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ESSENTIALIZING CULTURE: PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP EMBEDDED IN DUTCH CIVIC INTEGRATION

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Abstract

In this thesis I argue that since 2000, there has been a tendency in the Netherlands to perceive citizenship in terms of identification with, and loyalty to culture. Following others, I have used the term culturalization of citizenship to describe this communitarian tendency. I argue that this perception of citizenship is based on an essentialist notion of culture, which reflects the duality between 'our' western culture and 'their' non-western culture. Yet the cultural tropes by which Dutch cultural citizenship is partially defined are based on liberal western values that are also used to describe for example German or Danish citizenship. Since there is little difference between the cultural tropes, one could assume that immigrants are in fact integrated not into a specific nation-state, but into any state that adheres to liberal western values. Nevertheless, civic integration both in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, also entails an ethno-cultural attempt to integrate immigrants into their respective societies, tightening access to citizenship even further.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

'Wir schaffen das', said German chancellor Angela Merkel as a reaction on the 2015 refugee crisis. She was praised for her open border policy, but also highly criticized. Especially many on the rightwing saw the entrance of new refugees as a threat to German identity and security. Despite the Schengen Agreement, many other countries reacted more defensively, sealing off their borders to prevent immigrants from entering. In general, there is a widespread concern that an increasing amount of immigrants, especially from non-western origin, will fail to integrate, and that cultural difference will undermine trust and social cohesion in society (Mouritsen 2015,1).

Even the more recent decision of Great Britain to leave the European Union has, according to the Wall Street Journal, 'less to do with jobs and wages and more to do with concerns about national identity and control of borders' (June 29, 2016). In other words, the debate on immigration and national identity remains as high on the public and political agenda as in the past decade. Since 2000, the common response to this debate was that multiculturalist policies had 'utterly failed', as Angela Merkel famously expressed in 2010 (the Guardian, 17 October). In its place, immigration control measures were put into force, encouraged by the rhetoric of populist anti-immigration movements.

The debate on immigration and integration will probably remain high on the agenda this year as well, with right-wing populist parties participating in the national elections in France, Germany and the Netherlands. Anticipating the elections, Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* ran the headline: 'Is Dutch culture disappearing?' (September 29, 2016). The authors state that many political parties focus their election campaign on the question what characterizes 'the' Dutch identity.

The main reason why post-war immigration to Western Europe has been such a controversial topic is because it raises fundamental questions about the nation-state. Not only about its sovereignty to control the borders (or lack thereof, as became apparent from the 2015 refugee crisis), but also about its attribution of citizenship and its national identity (Koopmans et al. 2005, 233). Immigrants tend to be seen as the constitutive 'other' as opposed to whom an identity is formed. That is why immigration puts pressure

on the perceptions of citizenship and national identity of the receiving state, although it also opens up opportunities for a redefinition of that national identity (Koopmans et al. 2005, 6).

According to some, immigration has caused an 'identity crisis' or a 'crisis of citizenship'. The process of European integration has exacerbated this, as the ever-extending political union is felt to challenge national sovereignty and put national identity under pressure (Zapata-Barero 2012, 8). Immigrants are seen to be bringing about this 'crisis of citizenship', because they challenge the existing notion of citizenship. That is, modern citizenship is linked to the emergence of the nation-state in the United States and Europe. Yet there is a 'fundamental dilemma' in the European idea of the nation-state. The concept of "state" is based on a political, civic notion, whereas "the nation" is based on the ethnic notion of a shared past and culture (Stolcke 1995, 12).

In other words, the nation-state is both seen as a territorial political state and as a bounded community with a sense of shared belonging based on language, tradition, culture and memory. So on the one hand there is the notion of the citizen as 'an individual abstracted from cultural characteristics' and on the other hand one as 'a member of a community with common cultural values' (Castles and Davidson 2000, 12). These fundamental ambiguities have always been embedded in the concept of citizenship, but became visible due to globalization and immigration (Castles and Davidson 2000, 2).

Faced with immigrants, the crisis of citizenship has led to a debate on the question what kind of ethnic, cultural or religious diversity can be accommodated within liberal and secular societies (Zapata-Barrero & Triandafyllidou 2012, 7). This question is the main European debate in which my thesis is situated: the integration of immigrants in society, and the accompanying debate on what constitutes national identity and citizenship.

Most West European countries have reacted to the crisis of citizenship by restricting access to naturalization, as well as imposing requirements on those who want to immigrate to West Europe. Since around the year 2000, states are increasingly taking an active stance in the 'creation' of citizens through civic integration courses, exams and

contracts that require knowledge of language, history, politics and culture (Mouritsen 2015, 1). Since the nation-state and citizenship are seen as being put under pressure by immigrants, civic integration is a 'site *par excellence'* to study citizenship. After all, it is in the arena of civic integration that immigrants learn the conditions of citizenship (Kirk and Suvarierol 2015, 262). Therefore, in this thesis, the main research question is: what perceptions of citizenship are embedded in Dutch civic integration?

I will focus on what has been called the culturalization of citizenship: the process by which culture has come to play a central role in the debate on social integration, and cultural participation is seen as an integral element of citizenship (Tonkens et al 2010, 7). In order to research this, I will both look at the policy perceptions on citizenship, as well as the perceptions of immigrants who are in the process of civic integration. After all, they are the ones who are being taught the conditions of Dutch citizenship (Kirk & Suvarierol 2015, 262). Besides, as Entzioni notes, most of the citizens never have to prove their ability to be 'good citizens' (2007, 353): citizenship in their case is seen as something that comes naturally. Especially since citizenship tends to be taken for granted by those who already have it, I find it useful to look at newcomers who are not naturalized yet, but are in the process of learning the conditions of Dutch citizenship by means of civic integration.

Researching civic integration in the Netherlands is worthwhile, since the Netherlands has been one of the forerunners of civic integration. In the *'inburgeringsexamen'*, translated literally as 'citizening test', immigrants are not only tested on Dutch language skills, but also on their knowledge of Dutch society, traditions and customs. The test is both mandatory for permanent residence, as a requirement for naturalization. The Dutch policy on civic integration has been used as an example for other West European countries. For instance Austria, Germany, Denmark, France and Belgium, have taken over (parts of) the Dutch policy on civic integration (Joppke 2007, 44).

I will primarily aim this thesis at the Netherlands, but will not confine to it: in order to place the trend in a broader European context, I will briefly examine civic integration for immigrants in Germany and Denmark as well. Since in the Netherlands the content of the civic integration exam remains secret, I will focus on the civic integration trajectory as a

whole. That is, in my assessment of Dutch, Danish and German policy on civic integration as well as the immigrants' perspective, I both look at the civic integration course and the exam.

I will begin this thesis by providing an outline on the theoretical debate on citizenship. I will introduce the three main political strands towards citizenship: liberalism, republicanism and communitarianism. This is followed by a reflection on recent literature on cultural citizenship in the Netherlands. This will be the second chapter of this thesis. In the third chapter, I will explain the research methodology I will use to build on the recent literature. Then, in the fourth chapter, I will turn to a policy assessment of the Dutch policy on citizenship, which is followed by a short chapter on the content of the current civic integration trajectory. In it, I will show that the Netherlands has moved from a liberal, toward a more republican-communitarian perception on citizenship. As the chapters will demonstrate, since the year 2000 there has been a gradual move towards an essentialist culturalization of citizenship.

In chapter six, the perspective will shift from the policy towards its intended aim: immigrants who are in the process of Dutch civic integration. In an analysis of the interviews, I will demonstrate that immigrants hold the same culture essentialist perception of citizenship, while at the same time blurring the boundaries between western and non-western culture. The seventh chapter aims to give comparative insight in two other West European countries: Germany and Denmark. I have included research into these two nation-states, because they show a similar approach to civic integration as the Netherlands (Jacobs & Rea 2007, 10). After this, I will turn to the conclusion, in which I argue that all three nation-states use variations of the same cultural tropes of liberal western values in their perceptions of citizenship, as well as an ethno-culturalist perception of citizenship as cultural belonging.

This thesis is not an attempt to give a complete answer to the question of what perceptions of citizenship are embedded in the civic integration trajectory. For that, my research is too concise. Instead, I intend to offer an insight into the culturalization of citizenship in the civic integration trajectory.

Chapter 2. Citizenship and civic integration: a theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will describe the main theoretical views of citizenship, as well as providing an overview of the recent literature on cultural citizenship and civic integration in the Netherlands. First, I will briefly assess the work of T.H. Marshall, followed by an explanation of the three main political strands in citizenship theory: liberalism, republicanism and communitarianism, followed by an overview of the argument on the ethnic-civic dichotomy. Then I will turn to an assessment of the current state of literature on cultural citizenship and civic integration. I will conclude the chapter by stating what I will add to the existing body of literature.

2.1 Citizenship Theory

Citizenship is one of the most undervalued political ideals, according to legal philosopher Roland Pierik. After all, citizenship is easily taken for granted by those who possess it. Most of us are born with citizenship: it only becomes an issue for those who lose or want to change their citizenship (2012, 20). Sometimes described as 'the right to have rights', citizenship is a notoriously complex and essentially controversial concept that has been defined in different ways, more often than not based on competing political views. The only constant factor of citizenship may be that it concerns the relation between the state and the citizen. The reason why there are many definitions of citizenship is that, as Clarke et al argue, citizenship is an inherently political – and politically contested - concept. Following Etienne Balibar, they therefore speak of citizenship as 'always *imparfaite*': unfinished, and constantly 'in the making' (2014, 8).

To them, perceptions of citizenship reflect a certain view on power, on the state, the people and society, and on how life in society should be (2014, 13). It is important to see citizenship as socially and politically constructed rather than as a stable and fixed concept. Keeping their statements in mind, I do not have the intention either to write a universal definition of citizenship, or a normative assessment of an ideal form of citizenship - precisely because each definition implies a political or normative choice. Instead, I will look at *perceptions* of citizenship, recognizing it as an ever changing, politically and socially constructed concept. However, to make solid ground out of this

notoriously complex concept, I will first briefly consider some of the main discussions in citizenship theories, before turning to current perceptions of citizenship in civic integration.

2.1.1 Citizenship rights

It is almost impossible to write an approach to citizenship without starting with T.H. Marshall (1949). Trained as a sociologist, he wrote his famous essay 'Citizenship and Social Class' in the years after World War Two, in the context of the development of the welfare state in Great Britain. This is relevant since his theory has often been taken for granted as a universal or neutral theory on citizenship, whereas it has indeed been heavily influenced by the specific context of the creation of the British welfare state (Clarke et al 2014, 36). He saw the development of citizenship as the gradual acquisition of rights: starting with civil rights in the 18th century, followed by political rights in the 19th century, and lastly the addition of social rights in the 20th century.

That is not to say that citizenship only started to exist in the 18th century, but by then civil rights extended from the city to encompass the whole nation (Pattie et al 2004, 8). Civil rights were the rights Marshall deemed necessary for individual freedom: 'liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice' (Marshall 2006 [1949], 30). The second phase was characterized by the right of political participation, both active and passive, which took place in Britain in the early 19th century (although this still only included men from the privileged economic classes). The third phase, roughly coinciding with the period after World War Two, saw the development of social rights with public education and health care: from the right to economic welfare to the right to a dignified life.

To Marshall, citizenship primarily consisted of legal rights and duties – but mainly rights. By bestowing equal rights upon the citizens, he hoped to integrate the lower classes into society. Nowadays, his view is commonly seen as a liberal view of citizenship, with its emphasis on citizenship as a legal, passive, status. Although his theory is by no means universal since many nation-states saw a very different development of citizenship (Pattie et al 2004, 10; Clarke et al 2014, 36), his analysis can be seen as building blocks of

modern citizenship. After all, most of the modern liberal democracies uphold a combination of the civil, political and social rights that Marshall identified.

2.1.2 Political ideals

However, with some states favoring certain rights over others and emphasizing different obligations, this has resulted in different models of citizenship. As Engin Isin and Bryan Turner state in their Handbook of Citizenship Studies, liberal democracies such as the United States of America have emphasized civil and political rights, while leaving social rights to the market forces. Social democratic states on the other hand, such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, have highlighted social rights instead (2002, 3). In these differences, three main modern models of citizenship can be discerned: liberalism, republicanism and communitarianism.

Liberalism, as exemplified by T.S. Marshall's theory, strongly emphasizes individual autonomy, freedom and equality. Citizenship is seen as a legal status, which enables the citizen to claim his or her civil, political and social rights. In their review of Marshall's works, Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman conclude that liberal citizenship is 'essentially a matter of ensuring that everyone is treated as a full and equal member of society' (1994, 354). The liberal view of citizenship, however, is often called 'passive' or 'private' citizenship, because it consists of passive citizens' rights, rather than their obligations and duties towards the state or society.

Republican citizenship, in contrast, implies more than just a legal status: it involves active participation. This view is based on a reinterpretation of Greek and Roman republicanism, which rose to prominence after the French Revolution (Kartal 2002, 124). However, as Faulks (2000) has noted, there are dangers in using this conception of citizenship in the present day. After all, the Greek city-states were small, homogeneous, and many inhabitants were excluded from citizenship altogether, such as women and slaves (2000, 19). In the neo-classical interpretation of republicanism, citizenship is a normative ideal in which citizens equally and actively participate in the (self-) government of the political community, with an emphasis on civic duties and obligations, as well as active engagement in politics and community matters (Pohlmann et al 2013, 185). It has therefore been called 'citizenship as activity' (Pierik 2012, 22).

The third model, communitarianism, stresses that society is characterized by a specific and relatively unalterable shared identity (Pohlmann et al 2013, 185). This view strongly differs from the liberal view, for where the latter perceives all individuals equally and abstracted from particular and specific descriptions (such as male and female, black and white), communitarianism sees each individual as situated within a community (Kartal 2002, 113-4). Citizenship is thus perceived as identification with, and loyalty to the society. Underlying this view is the idea that individuals are influenced by the specific society in which they live, with culture as their common point of reference. Culture is seen as based on historically grown traditions, and intertwined with the dominant religion in the society. In short, citizenship is defined as 'individual identification with the society and the dominant culture, including the standards and values' (Pierik 2012, 22-23).

Although these classifications can be useful, their main flaw is of course the fact that no nation-state fits solely within the description of either of these typologies. As Rogers Smith puts it, these classifications fail to recognize that societies develop differently and do not fit into clear-cut pigeonholes (2002, 109). Rather, modern forms of citizenship and nationhood have been constructed by different liberal, republican, and other elements, combined with notions of nationalism and patriarchy built upon already existing and changing conceptions of ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and gender identities (2002, 109-10).

It has, however, become normal to make a distinction between at least three aspects of citizenship: citizenship as a status, meaning formal state membership and rules of access to it; citizenship as rights, about the duties and obligations connected to the status; and as an identity, 'which refers to the behavioral aspects of individuals acting and conceiving of themselves as members of a collectivity' (Joppke 2007, 38). In other words, rather than seeing the above-mentioned political strands of conceptions of citizenship as clear-cut divisions, citizenship is a combination of status (liberalism), rights and duties (republicanism) and identity (communitarianism), with the state or other actors emphasizing some elements over others.

2.1.3 Ethnic versus civic nations

The question that has sparked a lot of debate regarding to seeing citizenship as an identity, is what that identity exactly entails. Traditionally, a common distinction has been paramount in this respect: the difference between ethnic nations and civic nations. The traditional idea of the civic nation dates back to the Enlightenment and French and American Revolutions. The civic nation is 'a community of equal, rights-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values' (Ignatieff 1994, 3-4). Since citizens in perceived civic nations are loyal to the political institutions and values, in theory anyone who adheres to the nation's political creed can become a citizen of that nation – regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity or language[1]. Thus in civic nations, society is not held together by common ancestry, but by law: by a rational attachment to a set of democratic principles and procedures (1994, 4).

This idea is contrasted with another type of nation: the ethnic nation, which is seen as bounded by people's pre-existing characteristics such as language, religion, customs and tradition. Ethnic nationalists claim that 'an individual's deepest attachments are inherited, not chosen' (Ignatieff 1994, 4), imagining the nation as based on common descent and ethnicity. States were originally grouped into these opposing groups, with civic nations seen as inclusive and liberal, whereas ethnic nations were illiberal and exclusive (Wallace Goodman 2012, 670). Also, the civic/ethnic distinction was seen as representing respectively 'early' nations like France, England and the US, and 'late' nations such as Germany, Italy and the Eastern European nations (Laegaard 2007, 42).

Although this distinction is still used, it has come under scrutiny for being inherently ambiguous (Brubaker 2004, Nielsen 1999). According to the latter, it is as impossible to find a purely civic nation with commitment to freedom and democracy, as it is to find a purely ethnic nation (Nielsen 1999, 124-5). Liberal states can become illiberal and exclusive too, in their attempts to make all citizens alike (Laegaard 2007, 42). Will Kymlicka and Rogers Brubaker have criticized the civic/ethnic dichotomy for overlooking the cultural aspects that are embedded in both positions (2001, 243-45; 2004, 136-144). Kymlicka for instance argued that the ethnic communities in Quebec and Catalonia do

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[1] Ignatieff does recognize however, that this ideal that spread after the American and French revolutions was a rather easy one, since the 'citizens' were a homogenous group, because women,

not define their membership in terms of ethnic descent, but in terms of participation in a common culture.

Similarly, civic nations are not purely built on political principles but also form cultural communities. That becomes clear in the integration of immigrants, who have to learn the language and history of the country where they reside, also in perceived civic nations such as the French. Equality and freedom are abstract principles, but 'promoting a common sense of history is a way of ensuring that people identify not just with abstract principles, but with *this* political community, with its particular boundaries, institutions, procedures, and so on' (Kymlicka 2001, 245). In other words, both perceived 'civic' nations and 'ethnic' nations rely on a common culture for their perceptions of citizenship.

In my thesis I use the above-mentioned perceptions of citizenship as liberal, republican and communitarian as a tool to understand the perceptions of citizenship embedded in the Dutch civic integration trajectory. Also, as the debate on the ethnic/civic dichotomy has demonstrated, both perceived 'ethnic' and 'civic' nations rely on culture as a common point of reference. Below, I will further expand upon the role of culture in citizenship, by reviewing the recent literature on civic integration and citizenship in the Netherlands.

2.2. Recent literature on cultural citizenship

In the Netherlands, the emergence of a body of literature on civic integration coincided with the 'demise of multiculturalism' (de Leeuw & van Wichelen 2012, 195), which was launched by Paul Scheffers influential essay 'The Multicultural Tragedy' (2000). Faced with policy changes in immigration, naturalization and a mandatory civic integration exam under Minister Verdonk of the right-wing liberal party (2003-2007), several scholars started writing on civic integration in relation to citizenship. Most of the literature thus focuses on the changes that were accomplished during that period, such as the civic integration exam abroad (de Leeuw & van Wichelen 2012), the naturalization ceremony (Verkaaik 2009, 2010) and civic integration courses (Suvarierol & Kirk 2014, 2015).

The notion of a 'culturalization' of citizenship has become significant in recent decades. In 2002, Gerard Delanty signaled a confluence of culture and citizenship, and Reijerse et

al (2013) note that the public debate in the EU about immigrants and citizenship is also increasingly framed in terms of culture. Tonkens et al. see the culturalization of citizenship as both a discursive process, by which culture has come to play a central role in the debate on social integration, and a process related to the content of citizenship. With the latter they mean that cultural participation (in terms of adhering to certain norms, values, practices and traditions) is increasingly seen as an alternative to or as an addition to citizenship as rights and socio-economic participation (2010, 7). In this thesis, I will use their definition of the culturalization of citizenship.

It is important to note that culture is not fixed, but constantly evolving. The problematic notion of a 'Dutch culture' however, does imply that there are perceived stable elements in its culture. Therefore I see culture not as what a group objectively shares – if that is even possible - , but what is discursively represented as shared: specific conceptions of values, belonging and character traits (Mouritsen 2008, 22). The shift towards emphasizing these topics and especially the acculturation of Dutch 'norms and values' has been called 'culturalist" by Verkaaik (2010), 'cultural assimilationism' (Schinkel & van Houdt 2010), 'culturism' (Schinkel 2013) or a 'restorative culturalization' (Tonkens et al 2010).

2.2.1 Culturalization of citizenship

According to Dutch philosopher Rene Boomkens (2010), the first decade of the new millennium was characterized by a culturalization of political discourse in the Netherlands. This new discourse was caused by 9/11, the electoral success of populist right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn and his subsequent murder in 2002, as well as the murder on publicist Theo van Gogh in 2004. The discourse of cultural relativism was replaces by a discourse of culturalization: all problems were seen as having cultural causes and thus needed cultural solutions (2010, 308). So, according to this new discourse, 'the problems of ethnic minorities were said to originate in their cultural backwardness, their being unable to participate in a modern, enlightened, liberal culture like the Dutch; the solutions were found in simultaneously forcing minorities to integrate in that dominant culture *and* fighting the lack of coherence and self-confidence of Dutch national culture itself' (2010, 308). So on the one hand, the perceived failure of immigrants to integrate into Dutch society was "solved" by forcing them to integrate into

dominant Dutch culture, while on the other hand, attempts were made to identify and strengthen the content of that culture.

This culturalization of political discourse and citizenship is echoed in much of the current literature on citizenship and civic integration in the Netherlands. First, however, it is important to note that Boomkens sees the culturalization of citizenship as fostering inclusion, contrary to most of the other scholars. Boomkens analyzed the notion of cultural citizenship that was introduced by the Council for Culture, which advises the government. To the Council, the concept of cultural citizenship reflected the increased complexity of citizenship and the influence of different cultures on it. As Boomkens clarified, they no longer perceived culture as a fixed entity 'but as a collection of sometimes rather diverse practices that, together with rights and duties, constitute the notion and practice of citizenship' (2010, 313). So to Boomkens, cultural citizenship recognizes that culture builds on difference, that minorities are a natural ingredient of this, and that there is no such thing as a self-evident and undisputed Dutch cultural heritage (2010, 315). Although I agree with this definition of culture, I see his definition as an ideal. That is, as becomes apparent from the review below and as I will argue in the rest of this thesis, in the context of civic integration and citizenship, the concept of culture is used in a different way, which is less open to the fluid nature of culture and instead holds a more essentialist view.

2.2.2. Cultural tropes

Scholars who have researched civic integration, have demonstrated that within the context of civic integration, cultural citizenship is not seen as inclusive or fluid. Instead, they found that Dutch citizenship is more often than not portrayed as a fixed unity: as something that *they*, the immigrants, have to learn and accept.

Oskar Verkaaik (2010) for instance has analyzed how local bureaucrats perform the naturalization ceremony that was established in 2006. During this ceremony immigrants officially become Dutch citizens. Verkaaik argues that the ceremony expresses a 'culturalist' message of Dutch citizenship. By culturalist, he means that Dutch citizenship is not only a legal status combined with knowledge of the language and economic participation, but also comes with a cultural element. Dutch citizenship to him comes with

'a certain acceptance of "Dutch norms and values" a certain level of integration into "Dutch culture" (2010, 69). The naturalization ceremony, similar to the rest of the civic integration courses and exams, is meant to teach immigrants 'one crucial, yet implicit, key value of new nationalism, namely, that culture, in its essentialist form, matters' (2010, 80). He thus concludes that the naturalization ceremony emphasizes and fixes cultural differences.

De Leeuw and van Wichelen (2012) have done further research on the cultural aspects of citizenship embedded in the civic integration trajectory. They have analyzed most extensively how aspiring citizens are taught the conditions of Dutch citizenship. They do so by analyzing the visual representation of the Netherlands in the film *'Naar Nederland'*, which forms part of the civic integration exam abroad. De Leeuw and van Wichelen argue that in the film, 'culture' is paradigmatically disciplined upon the aspiring citizens. By culture they mean the dominant culture of Dutch secular liberalism, which they see as exemplified by four cultural tropes: gender equality, sexual freedom, freedom of speech and individualism (2012, 198). In other words, only by taking over these cultural tropes, an immigrant can become a Dutch citizen. They thus argue that the citizenship test functions as a 'technique of governmentality that normalizes secular liberalism in its appropriation of the migrant Other' (2012, 195).

This way, there are two 'cultures'. On the one hand there is Dutch culture, which is seen as enlightened, secular and tolerant (Van den Brink 2006), and is exemplified by the four cultural tropes that De Leeuw and van Wichelen (2012) have identified. This Dutch liberal culture is presented as homogeneous, disregarding the fact that not all Dutch citizens adhere to these secular liberal values. Indeed, internal disagreement about for instance gay marriage, freedom of speech, individualism or gender equality are ignored in order to present an imaginary and homogenized Dutch "we" (2012, 199).

On the other hand, there is the immigrant culture. Whereas secular liberal culture is seen as neutral, immigrants are seen as 'over-cultured' (De Leeuw & van Wichelen 2012, 198). According to Willem Schinkel, this culture is seen as potentially problematic within the Dutch discourse on immigrant integration, for it is perceived as incompatible with dominant Dutch culture (2013, 1146). The 'over-cultured' immigrant is, in the eyes of

many scholars, the Muslim immigrant. Prins (2011, 67) stated for instance that civic integration is clearly aimed at the non-western Muslim immigrant. And to Verkaaik, Dutch key values are defined opposite to the general view of Islam: in terms of gender, homosexuality and freedom of speech (2010, 71).

2.2.3. Us versus them

However, as the above mentioned scholars argue, the aim of the civic integration trajectory is to teach immigrants Dutch culture by instructing them the Dutch cultural tropes of gender equality, sexual freedom, freedom of speech and individualism. And since individualism is held in high esteem, it is reasoned that 'the over-cultured dangerous migrant can simply make a neoliberal, individualistic choice to 'be like us'' (De Leeuw & van Wichelen 2012, 198-9). So the underlying message of the exam is that the extent, to which an immigrant will be accepted or excluded by Dutch society, is completely up to the immigrant. In the words of De Leeuw and van Wichelen: '*we* tell you who *we* are and, simultaneously, although not explicit, *we* explain exactly what *our* cultural codes are – thus, what *you* need to do to be included in the Dutch *we*' (2012,199).

On the whole, civic integration is seen as a one-way street, in the sense that *they* have to adapt to *our* culture and values. This is also echoed in Suvarierol and Kirk's research into Dutch civic integration, which is one of the most recent studies in this field. They argue that immigrants learn that, in order to be accepted in Dutch society, they should not challenge the existing national narratives and ideals (2015, 262). Led by a strong anti-neoliberal perspective, they state that 'lessons on Dutch society may well teach freedom, equality, and democracy, but what the organization of civic integration courses teaches is rather submissiveness to state and market authority' (Suvarierol & Kirk 2015, 263).

The us-them dichotomy between Dutch society and the immigrant is also recognized by Oscar Verkaaik: "We" initiate and welcome "them", and "we" also exist without "them", he states, framing the debate in terms of autochthony and belonging. To Reijerse et al. (2013), these forms of cultural citizenship are used to exclude immigrants as culturally different. After all, cultural citizenship implies a preference for a culturally homogeneous

nation (2013, 615). Anything that deviates from the dominant national culture is perceived as a threat to the culture.

This point is taken even further by Prins (2011) and Winkel (2013), who argue that immigrants in the Netherlands may never become fully integrated in Dutch society, no matter how hard they try (2011, 65). Prins states that native Dutch citizens automatically seem to 'belong', even if they behave incorrectly or immorally. Immigrants on the other hand, may pass their civic integration exam and become fully Dutch citizens, 'yet they will never entirely be released from the burden of proof that they are indeed fully integrated and loyal citizens' (Prins 2011, 69).

In this thesis, I will build on this body of literature. I will use De Leeuw and Van Wichelen's notion of cultural tropes to assess the content of Dutch citizenship. However, where they identify the cultural tropes as primarily Dutch values, I see them as defining western values in general. Also, without disagreeing with Boomkens notion of cultural citizenship, I will show that both civic integration exam, as well as the immigrants undertaking civic integration, have a completely different understanding of culture and thus of citizenship. That is, both hold an essentialist notion of culture. By this I mean that groups are seen as culturally defined by perceived natural, essential characteristics. This is often anchored on dualistic thinking: the difference between 'us' and 'them'. In this thesis, I will argue that the civic integration trajectory is based on the cultural essentialist notion of western versus non-western culture.

Although this distinction between 'us' and 'them' has been described by for instance Verkaaik, I argue that the immigrants themselves also repeat this essentializing notion of culture. That is, I add to the existing body of literature a perspective that entails both the civic integration policy, and the recipients of that policy: the immigrant undertaking the Dutch civic integration course. That way, I both look at the policy intention and how it resonates with newcomers. Also, I will expand upon the argument of Prins (2011) and Winkel (2013) that immigrants may never become fully integrated in Dutch society as citizens. That is, I will argue that an ethno-culturalist attempt is made to integrate immigrants into the Dutch nation-state by teaching them normative behavior. In the next chapter, I will explain what methodology I will use in order to achieve this.

Chapter 3. Methodology

In this chapter, I will explain the methodology that I will use in order to answer my research question. Then I will turn to an assessment of the main research method, half-structured interviews, including its advantages and limitations. After this, I turn to an introduction of the respondents I interviewed.

In order to answer my research question, I have both drawn on qualitative data and performed a discourse analysis. For the two chapters on civic integration discourse and policy in the Netherland, Germany and Denmark, I have performed a policy analysis. Thereby I have critically assessed policy using both discourse analysis and secondary literature. Apart from literary research, I have performed eight half-structured qualitative interviews with *inburgeraars*: immigrants who are currently participating in the civic integration course, or who have recently done so. Besides, I have performed an interview with former minister Verdonk, who played a central role in the development of the current civic integration policy. I have also interviewed a civic integration teacher, who wished to remain anonymous.

I will apply the theoretical framework in two ways. Firstly, I will assess the perception of Dutch citizenship using the three political strands in citizenship theory: liberal citizenship, republican citizenship and communitarian citizenship. I will assess this both in the chapter on the Dutch policy on civic integration and the chapter on the experiences of immigrants with Dutch civic integration. Since no state has a purely liberal or republic perception of citizenship, I will research which elements of citizenship are emphasized.

Secondly, I will build on the recent literature on civic integration in the Netherlands. That is, in the chapter on the experiences of immigrants with Dutch civic integration, I will research the cultural tropes as identified by De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2012). During the interviews, I will assess if the immigrants describe the same cultural tropes as defining Dutch citizenship. Finally, I will build on the argument of Prins (2011) and Winkel (2013) that immigrants might never become fully integrated into society.

3.1 Research method

I will research the newcomers' perspectives on Dutch citizenship by performing semi-structured qualitative interviews, because as Tim May has noted, interviews enable insight to understanding how individuals make sense of their social world around them and how they act within it (2011, 157). The semi-structured format allows respondents to answer on their own terms, while still providing a structure for comparison. In a practical way, this means that I use the same list of questions as a guideline, but that I follow the respondent in his or her emphasis on certain topics. This fits in with my research design, since in-depth interviews allow for attention to personal narrative, as well as giving context to particular experiences. As such, they offer a strategic point of entry into understanding (Clarke et al. 2014, 62). Yet at the same time, the list of open questions still provides guidance for the analysis of the results. Thus qualitative half-structured interviews provide the best method for understanding how immigrants perceive Dutch citizenship.

In-depth interviews have a potential bias however, such as the effect that the interviewer has on the interviewee, and thus on the narrated experience. In order to lower my own impact, I formulated the questions as open as possible, enabling respondents to interpret in their own way as well as giving them the possibility to steer the interview in the direction of the topics most important to them. Also, the length of the interviews (approximately an hour per interview) enabled the respondents to become more comfortable being interviewed, especially for those who had never been interviewed before. I noticed that towards the end of the interviews, respondents became more openhearted, providing more useful data.

A second unwanted reaction can be deference, with respondents telling me what they think I want to hear, or social desirability: respondents answering in a way that they think makes them look good. Given that the respondents are immigrants in the Netherlands, I had expected them to be at least partially subject to these reactions, although only one of them was still waiting for the rejection or acceptance of her residence permit. In general however, the group of respondents did not give the impression of answering in such a way, for they provided me with sometimes critical assessments of how Dutch culture is

taught to them. The fact that I am native Dutch did not seem to prevent them from expressing opinions that might be omitted for social desirability, for instance mentioning their experiences with racism in the Netherlands.

Even the refugees I spoke to, whom I had expected to be more prone to answering in a socially desirable way, also mentioned negative experiences, such as unwelcoming neighbors. There was only one respondent of whom I had the impression she was trying to give socially desirable answers, for example by only mentioning positive experiences. I tried to counter this by asking her to describe some negative aspects as well.

Lastly, given that gaining understanding is the main objective of in-depth interviews, it is particularly important to have the same mode of understanding. With that I mean understanding precisely what someone is trying to convey. In this case I was disadvantaged, because I do not speak most of the native languages of the respondents. Instead, I used the language that the respondent felt most comfortable with, either Dutch or English. Yet to all of the respondents but one, neither English nor Dutch was their native language, meaning that their language was sometimes restricted in the vocabulary people used. In order to stay as close as possible to their original meaning, I use their quotes in the original language that was spoken. In the case of the Syrian respondents, this was often a mixture between Dutch and English.

This has been a conscious choice, for if I were to translate their words to English beforehand, it would be my interpretation of their words rather than their own words. This choice is reflected in the way of transcription, which is without correcting errors, in order to keep it as close to the person speaking as possible. I have only added words between brackets [ ] to make it easier to read. In case of a Dutch quote, I have added an English translation in the footnote.

After having interviewed the respondents, I made a complete transcription of the interviews. I analyzed the data by using qualitative data analysis and research software Atlas.ti, which enabled me to compare the interviews and to find parallels between them. I did this by identifying codes that I assigned to parts or quotes of the different interviews. These codes were for instance themes that came up unplanned during the interviews,

but that turned out to be recurring motives, such as 'liberty' and 'social/behavioral rules'. Other codes were based on questions that I asked, such as 'feeling of belonging', 'acceptance', and 'image of the Netherlands'. During the analysis I assessed whether I could identify the cultural tropes in the immigrants' narratives, and where their narrative deviated from the cultural tropes. Furthermore, I tried to keep the analysis open to the emic perspectives as much as possible. Therefore I have to add that many of the themes described below were brought up by the respondents themselves, rather than by me asking their opinion about it.

3.2 Respondents

I conducted the qualitative, half-structured interviews between May and June, among eight immigrants who had arrived in the Netherlands between six years and eight months previously. The prime criterion was that they had recently taken either the civic integration exam abroad, the civic integration exam in the Netherlands, or were still in the process of the civic integration course. All the while, I tried to increase the diversity of the respondent group concerning their background, gender, and main reason for coming to the Netherlands. In the end, I interviewed four men and four women currently living in Amsterdam (4), Utrecht (3), and Amersfoort (1). Five of them immigrated to the Netherlands as refugees, three for partner migration, which are the two main strands of immigration to the Netherlands.

The respondents come from diverse regions, namely Russia, Eritrea, Syria, Tunisia and South Africa. Most interviewees are between thirty and forty, with the exception of an older couple who are in their early sixties. Their professions are diverse as for instance dentist, English professor, pharmacy assistant, theatre maker and musician, yet as a group they have in common that they are relatively highly educated. Also, despite coming from different regions, they all migrated from urban centers: Tunis, Cape Town, Moscow, Asmara, Aleppo, Hama and Damascus.

Most of the respondents I have met through others, which is one of the reasons why the group of respondents might not be representative for all immigrants in the Netherlands. The respondents are people who already participate in society, given the fact that they

were willing to spend time helping me to understand their perception of Dutch citizenship and integration. Again, my goal was to perform in-depth qualitative interviews, rather than providing a purely representative image.

More important, while I assess the perception of Dutch citizenship as immigrants learn during the civic integration course, this does not imply that the civic integration course is the only factor influencing their perceptions. Their narratives are just as colored by what they experience in daily life, hear from others or watch on television, as what they have learned during the civic integration course. Bearing this in mind, I will now turn to an assessment of the Dutch policy on citizenship and civic integration.

Chapter 4. Citizenship in the Netherlands: a policy assessment

In this chapter I will sketch an outline of the Dutch policy on citizenship and civic integration. From the 1950s onwards, there has been a liberalization of Dutch citizenship, which became more restrictive after the turn of the century. During the late 1990s, citizenship was made a central concept in Dutch integration policy, thanks to its alleged 'inclusive' character towards newcomers. Policy was aimed at participation, hinting at a republican notion of citizenship. However, with the turn of the century a wide debate on national identity emerged, giving rise to a new discourse on 'norms and values'. Dutch norms and values were deemed an essential part of Dutch culture, national identity, and thus of citizenship. With the obligation of newcomers to learn Dutch history, behavioral norms and core values, adhering to 'Dutchness' became a substantial element of the civic integration course and mandatory exam. Similarly, the conception of citizenship shifted from that of a tool aimed at the inclusion of newcomers and participation in society, to a thicker understanding of citizenship, also encompassing a cultural loyalty towards the state, and thus a more communitarian notion.

4.1 Liberalization of citizenship

Dutch law on citizenship is currently based on *jus sanguinis*, which means that Dutch nationality passes through birth. This means that a child becomes a Dutch citizen if at least one of its parents holds Dutch citizenship, irrespective of where the baby is born. A second possibility to become a Dutch citizen is through naturalization, which has been possible since the Dutch Nationality Act of 1892. Generally speaking, naturalization was restrictive until the 1950s, after which followed several decades of liberalization of citizenship requirements.

Before the 1950s, naturalization policy was strict and expensive, and each individual naturalization request was discussed in parliament. After World War One, emotional ties with the Netherlands were stressed, and during the 1930s, an inquiry into the motives and background of the applicant was performed before they could be naturalized (Van Oers et al 2013, 3). Most of the time, applicants were either Belgian or German.

The period after World War Two saw and opening up of naturalization possibilities. From 1953 onward, immigrants from the third generation automatically became Dutch citizens, for it was argued that the third generation belonged to the Dutch community. This change in legislation was mainly meant for Belgians living in the Dutch border area. Also, former inhabitants of (ex)-colonies were granted easier access to citizenship (2013, 5). As a result, almost everyone who applied was granted citizenship.

In 1977, parliament deemed it no longer necessary that it individually assed each naturalization application. Instead, only the police held an interview to inquire whether the applicant spoke and understood Dutch, and whether he had 'assimilated' into Dutch society (2013, 6). As a result of this, naturalization rates increased: where 4.201 applicants acquired Dutch citizenship in 1976, six years later this number had risen to 19.728. The majority of these new citizens came from Surinam.

Meanwhile, during the 1960s the Dutch government had briefly held a guest worker policy, attracting lower educated laborers from Turkey and Morocco. Since the guest workers were only expected to stay in the Netherlands temporarily and then return to their home countries, no attempt was made to integrate them into Dutch society (Pierik 2012, 30). Only after the immigration had proved lasting during the mid-70s, the government officially recognized that the immigrants had come to stay. They also realized the need for a consistent integration policy, rather than the impromptu arrangements thus far (Fermin 2009, 15). Hence, during the 1980s, the Dutch Policy on minorities ('minderhedenbeleid') came into being. Its main aim was to integrate immigrants into Dutch society by the emancipation of the minority group they belonged to. The Policy on minorities heavily influenced the new Dutch Nationality Act that came into being in 1985.

The new Nationality Act opened up possibilities for citizenship acquisition even further. It was argued that to improve the legal position of immigrants, it should be easier for them to obtain Dutch nationality. That way, the integration of immigrants into society would be more successful (De Hart 2005, 20). According van Van Oers et al, citizenship was seen as a right, rather than a favor (2013, 13). In other words, citizenship was perceived as an

instrument to achieve integration into society. Many first generation guest workers that had been reunited with their families in the Netherlands, took this opportunity. Especially after immigrants were no longer required to denounce their former nationality in 1991, there was a dramatic increase of naturalization of Moroccans, Turks and refugees.

4.2 The 1998 Act on the Civic Integration of Newcomers

The public discourse on immigration shifted during the 1990s. Following the high naturalization rates, citizenship acquisition was deemed 'too easy' (Van Oers et al, 2013, 16). The previously abolished requirement to renounce the former nationality was reintroduced a few years later. Also, in 1996, the government concluded that a large group of immigrants had failed to integrate socially and economically in Dutch society. For this group, civic integration was deemed desirable and necessary (TK 1996/97, 19). This led to the first law ever on integration: the 1998 Act on the Civic Integration of Newcomers.

The Act placed new conditions on naturalization: instead of an interview with the police, an applicant now had to take part in a mandatory civic integration course. This took the form of mandatory lessons in the Dutch language, as well as courses on social skills and labor market orientation. Each immigrant was obliged to take the course, which lasted approximately 500 hours. The government described civic integration as the 'first step in the integration process,' enabling newcomers to participate in the education system and the labor market (TK 1996/97, 25 114, nr. 3:1). In other words: immigrants had to learn the language and to gain knowledge on the Dutch society in order to participate on the labor market.

In this new Act on civic integration, the concept of citizenship was chosen as its corner stone. Firstly, it was used to replace the concept of 'ethnic minorities' that had been central to the former Policy on minorities. Where the former policy stood for a group-based approach, the new Act emphasized the individual responsibility of each immigrant to integrate (Fermin 2009, 16). Secondly, the concept of citizenship meant that immigrants made an active choice to participate. The policy document stated that 'citizenship implies (…) a choice for a lasting participation in the Dutch society.

Citizenship also implies the responsibility of citizens towards each other' (TK, 1993/94, 5, own translation). In this way, citizenship is presented not just as a juridical status that immigrants might obtain, but also as a desirable activity: namely to participate.

Also, according to Driouichi, it entailed a notion of loyalty towards the state and towards fellow citizens (2007, 27). That is, citizenship was seen as a more inclusive concept to migrants, since the concept 'nation' implied a certain common history, while citizenship did not. As immigrants more often than not do not share the same past, citizenship was thus seen as a more inclusive term towards newcomers (Idem). This approach was akin to the republican notion of citizenship. After all, in this perception of citizenship is an activity: it is no longer solely grants civil rights, but also encompasses a duty towards the state and the rest of society, namely to participate.

4.3 The 2007 Act on Civic Integration

The beginning of the new millennium saw a clear change in the political and public debate. With Paul Scheffer's The Multicultural Tragedy (2000), the Dutch multicultural model was seen as failed - although, in fact, the government had already abandoned the Policy on ethnic minorities Scheffer criticized. Not only multiculturalism, but also integration in general was seen as failed. After 9/11, the rise and murder of populist politician Pim Fortuyn, followed by the murder on director and columnist Theo van Gogh, Muslims and Moroccans became the target group of integration debates (Van Gunsteren 2009, 36). Integration problems became increasingly defined as a cultural conflict, with Islam as 'the main source of division and as an obstacle for integration' (Fermin 2009, 16).

According to Van Oers et al, Minister Verdonk of Alien Affairs and Integration (2003-2007) from the conservative liberal party VVD, changed naturalization from a means of integration to a 'crown' on a completed naturalization process. While she held office, the Citizenship Act was amended: requirements were tightened, the civic integration test became mandatory, and a mandatory naturalization ceremony was established. Also, a new Act on Civic Integration came into effect in 2007. It meant that the scope of civic integration expanded. Where previously civic integration was mandatory for immigrants

who wanted to become Dutch citizens, with the new Act civic integration became mandatory for all immigrants who wanted to reside in the Netherland for an indefinite period of time. In other words: civic integration became a requirement for a permanent residence permit.

Apart from a civic integration test in the Netherlands, Verdonk also established the Civic Integration Abroad Act. This means that all immigrants, except refugees, have to pass a civic integration test in their home countries before being admitted into the Netherlands. Until this date, the Netherlands is probably the only country that obliges immigrants to learn about the language and the culture before even setting foot on Dutch territory. As a result of this, Driouichi speaks of civic integration becoming 'an instrument of admittance and exclusion' (2007, 46). Although amendments to the law have been made in 2013, the main content of the act remains largely unaltered. In the chapter five, I will expand upon the content of the current Dutch civic integration exam. For now I will take a closer look at the emphasis placed on culture in the 2007 Act on civic integration.

4.4 Cultural Dutch "core values"

In the interview, former minister Verdonk explained her reasons behind the stricter requirements for naturalization and admittance of immigrants into the Netherlands. 'Under the guise of tolerance we allow them to remain living in their own groups, and speak their own languages, which means that their participation has failed. That is why I believe in a clear legal arrangement with sanctions – which I have created with the new civic integration law' (interview with author, May 27, 2016). In fact, these sanctions meant that when an immigrant failed to pass the test, he or she would not receive a resident permit (Driouichi 2007, 61-2).

To Verdonk, one of the aims of civic integration is 'knowing that it is normal to work instead of relying on social benefits'. Interestingly, the immigrants repeated this rhetoric of not relying on social benefits, but I will turn to that point later. Moreover, the objective of civic integration is adaptation to Dutch norms and values in the public sphere. During the interview she said for instance: 'I don't mind if you play music from your home country and speak your own language at home, but in the public sphere there are certain norms

and values' (interview, May 27, 2016). According to her, norms and values are derived from the Constitution, meaning for instance equal right for men and women and sexual freedom.

In fact, 'norms and values' were key elements of the political discourse on integration after the year 2000. In the coalition agreement in 2003 for instance, norms and values were named explicitly in relation to integration. It stated that in order to successfully integrate into Dutch society, immigrants have to adhere to the norms and values that are 'anchored' in Dutch society (TK 2005/06, 11). Norms and values meant, among others, equality between men and women, the rejection of domestic violence and the acceptance of homosexuality, as well as values such as democracy and freedom of speech (Driouichi 2007, 42). As such, they strongly parallel the cultural tropes as identified by De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2012).

The emphasis "Dutch core values" reflects a broader shift in discourse to the redefinition of Dutch culture and identity (Maussen and Bogers 2012, 120). As Van Gunsteren has noted, in the nineties it was common to think that Dutch culture did not exist, and that tolerance and diversity particularly characterized the Netherlands. After the year 2000 however, the government started initiatives to recuperate that Dutch culture (2009, 45). This resulted for instance in a renewed interest in Dutch history and the creation of a Dutch historical canon, as well as attempts to establish a national historical museum - which miserably failed as no one could agree on its precise content. The preoccupation with the Dutch national identity burst to the surface in 2007. During the presentation of the report of the Scientific Council to the government then princess Máxima uttered the words that 'the Dutchmen does not exist', which caused a public outrage.

The new emphasis on Dutch culture led to a change in the perception of citizenship. Instead of an emphasis on shared participation in society, cultural loyalty was considered one of the defining aspects of Dutch citizenship. Maxime Verhagen, a member of parliament of the then ruling Christian Democratic Party, expressed this new perception of citizenship. To the largest party of the Netherlands, Dutch citizenship was characterized by 'a common foundation of history, shared values and norms, and solidarity with the Dutch society' (TK, 2003/04, 5971). In other words, citizenship was

considered as what 'we' have in common, described in terms of culture. This shift towards an emphasis on norms and values demonstrates the culturalization of citizenship in the Netherlands. As Tonkens et al. defined, cultural citizenship means that adhering to certain norms, values and traditions is seen as an addition or alternative to citizenship as rights and socio-economic participation (2010, 7). By including adherence to norms, values and traditions to the definition of citizenship, a more communitarian approach to Dutch citizenship emerged, not only requesting active participation but also a form of cultural loyalty.

Furthermore, cultural citizenship was presented as fixed. This becomes apparent in the accompanying letter of the Act on civic integration 2007. In it, culture is described as constituted by a 'coherent set of ideas' of what is considered valuable and acceptable in society (TK 2005/2006, 10, own translation). In other words, the 'core' of Dutch culture is presented as a set of values and ideas, to which immigrants need to adapt in order to become citizens. Although the letter states that culture is not rigid, at the same time it emphasizes the historical dimension of Dutch culture as well as the influence of Christianity, Judaism and humanism on it. The notion that culture might change or might be open to a plurality of influences is absent. This demonstrates an essentialistic notion of culture, which is diametrically opposed to the definition of cultural citizenship that Boomkens proposed: as constantly evolving (2010). Where Boomkens stated that there is no such thing as a self-evident Dutch culture, the Dutch government holds that there *is* a Dutch culture, which can be taught to immigrants.

In short, in this chapter I have sketched an outline of the Dutch policy on citizenship and civic integration. From the 1950s onwards, there has been a liberalization of Dutch citizenship requirement. However, after a peak in naturalization of former guest workers and concerns over their failed socio-economic emancipation, the first Act on Civic Integration of Newcomers was established in 1998. Requirements became stricter, and civic integration became mandatory. Citizenship was seen as an inclusive concept, entailing both loyalty towards the state and as towards fellow citizens, while participation was emphasized. However, with the turn of the century a wide debate on national identity emerged, giving rise to a new discourse on 'norms and values'. Dutch norms and values were deemed an essential part of Dutch culture, national identity, and thus of

citizenship. The new Act on Civic Integration restricted access to Dutch citizenship, and established a mandatory civic integration exam, both for naturalization and as a requirement for a resident permit. With the obligation of newcomers to learn Dutch history, behavioral norms and core values, adhering to 'Dutchness' became a substantial element of the civic integration course and mandatory exam. That way, the conception of citizenship shifted from that of a tool aimed at the inclusion of newcomers and participation in society, to a more communitarian, cultural understanding of citizenship, also encompassing a cultural loyalty towards the state. After having established this, I will now turn to an overview of the content of the civic integration exam.

Chapter 5. Civic integration in practice

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the requirements for the naturalization and civic integration test. Firstly, I will briefly asses the exam that immigrants have to take in their home countries, called Civic Integration Abroad, and then I will discuss the content of the civic integration exam that all immigrants have to take once they arrive in the Netherlands. I specifically focus on the course Knowledge of the Dutch society, in which immigrants learn about Dutch culture. As becomes apparent, in the civic integration exam the immigrants have to prove their knowledge of the Dutch language, as well as knowledge on Dutch society, history, and customs.

5.1 Civic integration abroad

As stated above, all immigrants who want to stay in the Netherlands have to pass the civic integration exam abroad in their country of origin in order to receive a residence permit. Once they arrive in the Netherlands, they also have to pass the regular civic integration exam in the Netherlands. Immigrants coming from EU/EER countries are exempted from basic Civic Integration Abroad, as well as immigrants from Australia, Canada, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Vatican City, the United States of America and South Korea. This exception has given rise to the thought that civic integration is primarily aimed at non-western immigrants. In fact, in the interview, former minister Verdonk who designed this law, admitted that civic integration is indeed, primarily aimed at non-western Muslim immigrants, since their 'values deviate the most from our values' (interview, May 27, 2016). After entering the country however, western immigrants still have to pass the civic integration exam that is described in the second part.

To prepare for the exam, applicants have to order the official home-study method *'Naar Nederland'*, which was analyzed by De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2012). The exam consists of three parts: knowledge of the Dutch society, speaking and reading. The first part is tested by answering questions about the film *'Naar Nederland'*, which is included in the official home-study method. The film shows daily life in the Netherlands in seven

chapters: geography, traffic and housing, history, civics and politics, the Dutch language, education, health care, and work and income.

The multiple-choice questions correspond with Dutch proficiency level A1, which is a very elementary knowledge of Dutch. An example of this is the following question:

When you visit someone, do you usually make an appointment, or do you just enter?
a. I make an appointment.
b. I just enter.

The correct answer to this question is also given in the official study course: namely 'a' (Naar Nederland, 2011). It shows that already in the civic integration exam abroad, questions are not only about Dutch language or the Constitution, but also focus on culturally defined behavioral norms.

5.2 Civic integration in the Netherlands

Once the above-mentioned immigrants have passed the civic integration exam abroad and have been permitted access to the Netherlands, they have to pass the civic integration exam in the Netherlands. A second group that is required to pass the exam consists of accepted asylum immigrants, spiritual leaders and immigrants who are allowed to come to the Netherlands in the context of family reunion. Immigrants from the EU and EEA zone are exempted from the civic integration test, as well as Turkish immigrants.

From the moment that immigrants legally reside in the country - so for asylum immigrants once they have been granted asylum – they become *'inburgeringsplichtig'*: which means that they are obliged to pass the civic integration test within three years. There are some exceptions: people who are illiterate, who have been ill or who have given birth, receive an extension. Since 2007, the civic integration test is also used as a naturalization test. So once immigrants have passed the exam, have legally resided in the country for five years, and have met the additional requirements, they can request Dutch citizenship.

Since 2007, only the civic integration test itself is obligatory, not the course. An immigrant can thus choose not to take classes. After the law was amended in 2013, those who do want to take classes have to find a school and pay for the course themselves. If they pick a recommended school, the immigrant can apply for a grant from DUO up to 10.000 euros. For refugees who pass the test within the three-year period, the grant is changed into a gift. The other immigrants however, as well as the refugees who do not pass the test within three years, have to pay back their grant as well as a fine of 1.250 euro maximum. Additionally, the immigrant has two extra years to pass the exam.

As the official website (www.inburgeren.nl) emphasizes, the immigrant is responsible for his or her civic integration. 'Do you need help with your civic integration?', the website says in Dutch, 'Maybe your family can help. Or a friend. Or someone from your school.' This has been the case since 2013, when civic integration courses were privatized, leading to a quickly growing number of private schools offering integration courses. At the time of writing, there were 171 schools offering civic integration courses.

The civic integration teacher that I interviewed for this thesis explained that there is no standardized teaching method or program for civic integration. Schools choose between several commercial teaching methods. However, all methods, as well as the exam, are based on the final objectives as formulated by the government. These state what immigrants are required to know in order to pass the civic integration exam. Since the precise content of the exam remains secret[2], I will now turn to the final objectives of the language part and the course on Knowledge of the Dutch society, as well as practice exams that are available, in order to give an insight in the content of the Dutch civic integration exam.

The civic integration exam consists of six components. Four parts are concerned with the Dutch language: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The fifth part is Knowledge of the Dutch society, and recently a sixth element has been added: orientation on the Dutch

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[2] A civic integration teacher explained that this is because immigrants can take the test on various moments during the year. If anyone could see the test, it would have to be redesigned every time, to prevent immigrants from already knowing the questions.

labor market[3]. In the language tests, the participant has to show that he or she is able to communicate in Dutch on level A2. This means that someone can express his or herself in everyday situations, for example in a store or at work. This is tested in 'practical situations' that immigrants encounter in their daily life, at work or in school. Another important element is 'citizenship': participants have to show that they are able to communicate about for instance registering at a new municipality, requesting documents, and maintaining contact with the neighbors under the term 'nabuurschap' (Rijksoverheid 2009, 3).

5.2.1 Knowledge of the Dutch society

The final objectives of the other component of the civic integration exam, Knowledge of the Dutch society, consist of eight themes: work and income, housing, history and geography, education, public institutions, civic and rule or law, health care and behavioral norms and values. The authors of the end goals state that the last theme is crucial, for the newcomer is expected to behave according to the conforming norms and values (2009, 6). This goes to show that one of the aims of civic integration is to prescribe the immigrant a normative way of 'good' behavior.

For instance, the immigrant has to be able to find a job and to be able to sustain their own living; he has to find suitable housing, as well as taking care of a clean living environment. An immigrant also has to know Dutch history, geography and civics, which is meant bind him to the Netherlands and Dutch society. This means for instance that he has to accept the separation between state and church, and that he is familiar with the ideas that have become accepted in the Netherlands since the 1970s (2009, 9-10). So, the newcomer has to 'know that open homosexuality is not forbidden', and that women and girls are expected to live independently (2009, 19).

Besides, the newcomer has to be familiar with Dutch holidays and their religious, political and historical background, as well as Dutch customs at family occasions, such as a wedding or birth. He knows the Dutch history of colonialism, maritime and migration in

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[3] The last component is mandatory for immigrants whose three-year period started in 2015. Since all of interviewees of this thesis started their civic integration before, I will not further assess this part of the exam.

the 20th century, and the effects of the Second World War in the Netherlands (2009, 19). Also, he understands the meaning of freedom of expression, freedom of religion and democracy, and adheres to laws and rules.

During the civic integration exam, the participant has to show his knowledge of the Dutch society by answering questions with the use of video fragments. In the practice exams, these questions are for instance on housing allowance, the function of a notary, which school is appropriate with a certain diploma or how to deal with the barking dog of the neighbors. Some questions deal with the meaning of certain words, such as the meaning of passive suffrage, other deal with more subjective issues on Dutch customs and habits. See for instance the following question:

Lisa does not want to live with her parents anymore. Lisa says to Ali: when I turn eighteen, I will live somewhere on my own. What should Ali say?
a. If you turn 18, you may live somewhere else.
b. A girl should live at home with her parents.
c. You can live with your husband once you are married. (Oefenexamens DUO)

This question is an example of normative behavior that is imposed upon immigrants by the civic integration exam. It is more far-reaching than requiring knowledge of for instance the Constitution, because it is based on a false supposition that all Dutch citizens behave in the same, normatively correct, way. As such, it holds the false assumption that there is something as a "Dutch culture" that is shared by all Dutch citizens.

I will further expand upon this topic in the next chapter, in which I will look at the 'receiving end' of the Dutch policy on civic integration: the immigrant who is in the process of civic integration. For now, I wish to conclude that in the Dutch civic integration exam, the immigrant has to prove his knowledge of the Dutch language, as well as knowledge on Dutch society, history, and customs. Among others, norms and values such as gay acceptance and gender equality are made an integral element of the course Knowledge of Dutch society, as well as behavioral norms.

Chapter 6. Citizenship perceptions among immigrants

The aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, I will assess how immigrants perceive Dutch citizenship, and secondly, I will research how they reproduce the content of Dutch citizenship. I will research the former by applying the three political strands in citizenship theory, liberal, republican and communitarian, to the perceptions of citizenship among the immigrants currently in the process of civic integration. In the second part of this chapter, I will assess the content of Dutch citizenship by looking at the cultural tropes identified by De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2012). Expanding on their knowledge, I will argue that immigrants repeat the us-them dichotomy by essentializing culture as western versus non-western. However, their access to Dutch citizenship is not restricted by the cultural tropes, but by the cultural behavioral norms that are also included in the civic integration course.

6.1 What is citizenship?

When bluntly asking 'what Dutch citizenship entails', I received divergent answers depending on the group of respondents. Although I do not necessarily make a distinction in the respondent group between refugees on the one hand and immigrants who have come to the Netherlands to be reunited with their partners on the other, in this instance it is worthwhile. That is, the refugees I spoke to, who are Eritrean and Syrian, have a strong desire to become a Dutch citizen. For the refugees receiving the legal status of being a Dutch citizen means being granted protection and security: the basic civil rights that are connected to liberal citizenship. Obviously, being a refugee implies fleeing their home country for safety reasons, which accounts for the emphasis they place on civil rights.

6.1.1 Liberal citizenship

To Erena, an Eritrean refugee who arrived in the Netherlands over six years ago, becoming a Dutch citizen is something she looks forward to very much, because for her it is a guarantee that she can stay in the Netherlands indefinitely. And most of all, it means that she can be safe: '(…) ik leef in veiligheid. Toen ik in Nederland kwam, ik vind ik ben

mens. Ik ben human, humanity. Daarvoor nooit, nee.'[4] Ghayath, who fled from Damascus where he worked as an insurance agent, made his necessity of Dutch citizenship even clearer. He found it very hard to express what being a Dutch citizen would mean – especially to someone for whom this has never been an issue: 'I tell you, I need it. It's important. You don't know, you have [it, Dutch citizenship], so – you don't know what you have. You have something value, waardevol[5].' They principally see citizenship as a legal status granting them the civil rights that T.H Marshall described: liberty, freedom of speech, thought and faith and the right to justice (1950). This is not to say that their conception of citizenship is restricted to these civil rights, rather it is what they find most important.

The partner immigrants did not stress the importance of becoming a Dutch citizen for its legal status or civil rights. This, of course, has to do with the fact that, contrary to the refugees I spoke to, their reasons for coming to the Netherlands did not have to do with the state's infringement of the basic understanding of citizenship as the protection of its citizens. Receiving Dutch citizenship is not something they prioritize, nor – to some – something they necessarily desire. Why not, reacted Achref, a Tunesian mime-actor, when I posed him the question whether he wanted to become a Dutch citizen. Or Eloise, a musician from South Africa, who replied: 'So yeah, I don't have a problem with becoming a Dutch citizen'.

6.1.2 Republican citizenship
What both groups have in common however, is their shared emphasis on participation in society, be it through labor or through social contacts. Erena, who had to follow a lengthy procedure to confirm her refugee status, is now eager to engage in Dutch society. 'Ik wil actief worden,' she says. 'Ik wil geen parasiet zijn, ik wil niets van andere mensen; ik wil het zelf doen. Ik wil proberen binnenkort zelfstandig [te zijn], een vaste baan [te] hebben. Dat is mijn droom.'[6] To Erena, being an active participant in society is related to her

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[4] I live in safety. When I came to the Netherlands, I finally felt myself human. Before, I never did.'

[5] Valuable

[6] 'I want to be active,' (…) 'I do not want to be a parasite, I do not want anything from other people: I want to do it myself. I want to try to become independent, to have a stable job. That is my dream.'

conception of Dutch citizenship as being self-reliant and independent, expressed by her fear to be a 'parasite'.

Mohammed, an English professor from Aleppo, finds it incomprehensible not to be working. 'I am sixty-one,' he exclaims with the feeling of drama of someone who is used to speaking in public. 'I went to the gemeentehuis[7] and I said: I to want to work!', slapping his hand on the table to emphasize his words. Ghayath, an insurance agent in his mid-forties, finds it hard to express himself in Dutch or English, but is nevertheless very clear in his opinion: 'I don't like uitkering[8]. For me personally, I wanna go out, I wanna work. I don't like this help. I respect [it], absolutely, but I don't need it.' Therefore, like another Syrian I spoke to, he is glad to have found voluntary work, but is eager to get back to work.

Achref, a twenty-nine years old from Tunis who immigrated to the Netherlands to be with his Dutch wife, also expresses his wish to participate in Dutch society, and is fairly proud of this achievements thus far. He explained that, during the eight months he has been legally residing in the Netherlands, he has done many things: 'Kijk, binnen acht maanden heb ik heel veel dingen gedaan. Ik voetbal bij een team (…) en ik heb een paar vrienden.'[9] Also, he notes that he has done many 'Dutch things': he has been to theatre performances and he 'always' goes to the cinema. Also, he performed with a Dutch group of musicians, and was working on his first theatre play for a Dutch audience.

These three examples demonstrate that immigrants, both refugees and partner immigrants, consider participating in society to be an important element of citizenship in the Netherlands. The reason behind their statements, however, remains unclear: does it originate from an intrinsic desire to work, or is it what they have been taught during the civic integration course: participating in order not to be a 'parasite', depending on social welfare payments, as Erena and Ghayath noted? As described in the theoretical chapter, active participation in society as fulfilling civic duties and obligations is deemed an

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[7] City hall

[8] Social welfare benefit

[9] 'See, within eight months I have done many things. I play soccer with a team (…) and I made a few friends.'

essential element of the republican view of citizenship. To Pohlmann et al (2013, 185) republican citizenship also entails active engagement in politics and community matters. However, none of the respondents mentioned political participation.

6.1.3 Communitarian citizenship

Lastly, respondents also display a more communitarian notion of citizenship when they note that citizenship is also about loyalty. This became apparent especially among immigrants who have come here for partner migration, because for them Dutch citizenship is rather a choice than a necessity. They stress an emphasis on citizenship as feeling part of a community, to belong. Eloise, who is not yet sure whether she wants to obtain Dutch citizenship, illustrates that citizenship is something more than just a legal status or participation. To her, becoming a Dutch citizen depends on whether she has to give up her South African nationality, which is something she clearly does not want to do. When asked why, she replied: 'It's sentimental, I think, my family all lives there.' Since her whole family is South African, citizenship to her implies adherence. 'It's a bit of loyalty,' she admits, 'I'm a born South African'. Besides, she says, having a certain citizenship status means being considered 'one of us', of not being a foreigner.
As Eloise summarizes it: 'I would be a foreigner if I didn't have my South African citizenship anymore and I would be a foreigner if I don't have Dutch citizenship'.

In a similar way, Natasha, a woman from Moscow who also moved here in order to be with her Dutch partner, would not want to give up her Russian nationality, because she always wants to be able to return to her 'own' country. It thus becomes clear that in the perception of the respondents, citizenship also includes an emotional aspect, encompassing loyalty and belonging. This element of citizenship is stressed in the third model of citizenship, the communitarian model. That is, communitarianism states that society is characterized by a relatively stable shared identity and dominant culture. Citizenship is thus seen as identification with, and loyalty to that society (Pierik 2012).

Also, it is remarkable that respondents often fuse citizenship with nationality and even national identity. Natasha, for instance, expresses a tight understanding of Dutch citizenship that is conflated with national identity. When asked about the boundaries of Dutch citizenship, she mentions an Armenian friend who immigrated to the Netherlands

when she was very young. Yet Natasha states that her friend is only partially Dutch, because she was not born in the Netherlands. That is, she sees Dutch citizenship and 'Dutchness' in terms of being raised in a certain culture, or as she puts it: 'het heeft alles te maken met films of liedjes of humor, alles, hoe je hersenen werken denk ik'[10]. Interestingly, both she and Achred note that they will become 'more Dutch' once they have children because, as Natasha expresses it: her children will be Dutch, because they have a Dutch dad. An ethnic view of citizenship is thus also present with some of the respondents.

In short, during the interviews all main political models of citizenship were mentioned: liberal 'basic' rights, republican participation and communitarian feelings of loyalty and ethnicity. Of course, as for instance Rogers Smith (2002) has argued, it is impossible to pinpoint for instance Dutch citizenship as being only 'liberal' or 'communitarian'. Instead, it is a combination of all elements: being granted basic civil rights, an emphasis on participating in society and the notion that citizenship entails more than just a legal status with rights and duties. That is, especially the immigrants who did not come to the Netherlands for security reasons stressed that citizenship comes with a certain cultural loyalty. Moreover, they use Dutch citizenship as a synonym for Dutch national identity.

6.2 Perceptions on the content of Dutch citizenship

After having given this general account on how citizenship is perceived among immigrants in the Netherlands, I will now turn to how newcomers 'learn' the conditions of Dutch citizenship. Or to use the words of De Leeuw and Van Wichelen, how are they culturalized into being Dutch citizens during the civic integration course. I will first look at two aspects that are often overlooked in the current body of literature, namely language and practical issues, which immigrants found very important and also useful. Then I will turn to the cultural tropes that De Leeuw and Van Wichelen have identified: gender equality, sexual freedom, freedom of speech and individualism. I will argue that migrants perceive these as western, rather than specifically Dutch cultural tropes. The 'Dutch'

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[10] 'It has everything to do with films or songs, or humor, everything really, the way your brains works'

aspect is then looked for in behavioral rules.

6.2.1 Language and practical issues

Firstly, when asked what the respondents had learned most during the civic integration course, they all emphasized practical issues. These cover, for example, applying for housing benefit, insurance, and how to fill out tax forms. Syrian Ghayath stated that he had just learned everything about the municipality. 'It's important, it's very important', he remarked. Another respondent mentioned that she found the lessons on filling out job applications, the governmental system, political parties, insurance and schooling very useful. Punctuality was a recurring issue among the respondents.

Secondly, learning the Dutch language was mentioned. Becoming a Dutch citizen means speaking the Dutch language first and foremost. Given the common desire to participate, all respondents mention the importance of speaking Dutch. Even to people like Syrian Sahar, who taught English just like her husband Mohammed, emphasizes that she can speak English everywhere, but still finds it important to speak the language of the country she lives in. To Erena, who wants to become a hairdresser, language is essential, precisely because it is the first step towards participation. 'Als mensen niet Nederlands leren, kunnen ze niet praten, niet werken: altijd parasite. (…) Als ik niet praat, dan kan ik niets doen.'[11]

However, they find it important to speak Dutch not only to be able to participate and to find a job, but also to 'become Dutch'. For instance when I asked Mohammed and his friend Abdulmonim when they would consider themselves to be Dutch, English professor Mohammed answered that it would be when he could speak Dutch fluently. They see language not only as an instrument to find a job, but also as a way to understand the Dutch mentality. 'En ik leer de Nederlandse taal,' Achref noted, 'en met de Nederlandse taal leer je ook een nieuwe cultuur'[12]. Or, as Mohammed explained, 'to learn the

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[11] 'If people don't learn Dutch, they can't talk, they can't work: they will always be a parasite. (…) If I don't talk, I can't do anything.'
[12] 'And I learn the Dutch language (…) and with the Dutch language I also learn a new culture.'

language of a people is to know their mentality, how they think. When we start to learn Nederlands, we have an idea how the Nederlandse mensen denken[13], you know.'

The cultural aspect of language is probably best illustrated by Eloise, a hip hop musician from Cape Town, South Africa, who moved to the Netherlands to be with her Dutch partner. Since she speaks Afrikaans, a language originating from the Dutch colonists that is similar to Dutch, she recognizes, as she calls it, an 'underlined understanding' between her and the Dutch. 'It is just easier to communicate I think, in a way (…) I think I just connected with the Dutch people. The cultural is there, so there is an understanding, an underlined understanding.' As Eloise explains, it is not just for speaking a similar language that it is easier to understand each other, but speaking a similar language comes with a similar way of doing things, what she calls a 'feeling of familiarity'. What she calls the 'feeling of familiarity' clearly stems from the way people interact with each other: 'It's like for instance, when I interact with a German person, they have a different way of expressing themselves, a different way of seeing things, of perceiving things than a South African person or a Dutch person would do because we have that connection really, because of our history with the Dutch.'

What these fragments illustrate is that language is not only deemed essential for finding work, and to participate in society, but it is also a way to understand something about Dutch mentality and culture. This becomes clear from Eloise's description of her 'feeling of familiarity' with the Dutch: not only do they share a similar language, but also a way of interacting that she recognizes. So learning a language comes with grasping a bit of the mentality and culture.

6.2.2 Cultural tropes

When asking the respondents about what they had learned from the civic integration course in regard to the content of Dutch citizenship, many of the answers resembled the cultural tropes that were identified by De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2012). In their assessment of the film *'Naar Nederland'* that forms part of the civic integration exam abroad, they argued that immigrants are taught Dutch citizenship by four cultural tropes:

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[13] '(…) Dutch people think (…)'

freedom of speech, individualism, gender equality and sexual freedom. The trope of sexual freedom, mainly understood as gay acceptance, stood out among the respondents as the embodiment of cultural difference.

The first trope, freedom of speech, was mentioned by all of the refugees. Mohammed for instance, who translated the interview for his friend Adbulmonim, explained that his friend used to think of the Netherlands as the land of freedom and democracy. After asking him what he meant with freedom, he replied that freedom means 'to speak whenever he wants to speak and to say whatever he wants to say without any repression'. To Achref, 'freedom' means that he can do more that he used to be able to in Tunisia: to him, as an actor, it is an opening up of opportunities. He explains for instance that Tunisians have problems with sexuality, being naked, or homosexuality. In the Netherlands, however, he notices that his ideas are changing: 'Mijn voorstelling bijvoorbeeld is vrij. Ik mag niet dezelfde voorstelling in Tunesië spelen. Dat mag niet. Maar – omdat ik in Nederland ben, krijg ik heel veel nieuwe dingen, een nieuwe cultuur.'[14]

Erena emphasized the second cultural trope of individualism and personal autonomy. She repeatedly noted that in the Netherlands, she is free to do as she pleases, as opposed to her life in Eritrea. She noted that many things are forbidden in Eritrea, such as wearing short clothes. That is because of the Eritrean culture, she added, which she finds 'onderontwikkeld', underdeveloped. But in the Netherlands she is allowed to wear the clothes she likes, because that is her individual choice. 'In Nederland,' she concluded, 'als je doet wat je wil, niemand voor jou vreemd kijken of vreemd doen, alle mensen doen zijn [hun] werk. Dat is vrijheid.'[15]

The tropes of gender equality and sexual freedom were mentioned most often. Interestingly, almost all respondents mentioned homosexuality at some point during the interview, as being the prime example of cultural difference between the Netherlands and

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[14] 'My play is free, for example. I would not be allowed to perform the same play in Tunisia. That would not be possible. But – because I am in the Netherlands I have many new things, a new culture.'

[15] 'In the Netherlands, there is freedom. I can do whatever I want. (…) In Eritrea, many things are not allowed. That is the culture, it is underdeveloped. For example, I cannot wear short cloths. But in the Netherlands I can, because here is freedom. In the Netherlands no-one will stare at you if you do whatever you want. That is freedom.'

their home countries. Even Syrian friends Mohammed and Abdulmonim, while first avoiding it, finally reached the subject of homosexuality, when Mohammed explained that there are many differences between Dutch and Syrian culture: 'We have our own culture, sometimes it is somehow far away from your culture. I mean, in the Arab world, lesbianism is not accepted, you know, because of religion. Eh, homosexuality is not accepted (…) We can understand it, but – you know. It's new for us.' A bit later, Mohammed adds: 'We don't have a problem with it [homosexuality]. It's there, in every culture, to be honest (…) but it's not talked about.'

Achref explains for instance that back in Tunisia he was not personally opposed to homosexuality, but since it was not accepted in Tunisian culture, he did not concord with it. As a true mime actor, he played out the following scene for me. Using a funny voice, he said: 'Ik vind homoseksualiteit niet goed, nee,'[16] describing his stance toward homosexuality in Tunisia. 'Ik word een beetje streng. Maar waarom? Omdat ik uit een Moslimland kom en wij hebben in het argument hetzelfde idee [namelijk dat homoseksualiteit niet kan].'[17] Yet, he says, sometimes you need to have the same ideas, because if you have a deviant opinion people will say: (putting on a funny voice again) 'misschien is hij raar, is hij zelf homo'. Maar nee: ik ben niet homo en ik heb geen probleem'[18].

In this scene, Achref describes an important aspect: namely that he did not necessarily oppose to homosexuality in Tunisia, but that he accepted the dominant values in Tunisia: the fact that homosexuality is disapproved of. Secondly, he states that he now accepts the (in his eyes) dominant value in Dutch society, which is to accept homosexuality. He even noticed a change in his behavior, when he explained that now he can also say in Tunisia that people should accept and respect one another. In other words, he is not afraid anymore that people will suspect him to be gay, when he subtly stands up for gay rights in Tunisia.

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[16] 'I do not approve of homosexuality'
[17] 'I become stern. But why? Because I come from a Muslim country and we have the same idea in this argument [that homosexuality is disapproved of]'
[18] 'Maybe he is weird, or he himself is gay. But no: I am not gay and I do not have a problem.'

Sahar also mentions that issues of gender equality and sexual freedom in the Netherlands are very different here from what she was used to in Syria. She noted for instance that in the Netherlands it is common to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and to live together without being married. When asked what she thinks of that, she replied: 'Ja, is vrijheid. Als jij wil het, geen probleem. Wij accepteren hier de society maar (…) in Syrië, wij accepteren niet samenwonen, want (…) het is de cultuur, [die] accepteert het niet'[19].

As these examples illustrate, Sahar and many of the respondent essentialize culture. That is, the respondents mention that in their home countries, they did not accept the sexual norms that are common in the Netherlands because they are not accepted in their *culture.* They see their native culture as a fixed entity that does not accept sexual freedom, and see Dutch dominant culture as one that does accept it. This is not only in the case of sexual freedom, but also in the case of individualism, for instance when Erena noted that, due to Eritrean culture, she was not allowed to wear certain clothes.

6.2.3 Essentializing culture
By essentializing culture the respondents reinforce the us-them dichotomy that Verkaaik (2010) among others mentioned. But they do so in a cultural rhetoric, posing western culture against their native culture. In other words, where Verkaaik and the others have argued that the Dutch civic integration trajectory reinforces cultural differences between western and non-western culture, I found that the immigrants participating in the civic integration process repeat this dichotomy by posing their native culture opposite to the new culture.

A side remark has to be made here that only Natasha, the partner immigrant from Russia, questioned this essentializing narrative. She did this by critically remarking upon the image of the 'Dutch dominant culture' that was sketched in the civic integration course. Concerning homosexuality, she remarked for instance that not everyone in the

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[19] [19] 'Yes, that is freedom. If you want to, no problem. We accept society here but (…) in Syria, we do not accept living together unmarried, because it is the culture [that] does not accept it.'

Netherlands accepts this, and that there are religious Christian people who strongly oppose it. Yet she was the only one to question the existence of a 'dominant Dutch culture'.

A second point is that the respondents, despite essentializing 'western' and 'non-western' culture, proved open to accepting the, in their eyes, dominant values of Dutch culture. Like the Muslim respondents, Erena, who is Christian, argued that now she lives in the Netherlands, she *has* to respect homosexuality, even if that is something that she perhaps did not accept in Eritrea: 'Maar als mijn buurman is homo, ik moet respect hebben. Als iemand doet wat hij wil, ik moet respect hebben'.[20]

Although interviews are oral self-accounts, and thus rely on what a person says rather than how he thinks or acts, I had the strong impression that the respondents did not just answer in a certain way to please me. That is, they all brought up the subject of sexual freedom themselves, without me asking about it. The fact that they openly spoke about something that is not talked about in their home countries, suggests that they do adapt to the (in their eyes) dominant Dutch culture. Also, Erena emphasized repeatedly that she did not learn about issues such as sexual freedom to pass the exam, but because she wants to live in the Netherlands indefinitely and thus wants to know the culture.

The civic integration teacher I interviewed recognized the newcomers' openness to the new culture. Noticing how immigrants position themselves in a new society, she explained: 'They probably think: in Syria this would never be possible, but now we're here, and here it is possible; and that they don't really want to make a fuss about that. Or that they simply think: it's just different here.'[21]

6.2.4 Western versus non-western

How do the respondents deal with the us-them dichotomy? As I have mentioned above, the majority of the respondents posed the Dutch cultural tropes against their native culture, seeing both cultures as essential and stable entities. Also, the immigrants prove

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[20] 'But if my neighbour is gay, I need to respect that. If someone does whatever he wants, I should respect that.'
[21] Interview, 09-06-2016

to be open to accepting the Dutch cultural tropes. Yet, the way in which they do so proves rather interesting. That is, they deal with the us-them dichotomy by stating that their native culture does not accept certain issues, but that they as individuals do, because they are already familiar with western culture. In other words, while reinforcing the perceived fixed nature of culture, at the same time they blur the boundaries by portraying themselves as western.

That is, the older couple Mohammed and Sahar for instance stressed repeatedly that they had lived in a western country before. 'Before I come here, I have been in England ten years. I feel part of me is English. So I am familiar with western culture,' Mohammed told several times. Sahar also explained that adapting to the Netherlands was easier for her than for other immigrants, because she was already familiar with western culture. But, she added, civic integration might be useful for other immigrants who are not familiar with western culture. Yet even Abdulmonim, who had never before been outside of Syria, described that other people might have problems with the Dutch culture, but not him.

Also Natasha and Eloise, who are from Russia and South Africa respectively, both emphasize that they did not learn much during the civic integration course and did not have any trouble adapting to Dutch culture, because they are already 'westernized'. Eloise expressed for example that civic integration might be useful for people from Arabic countries, because they are less used to western values than she is. 'What about people who do not speak English,' she said, 'they speak Arabic for instance, or ehm, whatever language they do speak, and they (…) are not necessarily ehm, as westernized as I am – I mean, for me it's easier'.

Their explanation has an important implication for the understanding of the cultural tropes that, to De Leeuw and Van Wichelen, teaches immigrants the conditions of Dutch citizenship. By stating that they do not have problems adapting the cultural tropes because they are already familiar to western culture, means that they do not see the Dutch cultural tropes as specifically Dutch, but rather as *western* in general. After all, while individualism and sexual freedom are promoted as key ingredients of Dutch citizenship, these values are by no means exclusively Dutch.

Rather, they are cherished broadly in West-Europe. As Christian Joppke has stated, 'contemporary definitions of what it means to be American, British, German, or Dutch are at heart replicas of the self-same idiom of liberal democracy: freedom, equality, tolerance, and so on' (Joppke 2007, 45). Or, in other words, the immigrants do not have much difficulty accepting Dutch cultural tropes because the tropes are shared more broadly among western countries. Immigrants recognize this and thus portray themselves as being western.

6.2.5 Cultural behavioral norms

In all, the respondents I spoke to proved rather open to accepting the tropes that are thought to be representing Dutch citizenship, but are widely shared in Western Europe. However, once they have mastered the Dutch language, and accepted the "Dutch" cultural tropes, the question is to what extent they will be considered Dutch citizens. Prins (2011) and Winkel (2013) have previously argued that immigrants in the Netherlands may never fully become integrated in Dutch society, no matter how hard they try. Here, I will take their point further by arguing that this is true, not because immigrants fail to adapt to the cultural tropes, but because the civic integration trajectory is also imbued with behavioral rules that are thought to be conveying 'Dutchness'.

As the respondents demonstrate, there are many unwritten behavioral rules that newcomers learn during the civic integration course. As the respondents demonstrate, the behavioral rules they have to learn have a normative character, as they are told how they should behave as ideal Dutch citizens. Especially these behavioral norms lead to incomprehension, and all interviewees struggle with understanding them. It must be noted that these are not major things. Without an exception the respondents mention small issues that are hardly noticeable to a Dutch person.

This ranges from small things that might indeed seem like minor issues, such as 'picking up your doggies poo' and 'kissing three times on the cheek', to behavioral norms that seem useful to know in order to participate in Dutch society, such as punctuality. Respondents often mentioned punctuality when asked the question what they had learned most during the course. In the Netherlands, Mohammed noted, 'you respect time. You know, you should have an appointment, you put it in your agenda, you should know

the place before you go there.'

While these norms are sometimes useful, the main problem is that they are understood as being stable and unchangeable. This becomes apparent from Erena's account on what she learned from the course. She was taught that when a neighbor comes over during dinner hours, they need to have dinner together. But when the neighbor comes over afterwards, they have to drink coffee or tea. To Erena, these behavioral norms are rules of 'how things are done' in the Netherlands, to which she has adapt in order to blend in.

Natasha describes that in the civic integration test, there was a question about neighbors fighting over a tree blocking the sunlight of the other neighbor's house. After the test, she decided to cut the high tree in her own garden, as she was afraid to annoy the neighbors. This proves that she feels pressured to behave similar to what was told in the civic integration course, despite the fact that she and her neighbor did not have a dispute over the tree. This way, the test prescribes an ideal of how immigrants should behave.

Similarly, Erena drew her own conclusions of the way she was supposed to behave in the Netherlands. She told for instance that there were many changes she had to internalize when she came to the Netherlands, because the culture is different from that in Eritrea. 'Toen ik in Nederland kwam, wilde ik soms mensen helpen, wilde ik opstaan, mensen helpen. (…) Als je iemand met zware dingen ziet, ik wil helpen, maar dat mag niet. (…) In ons land, mensen helpen is als cultuur. Ik wil graag oude mensen helpen, in Nederland mag [dat] niet.' It remained unclear why Erena thought she was not allowed to help other people, but the main point is that she has internalized a normative idea of correct "Dutch" behavior.

The civic integration teacher expressed her frustration with these kind of static normative behavioral rules. She quoted one of the questions during the civic integration exam in which was asked what the immigrant would do if his neighbor gives birth to a child. A: You step by their house to congratulate them, B: You call them by telephone, or C: you send them a letter. She explained that the correct answer would be C. 'Then I think: it might as well be A, what nonsense,' she remarked. 'This is one example of the

disappearing norms that are tested, while these norms are actually disappearing. No-one sends letters these days.'

While the precise content of the exams remain secret, this example shows that at least parts of it contain questions about behavioral rules that are not even common among native Dutch people. Another seemingly small example was the notion that guests are only allowed to eat one cookie with the tea – an example that was mentioned by several respondents. Only one respondent critically assessed that 'this is not true'. Through these seemingly futile examples, it becomes clear that immigrants are taught ideas of "Dutchness" as defined by these behavioral rules, which are outdated or simply normative. This way, an image of the Netherlands is presented in which the whole society sticks to the same normative behavioral rules, kissing three times on the cheek and sending each other letters.

The reaction of many of the respondents is a feeling of uncertainty when confronted with these behavioral rules. This is because they are afraid to act in a way that is not perceived as correct behavior, like Erena, who feels extremely self-conscious when she is around Dutch people only. Then she does not know what to say and is afraid to make mistakes. Even Achref, who speaks Dutch very well and has an extensive social network of Dutch people, expresses his unease for not knowing the behavioral rules, fearing to make a mistake. In sum, Natasha's remark proves very insightful, when she remarked that the more she learned about Dutch habits, the less she understood. 'Ik hoop dat ik het ooit beter kan snappen, waarom mensen zó met elkaar omgaan, precies op deze manier,'[22] she concluded.

The aim of this chapter was twofold. Firstly, I assessed how immigrants perceive Dutch citizenship, and secondly, I looked at how they reproduce the content of Dutch citizenship. The immigrants' understanding of Dutch citizenship was a combination of the three political models of citizenship. Refugees in particular tended to emphasize the basic civil rights, which are connected to liberal citizenship. All respondents displayed a republican notion of citizenship, which was present in a common desire to participate,

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[22] 'One day I hope to understand why people behave like this, precisely in this way.'

both work-related and in a social context. Their shared emphasis on duties were partially given in by an intrinsic desire to work, but also show a reflection of the populist rhetoric to 'not be a parasite of society'. Also, I found the communitarian notion of citizenship as defined as a shared culture, strongly present.

The second part of this chapter has shown that the immigrants repeat the cultural tropes that define Dutch citizenship as identified by De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2012), although they emphasize sexual freedom and gender equality. Other scholars have shown that civic integration reinforces the us-them dichotomy. Building on this body of knowledge, I found that the immigrants repeat this distinction. That is, they use an essentializing rhetoric of culture as western versus non-western. Subsequently, they deal with this distinction by portraying themselves as western individuals, who are open to accepting the "Dutch dominant culture" thus to integrate into society. The question is, however, to what extent this is really possible, because Dutch civic integration also entails cultural behavioral rules and norms. This causes uncertainty among the immigrants, for it emphasizes all small behavioral rules that the immigrants do not know, reinforcing the distinction between native Dutch and newcomers.

Chapter 7. Comparative insight: Germany and Denmark

In the last chapter, I have researched the content of Dutch citizenship from the perspective of immigrants. To put the findings in a broader European context, I will now take a closer look at the civic integration program in two other European countries and their perceptions of citizenship. I have chosen the cases of Denmark and Germany because they take a similar approach to civic integration as the Netherlands (Jacobs & Rea 2007, 10). In all three countries, immigration and integration policy have converged considerably in recent decades and since the 1990s, the nation-states have gradually tightened access to citizenship. In this chapter I will argue that citizenship in Denmark and Germany is defined by the same cultural tropes as Dutch citizenship, but also includes a communitarian notion of sameness and cultural belonging. First, I will focus on German civic integration and corresponding perceptions of citizenship, and then on Danish perceptions of citizenship.

7.1 German citizenship

Only recently Germany has started to accept its status as a country of immigration, although it has a history of at least seven decades of immigration. After World War Two, Germany had seen the migration of ethnic Germans, followed by the recruitment of guest workers who were later joined by their families in the 1970s and 80s. The 1973 stop on '*Gastarbeiter*' only had a boomerang effect: after an initial decrease in immigration, the numbers of foreigners residing in Germany quickly grew because of family migration (Bade 1995, 528). Also, the transition in Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany subsequently led to a dramatic increase in the number of refugees and immigrants in the late 80s, early 90s (Miera 2007, 3). Whereas previous governments insisted that Germany *'ist kein Einwanderungsland'*, the 2000 amendment of the Citizenship Law and the new Immigration Act in 2005 show that Germany has partly accepted that it is, in fact, a country of immigration (2007, 3). CDU-leader Angela Merkel even made integration her top priority when becoming Chancellor in 2005.

Traditionally, Germany is seen as the 'ethnic' model of citizenship attribution in Europe. Since 1913, German citizenship was based on *jus sanguinis*, meaning that citizenship is passed on through birth: if one of the parents has German citizenship, the child also becomes a German national, irrespective of the place of birth (Bade 1995, 522). In other words, citizenship used to be passed on through ethnicity, defined as descent and a common culture and history. The presence of immigrants did not challenge this system, as they were thought to be in Germany only temporarily. So, similar to the Dutch reaction to immigration, the state reacted with local, ad hoc measures, rather than coming up with long-term strategies. Also in Germany, the 1990s were marked both by the slow acceptance of being an immigration country and a growing discourse on how to channel and restrict migration. Increasingly, immigrants were seen as 'a threat to social welfare and "German culture"' (Miera 2007, 4).

The 2000 Amendment of the Citizenship law however, saw a liberalization of citizenship: the *jus sanguinis* principle was partly replaced by *jus soli*. This meant that children born to non-ethnic German citizens, who were previously excluded from German nationality, could apply for citizenship. Yet integration being high on the political agenda, the liberalization of citizenship law went hand in hand with tighter restrictions and preconditions for both citizenship and permanent residence (Michalowski 2010, 187). First, tougher conditions for permanent residence were set (2005), followed by testing for citizenship (2007).

7.1.1 Orientierungskurse

Although knowledge of the German language had already been a precondition for permanent residence since the 1990s, civic integration only became a part of a mandatory program in 2005. The objective of the so-called '*Orientierungskurse'* (orientation courses) is to teach immigrants how the German state and government work, where they can find information, to teach them the rights and obligations of being a German resident or citizen, and to foster a positive image of democracy as well as enabling them to participate in social life (Michalowski 2010, 198).

During the course, 600 hours are spent on language and 45 hours on civic education, in which immigrants are encouraged to participate in discussions in order to achieve the

objectives. To Michalowski, the course does not prescribe specific cultural or behavioral norms, but raises awareness about cultural differences and diversity (2014, 185). In Germany's federal system, the states are the ones to issue residence permits, and offer their own integration courses. Recently however, a national curriculum was written in which the end objectives are formulated. Also subcontractors can choose textbooks from a list of approved books, so courses still vary slightly (Brown 2014, 431).

Michalowski found that some themes are mentioned extensively during the civic education course, emphasizing religion, religious freedom, the relation between state and church, marriage, family, individual liberty and customs and manners. Topics such as gender equality, women's rights and education of children were frequently mentioned, whereas violence and physical integrity, sexuality and homosexuality were seldom mentioned (Michalowski 2014, 184).

What the *Orientierungskurs* promotes above all is the importance of constitutional principles in general, and of democracy in particular. The 19th century concept of modern German nationhood with a unique *Volksgeist* ideal had been discredited by Nazism. Thus, a post-war conception of nationhood emerged as both ethno-nationalist and universalistic, defining the new state as part of a 'united Europe' (Carle 2007, 149). Legislation has since then been a 'chaotic mix of liberal and nationalist policies' (2007, 147). Part of the liberal stance has been to strictly embed German nationhood in constitutional principles. Given in by a fear of political-religious extremism, civic integration should thus be about emphasizing liberal political principles (Mouritsen 2013, 103). Patriotism, as a result, is out of the question, and instead, European values are emphasized.

This is reflected by Jessica Brown's ethnographic findings among civic education teachers, who repeatedly expressed their disdain and ambivalence towards patriotism to their students. She quotes one of her respondents, Luc, a young civic integration teacher. During class, he asks students to sing their national anthems, but when it is his turn, he himself refuses to sing the German anthem. '"Patriotism may be alright in your countries," the gesture says, "but not here" (Brown 2014, 437). But what should then be the basis of the national identity? Brown's respondents, civic education teachers, suggest

that European identities should be taught rather than national identities, or to teach pride in the democratic government (Brown 2014, 438-9). In other words, German civic belonging is expressed through adherence to the constitution, which is traditionally described as 'civic nationalism'.

7.1.2 Constitutional principles and sharing the Holocaust

However, as Nielsen (1999) argued with regard to the ethic/civic dichotomy, neither a purely civic nation, nor a purely ethnic nation exists. Despite the attempt to promote German citizenship in civic and liberal terms, a German 'national identity' based on a shared culture is also promoted. That is, in Germany the debate on citizenship and civic education tests coincided with debates on the German *Leitkultur* ('leading culture').

The term *Leitkultur* was hijacked after 2000 by CDU politician Friedrich Merz, who stated that German culture should be the basis of rules for immigration and integration (Mouritsen 2013, 91). From the beginning, *Leitkultur* was used as a 'political catchword' against multiculturalism: its protagonists saw German 'culture, norms and values as threatened by immigration and "arbitrary multiculturalism"' (Miera 2007, 5). A return to the *Leitkultur* meant a reinforcement of the image of Germany as a culturally homogenous country, with immigrants having to adapt to German, cultural values. Those cultural values meant the German language, the norms and values that are written in the Constitution such as equal rights for men and women, human rights, secularism, but also knowledge of German history (Miera 2007, 6). Initially, the debate on *Leitkultur* was refused as being part of the extreme-right discourse, but was later taken up by more politicians. One can see the predominance of *Leitkultur*-discourse in the 2005 Immigration Act, with its emphasis on language and history.

An example of how attempts are made to convey a "national identity", is the importance given to the memory of the Holocaust. In the civic integration exam there are numerous questions on the defeat of Nazism and communism, the German reunification and the European Union (2013, 92). Jessica Brown's observation of the *Orientierungskurs* confirms the importance of memory narratives in the creation of new citizens, and the central role of the Holocaust (2014). That is, the majority of the time spent on history during the civic integration course is dedicated to events related to World War Two and

Nazism, even more than the appointed time calculated by the national curriculum. Yet the teachers in Brown's research emphasized the holocaust for two reasons. On the one hand, the Nazi era stressed the importance of liberal values such as democracy and religious tolerance. On the other hand however, they also use the narrative of the Holocaust to teach immigrants the 'intellectual and emotional requirements of membership to the German community' (Brown 2014, 432).

Apart from adhering to liberal values, belonging to the "national community" is deemed very important, and is done by adapting to the feeling of shame and regret about the Holocaust. In a country where the "never again" feeling is still very present among the population, newcomers are also expected to share in the national burden of the Holocaust. Or, in Brown's words, 'these lessons suggest a conception of citizenship that emphasizes the duties of belonging – in this case the micro-level work of knowing, remembering, and talking about the war – just as heavily' (Brown 2014, 434).

During the civic education courses, teachers explain that remembering and talking about the war is part of 'becoming German', and they teach the newcomers appropriate emotional responses to talk about the war. These lessons do not only function to warn for the dangers of Nazism or prevent the emergence of similar movements, but they also convey a message about the emotional content of citizenship: that historical belonging and national identity matter. As Rothberg and Yildiz argue, the memory of the Holocaust can thus become a platform of an ethnic, culturally defined German citizenship (2011, 36).

While immigrants are taught to share in the burden of the Holocaust, Dan Diner argues that German citizens of Turkish descent cannot speak of a common 'we' when they talk about Germany's troubled past, and Havva Jürgensen shows that immigrants are told to stay away from the issue of the Holocaust, because they are migrants (Rothberg and Yildiz 2011, 35-36). In other words, the narrative of the Holocaust can also function as an excluding marker between 'us' and 'them', conveying a message of citizenship that is conflated with an ethno-culturalist idea of national identity.

In conclusion German citizenship is in between promoting the so-called cultural tropes of

liberal values and the emphasis on national identity. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on Germany as 'Rechtstaat', in which liberal constitutional values are prioritized. Also, identification with European values is strongly promoted; both are the result of Germany's experiences in World War Two. On the other hand the promotion of these principles arose amidst a debate on the reinforcement of the German *Leitkultur* and a declared 'failure' of multiculturalism, similar to the norms and values discourse that emerged in the Netherlands. These liberal western values are promoted as part of the German culture and national identity. Above all, newcomers have to share in Germany's national identity of the shared burden of the Holocaust.

7.2 Danish citizenship

Traditionally, Denmark has been seen as a tolerant and liberal country emphasizing equality and social cohesion, as is characterized by its smoothly functioning welfare state and its concern for global humanitarian issues (Moore 2010, 355). It was also known for having one of the most liberal asylum and reunification laws in the world: the 1983 Foreigners Law was perceived as one of the most liberal laws in the world. However, it is suggested that the law was too liberal, since immigration from non-western countries multiplied in the years after its establishment (Christoffersen et al. 2014, 241).

Even though the recruitment of guest workers had stopped in the 70s, as in Germany and the Netherlands, refugee migration and family reunification continued. Consequently, all following amendments to the law were to restrict immigration, backed up by growing concerns of the population. During the 1990s, citizenship law became one of the most restrictive in Europe, with for instance no possibility for dual citizenship or *jus soli,* and seven-year residence duration in order to apply for naturalization.

7.2.1 Civic integration
In 1999, the first integration law was established, aimed to 'contribute to the newly arrived foreigner's possibility for participating on an equal footing with other citizens in the political, economic, work-related, social, religious and cultural life of society' and to provide 'the individual foreigner [with] and understanding of the fundamental values and norms of the Danish society' (Integration law, article 1, cited in Mouritsen & Olsen 2013,

695). On the one hand, the emphasis shifted to the responsibility of the immigrant to integrate under financial sanctions, while on the other hand membership became more conditional, and the conditions tighter (Ersboll 2011, 148). A new mandatory three-year integration program for permanent residence was established. If immigrants refused to participate, they risked the withdrawal of their benefit (cash aid) or even a refusal of residence permit (Ersboll & Gravesen 2010, 9). This so-called 'introductory' course, that is both aimed at refugees and family immigrants, forms a combination of language acquisition and societal knowledge[23].

After populist right-wing party DPP won the 2001 elections, conditions for immigration were tightened even further, obliging immigrants to 'adopt Danish values in order to remain in the country and obtain permanent resident and citizenship' (Mouritsen & Olsen 2013, 692). Immigrants for instance had to sign an individual contract, in which they state their duty to participate. This was followed by a 'Declaration on Integration and Active Citizenship in Danish Society' (2006), where immigrants must promise to do their best to learn the language and societal knowledge, as well as accepting all sorts of Danish norms and values, stressing for example the equality between men and women. This reflects a broader message that citizenship is not just about rights and the duty to participate, but also to belong culturally. In fact, the former minister for Integration said: 'citizenship is not just a piece of paper, but a declaration of belonging' (Hvilshoj 2007 in Mouritsen 2012, 98).

Also, since the integration test for permanent residence only tests language and not the societal knowledge that forms part of the course, it was decided in 2005 that permanent residents applying for naturalization should also take a 'citizenship' test on Danish history, culture and society. Following the Dutch example, this test consists of 40 multiple choice questions with 5 questions on current topics, and 35 on a textbook. Topics covered range from history (starting with the Viking age), religion (the arrival of Christianity), high culture (literature, art, music), customs and national holidays and democracy and the welfare society (Ersboll & Gravesen 2010, 60).

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[23] Denmark has with level B2 for naturalization the highest language requirement in Europe, practically disabling non-European immigrants ever to become naturalized.

7.2.2 Civic values and medborgskap

To Per Mouritsen, the language and cultural knowledge requirements stand in the Danish tradition of cultural homogeneity, or 'even ethnic closure' (2012, 104), making it hardly possible to obtain permanent residence, let alone citizenship. In fact, Denmark only consolidated its territory in 1920, but due to extensive nation-building in the 19th century, there is a persistent idea of Denmark as having a coherent national community and identity (Rytter 2010, 304). So currently, Denmark is often described as 'an old nation-state with a very homogenous population (Gundelach 2002 in Rytter 2010, 314). This historical context of Danish statehood resulted in a nation that upholds civic values, while at the same time falling into a nationalist discourse. This combination of cultural nationalism and democracy led to the perceived importance of 'sameness', while also upholding civic values (2012, 97).

The booklet "Welcome as a citizenship to Denmark" notes for instance on the first page that it is 'crucial' that society agrees about 'certain fundamental values and ground rules': 'Denmark is a democratic society that offers freedom, responsibility and equal opportunity for all regardless of gender, race, cultural background and way of life'. Here 'everyone is free to think, speak and write what they feel, form associations, practice their religion or follow an alternative way of life' (Mouritsen 2012, 99). This 'civicness' is not only expressed in the importance of democracy and freedom, but also through anti-authoritarianism, active participation in the welfare society - by volunteering, helping with schooling activities - and democratic participation.

Yet as Mouritsen and Olsen make clear, the liberal western values of democracy and freedom are tied up with the small, homogeneous nature of the Danish nation. 'The *smallness, cultural homogeneity* and tight-knit 'cosiness' of Danish society (…) remains a staple of recent discourse on national *cohesion*, the valuation of sameness and the mistrust of cultural pluralism per se.' This becomes apparent for instance in the Danish notion of *medborgskap*, which has been at the center of the official discourse since 2001 as an umbrella term for conditions of permanent residence and naturalization that immigrants have to meet (2012, 97).

Medborgskap was initially one of the two terms used in Danish for 'citizenship', meaning

membership in a society, an equal sharing of welfare state goods, and being 'one of us' (Mouritsen 2012, 97). In that sense, it strongly resembles Rytter's idea of 'kinship images' that are deemed central to Danish conceptions of citizenship and national identity. These images display an indigenous theory of how Danes are related to one another making a distinction between 'real' and 'not-quite-real' Danes (2010, 303). Citizenship, in short, also means belonging.

The idea that citizenship also entails emotional attachment was expressed by former Minister for Integration Hvilshoj, who said that the citizenship test helps them to 'function better as citizens; it makes sure that they love Denmark and prefer Denmark' (Mouritsen & Olsen 2013, 700). It also becomes apparent in the Declaration, which states that 'active commitment to the Danish society is a precondition for citizenship in Denmark'. In a similar way, language is prioritized not just as an instrument to become self-reliant and successful on the labor market, but also as an identity forging dimension.

So although the content of the Danish identity is dominated by western liberal values, at the same time it promotes an image of a culturally homogeneous nation to which one has to 'belong'. This makes Danish national identity and citizenship both liberal and nationalist, as it 'produces a particular Danish nationalism that is increasingly liberal and civic in terms of normative semantics, yet remains ethno-cultural in terms of membership and as instrumental pursuit of cohesion-as-homogeneity' (2013, 693).

In short, Denmark, like Germany and the Netherlands, has seen a gradual tightening of naturalization possibilities and a similar strengthening of the conditions of citizenship. Also, around the turn of the century, in all three countries a discourse emerged on the content and promotion of a national identity. In all countries, this debate has had a strong impact on the perceptions on citizenship. That is, in all three nation-states, culture or *Leitkultur* was emphasized. This took the form of an emphasis on liberal western 'norms and values'. In Denmark and Germany, as well as I have shown in the Netherlands before, liberal values as adherence to democracy, gender equality and the constitutional values are emphasized. In other words, all three countries use similar cultural tropes. However, the perception of citizenship is also imbued with a notion of cultural homogeneity. In Germany this takes the form of sharing in the contested burden of the

Holocaust, and in Denmark the discourse on citizenship is based on a nationalist discourse of Denmark as a culturally and linguistically homogeneous country defined by *'medborgskap'.* In other words, while the three nation-states use the same discourse of liberal western cultural tropes to describe and promote citizenship to immigrants, national identity and citizenship are increasingly defined in terms of culture and belonging.

8. Conclusion

As I have described in the theoretical chapter, citizenship theory distinguishes between three main political strands of citizenship: liberal, republican and communitarian. As Rogers Smith (2002) put it, no society can be pigeonholed into one of these approaches to citizenship. After all, modern forms of western citizenship are a combination of these elements, alongside existing conceptions of ethnic, cultural and religious identities. Indeed, as I have shown in the chapter on immigrants' perceptions of Dutch citizenship, the newcomers described Dutch citizenship as a combination of liberal, civic rights, a republican duty to participate and a communitarian emphasis on cultural loyalty.

Tracing the development of the concept of citizenship throughout Dutch policy on civic integration, I have seen that since World War Two, the Dutch policy has developed from a liberal towards a more republican-communitarian understanding of citizenship. Citizenship was seen as a right and a means to achieve integration into society by providing a legal status to immigrants during the 1980s, as well as a way to ensure inclusion. During the 1990s, immigrants' participation in society was stressed. Although the emphasis on participation is still visible in both the policy discourse and the discourse of the immigrants, after 2000 another layer was added to it. That is, since 2000 access to citizenship has become more restricted, as immigrants had to prove their adaptation to Dutch society and culture by a civic integration course and test. Citizenship was associated with identification with and loyalty to a perceived shared culture, which strongly resembles a communitarian approach to citizenship. This is, what I have described as the culturalization of citizenship.

Yet, this change was not only visible in the Netherlands, but was also apparent in the two West European countries I discussed: Germany and Denmark. In both countries, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw a tightening of citizenship access, as well as the emergence of a debate on national identity. They also introduced a civic integration exam for immigrants, both for naturalization and permanent residency. In the exams, immigrants have to prove Dutch language skills, as well as knowledge of the culture, society and history.

As I have shown, the debate on national identity and citizenship was framed in terms of culture. According to the Dutch Act on Civic Integration 2007, each society is formed by a culture, which consists of a coherent set of norms and values. Culture was thus perceived as a shared culture influenced by Christianity, Judaism and humanism, which, because it is characterized by shared norms and values, can and should be taught to immigrants. It becomes apparent that this notion of Dutch culture is diametrically opposed to the definition of culture that Boomkens holds. Instead of recognizing that culture is fluid and subject to a myriad of influences (2010), culture is presented as essentialistic.

De Leeuw and Van Wichelen have defined four main cultural tropes by which immigrants learn Dutch citizenship: freedom of speech, individualism, gender equality and sexual freedom (2012). In my empirical research, I have performed the other side of their research. Where De Leeuw and Van Wichelen assess the content of the civic integration test, I have researched the perceptions of the immigrants who are in the process of civic integration. I have found that the immigrants repeat these cultural tropes, which shows that the rhetoric used during the civic integration course, is at least partially effective.

I have also expanded upon De Leeuw and Van Wichelen's important notion that Dutch "culture" is presented as an unalterable, homogeneous given. In the context of civic integration, the cultural tropes are presented as defining elements of a shared Dutch culture that every native Dutch citizen adheres to (2012, 119). As such, Dutch culture is defined opposite to immigrant, mainly non-western Muslim, culture, which reinforces the cultural dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'. In my research, I have added the perspective of the immigrant in this regard. As becomes apparent from the interviews, immigrants repeat the dichotomy of 'our culture' versus 'western culture'. Especially regarding the topic of homosexuality, many respondents acknowledge their values as defined and restricted by the culture they live in. In conclusion, they hold the same essentialist perception of culture as is conveyed through the Dutch policy on civic integration.

However, at the same time, the immigrants constantly blur the boundaries between cultures. While clearly affirming the differences between their culture and Dutch culture, they also state that they do not have trouble adapting to it, because they are already

familiar with western culture. As such, the two essentialist cultures that are portrayed opposite one another are not non-western versus Dutch culture, but non-western versus western culture. It would seem that the perceived "Dutch" cultural tropes do not integrate immigrants into Dutch society, but as they are widely shared liberal western values, they aim to integrate into liberal western states.

After all, the cultural tropes are by no means restricted to the Netherlands only. The western liberal values they contain also form part of for example the German and Danish perceptions of citizenship. In Germany and Denmark too, adherence to constitutional principles such as religious freedom, democracy and gender equality are emphasized during the civic integration course. In other words, different nation-states use the same cultural tropes of western liberal values to teach their own culture to immigrants.

Yet, as I have also demonstrated, civic integration consists of more than just the promotion of the cultural tropes of liberal western values. They are also an attempt to convey a message of citizenship as ethno-cultural belonging. In Germany, this is done through the narrative of the burden of the Holocaust. In order to belong, immigrants have to share the burden. In Denmark, the perception of citizenship as adhering to constitutional principles is combined with the ideal of 'medborgskap', referring to an ideal past of ethno-cultural homogeneity. In the Netherlands, as my research demonstrates, the cultural tropes of liberal western values are combined with a normative prescription of cultural behavior. These take the form of behavioral norms that are supposed to portray a certain "Dutchness", such as how one is supposed to 'kiss three times' or to behave at parties. In fact, it is regarding these normative behavioral aspects of Dutch citizenship that respondents feel most uncertain about, and have most trouble adapting to. These findings support the assumption made by Prins (2011) and Winkel (2013) that immigrants may never become fully integrated citizens, although more research into this topic should be undertaken to find further evidence.

In short, in this thesis I have argued that since 2000, there has been a tendency in the Netherlands, as well as in Germany and Denmark, to regard citizenship in terms of identification with culture. Following others, I have called this communitarian tendency the culturalization of citizenship. This perception of citizenship is based on an essentialist

notion of culture, which marks the difference between 'our' western culture and 'their' non-western culture. Yet the cultural tropes, by which Dutch culture is partially defined, are based on liberal western values that are also used to describe German or Danish culture. Since there is little difference between the cultural tropes, one could assume that immigrants are in fact integrated not into a specific nation-state, but into any state that adheres to liberal western values. Nevertheless, civic integration in both the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, also entails an ethno-cultural attempt to integrate immigrants into their respective societies, effectively restricting access to citizenship even further, possibly excluding citizenship altogether.

9. Literature

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