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Beyond the Dutch “Multicultural Model” The Coproduction of Integration Policy Frames in The Netherlands

J. W. Duyvendak · P. W. A. Scholten

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Abstract The Netherlands has been internationally known for its multicultural approach to immigrant integration. The aim of this article is to delve into the “coproduction” by researchers and policy makers of this so-called Dutch “multicultural model”. As this article shows, researchers and policy makers have in The Netherlands been joined in several discourse coalitions. Indeed, one of these discourse coalitions supported an integration paradigm with multicultural elements, but at least two other types of discourses can be identified in The Netherlands, one of more liberal–egalitarian nature and one more assimilationist. In spite of the persistent image of The Netherlands as a representative of the multicultural model, it is in fact this multiplicity of discourses that characterizes the Dutch case. Moreover, labeling Dutch integration policies as “multiculturalist” has to be understood as a performative act by both politicians and scholars who disapprove of Dutch integration policies. In that sense, the retrospective labeling of policies as multiculturalist is a very specific kind of coproduction of a policy frame.

Keywords Immigrant integration policies · Multiculturalism · National models of integration · Research-policy dialogues · Policy frames

Mots clés Les politiques d'intégration des immigrées · Multiculturalisme (communitarisme) · Les modèles nationaux d'intégration

The Netherlands has been internationally known for its multicultural approach to immigrant integration. Some even speak of a “multicultural model” that would continue to inform Dutch political discourse and policy practices until this very day (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Joppke 2007; Koopmans 2007). The basic

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premise of this model would be that Dutch policies have been driven by a coherent and consistent belief that the recognition and accommodation of cultural, ethnic, and religious groups in society will lead to their successful emancipation into the Dutch multicultural society.

The genesis of this Dutch multicultural model is said to have been influenced greatly by academic researchers and scientific experts in The Netherlands. Among researchers involved in this field, there would have been a strong belief in the so-called multicultural model. Rath (2001) speaks in this context of an “ethnic minorities paradigm” in Dutch research. Furthermore, researchers in this field would have been strongly policy-oriented and even entwined in policy networks. Guiraudon (1997) and Rath (2001) speak in this context of a “technocratic symbiosis” that enabled the development “behind gilded doors” of a multicultural policy approach, while ignoring several alternative policy paradigms.

Yet, there is growing doubt about whether the “multicultural model” has been or at least continues to be a valid depiction of the Dutch approach to immigrant integration (Bertossi and Duyvendak 2009; Scholten 2011). The multicultural model seems to have been coined retrospectively, in an attempt by politicians to disqualify policies they disagree with. These politicians are helped in their framing effort by some social scientists who claim that there is evidence that, when it comes to concrete policy practices, some measures reflect the Dutch multicultural model (Koopmans 2007). When it comes to policy practices on the local level, it is contested, however, whether these policy practices are actually driven by a normative multicultural model or by more pragmatic concerns of “keeping things together” (Poppelaars and Scholten 2008).

The aim of this article is to delve into the social construction, or as we will describe it, the “coproduction” by researchers and policy makers of the so-called Dutch multicultural model and other policy discourses regarding integration. Based on neo-institutionalist literature, a framework will be developed that accounts for the dynamic nature of policy discourses and the role of the research-policy nexus in constructing these dominant frames. Whereas (rational and historical) institutionalist literature tends to accept the role of scientific research in policy-making as given (“science speaking truth to power”), neo-institutionalists focus on the more dynamic ways in which actors operate within the fields of research and policy. Our analysis is based on a rigorous review of policy documents and academic literature on immigrant integration in The Netherlands. A detailed analysis was conducted of these sources in order to reveal the frames and discourses that have emerged in policy and research over the past decades. Moreover, we charted the networks—including both politicians and social scientists—that developed over time, co-producing policy frames.

The empirical analysis in this article is limited to the Dutch case. However, we consider the processes that are revealed in this paper, especially in terms of the coproduction of specific integration frames by researchers and policymakers, as relevant to other countries as well. In fact, other researchers have also questioned the dominant position of specific national models of integration in countries as France and Great Britain (Bertossi 2009; Favell 1998, 2001). This article specifically contributes to a better understanding of the genesis of these alleged national models of integration and the role of migration research therein.

The research-policy nexus and the construction of “policy models”

The construction of (national) models of integration

The idea of “national models of integration”, inspired by institutionalist thinking, has acquired great resonance in European migration research. Institutionalists focus on which models or regimes are considered rational within specific institutional settings (rational choice) or which models are legacies from the history of a specific country (historical institutionalism). A key trait of these policy models is that they are expected to be relatively stable over fairly long periods of time, based on the assumption that the conditions that led to a specific model are unlikely to change rapidly and that models themselves tend to develop a certain path-dependency or resistance to change.

This models-thinking has become prominent in comparative studies of migration policies as well as to self-referential discourse within specific countries about immigrant integration. For instance, studies of France have focused on its so-called “Republican model” of integration, which is orientated at the assimilation of migrants into the French political and cultural community. In fact, within France, this model played an important role in structuring research-policy relations; there were public intellectuals that strongly supported this model (Favell 1998). However, this model also sustained a taboo on gathering statistics on ethnic groups that would be at odds with the color-blind premises of the model (Simon and Amiraux 2006).

A key reference in this models-thinking is Brubaker’s (1992) *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*. In this book, Brubaker juxtaposes the German and French models of citizenship that provided the foundations for the integration policies in these countries; a differentialist approach in Germany and an assimilationist approach in France. Whereas the Germans stressed exclusive membership of the German community based on ethnic ties (*ius sanguinis*), the French adopted a more inclusive model oriented at inclusion into full citizenship of everyone born on French soil (*ius soli*). As a true historical institutionalist, Brubaker shows how the historical conditions in both countries that led to the construction of these national models: a strongly developed cultural and apolitical sense of national belonging in Germany versus the state-centric tradition of nation building in France.

In addition, the work of Christian Joppke takes national models as starting point for comparative studies of immigrant integration as well (1995). Also, his recent work (2007) where he claims on a convergence of national policies is based on the idea that countries originally started out with national models. Or Patrick Ireland (1994) who, in a comparative study of France and Switzerland, found that national institutional conditions provide the best explanation for the type of policies that are developed. Or Ruud Koopmans (2007) who in his Dutch–German comparison takes the differences in national models as the main explanation for the differences in effectiveness of the Dutch and German approaches.

One of the reasons why models have gained such wide resonance in migration studies (as in various other sectors) is that they help reducing complexity: it simplifies the otherwise highly complex and contested matter of immigrant integration. Models help to construct international comparative studies to assess processes of convergence or divergence between various European countries.

Furthermore, by comparing ideal–typical models with specific periods, modeling can generate insight in a country's history. In this latter sense, Castles and Miller (2003) and in their footsteps, Koopmans et al. (2005), have extended Brubaker's dichotomy into a fourfold typology of integration models; civic-assimilationism, cultural pluralism, ethnic-differentialism, and civic-republicanism. An important difference with the historical institutionalist modeling of Brubaker is that this fourfold distinction of integration models represents ideal-types that can be used for studying country cases, rather than that these models are taken as representative for national approaches per se.

The danger of modeling is that the models are not only taken as tools for international comparison or for understanding historical periods. When a model begins to shape our understanding and beliefs about policies, the model becomes more than just a model: the model is then taken as an accurate historical reconstruction of policy rather than as a model of it. Models then take the place of historical analysis. In social science literature, this has often led instances where a model is “blamed” for the success or failure of a specific policy approach. For instance, various authors have blamed the Dutch multicultural model for the alleged failure of immigrant integration in The Netherlands (Koopmans 2003; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007).

In addition, models tend to oversimplify policies and overstress the alleged coherency and consistency of these policies (Bowen 2007; Bertossi and Duyvendak 2009). Policy practices tend to be far more resilient and diverse than most policy models would suggest. For instance, in Dutch as well as in French literature, there have been many references to differences between how policies are formulated on the national level and how they are put into practice often on the local level; some even speak of the decoupling of national and local policies in this respect (Favell 1998; De Zwart 2005; Poppelaars and Scholten 2008). In fact, even when policy makers claim to operate according to a specific policy model, their reasons for doing so may be more pragmatic and flexible, then in the policy model itself, in its ideal–typical form. For instance, the reason why some politicians in the 1980s framed immigrant integration in terms of the multicultural model may have much more to do with their fear of anti-immigrant parties playing the race card than with their so-called multicultural policy beliefs (Penninx 1988; Scholten 2011).

However, models can be very powerful as a form of *policy discourse* (Hajer 1995). A model is not just about being valid, but also about being conceptually and normatively clear and convincing. A model helps making sense out of the complex social reality that is often associated with issues as immigrant integration, they are tools for “naming” and “framing” the problem and determining adequate paths for policy action. Hajer speaks in this context of the formation of *discourse coalitions* which are actors that are held together by a shared discourse and not necessarily by coordinated interaction. This can include various types of actors, including politicians and policy makers, as well as academics, experts, interest groups, journalists, etc.

Once a discourse becomes dominant and is supported by a sufficiently large or strong group of actors, a discourse can prove difficult to change. Challenging a discourse means also challenging the beliefs and interests of the groups involved in the discourse coalition. Furthermore, discourses tend to become taken-for-granted:

even members of a discourse coalition may be unaware of their tacit beliefs and the presence of alternative beliefs. This is why, according to Rein and Schön (1994), situations that are characterized by a multiplicity of coexisting discourses (or “frames”) tend to evolve in *intractable policy controversies*. Such intractable controversies do not just involve mere disagreements about how to resolve a given problem, but fundamental differences in the naming and framing of a problem. Such controversies cannot be resolved by merely studying “the facts”, as discourse coalitions will have very different ways of selecting and interpreting these facts. Hence, intractable controversies would only be resolvable by reflecting on the deeper conceptual and normative premises that underlie a specific discourse (what Rein and Schön describe as *frame reflection*). This means that actors have to become aware of their own models or “frames”, have to be able to put themselves in the shoes of actors with other frames and have to be willing to adapt their discourses when required.

In the case of migration studies, this means that national models of immigrant integration should not be taken-for-granted. Rather, these models should be taken as object of analysis rather than as a starting point for analysis. The deductive evaluation of a model's success or failure would, from this perspective, probably not lead to the resolution of policy controversy, but the inductive analysis of the deeper premises of a policy may contribute to such critical reflection.

Research-policy dialogues

The objective of this article is to analyze the role of social-scientific research in the construction of the alleged Dutch multicultural model of integration and assess to what extent research has been able to contribute to “critical reflection” on this model. The standard model of the relation between social research and policy-making is one of “science speaking truth to power” (Wildavsky 1979). Indeed, as Radin (2000) shows, many of the social sciences evolved with a strong policy orientation and resolve to contribute to rational societal steering. This certainly applies to migration research which, as Favell (1998) shows, evolved in a clear parallel to emerging policy concerns about immigrant integration.

Yet, particularly when it comes to intractable policy controversies like immigrant integration, this standard model of speaking truth to power becomes difficult to maintain. What goes as truth tends to be inherently contested in situations where there are multiple discourses, each with their own way of naming and framing the problem, and their own way of selecting and interpreting evidence. Without notion of different underlying discourses, research-policy dialogues can in such situations decay in “dialogues of the deaf” (Van Eeten 1999).

Furthermore, researchers often do more than just present evidence to policy makers. Academics and experts are then part of specific discourse coalitions themselves. The formation of such discourse coalitions is often referred to as a key factor in the “co-evolution” (Nowotny et al. 2001) or “coproduction” of truth-claims by researchers and policy makers. In this context, Nowotny et al. (2001: 245) refer to the growing transgression of science-politics boundaries and the

contextualisation of science, which means that science not only speaks to society but society also speaks back to science. According to Shapin and Shaffer (1985: 332), there is a “conditional relationship between the nature of the polity occupied by scientific intellectuals and the nature of the wider polity”. Ezrahi (1990) has described the rise of modern science in relation to the increasing demand by modern societies as instrumental means to sustain administrative control; science would have been an important political resource for depersonalizing and depoliticizing ideological state control and thereby legitimizing modern liberal democratic politics.

Bourdieu has conceptualized this interaction between researchers and policy makers in terms of a conversion of scientific capital to other sorts of capital, such as economic, social, or cultural capital (Bourdieu 1975: 25), as well as other sorts of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2004: 55). For instance, besides “strictly scientific authority”, there would also be a sort of scientific capital that is more related to other sorts of capital, or a sort of capital that involves “power over the scientific world which can be accumulated through channels that are not purely scientific (...) and which is the bureaucratic principle of temporal powers over the scientific field such as those of ministers and ministries, deans and vice chancellors or scientific administrators” (2004: 57).

Thus, the fields of research and policy cannot be seen as essentially demarcated. Instead, they can best be conceptualized as interconnected in their development. Following Bourdieu's conceptualization of science-politics relations, it is likely that the conversion of capital between both fields will produce specific shared discourses (such as national models of integration). In other words, the interaction between fields tends to reinforce the coproduction of truth or knowledge claims. For instance, the type of knowledge claims that are developed by researchers will also depend on the sorts of capital that can be obtained with these claims, in terms of economic capital (e.g., research funding), but also social capital (e.g., networks) and cultural capital (e.g., authority, influence).

Bourdieu's conceptualization of research-policy relations and its implications for the coproduction of knowledge seems to support Rein and Schön's skepticism about the resolution of intractable policy controversies by studying the (scientific) facts. Researchers tend to be part of discourse coalitions rather than having the critical distance required for “critical frame reflection.” In fact, this has led many policy scientists to be very cynical about the possibilities for “policy learning” or “social learning”. According to Hall (1993), social learning will mostly take place on the level of secondary or tertiary policy facets, but rarely on the first level of fundamental policy assumptions. Similarly, Sabatier (1987) prospects that fundamental policy change due to learning is as unlikely as religious conversion and that such policy changes are more likely to be due to external perturbations like shifts in political power, large-scale focus events, or macro-economic perturbations.

In the following parts of this article, we will first reconstruct the claim that The Netherlands has known a multicultural model of integration. Secondly, we will examine the role of researchers in the framing of Dutch policies as “multicultural”—but we also look at the role of politicians and scholars in the coproduction of other policy frames regarding integration.

“The Dutch multicultural model” and other public discourses on integration

For the analysis of the role of social research in the construction of the so-called Dutch multicultural model of immigrant integration, the first step will be to reconstruct what is meant by a multicultural model by researchers using this term, followed by an assessment of the validity of their empirical claim that The Netherlands has developed multicultural policies on the basis of a multicultural model (does policy indeed follow this model, has the model been consistent and coherent, does the model also inform policy practices?).

How the “multicultural model” was invented by sociologists

A key trait of the Dutch multicultural model would be, according to some colleagues, its tendency to institutionalize cultural pluralism in the belief that cultural emancipation of immigrant minorities is the key to their integration into Dutch society (see also Duyvendak and Scholten 2009). This would also reflect a rather uncontested acceptance of the transformation of Dutch society into a multicultural society. In the latter respect, a connection is often made with the peculiar Dutch history of pillarisation, referring to the period from the 1920s to 1960s when most of Dutch society was structured according to specific religious (protestant, Catholic) or socio-cultural (socialist, liberal) pillars (Lijphart 1968).

A recent study by Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007), *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and its Discontents in The Netherlands*, explicitly labels the Dutch approach in terms of a multiculturalist model. The authors claim that the labeling of collective identities has inadvertently deepened social-cultural cleavages in society rather than bridging these differences. They take The Netherlands as their single exemplary case to found their claims. They root the Dutch approach back to the history of pillarisation: “The Netherlands has always been a country of minorities thanks to the power of religion to divide as well as unite” (pp. 13). In addition, the “collective trauma of World War II where the Dutch failed to resist the massive deportation of Jews would have contributed to that immigrant minorities have been seen in the light of the Holocaust (..) or that critical views of immigrants are labeled racist and xenophobic.” Due to these historical circumstances, a multiculturalist model would have taken root in The Netherlands.

The German sociologist Joppke also considers the Dutch as the most radical exponent of the multiculturalist model. He describes how recently the Dutch changed their policies, since the alleged multicultural policies have been a failure: “Civic integration is a response to the obvious failure of one of Europe's most pronounced policies of multiculturalism to further the socioeconomic integration of immigrants and their offspring. (..) In a counterpoint to multiculturalism's tendency to lock migrant ethnics into their separate worlds, the goal of civic integration is migrants' participation in mainstream institutions” (2007: 249).

Also among some Dutch scholars, thinking in terms of the Dutch multicultural model has acquired great resonance. Koopmans (2007) roots the Dutch approach to immigrant integration clearly in the history of pillarisation when ethno-cultural cleavages were stressed in a similar way in multicultural policies. He claims that the application of this model on new immigrant groups has had strong adverse effects, as

multiculturalism “offers new ethnic and religious groups a formal and symbolic form of equality, which in practice reinforces ethnic cleavages and reproduces segregation on a distinctly unequal basis” (2006: 5). Koopmans points in particular to the “path-dependency” in terms of policy practices. Although formal policy discourse and public discourse seem to have changed, in their actual way of dealing with ethno-cultural diversity the Dutch would have remained accommodative: “(O)rganizations and activities based on ethnic grounds are still generously supported—directly and indirectly—by the government. Whether people want it or not, ethnicity still plays an important role in public institutions and discourse (Koopmans 2007: 4).”

Dutch integration policy discourse

Often when using the term multicultural model, actors such as researchers and policy makers do this in a normative, pejorative way. The label is used to disqualify certain policies that allegedly have been a failure. This strong empirical claim—The Netherlands have had one static multicultural model leading to pernicious policy measures—can easily be tested. To what extent can we indeed recognize this multicultural model in the integration policies that have been developed over the past decades? It turns out that The Netherlands did not develop a policy aimed at immigrant integration until the early 1980s, when it was recognized that migrants were to stay permanently. During the 1980s, an “Ethnic Minorities Policy” was developed that was targeted at specific cultural or ethnic minorities in Dutch society, such as the foreign workers, the Surinamese, the Moluccans, and the Antilleans. Migrants were framed as “minorities” in Dutch society instead of temporary guests, and government decided to focus on those minorities whose position was characterized by an accumulation of cultural and social-economic difficulties and for whom the Dutch government felt a special historical responsibility (Rath 2001). The Minorities Policy expressed the idea that an amelioration of the social-cultural position of migrants would also improve their social-economic position. The policy objective was to combat discrimination and social-economic deprivation and to support social-cultural emancipation. These policies were not developed to celebrate all kinds of cultural differences—it did not include well-off migrants but just those who were socio-economically very weak, and even within this category only those ethnic groups for whom Dutch government felt a special historical responsibility. Within this perspective, government thought the preservation of cultural identities to be useful for instrumental reasons. At first sight, this might seem to reflect somewhat the Dutch tradition of pluralism through “pillarism”, that is the institutionalization of “sovereignty within the own sphere” for each minority group (Lijphart 1968). In this context, cultural pluralism (such as broadcast media for several groups, religious schools) was the right of Muslims like for any other group in The Netherlands. This pluralism has, however, nothing to do with integration policies as such, but was the consequence of the institutional heritage of pillarization.

The relation between Dutch Ethnic Minorities Policies and the history of pillarization has, moreover, to be put in perspective. First of all, Dutch society had been de-pillarizing in many sectors already since the 1960s and, particularly, the 1970s. Pillarization was considered as something of the past. This does not exclude, however, that the government responded to the arrival of newcomers with, what

Vink (2007) has called, a “pillarization reflex”: Dutch policy makers resorted to the traditional frame of pillarization for providing meaning to the new issue of immigrant integration. This pillarization reflex strongly resembles how in France the Republican model was re-invented in the domain of immigrant integration in the early 1980s Bertossi (2009).

Others have added that it was not so much the integration policy per se that was inspired by pillarization (Maussen 2009; Duyvendak and Scholten 2009). Rather, there was the influence of more generic institutions that were still to some extent pillarized, such as the Dutch tradition of state-sponsored special (religious) education, a pillarized broadcasting system and health system. Integration policy itself has never been oriented at the construction of minority groups as pillars. Minorities also never achieved the level of organization (and separation) that national minorities achieved in the early twentieth century. According to Rath et al. (1996: 59): “in terms of institutional arrangements, there is no question of an Islamic pillar in The Netherlands, or at least one that is in any way comparable to the Roman Catholic or Protestant pillars in the past”. In fact, we would emphasize that there never really was a “national multicultural model”, as defining slogans as “integration with preservation of cultural identity” were rejected already at this early stage; only later this slogan would be projected on this period in public and academic discourse. Pillarization nor multiculturalism were really embraced as normative ideals; statements of multiculturalism rather referred in a more descriptive sense to the increase of diversity in society. As far as references to pillarization or multiculturalism were used at all (the first time multiculturalism as a term pops up in politics is in 1995!), these seem to have been much more pragmatic than normative. Our conclusion therefore is that “multiculturalism” is actively co-produced by politicians and social scientists in order to disqualify policies of the past.

Besides the contested continuity between pillarisation and the alleged Dutch multicultural model, it is also obvious that this “model” has not been very consistent over the past decades. Since the late 1980s, the Ethnic Minorities Policy has been subject to fierce controversy. In 1989, the authoritative Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy denounced this policy model, as it focused too much on “culture and morality” and tended to make minorities too much dependent on state facilities because of its group-specific measures (WRR 1989). According to the WRR, the institutionalization of cultural pluralism should no longer be considered an independent policy objective. Rather, government should focus on stimulating individual migrants to be able to stand on their own feet. In the early 1990s, government policy changed in several important regards. The Minorities Policy was reframed into an Integration Policy that stressed social-economic participation of immigrants as citizens or “allochthonous” rather than emancipation of minorities. Promoting “good” or “active” citizenship became the primary policy goal, stimulating individual migrants to live up to their civic rights as well as their duties and to become economically independent participants in society.

Later, just after the turn of the millennia, an assimilationist turn took place in Dutch integration policy. In fact, a (second) broad national debate took place in 2000 in response to claims that Dutch policy had become a “multicultural tragedy” (Scheffer 2000). Also, the populist politician Fortuyn made the alleged failure of the Dutch integration approach into one of his central political issues. This set in motion

a gradual assimilationist turn, which was codified in an “Integration Policy New Style.” Whereas the Integration Policy had stressed “active citizenship”, the Integration Policy “New Style” stressed rather the “common citizenship”, which meant that “the unity of society must be found in what members have in common (..) that is that people speak Dutch, and that one abides to basic Dutch norms” (TK 2003–2004, 29203, nr. 1: 8.). Persisting social-cultural differences were now considered a hindrance to immigrant integration. Moreover, the integration policy was more and more linked to a broader public and political concern about the preservation of national identity and social cohesion in Dutch society. It was in this period that the framing of the “multicultural model” took place as a “counter-discourse” against which new policy developments were to be juxtaposed. This assimilationist turn may have contributed to a discursive reconstruction of the history of integration policies that put much greater stress on its alleged multiculturalist traits.

Clearly, there has not been one dominant model or discourse in The Netherlands. In spite of the singular image of The Netherlands as representing the multicultural model, Dutch policy has been inspired, beyond the multicultural model, by at least two different discourses. One of these competing discourses is the more liberal–egalitarian (social-economic) discourse, which became particularly influential in the 1990s. And the other is the more assimilationist discourse that emerged during the 1990s and become more prominent after the turn of the millennia.

Policy practices

Even when we accept for the sake of argument that The Netherlands has known a multicultural model in the 1980s, it still has to be proven that this model was also powerful in terms of concrete policy practices. For instance, in France, there is strong evidence of decoupling or *décalage* between official policy discourse (the Republican model) and concrete policy practices which tend to be much more lenient in terms of recognizing cultural and ethnic differences in a way that contrasts sharply with the color-blind national policy discourse (Favell 1998).

There is some evidence that policies that were initiated in the 1980s were effectuated in this period, and even were continued until well after the Minorities Policy had been formally abandoned. This is what Koopmans refers to as strong *path-dependency* in the practice of Dutch integration policies (2007). For instance, Immigrant Language and Culture Instruction continued until after the turn of the Millennia, which seem to suggest at first sight strong path-dependency. However, upon closer examination, the picture is totally different: whereas its goal was initially formulated as contributing to identity formation of migrants within the Dutch society, its rationale was reframed in the 1990s in terms of “language-transition” by first mastering the mother-tongue language as support for the subsequent apprehension of Dutch as second language. Another practice that was continued until well after the 1980s was the institutionalized practice of consultation with migrant organizations. At first, the establishment of migrant organizations and a National Consultatory and Advisory Structure for Minorities had the objective of democratically involving migrants in policy-making processes. In the 1990s, the

institutional involvement of migrant organizations was largely continued, although its advisory function was gradually marginalized. More recently, an important rationale for maintaining this form of institutionalized “multiculturalism” is that migrant organizations provide channels for debate when incidents, such as the murder of the film-maker Van Gogh, trigger broad public and political controversy. Also in other fields, there are signs of some path-dependency, such as in the existence of broadcast media for migrant groups and in the establishment of Islamic schools with state help. However, the meaning and the use of these policies and the opportunities offered to migrants have radically shifted over time, also because the national and local levels of integration policy seem to have followed rather different institutional logics. Whereas national policy discourse was inspired by politicization, trigger events, and a concern with grand themes like national identity and culture, local policy discourse seems to have been much more *pragmatic* of nature, concerned with utilitarian modes of problem-coping and a more instrumental policy logic.

An important instance of divergence in this respect concerns the recognition of ethno-cultural groups and minorities organizations. In the early 1990s, national government formally adopted a more color-blind citizenship approach, approaching migrants as citizens rather than as ethnic or cultural groups. This citizenship approach meant that various group-specific, tailor-made projects would have to be abolished. Yet, in practice, there has been a continued proliferation of such group-specific projects (De Zwart 2005). Often, there is a pragmatic need for policy practitioners to focus on specific groups and cooperate with migrant organizations, to be able to “reach” the policy target groups and to acquire relevant knowledge and information about these groups (Poppelaars and Scholten 2008).

Although these local practices often imply the de-facto recognition of cultural groups, it would be a mistake to consider them as real multicultural policies. Rather, they form more pragmatic attempts to conduct effective policies on the local level. They are not inspired by an ideology of multiculturalism nor by a legacy of pillarization, but rather by the more pragmatic need to recognize groups and develop tailor-made projects to conduct effective policies and to, as the mayor of the City of Amsterdam aptly phrases it, “keep things together.”

Research-policy dialogues on the Dutch model

Instead of there being one dominant discourse in The Netherlands, there were obviously at least several competing discourses. Among them there was a “Minority Policy Discourse” (rather recently retrospectively labeled as a “multicultural model”), but also a more liberal–egalitarian discourse and an assimilationist discourse. The next step is then to analyze the role that social research has played in the evolution of this intractable policy controversy. The literature suggests that policy development in this sector has been strongly influenced by social research (Penninx 1992; Guiraudon 1997; Rath 2001; Scholten 2011). But, has research also contributed to a resolution of this controversy, or has research rather become a part of the ongoing controversies itself?

The technocratic symbiosis of the minority policy

The Dutch Minority Policy on immigrant integration emerged as a discourse in The Netherlands in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was the period when it had become obvious that migrants would stay permanently and that some sort of policy response was required. Before this period, Dutch politicians had held on firmly to the myth of return migration, which prevented the development of an integration policy. This also was reflected in the absence of research interest for minorities: only few studies were done that really focused on the position of minorities within Dutch society (Penninx 2005). In fact, government-funded research avoided the use of the term “immigrant” (Van Amersfoort 1974) so as not to punctuate the myth of temporary residence.

There is a clear relation between the rise of research interest and the rise of immigrant integration on the policy agenda in the late 1970s. A powerful “discourse coalition” emerged that consisted of a comparatively small network of policy makers and researchers. On the side of policy and politics, there was a “gentlemen’s agreement” not to make this into a partisan issue, fearing radical parties that could play the race card. When government had agreed that a policy for ethnic minorities was needed, it rapidly established a departmental committee that was put in charge of the development of such a policy. There was a strong belief among policy makers in this period that integration as a social problem could be resolved if approached rationally.

On the side of research, a group of researchers emerged that was brought together in the government-sponsored Advisory Committee on Minorities Research (ACOM). This consisted primarily of researchers with an anthropological background, which seems to have contributed to a cultural focus in the research of the ACOM; it tended to focus on the specific problems that minority groups faced because of their cultural and ethnic traits. Furthermore, there was a strong sense of social engagement and policy orientation among these researchers: they wanted their research to have a clear societal function (Penninx 2005). In 1979, a report from the Scientific Council for Government, which was strongly inspired and influenced by the ACOM, provided the basis for the development of the Ethnic Minorities Policy. Most of the recommendations from this report were silently and directly adopted in formal policy.

This discourse coalition has been described as a *technocratic symbiosis* (Rath 2001), or a strongly centralized policy structure involving the co-optation of experts and ethnic elites (Guiraudon 1997). An important function of this technocratic symbiosis was to keep the debate on immigrant integration largely behind closed doors; it was structurally depoliticized. This created a specific sort of “framing dynamics” as this technocratic symbiosis was held together by a so-called “minorities logic”, that is a focus on what was specific to minorities in terms of culture and ethnicity rather than on their more general characteristics or what minorities had in common with other citizens. This illustrates how this discourse coalition not only sustained the discourse of that period, but also was itself held together by this discourse; there was a mutually reinforcing logic between the Minority Policy discourse and the discourse coalition by which it was sustained. At the same time, this symbiosis effectively excluded other discourses, such as a more

critical-Marxist discourse that had emerged in the social sciences in the 1970s and the nationalist (assimilationist) discourse that only had very little resonance in the field of politics in the 1980s.

Competing discourse coalitions and the role of research

The rise of the Minority Policy-frame in the 1980s was thus the outcome of “coproduction” by researchers and policy makers that were involved in a so-called “technocratic symbiosis.” For a considerable period (during the 1980s), this symbiosis maintained a structural equilibrium in the field of immigrant integration. Although many policy fields (especially social policy) were subject to major changes in the 1980s in the context of the politics of welfare state retrenchment, the contours of the Ethnic Minorities Policy remained largely stable. This policy “subsystem” continued to be depoliticized and there was a belief that, especially during periods of economic downturn like in the 1980s, there was an even greater need for specific measures of minorities because of their strong vulnerability for economic decline. At the same time, minorities research thrived as a rapidly growing research field that continued to be strongly policy-oriented, among others through the Advisory Committee on Minorities Research.

Yet, a new discourse coalition emerged at the end of the 1980s that advocated a more social-economic approach to immigrant integration to prevent migrants from becoming too much dependent on welfare state facilities. This discourse coalition involved leading politicians (such as Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, opposition leader Frits Bolkestein) as well as experts (such as Wim Albeda, chair of the Scientific Council for Government Policy and former minister of Social Affairs, and Han Entzinger). Yet, this discourse coalition faced difficulties to put immigrant integration on the agenda, especially because of its political sensitivity. Behind the scenes, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) and the Minister of Home Affairs, responsible for the coordination of the Ethnic Minorities Policy, therefore agreed that the WRR would issue a new advisory report. This report would have to focus primarily on “material areas” of integration, such as employment, education, and housing.

This WRR report triggered broad public and also political debate in The Netherlands. Although it did not immediately lead to policy change, the report was revived when several years later, in 1992, a broad national Minorities Debate emerged that effectively punctuated the norm of depoliticization and cleared the path for policy change. Especially in its focus on active citizenship and on material areas of integration rather than immaterial (cultural) areas, the Integration Policy that was formulated in 1994 clearly reflected many of the ideas of the WRR from 1989. The report triggered fierce responses from the established community of minorities researchers. The ACOM denounced the 1989 WRR report as “a report inspired by science rather than a scientific report” (ACOM 1989). By putting the participation of minorities in the broader perspective of welfare state change, the WRR had punctuated the technocratic symbiosis between researchers and policy makers that tried to defend the established policy equilibrium by drawing attention to what was specific to minorities rather than what they had in common with other “citizens.”

This episode brought an end to the institutionalized research-policy nexus that had evolved in the 1970s and 1980s. The ACOM was dissolved in 1992, and although minorities research continued to grow as a field of research, no similar institute evolved that had such a central position as the ACOM. The use of social research in policy-making became more selective and more instrumental. Penninx (2005) describes what he calls “pick-and-choose strategies” of policy makers to select only those strands of expertise that helped sustain the new policy discourse. The policy setting now determined the selection of expertise. This became strikingly clear when the WRR issued new reports on immigrant integration in 2001 and 2007, which were inspired by international research developments (such as the emerging transnationalist paradigm) rather than by the national policy setting (Scholten 2011). In fact, these reports were now taken as indications that the WRR would have become a “leftist” organization and would have become obsolete as an organization for policy advice.

Furthermore, the utilization of research became more instrumental; government wanted data to legitimize its new policy discourse. In this context, especially the government-associated Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) obtained a more prominent role. Its regular Minorities Reports were now often taken as anchor points for policy developments, especially as the SCP addressed a lot of attention to social-economic areas and increasingly also areas of social-cultural integration. In fact, the role of the SCP became even more significant when it openly developed an agenda in favor of a more assimilationist policy approach (see Schnabel 2000 and the inclusion of parts on “social-cultural integration” in the Minorities Reports).

Just after the turn of the millennia, a new discourse emerged prominently in Dutch politics, which stressed the need for social-cultural adaptation or assimilation. In 2000, a second national minorities debate took place in response to an essay of the public intellectual Paul Scheffer about “the multicultural tragedy” (Scheffer 2000). Also, immigrant integration was the central political issue in “the long year of 2002” that shocked Dutch politics (Andeweg and Irwin 2005). Led by Pim Fortuyn, a broad populist movement emerged that expressed a loss of confidence in the Dutch political establishment and its alleged ignorance towards the voice from the street. For Pim Fortuyn, immigrant integration was the topic that illustrated the lack of democratic responsiveness of Dutch politicians to popular concerns about cultural tensions in society. Political concerns about immigrant integration grew further due to a series of national and international events (11th September Attacks in the USA, the terrorist killing of a renowned Dutch film-maker and criticaster of Islam). Also, a number of public intellectuals (Hirsi Ali, Scheffer) continued to play a central role in feeding public debate on immigrant integration, stressing in particular the need to preserve Dutch identity and culture.

This new discourse was supported by a discourse coalition that consisted primarily of politicians and public intellectuals. Initially, social research played a rather modest role in the rise of this new discourse. The discourse coalition that supported this new discourse carried a deep mistrust toward most social researchers that had thus far been involved in this domain. This was manifested among others around the publication of the 2001 and 2007 reports from the WRR. One of the conclusions of the 2007 report was that “the” Dutch identity did not exist, which was also aptly indicated by the Dutch princess Maxima during the press conference for

the launch of this report. Several politicians, such as the rightist politician Wilders, saw this as an indication of the “multicultural nonsense” from research bodies like the WRR. The public intellectuals involved in this discourse coalition often blamed social researchers for their “multiculturalist bias” and their policy orientation. At the same time, these intellectuals called for a stronger political primacy in this field, in contrast to what they saw as decades of depoliticization through venues of scientific expertise.

These politicians and public intellectuals retrospectively labeled the past as a time full of naive multicultural dreams, leading to a “multicultural drama”. From 2003 onwards, some well-known sociologists supported this perspective by their research, labeling Dutch policies as a multicultural model. This proved very influential in terms of the ex-post labeling of Dutch policies, also the liberal–egalitarian policies from the 1990s, in terms of a multicultural model. Thereby, it clearly showed the performative function of models-thinking in Dutch discourse on immigrant integration.

This analysis of shifting discourses and shifting discourse coalitions shows that, as already theorized by among others Rein and Schön and Hajer, researchers are often part of specific discourse coalitions. Research played a key role in establishing the Minority Policy-frame in the late 1970s, but also in setting a new discourse on the agenda in the late 1980s, and retrospectively labeling the 1980s and 1990s as “multicultural”. Furthermore, we can observe that whenever a change of discourse coalition takes place, we often also see a different sort of involvement of research emerging, often also with different researchers and research bodies involved. If anything, this shows that the role played by scientific research is not “exceptional” in a way as described by the standard model of science speaking truth to power (Wildavsky 1979; Radin 2000).

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to analyze the role of social-scientific research in the construction of the alleged Dutch “multicultural model” of immigrant integration. Both in national and international literature, Dutch integration policies are often described in terms of a multicultural model, which would have involved a tendency to institutionalize cultural pluralism in the belief that cultural emancipation of immigrant minorities is the key to their integration into Dutch society. In this respect, the Dutch model would differ from for instance the French (republican) model that would focus primarily on the assimilation of migrants into the French political community regardless of cultural or ethnic origins of migrants.

This article, first of all, strongly nuances the idea that there would be a dominant Dutch multicultural model of integration. At best, it was one of several discourses; beyond multiculturalism, liberal–egalitarianism and assimilationism have also been powerful discourses in The Netherlands. In fact, when it comes to official policy discourse, the Minority Policy-frame was abandoned already in the early 1990s, and there is evidence that, even during the 1980s, this Dutch policy discourse was much less “multicultural” than often suggested by politicians and some scholars.

Moreover, many practices were actually not inspired by a normative belief in multiculturalism but by more pragmatic concerns of “keeping things together.”

Social-scientific research played a central role in the development of the Minority Policy-frame in the late 1970s and during the 1980s. A technocratic symbiosis that brought together a small network of policy makers and researchers allowed for the development this policy “behind closed doors.” Research also played a role in punctuating this symbiosis and the agenda-setting of a new type of (liberal–egalitarian) discourse in the late 1980s. In both episodes, social researchers formed a central part of the discourse coalitions that sustained either the Minority Policy-frame in the 1980s or liberal egalitarianism in the 1990s. However, some researchers also played a role in the discourse coalition that triggered the assimilationist turn in Dutch policy discourse after the turn of the millennia. Though the assimilationist turn was associated with growing cynicism toward social research, soon sociologists joined the “realist” discourse coalition (Prins 2004) by retrospectively labeling Dutch integration policies as “multiculturalist”. Obviously, this is a rather specific form of coproduction of policy makers and scholars: it is the invention of a tradition (the invention of Dutch multiculturalism) that produced the legitimacy for the assimilationist turn in Dutch integration politics.

This analysis shows that researchers often tend to be part of specific discourse coalitions: they too adopt specific normative models for naming and framing social reality. Rather than policy models being verified or falsified by research, we can speak of the coproduction of policy models by researchers and policy makers. The case-study of Dutch integration policies clearly show in this respect that, within the strongly national setting in which these policies are developed, researchers and policy makers tend to coproduce “national models of integration”, be it the (anti-) multicultural model or the more liberal–egalitarian model of civic integration. Similar observations have been made for France, where researchers (and intellectuals) and policy makers have “co-produced” various versions of “the” republican model of integration (Bertossi 2009). There is, however, one big difference between the two countries: whereas the Dutch multicultural model has retrospectively been framed as a negative point of reference, in France republicanism and ‘Laïcité’ still have strong positive connotations (Bertossi and Duyvendak 2009). Very recently, prominent politicians in Germany start to label their past as “multiculti” as well—and like the most vocal voices in The Netherlands, this is meant in a pejorative way.

Especially in the case of intractable controversies like immigrant integration, the coproduction of such national models of integration may in fact hinder our understanding of integration processes. As this case-study has shown, the Dutch case is characterized by at least several discourses or “models of integration.” Every discourse has its own way of naming and framing integration, and its own criteria for determining policy success or failure. Such a multiplicity of discourses complicates research-policy dialogues; what some see as evidence of policy success, may be seen by others as irrelevant or even evidence of policy failure. This way research-policy dialogues that do not manage to achieve the level of “critical frame reflection” may decay into a “dialogue of the deaf.”

Therefore, there is a need for research-policy dialogues that allow for reflection based on at least several discourses or “models of integration.” One way to achieve

this is to develop more inductive empirical research to integration processes. Instead of adopting a specific discourse as a starting point of research (for instance, research on the success or failure of Dutch policies), inductive research can strive to take as many problem aspects into account (based on an exploration of various discourses), and then reason towards different discourses. This also means that research in itself can never determine the success or failure of a specific policy.

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