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The Relationship Between Political Participation and Civic Community of Migrants in the Netherlands

Anja van Heelsum
IMES

This article examines the relationship between different forms of political participation and the civic participation in organizations of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. We have investigated the turnout rates and voting behaviour of migrants, the participation of councillors from ethnic minority groups and party officials in four cities and the organizations of ethnic minorities in Amsterdam and on a national level. The combination of all this information supplies us with a picture of the civic community of the ethnic groups in the Netherlands and we theorize about explanations on differences between these groups.

Cet article étudie le rapport entre les différentes formes de participation politique et la participation civique dans les organisations de minorités ethniques aux Pays-Bas. On s'est penché sur la participation au scrutin et le comportement électoral des migrants, la participation des conseillers de groupes ethniques minoritaires et des fonctionnaires de partis dans quatre villes, ainsi que sur les organisations de minorités ethniques à Amsterdam et à l'échelle nationale. La totalité de ces données nous fournit un portrait de la communauté civique que forment les groupes ethniques aux Pays-Bas. Des théories sont proposées pour expliquer les différences entre ces groupes.

Introduction

The population of the Netherlands—about 16 million—consists of about a million inhabitants that are considered *ethnic minority groups*. The term *ethnic minority group* does not apply to all immigrant groups, only to those with a consistent lower socioeconomic status in terms of educational level and income.¹ The main ethnic minority groups today are: (a) Dutch-speaking immigrants from former Dutch colonies with Dutch passports, namely Surinamese and Antilleans; (b) immigrants who arrived as temporary labourers between 1960 and 1980 (but who stayed for good), mainly from Turkey and Morocco, and their families; (c) immigrants who arrived more recently as refugees from a variety of countries including Vietnam, Somalia, Iran, and Iraq. To counter the risk that these groups would evolve

Key words/Mots-clés: Political participation/participation politique; ethnic minorities/minorités ethniques; migrant organizations/organisations de migrants.

into a permanent underprivileged group, national and local policies were formulated to improve their situation. In this study I focus mainly on the four largest ethnic minority groups, namely, Turks, Surinamese, and Moroccans.² The terms migrants and ethnic minorities refer to these groups.

Opportunities for political participation for members of ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands vary for the categories mentioned. Immigrants from the former colonies who have kept Dutch nationality have a right to vote in national, provincial, and local elections and to become local or provincial councillors, parliamentarians, or governors. Since 1992 Turks and Moroccans are entitled to dual nationality. About two thirds of the Turks and half of the Moroccans took Dutch nationality and kept their Turkish or Moroccan passports (Groenendijk, 2000). The Turks and Moroccans with a Dutch passport can participate in all elections actively (as candidates) or passively (as voters). Those who opted for dual nationality have almost the same political rights as other Dutch citizens. Non-nationals who have stayed more than five years in the Netherlands have been granted the right to vote at the municipal level since 1985. This means that the number of Turks and Moroccans who participate in local elections is considerably higher than in national elections.³ The third category is refugees, a diverse group with four main types of legal status: (a) asylum seeker; (b) an in-between status like permit for temporary stay (v-VTV); (c) A-status: accepted refugees with a refugee passport (who are officially stateless) or C-status (VTV); and (d) refugees who have taken Dutch nationality. Asylum seekers have no voting rights, and for all "accepted" refugees without Dutch nationality including those who are temporarily accepted, the five-year rule applies for the right to vote at the municipal level. The right to vote differs for the three groups. The right to become a councillor or parliamentarian is limited to holders of Dutch passports.

Theoretical Perspective: The Civic Communities Perspective

In this article the following question is addressed: What is the relationship between various forms of political participation and the civic community of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands? The civic community perspective that was (re)introduced by Putnam (1993) in his *Making Democracy Work* helps to explain various levels of political participation of migrants. In his study of the regional councils in Italy, Putnam has shown that civic culture explains a large part of the various political performances among the Italian regions. Putnam measured the "civicness" of regions by the density of local

cultural and recreational associations, by newspaper circulation, by referendum turnout, and by (lack of) preference voting. These measurements have a high interrelation and thus form a robust civic community index.

When two citizens meet on the street in a civic region, both of them are likely to have seen a newspaper at home that day; when two people in a less civic region meet, probably neither of them has. More than half of the citizens in the civic regions have never cast a preference ballot in their lives; more than half of the voters in the less civic regions say they always have. Membership in sports clubs, cultural and recreational groups, community and social action organisations, educational and youth groups, and so on is roughly twice as common in the most civic regions as in the least civic regions. (pp. 97-98)

Recently a debate has developed on the diminishing level of social capital and diminishing interest in formal organizations throughout the Western world (Fukuyama, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Hooghe, 2001).

Fennema and Tillie (1999, 2001) suggest that what is true for the Italian regions may also apply to Dutch multicultural society. The civic culture of ethnic groups, that is, their degree of civic community, will most probably contribute to the working of democracy in a multicultural democracy. In their article "Civic Communities, Political Participation and Political Trust of Ethnic Groups" (2001), this relationship is explained extensively, with a focus on political participation and the civic community of ethnic minority groups in Amsterdam. They state that the concept of civic community refers to voluntary associations of free citizens that are set up to pursue a common goal or a common interest. Migrants have established organizations to produce collective goods for their group: ethnic sports organizations, mosques, cultural organizations, political organizations, and interest groups (Lindo, van Heelsum & Penninx, 1998). Each of these organizations appeals to its members to work toward a common goal, and mutual social trust develops.⁴ When organizations have more contacts, social trust will spread to a greater part of the ethnic group. Thus a community develops with more social capital, that is, a network of points and lines of trust relations between these points (Fennema & Tillie, 2001). Social capital at the group level can be defined as the capacity of a group to produce collective goods and pursue common goals. A large network of migrant organizations through common board members can thus be seen as a measure of civic community. Fennema and Tillie show that measures of civic community are related to measures of political participation. They

tested their hypothesis on the local situation in Amsterdam. In this article I follow a similar reasoning, but analyse the situation on the national level to test the suggested relationship further. The results of three studies are used for this purpose: first, a study on voting behaviour; second, a study on local councillors; and third, a study of migrant organizations.

Political Participation

Political participation can be defined as taking part in or becoming involved in activities related to politics. An obvious way to do this is by voting in elections (this can be considered passive political participation); another form of political participation is to stand as a candidate (active political participation). I use two indicators as measures of the political participation of migrants to test the above theoretical relationship, namely, (a) turnout rates of migrants in municipal elections; and (b) the number of migrant councillors on city councils. To provide insight into the situation in the Netherlands, I include material on party choice and experiences of councillors.

Turnout Rates and Voting Behaviour

Aggregated data on the voting behaviour of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands are not available from the bodies that organize the elections. To protect the privacy of the voters the municipal registry supplies only names and addresses and not place of birth to the election registry. Hence we must rely on exit polls and surveys to find out more about the characteristics of the voters. In 1994 and 1998 exit polls were organized during the municipal elections in a number of Dutch cities (Tillie, 1994, 1998; van Heelsum & Tillie, 2000; Tillie with Fennema & van Heelsum, 2000). Cities with the highest percentage of ethnic minorities were chosen, namely, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, and Arnhem. In every city the sample consists of seven polling stations. Interviewers asked voters on their way out of the polling station, to fill in a one-page questionnaire on their ethnic background and voting behaviour. The answers of 11,588 respondents were gathered, of which 2,210 were Turks, 1,040 Moroccans, and 1,354 Surinamese.

Table 1 presents results on the turnout of migrant voters during the local elections of 1994 and 1998 in five cities in the Netherlands. For comparison the city turnout is given in the bottom row.

As shown in Table 1 the turnout rates of Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans differ considerably. The city turnout rate, which includes the majority of Dutch voters, is in general higher than the

Table 1
Turnout Rates of Five Ethnic Groups at the Local Elections of 1994 and 1998

<i>Background</i>	<i>Amsterdam</i>		<i>Rotterdam</i>		<i>The Hague</i>		<i>Utrecht</i>		<i>Arnhem</i>	
	1994	1998	1994	1998	1994	1998	1994	1998	1994	1998
Turks	67%	39	28	42	-*	36	55	39	56	50
Moroccans	49	23	23	33	-	23	44	26	51	18
Surinamese/ Antilleans	30	21	24	25	-	27	-	22	-	20
Capo Verdans	-	-	34	33	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>City turnout</i>	56.8	45.7	56.9	48.4	57.6	57.6	59.8	56.5	57.2	52.0

* Den Haag 1994: no data

Source: Tillie et al. (2000).

turnout of ethnic minorities. Between 1994 and 1998 the city turnout declined, including the migrant turnout. This was partly caused by blurring of the differences between the parties after the fall of the Berlin wall. Left-wing parties moved to the centre, and an unusual coalition of left and right was formed. A general loss of interest in politics also occurred. Electoral apathy was even greater among marginal groups and ethnic minorities. The low turnout of minority groups provoked the city of Rotterdam in 1994 to launch a campaign to stimulate participation of ethnic minority groups in the next elections, which was successful.

The results show a difference between Turks and other groups: Turks tend to turn out more at the polls than the other ethnic groups. Moroccans and Surinamese participate less. To provide insight into the voting pattern of migrants, the choice of party in the 1998 elections is shown in Table 2. The voting pattern of migrants is compared with voting patterns of the total Dutch population.

As shown in Table 2 migrants tend to vote more for left-wing parties (PvdA and the Green Left Party) than does the general population. Migrants hardly ever vote for parties that are usually considered to the right of centre (VVD, SGP, GPV, and RPF).

To discover party preferences voters were asked for which party they would possibly vote and for which they would never vote.⁵ If voting behaviour were ideologically determined, an average leftist-oriented person would not consider voting for a right-wing party. From the responses of voters I conclude that the voting behaviour of migrants was ideologically determined. A few examples of voting were determined by the ethnic background of a candidate, but usually this happened within the limits of party preference. In Dutch electoral tradition the parties nominate official and alternate candidates. Through preference voting, a candidate not supported by the party can emerge as a winner in an election. There were only a few exceptions where a well-known Turkish or Moroccan politician attracted significant votes for a certain party. This was common the first time non-nationals could participate in local elections. However, over time as the number of Turkish and Moroccan candidates increased in the mainstream parties, the polling power of ethnic candidates diminished.

Participation of Migrants in Municipal Councils

After the introduction of voting rights for non-nationals, the number of councillors from ethnic minority groups in local councils increased. The second type of data used here are those on migrant councillors.

Table 2
Choice of Party of Four Ethnic Groups in the Local Elections of 1998

	PvdA (Socialist party)	D66	Groen Links	SP	CDA (Christian democrats)	VVD (Liberal Democrats)	SGP GPV RPF	Other (local) parties	N (100%)
Turks	30%	2	16	1	29	1	0	21	2,209
Moroccans	42	1	45	1	4	1	0	6	1,040
Surinamese	62	4	11	3	5	2	1	12	1,354
Antilleans	51	5	13	6	8	5	2	10	174
Other migrants	41	6	19	6	10	6	1	11	1,408
Total migrants	42	3	20	3	15	2	1	14	6,185
Total Dutch	18	4	4	2	24	18	3	27	7,000,941

Source: Van Heelsum & Tillie (2000).

Lakmaker (2000) gathered data on the national level on the number of councillors. In our study, we interviewed all migrant councillors in four cities, namely, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Eindhoven, and Zaanstad (Berger, Fennema, van Heelsum, Tillie & Wolff, 2000; Fennema, Tillie, van Heelsum, Berger & Wolff, 2000). This study focused on the selection process of councillors from ethnic minority groups and the functioning and attitudes of the parties and policy-makers toward them. In 2000, 28 migrant councillors were interviewed, as well as 29 other party members and officials in the civil service of four cities. I use material from that study to elaborate on the functioning and the problems of the migrant councillors.

The number of migrants in the councils of six cities from 1986 onward is shown in Table 3. There is a steady growth of the number of migrant councillors. Table 3 shows that Amsterdam and Rotterdam have the most migrant councillors compared with the smaller towns. In Amsterdam 24% of the councillors were of migrant origin in 1998, so proportional representation was nearly achieved. In Rotterdam 17% of the councillors are of migrant origin, compared with 30% of the inhabitants. Zaanstad, a smaller town, is doing relatively well: the percentage of migrant councillors is 7.5 %, whereas the percentage of migrants in the population is 10.2%. In The Hague and Utrecht much work remains to be done: the percentage of migrants in the council is 3%, whereas 12.5% of the population in both cities are of migrant origin. Eindhoven is far behind and has only one migrant councillor, whereas with proportional representation the number of migrants should have been four. The general conclusion is positive: 13 years after the introduction of voting rights for non-nationals, migrants have become clearly visible in numbers in the councils of the big cities, even though they do not vote as often as the Dutch. Political institutions are accessible to migrants.

In smaller towns and villages, however, migrants are hardly represented. This underrepresentation in small towns and villages distorts the general picture. During the local elections of 1998 the total number of migrant councillors in the Netherlands had doubled from 74 (in 1994) to 150. Nevertheless, migrants constitute 1.5% of all elected councillors, whereas ethnic minorities constitute 7% of the Dutch population. The number of elected migrants must increase from 150 to 700 to become numerically representative of the total migrant population. It is obvious that it will be a long time before real representation is attained.

Among the minorities Surinamese were the first to enter active politics because they were Dutch nationals. In 1990 Surinamese and Turkish councillors were the majority among migrant politicians. By 1998 Turks had become the largest group (Lakmaker, 2000). Lakmaker found the following breakdown of migrant councillors in her nationwide

Table 3
Number of Migrants in the Council of Six Cities

Year:	1986-1990	1990-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002
City (councillors):				
Amsterdam (45)	3	4	8	11
Rotterdam (45)	1	2	2	8
The Hague (45)	1	3	2	6
Utrecht (45)	0	3	4	6
Eindhoven (42)	2	1	2	1
Zaanstad (39)	1	1	3	3

Source: Berger, et al. (2000).

study: 40% Turkish, 27% Surinamese, 14% Moroccan, and 19% from another background. Although the percentage of Turks and Moroccans in the population is similar, the number of Moroccan councillors is small.

In the four cities of our own research we found eight Surinamese, eight Turkish, five Moroccan, one Antillean, and one Ghanaian councillor. Migrant councillors are relatively new to the Dutch political parties. In the last 10 years all parties have put considerable effort into finding competent Surinamese, Turkish, and Moroccan candidates. According to some members of the selection commissions of the various parties, this has sometimes led to premature choice of candidates in that some were inexperienced and unprepared for Dutch politics. Barriers for the new councillors include mistrust, lack of knowledge of specific regulations, and lack of language proficiency. The expectations of the party include: they must attract voters from ethnic communities; they should have contacts in ethnic communities; and they should know more about issues that are important to these communities than their Dutch colleagues.

In general the councillors themselves report that they are satisfied with the influence they have on the policy of their party and about the attention that is paid to their views. Half of those interviewed had been a member of the committee that determined the party program before the elections. Most of the interviewees reported no obvious discrimination in the party or in their political life, although some of them indicated a prevalence of misunderstandings. Strong party loyalty is reported among migrant councillors. However, there seems to be unwarranted pressure on councillors to

Table 4
 Turks, Moroccans, and Surinamese Councillors, as Percentage of
 all Migrant Councillors in the Netherlands

<i>Year</i>	<i>1998</i>
<i>City</i>	
Turks	40%
Moroccans	14%
Surinamese	27%
other non-Dutch	19%

Source: Lakmaker (2000).

conform to the existing system. Their Dutch-born counterparts seem to fear that migrants might formulate their own "ethnic" program. Our interviews show that it is not always easy for the councillors to cope with contradictory demands like representing the views of the ethnic community on the one hand and adhering to the general politics of their respective parties. An example is the position of the left-wing parties toward religious facilities. Most Turkish and Moroccan voters argue that a mosque in their town is a basic requirement, but Dutch left-wing parties usually maintain that state subsidies should not be spent on religious facilities. Van Heelsum and Peninx (1999) describe an example in one of the city districts in Amsterdam. The mosques in this borough divided their buildings into a religious and a social-cultural space, and asked for subsidies for the social-cultural space and for the social-cultural activities from the leftist borough council. Thus they tried to evade the policy of the left not to support religious facilities.

The relationship between migrant councillors and ethnic organizations is complex. The majority (18 out of 27) of councillors in our study are members of one or more migrant organizations. Some councillors are on the list of election candidates because they are known in their community and in ethnic organizations. But frequently they give up such memberships after being elected and taking office. The reason they give for this is incompatibility of posts. Organizations ask councillors to look after their interests. Councillors do not wish to be subjected to pressure from organizations, so they either leave or try to cope with this pressure. They are afraid of being accused by Dutch colleagues of working for a specific (ethnic) rank and file. The expectations of parties are thus contradictory: on the one hand councillors are recruited because of their specific ethnic rank and file, but on the other hand they must not pay too much attention to their ethnic community, because this may easily lead to accusations of "clientelism" (i.e., exchange of favours: a voter casts a preferential vote and in exchange the candidate settles the affairs of a voter. This kind of arrangement is said to be more common in the home countries of the migrants).

Half of the councillors were elected by preferential votes. A quarter of the councillors believe that people from their own ethnic communities have cast these preferential votes. It would be unfair not to take care of the interests of one's supporters in these circumstances. Some councillors have given attention during their campaign to the needs of the ethnic community in their town. On the other hand, we found that a considerable group of councillors had not campaigned at all, or that they had stressed the party line during their campaign.

We asked if a councillor from an ethnic minority group could avoid dealing with minority issues altogether. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam some councillors dislike being addressed as a representative of an ethnic minority group and stress that they represent everyone in the city. In these larger cities there is enough room for them to work on general issues like economic policy or health care. In smaller cities, where only two or three councillors are from an ethnic minority group, it seems less realistic that one can avoid minority issues. A councillor stated: "There are simply not enough colleagues with the necessary knowledge and experience. And besides, I'm very involved with these issues." Some feel pushed into minority issues. Sometimes misunderstandings occur. For example, a Turkish representative had to visit the local mosque to talk about expansion while he was known as a socialist and antireligious person in the Turkish community. To conclude from this discussion of the experiences of migrant councillors: although contacts between migrant organizations and councillors are logical as a way to contact the electorate, outsiders view them with suspicion.

Civic Community: Density and Network of Migrant Organizations

The interconnectedness of a (migrant) community is shown by the network of organizations. Fennema and Tillie (2001) state that the concept of civic community can refer to voluntary associations of free citizens that are set up to pursue a common goal or a common interest. A large and interconnected network of organizations can be seen as a sign of a stronger and more effective civic community. A strong and effective civic community can achieve specific goals. The members can for instance use the internal network to gather money or to talk to acquaintances in the bureaucracy in order to establish a mosque. On the other hand, a small number of organizations and a loosely connected network between them may be seen as a sign of a weaker and less effective civic community. Political participation depends on the effectiveness and strength of the civic community.

As Fennema and Tillie (1999) have done in their article on Amsterdam, we treat the network of organizations as a proxy variable for civic community. I use three indicators of civic community: (a) the number of organizations in an ethnic group; (b) the density of organizations per member of the ethnic group; and (c) the percentage of isolated organizations in the network.

Networks of Migrant Organizations in the Netherlands

Information on migrant organizations was collected from various sources: the Chamber of Commerce, experts on the specific ethnic groups, and

members of ethnic organizations and migrant support organizations. Three databases were developed with names of organizations, addresses and telephone numbers, and objectives and names of board members. We have gathered data on Turkish (van Heelsum & Tillie, 1999), Moroccan (van Heelsum, 2001), and Surinamese (van Heelsum & Voorthuysen, 2002) organizations and their connections through common board members at the national level. To analyse the links between organizations, the computer program GRADAP was used. After the technical analysis, the results were graphed to show the linkages between organizations.

Our research shows that the number of Turkish organizations (1,100) is considerably higher than the number of Surinamese organizations (881) and Moroccan organizations (720). Not only does the number of organizations vary between ethnic groups, but the size of the largest interconnected network of board members also varies. The largest network of Turkish organizations consists of 150; the largest network of Surinamese organizations consists of 143; and in the case of Moroccan organizations only 53 were part of the largest cluster.

Graphical representations of the Moroccan, Surinamese, and Turkish organizations are presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3. The drawing of the network of Moroccan organizations (Figure 1) is the least complicated because it has the fewest interconnections; we are able to show all interlocking directorates. The largest Moroccan network is concentrated around two Islamic federations and the advisory board of Moroccans to the municipal council in Amsterdam.

The second drawing of the Surinamese network (Figure 2) had to be simplified because the number of interrelations was so great that including all of them would be confusing. The Surinamese network is dense, characterized by many lines in all directions; 39 of 143 organizations are shown in the drawing (those with at least five interconnections). The two major ethnic subgroups of the Surinamese community, the Afro-Surinamese and the Indo-Surinamese, are both represented in the network. The central organizations in the Surinamese network are Indo-Surinamese organizations in The Hague; these have links with Afro-Surinamese organizations in other cities.

The third drawing (Figure 3) shows the largest network of Turkish organizations in the Netherlands; it is simplified in a different way. The drawing shows 34 of the 150 organizations, and the circles indicate a group of connected organizations connected to a central one. The largest Turkish network shows eight clusters of organizations (circles in the drawing). The clusters represent the main Turkish Islamic denominations.

A comparison of the networks of organizations leads to conclusions about the civic communities of the three groups. Comparing the

Figure 1. The network of Moroccan organizations in the Netherlands, based on common board members (van Heelssum, 2000).

Figure 3. Simplified version of the network of Turkish organizations in the Netherlands, based on common board members (van Heelsum & Tillie, 1999).

networks, the number of contacts between the organizations, and the number of federations shows that the Turks are ahead of the Moroccans and Surinamese. The Surinamese organizations have a network with more interconnections than those of the Moroccans. Forty-eight percent of the Turkish, 53% of the Surinamese, and 64% of the Moroccan organizations are not related through common board members with other organizations. When we rank order by ethnic group, a consistent order becomes clear as shown in Table 5: Turkish organizations are the most interrelated, Surinamese the second, and Moroccans the third. The density of Turkish organizations is highest, followed by Surinamese, and then Moroccans, although the density score differs little between the Surinamese and Moroccan organizations. The number of isolated organizations again is lowest among Turks, second among Surinamese, and third among Moroccans.

Discussion: Combining the Results on Elections, Local Councillors and Ethnic Organizations.

Explanatory Factors from the Civic Community Perspective

Participating as a voter in elections, participating as a councillor in a municipal council, and participation in ethnic organizations are not independent issues. Putnam has drawn a plausible relationship between political participation and civic community in Italy. Fennema and Tillie (1999) showed this relationship between political participation and the characteristics of civic communities of ethnic groups in Amsterdam. In this article I have used data on the national level in the Netherlands. I have rank-ordered voter turnout, number of councillors per ethnic group, number of organizations per ethnic group, and percentage of isolated organizations, and these indicators point to a similar conclusion. The high voting turnout of Turks and the high number of Turkish councillors corresponds to a high density of organizations and a strong network between organizations in the Turkish community. These results show that the rank-order relationship of political participation and civic community on the national level follow the same logic as in Amsterdam. The general idea that civic community and political participation are interrelated is thus supported.

The order of the ethnic groups observed in Amsterdam (Turks, Moroccans, and Surinamese) is not repeated. The indicators all show Turks first, Surinamese second, and Moroccans third. Surinamese are second in number of councillors and also in the number and density of organizations and percentage of isolated organizations. Moroccans are

Table 5
Ethnic Groups in the Netherlands (per 1-1-2001) and their Organizational Density

	a. population ¹	b. organizations ²	c. density (b/a x 1,000)	d. percentage of isolated organizations
Dutch	16 mil			
Surinamese	308,625	881 ³	2.85	53
Moroccans	272,000	720	2.65	64
Turks	319,600	1100	3.44	48

Source: ¹<http://statline.cbs.nl>; ²Source: van Heelsun & Tillie (1999), van Heelsun (2001), Heelsun & Voorthuysen (2002); ³of which about 400 are Indo-Surinamese.

substantially behind in number of councillors and in number of organizations, slightly behind in density of organizations, and have the most isolated organizations. We can conclude that the rank correlation between the indicators of civic community of the various ethnic groups and the levels of political participation is visible in a similar manner as in Amsterdam. But there are other factors that explain the difference between Amsterdam and the national level. The model presented by Fennema and Tillie (1999) needs some additional factors to help explain the differences.

Other Explanatory Factors

Some factors that are not accounted for above can help to explain the differences between the three ethnic communities. First, the size of a community may influence the strength of the civic community. It is possible that a small community like the Antillean community in the Netherlands needs to look for alliances outside its own group to build social capital. For the largest minority community in the Netherlands, the Turkish one, it is easier to establish many internal organizations and federations. The difference in size between the Turkish and the Surinamese communities is not such that the size alone can completely explain the difference between the civic community.

A second factor is the set of cultural and historical characteristics of the ethnic group. The number of cleavages and ethnic subgroups in a community are consequences of cultural and historical processes. The three groups have distinct characteristics. The Surinamese community consists of several ethnic subgroups, the Afro- and Indo-Surinamese and several smaller groups like Javanese-, Amerindian-, and Jewish-Surinamese. Networks in the Indo-Surinamese subgroup are stronger than between subgroups, and they dominate the network of Surinamese organizations. The common language of Dutch and Surinamese and the high rate of intermarriage between Dutch and Surinamese (50% of the Surinamese second generation have one Dutch parent) may indicate that a section of the Surinamese community is opting for mainstream Dutch civic organization.

The Turkish community in the Netherlands is characterized by numerous Islamic orders, which all have federations and local organizations. They are sometimes connected to political parties or opposition movements and sects in Turkey. The Turkish state is involved and funding the section of Islamic organization that they prefer. How far this involvement can be considered civic activity of the Turks in the Netherlands becomes questionable, because it is sometimes interconnected to autocratic control. Nevertheless, competing groups manage to work together. The Turkish community in the Netherlands has a dense network of organizations, although Kurds seem not to be well integrated in this network.

The Moroccan community in the Netherlands is described by Landman (1992), Den Exter and Massaro (1998) and Van Gemert (1998) as uncohesive. This lack of cohesion is explained by pointing to fragmented clan traditions in the isolated Berber villages in Morocco. These traditions, reinforced by the low educational level, can aggravate the lack of cooperation between organizations. That 85% of Moroccan Berbers in the Netherlands come from the Rif Mountains, a region with a tradition of resistance to the Moroccan central government (Hart, 2001), helps to explain why political trust among Moroccans in the Netherlands is relatively low. In this region distrust of the central government has been prevalent throughout history. Further research comparing Moroccan organizations in the Netherlands and Belgium—where immigrants originate from the central region of Morocco directly connected to the centre of power—might discover more about this line of thinking.

A prerequisite for political participation and better functioning of democracy is, of course, that the receiving society give opportunities for participation of ethnic minority groups. The interrelation must be emphasized between the political opportunity structure and the opportunities that migrant organizations develop. Rath, Penninx, Groenendijk, and Meyer (1999) describe how Islam institutionalized in the Netherlands and clearly show the interaction between the immigrants and the receiving society. The Dutch political opportunity structure has been characterized for the last 200 years by explicit opportunities for religious denominations. The prevailing type of migrant organization is also the religious organization. The fact that Turks have many Islamic denominations might fit the Dutch (pillar) opportunity model, whereas Moroccans in the Netherlands are not much divided on a religious basis. In the case of the Surinamese, most organizations are religious Hindu organizations that have availed themselves of these opportunities.

The theoretical notions within the civic community perspective on the relationship between political participation and civic community have been useful in explaining the differences between ethnic groups in the Netherlands. In future research we would like to see study about the influence of political opportunity structure, cultural and historical factors, the number of cleavages within an ethnic group, the size of a community, and the autonomy of civic organizations. Exploring these factors may add to the explanatory power of the model of the political participation and civic community of migrants.

Notes

1. Immigrant groups that have not become “ethnic minorities” are, for example, Japanese, Spanish, and Italian immigrants who have attained a relatively higher socioeconomic status. Vermeulen and Penninx (2000) describe how immigrant integration took shape in the last 40 years.

2. On January 1, 2001 there were 319,600 Turks, 308,625 Surinamese and 272,000 Moroccans in the Netherlands according to the web site of the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands; most are first and second generation.
3. The higher the percentage in a certain region or town, the more urgent representation of ethnic minorities becomes in our opinion. In cities like Amsterdam 30% of the population is made up of ethnic minorities and in Rotterdam 31%. So representation in the municipal council is not only logical because of numbers, but also because of specific social problems.
4. Social trust is a relational concept: it can be defined as an attitude of members toward a specific member (x) or the attitude of a member (x) toward all members of a group (X).
5. Tillie (1994) developed the measure to determine the ideological orientation of voters.

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