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## 'Let us Live as Hindus': Narrating Hindu Identity Through Temple Building Processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost (1988-2015)

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# INTRODUCTION

Provoking the tears of grandmothers, enraging board members and devastating Hindu priests and community members, in April 2010 the local district government in Amsterdam Zuidoost declared that the temporary space used by the Devi Dhaam Hindu temple (DD) was to be evacuated.

After years of struggling to first establish a purpose-built temple in the neighbourhood, the DD Hindu temple and the local government reached an agreement where the community could lease a temporary space from 1997-99 at a minimal price. However, after staying in the space well into 2009, the DD community was forced by the local government to evacuate the space in April 2010. Various Hindu groupings in Amsterdam Zuidoost were suddenly left without a temple: There was no place for them to worship in a neighbourhood of multi-denominational churches, spaces for Afro-Surinamese religion, and the beautifully constructed Taibah Mosque.

Since 2010, four temple spaces in Amsterdam Zuidoost have been established—some in direct relation to the events of 2010, and others that saw the opportunity in the years leading up to the evacuation to break away and form new temple communities. These spaces remain hidden away in sterile industrial warehouses, nestled into rural roads and packed into neat parking garage compartments. The struggle to establish a publicly recognisable purpose-built temple still goes on for some in the community who feel that as citizens and Hindus, their bid for a public place of worship has been constantly denied or obscured by various actors, including members of their own community.

This dissertation explores temple-building processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost from the late 1980s until 2015 and asks the central question: How has Hindu identity become articulated through the absence of a purpose-built temple in the neighbourhood? Rather than take established Hindu temples to be symbols of Hindu identity overseas (Bhardwaj and Rao 1998) involved in the complex ritual processes of ‘sacralising’ land outside of India (Dempsey 2006, Narayanan 1992, Malory 1995, Knott 2009, Nesbitt 2006, Williams 1992), I focus on the turbulent period before grand, lavish temples are established. Instead of viewing this period as necessarily followed by the establishment of a temple and the realisation of the ‘Hindu experience’ outside of India, I treat this period as a productive, albeit liminal temporal and spatial condition wherein new ways of identifying as ‘Hindu’ ultimately arise, whether or not temples are actually built.

I move to answer my central question by forwarding three interrelated subquestions. Firstly, how has the process of temple building in Amsterdam Zuidoost become a symbol of Hindu victimisation? In turn, I ask how Hindu victimisation undermines the idea that Hindus are considered a well-integrated model minority. Unlike studies of overseas South Asian

communities that perpetuate the well-rehearsed narrative that first generations struggle to achieve socio-economic success and model minority status so that subsequent generations may involve themselves in issues of representation and identity (Gowricharn 2009, Choenni 2011, Werbner 2002, Safran 1991, Kurien 2007), this dissertation explores intergenerational narratives of Hindu victimisation in relation to temple building processes. What is more, it contextualises the notion of Hindu victimisation as a global and local phenomenon, symbolised not only by the migration trajectories of Hindus into Suriname and then the Netherlands, but also globally circulating Hindu nationalist rhetoric.

By taking the turbulent period before temples are established as a starting point, this dissertation seeks to focus upon specific narratives that community actors construct that connect temple building processes to the construction of Hindu identity. Therefore, my second sub-question asks how various Hindu actors have narrated temple building processes in the locality as a sign of in-group solidarity. This includes asking what critical events since 1988 have become particularly significant in community actors' narratives of temple building as an act of uniting as a group. On the other hand, I also question what critical events in the history of temple building in Amsterdam Zuidoost symbolise deeply rooted divisions among various Hindu actors.

This dissertation also explores the moments of self-reflection that community actors mobilise to reassess their intervention into temple building processes. This includes the ways in which various community actors use their experiences of hurt, victimisation and trauma to shift what it means to be a Hindu in Amsterdam Zuidoost. My third sub-question asks how these ideals mark not only a shift in what it means to be Hindu, but also what it means to be a citizen living in Amsterdam Zuidoost. It attempts to answer this question by interrogating the newly emerging values, ideals and norms that are a direct consequence of temple building processes in the neighbourhood.

Three theoretical frames guide this dissertation as it seeks to answer the questions posed above: Public Hinduism in the Netherlands, templeisation, and the culturalisation of citizenship in the Netherlands.

### **Public Hinduism in the Netherlands**

Public visibility has become a defining feature of Hindu communities overseas, proven time and again by the effectiveness of organised group concerns (Vertovec 2000,10). Research on public Hinduisms has focused most sharply on South Asia (Jaffrelot 2007, 1996, Assayag 1998, Freitag 1989, 1990, Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995), the UK (Zavos 2008, 2009, 2012, Warrier 2009, 2012, Anderson 2015) and the US (Prashad 2000, 2012, Kurien 2007, 2012, Williams 1992, 2012, Narayanan 2006). In 2012, the edited volume *Public Hinduisms* set out to interrogate the relationship between Hinduism and public space (Zavos 2012a, 4). In doing so, the authors

questioned how ‘the creative tensions and power plays inform the presentation of symbols, performances, buildings [and] communities as Hindu’ (*ibid*).

Connected to this question is the process of what Williams (1992) identifies as community-initiated ‘strategies of adaptation’ (228) that allow for Hindu individuals and communities overseas to determine how ‘religions are reappropriated’ (230) and presented in the diaspora. He outlines five ideal types of adaptive strategies that have taken hold in the United States: First, the individual—wherein individual immigrants focused on private acts of worship as a means of preserving their religious identity (231). Second, he identifies the national, wherein nationally based organisations accommodate regional differences under the umbrella of national unity (235). Third, he discusses ethnic adaptation, such as among the Gujarati Swaminarayan Hindus who focus on elements of Gujarati religiosity and culture as a binding identity (240). Fourth, he identifies the hierarchical strategy, wherein a spiritual or religious leader provides a basis for unity among members despite ethnic identification (241) and fifth, the ecumenical strategy, which transcends regional, ethnic or national identity. The ecumenical strategy of adaptation involves defining oneself foremost as a member of a religious community, while also creating meaningful connections to others who claim this identity (235). It is the ecumenical strategy of producing a Hindu community through temple building efforts on which this dissertation focuses, examining not how it has functioned, but how it has continually failed to materialise as an initiative of Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost.

One important aspect of a public ecumenical strategy among Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost is the articulation of identity through ‘Hindu campaigning’ (Zavos 2008, 325) to mobilise strategically as a united group against defamation and indecency (Anderson 2015, Sippy 2012, Reddy 2012, Warriar 2010, Zavos 2008). Much attention has been paid to the ways in which Hindu communities in the US and the UK have increased their visibility in public by waging campaigns in order to police the ways in which Hinduism is performed (Bouillier 2012, Okita 2012, Brosius 2010, 2012) visualised (Khanduri 2012, Zavos 2008, Anderson 2015) and historicised (Thapar 1992, 1996, Reddy 2012, Visweswaran et al. 2009). This dissertation mobilises the idea of the ‘Hindu campaign’ to frame the ongoing articulations of temple building processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost. This points out the ways in which the establishment of a Hindu temple is not only a matter of finding ‘a place for our gods’ (Nye 1995) but is also intimately tied to the hurt and outrage that various community actors and stakeholders have expressed without a visible temple space in the neighbourhood.

This ties itself to another crucial aspect of public Hinduism--its relationship to political Hinduism (Lal 2009), or *Hindutva*, which is uniquely configured in the diaspora. In the Netherlands, Oostindie (2011) has pointed out that politicised Hinduism is ‘not an issue’ (221) in

the same way that it may be in the UK. This, however, needs to be reassessed<sup>1</sup> in light of scholarship on Hindu campaigning and Neo-Hindutva (Anderson 2015). This dissertation assesses the ways in which the political conflict that arose over templeisation processes in the neighbourhood function within the parameters of ‘neo-Hindutva’ rhetoric. What is more, Part I will examine the ways in which Hindutva and neo-Hindutva articulations, visualisations and performances have become commonplace in makeshift temple spaces in Amsterdam, refocusing the way that politicised Hinduism should be understood in the Netherlands today.

Hindutva (translated most often as ‘Hinduness’) was first coined by V.D. Sarvarkar in the 1920s, when he was still a prisoner of the British in Maharashtra, and he wrote *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Jaffrelot 2007, 14). Sarvarkar did not take Hindutva as synonymous with Hinduism. Hindutva was instead based on culture and Western ideas of nationhood: The people of Aryavarta are the so-called Vedic fathers, and Hindus are their direct descendents. Sanskrit and Hindi represent a crucial linguistic dimension that led to Sarvarkar’s relationship between ‘Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan’ (Jaffrelot 2007, 15). Hindutva therefore epitomises Indian identity, and followers of ‘unIndian’ religions such as Islam and Christianity are permitted to worship in private but must uphold Hindutva culture because it is the original culture of India. These religions are not only foreign, but they threaten Hinduism through their history of conversions (Basu et al. 1993, 2) and missionary work in India (Kanungo 2002, Kanungo and Joshi 2009, 283). Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains are not included in this category, as they are considered to be followers of sects linked to Hinduism (Jaffrelot 2007, 15).

Hindutva discourse is represented in cultural and political organisations in India and its diaspora. It has its institutional stronghold in the largest Hindu organisation in the world, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or RSS<sup>2</sup>[translated as the National Volunteer Community or

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<sup>1</sup> Take, for example, the recent campaign ‘Holi is Not a Houseparty’ [*Holi is Geen Houseparty*] initiated by Hindu actors around the Netherlands to protest the cultural appropriation of the spring festival of colours, associated with the mythology of the god Krishna. The protest was launched against the idea of dancing to popular dance music, consuming alcohol, and the summer date of the festival, which was thought obfuscate the religious aspects of the festival. The campaign led to the withdrawal of the Holi Festival of Colours in the Netherlands, and community actors plan to protest until all European dates are cancelled.

<sup>2</sup> My respondents most often approached Hindutva through the lens of the RSS, so I will not recapitulate the histories of the countless other Hindutva organisations here, such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP, translated as ‘World Hindu Council’], even though it has a presence in the British diaspora as well as in the Netherlands (although the majority of activity is now overseen by RSS organisations in the Netherlands). As Bhatt also notes, in Britain activities are often jointly run between RSS and VHP (Bhatt 2000, 559). However, as Sippy (2012, 27) cautions, it is dangerous to see all umbrella organisations as simply part of the RSS or expounders of Hindutva: especially in the diaspora, different contexts, political struggles and lifestyles can reconfigure messages and ideas steeped in Hindutva discourse and make them relevant, as is the case with rights-based assertions of public identity.

Corps], founded by K.B. Hedgewar in 1925, which serves as the foundational organisation for a variety of other Hindutva organisations that operate in South Asia and various diasporas (Bhatt 2000, 560, Jaffrelot 2007, Dhokela 2000, Rajagopal 2000). The RSS calls itself a cultural organisation that is divorced from politics, but as Basu et al. (1993) argue, the idea of culture that is propagated by RSS groups is distinctly political as it involves ‘an authoritarian *rashtra* where Hindus, under RSS direction, will lay down the rules by which the minorities must abide’ (13).

Currently, the political wing of Hindutva discourse in India is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is in power currently under Narendra Modi. Although the RSS was successful as a grassroots movement from the 1920s-1940s, the organisation had little representation in the public sphere in India, as it was officially apolitical (Jaffrelot 2007, 16). In 1948 however, RSS member Nathuram Godse assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, and Prime Minister Nehru banned the organisation. Finding it difficult to garner support to reinstate the organisation, leaders of the RSS conceded that they must involve themselves more directly in politics, and established the Bharitya Jana Sangh in 1951 (Jaffrelot 2007, 17).

However, this dissertation concerns itself more with the ways in which Hindutva rhetoric and its associated organisations have shaped what it means to be Hindu in the Netherlands. In 2000, the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies* released a special issue on Hindutva in the diaspora in order to draw attention to the often-ignored category of ‘emigré-nationalism’ and its role in the building of diaspora communities (Bhatt and Mukta 2000, 407-408).

A significant observation about diaspora Hindutva is the changing configuration of political practice in the Hindu diaspora, particularly in the United States (Rajagopal 2000). The rhetoric of cultural superiority becomes more important than political action, particularly subsuming the violent anti-Muslim and anti-Christian mobilisations that groups such as the RSS have instigated in the past in India (Rajagopal 2000, Bhatt and Mukta 2000). This cultural superiority frames much of how Hindus across ethnicised and classed backgrounds discuss Hinduism.

Rajagopal argues that ‘Hindu nationalist organisations for the most part subdue their political rhetoric, and concentrate on issues of cultural reproduction, presenting themselves as well-meaning guardians of Hindu values’ (468). He traces this to the emplacement within a multicultural yet racially polarised society where South Asian Hindus are seen as an affluent, well-educated minority (Rajagopal *ibid.*). However, what is significantly different in this dissertation is that my respondents are overwhelmingly lower middle class and working class

people<sup>3</sup>: especially first generation migrants have a relatively low level of education. A minority of recent migrants from India who have come to work in the IT and professional sectors on temporary contracts are well educated and affluent. This research examines how the global circulation of the narrative of successful, wealthy Hindus perpetuates a ‘global Hindu pride’ (Mukta 2000, 442) that is framed in the glorious and ancient Indian/Hindu civilisation on the one hand, but also focuses on ways in which its connection to a model minority status is increasingly problematic for my respondents.

This dissertation also works within a framework of what Anderson (2015) calls ‘Neo-Hindutva’, which emplaces itself within the narratives of multiculturalism and minority rights. In this way, discourses of Hindutva have become those of mainstream and public Hinduisms (Anderson 2015, 45-6) due mostly to the various Hindu public campaigns waged in various diaspora localities (see chapter 2, also Zavos 2008, Warriar 2009, Anderson 2015, Reddy 2012).

Anderson differentiates between ‘soft’ Neo-Hindutva and ‘hard-Neo-Hindutva’ (2015, 47): The former refers to movements, groups and campaigns that seek to downplay, obscure or even deny the relationship between Hindutva and Sangh Parivar organisations, whereas the latter is more overt about their differences with the Sangh and their Hindu nationalist agenda. In this dissertation, the emergence of ‘soft’ Neo-Hindutva narratives of justice for Hindus, multicultural competition and the glory of Hinduism will be further contextualised in chapter 4.

While public Hinduism will be useful in framing the ways in which Hindu identity is articulated, it is also embedded in the processes of ‘templeisation’. Temple building is not only a public, visible symbol of Hindu-ness outside of India, it is a project that produces locality (Appadurai 1996). In this dissertation, temple building is discussed as a matter of intervening into Dutch society as a strategic group of citizens, rather than a way to strengthen transnational ties to India as a religious homeland.

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<sup>3</sup> When discussing class, I follow Bourdieu (1987) in viewing class as relational, embedded in which is the idea of capitals. I refer to middle class identity as reflective of upwardly mobile, educated and white collar professionals who possess certain amounts of cultural and social capital. In contrast, working class here refers to those community actors who possess less social and cultural capital and education than middle class community actors. However, throughout this dissertation, I nuance ideas about middle class identity in the vein of Hawley’s (2000) discussion of the Indian middle classes and temple based religious practices and the ways in which my respondents use it. Middle-classness, as Hawley (2000) and Dickey (2013) note, is preoccupied with social mobility as well as recognition. To be middle class is to ultimately be recognized as someone who possesses certain morals and dignities. At the same time, there is constant struggle, even anxiety to move forward and better one’s social position. This middle-classness is also, as Dickey notes, intimately tied with style and self-presentation (219). My respondents, as I will detail throughout this dissertation, contest middle-classness as a mark of well-educated, professional, moneyed people and focus on the ways in which moral capital and practices of self-discipline equally serve to bestow status upon someone.



## Templeisation<sup>4</sup>

Since 2000, temple building in the Netherlands has been on the rise, although compared to mosques, temples remain largely invisible (Gowricharn 2009). There are some exceptions, such as Amsterdam's first purpose-built temple in Osdorp, the Radha Krishna temple, built in 2000, the Shree Raam temple in Wijchen (Gelderland province)—the largest purpose built temple in the country— built in 2009, the Sewa Dhaam temple in The Hague, built in 2006, and the Srivartharajah Selvayinayanagar temple in den Helder, which is the first South Indian style temple to be established in the Netherlands in 2011.

Following Baumann (2009), this dissertation explores the importance of temple building as a process wherein '... The temple develops to become the main site for biographical rituals (*samskaras*), for being introduced to the Hindu tradition, for celebrating festivals, and for reinforcing behaviours and practices that are associated with Hinduism such as vegetarianism, prayer and meditation...' (Baumann 2009,154). The ongoing process of templeisation is a negotiation between public ritual displays: it is a process of legitimisation and religious placemaking that comes about through the institutionalisation of Hindu spaces in public (Nesbitt 1990, Malory 1995, Eck 2001, Waghorne 2004, Knott 2009, Narayanan 2006, Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2009).

However, my research will take issue with Baumann's second feature of templeisation, as he views the shift towards temple-based worship as a shift in authority from women to priests (2009, 137). It will become clear that temple building processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost, based on their political intervention into the neighbourhood, value community involvement in temple rituals and organisations across genders, class backgrounds and ancestries. They deflect attention away from the priesthood and onto active members of the community who possess certain skills and morals that are increasingly valued by community actors.

Bhardwaj and Rao (1998) argue that the Hindu temple in the diaspora functions as a site of 'ethnic regrouping' and is a symbol of cultural identity that cuts across class, caste, and regional identity. Their research also explores how American Hindu temple spaces are sites that facilitate ecumenical strategies that they identify as 'Hindu regrouping processes' that bring together Hindus from various backgrounds. This is particularly evident in the way that North Indian and South Indian communities have come together stylistically to build temples that would not be found in India (139). Similarly, rather than assume cohesive groups are always present at the initiation of temple-building projects, Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2009) have discussed temple building as an instance of 'religious placemaking' wherein the processes of planning and organisation as well as design and groundbreaking initiation rituals lead to successful instances of

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<sup>4</sup> Baumann (2009) attributes this term to a public lecture given by Vasudha Narayanan (2008).

groupmaking (307). In particular, they highlight how religious placemaking is an interconnected process between secular designers and architects, ritual specialists and lay community members (318-9).

While the existing literature on templeisation and placemaking provides a fruitful place to begin my research, this dissertation looks at how the lack of a temple space, rather than processes of building or the happenings inside an already existing purpose-built temple may be a more productive way to examine how ecumenical adaptive strategies are complex negotiations that are contested and rejected at various stages.

Rather than simply make place, I argue that Hindus strategically come together as a group as they struggle to produce and lay claim to a Hindu locality (Appadurai 1996, chapter 1). This dissertation focuses on the conflicts that arise while attempting to lay claim to belonging in Amsterdam Zuidoost, rather than to instances of successful ethnic regrouping. Following de Koning (2011), I aim to use social spaces in order to narrate and explore the making of Hindu identity in Amsterdam Zuidoost, focusing on the struggles that establishing a temple in a particular neighbourhood brings about. These struggles relate not only to temple building processes, so I use as points of comparison churches and mosques in the neighbourhood rather than Hindu temples in different Dutch localities.

Scholarship on templeisation has often focused on the specific stages that a community goes through before eventually developing their own temple space (Nesbitt 2006, Clothey 2007, Nye 1995). In relation to the UK, Nesbitt sees the development of Hindu temples as following (with some delay) the migration patterns of Hindus into the UK. Beginning especially after 1965, the majority Gujarati and Punjabi Hindus began to develop organisations that met informally in people's homes. Temples such as the Shree Krishna space in Coventry is proudly said to have developed from a group of Gujaratis who met in each other's homes to worship (2006, 200). Before purpose built temples were established, however, Hindus in the UK often worked to convert community centres and old churches into appropriate temple spaces. Currently, purpose-built temple projects are increasingly interested in principles of Indian architecture: two of the most prominent examples are the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Swaminarayan temple in Neasden, London (established 1995) and the Shri Venkateswara Balaji Temple in the West Midlands built in Tamil style (Nesbitt 2006, 200). The new preoccupation with Indian style architecture means that building materials and artisans from India are brought to the UK. Funds are usually raised entirely within the community from affluent devotees who view architecturally distinct temple building processes as essential to their visibility and legitimacy among Sikh and Muslim spaces of worship (*ibid*).

In comparison to the US and the UK, templeisation processes in the Netherlands have been virtually overlooked. A recent, rich contribution to the field is a series of studies of the Shree Raam temple in Wijchen (Nugteren 2009, 2014). On the one hand, the establishment of purpose-built temples in the Netherlands began in earnest only in 2000 (see chapter 1), which partly accounts for this gap in scholarship. However, this dissertation asserts that the actual establishment of purpose-built temples need not necessarily be the starting point for studies of templeisation processes, it attempts to approach a previously understudied area of research into Hindu practice and identity in the Netherlands.

As mentioned earlier, this dissertation explores temple building as a process where Hindus come together strategically as citizens to lay claim to the locality in which they live<sup>5</sup>. However, what it means to be a ‘citizen’ has shifted dramatically due to processes of temple building in Amsterdam Zuidoost. Therefore, my third theoretical frame explores current discourses of everyday citizenship in the Netherlands.

### **Culturalisation of Citizenship in the Netherlands**

For the past twenty years, scholars have noted a shift in public discussions of citizenship in the Netherlands from a Marshallian (1963) view of republican citizenship as membership towards what has been variously described as ‘active’ citizenship (Kennedy 2008), the ‘culturalisation’ of citizenship (Hurenkamp, Tonkens and Duyvendak 2011), the ‘moralisation’ of citizenship (Schinkel 2008, van Hout, Suvarierol and Schinkel 2011, Tonkens 2006, van Reekum 2012) and/or ‘affective’ citizenship (de Tocqueville 1990, Etzioni 1993, Kampen, Verhoeven and Verplanke 2013, Tonkens 2006, de Wilde 2015). These forms of citizenship view integration<sup>6</sup> and citizenship as a case of accepting and sharing various moral and cultural values rather than legal and state-based ideas of membership or socio-economic integration into a nation-state (Hurenkamp, Duyvendak, Tonkens 2010, 237).

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<sup>5</sup> As will become clear later, there are some respondents who live outside of the neighbourhood, but were raised in Amsterdam Zuidoost. Although they do not live in the locality, they remain committed to establishing a temple there.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use the term ‘integration’ in the vein of Lucassen (2005). He defines integration as various processes of socialisation that can be observed in schools, places of work, neighbourhoods, and other diverse public and private arenas (18). He puts forth two understandings of integration that can be observed: structural integration, which includes social mobility, school results or housing patterns, as well as identificational integration, the subjective ways in which individuals view themselves as different than or similar to mainstream society (19). This research focuses on the latter process of integration, particularly the ways that Hindus have shifted their subjective understanding of how their Hindu identity relates to their place in mainstream Dutch society.

As Rogier van Reekum (2012) argues, more culturally based notions of citizenship cite abstract (and often vague) values, morals and norms of citizenship that have increasingly put the onus on citizens to cultivate and participate in civic and cultural life in the Netherlands (594). At the same time, Hurenkamp et al. (2012), de Wilde (2015) and van Reekum (2012) have drawn attention to the ways that grassroots or ‘emic’ discussions of citizenship also include an appeal to abstract qualities of ‘goodness’, ‘honesty’ and ‘loyalty’ to describe the qualities of an ideal Dutch citizen. What is more, the idea of ‘community’ or ‘local’ involvement has also become a significant narrative register of ideal citizenship where feeling ‘at home’ in a Dutch neighbourhood is fostered through policies that celebrate the value of belonging as an abstract moral and social category (de Wilde 2015). This dissertation is particularly concerned with the ways that Hindu actors in Amsterdam Zuidoost make use of these emic constructions of culturalised citizenship when they discuss ideal Hindu behaviour amongst themselves in temple spaces after 2010.

The culturalisation of citizenship has opened up creative ways in which morality and values are negotiated (Tonkens 2006) between the broad discourses of culturalisation in the Netherlands, and with the lived and intersectional experiences of a citizen’s life. Although this type of moral negotiation has been documented across various migrant groups in the Netherlands including various sections of the Muslim community (Kleijberg 2006, Uitermark and Ham 2006) and Antillean communities (van San 2006), there is a lack of attention paid to the ways in which various Hindu groupings in the Netherlands equally engage in such processes of negotiation between their civic and religio-cultural identities.

I argue that this has to do with the way that ‘Hindus’ have been treated as a monolithic community who have historically been labeled as a well-integrated, socio-economically successful ‘model minority’. However, as Duyvendak, Hurenkamp and Tonkens (2010) observe, contemporary discourses of culturised citizenship in the Netherlands now place more value on those groups who share values and norms in addition to, or in place of, those who perform well socio-economically (237).

Scholarship on the culturalisation of citizenship has most often focused on the ways in which discourses of loyalty, shared values and belonging are set up in opposition to Islam (Duyvendak, Hurenkamp and Tonkens 2010, Schinkel 2008, Hurenkamp, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2012, Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2010, van der Veer 2006). These studies imply that the culturalisation of citizenship is a form of ‘secularisation’ of citizenship, wherein the pluralism permitted under former discussions of citizenship and belonging shift to reveal more assimilationist views of how to correctly participate and appreciate ‘secular, tolerant’ Dutch society (van der Veer 2006, Duyvendak, Hurenkamp and Tonkens 2010).

This dissertation contests the idea that culturalised notions of citizenship need to be expressed in secular terms by focusing on how Hindu groupings, particularly temple communities in Amsterdam Zuidoost, increasingly articulate these values as part of the similarities that Dutch society shares with Hindu practices. This original contribution to the literature on culturalised citizenship in the Netherlands therefore opens up new avenues to explore what I identify as Hindu ‘re-integration’ narratives in Amsterdam Zuidoost and how they are dependent on the re-affirmation, rather than denial of, an explicit religious identity. I argue also that these re-integration narratives emerge in direct relation to the experiences of temple building processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost.

It does so by examining how the aftermath of the 2010 closure of the DD temple space has resulted in a newly emerging Hindu moral economy that takes templeisation processes and the current uses of temple space around the neighbourhood to be an issue of active participation in larger Dutch society<sup>7</sup>. This includes negotiating a form of what I call ‘Active Hinduism’ that stresses various religious performances in connection with civic duties through voting and increased political involvement. This requires a sort of ‘moralising’ (cf. Tonkens 2006) that negotiates between neo-Hindutva assertions of Hindu glory and pride alongside principles of culturalised citizenship. Active Hinduism differs from what has previously been described as diasporic Hindu activism (Zavos 2015, Kurien 2007) where various Hindu groupings have staged protests against the appropriation of various symbols, iconography and holidays associated with Hinduism. Active Hinduism instead emphasises the particular need for Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost to participate more generally in Dutch society through an increased involvement in the local political landscape. In this way, I view active Hinduism as a culturally and locality specific iteration of Neo-Hindutva that connects the importance of the glorious past of Hinduism to its comfortable compatibility with civic norms and ideals in the Netherlands.

### **Multidisciplinary Methodology**

This work combines ethnographic and oral history interviews, participant observation, media and textual analysis. As it explores the production of identity, knowledge, and public-ness that negotiates between local, national, and transnational spaces and ideologies, this project hinges on a multidisciplinary approach. It is useful here to revisit Deleuze and Guattari (1987) metaphor of the rhizome--a concept that favours multiplicity and an interconnectedness of endless lines that are broken, re-made, and re-connected any number of times (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 5-8). It has become a crucial idea in diaspora studies (see Park 2014, Schramm 2008, Brazier 2003, Gilroy

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<sup>7</sup> Here, I define ‘Dutch society’ in the vein of Schinkel (2008) as a discursive construct that denotes the ideal social collectivity in the Netherlands (325).

1993, Malkki 1992), and also as a critical methodology for area studies (Schramm 2008, 2 Quayson 2007).

Basedau and Koller (2009) reiterate this strong relationship of an critical area studies approach and multidisciplinary research in their study of the methodological challenges present in comparative area studies approaches, as they note that area studies cannot be confined to one discipline, but areas of expertise that cut across humanities, social sciences and the hard sciences (Basedau and Koller 2009, 110). The advantages of a multidisciplinary approach are that I am able to include highly personal and emic experiences of my respondents to develop renewed criteria for conceptualising Hindu identity. Furthermore, by engaging in a range of interviews, I am able to give a picture not only of immediate emotions and reactions to events, but to wider narrative exercises of locating themselves within greater narratives of global Hindu diasporic identity.

### **'The Field': Amsterdam Zuidoost**

Following Gunn (2004), I view the idea of a singular 'field' in the process of ethnographic and oral historical research to be problematic. As she aptly points out, there is much danger in assuming that a field can be the 'sole locus of meaning for the people one finds there' (44). Furthermore, the idea of a diaspora as a fieldsite requires a certain level of reflexivity, as Shukla (2003) notes that ethnographic work in the diaspora is a constant reworking of the idea that a place reveals certain established meanings about their experiences (Shukla in Gunn 2009, 44).

This dissertation focuses on the temple building processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost and therefore my entrance point into 'the field' was through temple spaces in the neighbourhood. However, it is important to acknowledge that Hindu identity is also fostered in homes and Hindu primary schools, alongside informal moments and spaces such as public processions, festivals and life cycle rituals that are often performed outside of the temple. Therefore, I view the temple as one of many fields in which to explore Hindu identity making. Although the majority of my research took place in temple spaces, I attended various public and private events throughout the neighbourhood, city and country. In this way, my fieldwork experience was 'multi-sited' (cf. Marcus 1998, Hannerz 2003).

### **Respondents**

I was warmly welcomed into the field by most Hindu community actors whom I encountered. In some cases, I used a prominent member of the community, such as a priest or temple board actor as a way to gain access to respondents. For the most part however, I approached women, given the stigma in many South Asian and diaspora communities that surrounds unaccompanied women approaching men they do not know.

The majority of my respondents range in age from twenty years old to into their fifties, with a few older and younger respondents. While this is a large age range to cover, I feel that it

accurately reflects the average age of a devotee that comes regularly to the temple and has a direct hand in the daily maintenance of the temple. This way, I am also able to accommodate some devotees' views alongside the views of their own parents in order to examine inter-generational interactions of their religious identity through a line of questioning that directly related to raising young children.

My non-Hindu respondents, particularly civil servant and media actors, were first approached by phone and email. The local district government was particularly helpful in facilitating my research visits to see the archive of correspondence and to carry out interviews. I was told, however, that had I been a member of the media, I would not be given such a warm welcome. It seemed as if media and civil service actors were more comfortable talking to me as I was working on a sensitive issue from an academic point of view.

### **Participant Observation**

My research often used participation as a form of observation (O'Reilly 2005, 3 Willis and Trondman 2000, Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Mitchell, 2002, Robinson 2002), as I was often invited to participate directly on festival days and other major events held in temple spaces. Despite these instances of deeply involved participation, my role as a researcher has always been covert. After I felt that many of the regular members of the temple were comfortable with my presence, I began to make recordings, photographs and detailed notes while sitting in the corner of temple.

As many people recognised me as a 'Hindu', I was often expected and asked to participate directly in worship, festivals and special events in the temple. Often, the line between participation and observation was blurred (O'Reilly 2005, 3), and I observed through participating in various festivals and rituals. Most often, participation meant attending weekly worship sessions or festival events. Sometimes it also included cooking, babysitting younger children or taking care of older members of the community who needed food, water, chairs or special assistance.

### **Language Use in the Field**

My respondents use a range of languages in their daily lives: Dutch, English, Sarnami, Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, Kabuli, even some Tamil and Kannada are commonly heard throughout temple spaces, depending on context and day of the week.

However, while these languages are represented by members of the community, it does not necessarily mean that these are the languages in which my respondents are comfortable speaking. I have observed that especially those respondents between the ages of 18-40 who have grown up in the Netherlands feel more comfortable speaking Dutch or English during interviews. While many of them know Sarnami, the Surinamese dialect combining elements of Dutch, Bhojpuri and

Hindi (see Damsteegt 1988, 1990a, 1990b), they often claim they are ‘not fluent’ and opted to speak Dutch or English with me.

Especially among my upper-middle class Indian respondents, English is an ideal medium of expression as they use it to communicate with their colleagues on a daily basis. Often they have spent time outside of India in English speaking countries, so they feel comfortable using English to express complex ideas and emotions during interviews. I noticed that knowledge of spoken English and Dutch opened the most doors for me in terms of respondents, and that even my elderly respondents felt comfortable using Dutch (or English, in the case of direct-migrant Indians) during our interviews.

This is not to say knowledge of Indian languages has been unnecessary or irrelevant in my research. It is very useful to be able to recognise the difference between spoken Hindi and Sarnami, for example, in order to see which words and concepts are common to the languages and which need to be translated (often, if a word in Hindi is not understood by a speaker, the language changes to either Dutch or English). Indian languages themselves are highly regarded among many of my younger Surinamese respondents who see Hindi as a religious language, even if they do not feel confident in their own speaking skills.

I often used my Hindi reading skills during participant observation, reading verses of various poems and singing devotional songs that are written on the walls of the temple or provided in booklet form during certain festivals.

The interviews that appear in this dissertation were mostly conducted in Dutch and English. I have chosen to leave certain idiosyncratic phrases and words in English in my translations while giving a more grammatically correct translation in square brackets when needed. This is in order to retain a sense of my respondents’ own voices in my research.

### **Reflexivity**

The importance of reflecting on one’s role as a researcher in the field has been well articulated by many scholars, significantly through the work of feminist ethnographers (Abu-Lughod 1990, Acker et al., 1991, Berik 1996, Dossa 1997, Kondo 1986, Lal 1996, Narayan 1993, Ong 1995). Henry (2003) notes that neither the researcher nor respondent can be fully neutral, comfortable, or ‘natural’ within the framework of ethnographic data collection. There is always an element of ‘performance’<sup>8</sup> that effects a respondent or a researcher’s behaviour and therefore, also the findings of the ethnographer (Henry 2003, 230, Marcus and Fischer 1986, Clifford 1988, Okely and Hallway 1992, Marcus 1994, Aggarwal 2000, Gunn 2009).

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<sup>8</sup> There is also a significant body of literature from early oral history that deals with the oral history narrative as performance (Abrams 2010, Tonkin 1992, Vansina 1985).



As Gunn (2009) argues, it is increasingly important to be aware of the biases and preconceived notions one has when doing fieldwork in the city in which they live (41, 45). Doing fieldwork in Amsterdam has therefore led me to become aware of and embrace the ‘dis-orientalising’ perspective that occurs when the ‘field’ and ‘home’ are blurred (Gunn 2009, 42, Swamy 2015). Such a perspective calls into question assumptions about where discussions about Hinduism ought to take place and how devotees experience the world and the city in which they live. Although part of a Hindu diaspora, some of my respondents preferred to meet me in the city on busy shopping streets, high end cafes or restaurants rather than at the temple. These meetings are disorientalising moments that ‘reveal the multiplicities and fluid nature of religious identities’ (Gunn 2009, 42), and confront me with my own assumptions about how my young Hindu respondents socialise and enjoy themselves.

I share with Gunn (2009) the experience of spending short, intermittent periods in a certain field site rather than sustained periods of ‘immersion’. As I was always a short bus ride away from the temples, I was able to attend events last minute or events that lasted all night, with the knowledge that I would be ‘returning home’ at the end of the visit. What is more, I found that my fieldwork in Amsterdam was made up of series of ‘overlaps’ between what I would have previously assumed was a separation between daily life and time spent in the field. On some occasions, my interviews were carried out during practical activities such as going to pick up toiletries and groceries with my young female respondents.

My own personal background<sup>9</sup> as someone who grew up in a Canadian Hindu diaspora has influenced greatly how members of the community see me. In many cases, I feel as if I am treated as a fellow ‘Hindu’ first and a researcher second. It is true that in some ways, I was predisposed to learn the “cultural language” (O’ Reilly 2005, 95) of the temple based on experiences growing up in a suburban Canadian town with a temple, but this also proved to be an obstacle, as I consciously had to move away from the ‘Canadian’ frame of reference when researching a Hindu diaspora community that was ‘other’ than the one in which I grew up, such as when I carried out fieldwork with my Afghan Hindu respondents.

What is more, I am also aware that in entering into temple spaces in the neighbourhood, I did not raise too much suspicion because of my appearance. It is not a coincidence that so many younger Hindus were eager to make my acquaintance. Although they knew I came to the temple in my capacity as a researcher, they felt somehow that I had ‘the right’ to carry out such research, and assumed that I shared and understood their own struggles in constructing their Hindu identity.

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<sup>9</sup> A more in-depth analysis of my reflexive issues appears here: <http://allegralaboratory.net/dis-orientalizing-ethnographic-journeys-fieldnotes/>.

## Interviewing

The majority of my research data was collected in the form of qualitative interviews. I conducted fifty-nine semi-structured interviews, of which forty-one were pre-arranged and recorded. The others happened more spontaneously, usually after an event or worship in the temple, but were also semi-structured by a list of questions or issues that I used to guide the interview<sup>10</sup>. Most of my interviews began by asking my respondents to give me insight into their background, their migration trajectory (or ancestor's migration trajectory), their place of birth and their occupation. I then asked them to speak broadly about their experiences as Hindus in the Netherlands, and then to focus more specifically on Amsterdam Zuidoost, before presenting them with specific questions about their relationship to and knowledge of the closing of the Devi Dhaam temple. I would then move on, depending on their answer, to address more specific questions about identity, religion, politics and citizenship.

My respondents were most often interviewed once, although some were interviewed three or four times, or their voices appear across semi-structured, pre-arranged interviews, informal conversations and opportunistic interviews. My pre-arranged and spontaneous interviews lasted for a minimum of one hour and a maximum of three hours.

On top of pre-arranged and spontaneous interviews that were recorded, I additionally engaged in over one hundred informal conversations that were not recorded, but the details of which were noted on paper. There were other spontaneous conversations that happened in the course of my participant observation that were neither recorded nor noted: they served to build up a rapport with the community and establish a sense of individual and collective emotions, ideas, thoughts and opinions on Hindu identity at any given moment. In this dissertation, direct quotations from recorded, semi-structured interviews are written in italics. Direct quotations from interviews and conversations that are not recorded are written in regular typeface.

My interviews negotiated between oral history methodology and a broader ethnographic approach. Much like oral history methodology, my line of questioning about the closing of Devi Dhaam temple focused on the emotive, imaginative and the remembered aspects of the event, rather than the event itself. Remembering the opening and the closing of the temporary DD office space is crucial to understanding the construction of Hindu identity for many of my respondents (Grele 1991, 245).

Also in line with oral history methodology, I analyse my interviews according to various 'narrative registers' that depend heavily on narrative theory (Abrams 2010, 7, Roberts 2001, White 1973, 1976, Portelli 1991, Cronon 1991, Linde 1993, Jones 2004, Cvorovic 2009, Grele 1991). It takes seriously the processes of memory in all stages, where the moment of recollection

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<sup>10</sup> See O'Reilly (2005, 116-120) for a discussion of pre-arranged versus 'opportunistic' interviews.

is not divided from the process of ordering stories, experiences and emotions into a narrative (Abrams 2010, 78). My line of questioning related to the history of Devi Dhaam temple highlights how the personal recollection of a respondent reflects and is ultimately tied up with a shared ‘imagination’ (Portelli 1991, 49, Abrams 2010, 99) of the struggles of various Hindu groupings in Amsterdam Zuidoost that relate to ecumenical strategies and templeisation processes.

### **Voice and Counter-Voice**

This dissertation has centred around voices whose opinions and reflections reoccur across various chapters. These voices, although they may seem like a small sample, were chosen precisely because they reflected the views of many others in the field that I spoke to and interviewed. They also represent the range of ethnic, sectarian, class and gender backgrounds of those who I interviewed. Throughout this dissertation, longer quotations from interviews, conversations, reports and letters are presented in order to ensure that these voices are taken seriously.

The voices of Hindu community actors feature most prominently. This is because they are overwhelmingly the most involved and concerned with temple building processes in the neighbourhood. The amount of media and civil service actors involved is quite limited in comparison, but only a few of them are or were actively involved in templeisation processes. Still, their voices are also necessary in order to present a balanced view of the stakeholders involved.

While this is a project that foregrounds the voices of my respondents, I nevertheless intervene in my analyses to reveal the ways in which contradictions, misinformation and other unsettling articulations have been used as an affective strategy of Hindu hurt. My goal here is not to undermine the emotions of my respondents, but to add a dimension of critique with which to contextualise some of the more glaring inconsistencies between the use of various narrative registers and the recollection of various events.

At the same time, I have balanced my respondents’ views by addressing seriously the counter-narratives and counter-voices that arose among my respondents. This is an attempt not only to achieve a sound scientific balance in my work, but also to avoid misrepresenting Hindu groupings in Amsterdam Zuidoost as possessing monolithic views on events in their history. The diversity in ideas and reactions to events is therefore a crucial tool that explores how differences in socio-economic background, educational level, gender, and ethnic and sectarian affiliation effect the everyday negotiation of Hindu identity and ongoing templeisation processes in the neighbourhood.

It is also important to keep in mind that the voices with which I engage belong to those community actors who value temple-based worship and outwardly identify themselves as religious Hindus. Throughout my project, when I speak of an emerging moral economy (see chapter 7) or the value placed on democracy (see chapter 8), I am referring to the views of those Hindus who

attend temple worship. It would be fruitful in future research to explore how these observations hold up among Hindu groupings and individuals who do not attend temples.

In comparison to the numerical estimates of Hindus in the Netherlands, the numbers of Hindus who attend temple worship in Amsterdam Zuidoost is quite small. However, this research does not attempt to give a comprehensive view on how ‘Hindus’ as a monolithic group make meaning in the world. This is instead a locality-based study that focuses on voices that are often marginalised or written out of grand narratives of Hindus in the Netherlands—those who are of working-class background (see Part I), those who publicly challenge the Dutch government (see Part II), and those who reject socio-economic status as a marker of dignity (see Part III).

### **Anonymity of Respondents**

The closing of the DD temple is a sensitive subject among my respondents: emotions ran high as I recording the narratives of their experiences in 2010. At some points, I was both moved and surprised by how candid some members of the community were with me, revealing personal and confidential information that, for ethical reasons, has not been reproduced in this dissertation. It is important to note that the trust I gained almost immediately among my respondents had much to do with my experiences growing up in a Hindu diaspora community. People assumed not only that I possessed and cultivated certain values and practices, but that I understood and sympathised with their struggle due to my background.

In order to honour the deep trust that I have gained among my respondents, I have changed all names of my respondents and have withheld information that may reveal the identity of my respondents. In some places this means that more biographical information is given about a respondent than in other places—but age, gender and place of birth are almost always given in each case. My respondents also belong to close-knit communities, so I have also removed specific dates from interviews and documents (besides year in the case of correspondence) in order to keep incidents and information anonymous. In this way, I follow Kurien (2007) who also keeps the dates of her interviews relatively anonymous in order to protect the identity of her respondents. The interviews, conversations and participant observations that are reflected in this research took place from 2012 until the beginning of 2015.

At the same time, some prominent community actors, especially priests and temple chairmen were proud to be featured in my work. Their identities may be slightly more conspicuous than other community actors. However, they have also allowed me to use their narratives freely in my work despite the risk of being identified.

### **Body of Correspondence, Press Releases, and the Expert Report**

Alongside my interviews, I examine a small yet valuable collection of correspondence between DD temple board community actors and the local district government, focusing on the years 1988-1996. Although the collection of letters dates back to the late 1970s up until 2010, the correspondence from 1988-1996 is particularly useful in examining the affective strategies that elite temple board actors mobilised in the period leading up to receiving a temporary temple space.

The Local district government of Amsterdam Zuidoost graciously shared the press releases, correspondence and the ‘Quickscan’ temple report with me. Although these documents are open to the public, few people who are not involved in the ongoing templeisation processes and the local district government would be aware that they existed. According to the local district government, I was the first person to ask to see these documents.

Again, these press releases and correspondences are analysed according to narrative theory, and were first translated and informally coded in order to explore reoccurring narrative registers. These sources contextualise attitudes and narratives of public Hindu identity and temple space before there was a temporary space for the temple to thrive, as well as before the controversy over its closing had taken place. I do not present a chronological account of the letters, but present them thematically. This is to avoid imparting a false sense of coherence relating to themes and the years they were written—often a range of themes are explored over many years.

These press releases and correspondences were written in Dutch, sometimes less than perfect grammatically. I have translated the letters into English, trying to preserve the original tone of the letters while also rendering them in coherent and simple English.

I have also consulted official policy documents about the zoning laws in Amsterdam. I have made reference to secondary sources that work with official discourses on these issues (see de Wilde 2015) and have consulted those that are relevant for my project but have not engaged with them as primary sources. This is because my approach to citizenship and public Hinduism takes an emic approach (see Duyvendak et al. 2012) and attempts to shed light on how local actors work to develop their own sense of these issues, and in light of the fact that much interesting, thorough and recent work has been done with these policy issues as primary sources (de Wilde 2015). What is more, my focus is on public Hinduism rather than public policy regarding Hinduism.

### **Mediatised Sources**

In chapter 5, I introduce media coverage (both print and televisual) that covers the evacuation of the DD temple space. These sources were initially accessed through online archives. In one instance, I interviewed a prominent journalist who has covered the Hindu community in the

Netherlands for many years, and whose texts are analysed in my project. This was in order to gain an ‘outside’ media actor perspective on the narratives that circulated both inside and outside of the community after 2010. I have used them alongside the narratives constructed by my respondents, and also to demonstrate how the media contributes to the perpetuation of many symbols that appear in these narratives.

## Structure

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part I, ‘Setting the Stage: Producing Locality and Constructing Hindu Spaces in Amsterdam Zuidoost’ serves to contextualise for the reader the reason why Amsterdam Zuidoost, a relatively small residential neighbourhood of Amsterdam, is home to four functioning temple spaces. I first describe the migration trajectories of the four major groupings of Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost, and highlight two historical processes that have contributed to the notion of a cohesive ‘Hindu’ identity in the Netherlands: that of the ethnicisation of Hindu religious identity from roughly 1873-1920 in Suriname, and that of the legacy of pillarisation policies in the Netherlands that shaped the social and political landscape of the country from 1900-1960, and continued to influence policies of ethnic integration into the 1980s.

Chapter 1, ‘Hindu Groupness in Amsterdam Zuidoost’ begins by describing the migration trajectories into the Netherlands by the four main groups of Hindus that are represented in area: Surinamese Hindus, or Hindustanis<sup>11</sup>, working class direct migrant Indians, Afghan Hindus, and more recent professional migrants from India who often work for international or Information Technology companies. Of these groups, the Hindustani presence is by far the greatest, and a consequence of this is that constructions of public Hindu identity in Amsterdam Zuidoost become ‘ethnicised’ (cf. van der Veer and Vertovec 1994, Vertovec 2000) to reflect the struggles and practices of Hindustanis more often than Indians or Afghan Hindus. The first chapter then goes on to describe the ideological and policy-based forms of migrant integration and representation that facilitate the construction of temple spaces in the neighbourhood.

Chapter 2, ‘Producing a Locality in Amsterdam Zuidoost’ serves to give a brief history of Amsterdam Zuidoost, also known as ‘De Bijlmer’ from 1960 to present day by making use of secondary source material and primary source interviews. Although Amsterdam Zuidoost was designed in the 1960s for middle-class Dutch families in the style of large honeycomb style apartment blocks, it instead attracted recent migrants (mainly from Suriname and the Antilles) because of its low rental prices (driven down by the lack of interest by middle-class Dutch

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Hindustani’ refers to Indians who have roots in Suriname. The term is an ethnic marker—Hindustanis are mainly Hindu, but there are also Muslim and Christian Hindustani groups. The term is used widely throughout Suriname and the Netherlands. Throughout this dissertation, it will be assumed that the Hindustanis to whom I refer are Hindu.

families). From then on, the neighbourhood is produced as a multicultural reality that on the one hand corroborates ideas of a multicultural and tolerant society, and on the other perpetuates a narrative of a low-income ‘black’ neighbourhood full of crime and drugs. I highlight how various Hindustanis who have settled in the neighbourhood both perpetuate and contest the neighbourhood’s ambivalent reputation.

Chapter 3, ‘Current Temple Spaces in Amsterdam Zuidoost’ describes the four temple spaces as heterotopologies (Soja 1996) that reflect their own unique history and construction of ‘Hindu-ness’ in this diasporic context. I focus on the ways in which the narrative of the DD temple is intimately related to how the other temple spaces in the area have been established.

In Part II, ‘Templeisation Processes and the Shifting Articulations of Hindu hurt in Amsterdam Zuidoost’, I explore how the struggles to establish a purpose-built temple in Amsterdam Zuidoost have been articulated through the affective strategy of Hindu hurt (Mukta 2000, Zavos 2008), wherein various narrative registers of victimisation have strategically been forwarded by temple board actors, media actors, and community actors from 1988 to the present. These registers serve to draw attention away from the lack of legal knowledge among various actors and connect the failure to establish the temple as a deeply rooted problem from within the values of various community actors themselves.

Part II brings into focus the struggles of the Devi Dhaam temple community by introducing various multi-layered narrative registers of Hindu hurt that set the bid for a temple space up as if it were a Hindu campaign. The use of Hindu hurt is an elaborate affective strategy that mobilises narratives of suffering and alienation rather than legal discourse to articulate the community’s need for a temple space. It ends with the present-day situation where the first umbrella organisation exclusively interested in developing a pan-Hindu temple in the neighbourhood has been established.

Chapter 4, ‘Elite Narrative Registers of Hindu Identity and Hindu Hurt’ (1988-1996) demonstrates how temple board actors, media actors, and community actors have framed templeisation struggles in the neighbourhood. It begins by examining the body of correspondence and press releases that temple board actors sent to the local government, requesting for assistance in finding a temple space in the neighbourhood. This section focuses on the narrative frames mobilised by temple board actors to demonstrate how templeisation struggles were first articulated through ideas of citizenship rights on the one hand, and the reality of being ex-colonised subjects on the other. These frames carry on into the 1980s and 1990s, until the community is given a temporary temple space.

Chapter 5 ‘Mediatized Narrative Registers of Hindu Hurt (2010-Present)’ goes on to examine how after 2010, mediatized accounts of the closure of the temple strategically inscribe symbolic

boundaries where conceptual and moral distinctions are made between a deceptive, undemocratic temple board and a community of innocent victims, powerfully expressed through the corpothetic (Pinney 2004) image of the ‘crying mother’.

Chapter 6, ‘Community Based Narrative Registers of Hindu hurt (2010-Present)’ brings in ethnographic accounts that show how the trauma of failed templeisation processes has caused the community to shift their understandings of dharma to reflect the importance of an actually existing solidarity. In the end, it demonstrates how the ecumenical strategy as suggested by an independent third party is adopted, but treated with suspicion by many members of the community, and that those involved in the SMO umbrella organisation themselves see it mostly as a necessary evil.

In Part III, ‘Templeisation Processes and the Articulations of ‘Active Hinduism’ after 2010’, I explore how the effects of the 2010 closing of the DD temple space have affected the ways in which Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost experience their identity as Dutch citizens. I begin by examining the ways in which my respondents describe what it is to be ‘Hindu’ within the discourses of the ‘the culturalisation of citizenship’ in the Netherlands (Duyvendak, Hurenkamp and Tonkens 2010, Hurenkamp, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2012, de Wilde 2015, Schinkel 2008). I then go on to examine how temple spaces in the neighbourhood become symbols not only of Hindu identity, but of ‘active engagement’ in principles such as democracy through the ways that they are used as sites of civic education and democratic organisation.

Chapter 7, ‘Contextualising the Moral Economy of Active Hinduism’ demonstrates the ways in which a shifting definition of what it means to be Hindu has emerged among my respondents that focuses on the importance of self-discipline, action and initiative. What is more, performing Hinduism is not only a matter of religious and cultural pride, it is also necessary to become actively involved in politics.

Chapter 8, ‘The Narrative Register of Democracy and Egalitarianism’ focuses on the ways in which temple spaces in the neighbourhood are articulated as ideally ‘egalitarian’, dismantling notions of ancestral hierarchy and caste based discrimination in favour of democratically run, open organisations and focuses on how the ideals of democracy and democratic organisation are articulated in Hindu spaces in Amsterdam Zuidoost.