The retreat of multiculturalism in the Netherlands

* A post-structural policy analysis

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Executive summary

Since the 1990’s, the retreat of multiculturalism has been described as an integration policy trend across European states. There is however much disagreement among scholars on how this phenomenon should be understood and whether it actually exists. As previous research suggests that the Netherlands is perceived as an extreme example of the withdrawal of multiculturalism, this thesis seeks to critically examine integration in a Dutch governmental context. This is being done by making use of a post-structural policy analysis, which is aimed at understanding the discursive construction of a policy document. More specifically, it has been chosen to utilize Bacchi’s “What is the problem represented to be?” approach, as it focuses on how problems are being represented and understood instead of solely focusing on solving problems. Thus, the theoretical framework is based on Bacchi’s WPR methodology in combination with previous literature on multiculturalism and assimilationism. The object for analysis is the official Dutch integration policy document of 2007 “Make sure you belong”. By critically examining this document, it can be concluded that Dutch integration is indeed withdrawing from multiculturalism and showing strong features of assimilationism. It can additionally be concluded that the government has a powerful role in constructing meanings.

Key words: Dutch integration, Policy analysis, Bacchi, WPR, Post-structuralism, Governmentality

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1: Introduction</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Citizenship</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Sovereignty</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Meaning of citizenship</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Different modes of immigration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4 Summary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Integration trends in Europe</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Assimilationism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Multiculturalism</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Integration in the Netherlands</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Historical background</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Previous studies</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Theory and Method</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Theoretical framework</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Post-structuralism</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Governmentality, power and knowledge</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3 Multiculturalism and assimilationism</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Methodology</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Purpose</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Discourse analysis</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 WPR-method</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4 Data collection</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Analysis</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 What is the problem represented to be in the policy?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 What presupposition or assumptions underlie the representation of the problem?</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 How has this representation of the problem come about?</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Conclusion and limitations</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Immigration is currently a highly contested and politicized issue in many Western democracies (Morales et al, 2015: 1498). As international migration has reached a scale that is unprecedented in history (IOM, n.d.), host countries have become obliged to manage and adapt to these migration inflows (Rodríguez-García, 2010: 252). Evidence suggests that since the mid-twentieth century most European countries started to face issues regarding immigration and integration (Kastoryano, 2010: 81). Accepting foreign capital, goods and services in their economies appeared to be less problematic than accepting a large influx of immigrants (Givens and Luedtke, 2002: 292). As Dauvergne has argued: “control over the composition of the citizenry is control over national identity” (2008 cited in Williams, 2010: 415).

In most cases, the European Union (EU) policies in the governance of migrants have become increasingly restrictive (Audebert and Doraï, 2010: 207). The same applies to the Netherlands, which used to be known as a liberal and tolerant society but has arguably shifted towards a more assimilationist approach in regards to immigration (Kastoryano, 2010). In fact, prior research suggests that since the late 1990’s there is an integration policy trend across Europe that is withdrawing from multiculturalism (Borevi, 2014: 708), also known as “the retreat of multiculturalism” (Joppke, 2004). On the other hand, some researchers refute this theory altogether and argue that multiculturalist elements are still profoundly rooted in the legislation of many Western countries (Banting and Kymlicka, 2006: 6). There is hence a disagreement among scholars on how this phenomenon should be perceived.

As immigration is a global political problem, which is expected to rise mainly in the European Union in the upcoming years (Porter and Russell, 2018), it is important to conduct further research in order to better understand “the retreat of multiculturalism” and to determine whether it actually exists. It has been chosen to focus this research specifically on the Netherlands, since the country used to be perceived as a paradigm of EU multiculturalism in relation to its favorable integration policies (Mattei and Broeks, 2018: 26) but has recently changed its approach (Joppke, 2014: 253).

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to assess the Dutch integration policy in order to explore the government’s rhetoric and to provide an answer on how a multicultural retreat should be perceived in this country. Apart from that, focusing on the Netherlands as an in-depth case study will contribute to a better general understanding of the shift from multiculturalism to
assimilationism. This is essential since it has been argued that there is increasing convergence with regards to integration policies in Europe, meaning that national distinctiveness is weakening (Joppke, 2007: 1). As the Dutch case is widely perceived as an example of the failure of multiculturalism, other European countries started to withdraw from their own multiculturalism policies or not adopting them at all (Banting and Kymlicka, 2010: 44).

Thus, the thesis aims to answer the following research question: “What is integration represented to be in the 2007 Dutch policy context with regards to multiculturalism and assimilationism?”. It has been chosen to focus specifically on the year 2007 since during this time a series of stricter measures were introduced in order to better integrate immigrants (Human Rights Watch, 2008: 1). In doing so, Bacchi’s post-structural “What is the problem represented to be” (WPR) approach will be used. As there is no previous research on Dutch integration policies using the WPR approach, it can be argued that this thesis will make a significant contribution to the scholarly literature. Since it has been argued that the Netherlands has gotten a more assimilationist approach towards immigration and integration in recent years, it is expected that this research will reveal similar patterns.

After the presented introduction, the structure of the thesis is as follows. The second chapter will introduce the existing literature on immigrant integration trends in the European Union and in the Netherlands. Thus, the chapter will demonstrate how other scholars did research within the same field of study and what methods they used. The third chapter will present the theoretical framework, which will be based on the post-structural approach combined with previous research. In addition, the methodology will be presented in the third chapter along with the justification. Later on, chapter four will present the analysis, which will be divided into five questions based on Bacchi’s WPR approach. This will be followed by a conclusive chapter, where the initial research question will be answered along with the limitations. Finally, the last part of the thesis contains the complete list of references.
Chapter 2: Literature review

The following chapter will explore the existing literature on integration policies in the EU and in the Netherlands. As contemporary Europe was faced with a large influx of post-war migrants, questions on the meaning of sovereignty and citizenship emerged as well (Brubaker, 1990: 380). In order to set the scene, it is therefore crucial to look into the concepts and debates on citizenship, as it serves as background information to the current European integration policies. The chapter is divided into three main sections, which are citizenship, integration trends in the EU and in the Netherlands. Hence, a discussion of previous studies will be provided that looked into patterns of integration policies in the EU. Some argued that there is an increasing trend in an assimilationist approach towards immigration, while others claim that most immigration and integration policies still preserve multiculturalist elements. Moreover, the existing studies on integration in the Netherlands will be scrutinized.

2.1 Citizenship

2.1.1 Sovereignty

First and foremost, it is crucial to look more into the debate on sovereignty, which has been defined as the “right of people to control their borders as well as defining the procedures for admitting strangers into their territory and society” (Benhabib, 1999: 711). In the post-war era, two approaches have been dominating in the scholarly debate, which are the radical universalist perspective and the civil republican perspective. The former rejects national borders and argues that liberal democracies should have policies that are consistent with the idea of a world without borders (Carens, 1995: 229 cited in Benhabib, 1999: 712). One of the main advocates of this idea is Carens (1987: 252), who perceives citizenship in Western liberal democracies as a feudal privilege. In his study he draws upon the utilitarian approach as well as the theoretical approaches of Rawls (1971) and Nozick (1974). Even though these political approaches demonstrate significant differences, they all converge upon the argument that there is no justification for restricting immigration (Carens, 1987: 252). More specifically, the main argument implies that public policies should respect all human beings as moral persons and recognize their freedom and equality (Carens, 1987: 265). Furthermore, it has been argued that restrictive policies in Western liberal societies contradict liberal-democratic principles (Carens, 1987: 271).
In contrast to the radical universalist perspective, a number of civic republican theories argue for stricter criteria in regards to citizenship and integration (Benhabib, 1999: 712). For instance, Walzer (1983: 51) argues that communities should have boundaries in admitting immigrants, which he perceives as a feature of communal self-determination. Furthermore, he emphasizes each country’s “particularism of history, culture and membership” (Walzer, 1983: 61 cited in Carens, 1987: 266). In the same way, Honig (1998 cited in Benhabib, 1999: 712) argues that solely those immigrants who come closest to the common understanding of culture and justice as the host society should be welcomed.

2.1.2 Meaning of citizenship

With regard to the meaning of citizenship, it has been argued that it can be divided into three main components, which are collective identity, privileges of political membership and social rights (Benhabib, 1999: 720). Collective identity refers to the idea that political entities have specific linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic features, which can be differentiated from other political entities (ibid.: 720). Privileges of political membership, on the other hand, refer to the right of political participation, the right to hold offices as well as to perform certain tasks and decide upon certain questions (Benhabib, 1999: 720-721). Lastly, it has been reasoned that citizenship can be viewed as a privilege, which grants people certain entitlements, benefits and obligations (Benhabib, 1999: 721). As Marshal (1950 cited in Benhabib, 1999: 722) has argued, social rights can refer to the right to form trade associations and health care rights for instance. However, it should be noted that each country has its own legal, economic, and policy regulations that define the status of being an immigrant (Soysal, 1994). This is mainly influenced by cultural traditions and historical developments, which play a major role in how the “other” is treated in society (ibid.).

Benhabib (2004: 146) has questioned what the status of citizenship is in contemporary Europe, where there is arguably a disaggregation effect occurring. In other words, the rights of EU citizens have become increasingly dissimilar from those of third-country nationals. According to Benhabib (2004: 146), this can lead to a situation of “permanent alienage” where a specific group can get involved in civil society and enjoy certain rights, while at the same time having no access to political rights. She rejects this notion by arguing that “membership should be open to all” (Benhabib, 2007: 453).
2.1.3 Different modes of immigration

Freeman (1995: 882) has argued that liberal democratic states demonstrate diverse immigration politics due to their specific immigration histories. By doing critical analyses of immigration cycles, he distinguished three categories of states, which have different modes of immigration. These are the English-speaker settler societies (such as the United States and Australia), Western European states (for example Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden) and a number of European states that only recently have experienced issues with immigration (Spain and Greece amongst others) (Freeman, 1995: 882). It has been argued that these categories of states can be distinguished by the timing of their first exposure to mass immigration as well as the extent to which politics is institutionalized in society (Freeman, 1995: 896). Thus, since the politics of immigration in settler societies has been formed years ago, they arguably remain the only states that are willing to receive permanent immigrants (ibid.: 896). European states, on the other hand, have a less positive attitude towards immigration as they experienced mass immigration when they were completely developed as nation states (Freeman, 1995: 889). As a result, the mass immigration has led to dilemma’s regarding the meaning of nationality and citizenship (Freeman, 1995: 890). Despite of these differences, Freeman (1995: 883) argues that there are certain common features that all liberal democratic states possess. Thus, their political systems are characterized by a focus on individual rights, well-organized elections and competitive parties. Freeman claims that the typical approach to immigration politics in liberal democracies is the one of client politics. This means that small groups initiate tight relationships with policy officials that are responsible for immigration (Freeman, 1995: 886).

2.1.4 Summary

The previous sections have illustrated that since the post-war era, there have been two diverging views on the acceptance of immigrants. While some argue that the restriction of immigrants cannot be justified since it contradicts liberal-democratic principles (Carens, 1987), others plead for stricter criteria regarding integration and citizenship (Walzer, 1983). It has been argued that citizenship is composed of collective identity, privileges of political membership as well as social rights (Benhabib, 1999: 720). Cultural traditions and historical development play a crucial role in the way immigrants are treated in a particular society (Soysal, 1994). This has also been confirmed by Freeman (1995) who claims that apart from the common features of liberal democratic states, different modes of immigration can be found among different categories of states.
The following sections will therefore look more into the integration trends in Europe as well as in the Netherlands since this is the particular focus of the research.

2.2 Integration trends in Europe

2.2.1 Assimilationism
Prior research suggests that since the late 1990’s there is an integration policy trend across Europe that is withdrawing from multiculturalism. This phenomenon has been described as a shift from actively promoting ethnic diversity to instead having an attitude of passive tolerance towards immigrants (Borevi, 2012: 89). An important feature of this policy change is the inception of obligatory language courses and other requirements to assure that immigrants obtain certain skills that are perceived as fundamental to the host country (Borevi, 2012: 80). The assimilationist or republican model of integration stems from the idea that equality can be attained through adopting the rules and values from the dominant society as well as avoiding any considerations of diversity (Rodriguez-García, 2010: 253).

Brubaker (2001: 532-533) was amongst the first scholars who mentioned that the multiculturalist discourse in Western countries throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s have been replaced by a return to assimilationism. He describes assimilation as the rising desire to make immigrants similar to the host population (Brubaker, 2001: 535). Brubaker came to this conclusion by analyzing public discourse in France, public policy in Germany as well as scholarly research in the United States. In the same way, Joppke (2004: 243) argues that there is a retreat from multiculturalism policies in many European states, which are replaced by policies of civic integration. He claims that there are a number of reasons that can explain this policy trend. For instance, there is an absence of public support for multiculturalism policies. Also, the policies show fundamental shortcomings with regard to the socio-economic marginalization and self-segregation of migrants (Joppke, 2004: 244). Apart from that, Joppke (2004: 249) argues that the rise of right-wing populism in Europe has even exacerbated the issue. He claims that the shift to civil integration is mostly apparent in Britain and in the Netherlands, as these countries used to be most devoted to multiculturalism (Joppke, 2004: 253). Similarly to Brubaker, Joppke (ibid.) argues that the shift to civic integration is impelled by making immigrants familiar with the country’s values and their ways of doing things. However, he criticizes this by reasoning that most European states are caught in a paradox of universalism. Thus, despite of the fact that there is a growing demand of states that want to
make immigrants integrate into their society, it is difficult to distinguish their particularities (Joppke, 2007: 538). For example, the fundamental principles of British citizenship, such as respect for human rights and maintaining democratic values, are in essence universal principles of the liberal state (Joppke, 2004: 253).

One might ask: “Why is it that these European states have suddenly established these civic integration courses and tests?”. According to Wright (2008) this could be explained by the fact that immigration is perceived as a security threat along with the revival of national sentiment in nation states. Likewise, Dubois-Shaik (2014) has showed in her study that membership practices in Western European countries remain restrictive since migration is being problematized. She uses critical discourse analysis as a method in order to demonstrate how integration policy adds to constructing the meaning of membership. Thus, as policy actors give meaning to integration and migration, policy as discourse is constantly being shaped (Fairclough and Wodak, 2008 cited in Dubois-Shaik, 2014: 715). This way, she argues that it is possible to disclose how membership practices are developed through language and structures (Benhabib, 2004 cited in Dubois-Shaik, 2014: 715). She specifically focuses on the Swiss educational sector, where over the course of 30 years, students with a migrant background were and still are institutionalized as being a group with special needs, which makes integration measures rather challenging (Dubois-Shaik, 2014: 716). This shows that the concept of integration in Switzerland remains to be embedded in an assimilationist model of citizenship (Dubois-Shaik, 2014: 718).

2.2.2 Multiculturalism

While assimilationism opts for cultural homogenization, multiculturalism has been defined as the idea that nation states should not only maintain the common civil, political and social rights of citizenship, but adopt group-specific rights that recognize the particular identities of ethnocultural groups as well (Kymlicka, 2007: 61). The multiculturalist or pluralist model of integration is hence based on respecting and protecting cultural diversity within a framework of shared belonging (Rodríguez-García, 2010: 253). The main argument for multiculturalism is that minority groups should be protected by the state in order not to be unlawfully disadvantaged because of their cultural status (Maciel, 2014: 383). This view is mainly defended by Kymlicka (1995 cited in Maciel, 2014: 385) who argues that through culture, history and language, humans come to understand themselves fully and these factors serve as a prerequisite for becoming well-functioning individuals. Nation building by the state should
hence be conscious of group difference, as it arguably may promote integration (Maciel, 2014: 385). This has been discussed by Banting and Kymlicka (2010), who refer to Canada as an example where multicultural policies have helped in promoting integration and citizenship. They draw upon several studies, which show that immigrants do best when they are allowed to combine their ethnic identity with a novel national identity (Banting and Kymlicka, 2010: 61). Accordingly, Banting and Kymlicka (2007: 6) reject the idea that there is a retreat from multiculturalism policies in Western countries. They argue that multiculturalism has actually become rooted in the legislation, law and institutions of a large number of nation states (ibid.). For instance, it has been reasoned that national minorities and indigenous peoples receive more recognition in the form of official language status and the right of self-government (Banting and Kymlicka, 2007: 6). However, even though they admit that there has been a retreat from multiculturalism concerning immigration to some degree, they disagree that it is a universal phenomenon. Rather, this shift is more outstanding in some countries than in others (Banting and Kymlicka, 2007: 8). Apart from that, they claim that the shift has been more expressive in governments’ rhetoric than in actual policies and that within a country, variations exist in the attitude towards immigrants. Thus, public debates make distinctions between ‘hard-working’ and obedient immigrants as well as ‘bad’ immigrants. In case the latter group is perceived as the main beneficiary of multiculturalism, support for these policies diminishes accordingly (ibid.).

2.3 Integration in the Netherlands

2.3.1 Historical background

As previously mentioned, the Netherlands used to be perceived as a standard-bearer of multiculturalism (Joppke, 2004: 247). Since the early 1980’s, the Netherlands adopted a multiculturalism policy, which proudly supported emancipation for ethnic minorities. This has been established by allowing them to set up state-funded ethnic infrastructures, such as schools, hospitals and their own forms of media (Joppke, 2007: 5). This approach of allowing communities to set up their separate facilities has long existed in the Netherlands, which was based on the subsidiarity principle or on ‘sovereignty in one’s own circle’. It was long believed that this facilitated members of communities to retain their particular identity (Entzinger, 2006: 180).
However, as increasing unemployment, school dropouts and criminality were most apparent among the foreign population, a left-liberal government felt the urge to move away from the previous ethnic minorities policy and turning towards a civic integration policy in the 1990’s (Joppke, 2004: 248). While the previous policy has arguably neglected immigrants’ integration, the new policy was aimed at blending immigrants into the Dutch society instead of allowing them to live as separate groups (Entzinger, 2003: 74 cited in Joppke, 2004: 248). It has been argued that the most remarkable change has been the 1998 Law on Civic Integration for Newcomers, which require immigrants to take 600 hours of Dutch language and civics courses (Joppke, 2004: 248). Although the mandatory nature of Dutch integration did raise some questions from a liberal perspective, a number of European countries followed in adopting similar programs (ibid.). According to Entzinger (2006: 7), the obligatory nature of Dutch civic integration was simply meant to increase its reach and to assure that there would be a sufficient quality of courses available.

Nevertheless, the political climate took a rightist turn after the assassination of the Dutch populist Fortuyn in 2002. Similarly, the assassination of the Dutch filmmaker Van Gogh after the release of his anti-Islam movie quickly followed that event. Following these events, the political climate started to become increasingly negative on immigration as well as on cultural and religious diversity. As a result, the Dutch civic integration law was revised with a particular focus on “Dutch norms and values” instead of “respect for diversity” (Entzinger, 2006: 9; Koopmans, 2010: 21). In 2007 the Civic Integration Act came into force, which required all immigrants to take the Dutch language course. One of the other new measures was the fact that immigrants were required to fully pay for these integration courses, making them responsible for their own integration. Accordingly, a residency permit could only be obtained upon passing for the integration test (Joppke, 2007: 7). In addition, integration from abroad has been introduced as applicants for family reunification ought to take the integration test from abroad (Joppke, 2007: 8).

It has therefore been argued that this approach to immigration expects immigrants to assimilate to the Dutch mainstream culture, hoping that eventually they will become indiscernible from the native population. As a result, immigrants who lack the ability to assimilate are prohibited from becoming a Dutch citizen (Banting and Kymlicka, 2010: 49).
2.3.2 Previous studies

There are a number of previous studies that have focused on the Netherlands in regards to the shift from multiculturalism integration policies towards more restrictive ones. For instance, Entzinger (2006: 178) has done research on whether there is a causal relationship between the changes in multiculturalism policies and the decline of the welfare state in the Netherlands. He does this by first describing the Dutch policies in regard to immigrant minorities and applying a number of criteria to them. After that, he gives a concise description of how immigrants have been eligible for welfare state provisions and how they have made use of them. His research shows that the erosive effects of the multiculturalism policies in the Netherlands did not concur with the fall of the welfare state. According to Entzinger, the main reason for the shift away from multiculturalism was the fact that immigrants were excluded from the economic as well as from the social aspect of Dutch society (2006: 178). However, he does acknowledge the fact that multiculturalism appeared to strengthen immigrants’ dependency on welfare arrangement (Entzinger, 2006: 200). In addition, he argues that the current anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Dutch government will have the opposite of the desired effect since to build a society, a certain degree of solidarity is needed between both communities (Entzinger, 2006: 201).

In another study, Joppke (2004: 243) has argued that the retreat of multicultural policies in the Netherlands is mainly caused by socio-economic problems such as high unemployment and school-dropouts among the immigrant population. However, Vasta (2007: 715) argues that the institutional marginalization of immigrants in the Netherlands cannot be solely explained by the socio-economic problems of immigrants. Alternatively, the study shows that the unwillingness to acknowledge the large number of racist practices and structures in Dutch society make it quite difficult for immigrants to integrate (Vasta, 2007: 715).

Furthermore, Mattei and Broeks (2018: 37) have looked into the integration policies at the school level in the Netherlands and in England in order to investigate whether their integration models withdraw from multiculturalism and move towards assimilationism instead. By using a comparative case study method, a thorough picture of the main aspects in the policy development of these countries’ integration policies could be drawn (Mattei and Broeks, 2018: 29). Accordingly, the study revealed that, as opposed to the English case, Dutch integration policies stay closer to multiculturalism whereby individuals are given equal opportunities and equal access to state programs (Mattei and Broeks, 2018: 37). Hence, the moral obligations to assimilate students are in the Netherlands much less prominent than in England (Mattei and
Broeks, 2018: 38). This view has been supported by Koopmans (2007: 4), who argues that that the Netherlands is still an example of a multicultural vision of integration. According to him, organizations and activities that are based on ethnic grounds are still supported by the government (ibid.).

However, Duyvendak and Scholten (2012: 266) refute the idea of a Dutch multicultural model by looking into how integration policies have been framed over the past decades. This has been done by extensively reviewing the Dutch literature as well as critically analyzing policy documents and public debate. Their research has shown that even though Dutch integration policies have often been categorized as multicultural, they were not that multicultural at all (ibid.). Instead, they argue that over the years the Netherlands has become more culturally homogenous and uniform (Duyvendak and Scholten, 2012: 280).

The previous literature has shown that there is much disagreement among scholars on how integration policies in the Netherlands should be perceived. Previous studies have almost exclusively focused on the outcomes of integration policies, instead of scrutinizing the government’s rhetoric. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the literature in a number of ways. Firstly, it presents a thorough analysis of the Dutch government’s view on integration in the year that brought significant changes to the requirements of immigrants. Apart from that, there is no previous research on the Netherlands that has made use of Bacchi’s post-structural WPR approach as a method.
Chapter 3: Theory and Method

3.1 Theoretical framework

3.1.1 Post-structuralism
Every researcher’s orientation towards its project is shaped by its ontological and epistemological position. In other words, they shape the researcher’s approach to theory and the utilized methods (Marsh and Furlong, 2002: 17). Firstly, it is of main importance to identify what these two terminologies entail. An ontological position has been defined as the researcher’s view about the nature of the world, while the epistemological position is a theory of knowledge (Marsh and Furlong, 2002: 18-19). Hence, the latter reflects the position of what is studied, how it is studied and the status the researcher gives to the findings (Marsh and Furlong, 2002: 21). Thus, a researcher within the interpretivist tradition argues that the world is discursively or socially constructed. This position is known to be anti-foundationalist in ontological terms, which opposes the idea that the world exists separately of our knowledge of it (Marsh and Furlong, 2002: 26). Interpretive approaches believe that in order to understand actions, practices and institutions, it is crucial to comprehend the meaning, the opinions and the preferences of the people involved (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002: 134).

As the aim of this thesis is to investigate the Dutch governmental discourse on integration through policy analysis, it has been chosen to approach the issue from a post-structural perspective. Post-structuralism, which refers to a wide range of theorists who contend foundationalism, has emerged as a new variation of interpretive theory (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002: 137). The main focus of post-structuralism is to learn how knowledge is produced and how concepts can change their meanings over time and place (Bacchi, 2009: 277). It directs the researcher to follow the political influences that shape their content and how they function in political practices (Bacchi, 2009: 265). One of the most eminent proponents of post-structuralism is Foucault (1977; 1986), who argues that experience is obtained within a prior discourse. In addition, he claims that language is important as institutions and actions solely get a meaning through language (Foucault, 1977; 1986 cited in Marsh and Furlong, 2002: 28). Thus, the main interest in adopting the post-structuralist approach in a research is to identify the discourse and the role it plays in structuring meanings (ibid: 28). Therefore, this theoretical approach will contribute to a better understanding on how Dutch integration is constructed and in what context this is being done.
As mentioned in the introduction, the chosen approach of this research will be Bacchi’s WPR approach. While this will be further explained in the methodology section of this paper, the following sections will explain the theoretical framing. As Bacchi’s WPR approach is based on Foucault’s concepts of governmentality, discourse and power, these concepts will be further elaborated upon in the section below (Beutler and Fenech, 2018: 19). In addition, Bacchi’s theoretical framework will be combined with previous research on multiculturalism and assimilationism.

3.1.2 Governmentality, power and knowledge
Foucault (1980; 1983 cited in Beutler and Fenech, 2018: 19) has used the term governmentality to refer to the ways in which governing occurs in modern society. According to him, an important way in which economic and political institutions have governed since the nineteenth century is through the shaping and spreading of discourses (ibid.). Thus, Foucault (1982: 790 cited in Beutler and Fenech, 2018: 19) argues that discourses are in fact a form of power, which are being exercised by governments. Furthermore, he presents a power effect called ‘dividing practices’, meaning that one group in society is located as more powerful than the other group (Foucault, 1982: 777 cited in Beutler and Fenech, 2018: 19). He argues that critically analyzing governments’ actions and policies will lead to knowledge. “A critique does not mean that things are not good the way they are. Rather, it facilitates us in seeing on what kinds of assumptions the accepted practices are based” (Foucault, 1994: 456 cited in Bacchi, 2009: xv).

3.1.3 Multiculturalism and assimilationism
Taking the existing literature into consideration, this thesis will make use of the concepts of multiculturalism and assimilation. The analysis will hence be conducted by looking for the key elements of multiculturalism and assimilationism in the selected policy document. Thus, multiculturalism can be considered as a policy solution that respects all individuals as moral persons and recognizes their freedom and equality (Rodríguez-García, 2010; Kymlicka, 2007). Promoting ethnic, cultural and religious diversity and state protection can be perceived as key elements of multiculturalism. Assimilationism, on the other hand, refers to similarity, passive tolerance towards immigrants and strict criteria in regards to integration. It has been argued that immigrants who come closest to the norms and values of the host society should be welcomed (Borevi, 2012). The analysis will be done with regard to these concepts. To be more precise, it will be investigated how these models are reflected in the Dutch integration policy of 2007.
3.2 Methodology

This section will give a detailed description of the design of this thesis, which shows how the research and analysis have been carried out in order to answer the research question (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 14). As a first step to find a suitable methodology for this particular research, it is crucial to clearly define the purpose of this study.

3.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the thesis is to critically examine the Dutch integration policy of 2007 from a post-structural perspective. This will be done by investigating the Dutch governmental discourse on integration. It has been chosen to use discourse analysis in order to understand how integration is shaped in the Dutch governmental policy.

3.2.2 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is an interpretive form of analysis, which reasons that people act on behalf of their beliefs, values and ideology that give a significance to their actions (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 310). Furthermore, it has been argued that discourse analysis aims to disclose the meanings of political behavior (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 311). In fact, evidence suggests that analyzing integration policy discourses are an effective method in revealing the modes of membership practices across countries (Dubois-Shaik, 2014: 715).

3.2.3 WPR-method

It has been chosen to use Bacchi’s “What’s the problem represented to be?” as a method, which is a critical form of a post-structural policy analysis. Bacchi’s (2012:21) WPR approach has been described as a tool, which makes it possible to critically examine public policies. According to Miller and Rose (1990: 3 cited in Bacchi, 2009) the notion of ‘policy’ refers to the understanding of the role of government, which is shaped within a specific historical and national context. Bacchi attaches great importance to the role of governments in constructing problem representations. She argues that “. . . governments play a privileged role because their understandings ‘stick’ – their versions of problems are formed or constituted in the legislation, reports and technologies used to govern” (Bacchi 2009, p. 33).
The starting point in this approach is to determine a problematization, which is a problem that needs to change. A policy should therefore be read by focusing on how a particular problem is being represented. As opposed to problem-solving approaches, the WPR-method is rather problem-questioning as it examines how particular proposals imply certain understandings of problems (Bacchi, 2009: xvii).

In doing so, Bacchi proposes a set of six questions, which can be applied to a problem representation:

1. What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?
3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
6. How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

(Bacchi, 2012: 21)

The section below will briefly scrutinize all six questions in order to understand what is meant by them and how they will be applied to the policy analysis in the subsequent chapter.

**Question 1**

The first question acts as a starting point for asking what a government is hoping to change when it proposes to do something (Bacchi, 2009: x). A researcher should hence look for a problematization in a policy, which refers to how something is being represented as a problem (Bacchi, 2009: xiii). This way, a researcher gets deeper insights into the thinking process of governing practices. In other words, the WPR approach ‘works backwards’ as it seeks to uncover what is represented as a problem, instead of perceiving policy makers as problem solvers (Bacchi, 2009: 3).
**Question 2**

Secondly, after having identified the problem representation, one needs to ask which presuppositions or assumptions are the cause of the problem representation (Bacchi, 2009: 5). The specific goal is hence to discover the thought that lies behind the problem representation, which are connected to deep-seated cultural premises and values (Bacchi, 2009: 7). In doing so, Bacchi focuses on *binaries, key concepts and categories*, which will be explained in the sections below (ibid.).

**Binaries**

It should be noted that binaries or dichotomies play an important role in public debate. That is to say, what is on one side of a binary is excluded from the other side. In addition, binaries are hierarchical as one side is perceived to be more important than the other side. The WPR-method argues that it is crucial to examine where the binaries become visible in policies and how they contribute in shaping the understanding of the issue (Bacchi, 2009: 7). A few examples of binaries could be illegal/legal, moral/immoral and economic/social.

**Key concepts**

In addition, policies are composed of concepts, which are often filled with different meanings. The task is to recognize the concepts in problem representations and determine which meanings are given to those key concepts (Bacchi, 2009: 8). For instance, one could ask: “what does the concept of equality mean when a policy refers to that?”.

**Categories**

Bacchi (2009: 9) defines categories as concepts that play an important role in how governing takes place. People categories (such as citizens or foreigners) are considered to be the main focus given their centrality to governing processes. The challenge here is not to accept the categories as given, but rather to examine how they function to give particular meaning to problem representations (ibid.). This corresponds to Foucault’s idea that a category has not always existed across time and space (1980 cited in Bacchi, 2009: 9).

**Question 3**

After having asked which presuppositions or assumptions are the cause of the problem representation, one needs to determine how the representation of the problem has come about.
In other words, it is crucial to reflect on the developments and the decisions that contribute to the shaping of problem representations (Bacchi, 2009: 10). It should be recognized that problem representations exist over time and space and hence that things could have evolved differently. In doing so, the notion of ‘genealogies’ should be taken into account (ibid.). Thus, genealogies lead the researcher to discover how a problem came to be. Apart from that, it should be noted that some groups have more influence than others in assuring that a particular problem representation ‘sticks’ (Bacchi, 2009: 11).

**Question 4**
The fourth question is aimed to consider the limits or inadequacies of the problem representation. More specifically, the purpose is to reflect on issues and perspectives, which are excluded in the policy document (Bacchi, 2009: 13).

**Question 5**
This question seeks to address the effects of problem representations in order to critically assess them. As the WPR approach assumes that some problem representations lead to difficulties for some social groups more than to others, it is important to see what can be done about this (Bacchi, 2009: 15). In doing so, three sorts of effects should be identified.

*Discursive effects*
Discursive effects refer to the fact that problem representations and the discourses which frame them make it hard to think differently by limiting the social analysis that can be produced (Bacchi, 2009: 16).

*Subjectification effects*
The idea of subjectification is that discourses make certain subject positions available. Subjects are hence being formed through the ways in which public policies set up social relationships and our position within them (ibid.). Foucault (1982: 208 cited in Bacchi, 2009: 16) makes use of the concept of ‘dividing practices’ by arguing that stigmatizing targeted minorities by the government fosters desired behaviors of the majority. It is therefore required to question the effect of problem representations on the targeted subjects of a particular policy (Bacchi, 2009: 17). Subjectification effects have an impact on who we are and how we feel about ourselves and about others (Bacchi 2009, p. 16).
Lived effects

The notion of lived effects addresses the material impact of problem representations, which directly affects people’s lives (Bacchi, 2009: 18).

Question 6

The last question builds on the third question, which refers to practices and processes allowing certain problem representations to dominate. It should be questioned through what means do problem representations reach their aimed audience and attain legitimacy. For instance, the role of the media could be considered in supporting and spreading certain problem representations. Apart from that, the possibility of challenging problem representations should also be thought about (Bacchi, 2009: 19). Unfortunately, due to the limited time and scope of this thesis, it will not be possible to apply this question to the research problem.

Lastly, Bacchi (2009: 21) also stresses the importance of nesting, meaning that problem representations can be embedded within the other. It is therefore crucial to find out if there are key topics within a problem representation that themselves need to be analyzed.

3.2.4 Data collection

The type of data that has been used in the analysis of the thesis is primary data, which refers to information that has not yet been interpreted, commented, analyzed or processed earlier in some way (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 329). In order to confirm the credibility of this research, the analysis will clearly demonstrate how certain conclusions were reached by explaining the thought process and by making use of quotations from the chosen policy document.

The advantage of using the WPR method is that the kind of document selected for analysis is quite flexible. However, in order to comprehend the chosen policy, it is important to have sufficient understanding of the background of the issue. As shown in the literature review, 2007 was an important year in the Netherlands as it introduced the Civic Integration Act, which changed the requirements for immigrants. For this reason, it has been chosen to analyze the integration policy document of 2007 named “Zorg dat je erbij hoort” (translation: “Make sure you belong”). At the time, issues regarding immigrant integration were covered by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (from now on referred to as VROM). The policy was therefore drafted by minister Vogelaar, who is the former left-wing minister of Housing, Communities and Integration. The document is about 106 pages long and presents the
main themes of integration policy for the coming years (until 2011). It demonstrates the concrete policy priorities as well as the government’s vision on integration. This allows one to look deep into the problematizing process of the government by understanding the thought process of how the problem is constituted in the first place. It therefore fits well within the post-structural understanding of method as well as within the WPR method’s objective.
Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter will present the analysis of the thesis, which has been defined as the process of making sense and attaching meaning to the gathered data, as well as applying the resulting knowledge to the research question (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 326) The analysis will be organized around each question of the WPR method. As a first step in the process of analysis, it was crucial to read through the chosen policy document to become familiar with it. After that, several closer readings followed, whereby the WPR questions could be applied to the policy document. Similarly, it has been questioned how the models of multiculturalism and assimilationism are reflected in the policy document. In order to ensure the transparency in the research process, the analysis will make use of direct quotations which have been translated from Dutch to English. As mentioned in the methodology section, due to the limited scope of the thesis, the sixth question will be left out as it is unfeasible to address the way in which media has challenged the problem representation.

4.1 What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in the policy?

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the aim of the first question is to examine what the government wants to change when it proposes to do something (Bacchi, 2009: x). This will help in getting a better understanding of the thinking process of the government. The problematizations become clear in the policy document at a very early stage. The found problematizations have been structured into separate paragraphs, as it is shown below.

4.1.1 Growing Islamization and criminality

First of all, it is argued that a large number of the native Dutch population perceives the increasing visibility of the Islam as threatening. This is mainly explained due to the increased radicalization of Muslim communities in Western countries, which is being described as incompatible with modern society. In addition, the changing everyday life is also mentioned with a particular focus on clothing and attitudes that evoke feelings of fear and insecurity among the natives (VROM, 2007: 5).

“More general phenomena such as a rapidly changing street scene, expressed in clothing, attitude and behavior give rise to feelings of fear and insecurity (VROM, 2007: 5)”.
It is also argued that a large number of the immigrant youth is involved in violence and criminal activities (ibid.).

“As criminal immigrant youth cause nuisance, annoyance and fear…more and more native Dutch argue that ethnic minorities and immigrants should assimilate” (VROM, 2007: 5).

This quotation directly refers to assimilationism as it illustrates that the native Dutch population believes that their core values are being threatened and it insists for adjustment among the immigrant population.

4.1.2 Polarization

Apart from the majority of immigrants, who arguably fail to integrate into the Dutch society, the policy document also mentions a group of immigrants, who are committed to integrate into Dutch society but who do not feel accepted as fellow citizens. Hence, the world of the natives and ethnic minorities are too far apart from each other, which leads to increasing polarization (VROM, 2007: 5). This is being expressed in terms of a social and cultural distance, which ultimately results in socioeconomic inequality.

“It should be acknowledged that there are immigrants who live separately in their own ethnic circle and faith, more or less turning their back on society. This leads to the image that Islam is not compatible with Dutch modern society” (VROM, 2007: 5).

It becomes evident that the above-mentioned quotation openly refers to assimilationism as a different religion is supposedly not compatible with Dutch society.

4.1.3 Unemployment

“The social and cultural distance is closely related to socio-economic disadvantage among the immigrants” (VROM, 2007: 5).

It has been argued that immigrants have insufficient competencies and connections in order to successfully participate in the economy. Also, the competencies of citizens with a foreign background are often underestimated (VROM, 2007: 5). It is hence acknowledged that
immigrant face significant discrimination in labor markets (VROM, 2007: 8). This is closely related to another problematization, which is unemployment among the immigrant population. The government argues that from the non-Western immigrants aged between 15-65 years old, only 51% is engaged in paid work, which is far too little. According to the government, non-Western women in particular have an extremely low economic participation. It has been argued that this group “is exclusively focused on living in their own circle” (VROM, 2007: 40). As economic participation is crucial for social emancipation as well as social integration, it is required to increase the labor participation among immigrants (VROM, 2007: 8). As previously mentioned, combatting discrimination in the labor market can be seen as one of the solutions. It is also interesting to note that the government does not disclose any figures regarding unemployment rates of the native Dutch population.

4.1.4 Education

In addition, the policy perceives the lower level of education among the immigrant youth as a problem, which is closely related to the problem of a lower labor market participation.

“Reducing the deficit in language skills and cognitive development of non-Western children will be prioritized in education” (VROM, 2007: 7).

It has hence been argued that non-Western children show significantly weaker language and other skills compared to native Dutch children. The government therefore aims to help these children succeed at school by introducing certain measures such as offering additional language classes and combating segregation in education (VROM, 2007: 7). This way, it wants to assure that there will be no segregation of immigrants pupils and native Dutch.

“Many teenagers are predisposed to negative influences which is mainly caused by poor upbringing. The number of non-Western teenagers in this group is proportionally large” (VROM, 2007: 7).

Furthermore, the only language that will be offered in primary schools is Dutch (VROM, 2007: 26). This is a major change in comparison to previous multiculturalism policies, where communities were allowed to set up their own schools and teach children in their own language. It can therefore be argued that in the field of education, the government is also leaning towards assimilationism.
Also, the government addresses the fact that a relatively large number of non-Western youth gets involved in problematic behavior such as school drop-outs and criminality. For this reason, the minister suggests to strengthen the expertise of professionals in youth services in order to foster the social emancipation and social integration of these groups (ibid.). However, it can be argued that the reference of this problematization to assimilationism or multiculturalism is not that explicit.

4.1.5 Multiculturalism

Another prominent problematization that can be found in the policy document is multiculturalism, which is being presented as a model that in previous years has failed. It has been suggested that differences between cultures and beliefs should not be underestimated and the increased pluralism in society has arguably challenged the Dutch core values (VROM, 2007: 6). The main priority of this policy document is hence to improve the integration of newcomers.

In doing so, the government asks all citizens to participate in society on the basis of mutual acceptance and equality.

“Participating in society will make it possible for immigrants to identify themselves with it” (VROM, 2007: 6).

Thus, immigrants are required to learn the Dutch language, earn an income and educate their children. A particular focus in the document is the notion of individual responsibility and active citizenship, where each individual should be curious in learning the Dutch language, culture and history. On the other hand, the government addresses natives, institutions and businesses to create a society of equal opportunity. They should hence make an effort to be open to people from different cultural backgrounds who are eager to participate in the Dutch society (VROM, 2007: 6). The latter applies to the notion of reciprocity, which can refer to the fundamental rights. For example, freedom of religion is reciprocal as it not only means that one has the freedom of faith but also the respect for other beliefs (ibid.).

“Also many non-Western foreigners do not feel part of the Dutch society, as much as they make an effort” (VROM, 2007: 12).

In short, even though the government addresses both native Dutch citizens and immigrants, it is evident that the main focus is the latter group. Furthermore, this section is a clear illustration
of the fact that the government turns their back on multiculturalism and opts for a more assimilationist approach, where a particularism of history, culture and membership is not being accepted. The last quotation makes it quite obvious that mixed identities are not acceptable in the Netherlands.

4.2 What presupposition or assumptions underlie the representation of the problem?

The second question aims to reveal the thought that lies behind the problem representation, which is connected to deep-rooted cultural premises and values (Bacchi, 2009: 7). This section will therefore be divided in three sub-sections which will address binaries, key concepts and categories with can be found in the policy document.

4.2.1 Binaries

According to the WPR-method, it should be noted where binaries become prominent in policies and how they play a part in understanding the issue (Bacchi, 2009: 7). The main binary that can be found is the one of allochtoon/autochtoon. The term allochtoon refers to a person that comes from elsewhere, while autochtoon refers to a native Dutch person (Bishop, 2004). The document mentions this binary numerous times. In addition, this binary is being further divided into Western and non-Western allochtoon, in which the latter is perceived as the problem group. Non-Western allochtoten are being defined as persons from who at least one parent is born in a non-Western country (VROM, 2007: 12).

“It is expected from allochtoten that they do their best to earn a place in society by learning the language, follow an education and complete it, earn an income and be responsible for the upbringing of their children” (VROM, 2007: 6).

“For a long time, it has been insufficiently recognized that a gap had emerged, that is difficult to bridge between indigenous and non-native Dutch people” (VROM, 2007: 12).
“For non-Western migrants who settle in our country as newcomers, the lack of language skills and lack of knowledge about life in the Netherlands are in many cases a hindrance to participation” (VROM, 2007: 23).

These quotations illustrate that immigrants are perceived as people who do not master the Dutch language, who have low qualifications as well as low workforce participation. Also, the government sees them as responsible for the poor up-bringing of their children, who often come in contact with the police, as indicated below.

“Criminal allochthonous youth, sometimes relying on their faith, cause nuisance and fear. There is therefore a declining willingness to experience differences as an enrichment: more and more autochtonen believe that minorities should adjust” (VROM, 2007: 12).

The word ‘adjust’ in the above-mentioned quotation directly addresses the need for assimilationism. Furthermore, the document mentions several groups of people who are particularly perceived as problematic. It argues that there is an overrepresentation of Moroccan and Antillean youth, who are involved in crimes in comparison to other nationalities (VROM, 2007: 27)

“In the government’s opinion, a specific policy for individual ethnic groups is generally undesirable. A specific approach can only be justified in exceptional situations. The persistent overrepresentation of Antillean and Moroccan youth in crime figures is such an exceptional situation” (VROM, 2007: 8).

Another obvious binary is made by distinguishing migrant men, who are supposedly causing problems and migrant women, who are mainly portrayed as being sufferers. According to the government, these non-Western women are living isolated and are often experiencing suffer honor-related violence as well as polygamy and forced marriages (VROM, 2007: 41).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binary</th>
<th>How are they described in the document?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Allochtonen/ Autochtonen | • The policy document describes ‘allochtonen’ as negative and problematic. They have low qualifications, low labour market participation and low Dutch language skills.  
• ‘Autochtonen’ (or native Dutch citizens) on the other hand, are not much mentioned in the document. They are mainly described as people who feel threatened and unsafe by the “others”. |
| 2. Non-Western allochtonen/ Western allochtonen | • The government emphasizes the fact that these ‘problematic’ immigrants have none Western origins. In the same way, they are perceived as negative while Western allochtonen are not being mentioned at all. |
| 3. Muslims/ Non-Muslims | • The terms ‘Muslims’, ‘Islam’ and ‘radicalization’ are often being discussed as being a security problem.  
• ‘Non-Muslims’ and other religions are not being mentioned at all. |
| 4. Non-Western (allochtoon) women/ Western (autochtoon) women | • Non-Western women are being described as ‘dependent’, ‘victim of domestic violence’. In addition, they are perceived as ‘isolated’ due to a low number of labour market participation and a lack of social interaction with native citizens. |
| 5. Non-Western (allochtoon) youth/ Western (autochtoon) youth | • Western women are not being mentioned.
• Non-Western youth is being negatively characterized due to a high number of school dropouts and a low education level, a high criminality rate and a low participation in the labour market.
• Specific groups such as Turks, Moroccans and Antilleans are being mentioned as ‘extremely problematic’ and the government wants to approach this problem separately.
• Western or Dutch native youth is only being mentioned for their relatively low crime rates. However, this is not backed up with recent statistics. |

*Figure 1. Overview of binaries*

### 4.2.2 Key concepts

One of the key concepts in this policy document is ‘integration’, which is being referred to as accepting the core values of Dutch society and complying with current standards and norms (VROM, 2007: 14).

> “Cultural adaptation of migrants is seen as a condition for participation in society and therefore for integration” (VROM, 2007: 14).

It is expected that immigrants will learn the Dutch language already in their country of origin. The document refers hence to the adoption of the Civic Integration Act, which obliges applicants for family reunification to take the Dutch integration test from abroad (Joppke, 2007: 8). Furthermore, the government underlines the fact that it has stopped subsidizing the preservation of own language and culture of migrant groups (VROM, 2007: 14).
Apart from that, it has been argued that ‘active citizenship’ is the starting point for social integration (VROM, 2007: 37).

“Active citizens are aware of their commonality and are willing to contribute to it by, for instance, volunteering and participating in citizens' initiatives” (VROM, 2007: 37).

In other words, active citizenship refers to identifying yourself with Dutch society and contributing to it in various ways. In doing so, one should respect the fundamental rights, which are ,amongst others, democracy, freedom of belief and association, freedom of expression and equality of all citizens regardless of their political affiliation, belief, color or sexual orientation (VROM, 2007: 37).

Furthermore, the government places an emphasis on the Dutch history, as well as the political structure, the basic norms and values and so on (VROM, 2007: 38). This clearly demonstrates that the multiculturalist approach of integration is left in the past. It becomes evident that the ethnic, cultural and religious particularities of immigrants are framed by the Dutch government as problematic.

4.2.3 Categories

As previously mentioned, the policy document makes clear distinctions between native Dutch citizens and allochtonen, which literally refer to people from another soil. Numerous times, the government emphasizes the particularity of Dutch society as well as its distinctive identity. This particular Dutch identity is defined by making reference to its history, its traditions, the Dutch language and other particularities.

“Many citizens feel, in one way or another, involved with the Dutch society. This involvement helps to bridge differences between people and groups or at least makes them manageable and thereby contributes to social integration”(VROM, 2007: 17).

The government makes it very clear that those who were not born from the Dutch soil must do their best to assimilate into the Dutch society. They are required to prove their willingness to contribute to society by learning the Dutch language, educate themselves, earn an income and
be socially involved in their community. This shows that the rhetoric argues for assimilation rather than multiculturalism as a policy solution.

“There is little movement in the mutual contacts between immigrants and natives and the tendency to look for a marriage partner outside of their own circle is especially low among Turks and Moroccans” (VROM, 2017: 57)

This quotation demonstrates that the government finds it problematic that most Turks and Moroccans find a marriage partner in their own country and instead supports intermarriage. This shows that multiculturalism in Dutch society is not being accepted anymore, as opposed to the previous “sovereignty in its own circle” principle.

4.3 How has this representation of the problem come about?

As problem representations exist over time and space, it should be noted that things could have evolved differently (Bacchi, 2009: 10). It is therefore important to discover how a problem came to be. As mentioned in the literature review, the Netherlands used to have a multiculturalism policy since the 1980’s, which allowed immigrants to set up state-funded ethnic infrastructures (Joppke, 2007: 5). This way, immigrants could preserve their distinct identities, which were believed to contribute to a successful integration (Entzinger, 2007: 180).

The policy document mentions that since the 2000’s, it becomes clear that there was no improvement of social and cultural integration among immigrants. For this reason, the integration policies after 2001 emphasized the core values of Dutch society and compliance with norms (VROM, 2007: 14).

“The integration policy is becoming more compulsory” (VROM, 2007: 14).

This quotation shows that the government started to lean towards forced assimilation, as Dutch civic integration previously used to be optional (Entzinger, 2006: 7). However, the exact reason for the sudden shift from a multiculturalist integration policy towards an assimilationist one are not that pronounced in the document. It has been argued that during the nineties, many native Dutch people felt that there was insufficient political attention to the cultural frictions between them and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, it has been argued that the social unrest has quickly escalated after the events of 9/11 (VROM, 2007: 14). Apart from the increased fear of terrorism, socio-economic problems as high unemployment rates and school dropouts among
immigrants could be one of the main reasons for a retreat of multiculturalism (Joppke, 2004: 243).

4.4 What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?

This section will reflect on issues and perspectives, which are excluded in the policy document (Bacchi, 2009: 13). Though it seems complicated to determine what is not said in the policy document as it is mainly limited to a specific theme, it is an inevitable step in order to gain a complete understanding of the discourse. Apart from that, one should question if the problem could be conceptualized differently (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016: 20).

The aspects that are left unproblematic are in various ways connected to the assumptions that have been presented in the second question. In general, the Dutch government is quite explicit in underlining all the problems that are caused by immigrants. However, there is not much evidence presented for its claims. For instance, at a very early stage in the document, it is claimed that many native Dutch perceive the rapid increase in the visibility of Islam as threatening (VROM, 2007: 5). In addition, it argues that most of them believe that immigrants should adjust to the Dutch society (ibid.). However, it is unclear how this has been investigated and whether this is even true. Another example is the assertion that immigrants are more often involved in criminal activities than the native Dutch population.

“Antilleans and Moroccans distinguish themselves with the highest percentages of suspects, but also among Surinamese, Turks and other non-Western foreigners is the involvement in crime substantially higher than among the native Dutch” (VROM, 2007: 55).

In supporting this claim, the government uses statistics from 2004, which indeed indicate that the percentage of suspects among foreigners is higher than among the native Dutch population. Nevertheless, it can be argued that these statistics are quite outdated.

Furthermore, the policy document makes use of rhetorical constructions that barely mention any positive integration steps made by immigrants. Instead, it denigrates them and focuses solely on negative perceptions.
“Work and education are important areas for the social emancipation of the immigrant population. Positive developments are taking place in both areas. As the economy progresses, unemployment among non-Western immigrants is falling. In addition, youth from ethnic minorities benefit from the increased demand for work. But despite the positive developments, the gap between the labor market participation of non-Western foreigners and indigenous people is still too large.” (VROM, 2007: 57).

“The performance of primary education shows an upward trend and the proportion of non-Western youth in the higher forms of education is increasing. Yet, too many non-Western young people fail their education” (VROM. 2007: 57).

Furthermore, the policy document constantly underlines the lack of Dutch integration among immigrants and the fact that it leads to social problems. Yet, the exact meaning of Dutch integration has not clearly been addressed. Even though, several Dutch norms and values have been mentioned (such as democracy and freedom of speech), it can be argued that they are in fact similar to the universal principles of the liberal state, as suggested by Joppke (2004: 253).

4.5 What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?

As previously mentioned, the fifth question aims to address the consequences and the effects of problem representations so they can be critically assessed (Bacchi, 2009: 15). This section will briefly describe the different effects, which have been identified in the policy document. By doing this, one can understand how the problem representation is part of a greater discourse and a broader societal context as well.

**Discursive effects**

The negative undertone in the above-mentioned examples clearly illustrate that the government has the power to conceptualize a problem according to its own regards. It has been made clear that the Dutch government is focusing on the negative perceptions of immigrants and their (non) integration. By constantly focusing on the negative aspects, such as supposedly higher crime rates, increasing unemployment and extremism among immigrants, it makes it hard think differently. It has been argued that there is “a declining willingness to experience differences
as an enrichment” (VROM, 2007: 5). In this way, the government tries to limit the social analysis that can be produced (Bacchi, 2009: 16).

“… the shock and tension …confrontation with other cultures” (VROM, 2007: 5).

**Subjectification effects**

As Foucault has argued, the notion of ‘dividing practices’ is often being used by the government in order to target minorities and obtain the desired behavior of the majority of the population (1982: 208 cited in Bacchi, 2009: 16). In the policy document, non-Western foreigners are being portrayed as problems, while the native Dutch population is seen as desirable.

“..the rejection of elementary rights by some fundamentalists, psychological and physical violence against women and sexual minorities, nuisance and crime will be combated by all means by the government” (VROM, 2007: 18).

The quotation above is directed towards the immigrant population, while this could apply to a native Dutch citizen as well. However, the government clearly opposes this view by characterizing the immigrant as a security threat.

Apart from that, the government mentions that cultural assimilation of immigrants is perceived as a prerequisite for participation in society and therefore for integration as well (VROM, 2007: 14). This leads to the another dividing practice, which argues that the immigrants who can pass the Dutch language and civilization tests, are considered to be more acceptable than others. These subjectification effects impact the way how citizens feel themselves as well as about others (Bacchi, 2009: 16).

**Lived effects**

These effects refer to the material impact of problem representation that have direct consequences on people’s lives (Bacchi, 2009: 18). The government acknowledges the fact that despite of the social problems that immigrants face, they are not fully responsible for all of them. For instance, the low labour market participation among immigrants can partly be explained due to discrimination in the workplace. Apart from skilling migrant workers, it is similarly important to minimize racism and workplace discrimination (VROM, 2007: 8). In addition, the government also mentions the fact that the strong over-representation of some
ethnic groups in crime is at the same time causing a hindrance to integration as there is a high risk of relapsing into the previous mode of behaviour (VROM, 2007: 57). Therefore, the lived effects could for instance refer to discrimination towards ethnic minorities and a persisting distance between the native and the foreign population.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and limitations

Conclusion

This concluding chapter will sum up the main findings of the analysis and will connect it to the main aim of the thesis.

This thesis has sought to critically investigate the European integration policy trend, which is known as “the retreat of multiculturalism”. Immigration is a global political problem, which is according to research expected to exacerbate in the coming years and it is hence important to gain a deeper understanding of how this phenomenon should be perceived. Since this phenomenon has led to a considerable amount of disagreement among scholars over whether it actually exists, it was decided to research this puzzle in the context of the Netherlands, which has been perceived as an extreme example of the withdrawal of multiculturalism. Thus, the aim was to answer the following research question: “What is integration represented to be in the 2007 Dutch policy context with regards to multiculturalism and assimilationism?”. The chosen research method for this thesis was Bacchi’s post-structural “What is the problem represented to be” (WPR) approach, which enables the researcher to discover how knowledge is produced and how certain concepts can change their meanings over time and place. Accordingly, the questions of the WPR approach were applied to the Dutch integration policy document of 2007 in order to explore the government’s rhetoric at that time. The year 2007 has been chosen since during that year, a number of stricter requirements for immigrants have been introduced.

In addressing the above-mentioned research question, it should be concluded that the findings are consistent with the majority of the previous research showing that there is indeed a strong retreat from multiculturalism in the Netherlands. The government’s discourse shows that there are stricter criteria regarding citizenship and integration. In fact, it has been made clear that particularism of history, culture and membership will not be tolerated and that immigrants should respect the norms and values of Dutch society. Furthermore, the government places a particular emphasis on learning the Dutch language, which becomes the full responsibility of the immigrant.

Overall, the thesis contributes to the field of global politics and broader societal concerns in several ways. It shows that a country which was known for its generous multicultural integration policies can suddenly move towards another extreme and hence that societal change
can happen quite rapidly. This is particularly important since previous studies suggest that there is increasing convergence with regards to integration policies in Europe.

In addition, the results demonstrate a strong effect of the government’s use of dividing practices, which means that one group in society is portrayed as more powerful than another group. As immigration and integration are perceived as global political issues, one should be aware of the government’s powerful role in constructing meanings. The research has shown that the WPR approach is a useful method in assessing the role of discourse in structuring meanings.

**Limitations**

However, a number of comments should be made regarding the limitations of this thesis. Despite of the benefits of the WPR approach, it also appeared to be a source of difficulty. Since the approach is so wide-ranging and open to one’s subjective interpretations, it makes it difficult to make use of all the aspects of the method. For instance, the sixth question of the WPR approach has been left out in this thesis since it was not feasible to research the media’s role in shaping and challenging the problem representation. Furthermore, it is very likely that certain concepts have been unintentionally overlooked. Although it has been concluded that the Dutch integration policy of 2007 shows indeed a strong shift towards assimilationism, it could be argued that some elements are still rooted in its legislation. For instance, the government used to actively fund and support ethnic and immigrant groups in previous years. Although the policy document mentions the fact that it will discontinue subsidizing the preservation of own language and culture of immigrants, it is not sure how this will turn out in practice. In a similar way, a number of other aspects could not be found in the particular policy document.

In addition, a comment should be made regarding the limited scope of the thesis, which only allowed to investigate a specific period of time in Dutch integration. Even though the analysis yields promising findings, more useful data could be generated if a longitudinal study has been conducted where several integration policy documents could be researched over a certain period of time. Furthermore, it would have been interesting to do a comparison of a number of European integration policies and comparing their government’s rhetoric. It should additionally be noted that the lack of access to Dutch governmental data proved to be a constraint in this research. As an alternative, it would also be interesting to focus the research on other actors such as national political parties, but also on transnational and global actors in order to explore the actor’s rhetoric.
In brief, the main point is that there are numerous possibilities for future researchers to extend and deepen this type of research. For this reason, this particular thesis can be seen as a more of a short introduction into the whole topic of the retreat of multiculturalism in Europe and beyond.
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