THE VICISSITUDES OF DUTCH INTEGRATION POLICIES

ABSTRACT

Dutch integration policies as well as the making of such policies have shown remarkable shifts and changes in the 25 years of their existence. The Dutch case has revealed a sequence of *ad hoc* policy responses in the 1970s, evolving towards a welfare state of EM policy in the 1980s, shifting to more Republicanist integration policies in the 1990s, and finally to more symbolic politics since 2002. This evolution is in line with a broader context of increased depoliticization and technocratic policy making and implementation in the early 1980s, followed by a strong politicization at the end of the 1990s. This article proposes an historical overview of the Dutch integration policies, starting with the pre-1970s era to the beginning of the 21st century.

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Introduction[1]

Dutch integration policies as well as the development of such policies have shifted remarkably since they were created 25 years ago. The Ethnic Minorities policy (EM policy) started – much like in Sweden – as a welfare state policy to stimulate equality and equity of vulnerable groups in society during the 1980s. It was developed in a relatively depoliticized political context and laid down in a number of governmental documents (Ministerie 1980, 1981, 1983). In its implementation phase, this policy led to significant policy activity in many domains during the 1980s.

Towards the end of the 1980s the public and political discourse started to look closely at the EM policy: it had "failed in important areas of labour and education," and the collective character of the policy (target groups and their emancipation) and its "overemphasis on cultural aspects" was criticized. This led to the formulation of more Republican Integration Policies in the 1990s. The new policy document (Contourennota, Ministerie 1994) thus put the emphasis on the individual rather than on the group, focused on the socio-economic aspects of integration rather than on the cultural/religious ones, and put more emphasis than had previously been done on the citizenship responsibilities of individuals in integration processes. This led to new directions of policy implementation during the 1990s, among others to a national policy of introductory courses for newcomers in Dutch society on the one hand, and to area-based policies (urban policies), on the other.

The beginning of the new century prepared a new shift in policy orientation that was by now embedded in a full-fledged politicization of the topics of immigration and integration. The perception became dominant that integration processes and policies had fundamentally failed and that social cohesion of Dutch society had become endangered. Framing these topics in this way was successfully exploited in national election campaigns in 2002, thus reinforcing the politicization of the themes. A new policy called "Integration Policy New Style" was formulated in a letter of the Minister for Aliens' Affairs and Integration (TK 2003-2004, 29203, No. 1). The diagnosis of this policy document was that the integration policy of the 1990s was no longer in synch with the societal developments. It could no longer deal effectively with continuing immigration. Ethnic minorities are too far removed from Dutch society and there are insufficient incentives for participation in society (Ministerie 2004a, 6). A series of proposals and measures have therefore flowed from this bleak portrait, significantly reducing immigration (the Netherlands has had a negative net migration balance since 2003); with these changes, mandatory forms of integration for newcomers and oldcomers alike – called neo-assimilationist by observers – have been introduced.

How could such a remarkable development take place? In the following section I will analyze in more detail what the shifts and changes meant, why they took place, which actors have been involved. As indicated above, the basic policy documents that embody such changes follow somewhat later: 1983 for EM policy (Ministerie 1983), 1994 for Integration Policy (Ministerie 1994), and 2003 for Integration Policy New Style.

Policies of the 1970s and before

In the post-war period, the Netherlands did not consider itself an immigration country. Those who happened to be there, like the guest workers, were supposed to return to their home countries.

Consequently, *ad hoc* measures for accommodation were the rule and reception facilities were short-term and scarce (Penninx 1996). (The only exception to this rule was the assimilation policy for the repatriates from the former Dutch East Indies). Accordingly, the two main policy goals were remigration and accommodation of the guest workers to the Dutch society – on the condition that they remain in the Netherlands. Maintaining migrants' own identity was thus considered important, but with the understanding that migrants would return to their countries of origin.

In the 1970s in order to respond to the needs of some vulnerable groups like guest workers, asylum seekers, migrants from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles, Moluccans and "travellers" (*woonwagenbewoners*), a welfare policy was developed mainly within the Ministry for Culture, Recreation and Social Work (CRM). Many private institutions were thereby encouraged (and subsidized) to provide welfare services to each of these groups (Molleman 2004, Blok Commission 2004, Penninx 1979). As well, service delivery for guest workers, such as housing, were supposed to be ensured by the companies employing them. With increasing family reunification and the concentration of guest workers and their families in specific urban areas, local authorities were obliged to get involved. Often municipalities took initiatives in certain areas, such as housing, education, health care and welfare, and pressured the national authorities to recognize and finance these measures. However, the guest workers did not return to their sending countries after the halt in recruitment and the economic crisis that followed in the late 1970s. On the contrary, certain migrant communities grew significantly through family and asylum migration, in particular North African and Turkish migrants. Growing unemployment of migrant workers and the arrival of their families resulted in increased demands for specific measures.

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The administrative layout of the policies described above was problematic. Different ministries were involved for different target groups and policy domains. For example, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, respon-sible for the labour market and work permits, tended to continue its work based on the temporality of migration. The Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work, responsible for general welfare, was directly confronted with the problems of reception and was therefore more aware of growing tensions; consequently, it pleaded for change. There were thus difficulties in coordinating the efforts between ministries; indeed certain rivalry even existed (Hoppe 1987, Blok Commission 2004, Penninx 1979, Scholten and Timmermans 2004).

It was also during the 1970s that scientists started to get involved. Entzinger (1975) was one of the first to draw attention to the gap between the *de facto* permanent settlement of immigrants in the country and the policy-maker's view of temporary migration. He emphasized the risk of not acknowledging the problem. In 1976, the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work established the Advisory Committee on Research on Minorities (ACOM) that brought academics in this domain together within a common policy framework.

Media, the general public, local authorities, academics and civil servants all demanded policy changes (especially following the Moluccan terrorist attacks). The *Ethnic Minorities* report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (1979) acted as a catalyst for change: it pleaded to fully recognize that a number of immigrant groups had settled permanently in the Netherlands and to create an active policy aimed at the integration of what it called "ethnic minorities" in society. In its preliminary reaction to the report (Ministerie 1980), the government accepted the advice, decided to develop an EM policy and to install a strong coordinating structure for such policy within the Ministry of Home Affairs. This new policy direction gained full parliamentary support, which was symbolized by the fact that the government coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals nominated an oppositional Labour Party politician (Henk Molleman) as Director of the Coordination Department within the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Ethnic minorities policy in the 1980s

The basic rationale of EM policy was that: specific groups in Dutch society that combined low socio-economic status with a perceived ethnic and/or cultural difference would run the risk of becoming permanently marginalized groups in society. It followed that low status immigrant groups would be specifically targeted by this policy (but not all immigrant groups), as would certain native groups such as "travellers" and long established gypsies. The main principles of the new EM policy were:

1) To achieve equality of ethnic minorities in the socio-economic domain, inclusion and participation in the political domain and equity in the domain of culture and religion within a constitutional framework;
2) It was targeted at specific groups that were regarded to be in danger of becoming distinct minorities by

virtue of their low socio-economic situation combined with their being perceived as culturally different from mainstream society: guest-workers, Moluccans, Surinamese and Antilleans, refugees, gypsies and "travellers." An important assumption was that development of (group) identity would stimulate the emancipation within the community of the group and would have a positive influence on the integration in the broader society as well;

3) The EM Policy should cover all relevant domains and ministries, and be strongly anchored in the governmental apparatus. As a result, a Department for the Coordination of Minorities Policy was created (DCIM) within the General Directorate of "Home Policies" and not within that of "Security and Order" (Molleman 2004). The idea behind placing the coordinating unit in the Ministry of Home Affairs was that it was a policy for new citizens, and therefore the ministry responsible for cities and provinces should be in charge.

The 1980s became the heyday of the EM policy. Irrespective of how one evaluates the outcomes, the range of policy initiatives is impressive when compared to other European countries in that same period. In the *legal-political domain*, for example, the full legislation of the Netherlands was scrutinized on discriminatory elements on the basis of nationality, race and religion (Beune and Hessels 1983) and many changes were made. Anti-discrimination legislation was reinforced and a structure for reporting and consulting was created. Furthermore, active and passive voting rights for alien residents were introduced in 1985. In 1986 the Dutch *Nationality Law* was changed to include more elements of *jus soli*, thus making it much easier for alien immigrants and their children to become Dutch citizens. Over the course of time a consultation structure for all target groups of EM policy was established that should give these groups a voice in matters relating to their position in society.[2] Subsidizing EM organizations both at the national and local levels, and trying to engage them in integration efforts became an important strategic aspect of policy implementation.

In the *socio-economic* domain three themes were key: the labour market/unemployment, education, and housing. In EM policy several initiatives have been taken to combat the high unemployment, including a law inspired by the Canadian *Employment Equity Act*, and even affirmative action for national and local governmental employers in the period 1986-1993. The effect of these measures, however, has been weak.

Measures in the area of *education* have, from the outset, been an important part of EM policy. Currently, most of the EM policy's specific financial resources have been allocated to this domain, and specifically support measures aiming to rectify immigrant children's academic performance in the regular educational system. This was done by a points system in which schools received significantly more money for children of immigrant background than they did get for middle-class native-born pupils. Immigrant and minority children were rated at 1.9, while native-born children of low socio-economic background were rated at 1.25 and the standard was 1. Apart from this general financial assistance to schools, a relatively small portion was allocated to specific measures like: education in the native language and culture of immigrants.

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In the domain of *housing*, a fundamental change was introduced in 1981 that provided legally residing aliens with full access to social housing, which had been denied prior to this measure. Given the fact that social housing makes up the larger part of all housing in big cities in the Netherlands, this measure had a very positive impact on the position of alien immigrants.

In the domain of *culture, language and religion,* the EM policy may be called "multicultural" *avant la lettre*.[3] Developing migrants' culture was a key underpinning of the EM policy, and was, in principle, left to groups and organizations. The limits of its application is set by the acceptance of general Dutch laws. The role of government was defined as facilitating, i.e. creating opportunities for minorities, such as special programs in the media, in immigrant languages.

As for *religion*, "new religions" were able to legally claim facilities such as denominational schools and broadcasting facilities on the same grounds as established religions. The outcome was a relatively quick institutionalization of Islam (Rath et al. 2001).

During the late 1980s, disappointment with EM policy grew, but it was only in the early 1990s that it became the topic of intense public debate and criticism. The first strong critique on the EM policy was formulated in 1989 in a new Report of the Scientific Council for Government Policy (1989). Briefly stated, the message was that there was too little progress in two crucial domains: labour market and education. An interpretation was added

to this: too much attention was given to (multi)cultural aspects and subsidizing organizations, suggesting that that could hinder individual participation in education and labour market rather than enhance it. Consequently, the advice was that more effort should be made in the aforementioned key areas, and in a more compulsory way. "Obligations of migrants should be more balanced by extended rights," and policies should focus less on cultural rights and facilities.

Other topics were also publicly criticized. For example, Frits Bolkestein, leader of the Liberal Party and of the opposition in Dutch parliament at that time, suggested in a public speech in 1991 that Islam formed a threat to liberal democracy and a hindrance to integration of immigrants, and that immigrant integration should be handled with more courage.

Integration policy in the 1990s

Policy did not change immediately as a consequence of such critiques, but the seeds for a different conception were sown. A new policy document marked the first distinct shift in policy focus: it was titled the Contourennota of 1994 (Ministerie 1994). This document called for a renewed "Integration Policy" with a more "republicanist" character, and focusing on "good citizenship" and "self-responsibility" as guiding con-cepts. The argument was that citizen- ship entails not only rights but also duties, and that each citizen must be active and responsible for him/herself. Following the advice of the 1989 report of the Scientific Council for Government Policy, this new "integration policy" reflected three main changes in comparison with EM policy: 1) a shift away from target groups and towards disadvantaged individuals; 2) a strong focus on the socio-economic incorporation through labour market and education measures; 3) a shift away from (multi)cultural policies and strong reliance on immigrant organizations.

The social-democrat victory in the national elections of 1994 led to the so-called Purple Coalition, which included the Labour Party (PvdA) together with the Conservative Liberals (VVD) and left-wing Liberals (D66). The focus on economic integration of individual immigrants, as recommended by the Scientific Council report of 1989, fitted neatly with the general policy line of this government, whose motto was "work, work, and once again, work." As a consequence, measures specifically targeted at ethnic minorities were abandoned.

A new policy instrument that was better suited to this new philosophy were civic integration courses,[4] aimed at facilitating the initial integration of newcomers. An integration tool has been developed at the local level in a number of cities in the Netherlands since the early 1990s: courses for newcomers who should be given a toolkit of Dutch language training and information on the functioning of important institutions in Dutch society. Local policy-makers had wanted to provide these tools to all newcomers who needed it, and developed it systematically in their cities. This instrument was later taken over by the national government, and through the WIN-law of 1998, became the national reception policy.

> In 2002, the policy took another turn…The Integration Policy New Style closely follows the paradigm of the 1990s, based on the leading concepts of "citizenship" and "self-responsibility," but the emphasis is much more on the cultural adaptation of immigrants to Dutch society… Newcomers have an obligation of passing an exam, proving language skills and knowledge about Dutch culture and society, before entering the Netherlands.

Another way of transforming policies according to the new philosophy was to include many of the integration facilities in area-based policies (rather than group-based ones). In 1994 the Ministry of Home Affairs began establishing a policy dealing with deprived areas in major Dutch cities. This can be seen as a replacement of integration policies, as targeted areas are characterized by a majority of ethnic minority population. The "area" has been chosen as a primary policy category instead of groups in society. This was also institutionally reflected from 1998 onwards: a new Minister for Urban Policies and Integration was nominated within the Ministry of Home Affairs. Although such area-based policies have been a way of abandoning group-oriented policies, group-specific policies still exist at the local level.

A series of events at the turn of the millennium triggered a new shift in public and political discourse on immigration and integration issues that would later lead to a policy revision. It put the social and cultural dimension of integration back on the agenda, but in a different way. The search was no longer for "compatibilities," but rather for "commonalities" that would help preserve national norms and values and thereby restore and enhance social cohesion of society (Entzinger 2003). The integration issue was also increasingly viewed as a perceived "clash of civilizations" (Snel 2003).

A new national debate followed the publication of a newspaper article by Scheffer (2000), in which the multicultural society in the Netherlands was dismissed as a "tragedy" and a "disaster."[5] In this article, integration policy was declared a failure, followed by a call for a more assimilationist policy that would revive Dutch history, norms and values. As with the first national minorities

debate in 1992, Islam and the integration of Muslim immigrants were defined as particularly problematic. This was reinforced by international developments, such as the September 11 attacks in the United States that triggered fierce responses in the Dutch media, and led to several incidents of ethnic and religious violence.

In the meantime the Dutch political arena witnessed the rise of populist politician Pim Fortuyn. As a true populist, Fortuyn made harsh statements on criminality, direct democracy, and immigration and integration. He pleaded for "zero-migration," argued that "the Netherlands was full," and called for "a cold war against Islam."[6] To these arguments, that were not completely new, he added two elements: first, the accusation that the political elite had enhanced the failure of integration in the past by "hiding the real problems behind a curtain of political correctness," and second, the contention that the real victim of all this was the common (native-born) Dutch voter.

His populist campaign exploited this discourse quite successfully. His party first won a landslide victory in the local elections of March 2002 in Rotterdam, the second largest Dutch city. A few weeks later Fortuyn was murdered, just before the national elections of May 2002. Notwithstanding (or thanks to) the murder, his newly established LPF party won a landslide victory, gaining 26 out of the 150 seats in parliament and thus entering parliament at once as the second largest party. This success changed the political discourse on immigra-tion and integration radically. Infact, most parties changed their dicourse on these issues in the aftermath of the victory of Fortuyn (Penninx 2006).

A new series of events followed, but after 2002 it became uncertain whether events truly trigger attention to the issues of migration and integration, or whether the high agenda status of these issues turn these events into trigger events (Snel and Scholten 2005). The climax was reached when Dutch filmmaker Van Gogh was murdered in 2004 by a Dutch-Moroccan youngster who was affiliated to a radical islamist network in the Netherlands.

These events had two significant effects. First of all, they contributed to the image of policy failure. This led Parliament to establish a Parliamentary Research Committee on the Integration Policy that would examine "why policy had thus far known such limited success." However, when this committee concluded that the integration had been relatively successful (Blok Commission 2004), this conclusion was widely dismissed as naïve. In fact, some observers complained that a new political correctness had now emerged that rendered positive statements on the integration policy and on multiculturalism[7] taboo. Secondly, these events reinforced a new mode of policy discourse, described by Prins as "hyperrealism" (Prins 2002). This represented a shift from the radical and "realist" type of discourse of the 1990s calling for a "tough" approach to integration, to a type of discourse in which "being tough" in itself became a goal.

The Dutch case has revealed a sequence of ad hoc policy responses in the 1970s, to a welfare state of EM policy in the 1980s, turning to more Republicanist integration policies in 1990s, and finally to more symbolic politics since 2002.

Integration Policy New Style, since 2002

So from 2002 on, the policy took another turn, with a new political majority in power[8] and a renewed institutional setting that foreshadowed changes: the coordination of integration policies was moved from the Ministry of Home Affairs (where it had been for 22 years) to the Ministry of Justice under a new Minister for Aliens' Affairs and Integration. The Integration Policy New Style, formulated in a letter by that new Minister (TK 2003-2004, 29203, No. 1) closely follows the paradigm of the 1990s, based on the leading concepts of "citizenship" and "self-responsibility," but the emphasis is rather placed on the cultural adaptation of immigrants to Dutch society. The concept of integration policy is thus considerably narrowed. In addition, integration policy has clearly become tied to, and even instrumental to, immigration policy, facilitating the selection of migrants and restricting new flows, in particular those of asylum seekers, family reunion and marriage migration.

The premiere measure in the new policy was to be the reception of new migrants, which has been reformulated to serve the dual purposes of integration and migration control. Newcomers have an obligation of passing an exam, proving language skills and knowledge about Dutch culture and society before entering the Netherlands. After admission, they must attend civic integration courses. Renewal of temporary permits and of permanent permits are conditional on passing these courses.

The "new style" reception policy therefore includes significant modifications compared to the policy of the previous decade. On the one hand, it introduces a new distribution of responsibilities among the various partners involved, the migrants' own responsibility being the most important starting point. Since 2007, newcomers must find their civic integration courses and pay for them themselves,[9] and they are entitled to a refund of up to 70% of their training expenses, and this reimbursement is conditional on their succeeding the exam. Local authorities lose much of their responsibilities with this program.

The Minister for Aliens Affairs and Integration, Rita Verdonk, aimed to expand the target population of the new reception policy. In her first proposal, all migrants between the ages of 16 and 65 were made to follow mandatory civic integration courses, regardless of the time they had spent in the country, and even when they are naturalized Dutch. When this turned out to be unacceptable,

a revised proposal envisaged to extend the obligation to all individuals who had done less than eight years of obligatory schooling in the country. This would have included the so-called old-comers – people from migrant origin who already live in the country –, but also naturalized immigrants and native Dutch who had been abroad. She also specifically attempted to extend the obligation to immigrants from the Dutch Antilles, justifying this by the problematic character of this minority group. However, this proposal has been rejected by Parliament as unconstitutional and discriminatory, since Antilleans have Dutch nationality. Ultimately a final proposal has been passed at the very end of the Cabinet's legislative term (in July 2006), eliminating the obligation for (naturalized) Dutch citizens and postponing its actual implementation to the next legislature and therefore making it dependent on the next majority government in power.

Conclusion

The Dutch case has revealed a sequence from *ad hoc* policy responses in the 1970s to a welfare state of EM policy in the 1980s, turning to more Republicanist integration policies in 1990s, and finally to more symbolic politics since 2002. This development went hand in hand with the de-politicization and technocratic policy making and implementation of the early 1980s, followed by the strong politicization at the end of the 1990s. An unprecedented politicization took place in the years following the rise of Pim Fortuyn, leading to the articulation of popular ideas and sentiments concerning immigration and integration. As a consequence, the immigration and integration policy areas that used to be distinct have increasingly become integrated in a very specific way: restrictive immigration policies not only facilitate integration, but tough integration policies also discourage immigration. This new policy is top-down in its making and shows a strong tendency towards re-centralization in its implementation.

The gap between such symbolic politics at the national level and a more pragmatic "problem coping" approach at the local level leads to increasing tensions. A crucial question is how this tension will develop in the near future. Critique and resistance comes from different sides: civil society organizations, including churches, employers, trade unions and immigrant organizations, European and international institutions, but also particularly from local government that pressures less symbolic and more problem-oriented approaches to immigration and integration.

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Notes

[1] This article is based on a broader analysis of policy making in the field of immigration and integration in the Netherlands by María Bruquetas-Callejo, Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas, Rinus Penninx and Peter Scholten. This analysis will be published as an IMISCOE Working Paper at www.imiscoe.org.

[2] In 1985, a National Advisory and Consultation Body (LAO) is established, in which the most important minority organizations are represented. The LAO was to advise government on issues of immigrant integration, and to be consulted in the context of administrative issues related to the integration policy. In 1997, the LAO was replaced by the LOM, the National Consultation Body for Minorities, an institution with a weaker mandate.

[3] In the policy documents of 1981 and 1983 the term multiculturalism was not used. The labeling of EM policies as multiculturalist policies has been introduced later, particularly by adversaries.

[4] In Dutch these are called "*Inburgeringscursussen*." The word "*inburgering*" has the word *burger* (citizen) in it, but it is different from naturalization (becoming a national citizen). To avoid such confusion we prefer the term "civic integration courses" rather than "citizenship programs." The courses do not necessarily prepare for national citizenship.

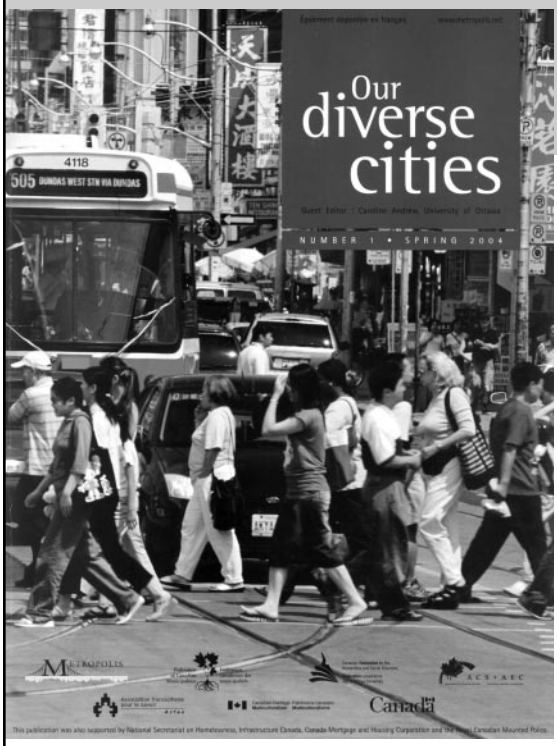
[5] Depending on the translation of the Dutch word "drama" in the title *Het multiculturele drama*.

[6] Interview with *De Volkskrant*, November 2, 2001.

[7] TK, 6 April 2004, 63-4112

[8] The cabinet Balkenende I was a short-lived coalition of Christian-democrats, liberals and the extreme right party LPF; it was followed in 2003 by Balkanende II, a coalition in which the LPF was substituted by the progressive liberals (D'66).

[9] Another element that has been introduced – without much debate – since the integration policy new style is financial: all costs of admission and immigration for the State should be born by the immigrants. This means that immigrants have to pay sums of money for visa and residence permits and their renewal that were unheard of before. An application for a temporary residence costs 430 euros, a renewal 285 euros per member of the family, a permanent residence permit costs 890 euros (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland 2004).



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