

Reinventing Multiculturalism: Urban Citizenship and the Negotiation of Ethnic Diversity in Amsterdam

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Introduction

The city is not a container where differences encounter each other; the city generates differences and assembles identities. The city is a difference machine insofar as it is understood as that space which is constituted by the dialogical encounter of groups formed and generated immanently in the process of taking up positions, orienting themselves for and against each other, inventing and assembling strategies and technologies, mobilizing various forms of capital, and making claims to that space that is objectified as 'the city' (Isin, 2002: 283).

Isin's evocative remark derives from a larger philosophical and political discussion of the last few decades in which issues of citizenship, equality of opportunity and ethnic identity have been raised and debated. In this lively and engaging discussion, what is most notably at issue is if, and if so how, national governments have to acknowledge and accommodate ethnic diversity (see, e.g., Taylor, 1992; Kymlicka, 1995; Fraser, 1995; Bhabha, 1998). However, while the nation-state obviously remains important, a number of authors have recently suggested that the city is becoming increasingly salient as a site for generating, managing, negotiating and contesting cultural and political identities (Amin, 2002; Amin and Thrift, 2002; Isin, 2002; Purcell, 2003).

In this article we want to probe further these dynamics and argue, with reference to the case of Amsterdam, that indeed new, albeit embryonic, forms of citizenship and political interaction are emerging at the urban scale. In order to appreciate the distinctiveness of these forms, we will, in the first section, revisit some key contributions to the debate. We argue that previous modes of accommodating ethnic diversity have come under increasing pressure in the wake of the decline incurred by conventional paradigms of collective belonging, namely those based on the sharing of ethno-national identity and citizenship. Many authors have already highlighted these developments and have suggested alternative political philosophies that view ethnic identities as hybrid, fluid, multifaceted and dynamic. One under-researched aspect of this literature concerns the institutional implications of the emerging approaches to minority integration: the type of programmes, policies, projects and organizations that should give concrete content to policy philosophies that refute essentialist notions of culture. In order to investigate this question, we empirically explore the ways in which minority

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associations, local governments and other institutional actors are devising strategies to deal with ethnic differences in what we will define as a 'post-multicultural era'.

Since post-multiculturalist literature views the city as the most promising site for the negotiation of ethnic identities, it is clear that we should focus our investigation on the urban scale. Amsterdam seems to be a particularly interesting context as this city has been commonly depicted as a laboratory of tolerance and cosmopolitan culture. At the same time, however, Amsterdam has witnessed a number of highly mediated incidents that have cast doubt on its image as a tolerant city and on the leverage of its policies to counter extremism and pacify inter-ethnic tensions. The latest of these incidents was the assassination of film-maker Theo van Gogh in November 2004. The impact of this event has been much stronger than the impact of earlier incidents related to delinquent youth of Moroccan origin and Islamic fundamentalism. However, as we explain below, this latest tragedy has so far not altered the philosophies and institutions that underpin the diversity policy that has emerged in recent years.

The article is composed of three parts. In the first part, we review the debate that has recently developed around the crisis of multiculturalism and the rise of novel approaches to civic and minority integration. We focus in particular on those theoretical insights that have investigated the city as an ideal site for the building of a post-national and cross-cultural society. The second part of the article scrutinizes the evolution of the Dutch model of 'ethnic corporatism', as this has been defined in the scholarly literature. We note the fact that while corporatist structures of traditional multiculturalism are inadequate in the present context, new forms and institutional pathways of minority integration have not yet fully emerged on the national level. In the third part, we therefore zoom in on the urban level as an emerging site of multicultural integration and discuss recent policy shifts in Amsterdam. Drawing on in-depth interviews with representatives from government agencies as well as minority organizations, this part critically assesses the new regime for the accommodation of ethnic differences that is currently taking shape in Amsterdam. We observe a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the scholarly as well as policy philosophies with respect to ethnic diversity and, on the other hand, the day-to-day experiences of actors in the urban public sphere. In the conclusion, we trace the origins of this discrepancy and highlight some problems that might arise when the increasingly popular understanding of the city as a site for the negotiation of ethnic diversity is put into practice.

Re-scaling multiculturalism: the rise of cities as sites for the negotiation of ethnic diversity

It is widely recognized that countries respond differently to the existence of ethno-cultural diversity. One point of reference is France where it is common to draw a clear-cut distinction between religion and private life on the one hand and politics and public life on the other hand (Feldblum, 1999; Banton, 2001; Favell, 2001). Countries that explicitly acknowledge or even promote ethnic and religious identities represent an alternative point of reference. In these countries, such as the United Kingdom, Sweden and the Netherlands, access to political membership is 'not conditional upon assimilation and new citizens are allowed to retain their cultural identities and express them and the interests related to them in the public sphere, including core institutions such as the school system, the military, and the media' (Koopmans and Statham, 2001: 75). While assimilationist integration strategies are traditionally believed to be increasingly untenable as a result of growing cultural diversity and proliferating ethnic identities, the pluralist model seems to represent a pragmatic answer to these processes (e.g. Soysal, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Delanty, 2000).

In recent years, however, an increasing number of scholars and other participants in the public debate have started questioning commonly held views of multiculturalism,

contending that multicultural policies contribute to the creation of new forms of exclusion from the institutional-political arena. Critics of multiculturalism have particularly focused their attention on perverse mechanisms of political representation and public incorporation. On the one hand, liberal critiques of multiculturalism have pointed to the internal contradictions intrinsically linked to the notion of cultural recognition, arguing that it is not possible to 'recognize' all cultures as equal but only to 'tolerate' other cultures and that the problem in cultural recognition lies fundamentally in its unilaterality: the demand is for the state and the mainstream society to recognize minority cultures, while less attention is paid to a reciprocal obligation of minority groups to recognize the ways of the majority (see Sartori, 2000; Barry, 2002; for a critical discussion of the liberal critiques of multiculturalism, see Joppke, 2004).

From another perspective, radical critiques of multiculturalism have focused their attention on the institutionalization of multicultural approaches, arguing that attempts to institutionalize ethnic diversity are frequently used by governments as simply ad hoc responses to tensions and imagined or real threats (see, for instance, Back *et al.*, 2002; Kundnani, 2002). According to this view, the endeavours to incorporate ethnic groups into institutions lead to the formation of an elite of ethnic leaders who pretend to represent their respective communities. Moreover, the recognition of ethnic communities as such is perceived as problematic: attempts to negotiate with ethnic leaders tend to reify culture by overemphasizing differences between ethnic groups and underplaying diversity within ethnic groups (Baumann, 1996; Vertovec, 1996; Grillo, 1998). In this context, the state dictates what is and what is not a legitimate identity and, as such, structures civil society in its own image. Ethnic identities are thus incorporated in a way that meets the demands of dominant groups: at the same time ethnic identities are recognized, their subordinate and isolated position is confirmed and consolidated (Cornell and Murphy, 2002).

In responding to the perceived failures of traditional multiculturalism, many authors have committed themselves to the search for novel approaches to institutionally manage ethnic diversity.¹ We may refer to this literature as 'post-multicultural' as it seeks to recognize ethnic diversity but at the same time tries to move beyond traditional multiculturalism by emphasizing the multifaceted and dynamic nature of cultural identifications. One of the most prominent examples in this respect is the report of the British commission for multicultural integration chaired by Anglo-Indian philosopher Bhikhu Parekh. In order to reform mainstream political practices that are rooted in a mono-cultural public realm, Parekh suggests creating institutions which are capable of evolving over time as relationships among actors evolve (Parekh, 2000). Such institutions should support cross-communal linkages nurturing the vital social capital of mutual trust and cooperation instead of promoting rivalry amongst different ethnic groups (*ibid.*)

These recommendations chime with an increasingly large body of literature which maintains that processes of political and institutional re-territorialization are leading to the formation of a multi-layered, differentiated citizenship where factors of gender, class and spatial belonging are intermingling with each other (Yuval-Davis, 1999; Soysal,

1 In the remainder of this article, we frequently refer to criticisms directed against multiculturalism. We mainly focus on progressive rather than conservative critiques of multiculturalism since these are most relevant in the Amsterdam context. It should be noted that critics of multiculturalism run the risk of simplifying, essentializing and reifying multiculturalism. Without saying anything about the validity of claims of critics, however, we can assume that the criticisms of multiculturalism we discuss below have important effects on the ways in which government policies are perceived: the dissatisfaction with multiculturalism is an immense social force, capable of fostering changes and reconfiguring formal and informal institutions dealing with the issue of minority integration (Uitermark, 2004). When we refer to traditional multiculturalism, we therefore mean the multiculturalism as represented by those critics, not multiculturalism as represented by its proponents.

2000; Benhabib, 2002; Baumeister, 2003). Traditional multiculturalism, due to its tendency to fix ethnic identities and to reproduce the primacy of national senses of belonging, so it is argued, is far too static to deal with these developments. Alternative approaches for accommodating ethnic diversity thus need to offer opportunities for dynamically negotiating ethnic diversity and, in doing so, to help develop the ideal of a post-national citizenship in a cosmopolitan society (Tambini, 2001; Beck, 2002; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Calhoun, 2003). Many authors suggest that this challenge will have to be met on the urban rather than the national level. A renewed kind of urban citizenship might help to build more dynamic, equal, democratic and inclusive forms of intercultural dialogue and exchange (Holston, 1999; Isin, 2000; Baeten, 2001; Bauböck, 2003; Staeheli, 2003). Urban life is viewed as the context in which identities are encountered, created and contested through a wide range of everyday spatial practices, enabling migrants and ethnic minorities to negotiate from 'bottom-up' the complex politics of citizenship and identity (Nagel and Staeheli, 2004; Secor, 2004). In this literature, urban citizenship is thus seen essentially in a positive light, because it is assumed that the vibrant character of urban everyday life provides ideal conditions for the formation of inter- and cross-cultural identities (McDowell, 1999; Sennett, 1999; Rogers, 2000; Bridge and Watson, 2002).

Amin's recent contribution is especially noteworthy in this respect. He calls for a 'politics of presence that is capable of supporting plural and conflicting claims and that is ready to negotiate diversity' (Amin, 2003: 463). Amin's ideal contrasts sharply with the notion of a nation divided into distinct and mutually excluding cultures that dominates public debates as well as policies. He strives for an urban public domain in which genuine antagonism can be negotiated so as to deconstruct the ethnic identities that appear 'fixed' in traditional multicultural discourse (see also Fraser, 1995; Young, 1995; Vertovec, 1999). Such a public domain would emancipate groups and individuals as citizens (rather than as members of a certain group) and would help members of a polity to focus on issues of social justice and democracy (Amin, 2002).

It is difficult to judge whether these suggestions would indeed yield the anticipated outcomes for the simple reason that they cannot be readily implemented. For example, the Parekh report, despite its valuable theoretical results and also its more practical potentials for the formulation of a novel approach to the governance of ethnic diversity (see Allen and Cars, 2001), has been eventually put aside due to opposition by those claiming the primacy of 'whiteness' in the formation of British identity (see Pilkington, 2003). In this climate, responses to the purported 'death of multiculturalism' (Kundnani, 2002; see also Cohen, 1999) that seek to transcend nation-based senses of belonging are less likely to take shape. This implies that we have not yet been able to assert what happens when post-multiculturalist theory is put into practice. This is quite an important omission. If we want to 'endorse a more complex public ethos in cities, one in which the unlike and the heterodox are assumed right from the start', then 'how this is done is a very large part of the answer and it is fair to say that this literature is heavier on injunction than institutional detail' (Amin and Thrift, 2002: 294).

In our view, it is indeed crucial to assess the institutionalization of these emerging approaches to multicultural integration, as we believe that, regardless of the nature of multicultural policies, institutionalization generates multifaceted forms and processes of selection and exclusion within governance structures and processes (e.g. Jessop, 1990). This selective nature of policies is hardly dealt with in abstract accounts of the principles to which (post-)multiculturalism should conform even though, as we will try to demonstrate, it is very much present in what we may call 'actually existing multiculturalism' (see also Schierup, 1994). In this context, the case of Amsterdam can be particularly instructive because policymakers in this city have tried to devise an alternative approach to the governance of ethnic diversity which explicitly aims to encourage inter-ethnic dialogue and debunk ethnic stereotypes. Politicians and policymakers in this city have never embraced an (explicitly) assimilationist policy but have instead tried to restructure its minority policy along the lines suggested by the post-

multiculturalist critiques. Our research in Amsterdam thus highlights some of the limitations and obstacles that might be encountered when the assumptions and recommendations of post-multiculturalist theory are adopted by policymakers and put into practice by public officials and other institutional actors.

In this context, we will argue that the attempt to reinvent multiculturalism in Amsterdam reveals what some authors would define as a 'soft' and 'thin' neo-institutionalist approach (cf. MacLeod and Jones, 1999; MacLeod, 2001; Peck, 2001). The distinguishing features of this approach rest on two increasingly influential assumptions. A first assumption is that public policies should pay greater attention to the differentiated interests and needs of the individuals within ethnic groups. A second assumption is that it is better to support high-quality projects that produce immediate results than to structurally and unconditionally subsidize organizations. Both assumptions are based on the idea that policies which focus on predefined ethnic groups tend to reify culture and support self-proclaimed ethnic leaders. Our article, however, seeks to demonstrate, firstly, that the focus on projects and differentiated identities leads to the de-politicization rather than effective negotiation of ethnic diversity. Secondly, it suggests that the official denial of the legitimacy of ethnic identities reconfigures and reinforces rather than negates power inequalities amongst different ethnic organizations and groups. The findings, therefore, show how attempts to overcome the perceived failures of multiculturalism produce new kinds of institutional inclusion and exclusion from the public domain and thus shape new patterns of political inequality.

Organizing ethnicity in the Netherlands: the Dutch model of ethnic corporatism revisited

The Dutch government, like national governments of other countries, did not have clearly articulated policies towards immigrants until the 1980s. In contrast, municipalities where immigrants had settled had started looking for ways to regulate the relationship between newcomers and natives practically as soon as the first immigrants arrived. For example, the city of Rotterdam undertook several attempts to disperse immigrants so as to prevent social unrest resulting from — sometimes xenophobic — responses on the part of the native residents (Uitermark, 2003a). However, the importance of the local level as a site for the regulation of inter-ethnic relationships diminished when, in the beginning of the 1980s, it was fully recognized that many immigrants who had come to the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s would permanently stay. The first official policy towards these groups was formulated in 1983 when the Second Chamber published the first memorandum on minority policy, the so-called *Minderhedennota* (the Minority Memorandum). It was now officially recognized that many immigrants would permanently stay in the Netherlands and so they were now considered as 'ethnic minorities' rather than as guest workers or foreigners (Rath, 1991). The fact that groups of immigrants (were believed to) share certain ethnic attributes was regarded as an opportunity for policies. It was expected that if minorities were enabled to retain their own culture and manage their own institutions they would be better placed to emancipate in Dutch society.

In line with the newly established minority policy, the national government increasingly felt the need to establish a dialogue with representatives of ethnic minorities. For this purpose, consultative bodies were created for nationalities, religions (especially Islam) and minorities generally. Together with regulations that allowed or enabled the establishment of provisions for ethnic minorities, these consultative bodies constituted the core of the ethnic corporatism as it emerged after the *Minderhedennota*. Writing about the corporatist model exemplified by the Netherlands and Sweden, Yasemin Soysal has argued that:

Elaborate state structures or state-sponsored institutions develop to provide social services. Since the state is responsible for the collective good, governments in corporatist polities generate clear top-down policies for the incorporation of migrants, with an emphasis on standardized protection and services. Corporatist polities have formal avenues by which new populations can gain access to decision-making mechanisms and pursue their interests (Soysal, 1994: 38).

This description resonates with a general impression given by the literature that the Netherlands to some extent represents an 'ideal' multicultural society. This approach to ethnic differences can partly be explained by taking into account the Dutch history of pillarization (Lijphart, 1975). Pillarization is a model that came into being in the early twentieth century in which each religious or ethnic group was granted a sort of 'subsidized autonomy': services were funded by the state but managed by ethnic groups. It is important to stress, however, that many of the features of traditional pillarization were lacking, which largely explains why the structure described by Soysal did not function as smoothly as she suggested. This is especially evident with respect to the issue of representation. In a situation in which democratically elected parties could not represent the interests of the newly discovered ethnic minorities, both self-organizations and the state searched for alternative forms of representation. This process resulted in a flourishing of consultative bodies in which leaders of ethnic and, to a lesser extent, religious self-organizations had a place (Landman, 1992; Sunier, 1996). However, these consultative bodies were dissolved quickly after they had been established or they lost their significance almost before they gained it. This can largely be explained by the fact that the bodies were created for government needs rather than constructed bottom-up. In addition, the younger generation wanted to 'open up' Islamic institutions, which reduced the legitimacy and stability of organizations that still recruited most of their cadre from the first generation (Sunier, 1996; Rath *et al.*, 1997: 394).

Regardless of the nature of these consultative bodies, in all cases they lacked a grounding in actually existing ethnic communities. Consultative bodies could thus not formulate a coherent political agenda and could only provide poorly articulated advice on topics that were considered by government agencies to be specifically relevant for ethnic minorities. Self-organizations could, on the one hand, not put pressure on the government and, on the other hand, the government could not use the self-organizations to reach all or even most members of the newly construed target groups (Uitermark, 2003b).

As the public debate about minorities, and especially their supposed lack of integration in Dutch society, became more heated over time, this model came under increasing pressure, urging government agencies to reconsider their approach to ethnic diversity. First, in the 1990s, a new discourse emerged in which members of ethnic minorities were less considered as cultural/religious groups and more as individuals. While it was still conceded that minorities should have the opportunity to foster their own (cultural and religious) institutions, more stress was put on integration. Individual integration rather than group emancipation was now the prime concern and goal of policy. In addition, the policy discourse became more 'tough': members of minorities should have a chance to integrate but now it was stressed that it could also be demanded from them that they make use of the opportunities provided to them. It was no longer believed that supporting minority cultures would contribute to their political and economic emancipation.

The ascendancy of Pim Fortuyn and the installation of a right-wing cabinet in 2001 have not caused a qualitative shift but rather speeded up a process of 'toughening' in which ethnic minorities are approached with increased suspicion (e.g. Houtum and Naerssen, 2002; Prins and Slijper, 2002). To some extent these measures constitute an alternative way of accommodating ethnic differences: the cultural attributes of immigrants and their offspring are recognized as much as before but now are considered to pose a threat, and institutions are adapted to match this new view (Houtum and

Naerssen, 2002). However, there is no simple shift from appreciation to condemnation. It is widely recognized that the process of integration, whatever that entails, demands some kind of positive acknowledgement of ethnic minorities' initiatives and organizations. Exactly what kind of form this acknowledgement should take is not yet entirely clear. There is an 'institutional void' (Hajer, 2003): the corporatist structures of traditional multiculturalism are no longer adequate whilst new forms have not yet fully emerged. Especially on the national level, the discussion has not yet led to a clear policy direction.

On the local level, experimentation with new discourses and institutional structures appears to be far more developed and it may be argued that we are now witnessing a return from the national to the local level as the prime site for the regulation of ethnic diversity. All four major cities in the Netherlands — Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht — have in recent years reconsidered their approach to ethnic diversity and have restructured the institutions that accommodate ethnic diversity. We believe it is possible to delineate, albeit in a preliminary fashion, some directions that the process of experimentation is taking. To this end, we now focus on recent policy changes in Amsterdam and suggest how a new discourse on the incorporation of minorities' interests has emerged. It is important to emphasize that this discourse has not yet materialized into durable new structures. At the same time, it may be asked whether the relatively abstract nature of the discourse together with the lack of rigid and durable institutions is not, in fact, in itself characteristic of newly emerging ways to accommodate ethnic diversity. Here we touch on the theoretical issues raised above and try to answer the question to what extent there has been a shift to soft and flexible institutions of multicultural governance.

'The power of a diverse city': the reinvention of multiculturalism in Amsterdam

In this section, we present research results that have been obtained from fieldwork conducted in Amsterdam during the summer and autumn of 2003. The recent policy changes towards post-multiculturalism in Amsterdam make it a particularly interesting case to investigate the kind of policies that may eventually come to replace traditional multiculturalism in West European cities. An additional reason to focus on Amsterdam is that this city is commonly regarded as a sort of 'laboratory of diversity' (e.g. Hannerz, 2000). According to many, conditions for creating new forms of intercultural interactions and interpretations seem to be exceptionally favourable in Amsterdam. Levels of segregation are relatively low (Blok *et al.*, 2001) and the city has a comparatively healthy economy (see Musterd and Salet, 2003). In addition, Fainstein (2000) suggests that civil society is particularly vibrant in Amsterdam whilst Soja (2000) documents the tolerant and lenient response of the government to radical opposition. Moreover, the local institutional context is favourable to processes of integration and intercultural dialogue as Amsterdam remains amongst the few Dutch cities where conservative and right-wing parties have not achieved major electoral victories in recent times. In short, Amsterdam provides fertile ground for experiments with new forms of governing ethnic diversity. Indeed, policymakers in Amsterdam are now trying to create a counter-discourse in which ethnic minorities are not a priori seen as a problem.

The research consisted of in-depth interviews with representatives of minority organizations, city officials, politicians and third-sector professionals. In addition, we analysed a number of policy documents related to minority and diversity policy. The survey mainly focused on the central area of Amsterdam, where conditions that are considered to be conducive to the effective negotiation of ethnicity — such as a number of opportunities for social interaction and a diverse population — are strongly present. We further limited our research to intercultural, Turkish and Moroccan organizations.

These organizations are now at the centre of debate as a result of international developments and because the government and the public are most anxious about integration of these groups into Dutch society.

From minority policy to diversity policy: recent policy shifts in Amsterdam

Initially, policies towards minorities in Amsterdam mirrored policies on the national level. Specific policies were created to emancipate or incorporate ethnic minorities by countering discrimination, supporting minority organizations for different nationalities and involving the latter in the process of policy formation. Together these policies to incorporate minorities within the local governance structure amounted to an attempt to create some form of ethnic corporatism at a local level. In line with the approach set out in the *Minderhedennota*, the local government established advisory councils for different minority groups. The councils were composed of representatives of individual minority organizations, including political associations, mosques, cultural centres and sport clubs. Many of the individual organizations received — sometimes substantial but most often small-scale — subsidies from the local government and the respective councils were supported administratively as well as financially. Turks and Moroccans each had their own advisory council while three other councils represented other ethnic minorities. The councils were a ‘hot topic’ for many of our respondents because they were officially abolished at the time of our research in September 2003.

Before this date, however, their position had been weakening for a number of years already. While the role of the councils became increasingly marginal during the course of the 1990s, at the same time a new discourse on ethnic diversity and its institutional organization was emerging. Within that discourse, ethnic corporatism was regarded as outdated and it was associated with the persistence of problems with the integration of minorities in Dutch society and Amsterdam. The first signs that ethnic corporatism was losing support can already be seen in the late 1980s when the city council formulated a detailed report to set out the lines of minority policy for the 1990s. With regard to the councils for minorities, the report already argued that the advices did not really have an impact on policy because of their lack of quality (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1989: 46). These feelings of dissatisfaction grew stronger over the years, also amongst minority organizations themselves. They argued, in accord with the criticism of traditional multiculturalism outlined above, that minority policy stigmatized its target groups. It allegedly associated these groups a priori with problems and it reified and subsequently isolated them because it only had eyes for one aspect of the identity of the target groups in question.

Minority organizations, political parties and civil servants therefore set out to develop a new approach towards ethnic diversity. The first steps in this direction, i.e. the first time that a more or less comprehensive attempt was made to formulate alternatives, were taken with the debates on minority policy. These debates were supposed to test ideas about what came to be known as the ‘diversity policy’. A definitive statement was made in 1999, when the alderman for (what was then still called) minority policy, published his memorandum, *The power of a diverse city*, which represents a turning point as it resolutely refutes minority policy and represents a consolidation of the newly emerged ‘diversity policy’ (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1999). The diversity policy ‘does not only want to address problems’ and ‘aims to create opportunities’ (*ibid.*: 3). In a sense rehearsing Taylor’s argument that it should be presumed that there is something of value in each culture, it argues that *everybody* (original emphasis) can make a contribution to the city. Everybody is entitled to participate, not as a member of a group but as an individual with a multifaceted identity. Dichotomies are thus resolutely rejected: ‘Amsterdammers [residents of Amsterdam] cannot be captured in one group. They are part of many groups’ (*ibid.*: 8). Yet apparently there are still many individuals who do not conform to this image since a major — and arguably the central — goal of the policy is to bring groups of people into contact with each other, i.e. to create, along the lines

suggested by Amin (2002) and Fraser (1995), everyday encounters where differences can be negotiated: 'through interaction on a personal level, (mutual) prejudices and interpretations can be tested and adjusted' (*ibid.*: 11).

The former minority policy is believed to have worked in the exact opposite direction. Now, the policy document suggests, the task is to put stigmatized groups, which are considered to have formed as a result of minority policy, in a positive light. Hence the policy lays great stress on communication. Advertising campaigns and public debates have been set up to debunk stereotypes of homosexuals, Muslim girls wearing headscarves and Moroccan boys. This campaign targets Amsterdam society as a whole and is meant to provoke discussion — it is believed that if inhabitants of Amsterdam communicate with each other, categories will be deconstructed and people will be able to see diversity as an asset rather than a threat or a weakness.

The policy is also explicitly directed at the municipality's own organization, which should change its own culture and open up for diversity in order to improve the quality and legitimacy of the local government. In other organizational contexts, too, diversity needs to be promoted, not 'only because this is social but especially because of the conviction that this will benefit the society of Amsterdam as a whole' (*ibid.*: 18). Here the 'diversity' fuses with another ideal, that of 'quality'. The institutions of traditional multiculturalism are believed to perform poorly and the new policy aims to improve the performance of government services. One of the ways to do this, so it is argued, is to subsidize projects that are consistent with the philosophy of the diversity policy instead of structurally subsidizing organizations.² The latter type of subsidies is believed to result in homogeneous and self-centred organizations. In contrast, project subsidies that are conditionally provided on a yearly basis give the municipality the opportunity to monitor the activities of the organizations in question and to make sure that they foster emancipation rather than isolation and self-referential agency. The stress on projects chimes with some central assumptions and recommendations in post-multiculturalist literature, notably the idea that individuals move in and out of different contexts and thereby gain a hybrid or polyvalent identity that negates any categorization of these individuals into ethnic, seemingly homogeneous groups.

The twin ambitions of diversity and quality are believed to be only realizable through institutional reform. The advisory councils for minorities especially are considered to be anachronistic because they epitomize the idea that each group has its separate identity and concerns. Hence the policy is to create new forums where participants from various backgrounds debate ideals and practices of diversity. In the new structure, there is only one council, a so-called 'diversity council', which consists of individuals who have professional experience and knowledge regarding integration issues. It is too early to discuss the functioning of this council — it was officially launched at the end of 2004 — but it is perhaps important to note that the members of the new council were not selected among the ethnic organizations. Participation in an 'old' minority council was regarded as a disqualification rather than as an asset. The members of the new council are explicitly supposed *not* to represent a group interest. Instead they are expected to provide accurate information and to develop links between different groups and especially between the government and civil society. Future research will show how, if at all, the members of the diversity council find balance between, on the one hand, the demand to have in-depth information and, on the other hand, the demand not to be too much involved with any particular group or in any specific organization.

This brief excursus into recent policy shifts has pointed to at least three major changes. First, there is a shift of emphasis from organizations to projects (see also Kraal, 2001). A second and closely interrelated shift concerns the stress on 'quality'. Third, individuals as well as self-organizations are no longer expected to operate as

2 Structural subsidies refer to subsidies for which funds are reserved from the municipality's budget. This means that organizations would only lose the subsidy if they discredited themselves – this has happened in the past but only incidentally.

representatives of certain interests or as self-centred clubs but are now supposed to effectively contribute to the city, especially to the 'diversity' that is now believed to be a major strength.

Taken together, these developments are fostering a qualitative change in the realm of minority policies in Amsterdam. Recent events, and especially the assassination of Van Gogh and its aftermath, raise new issues for the local government and for Amsterdam as a whole. The demands for security, stability and freedom of expression in the wake of the assassination will probably trigger both short-term and long-term responses from the government. However, our impression is that these latest events will not fundamentally alter the diversity policy. The most recent debates aroused in the wake of Van Gogh's assassination show that politicians and policymakers in Amsterdam still reject assimilationism, want to promote intercultural dialogue and favour a move away from multiculturalist policies through the implementation of the diversity policy.

In this sense, diversity policy could be regarded as an alternative to the assimilationist orientations towards immigrants and the ethnic minorities that are gaining ground in many countries and cities in Western Europe nowadays. Indeed, in contrast to assimilationism, the diversity policy explicitly takes into account ethnic identities. Ethnic identities are constantly evoked and problematized, not neglected or denied. Nor is the diversity policy an example of old (multiculturalist) wine in new bottles. In contrast to the minority policy previously adopted in the Netherlands, the diversity policy stresses that identities are highly complex and contentious, constantly changing and varying from one individual to another. Moreover, in contrast to what would be expected from multiculturalism, the diversity policy does not seek to give a voice or specific rights to groups and it is aimed at negating rather than reproducing group identities. The institutional and subsidy relationships reflect this difference to both assimilationism and multiculturalism: there is a council that concerns itself with ethnic diversity but it does not consist of ethnic representatives and there are subsidies but they are meant to undermine rather than support organization along ethnic lines. In the following section, we will explore the ways in which diversity policy has been concretely experienced by social and political actors in Amsterdam and try to highlight some questions that the institutionalization of post-multicultural approaches raise for the policy and the academic communities.

The diversity policy and minority organizations

One of the most important ideas in the new policy course is that public policies should focus on the diversity of the city as a whole rather than on individual groups. This idea finds its most concrete expression in the decision to abolish the advisory councils that serve to represent the interests of ethnic groups. The dismantling of the old councils is accompanied by the establishment of new advisory councils, which are no longer intended as assemblies representing the interests of individual minority groups but as forums in which diversity is debated and negotiated by members from different ethnic groups along with experts in the field and other public officials.

The transformation from the 'old' minority councils towards the new diversity council affects organizations that in the past held representative positions within the local councils and now find themselves excluded from the new consultative bodies. This is the case, for example, of Kman, a radical leftist association that was established in the 1970s to represent Moroccan workers but that now pursues a more comprehensive leftist and anti-racist strategy of political mobilization. The chairman argues that the institutional changes 'imply a shift away from consulting people in the field who represent the groups that are affected by the policies' (interview with the authors, August 2003). Other organizations that have been founded by guest workers but now more generally consider themselves as minority-oriented progressive organizations have suffered a similar process of marginalization. By many, especially politicians and state officials, they are regarded as 'old-generation organizations' that have less legitimacy

in the new policies than the so-called 'new-generation organizations'. On this point, it is worth reporting the opinion of Fatimah Elatik, a young political talent of Moroccan origin who now serves as an alderwoman in the district of Zeeburg for the Labour Party. The way Elatik selects actors reflects the spirit of the diversity policy, a policy that she herself helped to invent. Elatik states that she would ideally prefer cooperation with the so-called 'new-generation' organizations rather than with those of the 'old generation'.

The new-generation organizations are in part preferred because they do not provide a general political discourse but are rather oriented towards a specific end. A good example in this respect, in her view, is 'the neighbourhood fathers'. This organization operates in the western part of Amsterdam and was established by Moroccan fathers who were discontented with the media images of rebellious and criminal Moroccan youths and who decided to patrol the streets to increase social control. While these organizations are often, as in the case of the neighbourhood fathers, established by an ethnically homogeneous group, other organizations match the ideal of the diversity policy more closely because they are based on a territorial, religious or a social rather than an ethnic or political identity. For example, Assadaakka, an intercultural organization in Zeeburg and winner of the 'diversity prize' in 2001, stresses that it is open to 'everybody' in the neighbourhood and that it embraces all initiatives that help to solve problems in the neighbourhood. In a similar fashion, mosques are considered as important partners by the diversity policy since they can function as new intermediaries between the (local) government and minority groups. Whatever the nature of the organization in question, however, it will only be granted subsidies if it produces a plan in which it is stipulated what are the direct benefits of its activities for the integration of its members into Amsterdam society.

One important consequence of the stress on immediate results and the use of project subsidies is that ethnic organizations are forced to neglect their role as vehicles for political socialization: they are encouraged to view themselves as service providers with a short-term perspective rather than as social movements with the long-term goal of increasing their position within the local polity. According to Michon and Tillie (2003), the sharp decline in the political participation of ethnic groups can largely be explained by the refusal of the municipality of Amsterdam to structurally support organizations that socialize their members in the local polity (see also Fennema and Tillie, 1998). In Rotterdam, where the municipal government has traditionally tried to strengthen civil society with structural subsidies for ethnic self-organizations, participation levels have steadily increased during the last decade (Michon and Tillie, 2003).

Another important effect of the demand for immediate results has the effect of de-politicizing societal problems, such as youth crime and other forms of urban marginality and deviance. An organization is only regarded as legitimate when it can show that it efficiently provides socially relevant services such as language courses, computer courses or sports events. Organizations that aim to structurally improve the position of ethnic minorities through political struggles have no role to play in the new system of project subsidies and advisory councils. Since the diversity policy denies the validity of identities like 'Moroccans', 'Turks' or 'Muslims', the organizations that strive to represent the interests of those who are categorized as such are themselves marginalized. The ambivalence here is that the local government feels too much importance is granted to these categories and therefore seeks to select organizations that are not based on ethnic identities. For example, a group that is mixed with respect to ethnicity and is homogeneous with respect to age is more likely to be supported by the local government than a group that is homogeneous with respect to ethnicity but heterogeneous with respect to age. The result of this policy is to deny the identities that are of importance to many members of ethnic minorities. However, this does not mean that all organizations that are founded on a particular identity are affected to a similar degree. In fact, the denial of ethnic identities in general can promote the interests of organizations that combine a strong ethnic identity with political skills and a pragmatic attitude.

A comparison between Moroccan and Turkish organizations is instructive in this respect. Research on minority organizations in Amsterdam has shown that the Turkish community exhibits high levels of political participation compared to other ethnic minorities (Fennema and Tillie, 1999). Drawing on Putnam (1993), Fennema and Tillie explain such political behaviour with reference to the concept of 'social capital': the Turkish community has a dense network of relationships that is supported by a strong institutional structure, socializing its members in political culture and enabling them to gain information on politics (see also Tillie, 2004).

Most of the time, politicians and state officials sincerely try to treat organizations from different ethnic backgrounds in a similar manner. However, it is clear that, in practice, the well organized (parts of communities) reap more benefits. For example, the director of a local branch of Mdso, a local welfare agency that acts as an intermediary between the state and minority associations, says that Moroccan associations sometimes 'even do not show up at appointments'. This contrasts with the Turks who prove to be, from his point of view, more reliable and professional than the Moroccans. When asked how he responds to this situation, he replies that he just continues to invite the Moroccan organizations but that, in any case, he finds it more easy and productive to work with the Turkish organizations.

While some organizations are excluded from the governance structures because of their 'manifest' inefficiency, others are firmly incorporated within them. For example, it sometimes happens that one organization is identified as *the* interlocutor of 'the Moroccans' to the detriment of other Moroccan organizations. As a result of these practices of institutional selectiveness, divisions and conflicts continuously arise between Moroccan groups, weakening their capacity to defend their rights and to collectively act in the urban public sphere. For example, in the Zeeburg district, the neighbourhood council has identified an organization called Moroccan Council Zeeburg (MCZ) as the organization representing the Moroccan community. Those not granted such a status do not hesitate to show their disagreement with this policy, as we found on interviewing a representative of the Moroccan Platform Zeeburg (MPZ) who helped to create the MCZ but who decided to leave it because of its alleged closed and hierarchical character. In the view of excluded organizations, the ideology of 'professionalism' serves to exclude some voices, especially those who seek to politicize minority issues, and to continue systems of patronage. As the representative of the MPZ argues: 'They [the neighbourhood council] refuse to support our activities because they are allegedly more professional. Well, if they would give us the kind of resources they have, it would be very easy to be professional' (interview with the authors, September 2003). He feels that the more pragmatic and well-funded MCZ is embraced by the neighbourhood council exactly because the latter organization is de-politicized, technocratic and willing to use its status as 'the representative' of the Moroccan community to reap benefits and gain political influence.

This kind of privileged relation between political forces and certain organizations also takes place at wider scales such as that of the municipality where, according to many, Milli Görüş, a transnational Turkish-Islamic organization, has established a non-written pact of cooperation with the Labour Party. The case of Milli Görüş is particularly interesting as it is firmly incorporated into the local polity even though many organizations and individuals regard it as a distinctly conservative organization. The director of Milli Görüş has a straightforward explanation for the success of his organization:

Some time ago, Milli Görüş made a clear choice for professionalization and continuity. We do not want to operate on the margin but want to participate for real. This means you have to professionalize. When people talk to us, they know they are going to see the same face each time there is a meeting because we do not send just another volunteer. With other organizations, it is never clear what kind of agreements have been reached and with whom you deal. In contrast, we have a professional staff that represents the organization. For example, I was "headhunted" from ABN/Amro . . . If you want to be a part of things, you have to have people

who can read policy documents and who know what they are talking about . . . The weak will falter; it's a natural thing (interview with the authors, October 2003).

More than any state official or politician, the director is also frank about the results of the stress on quality. He frankly declares that 'ideology' (as he understands it) is not of these times:

We are close to the people. Our imams talk about things that concern us all and about things that are happening right now. We are not an organization that thrives on old antagonisms. People ask for local solutions . . . We are a people's organization and we don't engage in abstract waffle: we do not try to change the world (*ibid.*).

This example shows how professional organizations like Milli Görüş can be incorporated into the governance process. Yet it also shows how the new mechanisms of public incorporation do not lead to the ideal situation that is depicted in policy documents or in the writings of critics of traditional multiculturalism. In fact, despite the stress on intercultural interaction in the policy documents, what happens is that many organizations that strive for diversity are excluded. The notions of quality and professionalism are central to these new patterns of exclusion. The question may be asked whether the ideals of clearly articulated policy proposals and intercultural projects are not mutually exclusive. In practice, we see that an ethnically and religiously homogeneous organization like Milli Görüş can thrive on the new antagonisms between 'old' and 'new' generation organizations, in part because its homogeneous nature gives it a strong base of financial and political support and helps it to establish clear objectives (it is the only organization that said it represented only its members).

Arguably, the above observations also point to a deeper problem. On the one hand, the current policy approach stresses that culture has been 'absolutized' in the past and that, in order to avoid stigmatization, it should be recognized that each individual has a number of ethnic characteristics that cannot be reduced to labels such as 'Moroccan' or 'Turk'. Yet, on the other hand, we see that these notions *do* dominate the public debate and the imagery of politicians. This is illustrated by two incidents within the labour party. First, the alderman for education and diversity policy, Rob Oudkerk, was accidentally recorded on video tape when he said to the mayor, Job Cohen, that he was surprised by the lack of success of the Lijst Pim Fortuyn, the political party of the assassinated Fortuyn, in Amsterdam because 'we also have fucking Moroccans (*kut-Marokkanen*)'. The term *kut-Marokkanen* is now used by some Moroccans in the same way that some African-Americans use the word 'nigger', for example in rap songs. More recently, the chairman of the Labour Party in Amsterdam, Tjalling Halbertsma, had made a written suggestion on a memorandum to put 'those *kut-Marokkanen*' on a ship so that they could learn some discipline. If they refused to listen, they could, in his opinion, be 'keel-hauled'. Thus, the same alderman that is supposed to promote intercultural or even trans-cultural dialogues, reasons in terms of 'Moroccans', even 'fucking Moroccans'. The image of the delinquent Moroccan now dominates, more or less explicitly, many political discussions about criminality, multiculturalism and religion.

As a result, many politicians in Amsterdam now call on 'the Moroccan community' to mobilize (Duyvendak and Rijkschroeff, 2004), a demand that was loudly voiced after the assassination of Van Gogh. After such incidents, government officials immediately try to associate with Islamic or minority associations to prevent escalation through public denouncements of the murder and communication to members and target groups of ethnic organizations. The issue of 'civicness' has also become of immediate political relevance as a result of recent attention for the overrepresentation of Moroccan youths in crime statistics and constant media attention for scandals involving gang rapes, murders, harassment of the elderly, etc. For example, Eddy Linthorst, leader of the Labour Party in the district of Oud-Zuid, argues that it is necessary to 'identify the good and the bad guys'. In his view, the Moroccan community itself must take the initiative: it must 'stand up' and say which people are disturbing the image of the community on

the whole. Linthorst, as well as many others, suggests that 'the Turkish community' compares favourably to 'the Moroccan community' when it comes to mobilizing and organizing.

Many interviewees stressed that Moroccans are generally more oriented to Dutch society than other ethnic groups (such as the Turks or the Chinese), which would also explain the alleged lack of initiatives from 'the' Moroccan community. Indeed, the absence of a strong Moroccan organizational structure in Amsterdam fits perfectly with the ideals of the diversity policy (according to the conventional wisdom asserting that ethnic groups should not 'retreat into their own institutions'). Yet when scandal after scandal is covered in the press, Moroccans are blamed for not standing up for themselves.

In this context, the diversity policy has some paradoxical and controversial effects. The official policy line is not to support homogenous organizations and to de-politicize local problems (such as youth crime). However, individual politicians as well as the general public associate certain groups with problems, thus raising the political profile of the issues. It is no surprise, therefore, that in practice ethnically homogeneous organizations are called upon to provide services and to cooperate with the municipality. It is a frequently heard complaint that 'the government only wants to talk to us when there is a problem or when we show we are capable of mobilizing people' (as happened during the demonstrations that were held after a young man of Moroccan origin was shot by the police in July 2003). Exactly the kinds of organizations that are rejected as part of the philosophy of diversity are taken back on board when problems proliferate. The fact that such counter-publics are valued in difficult circumstances whilst they are excluded in ordinary situations reveals some of the ambivalences that underlie the diversity policy.

Conclusion

This article analysed the process of institutional and political change that has recently occurred in the public sphere of Amsterdam and the Netherlands with regard to the issue of multicultural integration. In particular, it sought to show how the crisis of ethnic corporatism in the Netherlands created a context in which new experiments can be undertaken at the local level. The shift from an approach centred on the recognition of minority groups on an ethno-national basis to one aiming to recognize ethnic diversity as such, is such an experiment. The diversity policy, as the new approach is named, is designed as a response to the perceived failures of traditional multiculturalism in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Moreover, it can be equally regarded as an alternative to the authoritarian wind that is blowing through the Netherlands.

While such experiments are understandably greeted with hope in the academic literature, we have tried to highlight some of the problems that may be encountered when ideas about intercultural dialogue and culturally inclusive democracy are actually implemented. The purpose has been to investigate the dynamics of selectiveness that are embedded in the everyday institutional practices. While these institutional practices may carry the promise of instantiating innovative forms of governance, they simultaneously bring with them a number of exclusionary practices that should concern every critical scholar. In this context, we have noted that demanding from organizations that they provide quality and diversity can easily generate new forms of exclusion. It can be argued that we are witnessing the emergence of a strategy aiming to discipline organizations and to restructure them to fit within the newly created institutional order. While the multiplicity of urban identities is celebrated, the city government at the same time seeks to produce and discipline subjectivities. This situation reproduces the ambivalent functioning of the urban public sphere in contemporary cities: while the production of subjectivities is stimulated and encouraged through the legitimization of processes of collective mobilization 'from below', the institutional procedures adopted

have the effect of re-conducting the agency of urban actors to the prevailing government's style and objectives (Rossi, 2004).

Arguably, these features are typical of a 'soft' and 'thin' institutional structure that is currently gaining ground in Amsterdam. This means that, on the one hand, there is a shift towards an individualization of policies' referents. Today, the municipality does not grant any organization or advisory organ a preferential status. In so doing, it grants itself a stronger position vis-à-vis the many organizations who want access to political or economic resources. It is thus producing a 'thin' institutional configuration in Jamie Peck's use of the word: the emerging configuration is flexible and endows self-organizations with power, yet in the process the position of the municipality has only been strengthened (*cf.* Peck, 2001). The new configuration may help the municipality to impose its own norms of quality while it simultaneously undermines the likeliness of effective opposition.

On the other hand, the policies are increasingly based on assumptions that MacLeod (2001) considers to be typical of 'soft institutionalism'. Today, there is not much attention paid to the structural barriers to successful political and economic participation and instead there is a stress on the importance of images and individual initiatives. It is believed that the task of the municipal government is to valorize the potentials for social and political cooperation emerging from those sectors of civil society that are inclined to build their own institutional structures. Thus, self-organizations that can present themselves as reliable and professional easily acquire access to political and economic resources. Ironically and crucially, these organizations are not likely to meet the ideals of the diversity policy; since effective organization *presupposes* strong internal bonds and high trust, it is unlikely that successful applicants for subsidies or political partners will originate from highly heterogeneous organizations. The commonly held institutional imperative states that whosoever does not want to cooperate with public institutions or does not demonstrate the ability to present high-quality projects cannot have access to public funds.

These findings have implications for the (overlapping) literatures dealing with urban citizenship, minority integration and the rethinking of multicultural theories and practices — what we have called the 'post-multiculturalist literature'. In this literature, policies are largely blamed for the construction and reification of ethnic identities. It follows that post-multicultural policies should acknowledge the dynamic, fluid and contested character of identities. However, our case study shows that contemporary policies do not operate in a vacuum. Past policies, inherited beliefs and contemporary socio-cultural processes have generated identities and power inequalities that somehow need to be taken into account. Simply withholding subsidies from organizations that are associated with 'reified' identities will not suffice. A policy that promotes intercultural dialogue and high-quality projects may generate positive results but our case study shows that such an approach is not sufficient: as long as all self-organizations and identities are treated in a similar fashion, it is likely that the stronger parties will reap most benefits. This is especially true when policies take on a 'soft' and 'thin' character. Policies that place high demands upon actors, try to valorize already existing potentialities and refuse structural support will most likely benefit ethnic communities with a high level of social capital and professional organizations. It follows that organizations that represent comparatively well-positioned groups find it easier to have access to public funding and other benefits than organizations which represent weaker and less-organized groups. In addition, such 'thin' and 'soft' policies, while they are entirely in line with the post-multiculturalist maxim that institutionalization can lead to reification, lead in practice to de-politicization. This, again, is not surprising since actors that lack a clear group identity are not likely to identify and subsequently promote their own interests.

In sum, post-multicultural approaches have to confront head on the problem of how to deal with marginal ethnic communities and the organizations that represent them. One option would be to choose the kind of action that the municipality of Amsterdam

has chosen. Even though we have observed many pitfalls and dangers, some commentators will undoubtedly have faith that at some point marginalized groups will develop the skills that are needed to operate in the political field. If it is believed that this is unlikely, another option would be to think through some kind of affirmative action in the political field. This would make it easier for these organizations to acquire funds so as to compensate for their comparatively low professional skills, fragmented support base and weak socio-economic position. Whatever option is chosen, though, it is essential that critical theory does not too quickly dismiss or relativize the identity of marginalized groups but that it instead thinks through what place, if any, these groups would have within the institutions that are supposed to bring closer the ideals of a post-multiculturalist urban sphere.

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