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# From Ethnic Minorities to Ethnic Majority Policy: changing identities and the shift to assimilationism in the Netherlands

Ellie Vasta

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**Abstract**

Recently in numerous European countries of immigration, there has been a widespread 'moral panic' about immigrants and ethnic diversity. In the Netherlands, a backlash has occurred in policy and in public discourse, with migrants being blamed for not meeting their responsibility to integrate and for practicing 'backward religions'. Why is it that a self-defined 'liberal' and 'tolerant' society demands conformity, compulsion and introduces seemingly undemocratic sanctions towards immigrants? These issues are analysed by providing an overview of modes of incorporation of immigrants in the Netherlands and it presents evidence on the socio-economic situation of immigrants. The paper argues that patterns of disadvantage, especially those which affect Dutch-born minority youth, cannot be explained by the low human capital attributes of the original immigrants. The causes have to be sought in pervasive institutional discrimination and the persistence of a culture of racism. The paper argues that racial discrimination is the link between immigrant structural marginalisation and the 'tolerant' society.

**Keywords**: cultural diversity, multiculturalism, racism, assimilation, integration policy, the Netherlands

**Author:**
Ellie Vasta is Senior Researcher at COMPAS, University of Oxford. Email – ellie.vasta@compas.ox.ac.uk

## Introduction

Over the past few years there has been a widespread 'moral panic' in Europe about immigration and ethnic diversity. Populist politicians and some sections of the media have portrayed immigrants as a threat to security, social cohesion and the welfare system. They claim that immigrants refuse to integrate and that governments have lost control. In response mainstream political parties and governments have been moving away from the multicultural policies introduced since the 1970s, which recognise the right to cultural and religious difference. New policies designed to ensure immigrant integration – even if this involves coercive measures – often seem like a return to old-style policies of assimilation, albeit under a more acceptable label. The Netherlands poses a particularly poignant picture because there seems to have been an extreme turn on integration policy, fuelled by a public outcry that immigrants have not met 'their responsibility to integrate'. Attitudes and policies have moved from a rather liberal to a rather narrow and restrictive approach. Since 1998, the Netherlands has introduced a number of compulsory programmes for immigrant newcomers in an attempt to ensure that they integrate into Dutch society and culture to a much greater degree than in the past. Legislation currently under consideration would introduce an even higher degree of coercion, through sanctions to withhold citizenship for those who do not achieve the expected civic and language grades.

Public debate on immigrants and integration has become very heated. In 2000 journalist Paul Scheffer attracted considerable attention with his claim that the Dutch had been too generous by not insisting that immigrants learn the Dutch language, culture and history (Engbersen 2003). According to this line of thinking, the Dutch had ignored basic liberal democratic values in favour of the acceptance of diverse cultural identities which would ultimately destroy social cohesion. Populist politician Pim Fortuyn claimed that the Netherlands had too many immigrants and that Islam is a backward religion. Matters escalated even further when film-maker Theo Van Gogh was

murdered in 2004. Van Gogh was famous for a film on Muslim women and domestic violence, as well as for his polemics against Islam. These events have fuelled perceptions of a schism between immigrant Muslims and the 'native Dutch'[1] over basic democratic values such as freedom of speech and the position of women in Muslim communities. Issues of immigration, asylum and cultural and religious diversity have become highly politicised.

The burning issue, then, is to understand why and how a country, which has institutionalised the acceptance of difference and has a reputation for its high levels of 'tolerance', can shift to what might be perceived as a coercive and assimilationist policy and public discourse. In other words, how can such a 'liberal' and 'tolerant' society go to the other extreme and demand conformity, compulsion and seemingly undemocratic sanctions against immigrants? Furthermore, why are immigrants being blamed for 'lack of responsibility' in the integration process and for practicing a 'backward religion'? Similar issues are being raised in numerous countries of immigration world-wide. I focus on the Netherlands in this paper because the shift appears more extreme than elsewhere.

These changes in the Netherlands are based on the idea that pluralist or multicultural approaches to immigrant incorporation into society have failed, and that the reasons for this are, first, a misplaced tolerance for cultural difference on the part of the Dutch, and, second, some immigrants' deliberate refusal to embrace Dutch culture language and values. Taken together, this is thought to lead to the social isolation of some immigrant groups (especially non-Europeans and above all Muslims) and to their inability to build the human capital needed for success in the labour market and in the society generally. In this paper I will argue that this widespread view is based on an unwillingness to recognise the exclusionary racist practices and structures within Dutch society that make it very difficult for

[1] The Dutch make official reference to Allochtonen – foreigners and to Autochthonen – the 'native Dutch'.

immigrants to integrate. It is not immigrants' refusal to integrate that is the core issue, but rather processes of racialisation and institutional racism within Dutch society – an idea largely ignored in dominant political and academic discourses. The high levels of unemployment, poor educational achievement and housing segregation, which are symptomatic of immigrant marginalisation, are the result of a specific type of discrimination against certain groups, characterised by racial, ethnic and religious markers.

This paper will begin by providing a brief overview of modes of incorporation of immigrants in the Netherlands as they developed in the post war years. I will then present evidence on the institutional marginalization of immigrants, which shows that such processes cannot be explained simply on the basis of claims that immigrants lack the necessary socio-cultural attributes for success. Next I will examine changes in public discourse in the Netherlands, notably the shift from acceptance of group difference to the demand for conformity in values and behaviour. Finally I will discuss the significance of racism for explaining these changes, and ask why many Dutch, including intellectuals, are so unwilling to confront the racialisation process.[2]

## Models of Inclusion in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has experienced successive waves of immigration with quite varied characteristics since 1945. Some came from the former Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) between 1945 and the early 1960s. In the 1960s and early 1970s, 'guestworkers' were recruited in Southern Europe, Turkey and Morocco. Also large inflows of people came from Surinam and the Antilles. Since the late 1980s there have been inflows of refugees and asylum seekers, especially from former Yugoslavia and Africa. Such primary flows

[2] I would like to thank the many researchers who have sent me material on the Netherlands. In particular, I would like to thank Lenie Brouwer, Jørgen Carling, Donna Driver-Zwartkruis, Han Entzinger, Philomena Essed, Hein de Haas, Karijn Nijhoff and Peter Scholten for their constructive and helpful discussion and comments. Specific thanks to Han Entzinger and Hein de Haas also for passing on relevant census tables to me.

have been followed by family reunion migration, including most recently the entry of spouses of second-generation descendents of migrants.

As a result of these complex and sustained inflows, the Netherlands has moved from a fairly high level of ethnic and cultural homogeneity to a remarkable degree of diversity. By 2003 there were 700,000 foreign residents in the Netherlands. But the foreign-born population stood at 1.7 million, since many immigrants had obtained Dutch citizenship. Taking into account of children of immigrants, the population of non-Dutch ethnic origin stood at 3.1 million – nearly one in five of the Netherlands' total population of 16.3 million. Perhaps more significant for debates on integration is the population of 'non-western' origin (including children of immigrants), which stood at 1.7 million in 2003, that is 10.7 per cent of the total population. The largest groups of 'non-western' origin were: Turkey, 352,000; Morocco, 306,000; Suriname, 325,000; Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, 131,000. Smaller groups came from countries as varied as Somalia, Ghana, Cape Verde and Brazil (Snel et al., 2005, Table 5.1, p. 69).

Over this 60-year period, the Netherlands has adopted several models of inclusion, sometimes for different groups of immigrants. There have been three main approaches that correspond with specific policies (although there is some overlap) - *pillarization*; *ethnic minorities policy* from 1983; and *integration policy* which was introduced in 1994, but has been revised and tightened up since.

### *Pillarization*

The Dutch tradition of 'pillarization' emerged in the 17 and 18th centuries as a way of overcoming violent religious schisms between Catholics and Protestants. Pillarization was a way of allowing tolerance for groups who maintained different religious beliefs, by allowing them to create their own institutions. The modern version meant that various societal sub-groups could have their own state-sponsored and semi-autonomous institutions for

health care, social welfare, education etc. The ideology of pillarization continued well into the period of the ethnic minorities policy. Immigrants could use semi-autonomous institutions as a means of preserving their own culture and group integrity. Pillarization also 'incorporated minority elites into the policy process…' (Koopmans and Statham 2003, 221).

***Ethnic Minorities Policy***

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Dutch realized that immigrants had come to stay and that they were not simply assimilating into Dutch society. The 1983 *Ethnic Minorities Policy* applied to the Turks, Moroccans, Southern Europeans, Moluccans, Surinamese, Antillians, refugees, Roma and Sintis, and caravan dwellers (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 20). Some immigrant groups, such as the Chinese, were not included on the grounds that they were not seen as minorities. Thus the Minorities Policy was not seen as being for immigrants in general, but as a welfare policy for certain segregated groups. In a way it can be seen as a continuation of pillarization, which allowed new ethnic and religious minority communities to set up their own places of worship and media, and certain types of educational provision. During the 1980s, policy measures were quite substantial particularly in three domains – the legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural domains. Rath (1993) suggests that the 1980s ushered in a period of 'controlled integration' through these policy measures. In the *legal-political* area, for example, anti-discrimination legislation was strengthened; in 1985 voting rights for non-citizens at the local government level were introduced; naturalization became easier; a consultation structure was set up to give target groups a voice regarding their position in society (Penninx 2004).

In the *socio-economic* domain there were three key areas – labour market and unemployment, education and housing. Labour market programmes, special training courses as well as education programmes for ethnic minorities were introduced (Entzinger 2003, 63). Voluntary agreements and laws were set up to help open up more jobs for immigrants. In the domain

of *culture, language and religion*, migrants were left to themselves to develop their own cultural, religious and linguistic institutions. This was later seen to create a type of separatism. Mother-tongue teaching was also available but it was soon discovered there were problems because the courses were amateurish and students were losing time from core classes. There was also a resistance to Islamic based schools for fear of isolation and segregation (Rath, et al. 2001, 176). Although the minorities policies stressed the importance of equality, in education and religion, the establishing of mosques was an extremely difficult process for Muslims. For example, Böcker states that 'Often it was quite a task not only to collect funds, but also to find suitable locations. When a building was finally located, protests from neighbours, municipal zoning plans and urban renewal policies could still throw a monkey wrench in the works' (2000, 153).

### *Integration Policy*

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, it became evident to policy makers that the goals of the *Ethnic Minorities Policy* had not been achieved. As we shall see below, migrants had not integrated into the labour market, educational achievement of immigrant children was low and housing segregation was also emerging as a problem. In addition, in the early 1990s, Frits Bolkestein, then leader of the Liberal Party and leader of the opposition in the parliament, triggered a public debate by claiming that 'Islam was a threat to liberal democracy and a hindrance for integration of immigrants…' (Penninx, et al. 2005, 5). This was the beginning of a public and policy discourse about the 'non-integrating migrant'. A new *Integration Policy* was introduced in 1994, based on the idea that integration should be understood as 'a process leading to the full and equal participation of individuals and groups in society, for which mutual respect for identity is seen as a necessary condition' (Contourennota, 1994: 24 in Entzinger 2003, 72). This new policy aimed at reducing social and economic deprivation by improving the educational and labour market position of immigrants (Castles and Miller 2003, 237).

While the same policy dimensions – social/economic, legal/political and cultural remained – a new direction was taken in that more emphasis was to be placed on Dutch language courses, social orientation and vocational training. The possibility of sanctions was introduced: for example, newcomers might be deprived of their welfare benefits if they failed to take the classes (Blok Report Netherlands 2004). This was the first time that Dutch language courses were officially provided for adult migrants. The *1994 Integration Policy* was also based on the idea of 'mainstreaming'- i.e. improving the inclusion of immigrants in mainstream services in order to move away from the ethno-specific provision popularly associated with a policy of multiculturalism. Entzinger (2003) suggests that up until this time, there was little incentive for the state or public authorities to provide public support for immigrants who were, in any case, meant to develop their own parallel arrangements. The 1994 policy was concerned with long-term ethnic minorities, but did not address the situation of the diverse newcomers who were entering the country in this period. In 1998 the *Civic Integration of Newcomers Act* was introduced in an effort to provide obligatory programmes for newcomers, consisting of Dutch language lessons, social orientation courses, information about work and social coaching for a final test to measure their progress (see Siedenberg 2004, 3). Fines were to be imposed if attendance norms were not met. This new ambition to familiarize immigrants with Dutch language, culture and society would have been 'almost unthinkable under the minorities' policy' (Entzinger 2003, 77).

At the start of the new millennium, there was a growing sense that integration policy was failing and that more needed to be done to integrate immigrants. Debates in the Netherlands were part of a growing anti-immigration, anti-asylum and anti-immigrant trend that had emerged in numerous EU countries (see Spencer and di Mattia 2004). The Blok Committee found that the initial policy steps taken, based on the *1994 Integration Policy*, were inadequate for 'the government had failed to act promptly on recommendations made with regard to structuring the

integration of newcomers and oldcomers' (Blok Report Netherlands 2004, 7). The right-wing coalition that came to power in the wake of the murder of Pim Fortuyn was keen to show that it was tough on immigration and immigrants. In April 2004, the Cabinet agreed to a new integration system, stating that the obligation to integrate would be the responsibility of individuals, although the government and municipalities would provide some funding for courses and administration. The following press release clarifies the Dutch Cabinet's intention:

> The integration obligation will only have been met as soon as people have successfully passed their integration examination…The newcomers and the settled immigrants will be in charge of their own integration […] If a newcomer has failed to integrate after five years an administrative fine will be imposed […] (Dutch Ministry of Justice 2004a).

In December 2004, another press release stated:

> The Government has decided that recent immigrants who have passed a basic test in their country of origin will have to pass the integration exam within three and a half years. Failure to pass the test will affect their residence status… (Dutch Ministry of Justice 2004b).

In September 2005, a Bill for a new Integration Act was introduced into parliament (TK30308). At the time of writing in early 2006 it is still being discussed in the Second Chamber. The main provisions of the proposed law include measures to define and enforce immigrant obligation and responsibility, as well as the provision of compulsory programmes and sanctions. In fact, language and social orientation courses have been available to newcomers for a number of years – they are fundamental to immigrant settlement – but provision of courses is often far from adequate. Moreover they often fail to meet the needs of certain groups, such as people with limited formal education and non-employed women (see Siedenberg 2004). It appears that the new principle of imposing sanctions and fines is not about improving the situation of immigrants. Rather is it part of the

discourse used to support claims that immigrants have not met their 'responsibility to integrate'.

At this point we need to disentangle what it is they could integrate into. They might integrate into the mainstream labour market, educational institutions and housing. They could integrate into civil society, where they might participate in civil and political aspects of life in the Netherlands including voting, political representation and decision-making processes. They could also integrate into the social and cultural traditions of Dutch society. It seems that different groups in the Netherlands emphasise different aspects, with conservative and populist groups calling for cultural integration with a view to restoring an (imagined) homogenous nation, while social democrats are more concerned with successful performance in education and the labour market. However, they too seem to call indirectly for cultural integration since this is seen as a precondition for socio-economic success. In the long run, both approaches emphasise individual adaptation and conformity – a demand that comes close to assimilationism.

As stated above, it is my argument that immigrants (especially those of non-western and Muslim background) are denied the opportunity of integrating through systemic institutional discrimination, based in the final analysis on racism. In the following section, we shall see that despite the policy changes implemented over the past twenty-five years, immigrant labour market participation and educational achievements remain comparatively low.

## The Institutional Marginalization of Immigrants

Despite the various policies outlined above, unemployment rates for immigrants have remained way above those of the 'native Dutch'. The figures in Table 1 reveal that in 1983 unemployment of foreigners was about twice that of the indigenous population. By 1993, unemployment of indigenous people had declined quite sharply. That of foreigners had also

fallen, but nowhere near as much. The unemployment rate for foreigners was now nearly four times that of locals. For the under-twenty-fives the situation is far worse.

**Table 1: Unemployment figures 1983 and 1993**

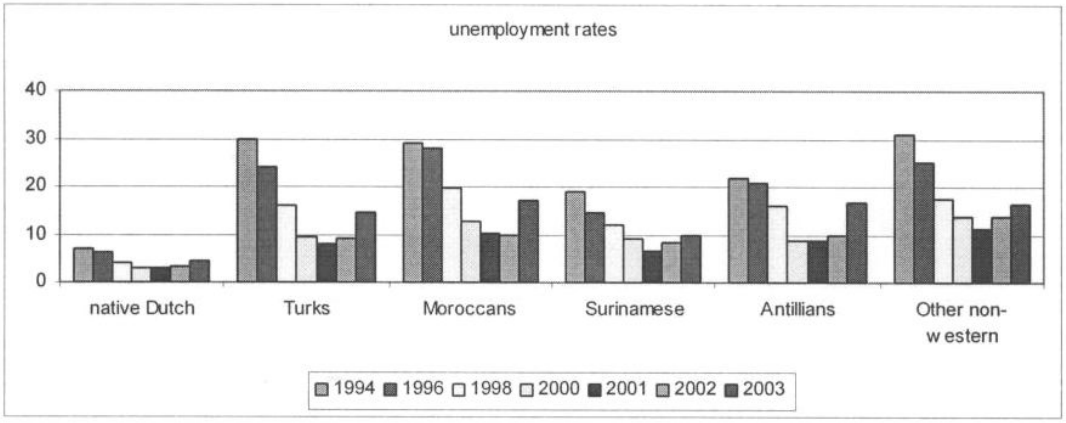
| Year | Indigenous | | Foreigners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | all | <25 yr olds | all | <25 yr olds |
| 1983 | 11.3 | 20.4 | 24.5 | 37.2 |
| 1993 | 5.7 | 9.7 | 19.6 | 25.5 |

Source: (Thränhardt 2004, 24)

The late 1990s was a period of strong economic growth in the Netherlands. Penninx suggests that the huge unemployment of immigrants in the late 1980s and early 1990s 'was solved by the market itself' in the second half of the 1990s due to the continuous boom in the Dutch economy. This led to a decrease in unemployment for both groups (Entzinger 2004; Penninx 2004, 6). Snel, de Boom and Engbersen use the results of regular large-scale official surveys to examine the occupational and education performance of people of non-western origin (i.e. immigrants and their Dutch-born children whether Dutch citizens or not) (Snel, et al. 2005, 87) . They show that from 1994 to 2001 the unemployment rate among people of non-western origin fell to less than 10 per cent. Nonetheless, it was still two to three times higher among non-western groups than among the native Dutch (Snel, et al. 2005, 97-98). From 2001 unemployment rates increased again (see Figure 2 below).

While unemployment rates have increased for the Dutch, Surinamese and other non-Western immigrants (by approximately 50 percent), the rates for Antilleans, Turks and Moroccans have increased at a higher rate (by approximately 70 – 93 percent) (Snel, et al. 2005, 98).

**Figure 2: Unemployment rate by Ethnic Descent (1994-2003)**




Source: Dutch SOPEMI Report 2003 (Snel, et al. 2005, 95)

Similarly, levels of educational attainment remain low for people of non-western origin in comparison to the native Dutch. Table 2 indicates that even though the educational levels for the Turks and Moroccans are slowly improving over time, they were still very low in 2002. The rates for the Surinamese and Antillians have also begun to improve, but remain low in comparison to the Native Dutch. The Dutch SOPEMI authors suggest a combination of factors lead to the different outcomes, including lack of individual qualifications, economic circumstances, structural factors, cultural factors, less effective social networks in some cases, and discrimination in the labour market (Snel, et al. 2005, 110-112).

On the whole, Turks and Moroccans are still comparatively poorly educated which in turn affects their labour market participation rates. The two groups also have the highest school dropout rates (Snel, et al. 2005, 89-92). Ethnic minority students have more difficulty in securing internships than do their native Dutch schoolmates (Schriemer 2004, 11). One reason for below average school performance seems to be the existence of trends to segregation in schools. There appears to be a process of 'white flight' from schools with high numbers of immigrant children. In the early 1990s some schools were regarded as 'black' and others as 'white'

**Table 2: Education Level of Post-School Age Workers (14-65 both genders) by Ethnic Descent (1998-2002) (in percent)**

| | Native Dutch | | Turks | | Moroccans | | Surinamese | | Antillians | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1998 | 2002 | 1998 | 2002 | 1998 | 2002 | 1998 | 2002 | 1998 | 2002 |
| Primary school | 18 | 12 | 65 | 51 | 74 | 58 | 29 | 22 | 29 | 20 |
| Lower vocational &general secondary | 27 | 25 | 16 | 23 | 10 | 14 | 31 | 33 | 30 | 32 |
| Intermediate vocational &general secondary | 26 | 41 | 15 | 20 | 11 | 21 | 24 | 31 | 27 | 28 |
| Higher education | 28 | 23 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 20 |
| (N) | 2024 | -- | 2880 | 1897 | 2234 | 1553 | 2404 | 1367 | 1157 | 906 |

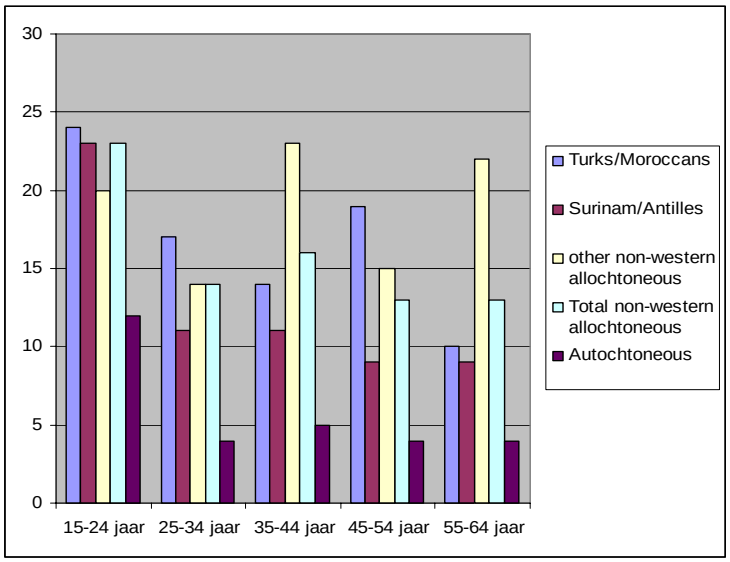
Source: Dutch Sopemi Report 2003 (Snel, et al. 2005, 90)

(Doomernik 1998, 61; Lucassen and Penninx 1997). Although segregation has fallen since, it still seems to exist along class and ethnic lines. It seems that children can sometimes be refused entry to schools on the basis of their religion or ethnicity, which appears to lead to a certain amount of discrimination. For example, complaints have been made to the Equal Treatment Commission that ethnic minority students were put on a waiting list for placement into a particular denominational school. This waiting list had been created in order to induce ethnic minority parents to send their children elsewhere. It was found that 'ethnic minority children were being placed on a waiting list exclusively on the basis of their origins' (Schriemer 2004, 29). Such processes lead to concentrated ethnic enclaves, which can have detrimental effects on schooling and social participation particularly for the second generation (Gramberg 1998; Sako and Ostendorf 1998).

One reason often given for higher unemployment rates among immigrants in the Netherlands is that the majority fit into the most vulnerable lower end of the labour market. It is mainly unskilled workers who bear the brunt of economic downturns. This is true of the first generation, who arrived mainly

as unskilled workers with low educational levels. But Figures 3 reveals a more complex picture.[3] Considering specifically the age group 15-24 (see Figure 3) which presumably includes many of the ethnic minority youth who have been through the Dutch school system, the discrepancy between the unemployment rate of ethnic minority youth and the native Dutch is dramatic. The Surinamese and Antillian youth suffer a very similar fate to the Turks and Moroccans. Similarly, the variation is huge in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups.

**Figure 3: Unemployed working population according to ethnic group and background characteristics, 2004 (age x unemployment rate in percent)**




Source: Jaarrapport Integratie 2005; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau / Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum / Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag 2005

A similar picture emerges in Figure 4 where unemployment levels of various groups are measured according to educational background. In the 2004 figures, Turks and Moroccans who have lower educational levels experience three times as much unemployment as do the native Dutch with similar qualifications. The Turks and Moroccans who have intermediate vocational to

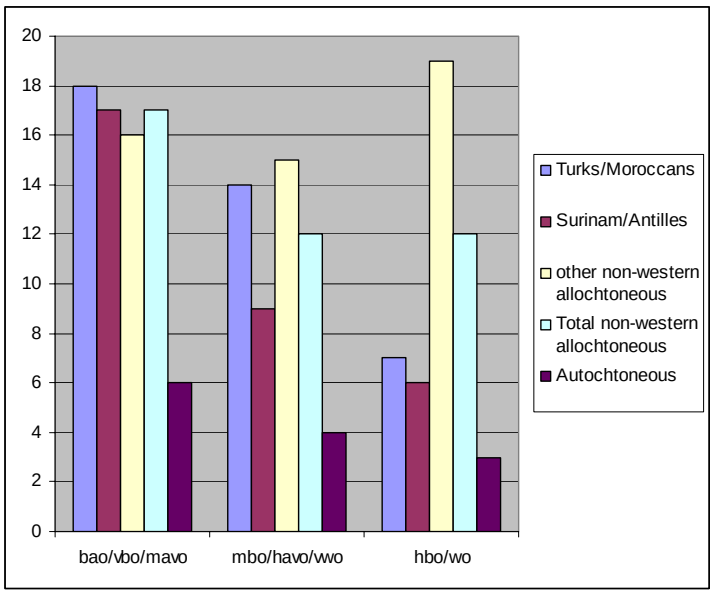
[3] My express thanks to Hein de Haas for finding and preparing this data and graphs for me.

pre-university qualifications also experience a high a rate of unemployment three times higher than the native Dutch. However, the more highly educated (higher vocational and university) among the Turks and Moroccans have more than double the unemployment rate while the Surinamese and Antillians have double the unemployment rate (see Figure 4 below). The 'other non-western group' (which includes many African refugees) experience three to four times higher unemployment rates than the equivalent native Dutch. Such discrepancies are too great to be simply put down to cultural factors or less effective networks. It is vital to look for other reasons, and here I suggest the need to look at institutional racism – even though such factors are largely ignored by Dutch scholars and policy-makers.

Pay differentials are also a problem. In one company it was found that two Ghanaians received lower pay than the Turks and Moroccans who in turn received lower pay than the native Dutch employees doing the same work. Another report, based on research conducted in the late 1990s, concluded that ethnic minorities earned a gross hourly wage of 13.20 Euros compared with 14.90 for the native Dutch (Houtzager and Rodrigues 2002, 43). These authors conclude that recruitment and selection methods are often discriminatory. Research commissioned by the ILO, in the early 1990s in a number of European countries including the Netherlands, carried out discrimination testing regarding access to the labour market. Results revealed that high levels of discrimination were experienced particularly among Moroccans at the point of entry into the labour market where 'the possibility of actually getting a job is almost zero for the Moroccan applicant' (Bovenkerk, et al. 1995, 52). A comparison between several countries showed net discrimination rates at 37 per cent for the Netherlands, 36 percent for Spain, 33 per cent for Belgium, 19 per cent for Germany and (Taran 2006, 3).[4]

[4] This ILO project is currently being repeated in 2005-6.

**Figure 4: Unemployed working population according to ethnic group and background characteristics (education), 2004**




**Note:** bao/vbo/mavo = up to lower general secondary; mbo/havo/vwo – intermediate vocational to pre-iniversity; hbo/wo = higher vocational and university

Source: Jaarrapport Integratie 2005; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau / Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum / Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag 2005

The voluntary agreements and laws set up to increase jobs opportunities for immigrants, according to Penninx 'turned out to be symbolic paperwork only', while a law introduced in the early 1990s obliging employers to report the ethnic composition of their workforce, also 'turned out to be a symbolic law and implementation has been erratic' (2004, 5-6). Employers' associations claimed it curtailed their freedom of selection. Furthermore, special training courses for immigrants were few and in some cases their very existence was used as an excuse for members of ethnic minorities not to be accepted in other mainstream courses (Entzinger 2003, 68; Essed 2002a, 5).

## The Public Discourse

In the 1990s, important ideological shifts occurred in the Netherlands (as elsewhere in Europe). Up to this time, the welfare state had been based on

the idea of a general safety net and a notion of communal care. There was now a move away from state protection to an ideology of self-sufficiency and responsibility (Blok Report Netherlands 2004, 3). This broader shift was reflected in the move from ethnic minorities policy to integration policy. The ideology behind the change to mainstreaming services in the 1990s was more oriented towards individuals than towards group needs of ethnic minorities (Duyvendak, et al. 2005; Fermin 1997; Scholten 2003), undermining the significance of culturally appropriate services (Entzinger 2003). In the new century, policy discourse reflects a 'neo-conservative ideology' that is more restrictive, and a public discourse that has become more inflammatory. Integration is presented as a one-way process – immigrants should integrate into Dutch language, culture and history.

One prominent argument has influenced policy, the elite, the media, many Dutch people and some people of immigrant background. In 2000, Paul Scheffer argued that 'the poor integration of ethnic minorities is the result of a detached and permissive Dutch policy in respect of minorities that does not confront ethnic minorities sufficiently with the Dutch language, culture and history' (Engbersen 2003, 59). Scheffer claimed that many Dutch people were concerned about the large numbers of immigrants, their lack of integration as well as continuing segregation and problems with the growing Muslim population. Scheffer suggested that the remedy to the problem was to include 'more obligatory policy efforts to overcome deprivation as well as demanding from the immigrants to adapt to the principles of liberal democracy…' (Entzinger 2003, 78-79).

The line of reasoning adopted by Scheffer and other critics of immigrant integration is that the Dutch have been benevolent by providing funding and resources to help immigrants integrate while immigrants have not taken the responsibility to integrate. One part of the claim is that ethnic minorities, such as Turks and Moroccans, have not put in the effort to find jobs, and in particular have not learnt the language, culture and history of the Dutch. But

Duyvendak et al. (2005, 13-14) suggest there is a lack of empirical data to support the claim that Dutch integration policy failed because the Dutch have been too tolerant of cultural and religious difference. They claim there was too much inconsistency in policy development and delivery to support the tolerance thesis. In the public discourse and in parts of the elite, there is a widespread tendency to blame the migrant.

According to Entzinger, the problem with Scheffer's argument is that it displays a static understanding of cultures and it ignores the immense diversity among immigrants. In addition very few people of immigrant background took part in these debates (Entzinger 2003, 79). Entzinger rightly criticises that what this approach 'seems to overlook is that a liberal democratic state that pursues an active policy of assimilation will soon clash with its own principles of freedom and tolerance' (2003, 80). Thus it is evident that current notions of compulsory integration in both official and the public discourse actually go back to old-style notions of one-way assimilation on the part of immigrants into a national culture imagined as homogeneous and superior. During the 2002 general election, Pim Fortuyn called for the Netherlands border to be closed, insisting there were too many immigrants and that Islam was a 'backward' religion. He ran his campaign on anti-immigration sentiment, claiming the Netherlands was full. The new government decided to impose a more stringent immigration policy. In November 2004, Theo Van Gogh, a filmmaker and columnist was shot and stabbed to death. He had recently completed a film with Hirsi Ali, originally from Somalia and now a member of the conservative liberal VVD. The film dealt with Muslim women's experience of domestic violence and implied that the Koran sanctioned such practices (Anthony 2004). The debate that emerged after his death was similar to earlier ones, asserting the backwardness of Islam and its incompatibility with western democratic values. Ali insisted that the 'treatment of women, the creation of ghettos like Islamic schools, these are all factors that explain why Muslim communities lag behind others' (Anthony 2004).

Some critics argue that the strategy used by people like Hirsi Ali and Van Gogh has contributed to the backlash. Ghorashi claims that Hirsi Ali has become a 'welcome mouth piece for the dominant discourse on Islam in the Netherlands that pictures Islamic migrants as problems and enemies of the nation' (Ghorashi 2003, 163). Hirsi Ali has given legitimacy to the exclusionary rhetoric that has been circulating in the Netherlands, since the early 1990s, based on the perceived need to protect Dutch cultural values and norms from invasion, leading to a form of 'cultural fundamentalism' (Ghorashi 2003, 165). Further, in this debate, there is an implication that violence against women exists only among those who practice 'backward religions/cultures'. Ali and others seem to use a notion of 'backward or illiberal cultural practices or religions' to explain what is essentially a matter of gender inequality. Violence against women is about unequal power relations between men and women and needs to be tackled across ethnicities, religions and classes. Patriarchal gender relations are being subsumed under the banner of 'backward cultures/religions'. Furthermore, to single out one 'culture/religion' only is to relieve all others from systematic scrutiny. Yet, it was only 'yesterday' that the women's movements in western democracies brought to our attention in a systematic way the violence done to women, inside and outside the home. One might ask why ethnic minority women have not benefited from the same improvements in social rights as have native Dutch women. In other words, why is gender inequality still a bigger problem for ethnic minority women?

**Racism and its Denial**

Let us return to the central questions of this article: how can a society that perceives itself as 'liberal' and 'tolerant' continue to show such high levels of structural marginalisation? How can this society demand conformity, while blaming immigrants for not integrating and using coercive methods to secure integration? How can a 'tolerant' society claim that certain religions and cultures are backward? My argument in addressing these questions is that

there is a common thread running through the immigrant experience in the Netherlands: the existence of institutional discrimination based, in the final analysis, on a history and culture of racism. Moreover, one reason for the ineffectiveness of successive approaches to immigrant incorporation is the refusal of most Dutch policy-makers and researchers to engage with the issue of racism, or even acknowledge its existence. Here I will consider three main issues: racism and its consequences for policy; racism and the academy; and the way identities are changing.

### *Racism*

Racist discourse, in policy, practice and in the public arena, is best understood as part of an (often unconscious) belief system of tolerant and liberal societies. It is not just an aberration of an individual's pathology, but deeply rooted in the history, culture and traditions of modernity and is closely linked to class and sexist domination. Broadly used, *racism* or *racist discrimination* is a relationship of power, a process 'whereby social groups categorise other groups as different or inferior, on the basis of phenotypical characteristics, cultural markers or national origin' (Castles 1996, 31). In former colonial countries like the Netherlands, racism is deeply embedded in national history and cultural stereotypes (see van Dijk 1993). Notions of the inherent inferiority of 'non-western peoples' and of the naturalness of racial and ethnic hierarchies are still strong despite modern ideas of tolerance.

As Goldberg (1993, 41-3) argues, racism is a discourse that 'emerges with modernity and comes to colonise modernity's continually reinvented common sense'. Thus it needs to be investigated whether racism is still part of 'commonsense' in the Netherlands, understood in the Gramscian sense of the accumulated, taken-for-granted and often contradictory set of assumptions used by people to understand and cope with the complex social world around them. The argument that this is the case was put most forcefully in the case of the Netherlands by Dutch scholar Essed in her book *Understanding Everyday Racism* (Essed 1991) - a work that has been largely ignored in

Dutch debates. The key point here is that a pervasive culture of everyday racism is likely to lead to practices of institutional racism, which are not recognised as such.

*Institutional racism* is best defined as the role played by the state and its institutions in reproducing the social exclusion of immigrants or ethnic minorities. In general terms, 'the institutional dimension refers to cooperative systems forming part of the ruling apparatus' (Essed 2002b, 205). Thus, the power of the dominant group is sustained through its structures and institutions, such as laws, policies and administrative practices, education, housing, indicating marginalisation of ethnic minority groups (see Goldberg 2002; Solomos 2003). Omi and Winant (1994, 76) argue that 'the state is inherently racial' because it routinizes and naturalizes cultural practices and terms. Discriminatory systemic trends such as continuous negative experiences for ethnic minorities in the labour market or in educational performance, can also fall within the purview of institutional racism.

***Policy and institutional racism***

Since the early 1980s, welfare and integration programmes have been periodically changed because they did not deliver their expected outcomes. Compared with several other EU countries, the Netherlands has provided more inclusive policy frameworks for immigrants with regard to labour market access, long-term residence, family re-union, nationality and anti-discrimination measures (see also Blok Report Netherlands 2004; Geddes, et al. 2005). The mere existence of policies, however, says nothing about implementation (Geddes, et al. 2005). It seems that policies like the Ethnic Minorities Policy was based on 'well-intended multiculturalist paternalism' (see Scholten 2003). However, by its nature, paternalism cannot confront the ingrained discriminatory practices that may work in subtle ways, while having detrimental effects on various groups. Poppelaars and Scholten suggest, in relation to social policies in the Netherlands, that policies can take on an 'institutional path-dependency...they tend to develop a natural

tendency to resist change' (see also Penninx, et al. 2005; Poppelaars and Scholten 2005, 4). This might imply that policies are at odds with implementation. Anti-discrimination legislation, for example, has had a tendency towards inefficiency (Thränhardt 2004).

Institutional discrimination appears in two main forms. First, there is the routine discrimination in terms of policies and programmes that do not achieve their goals. The 'Temporary Scientific Commission for Minorities Policy Netherlands' wrote in 1995 that the previous measures taken regarding immigrant integration '…could not prevent discrimination from occurring, nor racist incidents from increasing in number recently. The only possible conclusion is that the measures in question are a necessary, but inadequate precondition for eliminating discrimination' (Blok Report Netherlands 2004, 9). Evaluations of integration programmes conducted between 2000 and 2003 also found a number of problems. Firstly, the Integration Task Force revealed 'that the yield of integration courses is low' (Blok Report Netherlands 2004, 7; Siedenberg 2004). Many of the Dutch language lessons were taught in a uniform way, not taking into account the differing needs of immigrants ranging from the illiterate to professionals (Siedenberg 2004). Secondly, specific needs of other groups such as mothers with children needing childcare are not always available. The vocational orientation programmes were not as effective as they should have been in helping immigrants to find jobs. Finally, many found a huge gap between the vocational programmes and their own experience in finding work (see also Siedenberg 2004). Problems with municipal delivery of programmes and funding problems also need to be ironed out (Entzinger 2003; Siedenberg 2004). Poppelaars and Scholten (2005, 4) suggest that 'national policy philosophies seem to be inadequate guiding principles for concrete policy action'.

As noted earlier, institutional racism occurs when the power of the dominant group is sustained through its structures and institutions, such as laws,

policies and programme deliveries. If language courses and vocational programmes to help migrants find jobs are still failing after so many years then we would have to look at how racist practices and attitudes, usually not perceived as racist, are embedded in a society's institutions and practices, hidden in everyday common-sense structures. Malcolm Cross suggests that 'the Dutch are more like the French in having a greater problem with cultural difference than appears at first to be the case…' He believes the Dutch need to explore further their national prejudices' (2000, 46).

The second type of institutional racism is linked to the systematic negative experiences of migrants in terms of integration into societal structures such as the labour market and education. If we look at the combination of factors, that are sometimes used to explain poor outcomes for ethnic minorities, we can build up a more comprehensive picture. *Lack of individual qualifications* may be a reason for the first generation and older migrants who consistently experience high unemployment rates. But as Figures 3 and 4 indicated, there is a distinct problem when unemployment figures are high for youth, most of whom would have been through the Dutch education system. With economic restructuring, *structural factors* may also be a leading factor in high unemployment levels for immigrants as economic restructuring may affect more the unskilled sectors. Again, this does not necessarily explain the problems facing immigrant/ethnic minority youth, nor the university educated.

One constant remains. For example, as unemployment rates fell from 1994 to 2001, the rates still remained higher for migrants than for the native Dutch. With an upturn in 2002-3, the native Dutch unemployment rates still remained lower than those of ethnic minorities (see Figure 2). *Cultural factors* may be used to explain gender inequalities where it is sometimes claimed that girls are not allowed to pursue their studies. The figures above reveal that overall ethnic minorities have significantly lower educational attainment than the native Dutch. But other cultural factors might include

that immigrants do not speak the language for the job. It is difficult to measure this problem, but going by the claims of employers who do not want their freedom to selection challenged by laws and voluntary agreements, then again, it is probable that migrants experience racist discrimination at the point of entry not only because of their appearance or origins, but also for speaking Dutch with an accent. Although we do not have very recent figures for discrimination at point of entry into the labour market, it is clear from earlier ILO research, noted above, that ethnic minorities in the Netherlands suffer significantly from racist discrimination in hiring. Finally, ethnic minorities might *lack effective social networks* in the labour market. This may be truer for recent migrants. Longer-term migrants are more likely to have more effective networks.

Engbersen provides a distinctive analysis of the integration process in the Netherlands. He reveals incompatibilities arising between the various spheres of integration. Housing policies, for example, have led to severe segregation thus undermining intensive educational policies designed to create equal opportunities for children of immigrant background. In addition, housing segregation has led to more ethnically segregated, low-income districts that can also lead to high levels of unemployment. The social effects become concentrated in low-income areas (Engbersen 2003, 61-66). Thus, labour market trends, the 'black' and 'white' schools, educational achievement rates of ethnic minorities, resistance to setting up Mosques are but a few examples that point to institutional racism.

The subtleties of everyday racism in Dutch society were poignantly exposed by Essed (1991). The power of her research was two-fold. It showed the variety of racisms experienced by immigrants in public and private places in their everyday lives – at work, in the shop, in the neighbour's home, at the parents' school meetings etc. But it also showed how institutional racism works at an everyday level, ultimately leading to the 'racialized' other (see also Goldberg 1993; Miles 1993). Essed (2002a, 8) claims that in the

Netherlands, if racism is recognised at all, it is seen as a problem of individual error, not as an institutional problem.

***Racism and the academy***

Racism, as a broad social phenomenon, is not seen to exist in the Netherlands where there is a preference to refer to any exclusionary practice as 'discrimination' because racism is defined very narrowly in terms of biological differences. This, however, raises a significant problem because the preference is to see it in its milder form as 'cultural discrimination'. In other words, migrants are discriminated against because they are migrants, they are different and they practice different cultures or religions. This still does not alleviate the problem when people are discriminated against because of their skin colour, or their physiognomy, their language etc. If we simply call it 'discrimination' or 'institutional discrimination', then we cannot understand the specific types and forms of discrimination based on a person's or groups' race/ethnicity or cultural background for the simple reason that, although all forms of discrimination are based on unequal power relations, their roots are different. For instance, racial discrimination is not gender discrimination. 'Discrimination' does not help explain how race/ethnic and gender relations intersect for women, and whether one is more dominant than the other, nor which type of discrimination is more dominant in specific circumstances. In turn, we cannot understand how certain institutional racist practices, embedded in the institutions and cultures of the dominant society, create disadvantage based on a person's or groups' race/ethnicity/culture/religion (Essed 1991; Phizacklea and Wolkowitz 1995; Solomos 2003; Solomos and Back 1995; Wrench and Solomos 1993).

Rath's notion of 'minorization' might help us understand the matter further. Rath (1999) claims there are remarkable similarities in the problematizing of some fractions of the working class (the interior others) and the problematizing of immigrants (the exterior others). He claims that, in the Dutch case, both anti-social families from the 'lowest social classes' and

ethnic minorities 'are seen by the rest of society as people with a lifestyle that deviates from that of the middle class ideal type, as people who do not adequately conform to the dominant norms of normal society behaviour, as backward people with a lifestyle of an earlier pre-industrial period' (Rath 1999, 166). Thus, ethnic minorities are 'minorized'. It is true that such an ideology exists in many liberal democracies. However, a 'minorized other', is different from a 'racialized other' which refers to the social construction of groups on the basis of supposed biological and cultural differences (Miles 1989). Analysis of a 'minorized' other reduces structural class, race/ethnic and gender relations to problems of status, in the Weberian sense, where certain groups have the privilege and power to confer a lower status on groups that do not conform.

This is one analytical way of denying that racism exists structurally in the society. Ideologies emerge from specific social relations. Class ideologies emerge from class relations and class position. Class, gender and ethnic relations are structurally embedded in our societies. Structural or institutional practices disadvantage immigrants on account of their position in class, race/ethnic and gender relations in the specific society though, as mentioned above, their origins differ. The extremely good intentions and policies introduced to help immigrants integrate into their new national homes do not necessarily remove systematic racial discrimination. Van der Valk comes straight to the point (2003, 186):

> In general, mainstream Dutch academia shows little interest in racism as a social phenomena, let alone as a discursive one or as a theoretical concept…It is argued that contemporary ideological and practical forms of exclusion and domination of (ethnic) others that refer to culture or religion cannot be explained by this conceptual framework (see for example, Rath, 1991). The lack of conceptual clarity and the undertheorization of racism in their sociohistorical contexts in many cases lead to a situation in which racism is defined away.

According to Poppelaars and Scholten, in the Netherlands there exists a 'politics of avoidance'. It appears there has been much '…'political theatre'

where words count more than concrete policy effects…' (2005, 2-6). This stems from an important process with contradictory outcomes. On the one hand, many Dutch have worked against those who would prefer to play the 'race card' (Penninx, et al. 2005, 4). On the other hand, a politics of consensus has led to a politics of avoidance, not only in terms of academic research, but also in the society generally. In a project that examines everyday ways of thinking about multiculturalism, Verkuyten indicates that although people can simultaneously hold liberal and illiberal views, there is a tendency to blame the migrant while appearing mainly ignorant of how the 'native Dutch' are implicated, except in a rather positive way (2004, 66-67). Thus, 'minorization' and the 'tolerant nation' have become the dominant paradigms.

Finally, it is not that the Dutch do not deal with discrimination or that they do not believe there is a process of othering. The problem is that racism is taken out of the process of understanding discrimination and othering. Ethnic minorities, whether black, or Moroccan or Muslim experience racialization, a process that is normalized and hence rendered invisible to the Dutch. Essed believes that the protest against racism has been effectively silenced in the Netherlands where 'Stereotypes' and 'prejudice' [are] seen to be more acceptable as topics of research. This silencing in academia has meant that 'anti-anti-racism arguments have remained largely unchallenged' (Essed 2004, 123-130).

## Changing identities – tolerance and assimilation

Ethnic minorities in the Netherlands are caught in a contradiction. On the one hand, their ongoing structural marginalisation, partly the result of institutional and everyday racism, has not been adequately dealt with by the state, thus leaving many segregated and marginalised within the broader society. On the other, ethnic minorities are blamed for not integrating into Dutch culture. So how can a liberal and tolerant society ignore racism, blame

migrants and, more recently, demand conformity? It appears that racial discrimination is the link between immigrant structural marginalisation and the 'tolerant' society.

Thränhardt coined the term 'legitimacy of difference' to suggest that in the Netherlands the ideology of pillarization co-existed comfortably with discriminatory attitudes against migrants (Thränhardt 2004, 20). It appears now that the institutionalization of immigrant equality was founded on a very shaky basis. The 'legitimacy of difference' was based on the *tolerant norm*, an important aspect of Dutch liberal values. A dominant feature of Dutch national identity is its claim to liberalism and tolerance. Tolerance, as a characteristic of national identity, is problematic because it sets up a dichotomy between the dominant and subordinate person, groups or culture. The person or group who does the 'tolerating' is in a position of power to confer their 'tolerance' or acceptance on those they wish to confer it upon or on those they think deserve it. In other words, there will always be an unequal power relationship between the 'tolerant' and the 'tolerated'. It is also possible that tolerance can mean the avoidance of facing up to the systematic racial discrimination through the structural marginalisation of ethnic minorities. As we have seen in the section above, the existence and denial of racism is symptomatic of the *tolerant norm* because denial, as revealed in particular by Essed (1991), Verkuyten (2004) and Van der Valk (2003), ultimately means that someone other than the tolerant is to be blamed. The tolerant and liberal society did not have to be too concerned about racial discrimination because tolerance had been institutionalised within the ideologies of the various policies. The ideology of 'tolerance' continues as a dominant ideology to this day. Duyvendak et al. suggest (2005, 13):

> …if the majority culture turns tolerance into an ideology, then the foundation of the tolerance can be undermined. This is the paradox of recent years: native Dutch citizens deploy their widely shared tolerant values to stigmatise and exclude Islamic migrants.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of countries experienced what was then termed the ‘new racism’. After the liberating atmosphere of the new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, the conservative backlash against immigrants in the following decades produced analyses based on racism and nationalism. Reviewing an earlier backlash in France and other EU countries in the late 1980s, Balibar (1991, 23) called this ‘new racism’ a ‘racism without race’. According to his analysis, this new racism no longer speaks of superiority, but rather of immutable differences, that make co-existence between varying cultural groups in one society difficult, if not impossible. Huntington (2002) has taken this idea to its extreme with his ‘clash of civilisations’ as a justification for the unwillingness of some people to live with and accept cultural diversity. In the Netherlands, the backlash can be described both in terms of old racism and ‘new racism’. It is racism because ethnic minorities are categorised as inferior on the basis of their ethnicity, cultures, religion, skin colour etc and in turn are marginalised. But the ‘new racism’ also emerges when some Dutch claim the need to protect their historical homogenous culture seemingly from invasion of inferior cultures. Islamaphobia, for example, is partly based on the idea that Islamic values are inferior to western values.

An assumed tolerance is likely to break down and lead to a demand for assimilation which emerges from both forms of racism. While there might be a belief in immutable differences, new immigrants and ethnic minorities, the inferior and racialized ‘other’, are being told they will have to assimilate and become like ‘us’. Put another way, ‘This rhetoric goes even further when the superiority of western culture and values become the justification for the suppression of other cultures’ (Ghorashi 2003, 169).

The problem with the Dutch notion of integration/assimilation is that it is a one-way process. Brubaker provides two popular definitions. Assimilation can refer to a process of complete absorption, suggesting a state of policies and

programs of forced assimilation. The second definition designates a process of becoming similar through a direction of change and including a degree of choice for newcomers (Brubaker 2003). Scholten calls these the 'old' and the 'new' assimilation. The 'old' definition is based on the idea of a certain end-state where immigrants assimilate into the norms and values of the receiving society. The 'new assimilation', in line with Brubaker's second definition, is concerned with the idea of a more procedural notion searching for commonalities. Scholten suggests that, in the Netherlands, the policy changes are moving towards the 'new' assimilation while the public discourse tends towards the 'old' assimilation (2003, 122).

In general terms, both definitions are problematic because they do not accommodate difference adequately, and the discriminatory structures of the receiving society that prevent integration are generally ignored. Consequently, assimilation does not allow for institutional change that would accommodate structural needs of ethnic minorities. Essed (2002a, 4) suggests that '[A]t the heart of assimilation is the presupposition that the nation-state is racially or ethnically homogenous in which all members receive equal treatment'. Similarly, Ghorashi states that 'the recent discursive assumption has been that the social and economic problems of immigrants will be solved once they distance themselves from their culture and assimilate into Dutch society' (2003, 165-166). More specifically, assimilation/integration is fundamentally at odds with multicultural and liberal societies. Assimilation cannot accommodate diversity.

Yet, how we conceive of diversity is also significant in terms of national identity. In 1999, the City of Amsterdam replaced its minority policy with a 'diversity policy' aiming to move to a 'post multicultural era' (Uitermark, et al. 2005). The policy was introduced as a means of regulating ethnic diversity where 'everybody is entitled to participate, not as a member of a group, but as an individual with a multifaceted identity' (Uitermark, et al. 2005, 17-18). According to Uitermark et al., 'the diversity policy does not seek to give a

voice or specific rights to groups and it is aimed at negating rather than reproducing group identities' (2005, 20-21). Sociologists who study the processes of immigration argue that any attempt to deny people their group identities is quite problematic and unrealistic because immigrant ethnic identities are by necessity group identities. During the process of migrant settlement immigrant groups are often relegated to the position of 'other', often through racism. It is assumed within assimilationism that the process of fitting into the majority society and culture is an individual process. The reality is that in a situation of marginalisation and racism, group identity is crucial. Group identity can become a resource for survival.

Over time, group identities change. Duyvendak et al. suggest that the 'native Dutch' have become more culturally homogenous and uniform, leading to the idea that 'we' are more enlightened than 'them', thus sharing few norms and values with ethnic minorities. 'Since native Dutch citizens differ so little from one another, it would seem that we are losing our ability to cope with cultural differences' (2005, 15). This inability of the native population to accommodate cultural difference 'does little to enhance the openness of Dutch institutions to migrants' (Duyvendak, et al. 2005, 12). Hence, they ask 'Is it perhaps not the multicultural but the monocultural nature of the native Dutch citizens that forms an obstacle to integration'. They come to the conclusion that '…the assimilation mentality in the Netherlands is becoming more dominant as a result of the relatively strong consensus of the native population' (Duyvendak, et al. 2005, 3, 11).

The problem is the same in many countries of immigration – there is a preference for integration and assimilation rather than the development of processes and strategies to establish mutual accommodation. The failure to accommodate cultural diversity, be it due to cultural homogeneity of the dominant ethnic group and/or through racial discrimination, brings into question immigrant and ethnic minority identities. The lack of a migrant voice that is actually heard, lends weight to this problem. Ghorashi reminds us that

it is ‘essential for any democratic state to stimulate a sense of belonging in its citizens and to invite their active participation in the process of decision-making’ (2003, 168). However, as Iris Young pertinently states, a consequence of social privilege of dominant groups is that their definition of the common good is expressed as ‘compatible with their experience, perspective and priorities’ (2000, 108).

What is missing in current policies of multiculturalism or integration is *mutual accommodation.* According to Baubock, mutual accommodation ‘involves the adaptation of the inserted group to existing conditions, as well as a change in the structure of the larger society and a redefinition of its criteria of cohesion. Accommodation involves an *internalization of difference.* The collective characteristics of inserted groups become accepted as distinctions *within* common social positions and membership groups’ (1996, 114). In similar vein to Young, Parekh advocates that ‘all constituent cultures’ should participate in the creation of a climate of equality and they should have the ‘ability to interrogate each other’. Further, he suggests that outcome cannot be determined (2000, 221). So, different values have to be put to the test through dialogue and a collective language needs to emerge. This would require a rethinking of national identities.

## Conclusion

It might seem expedient in this time of great insecurity to adopt a policy and ideology of assimilation, but in the long run it is not likely to work. At a time when the role of civil society is no longer clear, the destruction of human rights and the destruction of security have become ‘naturalized’ (Sennett 2004). Many people feel they have lost control of their lives, if they have jobs, many are not secure and many feel they are not reaping the benefits of their hard work. There is also a sense in which people can no longer see broader, universal solutions which were earlier based on a collective (class) politics. Without the broader, universal understanding of the changes which

are occurring, it is all too easy for dominant ethnic groups, who feel under threat, to degenerate into a ‘politics of grievance’ or a culture of blame, based on individualism and the blaming of minorities.

In the Netherlands, there is a move away from civic identity towards nationalism. A sense of Dutchness seems no longer to be based on support for diversity which is meant to encourage a sense of belonging in all ethnic groups. Instead, the rhetoric of 'migrant responsibility' has become a convenient cloak for structural barriers and assimilationist identities rooted in Dutch history and culture. While there was a genuine attempt in the early years towards multiculturalism and accommodating diversity, racism has been largely ignored. This has led to an entrenching of structural marginalization which has strongly affected ethnic minorities’ sense of belonging.

The racialization of policies and structural marginalisation have reinforced the exclusion of ethnic minorities and thus constituted the 'problem' migrant to be addressed by assimilationism and a form of ‘cultural fundamentalism’. This is more concerned with drawing people into the Dutch idea of 'nation' than real concern with ensuring social rights. Thus migrants are being defined more and more as being outside the imagined national community. As racialized and inferiorized others, it becomes near impossible for ethnic minorities to integrate into and to became a part of a Dutch national identity.

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