

# THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF IMMIGRANTS IN PRACTICE: TURKISH AND MOROCCAN ISLANDS IN THE FAIRWAY OF DUTCH POLITICS\*

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## Introduction

It is now more than three years since the city of Rotterdam set out to write a new chapter in the history of the emancipation of immigrants from the Mediterranean area. The event was ushered in by much local hulla-balloo, the booming sound of music and a sultry belly dancer. On May 28, 1980, the men and women of six of Rotterdam's voting districts went to the polling stations to elect new district councils, and for the first time the non-Dutch residents of the town had been granted the right to vote and to run for office.

This must have been a very difficult decision to make. There were so many legal and political objections to extending the franchise to non-citizens. Wouldn't it mean creating opportunities for intervention on the part of foreign powers? Wouldn't it give undemocratic groups like the Turkish *Grey Wolves* or Moroccan *Amicales* a chance to exercise political influence? Would foreigners conform to our political customs? Wouldn't it force Dutch political parties to devote extra attention to foreigners in precisely those neighbourhoods were the Dutch themselves were in such dire need of it? Could a Dutch political party afford to risk losing Dutch votes as a result? Wouldn't it be better to give foreigners more of a say through special advisory bodies?

On the other hand, there was the very basic principle concisely formulated by Kobbén in a fictive letter from the 'Secretary of State for Ethnic Minorities' to the Cabinet in the year 1989: "We can no longer deny as fundamental a right as the right to vote and be voted for to people who

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All the foreigners' names in this article are pseudonyms, to emphasize the fact that I was not interested in specific persons but in the phenomenon of immigrant participation.

have often been living here for tens of years, who make their contribution to our economy, who pay taxes and who are subject to our laws"[1].

I agree with this 'Secretary of State for Ethnic Minorities' that, as a matter of principle, immigrants should be granted the right to vote, even though (judging from the present-day discussion on this issue) some Dutchmen are certain to disagree.

Up to now, however, discussions revolving around this question have essentially been not only of a normative nature but, more importantly, of a speculative nature due to the simple fact that as yet, there has been very little experience to learn from. The enfranchisement of immigrants: what are the implications in actual practice?

In an effort to answer this question, we might turn to the countries around us where the enfranchisement of immigrants has already gone into effect[2]. In Sweden, Denmark and Norway immigrants have been granted the right to vote and to run for office on a regional as well as a local level, in Ireland solely on a local level, and in Finland and Iceland foreigners from Nordic Council Member States can vote and be voted for on a local level. Under certain conditions, foreigners also have the right to vote in a number of Swiss cantons (Neuchâtel, Jura). In the United Kingdom, immigrants from the Republic of Ireland or the New Commonwealth countries can vote and run for office on all the various political levels.

The few publications that I have been able to find about the various aspects of immigrant voting deal with the United Kingdom and Sweden[3]. I shall confine myself to Sweden here. Hammar, a political scientist, analysed the voting behaviour of immigrants at the provincial and city council elections of 1976 and 1979. The impression one gets from his publications is that the foreigners behaved in an utterly 'reasonable' fashion. In 1976, about 60% of the enfranchised foreigners voted, and in 1979 about 53% (whereas 90% of the autochthonous Swedes exercised their right to vote). The majority of the foreign voters employed in the industrial and service sectors voted (more than the Swedes) for social democratic or communist candidates. Hammar noted that the longer the immigrants had been in Sweden, the more closely they adhered to the voting patterns of the Swedes. This might be viewed as a result of their growing command of the language, their improved socio-economic position, their reduced orientation towards their native country and the 'Swedification' of their conduct and attitudes.

In their voting behaviour, the immigrants were influenced by the opinions of their fellow workers, conversations they had with Sweden and with compatriots, the information provided by the government, the trade unions and (particularly the social democratic and communist) political parties, and the mass media. In addition, volunteer agencies and immigrants' organizations provided information by means of direct personal communication (including house calls).

Unfortunately, Hammar did not devote any attention to the processes regarding the elections that took place within the immigrant communities, nor did he go very deeply into the motivation behind their choice of parties/candidates. I was not able to learn very much about the immigrants' participation in the Swedish elections.

In the Netherlands, immigrants have not yet been granted true enfranchisement, but we have had a certain amount of experience with advisory bodies for foreigners. An increasing number of local governments have come to believe that foreign residents should also have a say. In anticipation of amendments to the Dutch Electoral Law and the City Law [4] granting *de jure* political rights to immigrants and following the examples already set by West Germany and Belgium, all kinds of bodies have been founded throughout the Netherlands to enable foreigners to express their opinions on the aspects of local policy most relevant to them.

In Utrecht, for example, a *Migrants' Council* was experimented with from 1973 to 1978, and, among others in Dordrecht, Gouda and Zaandam, *Committees Based on Sections 61-63 of City Laws* were founded. (These committees based on certain sections of City Law could be founded for the promotion of specific interests.) An ordinance stated that in these consultative bodies, each nationality was to elect its own representatives, in other words Turks could only vote for a Turkish candidate and so forth.

The turnout percentages at the two elections held by the *Migrants' Council* (which has since ceased to exist) in Utrecht[5] were 44.5% in 1973 and 35% in 1975. With the exception of a few candidates who were backed by organized groups of foreign workers, most of the candidates presented their names on an individual basis. Virtually none of the candidates had a platform advocating specific policies; they were elected solely on personal grounds.

A notably high percentage of the Turkish population voted in the 1975 elections ( $\pm$  50%). It is interesting to note that of the four Turkish *Migrants' Council* members, at any rate two belonged to (competing) *entrepreneur* families. An influential coffee house proprietor even went so far as to drive by Turkish boarding houses in a bus to 'invite' everyone there to vote for him. He had already arranged for transportation to and from the polling station[6].

It is striking that not a single one of the persons elected had any formal, institutionalized contact with the people who had elected them (for example, a 'party' they were accountable to). What little contact there was between the persons elected and the voters took place by means of oral communication, or through the channels of the assistance given by the members of the *Migrants' Council* to their compatriots. *Council* members were often visited at home by their fellow countrymen in need of advice or of some form of assistance.

With respect to these members of the *Migrants' Council*, Ester and Mellegers[7] noted that they had already been in the Netherlands for a relatively long period of time, and that in general they had a good command of the Dutch language. In so far as the voters' preferences for a certain candidate were not the immediate result of intimidation, they were usually based on the candidate's 'personality'. These decisions were based on the personal reputation and popularity of the candidate and on the voters' feeling, whether conscious or not, that the candidate would safeguard their personal interests.

Experiences with the *Section 61 Committee* for foreigners in Gouda[8] do not seem to have been very different. This committee also did not have much of a relation with the people who had elected it. Here likewise, (for the 1976 elections) a number of individuals had presented themselves as candidates or had been nominated by their group (such as the 'fascist' *Amicales*). Not a single one of them had any kind of platform or clear idea about policy-making.

It is striking that all four of the seats to be held by Moroccans were held by *Amicales* members. In the vicinity of the polling station, and inside the building itself, *Amicales* members were said to have exerted pressure on the voters to vote for one of them. A Moroccan candidate is even said to have 'advised' voters inside the voting booth.

Schooneveld[9] made an effort to shed some light on the relation between *Amicales* and the *Section 61 Committee*. He noted that in Gouda, it had been the 'regional leaders' who had come to fill the most important positions (for example as schoolteachers, butchers, boarding house keepers, mosque executives, members of the parents' committees and now also as members of the *Section 61 Committee*). These leaders joined ranks in *Amicales*. Schooneveld was of the opinion that the nucleus of *Amicales* in Gouda consisted of people who wanted to be 'cock of the walk', rather than of seasoned spies for the Moroccan regime. Elsewhere, in a more general context, he refers to 'key figures' who exerted a great amount of influence on the community. With their greater command of the Dutch language and their better understanding of the Dutch language and their better understanding of the Dutch mentality and way of life, they offered their services as intermediaries between the Dutch authorities and their compatriots who were dependent on them for these services.

Interviews with a random sample of immigrants showed that approximately half of them had been completely unaware of the elections. Of the other half, many had been personally informed by friends or by the candidates themselves[10]. Partly due to this lack of familiarity on the part of many foreigners with the *Section 61 Committee*, only 20% of them voted.

These experiences in Utrecht and Gouda, though recorded up to now in a rather fragmentary fashion, still make it clear that granting political

influence to foreigners is no simple matter. I took advantage of the opportunity to conduct a closer and more systematic study of foreigners' participation in the Dutch political system at the first instance of a new kind of political event, one resembling very 'real' elections: the elections for district councils in Rotterdam in 1980.

Here we can already see the vague contours of what it is going to be like in the future when immigrants from the Mediterranean area come to participate in city council elections.

I wonder to what extent the foreigners' voting patterns will be in accordance with the general lines of the political game as it is usually played here, and as we think it 'ought to' be played. Of course particularist elements do play a role in Dutch politics, but in general a universalist point of view is adhered to: politics is a matter for political parties that pursue specific policies on the basis of an ideology and/or group interests[11]. The electoral contest is a general one and is conducted as a contest between political parties. Individual political actors act on the basis of party interests.

So to what extent do the foreigners' voting patterns meet with the rules of the game?

### District councils

Since 1972, the city of Rotterdam has been setting up a system of district councils. The city has been administratively divided up into a number of districts, each of which has its own democratically elected governing body and its own official staff to which are delegated certain powers. Since the competency of the districts is not to weaken central city government, the districts' powers are mainly confined to advisory tasks[12]. Six of the seventeen 'wards' of Rotterdam were awarded the status of 'districts' in 1980. It is the city's intention to set up district councils in all the wards. Due to a lack of financial resources, a decrease in interest on the part of the population, and organized neighbourhood opposition to this extra level of government, the enthusiasm of the political parties and the city authorities has dwindled considerably, but every effort is made to conserve the six district councils which have already gone into effect, and they have now even been 'opened up' to immigrants.

A relatively small number of foreigners live in these six districts as a whole, but some of them (such as Centrum-Noord and Charlois) do contain neighbourhoods with a very large immigrant population.

Table 1 — Number of foreigners in each of the Rotterdam districts.

	Total	Foreigners	
	population	Number	Percentage
City of Rotterdam	579,187	50,335	8.7%
Districts (number of seats in district council)			
Centrum-Noord (25)	39,286	3,391	8.6%
Prins Alexander (25)	48,315	950	2.0%
IJsselmonde (25)	38,529	456	1.2%
Charlois (31)	79,085	3,468	4.4%
Hoogvliet (19)	24,619	808	3.3%
Hoek van Holland (13)	8,091	215	2.7%

City of Rotterdam. Bureau of Research and Statistics, *Demographic Statistics* Jan. 1, 1980

For my study, I selected the districts of Charlois and Centrum-Noord. They were where the largest groups of non-Dutch voters lived and, in view of this fact, they were where immigrants had the greatest chance of being elected to the district council.

I confined the research population to the Turkish and Moroccan communities from which all the non-Dutch candidates came and which included the largest groups of immigrants.

Table 2 — Number of foreigners (nationalities) in two research districts

	Centrum-Noord	Charlois
Total number of foreigners	3,391	3,468
Turks	1,040	1,210
Moroccans	440	338
Yugoslavs	253	207
Portuguese	276	199
Spaniards	206	215
Italians	100	69
Greeks	30	40
Others	1,046	1,190

City of Rotterdam. Bureau of Research and Statistics, *Demographic Statistics*, Jan. 1, 1980.

## Improvisatory research

My research method consisted of a combination of techniques and was essentially improvisatory. Since my aim was to get a total picture of the situation, participant observation among any one of the groups involved presented certain problems, as access to one 'camp' might easily rule out contact with another one. I chose a method that would allow me the greatest amount of leeway.

I conducted at least one extensive interview (in addition to many informal conversations) with each of the foreign candidates, and had extremely intensive contact with a number of them. I made every effort to attend all the election activities involving the migrant population, viz. the activities organized by the city and the districts as well as those organized by the individual groups themselves. I also obtained information from people who were active in one way or another within their community, from political parties and from representatives of relevant immigrants' organizations. In addition, wherever possible I attended the activities involving a voting boycott initiated by a number of tenants' organizations. In order to prevent my study from being restricted to the 'stars' of the foreign community, I paid a number of visits to the 'rank and file' in their coffee houses and boarding houses. Just before the elections, I employed a small questionnaire in the districts involved. Assisted by interpreters, I approached forty randomly chosen Turks and Moroccans.

This method also has its limitations. Since I was unable to establish a good confidential relationship with most of the subjects, some of the things that went on behind the scenes escaped me. Language barriers also played a role. And most important of all: politics, on whatever level, remains a delicate topic.

## The nomination of candidates

The immigrants' first confrontation with the elections was when they received a letter from the city of Rotterdam. The new voters were invited to attend an informative meeting. For these special occasions there was music and a belly dancer to brighten up the meetings. In this way, the city of Rotterdam hoped to arouse the foreigners' interest in the coming elections, and in becoming candidates. Members of the governing bodies of the districts and the Alderman of Local Affairs, W. J. van der Have, were there in person to address the 100 to 150 foreigners. The alderman praised the district system and announced that Rotterdam was about to grant foreigners the 'unique' opportunity to participate in it. The authorities stressed the fact that if the immigrants wanted to attain any degree of political influence, they should join the existing political parties and add their candidates' names to these parties' tickets.

The foreigners were treated in a somewhat paternalistic manner, which was not at all in keeping with statements made by city and district authorities to the effect that: "The essential aim of the elections is that foreigners be treated as full-fledged citizens." The impression was given that the district council would have far-reaching competency and that the right to vote in the district council elections would bring about a considerable improvement in the immigrants' position. Any critical comments questioning the truth of this were either completely ignored or quickly disposed of with a flippancy answer.

It is striking that (at both of the meetings), most of the questions were posed by (Turkish and Moroccan) individuals who were later to submit their names as candidates. Several of them had seen to it that a large number of loyal compatriots were present at the meetings, and their presence inspired the prospective candidates to literally and figuratively shout each other down. The information presented was, in my view, rather limited and somewhat misleading, but it was amply compensated for by the 'show' put on by prominent figures from the immigrant community.

After this introductory period, voters were registered and candidates were nominated. A total of eight Turks and Moroccans submitted their names. I should like to describe the course of the nomination process within the immigrant community on the basis of three cases.

#### Case 1

Kenan Asker, a Turk, was one of the foreign candidates (for the already existing Dutch Labour Party) in Charlots. Kemal Amir, a real 'livewire', played a central and indispensable role in his nomination. Amir had already attracted a lot of attention at the meetings. At the time, he worked at the Rijnmond Foundation for Assistance to Foreign Employees, so he had contacts and he had influence. Amir was a cultural social worker, and his work also involved granting technical, administrative and financial assistance to a number of organizations. In the south of Rotterdam, his efforts had contributed towards the founding of a flourishing mosque association and a number of socio-cultural organizations. Asker was active in one of these organizations, where he had proved to be a conscientious, untiring worker and was waiting for an opportunity to rise to a leading position. Amir could make good use of enthusiastic people like him in his 'Second Generation Projects', though these projects did not always prove to be all that successful.

Amir's and Asker's ambitions were the perfect combination. Their consensus of opinion as to the (individual) steps to be taken was not restricted to this socio-cultural field. In the field of politics, they were also of one mind. They were openly opposed to the spread of 'fascism' (particularly with respect to the Turkish *Grey Wolves*); the Turkish branch of the Foundation for Assistance to Foreign Employees required all the groups it worked with to uphold 'democratic' principles. So of course the mosque and the youth club where Asker was active claimed to uphold 'democratic' principles. This might have been the case on paper (in the tea house of the mosque, there was a cardboard sign prohibiting people to discuss politics there; thus preventing non-democrats' agitation), but in practice it was not always very clear. In point of fact, the word 'democratic' was used to mean 'social democratic', referring to the Turkish CHP, a mass party that more or less followed

the same line as the Dutch Labour Party, thus guaranteeing the sympathy of this Dutch party.

Amir had been a member of the Dutch Labour Party for several years, and never made a secret of it. He viewed joining the Labour Party as the only way Turks could and should play an effective political role. At the informative meetings, it became clear how important he felt this to be, particularly with respect to the district council elections. Before the meetings were held, he informed me that he had urged a number of Turkish people from various organizations to attend them. His reputation and the confidence people had in him because of the 'assistance' he granted made it easy for him to exert this kind of influence.

Behind the scenes, Amir also made every effort to promote Asker's nomination. Asker went along with Amir's suggestion that he submit his name as Labour Party candidate, even though this was the first he had ever heard of the existence of districts. At one of the meetings, Amir introduced Asker to the Labour Party delegation. Even though Amir did not know these Labour Party representatives personally, he was able to prove himself as a Labour Party 'insider' to his 'following'.

Because of the electoral effect, the Labour Party was eager to be able to boast of a foreign candidate in its ranks, but the party had only a negligible amount of contact with the migrant community and very little insight into its nature. They were only too happy to welcome Asker, Amir's 'puppet'. Asker, who was of course completely unknown, presented himself as a fervent opponent of the *Grey Wolves* and made ample use of social democratic rhetoric; it was not at all difficult for him to get his name placed high on the Labour Party ticket.

#### Case 2

In addition to the Labour Party, another group in Charlots that entered the election arena with a foreign candidate was the 'Law and Order for All' Foundation. Two candidates were to run for office; the list was headed by the Dutchman Joop de Bonte, and the Turk Süleyman Simsar was his running mate.

Since 1979, the 'Law and Order for All' Foundation had been promoting 'social and legal assistance' with Joop de Bonte as its leader. De Bonte, a formalist, stated that he had deliberately chosen the foundation framework because of its undemocratic nature. For engaging in politics and for working with foreigners, he viewed it as the only workable framework. To innocent outsiders, the 'Law and Order for All' Foundation looked like a real 'foundation', but in reality it consisted of two people: Joop de Bonte and (to a lesser degree) Süleyman Simsar.

The 'Law and Order for All' Foundation claimed that their most important work was granting 'assistance' to foreigners. De Bonte never let an opportunity slip by to pose as a legal specialist. He also claimed to be on excellent footing with 'famous and important' people. No matter how much De Bonte boasted about his legal skills and important relations, his actual achievements failed to make much of an impression on me. Apparently the important thing was not what he really could achieve, but what his clients believed he was capable of. With people in need of assistance, people having a hard time making their way society, De Bonte, in his role as distinguished and knowledgeable benefactor, with his overbearing behaviour, could sometimes be very successful indeed.

Simsar was one of his rare 'success stories'. Partly owing to De Bonte's 'assistance', he had not been deported from the country yet. In the 'Law and Order for All' Foundation, the (ex-) client Simsar now worked together with De Bonte, whose dominant position would not be threatened in any way by his loyal colleague.

Simsar, who had once taken some kind of course in Turkey to become a dental technician, was under the delusion that he was an honest to goodness dentist. He

attempted to use this trumped up story to boost his status and win esteem. Because of his queer behaviour, not everyone took him seriously. Many of the Turks who knew him scoffed at him and called him *dell dıgı*, crazy dentist.

Maintaining a large clientele served the (financial) interests of Simsar as well as De Bonte. De Bonte reaped the benefits of numerous 'problem cases', and since so many of them were Turks, good use could be made of Simsar's services, for example as interpreter. However, it was Simsar's services as intermediary that played a much more important role. De Bonte's access to the Turkish community went by way of Simsar's (alleged) connections. His reputation among the Turks enabled him to serve as a middleman and steer people with problems to the *entrepreneur* De Bonte. In return, De Bonte could recommend Simsar to people in need of 'dental care'.

The 'Law and Order for All' Foundation referred to itself as a non-political organization, which hardly coincided with the decision to engage in district politics. The Foundation viewed it as a way of enlarging its clientele and of getting all the contacts with Turks on the district level into its own hands. Moreover, if they got elected, De Bonte and Simsar would be able to have an office cum consulting room for themselves.

When addressing the foreign voters-to-be, De Bonte stressed his own righteous qualities as a candidate by constantly bringing the other candidates into disrepute; he not only questioned their political capacities, but also the quality of the 'assistance' they offered.

### Case 3

The only Moroccan to participate in the elections was Hassan Azzougagh of the Free Moroccan Alliance. He ran in the Centrum-Noord district. By profession, Azzougagh was a translator and interpreter. In addition, he occasionally provided 'assistance', viz. he helped people fill in forms, write letters to official agencies and so forth. In order to put this 'assistance' on a more formal footing so that it would contrast all the more favourably with the inferior aid provided by the competition, the Free Moroccan Alliance had been founded in 1978 under the leadership of the up-and-coming Azzougagh. By the time of the election campaign, the Alliance claimed to have somewhere between 130 and 160 members, i.e. people who at some point had invested ten Dutch guilders a month (to be paid three months in advance) for the right to obtain 'assistance'. Only a handful of these Moroccans (mostly 'members of the board') had continued to pay their membership fees regularly. The large majority of the Moroccans who joined the Alliance did so solely for the 'assistance'.

The Free Moroccan Alliance has always been emphatic about the fact that it was not affiliated with any other parties or organizations (either in the Netherlands or in Morocco). The Alliance claimed to be completely independent. Azzougagh was quoted as saying, "Politics is not important to us; the social problems are the only thing that matters". On the other hand, Azzougagh did publicly advocate following a left-wing political line. He referred to himself as a socialist and eloquently expressed his opposition to racism, fascism, imperialism and the like. In his view, the Free Moroccan Alliance ought to become a kind of left-wing Moroccan trade union, functioning in close co-operation with the Dutch Trade Union Federation (the largest of its kind in the country — JR) and the Labour Party.

There was a marked degree of doubt in some circles about just how 'non-political' Azzougagh was. He had once been a member of the 'fascist' *Amicales*, and according to his own account he was even offered a leading position there. The fact of his regular contact with the Moroccan consulate was also hardly indicative of independence. When the Free Moroccan Alliance made it clear that it wanted to run in the district elections, various people raised objections. It was Azzougagh himself

whom they objected to, more than the Alliance as a whole. In some Moroccan circles, he had the reputation of being a 'swindler'.

The entire Alliance election campaign was said to be solely a reaction to the possible participation of *Amicales*. The main idea was to prevent a situation from arising in which Moroccans would be forced to vote for *Amicales*. The Free Moroccan Alliance would serve as a good 'neutral' and 'independent' alternative. The people who raised the most fervent objections viewed this noble-sounding argument as a cunning ruse on the part of collaborators with the Moroccan regime to guarantee at least one seat in the district council for one of their representatives (especially after it turned out that *Amicales* would not be participating).

It seems to me that the political objections to the Free Moroccan Alliance were basically objections to the leader of the group, Azzougagh, especially to his 'social' conduct. The 'official' protests barely made any reference to his conduct, but in their opinion, Azzougagh behaved much more like an opportunist and an *entrepreneur* than like a true promoter of the interests of his compatriots. He was able to make certain Moroccans dependent on him by taking advantage of their inability to open up direct lines of contact with Dutch society. By way of these Moroccans, he hoped to enlarge his influence as a leader. During the elections, this same network was to back this *entrepreneur* and assure him of votes. Thus the members of the board of the Free Moroccan Alliance were no more than tools in his hands, loyal clients who were dependent on him. The ordinary members were people who were in urgent need of assistance, and Azzougagh was a man who, under the guise of a rather vague kind of ideology, wanted to achieve a position of power.

I shall confine myself to only mentioning the names of the other candidates. In addition to Asker, a man called Necati Yalnız, who never made much of an impression, was also a Labour Party candidate in Charlois. In Centrum-Noord, there were no less than three Turkish candidates on the Labour Party ticket. One of them was Ömer Hafız, who was chairman of the local mosque. The two others, both colleagues of Amir's at the Foundation for Assistance to Foreign Employees, were the social workers Yusuf Sakallı and Fatma Kadıressam. (An overly zealous district council member representing a one-man party in Centrum-Noord was very anxious to have a migrant as running mate. In an audacious mood — and without her express consent — he added Ayege Kaulmayan to his ticket. Without her endorsement or co-operation, this Turkish woman was not really a serious candidate.)

From the three cases described above, I should like to draw the following conclusions:

(1) We noted the activities of *entrepreneurs*, who nominated themselves or other individuals as candidates. They all appeared to play a central role in the network of relations within their ethnic group. I should like to draw a distinction here between two types of *entrepreneurs*. The first type is the person who directs a large part of his own activities towards the strengthening of his position within the group, and who is in constant pursuit of new clients. (Amir and Azzougagh are good examples of this type of man.)

The second type is the person who hardly displays any initiative at all to expand his circle of clients, but who is more or less forced into this kind of position by his own clients; it is his clients, as it were, who cast him in a leading role, and his functioning as an *entrepreneur* is 'merely' based on this situation. (Two examples of this type are the Turkish social workers from the Foundation for Assistance to Foreign Employees who were Labour Party candidates in Centrum-Noord.)

(2) All of these political *entrepreneurs* were people who had already been in the Netherlands for a lengthy period of time, people who spoke good Dutch, knew their way around in Dutch society and were regularly approached (informally) for the granting of assistance, and had developed a reputation as 'people you could go to if you had a problem'. Some of them were professional 'helpers' and others helped their compatriots 'voluntarily'. All of them justified the very existence of their 'assistance' (organization) on the basis of the alleged inadequacy of the other comparable agencies.

(3) This situation was legitimated and reinforced by harsh criticism of the competition. By bringing the other *entrepreneurs* into disrepute, various individuals tried to strengthen their own position. One of the results of the nomination of *entrepreneurs* as candidates was that the very sharp competition among them was elevated from the socio-cultural level to the quasi-political level; their scathing criticism had usually been confined to each other's socio-cultural work. Now the enfranchisement of immigrants for the district council elections created a new arena.

(4) A striking phenomenon was the (Dutch) *self appointed advocate*, who gained access to the immigrant community by way of a foreign intermediary. The fact that he spoke Dutch and had a co-operative interpreter at his side was already enough to ensure his success. De Bonte was a good example of this phenomenon, and Azzougagh's wife also functioned in this manner.

(5) The role of political ideology was a rather doubtful one. In the Amir-Asker *combine*, political ideology did much to conceal the true ambitions of the two men, and in the Free Moroccan Alliance, the role played by ideology was equally deceptive. Depending on whom he was talking to and what the situation was, Azzougagh professed a vague ideology, in an effort to soften the sharpest edges of his individualistic quest for ever more clients and influence. Azzougagh would claim to be a member of *Amicales*, then he would label it as fascist, and later still he would say he really didn't know one way or the other.

There was even a case of a heated conflict between the Turkish candidates running for one and the same political party (the Labour Party in

Centrum-Noord), without any political or ideological issues being involved at all.

(6) The Dutch Labour Party was the only party to nominate foreigners as candidates. Whereas the Dutch candidates were subjected to extremely careful scrutiny as to their capacities and allegiance to the party before being allocated a certain spot on the ticket, the completely unknown Turks were added quite arbitrarily: the very fact that they were migrants was enough. The Dutch candidates were not at all enthusiastic about being on the same ticket as the Turks, but a minority in the party (stressing the increased number of votes to be expected) managed to get the rest to accept the new candidates. None of the participating political parties, with the Labour Party as somewhat of an exception, proved to be overly interested in the immigrants; on the contrary, their interest was extremely superficial and virtually all the parties maintained an attitude of complete passivity.

(7) In spite of their participation in the Dutch political system and the fact that they were actually running for a Dutch political party, the role played by the non-Dutch candidates in the political and ideological tug-of-war in the Netherlands was negligible. In so far as they professed any political ideology at all, it was based on political issues in their native country and not in the Netherlands. The only important thing in the political race here was the other candidates and not the political parties. This made it possible for a situation to arise in which representatives of Dutch parties (viz. the left-wing splinter parties CPN [Communist Party of the Netherlands], PPR [Political Party of Radicals] and PSP [Pacifist Socialist Party]) protested against Azzougagh's candidacy because of his political affiliations, whereas in the Moroccans' opinion it was his 'assistance' activities that were objectionable, something to which the (Dutch) self appointed advocates did not attribute much significance at all.

The widely feared participation of the Turkish *Grey Wolves* never actually materialized, and for a very practical reason: they learned about the elections too late to be able to find a suitable candidate. *Amicales* did try to participate, but there were so many fervent objections that Central Polling Station of the Centrum-Noord district stepped in and refused to accept their registration.

### The campaign

After the candidates were registered, the important thing was to get as many people as possible to vote. In order to encourage the immigrants to come to the polls, the Rotterdam city authorities organized a special propaganda campaign. However, neither the city or district authorities, nor



the political parties or the boycotters had the slightest idea of how to approach the immigrants. They conducted their publicity campaign in the typically Dutch fashion: by way of newspaper advertisements, leaflets and, most of all, letters. The foreign electorate was swamped with printed matter of all kinds. The Dutch did not fully realize how many of the immigrants, particularly the women, were totally illiterate. In addition, those of the immigrants who were literate could often just barely read their own mother tongue. The only concession made to these immigrants with their language problems was the comic strip that was mailed to the homes of all the foreigners eligible to vote. By way of drawings, it explained the essentials of the voting process.

It was absolutely impossible to reach the 'ordinary' foreigner by way of information presented in such a typically Dutch manner about questions of policy, about democratically organized local governing agencies, and about Dutch political parties. Rotterdam authorities also tried organizing election rallies of an emphatically festive nature, but the response was minimal. Still, the activities on the part of the city's authorities contrasted quite favourably with the passivity of the political parties. Most of the political parties had stated that they were only going to conduct one general campaign, and that foreigners should not be treated any differently than anyone else. The only concession a few of the parties did make was to translate the party platform and the party yell into Turkish and Arabic.

Hardly any of the persons involved made any effective use of the media of the immigrants themselves.

In Centrum-Noord, the elections were boycotted by certain groups, which made matters considerably more complicated.

There was a sharp controversy there between the district council and the tenants' organizations, which were backed by the small left-wing parties CPN (Communist party of the Netherlands), PPR (Political Party of Radicals) and PSP (Pacifist Socialist Party). These tenants' organizations advised the people of the district to boycott the elections for this 'illegitimate' level of government. Though the boycott committees had hardly ever as much as noticed their foreign neighbours before, they now sucked them into the whirlpool of their activities, whether they liked it or not. So from one direction the immigrants were bombarded with propaganda about participation in the elections, and from the other direction they were urged to boycott them.

The commotion involving the role of the Free Moroccan Alliance in the elections only served to heighten the general confusion. The boycotters, who had labelled the Alliance a 'fascist' organization, now made ample use of this fact in their vehement denunciation of the district council as such, but whether this clarified something for the immigrants remains very doubtful.

For the non-Dutch candidates, the battle for the foreign vote, a battle so markedly characterized by individualism, was largely an 'inside' affair. In one way or another, virtually all the candidates approached their electorate in person. This approach included good will visits to mosques, coffee houses and tea houses, boarding houses and so forth, as well as the enlistment of the service of friends and relatives. This type of campaign involved personal activities on the part of the candidates, though not on as large a scale as most of them had anticipated.

We observed these activities in Centrum-Noord.

The largest Turkish mosque there was the territory of Ömer Hafiz, the devoutly religious Labour Party candidate. In his own view, there was ample proof of his qualities, not only as mosque chairman but also as a man who 'helped' his fellow countrymen, so that there could be no doubt as his capacities as member of the district council. When he compared himself with the other Turkish candidates in Centrum-Noord, he came to the conclusion that he was the best Moslem and the best benefactor of his people. He predicted that he would receive the largest number of preference votes.

In his mosque, Hafiz patiently explained all the various aspects of the elections to anyone prepared to listen. He also urged his 'friends' and 'the friends of his friends' to vote for him. Just before election day, Hafiz was approached by various Turks who had heard that he was a candidate and now wanted to vote for him. In a tea house, people even made appointments with each other to go to vote (for Hafiz) together. On election day, Hafiz was accompanied by a Kurdish *second* (Hafiz was a Kurd), who looked after his well-being. In the village in Turkey where Hafiz came from, this was common practice for candidates.

Another Labour Party candidate, a woman on the staff of the Foundation for Assistance to Foreign Employees, had repeatedly told me that she really had no desire to be a candidate at all. Now, however, she did pay a number of visits to the homes of her followers: Turkish women who were extremely difficult to mobilize.

The election campaign of the Free Moroccan Alliance was completely centred around the personality of the man heading the ticket, Azzougagh. A few days before the elections, Azzougagh distributed pamphlets door-to-door in two neighbourhoods: his own neighbourhood and the one next to it. On election day, about twenty Moroccans got in touch with Azzougagh because they wanted to vote for him. However, most of them came from outside the district. They had heard about Azzougagh by way of (what he referred to as) *the Arab telephone*: information passed on by friends and relatives. This word-of-mouth campaign was partly spontaneous, and partly a result of Azzougagh's very deliberate efforts. The services of 'acquaintances' (mainly from the immediate neighbourhood) were enlisted, and they in turn extolled Azzougagh's virtues to all *their*



'acquaintances'. Azzougagh also conducted his campaign through the channel of the Moroccan butchers in the district. On election day, various people from the neighbourhood were fetched from their homes and accompanied to the polling station, where they were instructed as to how to vote.

All things considered the entire election race was relatively uneventful. The commotion involving the Free Moroccan Alliance and the boycott actions were pretty much the only touches of colour in an otherwise rather dull contest.

### The enfranchised immigrants

The majority of the non-Dutch prospective voters to whom I spoke to were not at all familiar with the Dutch political system and the Dutch political parties. In so far as the immigrants had any knowledge of the parties, they usually expressed a preference for the Labour Party. This was somewhat more true of the Turks than the Moroccans. As their motivation for this preference, they frequently mentioned the personal popularity of Joop den Uyl ('that bald man'), the national leader of the Labour Party and in their eyes the personification of the entire party. Other reasons for their preference included the simple fact that of all the Dutch parties (they knew of), the Labour Party was the largest, the fact that up till then it had done the 'most' to promote the immigrants' interests, the party's social democratic ideology and of course the fact that the Labour Party had three foreign (Turkish!) candidates on its ticket.

A group of Turks told me that it was not the party but the candidate that was important. "I'm not voting for Hafiz, the mosque chairman, because he didn't devote enough attention to Koran lessons in the neighbourhood" or "Sakalli (Labour Party candidate in Centrum-Noord – JR) once helped me fill in forms for the Housing Department; I'm going to vote for Sakalli" were typical comments. In two cases, I should like to describe in greater detail how personal relations played a dominating role in the election.

#### Case I

At one of the addresses I had been given for the questionnaire part of my research, my interpreter and I tried to start a conversation with the Turkish people who lived there. But all of them were reluctant to talk, with the exception of one very obliging man, with whom we were soon engaged in a pleasant chat. But no matter how we phrased the question, with malicious delight he persistently refused to tell us who he was going to vote for.

This Turkish man turned out to be the owner of a number of buildings. He proudly pointed them out and stressed that they were all his property. Within hearing range of the other Turkish tenants, he referred to himself as the 'director'. The 'director' told us that, 'together' with the others, he had discussed the elections

and that 'together' they had decided who they were going to vote for. However, he was not about to reveal the particular candidate's name.

As we were leaving, one of the men snapped the following comment (which my interpreter just managed to hear) at his landlord: "Why do you talk such nonsense, we're all voting for Ömer Hafiz, aren't we?"

#### Case II

There were numerous pictures of the *Grey Wolf* on the wall, and on the table there were our teacups, which were filled at regular intervals. We spoke to two Turks, an older man with only a very halting command of Dutch and his son, who spoke it like a true native of Rotterdam. The father had a very clear-cut opinion. He thought the important thing was what a party did, and you could tell what it did by taking a good look at its candidates. Simply knowing the candidates wasn't enough reason to vote for them. You also had to look and see if they were good for the Turks. A good candidate had to see to better housing and better education and should promote integration. But the most important thing was that, on a small scale, the candidate should always be willing and able to solve other people's personal problems. For example, if someone who didn't speak good Dutch had to go to the doctor, then the candidate should go with him as an interpreter.

The father felt that he had found his 'spokesman' in one of the Turkish candidates, who happened to be the one most fervently opposed to the *Grey Wolves*. But just to be completely sure, he discussed the matter with some other Turks in a coffee house before the elections.

The son said that he didn't have the slightest need (any longer) for a personal spokesman, and had consequently decided not to vote.

In both of these cases, we see that a person-to-person relationship had a decisive influence on the way people voted. In the first case there was a 'director' who, being the person who provided housing, a very vital resource, was in a position to exercise and legitimate a great deal of influence over his clients. With respect to Hafiz, the candidate, the 'director' functioned as an intermediary, and with respect to his clients he functioned as a patron who could expect certain services from them, for example he could expect them to vote for the candidate of his choice.

In the second case, the relation between the voter and the candidate was more direct, but this relation was also based on an unequal division of resources. This time the resource involved was not housing but the mastery of the Dutch language and insight into Dutch society. The need for a spokesman was the motivation behind the choice of a certain candidate.

In our talks with enfranchised immigrants, it became clear that the existence of a personal relation between the voter and the candidate (whether or not by way of an intermediary), or the anticipation of this kind of relation, generally played a significant role. A number of other factors were also important. For each individual, there was a different combination of factors; to each person different aspects were important. I should like to mention several of the main ones.

in the first place, there was the aspect of ethnicity, the fact that one voted for members of one's own ethnic group. A Moroccan informant made the following comment to me: "Azzougagh is a Moroccan and Moroccans help each other. If there is a Moroccan in the district council, Moroccans can turn to him for help". Another Moroccan, however, described Azzougagh as a 'real Arab', by which he meant a 'haughty and mighty bureaucrat'. To an individual who views Arabs in such a negative light, the ethnic consideration might very well be a reason to *not* vote for this specific candidate.

A factor related to this aspect of ethnicity was the factor of regionalism, the preference for candidates from one's own region.

The distinction between candidates of urban or of rural descent, and the frequently related difference in educational level and mentality, also played an important role. Some of the Turks in Centrum-Noord put more trust in Ömer Hafiz with his more traditional mentality, a man not yet alienated from his rural Turkish background, whereas others had a marked preference for the well-educated, more urban Turkish Labour Party candidates with their Netherlands-oriented mentality.

Another related factor was the role played by religion. Ömer Hafiz, chairman of the local mosque, took advantage of every opportunity to accuse the other Labour Party candidates of 'atheism'. And Hafiz was frequently referred to as the man 'thanks to whom we now have a mosque'.

Personalist issues such as age and gender were also important. It is striking how many of the older Turks preferred Hafiz, an older man, to the young Turkish Labour Party candidates. The younger voters, in turn, had a preference for the young candidates (though I had the impression that on the whole, the younger voters were less interested in the elections). It was also striking that in spite of the fact that there was a Turkish woman on the Labour Party ticket, all the active roles throughout the election campaign were played by men.

All of these factors in the relations between the voters and the candidates were predominantly related to the native country, to the norms, values and expectations that were still prevalent, as if everyone was still in Turkey or Morocco. The familiar — culturally and historically determined — ways of doing things served as the foothold upon which behaviour was based. In the course of these district council elections, the voters acted in accordance with the Mediterranean politico-cultural expectations involving elections[3]: they preferred the candidates who were familiar to them and whom exhibited the kind of behaviour that was familiar to them.

### The elections themselves

The turnout for the district council elections was minimal: 37%. In all of

the districts, fewer people had voted than at previous elections. An average of 12% of the enfranchised foreigners had voted, which fell far short of even the most pessimistic predictions. Compared to the elections for the *Migrants' Council* in Utrecht, and for the *Section 61 Committees* in Gouda, it was also an extremely low percentage.

Table 3 — Turnout Statistics[14]

Districts	Absolute number of enfranchised persons		Turnout percentage	
	Total	Foreigners	Total	Foreigners (rough estimate)
Centrum-Noord	31,567	2,166	23.9%	± 9%
Prins Alexander	38,566	615	38.4%	± 9%
IJsselmonde	30,199	297	38.1%	± 16%
Charlois	64,653	2,141	39.1%	± 16%
Hoogvliet	17,614	480	40.3%	± 14%
Hoek van Holland	5,911	135	61.0%	± 47%
Total	188,510	5,834	37.6%	12.3% (N = 717)

Oral information provided by city officials at the Rotterdam Local Affairs Office

The low percentage turnout of the foreigners in Centrum-Noord was generally imputed to the boycott. This seemed to be only logical, but the large numbers of foreigners in the other districts, where no boycotts had taken place, who had *also* failed to vote led me to believe that other factors had played a role as well. The very significance of the whole elections race seemed to have escaped most of the foreigners. Some highly antagonistic Dutchmen concluded that foreigners had no political awareness, no feeling for democracy and it has even been suggested that they were too stupid and lazy. Less hostile observers have failed to produce much more than the plausible-sounding conclusion that the turnout was so low because:

(...) in spite of an intensive information campaign, the phenomenon of district council elections was still relative strange and very new to the foreigners, and it should also be taken into account that very few foreign women participated in the elections[15].

The immigrant turnout was extremely low. This was undoubtedly partially due to the erroneous Dutch assumptions in the inefficiently conducted campaigns. There was also the fact that immigrants in general constitute a low-participation segment of the population.

All kinds of conjectures have been made as to the extent to which the immigrant enfranchisement influenced the Dutch turnout. Some observers were of the opinion that many potential Dutch voters had refrained from voting simply because the immigrants now also had the right to vote. Others concluded that this was precisely the reason why certain Dutch voters *did* vote, viz. to help prevent foreigners from getting a seat in the district council.

For the foreigners, the election results certainly did not imply any great victories. The only immigrant elected to office was Asker for the Labour Party in Charlois, and that was only because he was so high up on the party's ticket.

It was striking that most of the foreign candidates, even though they were not elected to office, did score a relatively high number of preference votes, even considerably more than the Dutch candidates. After all the votes were counted, it turned out that Hafiz's prediction that he would get more preference votes than all the other Turkish Labour Party candidates together — an indecorous and inadmissible comment in the Dutch Labour Party view — did indeed come true.

The case of Azzougagh was also illustrative. In a typically novice-like attempt to adhere to Dutch political precepts, he summed up a number of his 'policies' on paper and distributed 1500 copies of them. In view of the election results, it is obvious that these pamphlets had absolutely no effect. What votes Azzougagh did get came from his own neighbourhood, and hardly a single voter anywhere else supported the Free Moroccan Alliance. Moreover, it was the polling station located on Azzougagh's own street that registered the largest number of votes for the Alliance. So Azzougagh's personal approach, which was focussed on his immediate neighbours, was unmistakably the most effective.

There were clearly a number of immigrants who had been 'coaxed' to go to the polling stations by means of personal 'information' provided by the foreign candidates (particularly Azzougagh and Hafiz). Another striking point was that so many of the foreign voters came to the polling stations without the form they were supposed to have received at home. Some of them even claimed that they hadn't received one. The fact that they nevertheless came to vote was a result of the efforts on the part of the candidates.

The percentage of foreign voters might have been low, but a certain number of them *did* vote; I think an important explanation for this can be sought in the existence of the candidates' own patronage network.

Unaware of it as the Dutch might have been, this manner of getting votes was the most effective! The candidates who approached their voters in the most personal fashion and relied most strongly on their own personal reputation were the ones who got the most (preference) votes.

## Conclusions

The enfranchisement of immigrants for the district council elections was hardly an unadulterated success. Only a handful of foreign voters showed up at the polling stations.

The study of the course of the elections revealed that Turkish and Moroccan immigrants differ from the Dutch in their expectations with respect to (each other's) political behaviour, that they really do exhibit different political behaviour, and that this leads to misunderstandings.

I should like to submit the political participation patterns of the Dutch as well as of foreigners to a further analysis on the basis of two theoretical models, which are diametrically opposed to each other. In reality, the contrast between the models will not be all that sharp: in actual fact, it is just a question of the accentuation of different aspects of reality. There are two ideal types involved, and thus the dualism serves as a framework within which empirical observations can be analysed.

The first model shows how elections are customarily conducted in the Netherlands: *the universalist model*, in which politics is mainly a party activity and a political ideology and/or a group interest is the sole motivating force [16]. In the Netherlands, personalist elements *do* play a role as well, particularly in politics on a local (district) level, where individual political actors do not always adhere so strictly to the universalist patterns of behaviour, but in general the Dutch political scene does make every effort to apply the universalist rules and regulations.

The second model, which we are familiar with from anthropological literature on elections in countries such as Turkey and Morocco [17], is the *entrepreneur model*, in which an instrumental relation between individuals is the driving force behind all manners of political behaviour.

I should like to summarize a number of characteristic differences between these two models.

### The universalist model

- Activities on the part of parties as a whole;
- Everything revolves around political policies;

### the entrepreneur model

- Activities on the part of individual persons;
- Everything revolves around the personal relation between the voter and the candidate;
- Only individual interests count, collective interests are unimportant;
- Policy decisions are made in the framework of a group interest and/or an ideology;
- Direct personal benefits are frowned upon;
- Participation in elections automatically implies a wide range of personal benefits, or the expectation that they will be forthcoming;

- The candidates are the people who are the best exponents of the party's policies;
- The candidates are the people who have certain resources at their disposal (which are also profitable for other individuals);
- The electoral contest involves competition between the parties irrespective of individual persons;
- The electoral contest involves personal competition between the individual candidates;
- The campaign is general and is concentrated on issues of policy;
- The campaign is of a personalist and instrumentalist nature and is concentrated on the individual voters;
- Party votes (that go to the person who is first on the ticket.
- Preference votes.

Not only was the way people voted important, but also their expectations.

On the one hand we see the Dutch authorities and the Dutch political parties, which each have their own (Dutch universalist) expectations regarding the participation of foreigners in the district council elections (and adjust their behaviour and lines of policy accordingly), and on the other hand we see a new electorate, which is traditionally accustomed to an instrumentalist type of participation in elections within the framework of a patronage network dominated by an *entrepreneur*. As a matter of course, the uniqueness of the participation of foreigners has been accentuated in this analysis.

In my opinion, there are two possible explanations for the fact that immigrants in the Netherlands acted in accordance with the *entrepreneur model*. The first explanation is based on the political culture in the home countries of these Turks and Moroccans, and the second explanation is based on their specific social position in the Netherlands.

The Turkish and Moroccan political culture is largely dominated by patronage phenomena. This not only holds true for political parties, but also for trade unions, the civil services and informal social groups. Whether or not a certain candidate is to be elected depends largely on the support of a patronage network. An individual's position within this kind of network is influenced and determined by his or her wealth, occupation, orthodoxy and religion, age, sex, family, relations with officials as well as by such factors as regional, tribal, ethnic and urban/rural descent. The most influential persons in a given community, the *entrepreneurs* who come closest to meeting with the specific requirements, are frequently the ones who act as political leaders.

Turks and Moroccans who leave this kind of background to settle in the

Netherlands re-create a similar political sub-culture here as soon as they arrive. With respect to contacts with Dutch authorities, and also with respect to elections, (we have noted that) there is clearly the expectation that personalism will play as dominating a role as it did in the native country.

In addition to this 'imported' political culture, the role played by the patronage networks in the elections race can also be accounted for on the basis of the social position of the migrants within Dutch society. Foreigners, and this holds particularly true for Moroccans and Turks, still live largely outside the borders of Dutch society, and their knowledge of the way things are done here is limited.

However, a small minority of foreigners have 'made good' here. They are the ones who have been here the longest, the ones who have proved to be the most enterprising, or who had already held relatively prominent positions in their native countries. They are also the ones who speak good Dutch and have acquired a good working knowledge of Dutch society, and they are the ones who are held in highest esteem within the Moroccan and Turkish communities in the Netherlands. They are the boarding house proprietors, the coffee house owners, the mosque superintendents and the butchers. Above all, they are the interpreters, who are highly respected and who are rightly expected to 'know their way around' when dealing with Dutch social agencies such as the aliens office, the welfare department, the housing bureau and the political parties.

Many of the men within this small elite have developed into real patrons. For their own clientele, they act as intermediaries in their contacts with the various Dutch agencies. In the eyes of their clientele, their social success not only serves as evidence of their exceptional qualities, but also of their 'important friends' in the Dutch bureaucracy.

It is easy to see that this system serves some clearly positive functions for the people involved. With a great amount of drive, the leaders do their pioneering work. Thanks to their efforts, the Turkish and Moroccan communities come to play a role in Dutch society, be it indirectly. These patrons played an active role in the elections, thus enabling their clientele to participate safely in Dutch politics. In this sense, the enfranchisement of immigrants, whereby the *entrepreneurs* fulfilled a bridging function, was a means of stimulating the participation of foreigners and their emancipation in the Netherlands.

But there is also a completely different side to the matter. The foreign politicians who played such prominent roles in the district council elections never stopped acting as *entrepreneurs*. They were men who had successfully climbed the social ladder, who had first gained a position in the socio-cultural field and now, by way of their participation in the elections, entered a new arena. They were competing with each other; each *entre-*

*preneur* tried to gather as large as possible a circle of clients, and did so by restricting the spheres of influence of the competition as much as possible. The aim of each *entrepreneur* was to mobilize a maximum of resources for his clientele, all to his own credit, and to then consolidate his position. It was not in the interests of a good *entrepreneur* to make his clients any less dependent on the services he provided, and he thus perpetuated their inability to act and speak out for themselves. Their participation in the Dutch district council elections simply transformed this hitherto informal influence and power system into a more formal one. The *entrepreneurs* who had access to certain resources, or at least successfully gave their clients this impression, were now in a position to mobilize their following for the elections. The clients felt a moral obligation to support their 'benefactor'. Participation in the elections only strengthened the patronage system. The oligarchical aspects were heightened, all the more since the patrons in the political parties and in the district council were held in even higher esteem by their clients.

The city of Rotterdam, the political parties, the Dutch in general, all of them were virtually unaware of the factors functioning within the foreign communities. They viewed the self-nominated leaders as people who were well adjusted to Dutch society and who they could 'talk to'. I repeatedly heard Dutch politicians refer to them as 'good' foreigners who could serve as an example for the others. They were eagerly accepted in their function as a link with the foreign communities.

In this sense, the *entrepreneurs* involved did indeed play according to the rules of Dutch politics. They concealed their own power aspirations behind ideological slogans: they were opposed to 'fascism', 'communism' and 'atheism' and they adopted the language of social democrats.

In spite of his limited competency in a governing organ as weak as the district council, Kenan Asker, a Turk, the first foreigner to be elected to this governing body, was put up on a veritable pedestal. His election victory led to exaltation in the Turkish press, and his 'inauguration' was attended by the Vice-Ambassador of Turkey as well as a number of top officials of the Dutch Ministry of Home Affairs. It is hardly necessary to stress how greatly this enhanced Asker's position in the foreign community.

Being elected to a district council was not the only thing that could help an *entrepreneur* to increase his following's dependence. In their efforts to provide the immigrants with more information as to the ins and outs of Dutch society, the Rotterdam city authorities once again will turn to these *entrepreneurs*, whom they took to be the 'innovators' or 'opinion leaders' of their communities[18]. What this kind of (quite necessary) information campaign actually will effectuate is a strengthening of the patronage system, since it only will provide the *entrepreneurs* with new resources to make the others even more dependent on them.

At the beginning of this article I referred to a fictive letter from the 'Secretary of State for Ethnic Minorities' and stated that, in principle, I was in favour of the enfranchisement of immigrants. The dishearteningly passive attitude on the part of the Dutch political parties, the 12% turnout at the district council elections and the functioning of patronage networks as tiny islands within the Dutch political system do not seem to encourage the enfranchisement of immigrants on a local level. However, the participation of ethnic minorities in formal Dutch politics has tentatively been started. This is an important breakthrough. Further developments in this direction should be supported. For this very reason I agree with the 'Secretary of State for Ethnic Minorities' that, in the very near future, immigrants should be granted the right to vote.

## Postscript

Since June 1981, there has also been a foreigner in the Centrum-Noord district council. A year after the elections, as a result of unforeseen circumstances, Sakall, one of the Turkish Labour Party candidates, came to fill a seat in the district council after all. As had been the case with his compatriot Asker in Charlois, his installation in office was also attended by a top embassy official.

On October 28, 1981, elections were held in two districts of Amsterdam for new district councils to be set up there. In Amsterdam-Noord, there was a Turk on the ticket of the CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal). There was also active participation on the part of the International Interests Group, an enterprising group of people of Italian, Moroccan, Dutch, Spanish, Surinamese, Tunisian and Turkish descent who competed for the favour of (mainly) the foreign voters. None of these foreigners, all of whom were active in the socio-cultural field, were elected to the district council.

In the district of Osdorp, a Turkish social worker figured as a Labour Party candidate. As was the case with the Turk on the Christian Democratic Appeal ticket in Amsterdam-Noord, he was on the managing board of the local Turkish Cultural Centre and was extremely active in the granting of (informal) social assistance. He was not elected either. The turnout of foreigners was conservatively estimated at less than 20% (whereas the total turnout was more than 45%).

In Rotterdam, two new district councils were installed as of January 1, 1982; elections had been held for them on November 4, 1981. The general policy adhered to by city authorities was that the Dutch should not make all too many concessions to the non-Dutch customs and practices involving elections but that the foreigners, once they had settled in the Netherlands, should adjust to the Dutch way of doing things. Nonetheless, a certain amount of extra attention was devoted to the foreigners. In the district of

Overschie, the Labour Party was the only political party to sound out a Moroccan resident as a possible candidate. However, the Moroccan immediately lost all interest in playing an active role in district politics as soon as it was made clear to him that, contrary to his expectations, no well-paid job would be in store for him in return for his services. As the Dutch saw it, it was all for the sake of the cause<sup>1</sup>.

In the district of Kralingen, the Labour Party was once again the only political party with a special candidate for the foreign electorate. This Turkish *entrepreneur* in every sense of the word had some very grand-scale plans, which were the epitome of personalist vote-getting. However, the Labour Party branded his plans as unfeasible, which led the disappointed Turk not only to withdraw his candidacy but even withdraw from the party altogether.

According to a Rotterdam spokeswoman, the turnout was approximately as high (low) as at the 1980 elections.

The course of the elections made it painfully evident how little knowledge and awareness the Dutch political parties had of the social and cultural background of the immigrants, and how little real contact they had with the foreign communities. The parties did not make the slightest effort to remedy this situation — with the exception of the Labour Party, which hadn't shown any interest in the foreigners until the elections drew near.

The conclusions of a study on the 1981 elections in Amsterdam and Rotterdam only served to support the research results involving the participation of immigrants in the 1980 elections<sup>19</sup>.

## NOTES

- 1 See *Ministerraad 1989* (Council of Cabinet Ministers 1989; 1979), pp. 30-33.
- 2 *Nota Kiesrecht Migranten* (Memorandum on the Enfranchisement of Migrants; 1979), pp. 7-8; Sica (1977); Tomasi (1981).
- 3 With respect to the United Kingdom, see for example Anwar (1974-1980); Anwar and Kohler (1975); Miles and Phizacklea (1977). With respect to Sweden, there are a number of publications by Hammar (1977, 1979, forthcoming). Unfortunately, only part of the Swedish material is available in translation for readers from other countries. See also *Participation of Migrants* (1977).
- 4 On February 17, 1983, the Dutch Constitution has been altered in such a way as to grant immigrants the right to vote and to run in municipal council elections. Not until the Electoral Law and the City Law subsequently have been amended will the immigrants actually be enfranchised. It is to be expected that in 1986, when the next municipal council elections are held, immigrants will be able to participate.
- 5 The sources of my information on the Migrants' Council were Ester and Mellegers (1974); Theunis (1979); *Evaluatieverslag migrantenraad* (Evaluation Report on Migrants' Council; 1977); *Motief*, V (1975), pp. 12-13; oral accounts provided by Olav Meyer and Dr. Martin van Buinessen.

6 Oral information provided by Dr. Martin van Buinessen.

7 Ester and Mellegers (1974).

8 The main references are *De Commissie Ex Artikel 61* (Section 61 Committee; 1979) and Schooneveld (1978).

9 Schooneveld (1978), 5.1 - 38.

10 Ibid, 3.2.2 - 10.

11 Andeweg (1975); Thomassen (1976); Vos (1978). Though Andeweg and Vos did note an increasing degree of personalism in the Dutch elections, they concluded that universalist thinking still played a more important role.

12 What is mainly meant are administrative competences (such as licenses) and the drawing up of appropriation plans.

13 With respect to Morocco and Turkey, see for example: Brown (1977); Buinessen (1978); Karpat (1976); Leder (1976) and Sayari (1977).

14 The percentage turnout of foreigners is only a rough estimate, which does not meet with all the requirements with respect to reliability. On the basis of the information at my disposal it was not possible for me to arrive at a more accurate calculation.

Hook of Holland, where almost half the foreigners voted, was a striking exception. Perhaps this was due to the fact that a considerable part of the immigrant population consisted of Vietnamese boat refugees. Special facilities had been set up there to prepare them for life in Dutch society. A large part of this highly cohesive group went to vote together. The general turnout percentage in this town, which is quite separate from Rotterdam, was also higher than in the other districts.

15 *Frontidaa*, June 7, 1980, p. 3.

16 See note 11.

17 The theoretical literature I refer to includes: Bailey (1969); Banck (1977); Boissevain (1969, 1974) and Thoden van Velzen (1973); see also note 13.

18 See *Nota Voorlichting aan en over Migranten* (*Nota over beleid en praktijk van de migrantenvoorlichting in Rotterdam*) (Memorandum on the Policies and Practice of the Information Programmes for immigrants in Rotterdam), City of Rotterdam, Information and Public Relations Bureau, August 1980.

19 Rath (1981).

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