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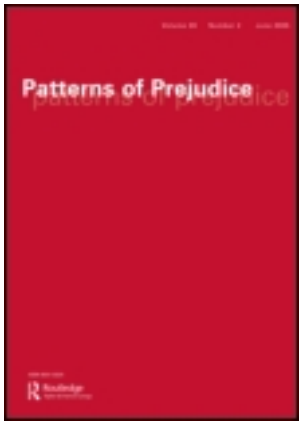

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National models of integration and the crisis of multiculturalism: a critical comparative perspective

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National models of integration and the crisis of multiculturalism: a critical comparative perspective

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Clifford Geertz famously argued that culture is both a model *for* and a model *of* the world with which it is associated.[1] National models of integration are no different.[2] They appear in the methodological frameworks of researchers and the conference rooms of policy makers, fly out of the mouths of politicians, philosophers and bartenders alike. They become embedded in popular imagination and play a part in political controversies. At every juncture they fulfil a double role: making and representing the world at one and the same time. They help people to make realities, as they inform normative assumptions about what is good and right, and to represent realities as they encompass a variety of phenomena.

The articles collected in this special issue set out to assess critically both aspects of national models from a comparative perspective, bringing together analyses of immigration countries in Europe (the Netherlands, France and Britain) and settler societies elsewhere (United States, Canada and Australia). Building on previous discussions, the questions we will raise with regards to national models seek to assess critically their relevance.[3] First, we will look at where the notion of a national model comes from

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1 Clifford Geertz, 'Religion as a cultural system', in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books 1966), 87–125.

2 John Bowen, 'A view from France on the internal complexity of national models', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 33, no. 6, 1003–16.

3 Christophe Bertossi, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Martin A. Schain (eds), 'The problems with national models of integration: a Franco-Dutch comparison', special issue of *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2012; Christophe Bertossi, 'National models of integration in Europe: a comparative and critical perspective', *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 55, no. 12, 2011; Jan Willem Duyvendak, Rogier van Reekum, Peter Scholten and Christophe Bertossi, 'The of/for distinction', in Rainer Bauböck and Marc Hebling (eds), *Which Indicators Are Most Useful for Comparing Citizenship Policies?* EUI Working Paper, RSCAS 2011/54, 15–19, available on the EUI website at http://eudo-citizenship.eu/citizenship-forum/380-which-indicators-are-most-useful-for-comparing-citizenship-policies?start=3 (viewed 25 June 2012).

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and what we can and cannot do with it. The academic and policy debates have seen the development of national models of integration for specific methodological and political reasons. Reflection upon these debates is necessary since in different cases national models have come to be used for different reasons.

Second, Europe in particular has witnessed political controversies over national models. 'Multiculturalism' in Britain and the Netherlands and 'republicanism' in France are said to be 'in crisis'. Partly on the basis of research outcomes, political contention over immigrant integration has centred on national models as 'traditions', 'legacies' and sometimes 'sanctuaries' that are now conceived to be in disarray. To what extent do these notions regarding a crisis of models make any empirical sense? Is the alleged crisis of models a specifically European phenomenon?

Lastly, national models of integration might have serious conceptual and methodological flaws and yet they are constantly used by a variety of actors in the field. This naturally makes them relevant for our understanding of the politics of immigration and diversity. What is the political, 'performative' work that national models are doing in the specific cases?

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What do we use national models for?

The emergence of national models in the literature on immigration and diversity can be traced back to the end of the 1980s and the 1990s. From that period on an increasingly self-evident notion of national models gained purchase in academic and policy debates. It makes sense to see the conceptualization of these national models as a somewhat unintended consequence of the dynamic between particular developments in the academic field and the concerns of policy makers, unlikely to have been understood at the time. At the very least, the design of national models aids in the reduction of complexity in research methods, policy evaluation and communication between research and policy.[4] Over time, the usage of national models in research and policy has been mutually reinforcing.

From the policy standpoint, the tendency to use nation-states as the level of analysis seems rather obvious. The whole point of integration policies is the idea that newcomers need to be brought into a national fold. That policies should somehow add up to a coherent and stable construct of national citizenship is almost inherent in the very idea of their development. The prevalence of national models in policy debates is clearly part of the political nationalism inherent in such forms of governance.

4 See Veit Bader, 'The governance of Islam in Europe: the perils of modelling', *Journal of Ethnic and Migrations Studies*, vol. 33, no. 6, 2007, 871–86.

The tendency among researchers also to aggregate policies within the vessel of the nation-state needs more clarification. It is not particularly obvious why the aggregation of policies into national models would provide the most relevant insights. How then should we understand the popularity of national modelling among social scientists?

In part, researchers have all too often taken on the politically motivated questions of policy makers and politicians. To answer specific political concerns, researchers have tended to research immigration and diversity while taking for granted the existence and preservation of nation-states. As long as the often implicit research question tends to be the extent to which nation-states are able to preserve themselves under conditions of intensified immigration and transnationalism, the identification of national models makes methodological sense. However, the problem with this approach is that it assumes what it seeks to explain. Why study the policy responses to immigration and diversity when it has already been assumed that nation-states can be identified with philosophically coherent and historically stable models of integration? Isn't the point of studying these politics and policies the fact that the nation-state remains a contentious entity? What policy makers must assume almost by default—the overriding integrity of nation-states—researchers should also question by default: how do people succeed or fail in constructing the nation-state day by day?

The tendency to adopt political assumptions about the integrity of nation-states was greatly spurred on by the salience of France and Germany in the empirical analysis of citizenship regimes. Rogers Brubaker's groundbreaking, historical reconstruction of French and German citizenship exerted a huge influence on the field.[5] These countries did indeed seem to provide clear cases of different, coherent and stable notions of national citizenship: one republican, one ethno-national. While Brubaker's study presents the contentiousness of national citizenship in great detail—and Brubaker has gone on to add increasing ethnographic detail in his later work—the notion of different, coherent and stable regimes of citizenship turned out to be highly applicable in the academic shift taking place at the time: from conceptual, philosophical discussions over citizenship and diversity towards more empirically oriented research practices. All this went on in the proximity of policy makers and politicians increasingly concerned with the integration of newcomers. With the methodological construction of national models, political philosophies and their philosophers had found—or so it seemed—their real life examples. The somewhat unsystematic reference to empirical examples in political philosophy could become methodologically more rigorous. As Britain and the Netherlands began to stand for 'multiculturalism', the perceived success

5 Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1992).

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or failure of those states to manage immigration and diversity could at the same time become a verdict on normative systems of philosophical thought.

The logic of this shift towards empirical validation of philosophical systems finds its apex in *Contested Citizenship*,[6] in which nationally aggregated indicators are positioned in a stable space of philosophical possibilities. This brand of analysis overlooks the fact that nation-states 'move in regime space' precisely because actors in and outside those states constantly problematize what the possibilities of citizenship in fact are. A substantial part of the contention impacting policy is about the meanings and implications of republicanism, *laïcité*, pillarization, multiculturalism, diversity, tolerance, equity, anti-racism and human rights. One can of course follow a nominalist strategy and label specific sets of indicators 'republicanist', while labelling others 'multiculturalist'. The crucial connection to political contention, in which such terms are highly polysemic, must then be relinquished.

The complicating factor in studying the politics of immigration and diversity is that there is not only contention *between* philosophies, but also and sometimes most poignantly contention *over* philosophies. In that sense, the daily discussions over integration policies in bars, parliaments and newspapers proceed quite differently from academic debates in which people make a focused, yet never entirely successful effort to define their terms.

It seems, then, that the national model concept does the conceptual work of an all-too-consensual notion of political culture. The concept assumes that nation-states can be characterized by coherent politico-cultural ideas about citizenship and that these ideas path-dependently determine policy struggles. However, the problem is that political culture is hardly as consensual as the national model concept assumes and projects onto policy regimes. Political culture might more appropriately be understood as the dissensus that emerges around a number of core issues on the political agenda. What people operating within the horizon of a political culture share is not a set of deep assumptions, for instance about citizenship, that can be explicated in the form of a model, but a set of highly ambivalent problems that they have a hard time resolving and will not seem to go away. A political culture need not imply consensus, nor does path-dependency imply inertia. So while the language of national models is present in both the European cases and the settler societies, a closer analysis of what notions of national models refer to reveals constant change in policy approaches and endemic dissensus about what those models amount to.

6 Ruud Koopmans, Paul Statham, Marco Giugni and Florence Passy, *Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2005).

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What does seem relevant in comparing the European cases to the settler societies is the expectations that actors have of policies and the state. The politics of immigration and diversity in Europe have become ever more pessimistic. Discussion over models has thereby centred on the question of whether the policy models really deliver results, namely integrate newcomers into the national fold. As we have just seen, these expectations have left their mark on European research practice. In this pessimistic light, national models of integration come to perform the task of national preservation. Anxieties have arisen in numerous European polities over their supposed failure to integrate newcomers. Consequently, their models of integration are said to be in crisis. The settler societies, particularly Canada and the US, present us with a different picture. While immigration and diversity are quite clearly *hot issues*, they are not understood to be problems of a failure of integration into a native majority. Precisely because nativity and integration cannot be identified without the risk of being a bigot, politics proceeds differently. In these contexts, national models are, at least, far less loaded with the heavy responsibility of national preservation and there is more optimism about immigration and diversity, at least in political and public discourse. Immigration and diversity in these settler societies need to be part of what it means to be American, Canadian or Australian. Changes in policy are not accompanied by much anxiety over the integrity of national identity, because immigration and diversity cannot be opposed diametrically to national identity. Here, models of integration provide researchers and policy makers with rough sketches of how the state can (and cannot) contribute to processes of integration. Models need not describe the very essence of nationhood, nor turn strange foreigners into familiar co-patriots. Subsequently, there is more room for pragmatic tinkering and optimistic rhetoric.

Converging rhetoric of crisis

Since the beginning of the 2000s, claims in the public and political debate about the 'failure' of integration became a general phenomenon across most of Europe's 'old' immigration countries. The politics of the 'failure of models' was fuelled by emblematic events in France, Britain, and the Netherlands, which took place roughly at the same time, around 2005. The first was the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 by a radical Islamist, after Van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali had made the anti-Muslim movie *Submission*. In Britain, the London bombings of 7 July 2005 shocked the public as the bombers were British citizens. This attack took place only four years after the urban riots in northern English cities, thereby linking such riots and transnational terrorism. In France, in November and December 2005, violent urban riots spread quickly and led to the perception that 'French republicanism' was in crisis. More recently, many

European political leaders—Sarkozy, Cameron and Merkel alike—have spoken out against multiculturalism, claiming failure of the multicultural model.[7]

On the basis of the previous discussion, we may wonder whether the recent anxieties over integration in European polities should be explained primarily by actual outcomes on the ground; and whether the very assumption of coherent and stable models is not responsible for much of the anxiety over their failure. When the participants in politics, including researchers, begin to construct supposedly coherent and stable models and load these policy models with the heavy responsibility of preserving what is distinctly national about a receiving society as it deals with immigration and diversity, we may wonder whether this has not been a recipe for disappointment. This disappointment effect arising out of the use of national models becomes all the more probable given the consistent dissensus in politics about what those supposedly coherent and stable philosophies of integration actually entail in practice. What model of integration would not be in crisis if it had to live up to the expectations implied by the concept?

As the analyses of the various cases show, policy approaches have been changing constantly and there is ample disagreement about what a chosen approach actually implies. Yet such changes and contention take place in the context of researchers, policy makers, politicians, commentators and citizens speaking the language of national models. How can this circle be squared? First of all, the various case studies collected here show that the assumption of coherent, stable models of integration does not make much empirical sense. This means that the diagnoses of crisis cannot be based on how policies work or their outcomes.

Yet we should not stop there. The fact remains that the notion of crisis, particularly in the European cases, has become an important political issue in its own right. This is understandable, as the language of national models turns struggles over integration policy into sites of national imagination. Although so-called French 'republicanism' and British or Dutch 'multiculturalism' are said to be in crisis for different contextual reasons, such claims of crisis do signal a similar contentious position: for too long immigration and diversity policies have been designed by people who lack an appreciation of what is truly French, British, or Dutch. The convergence of models, ascertained by some, might better be conceptualized as a convergence of rhetoric. This interpretation of the assimilationist turn in Europe

7 T. Cantle, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* (London: Home Office 2001); Christophe Bertossi, 'French and British models of integration: public philosophies, policies, and state institutions', *COMPAS Working Paper*, no. 45 (Oxford: University of Oxford 2007). For a discussion of these denunciations of multiculturalism and their connection to the politics of memory see: Markha Valenta, 'Multiculturalism and the politics of bad memories', *Open Democracy*, 20 March 2011, available at www.opendemocracy.net/markha-valenta/multiculturalism-and-politics-of-bad-memories (viewed 18 July 2011).

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allows for the often quite different directions that policy has taken under the new rhetoric of models-in-crisis. In the Netherlands, we see civic integration films featuring men kissing, while in Britain the Anglican Church threatens a constitutional crisis if parliament legalises gay marriage. It still matters quite a lot what migrants and their children are asked to assimilate to.

National models still live on

Since policies seem to have failed in countries with surprisingly divergent models, some authors have concluded that models have not been relevant for concrete policies after all (or, even more drastically, that policies do not matter so much for integration). Other scholars have concluded that differences between national 'policy paradigms' have become blurred through a process of convergence.[8] Whatever perspective one takes, the political and social crisis around integration has generated a rather paradoxical context for approaching the notion of models. That is, eventually all scientific, social and political discourses re-affirm the usefulness of models for discussing their possible convergence, end or crisis, and for analysing or justifying new policies to address the presence of immigrants and minority groups in Western European countries. The politics of the 'crisis of models' in France, Britain and the Netherlands tend to create coherent models ex-post facto to challenge better the past orientations of their integration policies. In France, this has resulted in the claim that it is really the republican model that is being transformed into a new set of norms and values. In the Netherlands, it took the shape of a rejection of the multicultural model.

In this special issue, we pay specific attention to these performative effects of the use of national models, showing that framing in terms of national models effectively impacts how people in society think and feel about integration issues. The micro-macro link suggested in the national model literature is present, yet not in the way assumed by its explanatory strategy.

As Christophe Bertossi shows in his contribution, the performative effect of the belief in a colour-blind conception of French citizenship has

8 Christian Joppke, 'Beyond national models: civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe', *West European Politics*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2007, 1–22; Hubert Peres, 'Towards the end of national models for the integration of immigrants in Europe? Britain, France, and Spain in comparative perspective', *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association* (Boston MA: 28–31 August 2008); Martin Schain, 'Immigrant integration policy in France and Britain: evaluating convergence and success', *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association* (Boston MA: 28–31 August 2008).

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produced a framing of membership and identities in ethnic and racial terms in contemporary France. At first sight, this seems to be a paradoxical and unintended consequence of a colour-blind discourse, but Bertossi convincingly shows that it is exactly the 'republican' critique of the failure of immigrant integration that grounds and justifies the increased culturalization of the terms of the debate. In a similar vein, Rogier van Reekum and Jan Willem Duyvendak show that in the Dutch case the critique of multiculturalism paradoxically produced 'new' policies that de facto shared many of the unresolved tensions present in the 'old' policy approach, which were subsequently understood as 'multicultural' etc. In France, the framing in terms of immigration failure led many politicians to celebrate the value of the republican model even more, but in the Netherlands the opposite happened: immigrant integration failure was blamed on the alleged multicultural model. In the end, however, this resulted in rather similar performative effects in both countries. First, migrants in both France and the Netherlands were blamed for their non-integration due to their cultural 'strangeness', a strangeness that was respected too much in the Dutch 'model' and which the French 'model' was not able to change. Second, in all European cases, political elites were held responsible for the lack of integration of (Muslim) migrants—causing recurrent discussions about the need for new models (the Netherlands, Britain) or a new understanding of the old model (France). But the biggest impact of the framing in terms of failed models was not on the political level but 'on the ground', where the (Muslim) minority was blamed for its unwillingness to assimilate into the majority mainstream.

In addition to this politics of 'failed models' in France and the Netherlands, Danièle Joly addresses the situation in Britain. She emphasizes variations in the definition of what must be understood as the British national model of immigrant integration and outlines the importance of the minority groups' agency in the successive discussions about Britain's approach to integration: first, in terms of race relations: second, multiculturalism; and third, in the early 2000s, with the emergence of a multi-faith paradigm. What is often referred to in terms of the 'British multicultural model' should rather be conceived of as a palimpsest, with key social and institutional actors reaching a provisional agreement about the dominant norm of inclusion and participation. As a consequence, the idea of a 'crisis of British multiculturalism' is a facade that hides the actual emergence of a new paradigm in today's Britain.

In settler countries, immigration and diversity are part of the national self-understanding. Consequently, debates regarding policy measures will not set new minorities in opposition to the majority population in a straightforward fashion. The performative effect of 'national modeling' in the US, Australia and Canada is necessarily more inclusive since newcomers are part of the national imagination in these countries. This is not to deny, of

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course, that discrimination of newcomers occurs or that among politicians racist and nativist arguments do play a role. But if newcomers do not fare well, natives of immigration countries will blame themselves at least as much as they will blame the newcomers. Moreover, the chance that integration problems will be framed in terms of a 'total failure'—as is the case in Europe today—is rather improbable in settlers countries that often have a more processual perspective on integration. While settler countries will be relatively optimistic about integration not yet fulfilled, many politicians in Britain, France and the Netherlands wonder whether integration is possible as such. Perhaps they have not given up totally—therefore they constantly re-invent and/or purify their national models—but they often take on that posture. Their impatience shows that these countries are still learning to be immigrant countries.

Three articles address the situation of settlers' societies. Nancy Foner's contribution complicates the picture of a multicultural or cultural pluralist 'model of integration' in the US. She emphasizes the need to take into account change over time as well as local-level variations—New York City is not Phoenix—in evaluating and understanding models of immigrant integration in the US. Foner shows the performative, sometime paradoxical effects of the US model, for example through romanticizing European immigrants of the past, who are held up as the ideal immigrants, in contrast to those arriving today. Beyond these, however, she points out that national models of integration cannot be dismissed simply as political rhetoric or justifications. They can also influence opportunities to gain political office, with the acceptance of ethnicity as a basis for political claims and campaigns, and the legitimacy of ethnic politics.

Robert van Krieken also highlights the changes over time in the definition of an Australian model of integration and presents a complex picture of a tolerant and diversity-friendly settler society. He shows that in the Australian setting, two distinct but interrelated narratives about social integration have had a complex carrier made up of the Aboriginal population and the question of their social and cultural integration into white Australian society, the successive waves of differing types of migrants to Australia and the tension between assimilation and multiculturalism. Van Krieken shows the extent to which conceptions of assimilation and social integration mobilized in each of these categories have influenced the form taken by the others.

Finally, in his article on the distinctiveness of the Canadian model, Jeffrey Reitz asks to what extent this model explains the relative successes of Canadian immigration experience. Reitz argues that different features explain these successes, namely skill-selective immigration policies, a version of multiculturalism for the integration of immigrants into mainstream society and the dominant public perception of immigrants as a positive economic benefit. Even if new challenges have emerged in recent years, all

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Canadian political parties espouse pro-immigration policies and are rarely asked by the public to defend them.

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