

## **The Netherlands: A Dutch Treat For Anti-Social Families And Immigrant Ethnic Minorities**

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### ***Introduction***

Social science research into migratory and post-migratory processes in Europe deals to some extent with the way in which certain categories of immigrants are ideologically problematized and are excluded from regular social resources. A key concept here is *racism*. What racism really is – i.e. what phenomena can be indicated by the concept – and how racism is embedded in its social environment, has for years been the subject of heated theoretical debate. That debate is, among other things, about whether racism is a matter of ideology or of (intended or unintended) practices. It is also about whether racism revolves round the signification and negative evaluation of phenotypical racial characteristics or those of cultural traits; about how far the colonial project is essential for the development of racism; and what impact racism has on class relationships. So far this debate has not led to any unequivocal conclusions. In so far as tendencies do appear, they are contradictory.

On the one hand there is the current tendency to label as racist discourses which have so far not been considered to be racist. The introduction of the concept of *neo-racism* is significant here. According to Barker (1981), with whom the concept became identified, racism is now expressed in cultural terms and no longer in biological ones. The concept of neo-racism should express both the continuity and the renewal of the phenomenon. Moreover it is the case that few students of racism today still assume that racism denotes a simple and static complex of beliefs and values. Following in particular Hall (1989: 917; see also 1980: 336) they start from the assumption that racism 'is historically specific, and applies to the period, the culture and the type of society in which it occurs'. Consequently they no longer talk of racism, but – in the plural – of *racisms*.

On the other hand there is a tendency to localize racism exclusively in colonial and post-colonial relationships. The occurrence of racism in European centres is then directly related to the migration of black people from former colonial territories. The title of the otherwise fascinating collection of papers entitled *The Empire strikes back. Race and racism in 70s Britain* illustrates this tendency in full. This theoretical demarcation has the consequence that other types of racism are excluded in advance from the researchers' field of view, or are defined as non-existent.

In this article these contradictory tendencies are discussed in the light of the theoretical insights of Robert Miles, the British sociologist, and as such this article can be considered as a critical appraisal of his work. In several publications he calls for theoretical and empirical research to be done into instances of racism outside the colonial context (Miles 1991a, 1991b, 1993a, 1993b). Miles argues that such exercises put us in a better position to identify, understand, and explain racism. The evidence he offers is so far rather thin, but that fault is easily remedied by carrying out more research. More problematical is the suggestion that all discourses of problematizing sections of the population of the exterior or interior should be labelled without hesitation as instances of racism or racialization. This article is in fact a plea for not starting from such an assumption *a priori*, and substantiates this suggestion by empirical data from the Netherlands. Before, however, discussing the specific case of the Netherlands the definition of the concept of racism and the context within which the phenomenon should be analysed will be examined more closely.

### ***Racialization and racism***

In his book *Racism*, Miles (1989: 41-68) dwelt at length on the definition of racism. He derides the trend of many modern students of racism to stretch definitions so that all kinds of other specific discourses – such as cultural or nationalist ones – can be included in the concept. Nor is he happy about the tendency of other students to relativize the social significance of ideologies or intentions, and to label already the origin or the maintenance of black disadvantage as racism. Miles belittles these developments as

'conceptual inflation', and he is right in doing so. With all these increasingly broad definitions it becomes steadily less clear what the essence of racism is.

Miles himself describes *racism* as a specific form of evaluative representation, analytically distinguishable from exclusionary practices. He considers racism as an ideology of dominance, grounded but not determined by a specific combination of political and economical relations. As an ideology racism gives direction, or legitimacy, to a certain inequality in the distribution of class positions and social resources. According to Miles (*ibid.*: 79) it is racism when collectivities identified as 'races' are 'attributed with additional, negatively evaluated characteristics and/or [are] represented as inducing negative consequences for any other'. Racism thus implies the ranking of social collectivities.

Miles puts forward an important idea when he says that racism is a specific articulation of a wider (descriptive) process of *racialization* and that it is consequently of essential importance to get a hold on that process. After all, the ideological construction of collectivities – in fact thinking in terms of 'race' – logically precedes the construction of a hierarchy of these collectivities. Miles (1989: 70) describes the process of racialization as the process of attributing meanings 'to particular objects, features and processes, in such a way that the latter are given special significance, and carry or are embodied with a set of additional, second order features'. It should be noted that Miles is not quite clear as to the nature of the characteristics signified. In his book *Racism* on page 76 he restricts the concepts of racialization and thus of racism to instances of signification of 'biological features of human beings' only, whereas on page 79 of the same book he argues that those characteristics may be 'either biological or cultural'. In the light of the position he takes in Miles (1993b), I take it that racialization and racism refer to instances of signification of real or alleged biological characteristics of people or of cultural characteristics which are considered as fixed or naturalized as 'the criterion by which a collectivity may be identified'.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the collectivity is represented as having a natural, unchanging origin and status, and therefore inherently different' (*ibid.*: 79). The logical consequence of this strict definition is that the signification of other characteristics than those mentioned cannot be included as instances of racialization. Even less then can that process lead to racism.

How racism is manifested cannot be foreseen. Miles (1993a; see also 1992) writing about British literature, but also referring to other literature (e.g. van Dijk 1991: 26-27; Essed 1991: 39) suggests, however, that students of racism mainly treat this concept in an unidimensional and monocausal sense. He argues that they often start from the assumption that 'the only or the most important racism is that which has "black" people as its object'.<sup>2</sup> The use of such a concept excludes to a greater or lesser extent that any non-black population can be the object of racism. Wrong, thinks Miles. He ascribes the popularity of this theoretical assumption to the predominance of the colonial paradigm of racism and to the influence of political and academic discourses in the United States. The colonial paradigm of racism is founded on the empirical data of the history of (British) colonialism and the subsequent immigration of black immigrant workers and others from former colonial territories (to Britain). Though in themselves undeniable, these data are fairly specific. Miles (1991b: 538) suggests therefore that 'theories of racism which are grounded solely in the analysis of colonial history and which prioritize the single somatic characteristic of skin colour [have] a rather limited explanatory power'.

The limitations are revealed when the historical development of various European nation states is compared. For instance, the existence of racism in Luxembourg, Germany, Poland or Switzerland can hardly be explained by the colonial history of these respective nation states, though some have in fact made an attempt in this direction (Castles, Booth and Wallace 1984; see for a critical view Bovenkerk, Miles and Verbunt 1991: 382). Moreover, the ideological representation of some categories of non-black natives sometimes shows remarkable congruence with those of some categories of black immigrants, an empirical fact that also in the British context can only with difficulty be shown as being inherent in the colonial scheme. For the record: it has never been denied that in specific cases there can be a link between racism and colonialism. What is in question is whether the history of colonialism is a sufficiently adequate starting point for theoretical discussion about the nature and significance of racism in present-day Europe.

How can the problem be solved? Miles (1991b; see also Bovenkerk, Miles and Verbunt 1990; Schuster 1998) suggests as an alternative starting point the formation and continued existence of nation states. In a general sense it is a question of the demarcation of an area of territory within which their own forms of citizenship and of political representation are valid, and within which a state apparatus operates that contributes to the continuity of the dominant means of production, the reproduction of class relationships, the distribution and redistribution of social resources, and the maintenance of the unity of the nation as such. More particularly it is a question of defining the boundaries of the nation, that is to say the processes which continually define and confirm who belongs and on what conditions, and who does not

belong to the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) called nation, thus the processes which define the Self and the Other and the differences between them. In every case there is the idea that those who belong to the nation have some specific common attributes regardless of social class, sex or anything else. It must be quite clear that this ideological representativeness is specific and – if only because of existing class differences – is inherently contradictory.

### ***The interrelationship between the interior and exterior Others***

Racialization and racism belong to the processes which in certain circumstances can be part of the process of forming a nation state. This is, for example, the case in Great Britain. The black population in the colonial territories of the British empire – later the black immigrant workers in Britain from former colonial territories – were in this way ideologically isolated from the dominant majority of the population: there is a widespread idea that blacks do not belong to the British race. However, if we do not concentrate only on colonial relationships and on black people, other modalities come into the picture. For instance, in the last century some fractions of the white working class inside the nation state became problematized on almost identical grounds.

What had happened? In previous times, the bourgeois class, eager to safeguard their privileged and dominant position, looked for ways to distinguish themselves from common people. This was done among other things by a refinement of their own values and manners. Paradoxically enough they also aimed at forging the nation of which they were a part into a homogeneous unity – on their own civilized terms, be it understood – without wanting to remove the differences between and within classes. In this process the bourgeois class identified all kinds of 'unsound' elements, people who in their eyes did not fit into the image of a civilized nation. In this way they constructed within the bounds of the nation state two dialectically connected categories of people: the 'civilized Self' and the 'uncivilized Other'. This second category – also so called 'dangerous class' – consisted mainly of members of the subordinate classes such as the rural peasantry and the expanding urbanized working class. It is of importance theoretically that the various categories of people were represented as *races apart*. On the one hand the bourgeoisie thought 'that its values and manners were more a matter of *inheritance* than a social construction' (Miles 1991a; author's italics). On the other hand 'the "backwardness" and "insularity" of rural peasants, and the "savagery" of the urbanized working class [were] often interpreted as *biological attributes* which obstructed their incorporation as "races" into membership of the nation' (Miles 1993a; my italics). For these reasons Miles identifies and labels this model as *racism of the interior*<sup>3</sup> as opposed to the better known *racism of the exterior*.

The parallels and even the historical linkages between these interior and exterior processes are remarkable. Miles (1991a) refers emphatically in this connection to the ideology of the *civilizing mission*. The colonial project claimed as one of its objectives the civilization of 'backward races'. This civilization came down to 'in varying combination, conversion to Christianity, the provision of elementary education (to teach "good manners" and to ensure at least some degree of literacy [...]) and the organization of labour order to ensure commodity production'. Within the boundaries of the nation state a similar civilizing mission was carried out, this time directed at the interior Others. This scheme was 'logical' because it fitted smoothly on to 'a preceding signification of these interior Others as inferior Others'.

Miles' contribution to the theoretical debate – fitting racialization and racism into the continuous formation of nation states, and the congruence between interior and exterior processes which could be distinguished analytically – is in any case interesting and valuable. However, I cannot help wondering whether a new unidimensionality is hidden in an approach within which the problematizing of specific categories of the population – of the exterior or the interior, and irrespective of their colour – is invariably analysed in terms of *race*. The reference to phenotypical and naturalized cultural characteristics applies perhaps to the specific empirical instances of Great Britain or France, but not necessarily to other nation states. Miles (1989: 119; see also Bovenkerk, Miles and Verbunt 1990) usually recognizes this, but seems sometimes to do so a bit inconsistently. For instance, he suggests that in certain European countries (notably Germany, the Netherlands and France) the notion of race 'has largely disappeared from official and much public discourse. Explicit references to human differentiation in terms of a fixed biological ranking, and sustained by assertions of congenital inferiority, are equally rare (*although belief in the existence of "races" remains widespread*)' (Miles 1991a; my italics). Elsewhere he says that 'the history of nation state formation in Europe, is a history of a multiplicity of *interior* processes including those of *civilization* and *racialization*' (1993a; author's italics). It seems to me that Miles, in the absence of empirical research, is somewhat too definite here. At least, he does not mention what possibly equivalent processes might look like.

I would like to investigate further how far it is necessary to speak of racialization and of racism, or of such functionally equivalent ideological representations of interior Others, by looking at the specific example of the problematizing of native 'anti-social families' (*onmaatschappelijke gezinnen*) in the Netherlands. The struggle against anti-socialness waged mainly and most intensively in this century – but never with complete success – is particularly interesting because it demonstrates striking similarities, both ideologically and practically, with the present-day approach to 'immigrant ethnic minorities'.

### ***The problematizing of interior Others: the anti-social families approach***

For at least a century there have been intensive efforts in the Netherlands to absorb families into the life of the nation or at least to discipline them. This has particularly been the case with families who over the years 'have been described variously as inadmissible, anti-social, socially ill, unsocial, socially maladjusted, deprived, underprivileged, and problem and multi-problem families' (van Wel 1992). The state and a great many private social institutions have tried in many ways to intervene in the life of these families. In doing so they went further than would have been thought possible in any other nation state. Until late in the 1950s whole families were transferred for treatment into separate hostels or encampments in the countryside far from the conurbation. A broad outline of the development of this unique example of social intervention is given below, together with the ideological representation of the interior Others affected by this intervention. The outline is inevitably a very broad one.

#### Up to the Second World War

For a good understanding of the situation we must go back more than 100 years. In the late nineteenth century, when industrialization was finally getting into its stride in the Netherlands, a social class of proletarian factory workers came into existence. The members of this class were recruited from the rural areas round the industrial centres. The inhuman living conditions under which the proletarians existed provoked a reaction from enlightened liberals among the bourgeoisie. They mobilized their forces from moral repugnance, but also from fear of revolt by the impoverished mob. They pressed for laws and measures to protect the socially and economically disadvantaged and to raise them from their pitiable condition (de Regt 1984: 243; see also Roes *et al.* 1987). It was not long before the state followed in their footsteps. It unfurled a range of initiatives in the fields of poverty relief, unemployment relief, education, social housing and health care. This was particularly the case around the turn of the century in municipalities dominated by the democratic socialists.

These socialists hoped to accelerate the defeat of capitalism by the working class by social and economic improvements, but also by moral improvement (*zedelijke verheffing*) of the working class. Although this was primarily regarded as an essential part of the collective emancipation of the working class, it also had practical motives. In the eyes of the socialist vanguard self-discipline, devotion to duty, and class consciousness encouraged willingness to take collective action. The moral improvement was achieved by (socio-cultural) education of the working classes; for this purpose workers' evening classes, libraries, outdoor pursuits, theatrical and singing groups, and youth organizations were established (Dercksen and Verplanke 1987: 42; de Regt 1984). In practice the moral improvement came down to a 'civilizing offensive' (*beschavingsoffensief*) based on such themes as order, neatness, industriousness, thrift, and devotion to duty. This offensive was, for that matter, not exclusively restricted to the democratic socialists. The Christian democrats also played its part in the fight against moral depravity, by which they understood primarily the slide into godlessness and socialism.

The ideals of culture and civilization seem to have caught on mainly with the educated, better paid and better organized workers (Leydesdorff 1987). De Regt (1984: 242-243) and van Wel (1992: 149) suggest that this is the result of the search for distinction of the upwardly mobile groups of workers. They did not want to be identified with the working population lagging behind in the slums, the rough mob of illiterate, casual, unorganized labourers. They distinguished themselves from them by assuming a more respectable and socially respected life style, by which they in fact meant the life style of the middle class. In this respect it is significant that the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDAP) and the trade unions linked to it were mainly organized by educated workers who had succeeded in rising socially. Meyer, Kouprie and Sikkens (1980) believe in this connection that the socialist leaders actually were not sure what to do about the unorganized workers whom they feared because of the risk of spontaneous go-slows, wildcat strikes, riots and brawls, which ran counter to the civilized parliamentary strategies of the SDAP and the unions.

As time went on the emancipating groups had less and less sympathy for accepting the 'unrespectable' behaviour of those 'left behind' (de Regt 1984: 202-205). Gradually their moral improvement acquired a less voluntary character. For instance, municipal authorities used their responsibility for social housing to come to grips with 'socially weak families'. In Amsterdam, where the socialists dominated local politics, housing officials identified these families as a problem group and attached the term inadmissible (*ontoelaatbaar*) to them. They next denied 'inadmissible families' access to normal council housing. They could go straight into housing schools (*woonscholen*), special residential areas under the supervision of wardens, who educated them into being respectable people. Partly because psychiatrists applied themselves to the problem, the counselling of the residents was to some extent focused on to their psychological state. The struggle against anti-socialness gradually became institutionalized, while the approach to it increasingly became a professional one.

Inadmissible families were defined as a problem, because they neglected their accommodation, were destructive, made a mess, caused trouble among themselves or with their neighbours, and failed to pay their rent on time (de Regt 1984: 205-212). This deviant behaviour was increasingly associated with characteristics like drunkenness, child neglect, crime and mental deficiency. It was not only the way they lived, but the total functioning in society of those involved which became the problem. By this definition all the characteristics combined to form a syndrome dominating the lives of these people and damaging for society.

Anti-socialness is more than a socio-cultural or moral problem, it is in all its aspects a problem of class. Its existence is inseparably linked to the growth of modern capitalist mode of production and the accompanying development of social classes. The anti-social behaviour of the lowest fractions of the working class bring painful memories of their own origins to the higher fractions (de Regt 1984: 199-203). The latter clearly experience the changed relations of production and the emergence of class differences in terms of respectability and culture. In one sense the civilizing mission against anti-socialness can also be regarded as a struggle for the socio-cultural hegemony of the middle class, sanctioned by the state.

In the inter-war years several academics looked for the cause of anti-socialness in mental incapacity and suggested that this was a question of temperament and heredity. The supporters of eugenics who put this point of view forward, believed that lower classes and races should not be given the chance to reproduce themselves, as otherwise the whole population would degenerate. The eugenic point of view can plainly be characterized as racism of the interior. However, Dercksen and Verplanke (1987: 53-67) suggest that the adherents of eugenics in the Netherlands were not successful in getting wide acceptance for their ideas (see also Noordman 1990).<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, another ideological tendency became dominant. In this period most people came to accept that the 'problem of anti-social families' could be traced back to wretched living conditions which had existed for generations. In their belief long-term deprivation led to backwardness and degeneration of character which were perfectly curable. The dominant ideological representation of anti-social families depended on the whole not on people's racialized traits, but on the signification and the negative evaluation of socio-cultural features of people from the lowest social classes without these features being classified as either unchangeable or natural.

#### The 1940s and 1950s

During the Second World War and for a short time afterwards the civilizing mission went ahead undiminished (Dercksen and Verplanke 1987: 89-104). Reconstruction was taken seriously in hand and the Dutch economy was set on its feet again. But reconstruction was not just a matter of economics. During the war morals values were relaxed and disturbed, and everywhere there was concern about social upheaval and moral degradation (Neij 1989: 41). Some people lacked any moral substance and suffered from loss of religious faith and broken families: the anti-socials.

The socialists pointed to the dark side of modern society (Meyer *et al.* 1980: 56-60). Its massiveness and its large scale led in their opinion to depersonalization, to a dulling of social relations and to undermining the community spirit. Particularly the 'socially elusive' were susceptible to this: they thought only of their own interests, did not take part in social, cultural, political or religious organizations and so escaped their influence, lived on their emotions, were uncritical, were unconscious of moral values and social norms, and as a result were an enduring hidden danger (Hoekstra: 1950).<sup>5</sup> The Christian democrats too pointed to the crying need for moral and cultural improvement as well as for economic progress. Moral reconstruction they regarded primarily as a sound religious and family life.

But what was to be done with those who ignored conventional morals? Not three months after the liberation experts came to the conclusion that anti-social families had to be put under supervision and re-educated. They advised that this must inevitably be compulsory. However, the legislation did not authorize

compulsory residence in special institutions for families. Amendments were considered but in the end were not implemented because of the ethical implications of deprivation of liberty (van Wel 1992: 152). 'Voluntary' residence did come within the law.

Almost the only people to go to the Family Institutions for Socially Maladjusted Families (*Gezinsoorden voor Maatschappelijk Onaangepaste Gezinnen*) were those living in great poverty, who had little education, were not in regular work, and whose living conditions were very poor (*ibid.*: 105-187). In the eyes of contemporaries they had only themselves to blame for these distressing circumstances, and they were not yet capable of catching up with the rapid developments in society. The men were said to lack responsibility, hardly cared for their wives and children, and failed to make a living properly. Their re-education was directed at giving them a sound work-ethic, meaning that they had to learn to turn up for work regularly and on time, work properly, behave correctly towards their superiors and their fellow workers, recognize their place in the hierarchy of power, and so on. The women had to cope with other problems. They were supposed to have discarded their natural responsibility as mothers, neglected their children, wasted money and were unhygienic. Their re-education concentrated on housework and motherhood. They learnt housework skills, such as washing up, cooking and cleaning, and also tasks involved with bringing up and caring for children. They also (like the men) learnt to cut their coat according to their cloth. Finally there were special programmes for children who were rude and aggressive, had no standards, were socially inhibited and inarticulate, and who distrusted the world outside. Only when their total behaviour had been adjusted, might the family return to 'normal' society.

On behalf of anti-social families private institutions and local authorities set up a series of institutions for special family and neighbourhood work. Particularly after the creation of the Ministry for Social Work in 1952, social work expanded enormously (Dercksen and Verplanke 1987: 86). The same applied to sociology and psychology, whose practitioners discovered an interesting and lucrative area for research in anti-socialness. The increasing professionalization of the civilizing work continued, one expression being the growth of the number of Schools for Social Work. In some of these schools 'the asocial family' or the 'socially maladjusted family' made up a separate section of the curriculum.

Just as before the war, anti-socialness was regarded in this period primarily as a socio-cultural problem. It was generally seen as involving people who had a deviant life style from that of the middle classes and who therefore deteriorated. The diagnosis was now often couched in epidemiological terms: anti-socials were socially diseased and threatened to affect the stability of the whole of society. In the opinion of the time they stood in the way of the development of society. They lowered standards, undermined law and authority, and made up 'centres of infection for moral deterioration' (Dercksen and Verplanke 1987: 92). This could be cured by means of social isolation of the family and by work-therapy.

It was accepted that maladjustment can in principle apply to all social classes. Despite this only the maladjustment of the lowest fractions of the working class were defined as a problem. For instance, around 1960 a state advisory committee stated that maladjusted behaviour could also occur in 'higher circles' (*ibid.*: 224). The committee gave an extremely *positive* evaluation of this: 'The lack of adjustment of artists, philosophers, inventors, can be of essential importance for the whole of society. The deviant and alienating behaviour of heroes and saints, which leaves the average man somewhat at a loss, can arouse and inspire'. The tone alters sharply when it discusses 'inferior' people. 'There are people, families, groups of the population found, among others, in the bottom layers of society, where deviance from the rules of the game is obviously more frequent, more disturbing, more deep-rooted and more manifest. This section of the population is so prominent that it has been labelled with the terms "anti-social" and "asocial"'.<sup>6</sup> The committee therefore found that the deviant behaviour of the bottom layer had a disturbing influence on society, believing particularly that this bottom layer made demands on institutions for social relief and was dependent on the state. These associations assumed a life of their own. As Milikowski (1961: 124-126; see also Van der Valk 1986: 164-166) later demonstrates, some people went so far as to identify socio-economic weakness as a sign of anti-socialness. For instance, for the purposes of a research report on anti-socialness (in 1950) people were only investigated who were on the files of the Social Services or of some more or less philanthropic institution.

#### The 1960s and afterwards

In the 1960s there was a change of approach. The family institutions were abolished, and the special department in the Ministry of Social Work reorganized. Its central objective was no longer to fight anti-socialness, but to arrange conditions in which everyone could deploy their own capabilities (Dercksen and Verplanke 1987: 225). Social work expanded from socially backward areas to cover the whole population. In complete conformity with assumptions transferred from the United States about community organization, institutions applied themselves to the improvement of peoples' social environment. In this

view society is not a static entity, to which anti-socials must adapt themselves, but the producer, and reproducer, of this socio-economic backwardness and inequality of opportunity. In this period the discourse gradually changed (*ibid.* 206-249). 'Anti-social families' became 'deprived or underprivileged families'. However, these underprivileged were categorized on the basis of more or less the same characteristics: if anything their low social class was given more emphasis. The broader perspective, however, from which these characteristics were viewed was fundamentally different. The causes of the behaviour of the underprivileged were considered more in their politico-economic context. Moreover, the evaluation of this behaviour became less negative; deviation deserved understanding and acceptance, even if there were limits to this acceptance. According to Dercksen and Verplanke (1987: 225) 'other norms could be accepted as long as they did not come into conflict with the general norms of society. (...) If there is conflict then it will be necessary to try and correct the deviant norms'.

At the end of the 1980s the discussion about problem families flared up again. Again the question became topical of whether people with maladjusted or deviant behaviour should be housed in segregated areas. For instance, in 1989 a conference of a thousand practitioners in the field of social housing discussed *Neighbour Nuisance – From Taboo to Policy*. Van Wel (1990: 146; 192: 160) points out that this increasing intolerance of deviant living and life styles now particularly involves ethnic minorities.

### ***The problematizing of exterior Others: the ethnic minorities approach***

Van Wel's observation indicates that there is a congruence between the way in which interior and exterior sections of the population are problematized. The process of problematizing ethnic minorities has been discussed elsewhere (Rath 1991, 1993a). It is only necessary here to summarize two historical examples: the forced assimilation of the Indonesian Dutch in the 1950s and the social assistance to guest workers from the Mediterranean in the 1960s.

#### The forced assimilation of the Indonesian Dutch

In the course of the 1950s, as a consequence of the independence of Indonesia, approximately three hundred thousand Indonesian Dutch settled in their *patria*, the Netherlands. Officials, members of state advisory committees, and private institutions for the reception of the Indonesian Dutch had previously worried a great deal about 'those rooted in Indonesia' (Schuster 1998). Would they be able to cope adequately with the pattern of life in the Netherlands? The yardstick applied here by the Dutch policy-makers and social workers is the cultural pattern of the 'Dutch middle class' (Godeschalk 1988: 90). The policy-makers and social workers attacked the problem of 'maladjustment' by falling back on a familiar solution: the anti-social family approach (Schuster 1992: 54-56). To keep everything on the right lines, the Ministry of Social Work set up the Special Care Commission. The objective of this commission was 'to prevent social degradation as much as possible, and if possible to cure it' (quoted in Godeschalk 1988: 62). The commission included several people who played a leading role in the struggle against anti-socialness. Soon the Special Care Commission joined the Central Committee of Churches and Private Initiatives for Social Care of Repatriates (CCKP) which co-ordinated the implementation of policy on behalf of the Ministry. The CCKP pulled out all stops to effect the adjustment of the repatriates as quickly and completely as possible. Numbers of social workers and house visitors started work under its aegis. They concentrated particularly on the cultural characteristics of the 'lower segments' (Godeschalk 1990: 43-44) which might obstruct their adjustment to Dutch society, and in doing so used schemes originally developed for anti-social families (Godeschalk 1988: 67). Especially those repatriates who were housed in hostels had difficulty in escaping from them. They were instructed in the Dutch style of housekeeping, bringing up children, budgeting, cooking, dress, language, home furnishing and so on.

#### The social assistance to Mediterranean guest workers

Since the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, hundreds of thousands of foreign workers from the Mediterranean countries have found work in Dutch industry. As soon as the first few hundred Italians arrived, almoners, social workers, academics, officials and others came forward to point out the 'other' nature and life style of 'the' guest worker, their alienness and their southern mentality, their difficulty in acclimatizing, and their problems of adjustment (see among others de Graan 1964; Simons 1962). The Dutch experts were quite sure that society was faced with a special category of people with special problems. Their message was that social assistance and other measures to encourage integration were essential if disorientation and rejection phenomena were to be prevented, and conflicts with the Dutch caused by cultural differences avoided. From the start they opted for a group specific approach. In many

places welfare institutions were set up on a corporate base which could provide for a more indirect and more uniform adjustment of the guest workers into Dutch culture. These welfare institutions applied to the Ministry of Social Work for a structural subsidy, drawing comparisons with their social work among caravan dwellers. A not unimportant factor is that in this period the struggle against anti-socialness began to subside and a need for new target groups began to grow among the specialists. Soon after there were violent clashes between local rowdies and Italian and Spanish guest workers (in the Eastern region of Twente in 1961, caused by the exclusion of Italians from a dance) and after the first guest workers were allowed to bring in their families, the national government decided to support these initiatives financially as well (Groenendijk 1990: 82). Within a few years the government assumed all responsibility, and was in complete charge of the reception of guest workers, and later also of other categories of immigrants such as those from Surinam. In view of the assumption that they would eventually return home, there was as yet no excessive pressure for their adjustment, and they had scope to develop their own communities.

It is these categories – caravan dwellers, immigrants from Mediterranean countries, Surinam, the Netherlands Antilles, the Molucca Islands, and a few others – which have later been labelled as ‘ethnic minorities’. In an advisory note to the government in 1979 the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) emphasized the specific nature of the problems of many members of ethnic minorities. These came down to ‘problems of backwardness, of their own cultural identity, and encounters with a different type of society’ (WRR 1979: viii). For instance, they have a relatively low level of education, limited skills and training, and hardly any economic power (WRR 1979: xii). They also cherish their own ideas of the relationships between the sexes, family relationships, the work ethic, eating habits, attitudes of citizens *vis-à-vis* the authorities, and so on. ‘This confrontation of ethnic minorities with their new environment can *obviously* lead to great tension’, declared the WRR (1979: x; my italics). The advice of the WRR appears to have been very influential in the establishment of the Minorities Policy in the 1980s.

#### Socio-cultural maladjustment

These examples illustrate the extent to which specific Others become problematized on the grounds of their socio-cultural maladjustment compared with the Dutch middle class idealtype. This applies particularly to the lower social classes. The idea is that their presence in society ‘obviously’ leads to ‘great tensions’. Measures to encourage integration, that is measures designed to adapt them, should prevent ‘conflicts caused by cultural differences’. At this ideological level the parallel with the problematizing of anti-social families is unmistakable (see further Rath 1991: 142-144).

It is important to understand that socio-cultural non-conformity does not *necessarily* lead to the construction of problem categories. The socio-cultural non-conformity of American or Japanese immigrants, for instance, is commonly approached with a highly positive attitude, but they are predominantly higher class people. The Japanese immigrants in the town of Amstelveen – which is adjacent to Amsterdam – constitute the largest immigrant community in the place. They are concentrated in a number of apartment blocks, send their children to Japanese schools, spend their free time in Japanese clubs, have little proficiency in the Dutch language, and do not show a great interest in learning the language or interacting with the Dutch. Contrary to what usually happens with regard to Turkish, Moroccan or Surinamese immigrants who live their lives separated from the native Dutch, the Japanese way of living is not defined as a problem. As a matter of fact, the opposite is the case. A commercial bank in Amstelveen has even opened a Japanese desk to cater for its Japanese clientele (*Intermagazine* november 1991). How different is the situation a few miles northbound, in the Amsterdam South-East. This relative new neighbourhood needs to be profoundly renewed, so the authorities have decided. A number of high rises have been teared down to make place for luxury and expensive apartments. The tenants of the high rises – predominantly immigrants from Suriname and African countries – accused the authorities of having racist motives when designing their plans. The responsible Alderman of Housing and the director of the housing corporation involved stringly denied these allegations. But, interestingly enough, they also claimed this:

‘A continuing concentration of poor minority groups in one neighbourhood is not good. This is not because cultural diversity does not have attractive aspects, but because it concerns low income groups with little or no education and a high rate of unemployment. Problems accumulate, the tenants are stigmatized and confronted with the prejudices of others (*de Volkskrant* 22-9-1992).

In my view, this is an exemplary case of minorization.

The ideological representation of anti-social families and immigrant ethnic minorities show remarkable similarities. There are nevertheless differences. The non-conformity of anti-social families was negatively evaluated without any hesitation. Their identity had to be mercilessly remelted into what was considered as a ‘normal’ identity. The identity of ethnic minorities, however, is treated somewhat more cautiously. Particularly in the 1970s immigrant ethnic minorities were give the right and facilities to maintain their cultural identity in

one way or another. This was to avoid their alienation from their cultural roots and was considered important for those who would anyway return to the home country. This basically served to confirm their exclusion from the Dutch mainstream. Furthermore, the norm not to engage in racism has become more prominent during since the 1960s, partly due as a reaction to the experience during the Second World War. Finally, contrary to anti-social families, immigrants ethnic minorities do have their own associations that have been recognized as partners in the political process. Particularly since the democratization movement in the 1960s, the government has a greater need to co-operate with target groups and to legitimize their policies (Compare Rath and Saggar 1992) . The co-operation of ethnic minorities can be enhanced by providing subventions and facilities. These subventions and facilities seem like a blessing, but then one ignores the hidden political agenda.

### ***The roles of the state and academia***

Let us return to the interior Other. The reproduction of the ideology of anti-socialness is largely to be ascribed to the reckoning of the state. The state may not determine this ideology, but it certainly sanctions this type of thinking about socio-cultural maladjustment by applying all kinds of political measures which in their turn reinforce the dominant ideology. It was officials who first used the term 'inadmissible', it is the state represented by municipalities which uses its authority to exclude 'inadmissible families' from normal social housing, and so on. With the expansion of the welfare state in the 1950s the involvement of the state with 'anti-social families' also grew. In this way the state intentionally or unintentionally reinforced the assumption that there was something wrong with these working class families. The bureaucratic apparatus, the nimbus of welfare institutions, the educational institutions training skilled professionals, and researchers who produced reports, formed in combination an institutional complex which gave the problem family approach its own dynamic: everyone justified each other's ideological representations of the maladjusted Other and each other's actions. Incidentally, all those involved were in their own way progressive. They were inspired by the wish to help society and believed that people could be changed for the better, and in the importance of their civilizing work.

In accordance with the empiricist tradition of Dutch social science (Rath 1991; 1999), researchers set themselves to practical social research into the extent and nature of the phenomenon of anti-socialness. The family institutions were true laboratories where researchers could experiment to their heart's content (Dercksen and Verplanke 1987: 107). Researchers, policy makers and practitioners met each other regularly in conferences and took part together in working parties and committees, and some academics even became officials in the Ministry of Social Work. Dercksen and Verplanke (*ibid.*: 188-189) go so far as to say that the broadening of the views on anti-socialness can be ascribed to the emergence of the social sciences.

Not until 1960 did more critical studies appear, of which the most well known is Milikowski's (1961). He accused the academics of lack of objectivity. They gave *common sense notions* about anti-socials an academic cachet, without worrying about whether they had any scientific basis. Blinkered by the culture patterns of higher social classes they claimed that in the interests of their emancipation everyone should conform to these culture patterns. According to Milikowski those who make such claims allow themselves to be used by the higher classes to defend the existing social order. Milikowski is in fact drawing attention to the existence of an organized consensus built round the paternalist treatment of specific interior Others.

Civil servants of the Ministry of Welfare, later the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (CRM), who played the first fiddle in the struggle against anti-socialness, then started looking for new target groups and new activities. Later, when it became evident that the post-migratory 'problems' went beyond their bounds, they tried to win other ministries for the cause of the integration of ethnic minorities. In so doing, they mobilised social researchers. In 1978, the ministry establish the Advisory Committee on Research of Cultural Minorities. In its very first advise, the committee stated that members of ethnic minority groups were fundamentally different from native Dutch in similar inferior positions, amongst others due to: 'the sometimes strongly different cultural orientation of those minorities' (ACOM 1979: 9-11). Like the Scientific Council for the Government Policy (WRR), that published its report on ethnic minorities in the same year, the ACOM was quite influential, also because it designed and implemented an ambitious research programme on 'ethnic minorities'. Numerous researchers embarked on this programme, thereby following the ACOM's definition of the situation.

## Conclusions

In various publications the British sociologist Miles has opposed the unidimensional and monocausal use of the concept of racism. Many students of racism assume wrongly that the only or the most important racism is that which has black people as its object, as if any non-black population cannot be the object of racism. According to Miles this is because they put the colonial model central in their considerations. The formation of the nation state is in his view a better starting point for theoretical consideration of the nature and meaning of racism in present-day Europe. It implicates the construction of the imagined community of the nation. Racism is one of the ideologies that are involved in that process, as is plain from the French and British cases. According to Miles this does not just involve *racism of the exterior*, the ideological process that is specifically relevant to black immigrant workers. There is also the question of *racism of the interior*, i.e. the problematizing of specific categories of non-blacks such as the 'dangerous class' of urbanized proletarians. These two modalities are closely linked to each other. In each case they involve sections of the population which are ideologically excluded from the imagined community on the grounds of the negative evaluation of racialized features, while the remaining members of society are ideologically included on the grounds of the positive evaluation of them. Those affected are all represented as *racés apart*, that is to say, as collectivities which exist as the result of the signification of real or alleged biological characteristics of people or of cultural characteristics which are considered as fixed, naturalized, thus as a consequence of the ideological process of *racialization*.

The process of nation-state formation, however, is historically specific. In each nation state there are some specific criteria which determine who does and who does not belong to the imagined community. So it is premature to assume that the ideological construction of interior and exterior Others in all cases which may arise are necessarily modalities of racism. In this respect the Dutch case is interesting.

On the one hand it shows Miles to be right that the problematizing of exterior Others and interior Others are congruent. The way in which nowadays immigrant ethnic minorities (the exterior Others) are ideologically represented displays remarkable similarities with the way in which anti-social families (the interior Others) were represented in an earlier historical phase. In one sense there is even historical continuity. Research into the struggle against anti-socialness certainly gives us a better understanding of the current problematizing of ethnic minorities.

On the other hand the Dutch case also shows that problematizing anti-socials or ethnic minorities is not necessarily an expression of racism of the interior or, as the case may be, of racism of the exterior. Both anti-social families and ethnic minorities – both constituting fractions of the lowest social classes – are seen by the rest of society as people with a life style which deviates from that of the middle class idealtype, as people who do not adequately conform to the dominant norms of normal behaviour, as backward people with a life style of an earlier pre-industrial period. To pick out some of the characteristics ascribed to them: they show insufficient respectability, neatness and hygiene; they don't housekeep properly; they are noisy; are a nuisance to their neighbours; are difficult socially; settle conflicts by violence; show criminal tendencies; go in for alcohol or drugs abuse; run into debt; do not have a sound work ethic and are often unemployed; are dependent upon the state and hardly capable of standing on their own feet; have enjoyed little education; don't speak proper; don't care much for parliamentary politics; don't base marriage on romantic and affectionate relationships; give a low status to women; don't bring up their children properly, letting them stay up late and not being supportive of their education; *etcetera*. The predominant ideological representation of these collectivities on the whole revolves round real or alleged *socio-cultural features* of human beings. That's why the Others are not represented as *racés apart* but as *minorities apart*. There is no question of racialization, and so not of racism in Miles' sense. The crux is that in the Dutch case – with the exception before the Second World War of a small number of supporters of eugenics with little influence – the signified socio-cultural features are *not* regarded as *fixed or naturalized*. As a matter of fact, the state and private institutions have done their utmost to get these Others to adjust to the dominant life style, in other words, to change them.

Because the problematizing of interior and exterior Others in the Netherlands does not begin with the ideological process of racialization, we must have recourse to a neologism: minorization, a concept that refers to the ideological construction of minorities (Rath 1993b). It goes without saying that racialization and minorization are theoretically distinguishable but functionally equivalent concepts.

Some critics may argue that this view is at odds with the prevailing image of the Netherlands as a country which has deliberately chosen for a 'multicultural minorities policy' and which, in doing so, has shown its progressive and humanistic stand (Compare Strijbosch 1992). They may furthermore claim that the Dutch approach takes more account of cultural diversity than the German or French approaches do. These distinctions, however, are only relative. And, what is more important, those who herald Dutch

multiculturalism are often reluctant to go beyond its fancy image and to face its ideological foundations and its exclusionary perverse effects •

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## **Abstract**

The British sociologist Robert Miles argues that the history of colonialism and the subsequent immigration of black immigrant workers and others from former colonial territories is an insufficiently adequate starting point for theoretical discussion about the nature and significance of racism in present-day Europe. In his view, the formation of nation-states is a better point of departure. Only then other modalities of racism come into the picture. For instance, in the last century some fractions of the 'white' working class inside the British nation state became problematized on almost identical grounds as 'black people' from territories exterior of Britain. Compared to the *racism of the exterior* of the latter, this process is identified and labeled as one of *racism of the interior*. Both revolve round the signification and negative evaluation of real or alleged biological characteristics of people or of cultural characteristics which are considered as fixed or naturalized. In this article the concept of racism of the interior is critically discussed. Empirical data from the Netherlands support Miles' view that the problematizing of interior Others – *in casu* native anti-social families – and of exterior Others – *in casu* immigrant ethnic minorities – are congruent, but contradict his suggestion that all discourses should be labelled without hesitation as instances of racism. In the Netherlands fractions of the lower classes become problematized on the grounds of their socio-cultural maladjustment compared with the Dutch middle class idealtype. There is no question of racism in Miles' sense, because the signified socio-cultural features are *not* regarded as fixed or naturalized.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This is still a matter for debate. Schuster (1998), for example, concludes that Miles take the more narrow position.
2. This does not necessarily imply that these authors consider racism as something exclusively associated with phenotypic characteristics.
3. Balibar (1991: 204-216) speaks in this connection of 'class racism'.
4. An additional reason for the religious denominations to oppose possible eugenic legislation, such as compulsory sterilization, is that this would imply state interference. They tried to prevent this as much as possible.
5. In addition to 'anti-socials' Hoekstra (1950) includes those 'honest citizens' who are 'unaware' of their social environment and who duck out of the control of the latter. In reaction to this Kaan (1950) calls this lack of social awareness the core of the 'problem'.
6. *Sociale integratie probleemgezinnen* (Social integration of problem families). Report of the Advisory Commission on the Prevention of Anti-socialness. The Hague, 1961. (Quoted in Dercksen and Verplanke 1987: 224).