Out of character: debating Dutchness, narrating citizenship

van Reekum, R.

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3.
The culturalisation of citizenship, or how to narrate *burgerschap*

Why would the Dutch context be a critical case when it comes to the implication of public plurality in the relation of nationality and citizenship? Quite generally, public plurality plays a crucial role in attempts to figure out what may be the Dutchness of Dutch citizenship. For a long time already, notions of public plurality have figured prominently in discourses about the Dutchness of citizenship. This chapter will seek to provide a genealogy of *burgerschap* as it relates Dutchness. The aim is create more critical distance from which the developments dealt with in the subsequent chapters can be perceived. It should allow us to consider with more precision to what extent and in what way ‘the constitution of a citizenry and the idea of nation reflect the notion of differentiated public or that of a unitary people’ (Calhoun 1997b: 99).

Again, the question of continuity is crucial here. With the increasing electoral dominance and public legitimacy of anti-immigrant and ostentatiously nationalist political movements and positionings in public politics, many public and scholarly writings have provided diagnoses of transformation (Scheffer 2000; Chorus & Galan 2002; Entzinger 2003; Couwenberg 2004; Wansink 2004; Pels 2005; Sniderman & Hagedoorn 2007; Vasta 2007; see also Bovens & Hendriks 2008). A whole spectrum of transformational terms has been used to describe what has been happening in Dutch citizenship politics over the last 30 years: a sudden shift, a remarkable breakthrough, a resurgence, a return, a reaction, a revolution, a backlash, etc. All these terms seek to give a name to the idea that somehow or other a confrontation with difference has effected an irredeemable change in Dutch citizenship politics. Public plurality does some crucial work here: while the Dutch past is, for better or worse, associated with a differentialist approach to national citizenship, its present is narrated as a constriction of difference and an emphasis on assimilation and homogeneity, again for better or worse (Vink 2007; Schinkel 2008; Duyvendak et al. 2009; Van Reekum & Duyvendak 2012).

If we would apply Calhoun’s concern for public plurality to these diagnoses of change, we would quite quickly come up with a verdict of Dutch case: while the Dutchness of Dutch citizenship used to be articulated with a strong
emphasis on plurality, this emphasis has markedly decreased as opposing articulations relate Dutchness and citizenship by reference to some essential similarity, often called ‘culture’. Moreover, this verdict would have as its accompaniment a counterposing verdict: the Dutchness of Dutch citizenship was always already founded on an essentialist similarity, while hidden and repressed for a while this characteristic of Dutch citizenship has been revealed in recent years as its veiling has been dropped. While opposed to each other, both verdicts do not need any consideration of how Dutchness and citizenship are made to relate. They give accounts of how they are, in fact, related and to what extent their interrelationship has changed. They do not, however, provide an account of the kind of performative work that goes into all of this. As said, this is where the crucial contribution of this study lies.

The study before you is itself the product of a scholarly diagnosis of transformation. It has been conducted in the context of a research project that entertained, at its centre, the idea that we have been dealing with a pronounced culturalisation of citizenship. The idea of a culturalisation of citizenship, as conceived in the research project mentioned above, started out from a Marshallian approach to citizenship in which different dimensions of citizenship are to be distinguished and described historically (Duyvendak et al. 2010). Marshall’s theory of citizenship thereby gave an opening to suggest that Dutch citizenship was shifting from an emphasis on political and social dimensions towards a distinct, cultural one. In no way was the notion of culturalisation primarily or specifically conceived as a shift away from ‘race’ toward ‘culture’, as is sometimes assumed. Even if the mobilisation race/culture distinctions play a major role in the culturalisation of citizenship, culturalisation neither prescribe any straightforward leaving behind of ‘race’, nor the emergence of a ‘cultural racism’. Whether culturalisation constitutes any of these directions is unspecified, itself a choice to be reflected upon.

Culturalisation does, of course, imply process and change. At the very least, it implies a heightened attention to ‘culture’ in citizenship politics. While the central argument of this study is at odds with the suggestion that Dutch citizenship had not been culturalised before the recent period of political contestation, it is also at odds with the suggestion that the prominence of ‘culture’ in citizenship politics is merely a continuation of the same in slightly different terms. Citizenship was already deeply culturalised and the more recent concerns for ‘culture’ in citizenship politics constitute a remarkable development that ought to be better understood (see also Van Houdt & Schinkel 2009). The initial research project was, from the outset, conceived to scrutinise culturalisation through a continuum between
‘constructive’ and ‘restorative’ forms of culturalisation, where ‘constructive’ indicated culture as a work-in-progress and ‘restorative’ indicated culture as a preservable essence. Not only does this dichotomy invite a certain race/culture distinctions after all – when ‘race’ is associated with unchangeable essence and ‘culture’ with adaptable practice –, it also assumes that it is possible to neatly distinguish between ‘constructive’ and ‘restorative’ modes. The main problem here, as I will argue, is that culture cannot be treated as merely another dimension of citizenship that in Marshallian fashion is developed alongside others. Or, to put it even more generally, dimensions of citizenship suggest that it is already clear what citizenship is apart from it acquiring dimensions in a variety of directions. With respect to culturalisation this means that we all-too-easily assume that we can oppose ‘constructive’ to ‘restorative’ as two mutually excluding modes of dealing with culture in citizenship politics. As will be explored in the subsequent chapters, ‘construction’ and ‘restoration’ continually appear together, calling forth each other, without it being possible to easily decide which of these ‘actually’ animates certain discourses, interventions and mobilisations. Instead of deciding between them and judging culturalisation accordingly, it is far more interesting to analyse their mutual dependencies and take them as part of what is at stake in the mingling of citizenship and culture. In order to develop a notion of culturalisation that allows us to do so, I will explore the relationship between culture and citizenship in more detail. Much like the concept of culture, I will argue that the notion of a culturalisation of citizenship can be productively repossessed.

Ignoring possible problems and deficiencies of Marshall’s theory, I do think that attention for the various aspects of citizenship is worthwhile (Van Houdt & Schinkel 2009; Isin & Nielsen 2008). However, the intellectual habit of enumerating aspects of citizenship is so widespread today that it is good to reflect on what all those aspects mean for citizenship. What could it mean to specify something like the culturalisation of citizenship? I’ll first clarify conceptually what is at stake in the culturalisation of citizenship, before going into the specifics of the Dutch context.

Aspects of citizenship
What sense does it make to latch words like ‘social’, ‘political’, ‘national’, ‘juridical’, ‘biological’, ‘cultural’, ‘active’, ‘moral’, etc. onto the concept of citizenship? Let’s begin with a programmatic statement by Charles Tilly:

Like relations between spouses, between co-authors, between workers and employers, citizenship has the character of a contract: variable in range, never completely specified, always depending on
unstated assumptions about context, modified by practice, constrained by collective memory, yet inevitably involving rights and obligations sufficiently defined that either party is likely to express indignation and take corrective action when the other fails to meet expectations built into the relationship. (1999: 253)

The point of Tilly’s statement is not to ground citizenship in social contract theory, but rather the opposite: to suggest that citizenship, like other instances of real world relationships, involves the always contestable, never stable tinkering with a never entirely coherent set of agreements and expectations. Tilly’s statement helps understand that the dynamic of claims, expectations, indignations and re-evaluations will have the tendency to move and proliferate. Citizenship expands, extends, moves, and gravitates across any number of domains for which its rights and obligations might become relevant. This is the case particularly because citizenship involves the effort to abstract from specific circumstances and to invent generalised rights and obligations. Once abstracted these subsequently become associated with matters that weren’t initially relevant.

The concept of citizenship makes sense because it refers to a way of dealing with agreements and expectations that is no longer just a case-by-case resolution between authorities and subjects. As Tilly continues: ‘Precisely insofar as a bundle of rights and obligations actually distinguish a whole category of the state’s subject population defined by its relation to that state rather than by a category’s place in the population’s general system of inequality, those categorically defined rights and obligations belong to citizenship.’ (Tilly 1999: 253, italics added). Historically, it began to make more and more sense to use a distinct term – citizenship – as state agents and affected subjects began to invent rights and obligations that abstracted from the practical circumstances of each. Thus, citizenship is characteristically unhinged from any particular set of concerns and may come to involve a rather long and disorderly collection of items, from jurisdiction to education to city planning, to language, to media access and so on. Citizenship is the institutionalisation of a social relation that may proliferate right across a host of different concerns and domains. Citizenship is never exhausted by a certain regime of legal codes, nor is it caught in its established institutional practices. As an abstracted social relation it always allows for the enactment of new aspects (Isin & Nielsen 2008) and, indeed, an erosion of its reach and depth (Turner 2001).

Tilly’s approach to citizenship clearly emanates from a larger engagement with the long-term history of statecraft and popular resistance, the ebb and flow of democratisation that is at the heart of his work (Tilly 2009). Like others, most notably Marshall (1950), his concept of citizenship invites us to look for long-term
historical arches in which aspects of citizenship are layered and patched onto each other as states and subjects enlarge and diversify their ever more intense relationship with each other. As the state diversifies, juridical rights are accompanied by political ones. Gradually, this set of rights is further complicated by a host of social rights. While citizenship is thereby formed by a disorderly set of rights and obligations, the category itself, the name of the social relation through which this set is bundled together, remain abstracted. For example, politics is no longer the occasional confrontation of sovereign and subject when parliamentary rights are granted to citizens. The political struggle, of course, still continues, but in a distinctly new way that the category of citizenship is meant to capture: the members of parliament are now exercising a capacity that they share with all those who share their particular relation to the state – citizenship – and is no longer derived from some other social status. Tilly’s definition reminds us that citizenship need not at all have the universalistic pretences that, in some cases, it has acquired (see also Calhoun 1999). The contention that citizenship should pertain to all subjects of a state is a recent ideal and a variable achievement, not some essential characteristic towards which citizenship inevitably bends. Citizenship merely means that claims are made by and rights are granted to a segment of the subjects that has distinguished itself and is distinguished on the basis of its relation to the state in general. The proliferation of citizenship means that among the many differences that exist in society a specific kind of difference becomes highly valorised and, often, dominant for deciding who may be entitled: the difference between citizens and non-citizens.

Within this approach, foregrounding the inherent instability of citizenship’s dynamics, culturalisation of citizenship would refer to the back-and-forth struggle in relation to ‘cultural’ concerns: language, customs, values, religion, knowledge, identification, art, aesthetics, meaning, understanding, heritage, commemoration, symbols, etc. From here, we can reconstruct the historical emergence and contemporary dilemmas of cultural citizenship (Kymlicka 1996; Stevenson 2003). This means that one takes culture to be a concern next to many others – welfare, politics, law, the environment and the like. Much can be said about the ways in which governments and governed have come to deal with culture through the notion of citizenship: government may for instance expect citizens to speak a certain language, while those expectation might be more or less formalised, more or less enforced (Brubaker 2013). The same may be true for religion. Yet, citizenship struggles over culture also point towards another, broader meaning of the culturalisation of citizenship. It is this meaning that I wish to explore.
Abstracted, but how?

We should be attentive to the fact that ‘culture’ poses a rather particular kind of problem to the development of citizenship. The emergence of cultural rights and obligations, namely, has the tendency to make concrete what citizenship tends to abstract from: how do people decide who will be qualified as citizens in the first place? Culture has the peculiar tendency to bring back on the table precisely those categories of ‘society’s general system of inequality’ from which the category of citizenship abstracted, to make particular that which was valued for its generality. As rights to particularity and difference take shape, the category of citizenship itself is problematised as it appears to contradict the relevance of such ‘cultural’ differences. As long as cultural rights are associated with cultural categories that are themselves assumed to delineate the civic community as a whole, this tension between citizenship and culture may still be manageable. This is where the nation-state-citizenry tautologies come to play their reiterative, looping role. For instance, compulsory education may oblige citizens to expose their children to a national history curriculum. As long as the hard work of homogenising nation, people and public is maintained – this is never entirely self-evident or successful – educational obligations are in principle no more contentious than any other kinds of civic obligations. But when cultural categories attain their significance from the differences within and across the civic community, it becomes hard to tell whether such rights and obligations actually enable an equal treatment of citizens or, in fact, disentangle and particularise the arduously abstracted category of citizenship. The culturalisation of citizenship is thereby concerned with questions about how to actually abstract citizenship. More specifically, it opens up the pressing question whether and in what sense citizenship itself is a cultural construct always bending to the particularities of non-civic differences in society.

Tilly, for one, suggest as much: ‘As observers, we actually witness transactions between governmental agents and broadly defined categories, but we abstract from those transactions a cultural bundle: a set of mutual rights and obligations.’ (1999: 253). So it is always an open question if and to what extent the abstraction of citizenship from the ‘general system of inequality’ is successful and what was needed to achieve that success. To what extent is there ever a well-enough established distinction between a category of the population in the system of inequality, on the one hand, and a category of the population defined by its relation to the state in the abstract? In principle, it should be clear enough that transactions with the state never entirely loose a connection to differences associated with culture. If citizenship is itself a cultural construct, when and how is it sufficiently abstract? When can we be sure that a discourse of citizenship –
abstract, general, concerned with the state – is not merely the cultural expression of a particular, privileged category of the population bending the state to its cultural particularity? The point of this argument is not to suggest that, behind the guise of ideology, all of citizenship is actually a form of cultural domination. We should not rush to the conclusion that citizenship is really just an ideology of bourgeois privilege, that ‘civic’ is really only code for ‘capitalist’, ‘patriarch’, and ‘white’. Indeed, it often is but it is also more than that.

I want argue that we need to be concerned with the narration and naturalisation of citizenship as put forth by Margaret Somers (2008). Citizenship is not just the product of Tilly’s to-and-fro producing a set of more or less formalised rights and obligations authorised by a state. There is always more to it. We also need to explain how this to-and-fro is enabled by and feeds back into a particularising narration and naturalisation of citizenship. Citizenship is not just or even primarily a bundle of rights and obligations, but also and crucially a historically and culturally located bundle of narratives and images that informs the specific way in which the more or less durable abstraction of citizenship is achieved and kept going, often against considerable odds. The collection of rights and obligations may be incoherent and incomplete, but it will be accompanied by narratives that assumes to make some sense out of that collection by placing its items in a more or less coherent, more or less self-evident story-line about how and why it is right and proper that citizenship is what it appears to be for the moment.

In this second meaning of the phrase, culturalisation of citizenship is about the changing narratives and associated repertoires with which people distinguish the category of citizenship from other kinds of differences between people. As Tilly argues, the to-and-fro tends to abstract the category of citizenship from the general system of inequality, as if devoid of any particularity and only defined by its relation to the state. But how and to what extent this effect of abstraction is actually sustained is an utterly empirical matter, dependent on the actual circumstances of narration. So we arrive at a notion of culturalisation that is markedly different from a Marshallian one, which makes it into yet another dimension, and instead foreground the narrations of citizenship through which citizenship is abstracted from other kinds of differences. The culturalisation of citizenship, then, refers to the struggle over how it is that citizenship stands apart from other kinds of differences between people, how it becomes the name of generality, granting it a privileged, abstracted status.

Although this may seem, at first, to be a rather scholastic problem, it can be found all over the place: ‘citoyenneté’, ‘Bürgerschaft’, ‘burgerschap’, ‘citizenship’ all have very particular genealogies and people work daily to figure
out what these notions actually mean and where they ought to apply. Studies of conceptual history show how difficult it can be for all the participants involved to figure out what the abstract notion of citizenship actually is and how their always preliminary solutions to this problem change (Koselleck & Schreiner 1994; Kloek & Tilmans 2002).

The meaning of burgerschap straddles constantly as public and political discourses change. On the one hand, burgerschap poses as the designation of a particular group amongst other groups, claiming for itself a status that is not so much concerned with the state as it is with civility, prudence and true love of country. To be a burger is to have certain dispositions and to live a certain civilised life, to display certain virtues and moral character throughout daily conduct. But it is also the name that, on the basis of burgherly dignity, is used by claimants of civic rights vis-à-vis the state. Only after a long process of contention does the vocabulary of burgers, burgerlijkheid and burgerschap lose some of its predominant attachment to a particular group and civility – the burgerij – and does it begins to designates a relationship to the state in general. This abstraction is achieved, moreover, not by simply cleansing it of particularising connotations to the cultural characteristics of a specific group, the burghers. Quite the opposite, the abstraction is achieved through a re-culturalisation of citizenship (Van Houdt & Schinkel 2009). Less and less are there allusions to the cultural gestures that set apart the burghers, but increasingly and after a while almost exclusively is burgerschap associated with the national population, its government and its particularising gestures, symbols and narratives associated with it. Quite literally, burgerschap was nationalised. Burgerschap was never a clearly political category, nor did it become more clearly abstracted by making cultural differences less relevant. What changed were the specific narrative notions and repertoires with which people made sense of the privileged position of citizens and their citizenship. Most poignantly, the narration of citizenship became encompassing rather than differentiating (Baumann & Gingrich 2004). Yet, how was this done?

The narratives of citizenship, through which people make sense of its abstraction from other categories, are reiterated many times over. At times, some or most of the story-lines are renewed. This is the sense of culturalisation to which we will now turn our attention in the Dutch case.

**Burgerschap as the public demonstration of autonomous moral conviction**

As was just noted, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries burgers were distinguished and distinguished themselves through a host of different narratives thatcentred on ideals of civility. It pertained mainly to independent, urban, mercantile families
Such narratives emphasised restraint, self-reliance, the fear of god (as opposed to fearing the Vatican), dignity, cleanliness, decency, respectability, order, utility, simplicity, pragmatism, rationality, independence, clarity, etc. These narratives operated within a much wider European world that included stories of ethnicity, aristocracy, honour, servitude, race, chivalry, religion, classism, revolution, radicalism, enlightenment, and so on (Leerssen 2006). This is to say that the narratives about civility positioned the burghers in a greater tapestry of meanings concerned with naming and differentiating groups and their affiliations.

Throughout the 19th century, the terms associated with *burgers* retained much of this differentiating tendency (Aerts 2002: 316; Aerts & Te Velde 1998). Its contentious boundaries show us what is at stake (De Haan 2002). *Burgerlijk* tends to appear in three senses. First, it designates a class of people between the nobility and the needy masses. In this sense, it also tends to refer to the nation, the civil society, the broad majority of well-ordered sociality. Second, it designates something or someone as being unassuming or average. This may be good or bad. As such, the *burgerij* tends to include those of modest means, with modest standing, who combine moderate wealth or prestige with an intensely cultivated civility and composure, an inner worth. It places people so disposed just a step up from the uncivilised rabble, marking off its lower limit. Third, paradoxically, it designates those formidable, wealthy and prestigious families that are involved in commerce, government, diplomacy and the military. These proto-aristocratic *patriciërs* represent the very best of the *burgerij*. These burghers are elevated too such an extent that they are sometimes attributed a place just above the *burgerij* (Aerts 2002: 316-317).

All of this amounts to two things relevant for our discussion: (1) the vocabulary of *burgerschap* functions in what Tilly calls the ‘general system of inequality’. It is a language for talking about hierarchical relations of social difference; (2) Narratives of *burgerschap* represent a distinctly anti-aristocratic notion of civility that foreground cultivated dispositions and carefully appropriated norms of conduct supposedly emanating from an inner conviction and dignity (cf. Elias 1939). Being a *burger* involves the hard work of training and sculpting the self and its inclinations, of gaining control over one’s compulsions and living one’s life according to an internalised moral capacity for judgement (Dekker & De Hart 2005). Morality is first and foremost a mode of civil conduct: bringing a desiring and insatiable body under the guidance of a god-fearing conscience and prudent entrainment. *Burgerschap*, then, already involves a certain notion of government,
even as its referent is not the state in particular, namely the government of conduct through moral capacity.

During the final decades of the 18th century, the *burger* not only designated a class of people in the social hierarchy, but was also the battle cry in consecutive attempts to establish a new, modern, national, independent republic – the *Bataafse Republiek* – ruled by and for the true lovers of their country and its glorious past (Van Sas 2004: 69-86; Rutjes 2012). Although the establishment of a republic grounded on civic rule was a failure – in 1813 ‘*natie*’, ‘*burgerschap*’ and ‘*patriotisme*’ had all but lost their revolutionary élan – it did establish a firm connection between the state and its citizens. It established the rather modern idea that citizens and nation should designate the same collectivity and the state’s main concern should be this nation of citizens (Prak 1999: 25). Gradually, more and more politico-social movements – ‘parties’ – followed the patriotic liberals in using the language of citizenship to claim their place in the heart of the civic nation and at the helms of government (De Haan 2002). *Burgerschap* thereby gradually became an encompassing notion – which is not to say that many were not deliberately excluded: women, religious others, the enslaved, the poor, colonial subjects and racial others (Jones 2007; Legêne 2009) – that abstracted from the social hierarchy and designated one’s relations to state government in general. This could only be achieved, however, by the fact that more and more socio-political movements followed the liberals in equating civil life to national membership. Protestants, catholics and eventually the socialists successfully tied their particular moral convictions and demonstrations of civility into the national narrative. Each claimed for themselves to be the real heart of the nation and, thus, to be equally qualified for citizenship, i.e. to have a voice in the matters of government (De Haan 2002). If the liberal, burgherly factions had hoped to, once and for all, gain decisive power over the state by claiming something that others lacked – ‘burgherly civility’ – they will have been severely disappointed. Their efforts to position themselves in the heart of the nation on the basis of their burgherly culture opened up the democratising state to other parliamentary voices claiming citizenship on the basis of their own version of the national character. Even if fierce disagreement thereby formed about what precisely was the essence of Dutch nationhood, all participants gradually began to play a similar game in which everyone came to assume that citizenship and nationhood co-constituted each other. The public display of moral dispositions thereby became conditional for access to national government.

This homology between nation and citizens functioned to the extent that the various voices found a way to depoliticise their differences, particularly when the state got involved in cultural and religious issues (Aerts et al. 1999). This
Depoliticisation is often referred to as pillarisation. However, pillarisation of socio-political movements and public institutions was never a stable solution. There is no one essential form in which it existed (Van Dam 2011). Nevertheless, the paradox of many national narratives claiming citizenship of one and the same state was continuously and more or less successfully resolved.

We cannot underestimate the importance of racial difference at this juncture. Even if internal coherence was never far from failing, certain boundaries seemed unquestionable. The disagreements within the burgeoning discipline of *volkskunde* and social sciences more broadly affirmed that the Dutch – like the other highly developed peoples of Europe – had a long genealogical history (Eickhoff et al. 2000; Van Ginkel 1998). A racial imaginary drew some very basic commonalities between adversarial groups: the Netherlands was and, in many respects, still is immediately imagined to be genealogically white/European (Jones 2007). Moreover, Dutch national citizenship has always been predominately obtained through birth (Heijs 1995).

If the *burgers* have lost their pre-eminence when it came to *burgerschap*, they did so because other socio-political movements had been successful in claiming what *burgers* deemed to be their particular exceptionalism: the capacity to be morally autonomous and to live by one’s own inner moral judgements. This process accelerated in the late 19th century, particularly after 1870, when new political movements invented popular politics. It was not just a matter of following the liberals in their tendency to equate nation and citizen, but also to take on the implication of morality and government associated with it. As Van Roojen (1996) shows, the 19th century sees the passage of religion – protestantism – from the public sphere where it was self-evidently enacted as an integral part of public-cum-religious life and state rule towards the hearts and minds of its believers. Only then does it become plausible and possible to begin enacting the religious and moral claims of a particular group, such as the orthodox-protestants under the leadership of Kuyper, as particular claims on the state that deserve to be taken into account. In lieu of the liberal *burgerij*, other moral communities with their own moral convictions and cultivated dispositions begin to enact their claims to citizenship as well. They too successfully claimed to be capable of autonomously articulating inner convictions and organising a distinct way of life in civil society. Although the contents of those moral convictions might be quite different from those of the liberal *burgerij*, the enactment of citizenship is the same: the public display of moral community – through rallies, protests, events and associations – and the articulation of distinct, moral claims on the state. Moral communities that were suspected to seek more than moral autonomy – ‘jews’, ‘communists’, ‘fascists’,
‘catholics’ – were stigmatised. In all these cases, some extra- or supra-national allegiance – world revolution; the Vatican; the diaspora – are to be brought in line with national democracy and citizenship. Demonstration of moral autonomy thereby also displays that communities are capable of placing national demands before non-national ones.

This argument could be construed to discover a hidden consensus about national citizenship beneath public strife. However, what takes shape here is not a politico-cultural consensus about citizenship, as if we have forgotten that many were excluded from this supposed consensus, but a shared means of disagreement that allowed and enabled a particular narration of citizenship. The associational politics of pillarisation need not be built upon a deep consensus in order to keep things together. What does take shape along the way is a form of disagreement that valorises some modes of political representation while rejecting others. Moral communities that could be severely hostile towards each other came to insert themselves into a liberal democratic order that granted their moral differences the status of civic voices. Deep moral, religious and political differences were subjected to an encompassing notion of equal, national citizenship. One gained the right to speak in this burgherly democracy, however, by enacting a very particular form of citizenship: through the display of civility, moral autonomy and self-control, by the capacity to abstain from power grabs, in short, through the enactment of a distinctly burgherly notion of government. Even though an abstraction of burgerschap takes place, it only takes place because a variety of communities invent ways of being burgherly in their relation to the state.

In summary, the culturalisation of citizenship described here is captured in two movements: (1) burgerschap moves from a differentiating discourse that highlights boundaries between hierarchical groups in society to an encompassing discourse about the nation: ‘we’ are all burghers; (2) the once particular cultural attributes of a group – burgherlyness – begin to form a generalised repertoire for claiming burgerschap, a repertoire for legitimate claims to participation in state power, and thus an ideal name for designating a national character: ‘we’ are all burgherly.

Throughout this shift there is constant disagreement about the national essence. Is it Calvinism? Is it entrepreneurship? Is it humanism? Is it religious pluralism? Yet, this same discord produces the circumstances in which a display of moral convictions that are self-imposed and independent from others can come to be the predominant enactment of national citizenship. Those deemed incapable of self-government and autonomous moral judgment were thereby excluded from citizenship’s encompassment. At what might be called a pivot point of this process
we see that *burgherlyness* – the remarkable fusion of inner moral conviction and outer political moderation – had attained a central place in the scholarly and public narratives of national character (Van Heerikhuizen 1982). As such, reflections over the Dutch character tend to focus on the remarkable way in which a small republic endured through the serendipity of European history to form a prosperous, civilised and exemplary nation-state (Krol in Beller & Leerssen 2007; see also Goudsblom 1968). Notwithstanding the importance of racial-ethnological imaginings, it is the perseverance of political and territorial independence and sovereignty that provides continuity in such understanding of the nation’s history.

We should not forget that there is an important counterpoint to the decidedly statist-territorial imagination of Dutchness. This counterposing narration is often designated as a form of ‘cultural’ nationalism, in opposition to political nationalism (Couwenberg 1980; 2001). This line of reasoning, from proponents like Geyl in the interbellum to Couwenberg and Fortuyn more recently, seeks to rehabilitate the centrality of language and ethnicity, involving peoples beyond the territorial borders of the monarchy. Such a notion of Dutchness does at times become prominent in citizenship politics. For instance, publics in the Kingdom associated themselves with ‘their brothers’ fighting the Boer-wars in South Africa (Van Ginkel 1999). Yet, opposing political-territorial nationalism to ethno-cultural nationalism would somehow suggest that the hegemonic narrative of Dutch *burgherlyness* and its emphasis on political and territorial continuity is not cultural, does not involve its own culturalisation of citizenship. As Leerssen has argued, all nationalism is cultural (Leerssen 2006). That is, all national narratives are developed from and sustained through cultural practices: writing, theatre, art, commemoration, symbolic representations, communication, pamphleteering, criticism, morality, etc. To call some notions of national community cultural and others less so, is to privilege certain cultural practices – speaking a language and entertaining an ethnicity – over others without much justification. In fact, ‘cultural’ nationalism is very political where ‘political’ nationalism is very cultural. For instance, what is at stake in the tensions between the *burgherly* Dutch and notions of a Dutch ethni are the appropriate political consequences of ‘national culture’: should Dutchness inform a particular political culture – moderation, equality, negotiation – or should it inform state efforts to preserve and cultivate a linguistic-cum-ethnic particularity, even beyond its territorial borders. The latter program has run into terrible, unresolvable trouble in the 20th century as discourses on pure, historical ethnicity have become tainted by the promise of genocidal violence. Even though Dutch citizenship has predominantly been obtained through birth and primordial notions of descent were crucial for imagining the historical contiguity of
the people residing in the ‘low lands’, ideas of ethno-cultural commonality have been enduringly marginalised when it came to narrating *burgerschap*. When proponent of ‘cultural’ nationalism claim that their concerns have always been of secondary importance in the politics of Dutchness, they are quite right. Prominent voices have argued against them and successfully kept them in the position of a counterpoint. The mistake of ‘cultural’ nationalists lies not in their feelings of inferiority but in their conclusion that the politics of Dutchness has therefore somehow been non-cultural or, by extension, anti-nationalist.

Johan Huizinga, for instance, expressly warned for trouble in his famous lecture on the Dutch, burgherly mentality (1935). Instead of hoping for a heroic affirmation of the one true cultural core of the Dutch people, Huizinga advised his public to rekindle their national mentality – moderation – and abstain from heroism. Again, we see how disagreement sustains particular ways of composing nationhood. While there may be profound disagreement over what ought to inform our insight into the nation, both ‘political’ and ‘cultural’ nationalism find national character the main object of their concern, thereby affirming that there is such a character even if they disagree about its contents and prerogative.

From Huizinga onwards, the burgherlyness of the Dutch has become its most reiterated cliché (Aerts 2002; Eijsbouts 2002). It has never regained the status of the positive ideal it had been. More and more, it came to denote an inhibited, parochial, and rather dull way of living. The terms and the connotations that go with it have, however, not disappeared in the least. As a derogatory term *burgerlijkheid* has remained part and parcel of everyday typifications of what is distinctively dull, boring, small and inhibited about Dutch life, akin to the oft referenced *gezelligheid* [convivial cosiness]. The terminology of burgherlyness still does major work in the everyday, banal articulations of what constitutes Dutchness.

**Looking in the mirror of *burgerschap***

My argument has been that the particular narration of citizenship associated with *burgerschap* imagines Dutch society to be ruled by and for a plurality of moral communities, who are capable of autonomously articulating inner moral convictions. This narration is quite distinct from the liberal narration of citizenship that Somers reconstructs for the Anglo-American discourses on citizenship. The liberal narration of citizenship narrates society to be a collection of families and markets. Real society is, thereby, a distinctly private domain. Somers concludes that the state tends to figure as an artificial, secondary construction that needs to be kept in check if ‘real society’ – families and markets – are to thrive (Somers 2008). The self-evidence of this liberal narration of citizenship explains, for Somers, why
it was and is so painfully difficult to contest the advent of market fundamentalism and its corrosive effects on social justice in US politics.

Conversely, the narration of *burgerschap* doesn’t present the state as an artificial intruder at all, but as the executor of moral convictions and shepherd of moral communities worthy of national recognition. What the state does, it does for the moral communities from which it derives its authority. It acts in name of the citizens who have proven to be civilised and dignified and are thus able to voice worthy moral judgements. It is therefore appropriate to evaluate the actions of the state in moral terms. In this narration, the *overheid* – as the state is often named – is the public instantiation of moral authority. Public policy, laws, regulations and institutions are not temporary, artificial infringements on the private domain of citizens – as is the case in a liberal narration of citizenship –, but rather *expressions* of morality governing the lives of citizens. It is up to the leaders of moral communities to prescribe what the state should be doing. As Ernst Zahn (1989) has argued in his analysis of Dutch political culture, up until depillarisation and moves to further democratise the state the public sphere was effectively formed by institutions of moral authority – most notably the churches – and imagined to exist above the state, speaking down to it and telling it what to do. This conservative, paternalist narration of citizenship, in which it is only natural that leaders shepherd their followers and look out for them, is not hampered by the endemic moral dissensus that has been part of Dutch democracy since its inception. Rather, it envisions a political process in which each presents their moral vision and negotiations become attempts to accommodate each group’s moral concerns appropriately (see Lijphart 1969; Van Doorn et al. 1989).

As more and more moral convictions find their way into parliament and under the guidance of government, rights and obligations have expanded immensely (De Swaan 1989; De Haan & Duyvendak 2002; Hoogenboom 2003). The expansion of the welfare state and the social citizenship that came with it has not been the project nor the exclusive achievement of a social-democratic left (cf. Marshall 1950). It is the outcome of a process in which a variety of parties made a succession of paternalist claims, each for their own community, to be taken over by the state. When the social-democratic left actually gained the political dominance to direct this process to their own inclinations, the politico-economic possibilities for doing so quickly evaporated and so did their political dominance.

Following De Haan (1993), we can see an important re-telling of the story of *burgerschap* emerging from the 1950’s onwards. This consisted of a populist-participatory challenge to the conservative, paternalist status-quo. But as De Haan and others also showed (Van Gunsteren 1992; Koenis 1997), the participatory
challenge remained largely ineffectual. In the end, De Haan accounts for the failure to displace the conservative citizenship narrative through what he calls the funhouse mirror effect of *burgerschap* (1992). New, self-confident and defiant generations of challengers have attempted to establish more participatory conceptions of citizenship. Conservative shepherding and corporatist depoliticisation is usurped for the benefit of an emancipated and autonomous citizenry that is willing and able to find solutions to its problems. Yet, consecutive generations of challengers find themselves in the paradoxical situation of prescribing *moral imperatives* of participation, emancipation and self-creation as part of a project to, once and for all, end the moral lecturing by authorities who deem themselves elevated above the yet-to-be enlightened populace. Each generation of challengers thereby at once forms an effective target for the next wave of anti-conservative polemicists.

Narrations of *burgerschap* in the second half of the twentieth century are reconstructed by De Haan as an on-going cycle of such anti-conservative self-critiques. Our main lesson is that moral convictions are consistently conceived as the drivers behind state actions and the basis for civic voice. The right to speak is claimed on the basis of moral capacity, albeit of the emancipatory kind. Proponents of participatory citizenship contested the self-evidence of authoritative moralising. However, they did remarkably little to displace the idea that the state is there to enact what citizens are convinced is morally good, proper and worthy. Even while many contended that citizens should take their problems into their own hands and not rely so much on state provisions or be obstructed by inflexible bureaucracy, this mainly amounted to moral prescriptions of good and active citizenship yet again (Bovens 1991; Simonis et al. 1992; Engbersen & Gabriëls 1995; Penninx et al. 1995; Koenis 1997). From these points of view, government should strive to cultivate values of self-government, participation, expression, initiative and flexibility among those sections of the population that seemed to lack these capacities (Van Houdt 2014). Contentions around *burgerschap* thereby still centred on the moral equipment that is assumed to be the crux of the matter (Schinkel 2008; Ossewaarde 2010). As we can now better understand, ideals of participation do not replace a conservative concept of citizenship, but rather become one of the more authoritative versions of *burgerschap* in the morality play that was and is Dutch citizenship politics. Increasingly, moral voices demand of citizens that they cultivate the dispositions and convictions of a liberal-progressive moral majority, thus becoming part of a modern and autonomous community of engaged individualists (Duyvendak & Hurenkamp 2004; Schinkel & Van Houdt 2010).
The advent of a liberal-progressive moral majority in narrations of citizenship has not, finally, contradicted the importance of moral instruction and capacity. Attempts to introduce notions of citizenship that expressly do not depend on the cultivation of moral capacities have gained little traction (Van Gunsteren 2008; Van Reekum 2011). In a period in which more and more was expected from the idea that the limitations of the welfare state would be amended through the ‘third way’ of responsible and active citizenship, the research of the last decade clearly shows that *burgerschap* is almost exclusively associated with local, small-scale practices of direct solidarity, conviviality and cooperation (Dekker & De Hart 2005; Tonkens 2008; Van Gunsteren 2008; Hurenkamp & Tonkens 2011; Schinkel 2010; Uitermark 2014; Van Houdt 2014). *Burgerschap* does not – or almost never – refer to the practices of antagonistic democracy, self-rule, resistance or political mobilisation. *Burgerschap* is still a performance of proper, civil conduct even if political, almost never a performance of agonistic engagement.

**The re-culturalisation of *burgerschap***

In a nutshell, the significance of emerging debates on Dutchness and citizenship in the 1970’s and 80’s is that they re-introduce the possibility of a differentiating discourse of citizenship. As was discussed, the narration of citizenship had tended, in a rather long arch, towards an encompassing logic in which each visible, audible and self-supporting community – pillars, denominations, ideologies – organised around and articulated distinct moral commitments. This logic was never stable or predictable. By the 1970’s and particularly from the early 1980’s onwards, a host of categories had entered the political and public discourse indicating populations that could not and would not easily fit into an encompassing narrative: ‘*buitenlanders*’ (a term that regularly did not refer to foreigners as such, but stigmatised groups of denizens and citizens that settled in the Netherlands), ‘guest workers’, ‘Turks’, ‘Surinamese’, ‘Moluccans’, ‘Moroccans’, ‘Antillians’, ‘allochthones’, and ‘ethnic minorities’ (Tinnemans 1994; Jones 2007; Laarman 2013). What all these names have in common is that they respond, in different ways, to the indefinite immigration of people deemed to enter from outside of the European/’white’ territories of the Dutch kingdom. What they problematise is the question if and how these populations fit among the established citizenry-cum-nation. Their very mention offered up this question without any definite solution in sight.

Encompassment was on the table for a while: some suggested that newcomers could, should or would construct ethno-cultural or religious pillars of their own and, thus, enact precisely the conservative citizenship narrative that had enabled an encompassing notion of citizenship. But the very fact that it was
explicitly discussed – and did not pass self-evidently – already indicates that the prospect of ‘ethnic pillarisation’ was a contentious one. An understanding of and justification for immigrant integration in familiar terms of pillarised emancipation did gain some measure of articulation (Schrover 2010). The actual importance of this way of conceiving the problem should however not be overestimated (Vink 2007). It mainly enabled politicians, civil servants and experts, who still dominated the discussion at the time (Scholten 2011), to depoliticise the issue by suggesting that the integration-cum-emancipation of distinct communities was nothing new in Dutch history. The trope of ethnic pillarisation downplayed the rather exceptional conjunction of immigration, economic downturn, rising unemployment and changing ideas about public morality that made immigrant integration an object of political anxiety (Lucassen & Lucassen 2011).

The genealogy of *burgerschap* allows us to better understand how *burgerschap* and Dutchness are entangled: 1) *burgerschap* is first and foremost the moral equipment that indicates sufficient civility and competence to independently partake in public life. This means, particularly, that one will refrain from imposing one’s particular moral convictions onto others; 2) *burgerschap*’s moral content is strongly associated with a polemical challenge against clerical and moral authorities as the discourses on participatory citizenship had grown stronger after the 1950’s. *Burgerschap* effectively means ‘standing on one’s own feet and not relying on others for moral guidance’. This discourse nonetheless prescribes its own moral convictions: communal participation, individualised emancipation, freedom of expression and enjoyment, individual autonomy, and moral self-government (Verkaaik 2009).

As explained at the beginning of this section, when we understand culturalisation as the arduous work of narrating and re-narrating the story of what citizenship is and effectively abstracting it from categories that express the general system of society’s inequality, it becomes clear that re-culturalisation was already well underway before the new millennium. *Burgerschap* had already become part of differentiating narrations. Such differentiation is expressed most poignantly as the difference between ‘autochthones’ and ‘allochthones’, but its expression has many guises. They are all variations on an established-outsider configuration in which, more often than not, the outsider is understood to be an outsider because she has *come from elsewhere*. Here, belonging in the European/‘white’ territory is at stake. Crossing this divide was already conceptualised as the cultivation of certain moral convictions at the heart of *burgerschap*. In such discourse, which may or may not strike an accommodative tone, *burgerschap* already captures the particularity of the established – one does not impose one’s moral convictions on
others and one is capable of standing on one’s own feet – and the deficiencies of the outsiders. While it is true that this differentiating narration of citizenship was not always or predominantly about the necessity of cultural sameness and the problems of cultural backwardness, we would seriously injure our analysis if we would therefore choose to underestimate the period before the new millennium as one in which citizenship was somehow not being culturalised. The discourses about people-out-of-place (Yanow & Van der Haar 2013) prompted re-culturalisation in a rather dramatic way as narratives of encompassment weren’t reiterated. Instead, burgerschap attained a differentiating significance as it highlighted the lacking moral dispositions and competencies of newcomers: ‘they’ do not know how to live like emancipated, autonomous, self-expressive, self-governing individuals (Rath 1991; Van der Valk 2002; Mellink 2014). Indeed, anti-racist and multicultural discourses found little to no resonance in the emerging public and political debates concerning diversity and citizenship (Essed & Nimako 2006; Uitermark 2012; Duyvendak et al. 2013).