

# Questioning the Dutch multicultural model of immigrant integration

Jan Willem Duyvendak and Peter Scholten

## 1. Introduction

*“Wake up any expert on immigrant integration in the middle of the night and ask that person to name a country known for its multiculturalism. Ten to one that the answer will be Canada, Australia or the Netherlands” (Entzinger, 2003:59).*

In this article, we deal with this dominant image of Dutch integration policies in terms of ‘a multiculturalist model’ (Joppke 2004: 248; Koopmans 2002:91; Sniderman & Hagendoorn 2007). These authors all claim that the Dutch pursued multiculturalist policies. Moreover, they claim that these policies have been a complete failure: “Under the shadow of official multiculturalism, an ‘ethnic underclass’ had been allowed to emerge” (Joppke, 2004: 248). Dutch pluralist integration policy is thought to have had not only a pernicious effect on the socio-cultural integration of migrants but also a negative impact on their socio-economic integration (Koopmans & Statham 2000; Ireland 2004).

In this article, we don’t deal with the alleged consequences of multicultural policies, but ask the question if the picture of a Dutch multicultural model itself is correct. In other words, we will address the question whether there has been a coherent set of policies that deserve the label of a model.

### 1. Locating the Dutch model in the social science literature

In Dutch as well as in international academic literature, there is a persistent discourse on what would be the Dutch ‘multicultural’ model of immigrant integration. A key trait of this multicultural model would be that the Dutch tend to institutionalize cultural pluralism in the belief that cultural emancipation of immigrant minorities is the key to their integration into Dutch society. Moreover, this approach to immigrant integration would reflect a rather uncontested acceptance of the transformation of Dutch society into a multicultural society. In the latter respect, a connection is often made with the peculiar Dutch history of pillarisation, referring to the period from the 1920s to 1960s when most of Dutch society was structured

according to specific religious (protestant, Catholic) or socio-cultural (socialist, liberal) pillars (Lijphart, 1968).

A recent study by Sniderman and Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and its Discontents in the Netherlands*, label the Dutch approach in terms of a multiculturalist model. In fact, the study's central claims are about multiculturalism in general and forms of identity politics associated with multiculturalism in particular. The authors claim that the labelling of collective identities has inadvertently deepened social-cultural cleavages in society rather than bridging these differences. They take the Netherlands as their single exemplary case to found their claims. They root the Dutch approach back to the history of pillarisation: 'The Netherlands has always been a country of minorities thanks to the power of religion to divide as well as unite' (pp. 13). In addition, the 'collective trauma' of World War II where the Dutch failed to resist the massive deportation of Jews would have contributed to that immigrant minorities have been seen in the light of the Holocaust (..) or that critical views of immigrants are labelled racist and xenophobic.' Due to these historical circumstances, a multiculturalist model would have taken root in the Netherlands:

A societal consensus, at the elite level, was formed in support of multiculturalism – and not just of a symbolic variety. In the Netherlands, as much as can be done on behalf of multiculturalism has been done. Minority groups are provided instruction in their own language and culture: separate radio and television programs; government funding to import religious leaders; and subsidies for a wide range of social and religious organizations: consultation prerogatives for community leaders; and publicly financed housing set aside for and specifically designed to meet Muslim requirements for strict separation of public and private spaces. (2007:...)

The German sociologist Joppke too considers the Dutch as the most radical multiculturalist model. He describes how recently the Dutch changed their policies, since the alleged multicultural policies have been a failure: "*Civic integration is a response to the obvious failure of one of Europe's most pronounced policies of multiculturalism to further the socioeconomic integration of immigrants and their offspring. (...) In a counterpoint to multiculturalism's tendency to lock migrant ethnics into their separate worlds, the opposite goal of civic integration is migrants' participation in mainstream institutions.*" (2007:249)

Also among some Dutch scholars, thinking in terms of the Dutch multicultural model has acquired great resonance. Koopmans in particular roots the Dutch approach to immigrant integration clearly in the history of pillarisation when ethno-cultural cleavages were stressed in a similar way as in the multicultural society. He claims that the application of this model on new groups has had strong negative effects: “The Dutch system of pillarization was developed in the early twentieth century as a means to pacify conflicts between native religious and political groups, and has been quite successful at that. However, it was never meant to serve as an instrument for the integration of immigrants, and has proven to be very inadequate for that purpose. (...) Neither immigrants nor native Dutch people are helped by applying principles that were originally meant for a native population with a largely similar socio-economic status, and common history and political culture, to the integration of newcomers with a different cultural background. This only offers new ethnic and religious groups a formal and symbolic form of equality, which in practice reinforces ethnic cleavages and reproduces segregation on a distinctly unequal basis.’ (2006:5).

While somewhat recognizing that in public and political discourse the multicultural model now seems to have been deserted, Koopmans points to the ‘path-dependency’ in terms of policy practices. Although formal policy discourse and public discourse seem to have changed, in their actual way of dealing with ethno-cultural diversity the Dutch would have remained accommodative:

The Netherlands is still an extreme representative of a 'multicultural' vision of integration. The country allows immigrants easy access to formal social and political rights while at the same time facilitating expressions of foreigners' own cultural identity with the help of the state. Considering the harsher tones of public debates in the 1990s, the Dutch (...) seem to think that this multicultural model is a thing of the past. But nothing could be further from the truth. Outside the limited world of op-eds in high-brow newspapers, the relation between Dutch society and its immigrants is still firmly rooted in its tradition of pillarization – a live and let live system delineated by ethnicity and religion which is supported by the government and the results of which have been detailed above. (...) (O)rganizations and activities based on ethnic grounds are still generously supported – directly and indirectly – by the government. Whether people want it or not, ethnicity still plays an important role in public institutions and discourse. The government still considers it as its educational duty to offer migrant languages as part of the curriculum. Nowhere else in Europe

are there that many Islamic and Hindu schools, Muslim and migrant media channels, and other public organizations on an ethno-religious basis. (Koopmans, 2006: 4).

Whereas in the actual debate Sniderman & Hagendoorn, Joppke and Koopmans are the most important scholars who voice this idea that the Netherlands have been pursuing a 'radical multiculturalist approach' (Koopmans et al. 2005:143), they were not the first to do so. In particular in the late 1980s and early 1990s, several authors criticized multiculturalist approaches then dominant in Dutch policies. In 1989, the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy published a report ('Immigrant Policy') in which it called for a more social-economically and individually focused policy approach. The WRR too labels the Dutch approach to immigrant integration (in those days!) in terms of a multicultural model, stressing in particular the focus on ethnic minority groups and its objective to promote cultural emancipation by a.o. providing facilities for the institutionalization of cultural diversity. The WRR calls attention to the alleged inadvertent effects of this policy approach. In particular, the focus on minority groups and the labelling of these groups in terms of an accumulation of social-economic deprivation and social-cultural differences, would have made the minorities too much dependent on state facilities (WRR 1989: 9). In 1989, the WRR rejected the dominant framing of 'ethnic' or 'cultural minorities'. It argued that this classification was 'arbitrary and prompted more by historical than by social considerations', and that this was a 'too limited concept' for describing the 'dynamism' in the social positions of immigrants and would be 'stigmatizing' (1998: 43, 54). Instead, the WRR proposed to define migrants as 'allochthonous' (or foreigners) stressing the non-native descent of immigrants rather than their ethno-cultural position. Furthermore, the WRR claimed that the integration policy (and debate) should no longer focus primarily on issues of 'cultural and morality' (ibid: 18), but rather on the social-economic participation of migrants so that migrants are able 'to stand on their own feet' (ibid: 9). In the cultural domain, the role of government should be far more limited. It should not be a goal in itself for government policy to create a multicultural society, but it should rather accept cultural diversity as a fact and create the conditions for different cultures to interact rather than to institutionalize cultural differences. WRR (ibid: 61):

[T]he institutionalisation of ethnic pluralism must not be regarded as an independent policy objective. A multi-ethnic society should be regarded as a social datum, and hence as a starting point for policies leaving space for cultural diversity in various fields. (...)

Immigrants who so wish should be able to maintain and develop their own cultural identity: integration certainly does not imply cultural assimilation. (...) The government's task is confined to helping eliminate the barriers experienced by ethnic groupings as a result of their non-indigenous origins, with a view to enabling them to participate on a equal footing with indigenous persons in a culturally diverse society.

About the same time, Jan Rath published his dissertation '*Minorisation: The Social Construction of Ethnic Minorities*' (1991). He situates the multicultural model in a technocratic community of experts and policy-makers and deconstructs the ideological principles on which it was based. Rath 'models' the Dutch approach in terms of what he calls the 'Minorities Paradigm'. This Minorities Paradigm defines society in terms of distinct groups or 'minorities' whose position is characterized both by a weak social-economic position and by social-cultural differences. Next to this model, Rath distinguishes also Marxist, caste, and colonial models which, he claims, would have remained largely obsolete in Dutch policy as well as in Dutch academic research. According to Rath, Dutch policy would have adopted the Minorities Paradigm because this model legitimizes government interference with ethnic minorities but also allows to exclude these minorities from political and economic processes because of their social-cultural non-conformity. Hence, according to Rath, it is no surprise that the ethnic minorities policy of the 1980s seems to have failed, as it would have contributed to a further 'minorisation' of ethnic minorities rather than to an amelioration of their social and political position in society.

In contrast to other 'modellers' of the Dutch approach, Rath does not root the Dutch model in the history of pillarisation. Rather, he traces it back to the ideological principles of how Dutch society approached anti-social families (1999). Just like ethnic minorities, these anti-social families were problematized not just because of their underclass status but also because of their social-cultural non-conformity. Such cultural arguments legitimized government interference with these groups. Moreover, they also helped to strengthen the 'imagined national community' by stressing what goes as non-conformity in contrast to the status quo. What the approaches to both groups have in common is that they connect social-economic and social-cultural issues, i.e. that they culturalize underlying social-economic and political differences. So, in contrast to other 'modellers' who connect the Dutch approach to pillarism, Rath rather defines the Dutch model as a product of class differences and ideological conflict in Dutch society.

In the following parts of this chapter, we will examine the validity of the alleged Dutch multicultural model of immigrant integration. To what extent can we truly speak of Dutch immigrant integration policies in terms of a coherent, consistent and persistent multicultural model? To what extent does it accurately reflect how policy has been put into practice? As we hope to show, we have to conclude that a Dutch multicultural model is more a scholarly invention than reality, or more precisely, that whereas the criticisms of the WRR and Rath around 1990 had some empirical grounding, those scholars who recently label Dutch policies as part of a coherent multicultural model, seem to have missed most of what have happened in the Netherlands in the past 20 years.

## **2. A historical reconstruction of Dutch immigrant integration policies**

Studying formal policy discourse, as formulated in policy documents and memoranda, reveals a strong discontinuity in Dutch immigrant policy over the past three to four decades. This involves a discontinuity in terms of how the issue of immigrant integration was defined as well as in terms of the institutional policy setting. Once in every decade or so, a major policy change occurred when a new policy paradigm emerged, involving a different the way of conceptualizing the policy problem, different categorizations of migrants, different causal theories or ‘stories’ to explain the problem and legitimize a policy approach, and also very different normative perspectives about migration and diversity in Dutch society. Reconstructing the history of Dutch immigrant integration policies reveals at least four policy paradigms of immigrant integration.

### *The no-policy monopoly*

Although large migrant groups had been settling in the Netherlands since the 1950s, Dutch government remained reluctant to develop a policy for immigrant integration until well into the 1970s. The presence of migrants (both labour and colonial migrants) was considered temporary. This was also manifest in the categorization of migrants as ‘guest-labourers’ or ‘international commuters’. Policies toward these temporary groups were mainly ad-hoc, aimed at participation in the economic sphere and retention of identity in the social-cultural sphere. For instance, tailor-made measures were taken for Immigrant Language and Culture Instruction to facilitate return migration, and in some cases government also facilitated

segregated housing. This phase of denial was based on a normative belief that the Netherlands was not and should not be a country of immigration.

This approach was sustained by powerful institutional interests. Specific government departments, political actors and welfare organizations formed 'iron triangles' around the group specific approach and denial of being a country of immigration in this period. The Department of Social Affairs, which was responsible for the large category of foreign laborers, sustained the idea of temporary migration because of social and economic reasons: the function of these migrants as a temporary reservoir of labor had to be preserved. Political actors tried to prevent partisan conflict about this sensitive topic, because they feared that politicization would benefit anti-immigrant parties. Furthermore, a structure of welfare organizations had evolved around the ad-hoc, group-oriented policies, that also resisted the development of a general immigrant integration policy for all migrant groups.

This no-policy monopoly was put under growing pressure in the late 1970s. A tension between the norm of not being a country of immigration and the fact of migrant settlement was becoming increasingly manifest. Furthermore, a series of 'focus-events', including racial tensions in several Dutch cities (Rotterdam and Schiedam) and a series of terrorist acts committed by members of one specific migrant group (the Moluccans), put immigrant integration on the agenda. This would eventually lead to the development of the first Dutch immigrant integration paradigm

#### *The multiculturalism of the Ethnic Minorities Policy*

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dutch government developed an Ethnic Minorities Policy that had distinct multiculturalist traits. The policy problem was now reconceptualised in terms of participation and social-cultural emancipation of ethnic or cultural minorities. Migrants were framed as 'minorities' in Dutch society instead of temporary guests, and government decided to focus on those minorities whose position was characterized by an accumulation of cultural and social-economic difficulties and for whom the Dutch government felt a special historical responsibility (Rath, 2001). The causal story behind the Minorities Policy expressed the idea that an amelioration of the social-cultural position of migrants would also improve their social-economic position. The policy objective now was to combat discrimination and social-economic deprivation and to support social-cultural emancipation. Moreover, although the Netherlands still not considered itself to be an immigration country, it did redefine the imagined national community in terms of being a multicultural society. Within this normative perspective, government left considerable leeway for the preservation of cultural identities

and group structures. This somewhat reflected the Dutch tradition of accommodation pluralism through ‘pillarism’, that is the institutionalization of ‘sovereignty within the own sphere’ for each minority group (Lijphart 1968). In this context, the institutionalization of cultural pluralism continued in this period (such as broadcast media for several groups, Immigrant Language and Culture Instruction, religious facilities), but now with the aim of integration in society rather than facilitating return migration.

This Ethnic Minorities Policy was formulated and implemented in a strongly technocratic structure (Guiraudon 1997; Scholten 2007). There was a strong belief amongst policy-makers and researchers that this issue could be effectively resolved through a rational mode of societal steering. On the one hand, policy-makers and politicians were eager to develop policy measures but also to keep this a non-partisan issue, and on the other hand social scientists were strongly policy-oriented and carried a strong social engagement with the position of minorities. The iron-triangles that had thus far prevented the development of a Minorities Policy, were now punctuated by this ‘technocratic symbiosis’. Responsibility for policy coordination now shifted to the Department of Home Affairs that claimed authority over this issue as migrants had been reframed as permanent minorities in Dutch society. In developing the Minorities Memorandum that was issued in 1983, it worked closely with specific scientific advisory bodies such as the Scientific Council for Government Policy and the Advisory Committee on Minorities Research. Moreover, there was a policy of cooptation of ethnic elites through actively stimulating the development of minorities organisations, that could advise government and were consulted on a regular basis by government.

However, this policy paradigm also came under growing pressure by the end of the 1980s. Forced by an economic recession and rising unemployment levels, government had been implementing a politics of retrenchment in many domains. Immigrant integration had been effectively excluded from this retrenchment politics as it was argued that especially in these difficult times it was vital that special measures for migrants were continued. However, the deterioration of the social-economic position of migrants during the 1980s eventually forced a reconsideration of this Dutch paradigm of integration as well.

#### *Towards a liberal-egalitarian Integration Policy*

In the early 1990s, the Minorities Policy was reframed into an Integration Policy that stressed social-economic participation of immigrants as citizens or ‘allochthonous’ rather than emancipation of minorities. Rather than categorizing migrants on a group level based on ethno-cultural traits, migrants were categorized on an individual basis based on foreign



descent. The causal story about the relation between social-economic participation and social-cultural emancipation was now reversed, with social-economic improvement now being considered a condition for a better position in the social-cultural sphere as well. The normative perspective of being a multicultural society shifted to the background in this period, with much more stress being put on the relation between immigrant integration and maintaining a viable welfare state. Clearly, the multiculturalist perspective of the 1980s was now exchanged for a more liberal-egalitarian perspective. Promoting ‘good’ or ‘active’ citizenship now became the primary policy goal, stimulating individual migrants to live up to their civic rights as well as their duties and to become economically independent participants in society.

This ‘new’ paradigm of immigrant integration also entailed a different policy structure, which was much less centralized and unitary than in the 1980s. The new ‘Integration Policy’ focused much less on group-specific policies but more on the intensification of general policies in spheres as labour, education and housing. This meant that the central coordination by the Home Affairs Department became much weaker to the benefit of other sectoral Departments. Also, immigrant integration now became more and more politicized, such as in a broad national minorities debate in 1991 and 1992 that was triggered by Bolkestein, then the leader of the main opposition party in parliament. The role of social scientific research changed as well, as the research-policy nexus that had played such an important role in the 1980s was de-institutionalized. Clearly, the technocratic structure that has supported the multiculturalist Minorities Policy was now replaced by a more open and politicized policy structure as the basis for the more liberal-egalitarian Integration Policy.

However, this paradigm also would not last for more than a decade or so. Although the social-economic position of migrants would ameliorate significantly in the 1990s, this did not mean the ‘success’ of this policy. Instead, attention would be drawn again much more to the cultural dimension of integration, although in a very different way than in the 1980s.

#### *The assimilationist turn and the Integration Policy New Style*

Whereas the Netherlands remained internationally renowned for its multiculturalist policies (even after the liberal-egalitarian turn of the early 1990s!), an assimilationist turn took place in Dutch integration policy at the start of the new Millennium. In fact, a (second) broad national debate took place in 2000, in response to claims that Dutch policy had become a ‘multicultural tragedy’ (Scheffer, 2000). Also, the populist politician Fortuyn made the alleged failure of the Dutch integration approach into one of his central political issues. This

set in motion a gradual assimilationist turn, which was codified in an ‘Integration Policy New Style.’ Whereas the Integration Policy had stressed ‘active citizenship’, the Integration Policy ‘New Style’ stressed rather the ‘common citizenship’ of migrants, which meant that ‘the unity of society must be found in what members have in common (..) that is that people speak Dutch, and that one abides to basic Dutch norms’ (TK 2003-2004, 29203, nr. 1: 8.). Persisting social-cultural differences were now considered a hindrance to immigrant integration. Moreover, the integration policy was more and more linked to a broader public and political concern about the preservation of national identity and social cohesion in Dutch society: integration was just as much about the integration of the Dutch society as such as about the integration of migrants in this society.

More than ever before, immigrant integration now became an issue of high politics. In response to the Fortuyn revolt, government tried to restore public confidence in Dutch politics. It developed, what has been described as, an ‘articulation function’ (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2004: 201), which means that it actively tried to articulate popular ideas and concerns to avoid being blamed for ignoring the voice from the street. Others have described this as ‘hyperrealism’, ‘in which the courage of speaking freely about specific problems and solutions has become simply the courage to speak freely itself’ (Prins 2002). As such, problem framing was geared not by a logic of minorities (as in the 1980s) or a logic of equity (as in the 1990s), but rather by majority’s logic (Vasta 2007). The role of ethnic elites was marginalized, and government only very selectively utilized scientific expertise for legitimizing its new policy approach.

This ‘assimilationist turn’ in Dutch integration policies seems to be again on its return since a new government was installed in 2006. More than in the Integration Policy New Style, immigrant integration is now connected to Urban Policy and to Neighborhood Policies, somewhat away from the more symbolic facets of national integration policies and issues of national identity.

### ***3. The Dutch approach contested***

This historical reconstruction clearly indicates that there was not one Dutch ‘model’ of immigrant integration. It reveals a pattern of punctuated equilibrium, with periods of relative stability when policy was based on a particular problem paradigm, interrupted by paradigm-shifts that led to very different ways of understanding immigrant integration. However, this does not mean that even within these periods of relative stability, the Dutch approach was

always unambiguous and generally accepted. In fact, there are many indications that the Dutch approach(es) have been contested on many occasions. Firstly, there are clear indications of inconsistencies and even conflicts between the approaches that were adopted in various periods. In various respects, the policies from various periods even seem to have contradicted each other. Secondly, there have constantly been powerful alternative paradigms and policy advocates challenging the prevailing model of integration. The Dutch approach to immigrant integration seems to have been inherently contested for most of the past decades.

### *The historical inconsistencies of Dutch immigrant policy*

More than just discontinuity, there have also been clear contradictions between the policy approaches adopted over the past decades. Policies in different periods framed the integration issue and achieved policy results that, at least in some respects, conflicted with other periods. This has inspired protracted debates about policy effectiveness. Only recently, the Blok-committee wondered that although the integration process was advancing rather successfully, if this was perhaps more despite of than thanks to the policy efforts of preceding decades (Blok-committee 2004).

An early but very influential instance of conflict between the different proposes is related to the reluctance of government until well into the 1970s to develop a policy aimed at permanent residence and integration. Until then, migrants were framed as temporary guests and various measures were taken to facilitate return migration and sometimes to inhibit rather than promote integration. For instance, residential segregation was in some cases promoted and the group-specific facilities for Immigrant Minority Language and Culture Instruction and also the structures for group interest representation were aimed at keeping group structures and cultural identities as much as possible in tact. Later, this approach conflicted in many respects with the various approached aimed at integration in Dutch society; not only the group-specific facilities but also the framing of temporary residence and preservation of cultural identities were powerful legacies to be confronted by later policies.

Another issue of protracted conflict has been the labelling or ‘social construction’ of migrants as policy target groups. Migrants have been defined based on national origin (until the 1970s), as ethnic or cultural minorities (1980s), and as ‘allochthonous’ or plainly new ‘citizens’ (since 1990s). These labels not only differed but also conflicted as for instance the labelling as national groups stressed the connections with the country of origin whereas the minorities-label stresses the position within the country of settlement. Furthermore, the group-focus of the label of ethnic minorities conflicted with the more individual-focus of the label of

Allochthonous. In this respect, Rath (1991, 2001) has rightly argued that the social construction of minorities has inadvertently contributed to the process of ‘minorisation.’ By labelling social-economic deprivation in ethno-cultural terms and developing various specific facilities for minority-groups, government policy in the 1980s would have contributed to the reification of ethno-cultural cleavages in society rather than to the bridging of these cleavages.

The inconsistencies and even contradictions in policy approaches from various periods have been most pronounced in the sphere of cultural integration. Whereas in the 1980s, the preservation of cultural identity was seen as an important condition for the cultural emancipation of minorities in Dutch society, over the past decade cultural diversity has become increasingly seen as an obstacle for integration. Linked to the history of pillarization, the belief was initially that minorities could emancipate in Dutch society as a group of community similar to the emancipation of national minorities decades earlier. Later, government has become more and more reluctant to intervene in the cultural sphere. In the early nineties, government already ‘de-coupled’ social-cultural and social-economic integration, with the former being attributed to the private sphere and government concentrating primarily on the latter. Since the turn of the Millennium, the social-cultural sphere has again become more central in government policies, but now with the aim of cultural adaptation rather than cultural emancipation. This reversal is aptly illustrated by a statement in a recent policy memorandum on the ‘Integration Policy New Style’ (TK 2003-2004, 29203, nr. 1: 8):

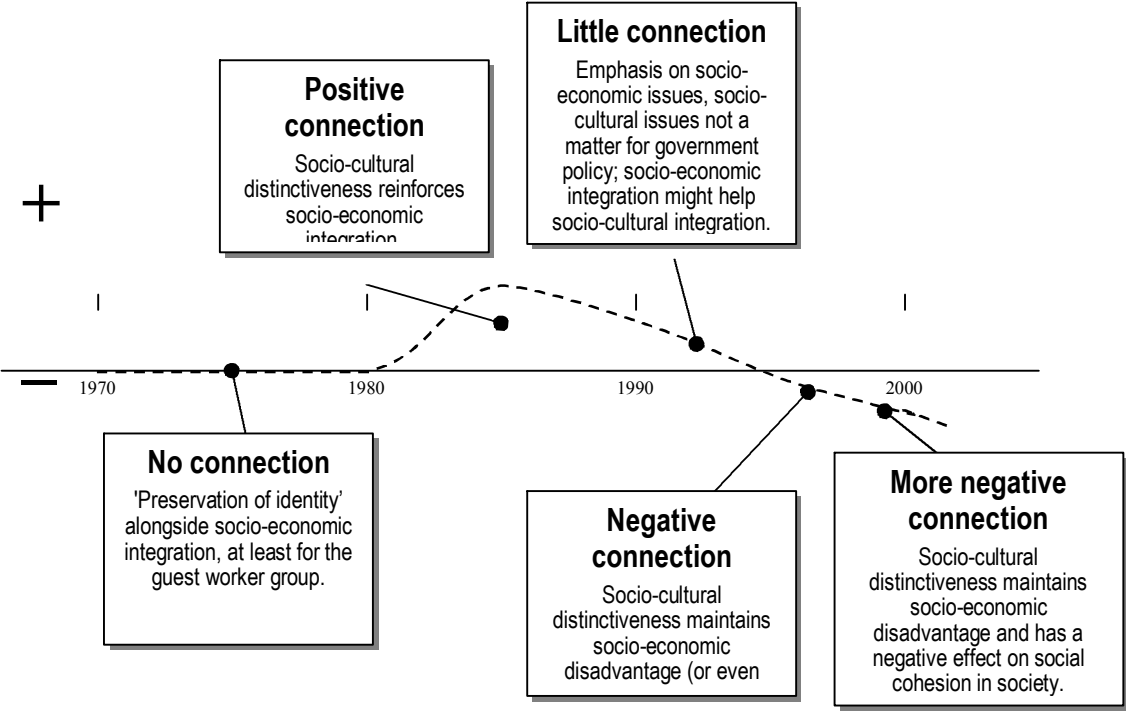
The Integration Policy has always put great stress on the acceptance of differences between minorities and the native population. There is nothing wrong with that, but it has often been interpreted as if the presence of allochthonous minority groups in itself would have been valuable, an enrichment tout court. One disregards that not everything that is different is also valuable. With the cultivation of the own cultural identities it is not possible to bridge differences. The unity of our society must be found in what the members have in common. That is (...) that they are citizens of one society. (...) Common citizenship involves that people speak Dutch, and that one abides to basic Dutch norms.

However, recent research shows that the ‘toughening’ of the discourse on immigrant integration and the need for assimilation is also triggering unforeseen effects. Instead of

furthering the bridging of social-cultural differences, the discourse on cultural assimilation seems to be contributing to the reification of social-cultural cleavages. Not only has the subjective perception by migrants of their degree of integration decreased, there also seems to be a growing proliferation of social-cultural differences (Entzinger, 2008). In particular the subjective perception of cultural distance between migrants and natives seems to have increased over the past years instead of decreased, in contrast to many indications that social-economic distance has declined. What stands out from recent research, is that especially the debate about Islam has made religion a more prominent ‘marker’ of cultural difference than before. As such, the Dutch debate about the alleged ‘clash of civilisations’ may inadvertently contribute to this clash becoming a reality more than ever before.

In sum, over time, and mainly as a result of the variation in the socio-cultural objectives, there were significant shifts in the policy visions regarding the relationship between the socio-economic position of minorities on the one hand and their socio-cultural position on the other. These shifts are presented diagrammatically in Figure 1, which shows that cultural distinctiveness is perceived increasingly often as a problem.

Figure 1: *Policy views on the connection between socio-cultural position and socio-economic position in the course of time*



*Controversies over the various approaches*

Whereas the Netherlands has become internationally known for its multiculturalist approach, this 'model' has been constantly challenged in the Netherlands by several alternative approaches. At several occasions, this erupted in public controversies in which various alternatives collided.

A first controversy emerged already in the late 1980s, after the publication of a report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 1989). Although this report had been officially requested by government, the Scientific Council proposed a much more fundamental policy change than had been expected by government. Instead of policy adaptation on various accounts, it denounced the current policy approach as ineffective, and asked for policy change towards a more individual focused social-economic approach. Behind the curtains, this report and the government advisory request for the report had been triggered by politicians and members of the WRR who advocated a politics of welfare state retrenchment. Welfare state reform had led to more activating policies in various domains, but not in the domain of immigrant integration. With this 'scientific advise', these actors managed to put an alternative policy paradigm on the agenda.

This report, both its content and its 'tone', triggered fierce controversy, also within the scientific community. The established Advisory Committee on Minorities Policy issued a counter-report (ACOM, 1989) in which it denounced the WRR report as 'a report inspired by science rather than a scientific report'. In terms of its content, the report had put too much stress on the individual deficiencies of migrants in terms of their social-economic participation, while ignoring the more structural causes of social-economic deprivation of minorities. In terms of tone, the report would have been too much policy-oriented, dissociated from the established scientific status quo, and potentially damaging for the position of minorities and the relation between researchers and minorities (ibid:25). Moreover, the way in which the 1979 WRR-report and the policies of the 1980s were depicted as a full continuation of the 1970s policy of integration with preservation of one's own identity' was clearly wrong. As early as in 1979, "when policy-makers recognised that guest workers were permanent rather than temporary, the notion of 'integration with preservation of own identity' was explicitly rejected as a guideline for integration policy. Back in 1979, the Scientific Council for Government Policy had rejected the idea of creating new 'pillars' for newcomers. It recognised that the 'preservation of own identity' seemed to fit well in the Dutch tradition of religious pillarisation, but a pillarisation strategy was seen as too much of an excuse for government inaction. 'Preservation of own identity' needed to be replaced by a more active encouragement of minorities to participate in Dutch society (WRR, 1979:XXI). Second, when

the term 'multicultural' was used in early Dutch integration discourse, this was only in a descriptive sense to coin the increasing ethnic diversity of Dutch society, but not with the normative connotation that we attribute to it today (Penninx, 2005:5)" (Vink, 2007:344).

Although the 1989 report triggered broad debate, it would take several years before it would see more fundamental policy changes in the direction it had suggested. What is important is that this controversy shows that there was, already in this early stage, a powerful counter-discourse to the 'multicultural model' - and the alleged protagonists of this model claimed that they themselves said farewell to the multicultural model already in 1979!

Another conflict of paradigms took place just after the turn of the millennium. Fuelled by debate on the 'multicultural tragedy' in 2000, the public unrest that followed the terrorist attacks against the U.S. on 11 September, 2001, and the rise of the populist politician Pim Fortuyn who was murdered on the eve of national elections (2002), immigrant integration had returned on the political agenda. Many political parties now denounced the policies that had been conducted thus far as a failure. In this explosive setting, parliament established an ad hoc parliamentary investigative committee, the Blok Committee (named after its chairman mr. Blok) to find out why the integration policy had failed and to offer proposals for a more successful integration policy.

In its report, 'Building Bridges,' the committee came up with some contradictory findings. To a large extent, its findings were based on a fact-finding study commissioned to the Verwey-Jonker Institute to scrutinize the existing literature on integration policy. The findings of the institute challenged the common opinion that the integration policy was a failure, and instead considered it relatively successful, especially in what it believed to be the key domains of integration: education and labour. The Blok Committee deliberated on the study's findings and held a series of public hearings and interviews with experts in the field. It concluded that immigrant integration had in fact been a 'total or partial success' (Blok, 2004: 105). The evidence of progress in education and labour supported this conclusion, although the committee claimed that this success would be due to the efforts of involved stakeholders rather than the policy itself.

These findings contrasted sharply with the negative tone of public and political debate on immigrant integration. The committee was criticized for introducing a bias in its findings by focusing on socio-economic facets and disregarding cultural and religious aspects of

immigrant integration. The committee's evaluation of immigrant integration initiated deeper disagreements about the nature of immigrant integration.

Rather than resolving the ongoing controversies, the committee instead became the target of controversy. Although many of its instrumental recommendations were eventually adopted by parliament, its most fundamental conclusion about the success of the integration process was widely and often strongly rejected. Disputes emerged in the midst of the committee proceedings about the members' supposed bias and a conflict of interest with the institute that commissioned the study. Specifically, debate emerged about the choice to ask the experts of the Verwey-Jonker Institute to evaluate this policy, as these experts would have been involved in policy making. Furthermore, leading politicians rejected the committee findings, because they were disappointed that the committee had not looked at cultural problems that were now so central to the ongoing debate.

At the heart of this controversy was a collision between different paradigms of integration. The investigative committee adopted a paradigm of integration that stressed social-economic participation, resembling the dominant policies of the Integration Policy in the 1990s. In contrast, many public intellectuals and political parties, including those involved in the two successive Centre-Right Governments that were established in 2002 and 2003, had embraced a more (mono)culturalist paradigm of integration, to which issues as coping with religious and cultural differences were much more central. In fact, as Entzinger argues (2005), the collision between these two paradigms seems to have characterized public and political debate on immigrant integration in the Netherlands already since the early 1990s, showing that there has not been one Dutch model, but at least two constantly rivalling discourses on immigrant integration.

The apparently deep-seated differences about what should be the Dutch 'model' of integration made it impossible to reach agreement on if, and if so why, Dutch integration policy had to be evaluated as either a success or failure. Whereas one actor may look at educational achievements and conclude that policy was successful, another may look at religious differences and conclude that it was a failure.

#### **4. The persistent image of Dutch multiculturalism**

Our analysis of the Dutch model(s) of immigrant integration shows that there is a strong discontinuity in terms of the paradigms that have been adopted over the past decades, and that there is ongoing controversy between at least various policy paradigms. The idea that there would be only one dominant Dutch 'model', one strongly influenced by multiculturalism, was



clearly discarded. Yet, how can we then account for the persistent image that there would be one dominant multicultural ‘model’ in the Netherlands?

### *Path-dependent policy practices*

One possible explanation for the persistent image of Dutch multiculturalism, is that there is much more continuity in actual social and policy practices in the domain of integration than there has been in political and policy discourse. This means that the discontinuity in formal paradigms of integration, as adopted in government policies, has not entirely trickled down to the levels where these formal paradigms are implemented. The discontinuity in formal ‘national’ policy contrasts with much more continuity that can be found on other policy levels.

In fact, there is much evidence that social practices that were initiated in the 1980s were continued until well after the multicultural policies of the Minorities Policy had been formally abandoned. For instance, Immigrant Language and Culture Instruction continued, although in slightly different forms and with different wordings of its rationale, until after the turn of the Millennium. Whereas its goal was initially formulated as contributing to identity formation of migrants within the Dutch multicultural society, its rationale was reframed in the 1990s in terms of ‘language-transition’ by first mastering the mother-tongue language as support for the subsequent apprehension of Dutch as second language.

Another practice that was continued until well after the 1980s, was the institutionalized practice of consultation with migrant organisations. At first, the establishment of migrant organisations and a National Consultatory and Advisory Structure for Minorities had the objective of democratically involving migrants in policy-making processes. In the 1990s, the institutional involvement of migrant organisations was largely continued, although its advisory function was gradually marginalized. More recently, an important rationale for maintaining this form of institutionalized ‘multiculturalism’ is that migrant organisations provide channels for debate when incidents, such as the murder of the film-maker Van Gogh, trigger broad public and political controversy. Also in other fields, there are signs of path-dependency, such as in the existence of broadcast media for migrant groups and in the establishment of Islamic schools under the Dutch regulations concerning special and public education. However, the meaning and the use of these policies and the opportunities offered to migrants have radically shifted over time.

### *Pillarization discourse*

Many of these ‘path-dependent policy practices’ seem to reflect the tradition of pillarisation in Dutch society (Lijphart, 1968). Pillarization involved the historical effort to emancipate national minorities (Catholics, Protestants, Socialists, Liberals) into Dutch society through their own institutionalized ‘pillars’ with for every group specific organisations, political parties, schools, media, etc. Indeed, the Dutch approach to the integration of immigrant minorities as developed in the 1980s carries a resemblance to this emancipation of national minorities in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This concerns for instance the establishment of specific schools and broadcast media for ethnic minorities.

Yet, the continuity between pillarization and immigrant integration policy should be questioned. First of all, at the time of the formulation of Dutch immigrant integration policies in the end of the 1970s, Dutch society was going through a process of depillarization that had already set in during as early as the 1960s. Secondly, it has remained highly contested whether there ever were any serious signs of pillarization amongst minority groups. Minority groups never come even close to the level of organization as well as the numerical position that national minorities obtained in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also, claims that an Islamic pillar would be forming have been renounced as the institutionalization of Islam in the Netherlands appears to be a highly selective and fragmented process: “A great deal has happened, but at the same time a great deal has not. In view of the ideal-typical model of Dutch pillarisation, Islamic daily and weekly papers might have been expected, and Islamic secondary and special schools, maternity clinics, hospitals, care homes, swimming clubs, trade unions, pressure groups, housing associations, political parties, emigration foundations, and so on and so forth, but in practice none of them are in evidence. Contrary to what some spokesmen are keen to claim, in terms of institutional arrangements, there is no question of an Islamic pillar in the Netherlands, or at least one that is in any way comparable to the Roman Catholic or Protestant *pillars in the past*” (Rath *et al.*, 1999:59).

Third, this still leaves open the possibility of what Vink (2007) describes as a ‘pillarisation reflex’. This means that, when faced with the issue of immigrant incorporation at the end of the 1970s, Dutch policy-makers and researchers resorted to the traditional frame of pillarization for providing meaning to the new issue of immigrant integration. This explanation also seems to be only partly valid, as few policy-makers in the 1980s really embraced pillarisation as a normative ideal. In fact, as Vink argues (*ibid*: 344-345), defining slogans as ‘integration with preservation of cultural identity’ were rejected already at this early stage; only later this slogan would be projected on this period in public and academic

discourse. In addition, pillarisation nor multiculturalism were really embraced as normative ideals (contrary to what Koopmans et al. claim by referring to the “Dutch national ideology of multiculturalism”, 2005:245) but rather in a more descriptive sense referring to the increase of diversity in society. Thus, the references to pillarisation or multiculturalism seem to have been much more pragmatic than normative.

Fourth, this leaves us with the some obvious parallels between pillarisation and early immigrant integration policy. It seems that several generic legacies of pillarisation, rather than allegedly pillarizing immigrant integration policies, account for these similarities, in particular the constitutional right to establish (state-funded) religious schools and broadcast media, etc.

Yet, even these generic institutional legacies of pillarization seem to have been losing ground during recent decades. Pillarism no longer has part in how contemporary Dutch society defines itself and how social cohesion is maintained. Instead, there is a renewed preoccupation with ‘norms’ and ‘values’ that would characterize Dutch society and define its national identity. This was, for instance, the rationale of a broad national ‘norms-and-values debate’ in 2003-4, and the reevaluation of such national norms and values has remained an important objective of government policy inspired by communitarianist thinking.

Contemporary Dutch society is ‘re-imagining’ itself as a national community (Anderson, 1991), and in this re-imagined community there is much less place for cultural diversity than in the period of pillarization. In fact, the re-imagination of the Dutch community seems to be taking place as a reaction against immigration and growing diversity, rather than as an attempt to include diversity as part of the Netherlands as an open ‘immigration society.’ The heated debates of the past ten years seem more due to increased monoculturalism in the Netherlands - the native-born Dutch, framing their country in terms of a progressive ‘moral majority’- than with whatever kind of multiculturalist model (Duyvendak, Pels and Rijkschroeff 2009).

### *Pragmatic ‘multiculturalism’*

Another explanation for the persistence of some group-specific policies is of more pragmatic nature. Whereas the discontinuity in national policy discourse was triggered by various focus events and the sharp politicization of immigrant integration over the past decades, the local level where much of the integration policy is implemented, seems characterized by a more pragmatic mode of problem-coping and a more instrumental policy logic. In this respect, national and local integration policies seem partly to have followed different policy logics.

An important instance of divergence in this respect concerns the recognition of ethno-cultural groups and minorities organisations. In the early nineties, government formally

adopted a more color-blind citizenship approach, approaching migrants as citizens rather than as ethnic or cultural groups. This citizenship approach meant that various group-specific, tailor-made projects would have to be abolished. Yet, in practice, there has been a continued proliferation of such group-specific projects (De Zwart and Poppelaars, 2007; see De Zwarts chapter in this book). Often, there is a pragmatic need for policy practitioners to focus on specific groups and cooperate with migrant organizations, to be able to ‘reach’ the policy target groups and to acquire relevant knowledge and information about these groups (Poppelaars and Scholten, 2008).

Although these local practices often imply the de-facto recognition of cultural groups, it would be a mistake to consider them as real multicultural policies. Rather, they form more pragmatic attempts to conduct effective policies on the local level. They are not informed by an ideology of multiculturalism nor by a legacy of pillarisation, but rather by the more pragmatic need to recognize groups and develop tailor-made projects to conduct effective effective policies and to, as the mayor of the City of Amsterdam aptly phrases it, ‘keep things together.’ They do show, however, that the ‘citizenship-approach’ that emerged in the 1990s did not institutionalize as a coherent policy model either. Neither the multicultural paradigm of the 1980s nor the citizenship approach of the 1990s did become a true ‘national model.’

## **5. Conclusions**

Koopmans et al. label the Dutch situation as cultural pluralist, even as increasingly pluralist (2005:73). Their claim of a Dutch multicultural ‘model’ is based on a misleading linear idea of continuity and coherence in (Dutch) policies. In order to claim this continuity, they have to highly exaggerate pluralist practices in the Netherlands. Koopmans et al. suggest for instance that affirmative action, one of their main indicators for cultural differences and group rights, has been an important tool in both the private and the public sector to enhance the labour market situation of migrants, However, in practice affirmative action has been highly controversial, the effective implementation of priority hiring of migrants has been rare and laws for monitoring the (lack of) progress of migrant participation in the work force have even been abolished. Second, as they acknowledge themselves, as far as religious pluralist practices did develop, these had little to do with integration policies: “To an important extent, the extension of multicultural rights to minorities in the Netherlands is based on the heritage of pillarization.”(2005:71) As far as migrants developed specific, categorical provisions that was thanks to the general Dutch institutional framework.

Koopmans et al. label pillarization as “multiculturalism avant la lettre” and by doing so, they imply that after pillarization, the Netherlands has known a period of full-blown multiculturalism, in which the institutional framework of pillarization played an important role. This is not an accurate reading of the past, however. Researchers who mistake the pillarised institutional heritage for policies intentionally developed by new generations of politicians, will never give a good picture of the actual situation in the Netherlands, a country that changed so rapidly in and after the 1960s. In contrast with the claims of the authors mentioned at the start of this chapter, the Dutch government was not willing to finance religious self-organisations of migrants (apart from, since 1983, activities of an explicitly non-religious but socio-cultural nature). In the first place this had to do with the diminishing importance of religious organisations in a depillarising country and the acknowledged separation of church and state. In the second place there was an idea that religious organisations were perhaps the least well equipped to form a ‘bridge’ to society. Religious organisations were assumed, after all, to keep people in isolation. In these kinds of organisations there are some who do indeed also acquire social capital, but they are mainly deployed as a tool for keeping an eye on one’s own supporters, according to the dominant idea (Sunier 2000).

Whereas Joppke, Koopmans, Sniderman & Hagendoorn depict the Netherlands as a country that values pluralist concepts of citizenship, it is the exact opposite that has occurred: since the 1990s, the Dutch are becoming less willing to make room for cultural differences. In fact, they are very concerned about the pluralist institutional framework that still exists as a consequence of the era of pillarisation; therefore a majority of the native Dutch want to amend the constitutional law in order to prevent the spread of Muslim schools. Where the history of pillarisation initially appeared to accommodate forms of pluralism, a homogenising tendency set in. Since this homogenisation is based on a set of rather progressive values, the value gap within particular Muslim migrants is big - bigger than in other countries where the majority culture is less progressive.

The image of the Netherlands as a liberal, neutral (or even multicultural) country that has been confronted with the limits of its own tolerance is just partly correct. As argued above, integration policies at large never emphasised religious identities. Moreover, the maintenance of whatever kind of ‘original’ identities was already disregarded in the late 1980s. That ‘culture’ is given so much attention today is not because of a Dutch appreciation of ‘culturally *pluriform* policies’ but rather precisely the opposite: the Netherlands has rapidly

become culturally homogeneous and more *uniform* – as far as the majority population is concerned. Whereas in many other countries there is serious division of the majority population in public and political opinion on matters of gender, and definitely on matters of sexuality, almost the entire political spectrum of the majority population in the Netherlands supports progressive values.

All these fundamental changes and internal differences in the Dutch debate, clearly show that it does not make any sense to label the Dutch approach to immigrant integration as ‘multiculturalist’, let alone to speak in terms of a multicultural ‘model’. Our analysis shows that the Dutch approach has, in contrast, been inherently contested over the past decades. This contested nature immigrant integration in the Netherlands seems to explain the often heated debates within and outside the Netherlands on the alleged Dutch multiculturalist approach. The coexistence of sometimes fundamental different ideas or ‘frames’ of immigrant integration has at times led to deep controversies in politics, public debate as well as in the scientific community. Whereas from one frame the integration process could be seen as a success, from another frame it may very well be considered a complete failure at the same time. Thus, the contested nature of immigrant integration has given rise to ‘dialogues of the deaf’ between very different ideas about immigrant integration and about what would have been or what should be the Dutch ‘model.’

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