Cultural Chameleons and Rootless Flowers

Migrant Integration Experiences and Cultural Identity Formation

in Rotterdam between 1989-2020

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Abstract: This thesis examines the way that migrants have created and maintained their cultural identities through formal and informal integration in Rotterdam. As a country with a long and strong history of migration, the Netherlands has seen various developments in its legislation to control and organise its migrant population. These laws have affected the way in which migrants are expected to integrate into Dutch society and in turn are able to express and define themselves, but how exactly this occurs remains unclear. Using semi-structured interviews with migrants who arrived between 1989 and 2020, this study reveals that migrants see their identities as fluid and, more often than not, split between two cultures. Social connections are crucial in their ability to become independent and self-reliant, but also to connect to the cultures they interact with. Meanwhile, integration programmes are well organized and have positive effects on the self-sufficiency of migrants, but is solely focused on assimilation rather than integration. These findings provide practical guidelines and possible outlooks for integration programmes that account for migrant experiences to achieve more successful participation and a sense of belonging in Dutch society. The research suggest that integration programmes strengthen their networking guidance so that migrants can develop strong social bonds together with the native population and through that explore their cultural identities to better adapt.
KEYWORDS: *Integration, Inburgering, Migration, Identity, Culture.*

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Preface: Would you say that you feel like a migrant?

Of course. I am. I am different. I am not someone who eats cheese, or eats *stamppot*, or celebrates Sinterklaas, but I love the Dutch. And I love my country too. With heart and soul. You love both, but you love them in a different way. Just like your friends. You don't love all your friends in the same way either.

The Netherlands is not home. But it is also, on the other hand, the only home I have, actually. I am not unhappy, but it is not my dream place to stay. Because I still don't feel 100% at home here.

All my memories from my youth are there. I like it when I am there, but I don't feel at home there. It is not that I have no contact at all anymore. I do, but differently.

The problem is that we are in no one's country, always. In the Netherlands we are the foreigners and in our home country too. There comes a point where you are no longer from anywhere. Then you live there and here. I am also used to the new situation, but it was a big transition for me. It was a moment when I felt, 'No, I don't belong here, and where then?' Such a moment, not belonging to anyone, that is really not a nice feeling.

We normalize it. But normalizing it does not mean that it has to be normal. You don't have to commit yourself to one place. I just can't identify with one place. But that's not bad, right? That's good too.

If someone says, 'Oh, have you become Dutch?' I say then, 'Maybe.' Rotterdam is my city. I came to Rotterdam and stayed in Rotterdam. Now, when I am in Rotterdam, I see all friends there, and then I feel really happy. If this country gives me something, why don't I give something back? I am grateful.

I do feel Dutch with always such a dot above the i. Do I have the right to be Dutch? Do I have the right to have that feeling? I am foreign. I can't change that. I can't change my blood to Dutch. Those are my roots.

But ultimately I do sometimes feel Dutch. I don't have roots here. I will probably never be able to put down roots here. But it is very nice to continue to blossom in such a vase. You start living anyway. You are still a beautiful flower. You don't have roots, but you can just continue and you can now just let flowers grow. I think I have blossomed here because of those people.

I have also adapted myself. You can always create space, but then space has to be created on both sides. We have to learn a lot from the Dutch, but also the other way around. That has to be balanced somewhere. Taking and receiving. Integration is really not just for foreigners.

But, *we* don't have family here. We make our own family here. So, network is everything. If you have people around you, you can do anything. Loneliness is a kind of illness. Sometimes you have someone who can see through it. They can also look at the person behind it. That does ensure that you can interact with each other in a more sustainable way. We are allowed to dream too.

I am also proud of myself, because I did this. You do a lot, but you also deserve it. These were just hard times, but in itself I don't feel like a migrant either. I am, but I also have my own world. It takes a while, because I grew up somewhere else, but I no longer feel like a complete foreigner.

I may be a migrant. I am the refugee. I am all of that and I embrace that. But I am also a person with a certain personality. I am myself. I really feel like a citizen of the world. I am not that and not this. And at the same time this and that together. Sometimes I think that might be a better question to use instead of, 'Are you Dutch or are you a migrant?' It's better to say, 'Are you a citizen of the world?'

'Where do you feel most yourself?'

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Es absolutamente difícil, el dejar todo para irte a otro país."

"It is absolutely difficult, leaving everything to go to another country."

- Cristina Álvarez[1]

This thesis starts off with a fictional migrant answering the question 'Would you say you feel like a migrant?' The response was born from a collection of interviews that I conducted in the spring of 2025 in Rotterdam, centring migrants' experiences and sense of cultural identity. The text reflects precisely what the city of Rotterdam sells to the public: its citizens are diverse, living amongst different cultures and carrying these with them.[2] This message is also part of the broader image that the Netherlands exports to the outside world. The country presents itself as the seat of tolerance, acceptance and inclusion through its self-labelled liberal and progressive politics, and courts for international justice.[3]

However, in a time where the Dutch Minister of Asylum and Migration can refuse to sign a ribbon award that prizes volunteers who work with asylum seekers, and Syrian refugee asylum claims can be rejected without public explanation, this pride in cultural diversity seems skewed.[4] How can aversion for immigration and pride in cultural diversity coexist? And how can a diverse nation stand so firmly against the integration of its newcomers?

As the States General of the Netherlands acknowledged in 2022, the country has always been one of immigration, with official data on migrants dating back to as far as 1829 with the first recorded census.[5] Non-official data can be traced even further back, giving us

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[1] This thesis makes use of quotes from interviews conducted between March and June 2025. The quotes have been translated from Spanish or Dutch by the author or taken directly from English-spoken interviews. The names of the interviewees are pseudonyms to preserve the privacy of the participants. An overview with the interviewees can be found in Appendix II.

[2] Remco Liu-van Dorp, et al., "Samenleven in één Stad," *Gemeente Rotterdam*, September 19, 2023, https://gemeenteraad.rotterdam.nl/Agenda/Document/c6fdfcbe-c03c-4332-a15b-0148839f6508?documentId=afec5a46-ac00-40fe-81d4-670a46d8b5f5&agendaItemId=c0b73cb3-c874-4800-810e-2bfee5bb43c3.

[3] Rijksoverheid, "Home," *Government of the Netherlands*, retrieved on May 6, 2025, https://www.government.nl/. Accessed 23 April, 2025.

[4] NOS Nieuws, "Asielambtenaren spreken steun uit voor vrijwilligers na 'lintjeskwestie'," *NOS*, April 24, 2025, https://nos.nl/artikel/2564763-asielambtenaren-spreken-steun-uit-voor-vrijwilligers-na-lintjeskwestie; NOS Nieuws, "Rechtbank: Ambtsbericht over Syrië Moet Openbaar Worden," *NOS*, June 6, 2025, https://nos.nl/artikel/2570178-rechtbank-ambtsbericht-over-syrie-moet-openbaar-worden.

[5] De Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Toezegging hoofdlijnendebat: integratie," *Rijksoverheid*, April 5, 2022; Han Nicolaas and Arno Sprangers, "Buitenlandse Migratie in Nederland 1795–2006: De Invloed Op De Bevolkingssamenstelling," *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* (2008): 32-47, https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2008/02/buitenlandse-migratie-in-nederland-1795-2006-de-invloed-op-de-bevolkingssamenstelling, 32.

estimates of about 900,000 foreigners migrating to the Netherlands between 1600 and 1800 as a result of the Dutch 'Golden Age'.[6] And a look to the end of the 16th century reveals letters of several internal migrants and displaced persons due to the Dutch Revolt, including emigrating refugees to England.[7]

Growing and becoming more specific over time, laws, policies and mentalities have been changing and adapting to the times. In the last decades, the government has taken it upon themselves to regulate the integration of migrants. The effects of these laws have been varied, and so research into the best arrangement has been growing.[8] The research, however, has mostly stuck to desirable policies, rarely looking at migrants' experiences and how these can inform us about the state of integration. Especially given that they are the actors most directly affected by the legislation.

From this gap in current academic work arises the question, "*How do migrants in Rotterdam interpret their cultural identity through their formal and informal integration between the 1989 and 2020?*" This thesis aims to answer it by analysing migrants' lived experiences and cultural identities through semi-structured interviews. This allows for insights into what makes migrants connect with different cultures, and what makes them feel at home.

By centralising migrant experiences, I also aim to fill a gap in the current academic discourse. With primarily policy-driven research, local perspectives fall to the background and formal integration is rarely critiqued.[9] The critical stance toward formal integration in the interviews will instead both question the programmes in place and provide an understanding of more successful approaches. On top of that, the research itself will serve as a platform for migrants to make themselves heard in a debate that often forgets about their voices.[10]

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[6] Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, "Een Gouden Eeuw met een lange nasleep (1550-1800)," in *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie: Een Verhaal van Winnaars en Verliezers* (Atlas Contact, 2018). 17-49, ISBN: 978-90-450-3609-0. 20.

[7] H. Q. Janssen, "De Hervormde Vlugtelingen van Yperen in Engeland, Geschetst naar Hunne Brieven: Eene Bijdrage tot de Hervormingsgeschiedenis van Yperen," in *Bijdragen tot de Oudheidkunde en Geschiedenis, Inzonderheid van Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen, Eerste Deel*, ed. H. Q. Janssen & J. H. van Dale (Altorffer, 1856), 211-304.

[8] Nicolaas and Arno Sprangers, "Buitenlandse Migratie," 41.

[9] Rinus Penninx, et al., "Migration and Integration in Europe: The State of Research," A report commissioned by the *ESRC* (2008), published at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237539737_Migration_and_Integration_in_Europe_The_State_of_Research. 9; Daniel Rauhut, "Integration and Informal Institutions," *Society* 57 (2020): 211–218, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-020-00467-6. 212.

[10] Charlotte Clara Becker, "Migrants' Social Integration and Its Relevance for National Identification: An Empirical Comparison Across Three Social Spheres," *Frontiers in Sociology*, 6 (2022): 1-15, https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.700580. 2; Verónica Benet-Martínez, et al., "Negotiating Biculturalism: Cultural Frame Switching in Biculturals with Oppositional Versus Compatible Cultural Identities," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33, no. 5 (2002): 492–516, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022102033005005. 493.

Research questions

This thesis will focus on the main research question, *"How do migrants in Rotterdam experience their cultural identity through their formal and informal integration between the 1989 and 2020?"* To better answer it, I will make use of three sub-questions based on the topics of the research.

The first topic, is looked at through the sub-question, *"How have migrants in Rotterdam undertaken formal integration and what effects did this have on their migrant experience?"* It considers the way in which the country or city demands migrants to integrate, and what institutions are available to migrants to achieve this. It then asks how these practices have affected migrants in their ability to be integrated or feel at home.

The second question is about the informal integration migrants undergo: *"How have migrants in Rotterdam undertaken informal integration and what effects did this have on their migrant experience?"* It helps look at the social institutions and structures of the city, putting into question how migrants were able to interact with networks and what these meant for their sense of self.

The last topic focusses on the formation of cultural identity by migrants in the city. It looks both at how identity is made and kept. This identity is split into three parts for the sake of the research, namely Dutch identity, native identity[11], and migrant identity. From this flows the sub-question, *"In what ways do migrants in Rotterdam shape and maintain their cultural identity?"*

Theoretical Concepts

Integration

The main concept for this thesis is integration in a migrant context.[12] Based on Berry's 1997 paper *Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation*, integration is one of four strategies of acculturation (the interaction between two different cultural groups), where migrants maintain both their native culture and adopt the host culture.[13] In the other three

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[11] It should be noted that native identity is defined by the migrant themselves, and not according to any strict facets like UN recognised nation states, self-announced states, religions, ethnicities, etc. That is because for some of the interviewees their ethnicity was more important than their nationality (e.g. Kurdish vs. Iraqi), others preferred their religion (e.g. Muslim vs. Iranian) and others were born in countries that no longer exist (e.g. Yugoslavia vs. Croatia). Allowing the migrants to define their native identity adds to the goal of giving migrants agency and a voice. On top of that, it shows the complexity of cultural identity and the various elements that it is made of.

[12] Integration can also be applied to social integration of youth or criminals. In both of these cases the concept is not tied to culture, but one can still speak of socially acceptable behaviour that an individual has to learn.

[13] John W. Berry, "Lead Article: Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation," *Applied Psychology: an International Review* 46, no. 6 (1973): 5-34, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x. 9.

strategies this is not the case, seeing as the migrant only maintains their native culture (separation) or adopts the host culture (assimilation), and in marginalisation, neither. More recent studies have shown that integration is the least harmful strategy to both the migrant's psyche and the host society, hence why this thesis will consider it 'the strategy to strive for' and assume it is the goal of both migrants and governments.[14]

Integration dimensions

To more easily analyse how this integration takes place, this thesis will use Hartmut Esser's 1980 'social-integration dimensions'.[15] These dimensions help distinguish the different parts of a migrant's life through which they integrate and will thus facilitate the analysis of the interviews. According to Esser, integration is achieved through four dimensions: 1) Culturation: the cultural freedom of immigrants, 2) Structuration: their chances to partake in institutions, 3) Interaction: contact with the host population, and 4) Identification: a shared identity accessible to immigrants.[16]

Formal and Informal Integration

With integration defined and the four dimensions through which it occurs, I have decided to narrow down the types of integration for ease of analysis, split into formal and informal integration. For the sake of this thesis, formal integration is shaped by the legal steps that a person has to take to stay in the country (similar to structuration under Esser's levels), while informal integration is all those actions consciously or unconsciously undertaken with informal institutions that take up responsibility through non-formalised or non-constitutionalised rules and procedures.[17] In other words, informal integration is made of interaction with the culture, identity and values of society. According to Rauhut, the collaboration and connection between the migrant and the host society is determinant for the

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[14] Colleen Ward, "Thinking Outside the Berry Boxes: New Perspectives on Identity, Acculturation and Intercultural Relations," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32, no. 2 (2008): 105-114, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2007.11.002. 106; Rainer Münz, "Migration, Labor Markets, and Integration of Migrants: An Overview for Europe," *Social Protection and Labour: The World Bank*, no.0807 (2008): 1-48, ISSN 1862-4960. 17.

[15] Hartmut Esser, "Assimilation, Integration Und Ethnische Konflikte," in *Migranten Und Medien, Neue Herausforderungen an die Integrationsfunktion von Presse und Rundfunk*, ed. Heribert Schatz, Christina Holtz-Bacha and Jörg-Uwe Nieland (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, 2000): 25–37, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-07794-7_2.

[16] Barbara Laubenthal, "Introduction: Assimilation, Integration or Transnationalism? An Overview of Theories of Migrant Incorporation," *International Migration* 61, no. 1 (February 1, 2023): 84–91, https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13118. 88

[17] Douglass C. North, "An Introduction to Institutions and Institutional Change," in *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990): 3–10, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808678.003. 4.

extent to which integration occurs.[18] It can thus be expected that informal integration will play a large role in the process of integration and feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Cultural Identity and Sense of Belonging

Lastly, the analysis of formal and informal will serve to make sense of how migrants create and maintain their cultural identities, and understand how a sense of belonging is created. These two concepts are born from psychological acculturation, which is the individual psychological process undergone when encountering a different culture.[19] Groen and his colleagues define cultural identity as shaped by, "the incorporated norms and values that constitute an image that an individual holds of himself or herself".[20] This definition will be employed to analyse how the interviewees view themselves in relation to their native and host culture.

Meanwhile, collective or shared identity flows from cultural identity. It is an identity created and shared by groups, and can determine whether individuals belong to the group and feel that way as well. Using collective identity will allow for a clearer analysis of how a sense of belonging is shaped. This is because Becker states that, "high levels of emotional integration, specifically national identification, can be considered the basis for national solidarity and an overall effective democracy."[21] This means that both migrants and the inhabitants of the host society need to locate the Self and the Other in social space and time. This helps them live their emotional state together, and make sense of culture and the past as one.[22]

Literature Review

1910s: Setting the Stage

In order to understand how and why migrants integrate into Dutch society, it is important to have a clear background on the debates surrounding these topics. The academic debate about integration, assimilation, acculturation, and all its various forms referring to individuals interacting with multiple cultures dates back centuries. The starting point for the

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[18] Rauhut, "Informal Institutions," 216.
[19] Berry, "Lead Article," 13.
[20] Simon P. N. Groen, et al., "Cultural Identity Confusion and Psychopathology: A Mixed-Methods Study Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands," *Journal of Nervous Mental Disease* 207, no.3 (2019):162-170, https://doi.org/10.1097/nmd.0000000000000935. 162.
[21] Becker, "National Identification," 2.
[22] Felix Berenskötter, "Chapter 2: Memory, Identity and Its Politics," in *Handbook on the Politics of Memory* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 18-30, https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800372535.00008. 9.

current (Western) academic debate however, is attributed to American sociologist Robert E. Park. In his 1914 paper on racial assimilation amongst Black people in the United States he already acknowledges the complex conversation surrounding the word assimilation, noting its two different meanings: 1) the way in which a minority group adopts language, customs and beliefs of a dominant group, and 2) how said minority group is taken in my the majority and becomes part of the larger society.[23] Park however states that while assimilation is believed to lead to a single national (i.e. a person who behaves and thinks like a member of the Nation/State), individual education keeps differences alive. For him, assimilation is the way in which separate characters combine to form a solidary corporation. He also notes that some groups have a harder time assimilating, because their external features such as their race are given a negative connotation that will in turn provide them with negative treatment.[24]

Another important idea that grew around this some is the concept of the double-consciousness. Black American sociologist, historian and activist W. E. B. Du Bois introduced this concept in his 1903 work *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the first chapter he already introduces a concept that will further affect this thesis, namely the idea of the double-consciousness. This was born out of his analysis of dynamics between white settlers and Black Americans living under Jim Crow laws. The Black individual has "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others."[25] They are both American and aware of their distinct Blackness. It is a self-conscious identity created out of the desire to flee from the oppressing white nation, and the simultaneous urge to build and grow in spite of it. The Black individual lives a double life so to say, and while not about migration, this concept is applicable to migrant lives as well. Park and Du Bois' analyses of how cultures interact show the continuous notion of separating groups through/leading to unequal treatment. The legislative effects will be further expanded upon in the next chapter.

Their insights into how cultures interact, and what results from these clashes continue to develop. In 1936, Robert Redfield and his colleagues designed a step-by-step to analyse the literature on the term acculturation.[26] The outline provided a definition for acculturation which was from then on to be used for future research: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different

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[23] Robert E. Park, "Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups With Particular Reference to the Negro," *American Journal of Sociology* 19, No. 5 (1914): 606-623, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/212297. 606.

[24] Park, "Racial Assimilation," 611.

[25] W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," in *The Souls of the Black Folk* (1903): 1-12. 3.

[26] Robert Redfield, et al., "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation," *American Anthropologist* 38 (1936): 149-152, https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1936.38.1.02a00330.

cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."[27] This definition is clear cut and was used by several other researchers later on, including John W. Berry, one of the biggest names in the field, who comes into play around the 1970s. Park's term of assimilation fit within this outline, seeing as it was considered a form of acculturation, or a stage of its process. What for Park was thus the phenomenon that occurs when two cultures interact, for Redfield and his colleagues it was simply one of the possibilities. Highlighting the fact that cultural interactions are complex and require more than superficial observation to understand them.

Post WWII: Expanding Definitions

After the Second World War, interest in migration grew. In the Netherlands this partly was due to the decolonisation of Suriname and modern-day Indonesia, but also an increase in labour migrants and the Refugee Convention of 1951 which suddenly held countries legally accountable for their treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. The rest of the world felt this last change too, and Redfield's definition of acculturation was put into question several times. One such case was the seminar on acculturation of 1953.[28] This seminar, with five panellists from different universities, started with one of the hard truths of the field that continues to be true to this day, namely that "the collection of empirical materials on acculturation proceeds faster than theoretical attempts to order and codify the central concepts which will make the studies yield maximum results."[29]

Despite the difficulties to reach a consensus, the seminar was a means to challenge what it means for two cultures to interact, and the panellists brought into question the rigidity of the interacting cultures and the presence of coercion. They pointed to the fact that, under pressure, the minority group (named the receptor) loses its political power. They thus pointed to the fact that assimilation may not always have the positive tag that others have attributed to it. On top of that, they stated that when research is carried out, the cultures are already in contact and it often suffers from confirmation bias, looking for cases in which minority groups indeed adapt to the majority. Leaving future academics with a stark reminder, namely that we measure what we see and not always what is happening.

In the 1960s this idea that acculturation wasn't a given and could indeed result in negative consequences for the minority group or receptor gained traction. Kalervo Oberg for

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[27] Redfield et al., "Memorandum," 149.
[28] N.A., "Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation. The Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation, 1953," *American Anthropologist* 56, no.6 (1954), pp. 973-1000, https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1954.56.6.02a00030.
[29] N.A., "Acculturation," 973.

example wrote about culture shock in his 1960 paper by the same title.[30] Simply said, culture shock occurs when one loses familiar signs and symbols of social interactions, resulting in anxiety. He believed that when all support is knocked out from underneath a person, their initial response is to reject the new culture. A large-scale research conducted by Rinus Penninx, a professor emeritus at the university of Amsterdam, revealed that there was little research done into immigrants before the 60s in the Netherlands[31].

This however changes around the 70s, when research nearly doubles. Penninx states that this is because there was no desire to normalise migration, and low levels of research would reflect that too. Before the 70s, newcomers were temporary labourers or repatriates. However, as family reunification of Moroccan labour migrants increases, this mentality dies slowly. Between 1964 and 1973, some 225 thousand immigrants from Mediterranean countries had come to the Netherlands as labour migrants, the vast majority of whom were men. In the beginning, these were mainly Spaniards and Italians, and later Moroccans and Turks. After 1973, only a quarter of the Spaniards remained, and 40% of the Italians. While return migration was common among Spaniards and Italians, among Turks and Moroccans there was mainly family reunification.[32] Because of this, one of the important ideas that arises in the Netherlands is the question of conscious integration. Should the guestworker now become part of Dutch society?[33] A more extensive analysis of the legal consequences of these debates will be discussed in chapter 2.

80s and 90s: The Basic Framework

Around the 80s, some of the most impactful authors in the field of integration would start publishing their work. These authors provide the basis for this thesis, given that their works continue to be considered the most influential in the field and they also serve as the underlying assumptions for future researchers. The most famous researcher is John Berry.[34]

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[30] Kalervo Oberg, "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments," *Practical Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1960): 177-182. https://doi.org/10.1177/009182966000700405.

[31] Rinus Penninx, "Onderzoeksbeleid van de Overheid m.b.t. Minderheden en Minderhedenbeleid; Verleden en Toekomst," *University of Amsterdam* (1988): 1-30, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358595367_Wie_betaalt_en_wie_bepaalt_Onderzoeksbeleid_van_de_overheid_mbt_minderheden_en_de_invloed_van_onderzoek_op_beleid_Den_Haag_Ministerie_van_Binnenlandse_Zaken_33_pp. 7.

[32] Nicolaas and Arno Sprangers, "Buitenlandse Migratie," 40.

[33] J. J. Godschalk, "Gastarbeid en het Vuile Werk," Sociologische Gids 25, no.5 (1978): 362-372, https://ugp.rug.nl/sogi/issue/view/2812; C. A. Groenendijk, "Van Gastarbeider tot Medeburger," *Beleid & Maatschappij* 2 (1979): 52-63, https://ugp.rug.nl/beleidmaatschappij/article/view/28102/25497.

[34] John W. Berry, "Psychological Aspects of Cultural Pluralism," *Topics in Culture Learning* 2 (1974): 17–22, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED100159.pdf; John W. Berry, "Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation." In *Acculturation: Theories, Models and Findings*, ed. A. M. Padilla (Westview, 1980): pp. 9–25; John W. Berry, "Cultural Relations in Plural Societies," In *Groups in Contact,* eds. N. Miller & M. Brewer, (New York: AcademicPress, 1984): 11–27.

Throughout the years he worked with several colleagues to eventually develop a framework that would be the basis for acculturation strategies. In 1997 he defined integration as the maintenance of native culture and adoption of host culture in his most famous paper *Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation*. He also described assimilation, separation and marginalisation, where the migrant only has the host culture, only their native culture, or neither, respectively. His paper also looked explicitly at the stress individuals undergo in each of the acculturation strategies, showing that integration is the most desired strategy for the migrant's wellbeing.

This framework however did not go in depth as to how exactly the different strategies were achieved (i.e. what do migrants do when integrating or separating). He only provided definitions and frameworks to move within for policy to be based on, but no explanations as to how they looked, which meant that it could not be used to research experiences as is the case for this thesis.

For this LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton offered a strong framework already a couple of years prior based on extensive literature research, case studies and in-depth analyses of various fields, tying back into the problem the panellists of the 1954 seminar had already mentioned. LaFromboise and her colleagues tapped into the discussion of biculturalism and cultural competence.[35] The latter is the idea that an individual is able to navigate a culture without negative effect to their identity. They hammer on Bandura's 1978 concept of reciprocal determinism, which states that "behaviour is influenced by and influences a person's cognition and social environment."[36] This is an especially relevant underlying belief for both their research and this thesis, granted that the individual's psychology and their connection to their surroundings has been proven to have an effect on their identity and perception of the world.[37]

The framework that LaFromboise and her colleagues end up providing in 1993 states that for a person to be culturally competent they need knowledge of the culture's beliefs and values, positive attitudes towards all groups involved in the cultural exchange, bicultural efficacy (i.e. an individual's ability to develop and maintain an effective interpersonal relationship between two cultures), communication ability, role repertoire (which refers to the way that a person presents themselves to society), and a grounded sense of self (meaning they are able to have external connections for support). The person has to understand how

[35] Teresa D. LaFromboise, et al., "Psychological Impact of Biculturalism: Evidence and Theory," Psychological Bulletin 114, no. 3 (1993): 395-412. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.114.3.395.
[36] Albert Bandura, "The Self-System in Reciprocal Determinism," *American Psychologist, 33*, no. 4 (1978): 344–358. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.33.4.344; LaFromboise et al., "Biculturalism," 396.
[37] Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in *Political Psychology*, 2004, 276–93, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505984-16. 276.

the host society is structured in its rules and has to accept the basis of this worldview to be culturally competent.[38] As Penninx and his colleagues state, the 90s were also a time of growing nationalism and national research, which could help explain why LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton's framework was so useful. Countries could now have research based on the best way to have migrants be respectful and knowledgeable of their culture. More specific ways in which laws played a part in achieving this in the Netherlands will be discussed in the next chapter.

New Millenium: Centring the Migrant

Towards the turn of the century, international data and national studies gain popularity. Both of which are funded by the European Union and incredibly policy-oriented.[39] Hartmut Esser, a German sociologist and migration scientist, is one of the researchers studying external factors that affect migrants' identity in his home country.[40] His focus lies in the changes that host societies undergo because of migration and biculturality that is more and more accepted as a paradigm for migrant identities. He takes the concept of assimilation, and centres the individual in his research by studying social integration and not system integration. He defines four dimensions through which migrants integrate, narrowing down on how integration occurs—instead of just stating what it is—and managed to show that indeed the social environment is the most relevant to migrant integration. This became a big change for acculturation studies, however as Penninx and his colleagues highlight in their review paper in 2008, migrant agency and system critiques are still immensely understudied, meaning that most research is directed at policy and formal/structural integration.[41] On top of that, there is a methodological problem in the research community that often uses quantitative national questionnaires for the macro-level, and qualitative interviews for the micro-level, making it harder to compare and combine their findings.[42] They also point to the fact that even more disciplines have added to the study of migration and acculturation, making the problems that already existed in the 50s even more difficult to analyse. However, Esser's research continues to be useful, because it helps us visualise the complexities of integration. Making us see the fact that integration is more than learning a

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[38] LaFromboise et al., "Biculturalism," 403.

[39] Penninx et al., "Migration and Integration," 7.; Peter Scholten et al., "Mainstreaming migrant integration? A critical analysis of a new trend in integration governance," *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 83, no.2 (2016): 283-302, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852315612902. 297

[40] Hartmut Esser, "Assimilation, Integration und ethnische Konflikte," in *Migranten und Medien* ed. H. Schatz, C. Holtz-Bacha, and J. U. Nieland, (Wiesbaden, 2000): 25-37, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-07794-7_2.

[41] Penninx et al., "Migration and Integration," 12.

[42] Penninx et al., "Migration and Integration," 9.

language or getting a residence permit.

      Meanwhile, research such as that of Colleen Ward and her colleagues where they develop indexes and scales to regulate research about integration, can help in the critique that is missing from both Berry and Esser. Throughout the late 00s for example, they provide a critical analysis of Berry's frameworks.[43] They make a call for research into independent behaviours and the long-term effects and processes of acculturation rather than just momentary results of acculturation. This leads to case studies such as that of Mayan communities in the southern United States that show that the focus on culture through organisations can help foster a strong cultural identity, or Bhatia and Ram's research into Indian diaspora which concludes that "for most people living in contemporary diasporas, their negotiation with multiple cultural sites is fluid, dynamic, interminable and often unstable."[44] This idea of code-switching and biculturality is especially relevant for this thesis, where the balancing and organising of two different value systems affects the cultural identity of the migrant.

2010 and Beyond: Identity and Emotion

      While research into migrant agency and identity increases, Charlotte Becker, another German sociologist, puts forward a framework for emotional integration, which is especially relevant to this thesis as it looks at migrant's individual experiences. This framework is centred around the idea that in order for a migrant to lead a good life they need to have a sense of national identification.[45] She also provides the argument that national solidarity results in more structured societies and better working democracy. Emotional integration for her is primarily focussed around 1) social distance theory, which explains that people feel less identified with a group they have less affiliation with, 2) self-categorisation theory, which says that people associate themselves with people their perceive as similar, and 3) contact theory, which states that contact between groups is necessary to dissolve barriers.

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[43] Colleen Ward and Arzu Rana-Deuba, "Acculturation and Adaptation Revisited," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 30, no.4 (1999): 422-442, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022199030004003; Colleen Ward et al., "The Construction and Validation of a Measure of Ethno-Cultural Identity Conflict," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 93, no.5 (2011): 462-473, https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2011.558872; Colleen Ward, "Thinking Outside the Berry Boxes: New Perspectives on Identity, Acculturation and Intercultural Relations," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32, no. 2 (February 22, 2008): 105–14, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2007.11.002.

[44] Shannan L. Mattiace and Patricia Fortuny Loret de Mola, "Yucatec Maya Organizations in San Francisco, California: Ethnic Identity Formation Across Migrant Generations," *Latin American Research Review* 50, no. 2 (2015): 201-215, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lar.2015.0019; Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram, "Theorizing Identity in Transnational and Diaspora Cultures: A Critical Approach to Acculturation," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 33, no. 2 (February 24, 2009): 140–49, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.009. 148.

[45] Becker, "National Identification," 2.

However, contact alone is not considered sufficient for lasting attitude change. It needs to occur under specific conditions. It needs to be "direct personal contact and the possibility to contest existing stereotypes, a similar social status of all individuals involved in the situation, the presence of egalitarian norms, and a collective goal." For this she analysed pre-existed research of over 2,000 migrants in Germany, using their sense of belonging.

Academic and Social Relevance

This thesis will build mainly on Becker's framework for understanding identity formation, granted that the supporting theories provide tools for asking guided questions, and her study is focussed on relationships, which are especially relevant for informal integration. However, her framework is lacking in terms of showing off real 'integration'. When looking critically at Becker's descriptions, can speak of emotional assimilation, where the migrant builds an emotional relationship with the host society. This research will aim to apply the existing theory to examine its use in an integration context. This remains a relatively understudied topic in academic literature, granted that it mainly focusses on policies, and when it doesn't it looks at how migrants best assimilate. Emotional aspects are often brushed aside, or only partially analysed by looking at the emotional relationship with the host culture or native culture, not both.

For this I will combine her framework with Berry's definition of integration, where a migrant maintains both their native culture and adopts that of the host culture. Becker's emotional integration will thus be applied to both Dutch culture and the interviewees' native cultures. Lastly, the framework will also be combines with Esser's tools for integration dimensions, splitting them into formal and informal integration. Combining the works of these three main theorists will provide a basis for understanding how migrants underwent their integration and what their effects were for their cultural identities. The use of interviews is especially important here, seeing as they offer the right tools to allow for the in-depth analysis of emotional factors and experiences that influence cultural identity. These results can in turn be used to find the most effective pathways to developing emotional bonds with a culture to develop a positive attitude towards it. Once these pathways are mapped out, they can be put into practice to create effective programmes that achieve the goal of facilitating integration.

Sources and Methods

This thesis will explore how migrants' integration experiences have influenced their

cultural identities. For this it will analyse relevant legislation that affects integration policies, and a series of interviews with migrants. This research will look at global laws relevant to understanding migrant rights, and specific Dutch legislation which defined how migrants had to integrate. For this, the online law database 'Wetten.nl' provides all the necessary entries of Dutch laws, including previous versions. The selection was done based on two chapters from *Limits of European Citizenship*: European Integration and Domestic Immigration Policies, which look at migration laws in Europe and the Netherlands more specifically.[46] Through doctrinal legal research the goals and effects of the laws will be determined to help contextualise the interviews.[47] This method looks at both what is stated in legislation, but also what is missing. The objective is to combine these facts to understand what the intended aims of the law were and to also analyse it effects through secondary literature.

Aside from legislation, the thesis also makes use of interviews as primary sources. For these, this thesis will employ an inductive thematic approach. Finding themes in the data will help determine patterns and through that better understand lived experiences, and using inductive, rather than deductive analysis will ensure a data starting-point, rather than a theoretical lens, which will centre migrants' voices.[48] The research uses 13 semi-structured interviews of about one to two hours. The themes and questions used are based on the Acculturation Index and the Identity Scale.[49] These were used to ensure a connection to existing research and facilitate the comparison of the data and findings across the literature.

The selection of interviewees was done through snowball sampling, and was tied to temporal and geographical homogeneity. Since formal integration is the determining factor for what procedures migrants have to undergo, the geographical requirement demanded they

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[46] Maarten Vink, "Resident Status," in *Limits of European Citizenship: European Integration and Domestic Immigration Policies*, ed. Layton-Henry, Zig & Danièle Joly (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 116-138; Maarten Vink, "Resident Status," in *Limits of European Citizenship: European Integration and Domestic Immigration Policies*, ed. Layton-Henry, Zig & Danièle Joly (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 139-157.

[47] Ian Dobinson and Francis Johns, "Legal Research as Qualitative Legal Research," In *Research Methods for Law*, ed. Mike McConville & Wing Hong Chui (Edinburgh University Press, 2007): 18-47. 19.

[48] Muhammad Naeem, et al., "A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *22* (2023): 1-18, https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789.

[49] Bryan Marshall, et al., "Does Sample Size Matter in Qualitative Research?: A Review of Qualitative Interviews in Is Research," *Journal of Computer Information Systems* 54, no.1 (2015): 11–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2013.11645667. 18; Allison Tong, et al., "Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ): a 32-Item Checklist for Interviews and Focus Groups," *International Journal for Quality Health Care* 19, no. 6 (2007): 349-57, https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzm042; Ward and Rana-Deuba, "Acculturation and Adaptation," 439; Ward et al., "Ethno-Cultural Identity Conflict," *466*; Erin E. Toolis and Phillip L. Hammack, "The Lived Experience of Homeless Youth: A Narrative Approach," *Qualitative Psychology* 2, no.1 (2015): 50-68, https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/qup0000019. 52.

arrived in the municipality of Rotterdam.[50] Nationality, sex, education, etc. were not taken into account when sampling, other than age, depending on the integration law of the year the migrants arrived in.[51] The interviews were held in Dutch, English or Spanish (per the interviewee's preference) and coded according to relevant themes from the interviews.[52]

The temporal limits were 1989 and 2020. Due to the fall of the Wall of Berlin in November of 1989, Europe saw big changes in its attitudes towards migrants. Meanwhile, 2020 left some margin for analysis before the COVID-19 pandemic, which transformed all sectors of society and research, including migration and integration.[53] This range allowed for a clear historical evolution through a decade of openness and two with restrictions, caused mainly by the terrorist attack in New York on the 11th of September 2001 by Al-Qaeda. In response, the world saw stricter immigration laws[54] and an increase in xenophobia, led by islamophobia and Arab discrimination.[55] Moreover, this time also dealt a hard blow to the Netherlands with the murder of far-right populist Pim Fortuyn in 2002, which eventually led to stricter migration laws.[56] Furthermore, the choice to interview migrants in such a recent time period is spurred by the application of their answers. The collected results stem from relatively recent experiences, which can thus help inform current policy and programmes better than a similar study in an earlier time frame.

Using a thirty-year period with limited interviewees contacted through convenience sampling means difficulty in generalising findings.[57] If not because each individual forms their own identity, then because their lived experiences will differ. However, given that this research focusses on how migrant-identities are created, and how formal integration helps migrants fit into their host society—regardless of their background—generalisation is not a priority, but rather adding to the collection of narratives told by migrants and findings some

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[50] Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, "Moet Ik Als Nieuwkomer Inburgeren?," *Rijksoverheid.nl*, July 12, 2024, https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/immigratie-naar-nederland/vraag-en-antwoord/moet-ik-als-nieuwkomer-inburgeren; Oliver C. Robinson, "Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no.1 (2013): 25–41, https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.801543. 28.

[51] Robinson, "Sampling," 32.

[52] Monique Hennink et al., "Data Preparation and Developing Codes," in *Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Alysha Owens (Sage, 2020): 207-234. 220.

[53] Maria Koinova, "Governing Transit and Irregular Migration: Informality and Formal Policies," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 51*, no.2 (2025): 423-444, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2371204. 428.

[54] Adam Luedtke, "Fortifying Fortress Europe? The Effect of September 11 on EU Immigration Policy," in *Immigration Policy and Security*, ed. Terri Givens, Gary P. Freeman, David L. Leal (Routledge, 2008): 130–147, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203894682-15. 133

[55] Chunbei Wang, "The Impact of 9/11 on the Self-Employment Outcomes of Arab and Muslim Immigrants," *International Migration Review* 52, no.2 (2018): 430-457, https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12292. 454.

[56] Maarten Rensen, "Rotterdam – de stad, het bestuur en de burgers," in *Het Minderhedenbeleid Voorbij: Motieven en Gevolgen*, ed. Laura Coello, Jaco Dagevos, Chris Huinder, Joanne van del Leun and Arend Odé, (Amsterdam University Press, 2013): 189-220. 211.

[57] Marshall et al. "Sample Size," 14.

common themes. However, through the use of similar topics to other researches this effect should be diminished.[58] One limiting factor that Rauhut points to when researching the topic of integration is the fact that it often does not attract migrants that do not wish to integrate or who have arrived through irregular migration, which unfortunately cannot be tackled under the scope of this research.[59]

Aside from practical limitations, ethical considerations are especially relevant with interviews. According to Marshall and Rossman, ethical research is split over respect, beneficence and justice.[60] The first level is often covered in procedural devices such as consent forms (see Appendix III) and institutional review boards. The second and third level look at whether the subjects are kept from harm and benefit from the study where realistically possible. For that this research will use a stipulated workplan.[61]

In the first step, the researcher goes through the COREQ checklist.[62] While it was initially designed for health research, it can be applied to many other fields as it serves to prepare researchers to increase their awareness of their positionality and relationship to the subjects.

In the next step, the goal of the study, the participants' role in it, the researcher's, and the stages of the research, are communicated to the interviewees through consent forms.

The last step requires awareness of ethical pitfalls during the interviewing process and the analysis. As Venkatesh' memoir *Gang Leader for a Day* demonstrates, interviewing is a skill that is developed over time,[63] and Lee-Treweek even points to the fact that emotional influence on research ought to be treated as its own data point.[64]

Positionality

In line with Lee-Treweek's statement, this section will hopefully provide some transparency in the effects of the author's role. For that I want to reflect on my positionality, seeing as it can help contextualise the findings and interpretations.[65] This thesis was born

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[58] Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, "How Does It Feel to Be Black and Poor?" in *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets* (Penguin, 2008). 5.

[59] Rauhut, "Integration," 216.

[60] Catherine Marshall et al., "Trustworthiness and Ethics," in *Designing Qualitative Research*, ed. Helen Salmon and Anna Villaruel, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) 50-60. 52.

[61] Marshall, Rossman and Blanco, "Trustworthiness and Ethics," 50.

[62] Tong et al., "COREQ."

[63] Venkatesh, "Gangleader."

[64] Geraldine Lee-Treweek, "The Insights of Emotional Danger," in *Danger in the Field*, ed. Geraldine Lee-Treweek, Stephanie Linkogle (Routledge, 20020: 124–41, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203136119-23. 127.

[65] Steven O. Roberts, et al., "Racial Inequality in Psychological Research: Trends of the Past and Recommendations for the Future," *Perspectives on Psychological Science 15*, no.6 (2020): 1295-1309, https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620927709. 1305.

from a personal interest in the topic. Growing up the daughter of two first-generation migrants I have always been surrounded by a life split between two cultures, be it through my parents or their friends, which were in large part migrants themselves. Seeing how individuals managed and juggled different lifestyles, values and beliefs spurred my curiosity to wanting to understand how people manage that and what effect it has on their being.

This up-close experience also drove me to working with migrants next to my studies. Working at an NGO that trains youth in the South of Rotterdam to explore their talents and skills put me in contact with refugees, seeing as the majority of candidates came from such backgrounds. Having this working experience in turn has led to me wanting to find ways to make life for incoming asylum seekers easier, or at the very least welcoming, having seen from first-hand experience how much open arms can mean to someone arriving in a foreign country (literally and figuratively).

These experiences also mean that I come into this research with a series of assumptions built from an environment where supporting the migrants was perhaps more important that being an objective observer. Being forced to take a step back and interview rather than coach or teach has thus been a strong switch which has occasionally resulted in a reduced distance between myself and the interviewees. At the same time, these assumptions, whilst at times being confirmed, were also broken, especially given that not all interviewees were refugees.

To add to that, my academic background may have influenced the interviews and interpretations as well. If not by the way in which I may have approached the conversations when 'regressing' to a coach position, then by taking a more professional stance, which can in turn make interviewees feel a difference in status. Whether that is due to knowledge about the topic, the way in which I were to understand their experiences, or due to general understandings that researchers can be distant observers with little interest in personal stories.

This potential effect of status perception may also have occurred due to cultural differences. While all interviewees were aware of my own (second generation) migrant background, several did mention that arriving at an older age or against their will is something that cannot be understood unless a person has lived it. And that no matter how well they try to explain it, no words will do the feelings justice. While I was born in Spain, I moved to the Netherlands at a young-enough age that it practice I could be considered a second-generation migrant, despite being a first-generation migrant on paper. This may in turn have led to some of them withholding information, or even changing their phrasing to make me understand. Similarly, being younger than most interviewees, there is a change

they adapted their answers too, with some of the interviewees at times even providing parental-like advice or highlighting our age differences. Finally, I would like to take a moment to draw attention to the issue of gender, while most of the interviewees were women, I also interviewed a few men. The interviewees themselves noted differences in how they may speak about their lived to men and women, so as to not appear pitiful, meaning that the provided answers may have been different than in an instance where a male interviewer might have sat down with them.

All these elements in turn also affect the way I am bound to interpret their answers. While I try to understand their experiences as much as possible, at the end of the day, it remains true that I am not a migrant, but rather a child of migrants. Interviews and their interpretations are a back and forth between interviewer and interviewee, and many aspects will affect these. Each interpretation is bound to be different, but that does not make their conclusions any less meaningful or insightful.

The goal of this thesis is to provide a platform for migrants to voice what their experiences upon arrival in Rotterdam were like, and to analyse how these have shaped their identities in order to critically reflect on how the government, society, and individuals can contribute to making these experiences positive and fruitful for everyone involved.

Chapter 2: Integration Law

"Het negatieve beeld [is] een blok aan [het] been van de mensen."
"The negative image is a ball and chain on people's leg." [author's translation]

- Hamide Ghorbani

The first chapter of this thesis provides contextualising information on migration legislation, with a closer look at its organisation in the Netherlands. Looking at the laws written for the regulation of migrants will provide a solid basis for understanding what support the interviewees received, what the emphasis was during their integration, and what can be expected about their experiences.

The chapter starts with some of the first widely recognised legislation written about migration, which dates back to the 1950s. After that it will look at the most important laws that the Netherlands has had over the years. Given that legislation is the basis for applied strategies, and through that the support offered to migrants, it is crucial to map out before going into the migrants' experiences in later chapters.

As the United Nations (UN) stated in their 2014 report, there is no clear definition for (international) migration.[66] In this thesis, an international migrant will be an individual who moves from one State to another, with the intent of residing in the host country. Under this definition fall for example refugees, labour migrants, individuals who are part of family reunification programmes, but also people who have no reason other than the desire to move.

The laws that apply to these migrants are varied, which is why the laws discussed in this chapter will range from general legislation on aliens, to concrete regulations on refugees and labour migrants. The chapter will focus on the time period between 1945 and 2021. This is because the Second World War led to massive changes in refugee legislation globally, and the most recent integration law in the Netherlands was changed in 2021. While outside the scope of this research, it does reflect the changing mindset in the political landscape in the years prior, which is relevant to understanding the social environment in which migrants were integrating in the years before.

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[66] United Nations, "Migration and human rights: IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED GOVERNANCE OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION," *UN*, published January 1, 2014, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/MigrationHR_improvingHR_Report.pdf . 7.

Breaking the law

Human Rights

To understand the basis of recent migrant legislation it is best to start with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, henceforth the Declaration.[67] This document was written in 1948 in response to the atrocities committed in Europe during the Second World War. Its preamble starts with a set of given assumptions, like the right to protection under the law, the recognition of equal and unalienable rights as the basis for freedom, justice and peace, and the acknowledgement that ignoring these have resulted in, "barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind."[68] All rights in the 30 articles that follow are firmly rooted in the belief that all individuals deserve to live a safe and just life, regardless of their origin or status.

Most people would agree that the Declaration is a good basis for organising our lives, but reality shows that not nearly everyone falls under these protections, including migrants. This is in part because political action is limited by anti-migrant sentiments in individual nations. As Matilla notes, one of the biggest points of contest in the Declaration is Article 13.[69] The paragraph states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State," and "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." In other words, people are free to move within borders and outside of them, and because one of the defining factors of a State is border control—something which the Declaration blurs quite strongly—not everyone is in favour of this part of the document.

This desire to go against the Declaration is relatively easy to carry out, because it is not a legally binding document, it is a guideline that States can opt to apply or ignore just the same. On top of that, not all countries have shared their support and signed the Declaration. The UN thus decided swiftly it would need to change its approach. In 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) were adopted, although still not signed by all States.[70] These two documents serve as legal requirements for States to adhere to,

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[67] United Nations, United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," adopted 10 December 1948, https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english.
[68] "Declaration," Preamble.
[69] Heikki S. Mattila, "Protection of Migrants' Human Rights: Principles and Practice," *International Migration* 38, no. 6 (2000): 53-71. SI 2/2000 ISSN 0020-7985. 54
[70] United Nations, United Nations, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," adopted 16 December 1966, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights; United Nations, United Nations, "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," adopted 16 December 1966, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights.

although here too, not. The ICCPR, for example, put in writing the right to self-determination and the protection of civil and political right, regardless of the individual's identity or background. Meanwhile, the ICESCR did the same, but in relation to economic, social and cultural right. What is notable is that three rights from the Declaration did not make it into either of these Covenants due to lack of political consensus: the right to seek asylum, the right to a nationality and the right to property.[71]

Refugee Protection

Prior to the Covenants however, the world had a much more known document that did address these topics, namely the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions—more often known as the Geneva Convention in singular use—are a series of treaties and protocols made in the aftermath of the Second World War, much like the Declaration of Human Rights. These documents set the international legal standard for humanitarian law, and one of the four main documents treats refugees. The 1951 Refugee Convention is a 56-page document (including its 1967 four-page protocol) that to this day remains the international norm for refugee protection.[72] One of the most important outcomes of the Refugee Convention is Article I. This article provides the formal legal definition of a refugee, which has since been narrowed down for sake of ease.[73] The original definition however differs a bit from the one the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) nowadays provides.[74]

In the Refugee Convention, an individual is only a refugee if their fear for persecution is due to the events before the 1st of January 1951 in Europe. Granted that

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[71] Monica Pinto, "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," United Nations (2021): 1-4, https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/icescr/icescr_e.pdf. 3.

[72] UN General Assembly, United Nations, "1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," Treaty Series 189, adopted 28 July 1951, https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/unga/1951/en/39821.

[73] "Any person who: (1) Has been considered a refugee under the Arrangements of 12 May 1926 and 30 June 1928 or under the Conventions of 28 October 1933 and 10 February 1938, the Protocol of 14 September 1939 or the Constitution of the International Refugee Organization; Decisions of non-eligibility taken by the International Refugee Organization during the period of its activities shall not prevent the status of refugee being accorded to persons who fulfil the conditions of para graph 2 of this section; (2) As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term "the country of his nationality" shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the protection of one of the countries of which he is a national."

[74] "Refugees are people who have fled their countries to escape conflict, violence, or persecution and have sought safety in another country." Who We Protect: Refugees, retrieved 9 June 2025, https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees.

anyone persecuted outside of the continent or in any new conflict would not be considered a refugee, these temporal and geographical limitations were taken out of the definition in the 1967 protocol.

Another of the most important outcomes of the Refugee Convention is the solidification of *non-refoulement*. This concept is addressed in the introductory note by the Office of the UNCHR. *Refouler* is a term used for the expulsion of refugees from a State. The note states that "the principle of non-refoulement is so fundamental that no reservations or derogations may be made to it."[75] However, when looking at the laws made by individual countries, there are plenty of loopholes to be found. One of those is that an individual may be expelled if they pose a threat to national security, so long as they are not sent to a territory where they may continue to be persecuted. This can then lead to people becoming stateless, which is in and of itself a transgression of the Declaration of Human Rights (Article 15).

Dutch Border Control

When looking at the concrete case of the Netherlands, its first *Vreemdelingenwet* (Aliens Law) dates back to 1849, and would cause several riots in this day and age if it were to be presented to the courts.[76] The law focussed mostly on border control and the individuals that should be let into the country. These were people who could identify themselves and had enough means to survive in the country. However, if one could get two police officers to sign a document that stated they were trustworthy, they were allowed entry as well.

After several changes, the Netherlands got its *Vreemdelingenwet* 1965 and much stricter demands.[77] It defined aliens as anyone without a Dutch nationality or otherwise treatment like that of a Dutch national according to the Nationality Law. The rest of the law expands on the ways in which various bodies of the State are allowed to exercise control over these aliens, in which cases they can expulse them, and what the responsibilities of aliens are. Under this fall for example the need to at all times be able to identify themselves. The *Vreemdelingenwet* 1965 however does not look at all at the protection or rights of migrants, despite the fact that both the Declaration and original Refugee Convention had since long been published.

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[75] "1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," Introductory Note.
[76] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Vreemdelingenwet 1849," adopted 13 August 1849, https://cmr.jur.ru.nl/cmr/vw/Vw1849/Stb.1849.39.pdf.
[77] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Vreemdelingenwet 1965," adopted 13 January 1849, https://cmr.jur.ru.nl/cmr/vw/Vw65/Stb.1965.40.pdf.

Hard Work Pays off

      Southern Migration

      Aside from the *Vreemdelingenwet* 1965, two more Dutch laws deserve special attention to understand the country's views on migration post-WWII. These are the *Wet Arbeidvergunning Vreemdelingen* 1964 (Law Alien Labour Permit) and the *Wet Arbeid Buitenlandse Werknemers* 1979 (Law Labour Foreign Employees).[78] Both laws served to regulate labour migration which was picking up around this time, with the Netherlands receiving workers from Mediterranean countries like Spain and Italy.[79]

      The law on labour permits starts precisely by acknowledging this, stating it is wise to "establish new legal regulations regarding the performance of work by foreigners with a view to the development of international relations in the socio-economic field, as well as to strengthen the guarantees for foreigners who perform or wish to perform work in this country."[80] The law, with only 17 articles, states that aliens are not allowed to work without a permit, and that either they or their potential employer must request it. The Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health is in charge of deciding what paperwork must be submitted, and has 90 days to approve or reject the request. While written already in 1964, the law didn't go into working until March 1969.

      This initial attempt at regulating alien labour stays for less than a decade. As labour migration increases, and Spanish and Italian workers are replaced by predominantly Moroccan workers, a new law comes into play.[81] The 1979 law about Foreign Labourers adds to its 1964 version that the Netherlands now requires an agreement with the alien's country of origin, states that the permit can be revoked if not used, can only be requested by an employer, and a maximum number of foreign employees is decided by the Minister of Social Affairs.

      Repelling Migrants

      There is a clear shift towards stricter labour migrant regulation. C. A. Groenendijk, scientific employee in sociology of law and former lawyer, highlights the fact that between the start of the 60s and the end of the 70s, the Netherlands saw a massive increase in immigrants. By this he means migrants that move to the country to reside permanently,

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[78] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Wet Arbeidvergunning Vreemdelingen 1964," adopted 20 February 1963, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-1964-72.pdf; The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Wet Arbeid Buitenlandse Werknemers 1979," adopted 20 February 1963, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-1978-737.pdf.
[79] Nicolaas and Arno Sprangers, "Buitenlandse Migratie," 40.
[80] "Wet Arbeidvergunning Vreemdelingen 1964," Preamble.
[81] Nicolaas and Arno Sprangers, "Buitenlandse Migratie," 40.

rather than as seasonal workers or even long-term labourers.[82] The next section will cover the decision by the Dutch government to lean into this phenomenon by controlling who is allowed to stay and become Dutch.

Until then, migrant legislation shows three characteristics: "inequality, assumed temporality and dependency."[83] Firstly, the migrant is treated differently than the native. The law creates an active distinction between the rights of these individuals and facilitates action on the government's part in case the former acts improperly. This in turn allows for the expulsion of the migrant, something that was also put in writing in the *Vreemdelingenwet 1965*.[84] Secondly, the laws impede (or hinder) the migrant's stay. Because the migrant is forced to renew their permit constantly, they are at a continuous risk of being unemployed, which can also ensure their expulsion from the country. Thus, giving the Netherlands another tool to control and remove (unwanted) migrants. Turkey is a similar case. With the country hosting the world's largest community of displaced Syrians, it uses the law much like the Netherlands as a tool to ensure the temporary nature of its migrants—in spite of international law surrounding refugees. Not only that, Kivilcim argues that the law actively pushes women towards marriage with Turkish men as a survival strategy, thus fixing their precarious status even further.[85] Lastly, their reliance on Dutch institutions in ensured through a lack of information. An example provided by Groenendijk is the unclarity of family reunification.[86] Some municipalities provide children with a permit under this label, but others don't. This means that the children do not have equal access to the Dutch education system. This dependency on institutional decisions is an enormous risk, seeing as it can also lead to unemployment, which is already dangerous for a native inhabitant, but can also mean removal for a migrant.

These legislative choices are meant to repel migrant populations, because no person wants to become part of a nation that so openly shows its disdain for their presence. More attractive laws would include, 1) a decrease in expulsion threat, 2) legal equality, 3) and active counteracting of (indirect) discrimination, and 4) "arrangements to protect and support the immigrants' own culture, provided that it does not conflict with fundamental values of Dutch society."[87] It would make sense then that the Netherlands would apply these four changes when it moves towards its next phase.

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[82] C. A. Groenendijk, "Medeburger," 52.
[83] Groenendijk, "Medeburger," 53.
[84] "Vreemdelingenwet 1965," Chapter III.
[85] Zeynep Kivilcim, "Legal Violence Against Syrian Female Refugees in Turkey," *Feminist Legal Studies* 24 (2016): 193–214, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-016-9323-y. 201.
[86] Groenendijk, "Medeburger," 56.
[87] Groenendijk, "Medeburger," 59.

To Control a People

Citizenising to Integrate

As the nineties come to an end, the Netherlands takes its first step towards organising its migrant population—rather than keeping out potential newcomers—by introducing the concept of *inburgering*. This word can be roughly translated to citizenisation, or the process of becoming a citizen. The term is not to be confused with *integratie* (integration) or *naturalisatie* (naturalisation). Integration is when an individual is able to become part of society and navigate it without losing their sense of self, and naturalisation is the formal process by which an individual acquires the nationality of the State they are residing in. Both of these concepts exist in many different States, but citizenisation is not present everywhere. Unlike integration, it is an institutionalised process by which migrants are expected to show their affinity with the host society.

Citizenisation was first presented in the *Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers* (WIN, Citizenisation of Newcomers Law) of 1998.[88] This law stated that any person over 18 who set foot for the first time in the Netherlands with the intention of a long-term stay would have to undergo the citizenisation track within 6 weeks of finalising the administrative work relevant to their situation. For asylum seekers this could be getting a permit, but for Dutch people born outside the country it could be finding housing and signing their contract.

According to the law, the track starts with a sign-up sheet and an initial conversation. At every step of the track, the person in charge of oversight is meant to measure the migrant's active and passive language skills, knowledge of Dutch society, potential for education and labour, and ability to be self-sufficient within the society. If the individual is not ready to take the final exam after the starting phase, they are provided with a citizenisation track. The design of the track is tailored to individual needs and the realistic ability to finalise it within 600 hours. After this track, the person should be knowledgeable on all testing fields and take the exam (which has no passing requirement). Any person who did not participate in the citizenisation track would be fined, but there would ultimately be no consequences for their stay, which leads one to wonder what the actual purpose of the track is. Simply participating? If there is no final test, there is no real incentive to work for it.

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[88] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers," adopted 9 April 1998, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-1998-261.pdf.

Naturalisation to Integrate

Integration was the next step after the legislation that ruled in the 70s and 80s. For a moment it looked like the Netherlands truly wanted to help migrants feel at home and learn the ways of the country, but in 2003 the minister of Alien Affairs and Integration added the naturalisation exam to citizenisation. Migrants would have to pass the exam in order to get their Dutch nationality.[89]

What we see here is a shift away from the concept of citizenisation towards naturalisation—despite what the law's name says—implying that to become a part of Dutch society one needs the paper that says so, and it is not a feeling that one can have. 'Dutchness' is an objective measurable standard rather than one's effort. On top of that, as Nissen and Waal indicate, one must earn their 'Dutchness' before they are ever considered part of the group, reminding one of the Us vs. Them mentality. This in and of itself can cause problems for healthy integration, seeing as creating an outgroup can lead to them being treated worse and the divide only growing.[90]

From optimism to Failure

The turn of the century saw another step towards control in its legislature. The Aliens Law was changed for the first time since 1965 to have much stricter measures and oversight, meaning that in combination with the WIN migrants have a much harder time entering the country and settling there. One of the ways in which this was felt in practice was the change from the *Adviescommissie voor Vreemdelingenzaken* (Advice commission for alien affairs) to the Adviesraad Migratie (Advisory board migration). This is because the commission was in charge of advising the government on its laws, but also reviewing the cases of migrants that had been rejected in their application. Once the Vreemdelingenwet 2000 passed however, this second task disappeared entirely. Migrants now have to go to a regular judge to make their case, which is much more complicated and lengthier. This change was partially made due to the desire to distinguish between 'real' and 'unreal' migrants.[91] Making the process of application harder was supposed to deter migrants from coming in the first place, and only attract those who absolutely needed it.

This was a continuous trend in the early 2000s, despite the fact that the Schengen Zone became a reality in 2001. Adam Leudkte describes the time period between 1999 and

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[89] Ellen J. Nissen and Tamar M. de Waal, "De Nieuwe Wet Inburgering. Veel Gewijzigd, Weinig Verbeterd," *Asiel & Migrantenrecht 12*, no.10, (2021): 516-523. ISSN: 1879-8128. 517.

[90] Tajfel and Turner, "Social Identity Theory," 281.

[91] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Vreemdelingenwet," adopted November 4 2000, https://www.eerstekamer.nl/9370000/1/j9vvkfvj6b325az/vfqtyl21epaa/f=y.pdf.

2005 as a one switching from optimism to failures, spearheaded by the terrorist attacks by Al-Qaeda in the United States on the 11th of September, which changed the way that the Global North looked at the world. In their wake, migration laws were rewritten to make it easier to deport migrants on suspicion of them being terrorists, and the public's attitudes changed accordingly. The UK for example adopted the Asylum, Immigration and Nationality Act in 2002, and around that same time, Belgium made several attempts to withdraw refugee statuses from people.[92] The Netherlands also suffered two events on home soil that shook its political landscape within three years after the attacks by Al-Qaeda, namely the murders of populist politician Pim Fortuyn and movie director Theo van Gogh in 2002 and 2004 respectively. Their deaths reinforced the mindset that the terrorist attacks in the US had started. This was because both Fortuyn and Van Gogh were adamantly against migration and open about their distaste for the presence of Islam in the country. Xenophobia and panic rose amongst Dutch citizens who were suddenly faced with the fact that their heroes could be killed.[93] The blame quickly shifted to migrants and the left given that the killers were a leftist extremist in the case of Fortuyn and a Dutch-Moroccan in the case of Van Gogh.

Citizenisation is the Norm

Citizenisation Duty

With the political landscape being built around control, and the general public gaining and increasing distaste for migrants, it is no surprise that migration and integration laws became even stricter. The first big change would be the new *Wet Inburgering 2006* (Law Citizenisation), which replaced its 1998 counterpart WIN.[94] This law covered the basic definitions about what *inburgeringsplicht* (citizenisation duty) is, who has to undergo this process and what it is. Newcomers over eighteen and under the retirement age would have five years to pass the citizenisation exam. This exam was split into a practical and central part covering language skills, and knowledge of Dutch customs, values and history. While the law went into action on the 1st of January of 2007, in July the first changes were already made. This was mostly about who would have to do the citizenisation. In the end it was

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[92] Leudtke, "Fortress," 135.

[93] Pantti, Mervi and Jan Wieten, "Mourning Becomes the Nation: Television Coverage of the Murder of Pim Fortuyn," *Journalism Studies* 6, no.3 (2005): 301–13, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700500131893. 307.

[94] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Wet Inburgering 2006," adopted 5 december 2006, https://www.eerstekamer.nl/id/vhyxhwywkep3/document_extern/w30308stb645/f=/w30308stb645.pdf.

decided that only aliens would have to undergo the track.[95] What was clear from the start however, was personal responsibility. The migrant has to look for classes, pay these out of pocket, and ensure they passed the test. Unlike with the WIN though, there would be consequences if they did not pass. Migrants who failed their citizenisation duty would have to pay a fine.

It is interesting to bring forth a quote from the policy note provided on the 4th of April 2007: "The goal of citizenisation is that everyone that lives in the Netherlands speaks the Dutch language and has knowledge of Dutch society and the most important Dutch norms and values. With this knowledge and skills everyone has the basis to actively partake in economic, social, cultural and/or political life."[96] From the sound of this, the government had a clear incentive to aid migrants into settling in the Netherlands. However, most money for migrant projects gets put into border control and policing, and legal recognition does not mean protection from state violence.[97]

As Daniel Rauhut makes clear in his paper on formal and informal institutions, laws and policies are often used to categorise migrants. This helps to distinguish between 'wanted' and 'unwanted' migrants. In other words, "an immigrant's integration is not only shaped by explicit integration policies, but also the way policies explicitly and implicitly perceive, problematize and categorise them." The fact that the Netherlands made programmes and laws to ensure citizenisation was presented as a way to support migrants, but theory shows that it can be used to marginalise already vulnerable groups even further. Berhane also speaks about the categorisation of migrants as a tool for control. Delving into Foucault's idea of biopolitics—which explains how a government exerts power by controlling human lives—she states that putting unwanted groups like migrants in precarious situations is a way of ensuring securitisation. The migrant is presented as a threat to the status quo, and thus outlawing it is a natural consequence. Furthermore, Ceyhan and Tsoukala state that "one of the striking consequences of the criminalization of migration is the progressive weakening of any distinction between migrants and asylum seekers."[98] This distinction is crucial when looking at documents like the Refugee Convention, where anyone fleeing a dangerous situation cannot be denied asylum.

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[95] College van Burgemeester en Wethouders, "Beleidsnotitie Inburgering 2007," *Gemeente Bronckhorst* (4 April, 2007), https://lokaleregelgeving.overheid.nl/CVDR63039/1.

[96] The Netherlands, Gemeente Bronckhorst, "Beleidsnotitie inburgering 2007," adopted 4 April 2007, https://lokaleregelgeving.overheid.nl/CVDR63039/1.

[97] Fiori Sara Berhane, "The Paradox of Humanitarian Recognition: Blackness, Predation, and Non-Statist Solidarities in the Migration of Eritreans to Europe," *Cultural Anthropology* 39, no. 3 (2024): 374-399. 376.

[98] Ayse Ceyhan and Anastassia Tsoukala, "The Securitization of Migration in Western Societies: Ambivalent Discourses and Policies," *Alternatives* 27, special issue (2002): 21-39, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45468066. 28.

Biopolitics in Citizenisation

The awareness of the categorising is especially important, because it did not end in 2006. The *Wet Inburgering* was revised and rewritten in 2013.[99] The citizenisation age was brought down to 16, in line with the age for compulsory education, rather than the age of majority. This is also the first time that any of the citizenisation laws clearly dictate what the language skills are that a migrant should have. From that point onwards, all migrants with citizenisation duty would have to attain the A2 level Dutch according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.[100] This is especially important, because it meant that all migrants had a strict set of knowledge they could work towards, rather than an arbitrary idea like the ability to speak the language. In contrast to the 2006 version, this law was much shorter, with entire chapters (like chapter 4 about the citizenisation exam) and several articles removed. Based on Berhane and Rauhut's analyses, this could be an indicator of further control over a vulnerable group. By categorising and selecting desired qualities to separate 'good' from 'bad', the sovereign is able to exempt people from juridical protection. These biopolitics are "the techniques of governing a collective of biosubjects that render otherness by shifting migrants outside of the legal order of the state."[101]

In 2021 another version of the law got passed.[102] While the law itself is not applicable to the scope of this thesis, the conversations leading up to it are, because laws are never written in a vacuum. Rather they are a reflection of the political and social landscape that precedes them. In the case of the *Wet Inburgering* 2021 that appears to be a more compassionate space. On the 22nd of April 2022 the House of Representatives published a memorandum with additional information as to why the changes had been made. The document starts with a clear self-reflection on the element that had characterised it for so long: the migrant's responsibility.[103] The memorandum recognises that this hammering on responsibility has proven to be counter-effective. Hindering social, societal and political participation. Because of that, the law had been changed to place more responsibility on the municipalities, which would organise the entire track, and focus the last part of it entirely on

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[99] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Wet Inburgering 2013," adopted 1 January 2013, https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0020611/2013-01-01.

[100] Council of Europe, "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)," *Council of Europe*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/.

[101] Caress Schenk, "The Migrant Other: Exclusion without Nationalism?" *Nationalities Papers 49*, no.3 (2021): 397-408, https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2020.82. 400.

[102] The Netherlands, Eerste Kamer, "Wet Inburgering 2021," adopted 1 January 2022, https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0044770/2022-01-01.

[103] Vaste commissie voor Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, "Wetsvoorstel: Aanpassing overgangsrecht Wet inburgering 2021," *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal* (14 April, 2022), https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/wetsvoorstellen/detail?cfg=wetsvoorsteldetails&qry=wetsvoorstel%3A36078#wetgevingsproces.

practical and societal guidance in collaboration with local institutions. On top of that, to increase leniency, any migrant that could prove they had put in conscious effort to their citizenisation and attempted to take the exam at least twice with a minimum of 300 hours of class, could be exempted from the track.

From Control to more Control

While Dutch legislation has certainly changed over the centuries, one facet remains: control. The laws in place are more focussed on choosing who gets to stay and who is forced to leave, rather than welcoming migrants and helping them settle. The centrality of the State in these laws is crucial. The legislation seems almost like a protector of the Nation State, rather than a tool to facilitate life for its inhabitants. They ensure the right of the country to regulate its borders and those who cross it, and place those right over any mentioned in the documents born from the aftermath of the Second World War.

The control in place did become more structured. Where the first Aliens Law in the 19th century could be subverted with two gullible police officers, in 2021 any individual is only allowed to stay under strict language requirements, knowledge of cultural values and society. It isn't until then that the migrant's responsibility disappears either. For this research that means that the migrants are 'on their own' when it comes to support to cross all the necessary hurdles. They had to find their own language centres and schedule their exams. The interviews did reveal that the migrants that came as refugees often had a contact person who helped them. However, this person was only there for the first one or two years to get them started, not until the end of their integration track. The next chapter will look further into how migrants were supported during the formal integration that was demanded from them on the basis of the discussed laws. This will in turn show what effects the application of these laws have had on their experiences.

Chapter 3 Formal Integration

"They say that one is my जान भूमि, *birth country ,*

and one is my काम भूमि, *which is my work country."*

- Supriya Rishi

With the legal basis for integration from the previous chapter, this chapter will go into the application of the laws. It will analyse how the interviewed migrants navigated their way through formal integration using the sub-question, *"How have migrants in Rotterdam undertaken formal integration and what effects did this have on their migrant experience?"* Using a deductive thematic approach the most relevant effects of their integration will be highlighted and discussed. This will serve to show how formal integration influences the way migrants view themselves in relation to Dutch culture and their native culture.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, under formal integration falls any practice of integration that allows for the structural integration of an individual into the host society. Using Esser's four dimensions of integration, this includes paid labour, acquiring the proper credentials (e.g. through examinations or diplomas), and, if applicable, attaining citizenship or permits to stay in the country. I have chosen to add to this the acquisition of language, because it is a legal requirement for migrants to stay in the country. This process however only refers to the formal ways in which migrants learn Dutch (i.e. classes) and no other means such as talking to friends, listening to music or watching television. Given that the focus of this thesis is not events, but rather experiences, this chapter will look at the most prevalent themes that arose from the interviews. These are relevant to understanding what formal integration actually *means* for migrants, rather than what it *is*.

Safety first

While there exist many different forms of migration, one of the most thought of versions is refugee migration. Defined by UNCHR, "refugees are people who have fled their countries to escape conflict, violence, or persecution and have sought safety in another country", refugees ultimately come from unsafe situations. As discussed in chapter 2, the securitisation of migrants has led to many laws creating loopholes to ensure the temporary stay of migrants.[104] It is thus no surprise that anxiety and fear of having to return to an

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[104] Ceyhan and Tsoukala, "Securitization of Migration," 28.

unsafe situation came back time and time again. Out of the 13 interviews that I conducted, 9 were either refugees themselves or part of family reunification. This meant that for many of them safety was always on the forefront of their mind.

One of them, Baran, told me about the moment she felt safe in the Netherlands. It wasn't when she landed together with her parents and brother at the airport, or when they signed all the paperwork to indicate that they had arrived, or when she finally got to hug her other brother at Schiphol after not seeing him for three years. It was the moment she was able to walk with the five of them through the Museumpark in the centre of Rotterdam and see all of them smile and not have to worry about anything for a moment.

When hearing stories like these it can be hard to see how formal requirements and signatures can also bring such a sense of safety. For many, paperwork is an annoying and often never-ending task, but for people like Mirjana who fled a war with her former captive husband and daughter still in a pram, "you are happy that you have a roof over your head somewhere. You get daily food, water, you can clean your clothes, I have enough water to shower. [Very] basal things." To finally be taken in at a centre and have your basic needs met can be a huge sense of safety. Part of formal integration is having a status. Acquiring a residency permit, a refugee status, or even a nationality down the line. Existing in a state where one is undefined is then incredibly stressful. Karim for example has been having a long and difficult procedure. He had left his home country of Saudi Arabia to go study in the Netherlands in 2020. This was because he and his family were stateless. Saudi Arabia being one of the few countries not having signed the Declaration does not grant a nationality to its inhabitants when born lest they are children of Saudis. Seeing as Karim's grandparents had fled to Saudi Arabia from Syria, they weren't Saudis, nor were their children. He arrived in the Netherlands as a refugee with no passport, Syrian nor Saudi. This means he lives with the constant fear of being sent back and is not allowed to leave the Netherlands, seeing as it will break the five-year integration period he must undergo. For him, citizenship will mean peace of mind and freedom of movement.

Formal integration is often the primary focus of integration programmes.[105] The migrant either has the necessary paperwork, diploma or language requirements, or doesn't. The migrants certainly saw benefits to these processes, but at no point did I get the impression that they made the migrants feel more connected to the Netherlands, let alone the city of Rotterdam. When asking the interviewees about their sense of belonging, rarely ever

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[105] Linda Bakker, et al., "The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees. A Study on the Impact of Length of Stay in Asylum Accommodation and Residence Status on Socio-Economic Integration for the Four Largest Refugee Groups in the Netherlands," *Journal of International Migration & Integration 15* (2014): 431–448, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-013-0296-2. 443.

was that tied to a house, a salary or a nationality. These were tools to live a good life, but they weren't its main components. In some cases, like for Supriya, acquiring a Dutch passport was even a practical choice. She simply applied for Dutch nationality because of the fact that her family had done so too, and the rules about migrants staying could potentially change, but it did not impact her "Indianness."

Working 9 to 5

Aside from formal integration providing migrants with a sense of safety, one of the most recurring themes was that of structure. Migration is a hectic period for any person, regardless of the reason they move. As María told me during a conversation after the interview had finished, moving houses is stressful enough, moving to a different country and culture is a whole other thing. The migrant is expected to organise and resolve loads of paperwork that often does not provide the previously mentioned safety until it is finalised. Until this is finished, they are confined to whatever space they have arrived in. That is because throughout the years, Dutch laws always assumed that until paperwork and official procedures are finished a migrant cannot find a job or participate in society. For refugees this can be an asylum seeker centre, the house of a partner, or their own house. I asked Karim, who is currently active in social work and regularly visits refugee and asylum seeker centres, what it was like to be at those places. He told me, "It hurts. An asylum seeker centre is sort of like a big prison. Like a small country. You are always stuck. You're not allowed to do this, that, that… You only get to wait. Whole years. You have nothing to do. Just eat, drink, sleep." The interviewees that spent time in centres shared this sentiment of boredom and wasting time, with many going out of their way to learning the language on their own. The feeling of being stuck was shared less so, given that they were allowed movement, albeit controlled, and so this was rarely the highlight.

One of the most used terms in social work, refugee care and general integration work in the Netherlands is *dagbesteding*. This term is used to refer to the way in which an individual on average fills up their day and is considered to be best spent working, socialising or developing one's talents through hobbies.

From my interviews I gathered that this time is also important for the migrants. The image of the lazy migrant that comes to benefit off social security (*uitkering*) certainly did not come back. Sentences like, "I only wanted to learn the language to be allowed to work," "I could earn by own money of course. I did not want to be dependent on anyone," or "I had no work. So, why sit at home? I stay a volunteer," are only a few of the examples that I

heard. The last sentence specifically was said to me by Hind. She is a Kurdish refugee from Iraq who came in 1998 to Rotterdam as part of a family reunification programme. After three years in the Netherlands her Dutch was strong enough to find a job. She started working as a translator at Vluchtelingenwerk for about nearly five years. After that, she worked there as a volunteer for another seven years until the government stopped funding them and she was forced to leave.

Just like Hind, Cristina also searched for work to give structure to her day. She lived on the outskirts of the city, separated from social life and spent the majority of her time at home. She told me that the day that she started teaching Spanish in the city centre was the day her life changed. "It was totally my salvation, because then when I started working, everything changed." The sense of comfort that Cristina felt was caused due to the fact that she had a schedule, but also the change in social atmosphere, which will be explored further in the next chapter. It appears that the push for migrants to work is indeed a good move on the government's part. However, as Hind did indicate, it remains difficult for migrants to find work. She indicated three main problems: language, age and diplomas. The Netherlands has to validate a migrant's diploma before any company or educational institution can accept it. This could be considered another step in hindering the migrant's ability to stay, and also deter them in turn from connecting with the host society.

Speak Your Mind

As seen in the first chapter of this thesis, Dutch legislation after the Wet Inburgering 2006 states that all migrants from outside the European Union have to learn the Dutch language. Reality shows however that this is not limited to them. Out of the 13 migrants I interviewed, three did not have to learn the language. Two because they were European, and the third because she came as part of a government programme for highly skilled workers. Yet, just like the other 10 interviewees they learned the language.

As LaFromboise and her colleagues state in their research "language competency, in fact, may be a major building block of bicultural competence."[106] A person has to be able to communicate their ideas and feelings effectively to navigate society in a comfortable manner and feel connected to it. French migrant Julia told me that she found a retiree who gave her Dutch lessons once per week. Looking back, she said she should have gone to classes, even if it wasn't necessary for her to do so. She told me her reading, and especially her writing, are in her eyes underdeveloped and have made it harder for her to make use of written

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[106] LaFromboise, et al., "Biculturalism," 403.

language because of that. However, her main reasoning was that she wanted to be able to solve her own problems and navigate the country without anyone translating for her.

This came back in other interviews as well, especially when talking to migrants from the Balkan. Amra and Emina both identify as (ex-)Yugoslavian, despite them being Serbian on paper. This led to issues for the both of them when they arrived in the Netherlands. "You arrive here and then... [sighs] First, you don't know the language. You are in a strange country. And then you come into contact with someone else's network. And, yeah... Then you listen a bit," Emina told me. Amra told me that when she applied for a refugee status, people from Croatia and Bosnia could get one easily, whilst for her that wasn't the case. Emina encountered this too, and when talking to people, they both noticed the war was being painted in black and white, with Serbia as the ultimate villain. "That was difficult. And because of that—that people can hear me and my story—it was important for me to learn Dutch," Amra told me. Emina shared a similar story. She told me that when she first arrived, she was very reliant on other Yugoslavian people to translate for her, but that she never got to share her personal experiences of her youth in the Balkan.

This sense of reliance came back quite often in interviews and more often than not paired with a more negative view towards Dutch society. In instances where the interviewee was able to choose their own network that supported them this changed. A prime example is that of Amra, who found a group of fellow students and refugees in Rotterdam South to be with. They helped her sign up for language classes, went with her to these locations and helped her plan her trips, and told her what she would have to bring. She recalls that she later even invited them to her wedding as she considered them her family. This will be covered more extensively in the next chapter.

Thus, while language is incredibly important as a supportive tool for migrants, Amra and Emina's cases show that language is much more than that. Language is an emotionally laden world of its own. The connotative meaning of words is the meaning derived by a person based on individual experiences and knowledge.[107] Stuart Hall's two systems of representation are also applicable here. Where the first system of representation consists of real objects and our mental correlations, the second system is made of our shared conceptual maps that we translate to language to create and exchange meaning.[108] In other words, to pretend that language is simply a means to buy bread at the store and know how much money you owe in taxes would be a disservice. For Amra and Emina it was a way to reclaim

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[107] Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Images, Power and Politics," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture (*New York : Oxford University Press, 2009): 9-48. 29.

[108] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, (London: Sage, 1997): 13-64. 17.

their identities and make space for themselves in a world that looked down on them.

This argument works the other way around as well. For at least nine of the interviewees their native language carries an important load as well. They engage with it frequently and feel connected to their native culture. As Cristina told me, she needs humour to connect to people, and humour changes between languages. If she can't connect through that, there is no feeling with the other party. Supriya managed to achieve this in her workplace. In her own words she told me, "I know the heartbeat of the Dutch people, how they are going to respond, how I can influence them." She then chuckled a bit and clasped her hands together before saying she could never do the same with a French group of people.

Language is the basis for allowing groups of people to understand one another, but that understanding has to go beyond the plain message in the text. Underlying subtleties are what make people feel accepted and at home. As a 1974 study by Fisher showed, programmes targeted at the maintaining of native languages amongst children helped in their self-perception.[109] This is important, because as LaFromboise and her colleagues, and Becker state, a strong self-image is crucial to having cultural competence and emotional integration.

Formally Assimilating

Formal integration in the Netherlands seems to do a strong job in providing migrants with the tools they need to navigate Dutch society. In having legal protection, a structured day, and a means of defending and expressing themselves, migrants gain independence. However, given that these three processes focus entirely on the migrant adapting to the host society, it seems more like assimilation programmes than integration. The migrants rarely spoke of the way that formal integration interacted with their native societies. Whenever they had language classes, the attention was on learning about the Netherlands, without referring to their own cultures, nor were work habits from different cultures kept in mind or given space. If Dutch society truly wants to reap the fruits of its pluralistic society it will have to focus its efforts on involving native cultures in the acculturation process as well. Something as simple as including different cultures in language classes and learning about these through comparison with Dutch culture, or educating Dutch employers into creating diverse workspaces that actively encourage the use of cultural knowledge and work habits.

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[109] Richard I. Fisher, "A Study of Non-Intellectual Attributes of Children in First Grade Bilingual-Bicultural Program," *The Journal of Educational Research, 67*, no.7 (1974): 323–328, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1974.10884641. 328

Chapter 4 Informal Integration

"Ik denk dat ik hier [ben] uitgebloeid door die personen."
"I think that I flowered here because of those people"
- Amra Marjanović

This next chapter will draw from the interviews to provide insights into how migrants have integrated through informal channels, rather than formal means with the sub-question, *"How have migrants in Rotterdam undertaken informal integration and what effects did this have on their migrant experience?"* Where the previous chapter was defined by legal requirements, this chapter is defined by migrants' own actions and desires. The aim of this chapter is to show how informal integration affects the migrant's relationship with Rotterdam as a city, and Dutch society and culture. This will illustrate how informal integration comes into play during the migration process and how it aids in making migrants feel at home and active in the host society.

Informal integration in this thesis is made of Esser's three remaining dimensions of integration. While it has always been part of migration, this type of integration saw an increase around the 2010s. Immigration changed and sped up due to the financial crisis of 2008, the Arab Spring (which led to a massive refugee wave to Europe), and the war between Ukraine and Russia. Institutions in turn were forced to adapt their integration processes.[110] For this they relied on informal institutions to take up responsibility as well through non-formalised or constitutionalised rules and processes. As established in chapter 1, informal integration has the most impact on a migrant's sense of belonging and their ability to form a connection with a culture. The themes that arose from the interviews are because of this especially important to keep in mind when designing integration programmes.

We are family

Esser's four dimensions of integration discuss socialisation as one of the primary contributors to a migrant's integration with the host society. He says that structural integration (i.e. getting a job, finding housing, getting the necessary permits) is impossible without social relationships, and that this socialisation in turn requires intra-ethic

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[110] Koinova, "Irregular Migration," 424.

communication.[111]. Based on social distance theory, and Becker's use of it for emotional integration, the more similar individuals consider themselves to the host culture, the more likely they are to identify with it.[112]

Research in Spain, Canada and Germany has shown that people with interethnic relationships had higher levels of national identification than those with only intraethnic relationships.[113] One interviewee from Brazil mentioned that she does not have close Dutch friendships at all. This is in part because according to her, Dutch individuals are too distant to get close. She speaks for example of a colleague she started to get close with and eventually ended up dropping the friendship. "[She] came to have dinner here in town. You have much fun. But after that she [doesn't] like. I [haven't] contacted her anymore." This sentiment was shared by others as well and led to many of the migrants forming friendships with fellow foreigners/migrants who had similar social customs. These friendships were mainly formed in language classes, asylum seeker centres and work. Through these they navigate the strangeness/differences between the native society and Dutch society, forming new 'families' as they called them.

In terms of migrant integration these are thus crucial. As a 2015 study with Latino minority students and white students at the university of California showed that perceived acceptance is contributing in and of itself to diversity.[114] They found that the way in which people are represented is more important to the feeling of diversity than the quantity of represented individuals. This ties into how the Netherlands presents its diverse nature, and how it is not experienced as such by the migrants. Their interactions with the native population are not sufficient for them to benefit from cultural pluralism, there needs to be a positive connection. This implies that the current integration programmes are not sufficient for the migrants to develop strong bonds with the host society.

Luckily the interviews also rendered some of examples where that was possible. As the majority of interviewees for this research were women, and ten out of the thirteen participants were mothers, it was unsurprising that connections with other mothers were highly present. As a result, some of these women ended up joining clubs with these people. Mirjana for example said she purposely joined the book club of her daughter's school. She put active effort into forming Dutch friendships in order to improve her language, which for her was crucial, saying, 'I want to go forward. I want to study. [...] I want to be part of all of

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[111] Esser, "Ethnische Konflikte," 36.
[112] Becker, "National Identification," 2.
[113] Becker, "National Identification," 3.
[114] Jaqueline M. Chen and David L. Hamilton, "Understanding Diversity: The Importance of Social Acceptance," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *41*, no.4 (2015): 586-598, https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167215573495. 595.

this to pave a way for my child. So that she feels at home too.' What is notable is that Mirjana said she never achieved that. Her daughter still feels Bosnian and presents herself as such, despite her mother's attempts to make her feel at home in the country.

Similarly, Supriya, a woman who came to in 2006 from India, and who put her children in the Dutch education system, mentioned the close connection to the mothers of the school. While she was not connected to them through an official club like Mirjana, the network did ensure that everyone knew each other. They knew her as "the mother of Binnu and Anjali", called each other whenever the kids went over to each other's houses and organised sleepovers for the children. To her this helped her feel accepted and welcomed into society.

Iraqi/Kurdish migrant Hind also had a female organisation in the city centre where she went every Monday, stating their main mission as "If somebody has problems, we go help." This group of women was not created to help the neighbourhood, but rather to provide support to its members. She mentioned a time when one of the members accompanied her all the way from the city centre to her house on the outskirts of the municipality after she'd had her baby. Carrying heavy boxes and the stroller because she was not able to do it on her own. Later, on another occasion, when the sister of an Iraqi woman died, they collectively went to her house, brought her dates, spices and other things from her home to provide comfort and battle the loneliness she was feeling.

Networks like these of Mirjana, Hind and Supriya are hard to come by if a person is not familiar with their new environment. As the interviewees who arrived in the 90s indicated, there is a decrease in social connection. Mirjana told me that her own daughter who is now in the phase that she was in when she arrived and is not connecting nearly as much as she used to. Given that these networks seem to be so important for the migrants, it should be an important point of action for integration programmes to focus on connecting migrants with preexisting networks that can help them feel more connected with society, (Dutch) people and the city as a whole.

You Give Some, You Get Some

One of the things that showed societal connection the most was the migrants that went back into contact with refugee organisations after their arrival. Hind, Baran, Karim and Hamide for example each started working with organisations aimed towards helping fellow migrants. For Baran and Karim this came in the shape of an internship during their MBO education. Baran had been informed of a centre for youth by one of her teachers and joined

them for an activity. When she talked about the first day at the centre, Baran's entire face lit up. Recalling how nervous she was not knowing anyone and how kind everyone was in spite of it. They took a full bus to Antwerp where they stayed the entire day. After that, Baran's first thoughts were, "Okay, I have to go to [organisation]. Or for the fun, or to help, or to improve my language, to find a job, or internship." The place offered Baran both space to develop herself and to help others. For Karim, this same organisation is "not only a workplace. It is a small country or small city. It is a safe place. A place like that is good for youth."

Similarly, Hind and Hamide volunteered at Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland. For Hind this was because she couldn't find paid work at first and she did not want to stay at home. Hamide added this to her job, because she wanted to do something in return for the society that accepted her. Overall Hamide recounts her migration story as positive, having found caring and supportive people along the way. That is why she says "I just find it very useful, what I do, because I can also pass a little of that optimism onto other people."

However, not all migrants showed their gratitude to organisations, because it wasn't the case for them. Emebet had left Ethiopia to go study in Russia. After five years there however, there was a coup in her home country which led to her no longer being able to return. She left Russia to come to the Netherlands in 1992, but because the country did not recognise the precarious nature of Ethiopia's situation, she lived with the constant fear of being sent back. When she came, she relied heavily on the network of fellow Ethiopians and churchgoers in Rotterdam. When her friend Fana later migrated to the country as well, she returned the favour. She recounts the story of Fana being called in by the municipality for suspected fraud, after she had been accused of it by her mother-in-law. Emebet acted both as a translator and mediator, seeing as there were cultural differences in terms of money being used by Fana. Emebet's network shows that the heavy reliance on migrants, and especially migrants of her own country helped her and later other people to navigate formal integration.

The stories of Hamide, Hind, Baran and Emebet show that migrants gladly give back to society and help others when they have been helped in return. Just like with the women's networks, these ways of interacting with societal structures offered the migrants a way to connect with the city through self-chosen action. While many of the migrants benefitted socially from these networks, NGOs or organisations, the primary goal for them was often to provide structure to their day, learn more about the city, better their skills or give back to the people around them. As governments continue to defund these types of programmes and organisations, it is important to note that migrants benefit on an emotional level far more

from this than the language classes at any institution, and hopefully keep them standing.[115]

Music Is the Answer

Some of the most impactful moments from the interviews where those where the interviewees got especially invested in the recollection of their memories. As Keya Genguly states, "recollections of the past serve as the active ideological terrain on which people represent themselves to themselves." The sharing of these memories thus highlights the importance to the creation of the participants' identity.[116] In three instances this was related to cultural holidays. The first was with French migrant Julia who started the interview by telling me of her childhood home. When I asked her to tell me of a concrete memory in the house, she told me of the Christmas dinners she celebrated with the family. Everyone seated around the table, talking, taking their time. When she told me over the years it became impossible to return every year, she got more emotional as well. While the social connections contributed strongly to her fond memories, it was clear that the moment itself was special as well. Seeing as Christmas is celebrated bigger in France than it is in the Netherlands according to her, no longer having that here made her miss it.

Similarly, two Kurdish migrants, one from Syria and one from Iraq, both celebrate Newroz. During the Kurdish new year on the 21st of March, it is traditional for families and friends to gather and trek into nature, often spending the day by the river, in the mountain or in forests. Kurds take the day off and use it as a moment to be with their loved ones, similarly to Christmas in predominantly Christian nations. Celebrating Newroz for both of these women meant connecting to their home culture and keeping it alive. So much so, that for Hind, the entire month is when she feels most like herself. That is because March is the moment when nature starts blooming again, and it reminds her of home when she was able to celebrate this holiday with her family.

Aside from holidays, music also played a big role for the interviewees. Four of the interviewees referred to music as both a means of comfort and to connect with a culture. Cristina for example said that the sound of Flamenco music was enough to get her emotional, whereas a song by André Hazes would barely move her. Similarly, Mirjana puts on Croatian music in the car when she drives to work in the morning. Emina told me about a birthday party she had attended the day before where she and her friends had listened to old

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[115] Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, "Maatschappelijke Diensttijd afschaffen is een slecht idee," *EUR*, June 6, 2024, https://www.eur.nl/nieuws/maatschappelijke-diensttijd-afschaffen-een-slecht-idee.
[116] Keya Ganguly, "Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood," *Cultural Studies* 6, no.1 (1992): 27-50, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389200490021. 29.

Serbian songs. "All the emotions came to the surface, you know? [And] then you say, 'Oh, we know all the songs.' Some you have also forgotten. And I- I kind of still live there a little bit."

Clothing and food were most often brought up in relation to 'special occasions'. These were birthday parties, holidays, or inviting people over. As such Baran and hind would dress up in Kurdish clothes to celebrate Newroz, or Esther would eat Brazilian dishes when she was with her Brazilian friend. One story that stood out was the adoption of Dutch cuisine by Supriya upon arriving in the Netherlands. Seeing as she and her partner both have a busy work schedule and two kids with extra-curricular activities, that leaves little time for kitchen work. "I started preparing the stamppot style but with an Indian twist, with a Dutch twist, with a… Whatever twist you call [it]." She would replace the potatoes with rice or couscous and combine dishes from her home country with that of the host country.

Home is where the heart is

All the interviewees gained a sense of belonging and feeling at home from interacting with culture. While these feelings are in part created due to childhood upbringing, they can be developed over time as well. Baran for example said that when she first arrived, she would never consider herself Dutch, but that as years have passed, she now considers herself both Kurdish and Dutch. This was mostly because of how her parents had educated her. She had been raised with values to believe that everyone is equal. "People are people. We are all the same." However, the culture of her parents is still important to her. She has a connection, and when people start speaking Kurdish or music starts playing, that connection is there. Examples like that of Baran and the other interviewees show the comfort that can grow from experiencing culture or cultural acts. Integration programmes can thus benefit immensely from the incorporation of positive cultural traditions, seeing as they can be comforting sources of acceptance and belonging.

Chapter 5 Identity

"Ik weet wie ik ben, wat ik ben. Ik weet wat mijn waarde is."

"I know who I am, what I am. I know what my value is."

- Emebet

While informal and formal integration serve to understand how migrants are working together with their host society, it does not necessarily reflect why they do. Nor does it help understand their sense of self. Research so far has not quite focussed on this last aspect of migration, instead opting for self-sufficiency and social relations. But structural and social integration do not equate actual integration, given that the emotional and personal are neglected. As Sunil Bathia and Anjali Ram state in the research on Indian diaspora cultures in the US, "For most people living in contemporary diasporas, their negotiation with multiple cultural sites is fluid, dynamic, interminable and often unstable."[117]

This last chapter will thus focus on cultural identity. It will do this by looking at how the interviewed migrants perceive themselves in relation to Dutch identity, their native culture's identity and migrant/foreigner identity to answer the sub-question, *"In what ways do migrants in Rotterdam shape and maintain their cultural identity?"* Given that identity is a tool to make ourselves known to others this is especially relevant to explore. The created cultural identities of migrants reflect not only what they adopt, but also what they are willing to present to the outside world.[118] Understanding why they make these choices (i.e. how cultural identity is made) can in turn lead to better designing of integration programmes to stimulate integration.

Remember Your Roots

Anyone who speaks to a migrant about their experience is likely to hear the 'root metaphor'. Here a person uses roots as a way to explain their connections to their host culture and native culture. For many people the comparison to plants is an easy tool to express their identity and sense of belonging within different places given that the listener will always understand how plants work, regardless of whether they themselves have migrated. In my interviews this came back several times. The two most extensive metaphors came from Yugoslavian migrant Mirjana, and Hamide from Iran. Mirjana compared herself

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[117] Bhatia and Ram, "Diaspora Cultures," 148.

[118] Saul Kassin, et al., "Chapter 3: The Social Self," in Social Psychology, ed. S. Kassin, S. Fein, & H. Rose (Sage, 2014): 52-101. 92.

to a plant that had been cut off at the stem. The roots were left in their native soil, while the flower was transported elsewhere. It had lost something integral to itself, but in the end, the flower was able to bloom and continue to grow in a vase. Its beauty hadn't decreased because of this 'amputation', and one was still able to admire it, but something had no doubt changed.

Meanwhile, Hamide painted a different picture: "You have a root, you pull that with you, but you are not that root. You [have] the root and you have developed branches in other countries. My root stays, but my branches are here. And if in 10 years I go to live somewhere else, I will be the same." Unlike for Mirjana, the connection to the root was never broken, the distance to it was simply longer. In both cases however the interviewees felt that plants could help explain their situation. The idea that an individual starts off in a place and grows there to the point that their wellbeing and survival is (partially) dependent on the location has become so important to the human experience that the verb can be applied to people as well. This also comes back in songs by indigenous individuals, highlighting how the feeling of remaining connected to one's culture can be shown through the rooting metaphor.[119]

While Hamide and Mirjana's cases show clear signs of being connected to both the host culture and their native culture, this was not the case for all individuals. Emebet for example told me she did not feel Dutch at all, and was completely Ethiopian. Her ex-partner even telling her she behaved differently whenever she was there and looked more alive. Esther on the other hand, had lost the connection to her home. It had gotten to the point where she was ashamed to show her Brazilian passport because of the politics in the country and the way that the rest of the world perceived the nation, "We are corrupt, we are this, we are that- I'm ashamed. And we *are*." She spoke of predominantly German tourists going to Brazil when she was little and 'hiring sex-workers' (which were really 12- or 13-year-old boys and girls), only to turn around and speak of Latin America like a backwards region. A paradox to say the least. Even so, at the end of the day, Brazil was the bad guy. Cutting down the Amazon and allowing boys and girls to be sold. Even though Esther was aware of Europe's selfish involvement in all of it, the representation of Brazil was so strong she could not possibly feel proud of her culture.

In the end, regardless of the outcome, all individuals tied their sense of belonging or

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[119] Some examples include, *Bakunawa*, by Ruby Ibarra, *I Wear My Roots Like a Medal*, by Dhee, and *Mujer Indígena* by Sara Curruchich, *My Africa* by Sabrina, or *Crown* by Alien Weaponry. It should be noted that the examples mentioned are all songs related to the survival of indigenous culture in spite of colonial powers, and not the connection to one's native culture through migration. However, given that in both cases the individual is separated from their culture and living in a society where a dominant culture limits the ability to interact and live their native culture, the comparison is still relevant.

connection to the nation/culture with different aspects of it. For Esther this was politics, but for many others it was social customs and values. Dutch people are known for being distant and individualistic, and this was noticed by the interviewees as well. Especially those that came from more collectivistic cultures felt a larger breach between themselves and the culture, tapping into social distance theory. Similarly, eating habits were brought up when explaining why individuals did (not) feel Dutch. Another Dutch stereotype that for the interviewees has proven to be true is the *boterham met kaas* (two bread slices with cheese) for lunch. While in other cultures eating is an event where individuals come together, connect and spend time with each other, Dutch eating habits are much more focussed on getting sustenance and moving on. Missing those moments of connection, migrants from 'eating cultures' again felt further distanced from the Dutch.

Coat of Many Colours

As the root metaphor shows, the migrant experience in complicated when it comes to being split between two cultures. However, all interviewees were asked a question that explores the in-between space: Do you feel like a migrant? While the answers differed, all interviewees at one point or another did tap into the feeling of existing in that space between the two ends of the spectrum. They either felt they were part of both cultures or neither. Some individuals remarked that their feelings did not matter. They were migrants on paper and that would never change. Others, in a similar vein, indicated they did not like the word. 'Migrant' wasn't a *feeling* they could express, it is a legal status someone has or doesn't have. Different words were brought up in its stead: world citizen, foreigner, cultural chameleon or simply no alternative because finding a word to describe the in between was impossible. When talking to Julia a long silence fell in which she tried to think of the right way to explain to me how she felt. She did not feel like she was a migrant, because to her the word had a negative or painful connotation (an association with refugees of war or natural disasters). Even when we discussed the possibility of distinguishing migrant and refugee, the word did not feel appropriate. Seeing as she had moved to the Netherlands for love and had been taken in with open arms, that image did not fit. She simply couldn't explain what she was. When I asked her if she'd be able to explain it in French, her native language, she told me she couldn't either. That it was simply a feeling she had.

It is no surprise that talking about one's feelings is difficult. After all, the abstract is turned into concrete words with meaning. However, with Julia, after the interview when we got to talking more informally, the cultural chameleon metaphor came up. While octopi and

plenty of frogs can change their colour to blend in with their surroundings, chameleons have always been a crowd favourite, and it appears that they make a perfect comparison for a migrant that switches back and forth between cultures.

According to Bhatia and Ram, if an identity is to be fixed, it needs to be placed outside culture, race, politics or power. Identity is however not anchored in space, place or nationality. It does not evolve out of universal origins. Identity is shaped along two axes. One of connection to the past and another of painful trauma. Migrants are thus constantly switching to adapt to different situations, and this is well-known amongst them.[120] Migrant programmes need to reflect that too. Referring to LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton's biculturalism, for successful cultural competence this needs to be actively encouraged.[121] Language programmes or jobs that provide space for cultural diversity are examples of situations like these. What is important to remember is that while the space is provided, it may not always be used.

The interviewees also referred to this ability to adapt to new cultures reflecting in the people they are surrounded by. Hind told me of the first weeks in the Netherlands when she knew no one. She wanted to meet her neighbours and walked up to her door and knocked to talk like she would back in Iraq. This is an unusual practice in the Netherlands, and so it was hard, but over time she noticed that her neighbour would do it too, and she now gladly welcomes her into her house.

Through a Child's Eyes

Aside from plant metaphors and animal comparisons the interviews resulted in another analogy, namely that of existing in a childlike state. This comparison is an old and repeated analogy, often coming back in imperialist infantilising practices. Here, the colonising entity presents native populations as children incapable of coherent speech, and thus incapable of representing themselves. This combined with primitiveness allows for the exclusion of colonised subjects from ruling conversations, and denies them the status of mature citizens.[122] The first chapter of this thesis already looked at the legal tools used to control othered populations, in this case the immigrant. But from the interviews it seemed that laws aren't the only ways to achieve this. Several of the migrants drew this comparison.

The clearest example of this came from Amra. With the start of the Yugoslav Wars,

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[120] Bhatia and Ram, "Diaspora Cultures," 148.
[121] LaFromboise et al., "Biculturalism," 403.
[122] Amar Acheraïou, "Colonialism: From Hegemony to Infantilism," In *Rethinking Postcolonialism Colonialist Discourse in Modern Literatures and the Legacy of Classical Writers* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 70-81. 73.

Amra wanted to stay behind and fight for her country, but her cousin and brother thought it was too dangerous. She was then pressured by them to join said cousin and her family to go to the Netherlands. Together with the couple and their six-year-old son, she arrived in Rotterdam and slept with the four of them in a car for a week. After that, they went to the police station and exchanged their German Marks for Dutch Guilders. With that money, they went to the Blaak market. Amra spoke of her cousin's fear at the sight of it. Saying the woman was scared of everything and fearful that someone would have bad intentions. Meanwhile, she and the little boy were staring in awe at everything. "It was very big for us. 'Wow! Look at this! And look at how much food! What is all this?' Everything for us was 'wow'. For the little kid and me."

By being put in a new environment where everything was strange and new, Amra felt as if she were looking at the world the same way as the six-year-old boy. As the literature suggests, when arriving in a new setting where one does not understand the language, the customs and very often is unable to navigate society on their own, they are left feeling lost. The acculturation process leads to acculturation problems due to uncertainty of being understood, which lead to mental health problems. "Traumatic experiences, trauma related psychopathology, postmigration stress, and acculturation problems appear to confuse cultural identity among this study group."[123] However, Acheraïou reminds us that the act of marking the Other as guided by a child's sense of insecurity and anxiety over the unfamiliar can be a dangerous—yet successful—tool to maintain the dependent relationship between an oppressor and the oppressed.

In a similar vein, Esther, a Brazilian migrant already fluent in English and Portuguese had to start learning the language from scratch. She compared the things they learn to that of a child: the alphabet, numbers, greetings, etc. Being led through the world like a child can be tied back to the sense of self-sufficiency that was discussed in the chapter on formal integration. Upon arrival migrants are completely dependent on their network, however, unlike children, they have experienced the freedom and responsibilities of an adult. It can thus be incredibly frustrating to not be able to act as one.

While not told though the child-comparison, Emebet did refer to this frustration in her studies. She already had a degree in veterinarian studies from Russia, where she had gone to before coming to the Netherlands. This degree however was not validated by the Dutch government, meaning she had to retake her studies. She told me that she did not want

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[123] Simon P. N. Groen, et al., "Cultural Identity Confusion and Psychopathology: A Mixed-Methods Study Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease 207*, no.3 (2019): 162-170, https://doi.org/10.1097/nmd.0000000000000935. 162.

to study again, neither for a career, nor a language. She had already learned Russian and English, and was now expected to add Dutch to the tally. In the end she forced herself to work through that frustration and get all her degrees.

This was thus a relatively recurring theme in the interviews. All migrants acknowledged the importance of learning the language and were willing to work for it, but the frustration and time consumption that came paired with it had to be overcome with a strong-willed mindset. While the migrants made the child comparison, it did not appear to be born from a position of inferiority. Rather it was a way of explaining that due to external circumstances, suddenly the migrants were placed in a disadvantageous position, forced into the childlike state. Their knowledge, memories and opinions could not be expressed, not due to lack of ability on their part, but a lack of communication channels, and perhaps even lack of understanding on the receiver's end.

National surveys have shown that while the Dutch believe integration is a bilateral process where both the migrant and the native are involved, they do consider that the personal responsibility of the migrant is most relevant to its success. This sentiment is shared by migrants as well.[124] It could be that this feeling originates with the desire to be self-sufficient and be rid of the sensation of being a child. Getting to know the culture, forming one's own friendships and being financially independent are big drivers in that. But the interview with Karim did show that integration and self-sufficiency are not a one-way street. He recalled attending a coaching session with a young refugee who was told to go to a psychologist. He had to pull the coach aside and explain to her that she couldn't just say that. While her intentions were good, she had essentially told the newcomer he was crazy. He told me, "we have a lot to learn from the Dutch, but they also have to get to know our cultures, because it is giving and taking."

Biculturally Fluid

The results from the interviews reveal that indeed migrants actively exist between their two cultures. That means that they are firstly aware of the distinction between the cultures, and secondly choose to act on both of these. Incorporating values from both sides. Most migrants, being refugees from war-torn regions or fleeing dictatorships, felt a strong passion for the freedom of the Netherlands. The ability to speak their minds, express their religion or see people acting differently. As much as it was at times difficult and they did not

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[124] Adviesraad Migratie, "Afgewogen Arbeidsmigratie," *Adviesraad Migratie* (2024). 58; "Bijlage 3, Integratie van migranten in Nederland: Adviesrapport Afgewogen Arbeidsmigratie. Gericht Arbeidsmigratiebeleid voor Brede Welvaart," *Adviesraad Migratie* (2024). 4.

agree with everything they learned, the Dutch 'tolerance' seemed to be important to them. Simultaneously, the process of learning and 'becoming Dutch' was hard and at times a lonely road when it came to outside support. One of the primary hinderances to this was the language. As previously discussed, language is a key success factor to creating meaning and thus a connection with any society or culture. Being put in a childlike state, despite of the ability to act as an adult delayed the process of connecting with Dutch culture. The migrant's agency is supressed rather than encouraged, and keeps they in a situation where they cannot develop their bicultural identity as easily as when they have access to situations where they can develop their natural language skills and employ their knowledge and memories to form relationships with others.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

"Ik vind zo'n culturele kameleon zijn echt heel leuk."

"I really like being one of those cultural chameleons."

- Farid Radan

This thesis has looked at one of the most contested discussions in Dutch and global politics at the moment, namely migrant integration. With political and social debates asking questions about who should be let into the country and how those allowed to stay should integrate, it is an impossible topic to ignore. While academic research shows that successful coexistence between different cultures is economically, socially and even scientifically beneficial to everyone involved, reality shows that this is harder than it sounds. At the end of the day, a sense of belonging is necessary for a good life, and daily life looks a lot different, with migrants experiencing disconnection, and natives sharing the sentiment with the newcomers. There thus remains a lot of dissatisfaction in both native inhabitants and migrants about integration, but there is little research into why this is and what can be done about it.

This research aimed to close the gap and better understand what creates a sense of belonging to a culture and how cultural identities are shaped. Based on a deductive thematic analysis of 13 interviews, it can be concluded that migrants' cultural identities are at their core bicultural and fluid. The results indicate that migrants seek pathways of their own accord to adopt the host culture, whilst maintaining their native culture as well. They exist in a space between these, but most importantly, they have agency and control over how and when to act on each culture. Depending on the environment, the openness of their surroundings, and personal interest in the respective cultures, they act more according to Dutch values or their native ones. At the same time, an understanding environment and openness from its actors (regardless of their cultural background) creates a willingness to explore the host culture, or even present the native culture in return. On top of that, migrants' personal experiences and preferences for political or social beliefs, also inform their internalised values. This willingness to interact with both cultures was born from primarily informal integration. The non-formalised environments made the interviewees feel more at home that the organised and structured processes they had to undergo.

Think Big, Act Small

By analysing the integration experiences of migrants, this thesis has shown that informal integration is the most relevant to forming said cultural identity. Formal integration is a necessary tool for settling in the country and laying the groundwork to later explore cultural identity, but does not support the migrant in developing a sense of belonging. This is instead done through social connections and 'the small things', such as listening to music, going to a party with people or meeting on a weekly basis for an activity. This research clearly shows that a successful integration process needs to be focussed on the local social sphere, but it also raises questions about how to successfully achieve this goal. The interviews revealed moments when the migrants felt welcomed. Examples of these are culture days at social work centres where people brought food, clothing and music from their native countries, day trips to nearby cities with large groups of people around the same age, or even 'hanging out' after language classes with Dutch volunteers at asylum seeker centres.

These events, while successful according to the interviewees, were not institutionalised. That means that if it weren't for the migrants' internal drive they would never have come in contact with these environments. To that we can add the fact that the interviewees in nearly all cases learned about these networks through fellow migrants. In other words, the government played no part in this informal integration. Furthermore, if the Dutch government wants to have integrated migrants, it has to support and promote local initiatives focused on informal integration and to generate situations where migrants and native people share time and activities. These are moments when migrants and natives can interact and exchange their culture in non-artificial ways, that stimulate the desire to engage with the lifestyle and values of the Other.

Future research and limitations

To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could assess instances where these programmes have been carried out. A deep dive into local projects that stimulate interaction between newcomers and the Dutch can help determine how they are best organised, how to reach the desired audiences, and identify potential blind spots that this thesis did not address. One of the primary factors to keep in mind is the distance addressed by the migrants. Seeing as they perceive the Dutch as rather reserved people, this might hinder in-depth connections, which have proven to lead to successful integration. More research into migrants' stances is also needed to find tools that are already supporting

them. As addressed earlier, migrants' voices are often pushed to the background, with research looking mostly at the macrolevels through surveys and statistics. This thesis has aimed to break with that trend by opting instead for a closer look at individual experiences.

While the scope of this research of 13 interviews limits the generalisation of the findings, this approach provides insights into the daily acts that create meaning for the migrants. Granted that a sense of belonging is a personal experience that cannot be expressed as easily through a survey, the use of the interviewees' stories is imperative to better understand what successful integration actually looks like. However, it should be noted that more data needs to be collected to be able to apply these findings to a larger scale. Yet, as Penninx and his colleagues noted there remains a need for local perspectives and the voices of those most affected. That means that the further collection of data should not result in the neglect of migrant experiences.

In conclusion, if the Netherlands wishes to benefit from the proven advantages of cultural diversity, it will have to turn its sights towards local initiatives, because these achieve more for informal integration than expensive programs, mostly aimed to border control. That means focussing its efforts on collaborating with existing networks that are in contact with migrants (e.g. Vluchtelingenwerk, social centres, NGOs, etc.) and involving the native population as well. High school programmes that encourage students to collaborate with migrants, promoting cultural festivals in workspaces and facilitating the participation of migrants in volunteer work where the Dutch are also active. Laws and integration policies should look for involvement of the native people, or at least, create opportunities for migrants to socially interact with native people.

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Appendix I

All names in this appendix are fictional to protect the identity and privacy of the participants. The column for migration types distinguish between refugees which are the first to settle into the country, and those who come as part of family reunification programmes. While they are also refugees on paper, their partner, child or parent has already received all the necessary qualifications, and so they arrive through regular migration.

	Last name	Native identity/country	Year	Gender	Migration type
Hamide	Ghorbani	Iran	1991	Female	Family reunification
Julia	Drost	France	1992	Female	Partner
Emebet*	N.A.	Ethiopia	1992	Female	Refugee
Mirjana	Koscina	Yugoslav/Croatia	1995	Female	Refugee
Emina	Mancic	Yugoslav/Serbia	1997	Female	Labour/Refugee
Hind	Jalil	Kurdish/Iraq	1998	Female	Family reunification
Cristina	Álvarez	Spain	2000	Female	Partner
Esther	De Sousa	Brazil	2000	Female	Partner
Farid**	Radan	Iran	2000	Male	Refugee
Supriya	Rishi	India	2006	Female	Labour
Baran**	Memar	Kurdish/Syria	2017	Female	Family reunification
Amra	Marjanović	Yugoslav/Serbia	1989	Female	Refugee
María	Peña	Venezuela/Colombia		Female	Student
Karim***	Massoud	Syrian/Saudi Arabia	2020	Male	Refugee

* Emebet solely has a first name, given that in Ethiopia last names are not given.

** Farid's interview was not used for the content of this thesis given that he arrived in the Netherlands when he was 5 years old. This meant that he at no point had to undergo integration per Dutch law. His answers were used to make the preface and provided the opening quote to chapter 5. Baran also arrived as a minor, but she turned 16 before finalising her integration process, and so she had to follow the integration track. She did the integration exams and language exams as a foreigner. On top of that, as a refugee she was provided with a coach. Because of this her responses are counted as valid for the study.

*** Karim self-identified as Syrian and Saudi Arabian, but due to Saudi Arabian laws he was a stateless person at the time of the interview.

Appendix II

All interviews were semi-structured with the following topics:

- Desire/reason to migrate (involved actors, personal feelings, internal conflict, etc.)
- Expectations upon arrival (people, food, values, schooling, work, etc.)
- Support upon arrival (government, NGOs, family, friends, locals, etc.)
- Organisation of integration (mandatory tracks, examinations, paperwork, etc.)
- Guidance of integration (coach, family, friends, teachers, government, etc.)
- Connection to city (places, people, friends, natives/migrants, etc.)
- Connection to Netherlands (places, people, friends, natives/migrants, etc.)
- Connection to home country/culture (places, people, friends, natives/migrants, etc.)
- Connection to migration (places, people, friends, natives/migrants, etc.)
- Values (difficulty to learn, means of learning, desire to learn, etc.)
- Self-perception (values, social connections, free space)

Here follows a list of the exact questions the researcher had on hand during the interviews. Not all of the questions were asked, nor were they asked in this exact form. These were guiding questions to help lead the interview, but the topics in Appendix II were leading for the interview.

Part 0: Preparation:

- Personal information and small talk (Name, age, ethnicity, occupation etc.).

Part 1: Migration

- What year did you come to Rotterdam?
- Why did you come to the Netherlands? Why did you choose to come to Rotterdam? What did you do to prepare for your moving? What did you expect to find here?
- What was your first day in Rotterdam like? What stuck by you? What do you remember of it? What surprised you about the city?
- Who were the first people that you had contact with? How was that interaction? What did you think when you arrived? What was your first impression?

Part 2: Formal integration

- What was expected of you in Rotterdam? What did you have to do to stay here? How did you find out about this? Who helped you along? Who checked up on you/kept an eye on you?

- Where did you carry this out? How did you arrive at this place? How was this organised? Who helped you reach this programme? What was this programme for?

- What did you expect to learn from this programme? What did you think it was going to be like? What had you heard about the programme?

- What did a day at this place look like? What do you remember about it? What did you learn from this programme?

- How did it affect your relationship with the Netherlands/Rotterdam? How did the programme relate to the reality of the Rotterdam? What did the programme fail to help you with?

Part 3: Informal integration

- Who were the first people you connected with in Rotterdam? What were these people like? What do you remember about your first interactions?

- How did you come into contact with these people? Why did you seek them out? What did this relationship and others like it teach you about Rotterdam and the Dutch?

- How would you describe the Dutch? How do you relate to these descriptions?

- Do you have any contacts here from your native culture? What are these people like? What do you remember about your first interactions?

- How did you come into contact with these people? Why did you seek them out? What did this relationship and others like it teach you about Rotterdam and migrant culture?

- How would you describe your home culture? How do you relate to these descriptions?

Part 4: Identity

- What values were you taught through the integration programmes? How did you see these in daily life? How do you relate to them as a migrant? Did they feel natural to you? Was it hard to adapt to these values?

- What was the hardest for you to learn? Why was that so? Did you want to learn it? How so?
- What was the easiest for you to learn? Why was that so? Did you want to learn it? How so?
- When do you feel a part of Dutch society? How do you feel when you act Dutch? Does it feel foreign? Is it a natural sensation? Why do you choose to adopt Dutch culture?
- What values do you carry with you from your home culture? How do these relate to Dutch culture? How has it been to carry these values with you in the Netherlands?
- When do you feel a part of your home culture? How do you feel when you act Dutch? Does it feel foreign? Is it a natural sensation? Why do you choose to stay in contact with your native culture?
- Would you say you feel like a migrant? What causes this sensation? What moments make you feel as such?
- When do you feel most like yourself? When can you be yourself? Do you actively behave according to these cultures that you live with? How do you choose when to behave Dutch or of your native culture?

Appendix III

<u>Information and consent form</u>

Introduction

Dear participant,

I am a MA history student at the Erasmus University Rotterdam doing my thesis and want to shed new light on the experiences of migrants in Rotterdam between 1989 and 2020. My project is explained below.

If you have any questions, please ask me. While reading, you can mark parts of the text that are unclear to you. If you want to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of my research is to collect and preserve stories about the experiences and memories of individuals who migrated to Rotterdam between 1989 and 2020. The results will help us better understand integration in Rotterdam by looking at the unique aspects of the city's programmes and citizens. And I also hope to give a voice to migrants whose stories have not been fully told, enriching the history of migration in the region.

Participants selection

I ask you to participate because of your experience as a migrant in Rotterdam and the integration that you did to become a part of Dutch society.

Interview

The project takes place in March 2025, as part of my master thesis project. I will conduct interviews with a dozen migrants in Rotterdam.

If you participate in this study, you will take part in <u>an interview</u> <u>conducted by me</u>. Each interview will last about 1,5-2 hours and will be conducted <u>in English, Dutch or Spanish</u>. If you do not want to answer a question during the interview, you are not required to do so. I will make an audio recording of the conversation. At the end of the interview, you will have the opportunity to comment on your answers and you can always ask me to have parts of them amended or deleted.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can stop at any time and would not need to provide any explanation.

There are no immediate, or financial benefits for participating in the study, however sharing your experiences

may shed some light on the situation concerning your own role in migrant history of Rotterdam. You can also be provided with the final result of the thesis if you wish to see it.

Personal data and research

Your personal data with be handle with care and will be saved in a safe university data storage.

During the interview, I will ask you about some personal data: your name, age, gender, occupation. Only I will know your personal data such as address, phone number, date of birth or occupation. This data will be stored separately from the rest of the findings.

The interview recording will be used by me to support my research. The final research will not be shared with the public. As a participant of this study you will receive a summary of the interview by email, in June of 2025. The summary will be done by me.

In case that the MA thesis will be published (publicly share the results) in (academic) journals and on the repository of the EUR, I may use your specific answers, but in that case I will always come back to you, to check if you give me permission to quote you or anonymise your answer.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to withdraw your consent to use the personal data that you have provided at any time. Data processed before the withdrawal of your consent is lawfully collected and can be used for the research. You do not have to justify your decision to withdraw your consent and there are no consequences for withdrawing your consent.

Right to privacy

You have the right to request access to your personal data and to request rectification, erasure, restriction, data portability, and to object to the processing of your personal data under certain circumstances.

Do you have a complaint or concerns about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl. (T: 088 - 1805250)

If you would like to lodge a complaint concerning privacy, you can do this with the national supervisory authority in the Netherlands on personal data (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens).

Who to contact?

If you have any questions about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data, please contact me Nuria Mainer Millán, 559697nm@student.eur.nl.

Declaration of Consent

I have read the information letter. I understand what the study is about and what data will be collected from me. I was able to ask questions as well. My questions were adequately answered.

By signing this form, I:
1. consent to participate in this research;
2. consent to the use of my personal data
3. confirm that I am at least 18 years old;
4. confirm that I understand that participating in this research is completely voluntary and that I can stop at any time;
5. confirm that that I agree to the interview being recorded
6. confirm that I understand that my data will be de-identified for further research and publication, unless I give my explicit consent to the Quotes and Actual Name options below.

Check the boxes below if you consent to this.

Audio recording
I consent to the interview being audio-recorded.

My answers in the article/thesis
I give permission for my answers to be used in papers, such as an article in a journal or thesis, only if my answers will de-identified.

My answers in the article with my name
 I give permission for my name to be used with my answers in an article/thesis.

Use for educational purposes and further research
I hereby consent to having my personal data, namely my name, age and gender, stored and used for educational purposes and for future research.

Name of participant:

Participant's signature: **Date:**