Out of character: debating Dutchness, narrating citizenship
van Reekum, R.

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Section 2:

Ascending to the native public
Introduction to section 2

In the following four chapters, I will not address to any significant extent the ideological, electoral or governmental elaboration of post-2000 culturism. My aim is not to show what kinds of discourses came out of the highly dynamic networks of conservative and radical right-wing politics in this period (Oudenampsen 2013; Rooduijn 2013; De Lange 2009; Krouwel & Lucardie 2008; Kriesi & Frey 2008; Halikiopoulou et al. 2012), nor will I demonstrate to what extent these movements have been able to effect policy outputs (Vermeulen 2007; Rusinovic & Bochove 2009; Vink & Bauböck 2013; Entzinger & Scholten 2013; Uitermark 2013; Koopmans et al. 2012; Van Oers 2013; Van Houdt 2014). My focus will be elsewhere and not necessarily at the hot spots or at the most egregious events. My aim is neither to understand nor to explain how the (extreme) right has been able to gain political ground. Instead, I focus on a number of issues, events and debates that help to understand what Dutchness became in all of this and to show the extent to which specific ideas concerning the importance of Dutchness are hardly exclusive to and ought not be analysed primarily in view of a resurgent right.

The debates of the post-2000’s were built out of the discursive tools already developed, while also bringing in new notions and connections. In this second section of the study I will show how attempts to clearly, explicitly and forcefully identify images of Dutchness in the post-2000 era were put forth, justified, debated and criticised. My main conclusion will be that the conception of a native public is recurrently at work in speaking about governmental attempts to resolve problems of Dutchness and the public debates that enveloped them. The analysis will focus on three specific items of intervention and contestation. In each case, there is the basic problem of translating the diagnosis of a presumably defective identity into more concrete policy measures, projects and interventions. These three cases are: contestations over civic enculturation or inburgering (chapter 7); the mobilisation of national history through efforts of canonisation (chapter 8); and specific attempts to publicly propagate non-exclusionary conceptions of what it means to belong to the nation (chapter 9). Yet, before I can set out to analyse the specific contestations in these three directions it will be necessary to consider how the political watershed of 2000-2002 was made relevant for these interventions (chapter 6).