

Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the Netherlands

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In a relatively short time the Netherlands has developed into a multi-ethnic society with consequences for all sectors of the Dutch society, including politics. An important part of the ethnic minorities does not have the Dutch nationality and are consequently excluded from the franchise. However, Dutch laws have been changed in such a way that non-Dutch residents will get the municipal vote soon. The immigrants with Dutch nationality already make use of the right to vote and to be elected at all political levels, albeit to a lesser extent than the Dutch themselves (although there are some interesting local exceptions). The inferior socioeconomic positions and specific cultural backgrounds of the ethnic minorities interfere with their participation in Dutch politics, and besides, the Dutch political parties are not very aware of their responsibilities to this 'new' electorate. This article illustrates the present state of affairs regarding the political participation of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands.

Within a few years, the composition of the Dutch population has changed drastically and irreversibly. A multiplicity of immigrants with different cultural backgrounds came to the Netherlands for various reasons and at present the so-called 'ethnic minorities' constitute 5 percent of the 14 million inhabitants. For a long time the presence of these immigrants was looked upon as a temporary matter; "the Netherlands may definitely not become a country of immigration" has been the (governmental) credo for years. Although many immigrants think of returning to their native countries

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some day, the reality proves that the vast majority of them have settled permanently.

The ethnic minorities are in a position which is now generally seen as 'problematic' and critical.² They differ from the indigenous Dutchmen in (sub)culture, race, language and religion. Usually their education is standard and very often they are discriminated on account of their ethnicity.

Most of them belong to the lowest socioeconomic classes and they are in vulnerable socioeconomic positions, especially in this time of economic stagnation. The fact that ethnic minorities cannot effectively participate in the regular political decision making characterizes them moreover; they are unable to exert adequate influence on governmental policies concerning them. At the end of the seventies the Dutch government decided on a new policy, aiming at equal participation of members of ethnic minorities in Dutch society and at combating the problems that balk their emancipation. Apart from all kinds of measures on education, housing, employment, welfare and race-relations, it is the intention to strengthen the political influence of ethnic minorities. For instance, more facilities will be offered to pressure groups of ethnic interest; participatory bodies by means of which ethnic minorities can assert their influence on forthcoming policies will be founded; and finally non-Dutch immigrants will be enfranchised. Most resolutions for such policies are still to be elaborated and administered, but the Dutch political arena will surely witness several changes within the foreseeable future; trends of which are already observable.

What are by now the rights and possibilities of ethnic minorities to participate in the Dutch political arena? And how do ethnic minorities use these rights and possibilities?

Participation in politics, first of all the right to vote, is chiefly established by the legal status of the individual. His legal status is determined by his nationality. The variety of nationalities of ethnic minorities reflects the historical background of their immigration into the Netherlands.

The Moluccans, who fought against the Indonesian nationalists in service of the Royal Dutch Colonial Army, came to the Netherlands in 1951. In colonial days they were recognized as Dutch subjects though not as Dutch nationals. At this moment about 30 to 40 percent of the Moluccans are without nationality for political reasons (they want to establish a new independent Moluccan republic in the Moluccan islands, which are now part of Indonesia; they consider themselves as Moluccan nationals in exile). Since

² A number of publications deal with ethnic minorities in the Netherlands (only a small number of which have been translated into English). Some of the most important ones are: Acom, 1979; Amersfoort, 1982; Berg-Eldering, 1979; Bovenkerk, 1978, 1979; Netherlands Scientific Council, 1979; and the special issue of *Planning and Development*, 1981. *N.B.* In the introduction of this article is set out that the term 'ethnic minorities' is related to particular groups of immigrants; not every immigrant belongs to the 'ethnic minorities'. Nevertheless, in this article the terms 'ethnic minorities' and 'immigrants' are interchangeable.

TABLE I
IMMIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

	Numbers x 1000
Antillians ^a	38.1
Mediterraneans ^b	291.5
Moluccans ^c	38.0
Surinamers ^a	176.1
Subtotal ethnic minorities	543.7
Citizens of E.C. countries ^a	142.2
Rest	89.3
Total immigrants	774.2
Total Population ^d	14,285.8

Notes: ^a Per 1/1/1981. Source: *Bevolkingsprognose allochtonen in Nederland, Deel II, Surinamers en Antillanen*. (Population prognosis immigrants in the Netherlands). Rijswijk: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 1982:41-42.

^b The Mediterraneans concern immigrants from Algeria, Morocco (93,000), Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey (148,500) and Yugoslavia (also exclusive E.C. countries Greece and Italy). The E.C. countries are Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and United Kingdom. Data per 1/1/1982. Source: *Statistisch Bulletin*, 38, 1982.

^c This is a rough estimate of the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture. Oral information. November, 1982.

^d Per 1/1/1982. Source: *Statistiek Zakboek 1982*. The Hague State Publishing Office, 1982:28.

1976 these stateless Moluccans have been put on the same legal footing as Dutch nationals except for the suffrage and the National Service. An estimated 60 percent of the Moluccan community became Dutch citizens, merely for pragmatic reasons. A small percentage of Moluccans (10%) has the Indonesian nationality (See, Schmid and De Graaf, 1980).

Surinamers and Antillians are immigrants from former Dutch colonies in the Caribbean area. The vast majority are Dutch citizens. About 10 percent of the Surinamese community has the Surinamese nationality. These immigrants chose to become Surinamese citizens, or arrived after the Day of Independence of the Republic of Suriname, November 25, 1975.

The Mediterraneans (for the greater part Turkish and Moroccan) have come to the Netherlands as 'guestworkers' and many of them stayed in this country and have brought their families. Nearly all the Mediterraneans are

foreign citizens, except for a minute number of nationalized residents.

To sum up: a small number of Moluccans and Surinamers and most of the Mediterraneans are foreign citizens.³ This implies a weaker legal status and certainly no right to vote and to be elected for municipal, provincial or national elections. The remaining immigrants have Dutch nationality. That means that their legal position is equal to the position of indigenous Dutch nationals; so *de jure* they have every right and possibility of participation in politics, including the suffrage.

To all this must be added the fact that members of countries of the European Community (for instance inhabitants of the Mediterranean countries Italy and Greece) find themselves in a more privileged position. For example, these citizens have more security about their residence and work. Residence can be forbidden to foreigners who manage politics in the Netherlands.⁴ Citizens of E.C. countries, however, cannot be expelled for this reason. This makes them feel freer in the Netherlands. In addition, citizens of E.C. countries living in the Netherlands possess the right to participate in elections for the European Parliament. In this way on June 10, 1979 they were able to vote for representatives of their native countries without being forced to return to those countries for voting. In May 1984 new polls will take place, so they can use this right for the second time.

So the legal status of members of ethnic minorities varies greatly, but the Dutch government is willing to equalize the (political) rights of Dutch nationals and foreigners to some extent. Albeit this is not yet the case, it is not said that ethnic minorities, who are not enfranchised yet, have absolutely no means to exert political influence; on the other hand to be enfranchised does not mean that one actually exerts political influence.

The political participation of ethnic minorities has rarely been the object of study and this fact is perhaps characteristic for their marginal position. This article presents a report of the present situation: first I will deal with the state of affairs on the alteration of the Dutch law to enfranchise foreign citizens; second, with the alternatives of the Dutch law to enfranchise foreign citizens; and third, with the available evidence on the actual participation of (enfranchised) ethnic minorities.

³ Unlike in the United States foreign children born on Dutch soil do not automatically become Dutch citizens. Very few foreigners naturalize; most grants to citizenship are to Surinamers.

⁴ See, Groenendijk and Swart, 1978. This 'danger' should not be exaggerated; this happened in one case, that of ex-CIA-agent Philip Aggee who was refused a stay in the Netherlands in the late seventies. Furthermore, citizens of non-E.C. countries having "permission for permanent residence" (which can be obtained after five years of residence) have the same rights at this point.

ALTERATION OF THE LAWS

History

The requirement of Dutch nationality is firm in the law. First of all in the Articles 90, 94, 137 and 152 of the Constitution, but also in Article 48 of the Statute of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in which the relation between the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles is arranged; the requirement is repeated for local election in Article B1 of the Ballot Act and in Article 21 of the Local Government Act.⁵

This criterion could be used with reason as long as the Dutch population had an ethnic homogeneous composition. At present, however, the question arises whether the criterion of Dutch nationality should still be maintained. Several authors have pointed out the importance of suffrage for deprived immigrants as a contribution to their emancipation (Hammer, forthcoming; Miller, 1981; Milovanovid, 1979; *Ministerraad*, 1979:30-33; Tomasi, 1981).

Recently the enfranchising of non-Dutch citizens came up for discussion in Parliament on a number of occasions, in particular in 1970-1971 when the "Memorandum on immigrant labour" about the position of the Mediterranean "guest workers" was being debated (*Handelingen der Tweede Kamer*, sitting 1970-1975, no. 10504) and in 1974 when the Act that regulates the legal status of displaced Moluccans was in preparation (*Handelingen der Tweede Kamer*, sitting 1973-1975, n. 12839).

During the seventies government circles began to see that Dutch nationality and the suffrage should be unlinked. In 1975 the government introduced a bill for a revision of the *Constitution* which opened the possibility of enfranchising non-Dutch inhabitants, thereby following international developments. In Sweden, and in the E.C. countries of Ireland and the United Kingdom, immigrants already have the right to vote and be elected. In E.C. circles the wish has been laid down to give E.C. immigrants the right to participate in local elections (in the current political climate in Europe, However, the idea of migrant participation does not seem to be looked upon very favorably).

It is interesting that the government proposed this bill at the instigation of Dutch lawyers; foreigners hardly campaigned for it. The bill runs as follows: "The law can grant the right to elect the members of the municipal council to residents who do not have Dutch nationality, if at least they meet the requirements that apply for residents who have Dutch nationality".

⁵ For an account of the alteration of the law see, Groenendijk and Swart, 1978; *Handelingen der Eerste en Tweede Kamer*, sitting 1975-1980, no. 13991; *ibid* sitting 1981-1982; Schutte, 1980.

⁶ Articles 90 and 94 are about the right to elect members of the Second Chamber and the right to be elected as a member of the Second Chamber. Article 137 is about elections for Provincial States and Article 152 is about elections for the municipal council. See, *Grondbwet*, 1964.

Since 1963 the entire Dutch constitution has been revised, and this bill fits into it. The commission that prepared this revision is of the opinion that national politics should remain exclusive to Dutch citizens. Therefore, the bill is limited to the municipal vote. A proposal by some commission members to extend the suffrage to Provincial States (similar to County Councils) was defeated, because members of the Provincial States elect members to the First Chamber (i.e., the Senate). For the same reason the idea to enfranchise foreigners for the Second Chamber (the House of Representatives) was rejected unanimously.

It cannot be said that the political parties welcomed the bill unanimously. The Social Democrats and the radical Left Wing endorsed the bill from the beginning, and these parliamentary parties even proposed the extension of the franchise to provincial and parliamentary elections. However, this proposal did not get a majority in the Second Chamber in 1979.

At first the Christian Democratic and Conservative Parliamentary parties appeared to have great difficulties with the disengaging of franchise and citizenship, and they suggested that naturalization and advisory-councils for foreigners would be better. These suggestions, as the only alternative for franchise, were turned down by the government.

A number of parliamentarians, especially from the Christian Democratic parliamentary parties, wanted to keep enfranchisement restricted to E.C. citizens (on the basis of reciprocity), but they did not get wide support for their proposal.

After the Christian Democrats and the conservatives overcame their objections to the bill, Parliament voted in favor. As laid down in the law, more ballots were required, the last one taking place in 1982. On February 17, 1983 the revision of the Constitution was promulgated (*Nederlandse Staatscourant*, 1983).⁷

Only when the statute has been altered, the above mentioned article will come into force in May 1983, this alteration was promulgated (*Handelingen der Tweede Kamer*, sitting 1981-1983, no. 17263). Now the constitution permits that the Ballot Act and the Local Government Act can also be altered. The main problem now is to give concrete form to the fundamental right, which is granted to foreigners. There has been ample debate on this question in Parliament. Should foreigners be fluent in the Dutch language? After how many years of residence will a foreigner get the vote? On request of the

⁷ This new law is embodied in Article 130 of the revised constitution. The new Articles 54 and 56 are about the right to vote and to be elected at parliamentary level; Article 7.6 is about provincial and municipal elections. The Articles mentioned in note 6 have been abrogated. (*De herziene Grondwet*, 1983). A novelty is the right to elect members of Parliament to persons of Dutch nationality with domicile outside the country. (*Ibid.*)

Parliament, the responsible Minister has asked the Kiesraad (a council concerning the Ballot Act) for counsel on this question. On March 5, 1982 the Kiesraad gave a number of recommendations.⁸

First of all it affirmed the view of the government that no difference should be made between E.C. citizens, displaced Moluccans and other non-Dutch citizens. Further it suggested that "command of the Dutch language as well as acquaintance with the rules of the Dutch political game are indispensable to function efficiently in the municipal council", but it thinks that legal requirements concerning this should not be recommended. Finally, the Kiesraad judged it desirable to prescribe a minimum duration of stay. It recommended a term of three years for the active franchise and a term of five years for the passive franchise.

At this moment it is not yet clear whether the government and the Parliament honor these recommendations. Presently the discussion is confined to the possible requirement of three or five years of stay.

Although it is difficult to overlook politics concerning this point, there seems to be a majority, within the parliamentary parties, willing to dispatch the remaining formalities in the way the Kiesraad proposed as soon as possible. It is expected that non-Dutch citizens will vote for the first time in the next municipal elections, those of May/June 1986.

The Opinion of the Dutch

Recent opinion polls⁹ show that a majority (56%) of the Dutch people are in favor of enfranchising foreigners for municipal elections at least. As for political preferences, the upholders and opponents among the respondents turn out to be divided among all parties (although not proportionally). We see that the small left radical parties are predominantly upholders, whereas among the supporters of the social-democratic *PvdA* (Labor Party) and the liberal D'66 (Democrats '66), two thirds are upholders. Among the supporters of the two other big parties, the conservative *VVD* (Peoples Party for Freedom and Democracy) and *CDA* (Christian Democratic Appeal) we find as much upholders as opponents. The followers of small, radical right wing parties turn out to be predominantly negative on the issue.

From the polls it stands out that younger people are more inclined to support enfranchisement than older people, and that people with little

⁸ Letter of the Kiesraad to the Minister of the Interior, no. 3395, March 5, 1981. It must be remarked that residents with Indonesian, Argentinian or South African nationalities can lose their nationalities if using the right to vote or the right to be elected in the Netherlands. See, *Note Kiesrecht Migranten*, 1979.

⁹ Opinionsonderzoek Nieuwe Landgenoten, 1982. (The Rapport Gemeenteraadsverkiezingen, 1982, mentions 58%).

education are more against granting enfranchisement than well-educated people. Furthermore, according to these polls, it does not really matter whether one has many or few immigrants in one's neighborhoods, where most immigrants live and where native Dutch (mostly with little education) are confronted with these immigrants most strongly; we find for example that the support for the anti-immigrant parties is growing very fast. One would expect that this would have emerged in the survey. Apart from that, such a survey does not teach us what attitude the Dutch really will adopt when foreigners actually claim their part in politics.

INDIRECT POLITICAL INFLUENCE FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES

Franchise is a necessary but insufficient condition for exerting direct political influence, and possessing this right is an important attainment. However, the Dutch political set up also knows other possibilities of asserting political influence. In the same way as the Dutch, the Mediterraneans, the non-Dutch Surinamers and the Moluccans (and of course other foreigners legally staying in the country) have a number of basic rights to influence the political decisionmaking (Groenendijk and Swart, 1978). We can think of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, etc., plus the right of petition. More than once, it has occurred that members of ethnic minorities have gone out on the streets to demonstrate their case.

There have been actions against the law which ordains the position of foreigners in the labor market and against the police policy towards illegals; occupations of churches by illegal foreigners demanding better opportunities for regularization; action by and against right radical immigrant groupings like the Turkish Grey Wolves or the Moroccan Amicales; demonstrations (and even counter-demonstrations) against the military dictatorship in Turkey and Suriname; activities of the Surinamese Liberation Council and the South Moluccan Government-in-exile; actions against lowering family allowances; and actions for better housing and better race-relations.

Occupations, industrial-actions, harassing the media, hunger-strikes, lobbying; all these things have come to belong to the arsenal of pressure by the ethnic minorities and their sympathizers. It will be clear that these immigrants are not politically quiescent. In practice, it is difficult to have a significant influence on political decisions. It is a cynical fact that the most violent actions had perhaps the most far-reaching political consequences: the high-jacking of trains by militant young Moluccans (Köbben, 1979; Schmid and De Graaf, 1980). Nevertheless, the actions have at least drawn attention towards minority issues. And it does occur that authorities meet their demands.

Ethnic Organizations

The government policy in the seventies was strongly 'welfare-oriented' and throughout the years an unprecedented number of state-aided ethnic organizations have been founded by members of ethnic minorities (sometimes together with native Dutch people) (Boer, 1982; Netherlands Scientific Council, 1979). These ethnic clubs, unions and foundations organize a) sports, social events and cultural activities; b) religious activities; c) activities focused on politics of the native countries and d) activities to take care of the individual or communal interests.

The ethnic pressure groups who organize the last-mentioned activities are of special political importance. The fact that ethnic minorities do not have *de jure* or *de facto* sufficient access to appropriate political channels gives an extra dimension to the political aspects of their activities. A curious detail is that these organizations are state-aided for their welfare, not for their political activities. They help their nationals with problem-solving, and try to politicize the problem by placing it in a larger framework. They react to (political) events and comment on reports about ethnic minorities or draw these up themselves. They also write letters and petitions about all kinds of abuses and sometimes they conduct a campaign by mobilizing the media and their rank-and-file. In particular they try to keep an eye on the Dutch government: draw attention to its responsibilities for ethnic minorities (according to them the government policy is directed to assimilating the ethnic minorities and destroying their cultural identity totally). Continually they point out their special (subcultural) minority positions. Apart from claiming their legitimate part of the social pie, they accentuate the necessity for special category facilities. Finally, a lot of these ethnic pressure groups are involved in the politics of their native countries, and try to influence these from the Netherlands.

With the Moluccans, the community organization is fairly good; with the Surinamers and Antillians the organization is more like an elite of welfare-workers; and with the Mediterraneans the organization is weak. These organizations and their leaders consider themselves (rightly or not) as mouth-pieces for the ethnic minorities and in this way they fulfill a sociopsychological function, which is of importance in the emancipation of minorities.

Most organizations are small, still they pretend to be representative of a particular or even all minorities. In this way they try to enhance their prestige and to become the official interlocutor of the government. The organization of ethnic minorities is fragmented. Not only are there dividing lines between the nationalities, but also between ethnic sub-groups (for instance between Creole, Hindustani and Javanese Surinamers), between religions, between orientation on the culture and politics of the native country, and not least between rivaling leaders. Nevertheless, there are

already some collaborative-links between several ethnic organizations. And we observe that the voice of the ethnic minorities gradually penetrates the Dutch political center(s).

Remarkably quite a few Dutch act as spokespersons, *i.e.* as advocates, for the ethnic minorities (Köbben, 1983). They do not belong to the ethnic minorities and are not elected by them to represent their interests. They set up actions on behalf of the minorities or support ethnic organizations. Some such spokespersons are active for political reasons and they frequently use their contacts with political parties or with the media. These can be mobilized on behalf of the minorities. The drawback of such interethnic coalitions is that in this way the ethnic minorities remain dependent on the Dutch in their political lobbying. Spokespersons sometimes determine the information and insight into the Dutch political set-up to ethnic minorities as well as informing the Dutch about ethnic minorities and so act as intermediaries.

Advisory Committees

During the discussion in Parliament about political rights of foreigners some MPs suggested that foreigners be given political influence at a local level by means of official advisory committees for foreigners such as exist in Belgium and Germany. In the Local Government Act, Articles 61, 62 and 63 offer the possibility of setting up committees to take care of special interests (*Geneenteijk inpratsbeleid voor minderheden*, 1982; Groenedijk and Swart, 1978, *De Commissie Ex Art. 61*, 1979; Schooneveld, 1978). In the second half of the seventies the policymakers of several provincial cities actually set up such community organizations. In 1973, the *Migrantenraad* (Migrant council) in the municipality of Utrecht was founded, but because of its malfunctioning this experiment was dropped in 1978. In a number of other municipalities (*i.e.*, Delft, Dordrecht, Gouda, Borinchem, Leiden, Zaanstad) so called *Commissies ex artikel 61, en 63* Committees under articles 61, 62 and 63 for the interests of foreigners have been founded.

Generally these committees have a double task: first, advising the mayor and the municipal council about all kinds of questions concerning (Mediterranean) foreigners, and second advancing consultation and cooperation between persons and institutions that are involved with the problems of foreigners. The composition of these committees is mixed: various ethnic groups within the municipality are represented and beside them a large number of Dutch people sit on the committee. They can be representatives of the municipality, the municipal council, the trade unions, employers' organizations, local welfare foundations for foreigners, etc. The foreign members

are chosen *A titre personnel* for a certain period of time by their fellow countrymen by means of secret and voluntary voting. There is no formal 'party' formation of immigrants. In a few municipalities it has happened that members of extremely nationalistic immigrant organizations worked their way into the committees by improper pressure on the voters. Generally the turn-out at the elections is not high (20 to 50%) although sometimes there are peaks in a particular ethnic group.

Apart from seeing to fair elections, with 'democratic' candidates and a high response by the electorate, the committees have to contend with many other problems. Most of the time, the foreign committee members do not have institutionalized contact with their supporters; at most they have individual relations with individual countrymen. To the ethnic rank and file the committees convey little. Nevertheless, some foreigners do know exactly how to find their way to the committee members, but this is often for personal problems. Consequently the committees tend to become a 'serving-hatch' for all sorts of personal problems of foreigners instead of being a platform for more universalistic issues. The result of all this is that these foreigners represent only themselves in the committee. In the municipality of Gorinchem for example, they try to activate consulting their grass-roots by not having direct elections anymore, but rather by putting representatives of local ethnic organizations on the committee. In addition, the enormous division that sometimes exists between and inside ethnic groups is an extra handicap for the work to be done by the committees. The language barrier and the lack of familiarity with the municipal administrative machine and its formal and inflexible decisionmaking procedures hinder the work of the committees. Furthermore, Dutch committee members may dominate in the procedures. Much of the committees' time, moreover, is spent on informing and instructing the foreign committee member.

The effect of these committees is minor, although they do know how to draw public attention of the Dutch people and the Dutch institutions to ethnic minorities. The competence of the committees, moreover, is exclusively advisory; they have no real political power, and it seems that their words carry little weight. High expectations of immigrants are not lived up to, especially because the committees have no tangible results to present.

Nevertheless, the government thinks that such committees can be important for the implementation of its minorities policy. It recommends the founding of these participatory bodies not only on behalf of the Mediterranean foreigners but also on behalf of other ethnic groups. In some municipalities (*e.g.*, Zwolle and Deventer) advisory bodies function for the Moluccan communities. Elsewhere, a number of informal councils take the participation of ethnic minorities upon themselves in one way or another.

At this moment the government has drawn up a draft of a bill which

provides the legal framework for the participation of minorities on the local and national level (*Voorontwerp van Wet*, 1981). Its passage is a ticklish affair and it is taking some time to materialize. Its principle is that as long as the ethnic minorities have special interests and as long as their involvement in the minorities policy stands out, it should be possible for them to exert a special influence on the government policy. It is not yet clear whether this participation will be organized by ethnic groups or by policy items. Another indistinctness is how the ethnic minorities will be represented.

One can raise objections to this bill, for it seems to 'sanction' the special position of ethnic minorities. One can question whether an institutionalized categorial participation is the right way to organize influence on the government policy.

So far, the municipality of Rotterdam is the only one that has opted for a general participation policy, *i.e.*, for participation of immigrants in regular administrative bodies of the municipality.

THE ETHNIC VOTE IN PRACTICE

It goes without saying that members of ethnic minorities have to penetrate into those places where the decisions are really taken, and the most suitable way of doing this is by joining a political party. Although exact figures are not available, it is certain that members of ethnic minorities rarely become members of political parties.¹⁰ Another indication of their involvement in politics is their participation in elections.

Surinamers, Antillians and Moluccans

In the latest provincial and Parliamentary elections a couple of Surinamers and Antillians ran for office. They were nominated for the *CDA* and *PvdA* in ineligible positions. Research into the municipal elections of June 2, 1982 has tried to record the participation of eligible Surinamers, Antillians and Moluccans (Bovenkerk *et al.*, 1982). The researchers first checked how far the passive franchise is exercised by members of these ethnic groups. There is a total of 59,650 candidates competing for the votes of 9,923,237 people for 11,364 seats on the town-councils throughout the country. I have traced no more than 43 immigrant candidates (27 Surinamese, 6 Antillians, 4 Moluc-

¹⁰ The CPN (Communist Party of the Netherlands) permits foreigners to apply as a member only since December 1982.

cans, 5 Turks and 1 Moroccan¹¹). This is 1/25th of what could be expected considering their part in the electorate. More than half of these stand for immigrant parties which they have founded themselves. Most of the remaining candidates belong to the social-democratic PvdA (albeit mostly in ineligible positions — the eligible immigrants are often sitting members of the municipal council). The Christian-Democratic CDA nominated less immigrants and the third largest Dutch party, the conservative VVD did not nominate a single immigrant. Despite the fact that all these candidates got a relatively great number of preference votes only seven of them were elected (5 Surinamers, 1 Antillian and 1 Moluccan). So Surinamers, Antillians and Moluccans are heavily under-represented in municipal politics; they hardly use the passive franchise or they are not encouraged sufficiently by the political parties.

In a number of polling-stations in neighborhoods where a large number of Surinamers, Antillians or Moluccans live, shadow-elections are held. From this it appeared that these immigrants do go to the polling booth, although in general relatively less frequently than do the indigenous. Especially the younger enfranchised Surinamers and Antillians turn up less often.

The ethnic voters mostly vote for the two largest and best known parties: for the PvdA, and for the CDA. They hardly vote for the VVD and the liberal D'66 and in the one municipality where this does happen, it can be explained by the action of a local Dutch spokesman who had given a specific recommendation for one of those parties. Various local circumstances also explain the success of some other (radical leftwing) parties in which immigrant candidates sometimes manage to pull ethnic voters from the PvdA and CDA. The special immigrant parties rarely receive votes. Their results were far too low even to win one seat anywhere. It seems likely that the foundation of immigrant parties is not the most efficient way for immigrants to gain actual political influence. It seems to me that the founding of immigrants parties has to do with the acquisition of influence within the ethnic community. Even so their very existence is a warning note to the Dutch political parties not to disregard the interests of immigrants. Successful in collecting immigrant votes are those parties (PvdA in particular) that put immigrants in a position where they are capable of being elected, and in addition that give these candidates the opportunity of conducting a personal campaign among the ethnic minorities. Conducting an intensive preference votes campaign is a salient element of the participation of ethnic minorities in the elections. This

¹¹ One Turk has been nominated as candidate at the PvdA-list in Amsterdam, although he has not been enfranchised at the moment. According to the PvdA this nomination must be seen as a symbolic deed of solidarity with the unfranchised immigrants in Amsterdam. The other Turkish and Moroccan candidates stand for an immigrant party. Only one of them has been naturalized.

enlarges the polls enormously. We can observe the results of such personal campaigns in a few polling districts in The Hague, where ethnic voters go to the ballot box comparatively more often than do "natives". The number of preference votes for immigrant candidates even surpasses the party quota here.

From such a result we can conclude that enfranchised members of ethnic groups are definitely willing to exercise the active franchise, but that the wholesale organizing of such is not a matter of course. The distance between the political parties and these Surinamers, Antillians and Moluccans is evidently too big and there are still too few immigrants and Dutch party-associates who try to bridge this gap.

Mediterraneans and District-Council Elections

It is difficult to predict what will happen when the 1980 municipal elections are held, yet there are some indications with regard to this: for some time past, in a few municipalities, non-Dutch residents have had the right to participate in elections for municipal district-councils. We can observe the trends of how things might work out in 1986 from the participations of foreigners in the district-council elections.

District-councils are chosen 'neighborhood administration bodies' of little political importance. The election rules of these district-councils may be different from those laid down in the Ballot Act, because the district-councils and their elections are intra-municipal affairs. It is the municipal council that determines who is or is not entitled to vote. In three municipalities (in which a large number of foreigners live) the municipal councils have allowed non-Dutch residents to participate in district-council elections. Furthermore they have determined that, as far as this is concerned, the non-Dutch are put on the same footing as the Dutch, so no supplementary demands (e.g., the duration of stay) are made on foreigners. In this way the foreigners in Zaanstad (since 1976), Rotterdam (since 1980) and Amsterdam (since 1981) have the unique right to participate in elections for such administrative bodies.

Regarding the participation of ethnic minorities in the elections of the four district-councils in Zaanstad in 1976 and 1980, no detailed data are available, except that no foreigners have run for office and that no special campaign among immigrants is conducted.

The elections in Amsterdam almost produced a council-seat for a Turkish immigrant in one of the two district-councils: he was put in a seemingly eligible position on the PvdA-list (*Kiezersengrupe Stadsdeeltraden*, 1981; Rath 1981b) but unfortunately for the Turkish socialist the PvdA lost council seats.

In another district another Turkish immigrant was nominated as a candidate for the CDA, but in a low, ineligible position, he did not get a seat on the council either. The discussion held in the CDA with reference to his nomination was interesting. The question was whether this Moslem could be nominated for a Christian party such as the CDA. Referring to a Scripture text in which care for strangers is urged, the CDA (with a clear conscience) put him forward as a candidate after all.

In the same district an immigrant party (in which people of various nationalities have united) participates, but it did not get enough votes. The turn-out of immigrants is estimated at between 10 and 20 percent versus an average turn-out of 45 percent for the total poll. From a survey that was carried out we can conclude that an important part of the ethnic vote was for the PvdA. A peculiarity is the appeal of a Moroccan organization not to vote. The Moroccans explained their action as a protest against the—from their point of view—passivity and Dutchifying policy of the government and political parties.

Regarding minority participation in district-council elections such data have been made available about the elections in Rotterdam in 1980 (Rath, 1981a).

NEW FEATURES IN DUTCH POLITICS: THE ROTTERDAM CASE

In two of six districts with larger concentrations of ethnic minorities eight Turkish and Moroccan immigrants were nominated as candidates. There were no candidates from other ethnic groups (a couple of Surinamers planned to run for office, but they did not carry it through and retired from the elections). There were two Turkish and Moroccan immigrant parties. The only Dutch party with immigrant candidates was the PvdA and it was surprising to see how quickly nomination came about. The fact that these brand new party associates are immigrants was sufficient for the party to give them, within a couple of weeks of party membership, a (sometimes even eligible!) place. These were 'tokens' pushed forward as the 'living proof' that the party is concerned with the lot of the foreign fellow citizens, and many party members expected that this move would yield a lot of votes. According to them it would not be the fault of the party campaign if the ethnic voters did not go to the polls. Most parties, however, remained absolutely passive towards the new foreign electorate, both in nominating candidates and in introducing a special campaign. It is only now that many parties realize that people from other origins who are living in their district can also function as party members. But the consequence of this is rarely accepted.

Members of local branches of the PvdA and of a few other parties and the municipality in particular do 'anything' to effect a high poll. Party posters were put up, election-meetings were organized, letters were sent to (often illiterate) foreigners and above all party brochures were spread around. Only a small part of which was translated in Turkish, Arabic, Portuguese, etc. The 'ordinary' foreigners, however, were totally inaccessible with such a Dutch campaign. The municipality and particularly the political parties had no conception of the fact that election campaigns in Turkey and Morocco are run differently. Only an average of 12 percent of the foreign voters appeared at the ballot box on the polling day versus 40 percent of the total electorate. Especially the foreign women stayed at home. The possible explanation for the low foreign poll was generally sought in the fact that the foreigners do not feel enough at home in the Dutch society, and that the phenomenon of a district-council election is completely new and strange to them. The fact that there were only a few immigrant candidates of only two nationalities is hardly mentioned, no more than the passivity of most political parties is expressed in detail. One (PvdA) Turk was elected.

A remarkable fact is that the immigrant candidate got many preference votes and it is interesting to see how this came about.

Since there are just a few immigrant candidates, for the ethnic rank and file these 'gladiators' determine the 'face' of the party very quickly—even more so because these ethnic candidates direct the attention above all to their own group. Their canvassing for votes is easier in the nature of a preference vote campaign, especially since Dutch parties fail to make direct contact with the immigrant voters. Furthermore, the Turkish and Moroccan communities are fairly small; many are acquainted with each other.

Through the ethnic organizations, through mosques, coffee-houses, muslim butchers, in short, through the nodal points of their ethnic network, the attention of friends, relatives and neighbors is drawn to the elections. Through this nationals are reached, most of all persons with a common family background, region of origin, ethnic (sub)group, religion, political opinion, etc.

The fact that these candidates come from their own set plays an important role for Turkish and Moroccan voters. The candidates can be considered controversial persons outside their own set, but within their set they are seen as reliable people who behave in a familiar way and who speak their own language. "He is one of us", is often heard. It is somewhat in contrast with the Dutch candidates who mostly propagate the principles and the platform of their parties. A lot of immigrant candidates include other things in their more individual campaigns. This attitude of these candidates and the high expectations that the ethnic voters have of their candidates in-person have much to do with the politico-cultural 'juggage' that Turks and Moroccans have brought with them to the Netherlands.

In Turkey¹² and Morocco the political system is kept going by patron-client relations; a similar political subculture develops within the Turkish and Moroccan communities in the Netherlands. A condition for the existence of such a patronage system is having unequal access to goods and services in a society, and for ethnic minorities in Holland such inequality in fact exists.

As mentioned before, the Mediterraneans are for the greater part at the bottom of the social ladder and many of them do not have a clear view of the social situation. Nevertheless, some have gone far. They are the ones who have been in the Netherlands for a long time and have a good command of Dutch. Furthermore, they have a good insight into Dutch society and are at present doing well as the owner of a coffee-house, or as a butcher or as the manager of a mosque and especially as an interpreter/welfare-worker. Many of these socially successful entrepreneurs now operate as actual patrons: they are often called upon by nationals for mediation with Dutch institutions such as schools, hospitals, the police, housing-offices and the social services. These entrepreneurs are respected by all those who need them as intermediaries and they are sometimes paid for their help.

It is remarkable that many of these entrepreneurs are active in welfare work, either as professionals or as volunteers. In the ethnic organizations they often fill leading positions—sometimes the entire organization is dependent on these leaders. Many of these entrepreneurs try to surpass their rivals by setting themselves up as 'better' than others as promotor of interests of the specific ethnic group and above all by lending maximal aid and intermediary services.

These entrepreneurs, who first acquired a prominent position in the socio-cultural field, now enter a new arena: politics. We already saw that ethnic organizations manage politics in a facultative and informal way; now some leaders take a hand in the elections as candidates and are able to convert the confidence they enjoy into votes. The consequence is that they can consolidate their elitist positions, and in this way the oligarchic process within the ethnic communities increases: the leaders keeping all key-positions, while maintaining the tutelage of their clients. Still these intermediaries fulfill a vital role by involving their unemancipated rank and file in politics.

In the party in which they run for office, the Dutch are hardly aware of how things function within the community of ethnic minorities. For the parties concerned these approachable immigrants apply as adopted foreigners with whom they might "do a deal".

¹² One reference: Sayari (1977) gives an interesting analysis of Turkish politics before the military coup of September 1980.

*The Surinamese, Antillean and
Moluccan Preference Votes*

Does the evidence in Rotterdam tell something about the participation of other ethnic groups in the elections? When we look at the Surinamers, Antillians and Moluccans who participated in the municipal elections of June 1982, we can observe again that most candidates already lived for a long time in the Netherlands, are often well-educated and have reached moderately high social positions in general,¹³ are active in one way or another in the sociocultural sector where they have won a reputation as promoters of others' interests. Again we establish a passion for personal preference-vote campaigns: house to house calls are made, special posters are made with private means, propaganda via ethnic organizations, mosques, churches and ethnic enterprises is carried out. The campaigns seem to be very lively and everything seems to be worth doing. In Amsterdam a Surinam candidate is up and about on the streets with a megaphone praising himself to his electorate and directing potential voters to the polling station, where they will be welcomed and 'aided' by a loyal friend and party member.

A new element in the electoral campaign of ethnic minorities is the use of the media. Candidates are recommended in the ethnic newspapers and magazines. On the national radio the nomination of ethnic minorities as candidates comes up for discussion. In The Hague and Rotterdam intensive use is made of illegal (Surinam) radio stations to push candidates.

Some such campaigns are quite successful. In municipalities where preference votes are canvassed most actively, the ethnic voters appear *en masse*. A preference vote campaign led in 1978 to a PvdA-Surinamer being elected to municipal council. This electoral success had led to the nomination and election of other Surinamers in the competing CDA in 1982. The struggle between Dutch political parties for the ethnic vote has started here, but so far this situation seems to be unique in the Netherlands.

It is interesting to note that some immigrants are already hard at work to build up a network of loyal intermediaries to support their canvassing for votes in 1986. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that the municipal elections (in which foreigners are expected to participate for the first time) fall in the Moslem Lent Ramadan. In this month the mosque is visited more frequently and because of that the possibility of mobilizing the Turkish, Moluccan and Surinamese Moslems is heightened. Although it will not be a conscious policy, it is likely that a larger turn out of these voters will be achieved via the mosques.

¹³ Bovenkerk, Rath and Ruland, 1982. Another research into the participation of Surinamers, Antillians and Moluccans is not finished at this moment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The scarce research data show that the ethnic minorities in the Netherlands have very limited political influence. Some of the Moluccans and Surinamers and almost all of the Mediterraneans do not have Dutch nationality and consequently they lack the most elementary means for political influence: the right to vote and to be elected. Channels through which political influence can be exerted (trade unions, ethnic pressure groups, advisory committees) are still functioning inadequately. The Antillians, nearly all of the Surinamers and a large part of the Moluccans who do have Dutch nationality can hardly lean on those political channels, too. Nevertheless, we can observe a growing pressure on the government by immigrants.

The last mentioned ethnic groups are enfranchised. Does this mean that the political parties will make themselves stronger for these ethnic groups and that the members of these ethnic groups will apply to political parties? What few studies that exist show that the distance between the members of these ethnic groups and the political parties is still too big, although there are indications that they are coming closer to each other. Immigrants are interested in politics: they do go to the ballot-box, although less frequently than the native Dutch. At this moment few immigrants join political parties, and for the time being a nomination is restricted to a single local initiative. Occasionally local party branches pay attention to immigrants and adjust their platforms. Ethnic minorities, however, are generally (even to the favorite PvdA) a forgotten electorate.

Although no thorough research has been done, I have some tentative explanations for this gap. The most trivial explanation is that a large part of the ethnic minorities is not allowed to vote or to be elected. The direct interest of these categories in political parties is limited, and they are completely uninteresting for the parties as potential voters. In addition, though the ethnic minorities constitute an average of 5 percent of the population, their number is minimal in some places. The electoral interest for political parties is again small then, and it would not be 'rewarding' to give special attention to ethnic minorities. On the contrary, in a lot of other places the concentration of enfranchised ethnic minorities is very high (sometimes up to 1/6 of the population), but this only rarely leads to a connection of immigrants with political parties.

Of course, the fact that many members of ethnic minorities are still insufficiently oriented as to the Dutch society plays a part. First of all, one has to feel really at home in the Netherlands before moving into politics. The marginal position and the 'myth of return to the native country' do not stimulate gaining an insight into the Dutch political set-up or using political rights. Immigrants have no tradition of active support to a particular Dutch

This does not alter the fact that many immigrants are indeed very concerned in the politics of their native country.

Apart from this, there is a fear and sometimes suspicion of being rejected by Dutch party members; this fear and suspicion of being discriminated against restrains some people from joining political parties. Also the language barrier is a factor, particularly for Mediterraneans.

Some party members suggest that ethnic minorities do not have a democratic tradition, that they are not used to participating in politics and that they could not vote or join a party for that reason. The opposite is true. In Surinam, in the Antilles and also in a Mediterranean country such as Turkey, political cultures prevail in which everyone is occupied with politics in some way or another and in which, for example, the election campaign is an event of the first order. There, politics are more lively and particularly personal and informal, and this is something which the Dutch political parties hardly understand or do not want to take into account. The Dutch political culture seems to be more detached and a bit more sober and formal. The Dutch parties have a waiting attitude; in general they lack a more personal approach. This makes politics less attractive and less accessible to immigrants who are used to different methods. Dutch (local level) politics can also be more personal while immigrant politics can be more universal.

In their 'approach' to ethnic minorities the political parties demonstrate enormous passivity. But it cannot be said that immigrants crowd each other out to apply to political parties. Notwithstanding all this, as an immigrant does apply, party members are pleased with this first move: the first contact has been made.

Political parties are familiar with the phenomenon of special subgroups lobbying for their interests. An excellent example is the women's rights movement. It has succeeded in adjusting the party platform, and in some parties a minimum quota of women are nominated as candidates.

Ethnic minorities have not gotten so far. Sometimes they are oppressed by the party culture. The ritual of nomination is a hard fight of lobbies and persons eager for making a political career or winning support for their political standpoints. This holds especially for higher positions. It is likely that immigrants are far from being enough at home in the party to be able to manipulate the nomination procedure as adequately as the native party members. Furthermore, only few (if any) immigrants are fellow party members.

It has occurred that indigenous party members constituting themselves as 'minority supports' put immigrants off from nomination. They act as self-appointed spokesperson and in this way can frustrate the political career of immigrants. It has also occurred that (efficiently organized) lobbies pushing their own candidates prevent the candidacy of immigrants being nominated. However, there are cases in which members of ethnic minorities have the

support of native Dutch and are quickly put up, sometimes even in eligible positions.

As previously stated, most political parties have very little contact with ethnic minorities. They do not give evidence of a profound knowledge and understanding of their way of life. The party platforms are generally very sketchy on this point; as the Dutch anthropologist Kobbén once said: a "consensus of shallowness" prevails. Only a few parties (e.g. the national PvdA¹⁴) have the disposal of a memo in which the principles of the policy towards ethnic minorities are laid down.

Of course some party branches or individual party members are worried about the lot of ethnic minorities, but the trouble which is taken to involve them in the party sometimes leads to disappointment through all kinds of misunderstandings or conflicts of interests. Their activities are of importance for the participation of ethnic minorities for all that, and undoubtedly there are some successes at which to point. Mostly, however, the political parties do not see the necessity of taking extra trouble in trying to reach the less accessible immigrants. This is because they are not aware of the specific situation of ethnic minorities and their responsibility toward them, or because they do not want to rebuff their traditional Dutch supporters. We shouldn't forget that a large number of Dutch people are not pleased with the presence of immigrants in the society and those participating (actively) in politics are not all exceptions to this.

The fear of a white backlash from the traditional electorate is also a cause of the fact that ethnic minorities and race relations are not 'hot issues' in the election campaigns, except with one party. Some speak of a 'tacit agreement' between political parties. As long as the political parties do not answer the question of how the multi-ethnic society should develop, however, undesirable trends might develop further: ethnic minorities are in imminent danger of becoming more isolated, and native Dutch threaten to resort to parties that have a racist signature (Bouw *et al.*, 1981; Nelissen and Donselaar, 1982). The cautious attitude of most political parties towards the majority issue was punished on September 8, 1982 during the Parliamentary Elections; the racist CP (the radical, right-wing 'Centre Party'), which conducted its campaign with the slogan 'The Netherlands for the Dutch', got one seat in parliament. The growing number of votes for this anti-immigrant party gives the warning note that race relations in the Netherlands are strained

¹⁴ *Nervoor Minder*, (no year). Until now, the 'Wierardi Beckman Stichting', the PvdA department making (election) researches, has not researched into the participation of immigrants nor into their wishes concerning the platform. The *PvdA Cultural Minorities Committee*, in which both the Dutch Specialists and immigrants participate, advises the party on minority issues. In February 1983 the national CDA founded the *Intercultureel Adviesory Council*; this committee will provide the party with counsel about ethnic minority questions. Prominent ethnic religious leaders participate on this committee.

and that the ethnic minorities are being oppressed.

Particularly, this means that now ethnic minorities are getting publicized it is all the more necessary to have their political interests better promoted. The fact that foreigners will be enfranchised within a short time makes their actual participation in politics even more of a current issue. The available evidence shows that the political parties and the ethnic minorities have not found each other yet, but there is certainly a beginning. This should be encouraging for the immigrants and the parties to take serious account of each other.

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