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### Group-related or host state-related? Understanding the historical development of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam, 1965-2000

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**Publication date**

2012

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

Post-colonial immigrants and identity formations in the Netherlands

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[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Vermeulen, F., & van Heelsum, A. (2012). Group-related or host state-related? Understanding the historical development of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam, 1965-2000. In U. Bosma (Ed.), *Post-colonial immigrants and identity formations in the Netherlands* (pp. 77-97). (IMISCOE research). Amsterdam University Press.  
<http://www.oopen.org/search?identifier=428771>

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# Post-colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands

ULBE BOSMA (ED.)



AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

## Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands

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# Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands

*edited by*  
*Ulbe Bosma*

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AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cover design: Studio Jan de Boer BNO, Amsterdam  
Layout: The DocWorkers, Almere

ISBN 978 90 8964 454 1  
e-ISBN 978 90 4851 731 2 (pdf)  
e-ISBN 978 90 4851 732 9 (ePub)  
NUR 741 / 763

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## **4 Group-related or host state-related? Understanding the historical development of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam, 1965-2000**

*Floris Vermeulen and Anja van Heelsum*

### **4.1 Introduction**

As is typical of immigrant communities all over the world, Surinamese migrants to the Netherlands have formed a considerable number of associations following the time of their arrival (Rex, Joly & Wilpers 1987; Jenkins 1988; Moya 2005; Lucassen, Feldman & Oltmer 2006). In this chapter we look at the factors that may explain the development of the Surinamese organising process by focusing on the policy of Amsterdam authorities and on factors related to the group itself. This chapter shows that Dutch policymakers at first reacted encouragingly, as separate welfare institutions for the just-arrived Surinamese fitted into the existing categorical policy line – which was both a result of the pillarised welfare system that existed in the Netherlands and an ad hoc result of the lack of policies concerning the integration of immigrants. But with the development of integration policies from 1983 onwards, these views changed and consequently support diminished for the Surinamese associations that already existed. More recently, resentment developed towards the role that immigrant associations might play, and they were – correctly or not – accused of functioning as fortresses where immigrants could hide from Dutch society (Penninx & Van Heelsum 2004). The attitudes of policymakers have influenced the organisations considerably. In this chapter we analyse the development of Surinamese immigrant organisations in Amsterdam between 1965 and 2000, as well as study the factors that influenced the rate at which these organisations were founded.

As we have explained elsewhere (Vermeulen 2006; Van Heelsum 2004: 12), the collective actions of immigrants are often explained by referring either to the characteristics of the immigrant population (Breton 1964; Jones-Correa 1998: 143; Moya 2005) or to the influence of the country of settlement (Olzak 1983; Kasinitz 1992; Waldinger 1996; Morawska 1996; Lucassen 2003; Koopmans, Statham, Giugni & Passy 2005). From our

point of view, the two interact and both should be taken into consideration. We therefore deal with the question of how a combination of these group-related factors (immigrant model) and host state-related factors (opportunity model) may explain the building of an organisational field among the immigrant group that was largest in the Dutch capital during the period studied.

Firstly, we give a description of Surinamese migration to Amsterdam, outlining the history of the main organisations this group established and distinguishing between Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organisations. In the first section we describe the development of the associations, paying particular attention to a factor in the opportunity model, namely the difficult relationship between local authorities and Surinamese and Afro-Surinamese organisations in the 1970s. This was influenced by colonial legacy in the form of mistrust towards the authorities on the part of the Afro-Surinamese, on the one hand, and Dutch authorities' racism (together with the fear of being called racist), on the other, which has cast a shadow over the rest of the organising process of the Surinamese in Amsterdam. We end this section with the development in numbers of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam. Secondly, we go deeper into one of the factors of the migrant model, paying particular attention to the development in the types of activities that Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organisations have set up in Amsterdam. Finally, we analyse which factors most influenced the founding rates of Surinamese, Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam, using multivariate regression analysis. This last section combines the opportunity model and the migrant model.

#### **4.2 History of Surinamese immigrants in Amsterdam and their organisations: Focusing on the opportunity model**

Surinamese immigration into the Netherlands has a long history and is closely tied to the colonial relationship between the two countries. Because of its colonial history, the population of Surinam is made up of several distinct ethnic groups, almost all brought there by the Dutch. The largest groups are the Afro-Surinamese, also known as Creoles, who are descendants of African slaves, and the Indo-Surinamese, also known as Hindustanis, who are descendants of contract labourers brought mainly from India to Surinam after the abolition of slavery in 1863. Other ethnic groups include Javanese, Chinese, Jewish and native Indians. Before World War II, Surinamese immigrants were predominantly children of the colonial elite or Afro-Surinamese middle class, studying or working in the Dutch capital (Cottaar 2004). After the war, this pattern changed slowly, as Surinamese migration in this decade became more ethnically diverse and

more driven by economic factors. As Van Niekerk (1994: 47) noted of this time: 'Administrative personnel, teachers and nurses arrive, still in small numbers, to work in the booming Dutch economy' (Cottaar 2003; Lucassen 2003: 330).

The history of the Surinamese organising process in Amsterdam began as far back as 1919, with the establishment of the Bond voor Surinamers, later known as Vereniging Ons Suriname (Our Surinam Association). However, the actual start of the first phase of the Surinamese organising process was not until after World War II, when Afro-Surinamese students became active in establishing several associations in support of the emerging nationalist movement in Surinam. Although Surinamese independence was the primary goal of such organisations, their activities were also aimed at fostering a resurrection of Afro-Surinamese culture. These students, studying in Amsterdam and confronted with Dutch society, founded nationalist organisations in an attempt to understand and express their national identity (Oostindie 1998: 225-228; Jansen van Galen 2000: 33-34). Such organisations were relatively few in number and their reach was mostly limited to Afro-Surinamese students. Most of these organisations ended their activities in the 1960s when their leaders returned to Surinam to expand the nationalist movement there (Jansen van Galen 2000). New Surinamese organisations established in the 1960s lost their political orientation and focused primarily on social and sports activities. They provided a familiar social environment for the growing Surinamese community in Amsterdam. For instance, several Surinamese soccer associations were founded in this decade, in which Surinamese immigrants could 'feel at home', as the jubilee publication of one of these associations states (Real Sranang 1990: 13). This cushioning function of immigrant organisations, which eases the shock of transition by offering a more familiar environment, was also important to the Surinamese immigrants in Amsterdam during this early period.

In the 1970s, migration from Surinam to the Netherlands changed completely in terms of numbers, ethnicity, social-economic background and motivation. The pull factors that dominated immigration into the Netherlands until 1973 remained important, but push factors caused more and more Surinamese to leave their country. The economic situation in Surinam showed little progress and more people came to look for work in the Netherlands. The Netherlands was the most obvious destination for these migrants, as they were familiar with the culture and language and possessed Dutch citizenship. These newcomers increasingly originated from the lower classes in Surinam, and the percentage from ethnic groups other than the Afro-Surinamese also increased in this period. The approaching independence of Surinam in 1975 caused more economic and political uncertainty, which resulted in more people leaving the country.

An exodus of more than 50,000 took place in the years 1974 and 1975 (Vermeulen 1984: 35-36; Van Heelsum 1997: 6).

The rapid increase in population during the early 1970s caused serious social problems among the Surinamese immigrants in Amsterdam with respect to housing, unemployment and increasing racism. The arrival of large numbers of low-skilled Surinamese workers after 1975 exacerbated the situation. The high level of unemployment sparked by the worsening Dutch economic situation was keenly felt in this group, which was less familiar with Dutch culture and language. Aberrant, or even criminal, lifestyles took root among unemployed Surinamese youth (Sansone 1992) and adverse media coverage reflected on the whole Afro-Surinamese population, associating it with drug crime and violence. Resistance to Surinamese immigrants, tension and discrimination within Dutch society became widespread in the 1970s (Van Niekerk 1994: 71). Authorities could no longer ignore the problems of Surinamese immigrants and strong policy measures were deemed necessary.

Social policy targeted specifically at the Surinamese community in Amsterdam had its beginning in 1974, when the city council issued a groundbreaking local memorandum. This memorandum acknowledged that social policy aimed at the Surinamese population was unavoidable and, more importantly, it assigned a crucial role to local Surinamese welfare organisations in implementing it. Surinamese immigrant organisations were designated to provide social services to deprived segments of the Surinamese community, with special attention paid to drug-related problems of the youth (*Gemeentebld Amsterdam* 1974: 2078-2081). From the opportunity model, the influence of local policies and programmes is the determining factor in the development process of associations. Because Afro-Surinamese organisations had historically been the most prominent Surinamese associations in the city, they seemed the best option for channelling social services to the community. The first Surinamese welfare organisation, Welsuria, was an initiative of Dutch and Afro-Surinamese individuals, mostly with religious backgrounds, and it was assigned a leading role. Board members enjoyed good relations with local officials and could count on generous grants, which they subsequently distributed to other Surinamese organisations in the city. However, within the Surinamese community, Welsuria had the reputation of being an elitist Dutch colonial organisation. This prompted the founding in 1968 of a new Afro-Surinamese welfare organisation called Building a Surinamese Home (BEST). BEST stemmed from the Surinamese nationalist movement and had a more pronounced Afro-Surinamese character than did Welsuria. Although its relationship with local officials was certainly not as good as Welsuria's, the city council nonetheless approved funding. BEST was a combined welfare organisation and pressure group. It published exposés of the many social problems plaguing the Surinamese community in the 1970s (including

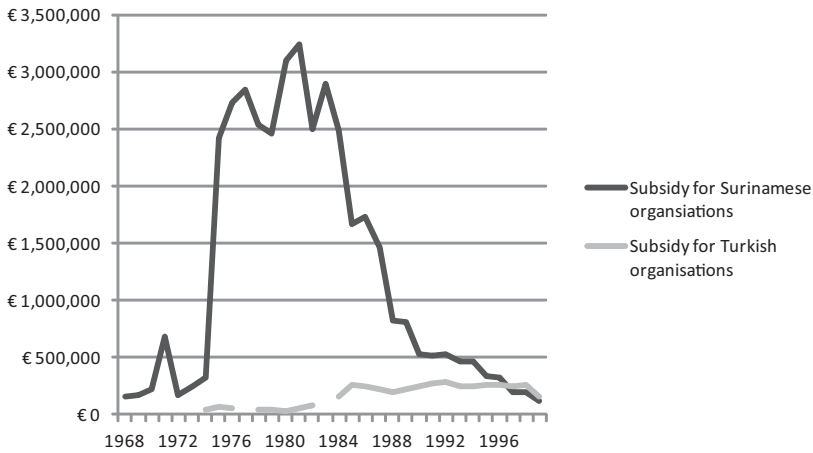
housing scarcity, police brutality, racial discrimination) and it provided social welfare services to Surinamese young people (Meerveld 2002).

In total, five Surinamese welfare organisations received municipal funding in 1974. A survey in 1977 found that 20 per cent of the local Surinamese population – some 5,200 people – had visited one of these five organisations at least once during that year (Gooskens 1979: 27). Because some organisations also funded smaller groups, the total number of organisations receiving public money was actually much greater than five.

Since there was not much experience with large numbers of immigrants, it was unusual in those days to delegate to immigrant associations such a critical role in social service delivery, which was normally the task of mainstream Dutch organisations. The pillarised system that existed for religious groups was more or less transferred ad hoc to social service provision for ethnic groups. Money for Surinamese organisations was no problem in the early 1970s, which was quite remarkable in light of the difficult economic situation in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis. The generosity of local government can be explained by the magnitude of the social problems plaguing the Surinamese population in Amsterdam, mainly because so many Surinamese had settled in the city over just a few years and the approaching independence of Surinam in 1975. The authorities seemed motivated by feelings of guilt over the colonial past and by a desire to preclude problems with the Surinamese minority. Mindful of the disastrous decolonisation process that had taken place in Indonesia, Dutch politicians, especially on the political left, were determined to avoid similar mistakes (Jansen van Galen 2001; Buddingh' 2001: 71). Surinam itself received a vast amount of Dutch foreign aid in the 1970s (Van Amersfoort 1987: 478), an expression of generous attitudes also evident at the national level. Figure 4.1 starkly illustrates the open-handedness of Amsterdam local government towards Surinamese organisations after 1974, especially if we compare this to the support given to Turkish organisations. The gaping disparity between the amounts of public subsidy provided to Surinamese and Turkish organisations is illustrative of the inclusive policy pursued by the Dutch authorities towards colonial migrants in the 1970s and 1980s (Koopmans & Statham 2000: 28-29). The first local subsidy to a Surinamese organisation was given in Amsterdam in 1968 (to Welsuria). The golden age for Surinamese organisations was between 1975 and 1984, a ten-year period during which they received over five million guilders a year.

The Amsterdam subsidy policy was to have far-reaching consequences, both positive and negative, for Surinamese organisations. The positive side was that many new Surinamese organisations could benefit from receiving subsidies, and a large number indeed sprang up after 1974. But the negative repercussions were tremendous. No clear concept underlay social policy towards the Surinamese in the 1970s, either at government level or

**Figure 4.1** *Municipal funding (in guilders)<sup>1</sup> to Surinamese and Turkish organisations in Amsterdam, 1967-98*



Source: Vermeulen (2006: 132)

within the organisations. Policy was characterised by ad hoc measures to maintain peace (Van der Burg 1990: 97), and little monitoring took place. One Afro-Surinamese organisation, SOSA, charged with providing welfare services to the youth, was notorious as a centre for drug dealing, and was shut down after a few years. Another organisation founded in 1977 to support Surinamese drug addicts, Srefidensi, received millions of guilders in funding, but could not account for how the money was spent and went bankrupt shortly afterwards (Reubsæet & Geerts 1983: 100-103). The supply of public money available to Surinamese organisations in the mid-1970s raised high expectations within the Surinamese community. Up to 1978, enough money was available for all groups, but that was to change. So many groups were receiving money that new groups now had difficulty in obtaining funding. New organisations could not accept this because funding had been so readily available just a few years previously. The suspicion grew that Welsuria and other large Afro-Surinamese organisations were withholding money (Reubsæet & Geerts 1983: 79-81) and the offices of Welsuria and BEST were occupied dozens of times in protests during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Another big problem for Welsuria was how to deal with the ethnic diversity within the Surinamese population. The main welfare organisations were predominantly Afro-Surinamese (Van der Burg 1990: 96-97), as were most Surinamese organisations that received money in Amsterdam. Indo-Surinamese organisations also began to demand financial support from the Amsterdam authorities. This could only be channelled through Welsuria,

which had been assigned the task of distributing subsidies among Surinamese organisations. So in 1977, Welsuria became involved in the establishment of an Indo-Surinamese cultural centre. It was difficult to find the right building, and internal quarrels between Indo-Hindu and Indo-Muslim groups frustrated the search even more. When an adequate facility was found, additional money was needed to renovate the property. Finally, in 1982, the money was found and the building was officially opened two years later, seven years after the initiative had started. Shortly after opening, the building was occupied by Afro-Surinamese organisations, protesting against the fact that so many subsidies had been given to an Indo-Surinamese organisation. The occupiers flooded the building, after which renovation had to start all over again (Meerveld 2002: 59). This example, along with many other failed Surinamese organisations during this period, illustrates the extremely difficult situation Welsuria and other Surinamese welfare organisations faced at the time.

By the end of the 1970s, the situation had deteriorated and Surinamese associations were plagued by increasing distrust and rivalry. Instability was aggravated by the fact that most organisations were structured around informal leadership. Informal leaders were successful and tolerated as long as they could raise sufficient revenue for their organisations and constituencies. To secure funding and a substantial patronage, an informal leader had to be as high-profile as possible, and the Dutch media had an inclination to support anti-colonial, anti-Dutch pronouncements. This created another paradox, whereby the most radically anti-Dutch voices received the most attention and subsequently the most government funding for their organisations (Van Amersfoort 1974: 158-162; Reubsæet & Geerts 1983).

For Surinamese immigrants this ambiguous situation was quite familiar, as it was similar to the manner in which voluntary organisations operated in Surinam. The Dutch colonial administration had always blocked the development of a democratic political system under which civil society might have matured. The first general election in Surinam was not held until 1949, and the political mobilisation that then emerged developed exclusively along ethnic lines (Buddingh' 1995: 279-280; Ramsøedh 2001). Most voluntary organisations in Surinam were linked to political parties or religions, and they were differentiated by ethnicity. Because organisational leaders and the Dutch colonial administration both used such associations to their own benefit, voluntary organisations were highly distrusted by the Surinamese population (Reubsæet, Kropman & Van Mulier 1982: 219-220). In the years leading up to independence in 1975, clientelism was rife throughout the political system. Surinamese politicians provided fake government jobs for their ethnic voters (Van Amersfoort 1987: 479). In other words, a situation in which voluntary organisations were not a symbol of trust and stability, but rather vehicles to jobs, influence and personal benefit, was rather familiar to Surinamese newcomers in Amsterdam. In this

sense, the colonial history of Surinam played an important role in the development of Surinamese immigrant organisations in Amsterdam in the 1970s. This, combined with a lack of trust in Amsterdam authorities, and both hidden and open racism on the part of Dutch policymakers, created an impossible situation.

The Amsterdam city government broke this chain of events in 1983 by severely decreasing the stream of subsidies to Surinamese welfare organisations, as illustrated in Figure 4.1. Social policy for the Surinamese was thereafter to be carried out by mainstream Dutch organisations, which was firstly fairer to other immigrant communities and also more in line with the socialist thinking of the PvdA, the dominant political party in Amsterdam. Surinamese organisations now became part of the general minority policy framework in which, for instance, Turkish organisations were also included. The introduction of the Dutch minority policy had several contradictory effects on Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam, as the new policy meant less money and less political influence, but more stability and eventually a more secure environment.

In terms of financial support, the introduction of the Dutch minority policy clearly decreased the resources for Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam. Figure 4.1 shows that the amount of subsidy was significantly lower after 1985 than before. It continued to decrease in the 1990s and by 1999 Surinamese organisations received even less money than Turkish organisations in Amsterdam (although the size of the Surinamese group was more than double that of the Turkish group). The introduction of the new policy also meant that Surinamese organisations became less powerful in political terms, as they lost the function of providing welfare support to the Surinamese population. On the other hand, the political position for Surinamese immigrants in Amsterdam did improve somewhat after the introduction of immigrant voting rights in 1985. Nothing changed formally, since the Surinamese had always possessed Dutch citizenship and already had the vote, but local Surinamese politicians benefited from the greater attention paid by Dutch political parties after 1985 to immigrant constituencies in Amsterdam. This gave Surinamese politicians greater access to the parties and to influential positions.

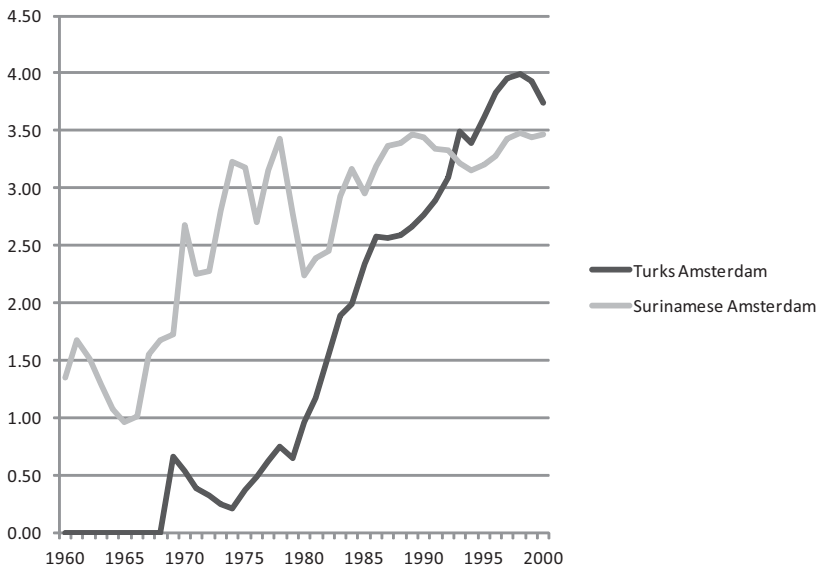
There was another positive side to the introduction of the Dutch minority policy in the early 1980s. It meant an end to uncertainty. As described, the ad hoc policies for Surinamese organisations and the provision of large sums of money had created a disruptive and unstable environment for Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam. With the minority policy, explicit policy goals were introduced and the requirements for receiving subsidy became stricter (Bloemberg 1995: 61-62) In addition, immigrant organisations were granted a clear position within the policy framework. Three primary tasks were envisaged for Surinamese organisations, just as for organisations of the other minority target groups: to promote and preserve



cultural identities, to emancipate their members and to serve as advocacy groups (Vermeulen 2005) (note that integration was not yet an issue). Furthermore, local authorities now became directly responsible for providing money to Surinamese organisations. Before 1983, this had been the task of Welsuria. Local authorities used Welsuria as a buffer to avoid contact with difficult Surinamese organisations or groups, often rejecting any responsibility toward Surinamese organisations, either old or new. This frustrated many Surinamese organisers and increased internal competition (Meerveld 2002). Now the more direct relationship with authorities provided opportunities for lots of new Surinamese organisations, which had been previously left aside. The total amount of subsidy for Surinamese organisations was lower, but the number of Surinamese organisations eligible for subsidy was greater.

To summarise historical developments, Figure 4.2 compares the number of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam to Turkish ones, thus providing a comparison between different immigrant groups in the city. It shows that the Surinamese organising process in Amsterdam is rather older than that of the Turkish. The small Surinamese population in Amsterdam already had a relatively high number of organisations in 1960 (interest, cultural and sports organisations). The provision of the first subsidy to a Surinamese welfare organisation in 1968 and the arrival of more and more

**Figure 4.2** *Number of Surinamese and Turkish immigrant organisations per 1,000 Surinamese and Turks in Amsterdam, 1960-2000*



Source: Vermeulen (2006: 138)

Surinamese after 1970 led to a significant increase in the number of Surinamese organisations. The improved opportunity structure for Surinamese organisations had the expected effect on their number: an increase from 1.5 per 1,000 Surinamese residents in 1968, to 3.4 in 1978. After 1978, the disruptive impact of ad hoc policies took its toll, and the number of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam dropped to its lowest level since 1969 (2.2 in 1980).

The Surinamese were the most actively organising immigrant group in the city until the second half of the 1990s. Figure 4.2 shows that the difference compared to the number of Turkish organisations was especially high in the 1970s, but also remained evident in the 1980s. In 1993, the Surinamese and Turkish had a similar number of immigrant organisations. Unlike the pattern for the Turkish, the number of Surinamese organisations remained stable in the 1990s.

#### **4.3 Development of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam among Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese: Focus on the migrant model**

The Surinamese population in Amsterdam consists of several different ethnic groups. From the viewpoint of the migrant model, this characteristic of the Surinamese community explains most of their organisational development. The description of organisational developments in the 1970s shows that these groups established separate organisations, and that Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese immigrants formulated different organisational demands. In fact, Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese have seldom established organisations together (Bloemberg 1995: 50), least of all in the first phase of the Surinamese organising process in Amsterdam. Indo-Surinamese valued their own ethnic organisations, separate from other Surinamese groups. In Amsterdam, they did not feel adequately represented by the Afro-Surinamese organisations that had initiated the organising process. This was mainly a continuation of the situation in Surinam, where they also felt unrepresented by the main organisations, which were practically all Afro-Surinamese. Indo-Surinamese leaders harnessed this discontent to start their own organising process in Amsterdam (Van Amersfoort 1970: 134). Some seventeen Indo-Surinamese organisations sprang up between 1970 and 1975, only six less than within the much larger Afro-Surinamese community.

In terms of the types of Surinamese organisations, it is therefore necessary to distinguish between the two main Surinamese groups, as the Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese groups differ in many respects. The origins of such differences go back to the colonial history of Surinam, but have been reinforced by migration to the Netherlands. Within the context

of their organising processes, the most important distinction between them concerns their types of social networks and their religious affiliations.

In general, Afro-Surinamese networks can be characterised as more open than Indo-Surinamese ones. Indo-Surinamese family structures are much tighter and less individualistic. Because Indo-Surinamese networks often include parents and children, social control and cohesion is far stronger than it is among the Afro-Surinamese (Van Niekerk 2000: 181-190). Mixed marriages with ethnic Dutch people are more common for Afro-Surinamese than for Indo-Surinamese.

In terms of their religious beliefs, there is a strong distinction between the Christian Afro-Surinamese and the Hindu or Islamic Indo-Surinamese. At first, Afro-Surinamese immigrants did not establish their own religious organisations but joined those European institutions they had been familiar with in Surinam (Cottaar 2004: 61), such as the Protestant Evangelische Broedergemeente (EBG). Many Surinamese immigrants joined the Dutch section of the EBG, basically changing it into an Afro-Surinamese organisation with their own Afro-Surinamese religious school. In the 1990s, the Pentecostal movement gained popularity among some Afro-Surinamese groups (Van Heelsum & Voorthuysen 2002: 11-12), increasing the percentage of religious organisations among Afro-Surinamese organisations during that decade (see Table 4.2).

The Indo-Surinamese can be divided into a large Hindu group and a smaller Islamic one, each with its own separate organisations. Although the number of religious Hindu organisations is relatively large, they have struggled amongst themselves over the establishment of Hindu temples, mainly due to contradictory interests within the Surinamese-Hindu community (Van der Burg 1990: 105). The Indo-Surinamese in the Netherlands are often characterised as a homogeneous group; yet they are far more heterogeneous than often presumed, not only in a religious sense but also in cultural terms (Gowricharn 1990: 9-10). What is indeed true, however, is that the Indo-Surinamese as a group place a lot of emphasis on preserving their religious and cultural traditions in the Netherlands. In that sense, the Indo-Surinamese are more engaged in maintaining a sense of ethnic community than the Afro-Surinamese (Van Niekerk 1994: 64).

The Surinamese population in Amsterdam consists predominantly of Afro-Surinamese. The Indo-Surinamese form a majority within other Surinamese populations in the Netherlands, mainly in The Hague (Bloemberg 1995: 63). Table 4.1 illustrates the changing ethnic composition of the Surinamese population in Amsterdam since 1970.

At first, the Surinamese immigrants in Amsterdam were overwhelmingly Afro-Surinamese. The proportion of Indo-Surinamese grew after 1974, although always remaining a minority. This shows that the character of the Surinamese immigration to Amsterdam changed notably during the years around Surinamese independence. Many Indo-Surinamese left Surinam for

the Netherlands in fear of Afro-Surinamese domination after independence. These Indo-Surinamese immigrants arrived as families, which explains the sudden increase in the number of Indo-Surinamese people in Amsterdam between 1970 and 1977. As the figures are estimates, and no precise annual numbers are available, we cannot show the relative number of Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organisations.

**Table 4.1** *Percentages of Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese within the total Surinamese population in Amsterdam*

	<i>Afro-Surinamese</i>	<i>Indo-Surinamese</i>	<i>Other ethnic Surinamese groups<sup>1</sup></i>
1970	95	5	0
1977	64	28	8
1994	70	26	4

<sup>1</sup> Mainly Javanese-Surinamese or Chinese-Surinamese

Sources: Van Amersfoort (1970: 113); Gooskens (1979: 15); Martens and Verweij (1997: 10)

#### **4.4 Types of Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organisations**

Literature has characterised Indo-Surinamese organisations as being highly religious and explicitly concerned with strengthening their ethnic and religious communities (Bloemberg 1995). Afro-Surinamese organisations, on the other hand, have been characterised as being concerned with promoting unity among the Surinamese in the Netherlands. They tend to value highly an ongoing relationship with people in Surinam and to emphasise the importance of knowledge of the country's history, in particular, its colonial past. Afro-Surinamese immigrants, in stark contrast to the Indo-Surinamese, have founded many organisations whose activities focus directly on Surinam. Table 4.2, showing the distribution of types of Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organisations, illustrates this, along with other differences between the two ethnic groups. A large proportion of the Afro-Surinamese organisations have been directly involved in their country of origin, supporting developments or projects in Surinam such as schools and hospitals. In the 1970s, in particular, these were core activities of Afro-Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam, when this type of activity constituted the second-largest goal of Afro-Surinamese organisations. Very few Indo-Surinamese organisations have been established that aim to improve the situation in Surinam. The Indo-Surinamese community is much more interested in its 'real' motherland, either India or Pakistan (if it concerns Islamic Indo-Surinamese). Indian culture (either from India itself or from the large Indian community in Great Britain) has proved a significant influence on Indo-Surinamese youth in the Netherlands (Van Niekerk 1994: 67).

**Table 4.2** *Percentage distributions of Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese immigrant organisations in Amsterdam, by the activities of the organisations, 1970-2000<sup>2</sup>*

	Surinamese %				Afro-Surinamese %			Indo-Surinamese %		
	1970	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Interest representation	20	11	18	13	10	21	9	3	11	6
Social welfare	12	16	11	6	14	10	5	13	6	14
Religious	12	23	22	28	6	5	24	60	58	56
Sociocultural	20	15	13	11	14	14	9	17	11	14
Country of origin	16	13	9	5	24	13	10			
Cultural	4	6	8	10	10	13	11			3
Sport	12	4	4	5	4	6	5	3	3	3
Youth		3	5	5	6	8	7		2	2
Women		3	3	5	6	5	6		2	2
Political			1							
Unknown	4	6	6	11	6	6	15	3	6	10
N=	25	104	215	209	50	106	88	30	64	63

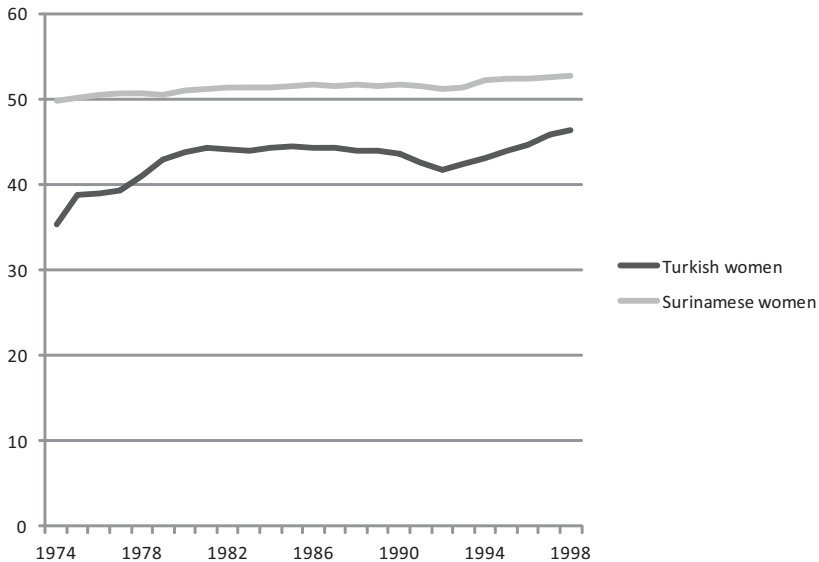
Sources: National Archive; Chamber of Commerce Amsterdam; for 2000 Van Heelsum and Voorthuysen (2002)

Table 4.2 further illustrates that Indo-Surinamese organisations have indeed been overwhelmingly religious by nature. Throughout the Indo-Surinamese settlement process, the vast majority of organisations for this group have been involved in religious or sociocultural activities. Religion has been the most obvious organisational principal for Indo-Surinamese for several reasons. Indo-Surinamese migration to the Netherlands was a family migration. Complete families came as a group, causing a sudden demand for religious Indo-Surinamese institutions (mainly Hindu, but also Islamic) in Amsterdam in the 1970s. These family migrations also resulted in the transplantation of almost complete family networks. Because of this, the social function of Indo-Surinamese organisations was less in demand, at least in the sense that networks did not need to be reconstructed, which can be an important function of the first organisations of recently arrived immigrant groups. Instead, Indo-Surinamese organisations could focus fully on the cultural and religious aspects of their community. Maintaining Indo-Surinamese culture and religion became the prime focus of the organisations, as well as incorporating the second generation into the ethnic community as much as possible (Bloemberg 1995: 201). One of the practical reasons that so many Indo-Surinamese organisations were established was the strong competition between different types of Hindu movements within the Indo-Surinamese community (Bloemberg 1995: 51).

The distribution of Afro-Surinamese organisational activities displays a more diverse picture. Afro-Surinamese already had a wide diversity of

organisational types to choose from in the 1970s, as their organisational history had begun long before then. We also see in the 1970s a number of Afro-Surinamese women's organisations, which was unusual at this time. Among other immigrant groups, women had not yet founded separate organisations. This relatively early existence of women's organisations can be attributed mainly to the high level of female representation in the Surinamese population, compared to other immigrant groups in Amsterdam. Figure 4.3 shows that the female-to-male ratios in the Surinamese population have been reasonably steady since the early 1970s, with the number of women slightly exceeding that of men from 1976 onwards. This contrasts sharply with, for instance, the male-dominated guest worker groups of Turkish immigrants. Especially within the Afro-Surinamese community, women play a relatively active role in society, as seen in their high rate of participation in the labour market, for instance (Van Niekerk 2002: 97-98). These women have also been very important in terms of the organising process. Afro-Surinamese women have functioned as intermediaries between the Afro-Surinamese population and the leaders of formal Afro-Surinamese organisations (Van Wetering 1986: 243-244).

**Figure 4.3** *Percentage of women in Surinamese and Turkish population in Amsterdam, 1974-1998*



Source: Vermeulen (2006: 146)

#### **4.5 Combining the migrant and the opportunity models: The relative influence of municipal policy and the characteristics of the Surinamese community**

In the next section of this chapter, we use a multivariate regression analysis to test the effect of the different explanatory factors determining the Surinamese organising process. We follow Hannan and Freeman (1989), who argued that the analysis of organisational founding rates is a good measurement of the entire development of the organisational population.<sup>3</sup> We wish to see to what extent group-related (immigrant model) and host state-related (opportunity model) factors, as described in the previous section, influence founding rates. To take into account that we are dealing here with different ethnic groups, we use three separate analyses for three populations: 1) all Surinamese organisations together; 2) only Afro-Surinamese organisations; 3) only Indo-Surinamese organisations. This makes it possible to analyse the organising processes of the ethnic groups separately, as well as to analyse interpopulational influences between these groups of organisations (Minkoff 1995). We can do this by looking at, for instance, the influence of the number of existing Afro-Surinamese organisations (density) on the founding rates of all Surinamese organisations or Indo-Surinamese organisations. It could be the case that the density of Afro-Surinamese organisations, the first group to organise, has had a positive effect on other types of Surinamese organisations (for instance, the Indo-Surinamese).

The database of organisations used to describe the developments here and the first section of this chapter was set up following Fennema and Tillie (1999, 2001; Fennema 2004). We gathered most of the information about immigrant organisations from the archives of the Chamber of Commerce Amsterdam (Kamer van Koophandel Amsterdam). The data held in these archives indicates the year an immigrant organisation was founded and when it was dissolved. It further includes the name of the organisation, its mission statement and the names, dates of birth and birthplaces of its board members and founders. To identify immigrant organisations, we used a method that works with keywords and existing lists of immigrant organisations (Van Heelsum & Tillie 1999: 10-11; Vermeulen 2006: 21-26). The information about board members is used to determine an organisation's ethnic composition and to assess whether the organisation is a genuine immigrant organisation. An immigrant organisation is defined as a formal (officially registered) non-profit organisation, at least half of whose board members originate from one single immigrant group (first or second generation). Every formal non-profit organisation founded by members of a single immigrant group is included, regardless of the mission statement of the organisation or the ethnic composition of its members (Fennema 2004).

From our database, the following variables were used in the regression model. As *dependent variable* – that is, the factor with which we want to explain the development in time – we have chosen *the organisations' year of founding*. The Chamber of Commerce Amsterdam keeps a record of the year organisations were founded. Based on this information, we made annual counts of the number of new organisations for each group and used these figures as the dependent variable (founding rates).

As *independent variables* – that is, the variables that in our opinion influence the number of newly founded organisations – we included three factors related to the two explanatory models described at the beginning of this chapter. For the immigration model we use *size of the immigrant population*. The size of the Surinamese population in Amsterdam is used to measure its effect on, and relationship to, the ethnic constituency.<sup>4</sup> In general, a growing immigrant population increases the demand for immigrant organisations, more new organisations are expected (increasing founding rates) and it will be easier to maintain existing organisations (decreasing disbanding rates) (Olzak & West 1991; Schrover & Vermeulen 2005; Vermeulen 2006). Schrover and Vermeulen (2005) expect that at a certain point in time the size of the population will not support the founding of more new immigrant organisations. To test this curvilinear effect of the size of the immigrant population, we included a quadratic size term. These measures are all lagged one year.

Two other independent variables are related to the opportunity model. One is the *state funding for immigrant organisations*. We included the annual amount allotted by the state to local Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam in Euros (Vermeulen 2006). The measures are lagged one year. The second variable are *multicultural policies from 1983 to 1999*. The Dutch multicultural policy acknowledged Surinamese as an official minority, entitled to specific rights as an immigrant group. For the Surinamese this meant fewer state subsidies, but a more secure environment. The period in which Amsterdam had an official multicultural policy is measured by including a dummy variable distinguishing the periods in which there was and was not a multicultural policy (coded 1 for years 1983-1999). The measures are lagged one year.

The last variable in the model is the *control variable*: '*organisational density*'. Control variables are extraneous factors, possibly affecting the analysis, that are kept *constant*. Organisational density has to be kept constant to control for interorganisational dynamics that occur (for instance more organisations means more competition for resources). Organisational density is calculated as the total number of organisations active at the end of the preceding year (t-1) to measure the density effect on the annual founding-rates of local immigrant organisations. We also tested for a curvilinear density effect by including a quadratic density term for the preceding year (Hannan & Freeman 1989). The density measure particularly enables



us to see whether competition between Surinamese organisations has had an effect on the organising processes of the group. The reason this factor was added is that density-dependent theory hypothesises a positive first-order effect of density on the founding rate (increasing legitimisation) and a negative second-order effect of density on the founding rate (enhancing competition).

#### 4.5.1 Results

Table 4.3 provides the results for three different analyses for three different groups of organisations. The first model presents the results for the complete population of Surinamese organisations in Amsterdam (the dependent variable is the founding rates of Surinamese organisations). The second model presents the results of the analysis of Afro-Surinamese organisations (the dependent variable is the founding rates of Afro-Surinamese organisations). The third model presents the results for Indo-Surinamese organisations (the dependent variable is the founding rates of Indo-Surinamese organisations). Significant effects (betas) are shown with stars.

Table 4.3 illustrates that for all three groups the immigration model has a significant influence on the organising process. More Surinamese, Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese are founded as the size of the Surinamese immigrant population in Amsterdam increases. It also shows that we cannot claim that group-related factors are stronger for the Indo-Surinamese process than for the Afro-Surinamese as all groups were influenced by this indicator. The fact that the effects are stronger for the entire group of Surinamese organisations than for the two sub-ethnic groups is probably due to the lack of specific annual data for the number of Afro-Surinamese and Indo Surinamese in Amsterdam.

Models 1 and 2 confirm the expectation of Schrover and Vermeulen (2005) that at a certain point, the size of the immigrant population decreases the founding rates of immigrant organisations. This is indicated by the significant negative influence of the quadratic term on the founding rates of Surinamese and Afro-Surinamese organisations. Apparently, in the long run, when the size of the immigrant population reaches high numbers, the immigrant constituency is able to fulfil their organisational needs using already existing ethnic organisations and native organisations. It then becomes more difficult to establish new immigrant organisations.

Table 4.3 confirms the negative effect that the state-funding policy of the city of Amsterdam had on the establishment of new Surinamese and Afro-Surinamese organisations in the city (models 1 and 2). The significant negative effect of the annual state subsidy for Surinamese organisations on the founding rates of Surinamese organisations shows that the large sums of state subsidy that were provided through a few large Surinamese welfare organisations decreased organisational activities among Surinamese im-

**Table 4.3** *The founding of Surinamese, Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese immigrant organisations in Amsterdam, 1965-2000 (negative binomial estimates)*

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Surinamese</i> 1	<i>Afro-Surinamese</i> 2	<i>Indo-Surinamese</i> 3
Immigrant	.0002***	.0002	.0002*
Population (t-1)	(.00007)	(.00009)	(.00001)
Immigrant	-1.7e-09**	-1.5e-09*	-1.2e-09
Population Squared (t-1)	(8.0e-10)	(8.4e-10)	(1.2e-09)
State funding (t-1)	-1.4e-07**	-1.6e-07**	-1.4e-07
	(6.2e-08)	(6.1e-08)	(1.1e-07)
Multicultural policy (1983-1999) (t-1)	.16	.38	.20
	(.30)	(.36)	(.43)
Density Surinamese Organisations (t-1)	-.027		
	(.02)		
Density Surinamese Organisations Squared (t-1)	-.00004		
	(.00006)		
Density Afro-Surinamese Organisations (t-1)		-.08	.021
		(.06)	(.026)
Density Afro-Surinamese Organisations Squared (t-1)		-.0002	
		(.0002)	
Density Indo-Surinamese Organisations (t-1)		.016	-.035
		(.04)	(.10)
Density Indo-Surinamese Organisations Squared (t-1)			-.001
			(.001)
Constant	.46	-.32	-.105
	(.39)	(.50)	(.66)
Pseudo-R2	.15	.17	.18
Log-likelihood	-10.28	-77.69	-62.20
Number of cases (years)	36	36	36

\*p < 0.10; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.01

Source: Authors' own derivation

migrants by causing an insecure and competitive environment. Older and more established Surinamese organisations protected their positions by putting up high subsidy barriers for new Surinamese organisations. These older organisations were also suspected of withholding money to secure their own financial positions. A common method employed by new organisations demanding more state subsidy in the 1970s and early 1980s was to occupy the offices of Surinamese welfare organisations. Models 2 and 3 illustrate that the Indo-Surinamese did not suffer as much as a result of the subsidy policies as the Afro-Surinamese organisations for which the policy was specifically formulated (Vermeulen 2006). Interestingly, we do not find statistical evidence that the implementation of local multicultural policy in Amsterdam in the early 1980s had an effect on associational

activities among Surinamese immigrants (models 1-3), which we would expect following the opportunity model.

Finally, Table 4.3 indicates that the Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organising processes evolved separately, as expected, as neither the density of Afro-Surinamese nor Indo-Surinamese organisations significantly correlates to the founding rates of other groups (models 2 and 3). We do not find any significant evidence of interorganisational dynamics, indicated by the lack of significant results for the density of organisations on the founding rates of similar organisations.

Summarising the main results of these statistical analyses, we find strong support for the immigration model and mixed support for the opportunity model. Group-related factors apparently play an important and positive role on the organising process of Surinamese, Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese immigrants in Amsterdam. As more Surinamese immigrants settled in the city the demand for immigrant organisations increased and different types of organisations were founded, as described in the second section of this chapter. The Amsterdam opportunity structure seemed to have played mainly a negative role in the Surinamese organising process. The ad hoc provision of large sums of local subsidies to a rather disorganised and recently arrived immigrant group frustrated the development of the Surinamese organising process.

## 4.6 Conclusions

This chapter described how the Surinamese were very active in establishing organisations in Amsterdam between 1965 and 2000. For a long time this group showed the highest degree of associational activities of all the immigrant groups in the city. We first focused on the influence of factors from the opportunity model, particularly subsidies. We then looked at factors from the immigrant model, particularly the difference between the Afro-Surinamese and the Indo-Surinamese. Finally, we combined the two. It has become clear that a combination of both models provides the best explanation, just as we had assumed.

The relevance of the immigrant model is shown by the clear distinction between Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese organising processes and the significant effect of the size of the immigrant population on the founding rates of Surinamese organisations. Both sub-ethnic groups predominantly organised separately and the development of their organisations should be understood differently. Afro-Surinamese organisations have more often established activities in their country of origin, Surinam. In addition, more Afro-Surinamese organisations have been involved in interest representation and in cultural affairs. Indo-Surinamese organisations, on the other hand, seem to have followed the demands of their ethnic

constituency more consistently. These organisations organise more often in relation to Hinduism, and in Amsterdam this group displayed a higher degree of associational activities than the Afro-Surinamese.

The relevance of the opportunity model is shown by the strong (negative) influence of the Amsterdam subsidy policies on the Surinamese (and Afro-Surinamese) organising processes. We explained the influence of the Amsterdam opportunity structure by referring to the colonial situation in the country of origin. For Surinamese immigrants in Amsterdam, the ambiguous manner in which Dutch authorities dealt with their organisations was quite familiar. It was similar to the way in which voluntary organisations in Surinam functioned. The Dutch colonial administration did not encourage the development of a vibrant and democratic civil society, although many voluntary associations were present in Surinam. Most of these organisations were linked to political parties or religions and clearly differentiated by ethnicity. In addition to that, organisational leaders and the Dutch colonial administration both used the existing associations to their own benefit, which created a lot of distrust among the population towards these organisations.

Consequently, we are tempted to conclude that in a situation in which voluntary organisations are not a symbol of trust and stability, but rather vehicles to jobs, influence and personal benefit, the provision of large subsidies has problematic consequences for the immigrant organising process, since it can multiply existing mechanisms. Reasoning a step further, it probably also has a negative effect on the formation of a post-colonial political identity as this political identity is not formed independently from the Dutch authorities, with whom the post-colonial immigrants had, by definition, an ambiguous relationship. A political identity solely formed by group-related factors would have been at least less complicated. In that sense, it is fortunate that we did find strong effects of group-related factors on the Surinamese organising process. This shows that the negative influence that the opportunity structure had in this case did not completely dominate the Surinamese organising process nor, consequently, the formation of a Surinamese post-colonial identity.

## Notes

- 1 One guilder is equivalent to about € 0.46.
- 2 Although no objective criteria are available for identifying Afro-Surinamese associations, a reliable categorisation can be made by taking an organisation's name in conjunction with the names of its board members (Van Heelsum & Voorthuysen 2002: 10).
- 3 We have modelled the organisational founding rate using Poisson regression analysis, which is a non-linear regression model and appropriate for use with annual count data (Barron 1992; Hannan 1991; Minkoff 1997; Cameron & Trivedi 1998).

According to Cameron and Trivedi (1998: 20), the baseline Poisson model takes the form:  $\Pr(Y = y) = e^{-\mu} \mu^y / y!$ , where  $y$  is the number of organisations formed per year. In the Poisson formulation, the assumption that the conditional mean and variance of  $Y$  are equal fails to account for over-dispersion. Over-dispersion occurs when the variance exceeds the mean and can result in a downwards bias of the standard errors for coefficients for the exogenous variables (Barron 1992). We used negative binomial regression models estimated by quasi-maximum likelihood to overcome this possible problem. The analyses were carried out using the software Stata 9.0 (Long & Freese 2003). In order to incorporate a set of covariates,  $X_{t-1}$ , including a constant, the parameter  $\mu$  is specified to be  $\mu = \exp(X_{t-1} \beta)$ , an exponential function is specified to insure a non-negative count.  $X_{t-1}$  refers to a set of covariates measured one year prior to the dependent variable.  $\beta$  represents a set of parameters indicating the effects of these measures on the founding rates of immigrant organisations (Cameron & Trivedi 1998; Minkoff 1995).

- 4 Unfortunately, we do not have information on the sizes of the Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese populations.