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### Flexibele burgers? Amsterdamse jongvolwassenen over lokale en nationale identiteiten

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## SUMMARY

This study deals with the relationship between local and national identities. It discusses how young adults with immigrant backgrounds (Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese) and native young adults in Amsterdam experience, reject, combine and give meaning to local and national identities. Young people have been at the centre stage when it comes to the shifting definition of national identity. They are as much a source of sorrow as a window to the future. What is left of the meaning of national identity for young people growing up with almost unlimited possibilities for international communication and in cities with culturally diverse populations, where many citizens have more than one nationality? This points to a broader question about the definition of citizenship, or in other words, the flexibility of citizenship. Does citizenship still carry emotional meaning, or is it just a tool that young people use strategically depending on the circumstances? And, how important is a national identity as a binding agent in big cities that have become very culturally and ethnically diverse? Whether urban youth are flexible citizens, and how they give meaning to local and national identities are the central focus of this study.

Territorial identities and identification of young adults living in large cities, especially of the children of immigrants that have come of age, have been popular research subjects in recent years. These studies mostly investigate identification from an integration perspective. They have dealt with the question of whether young people identify with the Netherlands, but not so much what the national identity means to them and how it relates to other identities. Moreover, the emphasis has been particularly on the role of the Dutch integration debate and national policies. There has been hardly any attention for the way in which the Dutch citizenship regime relates to the citizenship regimes of the countries of origin and to the urban citizenship regime. In order to map the shifting meaning of national identity and citizenship it is especially important to include these relations in the research. Furthermore, this study combines a perspective from above (states), with a perspective from below (young people). This study answers three interrelated questions:

1. How do the Dutch government and the governments of the countries of origin give meaning to citizenship and the national identity and how do these relate to one another? What is the role of the urban integration context and the urban identity?

2. How do young adults in Amsterdam identify with Amsterdam and the Netherlands and how do these two identities relate to one another?
3. How do second generation migrant youth identify with the Netherlands and the country of birth of their parents and how do these two identities relate to one another?

A literature and document analysis was conducted to answer the first research question and shed light on the perspective from above. The result sketches the citizenship regimes of the Netherlands and the countries of origin and shows what happens if these citizenship regimes meet. To investigate the perspective from below, a questionnaire was conducted amongst four groups of young adults in Amsterdam: from native, Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese origin. More than one thousand young adults completed the questionnaire, face-to-face or through the internet. In addition to the questionnaire, fifty in-depth interviews gain insight into the stories behind the answers to the survey questions. This research shows how citizenship regimes influence one another and how young adults use, combine and give meaning to local and national identities.

#### *Theoretical assumptions*

In globalization processes two opposite trends can be identified. On the one hand globalization leads to a breaking down of national sovereignty, a form of deterritorialization, for example by the development of transnational networks and the rise of dual citizenship. On the other hand globalization also causes a reaffirmation of national sovereignty, a form of reterritorialization. In times of crisis, whether it is international terrorism or a worldwide financial crisis, the call for more protectionism and protecting the national identity grows stronger. The starting point for this research is that these two trends exist next to one another and influence one another, causing a continuous redefinition of national sovereignty and shifting meaning of, and relations between, the territorial identities concerned. The goal of this study is not to show that deterritorialization or reterritorialization occurs, but to investigate how these parallel trends are translated into the meaning of national and local identities, for states and for citizens. Aihwa Ong (1999) illustrated the complex relationship between citizenship, territory and identity by investigating how a business elite uses citizenship flexibly for the accumulation of capital and power. For this elite, citizenship still carries importance for acquiring certain rights but, depending on the circumstances, they prefer one citizenship over the other. For this phenomenon she introduced the concept of 'flexible citizenship', which has a central role in this study.

To portray the meaning of national and local identities a dual perspective is crucial: from above (the states involved) and from below (the citizens involved). How national governments use and shape citizenship influences the identity formation of citizens, through excluding or including people. States can formulate conditions and rules for citizenship and national identity, but this is no guarantee that citizens experience and use them in that way. Ideally, social-cultural and political identification of citizens and the identity categories identified from above coincide. In real life, however, there is often tension between these aspects of national identity. By combining a perspective from above with the perspective from below, this research can reveal these challenges.

Investigating the flexibility of citizenship and the role of national identity also requires studying the relationship between territorial identities concerned. The links between the national and urban identity, and between the national identities of the country of residence and origin, are especially interesting. Cultural diversity and transnational connections are most visible in big cities. This raises questions about the hierarchy of territorial identities, which assumes a primary role for the national identity as the framework for social integration. Migrant communities are concentrated in urban areas and can relate to the enormous population diversity. The urban identity could gain importance as a result of the diverse population composition. To investigate the relationship between the identity of the country of residence and the country of origin, for example the relation between both citizenship regimes, is interesting. Many emigration countries pursue active policies to engage their population abroad, for instance by promoting dual citizenship, extending privileges and supporting transnational involvement. The question remains how these policies relate to the Dutch integration and citizenship policies and what conflicting policies arise for the citizens in question. The assumption is that by looking into the encounters between national citizenship regimes, sensitivities surrounding national sovereignty will come to the fore.

#### *From above: clashes of sovereignty*

This study confirms a trend of culturalization of citizenship in the Netherlands. In Dutch policy and in the public debate emotional aspects of Dutch citizenship are at the centre of attention. This is, for example, revealed in heated debates about 'the' Dutch culture and conditions for naturalization. This culturalization clashes with the reality of the population diversity in Amsterdam and the local political culture. Amsterdam pushes the urban identity to the fore as a solution for integration problems including respect,

tolerance and dealing with cultural differences as the spearheads of urban citizenship. The urban identity is portrayed as the counterpart of the more one sided cultural interpretation of the national identity. Together with its diverse population this makes Amsterdam a specific integration context.

Besides the clash between national and local policy practice, this study shows a clash of sovereignty between the Netherlands on the one hand and Morocco and Turkey on the other hand, because of the active diaspora engagement policies. Suriname does not pursue such policies. Especially claims on the loyalty and identity of migrant communities has resulted repeatedly in tensions between the Netherlands and the countries of origin. The Turkish compulsory military service, the inalienable Moroccan nationality, the alleged espionage by the Moroccan government and the recalling of imams to Morocco all caused some friction. For the emigration countries the control element plays a part because the emigrants are a substantial part of their total population. The Netherlands aims at shielding the population of unwanted foreign influences and protecting the national integration process. The alleged foreign influence on second generation migrant youth is an especially touchy subject, because they grew up in the Netherlands and are expected to choose exclusively for the Netherlands.

*From below: bridging urban identity, bounded national identities*

For native young adults, feeling Dutch is something obvious and therefore difficult to define or claim. It is something they take for granted. For young adults of Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese origin it is a different story. The Dutch identity does not leave enough room for their personal experiences and background. Therefore they do not feel Dutch, or at least not only Dutch. For them their appearance, origin and religion work as identification barriers. The young adults of Moroccan and Turkish origin share the experience of being called to account again and again based on their country of origin or religious conviction. The young adults of Surinamese origin define the identification barriers they experience mainly on account of skin color, although Muslims amongst them feel excluded based on religion as well. The fact that young adults of foreign origin do not feel Dutch, does not mean that they do not identify with the Netherlands. They stress that they are Dutch. They were born and raised in the Netherlands, they speak Dutch and they feel at home there. It is the identity label 'Dutchman' that feels impossible to claim.

The degree of identification with the country of origin varies enormously, based on their origin as well as by personal factors. The identification is the strongest amongst the young adults of Turkish origin. They keep up with

the situation in Turkey, speak the language well, have trust in the Turkish institutions and many are attracted to living in Turkey in the future. A strong identification with Turkey is however not the rule, but certainly no exception either. Turkish citizenship does not only exist in the background. The young adults are clearly aware of certain rights and duties the Turkish citizenship entails. Turkish military service is a clear consequence of holding Turkish citizenship. Young adults of Moroccan origin also feel a tie with the country of their parents and foster it, but the identification is above all emotional. Trust in Moroccan institutions is limited and the Moroccan media are hardly a frame of reference for them. Amongst young adults of Surinamese origin strong identification with Suriname is more the exception than rule. They barely follow the situation in Suriname. To feel Surinamese is not something that can be taken for granted, trust in Surinamese institutions is low and Suriname is not an important frame of reference. This study shows that the differences in identification with the country of origin can be explained by distance from the country of residence, image of the country and the possibilities for extraterritorial citizenship.

In general, the young adults of immigrant backgrounds identify more strongly with the Netherlands, than with their country of origin. Besides, strong identification with the country of origin does not negatively influence identification with the Netherlands. They feel at home in the Netherlands and in the country of birth of their parents. However, both national identities do have different meaning. The territorial aspect, living in the country, is an important aspect of Dutch identity. But for the country of origin identity the young adults emphasize cultural and emotional aspects, it is a feeling and it is cultural affinity. The identity gains meaning in Dutch society.

Even though identification with the country of origin does not negatively relate to identification with the Netherlands, this does not mean that these two identities coexist smoothly. On occasions young adults have to deal with conflicting citizenship regimes or conflicting expectation of family and friends on the one hand and Dutch society on the other hand.

The Amsterdam identity is, more so than the national identity, a bridging identity. It offers the possibility to combine identification with the Netherlands with identification with the country of origin. However, the Amsterdam identity is not only attractive to young adults of immigrant backgrounds, but to native young adults as well. As a result of the huge diversity of Amsterdam, no single ethnic group holds a clear majority in the street scene. Therefore the urban identity does not have a strong connotation with a certain skin color or other outward appearances. The international and progressive images of

Amsterdam are important aspects of its attractiveness as well. Nevertheless, even in Amsterdam, group boundaries have not disappeared. The young adults in Amsterdam experience tensions between different ethnic groups. And the urban identity as a melting pot of cultural identities also mobilizes nostalgic sentiments about the loss of Dutch culture. Besides, the majority of the young adults still have an ethnically homogenous circle of friends and the Amsterdam cultural diversity is in that sense not part of their everyday life.

*Are young adults flexible citizens?*

This research into the relationship between several territorial identities (local and national, country of origin and country of residence) from a two-sided perspective (states and citizens), has gained insight into the flexibility of citizenship. Instead of looking at the flexibility of citizenship for a business elite, it shows how a more average group of citizens, the young adults, give meaning to the flexibility of citizenship. This research shows the flexibility of citizenship of young adults in Amsterdam in two ways. First of all, it shows that the young generation with dual citizenship does not automatically operate as flexible citizens. The young adults with Moroccan or Turkish nationality in addition to Dutch nationality are, for the most, not flexible citizens who consciously and depending on the circumstances use Dutch citizenship or switch to the Turkish or Moroccan citizenship. Their Moroccan or Turkish citizenship is mainly symbolic and gains importance because of the Dutch integration debate. Clear consequences of the extraterritorial citizenship and an attractive image of the country of origin can activate the extraterritorial citizenship.

Secondly, by exploring the relationship between the national and the urban identity the research shows that the urban young adults are flexible citizens in another way. In the enormous diversity of Amsterdam the national scale loses its importance as the main frame for integration. It is not the Dutch identity that is bridging, but the urban identity. Just as states use big cities for pursuing international policies, young adults in Amsterdam push the local to the fore as their integration context. This means that integration issues cannot be reduced to the question of whether ethnic groups assimilate or adjust to national society. The extreme diversity in modern big cities calls for intercultural competences and the overcoming of group boundaries.