CANADIAN DIVERSITY CANADIENNE

Dutch Nightmare? The End of Multiculturalism?

Once upon a time, the Dutch republic had been rightly famous, comparatively speaking, for its advanced regime of toleration. Centuries later, in the 1970s and 80s, Dutch multiculturalism served, together with Sweden in Europe and, obviously, Canada and Australia, as a model for incorporation policies. Already during the 1990s things had changed considerably, but since 9/11 the right-wing populist campaign of Pim Fortuyn, his assassination, and recently that of Theo van Gogh, a dramatic change occurred first in political rhetoric and increasingly also in policy recommendations and actual implementation of new policies.

Now the government of the Netherlands (see Doomernik)[1] is a forerunner of *restrictive immigration policies* in all dimensions: applicants for *asylum* (strict implementation of Dublin agreements, making air carriers responsible for rigged documents, 'short' procedures, abolishing rights of appeal by rejected asylum seekers, expelling 'non-expellable' asylum-seekers from retention-centres); *family-reunification* (higher age requirements for spouses, 21) and required income-guarantees (120% of minimum wage) following the Danish example (Bird), together with such outlandish proposals as language and integration courses on CD-ROM in the 'Rif' (on their own costs) and multiple choice tests via Internet or by long distance calls; getting at and expelling long-term 'white illegal residents' (*koppelingswet* 1998, extremely restrictive legalization, denying education and medical assistance to their kids); policies of zero labour-immigration combined with a new guestworker regime for highly skilled professionals.

In addition Dutch *incorporation policies* are increasingly dominated by these restrictive immigration concerns as well as by security and loyalty: making denizenship-status more insecure – e.g. by requiring obligatory integration courses for long term, 'non-Western' (so-called '*allochtoon*') permanent residents (minister Verdonk in June 2004 in parliament: till the age of 75 or 80, recently changed: for all residents till 65, including 'Western' ones) on their own costs and threatening expulsion in case of not passing the tests (as in the case of committing serious crimes); sharpening naturalization-requirements, restricting dual nationality and threatening to withdraw Dutch nationality in cases of presumed 'crimes against the state'. Both policies (are explicitly meant to) reinforce each other in a malign spiral. They are aggressively promoted in the EU, turning the Dutch government from a forerunner of fairly decent integration policies into a coalition partner of Austria, Denmark and other countries in the threatening race to the bottom. What happened to the Netherlands, and how can it be explained? The predominant answer *inside* NL, like in Germany and other countries is simple: a broad coalition of 'politically incorrect' politicians (in the tradition of Bolkestein and Fortuyn), political journalists (Paul Scheffer) and even social scientists (Ruud Koopmans) make multicultural policies (MCP) in all varieties, not only the rigid, 'corporatist polder' version, responsible for the 'multicultural drama' (recently even for the murder of Theo van Gogh). In addition, they are joined from abroad by *French republican assimilationists* like Kepel and *English liberal assimilationists* like Trevor Phillips selling their preferred, biased models of incorporation informed by an idealized picture of their countries' policies.

Obviously, the retreat of MCP is neither an exclusively Dutch phenomenon (see Lithman for Norway, Bird for Denmark, Ricucci for Italy) nor an exclusively European one (Jakubowicz for Australia) though it might have happened here faster and, at least in political rhetorics, more drastically. In addition, MCP are not in retreat "across-the-board" (see Biles/Ibrahim/Tolley, Kymlicka, and Jedwab for Canada), not in all policy-fields (see Kymlicka for Dutch military and, one could add, police), not in the same way at the local level (Lithman) and, obviously, not as quickly and drastically in actual policies compared with predominant political talk that might only send signals to voters rather than scrapping MCP (Bauböck). Yet MCP have a hard time in most countries, even if there is no general roll-back and no 'general backlash against diversity'. The reasons for this are too complex to be dealt with in a short introduction. Apart from global changes in the economic and political opportunity-structure, (war against) terrorism in particular (Bader), processes and policies of *immigration* and processes and policies of *incorporation* are crucial.[2]

Successful adoption and implementation of MCP depends on processes and policies of *immigration,* the selection of the 'right or wrong' immigrants, on three conditions in particular (Kymlicka); whether states are able to prevent (i) massive illegal migration (due to good geo-political luck and/or to prudent immigration policies); (ii) massive immigration of groups that are (perceived as) "carriers of illiberal cultural practices that violate norms of human rights"; (iii) massive immigration of people that are (perceived to be) an economic burden. In all three regards, the traditional distinction between classical immigration countries like Australia, Canada and the U.S. and European countries is still important for two reasons. First, they are either surrounded by huge oceans or land borders that can be controlled (the American-Mexican border is, in contrast to the predominant rhetoric, in my view, as open or closed as it fits the U.S.) so that they are

able to prevent large-scale illegal immigration, whereas European States have many more geo-political problems in this regard (several states with different capabilities and policies to control land-borders even after attempts to homogenize policies in the enlarging EU; the Mediterranian Sea). Second, most *European countries* are confronted with the medium- and long-term consequences of post-colonial and/or guest-worker regimes selecting people that have been perceived as unwelcome and, eventually also as an economic burden (Lithman for Norway, Bird for Denmark). When they finally learned that 'guestworkers' came to stay and, grudgingly, declared themselves to be immigration countries, the economic tie had completely changed and no space has been left or created for new 'wanted' labour-migrants.

With or without (extremely restrictive) immigration policies they continue to select the 'wrong' migrants (largely by family reunification). *Classical immigration countries* had official immigration policies right from the start. Only after WW2 they, grudgingly, revised their racist policies, redefining the 'unwelcome' and, at the same time, their predominant conceptions of national culture and identity (officially in Canada and Australia, not in the U.S. that never embraced MCP). Yet they continued to select the economically 'wanted'. To the degree that these policies have been successful, they took a lot of pressure from processes and policies of incorporation. MC policies had comparatively better chances because they were not confronted with much higher (perceived) risks that are "unlikely to change in the near future" (Kymlicka). Better chances, however, are no guarantee for long-term success of MPC, as the Australian retreat (neglected by Kerkyasharian) demonstrates.

Processes of incorporation of immigrants run more smoothly to the degree that states succeed in selecting the 'wanted and welcome' migrants. Nevertheless, *incorporation policies* are faced with more or less serious dilemmas and trade-offs (Bader) whether they are traditionally assimilationist, newly 'liberal assimilationist', multiculturalist or 'diversity'-guided. Again, the distinction between traditional immigration countries and European nation-states has not lost all importance, despite how often this might be claimed and repeated. *Immigration countries* traditionally have easy naturalization procedures whereas European states needed quite some time, and some like Germany much more than others, before achieving this. In immigration countries, the core definitions of national culture and identity have been less narrowly ethnocentric though it took much time and protracted struggles to make them less WASP. All *European states,* given the important differences between them, long resisted such processes of cultural pluralization even (or maybe even very strongly) in the case of France (Wenden) where the official declarations of a purely civil and political culture and national identity have easily been deciphered as 'chauvinist universalism'. Some countries reluctantly embraced MC as official policy but clearly failed to root these policies in a more culturally plural and relationally neutral political culture, in common civic-political activities and identities (Bauböck, Lithman for Norway).

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Responses to 9/11 and to dramatized problems of 'integration of immigrants' showed that MCP lacked strong majority support (certainly compared to the broad public support in Canada: Jedwab, Biles et al.) and renewed attempts to create a thick 'national *Leitkultur*' (Lithman for Norway; Bird for Denmark, see Austria, Germany, NL) demonstrate that ethnic nationalism has been barely hidden under the surface of MC-rhetoric. Australia, again, shows that this is not confined to European countries (Jakubowicz). The lack of such deeply rooted public support, in combination with drastic changes in predominant political talk – making MCP responsible for all failures of actual incorporation processes – has a huge impact on the *perception* of the risks, mentioned above, even if immigration in absolute and relative terms is fairly marginal, as in Norway and Denmark. It 'makes us see' immigrants, even second generation immigrants, as unwanted burdens and 'culturally remote', 'unadaptable and illiberal foreigners' that threaten the rule of law, 'our democracy', 'our welfare states', 'our culture', and 'our security' (all over Europe that means nowadays: 'as Muslims').

Against this background, the 'diagnosis' and 'explanation' of the perceived disaster of *Dutch integration policies* as caused by MCP is at first sight really astonishing because it is so obviously wrong. It neglects (i) common integration problems in European countries that result from post-colonial and guest-worker regimes, and (ii) differences in the socio-economic contexts of these countries. (iii) It dramatically overestimates the impact of all possible varieties of incorporation policies, and (iv) neglects the unintended negative side-effects of (old and new) republican and liberal assimilationist policies that are presented as the optimal alternatives. In addition, it also neglects the continuing success of MCP in Canada. (v) It does not compare the actual processes and results of incorporation in different fields and countries in a fair and detached way. Though we urgently need more quantitative and qualitative comparative research in this regard[3] – we simply do not know right now all we want and need to know – we

know enough to reject this biased, simplistic and myopic answer. Here is no place to discuss whether Dutch incorporation policies performed better or worse in terms of labour market participation and/or self-employment, housing, education, political participation, 'social' integration (e.g. friendships, rates of inter-marriage), legal incorporation, cultural toleration, transformation of public culture, etc. according to (contested) standards, compared with (which) other countries and their respective mix of integration-policies, policies that, by the way, are nowhere consistent, neither in a temporal perspective nor regarding the different levels and agencies of government.

At the zenith of the *moral and political 'integration panic'* in NL, a parliamentary commission was installed. When this commission (named after its chairperson, the VVD-MP Blok) presented its report last summer showing – as could be expected by any social scientist – a mixed picture of incorporation processes and policies clearly at odds with the now 'politically correct' MCP-bashing, the report was honed away in predominant parliamentary politics and media, and the integrity and independence of scientific institutions and advisors has been challenged. Social scientific knowledge is clearly the least welcome and has the least impact if issues are already highly politicized in the policy cycle. If Dutch incorporation processes and policies have neither been a complete success-story nor a full disaster, what went wrong with Dutch politics, politicians and may be even 'the Dutch people'?

If Dutch incorporation processes and policies have neither been a complete success-story nor a full disaster, what went wrong with Dutch politics, politicians and may be even 'the Dutch people'?

Dutch politics has been known for its *consociational* style of policy-making (elitist moderation and compromises, negotiation cum deliberation). This style did not survive – at least at the level of politics of symbolic action – the highly 'incorrect', antagonistic and populist onslaughts by Fortuyn and its numerous self-proclaimed followers or newly emerging leaders in many parties. Reckless 'competition' by increasingly personalizing political parties for the perceived right-wing and increasingly foot-loose electorate (and their assumed fiery emotion – or '*onderbuikgevoelens*') resulted in a break through the dykes of 'political correctness' and moderation. Everything can and also has to be said now by leading politicians and journalists. A well-known and in this case clearly intended side-effect is that predominant political talk and publicized opinion has a huge impact on opinions, on what can be said now by everybody, by 'the man on the street'.

Have not only Dutch politicians and journalists gone mad but 'the Dutch' as well? Have the '*autochthonous*' Dutch changed in no time from virtuous and tolerant people (NL the famous 'wonderland of toleration') into an intolerant mass, burning mosques and Muslim schools? This is obviously ludicrous. They were not emphatically tolerant in the first place, as I as a long-term resident can tell you. They were no exception to the fact that all over Europe between 10-20% can be mobilized to vote for right-wing populist and/or anti-immigration parties depending on circumstances. What has dramatically changed, though, is the style of politics, the predominant political 'discourse', the type of political leadership, and the party-landscape on the right. The new 'politically correct madness', however, has a serious impact on actual policies and available long-term institutional options. Events like 9/11 and the murders of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh can trigger changes in the path of nested institutional structures. For me it is clear that there is nowadays not only, and rightly so, no way back to old corporatist, '*pillarized*' MCP, but unfortunately also no way forward from rigid, 'apartheid-like' (*Parallelgesellschaften*) to liberal, flexible and open models of incorporation like that proposed by associative democrats. Dutch politics is now under the spell of republican or liberal assimilationism and aggressive secularism. And it seems at least difficult to go back to the old regime and its 'gritting teeth toleration' that, in our dark times, has to be seen as an important virtue.

More generally speaking, I think we should stop repeating generalized success stories of the principles and official declarations of MC. We have to focus on actual risks and policy dilemmas all different varieties of incorporation policies are confronted with. We have to 'rethink' MC policies under the new conditions of skilfully managed emergency and security threats. MC-policies are certainly not without serious rivals today, not only old-style assimilationists amongst them but also recently propagated 'liberal assimilationism' and fashionable 'diversity' policies that all propose to return to homogenous and unitary citizenship. Proponents of multi-cultural citizenship and of democratic institutional pluralism should neither underestimate the public appeal of the new political discourses nor the dangers that they initiate actual policy change, eventually also on local levels.

Veit Bader, Guest Editor

Notes

[1] All references: this volume.

[2] Though incorporation of indigenous people and national minorities are often subsumed under MC and MCP (Wang for China, Bhattacharyya for India, Huat for Singapore, Bekker/Leildé for S.A., Pena for Mexico) I prefer a more narrow understanding that focuses on immigrants and accompanying ethno-religious cultural diversity because accommodation of First Nations and National Minorities requires different policies (e.g. 'bi-' or 'multi-nationalism' instead of MCP) that are not easily combined with MCP (Spoonley for NZ, Castles for Australia, Juteau and Biles/Ibrahim/Tolley for CA).

[3] The huge IMISCOE program, funded by the EU promises to deliver these data.