
THE NETHERLANDS FROM NATIONAL IDENTITY TO PLURAL IDENTIFICATIONS

By Monique Kremer

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Executive Summary

National identity has become a highly politicized issue in the Netherlands in the past decade, with many public figures voicing different opinions on what it means to be “Dutch.” Both right-wing and mainstream parties have adopted political rhetoric that appeals to the public’s growing anxiety about immigrants and their effect on local communities, and many have proposed policies designed to mitigate these fears.

This new dialogue has marked a turn away from multiculturalism and a turn toward “culturalized citizenship” — the idea that being Dutch means adhering to a certain set of cultural and social norms and practices. In 2004, the Dutch government officially rejected multiculturalism, claiming that this strategy of “accommodation” failed to address the ongoing problems of integration in the Netherlands. The new strategy places the onus on the minority to fit into the existing majority, primarily by emphasizing “the” Dutch national identity, prohibiting dual citizenship (which had been allowed in the 1990s), and making a civic integration exam compulsory. Immigrants now have to “become Dutch,” not only through language acquisition, but also in a cultural and moral sense.

National identity has become a highly politicized issue in the Netherlands in the past decade, with many public figures voicing different opinions on what it means to be “Dutch.”

The vitriolic political debate masks a deep ambivalence among the Dutch public: while a small majority believes that migration threatens national identity, a substantial number disagrees and is likely to say that the presence of different cultures actually benefits society. These complex views are influenced by many factors, including education levels, geography, and anxiety over globalization. People who vote for far-right politicians are not always the ones who have direct contact with immigrants and minorities in their neighborhoods: much of the “cultural insecurity” is not driven by real competition between immigrants and natives, but by fears of “losing” from the changes wrought by globalization, reinforced by media and political discourse.

National governments cannot alleviate all anxieties facing the public (especially the lower educated and economic “losers”), but stressing national identity and demanding cultural assimilation is likely to make things worse. Defining identity in rigid, exclusionary terms — premised on things such as shared heritage that cannot be easily acquired by the foreign born — can lead to the marginalization of one part of the population, and will not bring comfort to those who feel loss. Instead, plural identifications with the Netherlands should be encouraged, including: functional identification (shared interests and experiences), normative identification (shared norms and morals), and emotional identification (shared feeling of pride for the nation). For these to work, there needs to be a two-way process: immigrants need to adapt to existing norms, but they also need to see their culture and norms reflected in public arenas.

To encourage means of identification with the Netherlands that cut across ethnicity, policymakers need to do more to encourage positive intercultural interactions in key social arenas, especially schools and workplaces. Equipping immigrants with the tools they need to succeed in these environments may be more practical, and yield greater integration benefits, than teaching them about Dutch national identity. Such an approach not only contributes to social cohesion, but also allows for fruitful policy alternatives in which many actors have a role to play, such as fighting segregation in the labor markets and at schools, allowing for more extreme but also more civilized political points of view in the public debate, and stressing a fluid and open notion of national identity that permits the expression of multiple identities.



I. Introduction¹

After Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people in Norway in July 2011, portraying the victims as “traitors” who embraced multiculturalism and immigration, the focus of many journalists quickly turned to another small country in northwestern Europe: The Netherlands. In a 1,500-page manifesto posted online hours before the horrific attacks, Breivik mentioned Geert Wilders, the leader of the third biggest political party in the Netherlands, 30 times. This thrust the Netherlands on the international agenda again, several years after the emergence (and later murder) of right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn by an animal-rights activist and the killing of director Theo van Gogh by an Islamic radical.

How did it come to pass that a political leader in the tolerant, peaceful, globally connected Netherlands served as a source of inspiration for an anti-Muslim, nationalist murderer in Norway?

Shortly after Breivik’s rampage, a *New York Times* article revealed the widespread anxiety in the Netherlands, quoting a native Dutch resident as saying: “Sometimes I’m afraid of Islam...They’re taking over the neighborhood and they’re very strong. I no longer feel at home.”² These sentences exemplify Dutch discontent and the feeling of being displaced in one’s own country. The interviewee went on to say that despite her disdain for Wilders’ style, he “says what many people think.”

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In the past decade, there has been a backlash against what people perceive as “political correctness.” Citizens who no longer feel “at home” in the Netherlands have been voicing their anxieties and demanding acknowledgment of their concerns from politicians. Fortuyn, a controversial Dutch politician who called Islam “a backward culture,” was the first to publicly give voice to discontent with the multicultural society. Although other political parties — both right- and left-wing — had discussed the negative consequences of migration, Fortuyn was the first who made the issue politically prominent. The sociological feelings of discontent, in a country that is one of the world’s most densely populated and has welcomed significant inflows as guest workers or from former Dutch colonies since the end of World War II,³ were made political.

It is in this context that national identity became a political and policy issue. Reinforcing national identity has two purported policy goals: first, providing a sense of stability and comfort to those who feel anxiety — or a sense of loss — about the changes wrought by globalization and immigration; and second, it is also seen as a way to encourage integration by giving immigrants the necessary information about their new homeland so they are better able to fit in. In 2004, the Dutch government stated that the idea of multicultural society had failed. The focus on national identity in the Dutch context meant a farewell to the ideal of the multicultural society and a welcome to the culturalization of citizenship — whereby newcomers to the Netherlands have to fully adopt Dutch culture in order to become citizens.

1 This report draws substantially from the author’s work with Pauline Meurs, Dennis Broeders, and Erik Schrijvers for the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policies (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, or WRR), *Identificatie met Nederland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

2 Steven Erlanger, “Amid Rise of Multiculturalism, Dutch Confront Their Questions of Identity,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2011, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9500E1DD1439F937A2575BC0A9679D8B63&pagewanted=all>.

3 As of 2011, 20.6 percent of the country’s 16.65 million residents were immigrants or had at least one foreign-born parent; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), “Population; sex, age, origin and generation, 1 January,” <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/default.aspx?VW=T&DM=SLen&PA=37325eng&LA=EN>.



This is a more exclusionary approach, allowing only one accepted “Dutch national identity” as opposed to multiple means of identification with the Netherlands.

This report describes the discontent within Dutch society and subsequent search for an explanation. It also outlines the dominant policy response in which national identity is one of the key themes. Finally, the report tries to provide an alternative set of recommendations based on the idea that national identity as policy can cause counter-productive effects. Instead, the notion of plural identifications, which is a two-way process, offers more fruitful policy options.

II. Polarization in the Netherlands

Group distinctions and boundaries — whether drawn along ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other lines — are a reality for all societies. Even though the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has ranked the Netherlands as one of the more “equal” countries (based on inequality ratios), this does not mean there are no divisions or tensions between different groups.⁴ Before and after World War II, religious distinctions between neutral, Catholic, and Protestant groups were dominant. The organization of politics and daily life was built on religious pillarization. Around the turn of this century, however, new dividing lines became apparent: now the twin concepts of *allochtoon* (not from the Netherlands; literally, “not from here”) and *autochtoon* (from the Netherlands) came to be perceived as the crucial distinction. The concept of *allochtoon* also applies to children born in the Netherlands to foreign-born parents. Comparative European statistics from 2003 show that 61 percent of Dutch people said most societal tensions were between *allochtonen* and *autochtonen*; far fewer reported tensions between the rich and the poor (25 percent), men and women (9 percent), and old and young (18 percent).⁵ This pattern is also visible in other European countries, particularly in France and Belgium. In the minds of a fair number of people in Europe, and particularly in the Netherlands, “us versus them” group distinctions are based on people born in the country versus (non-western) migrants and their children.

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These new tensions are also visible in voting behavior. In 2002, Fortuyn’s party (Lijst Pim Fortuyn) won 17 percent of the vote in Dutch national elections (just days after his assassination) — the first significant victory for an anti-Islam, anti-immigration party. After forming part of a coalition government, the party collapsed within months, and was followed by another, less successful party: Rita Verdonk’s newly formed Trots op Nederland (TON or “Proud of the Netherlands”) Party. In 2010, Wilders’ Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV, Party for Freedom) received 15.5 percent of the vote for the Dutch Parliament, making it the third-biggest party in the Netherlands.

4 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising* (Paris: OECD, 2011), www.oecd.org/document/51/0,3746,en_2649_33933_49147827_1_1_1_1,00.html.

5 WRR, *De verzorgingsstaat herwogen* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), www.usgvox.nl/pdf/wrr%20rapport%20de%20verzorgingsstaat%20herwogen.pdf.



While not identical, the PVV, TON, and Lijst Pim Fortuyn have much in common. They are nationalist, premised on distinguishing natives from “others,” such as immigrants and Muslims; anti-establishment; critical of political institutionalism; anti-European Union; fearful of globalization; and focused on national identity. The parties have been able to reframe the issue of migration from a juridical and legal one to a cultural issue; they now consider all social problems, such as public safety and social cohesion, to be linked to migration or Muslims.

The people who have voted for these parties can loosely be labeled as “voters from the periphery,” although they now comprise a fair share of the population. Voters for Wilders in 2010 were often low- (sometimes middle-) educated, male, and over 55. They live in specific neighborhoods and regions, particularly in the South of Holland (Limburg), in which Wilders has siphoned votes from the Christian Democrats.⁶ Many PVV supporters live in stagnating industrial areas where unemployment and the aging of society are an issue. Voters for Wilders (as for Fortuyn in 2002) also live in suburban areas (such as the planned city of Almere), outside the economic, cultural, and governmental heart of the Netherlands.⁷

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Although journalists tend to go to neighborhoods with majority Muslim populations to understand “Dutch discontent,” there is no straightforward connection between the areas where people voted for Wilders and the number of Muslims residing there.⁸ Contrary to popular belief, Wilders voters are not the ones likely to have run-ins with misbehaving Moroccan youth and who report that their neighborhoods have been “taken over.” This is especially important because the Social Democratic politicians tend to respond to populist victories by campaigning in disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods. But the people who have stayed in the city center are often the ones who are able to cope with, and even enjoy, cultural diversity. It is not necessarily their day-to-day experiences that shape the views and votes of those who are anti-Muslim, anti-establishment, and anti-immigration. Some live in areas with nearby immigrant communities, so they may be afraid that their neighborhood will be the next to lose its identity. But many Wilders voters also base their views on the images they have of the Netherlands. What they see on TV may take on more importance than what they encounter around the corner from their house.

Anti-immigrant attitudes and cultural conservatism are, however, much more widespread than the voting patterns for Wilders and Fortuyn before him reveal. People who feel that the multicultural society has failed and that the Netherlands has been overwhelmed by immigrants may also support another political party that has grown rapidly: the Socialist Party. Also fishing in the social conservative pond, the Socialist Party expresses anti-Europe standpoints, is in favor of immigrant assimilation into the broader society, and stresses the importance of national identity.⁹

6 Other constituencies are located in the west of Brabant, Rijnmond region, and Zeeuws Vlaanderen.

7 Josse De Voogd, *Bakfietsen en rolluiken. De electorale geografie van Nederland* (Utrecht: Wetenschappelijk Bureau Groen Links, 2011), <http://wetenschappelijkbureau.groenlinks.nl/node/71331>.

8 W. P. C. van Gent and Sako Musterd, “Isolement en angst: PVV in Haagse buurten bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen van 2010,” *Beleid en Maatschappij* 37, no. 2 (2010): 143; De Voogd, *Bakfietsen en rolluiken*.

9 Previous Socialist Party Head Jan Marijnissen said in 2004: “The Muslim community must understand that there is a collective responsibility to combat excesses such as political Islam. Educators, teachers and imams must choose for our Constitution and bring up children in its spirit. If one is not prepared to conform to our values and obey our laws, the pressing advice is: seek a country where you feel at home.” See Jan Willem Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Europe and the United States* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 93.



In response to the successes of Fortuyn and Wilders, the Labour Party has also adopted the tough language of assimilation and anti-immigration in order to avoid being considered “too soft” on social issues. For example, Wilders put pressure on former Labour Leader Job Cohen, ridiculing the multiculturalist stance Cohen first undertook as mayor of Amsterdam as little more than an effort to “sit and drink tea with the Muslims.” The right-wing Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, or VVD) shows anti-immigrant tendencies and an emphasis on national identity as well, although the party is split into two camps. One camp is connected to employers who prefer cultural openness and are in favor of immigration as a way to win the battle of globalization and overcome the demographic time bomb; the second faction is more nationally conservative. (Wilders and Verdonk both sprang from the VVD.) Recently departed Prime Minister Mark Rutte employed Wilders’ rhetoric by saying: “We will make sure that we give this beautiful Netherlands back to the Dutch.”¹⁰ Only two smaller parties — D66 and the Green Left Party — continue to fiercely oppose adopting the rhetoric of national identity and cultural assimilation.

No Consensus on Views toward Immigrants

Dutch politics revolve deeply around anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, and pro-national identity feelings and ideas, which are more widespread than electoral support for the PVV shows. Yet, there is no anti-immigration or anti-Muslim consensus: Dutch society is deeply polarized. This is visible from the regular surveys conducted by the Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (Social and Cultural Planning Office, or SCP). For instance: asked whether the Netherlands would be a nicer country to live in if fewer immigrants lived there, a 2011 survey showed 32 percent disagreed and 41 percent agreed.¹¹ In addition: 54 percent agreed that the national identity of the Netherlands is threatened by immigration and open borders, whereas 24 percent disagreed. This shows that while a small majority fears migration because of the perceived loss of national identity, a substantial number disagree. Moreover, when asked whether the presence of different cultures represents a gain for society, 41 percent agreed, while only 27 percent disagreed. Dutch society shows much ambivalence, but over the last decade, much of the public has connected immigration with social problems and loss of national identity.

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Still, these attitudes and feelings can shift over time. Studies show that support for the view that there are too many people of different nationality in the Netherlands dropped to 38 percent in 2009 from 51 percent in 2000 and 48 percent in 1994.¹² While multiculturalism topped the list of most cited social problems during the last decade, since the onset of the economic recession, the issue has dropped from the top five concerns most important to the public.¹³

It is social cohesion that has dominated public concern in the Netherlands over the last decade, and, until recently, a majority, although small, linked this to issues of immigration and Islam.

10 Karen Zandbergen, ‘SGP een leuke partij met leuke mensen’, *Trouw*, April 3, 2011, www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5009/Archief/archief/article/detail/1855391/2011/03/04/SGP-ee-leuke-partij-met-leuke-mensen.dhtml.

11 Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP), *Continu onderzoek burgerperspectieven. Kwartaalbericht 2011* (The Hague: SCP, 2011), www.scp.nl/dsresource?objectid=28531&type=org.

12 SCP, *Stemming onbestemd* (The Hague: SCP, 2011), www.scp.nl/dsresource?objectid=27870&type=org.

13 Ibid.



This brings us to the question of how to interpret and explain this link. Why have cultural issues of assimilation, national identity, and anti-Muslim sentiment become so pronounced?

II. The Link between Cultural Insecurity and Politics

Anti-immigrant views and ethnic intolerance are often connected to education levels. People with higher levels of education tend to be more ethnically tolerant and more pro-immigrant, while less-educated people tend to have the opposite views.¹⁴ The academic debate focuses on identifying the underlying factors: Why are less-educated people less tolerant?

In the Netherlands, we have seen that anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim attitudes do not fluctuate predictably according to economic cycles. When Fortuyn made his political debut, the economy was doing well, producing relatively high growth rates and low unemployment. The “ethnic competition theory” — that less-educated people fear they will have to compete with low-skilled migrants — does not necessarily hold: neither income level nor weak employment situations can reliably predict public opinion toward immigration. Voters for Wilders, for example, tend to live in areas where there is little competition for work or housing between immigrants and natives, though it is possible some *perceive* this to be the case.¹⁵

So far, the conflict in the Netherlands seems to be about culture, rather than economic scarcity.¹⁶ Less-educated people have less cultural capital and are therefore unable to cope smoothly with ethnic and other differences. This cultural insecurity — when people fear their norms and values are being taken over, and that their national identity itself is at stake — leads people to turn to authoritarianism, rigid social order, and intolerance toward others.¹⁷ Therefore, intolerance seems to be primarily rooted in the *cultural* background of the less educated rather than as a result of competition over resources,¹⁸ and as such, people who are ethnically and/or culturally different are considered a cultural rather than an economic threat.

Looking at the post-war Netherlands, cultural capital has grown rapidly. Thirty percent of the population has benefited from higher education, so one would expect more people to be able to cope with differences and exhibit increased tolerance. Yet a substantial number of people continue to feel culturally insecure and threatened. The dominant explanation is that the Dutch political establishment pushed multicultural policies too far by giving “special treatment” to newcomers. By 1994, 60 percent believed that the onus should be on immigrants and minorities to adapt to Dutch culture, and they perceived that political leaders ignored their wishes in pursuit of the ideal of a multicultural society.¹⁹ This argument, however, is

14 Paul M. Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and its Discontents in the Netherlands* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

15 Van Gent, *Isolement en angst*.

16 Sniderman and Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide*.

17 The extensive surveys of Jeroen van der Waal and Dick Houtman, “Tolerance in the Postindustrial City: Assessing the Ethnocentrism of Less Educated Natives in 22 Dutch Cities,” *Urban Affairs Review* 47, no. 5 (2011): 642-71 and Jeroen van der Waal, Willem de Koster, and Peter Achterberg, “Stedelijke context en steun voor Wilders’ PVV,” *Res Publica* 2 (2011): 189-207 show that not only are low education levels linked to authoritarianism and a need to stress social order, but also that the intermediate factor was not income or employment insecurity, but issues of (cultural) insecurity. In addition, the existence of cultural capital was essential.

18 Dick Houtman and Jan Willem Duyvendak, “Boerka’s, boerkinis en belastingcenten: Culturele en politieke polarisatie in een post-Christelijke samenleving,” in *Polarisatie. Bedreigend en Verrijkend*, ed., Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (Amsterdam: SWP, 2009).

19 Sniderman and Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide*; Ruud Koopmans and Jasper Muis, “The rise of right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands: A discursive opportunity approach,” *European Journal of Political Research* 48 (2009): 642-64.



far from the truth. The Netherlands never pushed through fully fledged multicultural policies promoting diverse religious and cultural identities, focusing instead on socioeconomically disadvantaged ethnic minorities.²⁰ Moreover, other countries (e.g. the United Kingdom), have always been more supportive of institutionalized diversity.

It is more likely that cultural insecurity, which is more dominant among the less educated, is fueled by processes of globalization. According to the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, globalization divides societies into small global elites with a hybrid culture, while the majority gets more “local”—turning to local traditions because they do not feel connected to the new global culture of the elite.²¹ Especially for the less educated, globalization fosters feelings of authoritarianism and ethnocentrism, and parallel processes of secularization and individualization can lead to a possible feeling of loss of control.²² While the more educated feel better able to deal with globalization and are more able to cope with uncertainties, less-educated people become more insecure and try to keep what they have.

Also possibly contributing to feelings of discontent is the fact that the political establishment and the economic elite, particularly in the Netherlands, have always unequivocally favored global openness and European integration. With Dutch economic well-being largely dependent on international trade, globalization and greater European integration are said to benefit the nation. Therefore, the discontent and the success of populist parties are sometimes seen as a revolt against the establishment by low- and middle-educated publics.

The Netherlands never pushed through fully fledged multicultural policies promoting diverse religious and cultural identities

Cultural fears may also be fueled by uneven patterns and perceptions of mobility. Even though the Dutch have one of the highest intergenerational mobility rates of Europe (and much higher than in the United States)²³ because of universal education, the majority feel that their children will be worse off. For the first time in decades, social stagnation is visible: 17 percent of the public, mostly men, are less well off than their parents.²⁴ In the meantime, only one group that was previously at the lower end of the economic ladder is finally moving up: labor market participation rates for Turkish and Moroccan Dutch have increased significantly in 15 years and are “just” 10 percent less than for the native Dutch.²⁵ While on the one hand better-educated migrants are more tolerated, they may also be considered more of a cultural threat: they may be able to articulate their values and make claims to cultural areas of life. In other words, the narrowing of the employment and education gap between natives and foreigners — perceived or real — also could cause anxiety, as natives will not be able to preserve their comparative advantage. Even if they are not in direct competition, the upward mobility of one group may cause fears for another group.

20 Duyvendak, *Politics of Home*.

21 Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

22 Houtman and Duyvendak, “Boerka’s, boerkinis en belastingcenten.”

23 OECD, *Divided We Stand*.

24 Raad voor maatschappelijke ontwikkeling (RMO), *Nieuwe ronde, nieuwe kansen* (The Hague: RMO, 2009), https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDgQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.adviesorgaan-rmo.nl%2Fdsresource%3Fobjectid%3D30931%26type%3Dorg&ei=GqVVUbKSKpPI4APUt4CADA&usg=AFQjCNHJnDadtKp5hcgJYSNDxIJDcYnUcg&sig2=j_xcrFuAAJDWB6B_KqkS6g&bvm=bv.44442042.d.dmg.

25 Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), *Jaarrapport Integratie 2010* (The Hague: CBS, 2011), www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/dossiers/allochtonen/publicaties/publicaties/archief/2010/2010-b61-pub.htm.



Politics

Pim Fortuyn was able to present himself as anti-establishment and thus capitalize upon this discontent that the governing elite was pushing an agenda at odds with majority concerns, arguably even making the unease greater by giving it a specific target. His success lay in the fact that he was able to make anti-immigration, anti-Islam, and pro-national identity rhetoric *socially acceptable*. Because Fortuyn openly discussed issues that resonated with the public, he left the established parties with no choice but to take these concerns on board. Those parties had previously managed to avoid them.²⁶ He made the issues of Islam and migration a normal part of political discourse. The subsequent reactions of media and other politicians created dynamic feedback processes that raised his popularity among the electorate — a phenomenon that Jasper Muis and Ruud Koopmans refer to as a “spiral of discursive escalation.”²⁷

The emergence of Fortuyn’s right-wing populist party has Dutch dimensions but is not unique to the Netherlands: it clearly fits into a larger shift of politics in European countries. Hanspeter Kriesi et al describe a new structural conflict in Western European countries that pits those who benefit from processes of globalization (the “winners”) against those who experience disadvantages (the “losers”).²⁸ In this context, the cultural dimension has been gaining importance. Parties of the populist right do not stand out for their economic profile yet. It is on cultural issues where they support a demarcation strategy much more strongly than mainstream parties. Authoritarianism, according to Dick Houtman and Jan Willem Duyvendak, has become the crucial pole in Dutch politics, defined on the scale of ethnocentrism and social order.²⁹ Whereas secularization and individualization left a political void in the Netherlands, globalization has opened up a new demarcation line between those who feel they are not in control and do not have a “grip” over their lives, and those who are able to cope with diversity.

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So far, the political debate over globalization — which includes an economic component — has been fought in terms of culture and national identity, precisely because it raises issues of well-being and the challenges of economic, social, and ethnic diversity at the national and local levels. Today, with the financial and economic crises rattling Europe and the world, globalization increasingly raises material concerns. It remains to be seen if the economic crisis will focus the globalization debate primarily on economic concerns. It is too soon to draw conclusions but as described before, just recently in the Netherlands the issue of migration and multicultural society has dropped out of the top five most urgent problems identified by the Dutch population.

26 Wouter van der Brug and Anthony Mughan, “Charisma, Leader Effects and Support for Rights-Wing Populist Parties,” *Party Politics* 13, no. 1 (2007): 29-51.

27 Koopmans and Muis, “The rise of right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands.”

28 Hanspeter Kriesi, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschieer, and Timotheos Frey, “Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared,” *European Journal of Political Research* 45 (2006): 921-56, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00644.x/pdf>.

29 Houtman and Duyvendak, “Boerka’s, boerkini’s en belastingcenten.”



III. Policy Response: National Identity and Cultural Assimilation

In 2000, Paul Scheffer published an essay titled “The Multicultural Drama” that ignited the controversial debate about integration and immigration in the Netherlands.³⁰ Scheffer argued that the Dutch should develop a greater sense of national consciousness and become less indifferent to their own society. Doing so would also benefit immigrants, he contended, because if “we” became better at defining and propagating “our” language, history, and culture, immigrants would know in which country they had to integrate. Therefore, following Scheffer’s line of reasoning, the dominant policy response to cultural discontent has been to reject the ideal of the multicultural society, stress the (cultural) assimilation of one group (immigrants), remind the Dutch of their national identity by developing a national canon for educational purposes, reinforce this identity by building a national historic museum (the latter failed), and finally, prohibit dual nationality.

The concept of *inburgering* — becoming an integrated citizen — was introduced in 1994 as just one step in the process of full integration. By 2007, a civic integration exam testing knowledge of Dutch society and language skills had become compulsory for non-Western, non-EU immigrants entering the Netherlands (and even for some already settled immigrants). The demands being placed upon immigrants became heavier and also took on more moral and cultural weight: immigrants now have to become Dutch. In practice this means that those who do not speak the language and fail the exam on Dutch history and practices are denied admission to the country. For those who are already here, rules have become stricter: social assistance, for instance, can be reduced if one does not speak Dutch.

Since 2004 the ideal of the multicultural society has been officially rejected by the Dutch government.

Becoming Dutch also means appearing to be less Muslim in public. In pursuit of electoral gains, Wilders proposed a *kopvoddentax* — a headscarf tax — in 2009. This was an unfeasible policy idea as it is too unpractical to be implemented, yet it insults and alienates those who wear a headscarf. This was followed in 2011 by Interior Minister Piet Hein Donner (a Christian Democrat) proposing a prohibition on burqas in public spaces. In short, in addition to deepening the criteria for becoming Dutch, these rules now apply to a larger number of people. “Integration,” nowadays, already starts abroad, as it has become a criterion for admission to the Netherlands, and people who immigrated a long time ago — the proverbial 55-year-old Turkish-origin housewives — have to follow the set integration trajectories.

Since 2004 the ideal of the multicultural society has been officially rejected by the Dutch government. The new minority has to fit into the existing majority. As former Minister Donner underlined in a policy paper:³¹

“The persistence of integration problems underlines the image that the model of the multicultural society has not offered a solution for the dilemma of the pluriform society...Again and again it shows that many Dutch people do not experience ethnic and cultural diversity as an enrichment, but as a threat. The Dutch society, in all her diversity, is the society in which those who settle have to learn to live, to which they have to adjust and fit into.”

30 Paul Scheffer, “Het multiculturele drama,” *NRC Handelsblad*, January 29, 2000.
<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Lab/Multicultureel/scheffer.html>.

31 Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, *Integratienota Integratie, binding, burgerschap* (The Hague: Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2011),
www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/notas/2011/06/16/integratienota.html.



A national canon and museum focused on Dutch history were proposed to promote the country's culture. The museum, put forward by the Socialist Party, was never built because of political, national, and local power struggles and the economic crises. The canon, in contrast, was developed in 2006 and is obligatory for use in the Dutch education system.³² Nevertheless, the commission that set up the canon rejected the notion of national identity: "If it has been a valid concept, now less than ever: in the international, multicultural world of today it is a false, yes, dangerous concept." The commission does believe that the canon can contribute to integration.³³ However, the canon does not give space to divergence, diversity, or power differences. And even though historians agree that national identity is constructed and evolves according to dominant ideas, the national canon just gives one story about what the Netherlands is.

In the current debate over national identity in the Netherlands, a heated discussion has taken place on the issue of dual nationality. In practice, in the 1990s, people did not have to renounce the citizenship of their country of origin when they wanted to become Dutch. In 2004, when the issue was discussed again, then Integration and Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk considered dual nationality to be a hindrance to integration and sought to ban it. But today, a little over 1 million people have dual citizenship — including a member of the royal family and members of the government (which provoked public outcry in 2007 when the latter was revealed). Dual nationality is regarded as disloyalty. Such strong views about dual nationality are all the more striking because 68 percent of the Turkish-origin and 74 percent of the Moroccan-origin Dutch citizens, who have dual nationality report that they feel at home in the Netherlands, compared to 78 and 80 percent (of the same groups) who have only the Dutch nationality.³⁴ This shows that dual citizenship is not a hindrance to "feeling at home" in the Netherlands.

IV. From National Identity to Plural Identities

Modern nation states are built on a feeling of attachment to a community and culture defined as a "nation;" however, there are many variations in the ways "national identity" is shaped.³⁵ In the Netherlands, the common understanding of "being Dutch" is based on four categories: race/ethnicity, roots, cultural practices, and moral disposition. The Dutch Iranian scholar Halleh Ghorashi calls this a "thick" notion of identity — premised on things such as shared heritage that cannot be easily acquired — which makes it possible to distinguish between "us" and "them."³⁶ As a consequence, people from different backgrounds who are born in the Netherlands, or who have lived most of their lives in the country and have Dutch nationality, are not considered one of "us."³⁷ This rigid, ancestry-based

32 The canon is a set of ideas and historical events that are considered to be crucial for understanding Dutch history, decided upon by a commission of eminent historians. Some of the decisions made by the commission have been criticized fiercely: migration, for instance, makes up just a tiny part of the canon and only with respect to recent era. Most of the criticism, however, focuses on the fact that the canon is obligatory for us in the classroom. Schools and teachers are not allowed to discuss how they see Dutch history but must instead draw from the canon. History is thus not free from interpretation and power relations. See WRR, *Identificatie met Nederland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), www.wrr.nl/fileadmin/nl/publicaties/PDF-Rapporten/Identificatie_met_Nederland.pdf.

33 Commissie Ontwikkeling Nederlandse Canon, *De canon van Nederland Delen A en B* (The Hague: Ministerie van OCW, 2006), <http://entoen.nu/over>.

34 Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home*.

35 According to Benedict Anderson, the modern nation state is an "imagined community" that creates a feeling of attachment to the state in the form of love of the nation; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

36 Halleh Ghorashi, "Multiple Identities between Continuity and Change: The narratives of Iranian women in Exile," *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 42 (2003): 63-75, <http://hallehghorashi.com/nl/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/paper-focaal-identity.pdf>.

37 Ghorashi in Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home*; Halleh Ghorashi, *Ways to Survive, Battles to Win: Iranian Women Exiles in the Netherlands and the United States* (New York, Nova Science, 2003).



interpretation of national identity allows little space for multiple identities, despite the fact that this is already a practice of millions of people today. By rejecting people's pasts, a group will feel excluded and perhaps alienate itself. By focusing on such a rigid and thick concept of national identity and forcing people into a single identity, the Netherlands may not be ready for a future in a globalized world where multiple identities are more common.

Therefore it is preferable to look to the future rather than the past and adopt a more dynamic, pluralistic approach. Rather than offering a blueprint for *the* national identity of the Netherlands, it is more useful to promote the idea that there can be several routes toward identification with the Netherlands. Three processes can be distinguished: emotional, normative, and functional identification. Such an approach offers greater scientific and policy opportunity to address present and future tensions in society.

A. Emotional Identification

Emotional identification is about a sense of belonging and feeling connected, not only with other people and groups, but also with a country. The public debate in the Netherlands primarily revolves around emotional identification — encapsulated in the ideas of “feeling at home” and feeling pride for the country — which is no surprise in a society that increasingly pays more attention to emotions.³⁸ Being proud of the Netherlands — as 87 percent of the Dutch said they were in 2006 — does not automatically lead to exclusion of others.³⁹ However, the Dutch intellectual and political elite had previously been reluctant to acknowledge people's emotional identification with the nation-state. Until recently, “becoming Dutch” was nothing more than picking up your passport from the government office. Today, however, there is a ritual at the town hall that accompanies the naturalization process, in which new citizens, surrounded by family and friends, are welcomed.

Emotional identification, however, could also be based on a “thin” definition of national identity — a more fluid concept derived from mutual and individual identification rather than shared ancestry or heritage. As Duyvendak notes: “If the ticket into Dutch society can only be obtained by being part of a longer national history, people with different backgrounds are confronted with insurmountable obstacles. Dutch society then only becomes accessible to people with deep roots in Dutch soil.”⁴⁰ He agrees with Ghorashi, who stresses: “American national discourse allows thick cultural differences within its understanding of a thin notion of national identity. It is possible to be considered American — both by oneself as well as by others — within the diversity of physical appearances, languages, and cultural backgrounds. Thus, the notion of American identity is like an umbrella that includes different particularities.”⁴¹

A thin notion of national identity also allows for dual nationality, understanding that dual nationality as an expression of loyalty is a faulty link: loyalty is not related to passports. The fact that many people of Moroccan or Turkish descent have Moroccan or Turkish passports may stem from practical motives: they need passports to go back to their country of origin or protect land or other property there. Not wanting to renounce their nationality or disconnect fully from their country of origin does not necessarily indicate disloyalty toward the Netherlands or a sense that their future is not linked to the Dutch future. The flip situation also applies: The 6 percent of the Dutch population that lives abroad may also want to feel connected to the Netherlands, even if durable ties have been established in the country of settlement. Just recently, 4,000 Dutch expatriates signed a petition asking Donner to allow for double nationality. In a globalizing world, it is increasingly common for people to hold two passports, and this applies not only for immigrants to the Netherlands — the “new Dutch” — but also for Dutch émigrés. Emotional identification with the Netherlands has more chance of success if people are not forced to give up their identification with the country where they have their origins.

38 Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home*.

39 WRR, *Identificatie met Nederland*.

40 Ibid, 101.

41 Ghorashi, “*Ways to Survive, Battles to Win*,” quoted in Duyvendak, *Politics of Home*, 221-2.



Moreover, attitudes toward the nation, like other identifications, are rooted in local, ordinary, necessary, and specific practices, which acquire personal and group meanings. National identity and feelings of belonging are created through other types of identifications, via work, living in a local community, etc.⁴² Shared experiences are a necessary condition for the development of the nation and the mutual relationships between people.⁴³ Therefore, the route to emotional identification is hard to establish on the level of national policy. It is more likely to be established via the two other routes, normative identification and particularly functional identification.

B. Normative Identification

Normative identification means that people have the possibility to follow norms that are meaningful to them and articulate these publicly, and that there is enough space to solve conflicts about norms democratically. Normative identification contains two elements: adjustment *to* the norms (the process by which newcomers adapt to existing cultural practices) and adjustment *of* the norms (the process by which cultural practices are changed — implicitly and explicitly by immigrant or minority groups). In the latter, newcomers are agents of change, in the first they also have to adapt. Both processes should take place.

Most immigrants, after they have spent some time in the Netherlands, develop similar norms as the Dutch, although they often retain their religion.

The current political debate is primarily concerned with adjustment *to* the norms. But this is a process that often takes place naturally: most immigrants, after they have spent some time in the Netherlands, develop similar norms as the Dutch, although they often retain their religion. There is no need for specific coercive policies for immigrants to adjust to the prevailing norms. This adjustment is only a matter of time. There are some instances, however, in which people clearly need to adapt to the norms, for example obeying the law. Some categories of immigrants or their children are overrepresented in crime statistics, mainly young Moroccan Dutch youth. It is a given that the rule of law is the framework in which people need to behave. In this particular case, the state should enforce the law and restore safety in troubled neighborhoods.

Adjustment *of* the norms is a more multilayered issue. The sociologist Robert Merton argues that problems exist when a sizable group of people can no longer ascribe to the norm or are not capable to live as such.⁴⁴ Two reactions can take place, withdrawal or rebellion. Withdrawal can mean that people no longer identify with the Netherlands; a guided process of rebellion is to be preferred, whereby Dutch societies should allow discussion and steer responses toward the existing norms. One could argue that a process of guided rebellion took place in the 1960s, when people in the Netherlands demanded democratization of institutions, freedom of sexuality and women's emancipation. For normative identification with the Netherlands it is important that people see their conventions represented in public arenas. As a result, societal and political attention should also be given to those who want adjustment of the norms. The problem is that not everybody has a voice in the process: the ability to articulate and

42 Richard Johnson, "Towards a Cultural Theory of the Nation: A British-Dutch Dialogue," in *Images of the Nation: Different Meanings of Dutchness 1870-1940*, eds. Annemieke Galema, Barbara Henkes, and Henk te Velde (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1993).

43 Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Volume II (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

44 Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1968).



advocate for specific norms in the political arena — media and parliament — is not evenly distributed. Access to public good and services and political representation are key issues, as can be seen in the debate on freedom of speech versus freedom of religion.

Within the public and political debate a tension exists between those who stress freedom of speech and those who stress freedom of religion — both constitutional rights. A rather dominant school of politicians and intellectuals — sometimes labeled as Enlightenment fundamentalists — argues that newcomers have to adapt fully and should not be allowed to bring in Islam. Their tone and demands have been extremely insulting and provocative towards Muslims. Those who have felt insulted and stressed other constitutional rights — such as freedom of religion — have been less able to defend themselves and advocate for their ideas. Most Muslims are not in favor of political Islam, but those who are have not been able to explain why and how. The political establishment and the media have reacted with fear when occasionally a political movement or party has sought to establish itself. Moreover, Islamic leaders who are not moderate have no space to articulate their ideas. Of course, the lack of advocacy is also related to lack of representation (there is no cohesive Muslim community in the Netherlands, only segregated ethnic groups). And according to the Dutch majority, religion is no longer considered a valid source of political discussion, and for Islam in particular, little religious tolerance exists.

For normative identification, educators, politicians, and the media have a dual role to play in the public debate. On the one hand, there is a need to create greater space for the more extreme viewpoints, insofar as they exist within the boundaries of the law. This will mean that opposition will increase, but this will improve processes of identification in the long term. When people cannot voice their feelings — even if radical — they will not be able to identify with the larger community. At the same time, there is a continuous need to search for subtle nuance in order to generate insights into the great diversity of positions and views. So far, the lack of subtlety has led to withdrawal of the insulted. “To say what one thinks,” the adage of Fortuyn, does not necessarily lead to solving the conflicts that touch upon constitutional questions. Timing and style are also important, argues Alex Brenninkmeijer, the government’s national ombudsman: “Though language is necessary to gain influence, sometimes you reach more with soft language or even silence.”⁴⁵ Engaging in a more civil debate is the responsibility of members of the media, educators, and, not least, the politicians themselves.

C. Functional Identification

Functional identification occurs when a person is no longer seen as a member of a particular (ethnic) group, but as an individual with numerous functional relationships, for instance as a member of an occupational group, a sports club, or a political party. Shared interests with others open the way for processes of identification that cut across ethnicity.⁴⁶ So, when cleaning professionals in the Netherlands united to argue for a pay raise, for example, ethnic diversity was not an issue anymore. Functional identifications can lead to reduction of stereotypes, more empathy, and tolerance — tools necessary for culturally insecure groups to deal with the newly multicultural global society described earlier.

For functional identification to take place, interaction among groups is crucial. Several conditions must be in place, however, for these interactions to yield positive views of the other group, rather than provoke further anxiety. Facilitating conditions include: people having the same status when they meet, mutual interdependence and cooperation toward common goals, interactions that are repeated and intimate (i.e., with “friendship potential”), and finally, institutional support (i.e. from the authorities).⁴⁷ If these conditions are not in place, contact between members of different groups may feel threatening rather than productive.

⁴⁵ Alex Brenninkmeijer, “Een afwegingsmodel voor de vrijheid van meningsuiting,” *Nederlands juristenblad* 13 (2006): 737.

⁴⁶ Pettigrew defines the process as follows: first people are seen as part of an ethnic group, then they become decategorized and individualized, and then placed back into another category; Thomas F. Pettigrew, “Intergroup contact theory,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49 (1998): 65-85.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Defined this way, it may be more realistic for positive interactions to occur in the workplace or at school rather than in neighborhoods. In the workplace, ethnic differences are less important than individual differences. People from diverse ethnic backgrounds who work together on a common goal and have shared interests tend to forget about their group differences.⁴⁸ But in the Netherlands, the chance of meeting different ethnic groups at work is exceptionally low. Only 6 percent of ethnic Dutch people have coworkers from minority ethnic backgrounds.⁴⁹ Sectoral segregation occurs frequently and, the more highly educated — who are also more likely to be able to cope better with ethnic differences — are much less likely to meet members of different ethnic groups at work than their less-educated counterparts.⁵⁰

Policy-wise, it is important to continue to increase the education level of immigrants and their children.

There are two primary reasons for the lack of interaction among different ethnic groups in the Netherlands. First, the labor market participation of immigrants (and descendants of immigrants) is still comparatively low, about 10 percent less than the native Dutch, although this is improving.⁵¹ In 2011, 4.2 percent of the native Dutch population was unemployed, compared to 13.1 percent of the nonwestern *allochtone* population.⁵² Second, immigrants, and even their native-born children, are generally less educated. Nearly one-fifth of the *allochtone* population has only completed primary school, compared to 6 percent of the native Dutch population. About 13.7 percent of second-generation immigrants drop out of school without obtaining a diploma, compared to 10 percent for the native born.⁵³ Both are related: low education also means higher likelihood of being unemployed, especially in times of economic crisis. But there are also two softer factors: many employees with Dutch Moroccan or Dutch Turkish backgrounds have social skills deemed insufficient, have no feeling for the cultural codes at work, show inadequate job search methods, and have fewer networks to find jobs.⁵⁴ Employers, in their own right, show resistance. A typical example: highly educated refugees are unable to find a job once resettled, despite their education level (60 percent of male refugees were unemployed in 2000). In trying to reduce risks in the company's performance, some employers avoid hiring employees who look foreign. In 2004, half of employers in the Netherlands stated that they “did not want employees with a headscarf.”⁵⁵

Policy-wise, it is important to continue to increase the education level of immigrants and their children, develop social skills allowing them to succeed in Dutch society, and discuss the dominant cultural codes governing workplaces — all of which is far more practical than teaching them about Dutch national identity. Combating labor market discrimination should also be made a policy priority, and (financial)

48 Juliette Schaafsma, *Ethnic Diversity at Work: Diversity Attitudes and Experiences in Dutch Organisations* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2006).

49 Marc van der Meer and Judith Roosblad, “Overcoming marginalisation? Gender and ethnic segregation in the Dutch construction, health, IT and printing industries” (working paper 2004-29, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies, June 2004), www.uva-aias.net/uploaded_files/publications/WP29.pdf; CBS and Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC), *Integraatiekaart 2006* (The Hague: WODC, 2006), <http://wodc.nl/onderzoeksdatabase/integratiekaart-monitoring-integratie-2006.aspx>.

50 Schaafsma, *Ethnic Diversity at Work*.

51 Sjoerd Karsten, Charles Felix, Guuske Ledoux, Wim Meijnen, Jaap Roeleveld, and Erik van Schooten, “Onderwijssegregatie in de grote steden,” *Beleid en Maatschappij* 32, no. 2 (2005): 63-75.

52 CBS, “Population; sex, age, origin and generation, 1 January.”

53 CBS, *Jaarrapport Integratie 2010*.

54 J. Klaver, J. W.M. Mevissen, and A.W.M. Odé, *Etnische Minderheden op de Arbeidsmarkt: Beelden en feiten, belemmeringen en oplossingen* (Amsterdam: Regioplan, 2005), http://docs.szw.nl/pdf/129/2005/129_2005_3_7280.pdf.

55 Motivaction, *Trendmeter van het middenbedrijf* (Amsterdam: Motivaction, 2004).



measures could be taken so employers can more flexibly hire people and limit corporate insecurity. One can think of tax reductions for employers who hire members of marginal groups. At the same time, many immigrants and their children have specific soft skills — such as interethnic communication or “bridging” skills — that are underappreciated. The number of ethnic entrepreneurs making a living out of doing business with their country of origin is increasing.⁵⁶

School

Learning together can be a source of functional identification, making schools another crucial meeting site. Children at mixed schools have a more positive attitude toward other ethnic groups than those at a “white” school.⁵⁷ But in the Netherlands, segregation in education is very strong. In the period between 1985-2000, the percentage of basic education schools with 70 percent or more ethnic minorities grew from 15 percent to 35 percent in the four biggest cities, and the percentage grew more rapidly in average-sized cities.⁵⁸

Much of the educational segregation stems from neighborhood segregation: parents prefer to bring their child to a school close to home. This, however, is just one part of the explanation. In 2002, 33 percent of schools were disproportionately “white,” and 22 percent were disproportionately “black” compared to the ethnic composition of the neighborhood.⁵⁹ One-third of the ethnic segregation can thus be explained by the wishes of parents: few parents want to bring their children to a “black” school (with 70 percent ethnic minorities). Highly educated parents may not have internalized their ethnic intolerance — if it comes down to their own child, they also maneuver to avoid more ethnically diverse situations. They can thus be termed “situationally tolerant.” School administrative boards also play a role, with very subtle exclusionary mechanisms. White schools tend to demand that parents register their children soon after they are born, which excludes parents who are less informed, and sometimes demand high “voluntary” fees. Some schools want to remain as “black” as possible, as this entitles them to more subsidies, a practice which is no longer attractive as subsidies are now no longer based on ethnic composition but on parental socioeconomic background.

Crucial in the Dutch context is that parents have the constitutional right to choose their child’s school due to freedom of religion (Article 23 of the Constitution). But religious denominations have become less important. While a small number of Muslim parents still prefer Islamic schools for their children, few such schools exist. Why is promoting social cohesion and interethnic interaction less important than the individual rights of parents? It is important to weigh this with the significance of mutual identification — there are more conflicting values in the Dutch constitution (such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech). Schools and local authorities need greater scope to experiment with mixed schools. Not in order to impose a new rule on schools, but rather to support them in carrying out such experiments. Some municipalities, like Rotterdam and Nijmegen, have attempted to reduce ethnic segregation, but always felt hindered by Article 23.

Finally, functional identification stresses careful and precise use of language. Sweeping distinctions such as “immigrant/indigenous” are often counterproductive. The government, scientists, and the media need to tailor their language to the relevant context; the fact that someone is a tram driver or a lawyer is generally more relevant than the fact that his or her parents were born in Morocco. In policy papers and research of government-funded institutions it was common to make distinctions on the basis of *allochtoon/autochtoon*, initiated by the Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policies, or WRR). Such distinction may not always be adequate, and helps to create boundaries that are not changeable.

56 Ewald Engelen, “Etnisch Ondernemerschap 2.0,” *Sociale Vraagstukken*, November 25, 2010, www.socialevraagstukken.nl/site/2010/11/25/etnisch-ondernemerschap-2-0/.

57 Maykel Verkuyten, and Jochem Thijs, *Leren(en) waarden: discriminatie, zelfbeeld en leerprestaties in ‘witte’ en ‘zwarte’ basisscholen* (Amsterdam: Thela Thesis, 2000).

58 Karsten, *Onderwijssegregatie in de grote steden*.

59 Sardes, “Spreiden is geen kinderspel,” in *Spreidingsmaatregelen onder de loep*, ed. Onderwijsraad (The Hague: Onderwijsraad, 2005), http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/upload/publicaties/361/documenten/studie_spreidingsmaatregelen_onder_de_loep.pdf.



v. Conclusions

National governments cannot promise to take away the feeling of threat and cultural insecurity felt by many, mainly among lower- and middle-educated people; nor can they fully govern processes of globalization. So these concerns will continue to be part of the public's future, particularly in the Netherlands. Moreover, the immigrant population in the Netherlands is likely to become more upwardly mobile, as the education level of the second generation is rising, especially for girls. In contrast to first-generation immigrants (mostly men from rural areas of Turkey and Morocco), this new generation demands a greater voice. In this context, stressing national identity and demanding cultural assimilation do not constitute the most sensible policy response. Such an approach is highly exclusionary, can lead to the withdrawal of an already marginalized part of society, and will not bring comfort to those who feel loss.

A focus on maintaining and developing processes of identification seems to be a more sensible solution.

Instead, a focus on maintaining and developing processes of identification seems to be a more sensible solution. To feel connected to others and to the Netherlands, three dimensions of identification are important: emotional identification, normative identification, and functional identification. Such an approach not only contributes to social cohesion, but also allows for fruitful policy alternatives in which many actors have a role to play, such as fighting segregation in the labor markets and at schools, allowing for more extreme but also more civilized political points of view in the public debate, and stressing a fluid and open notion of national identity that permits multiple identities.



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