

Bonding, bridging and ethnic minorities in the Netherlands: changing discourses in a changing nation

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ABSTRACT. The discourse on the integration of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands has undergone profound changes over the past few decades. This article analyses how discourses in politics and academia have revolved around changing emphases upon the social capital processes of ‘bonding’ of individuals within groups and ‘bridging’ of individuals to the wider society. Four episodes of discourse and policy may be distinguished: denial of being a country of immigration until the 1970s; the Minorities Policy in the 1980s; the Integration Policy of the 1990s; and the rise of a more assimilationist discourse after the turn of the millennium. The country thus began in the post-war period with a pluralist perspective toward integration rooted in the traditional religious and ideological ‘pillarisation’ of society, shifting first to a multicultural perspective, then to an integrationist and, finally, in the new millennium, to an assimilationist perspective.

KEYWORDS: bonding and bridging, integration policy, policy venues, social capital, the Netherlands.

Introduction

Although historically a pluralist nation, the Netherlands has been struggling with the incorporation of ethnic minorities into society over recent decades. During much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Dutch nation was defined in terms of pillarisation. This meant that pluralism was institutionalised by various national minorities that formed pillars in Dutch society. The Dutch nation was held together by tolerance, sovereignty within communities and pacification of conflict by elites (Lijphart 1968). This way of defining the Dutch imagined national community was challenged by extensive post-World War II immigration, which contributed to the development of a series of immigrant or ‘ethnic’ minorities. By the twenty-first century, immigrants and their direct descendants constituted almost 20 per cent of the total population, and in some of the major cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam), non-Western minorities constitute more than one-third of the population. Migration seems

to have turned the Netherlands from a pillarised nation into an immigration society (Scientific Council for Government Policy 2001).

The development of a Dutch approach to the incorporation of ethnic minorities has sparked fierce controversy, within Dutch politics and government as well as within Dutch academia. We believe that these changes in the Dutch approach to ethnic minorities over the past few decades can be conceptualised in terms of changes in focus on either bonding within the specific minority community or bridging to the surrounding society. At first, a multiculturalist approach was chosen that in many respects resembled the pillarist approach, stressing bonding rather than bridging. Both political discourse and scientific literature focused on how to emancipate ethnic minorities in Dutch society, by supporting group structures and cultural identity formation as well as promoting socio-economic participation. The goal was 'integration, with retention of cultural identity'.

Recently, a very different approach has emerged, especially in Dutch political discourse. A more assimilationist approach has emerged, stressing the bridging of immigrants to Dutch society through adaptation to national norms and values. Bonding within one's group is now perceived as a threat to national social cohesion and even contributing to an alleged clash of civilisations in Dutch society. In particular, Islam became broadly construed as an obstacle to integration. Bridging has become the primary object of government policy, urging immigrants to become 'good citizens' and preventing the formation of minority groups that might turn their backs on society. This reflected a more nationalist current that emerged within Dutch politics, following the rise of populist-conservative politicians such as Pim Fortuyn, Ayan Hirsi-Ali and Geert Wilders. Ethnic minorities had become the focus of a political desire to redefine Dutch community in an era of migration, globalisation and growing uncertainty about national identity. We believe, therefore, that this radical change in political discourse on ethnic minorities reflects a broader way in which the Dutch national imagined community has been redefined.

In this article we ask how and why discourses on ethnic minorities in the Netherlands have changed so dramatically over the past few decades, placing very different emphases on bonding and bridging in different episodes. We focus both on political and academic discourses, and on the ways these have interacted. This draws attention to structural factors that may explain how and why changes in discourse took place, such as changes in the organisation of the political process and changing relations between the field of politics and academia. Based on an analysis of policy documents, records of parliamentary hearings, scientific advisory reports, a review of academic literature on minorities and minorities policy in particular, and interviews with a number of key political and academic actors, an analysis is made of what discourse changes took place, and what structural factors may explain these changes.

Bonding, bridging and immigrant integration

Nations require some sort of identity to keep the nation together, some kind of ‘imagined national community’ (Anderson 1983: 6). Nations are historically grown imaginations of communities that are somehow demarcated from other communities and defined as sovereign in a particular territory (*ibid.*: 7). In culturally monist countries, this imagined community is based on a cultural definition of nationhood. For instance, Germany has historically defined its national community in ethnic-cultural terms, the German ‘*Volksstaat*’, based on blood-ties with German ancestors (Brubaker 1992). Culturally pluralist nations that contain a variety of cultural communities must define the national imagined community in different ways. They face the challenge of reconciling the various, also imagined, communities with a national community that keeps these groups together. For instance, the United States, being a country of immigration, sees pluralism as part of its national founding myth and tries to keep various groups and races together by sharing the ‘American dream’ (Joppke 1996).

Pluralist nations face the challenge of constructing a national community that also demarcates a set of communities within one nation from each other. Communities within a nation can be conceptualised as national minorities as long as they do not form a dominant community (Kymlicka 1995). Immigrant minorities constitute a specific sort of national minority group when they settle permanently within a host society. When the focus on the migratory background of these minorities is gradually replaced by a focus on their permanent position within the host society, they are redefined as national minorities that are distinguished from other minorities not based on regional characteristics but often on racial or ethnic characteristics.

The sociologist Putnam has examined how communities, nations as well as minorities, are held together by trust, or what he describes as ‘social capital’ (Putnam 1993, 2000). This involves ‘norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness’ that are (re)produced in personal relations (2000: 19). On the one hand, communities are held together by ‘*bonding*’, which means the generation of trust within networks that are mainly ‘inward-looking’ and reinforcing ‘exclusive identities and homogeneous groups’ (2000: 22). On the other hand, ‘*bridging*’ involves the generation of value in networks that are ‘outward-looking’ and ‘encompassing people across diverse social cleavages’ (*ibid.*). Putnam conceptualises bonding and bridging as occurring when group identities matter to society as a whole. The term also refers to the value of particular groups or categories within society. Social capital can provide value to individuals in these networks who can rely on these networks of trust, as well as provide stability to democratic society as a whole. The generation of social capital by bonding means that value is drawn particularly from inner-community trust, and the security, economic and cultural capital this community may provide. In contrast, bridging means that social capital is generated especially in relations with other communities, and the economic

and cultural capital these communities may provide. Putnam states that bonding social capital is good for supporting specific reciprocity, mobilising solidarity, and providing 'crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community' (2000: 22). He concludes by stating that trust generated by bridging can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas trust generated by bonding bolsters a more narrow conception of the self.

Theoretical models of bonding, bridging and immigrant integration

Following Putnam's ideas, pluralist nations have to reconcile bonding processes within national groups, bridging toward other national minorities and bonding within the imagined national community. In the literature about the incorporation of immigrant minorities into their host societies, several perspectives on bonding, bridging and the integration of minorities can be distinguished (Castles and Miller 1993; Koopmans and Statham 2000). These provide a framework for studying models of bonding and bridging to be found in practice.

First of all, *assimilationism* seems to be the perspective that most often is associated with the nation-state. It involves primarily bridging between individual members of minority groups and majority population and bonding within the national community. Assimilation is generally associated with a discourse of cultural monism and national social cohesion, appealing to values such as patriotism. *Multiculturalism* is generally perceived as the theoretical opposite of assimilation, focusing primarily on bonding within cultural minorities and bridging to other communities. Whereas assimilationism searches for the commonalities between individuals and communities within the nation, multiculturalism rather seeks for compatibilities between groups. It celebrates pluralism and cultural diversity, but does so within a national context. Diversity is recognised and accommodated within the nation-state.

Universalist perspectives stress bonding within the national community, just as assimilationism, but do so in a less cultural and more political and economic way (Koopmans and Statham 2000). It represents a liberal-egalitarian view that leaves little space for social-cultural bonding of either minorities or nations (Barry 2000). Rather, the nation-state is defined as a political or socio-economic unit, held together by the idea of citizenship of individual members of the nation-state. Finally, *differentialism* has been distinguished as a perspective that stresses bonding within national minorities, without stressing the need for bridging to other communities or bonding within the national community (Castles and Miller 1993). For a considerable period, Germany followed a politics of exclusion toward its ethnic minorities, out of a reluctance to concede being a country of immigration.

Whereas the above-mentioned perspectives remain within the bounds of the nation-state, *transnationalism* and *postnationalism* attempt to reach beyond the nation-state. Transnationalism draws attention to the formation of transnational communities, characterised by patterns of bonding that stretch across the boundaries of nations (Faist 2000; Kivistö 2001). Transnationalism can also bring about new sorts of bridging between nations, for instance between migrants' countries of origin and destination, such as between the Netherlands and Morocco. Postnationalism represents a more cosmopolitan perspective that stresses globalisation, bridging between communities of all sorts, and in particular bonding on a global level in terms of universal personhood (Jacobson 1996; Soysal 1994). In this perspective, the boundaries between nations are to be dissolved, leaving little space for creating an imagined national community. Rather, supranational structural factors, such as an evolving universal human rights regime, are stressed as elements that contribute to bonding and bridging on a global scale.

Discourses in politics and academia

Changes in discourses on bonding and bridging in pluralist societies can have various causes. Changing discourses will generally reflect underlying changes in the composition of these plural societies, for instance due to migration and growing cultural diversity. However, the relation between such changes and changing discourses often seems indirect. For instance, cultural diversity does not necessarily lead to multiculturalist discourses. In fact, various countries, for instance France, have responded to growing cultural diversity with a revaluation of assimilationist and universalist discourse (Favell 1998).

One of the factors that may explain why some societal developments are interpreted and defined in specific ways concerns changes in the institutional context of policy-making. Such an institutionalist perspective on 'the politics of problem definition' (Rochefort and Cobb 1994) could explain why, for instance, a multiculturalist perspective emerges in some institutional contexts and assimilationism in others. Research has indicated that keeping policy-making 'behind closed doors' provides an institutional context that is more susceptible to the claims of ethnic minorities than political decision-making processes that are politicised and characterised by a broad scale of debate (Guiraudon 1997). Specific institutions, described by Baumgartner and Jones as 'venues', can be more susceptible to specific perspectives on ethnic minorities than others. In particular, legal (Guiraudon 1998) and scientific venues (Timmermans and Scholten 2006) are more conducive to multiculturalist perspectives because of their color-blindness, their insensitivity to variations in the distribution of power and their tendency to counteract polarisation. On the other hand, the political arena and the media seem to be more conducive to perspectives that reflect majority views. They tend to be less color-blind, more sensitive to power and have a tendency to amplify

problems. Politicisation has therefore often been conceived as one of the causes of the rise of assimilationist policies, such as in France.

What types of venues (politics, administration, media, scientific research, judiciary, interest groups) are involved in policy-making, and the way their mutual relations are organised, may therefore matter to what discourse is adopted for defining the national imagined community. For instance, when the policy process is organised in a technocratic way, scientific and administrative concerns will have a primary role in problem definition and policy formulation (Scholten 2007). In contrast, when the policy process is organised around a firm political primacy, political venues will have a primary role in the policy process. Different configurations of the policy process may, therefore, involve different types of venues and contribute to the rise of different perspectives on bonding, bridging and the integration of ethnic minorities (*ibid.*).

As earlier research has suggested, policy research institutes and government advisory bodies have played an important role in altering political discourses on ethnic minorities. Thus we will concentrate in this article on the role of venues of science. Discourses in politics and academia can interact in various ways. Their relations can be configured in different ways (see also Scholten 2007). The traditional model of research-policy relations is that of ‘science speaking truth to power’ (Wildavsky 1979). Science can determine policy development in a direct way, such as a technocratic configuration of science-policy relations, or it can do so in a more indirect way, as in an enlightenment configuration in which science influences policy through a gradual knowledge creep (Weiss 1977). Rival models claim, however, that science is often indistinguishable from policy and politics, and that relative primacy lies more with politics than with science (‘politics on top, science on tap’) (Hoppe 2005; Wittrock 1991). This can mean that the role of science is merely that of a provider of instrumental data, or ‘the facts’, in a bureaucratic configuration of science-policy relations. Or it can mean that politics follows ‘pick-and-choose’ strategies to select those strands of expertise that fit politically set goals, as in a social-engineering configuration of relations (Salter and Levy 1988).

Traditionally, the nexus between policy-making institutes and institutes that provide science-based policy advice has been strongly institutionalised in the Netherlands. On the one hand, there was a strong policy-orientation amongst the social sciences, contributing to the establishment of various institutes through which experts could be involved in policy-making (Blume, Hagendijk and Prins 1991). This led among other things to the establishment of the Scientific Council for Government Policy, an independent advisory body that provides scientific advice directly to the Council of Ministers on multi-sectoral topics from a multidisciplinary perspective (Halfmann and Hoppe 2006). On the other hand, scientific advice provided an effective venue for policy development within the Dutch political structure characterised by depoliticisation and consensus-seeking. However, this in-

stitutional research policy seems to have been subject to erosion over recent decades, due to the politicisation of Dutch political culture and a growing fragmentation within the Dutch social sciences (*ibid.*).

The Netherlands: a reluctant immigration society

Political and academic discourse on ethnic minorities has changed regularly over recent decades. This has brought about very different perspectives on the relation between bonding, bridging and the integration of minorities into the Dutch imagined community. Four episodes are generally distinguished in the literature: denial of being a country of immigration until the 1970s; the approach of the Minorities Policy in the 1980s; the Integration Policy in the 1990s; and the rise of a more assimilationist discourse after the turn of the millennium.

Not a country of immigration: bonding to avoid bridging (post-World War II period – 1970s)

Although the Netherlands received significant waves of immigration following World War II, the idea that the Netherlands would not and should not be a country of immigration persisted for a long time. Following the decolonisation of the Dutch East-Indies, large groups of immigrants migrated to the Netherlands for the first time. These so-called ‘repatriates’ were mostly seen as fellow Dutchmen and therefore public policy was directed at rapid assimilation of these returning compatriots into Dutch society (Rath 1991). Bonding among repatriates was discouraged through, for instance, policies aimed at their spatial dispersion across the Netherlands. The bridging of these repatriates to Dutch society appears to have been relatively successful; within a decade most of them had silently merged into society (Verwey-Jonker 1971). This successful assimilation helped, however, to maintain the idea that the Netherlands was anything but a country of immigration.

This assimilationist approach contrasts with the approach to most subsequent immigrant groups (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000). These included foreign workers from Mediterranean countries, postcolonial migrants such as Moluccans, and migrants from within the Dutch kingdom such as Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. Their presence was assumed to be temporary as they were expected to eventually return to their home countries. Foreign workers were also named ‘guest-workers’, and even the term ‘immigrant’ was carefully avoided so as to avoid creating the illusion that they were permanent settlers (Van Amersfoort 1984). In clear terms, it was stated that ‘the Netherlands was not and should not be a country of immigration’, especially because of its already high population density (Foreign Workers Memorandum 1974). To this end, facilities were created for preserving the bonds within the various immigrant communities. A policy aimed at bridging towards Dutch society

could not be developed, as this could create the suggestion that the presence of these immigrants would be more than only temporary. For instance, immigrant groups such as the Moluccans and guest-workers were often housed together, government negotiated with leaders from the immigrant communities so as to preserve the internal group structures and immigrant children were offered facilities for education in their own language and culture. By these means, public policy was aimed at bonding within their own group, so as to avoid the sort of bridging to Dutch society that might hamper their return to their home countries.

Also within academia, there was as yet little attention to the development of ethnic minorities. Academia generally shared the assumption that migration would be temporary. For instance, some studies defined migrants as 'international commuters' (Wentholt 1967), and an economic study of the effects of labor migration on the Dutch economy did not calculate the effects of potential permanent settlement (Statistics Office 1971). When a study was commissioned on the social position of specific migrant groups, a government department even blocked the use of the term 'immigrant', preferring the allegedly more neutral term 'allochthonous' (non-natives) (Van Amersfoort 1984).

The emphasis in political discourse on bonding to avoid bridging did not, however, lead to an amelioration of the situation of these 'temporary' immigrants in Dutch society. There was a growing tension between the declared norm of not being a country of immigration and the fact that most immigrants did not in fact return and that more immigrants continued to arrive (Entzinger 1975). In about a quarter of a century of temporary residence in the Netherlands, the situation of one immigrant group, the Moluccans, went from isolation and stagnation to radicalisation (Smeets and Veenman 2000). Lacking a clear future in the Netherlands or in their country of origin, several members of this immigrant community resorted to terrorist acts. In the 1970s, several terrorist acts were committed, including train hijackings, school hostage-takings and the kidnapping of officials. This became a catalyst for drawing attention to the marginalised position of these immigrants in particular and of migrants in general. For the first time, the issue of how to give immigrants a permanent position in Dutch society emerged on the political agenda.

The emancipation of minorities: bonding as a condition for bridging (the 1980s)

The Moluccan situation drew attention to the dramatic effects of an excessive focus on bonding and too little on bridging. In the 1970s, researchers from anthropological and sociological backgrounds started to engage in work on the position of minorities in society. These researchers often had a strong policy orientation and sense of societal engagement; they wanted their research to have a clear societal purpose. By describing the process of minority-formation in Dutch society and identifying the factors that con-

tributed to this process, such as discrimination and racism, researchers hoped to promote the cultural emancipation of minorities. Researchers, especially those from anthropological backgrounds, who had a history of studying alien cultures in Dutch colonies abroad, focused on minority groups and on cultural differences. Hence, academic discourse defined migrants as bring members of cultural or ethnic minorities rather than as individuals or in terms of class or color (race).

Academic discourse changed significantly in the 1970s. Carrying forward the traditional image of the Dutch nation as a community of minorities, an oft-repeated phrase in scientific studies and policy advisory reports, they added that the Netherlands had become 'a de-facto multicultural society.' In 1978, an Advisory Committee on Minorities Research (ACOM) was established, that advised government on ethnic and cultural minorities and coordinated research on the position of minorities in Dutch society. In a path-breaking report to the government that was strongly based on research from the ACOM, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (1979), or WRR, rejected the policy slogan of 'integration with retention of identity'. In the Council's view, too much emphasis had been put on bonding and too little on bridging: 'intensified participation by minorities in Dutch society would be incompatible with cultural isolation' and 'a situation in which minorities and the majority regard their own attitudes as being beyond discussion would entail an outlook of . . . cultural isolation, loss of identity and socio-economic deprivation on the part of the minorities' (*ibid.*: xxii). Instead, the Council argued that a more dynamic perspective had to be adopted on cultures of ethnic minorities as well as on majority culture: 'just as minorities and the majority need to respect one another's attitudes, both have to recognize that an optimal participation in society by minorities will necessitate cultural change from both sides' (*ibid.*). Instead of being perceived as static, homogeneous entities, the cultural identities of minorities were now approached as more dynamic and heterogeneous, in the context of an 'open, multi-ethnic society.' Bridging was required to avoid immigrants falling into mutually reinforcing processes of cultural isolation and socio-economic deprivation.

This did not mean that bonding was rejected. Instead, bridging was seen as a positive condition for bonding, as bridging would contribute to a better socio-economic position for minorities and consequently allow more room for them to experience their own cultural identities as well as secure more tolerance toward these minorities.

An active policy to combat social deprivation should . . . be seen as a necessary condition both for the minorities' desire to preserve their own culture in an atmosphere of freedom, and for the majority's ideal of equality in a multicultural society. The positive enjoyment and development of a separate culture in freedom only becomes possible if a number of basic living requirements are adequately met. This is also of importance for the tolerance of minority cultures by the cultural majority . . . (*ibid.*: xvix).

These changes in academic discourse on bonding and bridging made a strong impact on changes in political discourse. Government and politics adopted a discourse that recognised the permanent status of minorities and the fact that the Netherlands had now become a *de facto* country of immigration. A policy approach was developed that focused on the interaction between bonding and bridging within a multicultural society. The goal of this ‘Minorities Policy’ was to achieve ‘a society, in which the minorities that live in the Netherlands, as individuals and as a group, can have an equal place and have full opportunities for development’, by means of promoting emancipation and socio-economic participation and combating discrimination (Department of Home Affairs 1983: 10). A cultural relativist position was renounced, as mutual adaptation was not considered a viable option in situations where ‘values and norms of minorities from their original culture clash with those of the established norms of our pluriform society and when these are considered fundamental for Dutch society’ (*ibid.*: 107). So, a radical discourse of bonding only, such as in a differentialist perspective, was denounced in academic as well as political discourse, and instead a multiculturalist perspective was adopted.

There was, however, a slight but important difference between the political and academic discourse. Whereas academic discourse considered bridging as mainly a positive condition for bonding, political discourse defined bonding rather as a positive condition for bridging. Bonding was given more priority in government policy as it would have an important psychological function (Entzinger 1984). It was argued that ‘the fact that a migrant who finds himself in a new and uncertain situation is strongly attached to preserving familiar norms, values and certainties, and seeking support primarily from a group of peers, must be valued positively’ (Department of Home Affairs 1981: 20). Bonding would be an important condition for bridging, as group ties ‘help the individual migrant to find their way into the new society, to achieve their rights and to represent their interests’ (*ibid.*: 22). Thus, government adopted multiculturalist policies that often involved an institutionalisation of pluralism (Entzinger 2003). A structure, the so-called National Consultation and Advisory Council for Minorities, was developed for the representation of the interests of ethnic minorities in policy-making. Also, various facilities for bonding from previous years were maintained, but now from the perspective that they would contribute to the multicultural society instead of an eventual return to home countries. For instance, Immigrant Minorities Language and Culture Instruction was continued, based on the idea that retention of the mother-tongue would be a necessary prerequisite for learning Dutch as a second language (Lucassen and Köbben 1992).

Moreover, discussing bonding in terms of a national identity seems to have been rather taboo, in both political and academic discourse (Tinnemans 1994). The view that the Netherlands had become a multicultural or at least multi-ethnic society was quite broadly accepted, and the issue of national identity was, remarkably, rarely discussed. Mentioning the impact that

immigration and minorities would have on national identity often led to accusations of discrimination, racism or even fascism (*ibid.*). In this respect, there seems to have been an atmosphere of ‘political correctness’ (Werdmölder 2002) or at least a culture of avoidance (De Beus 1998) in not discussing ethnic differences in relation to national identity. This has been ascribed by some to the legacy of World War II feelings of guilt about the negligence of the Dutch people in protecting minorities during the war (Vuijsje 1986).

The changes in political and economic discourse seem to have reinforced each other in what has been described as a ‘technocratic symbiosis’ (Rath 2001). First, there was a political agreement not to turn ethnic minorities into a party-political issue (Interview with head of policy directorate). The reasons for this depoliticisation consisted not only in a fear that it would benefit anti-immigrant parties that wanted to ‘play the race card’ (Penninx 2005), but also in the consideration that this issue could pose a threat to the fragile consensus structure of Dutch politics (Hoppe 1993). This structure was a legacy of the history of pillarisation, when conflicts between pillars were pacified through negotiation and consensus-seeking by the elites of the pillars (Lijphart 1968). Issues that could frustrate this process of consensus-seeking, for instance by amplifying party-political conflicts, were carefully avoided (Van Amersfoort 1984). One way to depoliticise such issues was by delegating policy-making to venues of science, such as through research programming or by asking advice from policy advisory institutions. This way, policies could be legitimised in objective and instrumental terms. In the case of ethnic minorities, the ACOM and the WRR provided the main such venues.

Political discourse was therefore developed in a unitary and coordinated policy-making structure to avoid an expansion of the scale of debate and to keep policy-making largely behind closed doors (Guiraudon 1997). Key players were co-opted in this policy structure, including the above-mentioned research and advisory bodies as well as ethnic elites. The involvement of these ethnic elites, through government-supported ethnic organisations, seems to have been one of the reasons why bonding eventually gained greater priority in political discourse than in academic discourse (Fermin 1997; Urbanus 1983). These elites raised some opposition to policies proposed by the WRR, arguing that their policies would place too much stress on bridging instead of bonding and could pose a potential threat to the group structures and identities of minorities.

The integration of ‘allochthonous’: the de-coupling of bonding and bridging (the 1990s)

The prioritisation of bonding as a condition for bridging was increasingly criticised by the end of the 1980s. In both academic and political discourse, a new perspective emerged that involved a different prioritisation of bonding and bridging. One of the criticisms concerned the focus on ‘ethnic minorities’.

It was argued that the social construction of ‘ethnic minorities’ as one category, reified by means of various policy facilities aimed primarily at bonding and only secondarily also at bridging, would contribute to the consolidation of their minority positions. As such, the focus on minorities would strengthen the process of ‘minoritisation’ rather than preventing it (Rath 2001). In particular, the focus of government, researchers and ethnic elites on socio-cultural differences would have pushed socio-economic differences into the background, thereby sustaining socio-economic cleavages in society. In other words, the focus on bonding would have hampered integration rather than promoted it.

The new discourse that emerged in politics and academia stressed citizenship and the individual rights and duties of migrants (Scholten 2007). This citizenship discourse involved a stress on bridging, especially in terms of socio-economic participation of migrants in society at large. A second report from the WRR (Scientific Council for Government Policy 1989) proposed decoupling bonding and bridging. Minority cultures were to be delegated primarily to the private sphere, and government interference with culture would be confined to providing the conditions to allow every individual to freely experience their own culture. Although being a multicultural society was accepted as a given, government interference with minority cultures was rejected:

... the institutionalization of ethnic pluralism need not be regarded as an independent objective of government policy. ... [T]his forms part of the responsibility of the individual groups. ... The government’s task is confined to helping eliminate the barriers experienced by ethnic groupings as a result of their non-indigenous origins, with a view to enabling them to participate on an equal footing with indigenous persons in a culturally diverse society. Another related task for government is to ensure that the legal order is respected in inter-ethnic contacts at both the group and the individual level (Scientific Council for Government Policy, WRR 1989: 61).

The liberal-egalitarian citizenship discourse that emerged in academia broke radically with the minorities discourse that had prevailed before. It stressed the integration of individual migrants in particular by being able to ‘stand on their own feet’ (Scientific Council for Government Policy, WRR 1989: 8). The concept of ‘ethnic minorities’ was now regularly replaced by ‘allochthonous’, which replaces a focus on migrants as groups to migrants as a category. Bridging became the main focus in the context of the functionalist prerogative of maintaining a viable welfare state. The multiculturalist approach of the Minorities Policy would have turned minorities too much into ‘welfare categories’: ‘many members of minority groups have become directly or indirectly dependent on the state in the form of social security benefits, welfare services or facilities and housing’ (*ibid.*: 9). Government intervention should prevent disadvantages that are experienced by minorities but should not provide privileges to specific groups or interfere with cultural identities. This also meant that no separate policy for minorities would be put in place. Instead, the position of minorities had to be achieved through an intensifica-

tion of color-blind social policy in specific areas, such as labor, education and housing. An effective policy on socio-economic participation would thus make measures in other domains largely unnecessary.

Political discourse also adopted this citizenship discourse at the beginning of the 1990s. Importantly, the name of the policy changed from 'Minorities Policy' to 'Integration Policy'. This reflected a shift from a multiculturalist to a universalist approach aimed at integrating the nation as a community of citizens. The objective of the Integration Policy was to promote the 'active citizenship' of immigrants, meaning that migrants had to take responsibility for their integration: 'on all members of ethnic minorities ... lies the individual obligation to participate in education and the labor market and also the obligation to make efforts to learn the Dutch language and to acquire basic knowledge of Dutch society' (Department of Home Affairs 1994: 25). Bonding with their ethnic group was no longer considered an issue of government policy, but instead a choice that was left to the individual immigrant: 'members of minorities should determine for themselves to what extent they wish to preserve or further develop their cultural identities' (*ibid.*). One of the specific consequences of this change was that education in minority languages was now put outside the regular curriculum, and the structure of advice and consultation with immigrant organisations was downgraded to a mere consultative role. Moreover, an elaborate structure was set up to provide civic integration courses to individual newcomers in Dutch society, oriented at enhancing Dutch language proficiency as well as acquiring basic knowledge of Dutch society.

This reflected a more general change in the style of government and politics on this issue. Whereas policy-making on this issue had thus far been characterised by depolitisation and technocracy, now it became politicised and the role of those with academic and ethnic expertise became very different. Already in 1989, the report from the WRR triggered debate in both Dutch media and politics. Without triggering an immediate policy turning-point as its earlier report had in 1979, this report did break the taboo on politicising and discussing ethnic differences in relation to the welfare state (Scholten 2007). This politicisation intensified further in 1991 when a leading politician, Frits Bolkestein, broke with taboo by publicly calling for more courage and a stricter approach toward immigrant integration. Bolkestein also questioned the compatibility of Islam and Dutch culture. This triggered a broad national debate that would awaken a 'silent majority' that had been wary of multiculturalism but had felt unable to speak out thus far (Entzinger 2003).

The debate on ethnic minorities now moved to other venues, in particular media and politics. The style of discourse that dominated in these venues has been described as the 'new realism', aimed at eradicating taboos and describing 'reality as it is' (Prins 1997). This contrasted sharply with the consensus-seeking style that had prevailed throughout the history of pillarisation. New realism appealed to the ordinary Dutch citizen who had

previously been left out of political discourse. It claimed to take migrants ‘seriously’ by treating them as equals and not as dependents. Conflict and debate with migrants was not avoided, but was instead seen as a signal that they were being taken seriously and treated as full citizens. This style involved a rejection of a multiculturalist approach that left more space for cultural differences and put less stress on bridging. All this by means of confrontation and debate between minorities and natives ‘as equals’.

Clash of civilisations? Bonding as an obstacle to bridging (start of the third millennium)

After the turn of the millennium, bonding became more and more perceived as a threat to bridging and to the integration process, especially within political discourse. More than ever, the integration of ethnic minorities became an issue of high politics. This was, among others things, a result of a series of dramatic national and international events and trends. These included the rise of the populist politician Pim Fortuyn who denounced Islam as a backward culture; the 11 September attacks that contributed to suspicion toward Muslim immigrants; and the terrorist killing of the Dutch film-maker, publicist and harsh critic of Islam, Theo Van Gogh, by a Dutch-Moroccan youngster.

A political discourse emerged that claimed a ‘clash of civilisations’ within Dutch society (Entzinger 2005; Snel 2003). Bonding now became perceived as an obstacle to bridging and a threat to national social cohesion rather than as a private affair of minorities or as a condition for bridging as in earlier periods. The clash of civilisations discourse drew attention to social-cultural differences between ethnic minorities and natives, thereby constructing a dichotomy between ‘them’ and ‘us’ and, in particular, between Islam and the West (Shadid 2005).

The perspective on bridging changed as well. Bridging not only served to enhance socio-economic participation of individual migrants, but should also involve a degree of social-cultural adaptation. In other words, universalist discourse changed in a more assimilationist direction. Bridging now had to lead to bonding on the level of the Dutch nation, or to the integration of migrants into a Dutch national imagined community that is being reinvented as we speak. A clear link was thus established between the issue of integrating ethnic minorities and a broader concern in Dutch society about national identity and social cohesion. Hence the debate on minorities became part of a broader debate on Dutch values and norms (Scientific Council for Government Policy, WRR 2003). Pillarisation and its associated norms as tolerance toward cultural diversity and its structures of pacification and elite negotiation had now largely lost their function in bonding the Dutch imagined community (Ten Hooven 2001). The image of the Netherlands as a multiculturalist society was widely discarded, and Dutch multiculturalism was now referred to by some as a ‘tragedy’ (Scheffer 2000). The debate on ethnic

minorities now had a purpose in rediscovering what bound together the Dutch community and what demarcated it from others, of reinventing the ‘us’ against ‘them’. As such, the ‘clash of civilisations’ discourse was just as much about Dutch society as about ethnic minorities.

Policy was gradually reformulated into an ‘Integration Policy New Style’, in which bridging became the central objective and intra-ethnic group bonding was dismissed. More than ‘active’ citizenship, government now aimed to promote ‘common citizenship’, in which assimilation to the basic values and norms of society became more central. Thus immigrants would not only bridge to the native society, but also give up bonding with their own group when this proved at odds with the central values and norms of society. In a policy document on the new policy approach, government phrased the ‘cultivation’ of the individual’s own identity as an obstacle to the ‘bridging’ of social-cultural differences with society (Parliamentary document, 29,230, no. 1: 8):

The Integration Policy has always placed great stress on the acceptance of differences between minorities and the native population. . . . One loses sight of the fact that not everything that is different is also valuable. With the cultivation of one’s own cultural identity it is not possible to bridge differences. The unity of our society must be found in what the members have in common. . . . Common citizenship requires that people speak Dutch, and that one abides by basic Dutch norms.

A clear illustration of the negative discourse about bonding was the debate about immigrants with dual nationalities. Increasingly, the question of dual nationality was framed as one of dual and incompatible loyalties (De Hart 2004). Whereas dual nationality had been allowed in the 1990s because it would lessen the threshold for immigrants to acquire full citizenship and as such stimulate the integration process, now it was argued that loyalty to the Netherlands would have to be exclusive and indivisible. As such, dual citizenship was reframed from a contribution to an obstacle in the integration process. In fact, this frame-shift provided a rationale for government to tighten the regulations on dual nationality (De Hart 2004).

Academic discourse, however, contrasted sharply with the clash of civilisations discourse in the political arena. Due to academic internationalisation, but also to the growing involvement of European institutions in the coordination of research on migration and immigrant integration (Geddes 2005), academic discourse seems to have taken a very different direction. Research increasingly reached beyond the frame of the nation-state, putting nation-building legacies into question rather than strengthening them (Favell 2001; Lavenex 2005). Transnationalist and postnationalist discourse became more prevalent in Dutch academic discourse around the turn of the millennium. Moreover, studies frequently challenged the image of Dutch multicultural society as a ‘tragedy’. In fact, an important evaluation study that had been commissioned by the Dutch parliament concluded that the integration process in the Netherlands was advancing relatively successfully (Verwey-Jonker

Institute 2004). This conclusion was, however, widely dismissed in the political arena.

This ignorance toward academic discourse reveals an important change in the institutional structure of policy-making in this domain. This issue had now become politicised and was perhaps the dominant theme during the parliamentary elections of 2001 and 2002. Political polarisation around this issue reflected a broader change in Dutch political culture toward a more confrontational style, departing clearly from the pillarist legacy of accommodation and consensus-seeking (Andeweg and Irwin 2005). The politicisation was due, in particular, to the rise of Fortuyn in the political arena. Fortuyn made the alleged failure to incorporate minorities in the Dutch imagined community a symbol for broader popular dissatisfaction with Dutch government and democracy (Wansink 2004). The integration of minorities was seen as being too much an elite, technocratic project, and the voice of the common citizen too often ignored. This symbolised a tradition of politics ‘behind closed doors’ and the lack of democratic responsiveness of Dutch politicians. In response, politics developed what has been called an ‘articulation function’ (Verwey-Jonker Institute 2004: 201), which means that its role is to name and articulate problems and sentiments as they exist among the public. This articulation function stimulated centripetal forces instead of the centrifugal forces that had characterised the traditional consensus culture in Dutch politics. Government adopted a selective ‘pick-and-choose’ strategy toward scientific knowledge and expertise, utilising in particular instrumental expertise that could provide legitimacy to the new political discourse (Penninx 2005). For instance, a third report in 2001 from the WRR that had been very influential on earlier changes in political discourse now remained largely ignored because of its transnationalist perspective.

Conclusions: changing discourses in a changing nation

The Netherlands has long been celebrated for its way of managing pluralism. Moreover, the Dutch imagined community has traditionally been defined in terms of pluralism. The period of pillarisation was characterised by tolerance toward cultural diversity between various national minorities. This nation-building legacy was first carried forward when pluralism in Dutch society grew due to migration. The past decade has, however, witnessed a radical turn in the Dutch approach toward pluralism. Tolerance toward cultural diversity has decreased and the Dutch nation no longer defines itself in pluralist terms. Rather, the Dutch have shown a renewed concern with redefining the national imagined community in a way that provides a clear national identity and strengthens national social cohesion. This was reflected in the fall of Dutch multiculturalism and the rise of an assimilationist approach to the incorporation of ethnic minorities. In this paper, we have analysed the shifts that have taken place over recent decades in Dutch discourse about ethnic minorities in

terms of bonding and bridging, and have tried to explain these shifts by examining structural changes in the process of policy-making and political decision-making concerning these minorities.

Dutch political discourse had stressed bonding within ethnic minorities and even prevented bridging to the larger society until about the 1970s. The aim of this differentialist approach was to facilitate the return migration of 'temporary migrants'. When permanent settlement of ethnic minorities was accepted as a reality in the 1980s, bonding within ethnic communities was reinterpreted as a positive condition for bridging with the surrounding society. The Dutch nation now defined itself in terms of multiculturalism and revived the pillarist legacy of emancipation as integration but with retention of one's own cultural identity. Due to growing concerns that bonding would reify ethnic cleavages in society and turn migrants into welfare state dependents, bonding and bridging were decoupled in the 1990s. Bonding was considered an aspect of the private sphere of minorities, and bridging was considered crucial for turning individual migrants into equal citizens that were able to stand on their own feet. In a final stage, around the turn of the millennium, bonding within minority communities became viewed as an obstacle or even a threat to bridging with the larger society. Bonding was held to contribute to a 'clash of civilisations' within Dutch society, and to hasten the erosion of national identity and social cohesion. Bridging in terms of social-cultural adaptation to Dutch values and norms now became central to political discourse. The focus had clearly shifted from bonding between minorities to bonding on the level of the Dutch national imagined community.

These shifts in political discourse on bonding and bridging reflect larger structural changes in Dutch society. The multiculturalist approach of the 1980s was the product of a political structure and culture that had clear roots in the history of pillarisation. It involved elite negotiation, consensus-seeking and the pacification of conflicts. Issues that could spark controversy, such as the incorporation of minorities, were systematically depoliticised, in this case primarily through academia and via ethnic elites. The assimilationist approach, dating from the turn of the third millennium was, by contrast, the product of a political system that was depillarised and hence promoted more political polarisation and conflict. Moreover, the way the incorporation of minorities had been dealt with in the past had been turned into a negative byword for backroom politics and a lack of democratic responsiveness. In response, politics developed an articulation function, seeking politicisation instead of depoliticisation. This meant that the relation to academic discourse became, at best, selective, and that the role of ethnic elites and immigrant organisations in policy-making and political decision-making was marginalised.

The changes in discourses on ethnic minorities reflect larger changes in the way the Dutch national imagined community was defined. Traditionally, this imagined community was based on pluralism and tolerance. The Netherlands was a nation of communities, of Liberals, Catholics, Protestants, Socialists and, since the post-war period, of ethnic minorities. Around the turn of the millennium, however, in an epoch of globalisation and migration, the Dutch

evinced a renewed concern with redefining the national imagined community in cultural terms. Cultural diversity was rephrased in political discourse as a clash of civilisations. The Dutch twenty-first century nation-building efforts became focused on efforts to assimilate minorities into Dutch society. The dichotomy that was created between ethnic minorities and natives, between ‘us’ and ‘them’, would provide a way of rediscovering what binds the Dutch imagined community together. As such, Dutch discourses on ethnic minorities say as much about the developing position of these minorities as about developments in the Dutch nation itself.

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