
Introduction

National models of immigrant integration: The costs for comparative research

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National models of integration are omnipresent in public and political discourses about how Western European immigration countries address the presence and integration of immigrants and minority groups. That France is viewed as a ‘republican’ country, the Netherlands and Britain as ‘multicultural’ and Germany as an ‘ethno-national’ country, is something that has structured most of the public analyses and political debates within these countries. Models are conceived of as ‘national traditions’, ‘legacies’, sometimes ‘sanctuaries’, by a variety of actors involved in the policymaking and the politics of integration, ranging from civil servants, policymakers, opinion leaders and the media. This, however, changed in the early twenty-first century, models now being seen as a burden to the integration of immigrants. This reaction was directed at the Dutch and British multicultural politics in the 2000s and 2010s. This did not, however, alter the conventional political wisdom that views the Netherlands and Britain as countries with (a history of) multicultural models.

Scholars too have shown a strong interest in the notion, for the obvious reason that models help identify differences among countries with various integration policies and public conceptions of citizenship. In turn, scholars attempted to explain *why* different countries had followed these different pathways for integrating immigrants. In doing so, they found that different normative value systems were the basis for these cross-national differences. These systems thus defined were those used in the public discourses, as comparative research focused primarily on public narratives and official discourses where cultural idioms or philosophies of integration could be found (Brubaker, 1992; Favell, 1998).



This eventually confirmed that from an analytical, academic perspective too France *was* a republican country, the Netherlands and Britain *were* multicultural countries and Germany *was* an ethno-national country.

This led, however, to a powerful analytical ambiguity and many misunderstandings. Of course, it is indisputable that national differences exist, and that they often take on the appearance of ‘philosophies’ or ‘cultures’ of immigrant integration and citizenship. It is indeed difficult to deny that what is referred to as *la république française* has something to do with what is discussed in the field of immigrant integration politics and policies in France. It is equally difficult to claim that the notion of multiculturalism has absolutely nothing to do with how Dutch or British people discuss issues of equality and religious diversity in their country today. These cross-national differences can be found in various forms of institutions (Bleich, 2003), constellations of social meanings, structures of social movements, drawings of moral boundaries (Lamont, 2000) and conceptions of collective identity in a society.

However, it is much more problematic to claim that such cross-national differences can be *explained* by national philosophies or cultures of integration, let alone models. This is exactly what tends to happen in the literature. Emphasizing cross-national variations, scholars easily jump to the conclusion that these stylized differences are explained by stylized models of immigrant integration and citizenship. In turn, models are used as all-encompassing independent variables, able to account at once for the situation of migrants, for policy orientations or for the structure of public discourse in different countries. In this perspective, differences between France, Britain and the Netherlands are explained by the former being republican and the latter multicultural, and, it is suggested, this is a self-sufficient explanation for accounting for what makes France so French, the Netherlands so Dutch and Britain so British.

This problematic claim cannot be sustained without comparative empirical research on immigrant integration and citizenship in Western European countries incurring considerable problems. In the next sections, we highlight some of these problems and present the overall framework we propose in this volume for addressing them. We do so through a systematic and critical comparison between two countries that have long been conceived as having two mutually contradictory models: France and the Netherlands.

Models and the All-Encompassing Reflex

Since the 1980s, an extensive literature in comparative sociology and political science has developed around the notion of models, emphasizing sharp contrasts between so-called distinctive historical, political, philosophical, social



and cultural features of integration policies in different national situations. A national model of integration and citizenship is usually defined as a public philosophy (Schain, 2008), a policy paradigm (Favell, 1998; Guiraudon, 2006), an institutional and discursive opportunity structure (Koopmans *et al*, 2005) or a national cultural idiom (Brubaker, 1992). All these concepts attempt to show how social reality is structured by pre-existing ideas about a nation's self-understanding, and how such ideas frame at once social interactions, institutional arrangements, policy outcomes and social movements.

Within this perspective, France is conceived as an assimilationist country (as opposed to multiculturalist countries such as Britain or the Netherlands), whose national identity is based on a universalistic public philosophy (as opposed to an ethno-cultural national identity, as is the case in Germany). In turn, because France is a republican country, its notion of the Republic is seen as all-encompassing – the republic as a value system is said to organize the separation between public and private realms (through a strict colorblind approach to ethnicity and race), between the state and the church (the philosophy of French secularism – *laïcité*), and to underpin the specifically French 'political, open definition' of citizenship and immigrant incorporation through nationality (Brubaker, 1992). By contrast, in the Netherlands, different idealistic structures are viewed as enabling people to mobilize on the basis of ethnic identities, whereas integration policies aim at promoting group-based identities instead of a common citizenship (Koopmans *et al*, 2005; Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007).

When it comes to explaining precisely how this causal relation works and where these models come from, however, the literature is unclear. In France, a public speech on immigrants or a woman's decision to wear the veil are brought down to a single normative stake, namely the power of French republicanism to drive individual behaviors, social movements, institutional arrangements and policies. France's model is also conceived in terms of the teleological development of the idea of 'republican France', starting with the *prise de la Bastille* on 14 July 1789 and leading 'logically' to the prohibition of the full-face veil on 11 October 2010. Assumptions about Dutch multiculturalism lead to similar misconceptions. A key trait of the multicultural model as constructed in Dutch political and academic discourse would be that the Dutch have tended to institutionalize cultural pluralism in the belief that cultural emancipation of immigrant minorities is the key to their socio-economic integration into Dutch society. In the latter respect, often a connection is made with the peculiar Dutch history of pillarization, referring to the period from the 1920s to 1960s when most of Dutch society was structured according to specific religious (Protestant, Catholic) or socio-cultural (socialist, liberal) pillars (Lijphart, 1968). It is assumed – but not proven – that pillarization has informed 'multicultural' policies, resulting in



a national model; the very notion of a national model being held to be self-evident.

This type of scholarly reasoning does not go without serious costs for the social sciences. Among these costs are the danger of reifying the categories used by the social scientists for analyzing complex social interactions and settings; the poor definition and biased selection of indicators aimed at proving rather than testing the consistence of a model; a limited and unsatisfying conception of how ideas translate into action; a confusion between scholarly ideal-types and political stereotypes (Bowen, 2007; Bertossi, 2011).

From Ideal-Types to Stereotypes

Within the model perspective, countries must fall into clear-cut normative categories. This is usually justified as fitting into an ideal-typical approach. However, in many cases, ideal-types are simply instrumental for a series of moral judgments about what national value systems scholars find in one country. The attribution of a multiculturalist ideal-type to the Netherlands is aimed at a critique of what multiculturalism 'did' in (or to) the Netherlands. In turn, what better way to reinforce such judgments than to contrast 'outcomes' of an assumed coherent Dutch multicultural model with those of an equally coherent but radically opposite model such as France's republican integration? To put it flatly, some scholars have a strategic interest in an *a priori* conception of reified national 'philosophies' or 'cultures' of immigrant integration. Their corresponding normative commitments drive the form, structure and content of what these scholars call the French and the Dutch models.

This instrumental ideal-typical approach is correlated to a subsequent problem: it tends to merely address France from within the idea of republicanism and place this normative label to everything the country shows when immigrants and citizenship are concerned, because in this perspective ideas always precede social and institutional actions. Likewise, multiculturalism is similarly viewed as an all-compassing structure, able to analyze (and assess) everything Dutch policies, institutions and immigrant mobilizations have produced because this general value system is claimed to come first, whereas political and other trivial contingencies are considered as a marginal structuring factor of social life.

This *a priori* conception has major consequences for the social and political sciences. The construction of models as dense, coherent, stable and homogenous structures makes the analytical category of 'model' a total cultural and normative entity. In this research strategy, there is little room left outside the French republican and the Dutch multicultural models to understand contemporary French and Dutch societies (for a detailed discussion,



see Bertossi in this issue). Dense and consistent as they are seen, models are not only a matter of discourses and symbolic representations, but they are also presented as powerful driver of action and shaper of institutions. The lack of a convincing theory of action in this approach, as we suggested earlier, results more clearly in the misconception of how social actors interiorize ideational frames – an important problem, also identified in relation to the notion of opportunity structure (Mathieu, 2000; Goodwin and Jasper, 2011) – and how policymaking is structured – exaggerating the role of ideas in street level policies, although not really interested in the daily messy and muddling practices of street-level bureaucrats and professionals (Lipsky, 1980).

Another distortion of a model lens concerns the constant focus of this approach on the official versions of what policymakers and opinion leaders say in each country. Within this perspective, policies are seen as produced by the elite. The ability of this elite-driven discourse to shape a common framework of reference for an entire society is never put into the perspective of how such a discourse can be used, transformed, assessed, constantly negotiated, understood and misunderstood by a wide variety of social and institutional actors in various settings.

National integration philosophies and policies are actually discussed everywhere: in working-class pubs, hospital hallways, at the desks of family allowance organizations, in police stations, in school staff rooms, in union or NGO meetings, in the reader commentary sections of newspaper web sites, and in European ministers of interior summits, to name just a few. However, social contexts, concrete interactions and institutional settings are curiously never the place where ‘model scholars’ do any research (Bertossi and Prud’homme, 2011). Instead of socially embedded narratives, the models literature remains more often than not at the surface of societies. Social actors, from politicians to veiled Muslim women, are portrayed as simply inheriting these ideas and adapting to them, but rarely co-producing, using and altering them.

What is the result of this series of distortions of the models approach? We claim that under the reign of taken-for-granted models, the comparative literature is left helpless for explaining and predicting the empirical reality of different countries. Wrong indicators will result in wrong conclusions, and wrong conclusions in wrong predictions. For example, Muslim chaplaincies in prisons or in the military have been discussed as proof of multiculturalism in the Netherlands (Koopmans and Statham, 2005, p. 156). However, such institutional roles are perceived as either irrelevant or ‘pathological’ in the French context, as it is difficult to argue that Muslim chaplains in the French armed forces or prisons prove French ‘multiculturalism’ (Beckford *et al*, 2005; Bertossi and Wihtol de Wenden, 2007).

This discussion loses its absurdity when we stop conceiving of national models as dense, homogeneous and coherent value systems and if we stop



over-interpreting indicators in terms of ‘cultural rights’ any moment the situation at hand involves ‘Muslims’. Particularly in public organizational settings, accommodative strategies are a matter of states adapting universal provisions and liberal neutrality to new situations. They have nothing to do with multiculturalism – neither in the Netherlands nor in France.

Culturalist Integration Politics

This pervasion of normative, political and moral interests in the scholarship affects the definition of research agendas and debates, and makes it hard to find the difference between academic analytical categories and political stands.

One debate has focused on a possible ‘crisis’ of national models of integration and the ‘multicultural backlash’ in Europe (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2009). Within this perspective, research on the integration of immigrants in Western Europe has turned into discussions about the success or failure of stylized integration policies and the legitimacy of claims made by ethnic minorities, particularly when these claims are made by Muslims (Koopmans and Statham, 2005; Joppke, 2009a). These debates have by the same token reinforced questions about Muslims’ loyalty and incorporation (are they with us or against us?), and the relevance of a category (Muslims) that is used in and is the subject of political debates. Ironically, both supporters of multiculturalism, such as Banting and Kymlicka, as well as the toughest critics, such as Koopmans *et al*, see multiculturalism everywhere – either to defend it or to attack.

A parallel paradigmatic debate has also mobilized the students of national integration models to determine whether national models are rather path-dependent (Guiraudon, 2006; Schain, 2008) or converging structures (Joppke, 2007; Wallace Goodman, 2010). Some authors have addressed the apparent backlash against multiculturalism in Europe by describing a convergence of national self-conceptions of citizenship, and a retreat from multiculturalism in favor of a new ‘civic integration’ approach (Joppke, 2007, 2009b). A pivotal notion of the convergence hypothesis is the failure of multiculturalism to integrate Muslims. In his *Veil* book, Christian Joppke emphasizes that ‘the presumed disloyalty and illiberalism of Muslim immigrants is the main backdrop to the rise of “civic integration” policies in Europe’ (p. 115). Within this perspective, claims about the convergence among different models of integration toward ‘civic integration’ thus help support the strategic claim about the Islamic challenge to liberalism, as ‘Samuel Huntington has it right: “The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam”’ (p. 111).

Within the perspective of path-dependent national models resisting convergence, Koopmans and his colleagues seem to share a very similar view



when it comes to criticizing multiculturalism as a form of ‘segregationism’ (Koopmans *et al*, 2005, p. 11). In their comparison of Muslim collective claims in Britain and the Netherlands, Koopmans and Statham (2005, p. 155) emphasize the singularity of Muslim groups in multicultural contexts. The danger is emphatically identified in these so-called multicultural models. Koopmans added to this a discussion about the interplay between multiculturalism and welfare provisions, ‘given the welfare-state dependency that multicultural policies have brought about in the Netherlands’ (Koopmans, 2010, p. 21). Within this perspective, ‘Muslim immigrants’ are not suspected of illiberalism but viewed as (unconscious!) victims of multicultural policies, because multiculturalism not only offers ‘cultural rights’, but also provides ‘generous welfare provisions’.

The argument is based on three indicators: labor market participation, spatial segregation and the overrepresentation of immigrants in the prison system. Dutch multiculturalism, Koopmans concludes, is responsible for poor performances of immigrants in all three aspects. However, the reader can only accept this finding if (s)he also accepts the pre-conceived notions that multiculturalism was actually the model of the Netherlands, that segregation is the rationale of multiculturalism and that minority groups have abused the liberal state because of the strong opportunity to do so provided by Dutch multiculturalism. If one rejects only one of these assumptions, then Koopmans’s conclusion is at best a normative attack against welfare rights to immigrants under the pretense that it creates ‘parallel lives’ and ‘closed’ communities.

The resulting consequences are that the diagnoses proposed by social scientists and statements made by political professionals belong to the same argumentative structure, to the same discursive order. Claims by scholars about the moral-cultural crisis of immigrant integration in general, and Islam as an anti-liberal challenge in particular, are not different from what British Prime Minister, David Cameron argued in February 2011 at a conference on security and terrorism in Munich:

Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We’ve failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We’ve even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values. (Cameron, 2011)

This has become the conventional wisdom, a given for most of the politics and some of the most important scholarship on citizenship in the Western European context today. In turn, many scholars seem to endorse as an



adequate empirical and analytical diagnosis what President Nicolas Sarkozy said only few days after Cameron's speech. To the question of a journalist about whether 'multiculturalism was a failure', Sarkozy answered: 'Yes, it is a failure. The truth is that in all our democracies we have taken care, more than we should have, of the identity of the arriving person and not enough of the identity of the receiving country' (*Libération*, 2011, our translation).

We argue that the porosity between two discursive practices that are supposed to be distinct – the scholarship and the politics – is the result of using the ill-conceived notion of national integration model as an independent variable. Or, to put it differently: given the discursive context of a backlash against multiculturalism, and a moral and cultural crisis of national liberalism in Western European countries in the years 2000–2010s, how can we respect the singularity of the social scientist discourse and, at the same time, understand what many in our societies are prone to depict as (failed or outdated) national models of immigrant integration? (Bertossi, 2011).

Six Propositions

This critical analysis impelled us to work on two related research questions we proposed to our co-authors as a general framework for this special issue. The first question is whether the notion of models is viable for comparative research on immigrant integration and citizenship. If not, the second question asks, are there available alternative ways for social scientists to account for cross-national differences? In order to address both questions, we proposed six working hypothesis to the contributors of this volume that were discussed at two seminars we organized:

1. Far from being homogeneous blocks, national models are constantly contradicted by social, political and institutional practices. Contradictions, however, cannot be merely viewed as 'pathologies' but are fully part of what must be explained.
2. Models suggest stability and should allow varying public reasoning across time. To speak of republicanism as the French model or multiculturalism in the Netherlands leaves much to be said about differences in public discussions on the integration of migrants and the project of equality and inclusion of diversity in both countries.
3. Models are not an *a priori* normative matrix, but an *a posteriori* construct. French universalism and Dutch tolerance are not the starting point, but the temporary outcome of public discussions. Debates about models are aimed at imposing a dominant frame, which is never given before the discussion reaches a very provisional stage.



4. Models are polysemic expressions, which show a high level of strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984; Leitch and Davenport, 2007) that makes them easily manipulated by different actors who seek different outcomes from the discussion. The content attached to normative labels (republicanism, multiculturalism) and correlative notions (secularism, pillarization, state neutrality, integration and so on) is often different and always depends upon the context in which these labels and notions are used, as much as on political contingences and organized interests.
5. The model-constructing process involves a variety of argumentative structures and justificatory frameworks (Walzer, 1983; Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991). The *a-priori* mutual supporting relationship between, say, republicanism and *laïcité* or multiculturalism and pillarization, is part of the structure of the model discourse. But this relationship must be analytically deconstructed and not taken for granted.
6. Although models are not ‘something out there’, they are given an objective existence through social and institutional interactions between actors who exchange their ideas of French republicanism and Dutch multiculturalism. In other words, models represent a performative practice (Austin, 1962). All public discussions tend to routinize the idea that France is undeniably republican or that the Netherlands is multicultural, the effects of which are real. This performative effect should not merely be explored in the realm of official institutions and policies, but also in the cognitive construction of social reality, in which all segments of society participate (Bertossi, 2011).

Outline of the Volume

The first two articles empirically test the idea that France has a ‘republican model’ and the Netherlands a ‘multicultural’ one. Both articles conclude that, for various reasons, the history of integration policies cannot adequately be understood in terms of national models. Bertossi proposes to analyze the French case in terms of ‘schemas’, Duyvendak and Scholten opt for a framing perspective. In both cases, this shed a totally different perspective on French and Dutch history regarding migrants and their place in society. Streiff-Fénart and de Zwart deal with the ways governments in both countries have classified and categorized ‘newcomers’. On one hand, these analyses show differences between the two countries; on the other hand, it turns out that these differences are not related to ‘national models’ or ‘public philosophies’, but to daily practices of policymaking and dealing with various (groups of) citizens in concrete situations. Moreover, they both show the agency of the (migrant) groups involved, who often opt for labels that are not in line with the dominant



frames (an interesting finding, contradicting the determinism of opportunity structure reasoning).

The, often rather contingent and very contextual, factors seem also to be an important *explanans* of differences in the way women's veiling has been perceived in France and the Netherlands, and the respective policy responses. Next to the actual political power configuration and notions of gender equality, Lettinga and Saharso show in their article that church–state relations play here an important role. This latter is also the case in the two following articles that explicitly deal with these relations and their changes over time. Both Maussen for the Netherlands and Bowen for France show how these relations are often misunderstood by believers in 'national models', who don't pay attention to the changing nature of these relations, and their subtle pragmatism. Bowen, in the penultimate contribution to this thematic issue, theorizes these relations in terms of competing schemas. In the Conclusions to this issue, Schain pushes the argument even further. National models exit, okay, but what explains for the dynamics of competing schemas or frames?

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