Living and dying with the state: The Netherlands according to Egyptians in Amsterdam

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Becoming Egyptian in the Netherlands

Paul was born in Cairo, that much was true, but he had not been to Egypt for nearly twenty years, and after fifty years in the Netherlands, he no longer felt Egyptian, and definitely did not recognize himself in the Egyptians he met through his work as a certified translator in court. They are very different, he said, when I asked him to clarify. He came from a middle-class family, had already had an education before coming to the Netherlands, and had not come just to work, but to be with his wife, my great aunt Hanne. He had worked hard, and had reaped the fruits. They, the Egyptians he would translate for, had not. Well, they had worked hard, but they had not reaped the same fruits. They were not to blame, said Paul. They just did not have the background to benefit from the Netherlands like he had. And so, they had continued to live like they had in Egypt, namely in poor conditions, and unenlightened, *niet verlicht*, he said.

Like Paul, the directors of the Egyptian associations also presented themselves as better educated and therefore better adjusted to life in the Netherlands than the Egyptians they were organizing for. In fact, organizing was not only how they expressed that sense of superiority, but also what could confirm it. However, unlike Paul, they did not self-identify as Dutch.

Quite to the contrary, claiming to choose the best aspects of the two cultures they knew, they praised the Dutch for some of their traits, such as their purported punctuality and efficiency, while reproaching them for their supposed lack of hospitality and family values, reflected most poignantly in parents who actively encourage their children to move out, and adult children who let their parents live in elderly homes without even visiting more than once a week.

In a similar vein, the directors, as well as the people they were organizing for, readily distinguished Egyptians from Moroccan-Dutch and Syrian-Dutch, to whom they simply referred as Moroccans, respectively Syrians. Several people I spoke to evoked Pharaonic history to suggest that Egyptians descend from seven thousands years of civilization, as compared to Moroccan-Dutch who they said had come straight from the mountains. I spoke to people who pointed to the Egyptian snackbars to present Egyptians, and thus themselves, as particularly entrepreneurial, as opposed to Moroccan "guest-workers", and Syrian "refugees", both of whom were supported by the government, and did not have to establish themselves through hard work like Egyptians had, as one of my interlocutors put it.

In this chapter, I eschew the question of how "Dutch", "Egyptian", "Moroccan" and "Syrian" compare to one another. Given the way the world currently works, asking this or a similar question may be intuitive, or, at the very least, it provides an imperative for answering the question in a way that makes yourself and the people with whom you are grouped together look good. However, as I will show with regard to comparative research featuring Egyptian in the Netherlands, to ask the comparative question is to take for granted the idea of nationality, and to answer it is to homogenize and particularize an otherwise diverse group of people.

Seeing how readily the people I worked with evoked nationality based figures, I instead trace how these figures came about and conditioned the lives of the people I worked with. Following Michael Keith (2005), who suggests that iconic figures come about through an ongoing and unpredictable back-and-forth between categorization and self-identification, I begin by showing how the back and forth between Dutch efforts to categorize immigrants and Egyptian efforts to self-identify brought about the locally iconic spaces of the Egyptian snack bar and Egyptian association, as well as the corresponding figures of the Egyptian entrepreneur and association directors. I then draw on fieldwork conducted at the associations and snack bars to describe how the figurations of these spaces and the people that inhabit them shape everyday politics, to point out that the back-and-forth between categorization and self-identification is ongoing, and continues to shape social life. I then situate Egyptian figures within the larger cast of 'good' and 'bad' or 'deserving' and 'undeserving' immigrants, as well as the more general configuration of immigrants as what Ghassan Hage (2005) has called "third-world looking people", that is, people who

perform manual labor and are racialized as non-white. Finally, I describe how (self-)identified Egyptians drew on these configurations to situate themselves vis-à-vis themselves, each other, and the world in which they lived. In the conclusion, I draw on all this to argue that nationality worked both to connect and disconnect Egyptians from themselves, other immigrants, and the Dutch.

2.1 Towards minorities policies and research

Historically, across nation-states, both state authorities and researchers have invested in distinguishing between different kinds of immigrants. As a result, the history of immigrant categorization is the history of immigration policies and research. The Netherlands is no exception.

The history of Dutch immigration research has itself been the subject of much research, increasingly so from the 1970s onwards. These studies bring to light the long-term underlying principles of the way in which immigrants have been categorized, as well as the significance of changing the ways in which we categorize. In order to tease out those continuities and changes, in this chapter, I read the history of Dutch immigration policies and research as reconfiguring the relationship between residency, nationality, and citizenship. I start with the constitutions of 1814 and 1815, in which the Dutch, *Nederlanders*, were legally defined for the first time.

The 1814 constitution defines the Dutch (*Nederlanders*) as residents (*ingezetenen*) of the nine Dutch provinces of that time. Reading early drafts of the 1814 and 1815 constitutions, Eric Heijs (1993: 16) notes that the term Dutch (*Nederlanders*) only made it into the text in the very last stages. Apparently, initial drafts only mentioned residents, while later drafts mentioned 'nativity' (*inboorlingenschap*), which was meant to be a stricter definition of whom the constitution would apply to. According to Jan Mannoury (1954: 37-38), King Willem I personally insisted on replacing nativity with Dutch in order to maintain the authority to naturalize 'aliens' (*vreemdelingen*), but according to Willem Frederik Prins (1980: 6-7), it was actually Cornelis Elout, one of the members of the constitutional committee, who insisted on the term Dutch, because it was ambiguous on that question of naturalization. Either way, one year later, the constitution of 1815 more or less settled the question of whether naturalized people could be considered Dutch by explaining that the phrase 'people who are born as Dutch' included all those who were born on Dutch soil, including the colonies, as well as all people who were Dutch by virtue of legal interpretation (*wetsduiding*), such as children of Dutch parents born on foreign soil, and those who were naturalized as Dutch, which was a right reserved to the monarch. The 1938 National Civil Code, which replaced the French Code Civil that had hitherto been

in place, codified this in law, so that residency, citizenship, and nationality largely overlapped.

This began to change with the Nationality Law of 1850, which defined who was Dutch in relation to the exercise of political rights (*staatskundige rechten*) such as the right to vote and hold public office, and explicitly excluded natives of the colonies. Curiously, this Nationality Law did not replace, but rather came to exist next to the National Civil Code, which had defined who was Dutch in relation to basic civil rights such as equality under the law. This resulted in what was referred to at the time as double Dutch citizenship, or the situation in which legal citizenship and political citizenship were separated from one another. This situation lasted until the new Nationality Act of 1892.

The Nationality Act of 1892 did away with the combination of citizenship by right of blood (*jus sanguinis*) and citizenship by right of soil (*jus soli*), as well as the separation of civil rights and political rights, in favor of one citizenship acquired through the father's blood. From then on, only the legally recognized children of Dutch men were automatically Dutch, while people categorized as 'native' to the colonies were formally excluded from citizenship. Naturalization was still possible, but applicants would have to prove their affinity with the Netherlands, and each application would have to be approved by parliament. In other words, the 1882 nationality act separated residency from nationality and citizenship, but maintained and deepened the overlap between the latter two, in the sense that Dutchness was now akin not only to having the right to equality before the law, but also political rights.

In the period after the Second World War, the Dutch government insisted that the Netherlands was a country of emigration, not of immigration. The country was full, they said. That said, before, during, and after Indonesian independence, Dutch governments facilitated the repatriation of so-categorized 'Europeans' or 'Totoks', 'Indo-Europeans', and various 'native people' who had fought alongside the Royal Dutch East Indies Army and were therefore persecuted. Furthermore, in the 1950s and 1960s, Dutch governments facilitated the recruitment of so-categorized 'guest-workers' from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Morocco and Turkey. In addition, foreign nationals travelled to and settled in the Netherlands autonomously, as Paul did.

Per the official discourse, the Dutch government was not going to develop a comprehensive policy aimed at incorporating these people (Entzinger, 1975). Instead, national and local governments developed incorporation policies on the go. They did so on the basic principles of the 1882 nationality act, which restricted Dutch citizenship to Dutch nationals, and stipulated that, in order to become a Dutch citizen/national, one would have to provide evidence of a long-standing and profound relationship to the country (Heijs, 1993). Together, this categorically

excluded indigenous populations of the Dutch colonies from Dutch citizenship, and made it extremely hard if not impossible for them to become citizens should they have travelled to the Netherlands.

According to these principles, European or Totok repatriates were recategorized as Dutch, and told to silently settle back in through their families and social-political pillars. Indo-European repatriates were recategorized as Indische Nederlanders (Indo-Dutch) or Indisch (Indo) for short. They were supposed to take root and refrain from any indigenous habits they may have been susceptible to. In order to facilitate or ensure that they would, local bureaucrats arranged housing, while social workers helped them to become employable and taught them Dutch ways of 'living' (van Amersfoort and van Niekerk, 2006).

Initially, the various 'native' people who had fought alongside the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (*KNIL*) were referred to as Ambonese, or sometimes Moluccans. The Ambonese/Moluccans were meant to stay in the Netherlands for six months. They were housed in so-called *woonoorden*, residential areas intended to be temporary, which in practice were camps in former military barracks, monasteries, and Nazi concentration camps, among other remote places (Steijlen, 2015). These camps themselves offered some opportunities to work, as a cook or cleaner for example. In the larger camps, there were schools for the younger children. In the smaller camps, children were sent to nearby Dutch schools. Other than that, the Ambonese were supposed to just wait, without taking root. The guest-workers were meant to return, too, as soon as they would stop working. To prevent them from taking root, the Dutch government recommended a four year rotating system.

Finally, individual people like Paul, were categorized as *vreemdelingen*, aliens. Aliens were supposed to obtain a residency permit, and could do so by registering at the local administration. After holding a residency permit for five years, aliens could apply for naturalization, but in order to be granted nationality, they would have to prove their longstanding and profound connection to the Netherlands, renounce their previous nationality, pay 100 guilders, and be accepted by parliament (Heijs, 1993). This made it practically impossible for most aliens to ever become eligible, if only because, at the time, most states did not allow citizens to renounce their nationality. This included Egypt, and so, at that time, Paul did not yet become a citizen.

In summary, in the after-war period, governments insisted that the Netherlands was not and would not become a country of immigration, but intuitively drew on nationality to distinguish between people who were Dutch or at least half-Dutch and thus citizens, people who were not and could not become Dutch, and thus temporary guests, and individuals who had specific reasons to stay in the Netherlands, but did not require any special attention (Entzinger, 1975).

The Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics did not yet collect data on non-national residents, nor did the government commission many reports on the situation of any of the groups of people who were settling in the Netherlands at the time. In 1959, as a notable exception to that rule, the Scientific Council for Government Advice (WRR) commissioned Hilda Verwey-Jonker to report on the situation of the Ambonese, who had been in the Netherlands for a few years by then, and who required more adequate housing. In the report, Verwey-Jonker and her team confirmed that the camps were no longer suitable, if they had ever been, and recommended the government to relocate the Ambonese to designated neighborhoods.

Following the example set by the government, Dutch academics at the time prioritized the study of Dutch emigration over the study of immigration. However, the notable exceptions, such as Menno Vellinga and Willem Wolters' (1966) study on Chinese immigrants in Amsterdam, Jacques Ex's (1966) study on how Indo-European refugees adjusted to life in the Netherlands, and Rob Wentholt's (1967) study on guest-workers, were a sign of what was to come, namely an excessive research focus on those non-nationals who were considered different from the Dutch, rather than on those who were largest in numbers, such as Germans, Belgians, or British aliens (*vreemdelingen*).

In 1964, the Dutch government introduced an updated version of the Nationality Act, according to which women who were married to foreigners could opt to keep their citizenship. As it happened, this was also the year my great aunt Hanne married Paul, and so Hanne had the option to stay Dutch, and she decided to do so. Paul himself was able to obtain a residency permit by registering at the local municipality. Formally, Paul had no obligation to pass integration tests, as he would have today. However, given the conflation of citizenship and nationality, he still had to negotiate a context in which the options were to try and pass as Dutch or at least Dutch enough, or to remain a temporary guest forever. Paul chose the former, and was in a position to do so, unlike the Ambonese or the guest-workers, who would not pass as Dutch, even if they tried as hard as Paul did. Of course, Paul did not always pass either, but my impression was that he often did, and his children and grandchildren most certainly do.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, while Paul was busy establishing himself as Dutch, people across the world were losing their jobs due to restructuring of global capitalism. In the Netherlands, these so-called 'crises' made it clear that not all guest-workers would leave after their job, and that some Dutch citizens in the colonies of Surinam and the Dutch Caribbean were ready to try their luck in the Netherlands. In the meantime, the children of the repatriates began to speak up about the horrors of the Japanese camps and the added trauma of being silenced in the Netherlands, while the children of Moluccans increasingly began to demand rights in the

Netherlands, most dramatically through the hijacking of a train that led to the death of two hostages and six hijackers in 1979.

In response, politicians began to suggest that the Netherlands was becoming or had already become a country of immigration, while academics such as Han Entzinger (1975) were shedding light on what were then called "ethnic" or "allochthonous minorities", or minorities from foreign soils (van Amersfoort and Penninx, 1994; for a bibliography of the time, see Bovenkerk, 1975). Alarmed, in 1979 the Dutch Scientific Council for Government (WRR) hired anthropologist Rinus Penninx to sketch the outlines of a future minorities policy. In his report[1], Penninx described the three main minority groups, Mediterranean guest-workers, Moluccans, and Surinamese and Antillean citizens, before recommending that government deal with this new form of diversity in the same way that it had long dealt with religious and political diversity, namely by facilitating cultural expression as well as political representation in order to prevent the twin evils of deprivation and segregation. According to Justus Uitermark (2013: 70), Penninx's report not only reads like, but in a very real sense is, the founding document of the minorities policy, which eventually came into force in 1982, as well as the 1985 nationality act, which effectively disconnected nationality and citizenship, and brought residency and citizenship much closer to each other, by expanding the rights of residents, and by providing a more feasible pathway towards citizenship. As soon as the option became available, Paul applied for Dutch citizenship, for himself, and his sons.

As soon as the minorities policy came into effect, self-run but government-funded associations mushroomed. In 1983, in an apparent attempt to combat this fragmentation, the municipality of Amsterdam set up six immigrant advisory councils. Justus Uitermark points out that these councils were rife with contradictions from the start. First off, each council was supposed to represent at least 16,000 people. This requirement forced together 'Moroccans' (including royalists and communists), 'Turks' (including among others, Grey Wolves and Kurds), 'Ghanaians and Surinamese', 'Southern Europeans', and perhaps most awkward of all, 'Chinese and refugees'. At best, these people had no shared interest, but much worse than that, they were often each other's political opponents. Moreover, in order to be effective, the leaders of these councils had to be well versed in governmental logic, and credibly represent a marginalized constituency, which proved to be conflicting requirements that undermined their ability to do the work they were meant to do.

The Dutch government also followed Pennix' recommendation to foster research on minorities for the purpose of future policy. Accordingly, in 1982, the Dutch Central Bureau for

[1] https://www.wrr.nl/publicaties/rapporten/1979/05/09/etnische-minderheden

Statistics (CBS) began to register residents' and citizens' countries of birth, allowing researchers to structurally compare minorities to each other and the majority for the first time. Having conducted such research himself, Jan Rath (1991) observes how the practice of grouping together people on the basis of their country of birth in order to tease out the differences between them not only accentuates those differences, but actively contributes to what he calls minoritization, or the process by which minorities are produced and reproduced as different from and lesser than the majority. In my reading, such comparative studies also help to produce iconic figures through which we talk about postcolonial difference and inequality, and they do so by producing the particularities that make them different from us, that is, by homogenizing and particularizing them.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education increasingly funded what became known as minorities research. This further strengthened the already strong relations between policy and academic research, of which Rinus Penninx's own policy agenda setting research was a prime example. For Frank Bovenkerk, one of the main minorities researchers of the time, "the degree of intimacy between policy-makers, politics and science, and the ease by which government officials and university researchers would trade places was astonishing" (in Essed and Nimako [2006], their translation). According to Jan Rath (2001: 2) this intimacy resulted in a research that was "superficial in theory" and suffering from "one-sidedness", to the point that researchers more or less study the same thing over and over, and failed to consider other aspects and processes. And Philomena Essed and Kwame Nimako (2006) reveal minorities research as an ideological project built on an insider-outsider paradigm that problematizes 'them' by downplaying or outright ignoring the ramifications of colonialism and discrediting race critical paradigms.

These critiques are part and parcel of a larger body of work critiquing migration and immigration studies for assuming nationality as the primary source of belonging (Glick-Schiller, Caglar and Gulbrandsen, 2006), and more generally, for naturalizing the nation-state form, sanitizing nationalism, and problematizing some forms of moving and settling (e.g. Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2002, 2003). These critiques have made for well-established alternative traditions, such as critical border studies, and immigrant centered perspectives, which in general, start from individual migrants, the networks they form, and the institutions that emerge as a result. Still, as a result of available funding and data, and of the world in which we live, comparative research remains the dominant paradigm, in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Indeed, in the past decades more conventional researchers and investigative journalists continue to use CBS data to compare different groups of immigrants to the Dutch majority on the basis of nationality, for example in terms of labor market participation (Wolff and Penninx,

1993), welfare use (Koopmans, 2010), crime rates (Unnever, 2019), family formation (De Valk et al., 2004), parenting practices (Pels and Nijsten, 2017) and cultural views (Dagevos, 2001). Reading this literature, Willem Schinkel (2020) insists Dutch integration research uncritically adopts the epistemic perspective of society as an already existing whole into which immigrants can integrate into varying degrees, so that "diversity" is seen to imperil society, rather than constitute social life. I agree, but reading studies that mention Egyptians while being in conversation with Egyptians, I also found that, at least for some Egyptians, these studies, and the iconic figures they bring about were, also something to hold on to, in the sense that it offered them a way of making sense of the differences and inequalities they experience every day.

2.2 Egyptians enter the scene

In preparation for fieldwork, I searched for existing information and research on Egyptians in the Netherlands. I did not find much, but sources that I did find told a consistent story. This is not so surprising, and has to do more with methodology, than with the everyday reality. Researchers, including myself, either use CBS data, or reach out to community leaders, and, as result, find the same things. Indeed, when I began fieldwork, the directors of the different associations readily served me the story that I had pieced together, without me even asking for it. And when I went back to have a closer look at some of those sources, I realized that my interlocutors had either provided the input for them or were commenting on them. In this section, I repeat the story they told me, referencing both the secondary sources that I used and the conversations I had. I do not do so because I believe that this story offers an especially nuanced version of the history of Egyptians in the Netherlands. Rather, I do so because it shows the iconization of spaces such as the Egyptian snack bar and associations, as well as the derivative figures of the Egyptian entrepreneur and community leader.

In January 2017, the directors of the different Egyptian association individually told me that there are about thirty to forty thousand Egyptians in the Netherlands. At the time, the CBS reported 13.591 first and 10.365 second generation Egyptians, on a total population of 17[2] million residents in the Netherlands. These numbers notably exclude illegalized Egyptians like Anastasia and Saïed who figured in Chapter One, as well as children born in the Netherlands to Egyptian born fathers and non-Egyptian foreign mothers, who are registered according to their mother's country of birth. I have not been able to find reliable data on illegalized Egyptians or Dutch citizens born to Egyptian born fathers and non-Egyptian foreign born mothers.

[2] Data available on: https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/37325/table

However, according to the Egyptian demographer Ayman Zohry (2007), in 2000, Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) estimated that there were about 40.000 Egyptians in the Netherlands, as opposed to the 14.398 Egyptians registered by the CBS at the time, which gives a sense of the gap between the CBS data and the more informal reality. CAPMAS nowadays follows the official numbers provided by European countries, probably because at this moment of migration treaties, low numbers are politically more convenient. However, given the political and socio-economic developments in Egypt, and the intensification of Dutch borders, it seems unlikely that this gap has decreased. Moreover, I actually met quite a lot of Egyptian born men who had children with Moroccan born women, who would be categorized as from a Moroccan background by the CBS, but who might themselves identify as 'Moroccan-Egyptian Dutch'.

According to the people whom I talked to in 2017, and who I found out provided the input for earlier studies on Egyptian settling, Egyptian migration in the Netherlands began with young Coptic men who were travelling to the Netherlands to work in Israeli-owned shawarma snack bars. These Coptic students usually traveled on tourist visas, but in the Netherlands presented themselves as refugees. Today, this would mean that they would not be allowed to work, but back then, residency status and the right to work were not yet linked, so they could actually be legally employed. This was something I did not know yet, but which I found out after asking how people back then found work, which was a question that puzzled my interlocutors, as for them, it was obvious that residency had only been recently linked to the right to work, whereas I had never thought of them as separate things.

In 1985, Coptic clergy from New Jersey founded a Coptic church in Amsterdam Noord. In addition to offering religious services, the church provides social, legal, and financial support, Dutch classes for adults, and Arabic classes for children, much like Coptic churches do in Egypt, and much like Egyptian associations run by Egyptian Muslims would do from the mid-1990s onwards (de Wit, 2002). Meanwhile, in these early days of Egyptian immigration, Egyptian Muslims, who were also coming to the Netherlands, were joining mosques and other Islamic institutions run by Moroccan-Dutch.

Initially, by virtue of their visas, these Egyptian 'tourists' were seen as temporary seasonal workers (*seizoensarbeiders*), and accordingly described as such by Choenni (1993, 1997) and people drawing on his work, such as Jan Rath (2002) and Masja van Meeteren and colleagues (2013). In practice, Egyptian seasonal workers stayed, much like the Moroccan and Turkish guest-workers who stayed after losing their jobs. After legalizing their stay, many Egyptians set up their own businesses, which then became a pathway of incorporation for later generations

of Egyptian immigrants. Apparently, many of these later generation Egyptians immigrants followed the example of their elders, because according to Choenni (1993, 1997), by 1993, Egyptians owned an approximated 25% of all snack bars in Amsterdam and 75% of all shawarma bars. This is a number that I cannot verify, but it has since circulated in peer-reviewed publications (Rath, 2002; van Meeteren et al, 2013; Sportel, 2016) and a government report in which they were labeled as particularly "entrepreneurial" (Fijnaut and Bovenkerk, 1996).

The Egyptian men I met in 2017 drew on this image of Egyptian entrepreneurialism to present themselves as businessmen. They showed me pictures of their supermarkets, computer shops, cleaning agencies, construction companies, halal meat trading companies, and law and accountancy firms, among others. Like Masja van Meeteren and her colleagues (2013), I later found out that most of these businesses had never really gotten off the ground, and that these men had instead worked for the few Egyptians who were in the position to employ others. And they did so until they were forced to retire due to work related injuries and illness such as chronic pain and lung-diseases, after which they came to rely on unemployment and/or disability benefits.

In 1995, the coupling of residency status and the right to work and access social services increased the stakes of legalizing your stay. According to Puck de Wit (2002), who conducted fieldwork with Egyptian Copts in Amsterdam, in the wake of this coupling law, Copts began to present themselves as refugees. The Copts that I met in 2017 maintained a narrative about Egypt being unsafe for them, pointing to the attacks on churches and abductions to make their case. Meanwhile, the men, both Copts and Muslims, accused each other of conducting so-called business marriages, which they did not necessarily see as morally wrong, but which they knew were considered sham marriages by the Dutch authorities, and, in fact, could cost them their passport if they were to be found out (see also Sportel, 2016). Drawing on CBS data, Helga de Valk and colleagues (2004) found that among immigrants, Egyptian men were relatively likely to marry women born in the Netherlands, and that a relatively high number of these marriages were dissolved after three years, the moment that dependent spouses become eligible for an independent residency status. And although they state that they cannot verify whether these were 'marriages of convenience', by posing the questions whether they are or not, they at least suggest that they might have been.

In the meantime, more and more (divorced) Egyptian men married Egyptian women and, subsequently, applied for family reunification. According to the CBS data, in 1999, Egyptian women were the most fertile women in the Netherlands, with 4.9 children per woman, compared to 1.6 for "autochthonous" women (de Valk et al, 2004: 25). According to my interlocu-

tors, the arrival of women and children prompted Egyptian Muslims to use available funding to set up Egyptian associations as spaces in which Egyptians could come together to maintain and transmit Egyptian culture and language and provide for and support one another. Around the same time, Egyptian Muslims set up a mosque in Amsterdam to provide religious services that were more aligned to Egyptian understandings of Islam than the services provided in Moroccan-Dutch Islamic spaces. This mosque never became distinctively Egyptian, in part because not all Egyptian Muslims were attracted to it, and in part because it also attracted many non-Egyptians.

Curiously, none of the reports that I found discuss Egyptian associations extensively, even though the researchers who put together these reports heavily relied on the people directing these associations (but see Hendriks [2008] on the Middle Eastern diaspora for an overview of the Egyptian associations at that time). I assume this is the case because in the Dutch context, such immigrant associations are so ubiquitous that they are taken for granted, or because they are considered mere reminiscences of the past.

2.3 Towards integration policies and research

In the 1980s, comparative research revealed that minorities were lagging behind the majority on almost every measure, and especially on the labor market and education system, fueling public concern, and eventually prompting the Dutch government to order a new WRR report (1987). In that report (1989)[3], the WRR team stressed the need to shift focus from cultural expression and political representation to labor market participation and adult education, and to target not only recognized minorities, but all people from foreign soils, including not just foreign-born residents and citizens, but all residents and citizens descending from foreign born parents or grandparents. Accordingly, the CBS began to register residents' and citizens' parents' and grandparents' countries of birth.

In the early 1990s, right-wing politician Frits Bolkestein (VVD) successfully spearheaded further debates about culture, starting with an op-ed piece titled "The Minorities Policy Should Be Handled with Guts"[4], which became the main reference point for years to come. In it, Bolkestein drew upon the 1989 WRR report to argue that the Netherlands had to defend itself against the inferior culture of Islam, and that integration was failing because "multiculturalism" in general and welfare workers in particular were too accommodating. Initially, Bolkestein's cul-

[3] https://www.wrr.nl/publicaties/rapporten/1989/05/09/allochtonenbeleid

[4] Bolkestein, F. (1991a) Integratie van minderheden moet met lef worden aangepakt. De Volkskrant, 12 september.

turalist view on Islam was met with some serious opposition by politicians on the mainstream left, many of whom maintained a cultural relativist stance. However, while some more marginal actors continued to call out Bolkestein for his xenophobia, the more prominent members of the labor party felt compelled to go on record to say that Bolkestein was pointing to some very real problems that plagued multicultural neighborhoods, with the very notable exception of labor minister Hedy d'Ancona (Uitermark, 2013).

In 1994, the coalition of labor (PvdA), Frits Bolkestein's conservative liberals (VVD) and progressive liberals (D66) agreed to bracket ideology in favor of a supposedly technocratic managerialism. In practice, they developed a new immigrant integration act, which was to focus on immigrant integration, at the time defined as participation on the labor market. According to the labor party, this would empower the allochthonous, while the liberal party said that integration would make them contribute to the Dutch economy and reduce welfare expenditures.

In these years, the minority advisory councils, which had only been set up a few years prior, began to lose their central position. According to Justus Uitermark (2013), there were three reasons for this. First, progressives had pushed left-leaning immigrants in leading positions in the councils, who were increasingly unable to reach common ground with the more conservative leaders who emerged through religious institutions. Second, as part of a wave of privatization and a more 'business-like' style of governing, from the 1990s onwards, Dutch governments cut back on large-scale structural subsidies in favor of smaller, problem-oriented funding. This initially led to more but smaller immigrant associations, and later, when funding was further decreased, to fewer and smaller (immigrant) associations competing on the market place of funding directly related to the problems immigrants supposedly face or cause. Third, and finally, from the 1990s onwards, second generation youth began to see the older generation as coopted and instead developed a culture of defiance (cf. De Jong, 2007).

In 1998, parliament accepted the Civic Integration Act (*Wet Integratie Nieuwkomers*), infamously inaugurating the world's first civic integration policies. On paper, this act obligated new long-term residents to follow a twelve-month integration course, consisting of six hundred hours of Dutch language instruction, civic education, and preparation for the labor market, there were no measures to enforce the obligation, and newcomers from the EU and the main OECD countries were exempted from this obligation through bilateral treaties.

In 2000, prominent labor politician Paul Scheffer revitalized Frits Bolkestein's culturalism with an influential op-ed piece called "The Multicultural Drama"[5]. Scheffer had long positioned himself as a common man, and in the piece, he blamed the political left of being elitists

[5] Scheffer, P. (2000). Het multiculturele drama. NRC Handelsblad, 29 januari.

by refusing to acknowledge how culture, and Islam in particular, were incompatible with emancipation. According to Justus Uitermark (2013), this language of emancipation made culturalism acceptable among the left, and in the year or so that followed, integration as empancipation was widely debated among mainstream-left politicians and intellectuals. As Justus Uitermark observes, these debates notably excluded immigrants themselves.

Then, 9/11 happened, providing a fertile ground for Samuel Huntington's (1993) clash-of-civilization discourse to take hold around the world. In the Netherlands, Pim Fortuyn, who had been fear mongering about the Islamization of the Netherlands, quickly rose to prominence, with popular media featuring him night after night to lament the political establishment for refusing to acknowledge that Islam was a backward culture and a threat to the Dutch way of living. In 2002, he was set for a major electoral victory, but nine days before the elections he was shot dead by a left-wing animal rights activist.

In the years after, myriad politicians capitalized on Pim Fortuyn's legacy, by similarly positioning themselves as political renegades who were impugned if not persecuted for speaking the truth about Islam. In response, the national government also instructed local governments to defund cultural associations in favor of neighborhood centers and activities aimed at bringing together neighbors across cultural differences and so-called "target group policies" (*doelgroepenbeleid*), or policies that targeted group specific problems (van Nispen and Scholten, 2014).

Meanwhile, the national government drafted a new Civic Integration Act, which was passed by parliament in 2006 (Joppke, 2007). The new civic integration act expanded the scope of integration to encompass not only language and civic education, but also Dutch history and education. So-categorized "non-Western" residents were required to pass an integration test in order to become Dutch citizens, while 'non-Western' partners had to pass a preliminary language and culture test in their country of origin in order to acquire a spousal visa (Ibid.). This category of "non-Western" refers to people holding citizenship in all African, Latin American, and Asian countries, with the notable exceptions of Indonesia, Surinam, and Japan. These exceptions are odd, but they are not random, for Indonesian and Surinamese immigrants are considered Western because they are seen as already adjusted to the Dutch ways, thanks to the colonial past, while Japanese immigrants are only considered Western because most of them work for multinational corporations. So, indeed, as Dvora Yanow and Marleen van Haar (2013) point out, these exemptions merely reveal the categories of non-Western and Western for what they are, namely, categories of presumed proximity, and difference.

This shift from a comprehensive minorities policy to a combination of integration, neighborhood based, and target group policies has been described as the moralization (van Houdt and

Schinkel, 2010) and culturalization of citizenship (Duyvendak et al., 2016), or an increasing emphasis on the moral and cultural aspects of citizenship rather than the legal ones. In the terms set out in this chapter, this shift effectuated a further decoupling of citizenship and nationality, as one can now be a Dutch citizen without being considered a Dutch national. Meanwhile, the gap between residency and citizenship was widened, as the legal rights of residents have been restricted and it has grown harder to become a citizen.

In the 2010s, the WRR took it upon itself to search for terms and classifications that would do justice to reality, that were refined enough for policy advice, and were non-exclusionary. This culminated in a report in 2016[6]. In the report, the WRR research team started by stating that the labels "allochthonous" and "autochthonous", and "Western" and "non-Western" were out of date, because they no longer encompassed the diversity of migrations and immigrations, and because they had become charged terms. The team then states that classifying people according to their country of origin is only justifiable if (1) it serves a legitimate goal, (2) helps to realize that goal, (3) if that goal cannot be realized otherwise, (4) if the benefits of classifying outweigh the downsides. In subsequent chapters, the team discusses alternative classification and terms, as well as the goals that classification could serve, how classification could help to reach those goals, and the benefits and downsides to classification. In the conclusion, they argue to drop the categories "allochthonous" and "autochthonous", and "Western" and "non-Western" in favor of the labels "people with migration backgrounds" and people with Dutch backgrounds". These labels would still include first generation and second-generation immigrants, and still allow for more precise clustering according to a warranted purpose.

At first glance, the WRR report seems like a conscientious reconsideration of the use of classifications, but beneath the surface, it reproduces the insider-outsider paradigm in which "they" face and cause specific problems that should be targeted as such. This is most obvious in the final pages, in which the WRR team offers three cases to explain when classification and clustering are warranted. First, the lagging behind of second-generation migrants would warrant the distinction between people with migration backgrounds and people with Dutch backgrounds and a further clustering according to language spoken at home. Second, the overrepresentation of youth from certain cultural backgrounds among young delinquents would warrant clustering according to culture. Third, the over-occurrence of some disease among people of certain ethnic backgrounds would warrant clustering according to ethnicity. Here, in these three examples, the focus is on "them", the problems "they" are facing and represent, again leaving

[6]https://www.wrr.nl/publicaties/verkenningen/2016/11/01/migratie-en-classificatie-naar-een-meervoudig-migratie-idioom-34

unaccounted "us", and the harm "we" inflict.

It was in response to these developments that Egyptians developed Egyptian institutions like Egyptian associations and Egyptian snack bars. In the following sections, I explore these spaces in order to tease out how the combination of a taboo on organizing on the basis of nationality and stigmatizing target group policies shaped these institutions, and brought about those iconic spaces and figures.

2.4 The associations formerly known as Egyptian

As described in the introduction, over the course of my fieldwork, I spent a lot of time at Egyptian associations, and in doing so, I followed in the footsteps of researchers who came before me. Yet, while these studies mention the associations and even their directors by name, none of them take the associations seriously for what they were, namely, sites in which Egyptians negotiated what it meant to be Egyptian in the Netherlands, and perhaps more importantly, as sites that offer privileged insight into how contemporary target group policies interact with the basic premise that people belong to nations to mediate social relations.

The Egyptians whom I met at the different associations were primarily interested in coming together to eat food, exchange gossip, discuss politics, talk about the challenges of everyday life in the Netherlands, and provide practical, legal, and financial support to one another. However, at the time of my fieldwork, there was no categorical funding for immigrant associations anymore, as such associations were no longer seen as preventing deprivation and segregation, but rather as producing it. Instead, there was funding for activities that would address the problems to do with immigrants, notably the lack of neighborhood cohesion and livability, women's disempowerment, gender inequality, obesity, and Islamic radicalization. These were not necessarily the kind of issues that Egyptians were concerned about, but they did offer an opportunity for funding.

In this playing field, the directors had four basic options: they could self- or crowd-fund the activities that Egyptians wanted; they could apply for funding for migrant specific activities; they could apply for funding for neighborhood activities and use the money to bring together Egyptians; and/or they could apply for such funding and actually organize the activities. In practice, these options all led to frictions that could easily be interpreted as policy failure.

At one end of the spectrum, Gamal and Bahaa claimed to run Etihad without direct government funding, which according to Bahaa, kept it *zuiver*, pure, as he put it in Dutch. In order to finance their weekly get-together, they asked for a monthly contribution of ten euros. How-

ever, most of the people 'forgot' or outright refused to pay, so in practice, Gamal and Bahaa were forced to keep their expenses low or pay out of their own pocket. In most circumstances, this would have prevented them from getting together. However, when Gamal and Bahaa had just started, Gamal had used his connections to get access to one of the neighborhood centers in Amsterdam East for one year. Since then, each year, the coordinator of the neighborhood centers in Amsterdam East had wanted to end the arrangement but each time, Gamal had managed to keep access to one or another community center. In 2017, Gamal asked me to call the municipal coordinator on his behalf, and although she did end up making space for Etihad again, she also said that she was already getting into trouble for providing much sought-after space to a bunch of Egyptian men to sit around. "We don't do that anymore", she said.

A few weeks later, after another dinner paid out of their own pockets, Gamal and Bahaa announced they were applying for funding for a neighborhood restaurant, like their friend Ali had done through his association. You only show up for food anyway, Gamal said, addressing no one in particular. Idris, who was one of the people who indeed only showed up for food, responded immediately. He attended the meetings to be among Egyptians, not to serve lonely elderly like they are doing, he said, dismissively nodding to Ali. Ali looked at Idris indignantly, but others nodded, and one man drummed on the table. Apparently feeling emboldened, Idris stood up, took a pile of fifty euro notes out of his pocket and threw them on the table. I'll pay for a dinner for us, he said, with an emphasis on us. And with that, Gamal's proposal was off the table. Afterwards, Ali and I left Etihad together. As we biked away, he explained that this was exactly why he no longer organized for Egyptians. They are an ungrateful bunch of dogs, he said. Although collaborating with both, Ali, then, was on the other side of the spectrum of Gamal and Bahaa, and he actually referred to his association as 'formerly Egyptian'.

In between Gamal and Bahaa and Ali were Malika and Karima. Malika ran a 'multicultural' association, and used every opportunity she had to express her commitment to bringing together people across cultural backgrounds. In practice, she struggled to attract non-Egyptians and especially white Dutch people. In March 2017, Malika invited me for a multicultural dinner in the neighborhood center in Amsterdam Noord that she was co-organizing with a thirty-something year old white woman living in the neighborhood. I had a lovely evening, talking with Egyptians about Egyptian food and how to best prepare it. Then, during dessert, a man came in, and suddenly, a verbal fight erupted between him and a woman whom I did not know. After about five minutes, Malika managed to get the man to leave, but in his wake, Malika's co-organizer ordered her over to announce that she was going to leave as well. It was not so much the fight, she said, although it had not helped, but rather the whole evening. Your people do

not want to talk to us, she said. Malika pleaded with her to stay, but she said she really did not see the point of having a conversation about the future of the neighborhood after all, and that she would come in on Monday to tell the neighborhood center's manager that she would retire from the project.

In the fall of 2017, the manager of the neighborhood center where Karima organized her activities decided that, in order to improve the center's services, the organizers had to join each other's activities. At the time, Karima was in the middle of running a de-radicalization workshop for parents of at-risk youth, for which seven Egyptian mothers had registered. One Monday morning, a tall white woman in her forties joined. As was usual, the session started with a sheikha reciting a piece of Quran supposedly pertaining to the matter at hand for the day. As soon as the sheikha began to recite, I saw the woman glance at me, and after another minute, she gently touched me by the shoulder, leaned over, and asked me if I could help her follow. After I told her I also struggled to follow formal Arabic and could not provide an accurate translation, she decided to interrupt the sheikha. She cleared her throat, and addressing no-one in particular, began to say that in order to learn about the work that Karima was doing, she would have to be able to follow. Karima, who was not easily flustered, looked at me, but I did not know what to say either. After a few seconds of silence, Karima hesitantly began to explain that, in order for this workshop to be effective, it would have to be in Arabic because the women who were attending did not speak Dutch very well, and definitely would not be able to discuss the intricate matters at hand. The woman did not budge. Maybe someone could translate, she suggested. Her usual self again, Karima dismissed the suggestion, saying that this would disrupt the flow, and that the aims of the workshop were more important than the cross-sectional evaluation and inspiration. Upset, the woman got up, told Karima she should not underestimate the importance of learning from each other, and left. I never saw again, or any other non-Arabic speaking person at the workshop.

In this world of nation-states, people who find themselves on foreign lands are likely to seek out their fellow nationals, and at one point or another, even if they do not want to. Egyptians are no exception. The Egyptians I met sought each other out for many different reasons. They wanted to reminiscence about the country in which they grew up, and to which some of them could never return. They wanted to come together to reflect on experiences in the country they settled in. They wanted to come together to exchange information specific to being Egyptian, for example on how to prove that Egypt is not safe for political activists, how to register to vote in Egypt, or how to make a Dutch divorce legally valid in Egypt. Or they might draw on their ability to help or serve Egyptians in order to make a living, as the directors did, and as Paul did,

who had been trained as an engineer, but ended up working as a translator.

In this same world, Dutch policy makers have become wary of immigrants organizing on the basis of their 'nationality', but still want to address the problems to do with immigrants. This conundrum has led to contemporary integration, neighborhood based and target group policies, which on paper group together people on the basis of their supposed difference, but not, or at least not only, on the basis of their nationality. Street-level bureaucrats tasked with creating cohesion across difference, or to target specifically problematized groups found it difficult to do so without tapping into networks based on nationality. This goes to show that, in a world of nation-states, trying to prevent people who are socialized to identify with a certain nationality from connecting to each other is an uphill battle. Fighting this battle, street-level bureaucrats would sometimes reach out to so-identified key-figures (*sleutelfiguren*), like the directors with whom I worked, to help them to access these hard to reach groups, knowing very well that these key-figures would predominantly connect them with people of the same nationality, simply because that is how the world is organized. The people they were supposed to reach would not necessarily be interested in the kind of activities that were organized this way, but in some cases, the directors would promote them as though they would be of interest. Or, alternatively, the directors would compel people by promising to help them with their everyday troubles, a kind of service that was probably as high in demand as hanging out together to eat food.

Consider the dinner gone wrong organized by Malika. First, this dinner was funded by the neighborhood center, which would have presented dinner to demonstrate they deserved renewed budget from the municipality, while also showing Malika that they were deserving partners to work with. However, if their money came with too many constraints, as it did, directors like Malika could decide it was a dead end, as she indeed ended up doing a few weeks later, which meant that the center also lost her as a potential showcase of during the next application for municipal funding.

Second, it provided an opportunity for Malika to prove that she could actually attract hard to reach people, which is an actual term in Dutch policy talk, and connect them to others, and thus to appear deserving of future funding. It also provided her with an opportunity to show to the Egyptians that she was seeking to organize for that she could actually get funding for something worthwhile, making her deserving of future visits, and thus strengthen her position vis-à-vis the other associations. Then again, when she failed, she lost credibility from her funders, co-organizers, and attendees alike.

Third and finally, it gave attendees the opportunity to show Malika that they would show up, and were thus deserving of her future support, which she offered, and immediately provided

when that fight broke out. They could have also shown her co-organizers and funders that they were actually making an attempt to connect to others, but they did not, I assume because they felt that these co-organizers did not have much to offer, which I did not think they had either. This, then, is also why some of these people are considered hard to reach.

Bahaa and Gamal, Ali, Karima, and Malika run their associations with varying success, but they all had been in business a long time, and were recognized, if not always respected, for it. They enjoyed a certain status, and they used this status to narrate themselves as being better-educated and therefore better-adjusted to life in the Netherlands than the less-educated and less-integrated Egyptians for whom they were organizing. Then again, they called the other directors pretentious, and more than once suggested that they took money from foreign funders and/or misused funds made available by the municipality. In the same breath, they depicted successful Egyptian business owners as nouveau riche, that is, wealthy, but uneducated and uncultured. The business owners did not seem too concerned.

2.5 Egyptian snackbars

While some people were setting up associations, a small group of apparently more savvy Egyptian businessmen helped introduce and develop the concepts of 'Italian' and 'Argentinian' restaurants, ice-cream and Nutella shops that nowadays dominate the city center of Amsterdam. In general, these men were not so interested in involving me in their everyday lives, I suspect because their wealth allowed them to solve their problems in other ways. In the 2010s, these Egyptian owned eateries in the city center acquired something of an iconic status through a series of articles in the Amsterdam-based newspaper *Het Parool* accusing Coptic businessmen of using foreign money to pay above market prices to create a monopoly in the city center[7][8]. Around the same time, the national labor authority (*arbeidsinspectie*) began to step up its inspections of working conditions and working permits, and while this may be unrelated, the snack bar owners I talked to certainly did not think they were. As far as I know, the formal investigations never substantiated any of the rumors, but in the meantime, the inspections, or *controllaat*, as my interlocutors referred to them, meant that the snack bar owners as well as their employees had to be on guard constantly. This made them less than ideal for the kind of deep hanging out

[7] https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/schimmige-overnames-zetten-leefbaarheid-zeedijk-onder-druk~b8810d8e/?utm_source=link&utm_medium=app&utm_campaign=shared%20content&utm_content=free

[8] https://www.parool.nl/columns-opinie/koptische-ondernemers-op-zeedijk-wij-verdienen-eerlijk-ons-brood~be986e0f/

that I intended to do, and in the end, I only occasionally spent time there.

In the spring of 2017, when I already knew that I was not going to do much fieldwork at these snack bars, a friend who worked for the anti-crime unit of the municipality reached out to me because they had heard about my research and was wondering if I could keep an eye out for money laundering. I of course refused, and never spoke to them again. In 2019, a year or two later, after yet another inflammatory piece in *Het Parool*[9], one of the very successful Coptic businessmen reached out to ask me to write a rebuttal letter. This request also made me uneasy. I did feel like Coptic businessmen were unjustly portrayed, but I did not want to write such a letter without researching the finances at least a little bit, and I did not want to do that research. In the end, I politely told this businessman that I did not know enough to write the letter, but that I could lend him language skills. I did not hear from him again, but in November 2019, *Het Parool* published an article that repeated the arguments that the man had expressed on the phone and ended with a short statement by the journalist himself saying that a Friday night spent in the city center indeed indicates that the Egyptian owned eateries bring in incredible amounts of money[10].

The businessmen in the city center by and large tried to stay away from their fellow countrymen, researchers, and policy makers, but when their success was cast as suspicious, they were compelled to participate in narrating the story of Egyptians in the Netherlands. As they did, they set themselves apart from other, less savvy and thus less successful Egyptians. I did not engage much with the more prosperous businessmen, in part because they did not need my help as much, and in part because they were more apprehensive about researchers. I did talk to a few, though, and in general, they attributed their achievements to persistence and acumen. In addition, the Coptic entrepreneurs I spoke to specifically attributed their success to the fact that they had not invested in Egyptian real estate as Muslim entrepreneurs had, which had turned out to be a smart decision, at least financially.

At the associations, in those rare but cherished moments that Egyptians were able to spend some time together, to eat, gossip, reminisce, and remind each other what was unique about themselves, men often drew on the image of the savvy and prosperous Egyptian businessmen to present Egyptians, and thus themselves, as model minorities. In doing so, they also distinguished themselves from the general figure of the immigrant on benefits, and more specifically, from the Moroccan guest-workers who they said were recruited by the Dutch government to

[9]https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/zwart-geld-in-de-horeca-waar-komen-al-die-pizzerias-vandaan~b302e5b5/

[10]https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/witwassen-egyptische-ondernemers-zijn-insinuaties-beu~be024eaf/

work for Dutch companies and 'Syrians' who they said came as refugees and were given benefits and social housing. I was uncomfortable with these images, and often suggested that they were merely repeating stereotypes, and pointed out the many Moroccan and Syrian run businesses. As a result, I found out how invested the people I worked with were in not being like 'Moroccans'. I was often unironically reminded that as descendants of the pharaohs, Egyptians were the heirs of seven thousand years of civilization, whereas Moroccans in the Netherlands came straight from the Atlas Mountains, and therefore had some catching up to do. In addition, Egyptians Copts added that 'they' were already Christians before Europeans were, while some Egyptian Muslims suggested that the way in which Moroccans practice Islam was in fact un-Islamic, which is a discourse that circulates in Egypt too, but in the Dutch context, implicitly blames Moroccans for the bad image of Islam in the Netherlands. In their effort to distinguish themselves from Moroccans, my interlocutors also reproduced stigmatizing images of Moroccans as taking advantage from welfare resources, as bad parents, and as terrorizing the neighborhood, and drew on these images to question the extent of racism in the Netherlands, as Sama did during her interview with Moataz Rageb that I joined.

> Sama: I don't know about racism. I don't know. For example, with those Moroccans, well, sorry for saying it, but they just ask for it. They just sit at home, taking their subsidies, sending their children out on the street to terrorize the neighborhood. I mean, they can't help it, they came from the mountains without any education, and they only came to get rich. But what they need is an education. Because, for now, well, sorry, but I understand Geert Wilders, I really do. I mean, everyone would become racist with these Moroccans.

In practice, Egyptian Muslims in the Netherlands actually live in close proximity to Moroccans. They attend Moroccan-run mosques, send their children to Moroccan-run Islamic primary schools. Sama was no exception. Actually, she was married to, and had two sons with, a Moroccan-Dutch man, and right after saying what she said, she said that she feared that her sons were treated "as if they were one of them". I often encountered this fear of being treated as a Moroccan, suggesting an acute awareness that regardless of how they felt, in everyday life, they would still be mistaken for or likened to Dutch-Moroccans. It also suggests a keen sensitivity to the detrimental consequences.

My interlocutors also distinguished themselves from the Dutch through the image of Egyptians as light-hearted, hospitable and family oriented, and the Dutch as punctual and efficient but also individualistic and cold. They were above all horrified by parents who push their children to move out after finishing high school, and adult children who let their elderly parents

live in care homes and without even visiting them. These narratives evoke discourses about the Netherlands and Europe in general that circulate in Egypt, but in the Dutch context, they offered a positive spin on the stigmatizing discourses on Arabs and Muslims, which frame Arab and Muslim family as oppressively patriarchal, in order to frame Dutch families as emancipated.

The distinction between formal citizenship and nationality/ethnicity/race placed Egyptian citizens of the Netherlands outside of the nation, but the distinction also provided space for a more positive self-identification, and for distancing from (even more) stigmatized people. The people I met at the different associations where I conducted my fieldwork embraced this opportunity by presenting Egyptians, and thus themselves, as more hospitable and family oriented than the Dutch and as more entrepreneurial and educated than the Dutch-Moroccans. This was an understandable but in my view ultimately futile if not harmful balancing act, between on the one hand appropriating stigmatizing discourses of Muslim and Arab families, and on the other hand reproducing stigmatizing discourses of uncivilized, and welfare reliant Moroccans. In my reading, this balancing act was futile because no matter how well executed, Egyptians would still be grouped together with Moroccans and Syrians through policies targeting disempowered Arab women, uninvolved Arab fathers, or parents of radicalizing Muslim youth. It was harmful because by favorably comparing Egyptians and thus themselves to everyone else, they legitimized nationalism, and thus the exclusion and marginalization of the real, undesirable, or undeserving immigrants, in short, the third world looking people.

2.6 Immigrants as third world-looking people

Research homogenizes immigrants, or specific groups of immigrants, by particularizing 'them' vis-à-vis other immigrant Others and natives (Schinkel, 2018). In the case of Egyptians in the Netherlands, research made them stand out as "entrepreneurial" (Choenni, 1993; 1997; Rath, 2002; Fijnaut and Bovenkerk, 1996), as Christians fleeing Muslim oppression (de Wit, 2002; 2004), and as men who were relatively likely to marry and divorce women born in the Netherlands and as women who have comparatively many children (de Valk, 2004). I met exactly one family who neatly fitted this general description of a Coptic man who had married a Dutch citizen out of convenience, divorced her after becoming a Dutch citizen, married a Coptic woman from Egypt, with whom he had five children, and in the meantime ran a successful company.

The others whom I met deviated from this general picture in at least one way, and often in so many ways that they almost fell outside the scope of Egyptians in the Netherlands and were more in keeping with the international student or expat. This included Paul, who passed

as Dutch, an Egyptian woman who studied at the University of Amsterdam and reached out to me to get to know more about my research, and a young Egyptian man who worked for booking.com and joined my Wednesday evening football group, among many others.

The Egyptian international students and high-skilled workers whom I met avoided Egyptian snack bars and associations. This had to do with the sharp Egyptian class distinctions, but I believe it also had to do with these differentiated categories. That is, while I do not think that these students and high-skilled workers would have necessarily enjoyed seeking out the directors of the different associations, I can imagine that if they had to pass an integration test, they might have reached out to the people who had already been in the Netherlands for decades and knew how to navigate the bureaucracy.

The directors of the associations whom I talked to knew about these kinds of people, too. However, these people were not the people they could possibly organize, because they were not targeted as immigrants by policy makers or by researchers, and because they were not the kind of Egyptians they saw themselves advocating for. The Egyptians who were excluded from the story were also happy to remain outside of that general subject space of Egyptians in the Netherlands, and in the subject space of a Dutch family man (Paul), international student, or expat. As I will describe in more detail later, while telling this story, 'they' – the directors, international students, and expats – set themselves apart from 'them', the Egyptians who were less educated, less integrated, and therefore needed support. In the process, they played into the idea of real immigrants as 'third world-looking', that is, lower class and racialized as non-white, as well as the further distinction between 'good' or 'well-integrated', or 'hard-working' and thus 'deserving' immigrant versus the 'bad', 'not-integrated', or 'not-even trying' and thus undeserving immigrant (e.g Yoo, 2008; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2019). Indeed, in the Netherlands, and across the world, the attempts to manage immigrants have never been directed at all non-nationals, but always only at those non-nationals who were considered a threat. These have always been non-white and/or lower-class, or "third world-looking" people (Hage, 2009).

The ad hoc postwar policies were built on the mantra that the Netherlands was not and would not become a country of immigration, but only discouraged Moluccans and guest-workers from taking root. It did not discourage Germans, British, or Belgians from taking root, even though for a long time, each of them constituted bigger groups than the Moluccans and guest-workers combined. On paper, there were no policies dealing with the elites from the formerly colonized, but the experiences of Paul, who made a tremendous effort to pass as Dutch, suggest that they too were treated as outsiders. The civic integration policies that followed largely excluded high-skilled workers and further targeted non-Western migrants, which as Dvora Yanov

and Marleen van Haar (2013) amongst others point out, is code language for race.

These policies also distinguished between good and bad, or deserving and undeserving immigrants. The postwar ad hoc policies defined good immigrants as those third world-looking people who remained focused on leaving the Netherlands and bad immigrants as those immigrants who laid claim on the Dutch state. The minority policies of the 1970s and 1980s defined good immigrants as immigrants who organized themselves in cultural associations and used the advisory councils to influence local policies pertaining to them and bad immigrants as immigrants who either stayed home or sought state assistance. The civic integration courses of the 1990s defined good immigrants as immigrants who worked and knew their civic rights and responsibilities, while the civic integration courses of the 2000s and onwards added knowledge of Dutch culture and history to the mix, so that bad immigrants are immigrants who rely on welfare, do not carry out their civic responsibilities, and hold views that are at odds with the supposed Dutch norms and values.

The distinction between good and bad immigrants created additional possibilities for Egyptians to distinguish themselves from one another, and the people I met enthusiastically used these. The Dutch policies, then, produce immigrants as 'third world-looking people', but by distancing themselves from the real immigrants, people like Paul and the international students and high-skilled workers further define or at least sharpen the distinction between immigrants and non-nationals who, at least temporarily, come to belong.

2.7 Conclusion: (Dis)Connect

In this chapter, I examined how the figurations of the Egyptian snackbar and Egyptian associations, as well as the figures of the Egyptian entrepreneur and association director conditioned the lives of those identified as Egyptian in the Netherlands, which, as the story of Paul shows, is anyone who is or has been an Egyptian citizen and is in the Netherlands.

I began by tracing the histories of Dutch immigration policies and research. Reviewing the constitution of 1814 and 1815 and the civil code of 1838, I pointed out that there is no reason why residency, citizenship, and nationality cannot overlap, or even complement one another, as they did in the Netherlands at the time. I then mentioned the 1882 Nationality Act in order to make sense of the Dutch governments' treatment of so-categorized 'European', 'Indo-European', and 'Ambonese' repatriates as well as guest-workers. I then told the story of the minorities policies, which sought to prevent marginalization and segregation by stimulating social-cultural expression and political representation, the story of integration policies, which

seek to foster immigrants' participation in the labor market and cultural assimilation, and the story of target-group policies, which seek to address specific problems in specific populations, defined by the problem they represent.

These policies have had a profound impact on people's lives, but in hindsight, in each instance, policies were based on, and in turn reinforced nationality as the main marker of difference. Immigration policies and research concretely do so by homogenizing people who by most other measures represent a heterogenous group. In other words, by grouping together everyone of a certain nationality under one umbrella, they help to produce stereotypical notions and elevate certain kinds of figures that in turn shape the ways that people connect and relate.

The directors of the associations, as well as the studies they provided input for, helped to invent, authenticate, and popularize these notions and supposedly representational figures. My interlocutors drew on these iconic figures to distinguish themselves from other, supposedly lesser Egyptians, other and lesser immigrant Others, and the Dutch, who in some ways they also saw as lesser than Egyptians. In doing so, they played into the more general configuration of immigrant Others. By distancing himself from Egyptians who were still living under difficult material conditions and unenlightened, Paul played into the idea of real immigrants being "third world-looking". The directors further played into the ideas of 'good' and 'deserving' versus 'bad' and 'undeserving' immigrants, with 'good' and 'deserving' immigrants being those who are integrated or at least make an effort, and the 'bad' and 'undeserving' immigrants those who do no even make an effort, and instead appear in the 'wrong-statistics', as defined by research comparing people in terms of employment, welfare use, and crime rates. These attempts to distinguish themselves originate in the world of nation-states, but were ultimately futile, because target-group policies lumped them together anyway, as disempowered Arab women, uninvolved Arab fathers, or parents of potentially radicalizing youth, for example. They were also harmful, because they feed into inherently violent and exclusionary nationalist ideas.

Taken together, I showed how nationality based immigration policies and research connected and disconnected Egyptians from one another, from other immigrant Others, and from the Dutch. In the next chapter, I move on from thinking about integration and other target group policies that define immigrants as the Other within, towards thinking about more generic welfare services, which ostensibly group together immigrants and native citizens, but nevertheless make immigrant citizens stand out.