

*The State of
Multiculturalist Politics
in the Netherlands*

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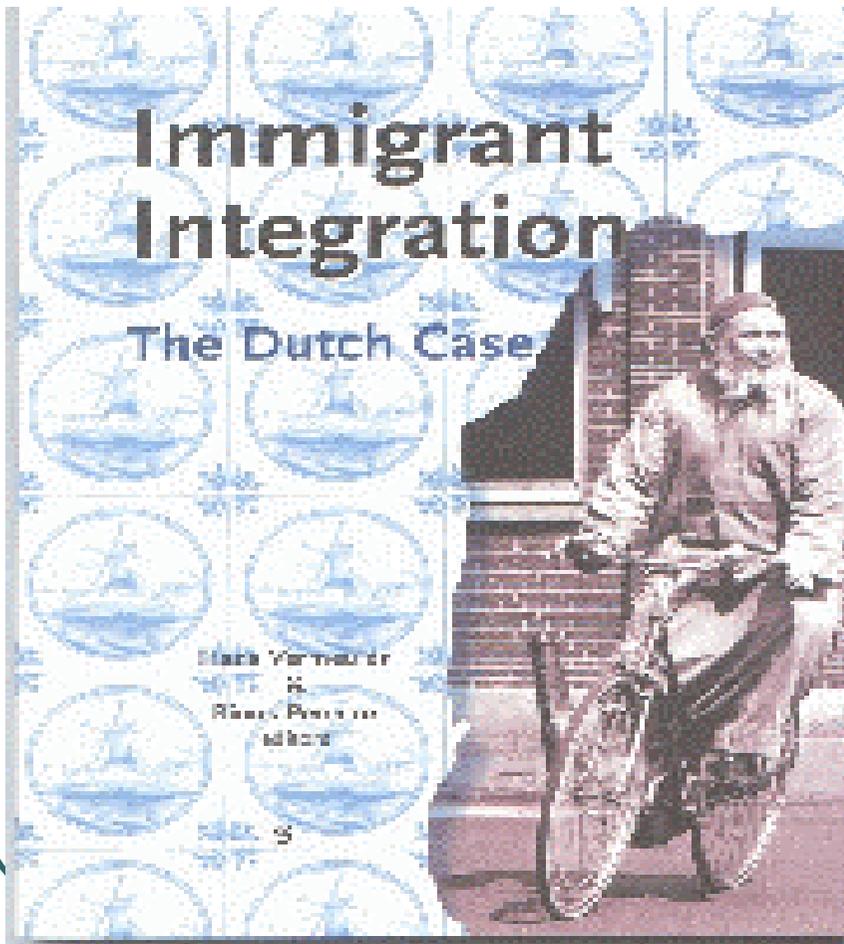
University of Maastricht

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(Still) a Multicultural Paradise?

- 'Wake up any expert on immigrant integration in the middle of the night and ask that person to name a country known for its multiculturalism. Ten to one the answer will be Canada, Australia or the Netherlands' (Entzinger 2003).
- In so far as the term comes up, multiculturalism is relegated to dunghill of political history' (Doomernik 2005)
- 'The turn from multiculturalism to civic integration reflects a seismic shift not just in the Netherlands, but in other European societies as well' (Joppke 2004)

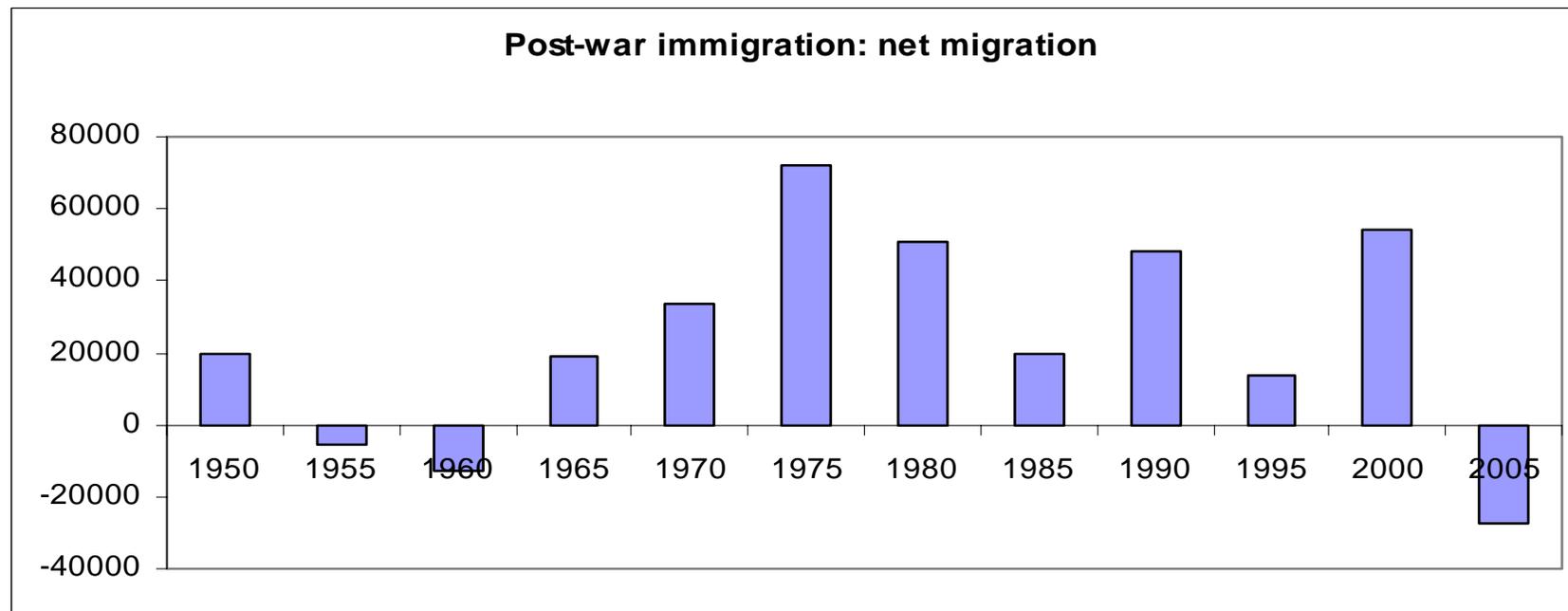
Immigrants on Bikes: A Case of Perfect Integration?



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Developing a 'Multicultural' Dutch integration policy

- For a long time no coordinated policy
 - Repatriates assumed to integrate easily
 - Guest workers assumed to return



Since 1980s: Integration Policy

1. Civil equality (anti-discrimination)

- 'All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in all circumstances' (Art. 1 Constitution, 1983)

2. Political equality (voting, nationality, consultation)

- Voting rights for non-citizens in local elections (1985)

3. Socio-economic equality (employment)

- Policies to stimulate labor market participation

4. Cultural equality ('preservation of own identity')

- State-subsidized Islamic and Hindu schools (1980s)

Dutch Integration Discourse 2006

- Strict admission and expulsion policy
- Strict control of mosques and schools
- Civic integration exam

‘Stop Islamification of the Netherlands’
(Wilders)

‘Multicultural society is not something to
strive for’ (Balkenende)

So, what happened?

Two 'shock' explanations:

1. 9/11
2. Murders: Fortuyn (2002) + Van Gogh (2004)

Two 'structural' explanations:

3. 'Multicultural tragedy' (Scheffer, 2000)
4. 'Return of the citizen' (Kymlicka/Norman, 1994)

9/11, Fortuyn, Van Gogh, and ... Verdonk



'A Multicultural Tragedy' (Scheffer 2000)

- Failure of Dutch integration policy:
 - Good intentions, bad results ('cozy multiculturalism')
 - 'New ethnic underclass' (employment, criminality)
 - 'New segregation' (residence, education)
- Reasons for failure:
 - Insecurity about 'national' identity
 - Culture of toleration (and political correctness)
 - Permissive admission policy

The 'pillarized' story of Dutch integration policy

- Just as previously Dutch education allowed for Roman Catholic, Protestant and neutral school types, and similar divisions in the media, hospitals, trade unions and employers, (...) it now offered Muslims and Hindus the same opportunities (Doomernik, 2005).
- When Muslim immigrants began to arrive, it was natural that the Dutch would allow them to build their own 'Muslim' pillar. Muslims would be given a chance to emancipate themselves in the context of their cultural identity (Carle, 2006).

A new Muslim 'pillar'?



Why new immigrant pillars never developed

- No shared 'national' identity (Scheffer)
- Migrants arrived 'too late', after de-pillarization had begun (Rath et al, 1999)
- Creation of new pillars was explicitly prevented (Rijkschroeff et al, 2003)
 - 'preservation of own identity' based on pragmatism (return strategy) and not on cultural relativism
 - policy-makers were aware of the risks of segregation

Why the 'demise' of Dutch multiculturalism (in as far as it ever existed) goes back long before 2000

- The marginalization of immigrants was already observed at the end of the 1980s
- The increasing numbers of asylum-seekers in the 1990s led to a more restrictive admission policy
- The 'return of the citizen' led to reevaluation of Dutch citizenship (nationality + civic integration program)

So what is the state of multiculturalist politics in the Netherlands?

- Significant change in discourse (but change started already by the end of 1980s)
- Recent dissatisfaction at least partly result of misconceived and mismanaged integration policy (but 'multicultural' origins have been idealized)
- Some recent policy changes, mainly in sphere of admission (but continuity prevails)