

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## Female migrants as 'Mediators between Two Worlds': Spatial-Temporal Articulations of Intersectional Positions

### Journal Item

How to cite:

de Jong, Sara (2015). Female migrants as 'Mediators between Two Worlds': Spatial-Temporal Articulations of Intersectional Positions. *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies (DiGeSt)*, 2(1-2) pp. 111–126.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© [\[not recorded\]](#)

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:  
<http://www.digest.ugent.be/volume2issue12>

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](http://oro.open.ac.uk)

## **Female Migrants as ‘Mediators between Two Worlds’:**

### **Spatial-Temporal Articulations of Intersectional Positions**

**Abstract:** This article takes as its point of departure the media attention for a Vienna-based project, which recruits migrant women to act as mediators between migrant communities and ‘Austrian’ society. Drawing on historical literature on gendered and racialised cultural brokers, it understands the appeal of this project as arising from its correspondence with dominant intersectional gender and ethnic stereotypes. In this article, I offer a critical analysis of the media sources and argue that the contemporary media narratives present a reconfigured version of the historic colonial tropes of “panoptical time” and “anachronistic space” (McClintock, 1995); two tropes that express hierarchical narratives of progress, placing gendered, racial, and classed ‘others’ outside modernity. I suggest that the gendered and ethnicised intersectional positions of the female migrant mediators are mapped onto a modernising narrative, which is articulated through spatio-temporal images. By contrasting the three main figures of the project – the project founders, the target group, and the female migrant mediators – I illustrate how gender and ethnicity get imbued with distinct hierarchical and relational meanings at different intersectional junctions. Particular spatial and temporal locations come to stand in for specific intersectional positions, and communicate a hierarchy between gendered Austrianness and gendered othered migrant-status. This article makes a contribution beyond the particular case of the Austrian project analysed here, by demonstrating that intersectional analysis can gain from attending to continuities with colonial discourse and to spatial-temporal metaphors.

**Keywords:** intersectionality; migration; space/time; NGO; ethnic minorities; whiteness

In March 2013 the Austrian left liberal weekly newspaper *Falter* published an article about the Vienna-based<sup>i</sup> project ‘*Nachbarinnen*’ (Neighbours<sup>ii</sup>), financed by a combination of public and private funders, ranging from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Bank Austria Social Prize and the crowdfunding platform Respect.net. A selected group of sixteen women from different migration backgrounds, speaking different languages, including Turkish, Arabic, Somali and Chechen, had just completed a five-month training course. Ten of them<sup>iii</sup> would shortly commence work as ‘professional neighbours’, a type of social worker. As ‘neighbours’ their task would be to support migrant families in their own neighbourhoods, bridging the gap between social services and migrant communities. The article’s narrative sketched a vivid image of the three main players. First, the project’s target group that was described as ‘non-integrated’ ethnic minority women who experienced issues that they could not communicate and for which they could not receive appropriate support. Second, the two white Austrian female founders of the project, one a social worker, the other an internist, who were concerned that they had not managed to reach the migrant communities in their practice area. Third, the main protagonists, the newly trained ‘neighbours’, that is, the selected ethnic minority women who were to play a mediating role between ‘their’ migrant communities and ‘ethnic Austrian’ majority society.

Initially, the set-up of the project sparked my interest, since I had just embarked on a research project on the positionalities of ethnic minority NGO workers who support migrants in Austria. When I started collecting newspaper clippings about the project, I was struck by the extensive media attention and the similarity between the articles. My interest shifted to the narration of the project. What was ‘seductive’ about the project’s story? Which recurrent tropes could be found across different newspapers? In light of the by now well-established insight that identities are relational, I was particularly interested in analysing how the ‘neighbours’ were described, that is, the women who should negotiate between ‘white’ and ‘migrant Austria’. What

understandings of gender and ethnicity were underpinning their recruitment and how was ‘their’ gender and ethnicity described in relation to the gender and ethnicity of the Austrian white female founders? Their position as brokers in the middle allowed me to take a closer look at constructions of difference and sameness regarding the target group on the one hand and the project founders on the other hand.

In this article, I will conduct a critical intersectional reading of thirty-two written newspaper articles, supplemented by one television reportage and two items of *Bank Austria* on the project *Nachbarinnen*, published or released between December 2012 and March 2015<sup>iv</sup>. In contrast to singular or additive approaches, an intersectional analysis highlights how categories such as gender and ethnicity coincide to produce specific effects, not reducible to either of its components (Crenshaw 1989; cf. Mügge and de Jong 2013; Farris and de Jong 2014). Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix provide a dynamic definition of ‘intersectionality’ as denoting “the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation [...] intersect in historically specific contexts” (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, 76). The point of departure for this analysis is, therefore, that categories such as gender and ethnicity do not have a priori fixed meanings. Instead, categories shift and change in intersectional constellations; they are imbued with meaning in the narratives themselves. Although intersectional approaches have emerged from analysing the experiences of those facing multiple oppressions, they can also be applied to groups that occupy ‘mixed’ or privileged positions (Yuval-Davis 2006, Verloo 2009; de Jong 2013). It is, therefore, appropriate for an analysis of the juxtaposition of the white female founders of the project with the ethnic minority female ‘neighbours’, which is productive in making (gendered) ‘whiteness’, as a dominant category that often remains unmarked, visible. Since gender and ethnicity (combined with migrant status) are perceived as the key markers of distinction in the set-up of the project, my analysis will predominantly focus on, but will not be limited to, the intersection of these two categories.

When Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) first introduced the concept of intersectionality, she illustrated intersectional discrimination with a metaphor, which had an explicit spatial component and a more implicit temporal dimension: a woman standing in the middle of an intersection who gets hurt in the collision with one or more cars. In this article I draw on the legacy of this image, and argue that the gendered and ethnicised intersectional positions of the cultural mediators are narrated through two spatio-temporal tropes. This article makes a contribution beyond the particular case of the Austrian project analysed here, by suggesting that intersectional analysis can gain from attending to spatial-temporal metaphors. The analysis also demonstrates that tracing continuities with colonial discourse can enrich and inform our conceptualisation of contemporary (discourses on) intersectional positions.

My argument is inspired by Anne McClintock's cultural analysis of the colonial tropes "panoptical time" and "anachronistic space" (1995). Though McClintock does not call her analysis of colonial imagination 'intersectional', she treats structures of 'race', gender, class and sexuality, as interlocking. The two tropes express a hierarchical narrative of progress, in which gendered, racial, sexualised and classed 'others', are placed outside modernity. 'Panoptical time' combines the spatial term of the 'panopticon' with historical temporality. With 'panoptical time', McClintock refers to the images of 'scientific' racism, which, by depicting the steps from 'primitive' to 'civilised man', offered 'racial progress' at a glance. 'Panoptical time' is accompanied by the trope of 'anachronistic space', which places those deemed 'underdeveloped' (such as women and working-class people) in a radically different space, "inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity" (1994, 40).

### **Cultural Brokers**

As one article in the Austrian Christian liberal newspaper *die Furche* describes, the selected women of the *Nachbarinnen* project "are mediators between two worlds" (Einöder, 2013, 10).

They, in the words of the Christian-conservative press, are recruited to address the misunderstandings “that can only be cleared up by those who understand both sides” (Imlinger, 2013a). Such mediators between two ‘different’ cultures are not new and the popularity of their stories is not limited to media attention in the context of the *Nachbarinnen* project. As Erik Seeman writes: “Historians love cultural brokers” (Seeman, 2008, 1511). Some scholars have attributed the rising interest in historical cultural brokers to the fact that contemporary societies are increasingly pluralistic (Weibel-Orlando, 1995, 659). Indeed, as Roggeband (2010) has documented for the Netherlands and Wadia (2015) for the UK, for some years now migrant (especially Muslim) women have come to be viewed by the state as mediating agents, who play a key role as mothers and wives in the ‘civilisation’ of their male family members.

Historically, the formation and sustenance of colonial and settler societies relied on persons who negotiated between different communities. Since the 1990s, historians have increasingly focused on recovering the stories of such mediators and on reconstructing the pivotal role they played in colonial encounters. The concept of ‘cultural broker’ has now become an established term to define those who mediate between two ‘cultures’. Cultural brokers are “operators [...] ‘between two worlds’, exemplars of ‘transculturalisation’” (Hosmer, 1997, 493). Historical research has documented the lives of brokers who emerged from the ranks of colonial or settler communities as well as from indigenous communities (Szasz, 1994; Karttunen, 1994; Metcalf, 2005). In colonial New York, for example, white settler children were placed among indigenous populations to later act as cultural brokers (Hagedorn, 1995). In the Canadian Hudson Bay, European fur traders were actively encouraged by their employers to engage in relationships with indigenous ‘Indian’ women, to foster trading contacts (van Kirk, 1980).

However, the three most written about cultural brokers, Pocahontas, la Malinche and Krotoa, from respectively a North-American, a Mexican and a South-African context, each come from

indigenous communities and are female. In so far as their status as cultural broker is narrated as deriving from their relationships with white men, they emerge as distinctly gendered (and sexualised) figures: Pocahontas is said to have saved Englishman John Smith, la Malinche was the interpreter-cum-mistress of Spanish colonial Cortés, and Krotoa is speculated to have been in an illegitimate relationship with van Riebeeck, first governor of the Cape Colony (Wells, 1998; Scully, 2005). These famous figures are symbolic of other indigenous women whose stories have not been told in the same detail. Clara Sue Kidwell has argued for the North-American context that “there is an important Indian woman in virtually every major encounter between Europeans and Indians in the New Worlds. As mistresses or wives, they counseled, translated and guided white men who were entering new territory” (1992, 97). Similarly, in African and Asian colonies European men relied on the linguistic, cultural and medical knowledge of local women, to which they gained access through liaisons (Stoler, 2002; Zastoupil, 2002). Although these studies on women’s brokering roles have served to signal important gender dimensions of cultural brokerage, feminist historian Pamela Scully has self-reflectively questioned the gender biases of historiography:

Historians have perhaps been less suspicious than we might have been of the story of the indigenous woman helping the man in part because the model of the girl as mediator and translator meshes so well with long-held views of women’s particular gifts as conciliators and nurturers (Scully, 2005).

Scully’s observation is a useful starting point for thinking through the media attention for the *Nachbarinnen* project and to understand this in relation to widely held gender stereotypes. For example, in the vast majority of articles, the ‘neighbours’ are described as wives and mothers, often with the number of children listed (e.g. Einöder, 2013; Gogala, 2013; Hamann, 2013; “Melek Komşular” mezun oldu 2013). One magazine article writes that when the ‘neighbours’ approach other migrant women on the street, “different than in normal everyday life, it is not about women’s gossiping, but a women’s empowerment integration project” (Kozbunarova,

2014). The fact that the two female ‘ethnic Austrian’ founders of the project, are rarely described in relation to their marital status or their number of children suggests that gender stereotypes alone cannot account for such narratives (for exceptions see: Hamann, 2013; Mauch, 2015). Scully’s suspicion about the fascination with Kurota, Pocahontas and la Malinche also addresses the specific sexualisation of *indigenous* women, which I take as an encouragement for considering the intersection of gender and ethnicity in the narratives about the *Nachbarinnen*. In the analysis below I show how ‘womanhood’ takes on different meanings when intersected with (middle-class) white ‘Austrianness’, compared to respectively the positions of the ‘unintegrated’ migrant (the target group) and the ‘well-integrated’ migrant (the ‘neighbours’). Along the same lines, ‘masculine ethnicity’ is distinct from ‘feminine ethnicity’; in the words of Christine Scholten, one of the founders of the project: “We approach women, because they represent the culture of the homeland as well as the family” (Gritsch, 2014, 12).

### **Panoptical Time**

The media reports on the *Nachbarinnen* project each contain descriptions of the ‘neighbours’, the project’s founders and the target group, with the latter variably described as migrant women or migrant families with children. A study of the presented contrasts and commonalities between these three ‘figures’ allows for a closer understanding of the representation of the intersection of gender and ethnicity. In the article *The First Sparks of Freedom* published in March 2013 by newspaper *Die Furche*, the reader is presented with the story of one of the women who participates in the five-months training program to become a ‘neighbour’: Senem Ayaz. She is described as a thirty-eight year old Turkish woman, who has been living in Austria for thirteen years. Previously, she has supported other migrants on a voluntary basis and she is now looking forward to continuing her work on a semi-professional basis in the *Nachbarinnen* project. Senem’s migration story is told with a mixture of direct quotation and third person narrative:

In Turkey [Senem] Ayaz worked in accounting. “I actually wanted to start studying, but then I came with my husband to Austria. He wanted children immediately, so after four months I was pregnant”, she explains in crystal clear German. The first period in Vienna was a shock for the young woman: she hardly spoke any German, and had to rely on the help of acquaintances when going to the authorities or doctor’s visits (Einöder, 2013, 10).

The temporal account becomes a narrative of progressive development. Since arriving in Austria, Senem has transitioned from few German language skills to crystal clear German and from relying on the help of others to becoming a provider of support. Senem’s story resonates with the stories other articles tell about the other ‘neighbours’ of the *Nachbarinnen* project. In *Augustin*, the Vienna street newspaper sold by homeless people, the reader learns about the story of ‘neighbour’ and mother of two children Ayten Paçarız, who was two years old when her parents moved from Turkey to Austria. At twenty-three, she moved to Turkey; at thirty-four she was back in Vienna again. All that time she was looking for her ‘own place in this world’, oscillating between Vienna where she spent her childhood and where her children are growing up and Turkey where her parents feel at home. Now she has finally found her place of belonging in her new profession: first as mediating ‘neighbour’, then project assistant, and since April 2014, as operational manager of *Nachbarinnen* (Mauch, 2014b; “Muttersprachliche Begleitung ist der Schlüssel” 2015). ‘Neighbour’ Firdes Acar, also from Turkey, arrived in Vienna as a fifteen-year-old married girl, keen to learn German. Her mother-in-law, however, found it unnecessary that she would learn the language, since she would soon get a child. According to a *Kurier* article, the first ten years in Austria she did not learn any German and had to rely on another woman who accompanied her on doctor’s visits (Gogala, 2013). In the final lines, Firdes’ story is used to illustrate the hope that the project will have a snowball effect: “With more women who overcome their speechlessness and become ‘neighbours’. Like Firdes. Only that the other women do not need ten years to take the step to freedom and autonomy” (Gogala, 2013, 44). The articles that mention two other *Nachbarinnen*, Asha Abdi Osman, a mother of nine, who left a UN job in Somalia when she fled to Austria and Sudanese Mashaer

Ali Hamad, a mother of four and an Arabic teacher in a Viennese mosque, reveal few details and thereby fail to fulfill their potential for offering an alternative narrative (Winkler-Hermaden 2013; Kozbunarova, 2014, *Welt der Frau*, 2014). Only about Osman we read that she understands the women she supports, since she equally had a hard time when she arrived.

The presentation of the ‘neighbours’ in a temporal story of progress, where they move from a position that is aligned with the project’s target group to a position that approaches the ‘ethnic Austrian’ founders of the project, is essential to their construction as gendered and ethnicised cultural brokers. I suggest that the articles on the *Nachbarinnen* project employ a reconfigured version of the colonial trope of panoptical time. The colonial version of the gendered and racialised family tree of man appears in contemporary times as a gendered and ethnicised tree of women, depicting ‘cultural progress’. The media narratives present a hierarchical account of three phases, which take two distinct forms. Either the three main figures stand for three ‘evolutionary stages of womanhood’: first the migrant women of the target group, then the hybrid ‘neighbour’, and finally, at the most advanced stage, the ‘ethnic Austrian’ white founders. Or the evolutionary stages are personified by the ‘neighbour’: the past of the ‘neighbour’, her present state, and her potential future that still remains out of reach. The three stages are expressed along different lines: for example, from no German language skills to advanced German language skills to German as mother tongue. Or, from the dependent receivers of support to the semi-independent providers of (peer) support and to the independent co-ordinators of the project. With regard to labour market participation, the three steps are either: no job and full-time mother (the target group), then mothers with a subsidised part-time job<sup>vi</sup> based on their gendered and ethnicised skills (the ‘neighbours’), and, finally, high-status employment (the founders) in feminised professions. Or, voluntary engagement (‘the neighbour’s past’), paid engagement for the community (the ‘neighbour’s present position), and professional high status job (the neighbour’s potential future).

In line with the aspired multiplication effect of the project, the target group is also described in terms of temporal, progressive development. Magazine *Biber* that defines itself as a young transcultural magazine for new Austrians tells the story of Roda, a woman who is supported by ‘neighbour’ Asha Abdi Osman. Roda is described as illiterate. This limits her to her small flat as she is afraid to get lost, and can neither understand the street signs nor ask for directions. “Fear for the *future*. But all of this was *yesterday*. *Today* Roda is independent, speaks with other women, reads and learns German. She goes to the parent-teacher conference of her four children and has courage.” (Kozbunarova, 2014, emphasis added). The gendered emotive language in many of the articles adds weight to the developmental trajectory that is outlined. The first stage (the past of the ‘neighbour’ or the situation of the women of the target group prior to being supported) is described as one of fear and despair. The second stage (the women in their role of ‘neighbour’ or the target group post-intervention) is framed in terms of relief, excitement, laughing, satisfaction, and confidence, while emotions are largely absent among the founders of the project, representing the rational third stage (Einöder, 2013; Hamann, 2013; Helmberger, 2013; Gritsch 2014; Mauch, 2014b; Brückenbauerinnen Zwischen den Kulturen, 2014).

The ‘neighbour’ is one step ahead of the women of the target group. As Renate Schnee, the social worker who co-organises the project explains: “[they] have already reflected on their position as a woman and a migrant” (Einöder, 2013, 10). The project’s initiators are not only presented as ‘the end of history’ but also as the drivers of history, who can speed up others’ developmental processes. Founder Christine Scholten is cited to describe the “win-win situation” of the project as follows:

On the one hand, we can bring women, who were previously dependent on their husband or parents-in-law, into the labour market. On the other, hand the living situation of women and children in the target group should improve (Einöder 2013, 10).

In the images McClintock (1995) studied, evolution is represented by men while women remain invisible and outside the picture. The reconfigured panoptical time in which the *Nachbarinnen* project is framed is gendered in the opposite way; men are absent or external to the frame. ‘Ethnic Austrian’ men are left out of the picture with none of the articles mentioning them. Are they marking the boundaries of progress that women can achieve? By way of their absence, they become the negation of how most men with a migrant background are described: as obstacles in the ‘development’ of their migrant wives. When they appear, they most often figure as impediments (e.g. Einöder, 2013; Gogala, 2013; Hamann, 2013; Helmberger, 2013; Imlinger, 2013b), sometimes as support, but only when it is the ‘neighbours’ themselves talking about their own husbands (Gogala, 2013; Vasari, 2013). Occasionally, they figure as workers (Mauch, 2014a; Mauch, 2014b) and only once as fathers (Gritsch 2014), despite the frequent mentioning of children.

In some cases, ‘ethnic Austrian’ women are explicitly presented as free (Austrian Bank Social Prize promotional video of the project, 2013; Einöder, 2013). In other articles, the emphasis on the perceived absence of liberties for ethnic minority women implies the autonomous status of ‘ethnic Austrian’ women. This is further reinforced by the fact that the organisers of the project position themselves as the judges of others’ lack of freedom. Scholten, whose practice is based in a Viennese neighbourhood with a large ethnic minority population, is quoted to have experienced the lack of freedom of many of her patients as “oppressive” [beklemmend] (Mit den Nachbarinnen zum Arzt, 2013). And, in another instance, where she justifies her motivation to set up the *Nachbarinnen* project, she is cited to have said: “The lack of freedom of the women and children that we counsel, got on our nerves” (Bauer, 2014; cf. Ein Tee mit... Christine Scholten, 2015). And, about the first woman she selected as ‘neighbour’: “Gül had from the beginning these sparks of freedom in her eyes.” (Mauch 2015).

Words expressing temporality commonly appear in the media reports. In addition to words like ‘already’, ‘yet’, ‘still’, ‘until now’, there is Austria as the ‘new homeland’ [neue Heimat] (Gogala, 2013; Vasari, 2013; Bauer, 2014), the “new reality” (Kozbunarova, 2014) versus the “traditions” of migrant communities (Baltaci, 2013; Kromus, 2014). The ‘neighbours’ occupy the middle ground between the old and the new: “On the one hand, they *still* have one foot in their community. On the other hand, they have *already* settled in [eingelebt] in Austria.” (Einöder, 2013, 10). This metaphor of standing with one foot in the community, meaning the neighbour’s ‘own’ ethnic community within Austria, and with the other foot in ‘ethnically white’ Austrian society does not only have a temporal but also a strong spatial component.

### **Anachronistic Space**

As quoted above, the ‘neighbours’ are invariably described as mediators between two different worlds or as “bridge builders between two cultures” (Brückenbauerinnen Zwischen den Kulturen, 2014, 17). These two worlds are, on the one hand, the anachronistic space of the primitive migration community within Austria and, on the other, the space of civilised ‘ethnically white’ Austria. As already touched upon above, the spatial shift required of the ‘neighbours’, and eventually of the target group too, is at the same moment a journey through time.

In a critical reading of British Government policy documents on migration and integration, Gail Lewis quotes a statement from a 2002 publication by David Blunkett, then Home Secretary, which illustrates how the temporal and spatial are mutually reinforcing. According to Blunkett, some migrants “because of their education or geography, find themselves catapulted into effectively different centuries. They are making a journey in the space of a few weeks or

months, which it has taken us hundreds of years to make” (Blunkett 2002, quoted in Lewis 2006, 546).

McClintock’s examples of the inhabitants of ‘anachronistic space’ include both those geographically removed from Europe as ‘the centre of civilisation’ (colonised peoples), but also those ‘others’ that resided in these centres, who had to be conceived of as existing in another space in order to uphold linear modernity. This is illustrated by a headline of an article in the *Bank Austria* newsletter that awarded the *Nachbarinnen* project the second place in their Social Prize Competition. The headline reads: “What Is Alien Can Be So Close” [Das Fremde Kann So Nah Sein] (Bank Austria, 2012). The migration narratives that are told about the ‘neighbours’ as well as the project’s target group, present a two-phase journey: first from the periphery to the metropole in the migration from the global South to Austria, and then from the margins of Austrian society to the centre. This supposed spatial move inside Austria is strongly present in some of the articles’ headlines: “From the Edge into the Middle” (Vasari, 2013 20), “Neighbours Get Women out of Isolation” (Imlinger, 2013a), “Going Part of the Way Together” (Sweeney, 2013). These spatial terms are equally prominent within the texts; ‘neighbours’ “have to accompany female migrants on the way to an active, autonomous life” (Meine Erfahrung Für Sie, 2013, 21), the project’s goal is “an autonomous navigating of the city, without help from others” (Wienerzeitung, 2012) and ‘neighbours’ “learn to support integration-distanced families in their entry in a more open world” (Ein Tee mit... Christine Scholten, 2015). Elsewhere, the phrase “the family is on the way out of isolation, into *our* society” (Baltaci, 2013 emphasis added; cf. ORF III, 2014) suggests that the reader and author of the Christian-conservative newspaper *Die Presse* are located in the centre of ‘ethnically white Austria’.

The descriptions of the locations where the women of the target group reside become a proxy for their intersectional position as migrant (and, as is sometimes specified, Muslim) women.

An example is this narrative in the left liberal weekly *Falter*:

They live here, in the large social housing complex [...], in the multiple room apartments that are reserved for families with many children. They sit behind the curtains, the whole day, and wait, until the children come back from school. They neither know the Stephansdom [a church that is a famous landmark in Vienna] nor the Wurstelprater [classic amusement park in Vienna], they do not go into any café [Kaffeehaus], they only move within a small radius until the next Lidl [discount] supermarket” (Hamann, 2013).

This intersects with lower classness in its reference to social housing, cheap supermarkets and lack of purchasing power. The description depicts the minoritised women as little more than housewives and mothers of too many children, locked in their domestic terrain. What is presented as quintessential Austrian society – the Stephansdom, the Viennese cafes, the Prater park – remains out of reach for them. Domesticity takes on a different meaning compared to the colonial time in which McClintock situates the trope of anachronistic time. In the age of empire domesticity stood for female middle-classness. Those women that engaged in paid work and moved in public spaces were dangerous boundary-crossers that could contaminate the different spheres (McClintock 1995, 42). In contrast, residing in the domestic sphere now comes to stand for failed emancipation. Women’s participation in the labour market is presented as the Austrian norm, exemplified by the project’s white female founders as well as by the successful ‘neighbours’, who have made the transition to professional training and work.

Roda, the woman described above as illiterate, has a life that “is limited to the four walls of a room. She lives sealed off [abgeschottet] from the society” (Kozbunarova, 2014). Hence, Roda is neither a part of society nor is Austrian society present inside her flat. Roda’s ‘development’, post-intervention by ‘neighbour’ Osman, is summarised in spatial terms in the article’s section

title: “Two worlds: One door”. According to the commentary, after eight months of support, Roda is now attending a German course, has found a new flat, and is looking for a job.

The work of Asha is finished. “Roda has achieved a lot, and has become such a strong woman,” she says smiling, while she closes the door of Roda’s flat. Only one year ago, this door was a social prison for Roda. (Kozbunarova, 2014)

The door of Roda’s flat marks the borders of anachronistic space. The ‘neighbour’ could already enter this space and leave it again; Roda is now able to do so as well. The initial meeting places where the ‘neighbours’ approach the targeted women, who in almost every instance are described as “withdrawn” or “isolated” (Interview: Ayten Pacariz, 2014; ORF III, 2014), are the street, the playground, the school, the mosque, and “cultural festivals” (Limbeck, 2013, 21; Vasari, 2013). These are places where the women go to fulfill their duties as caring mothers, shopping housewives, observant Muslims, and bearers of culture. The ‘neighbours’, then, encourage these women to come to the sessions at a neighbourhood centre, where experts give advice on education, childcare, and health. This moment of passing the threshold and entering the world of Austrian social services marks the moment of success of the project, as well as the moment that an important ‘step’ is taken in the ‘development’ of the women.

The space of the neighbourhood centre is also inhabited by the ‘ethnic Austrian’ founders of the project. The founders who emerged already as drivers of history are also mobilisers across space. They are the ones that entice the migrant women to move into the direction of ‘modern’ time/space. During this trajectory, the migrant women are under their prescriptive control. They are held by the hand by the ‘neighbours’ who guide them in the ‘right’ direction. In response to a question by a presenter on public television, whether the target group always accepts support right away or whether one has to approach them carefully, Scholten explains reminiscent of the colonial maternalist white woman’s burden: “One does indeed have to lure a little bit.” (ORF III 2014). And, then:

And they are actually only released into independence, when they really do what we expect them to do. [...] For example, when the children go into the cinema and watch German language films [...] So, when it has worked out that the mothers really go out of the house and the children also leave the house, have more success in school etcetera, then we leave them out again (ORF III, 2014).

Hence, alongside the narrative of the permeability of the borders and the imperative that women of the target group are forced out of their isolated locations, other boundaries remain intact. The founders of the project ‘lure’ them into ‘Austria’, by providing support “when the families take steps towards better integration”, but they “will however not take steps, when [they] have the feeling that those concerned do not engage” (Ein Tee mit... Christine Scholten, 2015). Schnee and Scholten initiated the project, because “we as Austrians have no chance at all to reach these families” (ORF III, 2014). As Schnee puts it, in the situations they witnessed, “conventional social work is confronted with its limits” (Baltaci, 2013). Or in Scholten’s words: “I notice that I hit a border with my words [...] and that does not only have to do with language” (Hamann, 2013). These essentialised boundaries reflect a “Package Picture of Cultures”, in which cultures are “neatly wrapped packages, sealed off from each other, possessing sharply defined edges or contours” (2000, 1084).

While the migrant woman can be brought into reach by the ‘neighbours’ or become a ‘neighbour’ herself, I suggest that she is never allowed to fully enter the centre, marked as ‘ethnically white’ Austrian society. Lewis argues in the context of the “spatial catapulting” that “even if these migrants do successfully traverse the spatio-temporal terrain to the ‘modern world’ they can only be incorporated into a minoritized position as part of a settled, but not ‘host’ community” (2006, 546). Her argument rings true when reading how the ‘neighbours’ are consistently described as mediators: they should support their “fellow country(wo)men” [Landsleute], as “women from the community, for the community” (Wienerzeitung, 2012). Although they are often described as “well-integrated” in Austrian society (Mauch, 2014a), ‘their’ country and ‘their’ community always refers to their country of birth. However far the

‘neighbours’ manage to stride, the founders of the project are always one step ahead. In recognition for their project, Christine Scholten and Renate Schnee were awarded the ‘Austrian of the Year’ prize, by newspaper *Die Presse*, described by Austrian president Fischer as a “recognition that serves as an example and role model for all people with good will in our country”, thereby reaching an even higher ‘evolutionary level’ of exceptional Austrianness (Vorhang Auf Österreicher des Jahres, 2013)

### **Concluding Thoughts**

To quote Scully again, “the stories of Malintzin, Pocahontas, and Krottoa are almost too familiar. They resonate so comfortably with a kind of inevitability and truth that seems, on reflection, perhaps “too neat” (2005). In this article, I have therefore critically approached the narratives constructed around the *Nachbarinnen* project not for their informative value but to unpack equally seductive contemporary narrations of cultural brokerage and to identify discursive reproductions of intersectional positions. Where Scully reads accounts of historical events critically in connection with current gender and racial stereotypes, I have argued here that contemporary media narratives draw on a reconfigured version of the historic colonial evolutionary tropes of “panoptical time” and “anachronistic space” (McClintock, 1995). This article has drawn on colonial analysis to demonstrate how contemporary gendered and ethnicised intersectional positions are mapped onto ‘progressive’ time and space. It teases out how different gendered and ethnicised intersectional positions get signified relationally and hierarchically. I have shown how particular spatio-temporal locations become a proxy for intersectional positions, and communicate a hierarchy between gendered Austrianness and gendered ‘othered’ migrant-status. This insight invites further consideration of the function of spatio-temporal tropes in intersectional representations elsewhere.

## References

- Baltaci, K. (27 October 2013). Die Engagierten Nachbarinnen. *Die Presse*. Page number unknown.
- Bank Austria (4 December 2012). Das Fremde Kann So Nah Sein. *Bank Exklusiv PLUS*, pp. 8-11.
- Bank Austria (4 March 2013). NachbarInnen. *Feinkost MEDIA*, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMyJ4\\_lcTm0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMyJ4_lcTm0).
- Bauer, A-M. (24 March 2014). Nachbarinnen laden zum Bildungsfrühstück. *Kurier*. Retrieved from: <http://kurier.at/chronik/wien/nachbarinnen-laden-zum-bildungsfruehstueck/57.493.468>
- Brah, A. and Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5(3), 75-86.
- Brückenbauerinnen Zwischen den Kulturen (1 February 2014). *Welt der Frau*. pp. 17-18.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 14, 139-167.
- De Jong, S. (2013). Intersectional Global Citizenship: Gendered and Racialised Renderings, *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 1(3): 402-416.
- Einöder, S. (7 March 2013). Der erste Funken Freiheit. *Die FÜRche*, pp. 10.
- Ein Tee mit... Christine Scholten (27 February 2015). *Social City Wien*.
- Farris, S. F. and S. de Jong. (2014). 'Discontinuous intersections: second-generation immigrant girls in transition from school to work', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37(9): 380-389.

- Ghosh, D. (2006). *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gritsch, H. (16 October 2014). Beruf: Nachbarin. *Die Schottengasse*, pp. 10-12.
- Gogala, E. (1 February 2013). Nachbarshaftshilfe. *Kurier*, pp. 42-45.
- Hamann, S. (13 March 2013). Hallo, Nachbarin! Von wegen integrationsunwillig: Am Schöpfwerk kümmern sich Frauen um ihre Nachbarinnen. *Falter*, 11/13, pp. 41-43.
- Helmberger, D. (31 October 2013). Ein Engel namens Nachbarin. *Die Furche*, p. 44.
- Hosmer, B. C. (1997). Reflections on Indian Cultural "Brokers": Reginald Oshkosh, Mitchell Oshkenaniew, and the Politics of Menominee Lumbering. *Ethnohistory*, 44(3), 493-509.
- Imlinger, C. (22 July 2013a). Nachbarn Holen Frauen aus Isolation. *Die Presse*, p. 10.
- Imlinger, C. (23 September 2013b). Gegen die Isolation: Nachbarinnen als Beruf. *Die Presse*, p. 21.
- Interview: Ayten Pacariz (17 July 2014). *In Wien*. Retrieved from: <http://inwien.at/?id=18979>
- Kozbunarova (28 September 2014). Von Nachbarshaften und sozialen Gefängnissen. *Biber*. Retrieved from: <http://www.dasbiber.at/content/von-nachbarschaften-und-sozialen-gefängnissen>
- Karttunen, F. (1994). *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Kidwell, C. S. (1992). Indian Women as Cultural mediators. *Ethnohistory*, 39(2), 97-107.
- Lewis, G. (2006). 'Welcome to the Margins: Diversity, Tolerance, and Policies of Exclusion', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(3): 536-558.
- Limbeck, B. (18 June 2013). Merhaba Nachbarin. *Gesunde Stadt*, p. 21.
- Mauch, U. (4 March 2015) "Im Nutella-Fass". *Augustin*, p. 23.

- Mauch, U. (3 May 2014a) Tue Gutes und Gewinn einen Preis. *Kurier*, p. 23.
- Mauch, U. (2 September 2014b). Sowohl als Auch. *Augustin*, p. 23.
- McClintock, A. (1995). *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. London: Routledge.
- Meine Erfahrung Für Sie (1 April 2013). *Wien.at*, p. 21.
- “Melek Komşular” mezun oldu (14.07.2013). *Yeni Vatan Gazetesi*. pp. 6-7.
- Metcalf, A. (2005). *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*. Austin: The University of Texas Press.
- Mit den Nachbarinnen zum Arzt (6 March 2013). *Wiener Zeitung*, page number unknown.
- Mügge, L. M. and S. de Jong (2013). ‘Intersectionalizing European politics: bridging gender and ethnicity’, *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 1(3): 380-389.
- “Muttersprachliche Begleitung ist der Schlüssel” (14 July 2015). Retrieved from: <http://inwien.at/Frauen-fuer-Frauen-Ayten-Pacariz-und-die-Nachbarinnen.21019.0.html>
- Nachbarinnen in Wien, <http://www.nachbarinnen.at/>
- ORF III (1 April 2014) Nachbarinnen in Wien. [Television Programme *Kultur Heute*]
- Scully, P. (2005). ‘Malintzin, Pocahontas, and Krotoa: Indigenous Women and Myth Models of the Atlantic World’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 6(3), no page numbers.
- Seeman, E. R. (2008). [Review of the Book *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert*, by E. Anderson]. *American Historical Review*, 113(5), 1511-1522.
- Stoler, A. L. (2002). *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Sweeney, F. (1 April 2013). Gemeinsam ein Stück des Wegens gehen. *Bezirksblatt Brigittenau*, p. 8.
- Szasz, M. C. (ed.) (1994). *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Van Kirk, S. (1980). *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Vasari, B. (2 July 2013). Vom Rand in die Mitte. *Wiener Zeitung*, p. 20.
- Verloo, M. (2009). *Intersectionaliteit en Interferentie: Hoe Politiek en Beleid Ongelijkheid Behouden, Bestrijden en Veranderen*. Inaugural Address, 18 Sept 2009, Radboud University Nijmegen.
- Vorhang auf für die „Österreicher des Jahres“ (25 October 2013). *Event Paper Die Presse*, 1-3.
- Weibel-Orlando, J. (1995). [Reviews of the Books *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors*, by F. E. Karttunen, and *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* by M. C. Szasz (ed.)]. *Ethnohistory*, 42(4), 659-662.
- Wells, J. C. (1998). Eva's Men: Gender and Power in the Establishment of the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-74. *The Journal of African History*, 39(3): 417-437.
- Winkler-Hermaden, R. (2 September 2013). "Die Lösung ist die Sprache", *Der Standard*, p. 8.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006) 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(3), 193-209.
- Zastoupil, L. (2002): Intimacy and Colonial Knowledge. *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 3(2), no page numbers.

**Bio:** Sara de Jong is Marie Curie Research Fellow at the Department for Development Studies, University of Vienna. She obtained her PhD in Politics from the University of Nottingham, UK. Her research critically engages with non-governmental organisations, cultural brokerage, migration and diversity management. Recent articles have appeared in the *Journal for Ethnic and Migration Studies*; *Ethnic and Racial Studies*; *Politics, Groups and Identities*; *Journal of Intercultural Studies*.

**Acknowledgements:** I gratefully acknowledge support from the EU Marie Curie Actions, IEF (Grant number 624577). I want to thank the special issue editors Karen Celis, Alison Woodward, Marleen van der Haar and Eline Severs – the latter two also as organisers of the 2014 Politicologenetmaal session “Power, privilege and disadvantage” where an early version of this article was presented – for their invitation to contribute to this special issue. I am grateful for the feedback I received from the other participants at this session as well as from the anonymous reviewers of the journal.

---

<sup>i</sup> The project ‘Nachbarinnen’ is inspired by a Berlin-based project ‘Stadtteilmütter’ (district mothers), which was initiated in 2004. A similar project exists in the Netherlands, which started in 2013 in The Hague under the name ‘Schilderswijk Moeders’ (Schilderswijk mothers).

<sup>ii</sup> ‘Nachbarinnen’ is the female form of neighbours.

---

<sup>iii</sup> At the time of writing (August 2015) there are 15 ‘Neighbours’ active in Vienna and a new training course has just been completed in Linz by another 15 women from 10 different countries.

<sup>iv</sup> All the written publications and the selected TV item were available from the Nachbarinnen project website ([www.nachbarinnen.at](http://www.nachbarinnen.at)) in July 2015. From the thirty-two available printed publications, all but one article (which is published in Turkish) are written in German. The newspapers range from local to national newspapers, left liberal to populist, independent to publications sponsored by the city of Vienna. Some newspapers published more than one article on the project.

<sup>v</sup> All media quotes have been translated from German to English by the author.

<sup>vi</sup> The neighbours receive a net monthly salary of 720 Euro (Brückenbauerinnen Zwischen den Kulturen, 2014).