

3 A Game of Ethnic Musical Chairs? Immigrant Businesses and Niches in the Amsterdam Economy

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For years, Amsterdam has been a place of settlement for large groups of immigrants. In the sixteenth century, residents from the south Netherlands arrived.¹ They could no longer bear to live under the yoke of the Spanish fury and fled to the Calvinist North (Lucassen and Penninx, 1994: 30ff.). In the seventeenth century, a new flood of Protestant refugees arrived – the Huguenots. Both groups, immigrants from the south Netherlands and the Huguenots, were well endowed with capital, trading contacts and skills, which enabled them to secure a prominent place in the Amsterdam economy. This was especially so for the first group of refugees who specialized in trade and industry, and were given certain privileges such as (free) civil rights and generous fiscal benefits by the city administration. Partly due to their energetic entrepreneurship, the city of Amsterdam – and with it the republic – became a focus of what was then the world economy. In this regard, it is significant that roughly one-third of the money invested in the Dutch East India Company came from immigrants from the south Netherlands.

There were, of course, other groups of immigrants. From the end of the sixteenth century onwards, large groups of Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula arrived in the *Mokum* and, in later periods – up until this century – also Ashkenazi Jews from central and eastern Europe. These immigrants became involved in trade and industry – partly because the non-Jewish majority excluded them from various occupations (Berg, Wijzenbeek and Fischer, 1994).² Jewish economic activity was concentrated in certain branches of industry, such as banking, the sugar trade and butchering. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries – when the industrial economy developed further and the four-

centuries of the welfare state were being laid – they were well represented in Amsterdam in the free professions. These included the entertainment industry, banking, insurance and the retail trade, as well as the production of ready-to-wear clothing, tobacco processing and cutting and polishing of diamonds (Leydesdorff, 1987; Lucassen and Penninx, 1994). They also monopolized the market for kosher products and local traders in the Jewish quarters were partly protected from the 'open' market. Finally, a considerable proportion of Jews earned an income through irregular home working – this was widespread in the garment industry – and with small-scale street trading. Jewish street traders were over-represented in the vegetable and fruit trade, in the fish and flower trade and to a lesser degree as ice sellers. In the interwar period, one out of every three Amsterdam street traders was of Jewish origin; at one point their share in the rag-and-bone trade was 90 per cent.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Roman Catholic immigrants of Westphalian origin settled in the city. Anton Sinkel was one of the first people to experiment with the concept of a 'modern' shop. Descendants of the German peddlers Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer followed in his footsteps. Though the first C & A department store was situated in the northern town of Sneek, it was in Amsterdam that the chain became really successful. There, at the turn of the century, a number of sales outlets were set up, as well as the first factory for garment manufacture. The retailers Willem Vroom and Anton Dreesmann also established their first manufacturing business in Amsterdam. They, and many other immigrants with a Roman Catholic, German background were able to penetrate the Dutch (especially Amsterdam) garment manufacturing industry using their trading skills and their knowledge of textiles (Miellet, 1987).

So much is clear: these immigrants, or at least a number of them, originating from different corners of the world, arrived in different historical eras each with their own ethnic and religious backgrounds, and concentrated themselves as entrepreneurs in certain branches of trade and industry. Other examples of such concentrations are those of Belgian straw hat makers; German bakers; German beer brewers; Oldenburg plasterers, whitewashers and masons; French umbrella peddlers; Italian street traders selling plaster of Paris statues, or terrazzo workers, chimney sweepers and ice-cream makers (Bovenkerk and Ruland, 1992; Schroyer, 1996). Although all these examples suggest that economic concentrations only occurred with tradesmen and craftsmen, the case of German servants illustrates that this could also apply to hired labourers (Henkes, 1995).

That immigrants should funnel into certain occupations or branches of

industry is intriguing. Such niches are not confined to history books. To this day, such concentrations can be observed in various forms. Walking through the city, one is likely to pass an Italian ice-cream seller or a Turkish or Moroccan Islamic butcher, or bump into the clothes rack of a Turkish sweatshop. With a bit of imagination we could even claim that they are the successors of the Jewish ice-cream sellers, kosher butchers and confectioners who determined the townscape before the war.

Does the process of economic incorporation really take place through concentrations in certain occupations or lines of business? Does a pattern of succession really occur? If so, what are its structural determinants? The answers to these questions could help us obtain more insight into the dynamic process of economic incorporation in which the immigrants of today participate. Immigrant self-employment in Amsterdam has been researched here and there, but the question of the succession of ethnic niches has not been systematically dealt with until now (see Rath and Kloosterman, 1998). This chapter is therefore to be seen, first and foremost, as an intellectual exercise. I use the theoretical insights of the American sociologist Roger Waldinger as a source of inspiration, and shall conclude by providing some commentary on his work.

A GAME OF ETHNIC MUSICAL CHAIRS

Waldinger (1996) expressively describes the process of succession of ethnic niches as 'a game of ethnic musical chairs'. In his cleverly written book on New York – as well as in his contribution to the prize-winning book on Los Angeles (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr, 1996) – he deals with the question of why various categories of the population take up certain positions in the urban economy. In particular, he asks which structural determinants trigger this process and keep it in motion. In contemporary literature, emphasis is placed on the economic and demographic transformations that metropolises such as New York, London and Los Angeles are going through and which, in turn, cause a mismatch of labour (see Kasarda, Friedrichs and Ehlers, 1992). Other scholars emphasize the process of globalization and point to the concentration of high-grade service activities in so-called global cities, which directly or indirectly create a demand for small-scale and partly low-quality activities (Sassen, 1988 and 1991). Waldinger is not enamoured with these approaches. In his opinion, they lack adequate empirical foundations (certainly in the case of New York and Los Angeles), are economically deterministic and

ahistorical and do not take enough account of the real *dramatis personae*, the immigrants themselves.

Waldinger claims that in every market economy jobs are distributed according to the principles of desirability and availability, yet each market economy is affected by the social structure of the country within which it is embedded. In a society as 'race conscious' as the United States, people in the 'free' market economy are ranked in terms of ethnic or racial characteristics. In this way a *queue* is formed, a pecking order, with the members of the dominant cultural group at the head and the problematized groups somewhere towards the end. Immigrants coming into such a structure, whose economic orientation is still influenced by their land of origin, will, more often than not, be satisfied with this marginal position. However, changes in the economy affect the queue. Due to the vertical or horizontal mobility of those who are better situated, vacancies are created in the lower levels of the queue. Those in a lower position or by newcomers fill these in turn. These processes take years, sometimes developing quickly, sometimes slowly. This knowledge forces us to drop our all too popular preoccupation with short-term developments and enables us to go beyond worrying about the issues of the day.

How are niches formed? Waldinger (1996: 95; see also Waldinger and Bozorgmehr, 1996: 476–7) operationalizes a niche. On the basis of the work of Model (1993), he does this partly as 'an industry employing at least one thousand people, in which a group's representation is a least 150 per cent of its share of total employment'.³ This definition is not limited to trade and industry, but includes the public sector. The government influences niche formation, not only as an agent that can strengthen or weaken it, but by influencing its location – for example by employing members of a certain ethnic group in the public sector. Niches develop in the interaction between a group and its surrounding society, in which the degree to which the players are embedded in social networks is of crucial importance. Lieberman (1980: 379) points out that:

It is clear that most racial and ethnic groups tend to develop concentrations in certain jobs, which either reflect some distinctive cultural characteristics, special skills initially held by some members, or the opportunity structures at the time of their arrival. ... These concentrations are partially based on networks or ethnic contacts and experiences that in turn direct other compatriots in these directions.

Waldinger uses this line of thought and suggests that immigrants are

funnelled towards specialized economic activities via their networks, the most important instruments being enforceable trust and bounded solidarity to one's own group (cf. Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993 with Roberts, 1994). As soon as the first pioneers have established themselves, others follow and thus, in time, ethnic concentrations – or niches – are formed. As usual, the most attractive functions are reserved for *insiders*, while the *outsiders* at the end of the queue (for example, members of other immigrant groups) are excluded (Waldinger, 1995). This continues as long as there is space in the market (Light, 1998) or until vacancies occur elsewhere, enabling a group as a whole to shift to another line of business. The latter may be caused by the niche itself: once a concentration of entrepreneurs from a certain immigrant group grows, the demand for accountants, lawyers, carriers and so on from the same group also increases. To summarize, the most important ingredients in Waldinger's recipe are:

- the permanent striving of all participants in economic life for social mobility;
- a continuous stream of new immigrants;
- a race-conscious society;
- restricted embedding in social networks;
- the formation of a labour queue with in-groups at the top and out-groups at the bottom;
- the formation of ethnic concentrations (niches) in certain occupations or branches of industry;
- an institutional framework formed by ethnic or racially based interest group activity; and
- a high level of continuity in market conditions and ethnic loyalty.

Together, these form the mixture from which the pattern of succession of ethnic niches develops.

To what extent does this viewpoint – with its empirical foundations on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean – give us something on which to build? True, Waldinger did not develop it with the intention of understanding and explaining the situation in Amsterdam. Yet, it does serve to assess the validity of his *theoretical* argument. There are, however, a few complications. First, use of Waldinger's definition of niches can lead to peculiar situations. Are we to consider the tens of thousands of guestworkers in the ageing industries of the 1960s as forming a niche, even if, as job hunters, they had no influence on the branch of industry in which they eventually landed? And what are we to think about slavery? A strict application of

Waldinger's definition could possibly be taken to justify statements suggesting those African slaves on the US cotton or Surinamese sugar plantations formed a niche. Such statements seem to me to be rather strange.

Second, Waldinger refers to occupations and branches of trade and industry in rather general terms. Because of this, he is in danger of missing important differentiations. A particular group may, for example, have formed a niche in the health care sector. In terms of their economic incorporation, there is a vast difference between being spread over the sector as a whole or concentrated in the positions of heart surgeon, nurse or domestic help. These are, after all, different labour markets.

Third, only when the number of people in a particular occupation or branch of industry exceeds 1000 does Waldinger consider it to fall within the definition of a niche, for only then does the concentration have any impact on the group as a whole. In the case of Amsterdam, this would mean that the 14 Greek cafés and restaurants, for example, would have absolutely no impact on the local Greek 'community', which then consisted of roughly 250 people (Vermeulen et al., 1985: 57, 114). This is hardly credible. I can think of no compelling theoretical reason to employ the huge scale used in the United States on cases such as Amsterdam.

Fourth, Waldinger assumes long historical periods of continuous immigration and strong social continuity. To some extent, these are necessary conditions for the game of ethnic musical chairs. However, in the Netherlands these conditions are only partially fulfilled. There is absolutely no question of continuous immigration (the Second World War was an important breaking point), which clearly affects the continuity of entrepreneurship. During the occupation, the Nazis destroyed the Jewish niches, making any eventual niche maintenance impossible.⁴ For this reason, in the rest of this chapter, when using examples from the past, I will focus mostly on the postwar period. Whether this period is long enough to allow niches to mature remains to be seen.

Taking these restrictions into account, I return from what was New Amsterdam, to the would-be global city in the lowlands.

NICHES IN AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam, like New York, has always had a strong influx of immigrants. At present, almost at the end of the second millennium, the Dutch capital has, absolutely and relatively, the greatest number of immigrants. Some 42 per cent of the total population of the city (irrespective of

Table 3.1 Immigrant/ethnic groups in Amsterdam, 1 January 1996

Origin	Number
Surinam	69 600
Dutch Antilles	10 500
Turkey	31 000
Morocco	48 000
South European countries	16 300
Non-industrialized countries	59 700
Industrialized countries	69 500
The Netherlands	413 600
Total	718 100

Source: Hooit and Scholten, 1996: 15.

nationality and including those born in the Netherlands) are immigrants. Most of the labour force among these groups is incorporated in the urban economy through employment as waged labourers. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Chinese, who are well known for their entrepreneurship, came to Amsterdam in 1911 as hired seamen (van Heek, 1936). They were recruited to replace striking boilermen and coal trimmers. As blacklegs, they stood way back in the labour queue – to use Walldinger's terminology.⁵ A similar position was later held by the guestworkers from Italy, Spain, Turkey and Morocco. During the 1950s and 1960s, economic expansion enabled native Dutch labourers with low levels of education, who were working in malfunctioning industries, to find employment in higher ranks of their own branch of industry or in branches with better prospects. The vacant places were filled by migrant workers who, being economically oriented towards their land of origin, saw little chance of obtaining – by Dutch standards – more attractive jobs (Marshall-Goldschvartz, 1973; Penninx and van Velzen, 1977). The government was most supportive of such recruiting practices. In Amsterdam, the guestworkers were hired in the factories of, for example, Ford or one of the offshore firms.

Between 1956 and 1963, industries also recruited in Surinam (Dutch Guiana) and the Dutch Antilles. Experiences with these labourers were, however, 'not so positive' and new recruits were not sought (Penninx, 1979: 50; see also van Amersfoort, 1973: 163–4, 182–6). The slow work

Table 3.2 Percentages of unemployed people in Amsterdam, 1995

Origin	% unemployed
Surinam	25
Dutch Antilles	23
Turkey	22
Morocco	27
South European countries	18
Non-industrialized countries	36
Industrialized countries	14
The Netherlands	8
Total	14

Source: Hooit and Scholten, 1996: 68.

tempo, the high level of absenteeism and the lack of work experience made the Ford factory wary of hiring more Surinamese – which seems to prove the existence of a queue (Bayer, 1965: 64). On the other hand, Surinamese workers at an offshore firm accused their employers of not keeping to their agreements and complained about their salaries and housing (Schuster, 1998). Many of the present immigrants, however, arrived later, during periods of economic recession. The two immigration peaks from Surinam, for example, occurred at the same time as the two oil crises in the 1970s, thus hampering their economic incorporation.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the position of immigrants in the Amsterdam labour market declined considerably – as in the rest of the country. Since then, immigrants have been more likely to experience unemployment than native Dutch people have and for longer periods; if they do have work, it is often in the less attractive areas of the labour market. The labour force classification of 1995 showed that, on average, 14 per cent of the urban population was *without* a paid job. The differences between the different population categories are marked.

Amsterdam residents *with* jobs work mainly in the service sector, particularly in health care, social work, banks, insurance companies and other commercial service sectors. The Surinamese and West Indians fit in with the general profile. Turks and Moroccans are almost non-existent in the commercial service sector; they work in industry in general and in trade and catering in particular. This pattern is explained not only by their lack

of qualifications, but also by discrimination and the fact that their economically relevant networks rarely extend outside these sectors (see Veeman, 1994: 98). That the economy in Amsterdam is increasingly heavily dependent on the service sector (Amsterdam Municipal Council, 1996) does not make it easier for the Turks and Moroccans to quit their positions at the end of the queue.

In the Dutch welfare state, the government and, in its wake, numerous organizations and institutions in the private sector have made efforts to turn the tide. With inventive forms of flexible work – part-time work, temporary work and temporary contracts – and moderate wage increases, after 1985 employment levels increased considerably (Penninx et al., 1995; SCP, 1996). Dutch women have profited most from these measures and in Amsterdam this has been especially true of trade, and of the hotel and catering industry (Kloosterman, 1994, 1996a and 1996b). On top of all this, the government has developed a series of employment plans, training schemes, subsidized wage schemes, contracts, positive action measures and so on. Immigrants from non-industrial countries, especially from Surinam, are over-represented in the public sector's various job-creation programmes.⁶ They constitute an average 43 per cent of the participants, while being 'only' 26 per cent of the labour force.⁷ Furthermore, immigrants often find employment in areas of the public sector that are explicitly orientated to ethnic minorities as a target group. Examples of these would be so-called migrant workers in the welfare sector, teachers of mother tongue education or civil servants concerned with the implementation of ethnic minority policy (Bovenkerk, den Brok and Rutland, 1991; Koot and Uniken Venema, 1985).

This gravitating of immigrants towards the public sector is interesting. Waldinger had already emphasized the importance of this sector in New York and Los Angeles for African Americans. Previously, the civil rights movement had fought for the privileged admittance of African Americans to (among others) civil servant positions. This was a situation which, due to their political empowering, they could exploit to the full. Once inside the civil service, they could use their own networks to assist other African Americans to find better jobs. In this way they nestled themselves in the public sector niche.⁸ It is difficult to say whether we are already witnessing similar developments in Amsterdam. In the Netherlands, this sector includes a mix of the most diverse services and establishments from both the civil service (in the strict sense of the word) and the subsidized sector such as education, welfare work and health care. The use of the concept 'niche' in this vast and colourful field of institutions seems at present

inappropriate. The supplementary employment programmes only offer short-term jobs, which furthermore (at least officially) are not intended for one specific ethnic group. Having said this, experience in Amsterdam shows that people from Surinam or the West Indies work as government officials or in education almost as much as Dutch natives (Berdowski, 1994: 40). What has not yet materialized, still can. The fact that the Surinamese have not as yet been able to get to grips with the political system in order to influence the division of labour – assuming that they would wish to do this – hampers the possible formation of their own niche within certain public functions or sectors.⁹

An increasing number of immigrants no longer wait for a job as an employee, but, as the Jews or Roman Catholic Westphalians before them, set up their own businesses. Some of them emigrate with the intention of becoming an entrepreneur in the host country (Blom and Romeijn, 1981; Bovenkerk and Rutland, 1992; Choenni, 1997). In this way, they contribute greatly to the growth of self-employed entrepreneurs – a general trend over the last few years (cf. OECD, 1995 and Rath, 1998a).

On 1 January 1996, Amsterdam counted roughly 72 000 businesses (Amsterdam in Cijfers, 1996: 207–11). Exactly how many of these belong to immigrants is difficult to say. In 1986, it was assumed that about 1000 immigrant entrepreneurs were in business out of a total of 30 000 entrepreneurs, namely about 5 per cent (Kupers, 1995). In 1993, Choenni (1997: 58–9) researched the company trade register at the Chamber of Commerce and counted 4301 immigrant-run businesses. According to the register, 5097 entrepreneurs were involved in these establishments and they accounted for 6.7 per cent of the total population. However, registration at the Chamber of Commerce is imperfect: not all registered businesses actually start up, while not all those that close down are registered as such. A recently held (mini) count of the labour force showed the number of self-employed entrepreneurs in the city to be smaller (Hooft and Scholten, 1996: 76–7). Of the 3328 entrepreneurs Choenni counted from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles, Aruba and the Mediterranean countries, the count does go no further than 2600: roughly 4 per cent of the total. Its economic relevance stretches further than the interests of the entrepreneur do. The Economic Research Bureau (1994) claims – without proof – that each ethnic entrepreneur has three employees. Were this assumption to be correct, immigrant businesses in Amsterdam could be contributing an additional 8000 to 10 000 jobs to employment.

The Turks are the largest category of immigrant entrepreneurs, followed

directly by Surinamese and less closely by Moroccans, Egyptians and Pakistanis. Together, they account for almost two-thirds of the registered immigrant entrepreneurs (see Table 3.3). If we study the number of entrepreneurs in the respective labour forces, we see that Italians and Turks, and especially Egyptians, Pakistanis and Indians are active: their entrepreneurship far exceeds the national average of 8.7 per cent (OECD, 1995: 314–15).

Table 3.3 The share of immigrant entrepreneurs in the 1993 Amsterdam labour force

	Turkey	Morocco	Surinam	China	Egypt	India	Pakistan
Entrepreneurs	1015	429	915	382	407	312	370
Share in labour force (%)	12.8	4.7	3.5	—	>33	>33	>33

Source: Choenni, 1997: 60.

Table 3.4 shows the sectors in which immigrants most often settle, and it is here that we should find the contours of their niches. Indeed, there appears to be some kind of ethnic specialization forming. As shown in the table, of all the researched categories, Surinamese and Turkish entrepreneurs are the most widely spread over the different sectors. Turks are the only category active in the manufacturing industry, particularly the garment industry – as far as this still exists today (Raes, 1996; Rath, 1998b). Besides the latter, Turks are active in the catering industry, in particular in their own coffee houses and in Italian restaurants (Larsen, 1995; Rekers, 1993), and in (Islamic) butchers and bakeries (Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath, 1997b: 74–85). Recently, there has been a movement towards trading activities (Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath, 1997a) although this is without clear traces of concentration.

The Surinamese, the other immigrant group spread widely over the different sectors, have also penetrated the service sector in such branches as insurance and property. They are most active in the distribution of advertising material (folders), in accountancy, in boosting trade and in assisting during events in the fields of sport and theatre, without, however, any traces of niche formation. In the rest of the service sector we come across Surinamese who have set themselves up in business as driving instructors, cleaners, or handy-men or women.

Other remarkable concentrations of immigrant entrepreneurs are of course the Italians in their ice-cream parlours, the Chinese in their stores

and restaurants,¹⁰ the Greeks in their restaurants, Indians and Pakistanis in the (wholesale) trade in textiles and clothing, and Egyptians in snack bars (*shawarma*), currency exchange banks and telshops.

Table 3.4 Immigrant enterprises in 1993 in Amsterdam by sector and country of origin

Sector	Tur	Mor	Sur	Chi	Egy	Ind	Pak	O im	T im
Manufacturing	224	6	17	2	6	7	3	18	283
Wholesale/distributive trades	141	37	162	44	41	91	111	370	997
Retail business	183	127	223	40	24	100	109	181	987
Restaurants	235	143	176	147	226	38	47	278	1290
Production services	7	3	32	8	5	1	1	37	94
Other services	84	46	79	6	16	1	24	107	363
Other	26	18	83	22	15	19	5	99	287
Total	900	380	772	269	333	257	300	1090	4301

Note: Tur = Turkey; Mor = Morocco; Sur = Surinam; Chi = China; Ind = India; Pak = Pakistan; O im = other immigrants; T im = total immigrants

Source: Choenni, 1997: 61.

This overview shows that quite a number of immigrants set up shop without niches being formed, and that some 'older' niches have almost or totally disappeared. In certain cases, the disappearance of the occupation or branch of industry, such as straw-hat makers, caused this. In others, it was due to the location of the activities being changed. The diamond industry in Amsterdam – an outstanding example of the Jewish niche – has almost disappeared; before the Second World War, businesses were already being moved to Antwerp or elsewhere. The baking trade, in the nineteenth century a niche for immigrants of German origin (Schrover, 1996: 103), still exists today, albeit with a strong industrial influence and no longer in the hands of one specific group. Although one in six bakers in Amsterdam are Turkish, they represent a minute segment of the market (Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath, 1997b: 74–80). The market trade, previously the domain of Jewish entrepreneurs, has not (yet?) developed into a niche for immigrant groups. The strict system of assigning market stalls according to registration based on a subscription period, seems systematically to disadvantage immigrants (Kupers, 1995; see Kehla, Engbersen and Snel, 1997: 54–5). Finally, it is noticeable that there are

hardly any immigrants active in the street trade, such as the Jewish paupers or the Chinese peanut sellers before the war (van Heek, 1936). A few exceptions are perhaps Vietnamese pancake roll sellers, Italian ice-cream sellers, musicians from Ecuador or (undocumented) Indian rose sellers (Staring, 1998), which is not to say that these *per se* form niches. The small number of hawkers could be explained by the – by now – fairly strict regulations on ambulant trading, by changed consumption patterns, or by the fact that it is no longer necessary to earn a pittance by trading door-to-door. The present welfare state guarantees social security: every (legal) resident has a right to an income, either from supplementary benefits or otherwise (which is not to say that people never have financial problems). This is very different in 'liberal welfare states' like the USA."

ETHNIC SUCCESSION

In as much as immigrants now form niches, to what extent are they part of an historical chain, as Waldinger claims? In the interwar years, Italian ice-cream makers forced Jewish ice-cream sellers from the market; more recently, Egyptians have supplanted Israeli *shoarma* sellers and Turks have nestled in what was previously the Jewish niche in the garment industry. Ethnic succession also takes place in the more infamous sectors of the economy. Moroccan cannabis dealers, for example, have pushed Dutch drug barons out of the market (Bovenkerk and Fijnaut, 1996: 129).

However, these examples do not in the least prove that the settlement of immigrant entrepreneurs takes place according to the rules of Waldinger's game of ethnic musical chairs. At second glance, the case seems somewhat more complicated.

Take, for example, the *Italian ice-cream makers* (Bovenkerk, Eijken and Bovenkerk-Teerink, 1984). These young migrants prepared excellent fruit ices, a product many customers appreciated. On the basis of this popular product and with the help of their own networks, they were able to form a niche. Although Italians are still well represented in the ice-cream trade, the continuity of their niche is in jeopardy. Second – and later – generations of *gelateri* are disinclined to take over their parent's business and move out into other economic sectors. Nowadays, community forming hardly exists and the role of ethnic networks has correspondingly decreased (see Lindo, 1994). Moreover, the preparation and selling of quality ice-creams faces competition from other (internationally operating) factories such as Häagen Dasz, or concerns such as Unilever.

During the 1960s, Italian guestworkers did make a run at the ice-cream selling business (as street traders), so much so that the local authorities started to regulate the branch. They thus enforced a legal ceiling, limiting the growth in the number of entrepreneurs in the ice-cream trade. Most ice-cream sellers, however, have no wish to establish themselves as self-employed ice-cream makers – among other things because of the many rules and regulations with which they must comply – and consider the trade only as an extra source of income.

Take, as another example, the *Turkish garment manufacturers* (Raes, 1996; Rath, 1998b). When the garment industry was struggling to get to its feet during the years of recovery after the war, various Jewish entrepreneurs participated, but they did so without reinstalling their niche. Jewish entrepreneurs could no longer rely on the help of Jewish women for the workshop and instead recruited labour on the Dutch open market and later also in the Mediterranean countries. The sector began to decline during the 1960s, due to international competition, and one business after another closed, or moved its clothing assembly to lower-wage countries. A few Turkish workers, who had learned the trade from Jewish entrepreneurs, eventually set up their own establishments. These entrepreneurs only really got started once market developments were favourable. Partly as a result of changing consumer demands, customers – especially those in the so-called short-cycle ladies fashion – needed shorter and faster supply lines. Local workshops could meet this demand. Both immigrants with experience in the (craft) clothing industry in Turkey and unemployed guestworkers got lucky, and, partly through their networks, a cluster of Turkish trade and industry evolved. The mushrooming of the Turkish garment industry at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s is also linked with the extremely accommodating attitude of the authorities towards their informal practices. Since 1994, however, the public prosecutor has intensified controls on fraud and illegalities in the garment industry. Partly forced by the operations of the garment industry's intervention team and partly due to the opening of new markets in east Europe and Turkey, garment sweatshops were forced to close one after another. As far as the Turkish niche has disappeared, no new successors have appeared to take their place as yet.

Or, take the *Egyptian shoarma sellers* (Choenni, 1997: 71–9). Israelis introduced *shoarma* (kebab) to Amsterdam during the 1970s. During the busy holiday periods they hired Coptic student workers from Egypt who knew the product. When the snack became popular, these first temporary workers changed tack and became self-employed entrepreneurs. One

thing leads to another and, within a few years, the Egyptian immigrants had completely overshadowed the Israeli *shaarma* sellers. In 1993, in a 'community' of roughly 3200 Egyptians, some 145 snack bars and lunch-rooms were counted. The rise of these *shaarma* bars has been so quick that the question arises of whether this falls under the heading 'ethnic musical chairs'. After all, the Israelis had hardly had a chance to form their own niche.

CONCLUSION

The time has now come to make up the balance. Immigrants who have come to Amsterdam over the years have all followed their own route of economic incorporation. In earlier historical periods, immigrants mostly sought refuge in trade or in certain traditional craft industries. This was because their skills and trading contacts were aimed at these sectors, but also because they had been denied access to other more regular economic areas. In more recent periods, the majority of immigrants have taken their refuge first and foremost as employees. Lately, however, self-employed entrepreneurship is on the rise, a development in which immigrants participate disproportionately. Here, Amsterdam shows an increasing similarity with the world's most classic immigrant city, New York. Within groups of immigrants, though, we sometimes see a large degree of heterogeneity.

The sociologist, Waldinger, has discovered in New York – and also in Los Angeles – a remarkable pattern of economic incorporation: immigrants settle in niches and become – via these niches – engaged in what resembles a game of ethnic musical chairs. Further examination, however, shows that this pattern of incorporation is not automatically applicable to Amsterdam. There *are* forms of ethnic concentration, but these do not seem to be the only – or necessary – route to economic incorporation. Moreover, there is not always a continuing historical chain: sometimes niche succession takes place falteringly, other times, not at all.

Although the present state of research in Amsterdam demands modesty, the above economic sociological exercise still leads to questions regarding Waldinger's theoretical assumptions. Waldinger does point to important factors and processes, such as the role of social networks, but fails to take the following points adequately into consideration.

First, Waldinger stipulates the need for a hierarchy of preferred population categories. This must, moreover, be practical, for example through the formation of a labour queue. Generally, such processes also take place

in the Netherlands. There are, however, important differences, for we are now talking about different 'imagined communities' (see Rath, 1991). In the United States, ethnic and racial characteristics form important *markers* (it is no coincidence that Waldinger calls the society 'race conscious'), while in the Netherlands, the main *markers* were primarily religious in the past and are sociocultural in the present. In the present Dutch system, the significance of sociocultural characteristics inspires all kinds of attempts at the 'controlled integration' of minority groups; attempts that assume that sociocultural characteristics are changeable are often of an extremely paternalistic nature. This specific signification and its sociopolitical dynamics produce changing orders of ranking and queues. This means that attention should be paid to their dynamics, that is the possibility that the society's appreciation of these characteristics can rise or fall. Although only 30 years ago, Spanish and Italian immigrants in the Netherlands figured as problem categories at the back of the queue, although not as far back as 'long-haired louts' (see Bagley, 1973), they are now considered 'relatively non-problematic' (Lindo, 1994: 117).

Second, but related to the first point, Waldinger supposes the long-term existence of more or less cohesive ethnic groups, with a large measure of solidarity and trust. However, in reality, social relationships are not often that harmonious. Especially when entrepreneurs are operating from one niche, namely in the same market, there is a strong chance that they become each other's competitors. This can undermine the niche. Furthermore, we must bear in mind that some immigrant groups assimilate, so their niches are not permanent *per se*. Italian immigrants are less and less using their own ethnic networks for their economic activities.

Third, Waldinger focuses on the sociological and not the economic field when explaining the economic incorporation process. Although he certainly does take market developments into consideration – he sees these as one of the factors that lead to changes in the labour queue – he regards networks as being of central importance for the incorporation process. However, if we are to explain the rise and fall of the Turkish garment industry in Amsterdam, for example, we cannot ignore such factors as the changes in consumer demand or the international division of labour. Without such changes, the small Turkish businesses would never have had so much opportunity to develop. In this connection, we must also point out the role of technological change. The fall of the Jewish niche in the sugar trade and industry, halfway through the nineteenth century, can be explained, for the most part, by the technological innovations that made it possible to make sugar from sugar beet instead of from imported

sugar cane. Although the Jews had not lost their control over the processing of sugar beet, the Roman Catholics from the southern province of Brabant were able to take over the market simply because they were able to offer a considerably cheaper product (Schrover, 1994: 164).

Fourth, Waldinger limits the role of the institutional framework to political arrangements steered by ethnic or racially based interest groups with the aim of influencing the allocation of jobs in the public sector. The political system in New York is certainly not a blueprint for 'the' institutional framework. The government and its nimbus of quangos, 'quasi non-welfare state, this framework has expanded enormously, certainly in comparison with the rather meagre US welfare state. This has far-reaching consequences for spending power. Even the long-term unemployed have a fairly high minimum wage in the Netherlands, which influences the need to start up and make a success of one's own business (Kloosterman, 1998). The mixture of rules and regulations steering economic traffic – and the way the authorities enforce these – have more direct influence. The Jewish street trade before the Second World War, the preparation and selling of ice-cream by Italians, as well as Turkish garment manufacture, would have developed to a greater extent if regulations had been less strict and investigators less active. On the other hand, we see that the institutional framework can contribute to the endurance of certain niches. The establishment of Islamic butchers (of Turkish or Moroccan origin) is subjected to a special legal regime. Moreover, the ritual slaughter necessarily, this regulation is based on rules and regulations that were once made for Jewish butchers (Rath et al., 1996: 74).

All in all, the game of ethnic musical chairs, described by Waldinger, cannot be accepted without reservation as *the* model for understanding and explaining the incorporation of immigrants in Amsterdam. Although he points to a number of important processes – which deserves our appreciation – others remain underexposed. His viewpoint would certainly be strengthened if he were to give more credit to the role of the market, to technological innovations and to the institutional framework.

Notes

1. The author thanks Frank Bujs, Mies van Niekerk, Rinus Penninx and Marlou Schrover for their commentary on an earlier version of this paper and Sanna Ravestein-Willis for her editorial support.

2. In the beginning they were excluded from most of the guilds. However, those of the surgeons, estate agents and booksellers allowed them to become members – under strict conditions – even before the Batavian Republic (Kockelkorn, 1994; Lucassen and Penninx, 1994). Furthermore, the exclusion from the (other) guilds in the republic was far less extensive than in some other neighbouring countries (see Lucassen, 1997).
3. I would like to point out that I am concerned here with *niches*, not with the seemingly related concept of the *ethnic enclave* (see Wilson and Portes, 1980). The concentration of ethnic groups in a certain trade or line of business is determined by dividing the share of a certain group in employment in a certain industry by its share in the total employment.
4. This, of course, also applies to other countries on the European continent. Morokvasic, Phizacklea and Rudolf (1986) contribute the absence of immigrant-run sewing workshops in Germany partly to the persecution of the Jews.
5. Admittedly, those with restaurants nowadays have little in common with the labourers of the past. The Chinese form in many ways a rather heterogeneous group, see Benton and Vermeulen, 1987.
6. This applies to immigrants and their children from the ex-colonies, Mediterranean countries and all other non-industrial countries. In the jargon of the Amsterdam civil servant, these are collectively named 'minorities'.
7. At the end of December 1996 these programmes totalled 6492 participants, of which 2799 were from the above mentioned target groups. See the Amsterdam Work Monitor (1996: 10). The share of ethnic minorities in the Melkert I Supervision Programme is a good 60 per cent. According to Hoofit and Scholten (1996: 73–5), Surinamese and Moroccans were the main participants in the joint working group. See also Smeets, 1993: 16–17.
8. This niche has proven vulnerable. Both in New York and Los Angeles, African Americans are losing political influence, while the continuation of programmes for affirmative action is under discussion. Concentration on networks in this sector has led to a lack of relevant networks in other ones. This is now leading to their downfall. See Waldinger (1996) and Grant, Oliver and James (1996: 399–400).
9. This does not, however, alter the fact that they may profit more than other immigrant categories from the space afforded to immigrants within the political system or that they may be better equipped to fight for this space. Compare Rath (1988: 631) or consider the adventures of the so-called Black Caucus (*Zwart Beraad*) in the district of the Bijlmer.
10. Indo-Chinese are generally strongly represented in the medical profession, whether this is the case in Amsterdam I cannot say (see The, 1989).
11. It is no coincidence that one often finds hawkers in the *global cities* such as New York or Los Angeles (see Austin, 1994).

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Minorities in European Cities

The Dynamics of Social Integration and Social Exclusion at the Neighbourhood Level

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