

'Doing' integration: Occupational perspective on discursive power of citizen initiative's with refugees

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PODIUM PRESENTATIONS

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‘Doing’ integration: Occupational perspective on discursive power of citizen initiative’s with refugees

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The Netherlands; The Netherlands; Canada; The Netherlands

Citizens have responded to newcomers in the Netherlands with acts of solidarity and programmes to support integration, often in response to increasingly restrictive government policies. In a previously published study by the primary author, a critical discourse analysis was conducted of texts used in mandatory government integration programmes. Findings showed that texts discursively construct the “modern Us” the “unmodern Other” and a hierarchical relationship between the two, recreating in practice racialized categories reminiscent of colonial times. Considering the role citizen initiatives play in integration, it is important to also understand their discourse on integration. A critical discourse analysis using Bacchi’s *What’s the Problem Represented to Be?* approach was conducted on texts used in citizen initiatives for integration in the Netherlands. Additionally, as part of a larger institutional ethnography, ethnographic data was gathered on their day-to-day work. These data were analyzed through a theoretical lens inspired by occupational science, governmentality and post/decolonial studies. Initial findings show dominant discourses found in formal integration programmes being actively reproduced in citizen initiatives. Additionally, findings display concepts of ‘successful’ integration, the “Us”, and the “Other” being discursively shaped by promoting ‘modern’ occupations as part of ‘successful’ everyday life. Occupational science is a field with particular interest in social transformation projects, projects often based in the informal sector. Understanding how dominant discourses are reproduced in informal programmes provides important perspectives on their impact on everyday life, demonstrating the importance of remaining critical of discourses in projects operating in the peripheries.

References

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