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#### **Introduction: A highly regarded reputation of practices of toleration**

The Netherlands has a reputation of being a country which has played a vital role in developing the ideas and practices of tolerance. During the period of the Dutch Republic (1588-1795) the Low Countries offered a safe haven to religious dissenters that were persecuted in other European countries. For instance, at different moments in the history of early modern Europe Spanish Jews and French Huguenots sought and found refuge in the Netherlands. Cities such as Leiden and Amsterdam were home to the major thinkers of tolerance, including Baruch de Spinoza (Bogers, 2011) and Pierre Bayle. John Locke wrote his *Letter concerning toleration* (1689) while in exile in Holland. Another well-known aspect of Dutch history which is traditionally related to its approach to pluralism and tolerance is 'pillarisation'. During this period, from approximately the 1900s until the 1960s, religious and other denominational groups – Catholics, Protestants, Socialists and Liberals – lived 'parallel lives' in separate institutions and organisations. Elite agreements and avoidance of sensitive topics in public and political debate ensured societal stability between the different groups. The 'rules of the game' belonging to pillarisation and the related Dutch consensus democracy have often been represented as important lessons on how to organise stability top-down in deeply divided societies (Lijphart, 1990). A third historical period in which Dutch practices of toleration became internationally renowned was in the wake of the cultural revolutions of the 1960s. Life-styles associated with youth culture of the 1960s were tolerated in the public sphere. Especially Amsterdam was seen as one of the most 'tolerant' or 'permissive' cities in the world. This openness to different life-styles and the decline of religious adherence also resulted in new liberal legislation in domains such as medical ethics (euthanasia, contraception, and abortion), gender equality and equality of sexual orientation (gay rights, gay marriage). Finally, a Dutch reputation of tolerance was established when in the 1980s and 1990s, it was one of the first countries to adopt a form of 'multiculturalism' in response to large scale immigration. A policy slogan such as 'integration with retention of cultural identity' served to demonstrate that also in the domain of immigrant integration the Dutch would pursue strategies of governance that were grounded in respect for

cultural difference and equal treatment of minority groups. Governments responded positively to emerging separate institutions and organisations that catered to the needs of ethnic minorities, believing these would allow newcomers to integrate fully in a culturally diverse society.

Whereas the Netherlands used to have a reputation as a country welcoming other cultures and respecting the rights of immigrants, it is now often mentioned as an example of the ways the critique of Islam and multiculturalism dominate public debates on immigration and integration issues in Europe. In the course of this chapter we will argue that in the past 20 years or so, there are two categories of communities which are most outspokenly challenged in debates on cultural pluralism. These are religious groups and immigrants. We analyse public debates on Orthodox Calvinist groups, which often concern principles such as gender equality, religious freedom and associational autonomy, especially in the domains of education and politics. We also include analysis of the main immigrant groups and how their cultural and religious differences have given rise to public contestation. In debates on migrant groups the focus is usually on specific ethno-religious practices, on the need for 'integration' and on a wide range of societal problems that are associated with cultural difference and socio-economic disadvantages, such as unemployment, social isolation and crime. The group that is most outspokenly seen as both ethnically and religiously 'different' are Muslims and we will discuss issues and events in which Islam dominates the public discourse concerning toleration and diversity challenges.

## National identity and state formation

### Governance of diversity challenges and societal transformations

Understanding contemporary diversity challenges in the Netherlands requires an analysis of the history of religious pluralism and the ways various civil authorities have handled this form of pluralism. In the first place, as we will show in this section, the process of state formation in the Netherlands, which began in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was closely related to the development of religion, shifting relations between majorities and minorities and changes in the institutional relations between church and state. In the second place, some important institutional arrangements for handling diversity, notably in the domains of education and politics, have been profoundly shaped by ideological struggles and social and political processes that date back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the third place, religion and migration are at the centre of contemporary debates about diversity. In what follows we focus on inter-faith strife and its settlement and in particular on the ways they left their imprints on Dutch institutions, political culture and strategies of governance.

The Netherlands emerged as an independent political entity out of the Dutch Revolt. The repressive reactions of Catholic Spain to the Reformation greatly fuelled anger and unrest in the Northern parts of the Low Countries, and local nobility and urban patricians believed the unrelenting Spanish decrees to be an undue imposition of power (Knippenberg, 2006: 318). The 1579 Union of Utrecht was imposed as a defensive unity against Spanish rule but also came to form the basis of the Dutch Republic. Through the Union of Utrecht the Inquisition was renounced and each province of the new federal state could now decide

for itself the status and practical exercise of religion in the public realm. The Dutch Republic was praised throughout the seventeenth century by foreign visitors for its comparative freedom of religious organization and its lack of uniform imposition of religion. Although religion and politics were heavily intertwined, power ultimately lay with the civil authorities.

The Calvinist Reformed Church dominated the public sphere. Its leaders often pressed for persecution of protestant dissenters and the extirpation of Catholicism. However, the civil authorities were not inclined to answer this request out of concern for the disruption of commercial and social stability. This did not mean the civil authorities could simply tolerate all forms of religious activity in the public realm. In practice civil authorities would choose to look the other way as long as the tolerated religious practices did not cause any social disturbances (Price, 1994: 190, 203-204). In 1813 after the fall of Napoleon, William I, heir to the last *stadtholder* of the Dutch Republic, was proclaimed sovereign head of state of the Netherlands and in 1815 king of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which included the former Austrian Netherlands, present-day Belgium. Encouraged by the state, the new nationalism of the nineteenth century became heavily intertwined with Protestantism with the aim of providing Dutch citizens with a moral upbringing (Van Rooden, 2002: 122). After the separation with Belgium in 1839, the northern part of the Netherlands above the Rhine-Meuse delta was a Protestant dominated area. The southern part of the Netherlands below the Rhine-Meuse delta held strong Catholic majorities.

After the 1848 constitutional reform, liberals such as Thorbecke and Kappeyne van de Coppello saw it as the task of a modern nation to create modern citizens. Modern for liberals entailed agnosticism and an emphasis on the natural sciences. Liberals in the 1870s argued for obligatory education throughout the nation, so children could be brought up to become modern citizens. In practice this meant that in places where confessional schools were absent, children would be sent to public schools. Confessional politicians heavily opposed these proposals. From then on, the political strife between confessional and liberal politicians was channelled through the question of education (De Rooy, 1998: 183-184).

In opposition to the liberal modernisation campaign, Protestant politicians under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper organised themselves as a political party with popular support. Although anti-modernists, the Protestants thereby in fact introduced modern mass-politics in the Netherlands (De Rooy, 1998: 188-189). The dispute over education was settled with a political agreement that has become known as 'the pacification' or 'the Great Compromise' of 1917. Privately founded confessional schools were entitled to equal state financing as were public schools. In return for conceding this confessional demand, the liberals obtained general male suffrage (Lijphart, 1990: 105-106).

Since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the mid 1960s, the Netherlands was a 'pillarised' nation, meaning that most areas of human activity were marked by separate organisations representing the different religious and secular points of view (Monsma and Soper, 2009: 11). Each pillar was defined by religious conviction or the lack thereof. There was a Catholic, a Protestant and a general pillar. Within the general pillar socio-economic cleavages resulted in the formation of a Socialist and a Liberal pillar (Lijphart, 1990: 34).

People lived in relative isolation from those who did not belong to their pillar. Only the pillars' elites were in regular contact with each other (Lijphart, 1990: 106). These elites endeavoured to reach consensus on issues that were controversial between, but not within, the homogenous pillars. The resulting politics of pacification led to noticeable democratic stability during the period of pillarisation (Lijphart, 1990: 110).

In the period following World War II, Dutch society and politics have undergone significant changes. These societal transformations occurred especially in the period following the cultural revolution of the 1960s. In the first place, the rise of a modern welfare state meant that the state would take over many tasks and services that were carried out by different organisations belonging to the various pillars until then. In the 1980s the welfare state receded again and neo-liberal policies of reform were implemented. In the second place, a widespread process of secularisation and decline of religious participation brought an end to the authoritarian character of pillarised Dutch society (Van Rooden, 2010: 71). Gradually a society developed that conceived of morality in secular terms which resulted in legislation of abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriages. In many respects, the Dutch came to think of themselves as a progressive 'guiding nation' that set an example for other countries.

The emancipation of the voter from the confines of the pillars resulted in a changing political landscape. In the 1970s the three confessional parties merged into the Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen-Democratisch Appèl, CDA*). From 1994 to 2002 the Netherlands were governed by the 'purple' coalition governments composed of the Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA*), Liberal Party (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD*), and Liberal-Democratic Party (*Democraten 66, D66*). This was the first time that the Netherlands was governed solely by non-confessional parties. The current coalition government is a minority government, a novelty for the Netherlands, consisting of the Christian Democrats (*CDA*) and the Liberal Party (*VVD*), condoned in parliament by Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (*Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV*).

Another major societal transformation of Dutch society over the past decades is related to the successive waves of immigration, which have changed the religious and cultural composition of the population. In the next session we discuss the main diversity challenges in the Netherlands and explain how these have been influenced by post-war immigration.

## Minority groups and diversity challenges

### Defining the boundaries between what is tolerable and intolerable

Minorities in Dutch society can roughly be categorised into 'native minorities' and 'post-war immigration minorities'. The first category contains those groups that continue to be seen by others (and continue to define themselves) as different from the mainstream society, mostly for cultural or religious reasons. The second category contains post-war immigration groups. Here we make a distinction between colonial migrants (Indonesians, Moluccans, Antilleans and Surinamese) and labour migrants (Turks and Moroccans). Given the prominent role issues around Islam have played in public debate over the past decade we briefly discuss Muslims as a separate group. We provide a very brief introduction to each group that serves as a background for the discussion of the main diversity challenges.

	1990	2000	2009
None	38	40	44
Roman-Catholic	33	32	28
Dutch Reformed	17	14	9
Orthodox Reformed	8	7	3
Protestant Church Netherlands	n/a	n/a	6
Other religious (including Islam)	5	8	10

Source: Statline - Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS, 2010)

	1996	2000	2005	2010
<b>Total</b>	15,493,889	15,863,950	16,305,526	16,574,989
Autochthonous	12,995,174	13,088,648	13,182,809	13,215,294
Allochthonous	2,498,715	2,775,302	3,122,717	3,359,603
Western Allochthonous	1,327,602	1,366,535	1,423,675	1,501,309
Non-Western Allochthonous	1,171,113	1,408,767	1,699,042	1,858,294
Indonesian	411,622	405,155	396,080	382,411
Moluccan	n/a	40,000*	n/a	n/a
Surinamese	280,615	302,514	329,430	342,279
Antillean and Aruban	86,824	107,197	130,538	138,420
Turkish	271,514	308,890	358,846	383,957
Moroccan	225,088	262,221	315,821	349,005
<b>Main assylum seeking immigrants from CEE countries</b>				
Polish	5,910	5,645	10,968	43,083
Bulgarian	550	713	1,924	12,340
Romanian	1,466	1,397	3,020	7,118
Hungarian	1,133	1,385	2,029	5,294
Slovakian	205	579	1,239	2,844
Czech	350	887	1,707	2,602
Lithuanian	127	338	970	2,126
Latvian	63	146	361	1,143
Former Soviet Union	13,485	22,625	44,419	55,896
Former Yugoslavian	56,220	66,947	76,301	70,119
Somali	20,060	28,780	21,733	27,011
Sudanese	943	3,919	7,285	6,329
Iraqi	11,278	33,449	43,708	52,102
Afghanistani	4,916	21,468	37,021	38,664

\*Estimate, see Smeets and Veenman, 2000: 41  
Source: Statline, 2010

## Religious groups as native minorities

In 2009 Catholics were by far the largest religious group in Dutch society with 30% of the population belonging to the Roman Catholic Church (CBS, 2010). Regular church visits in this group are in decline, with 23% of all Catholics visiting church at least once a month in 2008 (CBS, 2009: 23). Catholicism remains dominant in the provinces south of the Rhine-Meuse delta, namely North Brabant and Limburg (CBS, 2009: 42).

In 2009 there were almost 52,000 Jews in the Netherlands, less than 1 percent of the total population (Solinge and Van Praag, 2010). When compared to other European countries, a relatively high number of Dutch Jews

were murdered in the Holocaust. From the 107,000 Jews that were deported only 5,200 survived. In 1941 the Jewish population in the Netherlands totalled more than 160,000 people. In 1966 this number was a small 30,000 (Knippenberg, 2001: 196-197). Where Calvinists and Catholics developed their own pillar within Dutch society, Jews developed along the opposite route of assimilation. Areas with a large presence of Jews were the cities of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Groningen.

One native religious minority that figures repeatedly and prominently in public debates on diversity challenges in the Netherlands are Orthodox Reformed Calvinists, who live in a 'Bible belt' from the South West province of Zeeland to the North East part of the Country. Orthodox Reformed Calvinists adhere to a strong version of neo-Calvinism and seceded from the mainstream Dutch Reformed Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within this group the so-called pietistic Dutch Calvinists (*bevindelijk gereformeerden*) adhere strictly to the Bible as the word of God. They are characterised by conservative teachings, opposing abortion, euthanasia and work on Sundays, rejecting modern amenities such as television or cinema and opposing mandatory vaccination (Schuster, 2009: 157). Of the Dutch population in 2009, 9% sees itself as Dutch Reformed, 3% as Orthodox Reformed and 6% as belonging to the Protestant Church Netherlands (CBS, 2010). In these communities of pietistic Dutch Calvinists, the Political Reformed Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij, SGP*) finds most of its voters. The party program of the SGP is founded on the Bible as the word of God and states that the political aim of the party is a political order based on the word of God. Since the election of 1922 the Political Reformed Party has consistently obtained between 1 and 3 out of 150 seats of parliament.

### **Post-war immigration minorities**

In the period following the Second World War there have been different forms of immigration to the Netherlands. Between 1946 and the early 1960s immigrants mainly came from the former Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia). In the 1960s and 1970s immigrants were mostly 'guest workers' from the Mediterranean region and post-colonial immigrants from the Caribbean region (Surinam and the Dutch Antilles). Even though labour recruitment policies were ended in the mid 1970s, immigration from Turkey and Morocco continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s because of family reunification. Asylum seekers constitute a significant group of immigrants, especially since the 1990s (Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 2007: 9-11).

### **Colonial immigrants**

From 1946-1962, as many as 300,000 repatriates from the Netherlands East Indies migrated to the Netherlands (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000: 5-6). This group consisted of people who had a relation with the former colonial regime, amongst them a significant portion was of Indonesian-Dutch decent. The successful and rapid integration of the Indonesians is usually contrasted to the very painful and difficult incorporation of Moluccans. In 1951 around 12,500 inhabitants of the Moluccan Islands, a part of the Indonesian Archipelago, migrated to the Netherlands. This group consisted mostly of soldiers from the former colonial army

and their families. It is estimated that in 2000 there were almost 40,000 Moluccans in the Netherlands (Smeets and Veenman, 2000: 41). Experts agree that the second generation of Moluccans made a great leap forward when compared to the first generation, yet this trend seems to have lost some of its momentum among the third generation (Amersfoort, 2004: 168).

The Netherlands' other colonies, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, remained part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands after the Second World War. Citizens from these overseas parts of the Kingdom had free access to the Netherlands. From 1965 onwards unskilled workers from Surinam moved to the Netherlands (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000: 7). In the years leading up to its independence, immigration from Surinam reached its peak from 1973-1975 and again from 1979-1980 towards the end of the transitional phase. Immigration continued after 1980 but on a smaller scale (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000: 7). At present about 40 per cent of all Surinamese people live in the Netherlands, a total of 329,279 people in 2010 (CBS, 2010).

Because the Netherlands Antilles has remained part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Antilleans can still move freely throughout the Kingdom (Oostindie, 2010: 37). Immigration from the Netherlands Antilles grew considerably after 1985 due to crises in the local oil industry, and has remained high ever since (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000: 7). Only recently, on October 10 2010, have the Netherlands Antilles been dissolved with some islands becoming independent nations within the Kingdom, and the others becoming municipalities of the Netherlands. In 2010 there are 138,420 Antilleans living in the Netherlands (CBS, 2010).

The vast majority of Surinamese and Antilleans are Dutch nationals. Although there is still a gap between Surinamese and native Dutch in socio-economic terms, Surinamese find themselves in an upward trend of social mobility. Concerning Antilleans in the Netherlands there is less reason for optimism. A large majority of Antillean families are single mother households, often dependent upon benefits. Among Antilleans unemployment is three times higher than among Dutch. Furthermore many Antilleans find themselves at low levels of socio-economic rankings and criminality among Antilleans is high (Van Hulst, 2000: 106, 119).

### **Labour immigrants – Turks and Moroccans**

After the Second World War the education level of the Dutch grew rapidly, resulting in a shortage of low-skilled labourers. This was especially felt during the economic boom from the 1960s until the first oil crisis in 1973 (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000: 10). To fill these labour shortages so called 'guest workers' were recruited from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Yugoslavia. Recruitment agreements were also set up with Turkey (1963) and Morocco (1969). Guest workers from Morocco but also from Turkey did not return to their country of origin, as was anticipated by the Dutch government, but instead became permanent residents.

In 2010 there were 383,957 Turks in the Netherlands (CBS, 2010). Turks in the Netherlands form tight-knit communities wherein traditional norms and values are upheld. However the adherence to traditional values forms an impediment for Turkish youths to fully participate in Dutch



society and climb the social ladder. The relatively low socio-economic position of most first generation Turks is very unlikely to change. On the other hand, Turks have set up a wide network of ethnic organisations and there is a relative high turnout of Turks at local elections (Böcker, 2000: 173-174).

In 2010 there were 349,005 Moroccans in the Netherlands (CBS, 2010). Around 40% of Moroccans are born in the Netherlands (Nelissen and Buijs, 2000: 189). The role of teenage Moroccan men often dominates the debate on integration in the Netherlands, more so than Turks and other ethnic minorities. Their integration into Dutch society is perceived as especially problematic partly due to recurring negative reports on certain Moroccans' deviant behaviour. Even though in public perception the situation of Moroccan migrants is worse than that of Turkish migrants, they are nowadays often subsumed under the category of 'Muslims'.

### **Muslims in the Netherlands**

Over the past decade the discussions on immigration and integration in the Netherlands has more and more focused upon the situation of Muslim migrants and the role of Islam in society. At present one finds many references to the situation of 'Muslims', which are now seen as a distinct group, whereas until the mid 1990s the main focus was on different ethnic groups.

It is estimated that in 2009 there were 907,000 Muslims in the Netherlands, which is about 5.5% of the population. Of all Muslims in the Netherlands 73% is of Turkish or Moroccan decent (FORUM, 2010: 7). Only small minorities of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands, 3% and 5%, see themselves as non-religious.

Three major issues dominate the almost continuous debate on Islam and Muslim in the Netherlands. First, there is a wide debate on the degrees of collective autonomy that should be given to Muslim communities and Islamic organisations and on whether or not religiously motivated forms of behaviour should be tolerated or not. These debates usually focus on widely mediatised individual cases of Muslims who refuse to shake hands with members of the opposite sex, who refuse to stand up in court or who want to wear specific forms of dress (headscarf, face-veil). Second, especially since the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004, there has been a wide debate on the dangers of radicalisation among young Muslims in the Netherlands. Many local governments have developed special programs to prevent radicalisation. Simultaneously programs have been set up to combat discrimination of Muslims and create more understanding and tolerance between different communities living in the Netherlands. Finally, there is a more general debate on whether or not 'Muslims' are sufficiently 'integrated'. This debate primarily focuses on the need for cultural assimilation. Some politicians claim that Muslim immigrants lead 'parallel lives' and they argue that the conservative values that are dominant in Muslim communities clash with the norms and values of a liberal and secular Dutch society. In the latter context political leaders of the Freedom Party (PVV) repeatedly demand 'less Islam', meaning both a curb on 'immigration from Muslim countries' as well as creating obstacles for the creation of Islamic institutions, such as mosques, ritual slaughtering and Islamic schools. Overall the present debate on Muslims



in the Netherlands is more focussed on defining the boundaries between what is tolerable and intolerable than on moving from tolerance to genuine recognition and equality.

### **Diversity Challenges**

Whereas in some other European countries 'diversity challenges' can be neatly related to distinct minority groups, in the Netherlands it makes more sense to focus on clusters of events around which forms of ethnic, cultural or religious differences are challenged.

We distinguish between two clusters of events. On the one hand, events and discussions related to the existence of special institutions catering to different ethnic and religious groups (faith-based schools, ethnic organisations) and whether or not these enhance segregation and feelings of alienation between different groups in Dutch society. On the other hand, events and issues related to gender and sexual equality. In what follows we aim to identify the relevant practices, norms, and institutions at play, and, if relevant, the various usages of concepts such as tolerance, acceptance, respect, pluralism, national identity and national heritage.

A major issue in Dutch public debates on diversity relates to the relationship between the cultural and institutional legacies of pillarisation and immigrant integration policies and the ways ethnic organisations and institutions have been recognised by Dutch authorities. In public debate Muslims are on centre stage, but depending on the events or issues that set off debates, other religious groups (Orthodox Calvinists or Jews) or other immigrant groups, enter the picture. A major concern is whether the existence of special religious institutions and networks of ethnic organisations will not result in a highly segregated society in which different groups lead 'parallel lives'. Another issue is whether there is not too much room for conservative cultural and religious groups to adhere to extremely illiberal ideas and values. And consequently, to uphold forms of behaviour and cultural practices that violate liberal norms of equality and individual freedom. Public debates concentrate on what practices and ideas should *not* be tolerated in a liberal society.

In some respects the institutional structure stemming from pillarised society is still in place today. A fundamental part of the institutional inheritance of pillarisation is the Dutch educational system. Confessional schools are granted equal material resources as public schools, but they are not administered by the state. Most pupils in the Netherlands are enrolled in confessional schools. All schools are obliged to follow the same general curriculum, but the confessional character of a school can be expressed through extra-curricular activity and additional religious education. Religious newcomers, including Islam and Hinduism, have founded many faith-based schools and other institutions that now exist alongside Catholic, Jewish and Protestant institutions. For example, there were 43 Islamic primary schools and two Islamic secondary schools in 2010 (FORUM, 2010: 41).

Early Dutch immigrant integration policies of the 1980s, known as Ethnic Minorities Policies, showed a structural similarity to the foundational ideas of pillarisation. These policies were based on the distinctions between cultural minority groups. The approach was driven by the

twin ideals of equal opportunities and respect for cultural differences. The slogan 'integration with retention of cultural identity' became the motto of Minorities Policies. Emerging ethnic elites rapidly picked up this policy slogan to argue that successful integration did not require cultural assimilation and to justify their attempts to create community based institutions. Part of this policy was encouraging the creation of immigrant organisations through government subsidies (Penninx, 2006: 243-244). It was thought that group membership would have positive integrating effects on its migrant members (Sunier, 2010: 122). Groups were assumed to be homogeneous, ignoring diversity within groups and overemphasising differences between them. This system of subsidisation contributed to the fossilization of views about minority groups (Schrover, 2010: 335, 345, 348).

Towards the end of the 1990s, public discourse on multiculturalism became more critical (Penninx, 2006: 252). National and international events like September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, the murder of anti-establishment parliamentary candidate Pim Fortuyn in 2002, and the slaying of Theo van Gogh in 2004, contributed to a more critical public and political stance towards the integration of Muslim minorities in Dutch society. Leading concepts became 'citizenship' and 'individual responsibility' and the emphasis was on the cultural adaptation of immigrants to Dutch society (Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 2007: 20).

State funding for confessional schools is still in place but over the past decade there is more and more debate on the structure of the Dutch educational system. There is a discussion on secularism and whether or not the state should finance faith-based schools. There are also discussions about the degrees of associational autonomy of denominational schools, for example with regard to curriculum, the hiring of teachers and the right to refuse to admit pupils. Especially the will to see immigrant Muslim minorities assimilate into Dutch society has led to questions on the desirability of state funded confessional education.

A second, and related, debate concerns the ways the Dutch history of pillarisation and policies of multiculturalism continue to hinder, rather than facilitate, immigrant integration. For instance Sniderman and Hagendoorn conclude their book on identity politics and conflicts of values in the Netherlands by writing: 'Multiculturalism has helped to make it unclear whether Muslim immigrants will commit themselves as a community to the liberal Dutch society, precisely because it has made it unclear whether they should' (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007: 138). There is disagreement among scholars, however, on the actual effect the legacy of pillarisation had on immigrant integration policies and the development of Muslim institutions (see critically Maussen, 2012). The general thrust of these debates is to define the limits of tolerance in a liberal state that operates in a context of a society of immigration.

### **Gender equality and equality of sexual orientation**

Different incidents have occurred in the last decade wherein religious and immigrant minorities conflicted with dominant societal norms of gender equality and equality of sexual orientation. These debates often focus on events related to religious diversity and especially confrontations between progressive values and the principles held by Orthodox religious groups.

One exemplary debate about the limits of tolerance and the associational autonomy of Orthodox Calvinist institutions concerns the stance of the Political Reformed Party towards the participation of women in politics. In 2003 the Clara Wichmann Institute and other advocacy groups for women's rights, filed a court case against the state for subsidising the Political Reformed Party. According to the Clara Wichmann Institute the Political Reformed Party discriminates against women because its statutes prohibit women from becoming members of the party, a practice which the state should not allow let alone subsidise. Because women cannot become members of the Political Reformed Party they also cannot be elected into public office. The judge ruled in favour of the complainant motivating that there should be a level playing field for men and women in politics and that political parties should ensure this is the case (Dölle, 2005: 110-114). Hereupon subsidy for the Political Reformed Party was cancelled for 2006. Taking this into consideration and under pressure from some of its members, the Political Reformed Party decided to allow membership for women, although women are still excluded from obtaining political office. Both the state and the Clara Wichmann Institute have filed several appeals in reaction to the 2005 ruling. In 2007 the Council of State (*Raad van State*) argued that in practice women are not discriminated against in Dutch politics because they can become members of other parties and can be elected into office through them. Due to this verdict the Political Reformed Party was re-allowed its 2006 subsidy. However, in 2010 the Supreme Council (*Hoge Raad*) ruled that the state should take appropriate action to ensure that female members of the Reformed Party can also be elected into office (*Reformatie Dagblad*, 14 April 2010).

Another major issue concerns how principles such as equal treatment and equal respect for homosexuals relate to the associational autonomy of religious organisations. In April 2001 the Netherlands was the first nation to legalize same-sex marriages. However, there is an ongoing debate on whether or not civil servants can refuse to bind a same-sex marriage on religious grounds. In relation to Islam, the political presence of Pim Fortuyn fuelled the debates concerning gay rights and homophobia. Pim Fortuyn fiercely opposed Islam for its rejection of homosexuality. According to Fortuyn, who was openly gay himself, Muslims view homosexuals as inferior beings. Fortuyn emphatically remarked that he did not want to 'have to re-do the emancipation of women and homosexuals all over again' (*De Volkskrant*, 9 February 2002). In May 2001 Moroccan born Imam Khalil El-Moumni condemned homosexuality and labelled it as a contagious disease which threatens Dutch society (*De Volkskrant*, 4 May 2001). In April 2004 it became known that the Amsterdam El Tahweed-mosque sold Dutch translations of Islamic publications which stated that homosexuals should be killed by throwing them from high buildings with their 'head first' followed by stoning (*Trouw*, 21 April 2004). The alderman for Amsterdam at the time, Ahmed Aboutaleb (Labour Party), Moroccan born and at present the mayor of Rotterdam, declared that the mosque's leaders need to be aware that such statements have no place in a mosque (*Trouw*, 21 April 2004).

The tensions between, on the one hand, gay rights and equality, and, on the other hand, conservative values and religious convictions do not only concern high held principles. Intolerant behaviour and violence against homosexuals continues to be a problem. In the Netherlands reports of violence against homosexuals had risen by a quarter in 2009 when compared

to 2008, meaning that such incidents occur on a daily basis (*De Volkskrant*, 19 January 2010). The incidents and discussions show an increasing awareness in Dutch society of the tensions between liberal values (concerning sexual morality, gender equality and equality of sexual orientation) and the values and opinions of conservative religious groups. Regarding religious organisations and faith-based organisations this often leads to debates on the limits of associational autonomy. These debates primarily revolve around the distinction between what is tolerable and what is intolerable.

## Conceptualisation of tolerance and their use in Dutch society

### Perceived traditions under siege: conflicting views of toleration

From the above it has become clear that Dutch society is increasingly facing new challenges of diversity. These challenges are addressed by drawing upon national traditions and institutional repertoires. In this section we discuss five conceptualisations of tolerance that, so we argue, structure the discursive space in which ideas about toleration and acceptance are being articulated in the Netherlands. We discuss each by looking at what conceptualisation of tolerance and acceptance it consists of and what the historical contexts, social practices and institutional arrangements are that are primarily associated with it.

#### *Toleration of minorities*

The first conceptualisation concerns toleration between a majority and different minorities. The values, beliefs and norms of the majority are represented as normal, whereas those of the minorities are seen as deviating and as inferior for moral, religious or cultural reasons. Diversity becomes an issue when minorities claim recognition for their position in society and demand a more equal say in affairs of the state. The reasons invoked for not actively suppressing or persecuting minorities are primarily pragmatic: maintaining public order, upholding peaceful relations with other countries, or protecting the interests of commerce.

Historically, ideas about toleration initially concerned relations between the dominant Calvinist group and religious minorities. In the Dutch Republic of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, dissenting protestant groups, among which were the Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Lutherans, but also Catholics and Jews, were publicly tolerated (Aerts, 2001: 63). An important social practice illustrative of toleration was the clandestine church (*schuilkerk*) which allowed dissenters to worship in spaces demarcated as private, thereby preserving the monopoly of the official church in the public sphere (Kaplan, 2007: 176). Their existence was not a secret because many people openly visited them. However, there were no symbols on the exterior of the buildings marking them as churches, nor did they have towers or crosses or bells calling everyone to come to service. This symbolic invisibility sufficed for the civil authorities to look the other way (Kaplan, 2007: 172-197). Another characteristic was the fact that all groups, including Catholics, would choose a relatively reticent and introvert style of presenting themselves in the public realm. All would share in a puritan public order which disapproved extravagant behaviour (Aerts, 2001: 69). There was little open debate and criticism between the different groups. The governing elites of

the cities were mainly concerned with maintaining peace and public order in a religiously divided country, motivated in part by the interests of commerce and industry.

The practices and virtues associated with toleration are sometimes presented positively. For example, despite the fact that religious minorities were often discriminated against they were not violently persecuted in the Netherlands. In contemporary debates the notion exists that 'deviating' minorities have to be tolerated, but that this also entails obligations on the side of these minorities. For instance in discussions concerning the presence of Islam in Dutch society, some argue that Islam should not be too visible in the public realm and that Muslims should not cause 'offense'. To that end Muslims should express their differences in a 'more reticent' or 'modest' style.

There are also more critical perspectives concerning toleration of minorities. These basically argue that toleration alone is not enough, and that minorities are entitled to full recognition and equal treatment in society. Illustrative is the case of Catholics who since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century demanded a more equal position in Dutch society and protested against rampant 'anti-Papist' sentiments. Their demands consisted of the right to hold processions, institute Catholic schools and build Catholic churches. Another illustrative case is that of homosexuals who since the 1960s demanded equal rights and recognition for their sexual orientation as equal to heterosexuality. Both these examples show how toleration of deviance from the perspective of the tolerated, can be unsatisfactory. The tolerated demand acceptance and equality from the majority, instead of being seen as merely a deviant group whose practices are to be 'tolerated'.

### *Principled acceptance*

A second conceptualisation sees tolerance as a matter of reciprocity between established minorities. This approach is more principled because it builds on the assumption that there are different religious and non-religious 'philosophies of life' (*levensovertuigingen*) that should respect one another. Also these philosophies of life should have equal positions in society and within the state. The aim is a society wherein these different views can be visible and institutionalised, whilst keeping sufficient distance between them to allow separate communities to develop themselves.

This second conceptualisation developed in tandem with a changing social imagery of the Dutch nation as composed of people belonging to different groups. These groups could agree to give one another equal rights allowing everyone to live peacefully together (Van Rooden, 2010). The various groups presented themselves as sovereign moral communities within the nation-state. One of the main theorists of this approach to difference was the neo-Calvinist Abraham Kuyper, founder of the Orthodox Reformed Party (*Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, ARP*) and the VU University Amsterdam. Kuyper spoke in support of 'parallelism' by which he meant 'the right and freedom of differing religious and philosophical perspectives and movements to develop freely on separate, parallel tracks, neither hindered or helped by the government' (Monsma and Soper, 2009: 59). This implied that all the different groups and communities were entitled to visibility and institutionalisation in the public realm. This can be seen as a form of group recognition.

The ideas associated with principled acceptance have found a strong institutional base. General suffrage and proportional representation allowed each group to be represented in Parliament, leading to a situation in which coalition governments have to be formed and therefore demands must be moderated (Ten Hooven, 2001: 291). One of the major institutional features of pillarisation was proportional public financing of institutions that allow a subculture to exist, e.g. in media or education. During the period of pillarisation toleration was primarily a tool used by the pillars' elites to discourage their rank and file from intolerance against members of a different pillar. Each pillar formed a separate minority and toleration of other minorities guaranteed toleration of their own pillar. However, in practice this form of toleration resulted in a lack of contact with members of other pillars. As Aerts observes: 'The communities recognised one another as national partners but rejected one another's ideas and subculture. They combated one another continuously but without much passion. Tolerance came down to avoidance at best, but without positive recognition' (Aerts, 2001: 77).

The more positive perspectives on principled acceptance view it as a way of organising a deeply pluralistic society with profound differences. Communities should respect one another's sovereign spheres and the state should aim to be equi-distant to all citizens. Thus the state needs to guarantee the associational freedoms which allow cultural and religious communities to live-out their respective conceptions of the good life. These conceptualisations are still important for ideas articulated by Christian Democrats and orthodox Christians. In the 1980s and 1990s this model of acceptance was also applied to notions concerning the cultural incorporations of immigrants. The now notorious phrase 'integration with retention of cultural identity' and the notion that ethnic and religious subcultures should be accommodated and should be allowed to institutionalise in society, reflect the approach of principled acceptance.

However, in the past decade or so these views have been criticised in the context of discussions on immigrant integration, Islam and Orthodox Christian demands. Critics argue that 'parallel societies' and 'pockets of backwardness' have come into being and should disappear. Furthermore, it is believed that too much respect for the 'moral sovereignty' of groups stands in the way of the need to protect individual rights and freedoms. It is also questioned what levels of 'parallelism' are viable in the context of societies that are highly individualised and obtain large numbers of immigrants. Social goals such as economic participation and integration require a more firm socialisation into one dominant culture, so critics argue.

### *Pragmatic toleration or condoning (gedogen)*

A third approach to acceptance is seen as illustrative, or even unique, for the Dutch situation, but is also more difficult to distinguish from what we have called toleration of minorities. These are the conceptualisations of tolerance around the concept '*gedogen*', usually translated as 'condoning' or 'pragmatic toleration'. Gordijn describes acts of pragmatic toleration as consisting of a declaration in advance, that under certain specific conditions offenders against a particular norm do not need to fear punishment (Gordijn 2001: 230-231). Well known examples include the use and possession of (soft)drugs, prostitution, the existence of brothels, euthanasia and medically assisted suicide, and squatting. The



motivations for such practices of condoning are multiple: for instance the material or social costs of upholding a legal norm are said to outweigh the societal damage when it is being violated. Or, an official ban on paper combined with toleration in practice, provides room to balance and respect the sensitivities of different social groups.

Condoning is often seen as a continuation of the social practices associated with toleration of minorities, meaning that the state and dominant groups would seek to avoid sharp confrontations by 'looking the other way' when minorities or individuals would engage in acts that were formally illegal. In post-war the Netherlands, this model of pragmatic toleration smoothed the transition from a society dominated by Christian norms to a progressive and secular society. Formally legalising acts and practices that violated Christian norms, such as drug use, homosexuality or prostitution, would provoke fierce resistance by Christian groups. But the effective persecution of individuals and the active suppression of these practices would also lead to strong protest from liberal factions. Pragmatic toleration serves as a tool to upset as few people as possible. Since the 1960s new life-styles of younger generations which were still seen as offensive to many in the Dutch petty bourgeois society, could nevertheless be accommodated through condoning.

In recent years condoning is less and less seen as a virtuous style of governance. Some argue that legal norms should be upheld and that pragmatic toleration will only result in erosion of the legal system (Gordijn, 2001: 239). The debate on pragmatic toleration took a new turn when it became associated with the debate on immigrant integration. The notion of 'looking the other way' was now represented as functioning as an escape route when immigrants were violating legal and cultural norms. The concept came to be linked with so-called strategies of social avoidance which were seen as a sign of a lack of social cohesion. Paul Scheffer attributes the failure of immigrant integration to pragmatic toleration because immigrants who were confronted with a Dutch state that was unwilling to uphold the law, began to believe that Dutch law does not need to be taken seriously at all (Scheffer, 2007: 169).

### *Multicultural recognition*

The guiding concepts in a fourth approach to the handling of diversity are recognition and equal respect for cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences in a society of immigration. This corresponds to a conceptualisation of acceptance that emphasises full recognition, respect, normality and equality as values. These concepts build on the notion that inter-group relations in a multicultural society require both virtuous citizens who are open-minded, free of prejudices and want to embrace difference, and institutional guarantees to protect vulnerable newcomers, both individually and collectively. Examples of the latter are anti-discriminatory and anti-racist legislation, subsidies to maintain and develop ethnic identities, and institutional guarantees allowing for cultural and religious practices and associational and collective autonomy. Dominant in multicultural recognition is the notion of 'acceptance' by the host society which should be willing to change its ethnocentric views, primarily on national identity and cultural norms. Also, the host society should make a principled choice to allow newcomers to participate on equal footing in society and affairs of the state.



These notions of multicultural recognition have been developed in post-war the Netherlands and remained dominant throughout the first immigrant integration policies of the 1980s and early 1990s. Horrors of the war were used to draw lessons from in terms of dealing with right-wing extremism, racism and vulnerable minorities like Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals. Also, the notion became dominant that the Netherlands should become a 'guiding nation' in the process of building a democratic Europe, advocating human rights and developing liberal legislation in domains such as medical ethics, gender and sexuality, and differing life-styles. The Netherlands also became one of the leading countries in creating institutions to monitor and combat racial discrimination in Europe. The Netherlands were among the first countries in Europe to pick up on ideas about multiculturalism and the need to develop policies of integration that were supportive of ethnic diversity.

These conceptualisations of acceptance have had several institutional counterparts. One concerns the legal arrangements to combat discriminatory and racist speech and the extreme right. The creation of the Equal Treatment Commission in 1994 served to demonstrate the importance of upholding article 1 of the Dutch constitution, which prohibits discrimination and guarantees equal treatment. Other measures associated with multicultural recognition include the scrutinising of Dutch legislation in 1983 to see whether it contained elements of discrimination on the basis of nationality, race or religion, the introduction of migrants' native language in schools, and the creation of local and national representative councils for ethnic groups. Another set of social practices were the attempts to create more understanding between communities. Towards this end attempts were made to teach children about other cultures, curricula was revised to include more references to issues such as slavery and colonialism, and initiatives such as the 'day of dialogue' were instituted.

Despite the fact that in contemporary public debate the ideas associated with multicultural acceptance have come under heavy fire, there are still articulate defenders of it. First, there are those who argue that a principled choice in favour of equality and pluralism combined with the notion that immigration and the existence of culturally diverse societies are a fact of life, inevitably resulting in a manner of engaging with difference that goes beyond mere toleration and entails respect, recognition and equal opportunities. Second, some argue that multiculturalism provides a more sensible approach to deal with differences in societies that are highly individualised and in which migration has resulted in far deeper forms of cultural diversity than ever before. The notion of a unified, singular and stable 'Dutch culture' which will re-emerge is portrayed as unrealistic.

However, the more critical voices towards multicultural recognition dominate the debate. One of the main critiques is that multicultural acceptance results from an unhappy marriage between excessive subjectivism and cultural relativism. Subjectivism has resulted in the notion that being tolerant or 'having an open mind' means refraining from judging others. Here we see an example of the wider debate on value relativism in Europe. The argument is that cultural relativism has led to the notion that all cultures are of equal worth and that it is inappropriate to impose Dutch or European cultures on immigrants. Critics also point to the forms of intolerance that the strong norms of anti-racism and multiculturalism have introduced in the Netherlands. Forms of speech or behaviour that

could be seen as offensive to minorities or hurting the feelings of immigrants were banned from the public sphere.

***The divide between the tolerable and the intolerable:  
Dutch liberal intolerance***

A fifth and final approach entails conceptualisations of acceptance arguing that true toleration can only be achieved when the boundaries between the tolerable and the intolerable are very clearly demarcated. Consequently, different groups and individuals have to clearly spell out where they stand and what their differences are. A distinction is made between toleration which requires engagement, disagreement and disapproval, and toleration as a form of ignorance, relativism or disinterest. In a part of his book entitled meaningfully 'The Netherlands, country of avoidance' Scheffer explains that toleration is undermined by a *laissez-faire* attitude. Scheffer pleads for a stronger adherence to core values, like the foundational principles and values that support the legal-democratic order. Otherwise the conditions for a peaceful and free society will be gravely undermined: 'upholding the norms of an open society is one of the main tasks of the state' (2007: 167). The dissatisfaction with multiculturalism focuses on the contradictions in the multicultural dogma 'toleration of the intolerant' by pointing to the position of vulnerable minorities, notably women. The critics motivate that one of the main reasons not to tolerate specific ideas or practices is to uphold progressive values, notably with regard to gender equality, gay rights, and liberal education and science (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007).

In terms of institutional arrangements these conceptualisations entail a firm protection of free speech. This includes the right to offend and to critique religious dogmas, religious practices, and cultural practices. It also entails an obligation for minorities to justify their acts and world-views, entailing the risk that these will not be tolerated. Thus, certain moral or legal norms, such as non-discrimination and gender equality, can result in the limitation of associational autonomy, notably of religious institutions such as confessional schools and political parties, but also of social practices in communities and families. In *Empty tolerance. On freedom and lack of commitment in the Netherlands*, Ten Hooven argues that the notion of respecting the sovereignty of specific groups does no longer work and that in contemporary times toleration is an individual virtue and an element of good citizenship. In terms of social practice, interactions between groups should not be based on avoidance and 'looking the other way', but rather on identifying, if not amplifying, differences, exposing them and confronting them (Ten Hooven, 2001).

In a more positive evaluation, this way of thinking about tolerance entails the opportunity of maintaining a free society in which liberal rights and individual opportunities are guaranteed. To some it also means that there should be a willingness to challenge conservative groups, especially if they violate the rights of vulnerable minorities. One issue that appears on the agenda repeatedly is the refusal by some Orthodox Christian groups, including Jehovah's witnesses, to let their children be vaccinated against polio. Others frame the issue as concerning the need to maintain a threshold of cultural norms that are recognisably Dutch and argue, for example, that these should be taught in schools by creating a canon of Dutch history and civic orientation classes.

More critical perspectives entail, first, that despite the fact that this is presented as a conceptualisation of tolerance, the main thrust of the discussion is to point out what is *not* to be tolerated and to ban specific practices or limit associational freedoms. Especially in the case of Islam and immigrants the category of intolerable practices and symbols becomes larger and larger and the ways in which disapproval is expressed becomes more and more violent. Thereby the notion of toleration as ‘putting up with what one disapproves of’ becomes an empty signifier. Secondly, the process of exposing differences in order to discuss them through a ‘healthy confrontation’ is usually dominated by gross stereotypes. The alarming tone of public outcries about, for instance, ritually prepared food, lawyers who do not stand up in court or imams who refuse to shake hands, results in far more social conflicts than strategies of avoidance do. Some argue, therefore, that this way of thinking about tolerance as requiring confrontation and open debate hinders rather than facilitates societal cohesion and peace.

## Concluding remarks

### **The challenges of pluralism in a depillarised society of immigration**

In contrast to dominant notions, debates concerning cultural diversity and minority acceptance in the Netherlands do not exclusively focus on the position of Muslims and the role of Islam in society. There is also an ongoing discussion on the position of native religious minorities, notably Orthodox Calvinist groups. The history of the Netherlands is not the history of a distinct development of toleration. It is important to emphasise this point because portrayals of the tumultuous political developments in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are often contrasted to a supposed ‘Dutch tradition of tolerance’. It would be wrong to maintain the image that until recently the Netherlands was an exemplary tolerant country and that it recently has become ‘intolerant’ and has fallen victim to a ‘backlash against multiculturalism’. In practice, however, as we have argued in this report, each time is confronted with its own specific challenges which are met with their own specific answers. From the above we want to extract some conclusions and major issues that require further examination and empirical research.

First of all, it is clear that since about ten years, notably since the Fortuyn revolt in 2002 and the following stable presence of populist parties in Dutch politics, the discourses of ‘liberal intolerance’ have become particularly influential in the Netherlands. The main thrust of this shift in public debate is that there is a need to identify the core values that characterise ‘Dutch culture’, ‘liberalism’ and ‘secularism’ and that these should become ‘non-negotiable’. As a result, so it is argued, there is a need to confront immigrant communities to enforce full respect for these values and principles. One effect of this shift in discourse has been a renewed interest in Dutch history, including attempts to identify the essence of ‘the Dutch canon’, the creation of a ‘national historical museum’ and efforts to instruct immigrants about ‘Dutch culture’ during compulsory ‘civic orientation lessons’. Citizenship, national solidarity and respect seem to require a renewed enthusiasm about ‘Dutch culture and Dutch values’. Politicians have also demanded that schools should teach tolerance and respect in the form of ‘citizenship education’. Another aspect of this shift in the dominant

discourse on diversity issues is a widely advocated need to strengthen the principles of the separation between church and state. In the Netherlands people who position themselves as modern, liberal and progressive speak out loudly to defend values such as equality, individualism and secularism. Often this is taken to mean that religious groups and organisations should no longer be allowed to use their collective and institutional autonomy to divert from core values and norms. According to these voices, liberal values are under siege, mainly from religious groups and immigrant communities.

One striking feature of contemporary cultural diversity challenges and discussions in the Netherlands is the focus on *religious* minorities. Orthodox Calvinist groups, Catholic institutions and Muslims are publicly challenged with respect to their beliefs and practices, which are often perceived as crossing the boundaries of the 'intolerable'. Especially around issues related to gender equality and equality of sexual orientation, many believe that principles such as non-discrimination, that have already been established legally, should also function as shared values across Dutch society. They reason that this means that exceptions to the rule should no longer be accepted. This provides opportunities for populist politicians to camouflage more general feelings of hostility towards Islam and Muslims as well-intentioned attempts to contribute to the emancipation of Muslim women. Nonetheless, in a society that secularised in rapid pace since the 1960s and that has come to define itself as 'liberal and progressive', there is a genuine concern about the ways conservative immigrant groups undermine norms that have become well established over the past decades. The focus on Muslims and Orthodox Christians also results in the fact that other minority groups are far less exposed and criticised. For example, there is hardly any debate on the position of the Surinamese community in the Netherlands.

A third aspect of diversity challenges and discussions on tolerance in the Netherlands that merits attention is that there appears to be a radical change in prevailing Dutch conceptualisations of tolerance. For a long time, 'principled acceptance' has been crucial to Dutch governing traditions. Its philosophical foundations were developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, amongst others by Abraham Kuyper. It was institutionalised in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the form of church-state traditions, in the model of consensus-democracy and in the educational system. However, at present, secular voices demand less room for religious schools, a ban on ritual slaughtering and less accommodation of religiously motivated demands with regard to dress. Other elements of Dutch traditions of tolerance are also criticised. The notion that a majority in society may well disapprove of the ideas and practices of a religious minority whilst still 'tolerating' them, has lost much of its appeal in public discourse. The same applies to the idea that 'pragmatic toleration' or 'condoning' is an adequate governing strategy in a deeply plural society. At present public discourse on toleration centres around the ideas that tolerance should not mean value relativism and avoidance, but confrontation, defining what is acceptable and combating that which is intolerable. Interestingly, the autochthonous majority often expresses its unwillingness to 'put up with' or 'tolerate' other cultures and religions. A recurring topic in the national elections throughout the last decade has been the call to severely curb flows of immigration to the Netherlands. Although instigated by populist parties, traditional parties too advocate the need for a highly selective immigration policy. Overall, the notion of the Netherlands as an immigrant nation has become supplanted by the notion of the Netherlands as a nation rooted in a distinct European

Judeo-Christian tradition. A tradition that needs to be 'defended' from external influences stemming from immigration.

Finally, it is remarkable how the overall concern about 'societal cohesion' and 'immigrant integration' result in demands to restrict pluralism, for example in the form of ethnic subcultures, special institutions and the accommodation of religiously motivated demands. In public debates there are often outcries about 'multiple loyalties' of immigrants with dual nationality, about the existence of ethnic 'parallel societies' or about religious orthodox groups that isolate themselves from mainstream society. This is paradoxical because at the level of individualised life-styles the embrace of 'diversity' is paramount. Also, according to popular culture everyone should be as 'different' and 'unique' as possible. It appears that the Netherlands is still trying to strike a balance in accommodating various forms of pluralism in a depillarised society of immigration.

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