



Angelina-Rossa Murphy
Urban Geography MSc Thesis



Student Number: 11637145

Monday August 12th 2019

Supervisor: Dr. F.M. (Fenne) Pinkster

Second Reader: Dr. V.D. (Virginie) Mamadouh

Master Program: Human Geography (Urban Geography Track)

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Fenne Pinkster for going above and beyond her requirements as supervisor to assist me through my thesis process. She provided gracious feedback and guidance throughout and was patient and supportive with me throughout my series of doubts and anxieties. I am extremely grateful to have had her as my thesis supervisor and I admire her greatly. I am thankful to Thamon, Sidney for inviting me along to their projects and allowing me to be a part of United Painting, it was truly a wonderful experience. This project could not have been completed without the trust and cooperation of United Painting participants and I thank them for their willingness to contribute to my research. Lastly, thank you to my family and friends for their constant encouragement and emotional support.

I dedicate my thesis to my father, William Murphy, who passed away shortly before I began the master's program at UvA. There were times when I felt my grief would be too much for me to continue my studies but remembering the unwavering love and support he showed me every day motivated me to push through.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Table of Figures	5
1. Introduction.....	7
2. Theoretical Framework.....	9
2.1. What constitutes belonging?.....	9
2.12. Belonging and identity	10
2.13. Emotional dimension of belonging	11
2.14. Territorial dimension of belonging	12
2.2. Politics of Belonging	12
2.3. Community and Connection.....	14
2.4. Transgressive practices through art	15
3. Research Design and Methods.....	17
3.1. Research Questions.....	17
3.2. Research Design	18
3.2.1. Overview of the Cases	18
3.3. Methods	23
3.31. Participant Observation and Site Visits.....	23
3.32. Semi-Structured Interviews.....	23
3.33. Secondary Sources	24
3.34. Sampling and Participants.....	24
3.35. Ethics and Positionality.....	26
4. Structural aspects of the Projects	27
4.1. Organization and Aims of United Painting	27
4.2. Recruitment	28
4.3. Participants	29
5. Stimulating Collaboration, Constructing Community?	31
5.2. Individual Benefits of Project Participation	37
5.2.1. Skill Development.....	37
5.2.2. Therapeutic Action.....	37
5.2.3. Social Support	38
6. Belonging.....	39
6.1. Fostering attachments in Refugee Centers	39
6.2. Fostering belonging in public space	43

6.3. Representation and Visibility	45
6.3.1. Multiculturalism of designs.....	45
6.3.2. Painting in Public	46
7. Conclusion	47
7.1 Discussion of Findings	48
7.2 Reflection, Limitations and Recommendations.....	51
Bibliography	53
Appendices.....	55
Interview Item List: Refugee Participants	55
Interview Item List: United Painting Staff	60
Extra Fieldwork Images.....	63

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Entrance of AZC Bijlmerbajes	7
Figure 2: Artworks at AZC Bijlmerbajes.....	19
Figure 3: Recreation room and project site at AZC Willinklaan	19
Figure 4: Participants drawing designs on blueprints at Spark Village Project	20
Figure 5: Felt carpet painting instillation for King's Spray project at NDSM, prior to being painted.....	21
Figure 6: Early stages of painting for project at Plein 40-50 for Freedom Day.....	22
Figure 7: Flyer used to inform residents about the upcoming project at AZC Willinklaan.....	28
Figure 8: United Painting staff member and participant working together with a stencil	32
Figure 9: Me collaborating with a fellow participant at King's Spray project	33
Figure 10: Spark Village residents voting on the top choice designs for community building exterior.....	34
Figure 11: Festival goers watching United Painting participants work	43
Figure 12: Participant teaching a child how to spray paint onto a stencil.....	44
Figure 13: People looking at the finished artwork of the Freedom Day project as they walk past.....	45
Figure 14: United Painting on King's Day	52

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
AZC	Asylum Seekers Centers
COA	Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers

1. Introduction

The terms *prison* and *home* are not words one would often find associated with one another. Yet, for refugees in Amsterdam, a former prison complex called the Bijlmerbajes was the place they had to call home once they arrived in the Netherlands. In 2016 however; an opportunity arose for the inhabitants of the Bijlmerbajes to transform the prison exterior and interior by painting colorful murals throughout, in collaboration with a non-profit organization named United Painting Project. What was once a cold, concrete building has been transformed to have character and a story that lying within its walls. Even with the impermanency of temporal housing and the inhospitable nature of a former prison, the refugees and asylum seekers involved in the project were able to connect to the space through their art contributions and had an opportunity to make the place feel more like a home.



Figure 1: Entrance of AZC Bijlmerbajes

Source: Adriaan de Jonge

In 2018 alone, over 130,000 people were forcibly displaced from their home countries and risked their lives to migrate to Europe (UNHCR, 2018). The journey of migrants is often a tumultuous one that continues far past the arrival to a host country. Refugees face numerous challenges in their new environments. For example, they can be challenged with mobility restrictions from international and national laws as well as sociopolitical discourses, which regulate the migrant body and the ability to create social relations (Witteborn, 2011). Xenophobia and fears of terrorism have created an environment of suspicion and social exclusion towards refugees. Additionally, the narratives portrayed in media and politics are often singular, retold stories of

victimization and lack of agency. These narratives are harmful and unrepresentative of the diverse experiences, stories and survival of individuals who have found themselves in the positions as refugees and asylum seekers. Governments in countries such as the Netherlands have implemented policies to help ease and accommodate refugees in adjusting to their new environments. However, it is unclear if these policies are enough to help refugees' foster belonging and connection to their new homes. **Place-making and belonging are essential for social cohesion and identity development of refugees in new environments (Antonisch, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2016).** Art has been used as a governance strategy for community development and social change around the world, especially for marginalized groups. **The effectiveness is often controversial and contested, as expressed in literature such as Madyaningru (2011) and Belfiore (2010)** but there is also evidence in research which supports that art projects can be an instrument in improving the experiences of marginalized groups and individuals (Fobear, 2017; O'Neill, 2008).

Favela Painting Foundation, an organization which creates large-scale community art projects, began a project called United Painting Project in 2016. United Painting Project works with refugees in the Netherlands, Italy and Greece, providing them with opportunities to paint artwork in their urban environments. Through these projects, **participants are given a chance to connect with other refugees and connect with the places where they are painting.** Because art is one of the most universal means of expression, these projects do not just impact the participants but also the observers within the urban environment. **It is possible that the United Painting Project is a bridge for encounters and provides visibility between socially excluded groups and the majority of society.** The purpose of this research is to investigate **the impact** that United Painting art projects have on refugees and how these projects contribute to finding a sense of belonging in the living environments of refugees. By doing so, this research aims to critically analyze whether collective art projects can transgress imposed boundaries and provide agency and representation that **reduces stigma and social exclusion of refugees.**

2. Theoretical Framework

This section will address key concepts and themes that are relevant to this research topic using prior literature and theoretical analysis. The main focus of this research is belonging and it is discussed first. Secondly, **the politics of belonging** will be discussed in order to provide context for the social and political environment for which this research takes place and the conditions under which belonging is produced. Thirdly, the use of art as an instrument for belonging will be theorized because art is a key variable in this research project. Lastly, the concepts of visibility, representation and resistance in regards to refugees and art will be discussed using literature from other case studies.

2.1. What constitutes belonging?

The concept of belonging is a complex and dynamic experience; encompassed in and influenced by many factors. Belonging is often conflated with notions of identity and citizenship but the concept of belonging runs much deeper than just nationalism and ethnicity. **Belonging is a personal, intimate and sentimental feeling of “being at home” and feeling a sense of safety and attachment to a place (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006).** Refugees who migrate to new places often do not possess citizenship in their host countries, yet, there is still opportunity to develop a sense of belonging. Therefore, diluting belonging as simply citizenship and national identity is not enough. For many refugees, integral aspects of their identities and formulated ideas of self are stripped away in their new cities because their home-place attachments and feelings of belonging are connected to their home countries were they, often, cannot return.

The theoretical framework of belonging for this research project incorporates and expands upon the literature of belonging and the politics of belonging by Antonisch (2010), Youkhana (2015) and Yuval-Davis (2006). Belonging has been operationalized by these scholars in different ways. **Yuval-Davis (2006) defines belonging in three categories, a) social locations that emerge along different power axes and social categorization, b) individuals’ identifications and emotional attachments, c) shared ethical and political value systems. Antonisch (2010) defines belonging similarly, but with a greater emphasis centered on place attachment. Youkhana (2015) re-conceptualizes former ideologies of belonging by adding space as a critical factor of belonging.** This research will intersect within these prior studies of belonging, focusing on the emotional and territorial dimensions of belonging.

Previous literature and discourses around refugee belonging place too much focus on binary and essentialist ideals of belonging according to Antonsich (2010) and Youkhana (2015). **Scholars of migration studies continue these “groupist” imaginations by using methods that refer to national and ethnic belongings without inquiring into context and individual background (Youkhana, 2015).** The issue with grouping people by nationality is that these ideas simplify belonging to be obvious and expected between individuals with predefined similarities. This becomes racialized rather than taking into account other levels and factors of belonging. Social and physical

locations, previous experiences, politics of differences, experienced encounters, and feelings regarding safety are some examples of other factors that contribute to belonging which are not related to ethnicity and nationality. Youkhanna (2015) stresses the importance of understanding of belonging with sensitivity towards the multiplicity and situatedness of individual attachments which entangle social, imagined and sensual-material relations that are constantly re-articulated and re-negotiated by actors in their day-to-day practices. This is important to distinguish because this research focuses on belonging through the means of collective art projects, a shared experience between a group of individuals which are refugees living in temporary housing facilities. **These individuals share a common experience of being in the position as refugees but that shared experience does not necessarily foster bonding between people.** In fact, many refugees living together in temporary housing have conflicting feelings towards each other, be that because of culture, language, politics or gender, etc. In addition, many have had traumatic experiences and are in an emotionally vulnerable state. A feeling of distrust among one another as well as distrust of others is common. **Though literature on the effectiveness of collective art projects in providing an opportunity for refugee belonging exists (see Fobear, 2012; Koettig, 2009; O'Neil, 2008; Serrano, 2017),** it is limited compared to literature which focuses on the ability of collective art projects to improve pre-existing communities or communities established upon fixated geographical locations. What is particular about this research project is that **the collective art projects of United Painting aim to support the development of belonging in communities which are situational because of their status as refugees and shared location of living in refugee centers.** This research hopes to contribute to growing discussions around the effectiveness of art projects in fostering belonging within temporary collectives of refugees and the potential to produce alternative forms of belonging through these active engagements.

2.12. Belonging and identity

The notions of belonging and identity permeate through one another. This means the concepts are not mutually exclusive but they are not synonymous either. **Belonging is both a form of self-identification, but also identification of and by others.** Subsequently, the ways in which an individual identifies and categorizes themselves and others affects how and where they belong and how they move through space. Belonging is not activated as a discursive resource for drawing boundaries of social inclusion/exclusion but as a personal, intimate, existential dimension that narrates and is narrated by the Self (Hooks, 2009). A person's identity is intersectional; it is formulated by their social status/location, i.e. race, gender, sexuality, age, but also by the narratives that they tell themselves about whom they are and whom they are not. Individual life stories, versatile contexts, and situated experiences and acts all effect the ways in which individual's find belonging. These factors can be extremely powerful for refugees who have moved to countries where their experiences, stories and cultural identities exist outside of the normative society.

Identity can also be created based on membership to different groups and what belonging to those groups means for the individual. Collective identity can often inform individual identity as well. In (Yuval-Davis, 2006) theoretical framework of belonging, she distinguishes three analytical levels of belonging, the first of which, is social locations; the social and economic locations which, at each historical moment, have particular implications along the grids of power relations in society. Social location is not stagnant; instead it is indicative of historical context and positionality within the axis of power. What this means for refugees is that their social locations change when they move to their new countries of residence and consequently, their identities shift. A change in social location as well as a loss of home-place attachment consequently uproots a person's sense of self and identity. Refugees are faced with their identities being questioned while simultaneously being reimagined and reconstructed in the context of their changing environments and situated places.

2.13. Emotional dimension of belonging

The emotional dimension of belonging, through the everyday practices and interactions of individuals with the material and social world, is about feeling 'at home' and "secure" (Yuval-Davis, 2006) but also about being recognised and understood (Wood and Waite, 2011). Individuals desire and emotionally invest in forming attachments to constructed forms of belonging. For refugees, the precariousness of their situation does not make for emotional dimensions of belonging to be easily fostered. Scrutiny, pressure and challenges that refugees face in their country of immigration can increase their perceived instability of livelihood and loss of home place. For example, refugees may be moved around to different housing facilities throughout their process of asylum or for other reasons at the discretion of COA. According to the Asylum Information Data Base (2019) "Asylum seekers can be moved to another AZC due to the closure of the centre they are currently staying at or because this serves the execution of the asylum procedure, e.g. in order to avoid that the AZC is so full this would create tension amongst the residents. It may also happen that the applicant has to relocate from one reception centre to another if their case changes "tracks" during the procedure, for example if they are moved from the accelerated procedure to the regular procedure." What this means is that an individual living in a centre can be moved any time and any place within the Netherlands an unlimited number of times throughout their asylum process. This constant uncertainty and lack of control makes emotional feelings of safety, rootedness, attachment and personal identity formation challenging. Developing a sense of belonging is vital for everyone but especially for refugees who may be emotionally and mentally vulnerable. The absence of belonging can lead to loneliness, isolation, alienation and mental health problems (Antonisch, 2010) which stresses the importance of opportunities for refugees to connect and express themselves. Organized activities such as collective art projects can be the opportunity for social mobilization and livelihood improvement for refugees in their new environments.

2.14. Territorial dimension of belonging

Without naming, identification or representation by ordinary people, place is not a place according to Gieryn (2000). Place also becomes what it is to the individual by how it is interpreted, narrated, felt, perceived, understood and imagined. Place in the context of this research is geographically conceptualized as space invested with meaning in the context of power (Antonsich, 2016; Cresswell, 2004; Youkhanna, 2014). Experiences, relations and memories attach personal meaning to a given space (Antonsich, 2010) and it is these autobiographical factors that an individual associates with a place that forms the feeling of being “at home” and belonging. Home stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment (Antonisch, 2010; Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006) and by conceptualizing home as such, it is apparent that emotional and place attachments are interrelated in the development of belonging. Additionally, feelings of belonging to a place and processes of self-formation are mutually implicated (Antonsich, 2010).

Elaborating upon the definition of place, it can be said that places are socially constructed and those constructions are founded on acts of exclusion. Reasons for this being that some scholars and political actors see the constructed notion of place as essentialist and exclusionary based on notions of rooted authenticity ie. citizenship (Cresswell, 2004). Essentialist ideas of place pose obstacles to refugees whom may have the validity of their attachments to place and sense of belonging questioned or even refuted by others due to their lack of citizenship. One of the ways in which refugees may counter this and form attachments to place is through appropriation. In regards to art based projects, both the process of making art as well as the final product is a creation and appropriation of space. Importance of infrastructures, things and material culture in general for the production of belonging is stressed as is the constant appropriation and remaking of space (Youkhana, 2015). Material objects, such as art, are situatively involved in interactions with humans in order to enact and perform the formation of the collective (Youkhana, 2015).

2.2. Politics of Belonging

In order to belong, people should feel that they can express their own identity and be recognized as an integral part of the community where they live as well as being valued and listened to (Antonisch, 2010) but this is challenging for refugees, who are often excluded and othered by the majority of society. The practices of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion influence an individual’s attachments and feelings of belonging. Additionally, social realities and historical trajectories influence the ability to form senses of belonging (Youkhana, 2015). Xenophobia, racism and weaponized nationalism are themes circulating in media and politics at an increasing rate. These ideologies do not protect refugees’ ability to express their identities nor make them feel welcomed in society.

The performativity of belonging and politics of belonging are stressed by Antonisch (2010), Yuval-Davis (2011) and Youkhanna (2015). Yuval-Davis (2011) states, “Specific repetitive

practices, relating to specific social and cultural spaces, which link individual and collective behavior, are crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment”. In regards to this research, collective art projects facilitated with refugees are a form of repetitive practices even though they influence attachment and identity at a smaller scale. Everyday politics of belonging involves two opposite sides: the side that claims belonging and the side that has the power of ‘granting’ belonging (Antonsich, 2010). In the case of refugees, the politics of belonging is often the reproduction and continuation of boundaries by different communities/ collectives and hegemonic actors such as institutions and the nation-state. Social, political and territorial demarcations are set in place and are constantly negotiated, rejected and transgressed at the individual or collective scale or both (Antonisch, 2010; Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis 2006). “The politics of belonging comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectives that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways“ (Yuval-Davis, 2006 p.197). **What this means is that individual and collective belonging is not just a personal feeling of being at home, it is a complicatedly social phenomenon that constructs, reproduces and informs individual and collective identity within hegemonic power relations.**

Contextually, the politics of belonging occurs at different sociospatial scales. The most influential political project of belonging is the nation-state (Youkhana, 2015). Ideologies of nationalism and territoriality perpetuate who is legitimate to belong and who is not based on citizenship. **The right to belong takes on both physical and social attributes even though that right is negotiated by imaginary communities like the nation.** Citizenship is an aspect of the politics of belonging that can be weaponized against refugees. Lack of citizenship can dictate what opportunities refugees can or cannot partake in, where they can or cannot go and how they can or cannot act. Migrants relate and resort to different political projects of belonging, which describe relevant contestations and indicate both inclusionary and exclusionary social realities, as explained by Youkhana (2015). **Status and entitlement influence an individual’s feelings of safety and security, which effects their feelings of belonging.** The politics of belonging critically affects the ways in which refugees find both individual and group belonging as well as attachment to place and space. Refugees who are given full residence rights can still be told after many years that they must leave and return to their home countries as Yuval-Davis (2016) explains. **This fear of eventually being forced to leave can be detrimental to a refugee’s ability to feel welcome, attached, rooted and secure in the places they live.**

Recently, scholars have begun to shift discourse of the politics of belonging from rigid national citizenship to more transnational, global and cosmopolitan ideas of citizenship (Antonisch, 2010; Youkhana, 2015). Some scholars, such as Youkhana (2015), are calling for new metaphors of belonging putting forward the idea that people belong neither to a territory nor a cultural or ethnic group, but to a situation i.e everyday life encounters (Amin, 2005;Antonisch,2010). Everyday encounters with similarity and difference are extremely informative for individual belonging and unbelonging, as well as collective belonging and unbelonging. This idea is

reiterated by Youkhana (2015) who writes, belonging is produced beyond ethnic or national boundaries but is contested on interrelated sites, scales and networks. Social status, identity, collective membership, citizenship and privilege are key factors of the politics of belonging and who is or is not allowed to belong.

Youkhana (2015) writes that new forms of belonging can be forged by questioning sociocultural and political demarcations, compatibility of ascribed socio-cultural difference and stressing the permeability of borderlines. Collective art projects may be a mechanism for which refugees can permeate sociocultural boundaries and feel valued and recognized for their differences even if it is momentary or small in scale. New forms of everyday belonging are possible under different conditions that challenge the politics of belonging and this can lead to social mobilization, collectivization and change (Antonisch, 2010; Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2007).

Scholars have begun investigating forms of belonging with migrants that no longer identify purely with territory but for instance with linguistic commonality or with transnational networks, images and memories at times suspended in an imaginary esthetic space (Antonisch, 2010). The ability of art to transcend boundaries and barriers makes it a valuable and purposeful tool for enhancing the experiences and sense of belonging of refugees in inhospitable sociopolitical settings. Fobear (2017); Rotas (2006), O'Neill, (2008) and Youkhana (2015) present similar arguments that collective art projects allow for participants to create spaces that challenge hegemonic norms. The agency enacted through creating art that is representative of the individual or collective forms spaces of therapeutic connection and safety. Participatory arts are a useful means for community building and solidarity among different groups of refugees, especially when there are communication barriers (Fobear, 2017).

2.3. Community and Connection

For many refugees, categorization within a refugee group is the very aspect of their identities for which they wish to remove themselves from. This desire for distance can be attributed to their experiences and traumas which forced them to leave their home countries as refugees and also to the negative images and stereotypes portrayed in the media and politics. Meade and Shaw (2007) argue that community arts 'constitute important sites of counter-hegemonic struggle against limited and limiting accounts of human experience. Therefore, it is important for refugees to have opportunities to connect and identify with one another through mediums, such as collective art projects, which are not centered on their status as refugees. Collectives are built through joint action and corporeal experiences that are translated into the production of situated forms of belonging (Youkhana, 2015). The joint action of art projects by participants of different backgrounds produces a collective. Whether or not the participants find belonging within this collective is not inherent but it allows for the opportunity for community connection and belonging to develop. People of different backgrounds, beliefs and feelings coming together with one another to make art can create a bond and solidarity, even if it is momentarily, that may

loosen previous stigma and strengthen connection. This can also be described as a “meeting space of recognition” (Cerdera, 2015; Serrano, 2017). Mutual mean making or community art can be an action which provides the space to highlight the importance of dialog and everyday experiences in formulating shared understandings, which in turn can manifest into social change (Cerdera, 2015; Fobear, 2010; Madyaningrum (2011)).

In Madyaningrum (2011), a study on community development through art-based projects, the research concluded upon three themes of how participants viewed their participation in community art projects, which were; giving voice to the silenced, creation of social connections and challenging and reproducing stereotypes. The act of participating may facilitate the emergence of community awareness as it provides an opportunity for ‘a community to state and negotiate identities and social representation which are, in turn, shaped and constrained by the material and symbolic power relations in which they are located (Madyaningrum, 2011). This theory relates to Antonsich (2010) and Yuval-Davis (2006) theories on belonging and the politics of belonging because social identities influence where and who an individual can belong to and also inform the individual about their social identity and who they are. Belonging can also be theorized as a mode of affective community-making based on physical proximity rather than a common identity (Antonsich, 2010). This would be a more inclusive means to creating belonging for refugees since they come from many different places that shape their identities differently, i.e. languages, cultures, religions and beliefs. Those who are refugees may want to distance themselves from this part of their identity because of the stigma and exclusion that being defined as a refugee comes with. Therefore, allowing people to create connection and community based on something like their geographical location or a shared experience, such as creating collective art, rather than the fact that they are all refugees may be a positive way to create belonging.

2.4. Transgressive practices through art

Creative activism and urban art are increasingly being used as an instrument to collectively re-appropriate the urban space and thus articulate urban belonging and citizenship (Youkhana, 2015). Individuals and groups use the public space as a laboratory for resistance, creative acts and as a medium of communication. Urban landscapes are largely created, controlled and represented by the interests of economic and political institutions. The exercised forms of power relations in urban spaces inform everyday interactions with difference and reproduces boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. Boundaries are constantly being re-drawn and re-imagined through social and spatial practices of individuals and collectives. In her research on how undocumented queers configure sites of belonging through art, Serrano (2017) writes that understanding the naturalization of white and heterosexually abiding bodies as neutral markers of belonging automatically positions anything outside such spheres as potential threats, as perpetual “beings away from home”. Based on this theory, the visible existence of migrants in urban space can be a radical act and can contest the lines drawn to demarcate belonging.

Art that disrupts the mechanisms of power within urban spaces is an act of transgression and activism. It provides visibility to the marginalized and therefore it is inherently political. Previous literature on collective art projects (Fobear, 2017; O'Neill, 2008; Rotas, 2006; Serrano, 2017; Youkhana, 2015) validate that the production of art by refugees allows them to gain visibility, agency and representation of their narratives and identities. As a result, this action transgresses against harmful rhetoric on refugees and the boundaries of social exclusion produced under the politics of belonging. New forms of belonging within social spaces and urban places can develop as a result of transgressive art but also, social spaces and urban places constructed by the dominant societal group becomes more permeable once boundaries of othering and exclusion are transgressed (Daniels, 2016; Witteborn, 2011; Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Victimization and narratives of trauma/violence are perpetuated in discourses by politics and media that strip refugees of their agency and instead, reinforce power relations and hierarchical institutions (Fobear, 2017). It is important that projects facilitated as a means of visibility for refugees are representative of the diverse experiences and individualities of the participants. Allowing one story to represent the multitude of complex human experiences produces another form of violence for marginalized communities by removing them from a position of authority based on lived experience and knowledge, instead making them passive objects for consumption by outsiders (Adichie, 2009; Fobear, 2017).

Fobear (2017) researched collective art projects with LGBT refugees in Canada and found that incorporating art practices into community development lead to empowerment for the participants and greater opportunities for understanding and empathy between refugees and others. The organization in this case study is named Painted Stories Project and it was formed as a resistance to the one-sided depiction of LGBT refugees. This organization aspired to create a space strictly for refugees where they could have complete agency and authority over the design of the art project. They created a mural of butterflies with person messages written in the butterfly wings. Some were more political such as "we are humans just like you" and others were simply expressions of personal feelings such as "I like cats". Critics of the project argued that it was not political enough yet this could not be farther from the truth. Allowing for a group of extremely marginalized individuals to organize and claim a space which is entirely their own is highly political. This act is transgressive in that this group of LGBT refugees' gained visibility through art that they created with their own agency and rejected involvement from anyone outside of their community. "The participants wanted to show their authority as advocates and fully capable actors with diverse interests, desires and needs"(Fobear, 2017; p7). Fobear (2017) describes these kinds of art projects as an act of social justices, which it is, however; these art projects also provide an opportunity for developing a sense of belonging and a sense of community.

O'Neill (2008) also argues that there are few exemplary examples of art based work that provides an alternative voice from the perspective of refugees and asylum seekers. It is important that refugees and asylum speakers have the right to represent themselves and are given the space

to do so (O'Neill, 2008). The case study by O'Neill (2008) analyzes several refugee art projects and found that by creating a safe space for dialogue, images and narratives to immerse, participants understanding of one another improved. Participants were able to discuss themes like transnational identities, home and belonging. (O'Neill, 2008, p.14) describes the art projects as “social spaces” and “potential spaces” for participants and audiences to attempt to situate oneself in the place of others in order to understand them and who they are. People are able to share their stories through art in a way that allows for others to empathize in a rather profound way. In the contexts of hegemonic society, “agents of knowledge production” have always been members of dominant groups (primarily white and male) and so there is power in creating alternative spaces of dialog for those whose identities fall outside of the dominant categorization.

3. Research Design and Methods

3.1. Research Questions

This research intends to examine what is the value of collective art projects in refugees' process of finding belonging within Amsterdam. Literature on this topic is not extensive enough so the intention is to contribute to a growing discussion of the power of art in transforming the experience of refugees. The main research question is: *How do art projects help refugees foster a sense of belonging?*

Belonging is a complex term that manifests in many forms so it will be measured through several themes: Emotional, Territorial and Community attachment. Additionally, visibility is also focused upon because United Painting creates projects in public space which provides refugees the opportunity to be seen in spaces which they are often excluded from under the contentious politics of belonging.

The following sub-questions were crafted to assist in answering the main research question in the most thorough means possible within this scope of research.

Sub Questions:

- How are the collective art projects of United Painting organized and executed?
- How do art projects help create emotional and territorial attachment in public/semi-public space?
- How do art projects such as United Painting help refugees build community and connections and to whom?
- How do refugees gain visibility through collective art projects such as United Painting?

3.2. Research Design

This research project follows a case study research design. This case study analysed the collective art projects facilitated by United Painting Project within Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Yin (2009) states that case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. For this reason, representative/exemplifying case study method will be employed for this research project. The intention is to conduct this research this way because there is a contemporary phenomenon that this research aims to address. This research aims to understand how in an era of increasing transnational migration and where refugees migrate to nations where they are socially and politically excluded, how do they find belonging? More specifically, this research studied the role which art projects like United Painting play in refugees developing their sense of belonging and inclusion. The notion of exemplification implies that cases are often chosen not because they are extreme or unusual in some way but because either they epitomize a broader category of cases or they will provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered (Bryman, 2012). Designing the research in this manner will allow for the possibility of the research being replicated elsewhere, an important requirement of research according to (Bryman, 2012). The ability of replication is important because collective art projects are being facilitated globally as an instrument of opportunity and experience for refugees. Understanding what these projects actually do for participants through a case study design will enhance the available knowledge on the value of collective art projects.

3.2.1. Overview of the Cases

Data collection for this research occurred at several projects facilitated by United Painting. The projects served as sites for participant observation and also provided access to interviewees. These projects will be referenced through out the research and therefore each must be individually described in order to provide context and a frame of reference for the in depth analysis and discussion of the findings. It is important to note that participant observation was not collected at the Bijlmerbajes project. The Bijlmerbajes project is reflected upon in interviews by United Painting staff members and by a refugee participant so consequently, it is necessary for this project to also be described. The painting projects are recounted below in chronological order.

3.2.1.A. AZC Bijlmerbajes Project

Bijlmerbajes asylum seekers center (AZC) was the location for the first painting project of United Painting which began in 2016. As a newly formed organization, United Painting completed an ambitious project within the asylum center. The Bijlmerbajes, a former prison complex, was a very large scale area consisting of six towers which hosted over 1,000 refugees. The organization, along with resident participants and local volunteers, painted parts of the exterior and interior as well as a space within the complex called Lola Lik, which functioned as

the cultural/ creative hub for residents. United Painting worked in collaboration with the Refugee Company, an organization which connects refugees with Dutch companies for job opportunities and trainingships. The Refugee Company was based at Lola Lik within the Bijlmerbajes complex

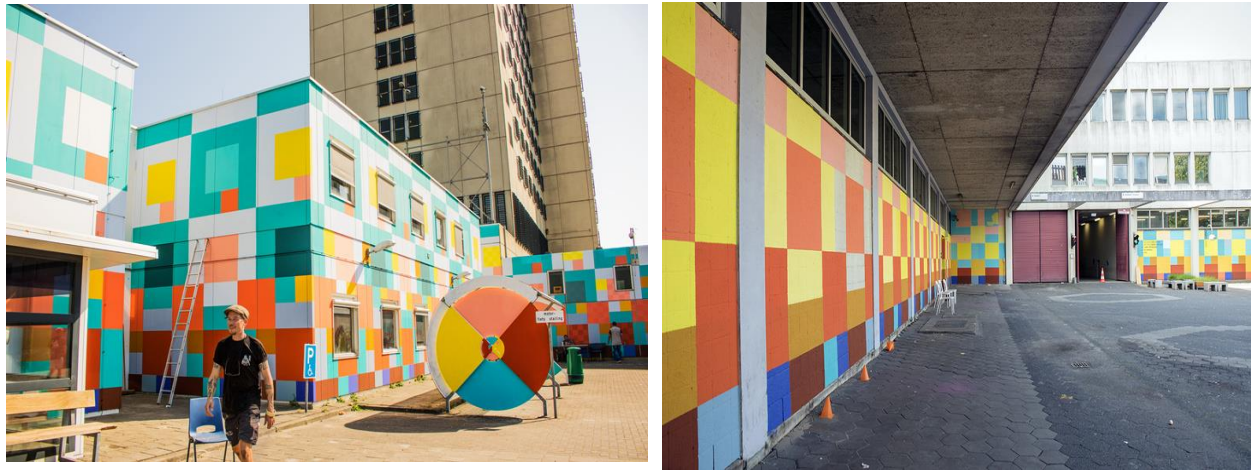


Figure 2: Artworks at AZC Bijlmerbajes

Source: United Painting Projects

and the company's coffee bar, restaurant and office space was designed and painted by United Painting. The Bijlmerbajes was the largest painting project completed by United Painting. It was also the longest project, spanning over two and a half years time. According to staff members, this project recruited the greatest amount of participants because of the scale and time. United Painting gained dedicated participants from this project whom have continued their involvement with the organization even after moving from the Bijlmerbajes center.

3.2.1.B. AZC Willinklaan Project

The asylum seekers center (AZC) was moved to a new location, Willinklaan, following the closure of the Bijlmerbajes living facility in 2018. AZC Willinklaan is located in the Geuzenveld neighborhood of Amsterdam, Nieuw-West. The center is run by the independent administrative body, COA and they work together with other organizations in the reception and guidance of asylum seekers. One of the organizations that COA works closely with is the Refugee Company.



Because they had collaborated on the painting project at Bijlmerbajes, United Painting was invited by the Refugee Company to paint the Café called 5 the Coffee Connect, which they opened at Willinklaan. 5 the Coffee Connect is located at the entrance of Willinklaan and is open to the public. After

Figure 3: Recreation room and project site at AZC Willinklaan

receiving an overwhelmingly positive response from residents and non-residents alike, United Painting was invited back by COA to paint the recreation room within the living facility. The recreation room is a multi-functional place used as a space for residents to gather and socialize with one another. The space contains a ping-pong table, foosball table, couches, television, kitchen and picnic table. The recreation room is located within the living facility and is not accessible to non-residents unless they are granted security access. The project for the recreation room was painted in four hour workshops which were once a week for a three week period. Participant observation was collected for two of the workshops at AZC Willinklaan.

3.2.1.C. Spark Village, Science Park

Spark Village is a new neighborhood created in the Science Park area by the Rochdale Housing Association. Spark village residents are a mix of refugee status holders and Dutch students. United Painting was invited by the Rochdale Housing Association to paint the outside of the neighborhood's community building. The building is comprised of three storage containers stacked on top of each other. The surrounding apartments are lined in rows facing inwards to a courtyard area and the community building is located in the center of the courtyard. Participant observation was gathered for the first workshop of the Spark Village project. In this workshop, residents were given a blueprint of the community building exterior and asked to draw a design for how they wanted the building to be painted. **Participants drew and painted on the blueprints and after they finished, all of the designs were displayed in the community center and the participants voted on their top four design choices. The process was very democratic and communal.** The top four designs were chosen and will be combined together to form one larger design which will be used for the exterior of the building. As of current, United Painting has not organized any other workshops for the Spark Village project because additional funding is needed to complete the project.



Figure 4: Participants drawing designs on blueprints at Spark Village Project

3.2.1.D. King's Spray Project

On April 26th and 27th, United Painting organized a project for the King's Day holiday. They were invited alongside ten or so individual artists and collectives to paint in Street Art Today's festival called King's Spray. The painting project took place at NDSM, a former ship yard turned into a multi-used port for urban creatives. The location which United Painting was given to paint was right in the front of the area where all the artists were set up. Directly adjacent to our spot was the main walk way and so we were highly visible to passer-by. The other artists participating in King's Spray were muralists, painting walls made of metal storage containers as their canvases. United Painting was the only group that did not paint on the metal storage containers; instead we painted a large square felt carpet on the ground meant to resemble a rug. This medium was chosen by United Painting as the surface to paint on. From talking to participants, I learned that the prior two years, they also painted a square area to resemble a rug however; they painted directly onto the ground with temporary spray paint. The felt carpet was chosen to paint on this year instead of the ground because the art would last longer, according to staff members. Additionally, the carpet will be moved and exhibited in Street Art Today's graffiti museum that is in the process of being created within the NDSM shipyard. Participant observation was gathered on both days of the project. The participants of King's Spray were all invited by United Painting because they had painted in prior projects with the organization. Three participants from the King's Spray project were later interviewed.

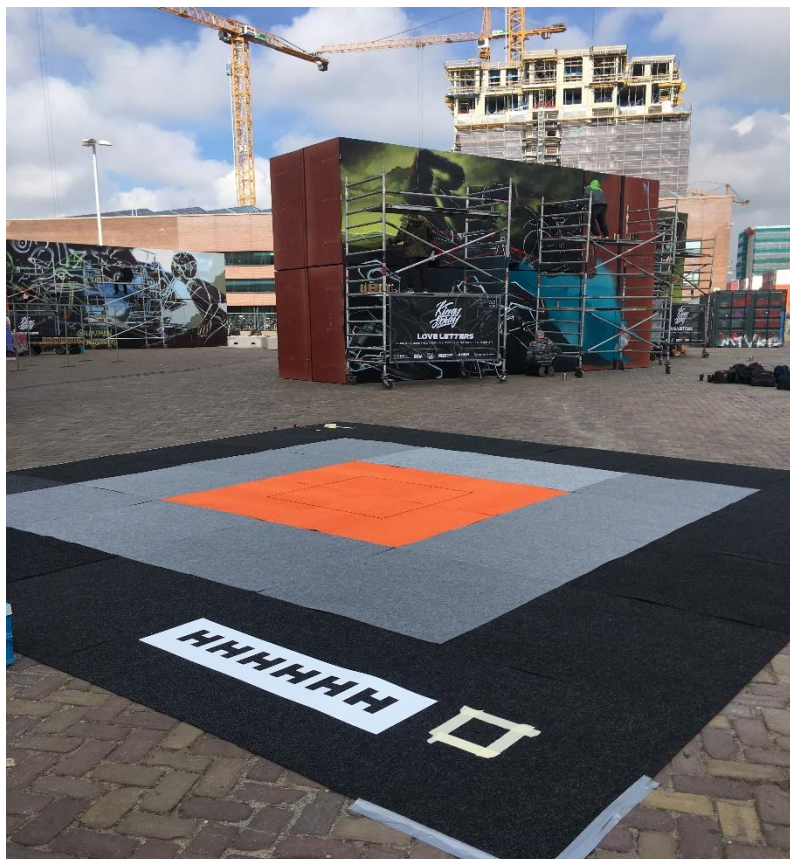


Figure 5: Felt carpet painting installation for King's Spray project at NDSM, prior to being painted

3.2.1.E. Freedom Day Project

United Painting organized a small painting project for the Freedom Day festival located at Plein 40-50. Plein 40-50 is a mall in the Nieuw-West area of Amsterdam. The festivities took place in the outdoor area and United Painting was among a dozen booths and vendors set up for the festival. United Painting was the only group there which was an art organization and we painted a felt carpet similar to the King's Spray carpet but much smaller in scale. All but two of the participants from the King's Spray project returned for the Freedom Day project. After the carpet was painted, it was left to be viewed by passer-by throughout the day and then moved from the location at the end of the festival.



Figure 6: Early stages of painting for project at Plein 40-50 for Freedom Day

3.3. Methods

For this research project, several qualitative methods were employed in order to collect data which would address the research sub-questions. According to Yin (2009) the case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence: direct observation and systematic interviewing. The methods for this research align with Yin (2009) because the bulk of the data collected was derived from participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Further validation in regards to the chosen methods comes from Gilmartin, (2008) who states that a range of qualitative techniques including ethnography, in-depth interviews, biographical approaches and participant observation has been increasingly used in geographical studies of migration.

For the first sub question: “*How are the collective art projects of United Painting organized and executed?*” secondary sources were additionally used to understand both the organizational process of United Painting and the motivations and strategies which they employ for their art projects. For the remaining sub-questions, participant observation and semi-structured interviews were the chosen methods used for data collection.

3.31. Participant Observation and Site Visits

Participant observation was the most instrumental and utilized method for this research project. All of the research questions were addressed using data from participant observation. Through this method, the interactions that refugee participants had with one another, United Painting staff and with myself were noted and interpreted. Casual conversations provided extremely useful information. Most participants initially were a bit more reserved and hesitant to open up with me so casual conversation proved to be a very useful tool to get to know participants and make them feel more comfortable. Conversations overheard between participants were also gathered for data collection. In other literature on art based projects with refugees (Fobear, 2017; O’Neill, 2008; Rotas, 2006) observation was used as a method of analyzing the social interactions which occurred during the production of art projects and also analyzing the ways in which the art is interacted with and viewed by others/ observers. Fobear (2017) study on LGBT refugee art used participant observation to evaluate the organization and execution of art based projects by the Painted Stories Project. A similar strategy was used for this research project. Observing the entire process of the projects; the organizational aspects, the environment, the participants, the interactions, the painting process and the outcome all contributed to the data used for addressing each of the research questions.

3.32. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-Structured interviewing is a valuable method to use for qualitative research. Interviewing allows for researchers to see what the interviewee finds relevant and important. It allows for the interviewee’s point of view to be seen (Bryman, 2012). The sub-questions for this research aim

to address complex concepts which are not defined or understood in any singular way. Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed for the in depth questions and responses that are needed for this research because questions about feelings are complicated and complex to answer. An interview guide was used to structure the interview and all responses were recorded, with the interviewees' permission. The interviews were then transcribed and coded. Coding was determined based on the different themes of this project and analyzed based on theoretical literature. Madyaningrum (2011) interviewed 10 participants for their study on art projects contribution to community development and found this quantity of participants to be sufficient for the research. Initially, the goal was to follow suit and interview 10 people involved in the projects however this proved to be a difficult feat. 6 interviews were conducted in total; 2 United Painting staff members and 4 refugee participants. Limitations for interviewing based on access to participants and time constraints were taken into consideration from the beginning of the research and that being so, participant observation compensated for this situation. Refugee participants provided the most insightful data for the research questions because they are the individuals whom are directly impacted and whose experiences and perspectives this project mainly focuses on, however; interviewing United Painting staff provided more diverse perspectives and as mentioned prior, interviewing staff of United Painting was necessary in order to answer the first sub-question: "*How are the collective art projects of United Painting organized and executed?*"

3.33. Secondary Sources

The first sub-question of this research project is necessary in order to understand how United Painting is organized and how this translates into the ways that the art projects are conducted. By understanding the organization of the art projects, the contributions these projects have in the process of fostering belonging, community and visibility in refugees, can be evaluated more comprehensively. Background information about United Painting was available because of my affiliation with the organization. Background information was derived from videos and texts created by United Painting. These sources are considered as secondary sources. The secondary source research was combined with interviews of United Painting staff members. It is important to note that a potential problem with relying on secondary sources and interviews with United Painting is that it could provide biased data. It was expected that United Painting staff members would speak of their projects in a generally positive manner and could have possibly over emphasized the values of their project and so the interview questions were structured in a way that required them to provide examples along with their responses/ opinions. The data provided was analyzed in a very critical manner in order to avoid an overly biased conclusion.

3.34. Sampling and Participants

Bryman (2012) states that with quantitative research, the research questions should give an indication of what units need to be sampled. Research questions are likely to provide guidelines

as to what categories of people need to be the focus of attention and therefore sampled. In the case of this research, it is clearly defined based on the main research question and sub-questions that the sample group is refugee participants of United Painting projects. Several projects were utilized as sample sites to gain access to participants. Initially, only the Willinklaan and Bijlmerbajes refugee centers were going to be used as sample sites for data collection however; the plan had to be adjusted very early on in the research because the Willinklaan project was cut short due to lack of funding. This was initially thought to be a hindrance for the research but in fact, using multiple projects as sample sites turned out to allow for a more representative sample group of United Painting participants. The hope was that the sample group would be heterogeneous but **since there is no way to control which refugees participate in the art projects and which don't, the diversity and demographics of participants were noted** and discussed in the findings. Convenience sampling as defined by Bryman (2012) is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility. By this definition, convenience sampling was the strategy used for the research because the sample group was only accessible because I worked with United Painting Project. It is very likely that these individuals may not have been accessible otherwise because the AZC centers are not open to the public and in the case of the Bijlmerbajes project; I would not have access to those who participated without being in contact with United Painting.

Additionally, my affiliation with United Painting Project may have been beneficial in regards to the willingness of the sample group to speak with me and answer questions for this research project truthfully. Since this group is a rather vulnerable population, many waiting to hear a decision on their status in the Netherlands and many having fear and distrust of institutional actors, they may have found my questioning suspicious if they had not known I was doing my research in coordination with United Painting. The participants whom had been involved with numerous projects had very close relationships with the staff members and therefore trusted that I did not have any foul intentions. I made sure to always be transparent about my involvement with the project because as explained in Bryman (2012), ethically sound research can only be conducted if researchers do not deceive or invade the privacy of their sample participants. In order to protect the participants and ensure their safety in regards to this research, their real names have not been used in this project. Instead, all participants are referred to by pseudonyms. An overview of interviewee demographics is provided below in table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of Interviewees

Name	Age	Gender	Origin	Time living in the Netherlands
Mateen	26	Male	Afghanistan	3 years
Masood	29	Male	Afghanistan	5 years
Sahir	25	Male	Syria	1 year 7 months
Samten	26	Male	Tibet	10 months
Tenzin	26	Male	Tibet	10 months

3.35. Ethics and Positionality

This research project focused upon a vulnerable population of individuals and for this reason, ethical considerations were taken very seriously. Transparency about the research was given to all participants that I interacted with. Awareness of my positionality as a researcher was also very important because participant observation was heavily relied upon for data collection. It was imperative as a researcher to understand how my presence and positionality may affect the group being observed. My positionality as a young, white female researcher put me in a somewhat precarious position within my research environment. Gender imbalance was something that I noticed from the beginning of my participant observations. **The United Painting staff members with whom I worked with are all male and white.** Additionally, the Spark Village project was the only site in which there were female participants. **This often placed me as the only female in the space and that dynamic was felt by me as well as the others.** It is possible that because of cultural or social factors, **I may have been perceived or interacted with in a manner that was different than if I was a male researcher.**

Bryman (2012) states that, **various studies have demonstrated that characteristics of interviewers and respondents may affect the answers that people give.** Characteristics such as ethnicity, gender and the social background of interviewers may combine to bias the answers that respondents provide. It is possible that some participants may not have wanted to speak with me as candidly because I am a woman. But at the same time, it is possible that some participants found me more approachable because of my gender. Admittedly, I felt somewhat self-conscious at times during the workshop I attended because I was the only woman in the room though as my involvement with the organization progressed, I was able to relax and feel more comfortable. My inability to speak Dutch was not expected to be a problem since refugees do not always speak Dutch either yet it did prove to be an obstacle the Spark Village project. I was the only person who did not speak Dutch at this project and so most of the conversations and discussions were in Dutch rather than in English. For this reason, it was more challenging to gather participant observation at Spark Village. My positionality as an American appeared to work in my benefit. Although I have come to the Netherlands in a privileged position under completely difference

circumstances, participants were eager to talk with me about their experiences adjusting to the country and to Dutch culture after I had shared my personal experiences with such.

4. Structural aspects of the Projects

4.1. Organization and Aims of United Painting

United Painting is branch of a larger art organization named Favela Painting. United painting was created in response to growing number refugee housing facilities in the Netherlands being assembled out of unconventional and inhospitable places such as vacant prison structures. With Favela painting having previously worked with only established single communities; the tasks of United Painting were an uncharted endeavor. The staff members are extremely involved and hands on throughout the entire process of the projects. The organization is run by two staff members whom coordinate/organize the projects, bring the supplies, recruit participants and teach participants and paint. The staff member titles are head of design/team leader and production manager and they will be referred to by their titles in this research. In regards to funding, **the organization relies on contributions from other actors such as the municipality, COA and private funders. United Painting also applies for grants. Funding is one of the main challenges that the organization faces.** There are several projects that United Painting has begun or wishes to begin but cannot complete because they do not have the proper funding needed.

Despite the fact that United Painting creates impressive artworks, the outcomes of the projects are not the greatest aim of the organization. **Participant experience is valued as most important.** The reason that experience is valued greater than **the art itself is partly because most projects are created in temporal spaces by participants living in temporal housing situations.** Because of the impermanency and unpredictability that refugee participants face in their everyday lives, United Painting structures their projects around experience and engagement in the present moments and chooses projects based on their potential to get participants to engage and collaborate with one another. When asked what lessons were learned from completing the AZC Bijlmerbajes project, the head of design/team leader of United Painting responded with:

*“I think the essential thing that we learned basically was that it was not all about putting a design on a building that we planned, it was mostly the way to it that was very important. **The essence for the people is just to work, to get out this troubled mindset, and uh and that they have influence in changing their surroundings** while they came from a situation that they have no home or feeling or touch with feeling home so now with paint they had influence on it and I think that is an essential thing in the project, **a learning process.**”*

4.2. Recruitment

Recruiting participants is a significant aspect of the work United Painting does. Recruitment is important because **the artworks of the projects are meant to be created by participants with staff members mainly there to provide the material and guidance**; although staff members do paint



Figure 7: Flyer used to inform residents about the upcoming project at AZC Willinklaan

alongside participants as well. **The essence of the organization is to provide opportunities for refugees to create art collaboratively and therefore, they strive to reach as many people as possible.** The recruitment tactics employed by United Painting follow a relaxed approach. This is partly **a strategic decision because they want people to join by choice rather than out of pressure or obligation.** Residents of the refugee centers are notified of upcoming United Painting projects either through flyers posted in the common areas or from WhatsApp messages from “community builders” of the housing corporations. Evidently, within the refugee housing projects that were included in the participant observation, the Spark Village project, where a community builder had messaged the residents, had a higher participant turn

out than the AZC Willinklaan project which participants were notified through **flyers posted in the recreation**

room. At AZC Bijlmerbajes, the project was advertised through flyering and from a large banner hung on the scaffolding which was being used for the project. According to staff and participants, the banner was useful for gaining attention to the project because it was large and highly visible. Additionally, the first part of AZC Bijlmerbajes that was painted was the entrance to the refugee center, so anyone who came into the center saw the banner for the project.

Once a project has begun, staff members attempt to make **the environment lively and approachable to residents.** They do this by playing music, wearing matching United Painting t-shirts and **engaging in friendly conversations with each other.** When residents pass by and see this, they often become curious as to what the projects are about. United Painting staff members

always take the time to greet residents, inform them on what the projects are about and invite them to join. In an interview with the production manager of United Painting, he reflected upon the recruitment tactics of the Bijlmerbajes project:

Production Manager: there's a big main square and when you walk into it there's squares that we painted on several walls and that's something that people immediately notice when they walk in or they would see us up in big heavy duty cranes so that had a feeling that people wanted to be a part of. And if you are outside and playing music and chilling and laughing then everyone would notice you and identifies with you.

Angie: Okay and can you talk about how you get people to engage with the projects?

Production Manager: It's mostly I think a pleasant vibe and then that vibe is clustered in making music, just being open for everyone and having an easy way of doing things and then also I think a part is the street kind of... atmosphere it has. So, when we are outside chilling we always have t-shirts and hoodies and they have a certain kind of...what do you call that... street cred or something. People also want to be a part of that so it makes it easier for them to be like.. "cool when I join this I will also get this hoodie" and it makes it easier for you to approach them and "okay you want to join? You will get a hoodie" and they are like "oohh okay cool" so yeah, that works.

Participants reinforced this notion by mentioning that they felt interested to join the projects because of the friendly atmosphere and approachable attitudes of the United Painting staff members. Additionally, United Painting makes the invitation very low stakes in order not to overwhelm and deter people from joining. Staff members explained that they realized from working with refugees over time that many residents are in very stressful or transitional situations while living in refugee accommodation centers and they cannot or do not want to fully commit to the projects. Therefore, the organization believes that making participation casual is the most effective way to gain participants. Once someone has participated in a project, they can choose to give their contact information to the United Painting staff in order to be invited to future projects with the organization. This is how participants become involved in United Painting projects that are outside of projects at their housing accommodations. These projects are (usually) outdoor, public space projects where participants from many different original projects come together.

4.3. Participants

As stated in the prior section, participation is heavily based on drop-ins by the choice of residents. Participants seem to initially join for a diverse number reasons ranging from curiosity, to boredom and/ or to an interest in art.

For participants Tenzin (26) and Sahir (25), the main motivations for joining the organization was their interest in art. Both participants expressed that they've made art before the projects of

United Painting and found the projects to be a good opportunity to be involved in arts and also learn new painting skills. When asked why he wanted to join the projects Tenzin (26) said:

*“I think I have an interest with drawing and painting and when I see them doing it I wanted to help and also I wanted to color, like **when you accomplish something it’s a nice feeling**... I think it’s like, um how do you say this.. it’s like a job. If you really like it, I don’t think you will feel like you are working cause when you do something that you love, you don’t feel like it is work. It is like your passion, that is what I feel.”*

Sahir (25) also explained his motivations for joining, saying that:

“It was actually a new experience for me because I already did some painting when I was in Syria but actually it wasn’t the same and different materials, different qualities, let’s say different style so it was pretty cool and I loved it”.

While I was painting with the group at AZC Willinklaan, a few residents briefly joined throughout the workshops, motivated by their prior experience with painting and art. I reflect upon one resident this in a journal entry on March 13th:

“At one point, an elderly Iranian man came in and tried to help me with wall I was painting. He did not speak English but he used hand motions to show me how to paint the corner of the wall correctly. He even got up on the latter and helped me paint the spot that was too high for me to reach. He was very friendly even though we couldn’t communicate through language. He stayed for a while, talking with and helping out another participant from Iran. After he left, the other Iranian participant told me that the elderly man used to paint homes for a living and he thinks that the man wanted to help me because he felt a sense of nostalgia about painting.”

Others initially joined out of curiosity, stemming from the image and atmosphere United Painting reflected. When asked why he participated in the project, Mateen (26) explained:

“Actually, I was living at the place they were working (AZC Bijlmerbajes). I was seeing them every day there where they work and they were a good group, kind people, they were working together and they had the music they had fun together and it was kind of funny for me and this was the reason I participated in the project and why I work with them”

United Painting staff also noted from their experience working on the projects that some residents decide to join **the projects simply out of boredom, mentioning that people who felt “stuck with themselves” and “just needed to do something for their mental wellbeing”**, participated in the project. Staff members explained that some participants are waiting for months and sometimes years with nothing to do to fill the time and so when United Painting arrived, they felt like they had something to occupy themselves with.

While participants have quite diverse migrant histories and cultural backgrounds, age and gender demographics of participants in the projects of this research followed a similar trend. **Males in their twenties made up the majority of refugee participants.** The Spark Village project was the only project in which women participated but even then, the female participants were Dutch students, not refugees. This can be partly attributed to the demographics of residents in refugee centres. **In 2018, men made up 71% of asylum applicants** (AIDA, 2019) **however; this trend of male participation may also be reinforced by the image reflected by United Painting. The “street vibe” and “cool” image portrayed from the atmosphere of the projects may appear more attractive to the younger residents in their twenties than the older residents. In regards to gender, female residents may feel hesitant to join the projects because the environment is male dominated.** Reversely, male residents may feel like the group is an accepting space for them because there are mostly men there. Reflecting upon how the recruitment approaches by United Painting generates specific categories of participants is important because this informs and reproduces the social composition and dynamics of the projects.

5. Stimulating Collaboration, Constructing Community?

In the discourse on collaborative art, the process of collaborative mean making and its potential to create and construct community through aspects such as knowledge exchange, solidarity and connection is emphasized (Belfiore, 2010; Cerdera, 2015; Fobear, 2010; Mayangruim, 2012; O’Neill, 2008). The projects of United Painting organize and engage residents living in AZC centers. Collaborative art making provides participants an opportunity to interact with others living in the center especially those whom they potentially do not encounter in their everyday routines.

“Doing something collaborative is also something I always compare with playing a match of soccer with strangers. Suddenly, you’re in this moment together, you’re all working for the same team and people react to that and they feel immediately like part of a bigger group, a bigger energy. And especially when you’re changing the environment where you’re living it’s very uplifting to get that energy together as a group, group dynamic. So that has always like.. an optimistic outcome.”

United Painting team leader/ head of design reflecting upon what he finds to be the most meaningful parts of the projects

The artworks of United Painting follow a distinctive style; bright coloring and geometric patterning. The stylistic choices of the organization are not only for aesthetic appeal, they are strategic. The mediums and methods of design are used to increase accessibility and encourage collaborative painting amongst participants. United Painting created stencils with various geometric patterns that can be painted over with liquid paints or spray paints. These stencils can be repeated or layered together along a surface to create intricate looking artwork. This method is versatile; it can be used upon different surfaces such as walls, which has been used for the indoor projects at the refugee centers or carpeting which has been used for the outdoor public space projects. The method of stenciling is easy to learn and therefore both participants with artistic experience and without experience can join in on the projects. This makes the projects more inclusive because participants do not have to meet any artistic skills or requirements. United painting arrived upon this method by analyzing what did and did not work from the design methods of the AZC Bijlmerbajes project for which stenciling was not used. Staff members felt the stenciling method allowed for participants to play more active role in the creative process.



Figure 8: United Painting staff member and participant working together with a stencil

The method and design of the projects also requires that participants work together collaboratively. With the stenciling, often one participant holds down the stencil while another paints over it using spray paint or liquid paint. **When two people work together with a stencil, they eventually begin to engage in conversation.** This was something that I also experienced while working collaboratively with participants. I found that often when I first met a new participant, they would be a bit more reserved and possibly shy to speak with me but once we were working together with a stencil, they were very open and interested in talking and getting to know one another. They would start by asking general questions such as, where am I from and how am I involved with United Painting and the conversations would evolve from there. From my own experience, **painting while talking alleviates some of the stress and anxiety that comes with interacting with new people.**



Figure 9: Me collaborating with a fellow participant at King's Spray project

After working with a participant, casual conversation and interaction on both ends became much easier and organic throughout the day. This was something that participants and staff members also experienced from collaborating with each other. Participants mentioned how it can be

difficult to connect with other residents because of cultural differences, language barriers, anxiety and lack of common interests but through participating in the projects and collaborating together **people feel bonded to a common goal and those other barriers seemed to diminish.** United Painting team leader/ head of design witnessed how participants deconstructed these barriers through collaborating together on the projects.

“Yeah suddenly the cultures that don’t necessarily like each other that much because we uh we had a few experiences on that, they became very good friends and they still have contact with each other after years. So I think that it’s such a multicultural project that it really helps set in and connect the bridge even between cultures that can’t stand each other. Because at the end of the day, they’ve been through something heavy, and they can share it with each other and that starts with painting and becomes trust and talking and that helps a lot”.

Collaborative decision making is also structured into the process of the projects in some cases. For example, in the Spark Village Project, participants were asked to individually design artwork for the exterior of the community building but once their designs were complete, they **collectively voted upon the top five designs.** It was a very democratic and communal process. Participants were very encouraging towards each other, complimenting each other’s designs and showing interest in the inspirations and motives behind their creativity. Participants expressed that they found collaboratively deciding on the design for the building was a positive aspect of the project because it brought residents together. Participants met other residents of the Spark Village whom they had not encountered prior. Additionally, participants felt the design will represent and reflect the Spark Village community because community members had autonomy over the designs. Spark Village is different than the AZC centers and public space projects because it was organized specifically for residents of this neighborhood, where a form of community already exists. However; the collaboration fostered through the project at Spark Village provided a space for the possibility of new connections to grow and strengthen amongst



Figure 10: Spark Village residents voting on the top choice designs for community building exterior

residents. Relating the Spark Village project to other research on community art projects, Madyaningru (2011) states that the act of participating in may facilitate the emergence of community awareness as it provides an opportunity for ‘a community to state and negotiate identities and social representation.

From observing and participating in the AZC Willinklaan, King’s Spray and Freedom Day projects with United Painting, it was clear that the collaborative aspect of the projects was a huge reason why participants engaged and connected with one another. Participants and staff similarly define the connections they’ve built with one another as a network of friendships or as a form of community. “A form of” community is important to note because defining community is complicated. The image of what a “community” is will always be contested and re-imagined depending on who are telling the story because it is a complex web of relationships, symbols, ideologies and spaces. The participants that commit and return for future workshops and projects all expressed that they found the experience of making art collectively to be a meaningful part of the projects.

“I love it because eventually it was teamwork actually, and it was amazing and so brilliant. So beautiful... You can see from the other guys that we are all painting together and it gives you the feeling that you are doing a teamwork so it’s not only about me, it’s also about everyone involved and so it’s nice to have this feeling also”

Sahir (25) reflecting on the collaboration of the King’s Spray Project

Sahir is exhibiting a mentality in which he values the group as a whole over his individual experience. The King’s Spray and Freedom Day projects were completed by the dedicated participants of United Painting. What is defined in this context as “a dedicated participant” is someone who has been involved in more than one project of United Painting. It was highly apparent that dedicated participants have created a form of community amongst each other. They met one another with enthusiasm and embraced in hugs when greeting. Watching participants interact, it felt as though these two projects were a reunion amongst participants. This feeling of reunion was confirmed by participants whom expressed that they were looking forward to the King’s Spray project because they get to see other participants that they may have not seen for a while. In addition, the way that the participants collaborated with each other and with United Painting staff was noticeably different than the ways that first time participants engage with each other and the projects. Participants of the King’s Spray and Freedom Day projects came across as confident, skilled and social. The participants were able to take the lead in certain moments of the project without doubting their decisions or without always consulting with United Painting staff. The participants were very social with one another, constantly talking and laughing together. Most of the participants had already known each other or considered each other friends and took occasional breaks from painting to talk in depth and catch up. Though this community

is flexible, with few obligations or expectations, it is strong and valuable according to its members.

From witnessing participants' interactions with each other and the ways in which they speak and carry themselves, it appears that participants seem to *identify* with United Painting. Participants and staff constantly used the terms “crew” and “crew members” when talking about themselves and others in the group. This type of language is used acknowledge who is a part of this group. This mentality of togetherness and identity membership to United Painting also translated to other parts of participants lives. For example, there have been multiple participants who painted their rooms and apartments in similar styles to and with the help of United Painting. During the Freedom Day project, a participant named Samten (26), whom I met during the AZC Willinklaan project, was showing me pictures of the studio apartment he had been approved for and would be moving to in the upcoming month. Samten had been living in AZC centres for almost a year and was extremely excited to be moving into his own place.

Samten: Look this is my new apartment! What color do you think I should paint the walls?

Angie: Hmm, maybe like a deep blue or red?

Samten: Yes I like red. But I want to paint with the patterns too and other colors too like we do here (pointing to the artwork)

Angie: Oh yeah? That's really cool

Samten: Yes, I even asked them (referring to United Painting staff) and they said they will come help paint my house. You can come help too, everyone can.

Samten's desire to paint his own home in the same way as the projects is a very telling example of the impact that United Painting has had on some participants. Samten quite literally takes the projects home with him. Being a part of the United Painting crew has provided something for Samten which has influenced the ways in which he sees himself and how he dedicates himself to the projects/ painting.

United Painting team leader/ head of design also remarked upon how identifying with United Painting gave participants a sense of empowerment.

“we had a certain team of people of maybe twenty, twenty people eventually did want to participate in every single project to put the effort into it because they.. they.. it gave them a kind of, uh, empowerment without wanting to get paid, for example. They just wanted to do it more. Some wanted to become painters. Some painted their houses in the style that we learned or taught them. And even a guy from Iraq, who got sent back unfortunately, it was devastating, but he became a painter and wanted to do the same things over there so I reckon that is empowerment”

It can feel empowering for an individual to cement their identity to a group. Not only does it provide an individual with a sense of self and social network, it also is a form of attachment; these factors contributing to community development and belonging.

5.2. Individual Benefits of Project Participation

Participants do not only benefit for the projects in a collective and communal sense. They also gain individual and person benefits, which is not emphasized in the literature on collective art projects. What individuals gain from the projects will be categorised as skill development, therapeutic action, and social support.

5.2.1. Skill Development

Some participants focused on the desire to learn and strengthen their skills in painting. These individuals explained that they have seen a personal growth in their painting abilities from working collectively with others. Participants help each other through the process, teaching one another and giving advice on techniques. Participants reciprocate knowledge to one another. These kinds of exchanges happened frequently during the King's Spray and Freedom Day projects. Participants that had not used spray paint before were helped by other participants in how to use the method correctly. This happened for me constantly because I had never used most of the methods and equipment involved in the projects and experienced participants were always willing to help me and show me how to use them. As stated prior, participants who had participated in many projects came across as very confident in their painting abilities during King's Spray and Freedom Day, often leading parts of the projects and also working efficiently and independently. United Painting production manager noted that some participants went on to develop their own art careers after painting with United Painting.

5.2.2. Therapeutic Action

Other participants expressed that they continue to participate in the projects because it feels therapeutic to them. Some participants said that the action of painting was a way to channel their energy, anxieties and emotions into something physical. The physical action of painting allows for their mind to relax and not focus on troubles, trauma or fears, according to participants. Participating in the projects gets them out of their rooms, gets them around others and at times, also gets them out of the AZC centres.

Angie: Okay and what did you think about the colors and the designs of the project?

Tenzin: Uhh..I would say the colors are very active and its playful and when you see the designs it is active and I think it will help you to become more active I think

Angie: Active, so when you, when you see it you get a good feeling from it?

Tenzin: Yeah good feeling and like active umm like more energy like (pause) you want to do more when you see it, like, if there is like a plain color you wouldn't see anything like it is just a

plain but if there is lots of squares and lots of designs it is more active and maybe it can help you to be more active

Here Tenzin describes how *seeing the artwork changes the energy and atmosphere of the space*. He uses the terms “playful” and “active” which can also be interpreted as lively. These changes alter the everyday experience that Tenzin has within the recreation room. The color and design of the paintings make Tenzin feel that he “can do more”. *These sorts of changes to atmosphere can be extremely beneficial for an individual’s mental state*. Especially for refugees, who may be coping with trauma and the feelings of loss which come with leaving home and sometimes family behind.

United Painting production manager also commented upon the therapeutic value of the projects which have been expressed to him by participants saying:

“People having to wait for years sometimes.. or for months not doing anything and then when we showed up they finally got a chance to just do something while they were there so it was kind of like an occupational therapy you could say. And they didn’t really care.. Some of them.. What they were painting, well.. at the end of the day they were looking up like ‘oh that’s pretty cool actually’. But the fact that they were just doing something and being there was already really valuable for them”

5.2.3. Social Support

Participants who are involved with United Painting projects over *a prolonged period of time felt that they have built friendships and support systems with both other participants and with staff members*. United Painting team leader/ head of design remarked that throughout the two and a half years of working on the AZC Bijlmerbajes project, he often times felt like his predominant role with participants was as a social worker.

“People see you as a social worker, and especially because the project that we did opened up people, because they trusted us at a certain point because you’re there for two and a half years instead of a psychologist so people start talking about their situation”

Multiple times in our interview, he stressed times *the importance of time in regards to building trust and social support amongst the group*. He also mentioned that as participants built trust with staff, they told other residents who had not yet participated in the projects that *“these guys are cool to paint with and we have such a good time, come join us”* and in turn, participation grew and they were able to build the network of support. Throughout all the projects, I constantly heard United Painting staff members asking participants about their lives and how they are doing and if they needed anything. Participants were seen spending time talking and catching up with each other during the projects as well. Participants also highlighted that their friendships with one another are not bound to the project sites and that they spend time together doing other

things such as playing sports, watching football and having drinks together. Sahir (25) elaborates:

“I 100% consider them my friends. We go out together to just like chill out and it’s not only about painting but we became like, good friends and yeah. We see each other quite often”

Feelings of friendship amongst the group were expressed by all participants interviewed. Masood (29) even used the word *family* to describe how he feels about his relationship with United Painting.

6. Belonging

In the literature on art based community projects, the effects of such projects have often been discussed through the lens of belonging. Belonging is conceptually complex. The notion of belonging difficult to measure because it is nuanced, intersectional and sensitive to scale. Initially, I planned to research the theme of belonging by conceptualizing it as emotional attachments and place attachments based on the theoretical frameworks of Antonsich (2010) and Yuval-Davis (2006). When I participated in the King’s Spray and Freedom Day projects and observed how the participants reacted to creating art in public urban spaces, I realized that the work of Youkhanna (2014) on space sensitive approaches to belonging and collective action was imperative for the theoretical framework of this research as well. Youkhanna (2014) writes that *belonging should reflect the complex relations that individuals have with other people, circulating objects, artifacts and changing social, political and cultural landscapes and thus, mirroring both material conditions and the underlying power relations*. This chapter will first discuss the findings regarding belonging in the residential projects; AZC Willinklaan, Spark Village and Bijlmerbajes. Secondly, the outdoor public space projects will be discussed in relation to belonging. Thirdly, representation and visibility will be discussed, as it merges with the conceptualization of belonging.

6.1. Fostering attachments in Refugee Centers

“First when I came there, the driver who brought us there told us when we arrived that it was a jail. It was so sad for me. I was worried”.

Mateen (26) reflecting on his experience of arriving at the Bijlmerbajes refugee center.

“I was one of the first people to arrive at the Bijlmerbajes and the first two weeks was so difficult because you know like it is a jail and it was so difficult I always had a headache and panicking like what the hell? They sent me back to the jail... being there I was feeling like I am a criminal”

Masood (29) also reflecting on his experience of arriving at the Bijlmerbajes refugee center.

What was made clear to me in conversations with both residents of refugee centers and United Painting staff is *that individuals do not want to become attached to the refugee centers*. These

refugee accommodations are viewed as transient places in individuals' lives. This could be for several different reasons. First, refugees are often moved around to different refugee centers. All of the participants whom were spoken with had lived in multiple centers, some within the span of years, others just within months. Secondly, individuals associate painful memories and hardships with the period of time in which they have to live in refugee centers and consequently, wish to remove themselves mentally and physically from those spaces. To say that United Painting projects help refugees feel that they belong in the centers is inaccurate. However, the projects help residents form the everyday aspects of belonging. Examples of such would be feelings of comfort, creating positive memory associations, and forming social ties within the refugee centers as a result of participating in the projects.

While painting at AZC Willinklaan, I met Tenzin, a 26 year old refugee from Tibet. When we first met, Tenzin was friendly but rather soft spoken and reserved. In our first few times talking, he did not make eye contact often or initiate conversations. I worked together with Tenzin on several projects and was able to witness his growth in confidence over time regarding social interactions as well as in his painting abilities. After participating in several projects, Tenzin was able to take initiative in the projects and shared his humor with the other participants, often making funny jokes. Tenzin met me for a semi-structured interview at a cafe in Amsterdam Oud-West and we had a two hour conversation with one another in which I was able to learn a great deal about him and his life experiences. I felt that Tenzin would be an interesting participant to talk with because he was very dedicated to the painting projects at AZC Willinklaan which we had just completed at the time. Not only did he participate in all of the workshops at AZC Willinklaan but he also participated for the entire duration of the workshops and was the only participant to do so. At the end of one workshop, Tenzin and I were reflecting upon what we had created that day and he said to me that he had some relatives moving to the center in the upcoming weeks and was excited to show them the artwork that he did. Additionally, when asked in the semi-structured interview what he felt about his contribution to the painting at AZC Willinklaan, Tenzin responded saying:

“I think I would say I accomplished something. Like, in a project to... accomplish a project and so I think I did my best for the project and the... it went well and when we go in the room, the recreation room, we see the color and.. When I bring my friends they say, “Wow! It is very nice” and I tell them I painted that and they say “Wow”. Like, this is a good feeling”.

In later questioning, Tenzin was asked what he thought the other residents felt about the paintings and he responded with:

“They didn't say much about the painting but, the few people that I saw, when they saw it the first time, they were surprised. And they were like “how did you paint this?” even like, I took a photo and sent it to my sister and my family and they said, “how did you paint this?” and I said

you have to keep like a paper down and pick a color and paint over it and they say like “Yeah this is very nice” and they were all like “How did you do the small squares and the small details?” and I said “This is the way how to do it, like, you keep the stencil and paint that” and they said “It’s very nice”.

These quotes from Tenzin show that he felt a **sense of accomplishment and pride** about the painting that he did in the AZC Willinklaan center. He connected with the space through painting and created positive memories which he reflects upon with others. He shared his experience and artwork with friends and family, which also shows that he felt it was meaningful and important. Place and memory are intertwined with one another. The materiality of a place means that memory inscribed into the landscape (Cresswell, 2004). What that means for Tenzin is that the recreation room is a place that holds a new meaning because his memories of painting are connected to the space.

Angie: What do you think the painting adds to the center?

Tenzin: Maybe... Emotion

Angie: Emotion?

*Tenzin: Emotion. Because the color tells... **color can change your mood.** Color can change like.. how you perceive like, yeah that’s it.*

By saying that the colors and patterns can change his mood, Tenzin is describing that he is mentally affected by the paintings within the recreation room. According to Tenzin, these effects and mood changes are all positive. **By engaging with the space and appropriating it through painting**, Tenzin has transformed his experience with the recreation room, a place which he as well as other residents spends a majority of their time in. **The colors and patterns evoke emotion from him when he sees them.** Individuals feel emotion towards something, in this case colors, patterns, a room, when they have a sense of connection to it.

Tenzin was not the only participant to express **the feeling that the paintings altered the energy and character of spaces**. Masood(29) described the changes as **making the building feel fresh**. Sahir (25) shared his experiences of participating with United Painting for a project in his housing’s recreation room noting upon how it changed his feelings about the housing facility.

*“Yeah, there have been changes because actually the walls are all grey with concrete and with no color, you know what I mean? So when you see it and for huge building you don’t feel like relaxed or... You feel you need to change something or just paint it because it... Well **it’s ugly.** So... but with the paints it’s completely changed because I remember before the guys (United Painting) started the project, first project actually in our place it was like all the same all around the same but after, and with different colors it was incredible, it was different, completely different. You can see the difference actually, you can feel it”.*

Here Sahir mentions how before the building was painted he felt the inability to relax when he looked at his living environment and a restlessness to change this feeling. Sahir has also formed memory associations to the spaces which he has painted. During the King's Spray project, the United Painting project manager was looking through a pile of stencils and pulled one out to show Sahir.

Project Manager: Sahir do you remember this stencil?

Sahir: (Laughing) ahh yes, the yellow wall, I hated it!

Project Manager: (Laughing) you should use it again

Sahir: (Laughing) No way, no way

I later asked Sahir what he and the project manager were talking about during this interaction and he explained to me that when they were painting the recreation room of his building, he was using that stencil and a yellow paint color on one of the walls. He painted the whole wall and after finishing, realized that he absolutely hated the yellow color. United Painting staff asked Sahir what he thought of the color and pattern and he was completely honest with them that he did not like it at all. They all laughed together and the staff offered him to repaint the wall but Sahir said that he decided to keep it for the memory.

"Well I decided that we should just keep the color because it was a funny situation and now every time I look at it I remember and laugh about it."

When Sahir sees/ passes the painting along his everyday routines, this interaction comes to mind for him. When living in a place that is not what someone perceives as their "home", these minor associations can have meaningful effects on the individual's ability to feel connected with the space.

Sahir also painted his flat and bedroom with the help of United Painting. He was asked how it felt to paint his personal space and replied saying:

"Well actually I was thinking about painting it before they came to help us but it was a huge opportunity like a good opportunity to just have them say, "okay go for it just paint your own room" so I think like "hey guys okay uh can I chose or am I allowed to paint my room?" and they gave me the whole freedom to paint my own place so yeah. And I painted like how I wanted so it was amazing."

Sahir defines the experience of United Painting coming to help him paint his room as a "huge opportunity". This choice of words shows how much he values the organization and how impactful art is on his life. He describes that the experience gave him *freedom*. **This notion of freedom can also be synonymous with feelings of autonomy, which is an extremely meaningful feeling for refugees to possess because they may have not felt a sense of autonomy from their experience of being a refugee.**

6.2. Fostering belonging in public space

Refugees face numerous obstacles while living in AZC centers, including being socially, spatially and economically fragmented from others within Amsterdam. Physical distance due to AZC Willinklaan being located outside of the ring road (what is considered the geographical boundary marker of the city), lack of Dutch language skills and financial limitations make the possibilities for refugees to socially engage in the urban environment difficult, though participants expressed that the desire is there. While it is important that refugees feel comfortable and safe in the housing accommodations they live in, it is also important that they feel safe and included within urban spaces and Dutch society. United Painting organizes collective art projects in public space in order for refugee participants to gain a sense of place outside the housing facilities, which ultimately they will move from if granted residence permits.

Participants of the King's Spray and Freedom Day projects expressed that the public space projects make them feel a sense of importance and purpose, describing that being watched by others made them feel confident, happy and proud to be painting. Sahir (26) explains what he liked about the King's Spray project *"Well, it's nice to see people watching you doing your job or just painting and people giving attention to you. So, it gives you more confidence and more energy to do it. It's like okay, you are not alone here.."*



Figure 11: Festival goers watching United Painting participants work

Having positive attention from locals and other onlookers gave participants a feeling that they were accepted and appreciated in those spaces, that they were not “*alone*” and excluded. Participants recounted how onlookers spent time watching them, taking pictures, asking questions about the projects and giving praise. During the King’s Spray project, I noticed that throughout the day that a ring of onlookers formed around the carpet while we were painting. Children were very fascinated by the painting techniques and wanted to join in on the project. One of the participants invited a young child to help him with the stenciling. He taught her how to hold the spray can and paint over the stencil which the child was very happy to do, smiling and laughing with the participant. The parents of the child were also enjoying this interaction, documenting it with many pictures. Participants felt valued when they were able to share their skills with others whom have a genuine interest in what they are doing.



Figure 12: Participant teaching a child how to spray paint onto a stencil

Masood (29) is one of United Painting’s most dedicated participants. He began his involvement at AZC Bijlmerbajes, where he was living, and since has participated in over twelve projects with the organization. He has participated in three consecutive years of King’s Day projects with United Painting. Masood shows a strong appreciation for the public space projects stating,

“I feel good about these projects you know what I’m saying? I meet new people, like you for example.. we met for the first time there. The people are coming and watching us, working and painting. They are taking pictures and asking, “what do you do?”. This kind of project I’m liking. It’s also a new experience from other people like... its learning something new from other people so I’m feeling so happy working these kinds of projects. I’m hoping that they can have even more of these”.

Masood also painted at the Freedom Day project and was friendly and open with onlookers. At one point, an elderly Dutch woman approached him to ask about the carpet being painted. The two ended up talking with each other for a long period of time and at one point Masood pulled up a chair for her to sit with him and together, they watched the other participants paint. **Small interactions like such can hold value and affirmation for participants whom have not had many opportunities to socialize with Dutch residents or even others outside of the refugee centers. When they are painting in these public space projects, participants feel as though they are seen as painters of the organization not as refugees.** This makes participants feel they have a particular status of importance.

“I’m so happy working with them and I feel so proud of myself when I’m working with these kinds of people”

Masood (29)

6.3. Representation and Visibility

By painting in public spaces, participants are not only fostering their sense of belonging within Amsterdam, they are also transgressing against the hegemonic power relations woven within the urban environment. Though the artworks are temporary, the process of appropriating public space disarms built and social boundaries which work to exclude refugees. The urban landscape



Figure 13: People looking at the finished artwork of the Freedom Day project as they walk past

plays an important role as it serves as an instrument for exercising power by symbolic staging (Youkhanna, 2014). In turn, new urban meanings and forms of belonging can be formulated by transgressive art practices.

6.3.1. Multiculturalism of designs

In constructing the designs for their artworks, United Painting’s intentions are to reflect the multiculturalism of its participants. Participants of the projects have diverse histories and cultural backgrounds and therefore; the group is rich in perspectives, experiences and knowledge. The artworks are

a composition of blended patterns and symbols of various cultural imageries. The majority of these patterns and symbols are Arabic but some also are African or they are **geometrically nondescript**. The intention from United Painting behind the inclusion of Middle Eastern and African cultural imagery is to make participants feel that an element of their home and culture is represented in the projects. Participants may have attachments to symbols used in the artworks which make them feel included and seen. United Painting team leader/head of design explains,

“The patterns were created to include elements from different backgrounds into the designs so that people could connect more to the design instead of just flat squares and circles”

Participants felt a sense of pride that their culture was being included and acknowledged in the designs. I recount an experience with a participant excited over the patterns being used on one of the projects in this journal entry from March 13th:

“A first time participant from Iran began to talk about how he really liked the design and patterns that were being used for the project because they reminded him of Iranian architecture and culture. He was extremely happy and excited that he recognized the patterns as imagery from his culture and home country. He then took out his phone to show me pictures of different historic monuments in Iran which had these kinds of patterns including the Ālī Qāpū palace”.

Although participants valued having their cultures represented in the patterns, **they seemed to find it even more meaningful and powerful that imagery from various cultures was blended together to form one design. Participants emphasized the power of bringing their cultural backgrounds together into one piece.**

“It’s matched to different cultures you know? Like for example, the project we did for King’s Day, I can see the difference between each pattern because each one is connected to different cultures. Even the pattern I painted, it’s connected to my culture so mixing these together with a certain color it gives you like... A different thinking or new look to it. I mean it’s really nice to do it. It’s something new and I’ve never seen before”

Sahir (25)

The emphasis from participants that the true value of the designs comes from the multiculturalism and **synthesis of imageries shows participants find strength in unity**. This may show that the collectivization through these projects has shifted participants thinking towards a more community based and group identity viewpoint.

6.3.2. *Painting in Public*

Representation in design is important but moving a step further, it is essential that the refugee participants can create artworks within spaces which are not typically reserved for them; such spaces which reinforce societal hierarchies and boundaries informed by the politics of belonging.

King's Spray project and Freedom Day projects are examples of projects which took place within social spaces which disrupted normative expectations of whom can and cannot be represented and visible. These two projects took place on culturally significant Dutch holidays; King's Day and Freedom Day.

Mateen (26) and Masood (29) expressed that their favorite projects are the public space projects because they are in *important places* and they like that the paintings can be seen by people other than residents of the refugee centers.

"I like it because it was different, an important place in Amsterdam and people from everywhere come there"

Mateen reflecting upon the King's Day Project

Throughout both projects, King's Day and Freedom Day there was a celebratory and joyous atmosphere amongst participants and onlookers. Multiple times, onlookers came up to me and other participants to ask about the project, as they were very curious about the artwork. The people I spoke with were all very intrigued by the projects and the organization saying things like "wow very cool" and "what an interesting idea". I did not hear anyone say anything negative about the artworks or the organization nor did any participants say that they did either. Overall, participants expressed that the public space projects feel the most energized and they feel the most prideful about these project. In a way, this can be described as *empowerment* because participants are taking space for themselves and achieving something for which they feel good about.

7. Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the role of collective art projects in refugees' development of belonging through a case study of United Painting Projects in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In 2018 alone, there were 20,500 migrants that came to the Netherlands seeking asylum (CBS, 2019). The precariousness of being a refugee, living in AZC centers and awaiting status results raises obstacles for individuals to develop their sense of belonging. This calls attention to the societal relevance of researching how refugee belonging can be fostered through opportunities such as collective art projects. By asking the main research question "*How do art projects help refugees foster a sense of belonging?*" this research intended to understand what role collective art projects play in refugees development of belonging in both refugee centers and public spaces within Amsterdam. By looking through the lens of belonging, a notion which permeates and intersects within other concepts such as identity, community, visibility and representation, the values of collective art projects were able to be analyzed in a more comprehensive manner. Firstly, the findings show that the collective art projects help refugees' foster belonging in the everyday sense, which can be subtle and even unconscious factors which repeated over time, are impactful and informative to an individual's attachments and sense of belonging.

7.1 Discussion of Findings

The initial motivations of participants for joining the projects fit into three general categories; interest or prior experience in the arts, curiosity stemming from the image and atmosphere portrayed by United Painting, and/ or boredom and the need to fill time. Participants generally did not know one another before joining the projects and in some instances, had reservations against others due to factors such as language barriers or cultural differences. Yet over time, the distance between participants shortened and they became bonded and connected with one another. In investigating what components were responsible for shortening those distances, it was found that the collaborative nature of the projects is the catalyst for participants' formulation of social ties with each other and staff. **These social ties have manifested into a loose form of community amongst United Painting members, with loose expectations but strong value.** The community of United Painting is multicultural and the collective identity of the group transcends social and cultural demarcations of participants. **The formation of community amongst participants is situational; they initially are brought together by the commonality of their physical locations (living in the AZC centers).** The community is mediated by sharing place together but the interpersonal connections and friendships develop over time and continue when they no longer live in the AZC centers. In time, participants become disconnected from the place where they initially bridged connections but the relationships are sustained. The community development within United Painting is peculiar because often, literature on community based art projects focuses on communities which are transfixed upon geographical locations. **For the community of United Painting, location only marks as the meeting place or epicenter of their connections. The community is sustained through memories, friendships, solidarity and practices such as continuous participation in the projects.** In her research on community art, Fobear (2017) theorized that participatory arts are a useful means for community building and solidarity among different groups of refugees, especially when there are communication barriers. In the case of this research project, participatory arts through United Painting certainly functioned as a way to build community and connection amongst participants within the AZC centers. **This research follows the theory that "to be able to feel at home in a place is not just a personal matter but also a social one and if one feels rejected or not welcomed by the people who live in that place, their sense of belonging is inevitably be spoiled"** (Antonsich, 2010). Therefore, **formulating social ties and loose community amongst participants was essential for their development of belonging.**

The concept of belonging can be viewed through different spatial and social scales such as national, ethnic, personal or collective. In order to zoom in on belonging, the research sub-question "*How do art projects help create emotional and place attachment in public/semi-public space?*" was posed. This question aimed to investigate the ways the projects of United Painting aided participants in fostering attachments within AZC centers and within public spaces of Amsterdam. The findings show that refugees develop forms of belonging as a result of their participation in the projects but these forms of belonging are subtle and smaller scale versions of what is theorized by Anonsich (2010), Youkhanna (2014) and Yuval-Davis (2011). Youkhanna

(2015) theorized that belonging comes into being as a result of individual life stories, versatile texts and situated experiences and acts. The multiplicities of factors which manifest into belonging according to the theories by Youkhanna (2014) were found to be informative for the development of belonging in participants of this study.

From studying the participants' feelings of belonging towards the AZC centers, multiple results were found. Firstly, participants felt ambivalence towards the centers, both before and after painting. They expressed appreciation for the artworks, the experience and the transformation of the spaces due to painting but did not develop attachments towards the centers themselves. A pivotal reason for this being that participants view the living situations as transient places in their lives and therefore do not desire to become attached or find belonging within the AZC centers. This perception of the space as temporary largely dictated the ways in which residents did and did not attach the AZC centers. Participants never regarded the centers as "home". Secondly, participants don't want to belong within the centers, but they do want to feel safe and comfortable while they are there. Antonsich (2010), Youkhanna (2014), Yuval-Davis (2006) and Wood and Waite (2011) theorize that safety and security are important aspects of belonging and it was found that appropriating space in the centers through painting attributed to an increase in feelings of comfortability and safety for participants. Participants expressed that the environment in the centers prior to painting felt unwelcoming and made some feel uneasy due to the constant urge to change the spaces aesthetically.

In regards to the research sub-question on fostering attachments in public space, it was found that participants valued the public space projects as the most enjoyable and most meaningful to them. The reasons for this being that participants felt a sense of pride, status of importance and surge of energy which came from being positively received by onlookers. When they received attention and praise from others, it made them feel accepted and appreciated. In Antonsich (2010) framework of belonging, he theorizes that an individual's personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place should always come to terms with discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very place and which inexorably conditions the individual's sense of place belongingness. It has been addressed through the theoretical framework that the hegemonic conditions which negotiate inclusion/ exclusion are influential in the development of belonging. Linking to the findings, the inclusive attitudes portrayed by onlookers of the projects dismantled expectations and ideas participants had about how they would be perceived in spaces primarily reserved for Dutch people.

The research sub-question: "*How do refugees gain visibility through collective art projects such as United Painting?*" was formulated in order to dig deeper into dimensions of urban belonging which address how art can be used by refugees to challenge how they are controlled and represented within the sociomaterial environment. Youkhanna (2015) speculates that creative activism and urban art are increasingly being used as an instrument to collectively re-appropriate

the urban space and thus articulate urban belonging and citizenship from below. Urban space can be used as social and participatory space, as it has been by United Painting projects. The findings show that participants appropriated public space, albeit temporarily yet the process and experience allowed for refugees to transgress suppressive boundaries and gain visibility in a sociopolitical environment where they are so often expected to be unseen and unheard. The art produced by United Painting draws inspiration from the multiculturalism of the participants and because of its emphasis on cultural visibility which exists outside of Dutch culture, the artworks are politically charged without obvious or overt political messages. The appropriation of street pavement, a very open and traversed space, also allowed for interactions and encounters between refugees and other social groups such as local residents of Amsterdam. In turn, this rendered them visible within Dutch society, especially taking into account that the projects were produced during the Dutch holidays of King's Day and Freedom Day. The King's Spray and Freedom Day projects of United Painting produced a space for participants to belong through the transgressive practices. Spatializing power in a way that is inclusive and representational of marginalized groups challenges what is produced by the conditions of contentious politics of belonging. United Painting participants practice of social visibility, agency and transgression represented by collective art projects, provides a space of being which disrupts assumed conceptions of geographic belonging and identity.

Prior literature on community based art projects such as Belfiore (2010), Cerdera (2015), Fobear (2010), Mayanruim (2012), O'Neill (2008) direct focus of the values of the community art in regards to the collective rather than the individual. Though this is a valid way to investigate these types of art based projects and collective meaning making, the findings of this research show that the individual benefits were of equal value to the collective benefits of the projects. Individual project benefits were not addressed in the initial research questions of this study, however; this new category of project value arose from the research. Individual project benefits included learning new skills, therapeutic action and social support. The precariousness of refugee status can be softened for participants from development of these individual benefits. For example, painting functioned as a therapeutic action for participants to release negative energy and distract or alleviate themselves from troubling thoughts and uncertainties relating to their experiences and past traumas. The projects were an outlet for participants to keep busy in a way that was purposeful to them and they had a sense of pride over. Learning new skills from painting gave participants a sense of confidence. Some participants went on to become professional artists after being involved in United Painting. Participants also gained social support in the form of having others to share their feelings and emotions with whom they could trust. Future discourse on community based projects should make more space for discussion of individual benefits gained through project participation because these benefits can positively affect the success of such projects.

These findings lead to one final point of discussion which is that the outcomes of the projects are largely influenced by the methods and structure of United Painting Projects. Meaning that the

techniques from staff and the overall structure of the projects has influenced the ways in which belonging, community development, visibility and individual benefits have developed for participants. Firstly, by strategizing that the projects should be a low stakes and low pressure commitment, it has allowed for more participants to join the projects. Recruitment for the projects are structured around drop-ins from residents. This has produced different categories of participants. As stated prior, participants join for a multitude of reasons but also, who joins the projects is also influenced by the atmosphere projected from the project environment and from staff members. The staff members' approachable and supportive attitudes have made participants feel they can trust the organization and in turn, participants recruited other residents to join, expanding the network of participants. The organization has also developed designs and techniques which are accessible to people with little or no prior experience in art, thus making the projects inclusive to any and all who wish to join.

7.2 Reflection, Limitations and Recommendations

With any research project, the limitation of time is something which affects the possible scope and depth of research. Initially, I had developed a much different research design in my proposal. I intended to do a comparative case study on AZC Bijlmerbajes and AZC Willinklaan. In the early stages of data collection this research design had to be rethought because the AZC Willinklaan project was halted after three workshops for lack of funding. I readjusted my research plan and theoretical framework to incorporate the various projects of United Painting, including the public space projects. As I reflect upon the process of collecting data for this research, it must be addressed that the time frame also limited the amount of projects which could be used for data collection. Consequently, this study has a small sample of interviewees, not for lack of trying, but because access to project participants was based on their participation and a relatively lower number of participants partook in the projects which were used in this case study. This is why participant observation was critically important for the research. Conducting participant observation proved to be foundational in understanding the ways in which the projects function and how participants engage with the projects. Relying solely on interviews from participants would have produced potentially biased results because in addition to potential distrust or reservations towards my research, participants may have felt they should only speak positively about the projects for fear of reactions from United Painting if they had spoken negatively about the projects. It is not believed that United Painting would reprimand any participants for their opinions on the projects, they appeared to honor the honest opinions of participants from what I witnessed. However, the potential that participants may have worried about such actions had to be taken into account. Reflecting upon on my positionality as a female researcher, the process of participating in the projects, interacting with participants and collecting data proved to be challenging at times in an environment filled solely of men. I was welcomed and received positively by both staff and participants however; I was very aware of how I stood out amongst the rest. I pushed myself out of my comfort zone to be assertive and express my needs in regards to the research, another challenge to working with an organization which has relaxed and casual standards of communication and organization. Overall, this research proved

the societal relevance of the topic, justifying reasons for further research to be conducted which might be able to make a more in depth and comprehensive look at the value of collective art projects for refugees. Gender and age dynamics/imbances may be interesting points of investigation in order to gain deeper understandings into how and why these types of projects attract certain categories of participants. It would also be interesting to investigate further on how the public space projects may play a role in urban regeneration efforts and what that means for the integrity of these types of projects. Lastly, future research should ensure that integral work is given about this group when taking into account the huge amount of trust it takes for people share their experiences and narratives of being refugees.



Figure 14: United Painting on King's Day

Bibliography

- Adichie, C. (2009). *The danger of the single story*. Retrieved from TED Talks:
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en
- Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for Belonging-An Analytical Framework. *Geography Compass*, 644-659.
- Asylum Information Database, A. (2018). *Country Report: Netherlands*.
- Bodnar, J. (2015). Reclaiming Public Space. *Urban Studies*, 2090-2104.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, E. (2012). TRANSGRESSION, AFFECT AND PERFORMANCE: choreographic a politics of urban space. *British journal of criminology*, 18-40.
- Cerdera, P. (2015). Healing and Belonging: Community Based Art and Community Formation in West Oakland.
- Cresswell, T. (2004). *Place, a short introduction*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Daniels, P. (2016). Political Geographies: Geopolitics, territory, states, citizenship and governance. In *Introductio to Human Geography* (pp. 422-437).
- Doss, E. (1992). Raising Community Consciousness with Public art. *American Art*, 6(1), 62-81.
- Fobear, K. (2017). "This painting is nice, but I wish it were more political." Exploring the challenges and dilemmas of community art with LGBT refugees. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 52-60.
- Gieryn, T. (2000). A Space for Place in Sociology. *Annual Review Sociology*, 463-496.
- Gilmartin, M. (2008). Migration, Identity and Belonging. *Geography Compass*, 2(8), 1837-1852.
- Hooks, B. (2009). *Belonging: A culture of Place*. Routledge.
- Koettig, M. (2009). Constructions of Collective Belonging through Art by Migrants from Cuba in Germany and South Florida. *Forum: Qualitative Social Science, Volume 10, No.3*.
- Madyaningrum, M. E., & Sonn, C. (2011). Exploring the meaning of participation in a community art project: A case study on the Seeming Project. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 358-370.
- McNally, D. (2019). 'I am the tower of hamlets!': Enchanted encounters and the limit to art's connectivity. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 20:2, 198-221.

- O'Neill, M. (2008). Transnational Refugees; The transformative role of art? *Forum: Qualitative social research*.
- Rotas, A. (2006). Is 'Refugee Art' Possible? *Third Text*, 18:1, 51-60.
- Sacco, L. P., Ghirardi, S., Tartari, M., & Trimarchi, M. (2019). Two Versions of heterotopia; The role of art practices in participative urban renewal processes. *Cities* 89, 199-208.
- Serrano, K. X. (2017). Dreaming a Radical Citizenship: How Undocumented Queers in the United States Configure Sites of Belonging and Being through Art and Media Technologies. *European Journal of American Studies*, 11-3.
- Sharp, J., Pollock, V., & Paddison, R. (2005). Just Art for a Just City: Public Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Regeneration. *Urban Studies*, 1001-1023.
- Speigel, J., & Parent, S. (2017). Re-Approaching Community Development through the Arts. *Community Development Journal*, 53(4), 600-617.
- Stokowski, P. A. (2002). Languages of Place and Discourses of Power: Constructing new senses of Place. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 368-382.
- Szöke, T. (2014). Investigating the geographies of community based public art and gentrification in downtown eastside, Vancouver.
- UNHCR. (2018). *Europe Situation*. Retrieved from UN Refugee Agency: <https://www.unhcr.org/europe-emergency.html>
- Vademark, M. L. (2007). Promoting a sense of self, place and belonging in displaced persons. *Science Direct*, 241-247.
- Witteborn, S. (2011). Constructing the Forced Migrant and the Politics of Space and Place-making. *Journal of Communication*, 1142-1160.
- Wood, N., & Waite, L. (2011). Scales of Belonging. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 4(4).
- Yin, R. (2009). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. *Applied Social Research Methods*.
- Youkhanna, E. (2014). Creative Acitivism and Arts Against Urban Renaissance and Social Exclusion- Space Sensitive Approaches to the study of Collective Action and Belonging. *Sociology Compass*, 8(2), 172-186.
- Youkhanna, E. (2015). A Conceptual Shift in Studies of Belonging and the Politics of Belonging. *Social Inclusion*, 3 (4), 10-24.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 197-214.

Appendices

Interview Item List: Refugee Participants

Themes	Potential Interview Questions
<p>Introduction conversation, focusing on art to ease discussion</p> <p>Focusing on most recent project with participant</p> <p><i>Sense of pride</i> <i>Empowerment</i> <i>Identity</i></p>	<p>What was the first project you did with United Painting?</p> <p>How do you feel about the project when you think of it now?</p> <p>How many projects have you been a part of?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your experience in the projects?</p> <p>What made you want to participate in the projects?</p> <p>Do you feel like your experiences have changed over time?</p> <p>What are the differences and similarities between the smaller projects and the bigger ones?</p> <p>How do you think the painting went?</p> <p>What do you think about the colors and design of the project?</p> <p>Did you enjoy painting?</p> <p>What do you like about painting?</p> <p>What made you want to participate in the project?</p> <p>Have you participated in projects like this before?</p> <p>What did you think about the project? (Positives/ Negatives)</p> <p>How do you feel about your contribution to the project?</p> <p>What do you think other residents feel about the project?</p> <p>Why do you think some people wanted to participate and why do you think some people did not?</p> <p>Would you participate in future projects with United Painting?</p>

<p>Interviewee background information (personal biographies)</p>	<p>Where are you from?</p> <p>How long have you lived in the Netherlands?</p> <p>How long have you lived in the AZC center?</p> <p>What is your status in the Netherlands?</p> <p>How old are you?</p> <p>Did you move here with others or by yourself?</p> <p>Do you speak Dutch?</p> <p>What kind of activities do you enjoy outside of painting?</p>
<p><i>Belonging:</i> Emotional Attachment</p>	<p>How do you feel about living in Amsterdam/the Netherlands? What do you like? What do you not like?</p> <p>How has your experience been with Dutch people?</p> <p>Where do you see yourself living after AZC? What kind of place?</p> <p>Do you think that it is possible to achieve in the Netherlands?</p> <p>Do you think the Netherlands will feel like home to you eventually?</p> <p>Why or why not?</p>

Belonging:
Place Attachment

How has your experience been living in the AZC center?

What do you like and dislike about living in the AZC center?

How has this changed over time?

What do you think the painting adds to the center?

Do you spend time in the spaces that have been painted?

Why or why not?

Has your use of the space changed since you participate in the project?

Community
Development

What kind of people live in the AZC center?

Who do you consider your friends here?

How did you become friends?

Do people in the AZC center interact with one another?

If yes, can you provide an example?

Are people friendly to one another?

In what ways?

Has this changed since the art projects began?

If so, how has it changed?

Have you met anyone new while working on the project?

If yes, have you interacted with each other outside of the project?

Do you think connecting with others in the AZC center is important?

Why or why not?

<p>Visibility</p>	<p>Do you want others (non-refugees) to see these art projects when they are finished?</p> <p>Why or why not?</p> <p>Do you think that the participants should be able to design the art that is painted?</p> <p>Why or why not?</p>
<p>King's Day & Freedom Day (focusing on public space)</p>	<p>What did you think about the project? (Positives/ Negatives)</p> <p>How do you feel about your contribution to the project?</p> <p>How do you think the painting went?</p> <p>What do you think about the colors and design of the project?</p> <p>Did you enjoy painting?</p> <p>What do you like about painting?</p> <p>How did it feel to have others watching you paint?</p> <p>In all the projects: Why do you think some people wanted to participate and why do you think some people did not?</p>

Interview Item List: United Painting Staff

Themes	Potential Interview Questions
Interviewee background information	<p>How long have you worked for United Painting?</p> <p>What made you want to become involved in this project?</p> <p>What is your role in this project?</p> <p>Did you have experience in collective art projects prior to working for United Painting?</p>
Project Background (AZC)	<p>How was AZC Willinklaan decided on as the place for a new project?</p> <p>Can you tell me about the process of organizing these kinds of projects?</p> <p>Are there other organizations or actors involved?</p> <p>Are there differences between the organization of the AZC Bijlmerbajes project versus the AZC Willinklaan project?</p> <p>Can you give me examples?</p> <p>Are there any differences between the two projects that you think are especially important?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How do you get people to engage with the project?</p> <p>What kind of people participate and what kind of people don't?</p> <p>Why do you think that is?</p>

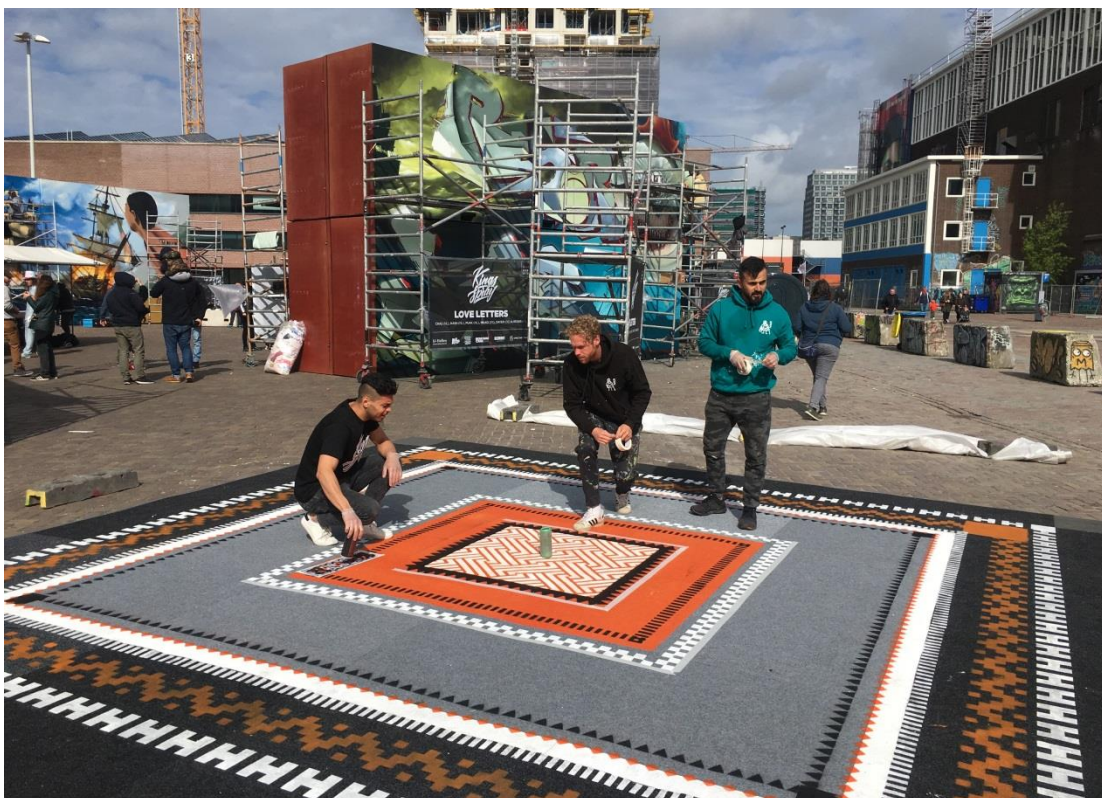
<p><i>Belonging:</i> Emotional Attachment</p> <p><i>Sense of pride</i> <i>Empowerment</i> <i>Identity</i></p>	<p>What do you think these projects mean for participants?</p> <p>Why do you think this is?</p> <p>Can you give examples?</p> <p>What kinds of responses have you gotten from participants?</p> <p>(Further probing based on response, why do you think the participants responded in these ways?)</p> <p>What do you think these projects do for people?</p> <p>Why do you think that is?</p>
<p><i>Belonging:</i> Place Attachment</p>	<p>Do you think people's use of these spaces change after they have been painted?</p> <p>Why do you think this is?</p> <p>Have you observed any examples of this change?</p> <p>Do you think people who participate in the projects feel more attached to the spaces afterwards?</p> <p>Why or why not?</p> <p>Do you have any examples you have witnessed?</p>

<p>Community Development</p> <p><i>Solidary Identity Trust</i></p>	<p>Do you think the United Painting projects have helped people connect and build community at the Bijlmerbajes and AZC center?</p> <p>In what ways?</p> <p>Has the way these projects supported community building differed between the two projects?</p> <p>How?</p> <p>What type of connections do people seem to develop to each Other? Examples you've observed?</p> <p>Do people seem to open up with each other more over time?</p>
<p>Visibility</p>	<p>Do you think the participants feel empowered by these projects?</p> <p>Do you think participants are able to express themselves in these projects?</p> <p>Why or why not?</p> <p>What have been the responses from people outside of the projects who have seen the art?</p> <p>What are your thoughts on this?</p>
<p>Opinions on project</p>	<p>The art for these projects is designed by United Painting, what do you think are the positives and negatives of this?</p> <p>Which projects executed by United Painting received the most positive responses from participants?</p> <p>Why do you think this was the case?</p>
<p>Lessons</p>	<p>Would you consider the projects to be successful?</p> <p>Why or why not?</p>

Extra Fieldwork Images



An “inspiration board” of sorts displayed at the start of the AZC Willinklaan Project which included design plans for the AZC Willinklaan project, pattern inspirations and images of artwork from past projects.



King's Spray project underway



King's Spray participant teaching a child how to lay the stencil for the artwork



Participants laying down stencils for the Freedom Day project



Participant learning how to use a stencil at the AZC Willinklaan Project



Participants painting their blueprint artwork at Spark Village Project