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Between Perceptivity and Selective Blindness

Interpretations of Integration in Dutch Humorous Television Programmes, 1975-2010

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Cover image; Bazen, Roel. *Ons Kent Ons; De Types van van Kooten en de Bie: De Foto's van Roel Bazen*. Amsterdam; De Harmonie, 1993.

PREFACE

This master thesis is the culmination of my studies at Leiden University. As a Belgian student in the Netherlands, it has been a great pleasure to delve into Dutch humorous television programmes. By doing so, I obviously got to laugh a lot, but most importantly, I discovered new things about the country that I have been living in for three years now.

I would like to thank my supervisor, dr. Adriaan van Veldhuizen, for sharing my enthusiasm about this research project and providing me with insightful and inspiring comments through each stage of the process. Furthermore, I owe many thanks to my parents for giving me the opportunity to study in Leiden. Their engagement and interest in my studies mean a lot to me.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, I love Holland. Don't you feel the same? Holland is really cool. Currently, in Holland you can be whoever you want to be, you know. Take the extreme right. It's arising. All those youngsters, skinheads, you know. Those men carry the flag of Holland. Hardcore Dutch, you know. Those men are proud of the Netherlands and I think that's beautiful. (...) The country in which the best football player is Clarence Seedorf. The best basketball player, you know, is ... (...) Francisco Elson. (...) And the best lawyer is Gerard Spong. The best rapper is Ali B. The best comedian is Rachid Larouz. (...) Let's be honest, you've got to looooooove Holland! [Raymann throws both of his arms up in the air.]¹

With the joke above, stand-up comedian Jörgen Raymann kicked off an episode of the stand-up comedy show *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007). Raymann's joke is just one example of the many humorous interpretations of integration that I came across during this research. By stating that he loved Holland, then referring to the extreme right, and finally listing various famous people of migrant background, Raymann gave an unexpected twist to the start of his joke. He surprised the audience by challenging the traditional view of the Netherlands. According to Raymann, cultural diversity had enriched the Dutch society and he suggested that it should be celebrated.

In this thesis, I examine the humorous interpretations of integration which figured in Dutch humorous television programmes between 1975 and 2010.² In my research, humour is not just another aspect to take into account. To the contrary, it is central to it. According to Dutch humour scholar Giseline Kuipers, humour opens up a 'discursive space within which it is possible to speak about matters that are otherwise naturalized, unquestioned or silenced'.³ Humorous television programmes are able to open up such a discursive space, because at the same time they provide a way out. 'Both the joker and the audience can ignore any potential serious import of the joke'.⁴ I am convinced that an analysis of what was said about

¹ Original quote: 'Ik hou van Holland de laatste tijd. Hebben jullie dat niet? Holland is echt cool. In Holland kan je echt zijn wie je wil tegenwoordig, weet je. Neem extreemrechts. Dat komt helemaal op. Al die jongeren, skinheads, weet je. Die mannen dragen de Hollandse vlag. Hardcore Dutch, weet je. Die mannen zijn trots op Nederland en dat vind ik mooi. (...) Het land waarin de beste voetballer Clarence Seedorf is. De beste basketballer, weet je, is ... (...) Francisco Elson. (...) En de beste advocaat is Gerard Spong. De beste rapper is Ali B. De beste comedian is Rachid Larouz. (...) Laten we eerlijk zijn. Je moet van Holland houdennnnn! [Raymann gooit beide armen in de lucht.]' Jörgen Raymann, 'Intro Raymann', *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 1 September 2007), Beeld en Geluid.

² I decided on this timeframe (1975-2010) based on the periodisation used in Leo and Jan Lucassen's *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*. Further on in this thesis, when giving a historical overview of the Dutch integration debate, I specify how the integration debate changed between 1975 and 2010. The choice to start the analysis in 1975 relates to important moments in the integration debate. Furthermore, from then on humorous television programmes became more and more common on Dutch television. The analysis goes until 2010, for I consider the period after 2010 too recent to study from a historical perspective. Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie: Een Verhaal van Winnaars en Verliezers* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas Contact, 2018); Bert Hogenkamp, Sonja de Leeuw, and Andreas Fickers, *Een Eeuw van Beeld en Geluid: Cultuurgeschiedenis van Radio en Televisie in Nederland* (Hilversum: Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, 2012).

³ Donna Goldstein quoted in: Giseline Kuipers, 'The Sociology of Humor', in *The Primer of Humor Research*, ed. Victor Raskin, vol. 8 (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 370.

⁴ Kuipers, 374.

integration in this discursive space opened up by humorous television programmes, will result in a deeper understanding of the importance and meanings ascribed to integration in Dutch society at large, not just in politics. In sum, with this research, I set out to open up fresh territory and study the highly politicised topic of integration in a context which is often unrightfully dismissed for being ‘not serious’. By doing so, I seek to present a new and original perspective on this extensively studied political and societal debate.⁵

The research question can be rephrased as follows: What humorous interpretations of integration existed in the discursive space opened up by Dutch humorous television programmes between 1975 and 2010? In consideration of answering this question, I started by asking the following sub-questions: What groups of immigrants appeared in these humorous television programmes and what groups did not? How were the non-native Dutch and the native Dutch represented? What opinions on what it means to be integrated were voiced in these television programmes and which ones were absent? How did humour work in relation to the topic of integration? What aspects of integration were highlighted through humour and which ones were not?



This thesis contributes to three fields of academic research. As a historical study of Dutch television programmes, it fits both into the field of (Dutch) migration history⁶ and into that of (Dutch) media history.⁷ Combining these two fields is fruitful, because it allows me to reflect on issues such as the representation of immigrants in the media⁸ and the working of the phenomenon of othering through the media.⁹ Most importantly, by specifically focussing on humorous television programmes, I engage with theoretical debates within the interdisciplinary field of humour studies. For example, by providing concrete

⁵ Throughout this thesis, particularly in the historical overview of the Dutch integration debate, I regularly refer to this secondary literature. It can be considered as a limited literature overview.

⁶ Literature on the Dutch integration debate in particular is mentioned in the following historical overview of the Dutch integration debate. General reference works on Dutch migration history are: Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*; H. L. M. Obdeijn and Marlou Schrover, *Komen en Gaan. Immigratie en Emigratie in Nederland vanaf 1550* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008).

⁷ As a starting point for the study of Dutch media history, I take the following reference works: Hogenkamp, Leeuw, and Fickers, *Een Eeuw van Beeld en Geluid*; Huub Wijfjes, *Hallo Hier Hilversum: Driekwart Eeuw Radio en Televisie* (Weesp: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1985). For an overview of the literature on Dutch media history, see: Frank van Vree, ‘Media History in the Netherlands (1993)’, *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 17, no. 1 (17 September 2014): 55–59.

⁸ For a general discussion, see: Chris Haynes, *Framing Immigrants: News Coverage, Public Opinion, and Policy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2016). Regarding media discourse and the representation of Muslims in the Netherlands, see the following PhD dissertation: Andrea Meuzelaar, ‘Seeing Through the Archival Prism: A History of the Representation of Muslims on Dutch Television’ (University of Amsterdam, 2014).

⁹ For a discussion of the phenomenon of othering, see Chapter 11, titled ‘Us Versus Them’ in: Robert M. Sapolsky, *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017).

illustrations, I contribute to the literature on specific types of humour such as political¹⁰ and ethnic humour¹¹, on the one hand, and particular styles of humour, such as satire and irony¹², on the other hand.

Occasionally, I indirectly refer to general theories of humour, such as the superiority theory.¹³ From the ancient Greek philosophers until today, scholars have puzzled their heads over the intriguing and ubiquitous phenomenon called humour.¹⁴ They reflected and still reflect on a variety of questions like the following: What is humour? Why do people laugh? What causes people to laugh? Can humour convey a serious message?¹⁵ Although these questions certainly play a role in my thesis, it is not my objective to address them directly. Rather, by studying the working of humour in a specific context bound by time, medium and topic, I aim to gain a better understanding of how humour *works*, instead of defining what humour *is*.¹⁶

STUDYING HUMOUR: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paragraph, I set out the theoretical framework of this thesis. I start from and build upon the work of the aforementioned Dutch sociologist Giseline Kuipers, a prominent scholar within the field of humour studies. Besides contributing theoretically to this interdisciplinary discipline, Kuipers has studied the Dutch humorous culture in great depth. Especially her insights into the workings and reception of (ethnic) humour

¹⁰ A great introduction into political humour is: Diana Elena Popa and Villy Tsakona, *Studies in Political Humour: In Between Political Critique and Public Entertainment*, Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011).

¹¹ For literature on ethnic humor, see: John Lowe, 'Theories of Ethnic Humor: How to Enter, Laughing', *American Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1986): 439–60; Christie Davies, 'Ethnic Jokes, Moral Values and Social Boundaries', *The British Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 3 (1982): 383–403; Christie Davies, *Ethnic Humor Around the World: A Comparative Analysis* (Bloomington, In. [etc.]: Indiana University Press, 1990); Leon Rappoport, *Punchlines: The Case for Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Humor* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005).

¹² Lastly, for literature on satire and irony, see: M. Meijer Drees and I. Nieuwenhuis, 'De Macht van Satire: Grenzen Testen, Grenzen Stellen', *Nederlandse Letterkunde* 15, no. 3 (2010): 193–220; Marijke Meijer Drees and Sonja de Leeuw, *The Power of Satire* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015); Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humor* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003); Ted Gornelous and Viveca S. Greene, eds., *A Decade of Dark Humor: How Comedy, Irony, and Satire Shaped Post-9 11 America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011).

¹³ These theories are discussed in nearly all works on humour. For the most in-depth discussions, see: Michael Billig, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour*, Theory, Culture & Society (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2005); Ted Cohen, *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Paul McDonald, *The Philosophy of Humour*, Philosophy Insights (Penrith, CA: Humanities-Ebooks, 2012); Victor Raskin, *The Primer of Humor Research*, vol. 8, Humor Research (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2008).

¹⁴ Within the field of humour studies, the term *humour* is accepted as an umbrella term, which covers all synonymous or related terms, such as *laughter*, *wit*, *comedy*, *banter* and so on. For more information on the use of humour as an umbrella term, see: Salvatore Attardo and Sage Publications, *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2014), 41, 350–51.

¹⁵ For an overview of how different disciplines within the interdisciplinary field of humour studies deal with these questions, see the different chapters in: Raskin, *The Primer of Humor Research*.

¹⁶ In their edited volume on satire, Marijke Meijer Drees and Sonja de Leeuw use a similar approach. Drees and de Leeuw, *The Power of Satire*.

in the Netherlands are of great value to my research, for they served as touchstones for my findings.¹⁷ Nevertheless, in the end, my analytical perspective is historical rather than sociological. As I am primarily interested in the meanings that were ascribed to the topic of integration and how these related to the general debate on integration, I used qualitative and interpretative research methods and approached the humorous television programmes as products of their time.

In view of studying the role integration played in Dutch society at large between 1975 and 2010, humorous television programmes are an extremely rich type of sources. According to Kuipers, humour is always to be understood in relation to the 'sensibilities and preoccupations' of a specific society at a specific time.¹⁸ More precisely, humour centres around crossing boundaries, and presupposes that the joke – implicitly or explicitly – deals with taboos or sensitive topics. 'To make a topic fit for joking, it must have a strong cultural and social meaning. A hearer must be susceptible to what is being said to experience it as funny; the text has to closely approach a social or cultural boundary and then give it a little push'.¹⁹ Michael Pickering and Sharon Lockyer, amongst others, share this view: 'humour is only possible because certain boundaries, rules and taboos exist in the first place. Their existence, along with the satisfaction and sense of agency in overcoming them, are equally vital to why we laugh'.²⁰ Assuming that we only laugh about topics that are defined by social and cultural boundaries and therefore have the capacity to make the audience tense, it follows that humorous television programmes – and more precisely the 'discursive space' they open up – are a good indicator of what is of importance in a society.²¹ This view of humour, which is sometimes referred to as the 'barometer thesis', is widely accepted within the field of humour studies.²²

In her chapter on Dutch joke culture, Kuipers identifies seven boundaries that are often crossed: (1) *sexuality and gender*, (2) *shortcomings and social deviance*, (3) *sickness, suffering and death*, (4) *religion*, (5) *money and wealth*, (6) *power and authority*, and (7) *stereotypes and relations with Others*.²³ Humour dealing with the topic of integration generally falls under the last category. Yet, Kuipers rightly notes that this last category is usually combined with another one, for example (4) *religion*.²⁴ With regard to these boundaries,

¹⁷ Giseline Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste: A Sociology of the Joke*, Humor Research 7 (Berlin ; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006); Giseline Kuipers, 'De Strengere Regels van de Etnische Grap: Over de Gevaren en de Noodzaak van Humor in Een Multiculturele Samenleving', *Migrantenstudies* 21, no. 4 (2005): 194–204; Giseline Kuipers, 'The Difference Between a Surinamese and a Turk: Ethnic Jokes and the Position of Ethnic Minorities in the Netherlands', *Humor - International Journal of Humor Research* 13, no. 2 (2000): 141–176; Giseline Kuipers, 'Television and Taste Hierarchy: The Case of Dutch Television Comedy', *Media, Culture & Society* 28, no. 3 (2006): 359–378.

¹⁸ Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 120.

¹⁹ Kuipers, 120.

²⁰ Michael Pickering and Sharon Lockyer, 'Introduction: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humour and Comedy', in *Beyond a Joke: The Limits of Humour*, ed. Michael Pickering and Sharon Lockyer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14–15.

²¹ Donna Goldstein quoted in: Kuipers, 'The Sociology of Humor', 370.

²² Theo Meder and Eric Venbrux, 'Vertelcultuur', in *Volkscultuur. Een Inleiding in de Nederlandse Etnologie*, ed. Ton Dekker, Herman Roodenburg, and Gerard Rooijakkers (Nijmegen: SUN, 2000), 282–336. Without terming it as such, this thesis is also discussed by many of the contributors to: Attardo and Sage Publications, *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies*; Raskin, *The Primer of Humor Research*.

²³ Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 122.

²⁴ Kuipers, 121–22.

Kuipers makes an interesting distinction between ‘jokes *in which* a boundary is transgressed and jokes that *themselves* transgress a social boundary’.²⁵ Every social boundary allows for this variation in boundary transgression. The difference lies in the definition of a taboo. Kuipers defines a taboo as ‘that which cannot be discussed but also that which must be approached solely with appropriate seriousness’.²⁶ Whereas the first part of this twofold definition refers to the meaning of the word *taboo* in a narrow sense, the second part suggests a broader interpretation. Jokes about integration are mostly jokes *in which* a social boundary is transgressed. Integration is an ideal example of a topic that can be discussed, but for which seriousness is indeed a prerequisite.²⁷ It is my hypothesis that this is the type of jokes that was made in most humorous television programmes.

Nevertheless, there are jokes about integration that *themselves* transgress a social boundary.²⁸ ‘Attitude jokes’, for example, belong to this category, because they incite people ‘to murder or maltreat a certain group’.²⁹ Jokes that *themselves* transgress a social boundary can be recognized by the ‘ooh laugh’ that follows the joke, a ‘laugh containing shock and indignation’.³⁰ In these instances, an ethical boundary is crossed as well. To quote Pickering and Lockyer: ‘It remains the case that while many people expect comedians to push at the accepted boundaries, take risks, attempt to shock us and shatter our illusions, they do not concede that this means comedians can do or say whatever they like, or that certain ethical lines should never be drawn’.³¹ These jokes are ‘so far beyond a joke that they are deadly serious’.³² It is very unlikely to encounter this type of jokes in humorous television programmes broadcasted by public broadcasting stations. Rather, they are told in person or posted on the internet.³³

The importance and sensitivity of each boundary is not set. Depending on societal changes, a boundary can gain or lose significance.³⁴ Furthermore, each person is different. One person might laugh at a joke and someone else might not.³⁵ While the topic of integration itself is not taboo in the strict sense of the word, there are other taboos which comedians need to respect.³⁶ First, starting from the 1960s, most Dutch people were extremely sensitive to ‘any reference to racial or ethnic difference’.³⁷ Even though

²⁵ Kuipers, 123.

²⁶ Kuipers, 134.

²⁷ Kuipers, 123.

²⁸ Kuipers, 123.

²⁹ Kuipers, 27, 141.

³⁰ Kuipers, 127–28.

³¹ Pickering and Lockyer, ‘Introduction: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humour and Comedy’, 14.

³² Pickering and Lockyer, 16.

³³ For a case study of racist jokes on the internet, see: Simon Weaver, ‘Jokes, Rhetoric and Embodied Racism: A Rhetorical Discourse Analysis of the Logics of Racist Jokes on the Internet’, *Ethnicities* 11, no. 4 (2011): 413–435.

³⁴ Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 145–47.

³⁵ This was one of the things that came up repeatedly during the interview I had with the curators of the exhibition on satire in the museum of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*: Edurne De Wilde, Interview with Karen Drost and Bart van der Linden - Beeld en Geluid, 7 May 2019.

³⁶ For a discussion of the rules that restrict comedians in joking about integration, see: Kuipers, ‘De Strengere Regels van de Etnische Grap: Over de Gevaren en de Noodzaak van Humor in Een Multiculturele Samenleving’.

³⁷ Kuipers, ‘The Difference Between a Surinamese and a Turk’, 145.

integration could be debated, the sensibility of explicit references to racial or ethnic differences inhibited this debate. This is what Herman Vuijsje terms the 'ethnic taboo'.³⁸ Second, jokes about certain groups of immigrants carried an extra political and social layer of meaning, as their presence in the Netherlands was perceived as problematic and they generally had a lower social status than the average native Dutch citizen.³⁹ Thirdly, comedians could never be certain that their joke would not be interpreted as a serious expression of a racist or discriminatory message.⁴⁰

The third and last point signals what is probably the most discussed matter when it comes to humour, namely its ambiguous nature. The central question here is whether or not humorous statements can be interpreted as conveying a serious message. Although scholars disagree on how to interpret this message, most scholars think of jokes as vehicles used to bring across a serious message. It follows that humour can be studied as a means of expressing social criticism or as an act of activism.⁴¹ Less optimistically, this view also confirms the concern people have that jokes can be meant to offend people, incite violence or stir up hatred.⁴² Scholars who do not accept the aforementioned premise that humour can effectively convey a serious message, stress that humour always provides a way out. They argue that the potential serious import of the joke does not matter, for it can be ignored.⁴³

In this debate, I concur with the first point of view. In order to uncover what meanings were ascribed to the topic of integration, I could not but accept this premise. When analysing the humorous television programmes, I continuously asked what point the comedians might have tried to get across. The interpretations of jokes presented in the analytical chapters to come are thus undeniably subjective. By no means, do I claim that there are no alternative interpretations possible besides mine. However, as I went through all the source material, I familiarised myself with the various humorous genres and comedians and was able to get a sense of the bigger picture. What I intended to do in the analytical chapters is not to discuss jokes by themselves, but to contextualise them and relate them to other jokes. While I might have overlooked specific interpretations of jokes, I strongly believe that my analysis as a whole and the argument I put forward are convincing.

³⁸ Herman Vuijsje, *Correct. Weldenkend Nederland Sinds de Jaren Zestig*, 3rd ed. (Olympus, 2008), 24–37.

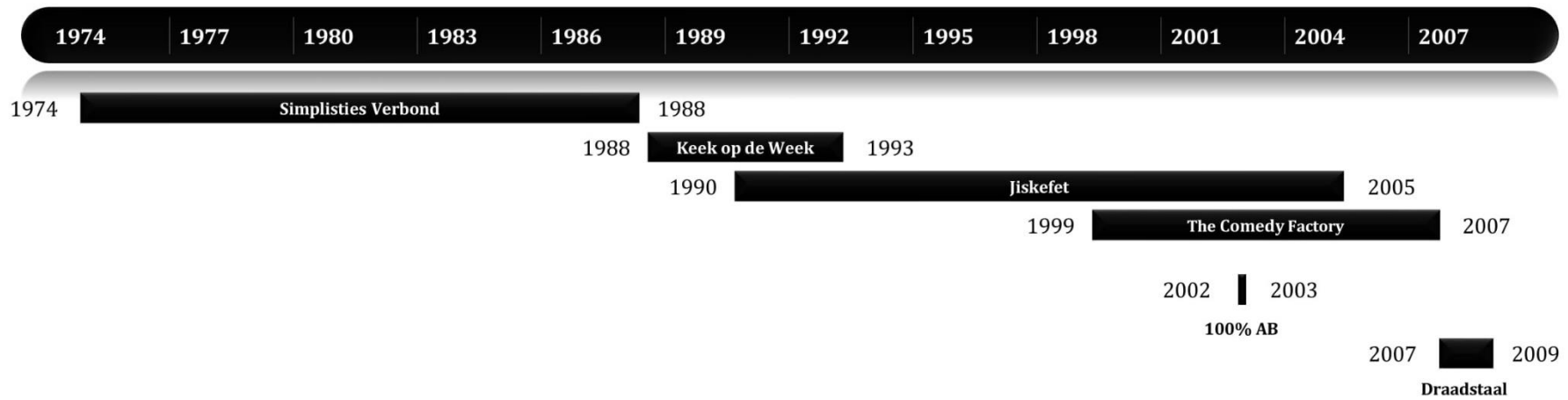
³⁹ Kuipers, 'The Difference Between a Surinamese and a Turk', 141; Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 144.

⁴⁰ Kuipers, 'De Strengere Regels van de Etnische Grap,' 194.

⁴¹ For example, see: Popa and Tsakona, *Studies in Political Humour*; Rappoport, *Punchlines*; Rebecca Krefting, 'Making Connections: Building Cultural Citizenship through Charged Humor', in *All Joking Aside: American Humor and Its Discontents* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014).

⁴² This is often referred to as the 'dark side of humour', see: Kuipers, 'The Sociology of Humor', 382–85; Billig, *Laughter and Ridicule*; Sharon Lockyer and Michael Pickering, eds., *Beyond a Joke: The Limits of Humour* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005); Gournelos and Greene, *A Decade of Dark Humor*.

⁴³ Kuipers, 'The Sociology of Humor', 374.



Timeline 1. Timeline of the six humorous television programmes analysed in this research.

SOURCES: A VARIOUS SELECTION OF HUMOROUS TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

In total, I analysed six humorous television programmes broadcasted by Dutch public broadcasting stations [Timeline 1]: *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988), *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993), *Jiskefet* (1990-2005), *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2006), *100% AB* (2002-2003) and *Draadstaal* (2007-2009).⁴⁴ The television programmes were selected in consideration of a number of criteria.

First and most importantly, I selected the programmes based on whether or not they (regularly) referred to the topic of integration. In my preliminary research, I tried to identify programmes which dealt with this topic, or had a recurring non-native Dutch character or host. My thesis supervisor, dr. Adriaan van Veldhuizen, and Bas Agterberg, who works at *the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* and is involved in (historical) research into the collection, helped me a lot in this process.⁴⁵ Furthermore, they gave me an idea of how well-known these programmes were, or at least are now. Due to the limited scope of this master thesis, I preferred to study a small number of popular television programmes in depth, rather than a selection of more, but possibly lesser known, television programmes. Secondly, with the selection of programmes I aimed to cover the period under research, namely 1975-2010.⁴⁶ I made sure to have some overlap in order to be able to compare between programmes. Lastly, I considered the specific genres of the television programmes. Instead of only choosing humorous television programmes with a similar approach, I intentionally opted for a selection of diverse television programmes. By doing so, I wished to compensate for the aforementioned choices, notably the practical decision not to include humorous television programmes broadcasted by commercial broadcasting stations, which possibly restricted the variety of the humorous television programmes. In the first chapter, I briefly typify the television programmes and highlight how they are different from each other. Throughout the rest of the thesis, I continue to pay attention to the particularities of each television programme. In sum, it is not my aim to be able to confidently make general or quantitative claims about the humorous television programmes and the way they dealt with the topic of integration, but to gain more insight into humorous interpretations of integration as a phenomenon.

Having selected these six television programmes, the next step was to work out a method of selecting relevant episodes or fragments. Although the extensive database of *the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* allows to be searched by making use of search terms, this approach turned out to leave too much to chance. For instance, looking for episodes of *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988) and *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993) with the character of Mehmet Pamuk, a Turkish guest worker, I realised that using the search term

⁴⁴ My decision to study television programmes broadcasted by public broadcasting stations was largely practical, for the archive collection of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* in Hilversum almost exclusively consists of television programmes broadcasted by public broadcasting stations. Commercial broadcasting stations keep their own archives. Hogenkamp, Leeuw, and Fickers, *Een Eeuw van Beeld en Geluid*.

⁴⁵ Interview with Bas Agterberg - Beeld en Geluid, interview by Edurne De Wilde, 23 October 2018; 'Bas Agterberg', Beeld en Geluid, accessed 11 October 2018, <https://www.beeldengeluid.nl/kennis/experts/bas-agterberg>.

⁴⁶ Further on in this thesis, when giving a historical overview of the Dutch integration debate, I specify how the integration debate changed between 1975 and 2010. The choice to start the analysis in 1975 relates to important moments in the integration debate. The analysis goes until 2010, for I consider the period after 2010 too recent to study from a historical perspective.

'Mehmet Pamuk' only resulted in a list of episodes in which this search term was mentioned in the description (under the tab *metadata*). If the episode did not have a description, or if Mehmet Pamuk was mentioned in the description in a different way – for example, as 'de Turkse gastarbeider' ('the Turkish guest worker') – the database would not show this episode as a result. This problem of synonyms also held for other search terms such as 'immigrant' and 'integratie' ('integration').⁴⁷ Therefore, I decided on a different approach. Since I already selected the television programmes, I searched on the programme title and closely scanned through the database's descriptions of all episodes looking for indications of the topic of integration.⁴⁸ This method effectively tackled the problem of the synonyms for the search terms and made the results less arbitrary. Yet, the problem of episodes without a description remained. These episodes I did, therefore, not include.

Before going into the methodology, it is necessary to make two remarks which concern the representation of the non-native Dutch in the humorous television programmes. First, I deliberately use the term non-native Dutch, because this umbrella term encompasses the various groups in the Netherlands that comedians referred to in relation to the topic of integration. In this thesis, I tried to reflect this variation, by including jokes regarding different groups, from Turkish and Moroccan guest workers to refugees and people from the former colonies.⁴⁹ Second, it is opportune to make a remark about the terminology used by the comedians. With the exception of one term, I consistently used the English translation of the Dutch words. 'Buitenlander', for instance, I translated as 'foreigner', and 'gastarbeider' as 'guest worker'. As the Dutch term 'allochtoon' does not have an English translation, I decided not to translate it. This particular term points to another consideration I had to make, that is whether or not I would use contested terms, such as the oppositional pair 'autochtoon' and 'allochtoon'.⁵⁰ I decided not to use alternatives, precisely because these terms carried a lot of meaning. The fact that the terms used to refer to immigrants were and still are contested, is an indication of the sensitivity of the seventh social boundary identified by Kuipers, namely *stereotypes and relations with Others*.⁵¹

⁴⁷ It was impossible to identify all the possible synonyms used.

⁴⁸ For *Draadstaal* only the most recent seasons are included in the database of *the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*. Luckily, most of the episodes of the seasons from 2007-2009 are available through the website of npo3. As they did not always have a description, I watched all 24 episodes. 'Draadstaal', npo3.nl, accessed 24 January 2019, https://www.npo3.nl/draadstaal/AT_2033696.

⁴⁹ I deal with the character of Oboema Sestetokoe from *Jiskefet* (1990-2005) separately, for he can be said to be non-native Dutch as well as native Dutch. 'Jiskefet', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 14 January 2019, <https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Jiskefet>.

⁵⁰ The term 'allochtoon' was coined in 1971 in a report by sociologist Hilda Verwey-Jonker. It was used to refer to a resident of the Netherlands with at least one parent who was born abroad. Conversely, any resident of the Netherlands of whom both parents were born in the Netherlands fell under the category of 'autochtoon'. Over time, the terms became emotionally charged. They fell into disgrace mainly because they emphasised the permanent nature of foreignness and did not take into account the citizenship of individuals. One could, for example, simultaneously be a Dutch citizen and an 'allochtoon'. Even if one technically was not an 'allochtoon', the word would still be used, for it became to be synonymous with the term 'foreigner'. Marlou Schrover, 'Inleiding - Voorbij de Dreiging' (PPT presentation, February 2017); Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 16–18.

⁵¹ Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 122, 140–45.

METHODOLOGY

Having positioned my research within the aforementioned relevant academic debates, I now move to the guiding questions for the analysis of the six selected Dutch humorous television programmes. I drew up a standard analysis form consisting of two parts. The objective of this form was to facilitate a structured and consistent analysis, not to restrict the analysis. I made sure to leave open the possibility to add extra thoughts and observations.

I filled in the first section of the form for all the episodes and fragments selected during the preliminary study [cf. Appendix 1].⁵² In order to experience the material as the viewers normally would, I did not pause the video, nor did I take notes in between.⁵³ Whereas my initial lack of familiarity with Dutch humorous television programmes made me dependent on others in the selection of the television programmes to analyse, I am certain that my fresh perspective as a Belgian, but Dutch speaking historian, was an advantage during the first viewing(s) of the source material. In hindsight, I can confidently state that the disadvantages – for example, that I sometimes did not pick up on certain cultural references or had trouble understanding what was said because characters had strong regional accents – did not cancel out the one big advantage I had, namely that I approached the programmes with an open mind. On the one hand, my detachment and initial unfamiliarity motivated me to be as attentive as possible, on the other hand, at a later stage, it facilitated me to approach the jokes about integration on a more abstract level.

Only after the first viewing, I completed the first section as a way to capture my first impressions and write down what was striking. The guiding questions were: What was it about? What was striking? Are there scenes that I particularly recall? If so, which ones? Did the style or story generate specific associations? What genre does the programme belong to? What did I notice in terms of humour? Lastly, a couple of yes-no questions conclude the first section: Was there a (recurring) non-native Dutch character or host? How was he/she presented? Is the fragment part of a recurring feature of the television programme? If so, which one?

In his book *Bewegend Verleden: Inleiding in de analyse van films en televisieprogramma's*, Chris Vos argues that a thorough analysis of television programmes is very time consuming. He recommends the researcher to make a conscious selection of material in consideration of the research question(s).⁵⁴ Therefore, after watching all the material for the first time, I went through my notes looking for similarities/differences and continuities/discontinuities. I characterised the fragments by assigning labels to them. Labels I used were, for example, 'refugee', 'racism' and 'religion'. Based on this overview, which signalled important themes and humorous techniques, I was able to make a provisional selection of fragments to study in more detail.⁵⁵ For this smaller selection, I also completed the second section of the form. In this section, I more explicitly studied the media discourse – visual and textual – of the humorous

⁵² Taken together the selected fragments and episodes amounted to 19 hours and 21 minutes.

⁵³ Chris Vos highly recommends this approach: Chris Vos, *Bewegend Verleden: Inleiding in de Analyse van Films en Televisieprogramma's* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004).

⁵⁴ Vos, 18–19.

⁵⁵ All the sketches and comedy routines which figure in this thesis as examples were analysed in detail. Some were already included in the provisional selection. Others were added during the writing process.

fragments.⁵⁶ This method of (media) discourse analysis allowed me to distinguish between different layers of meaning and gain a clear insight into the working of humour.⁵⁷

Regarding the layers of meaning, I focussed on the third layer of meaning identified by Vos: (1) the 'cinematic' layer, (2) the 'narrative' layer and (3) the 'symbolical or ideological' layer.⁵⁸ On this level of meaning, a television programme is interpreted as a source of information about the society in which it was created and broadcasted. It is considered to send out a message. Yet, Vos and others rightly problematise the possibility of a definite reading of this message. They argue that the medium of television is not a 'mirror of reality'.⁵⁹ According to Vos, it is important to ask how this reflection came about and what exactly it reflects. He, for instance, suggests that television can also be a way of visualising a reality that does not exist.⁶⁰ This reality may be preferred over the actual reality, or might – as is often the case in the genre of science fiction – bring into life a reality in which negatively perceived current trends have attained their full development. This view of television as a constructed reality is arguably the most adequate one. Yet, deriving meaning from this constructed reality remains complex. Vos rightly problematises the idea that television programmes carry a straightforward meaning. Stating that 'no film has a meaning of itself', he makes an interesting distinction between three types of meaning. There is the 'intentional meaning', (the meaning the makers had in mind), the 'inherent meaning', (the sum of all possible meanings), and the 'perceived meaning' (the meaning the viewers ascribe to it).⁶¹

In this thesis, I apply this trichotomy of types of meaning to the jokes made in the humorous television programmes. Instead of trying to pin down the one and only hidden meaning of a joke, I present what in my view is the most convincing interpretation. This interpretation brings together all three layers of meaning and is supported by arguments that refer to the working of humour. Specifically, I asked the following questions: Who is the persona of the joker and who/what is the butt of the joke? What social boundaries are at stake and what sort of transgression occurs?⁶² How is incongruity created?⁶³ Is there reference to taboos, such as racial or ethnic difference?

⁵⁶ By 'textual' I mean that the sketches and comedy routines can be considered as performances of written scripts/texts. Therefore, many times I made transcriptions and analysed these in combination with the visual performance.

⁵⁷ I primarily used Fairclough's work on media discourse, in which he applies the method of critical discourse analysis to media language: Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (Arnold, 1995). For discourse analysis in general, I mostly referred to Mills' work: Sara Mills, *Discourse, The New Critical Idiom* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Sara Mills, 'Discourse', in *Michel Foucault* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁵⁸ I analysed the first and second layer in consideration of the third layer. Vos, *Bewegend Verleden: Inleiding in de Analyse van Films en Televisieprogramma's*, 15.

⁵⁹ Vos, 115–28.

⁶⁰ Vos, 121.

⁶¹ Vos, 16–17.

⁶² Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 122–23.

⁶³ For elaborate and insightful accounts of the essential role of incongruity in the working of humour, see: Raskin, *The Primer of Humor Research*; Willibald Ruch, 'Psychology of Humor', in *The Primer of Humor Research*, ed. Victor Raskin, vol. 8 (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 17–100; Kuipers, 'The Sociology of Humor'; Amy Carrell, 'Historical Views of Humor', in *The Primer of Humor Research*, ed. Victor Raskin, vol. 8 (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 303–32.

OUTLINE

This thesis consists of two main chapters and is structured as follows. The first chapter serves as the frame of reference. I start by giving an overview of the Dutch integration debate from the late 1960s until the present day. Next, I introduce the six humorous television programmes and analyse how the topic of integration figured in these programmes over time and how the comedians' humorous interpretations of integration corresponded to the understanding of integration at the time. The second chapter builds upon this framework. It centres around four interconnected questions: (1) How was integration understood as an ideal in the humorous television programmes? (2) How did comedians present the reality of integration? (3) Looking towards the future, what/who were the obstacles to integration? and (4) What aspects of integration were problematised by the comedians?

CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE SCENE

In order to understand why the topic of integration figured in the selected humorous television programmes the way it did, it is crucial to get a sense of the television programmes themselves and to recognize them as products of their time. In this chapter, I do both.

First, I present the history of the Dutch integration debate starting from the 1960s. What was understood under the term integration? Which groups of immigrants were at the centre of the debate? What aspects of their integration were prioritised? What policies for integration were proposed?⁶⁴ Besides addressing these questions which specifically relate to the Dutch integration debate, I also have an eye for the larger picture. Just like all societal debates, the Dutch integration debate was – and still is – shaped by the societal, economic and political events and developments of the time, both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, the impact of individual politicians and opinion makers is not to be underestimated.⁶⁵

It is important to note that the debate about integration is conducted in various places and in different ways. However, the question of integration is most commonly studied from a political perspective.⁶⁶ In addition to that, scholars have studied how the question of integration is framed in the media.⁶⁷ This focus is apparent in the following historical overview, which describes the context within

⁶⁴ I largely draw from the reference works on Dutch migration history by Leo and Jan Lucassen, and Marlou Schrover and Herman Obdeijn. These studies, which bring together the research of many historians and other academics, offer a long *durée* overview of the groups of people who immigrated to and emigrated from the Netherlands from the 16th century onwards. Furthermore, in view of the objective of this thesis, these works are of great value for they not only give factual information, but reflect on the changing interpretations and policies of integration. Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*.

⁶⁵ I consulted, amongst others, the following (political) histories of the Netherlands: Remieg Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren: Een Politieke Geschiedenis van Nederland 1780-2012*, 9th ed. (Amsterdam: Boom, 2016); J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts, eds., *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2014); Frits van Oostrom, *The Netherlands in a Nutshell: Highlights from Dutch History and Culture* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008).

⁶⁶ The work of Peter Scholten, who is specialised in governance of migration and migration-related diversity, is exemplary of this type of research. My description of the changing dominant policy frames in relation to integration is based on his studies of integration policy in the Netherlands. Peter Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration: Dutch Research-Policy Dialogues in Comparative Perspective* (Amsterdam University Press, 2011); Peter Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', in *Challenging Multiculturalism: European Models of Diversity*, ed. Raymond Taras (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 97–119; Peter Scholten and Erik Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama: Integratie Als Hardnekkig Beleidsprobleem', in *Moderniteit en Overheidsbeleid: Hardnekkige Beleidsproblemen en hun Oorzaken*, ed. M.J. Arentsen and W.A. Trommel (Bussum: Coutinho, 2005).

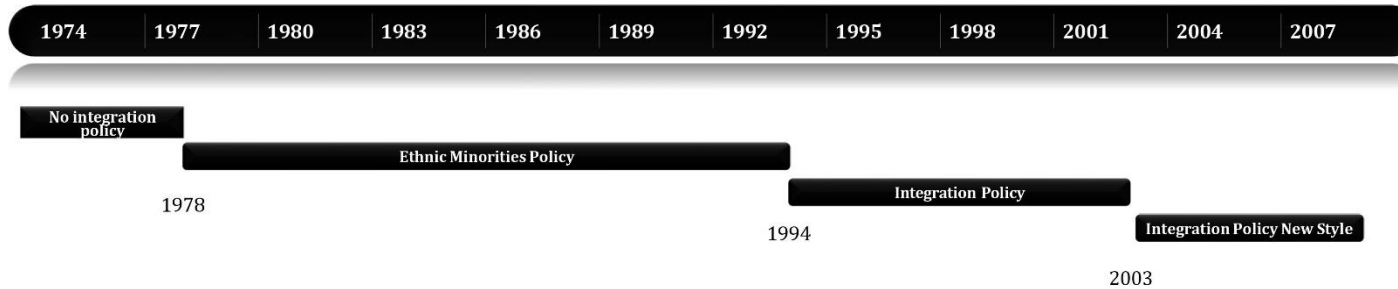
⁶⁷ For example, see: Haynes, *Framing Immigrants*; Sophie Lecheler, Linda Bos, and Rens Vliegthart, 'The Mediating Role of Emotions: News Framing Effects on Opinions About Immigration', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 92, no. 4 (2015): 812–38; Rens Vliegthart and Conny Roggeband, 'Framing Immigration and Integration: Relationships between Press and Parliament in The Netherlands', *International Communication Gazette* 69, no. 3 (2007):

which the humorous television programmes themselves and the comedians' humorous interpretations of integration are to be seen.

Afterwards, in the second and third section of this chapter, the focus shifts to the humorous television programmes. For each television programme, I clarify the format and the humorous genre of the television programme and provide background information about the makers. Next, I describe how the topic of integration figured in the television programmes and consider how the makers' humoristic interpretation of integration corresponded to the then perception of integration. In other words, it shows how the general – the existing ideas about integration – can be seen in the particular – the humorous television programmes. In sum, by looking at humorous television programmes, this thesis sheds light on one particular sub-debate within the sphere of the media, which has not yet been studied.

| | View on immigration | View on immigrants | Policy perspective |
|--|---|---|---|
| No integration policy (before 1978) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immigration is temporary. - The Netherlands is no immigration country. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temporary stay. - Immigrants will return. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No integration. - Preservation of own identity as condition for return. |
| Ethnic Minorities Policy (1978-1994) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immigration is temporary. - The arrival of minorities was a historically unique event. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Certain minorities (target groups) are permanently present. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Integration with retention of cultural identity" |
| Integration Policy (1994-2003) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immigration is permanent. - The Netherlands is an immigration country. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permanent presence of immigrants. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Good citizenship" - Socio-economic participation (living, knowing, working) |
| Integration Policy New Style (after 2003) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immigration should be curbed. - The Netherlands is not an immigration country. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permanent presence of immigrants of various origins. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Shared citizenship" - More emphasis on cultural adaptation (norms and values) |

Table 1. Reconstruction of the four dominant policy frames regarding integration in the Netherlands. (Based on: Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 12.)



Timeline 2. Timeline of the four dominant policy frames regarding integration in the Netherlands. (Based on: Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 12.)

1. THE DUTCH INTEGRATION DEBATE

Building on the work of Peter Scholten, the Dutch integration debate can be divided in four phases, which roughly coincided with the different decades (1960s and 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s). Each phase corresponds to a different policy frame through which the question of integration was approached.⁶⁸ A policy frame is the whole of a set of partly normative views which influence politicians' and policy makers' perception of a certain reality, in this case the integration of immigrants into Dutch society. It serves as the basis for the development and implementation of policy: it defines what the problem is, how it can be explained, and what can and should be done about it.⁶⁹

According to Scholten, the Dutch case is remarkable because the policy frames changed rapidly and profoundly. Looking back, politicians, policy makers and society at large did not only disagree about the possible answers to the question of integration. They held conflicting views on the nature of the problem as well.⁷⁰ I take these policy frames as the point of departure, not because they capture the entire public debate on integration, but because for each period they signal the core issues of the debate [Table 1⁷¹]. In the following paragraphs, I sketch the integration debate in each of the four phases. I pay specific attention to the reasons why time after time the question of integration was approached from a new perspective. In this regard, larger societal, economic and political developments are considered.

THE SETTLEMENT OF TURKISH AND MOROCCAN GUEST WORKERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Starting from the 1950s, the Netherlands relied on foreign workers to fill the acute shortage on the labour market, especially in the industrial sector (the metal industry, the food industry, the textile industry) and the mines. These so called guest workers mostly came from Spain, Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Morocco.⁷² While some were actively recruited by employers, others came to the Netherlands on their own initiative in the hope to find a job.⁷³ The migration of guest workers in the second half of the 20th century was not a typically Dutch phenomenon. Neighbouring countries, notably Belgium and Germany, also employed guest workers.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Scholten presents and elaborates on these four policy frames in the following books and articles: Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration*; Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth'; Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama'.

⁶⁹ Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 1.

⁷⁰ Scholten and Snel, 7, 9.

⁷¹ This is a translation of the original Dutch table included in: Scholten and Snel, 12.

⁷² Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 160; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 337; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 284.

⁷³ The Netherlands made official recruitment agreements with Spain (1961), Turkey (1964) and Morocco (1969). Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 131; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 285–86.

⁷⁴ For literature on guest workers in Belgium see: Jozefien De Bock, "'Alle Wegen Leiden Naar Gent': Trajecten van Mediterrane Migranten Naar de Arteveldestad, 1960-1980', *Brood & Rozen. Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis van Sociale Bewegingen* 3 (2012): 47–76; Mazyar Khoojinian, 'L'accueil et la Stabilisation des Travailleurs Immigrés Turcs en Belgique, 1963-1980.', *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis* 17 (2006): 73–116; Anne Frennet-De Keyser,

From the beginning, the presence of migrant workers was seen as a means to an end, as a temporary solution to a problem. The term *guest workers* illustrates this. The notion of temporality was not just promoted by the employers who actively recruited guest workers from abroad. The guest workers themselves as well saw their stay in the Netherlands as temporary. They would work in the Netherlands for a while, earn some money, and then return to their country of origin. Yet, contrary to all expectations it worked out differently.⁷⁵ Especially Turkish and Moroccan guest workers stayed in the Netherlands. According to Leo and Jan Lucassen, during the 1970s and 1980s hundred thousands of Turks and Moroccans permanently settled in the Netherlands with their families.⁷⁶

The permanent settlement of Turkish and Moroccan families had to do with a confluence of events in the early 1970s, which resulted in a restrictive immigration policy. As a result, those who were in the Netherlands already and had built up some social rights, were less inclined to leave, for they would not be able to come back to the Netherlands.⁷⁷ This is was not the case for Spanish and Italian guest workers, who were free to migrate since Italy and Spain were part of the European Community.⁷⁸

What caused the restrictive policy? It came about as the result of an international and a national development. The international oil crisis of 1973, which hit the industries in which the guest workers were employed, caused a recession that lasted until the 1980s and forced the government to make cutbacks. Therefore, the Netherlands decided to stop its active recruitment of guest workers. Nevertheless, migrants continued to come to the Netherlands. This group consisted of men, who were still looking to find a job, and women and children, who migrated to the Netherlands within the scope of family reunification.⁷⁹

As the numbers increased, the presence of Turkish and Moroccan families in the Netherlands became more visible.⁸⁰ Even though overall the period between 1960 and 1975 was characterised by optimism in regard to the immigration of guest workers, starting from the late 1960s some more pessimistic opinions were voiced, for instance by the in 1971 newly established extreme right political party 'Nederlandse Volksunie' ('Dutch Peoples-Union').⁸¹ What was a source of great concern to these pessimists, was the cultural difference between native Dutch and immigrant families, a difference which was perceived as

'L'immigration Marocaine en Belgique', in *Histoire des Étrangers et de l'Immigration en Belgique de la Préhistoire à nos Jours*, ed. Anne Morelli (Brussel, 2004), 329–54.

⁷⁵ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 129; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 287–89; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 337.

⁷⁶ For graphs with the precise figures see: Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 130–31, 164.

⁷⁷ After the Second World War the Netherlands organized itself as a welfare state. Most of its social laws were passed during the 1960s. These laws also applied to the non-native guest workers. Lucassen and Lucassen, 134–35; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 288; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 311; Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 437–38.

⁷⁸ While most of the Turkish and Moroccan guest workers who came to the Netherlands in the 1960s left again, those who came in the early 1970s mostly stayed. Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 165–67.

⁷⁹ Lucassen and Lucassen, 164–67; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 324, 328–29; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 288; Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 443–44.

⁸⁰ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 138–39; Meuzelaar, 'Seeing Through the Archival Prism', 29.

⁸¹ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 152–56.

unbridgeable.⁸² In The Hague and Rotterdam, these anti-immigrant feelings resulted in incidents of violence against Turkish and Moroccan guest workers.⁸³

Up and until the late 1970s there was a 'firm belief that the Netherlands was not and should not be a country of immigration'.⁸⁴ Therefore there was no specific immigrant integration policy. This is not to say that there was no policy. Instead of focussing on integration into Dutch society, the policy in place aimed to facilitate a smooth return to the country of origin. Therefore, the government emphasised the importance of the preservation of the guest workers' culture and identity.⁸⁵

THE INTEGRATION OF MINORITY GROUPS

In the early 1980s, the Netherlands renounced the notion that immigration was a temporary phenomenon.⁸⁶ Yet, there was still a strong sense that the Netherlands was not – and should not be – a country of immigration. Politicians and policy makers had accepted the new reality, but contended that future immigration should be restricted.⁸⁷ The new Ethnic Minorities Policy expressed this view, by focussing on the integration of seven specific minority groups whose presence in the Netherlands was evident – namely, as listed by Scholten: 'Moluccans, Surinamese, Antilleans, foreign workers, gypsies, caravan dwellers and refugees'.⁸⁸ What these groups had in common was that their presence was understood to be permanent. Note that the new terminology of *minorities* does not refer to a sense of temporality.

The Dutch government indicated that it felt a 'special and historic responsibility' for these groups of minorities.⁸⁹ The Moluccans, Surinamese and Antilleans, for instance, were former Dutch colonial subjects. The presence of immigrants from Surinam or the Antilles in the Netherlands was not a new phenomenon. However, starting from the 1970s the numbers increased. This rise was caused by the independence of Surinam in 1975 (ten percent of the population emigrated to the Netherlands) and the military coups in 1980. The emigration of Antilleans, on the other hand, was mostly connected to the unemployment rates at home. After 1972, more and more Antilleans came to the Netherlands in search for a job. Between 1973 and 1982 the net migratory balance was more than 15 000.⁹⁰

The objective of the Ethnic Minorities Policy was to achieve the 'socio-economic participation of individual members of these groups'.⁹¹ Politicians and policy makers trusted in the market's capacity to affect society and argued that something should be done about the disadvantaged position of minority

⁸² Lucassen and Lucassen, 139.

⁸³ Lucassen and Lucassen, 153–55.

⁸⁴ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 100.

⁸⁵ Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 9.

⁸⁶ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 183.

⁸⁷ Lucassen and Lucassen, 183.

⁸⁸ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 101.

⁸⁹ Scholten, 101; Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 8.

⁹⁰ Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 248–63; Van Oostrom, *The Netherlands in a Nutshell: Highlights from Dutch History and Culture*, 102–3.

⁹¹ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 101.

groups in Dutch society, which manifested itself in high unemployment rates, segregation in poor neighbourhoods and problems in the educational system.⁹² The suggested way to accomplish socio-economic participation was through social-cultural emancipation. The explicit attention for social-cultural emancipation is why, in retrospect, this policy was – and still is – mostly referred to as a multiculturalist policy.⁹³ However, as historians have shown, in practice the policy was multifaceted. Scholten, for instance, nuances the image of the Netherlands as a strong advocate for multiculturalist ideas in the 1970s and 1980s, by emphasizing that the ‘Ethnic Minorities Policy was a mixture of elements that match the multiculturalist ideal-type, together with elements from a more liberal-egalitarianist (or ‘universalist’) approach’.⁹⁴ This multiplicity of elements was and is regularly overlooked, because initiatives and measures that fit the first multiculturalist ideal-type, such as the promotion of mother-tongue learning, and the institutionalisation of Islam (and Hinduism) were more outstanding and therefore more memorable.⁹⁵ In line with Scholten, Leo and Jan Lucassen claim that the importance of the multiculturalist feature of the Ethnic Minorities Policy has been magnified: ‘Many a researcher and journalist has let himself be fooled by the packing of the message (‘integration with retention of identity’) and has not paid enough attention to what the policy actually amounted to’.⁹⁶ As such, the myth of Dutch multiculturalism assumed a life of its own.⁹⁷

THE NETHERLANDS AS A DE FACTO MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Willingly or not, in the 1990s most Dutch people realised that immigration was a permanent phenomenon and that the Dutch society was de facto multicultural.⁹⁸ Conflicts around the world created refugees, a number of whom sought asylum in the Netherlands. In the period between 1992 and 1998, the Netherlands received refugees from, amongst others, Sri Lanka (10.091), Yugoslavia (21.859), Afghanistan (22.351) and Iraq (31.607).⁹⁹ In order to govern this de facto multicultural society, politicians argued that the Netherlands needed an integration policy that was applicable to all present and future immigrants.¹⁰⁰ Instead of focussing on group emancipation, immigrants were ‘reframed as citizens’ with rights as well as

⁹² Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 183; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 357–58.

⁹³ Scholten, ‘The Dutch Multicultural Myth’.

⁹⁴ Scholten, 101.

⁹⁵ Scholten, 101–2; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 184–86; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 291; Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 436, 441.

⁹⁶ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 188.

⁹⁷ I adopt the term ‘myth’ from: Scholten, ‘The Dutch Multicultural Myth’.

⁹⁸ The Netherlands went from a population of 16 million in 2000 to a population of almost 17 million in the early 2010s. Of this population in the 2010s ten percent was of non-Western origin and another ten percent was of Western origin. Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 447–48; Scholten and Snel, ‘Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama’, 8.

⁹⁹ In total 240.096 refugees sought asylum in the Netherlands between 1992 and 1998. Obdeijn and Schrover provide the numbers of refugees from the following countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Congo (Zaire), Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iraq. Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 328.

¹⁰⁰ Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 447–48.

duties. One of these duties was to take part in settlement programmes for newcomers, which were designed to teach immigrants Dutch and familiarise them with the Dutch society.¹⁰¹

What is remarkable about this period in the Dutch integration debate is the establishment of a new ‘realist discourse’, which ‘sought to address immigrant integration problems ‘head on’, and called upon immigrants to live up to their civic responsibilities’.¹⁰² This discourse went right against the ‘ethical revolution’, which had strongly influenced all political and societal debates from the 1960s onwards.¹⁰³ Central to the ‘ethical revolution’ was the principle of non-discrimination. Distinguishing between people based on ethnicity was therefore frowned upon. As mentioned, this is what Herman Vuijsje termed the ‘ethnic taboo’.¹⁰⁴ The ‘ethical revolution’ was strongly connected to the self-image that the Netherlands propagated around that time, that is the image of the Netherlands as a model country, which embraced pacifism and universal values.¹⁰⁵ By the early 1990s, however, the influence of the ‘ethical revolution’ – and with it the ‘ethnic taboo’ – had diminished. As a result, opinions that were ignored before, for fear of otherwise facilitating the growth of racist parties, now attracted more attention. Politicians who mobilised anti-immigrant feelings, unlike their predecessors in the 1980s, now succeeded.¹⁰⁶

Frits Bolkestein (chairman of the VVD) and Pim Fortuyn (columnist and founder of the LPF – Lijst Pim Fortuyn) were two such politicians. Inspired by the conservative turn that had taken place before in the Anglo-American political landscape, Bolkestein and Fortuyn turned to the new ‘realist discourse’ and presented themselves as politicians who were in touch with society and who, unlike their colleagues, refused to ignore the increasing feelings of dissatisfaction in relation to immigrants.¹⁰⁷ According to Bolkestein and Fortuyn, the Muslim identity of many immigrants caused tensions in the secularised Dutch society. Both politicians spoke of the Islamisation of the Dutch society and introduced it as a political issue.¹⁰⁸ Bolkestein proclaimed that the Islamic culture was antiliberal and therefore inferior to western civilization.¹⁰⁹ He referred to ‘the subordinate position of women, the discrimination of homosexuals, the

¹⁰¹ Scholten and Snel, ‘Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama’, 10–11; Meuzelaar, ‘Seeing Through the Archival Prism’, 32.

¹⁰² Scholten, ‘The Dutch Multicultural Myth’, 108.

¹⁰³ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 149, 178–79.

¹⁰⁴ Vuijsje, *Correct. Weldenkend Nederland Sinds de Jaren Zestig*, 24–37.

¹⁰⁵ Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 333–35, 344–46; Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 436, 445.

¹⁰⁶ Hans Janmaat and Hilda Verwey-Jonker, for example, were strongly opposed against immigration. However, they were kept outside of the political debate. Especially Janmaat’s views were dismissed as fascist and therefore ignored. He was found guilty of discrimination twice. Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 179–80, 196–97, 211–13, 277; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 332.

¹⁰⁷ Merijn Oudenampsen, *De Conservatieve Revolte: Een Ideeëngeschiedenis van de Fortuyn-Opstand* (Vantilt, 2018); Scholten, ‘The Dutch Multicultural Myth’, 108–9; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 209–15; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 316; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 345–46.

¹⁰⁸ Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 438; Meuzelaar, ‘Seeing Through the Archival Prism’, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Bolkestein made these pronouncements during lectures in 1990 and 1991. Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 210.

lack of freedom of speech in Islamic countries and the totalitarian tendencies of radical Muslims'.¹¹⁰ Fortuyn also warned the Dutch society of the danger of Islamisation, a danger that was ignored by the 'left'. In 1996, he wrote a pamphlet, titled *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur* ('Against the Islamisation of our culture'). In this pamphlet, Fortuyn presented Islam as a backward culture, opposed to western norms and values. In 2002, Fortuyn established the political party *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* ('List Pim Fortuyn'). Twelve days before the national elections, the news that Fortuyn was shot by an animal rights activist caused consternation. In spite of everything, the party participated in the elections and won 26 seats.¹¹¹ Fortuyn's message was successful because he managed to connect different sorts of dissatisfaction in his 'realist discourse' that went against the dominant political culture. Besides anti-Muslim sentiments, there also existed anti-Europe sentiments in the Dutch society. Fortuyn brought these together and instrumentalised peoples' fear of a future in which they would no longer recognise the society they once knew.¹¹²

Importantly, the new 'realist discourse' established multiculturalism as its 'counter-discourse'.¹¹³ It created the idea that the political correct 'left' was responsible for opening the floodgates for immigrants.¹¹⁴ The discourse accused previous politicians and policy makers of downplaying incidents and being unwilling to listen to any 'reasonable suggestion concerning immigration restriction'.¹¹⁵ This tied into the aforementioned myth of Dutch multiculturalism, which presented the Ethnic Minorities Policy as a failure because of its sole focus on social-cultural emancipation.¹¹⁶ In 2000, publicist Paul Scheffer expressed this sentiment in an essay, titled *Het multiculturele drama* ('The multicultural tragedy'), which was published in the national newspaper, *NRC Handelsblad*.¹¹⁷ As the title of his essay indicates, Scheffer considered multiculturalism to have failed dramatically. Moreover, just like Bolkestein and Fortuyn, Scheffer presented himself as someone who was not afraid to tell it the way it is. According to Leo and Jan Lucassen, this explains the significant impact of Scheffer's essay. Its conclusion, namely that the notion of a multicultural society was an illusion, was hardly contested.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Lucassen and Lucassen, 210–12; Derk Jan Eppink, 'Bolkesteins blijvende betekenis voor het debat', *De Volkskrant*, 4 April 2013, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/gs-b52b4e40>.

¹¹¹ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 214–16; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 355–56, 365.

¹¹² Geert Wilders of the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (the Party for Freedom) has since adopted Fortuyn's approach. Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 356–57; Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 449–50.

¹¹³ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 108.

¹¹⁴ Besides that they were said to be responsible for many other things, for instance: the bad state of the educational system, waitlists in the health service, the lack of control over criminality, inefficient bureaucracy and so on. Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 355–56; Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 448.

¹¹⁵ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 129, 149, 207.

¹¹⁶ Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 12; Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 102–3.

¹¹⁷ Paul Scheffer, 'Het Multiculturele Drama', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29 January 2000.

¹¹⁸ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 216–18; Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 108; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 355–56.

CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT DUTCH CULTURE AND IDENTITY

As with the previous policy shift, the shift from the Integration Policy to the Integration Policy New Style was prompted by a sense of failure. Even though a parliamentary commission of inquiry had concluded that the Integration Policy had facilitated the social-economic emancipation of immigrants, this conclusion did not correspond to the public opinion.¹¹⁹ Instead, it was emphasised that other critical problems remained unresolved. Most importantly, the large distance between immigrants and Dutch native citizens was problematised.¹²⁰ This is a good example of how the perception of the nature of the problem changed over time. What was first a problem of social-economic disadvantage, became a problem of cultural difference: 'was the tolerant Dutch society, in which 'everything should be possible', not too tolerant, especially for certain migrant groups, who because of this could persist in a culture that did not correspond with the opinions of the majority of the population'?'¹²¹

Due to international events in the early 2000s, the topic of Islam and multiculturalism came to the core of the public debate in Western Europe.¹²² Notably 9/11 (2001) and the subsequent terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) incited fear of Islam and confirmed the idea of a 'clash of civilizations'.¹²³ Nationally, this sense of crisis was intensified by the murder of the controversial film director Theo van Gogh by a radicalised Muslim (2004), and the arrest of Hofstad Network (2004), the group of radicalised Dutch Muslims he was connected to.¹²⁴ Under these conditions the outlook on immigration became very pessimistic, which allowed for the earlier 'realist' discourse around integration to radicalise.¹²⁵ Baukje Prins argues that one can speak of 'hyperrealism'. This means that 'frankness was no longer practiced for the sake of truth, but for its own sake'.¹²⁶ To the right wing populist movements that had their breakthrough around and after the turn of the century, being frank was more important than being politically correct.¹²⁷ In their view, anyone who said something positive about the integration of immigrants was naïve and ignored the actual problems.¹²⁸

¹¹⁹ Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 11.

¹²⁰ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 104.

¹²¹ Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 355.

¹²² For a more extensive overview of these events, see: Aerts et al., 354–55; Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 449–50; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 14–15, 262–64; Meuzelaar, 'Seeing Through the Archival Prism', 33.

¹²³ This term was coined in 1993 by political scientist Samuel Huntington. Huntington predicted that cultural differences would soon lead to conflicts. The events around the turn of the 21st century were interpreted in this sense. Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 355–56.

¹²⁴ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 258; Meuzelaar, 'Seeing Through the Archival Prism', 11, 34.

¹²⁵ Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 364.

¹²⁶ Baukje Prins, 'The Nerve to Break Taboos: New Realism in the Dutch Discourse on Multiculturalism', *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de La Migration Internationale* 3, no. 3 (2002): 376.

¹²⁷ For a discussion of the 'origins, progress, content and style of political correctness', see: Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

¹²⁸ Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 438–40; Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 109.

Pessimistic about immigration or not, a new policy had to be designed. The Integration Policy New Style, personified by Rita Verdonk, the Minister of Immigration and Integration between 2002 and 2007, took an unmistakable 'assimilationist turn'.¹²⁹ Through 'civic integration programmes', immigrants were socialised into the Dutch norms and values.¹³⁰ If they adhered to these and mastered the Dutch language, immigrants would be able to participate in all spheres of Dutch society. In sum, cultural adaptation was a non-negotiable condition for integration.

Minister Verdonk argued that there would still be room for cultural diversity, but that it was up to policy makers to focus on the communalities. This raised the question of what these norms and values were, and more generally what it meant to be Dutch.¹³¹ Characteristic of this ongoing debate is that 'Dutchness' is mostly defined in contrast to certain aspects of other (immigrant) identities that are perceived as problematic.¹³² As a result of immigration and globalisation, the Netherlands experienced and still experiences an identity crisis.¹³³ Behind the façade of windmills, tulips and cheese that is used to attract tourists, there is no consensus on the Dutch identity. The definition of Dutch culture is contested, for people's interpretation of Dutch identity depends on their perception of who they themselves are and on their perception of other people. This, however, is a reality that is difficult to accept. For instance, when Máxima, the present queen of the Netherlands, claimed in 2007 that the Dutchman or Dutchwoman did not exist, it caused general indignation. Right wing politicians argued that it was an absolute shame that the Dutch queen was not proud of the Netherlands and what it stood for. In their opinion, the Dutch should define their norms and values and actively defend these against people with different views.¹³⁴

Yet, even if one could figure out what these norms and values are, that does not mean that they are fixed. In fact, the norms and values of Dutch society have changed over time. The cultural and political revolution of the 1960s, for example, successfully challenged traditional norms and values. The interconnected processes of 'secularisation, liberalisation, and individualisation' lessened citizens' respect for authority, created a new leadership style, allowed for the media to practise a more autonomous form of journalism, fostered pacifism and encouraged sexual freedom and the equal treatment of men and women.¹³⁵ These new norms and values will inevitably change again, and will continue to tantalise those who try to come up with a definite definition of Dutch society, culture and identity. Jörgen Raymann's joke about how he started to love the Netherlands more and more (cf. introduction) highlights this discrepancy between the static image nationalistic Dutch people have of their country and the reality of the Netherlands as a dynamic and culturally diverse country. Raymann suggested that regardless of the fact that people of migrant background are represented in all spheres of society – for example, the government, sports, music,

¹²⁹ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 104; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 316–18.

¹³⁰ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 105.

¹³¹ Scholten, 105.

¹³² Kuipers, 'The Difference Between a Surinamese and a Turk'.

¹³³ Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 447–48; Meuzelaar, 'Seeing Through the Archival Prism', 11.

¹³⁴ Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 22–23; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 220.

¹³⁵ Blom and Lamberts, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, 435–37, 440–42; Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 315–19, 321–22, 346–49; van Oostrom, *The Netherlands in a Nutshell: Highlights from Dutch History and Culture*, 96–97.

comedy, science and literature – native Dutch people still primarily think of the Dutch society as a monocultural one. Regardless of their status in Dutch society, people of migrant background are excluded from the definition of ‘Dutchness’.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ For a short list of people of migrant background active in the Netherlands as authors, actors, politicians, journalists, athletes and academics, see: Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 269.

2. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SIX HUMOUROUS TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

Before I elaborate on how the various humorous television programmes dealt with the topic of integration, I introduce them one by one. I elaborate on the format, specify what humorous genre they belonged to, and mention if they included recurring non-native Dutch characters or a non-native Dutch host [Table 2].

An aspect I only touch upon indirectly is reception.¹³⁷ As mentioned, the selected television programmes – except for *100% AB* – are well known programmes both then and now. For instance, this year in February a new exhibition on satire, *Serius grappig (Seriously funny)*, opened in the museum of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*, which included references to all six programmes.¹³⁸ Furthermore, in light of the reception of the six humorous television programmes, it is important to consider the fact that these six programmes were broadcasted by progressive and intellectual public broadcasting stations, namely VPRO (*Simplisties Verbond*, *Keek op de Week*, *Jiskefet*, *100% AB* and *Draadstaal*) and NPS (*The Comedy Factory*). As mentioned, this was a practical consideration, unrelated to the research question.¹³⁹ However, even though these programmes were and are well known, one needs to take into account that this type of highbrow humour was mostly appreciated by highly educated Dutch people. This was the target audience the comedians had in mind.¹⁴⁰

| | Format & Genre | Recurring non-native Dutch character(s) or host |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Simplisties Verbond</i> (1974-1988) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sketches - Satirical humour - Commentary on issues of the time | Mehmet Pamuk (character) |
| <i>Keek op de Week</i> (1988-1993) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sketches - Satirical humour - Commentary on current events | Mehmet Pamuk and Milos Pecik (characters) |
| <i>Jiskefet</i> (1990-2005) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sketches - Satirical and absurd humour | Oboema Sestokoe |
| <i>The Comedy Factory</i> (1999-2007) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stand-up comedy routines - Humour inspired by personal experiences and observations - Commentary on current events | Jörgen Raymann (host) |

¹³⁷ Originally, I hoped to find and include viewers' letters sent to the broadcasting station in my corpus of sources. Unfortunately, Bas Atterberg of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* informed me that for these television programmes such letters may have existed, but were not archived.

¹³⁸ 'Serius Grappig', Beeld en Geluid, accessed 13 April 2019, <https://www.beeldengeluid.nl/bezoek/agenda/serieus-grappig>.

¹³⁹ The archive collection the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* almost exclusively consists of programmes broadcasted by public broadcasting stations. Commercial broadcasting stations keep their own archives. Hogenkamp, Leeuw, and Fickers, *Een Eeuw van Beeld en Geluid*.

¹⁴⁰ For an extensive discussion of the appreciation of different humorous styles, see: Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*; Kuipers, 'Television and Taste Hierarchy'.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">100% AB (2002-2003)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentary style features - Satirical humour - Examination of the state of the integration of immigrants in the Netherlands | <p style="text-align: center;">Javier Guzman as Ab de Inburgerman (character and host)</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Draadstaal (2007-2009)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sketches - Satirical and absurd humour - Commentary on current events and timeless topics | <p style="text-align: center;">Sayid N'gish (character)</p> |

Table 2. Overview of the six selected humorous television programmes. [Timeline 1 & Appendix 2]

SIMPLISTIES VERBOND (1974-1988) & KEEK OP DE WEEK (1988-1993)

Simplisties Verbond and *Keek op de Week* were both conceived by comedians Kees van Kooten and Wim de Bie.¹⁴¹ Van Kooten and de Bie, often referred to as Koot and Bie, started their career on the radio. Later they made the change-over to television.¹⁴² Through conversations I had about this research project with Dutch friends and acquaintances, I learned that the comic duo of van Kooten and de Bie was – and still is – very well-known by Dutch people of all ages and appreciated by a higher educated public.¹⁴³ Just by googling their names one can confidently state that van Kooten and de Bie are icons of Dutch humour.¹⁴⁴ To this very day there is a lot of appreciation for and interest in the work of van Kooten and de Bie. Much of the aforementioned exposition on satire is dedicated to van Kooten and de Bie, who recently handed over their archive to the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*.¹⁴⁵

Simplisties Verbond and *Keek op de Week* were both presented by van Kooten and de Bie. Apart from that, van Kooten and de Bie assumed the roles of the many characters, both real (notably politicians) and fictional. Even though the two television programmes had a lot in common, their approach was different. As the title of *Keek op de Week* (*Look at the Week*) indicates, van Kooten and de Bie presented their humorous interpretation of the events of the past week. Among other things, they took up issues that had been on the

¹⁴¹ 'Het Simplisties Verbond', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 14 January 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Het_Simplisties_Verbond; 'Keek Op de Week', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 14 January 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Keek_op_de_Week.

¹⁴² 'Kees van Kooten', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 14 January 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Kees_van_Kooten; 'Wim de Bie', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 14 January 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Wim_de_Bie.

¹⁴³ In her sociological work on Dutch humour, Kuipers more than once mentions van Kooten and de Bie as famous Dutch satirists. She classifies their humorous television programmes as 'highbrow comedy' and describes their humour as 'satirical but seldom explicitly political'. Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 126.

¹⁴⁴ There are countless newspaper articles and television interviews out there. An overview of the appearances of Kees van Kooten and Wim de Bie in the media (up and until 2007) can be found on the website of Wiki page of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*: 'Kees van Kooten in de media', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 13 April 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Kees_van_Kooten_in_de_media; 'Wim de Bie in de media', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 13 April 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Wim_de_Bie_in_de_media.

¹⁴⁵ 'Serieus Grappig'; Karen Drost, 'The Making of Serieus Grappig: Deel 1 - En Wel Hierom', Beeld en Geluid, accessed 13 April 2019, <https://www.beeldengeluid.nl/kennis/blog/making-serieus-grappig-deel-1-en-wel-hierom>.

news, analysed statements made by politicians or other public figures and referred to newspaper articles they thought were remarkable. In *Simplisties Verbond* (*Simplistic Union*), on the other hand, van Kooten and de Bie reflected on general issues of the time and supposedly tried to clarify them. Not having to link their sketches to specific events arguably gave them more creative freedom.

***JISKEFET* (1990-2005)**

Jiskefet, which means dustbin in Frisian, was a humorous television programme developed by Herman Koch, Kees Prins and Michiel Romeyn. A typical episode consisted of a number of sketches, which followed one another without interruption. Usually, the main characters were played by Koch, Prins and Romeyn. For the other roles, they called upon the services of other actors. As a number of characters appeared frequently, it is possible to speak of recurring features in *Jiskefet*. Sometimes these sketches within a feature built upon the same storyline. Other times they did not.¹⁴⁶

The sketches in *Jiskefet* were satirical and at times very absurdist. Hence, *Jiskefet* was sometimes compared to the English *Monty Python*.¹⁴⁷ According to the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*, *Jiskefet* did not immediately become the success it is remembered as nowadays. Only around 1995 did the general public discover the programme, mostly through the recurring features 'Debiteuren Crediteuren' ('Debtors Creditors') and 'De Lullo's' ('The Dickheads').¹⁴⁸

***THE COMEDY FACTORY* (1999-2007)**

The Comedy Factory was the debut of Dutch-Surinamese comedian Jörgen Raymann on Dutch television.¹⁴⁹ Afterwards he was the host of other shows, including the satirical talk show *Raymann is laat!* (2001-2010). In this show, the chatty 'Tante Es' ('Aunty Es'), the popular alter ego of Raymann, made her entry. Dressed as a Surinamese woman, Raymann interviewed his guests in a very amicable way.¹⁵⁰ Until today Raymann is very active. He writes books and columns, presents a radio programme and performs as a cabaret artist.¹⁵¹

The Comedy Factory differs from the five other television programmes in the sense that it is the only television programme that falls under the genre of stand-up comedy. As the master of ceremony of *The Comedy Factory*, Raymann welcomed the culturally diverse live audience, did a short comedy routine

¹⁴⁶ 'Jiskefet'.

¹⁴⁷ Based on the interviews she conducted, Kuipers offers an interesting overview of the different 'readings' of the sketches in *Jiskefet*. She pays particular attention to the feature 'Debiteuren Crediteuren' ('Debtors Creditors'). Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 86-90, 258.

¹⁴⁸ 'Jiskefet'.

¹⁴⁹ *The Comedy Factory* is the only programme that was not broadcasted by VPRO. It was broadcasted by NPS, which became the NTR in 2010. NPS was a national station, which specifically focussed on programmes concerning art, youth and minorities 'The Comedy Factory', Men At Work TV Producties, accessed 14 January 2019, <http://www.menatwork.tv/tv-programma/the-comedy-factory/>; 'Welke omroepen zijn er?', Rijksoverheid.nl, accessed 8 October 2018, onderwerpen/media-en-publieke-omroep/vraag-en-antwoord/welke-omroepen.

¹⁵⁰ 'Raymann Is Laat!', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 14 January 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Raymann_is_laat!!

¹⁵¹ 'Jörgen Raymann', Jörgen Raymann, accessed 14 January 2019, <https://www.jorgenraymann.com/>.

himself, and announced the international or Dutch comedians of that night. In his routine at the beginning of the show, Raymann usually looked back on the previous week and shared his thoughts on current events.

100% AB (2002-2003)

Of all six selected television programmes, the ten-part satirical series *100% AB* (2002-2003) was the only one in which the question of integration was the central point. It was arguably also the least well known television programme. In *100% AB*, the cabaret artist Javier Guzman played the role of the Moroccan Ab, who referred to himself as 'de inburgerman' ('the integration man'). The title of the programme, *100% AB*, is a subtle play on words. 'AB' refers to Ab's name, but is simultaneously an abbreviation of 'aangepast burger' ('adapted citizen').

In the series, Ab, who spoke with a strong accent and dressed in a stereotypical way, assumed the role of researcher and set out to examine the integration of immigrants in the Dutch society. *100% AB* is remarkable in the sense that it reversed the dominant question, that is: What should immigrants do to integrate in Dutch society? and also asked what native Dutch citizens could – and should – do to facilitate integration. The different features in *100% AB* related to this proposition. Integration was presented as a project that would only succeed if both the immigrants and the native Dutch would assume their responsibility. It thus concerned the entire society. Starting from the understanding that the Netherlands was a multicultural society, some features addressed things immigrants could do to fit in better and others suggested ways in which the idea of Dutch culture and society could be made more inclusive.

DRAADSTAAL (2007-2009)

Lastly, *Draadstaal* consisted of short satirical sketches in which Jeroen van Koningsbrugge and Dennis van de Ven denounced and laughed at timeless themes. The characters in *Draadstaal* were played by van Koningsbrugge and van de Ven, who – as themselves – also presented the short bits in between the sketches. The only recurring non-native Dutch character was Sayid N'gish, a Moroccan guest worker who had been living in the Netherlands for over ten years.¹⁵²

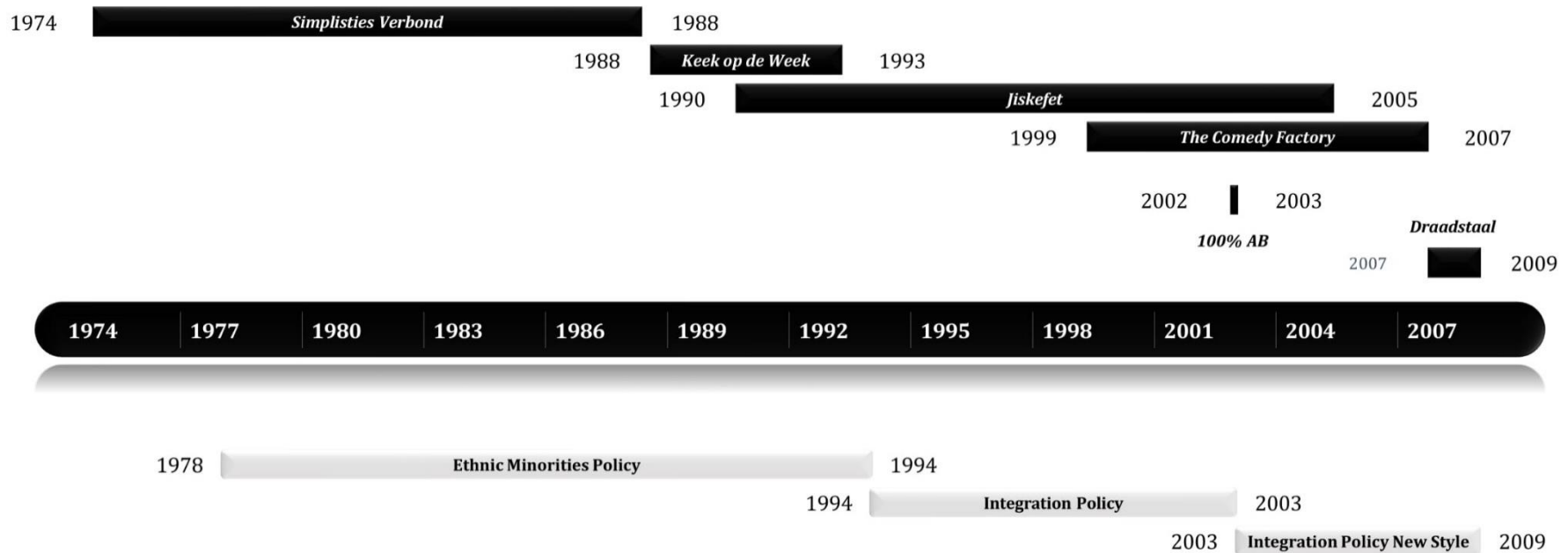
Draadstaal originally started as a satirical website of the same name, which was inspired by the news. The word 'draadstaal' does not mean anything. Yet, switching the first and last part of the word gives 'staalraad', which means 'steel wire'. In the intro of the television programme, van Koningsbrugge and van de Ven each held a small piece of paper. One paper had the word 'draad' written on it, the other one 'staal'. With their papers, van Koningsbrugge and van de Ven then formed the word 'staalraad', after which they changed it into 'draadstaal'.¹⁵³ Arguably, this refers to *Draadstaal's* sense of humour, that is to put things on their heads. In the announcement of the second season of *Draadstaal*, van Koningsbrugge and van de Ven

¹⁵² 'Draadstaal', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 14 January 2019, <https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Draadstaal>.

¹⁵³ 'Intro Draadstaal', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 2007 2009), NPO3.

mentioned that people had told them that they thought they were a copy of van Kooten and de Bie. Van Koningsbrugge and van de Ven took this as a great compliment: 'Thanks a lot for that. Thank you'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Original quote: 'Dank je wel daarvoor. Dank je wel.' 'Aankondiging Draadstaal 2008', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 28 December 2007), NPO3.



Timeline 3. Timeline of the six humorous television programmes analysed (above) and the policy frames regarding integration (below).

3. THE QUESTION OF INTEGRATION IN THE HUMOROUS TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

Taken together, the six Dutch humorous television programmes – *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988), *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993), *Jiskefet* (1990-2005), *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2006), *100% AB* (2002-2003) and *Draadstaal* (2007-2009) – covered a period of thirty-five years. As discussed, the framing of the question of integration changed rapidly and profoundly during this period [Timeline 3].¹⁵⁵

In this section, I discuss how the topic of integration figured in the six humorous television programmes between 1975 and 2010. Rather than discussing the programmes one by one, I refer back to the historical overview of the Dutch integration debate and analyse how the humorous television programmes related to this debate.

The first immigrants to appear frequently in the humorous television programmes were the guest workers.¹⁵⁶ In *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988) and *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993), van Kooten and de Bie introduced their viewers to the character of Mehmet Pamuk (van Kooten), a Turkish guest worker who had settled in the Netherlands with his family in the 1970s.¹⁵⁷ In total, Pamuk appeared in seven sketches between 1984 and 1992. In these sketches, the character of Pamuk figured as a spokesperson for the Turkish guest workers in the Netherlands, and by extension all former guest workers. Van Kooten and de Bie often asked him about the way immigrants were treated in the Netherlands. While Pamuk was polite at all times, he was anything but a passive and docile character. In contrast, he was assertive and was not afraid to point out what he considered to be social wrongs, such as exploitation and discrimination. Even though Pamuk was critical of the way immigrants were treated in the Netherlands, he remained hopeful.

With the character of Pamuk and with other sketches about integration, van Kooten and de Bie presciently presented the presence of immigrants in the Netherlands as an incontestable fact. They were there and they would stay. Therefore, one could – and maybe should – laugh about this new reality. As I see it, van Kooten and de Bie wanted to make two additional points about integration. On the one hand, they suggested that the grievances of immigrants should be taken seriously. On the other hand, they argued that the cultural differences between the native Dutch and the immigrants were not unbridgeable. By doing so, they went against the then pessimist opinions in Dutch society which problematised these cultural differences.

Over time the attention for the presence of Moroccans and Turks in the Netherlands remained constant. In *Jiskefet* (1990-2005), *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007), *100% AB* (2002-2003) and *Draadstaal* (2007-2009), the focus was less on the former guest workers themselves, but on the second and third generation. *100% AB* and *Draadstaal* each had a recurring Moroccan character, respectively Ab (Guzman) and Sayid N'gish (van Koningsbrugge). Just like Mehmet Pamuk, Sayid N'gish was not afraid to express his grievances. He did not hide the fact that he struggled to make ends meet and openly complained about the

¹⁵⁵ Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 7.

¹⁵⁶ For the group of post-colonial immigrants from the former colony of Indonesia, conversely, who arrived in the Netherlands after the Second World War there was almost no explicit attention.

¹⁵⁷ In a sketch from 1990 Mehmet Pamuk mentioned that he had been living in the Netherlands for sixteen years. 'Mehmet Pamuk weigert bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen zijn plaats af te staan', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 11 February 1990), Beeld en Geluid.

native Dutch who were prejudiced against him. However, rather than resilient, Sayid was an embittered figure. He often referred to the past, when – according to him – things were better. He did struggle in the past, but at least people were nice to him and were not afraid of him. His gloomy view of the Dutch society corresponded to the integration debate after the turn of the century which was characterised by a sense of polarisation and fear.

In the 1980s and early 1990s the scope of the integration debate widened. The presence of minority groups other than the guest workers became more clear in the humorous television programmes as well. To a greater or a lesser extent all the minority groups targeted by the Ethnic Minorities Policy were represented in the humorous television programmes of the time, that is *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988), *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993) and *Jiskefet* (1990-2005).¹⁵⁸ The group that received most attention was the group of refugees.¹⁵⁹ Compared to later periods, refugees received most attention in the 1980s and especially in the early 1990s. After all, during this period the number of refugees that sought asylum in the Netherlands was at a high. In 1993 the number amounted to more than 30 000 and in 1994 it was higher than 50 000.¹⁶⁰ The attention for refugees in humorous television programmes was thus very much influenced by fluctuations in the number of refugees in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is quite likely that starting from 2014, when the number of asylum seekers significantly rose again, humorous television programmes once more paid more attention to refugees. Since this falls outside of the time period of this thesis, I am unable to confirm this. Yet, a quick scan of the most recent seasons of *Draadstaal* (2015-2019) corroborates this suspicion.¹⁶¹

The only recurring refugee character in the 1980s and early 1990s was Milos Pecik (de Bie), who was introduced as a ‘refugee from former Yugoslavia’.¹⁶² In *Keek op de Week*, Pecik was interviewed a couple of times by van Kooten and de Bie about the conflict in Yugoslavia. Together, the five sketches in which Pecik

¹⁵⁸ [Surinamese] ‘Surinamer Harold’, *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 3 March 1985), Beeld en Geluid; [Foreign workers] ‘Onderdak aan buitenlandse werknemers’, *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 17 November 1982), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Toenemende discriminatie door de komst van illegalen uit Oost-Europa’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 16 February 1992), Beeld en Geluid; [Gypsies and caravan dwellers] ‘Zigeunerbeleid van Minster van Dijk’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 6 November 1988), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁵⁹ [Refugees] ‘Noodwet m.b.t. asielzoekers op Schiphol’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 18 December 1988), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Oosting neemt een vluchteling in huis’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 5 February 1989), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Asielzoekers’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 5 April 1992), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Milos Pecik verkoopt winterijs en vertelt over Joegoslavië’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 14 February 1993), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Milos Pecik verkoopt winterijs en praat over de voedseldroppings in Joegoslavië’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 28 February 1993), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Milos Pecik probeert krijgers te ronselen om in Joegoslavië te gaan vechten’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 14 March 1993), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Milos Pecik over illegale arbeid en het vechten in Joegoslavië’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 28 March 1993), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Milos Pecik heeft zijn ijskar terug en krijgt een verblijfsvergunning’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 4 April 1993), Beeld en Geluid; ‘Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker’, *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 8 April 1996), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁶⁰ For the graph, see: Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 230.

¹⁶¹ In the following sketch from 2015, Fred shared his thoughts on the so-called ‘refugee crisis’: ‘Fred en Ria: vluchtelingen’, NPO3, accessed 22 June 2019, https://www.npo3.nl/draadstaal/13-12-2015/AT_2044377/POMS_AT_3642757.

¹⁶² Original caption: ‘vluchteling uit vm. Joegoslavië’ ‘Milos Pecik verkoopt winterijs en vertelt over Joegoslavië’.

appeared in 1993, recounted his personal story.¹⁶³ Pecik, for instance, spoke about his family at home and about the camping he ran there. He hoped that the conflict would soon come to an end, so they could be reunited. Until then, Pecik tried to make a living in the Netherlands by selling ‘winterijs’ (‘winter ice-cream’). In addition to being the only recurring refugee character, Pecik further differed from the other refugee characters. Contrary to the other refugees, who were presented as passive and dependent, Pecik was an assertive character with agency. For instance, he openly criticised the Netherlands for not intervening in Yugoslavia, while they said they would.¹⁶⁴ This difference in portrayal has to do with the fact that Pecik was the protagonist in his sketches. In the other sketches, the passive and dependent refugees took on supporting roles. Consequently, the focus was on the native Dutch protagonist(s) who received the refugees and took care of them. The conflicts the refugees fled from were mostly left undiscussed, because as the comedians pointed out, the native Dutch did not really have an idea.

The rising number of refugees coming to the Netherlands in the early 1990s challenged those who still maintained that immigration was a temporary phenomenon and that the Netherlands was not – and should not be – a country of immigration. The idea that the Netherlands was a de facto multicultural society was clearly reflected in *Jiskefet* (1990-2005), *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007), *100% AB* (2002-2003) and *Draadstaal* (2007-2009). It was the starting point of the jokes, rather than the conclusion that could be drawn from the jokes. Before going into how these programmes fitted into the integration debate, it is crucial to note that *The Comedy Factory* was exceptional in the sense that the acceptance of multiculturalism not only had an impact on the content of the humour, but on the form itself.

The Comedy Factory was the first humorous television programme in the selection which provided a platform for non-native Dutch comedians. I refer to them as ‘ethno-comedians’.¹⁶⁵ By doing so, the programme argued that actual immigrant voices should be included in the integration debate. For the first time the non-native Dutch were the ones making the jokes about integration. This is noteworthy because up until then immigrants had only been represented in the humorous television programmes as fictional characters. More even, it was native Dutch comedians who entered into these roles.¹⁶⁶ They could not draw from personal experiences, but had to imagine themselves in the situations immigrants in the Netherlands found themselves in. Thanks to the genre of stand-up comedy, ethno-comedians were able to address the

¹⁶³ ‘Milos Pecik verkoopt winterijs en vertelt over Joegoslavië’; ‘Milos Pecik verkoopt winterijs en praat over de voedseldroppings in Joegoslavië’; ‘Milos Pecik probeert krijgers te ronselen om in Joegoslavië te gaan vechten’; ‘Milos Pecik over illegale arbeid en het vechten in Joegoslavië’; ‘Milos Pecik heeft zijn ijskar terug en krijgt een verblijfsvergunning’.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Milos Pecik probeert krijgers te ronselen om in Joegoslavië te gaan vechten’.

¹⁶⁵ The term ‘ethno-comedy’ is defined as ‘comedy about questions of ethnicity and multiculturalism that is performed by actors who may or may not be of migrant background’. The term ‘ethno-comedian’, however, is reserved for comedians of migrant background. The aforementioned terms are almost exclusively used in a German context. Elsewhere, this type of humour is mostly referred to as ‘ethnic humour’. Kathrin Bower, ‘Made in Germany: Integration as Inside Joke in the Ethno-Comedy of Kaya Yanar and Bülent Ceylan’, *German Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (2014): 362.

¹⁶⁶ *100% AB* is in-between, for Javier Guzman, who played the Moroccan Ab, was born in Spain. Even so, I choose to consider Ab together with characters played by native Dutch comedians, such as Mehmet Pamuk (van Kooten), Milos Pecik (de Bie), Oboema Sestetokoe (Romeyn) and Sayid N’gish (van Koningsbrugge), because they were all fictional characters. The word fictional is key. ‘Javier Guzman’, accessed 20 May 2019, <https://javierguzman.nl/>.

audience directly and as themselves. Unlike the native Dutch comedians, they could draw from personal experiences. It does not matter whether or not the stories they told on stage happened exactly as they recounted them. The point is that theoretically the stories these ethno-comedians shared with the public could have happened to them. I suspect that this focus on the direct personal experiences of immigrants allowed for viewers of migrant background to identify more easily with the ethno-comedians than with fictional characters such as Mehmet Pamuk (*Simplisties Verbond* and *Keek op de Week*), Milos Pecik (*Keek op de Week*), Oboema Sestetokoe (*Jiskefet*), Ab (*100% AB*) or Sayid N'gish (*Draadstaal*). That was exactly the intention of the programme makers of *The Comedy Factory*. They aimed to develop a humorous programme that would appeal to a public consisting of both native Dutch people and people of migrant background.¹⁶⁷ Considering the make-up of the live audience, *The Comedy Factory* certainly succeeded at that.¹⁶⁸ In short, both the comedians and the audience of *The Comedy Factory* were a reflection of the Dutch multicultural society.

Along with the integration debate, around the mid-1990s the focus in the humorous television programmes shifted towards immigrants that had already settled in the Netherlands. Distinctions were still made between immigrants, but now based on their cultural background rather than by the 'type' of immigrant they represented. *100% AB* (2002-2003) and *Draadstaal* (2007-2009) almost exclusively focussed on Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. In *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007), there was also explicit and frequent attention for the former Dutch colonial subjects from Surinam and the Antilles.¹⁶⁹

Interestingly, religion became an increasingly important element of the cultural background of immigrants. It even became a way to refer to certain immigrants, that is as 'Muslims'. The increased importance of this common denominator had to do with the political climate around the turn of the century in which Islam was problematised by proponents of the newly established 'realist discourse'.¹⁷⁰ First, there was a new concern with gender, specifically with the position of the Muslim woman. Second, the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, were considered as proof that Islam was a direct threat to the 'civilised societies of the West', for it could incite extremists to violent terrorist acts.¹⁷¹

In the humorous television programmes of around and after the turn of the century the topics of integration and religion were closely connected. This suggests that the Dutch society had become more sensitive with regard to the social boundary of religion.¹⁷² This attention for religion was not new. In the humorous television programmes of the 1980s and early 1990s, religion was certainly not overlooked as a

¹⁶⁷ De Wilde, Interview with Karen Drost and Bart van der Linden - Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁶⁸ The montage of the stand-up comedy routines alternated between shots of the comedian on stage and shots of the audience. Besides ethnicity, the audience was also diverse with regard to gender and age. While it is difficult to determine the identities of the viewers of the other humorous programmes, it is quite likely that – relatively speaking – *The Comedy Factory* had more viewers of migrant background.

¹⁶⁹ Jörgen Raymann, the master of ceremony, himself was born in Suriname. Many of his jokes built upon a comparison between the Surinamese and the Dutch. Furthermore, he invited comedians with Surinamese and Antillean origins, respectively Roué Verveer and Jandino. Roué Verveer, 'Roué Verveer', *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 28 May 1999), Beeld en Geluid; Jandino, 'Jandino', *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 18 August 2007), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁷⁰ Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 438; Meuzelaar, 'Seeing Through the Archival Prism', 11.

¹⁷¹ Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 355–56.

¹⁷² Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 122.

marker of immigrant identity. In a few sketches, van Kooten and de Bie reflected on what it meant for Muslim immigrants to live in the Netherlands.¹⁷³ What changed around the turn of the century was that the programmes more explicitly reacted against the Islamophobic discourse. Instead of putting forward a counter discourse, they took it so far as to ridicule it. The very first sketch of *Draadstaal* (2007-2009), for instance, presented the audition of a suicide terrorist as if he were auditioning for a talent show [Appendix 2].¹⁷⁴ However, the comedians did not challenge every single element of the Islamophobic discourse. For example, consciously or not, they adopted the use of 'Muslim' as a meaningful common denominator. This is an important observation, for the frankness that came with the 'new realist' discourse had made it possible to discuss ethnicity under the guise of religion.¹⁷⁵

It is crucial to note that – in the spirit of the ethical revolution of the 1960s – comedians were always careful with references to ethnicity. Until the mid-1990s, many sketches referred to the doubts native Dutch people experienced with regard to what terms to use to refer to immigrants.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, there were numerous sketches which denounced racism and discrimination.¹⁷⁷ In other words, the comedians did not break the taboo, but created humour about the taboo itself. With the increased attention for religion in the humorous television programmes around and after the turn of the century, the topics of terminology, racism and discrimination were pushed into the background. This gave the impression that racism and discrimination were issues of the past and that the problems (Muslim) immigrants faced only had to do with their religious cultural background, not with the fact that they looked differently.



In conclusion, the humorous television programmes can indeed be seen as a sub-debate within the integration debate. While the changes in the discourse regarding integration can be recognised in the humorous television programmes, the comedians did not just adopt every new discourse without question.

¹⁷³ Some examples are: 'De Chrislam', *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 16 March 1986), Beeld en Geluid; 'Jet en Koosje leggen een bos tulpen neer bij een moskee', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 2 February 1992), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁷⁴ 'Auditie zelfmoordterrorist', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 26 September 2007), NPO3.

¹⁷⁵ M. Meeteren and L. Oostendorp, 'Are Muslims in the Netherlands Constructed as a "Suspect Community"? An Analysis of Dutch Political Discourse on Terrorism in 2004-2015', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 71, no. 5 (2019): 525–540.

¹⁷⁶ Some examples are: 'De gekleurde medemens', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 8 March 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Visie op allochtonen van het wetenschappelijk bureau van het Simplisties Verbond', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 8 March 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Asielzoekers'; 'Stichting Hulp: Worden ze alleen door buitenlanders gebeld?', *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 18 May 1997), Beeld en Geluid; Jörgen Raymann, 'Intro Raymann', *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 9 April 2001), Beeld en Geluid; '100% Aangepaste Allochtonen-Schotels - Afl. 8', *100% AB* (VPRO, 3 January 2003), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁷⁷ Some examples are: 'Racistische lectuur', *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 20 December 1981), Beeld en Geluid; 'Kledingverkoper met T-shirts "wite power" en hakenkruizen', *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 15 December 1982), Beeld en Geluid; 'Discriminatie veroorzaakt door de golfoorlog', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 3 February 1991), Beeld en Geluid; 'De Bie geschorst omwille van racistische opmerkingen', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 8 March 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Anti-racisme-betoging', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 22 March 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Oprukkend racisme in het Journaal', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 29 November 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Anti-racisme-demonstratie', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 21 March 1993), Beeld en Geluid.

Through their jokes, which signalled their perceptivity, the comedians highlighted particular aspects of the integration debate of the time and reminded the viewers that these aspects were not self-evident. By doing so, the comedians contributed to the integration debate. In that regard, the turn of the century was a key moment, for *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007) and to a lesser extent *100% AB* (2002-2003) opened up the comedy landscape and created a platform for ethno-comedians to share their experiences as immigrants in the Netherlands in a humorous way. For the first time, the humorous sub-debate about integration now also included actual immigrant voices.

CHAPTER 2

HUMOROUS INTERPRETATIONS OF INTEGRATION

1. GRASPING INTEGRATION: ADAPTATION, RECIPROCITY & RESPONSIBILITY

In all six humorous television programmes the comedians used their creative licence to present humorous interpretations of integration. They gave a twist to the dominant discourses related to the integration debate or experimented with new ideas. In this first section, I uncover how integration – both the process and the resulting society it would bring about – was interpreted by the comedians over time and I discuss the different elements that made up these interpretations.

As mentioned in the historical section on the Dutch integration debate, the frames through which the question of integration was approached changed rapidly and profoundly [Table 1 & Timeline 2].¹⁷⁸ Each frame defined what the problem was, how it could be explained and what could and should be done about it. As such, every frame started from a specific normative definition of integration. Scholten argues that it took until the turn of the century for integration to be understood as an issue that concerned the entire society, rather than as a problem of the immigrants, who found themselves in a disadvantaged position and were in need of policies to help them climb the social ladder.¹⁷⁹

Interestingly, the analysis of how integration was understood in the six humorous television programmes points out that the comedians did not adhere to this linear process from definition A to definition B to definition C. Rather, throughout time one general interpretation of integration was dominant. This interpretation started from the premise that integration was a process of adaptation. Importantly, comedians suggested that in order for the integration project to succeed, all parties involved – immigrants as well as the native Dutch – had to take their responsibility and had to be willing to adapt to a new multicultural reality. In the humorous television programmes, integration was thus always seen as a matter that concerned the entire society.

AB'S INTERPRETATION OF INTEGRATION

100% AB (2002-2003) is the best point to start the discussion of the underlying definition of integration in the six humorous television programmes, for it exclusively and explicitly dealt with the question of integration. In what follows, I illustrate how Ab proposed that the success of the integration project depended on the efforts of both the immigrants and the native Dutch. In the next section, I demonstrate that this understanding of integration was already accepted in earlier programmes and continued to be significant afterwards.

In *100% AB*, Ab (Guzman), who referred to himself as 'de inburgerman' ('the integration man'), analysed the state of the integration of immigrants in Dutch society and gave tips to facilitate integration.

¹⁷⁸ Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama', 1, 7.

¹⁷⁹ Scholten and Snel, 11.

Every single one of the ten episodes of *100% AB* started with Ab addressing the viewers as follows: ‘Welcome, welcome. I am Ab, Ab the Integration man. We are looking for 100% AB, 100% adapted citizen. Because *allochtonen* need to adapt better, yes, but, in my opinion, the Dutch need to adapt better as well. We will look for tips’ [Appendix 2].¹⁸⁰ Two interesting observations can be made about this quote. First, Ab indeed defined integration as a process of adaptation. Second, he used the word ‘better’. In his opinion, both the non-native Dutch – referred to as *allochtonen*¹⁸¹ – and the Dutch needed to adapt ‘better’ than they did already. The different features in *100% AB* related to this proposition. Since integration was seen as a two-way process, *100% AB* included sketches which suggested things immigrants could do to fit in better as well as features which addressed some practices the native Dutch could adopt from immigrants.

Surprisingly, the image Ab presented of immigrant culture was very negative. Two topics that recurred frequently were criminality and female oppression.¹⁸² This emphasis will become clear in the examples mentioned below. I suspect that Ab’s choice to focus on these topics was ironic. Ab seemed to suggest that, just as the Dutch culture was multifaceted, immigrant culture should not be reduced to these issues. Furthermore, he implicitly raised the question of why the Dutch were so concerned with problems like female oppression and criminality. By focussing on female oppression and criminality, the native Dutch could arguably avoid taking responsibility for problems like racism and discrimination. As mentioned, after the turn of the century the integration debate was predominantly focussed on cultural difference, which pushed issues like racism and discrimination to the background.¹⁸³

The feature *de Binnenloper (the Visitor)*¹⁸⁴ typified the first type of features in which Ab suggested what immigrants could do to fit in better. In this feature, Ab presented an easy solution to integration.¹⁸⁵ He told the viewers that he had a special type of key with which he could enter any Dutch house. (Note the reference to burglary.) The key was for sale for 100 euros, so whoever wanted to learn more about the Dutch could purchase it and experience Dutch conviviality in person. The feature *100% Gezellig (100% Convivial)*¹⁸⁶ also concerned Dutch conviviality.¹⁸⁷ Ab went from door to door to test the conviviality of the

¹⁸⁰ Original quote: ‘Welkom, welkom. Ik ben Ab, Ab de Inburgerman. En wij gaan op zoek naar 100% AB, 100% aangepaste burger. Want allochtonen moeten zich beter aanpassen, zeker, maar ik vind, Nederlanders moeten zich ook beter aanpassen. We gaan op zoek naar tips.’ ‘Intro 100% AB’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁸¹ As mentioned in the introduction, I decided not to use an alternative term for the term ‘allochtoon’. It is important to note that in *100% AB*, Ab used the terms ‘allochtoon’ and ‘autochtoon’ deliberately. For example, every person Ab interviewed was referred to in the caption by name and by status, that is ‘autochtoon’ or ‘allochtoon’. Considering that by this time the terms were contested, I interpret Ab’s overt and extensive use of the terms to be ironic, as a critique of the difficulty people – both ‘autochtonen’ and ‘allochtonen’ – had to go beyond these meaningless categories.

¹⁸² References to these problems were ubiquitous in all features.

¹⁸³ Aerts et al., *Land van Kleine Gebaren*, 355.

¹⁸⁴ The word ‘binnenloper’ comes from the verb ‘binnenlopen’, which means ‘to drop by’. Therefore, I chose to translate it as ‘visitor’.

¹⁸⁵ ‘De Binnenloper’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁸⁶ The word ‘gezellig’ is extremely difficult to translate into English, for it can be used in many different contexts. Here it refers to a pleasant atmosphere. ‘10 cool Dutch words that have no English translation’, Expatica - Expat Guide to The Netherlands, accessed 24 May 2019, <https://www.expatica.com/nl/education/language-learning/10-cool-dutch-words-that-have-no-english-translation-927506/>.

¹⁸⁷ ‘100% Gezellig’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003), Beeld en Geluid.

native Dutch.¹⁸⁸ Along the way, he met Mr. Vonk, who was introduced as a ‘conviviality expert’.¹⁸⁹ In the interview, Ab and Mr. Vonk talked about the ways in which immigrants could participate in Dutch conviviality. Together they came up with some practical tips.¹⁹⁰ In the second type of features, Ab introduced the native Dutch to some immigrant practices and tested whether they managed to master them. He, for instance, asked some Dutch men to hit their wives.¹⁹¹ (Note the reference to domestic violence.) In another feature, called *Ab’s Test*, teenage girls were given two minutes time to run away. If Ab could catch up with them, they would have to marry their older cousin [Appendix 2].¹⁹² (Note the reference to arranged marriages.)

Apart from the aforementioned features which related to what individuals could do, most features proposed ways in which the idea of Dutch culture and society as a whole could be made more inclusive. Starting from the understanding that the Netherlands was a multicultural society, Ab presented his view on what an integrated and inclusive Dutch society should look like. The titles of the features, which all started with ‘100% Adapted’ followed by something stereotypically Dutch, suggested that adaptation was key. Some examples are: *100% Aangepast Volkslied*¹⁹³ (*100% Adapted National Anthem*), *100% Aangepaste Smartlappen* (*100% Adapted Croon Songs*), *100% Aangepast Turks Fruit*¹⁹⁴ (*100% Adapted Turkish Delight*), *100% Aangepast Kunst & Kitsch*¹⁹⁵ (*100% Adapted Art & Kitsch*) and *100% Aangepaste Delfts Blauwe Spreuken* (*100% Adapted Delft Blue Sayings*).¹⁹⁶

Except from the lyrics of Ab’s adapted national anthem in which he referred to stereotypes of both Dutch and immigrant culture, the other adapted versions presented by Ab were only recognisable as Dutch by their form.¹⁹⁷ With respect to content they were all about immigrants. I interpret this as an attempt by Ab to compensate for the lack of immigrant representation in Dutch (popular) culture. Even though integration was interpreted as a collective undertaking, it was up to the native Dutch to take the lead and make sure that there was a fair representation of immigrants. In these particular features Ab set a good

¹⁸⁸ ‘100% Gezellig - Afl. 2’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 22 November 2002), Beeld en Geluid; ‘100% Gezellig - Afl. 10’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 17 January 2003), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁸⁹ Original quote: ‘gezelligheidsdeskundige’ ‘100% Gezellig - Afl. 10’.

¹⁹⁰ ‘100% Gezellig - Afl. 10’.

¹⁹¹ ‘100% Slaantest’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁹² ‘Ab’s Test’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁹³ In *Jiskefet* Oboema Sestetokoe also performed an alternative multicultural national anthem. ‘Oboema’s alternatieve multiculturele volkslied’, *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 31 January 1994), Beeld en Geluid.

¹⁹⁴ *Turks Fruit* is the title of a famous Dutch novel from 1969 by Jan Wolkers.

¹⁹⁵ *Tussen Kunst & Kitsch* was a popular television programme in which experts estimated the value of the objects and artworks people presented to them. ‘Tussen Kunst & Kitsch’, Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 24 May 2019, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Tussen_kunst_%26_kitsch.s

¹⁹⁶ ‘100% Aangepast Volkslied’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003); ‘100% Aangepaste Smartlappen’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003), Beeld en Geluid; ‘100% Aangepast Turks Fruit’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003); ‘100% Aangepast Kunst & Kitsch’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2002-2003); ‘100% Aangepaste Delfts Blauwe Spreuken’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 2003).

¹⁹⁷ One of the lines went as follows: ‘I now eat couscous with gravy. I eat sauerkraut on my kebab.’ Original quote: ‘Ik eet nu couscous met een kuiltje jus. Ik eet zuurkool op mijn broodje kebab.’ ‘100% Aangepast Volkslied’. [Appendix 2].

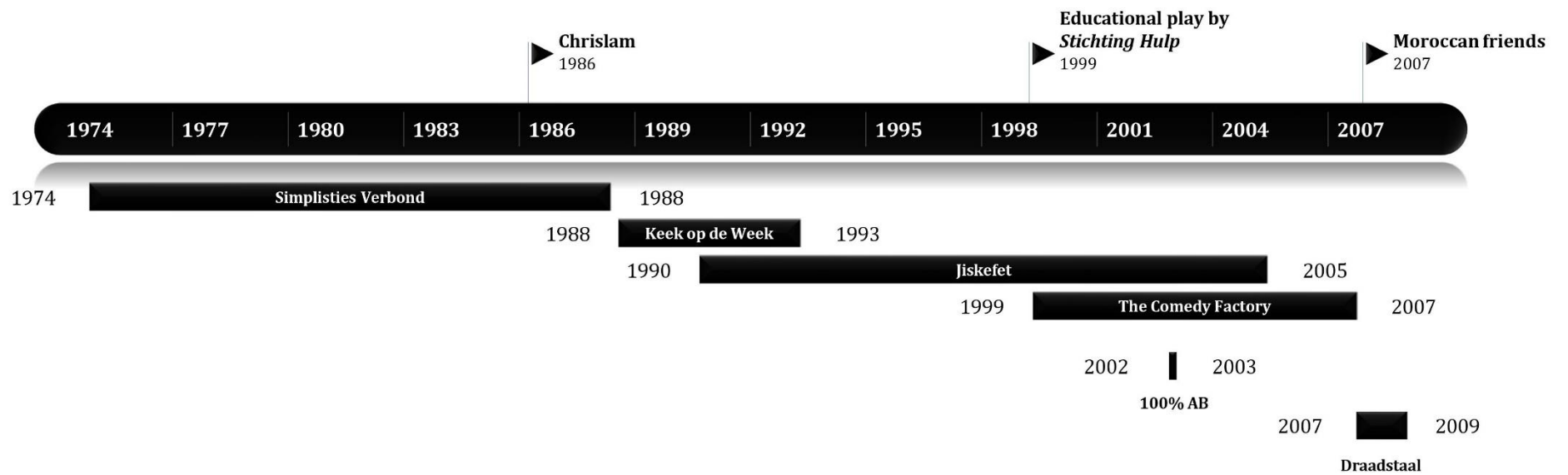
example. For example, in the feature *100% Aangepaste Delfts Blauwe Spreuken*, Ab interviewed a man called Rinus who worked at Royal Delft. Ab argued that changing some sayings would make it easier for *allochtonen* to relate to them.¹⁹⁸ Ab, for instance, suggested to change the common saying ‘Let’s get started!’ into ‘Where’s my food, whore?!’¹⁹⁹ (Note the reference to the subordinate position of the woman.) In another feature, called *100% Aangepaste Smartlappen*, Ab wrote new lyrics to famous croon songs, a popular genre in the Netherlands.²⁰⁰ One of the lines went as follows: ‘Daddy please don’t hit so hard. Hit a bit softer, please. Isn’t your hand tired yet? Daddy please don’t hit so hard’.²⁰¹ (Note the reference to domestic violence.)

¹⁹⁸ ‘100% Aangepaste Delfts Blauwe Spreuken’.

¹⁹⁹ Original quotes: ‘Vooruit met de geit!’ and ‘Waar blijft mijn eten, hoer?!’ ‘100% Aangepaste Delfts Blauwe Spreuken - Afl. 10’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 17 January 2003), Beeld en Geluid.

²⁰⁰ ‘100% Aangepaste Smartlappen’.

²⁰¹ Original quote: ‘Papa sla toch niet zo hard. Sla wat zachter, toe. Is je hand nog niet moe? Papa sla toch niet zo hard.’ This quote was based on the following line from Herman van Keeken’s song titled, ‘Pappie loop toch niet zo snel’: ‘Pappie loop toch niet zo snel. Pappie loop toch niet zo snel. Loop wat zachter toe, want ik ben al zo moe. Pappie loop toch niet zo snel.’ ‘100% Aangepaste Smartlappen - Afl. 1’, *100% AB* (VPRO, 15 November 2002), Beeld en Geluid.



Timeline 4. Timeline of the sketches mentioned in the following section 'Similar Interpretations Before and After'.

SIMILAR INTERPRETATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER

Besides *100% AB*, the other television programmes also understood integration as a matter that concerned the entire society and presupposed a certain degree of adaptation. I selected one sketch from each of the following programmes: *Jiskefet* (1990-2005), *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988), and *Draadstaal* (2007-2009). These examples respectively illustrate that integration was always understood as (1) a matter of adaptation, (2) a two-way process, and (3) something in which the native Dutch should take the lead.

In the selected sketch from *Jiskefet* a charity called *Stichting Hulp* (*Foundation Help*) staged an educational play about various social phenomena, including integration [Appendix 2]. The ladies of the charity approached the topics of cultural diversity and integration through a curious metaphor. On stage there were two fake fruit trees, one with red apples and one with yellow pears. After putting some apples in the pear tree and the other way around, one of the ladies of the charity asked the audience of teenagers whether they noticed that something was up. The teenagers stated that they did. Next, the lady asked if they would still notice if the pears were painted red and the apples yellow. This time the teenagers replied that they probably would no longer notice. Their answer prompted the lady to draw the following conclusion from the short experiment: ‘The shape can stay the same, but try to all assume the same colour’.²⁰² This was immediately the end of the short bit on cultural diversity. The teenagers in the audience (and the viewers at home) were left without any concrete definition of integration. The imagery surely suggested that there was no integration without adaptation. Moreover, the ladies presented this adaptation as if it were no big deal. Yet, ultimately, it was impossible to draw the moral from the story. Firstly, it was not made explicit what was meant by ‘shape’ – the thing that could stay the same – and ‘colour’ – the thing one should adapt. Secondly, the reference to the proverb *to compare apples and oranges* – in Dutch it is pears instead of oranges – further complicates the interpretation: How can they be incomparable, yet still be expected to assume the same colour?

The sketch from *Simplisties Verbond* presented a more specific image of what integration entailed. In the roles of the *Positivo’s*²⁰³, van Kooten and de Bie introduced what they termed the ‘Chrislam’ [Appendix 2].²⁰⁴ The funny looking duo (they wore pink suits and colourful caps) explained that they had made an attempt to unite the Bible and the Koran, an idea they got after they exchanged holy books with a Moroccan family down the street. The result was the ‘Chrislam’ with ‘Gollah’ as its deity, a new world religion which they argued was founded on practical compromises between Christianity and Islam.²⁰⁵ For example, instead of fasting for one month during Ramadan or Lent, ‘Chrislam’ advocated to fast one day a week. I mention this sketch, because its approach was similar to the aforementioned national anthem from *100% AB* in which Ab creatively combined stereotypical elements of immigrant and Dutch culture. In this sketch, van

²⁰² Original quote: ‘De vorm mag hetzelfde blijven, maar probeer allemaal dezelfde kleur aan te nemen.’ ‘Stichting Hulp: de drie dames voeren een multicultureel en maatschappelijk verantwoorde theatervoorstelling op’, *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 21 March 1999), Beeld en Geluid.

²⁰³ This can be translated as ‘the optimists’. The term ‘positivo’ was a neology coined by van Kooten and de Bie and is included in *Van Dale*, the leading dictionary of the Dutch language: ‘Positivo’, in *Van Dale*, n.d.

²⁰⁴ ‘De Chrislam’.

²⁰⁵ Just as ‘Chrislam’ was a synthesis of ‘christendom’ (‘Christianity’) and ‘islam’, ‘Gollah’ combined ‘God’ and ‘Allah’.

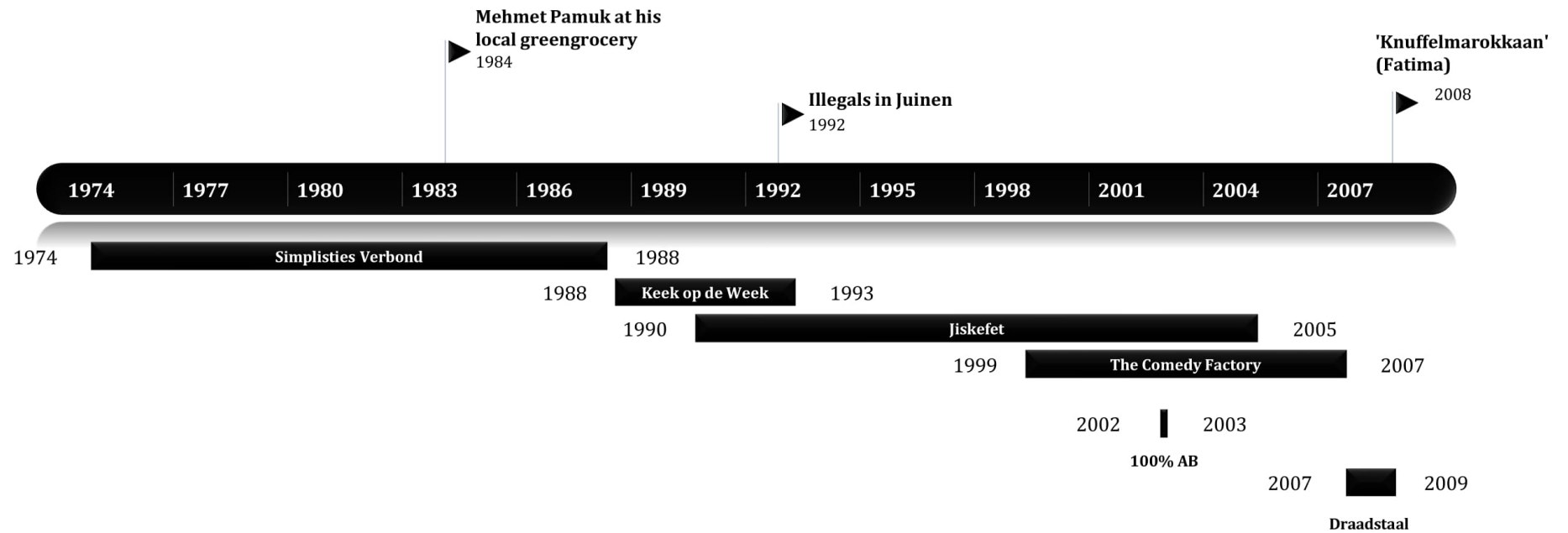
Kooten and de Bie did the same. By doing so, they suggested that Islam was something the Dutch should show interest in and could embrace elements of. The other way around, Muslim immigrants should adopt the same attitude. In an indirect way, van Kooten and de Bie thus presented integration as a two-way process. Yet, they also seemed to question to what extent the Dutch would be willing to make these sort of symbolic, yet meaningful changes that were naturally expected of immigrants.

Lastly, in the sketch from *Draadstaal*, van de Ven asked van Koningsbrugge how many Moroccans he had in his phone contacts.²⁰⁶ Van Koningsbrugge said that he had no idea: 'Yes, well, I really don't know. I just have my friends' telephone numbers and that has nothing to do with origin'.²⁰⁷ To this van de Ven replied: 'Apparently your method of selection makes sure that Moroccans never become your friends.'²⁰⁸ While van Koningsbrugge maintained that someone's origin did not influence his decision to befriend a person or not, van de Ven pointed out to him that this statement was irrelevant, because he seemed to never actually meet Moroccans, let alone befriend them. The fact that van Koningsbrugge did not have any Moroccan friends was thus his own fault. It was up to him to change something about this situation by approaching Moroccans and getting to know them, not the other way around.

²⁰⁶ 'Marokkaanse vrienden', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 16 November 2007), NPO3.

²⁰⁷ Original quote: 'Ja, euh, dat weet ik echt niet. Ik heb gewoon vrienden in mijn telefoon staan en dat heeft niets met afkomst te maken.' 'Marokkaanse vrienden'.

²⁰⁸ Original quote: 'Blijkbaar zorgt jouw selectiemethode ervoor dat Marokkanen nooit jouw vrienden worden.' 'Marokkaanse vrienden'.



Timeline 5. Timeline of the sketches mentioned in the following section 'The Complex Reality of Integration: A Work in Progress'.

2. THE COMPLEX REALITY OF INTEGRATION: A WORK IN PROGRESS

Up until now, I have only analysed how comedians understood integration as an ideal. As mentioned, the key elements were adaptation, reciprocity and responsibility. In this section, the focus shifts to how the six humorous television programmes presented the reality of integration. I argue that the comedians showed how, in practice, integration was not that straightforward. Just like Ab, when he said that both immigrants and the non-native Dutch had to adapt 'better', other comedians also presented integration as a work in progress.²⁰⁹ The analysis centres around two questions: (1) What situations did the comedians describe in order to show that the project of integration was a work in progress which had not yet fully succeeded? and (2) What obstacles to integration can be identified based on these sketches?

With respect to the first question, the sketches of the humorous television programmes can be divided in two groups. On the one hand, there were sketches in which there was interaction between native Dutch characters and immigrant characters. On the other hand, there were sketches in which a lot was said about immigrants, but in which they did not actually appear. Each type of situation was shown to pose its own sort of problems. Yet, regardless of whether or not there was interaction, the root cause of these difficulties was the same. Comedians suggested that the reality of integration was a complex one, because people generally struggled to question their assumptions and go beyond their own perspective.

INTERACTION: PROBLEMATIC COMMUNICATION

Communication was presented as the main obstacle to successful interaction between immigrant characters and native Dutch characters. The following examples from *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988) and *Draadstaal* (2007-2009) illustrate how this interaction did not always proceed smoothly.

In the sketch from *Simplisties Verbond*, Mehmet Pamuk, a Turkish guest worker, went to his local greengrocery [Appendix 2].²¹⁰ This sketch from 1984 is arguably the most famous one with Mehmet Pamuk (van Kooten). The humour in this sketch resulted from the unnecessarily inefficient way the greengrocer (de Bie) interacted with Pamuk. At the beginning of the sketch, the greengrocer explained that about fifty percent of his customers were foreigners. So, to make sure they would continue to do their groceries at his shop he started learning Turkish, Moroccan and Papiamento. Next, Pamuk walked into the store and was introduced by the greengrocer as one of his regular customers. As soon as he started talking to Pamuk, it became clear that the greengrocer did not speak Turkish at all. Rather, he spoke a simplified and childlike form of Dutch. The contrast with Pamuk, whose Dutch was impeccable, yet somewhat old-fashioned and overly formal, could not have been bigger. The greengrocer, however, was clueless and continued to treat Pamuk as if he did not understand Dutch. At no point did he reconsider his prejudice about immigrants' proficiency in Dutch. Through all of this, Pamuk remained polite. At the end of the sketch, Pamuk observantly stated: 'I consider the Netherlands to be one of the most civilized countries of Western Europe.

²⁰⁹ 'Intro 100% AB'.

²¹⁰ 'Mehmet Pamuk bij de groenteboer', *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 8 February 1984), Beeld en Geluid.

However, there is one thing I notice more and more frequently, that is that the Dutch have started to speak their mother tongue in a consistently more careless way'.²¹¹

In the sketch from *Draadstaal*, the host of a talk show interviewed a young Moroccan lady, Fatima, who dedicated herself to helping out youngsters in her neighbourhood [Appendix 2].²¹² Just as in the sketch with Mehmet Pamuk, the native Dutch character (the host) struggled to interact with the immigrant character (Fatima). Rather than the language itself, the tone adopted by the host was problematic.²¹³ Unlike Pamuk, who did not go against the greengrocer, Fatima did reprimand the host for the paternalistic tone he adopted when talking to her. Very early into the interview, Fatima interrupted the host and stated: 'But wait, I want to say, I do not want to be portrayed as a *huggy-Moroccan*²¹⁴, okay?'²¹⁵ It was no accident that Fatima chose to use the Dutch term 'knuffelmarokkaan', for this term had and still has an ambiguous meaning. Googling the Dutch term 'knuffelmarokkaan' results in a list of articles about the Dutch-Moroccan rapper Ali B, who was referred to by this nickname and was seen as the textbook example of a 'knuffelmarokkaan'.²¹⁶ In an article about Ali B, *The Economist* clarified the ambiguity of the term: 'the Dutch idiom implies that he [Ali B] is both a token and the squeeze-toy version of a dangerous animal'.²¹⁷ I argue that in this sketch the term meant something slightly different because Fatima was a Moroccan woman. Instead of being represented like Ali B – that is as a remarkably unthreatening Moroccan – the host spoke about Fatima as if her social commitment was extra commendable because she was Moroccan. When the host expressed his appreciation for her work, Fatima replied: 'Good? That is so good? That tone is terrible. In what way is that good? Oh, she is a *Muslima* and oh, what does she act Dutch!'²¹⁸ When Fatima said she did

²¹¹ Original quote: 'Ik vind Nederland één van de beschaafde landen van West-Europa, maar één ding valt mij steeds vaker op en dat is dat Nederlanders voortdurend onzorgvuldiger hun moedertaal beginnen te spreken.' 'Mehmet Pamuk bij de groenteboer'.

²¹² Fatima was invited for an interview, because she had been presented a prize: 'Knuffelmarokkaan', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 7 December 2008), NPO3.

²¹³ Some examples of sketches in which the communication between native Dutch characters and immigrant characters was problematic because they could not communicate in the same language are: 'Politici halen een politiek vluchteling op van Schiphol', *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 10 November 1985), Beeld en Geluid; 'Oosting neemt en vluchteling in huis', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 5 February 1989), Beeld en Geluid; 'SS-er als vluchteling bij twee dames', *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 13 February 1995), Beeld en Geluid; 'Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker', *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 8 April 1996), Beeld en Geluid; 'Gesprek met een allochtone man in het park', *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 18 July 2004), Beeld en Geluid.

²¹⁴ In an article in *The Economist*, the term 'knuffelmarokkaan' was translated as 'huggy-Moroccan': 'The Fly Dutchman', *The Economist*, accessed 3 June 2019, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2015/11/21/the-fly-dutchman>.

²¹⁵ Original quote: 'Maar wacht, ik wil wel zeggen, ik wil hier niet worden neergezet als knuffelmarokkaan, hé.' 'Knuffelmarokkaan'.

²¹⁶ Two of the first results are: 'Ali B niet blij met "knuffelmarokkaan"', NU, accessed 3 June 2019, <https://www.nu.nl/achterklap/2600054/ali-b-niet-blij-met-knuffelmarokkaan.html>; Etienne Verschuren, 'Ali B laat alle Nederlanders huilen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 20 November 2015, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/11/20/ali-b-laat-alle-nederlanders-huilen-a1491354>.

²¹⁷ 'The Fly Dutchman'.

²¹⁸ Original quote: 'Goed? Dat is zo goed? Dat toontje is verschrikkelijk. Hoezo, dat is goed? Oh, zij is *moslima* en oh, wat gedraagt ze zich Nederlands.' 'Knuffelmarokkaan'.

not want to be presented as a ‘knuffelmarokkaan’, she meant that she wanted the host to take her and her work seriously. By presenting her as a praiseworthy Moroccan, in her view, the host was not complementing her. Rather, by insinuating that she was the exception to the rule, the host insulted other Moroccans.

In both sketches, the immigrant character and the native Dutch character communicated by trial and error. These sketches were humorous because the comedians highlighted what (incorrect) assumptions the native Dutch held about immigrants. In the first sketch, the Dutch greengrocer wrongfully addressed Pamuk in broken Dutch. He was arguably misguided by Pamuk’s appearance, which corresponded to the (Dutch) stereotypical image of Turkish men.²¹⁹ Since to him it was a fact that immigrants did not speak Dutch, the greengrocer did not actually listen and thus did not realise that Pamuk was proficient in Dutch. While in the sketch with Mehmet Pamuk it was the native Dutch character who was unable to let go of his assumptions about immigrants, in the example from *Draadstaal* the communication was difficult because both the native Dutch and the immigrant character were stuck in their own point of view. The humour resulted from the host’s inability to address Fatima in a normal way and his lack of understanding of why Fatima was offended. Yet, just like the host, Fatima also could not go beyond her own point of view. Her immediate and almost automatic replies to what the host said suggested that she had already passed a definite negative judgement on the host. This judgement was unlikely to change, because Fatima interpreted everything he said in such a way that it proved her point.

NO INTERACTION: DISTORTED REALITY

Even though in the following sketch from *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993) a lot was said about immigrants, no immigrant characters were put on screen. I term this the *tell don’t show* strategy. Instead of focussing on the interaction between native Dutch and immigrant characters, as in the previous sketches with Mehmet Pamuk and Fatima, immigrants were treated as an abstract notion.

Considering the *tell don’t show* strategy, one sketch, titled ‘Illegals in Juinen’, particularly stood out [Appendix 2].²²⁰ The sketch exhibits the brilliance of van Kooten and de Bie as comedians. In the sketch, the viewers were introduced to H. van der Vaart (de Bie), the mayor of the fictional village Juinen, and his alderman, Tjolk Hekking (van Kooten). Alarmed by the news that the number of illegal immigrants in the Netherlands was increasing, the mayor ordered his alderman to figure out how many illegals there were in Juinen. Hekking assured him he had never seen an illegal in Juinen before. Yet, as soon as the mayor was out of sight, Hekking confessed to the viewers that he knew exactly how many illegals there were in Juinen, 229 to be precise. More than that, he knew where they all lived and worked.²²¹ Hekking acknowledged that Juinen relied on them. Notably the businesses in Juinen that were run by his family members employed many illegals. Hence, he did not want the mayor to know. When asked for the results of his investigation, Hekking thus lied and told the mayor that there were no illegals in Juinen. The mayor, a little bit disbelieving

²¹⁹ As a character, Pamuk was very recognizable. He always wore the same outfit, consisting of a red knitted cap, a white shirt, dark smart trousers and a grey coat. Above all, however, his large moustache was his trademark.

²²⁰ ‘Illegalen in Juinen’, *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 1 November 1992), Beeld en Geluid.

²²¹ At the end of the sketch, the viewers found out that Hekking himself also lodged a number of undocumented workers in his house. ‘Illegalen in Juinen’.

at first said: 'Not one? Not one illegal in Juinen?!'²²² Shortly afterwards, he joyfully exclaimed: 'We do not have a problem with illegals in Juinen at all. Great! Bravo!'²²³

I consider the use of the *tell don't show* strategy to be a conscious decision, for it had specific effects that otherwise would not have been as strong.²²⁴ By not putting a face on the undocumented immigrants, van Kooten and de Bie cleverly emphasised the discourse and behaviour of the native Dutch characters. For instance, the mayor's rhetoric of fear was underlined and the fear itself was suggested to be irrational. After all, the mayor was worried about the presence of people he only knew to exist, but had never met before. Connected to this, the sketch contrasted different perspectives. Adding to Vos' argument that television can visualise a reality that does not exist, this sketch indicates that different realities can be put on screen simultaneously.²²⁵ On the one hand, there was the mayor who desperately wanted to see his ideal image of Juinen confirmed by his alderman. The alderman, on the other hand, had a more realistic image of Juinen. However, he did not want to shatter the illusions of the mayor, for he and his family members arguably wished to continue to profit from the immigrants' cheap and *invisible* labour. Lastly, the viewers were put between the two. What they actually saw corresponded with the mayor's perception of Juinen, but from the things the alderman confided to the viewers, they knew this to be untrue.

In conclusion, this sketch shows that the reality of integration was always complicated, even before it was a matter of interaction. In these situations the main obstacle to integration was not communication, but unworldliness. Van Kooten and de Bie demonstrated that some people's views regarding immigration were remote from the realities of everyday life. This contrast between perception and reality hindered them from thinking about and dealing with integration in an adequate way.



Taken together, the two types of sketches – those in which there was interaction and those in which there was not – raise the question of whether or not more interaction between immigrants and native Dutch people would facilitate integration. This question connects to the contact hypothesis, a scientific theory developed by Gordon Allport, which states that under specific circumstances contact between different (groups of) people can decrease prejudice, and with it racism and xenophobia.²²⁶ All comedians reflected on this thesis in their own way. For instance, the aforementioned feature *de Binnenloper (the Visitor)* in *100% AB (2002-2003)* started from the same premise.²²⁷ Ultimately, however, I argue that all humorous television programmes painted a sceptical picture of the contact hypothesis. Comedians did not show

²²² Original quote: 'Niet één? Niet één illegaal in Juinen?!' 'Illegalen in Juinen'.

²²³ Original quote: 'We hebben helemaal geen probleem met de illegalen in Juinen. Geweldig! Bravo!' 'Illegalen in Juinen'.

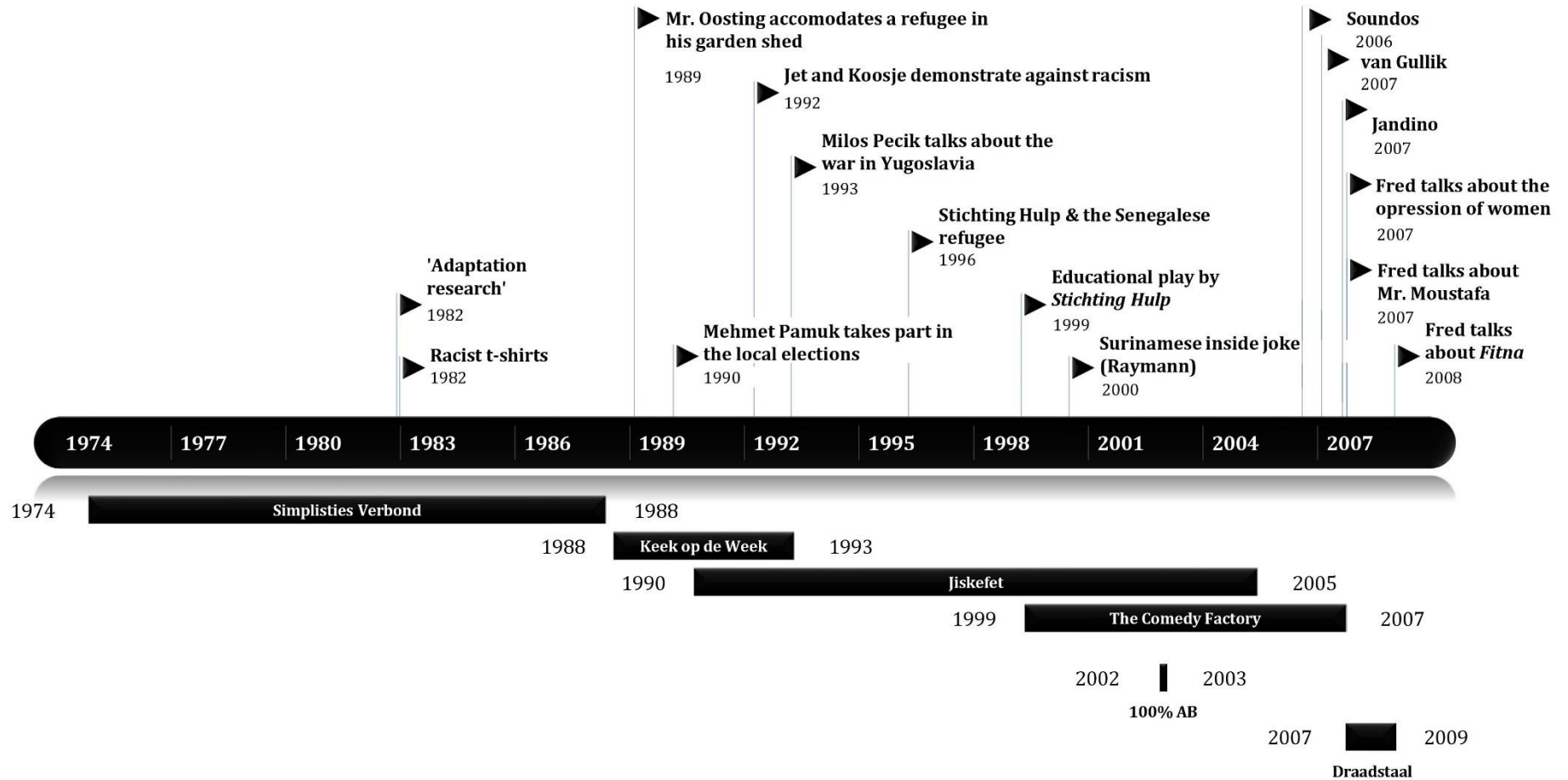
²²⁴ Other sketches which incontestably made use of the *tell don't show* strategy are: 'Onderdak aan buitenlandse werknemers'; 'Zwerver Dirk brengt asielzoekers onder in zijn nieuwe leegstaande villa', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 8 April 1990), Beeld en Geluid; 'Jet en Koosje leggen een bos tulpen neer bij een moskee'; 'Anti-racisme-betoging'.

²²⁵ Vos, *Bewegend Verleden: Inleiding in de Analyse van Films en Televisieprogramma's*, 121.

²²⁶ For a discussion of the contact hypothesis, see: John F. Dovidio, Peter Glick, and Laurie Rudman, *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

²²⁷ 'De Binnenloper'.

instances in which interaction decreased prejudice, but continuously highlighted how people's prejudice influenced their behaviour and view of reality. It is impossible to determine whether or not they did so for a specific reason or in consideration of what would have the most humorous effect.



Timeline 6. Timeline of the sketches mentioned in the following section 'Criticism: Who is to Blame?'

3. CRITICISM: WHO IS TO BLAME?

In the previous section, I argued that the six humorous television programmes presented the reality of integration as a truly complicated and imperfect one. This raises the question of what serious message the comedians tried to convey through their humorous interpretations of what integration was like in practice. I argue that they oftentimes expressed criticism. This already became clear in the previously mentioned sketches. Think of the mayor of Juinen, who was criticised for his unworldliness and of Fatima, who spoke out about the interviewer, who she felt disrespectfully addressed her as a 'knuffelmarokkaan'.²²⁸ As the title indicates, this section examines who the comedians suggested were to blame for the imperfections of integration.

TARGETING THE NATIVE DUTCH AND/OR THE NON-NATIVE DUTCH

Before going into detail about the criticism voiced by the comedians, it is important to pause briefly and observe that the ones facing criticism were almost exclusively the native Dutch.²²⁹ While both the immigrant and native Dutch characters were entertaining and funny, the immigrant characters were almost never the butt of the joke. A possible explanation for this is the fact that the ethical revolution of the 1960s had a strong legacy in the Netherlands and created an 'ethnic taboo'.²³⁰ As a result, following Kuipers argument about the role of taboos in humour, ethnicity as well as integration in general were topics that had to be addressed with 'appropriate seriousness'.²³¹

While surprising at first, this observation also makes sense in light of the particular nature of satire.²³² Satire typically targets people that symbolise power in a society or are simply higher up in the social hierarchy.²³³ A nice illustration are satirical cartoons of, for instance, politicians or royalty.²³⁴ By most people they are considered to be acceptable targets because they have a certain authority and are in a position to defend themselves. This does not mean that all jokes targeted at them are necessarily accepted. The boundaries of what is acceptable differ from individual to individual.²³⁵ The point at issue is that people with a high social status or established institutions are approved as legitimate targets of satire.²³⁶ In contrast, targeting individuals or groups in society that do not enjoy a high status is complicated. As Bart

²²⁸ 'Illegalen in Juinen'; 'Knuffelmarokkaan'.

²²⁹ The only programme in which both the native Dutch and immigrants were the butt of the joke was *The Comedy Factory*. Further on, I explain what made *The Comedy Factory* exceptional.

²³⁰ Vuijsje, *Correct. Weldenkend Nederland Sinds de Jaren Zestig*, 24–37; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf Eeuwen Migratie*, 149, 178–79.

²³¹ Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 134.

²³² Apart from *The Comedy Factory*, all humorous television programmes were categorized as satirical on the Wiki page of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*. 'Categorie: Satire', Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 3 October 2018, <https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Categorie:Satire>.

²³³ Meijer Drees and Nieuwenhuis, 'De Macht van Satire'.

²³⁴ The exhibition *Serieus Grappig (Seriously Funny)* in the museum of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* includes many nice examples of satirical cartoons: 'Serieus Grappig'.

²³⁵ De Wilde, Interview with Karen Drost and Bart van der Linden - Beeld en Geluid.

²³⁶ Meijer Drees and Nieuwenhuis, 'De Macht van Satire'.

van der Linden, researcher for the exhibition on satire *Serieus grappig (Seriously funny)*, put it: 'It is not done to kick down'.²³⁷

The fact that immigrants remained free from ridicule in the selected television programmes suggests that the comedians in question reasoned that mocking them would be equal to humiliating them, for their low social status hindered them from effectively defending themselves. Especially on public broadcasting stations, humour with the intention to humiliate – that is 'putdown humour' as it was termed by Zillmann and Stocking – did not find acceptance.²³⁸ Interestingly, their low social status can also be said to explain why characters like Mehmet Pamuk, Milos Pecik and Sayid N'gish were presented in a stereotypical, yet friendly and entertaining way. In their study on stereotype content, Fiske, Cuddy, Glick and Xu argue that stereotypical depictions of out-groups are captured by two dimensions, namely warmth and competence. More specifically, they claim that out-groups that are not seen as competition to the in-group are generally portrayed in a warm way.²³⁹

The Comedy Factory (1999-2007) was the only exception to the unwritten rule to not ridicule immigrants. In this television programme, stand-up comedians did target immigrant groups and made them the butt of their jokes. Crucial in this regard, however, was that most comedians who did so were of migrant background. Just as native Dutch comedians who ridiculed the way their peers responded to the question of integration, with their jokes these 'ethno-comedians' referred to a group they belonged to themselves.²⁴⁰ A comedian of Moroccan origin, for instance, could make fun of his own specific group, namely people of Moroccan origin, but he could also ridicule other immigrant groups, such as immigrants from Surinam or Poland. Resultingly, ethno-comedians attracted attention to the variety of immigrant groups in the Netherlands.

Furthermore, ethno-comedians targeted the native Dutch as well. This was not considered to be problematic, because the native Dutch were generally higher up on the social ladder. These kind of jokes were typically created through a comparison between a certain group of immigrants – or immigrants in general – with the native Dutch. What is interesting about this type of jokes is that they evoked a sense of community among the non-native Dutch. For example, at one point, Jandino, a comedian born in Curaçao, referred to this community as follows: 'we, allochtonen'.²⁴¹ It is important to note that when they made jokes about the native Dutch, the ethno-comedians did not necessarily exclude them from sharing a laugh. Those who did not take themselves too seriously, usually joined in. Yet, that was different for inside jokes, an

²³⁷ I had an inspiring conversation over the telephone with Karen Drost and Bart van der Linden, who created the exhibition on satire, titled *Serieus grappig (Seriously funny)*, in the museum of the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* in Hilversum. De Wilde, Interview with Karen Drost and Bart van der Linden - Beeld en Geluid; 'Serieus Grappig'.

²³⁸ Dolf Zillmann and S. Holly Stocking, 'Putdown Humor', *Journal of Communication* 26, no. 3 (1976): 154–163.

²³⁹ Susan T. Fiske et al., 'A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 6 (2002): 878–902.

²⁴⁰ The term 'ethno-comedy' is defined as 'comedy about questions of ethnicity and multiculturalism that is performed by actors who may or may not be of migrant background'. The term 'ethno-comedian', however, is reserved for comedians of migrant background. The aforementioned terms are almost exclusively used in a German context. Elsewhere, this type of humour is mostly referred to as 'ethnic humour'. Bower, 'Made in Germany: Integration as Inside Joke', 362.

²⁴¹ Jandino, 'Jandino'.

interesting new type of jokes that appeared in *The Comedy Factory*. With inside jokes ethno-comedians built upon (cultural) knowledge that was not available to the native Dutch. In these instances, they were excluded from laughter.²⁴² For example, after telling a joke which included a Surinamese expression, Raymann observed: ‘Yes, those Dutch people are like *huh?*’ He continued: ‘That’s a Surinamese joke. We’ll explain it to you later’.²⁴³

Interestingly, I observed that – in this setting where it was acceptable to laugh at immigrants – some native Dutch stand-up comedians felt comfortable enough to give it a try. After all, by accepting the invitation to perform in a television programme like *The Comedy Factory*, which was characterised by its culturally diverse audience, the native Dutch comedians had already made it clear that they were no racists. The following fragment from the routine by Johan van Gullik suggests that these jokes were appreciated [Appendix 2]. Van Gullik’s routine, in which he talked about ‘Moroccan pigeons’ and ‘Surinamese pigeons’, was received by the audience in an exuberant way. His use of imagery made people burst out in tears. At one point, he even had to ask the audience to stop laughing, so he could deliver the punchline. Below, I added a fragment from his routine:

Recently, I was eating some fries, when suddenly a Moroccan pigeon flew towards me. [Van Gullik uses his hands to imitate the flying pigeon.] *Flap, flap, flap...* right into my bag of fries. Steals some fries, flies away, comes flying back a bit later with the stolen fries still in its beak, right into my mayonnaise. Nah, rude dude. Really rude. And do you know what it is? You cannot say anything about it, because before you know ten, twenty, thirty of those Moroccan pigeons appear. *Moroccoe! Moroccoe!*²⁴⁴

Shortly after this joke, van Gullik went on to talk about ‘Surinamese pigeons’. Again, he translated common stereotypes about Surinamese people into characteristics of pigeons: ‘You know them, those Surinamese pigeons. With those golden rings around their legs. (...) Those golden beaks. All of a sudden they come from around the corner. *Doekoe! Doekoe!*’²⁴⁵ (*Doekoe* is a well-known Surinamese word for money.²⁴⁶) Although van Gullik referred to negative stereotypes about Moroccans and Surinamese people, I suspect that his creative imagery made his use of those stereotypes less problematic.

²⁴² Bower, ‘Made in Germany: Integration as Inside Joke’.

²⁴³ Original quote: ‘Ja, die Nederlanders kijken ‘huh?’ Dat is een Surinaams grapje. We gaan dat later even aan jullie uitleggen.’ Jörgen Raymann, ‘Intro Raymann’, *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 20 June 2000), Beeld en Geluid.

²⁴⁴ Original quote: ‘Laatst ook, stond ik mijn patatje te eten, komt er ineens een Marokkaanse duif aan fladderen. [Van Gullik doet met zijn handen een vliegende duif na.] *Flap, flap, flap...* in mijn bakje patat. Pikt een patatje, vliegt weg, komt even later weer terug vliegen met het gestolen patatje nog in z’n snavel, zo in mijn bakje met mayonaise. Nah, brutaal jonge. Echt brutaal. En weet je wat het is? Je kan er niets van zeggen, want voor je het weet staan er tien, twintig, dertig van die Marokkaanse duiven. *Maroekoe! Maroekoe!*’ Johan van Gullik, ‘Johan van Gullik’, *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 28 January 2007), Beeld en Geluid.

²⁴⁵ Original quote: ‘Je kent ze wel die Surinaamse duiven. Met die gouden ringetjes om hun pootjes. (...) Van die gouden snaveltjes. Komen die ineens om het hoekie. *Doekoe! Doekoe!*’ van Gullik.

²⁴⁶ ‘Doekoe’, in *Van Dale*, n.d.

Since in all other television programmes the native Dutch comedians decided against targeting immigrants, they had to find another subject of ridicule in order to still be able to address the topics of migration, integration and cultural diversity in the Netherlands. As mentioned, the choice fell on the group they belonged to themselves, that is the native Dutch. In essence, the humour was all about the way they thought about and dealt with the presence of immigrants in the Netherlands. I structure the remainder of this section according to the different groups in Dutch society that were criticised. For each group I go into what exactly they were blamed for.

Roughly speaking, there were two targets of criticism. On the one hand, ordinary people were criticised. Within this group, comedians distinguished two opposite groups: the xenophiles (native Dutch characters who were overly optimistic about integration and held progressive views) and xenophobes (native Dutch characters who were pessimistic about integration and held conservative right-wing opinions). On the other hand, politicians and the policies they represented were the butt of criticism.

ORDINARY PEOPLE: XENOPHILES & XENOPHOBES

It is interesting to note that the comedians decided to present two opposing types of ordinary Dutch people. The native Dutch who were indifferent about integration or did not hold strong opinions on the topic, did not figure in the sketches, and were thus not directly criticised. This choice to focus on the extremes makes sense in light of the comedians' objective to generate laughter. Just by exaggerating their discourse and behaviour, the comedians managed to present them as funny characters. For the same reason, it was easy to highlight what they were to blame for.

I start the analysis with the xenophiles. The following sketches from *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993) and *Jiskefet* (1990-2005) presented characters that belonged to the group of Dutch xenophiles.²⁴⁷ In these sketches the representation of the immigrant characters served the purpose of criticising the xenophiles. They were never (one of) the protagonist(s), but were depicted as dependent characters who barely said anything. By depicting them like that, the comedians highlighted and ridiculed the discourse and behaviour of the xenophilic native Dutch protagonist(s).²⁴⁸ The criticism directed at them was that they were paternalistic and ignorant.

First, *Keek op de Week* included a sketch with Mr. Oosting [Appendix 2]. In the sketch, Mr. Oosting (van Kooten) recounted how a few days earlier he had driven past Schiphol and had given a man a ride. This man, he later realised, was a refugee. Hence, Mr. Oosting decided to accommodate the man in his garden shed. Halfway through the sketch, Mr. Oosting went back to the shed with a glass of milk for the refugee, his 'amigo' as he called him. To his surprise the shed was empty. At first Mr. Oosting seemed genuinely depressed. He said that all of a sudden he had a very empty feeling. Next, however, he casually added: 'This

²⁴⁷ 'Oosting neemt een vluchteling in huis'; 'Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker'; 'Stichting Hulp: de drie dames voeren een multicultureel en maatschappelijk verantwoorde theatervoorstelling op'.

²⁴⁸ Overall, this type of sketches was most frequently included in *Simplisties Verbond*, *Keek op de Week* and *Jiskefet*. Moreover, especially refugees who had just arrived in the Netherlands and did not speak the language were presented this way. Some examples are: 'Politici halen een politiek vluchteling op van Schiphol'; 'Oosting neemt een vluchteling in huis'; 'SS-er als vluchteling bij twee dames'; 'Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker'.

is exactly the feeling I had when my dog ran away. (...) That time I also had such an empty feeling'.²⁴⁹ Shortly after, he stated that he would go back to Schiphol to get a new refugee: 'I'm going to Schiphol. I'm getting a new one'.²⁵⁰

In this sketch, Mr. Oosting was unmistakably the butt of criticism. Especially at the end, van Kooten and de Bie did not spare him. They expressed severe criticism by implying that to Mr. Oosting – and by extension all xenophiles – refugees were like pets. They had no inner life, could be kept in a garden shed and were interchangeable. I interpret this sketch as an expression of criticism on Mr. Oosting's paternalistic attitude. Rather than actually caring about the refugee, he was self-involved and liked the idea of himself as someone who helped refugees.

The following sketch from *Jiskefet* targeted Oda (Prins), Guusje (Romeyn) and Femke (Koch), three middle-aged women who were on the board of a charity called *Stichting Hulp (Foundation Help)*.²⁵¹ In the sketch, Oda, Guusje and Femke had a meeting with an asylum seeker from Senegal to complete some paperwork [Appendix 2].²⁵² The man's name was mentioned by Femke, but in an unintelligible manner. It was clear that she did not know how to pronounce it. During the meeting Oda, Guusje and Femke addressed the Senegalese man in broken English and continuously threw in Dutch words. The man seemed to only partly understand what was going on. To most of the questions they asked him, he replied by nodding or shaking his head.

The ladies of *Stichting Hulp* were clearly the butt of criticism. First, there was the ignorance of Oda, Guusje and Femke. Since they had trouble communicating with the asylum seeker, the ladies started to come up with their own answers to the questions. For example, assuming he came from the capital of Senegal, they wrote down 'Senegal City'.²⁵³ Further down on the form, they needed to fill in his profession. Femke promptly suggested to fill in 'electrician'. Oda agreed and replied: 'Sounds good'.²⁵⁴ From a more cynical point of view, their ignorance could also be interpreted as a lack of interest, but I would not go that far. Second, Oda, Guusje and Femke were criticised for their paternalistic mentality. At one point the ladies talked – speculated actually – about the things the man must have gone through in Senegal. Guusje agreed with Femke that they could not possibly imagine. Shortly afterwards, she stated: 'The funny thing is that if

²⁴⁹ Original quote: 'Dit is precies hetzelfde gevoel dat ik had wanneer mijn hond was weggelopen. (...) Toen had ik ook zo'n leeg gevoel.' 'Oosting neemt een vluchteling in huis'.

²⁵⁰ Original quote: 'Ik ga naar Schiphol. Ik haal een nieuwe.' 'Oosting neemt een vluchteling in huis'.

²⁵¹ 'Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker'.

²⁵² In an article on the website of *VPRO* about the representation of refugees on television, this sketch from *Jiskefet* – 'de asielzoeker' ('the asylum seeker') – is specifically mentioned. They argue that it is a sketch which puts a face on refugees. While this is technically true, this title is misleading, for the refugee is presented as a flat character. 'Bij de Vpro krijgt de vluchteling een gezicht', *VPRO*, accessed 8 January 2019, <https://www.vpro.nl/themadossiers/migratie.html>.

²⁵³ A similar critique of the ignorance of the Dutch can be found in a sketch from *Simplisties Verbond* in which two politicians described a refugee as coming from a place in 'East-West Central Africa': 'Politici halen een politiek vluchteling op van Schiphol'.

²⁵⁴ Original quote: 'Klinkt goed.' 'Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker'.

you look into those eyes, you can still see great joy through all sadness'.²⁵⁵ Everything considered, this sketch condemned the fact that three ladies happily saw themselves as benefactresses coming to the rescue of this poor man from Senegal, who in reality they knew nothing about, not even that he probably spoke French.

Whereas the xenophiles were not criticised for their ideals, but for the way they lived up to them, the xenophobes were criticised for the beliefs they held. The comedians suggested that the fact that they held these beliefs said something about them, namely that they were stupid. While xenophiles were portrayed as naïve people, xenophobes were presented as too stupid to realise that their opinions were reprehensible. This conclusion is very pessimistic, because it implies that there was no point in trying to persuade xenophobes with good arguments. They would simply never understand.

This focus on the stupidity of the adherents of the right was apparent throughout time.²⁵⁶ Yet, their discourse, which was shown to be stupid and lacking of all logic, was contextual. In the 1980s and 1990s, xenophobes were presented as racists.²⁵⁷ Below, I included a sketch from *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1988).²⁵⁸ Around the turn of the century, the sensitivity of the social boundary of religion increased and the topic of Islam really came to the core of the discourse.²⁵⁹ Through the character of Fred, a middle aged unemployed Dutchman, the makers of *Draadstaal* (2007-2009) criticised the (extreme) right discourse for spreading an irrational fear of Islam [Appendix 2].²⁶⁰

In the sketch from *Simplisties Verbond*, the owner of a clothes shop (de Bie) explained that he had noticed that the youth was leaning more and more to the right. He saw this as a great opportunity to make a profit, so he ordered 1000 T-shirts with a swastika and below it the caption 'wite power'. He was not happy with the result, however. Holding up a T-shirt, he asked the viewers if they noticed what was wrong with it. He continued to answer his own question: 'The legs of the swastika point in the wrong direction.

²⁵⁵ Original quote: 'Het gekke is dat als je dan toch naar die ogen kijkt, zie je ook door alle verdriet een enorme vreugde.' 'Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker'.

²⁵⁶ Kuipers argues that it is accepted for a stand-up comedian to tell ethnic jokes if he/she makes it clear that he/she is posing as a stupid racist: Kuipers, 'The Difference Between a Surinamese and a Turk', 146.

²⁵⁷ The following sketches are examples in which the topic of racism was central to the sketch: 'Racistische lectuur'; 'Kledingverkoper met T-shirts "wite power" en hakenkruizen'; 'Toenemende discriminatie door de komst van illegalen uit Oost-Europa'; 'De Bie geschorst omwille van racistische opmerkingen'; 'Anti-racisme-betoging'; 'Oprukkend racisme in het Journaal'; 'Anti-racisme-demonstratie'.

²⁵⁸ 'Kledingverkoper met T-shirts "wite power" en hakenkruizen'.

²⁵⁹ Before (in the programmes of van Kooten and de Bie), Islam was mentioned as well, but less frequently. Sketches in which Islam was mentioned are: 'De Chrislam'; 'Discriminatie veroorzaakt door de Golfoorlog'; 'Jet en Koojsje leggen een bos tulpen neer bij een moskee'.

²⁶⁰ 'Fred en Ria: shoarma', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 26 September 2007), NPO3; 'Fred en Ria: moslims', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 28 September 2007), NPO3; 'Fred en Ria: het Nederlands van buitenlanders', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 5 October 2007), NPO3; 'Fred en Ria: goede doelen', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 12 October 2007), NPO3; 'Fred en Ria: terroristen', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 27 October 2007), NPO3; 'Fred en Ria: horrorfilms', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 4 November 2007), NPO3; 'Fred en Ria: kerstpakket', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 28 December 2007), NPO3; 'Praatstaal', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 28 December 2008), NPO3.

They are pointing left now, while that should be right. The right youth will immediately notice this'.²⁶¹ Funnily enough, he did not notice the obvious spelling mistake.

As mentioned, in *Draadstaal* the focus was not so much on racism, but on Islamophobia. The discourse of Fred (van Koningsbrugge) about integration clearly fit within the larger Islamophobic discourse of the beginning of the 21st century. Moreover, it can be termed 'hyperrealist', for Fred arguably did not care for political correctness, but was frank 'not for the sake of truth, but for its own sake'.²⁶² For example, in one sketch, Fred was asked about his opinion on *Fitna*, a film made by the right-wing politician Geert Wilders expressing his views on Islam.²⁶³ Fred immediately replied that he thought it was time a film like that was made. Ria, his wife, however, blurted out that he had not even watched it. Annoyed at Ria (van de Ven) for selling him out, Fred argued that there are things you do not need to see to know that they are true. On a higher level, this statement symbolised what was wrong with the right discourse according to the makers of *Draadstaal*, that is that it was based on assumptions.

Another illustration of Fred's illogical and overdramatic reasoning is the following conversation between Fred and Ria about Mr. Mustafa, a man who lived in their neighbourhood:

Ria: As a matter of fact, Mr. Mustafa is a terribly nice man. He always says *good morning!*

Fred: What good is it to you if someone says *good morning* and then blows himself up in the bus?

Ria: But he didn't actually blown himself up!

Fred: In a manner of speaking, Ria. In a manner of speaking. The point is that you do no longer know who you can trust nowadays. Before you know it, you open the door and find the entire street filled with pulled off legs and arms.²⁶⁴

Fred's use of the expression 'in a manner of speaking' is symbolic of his overall discourse, which was full of fallacies. The makers of *Draadstaal* suggested that an irrational fear had troubled Fred's judgement and made him see danger and possible terrorist attacks where there were none.²⁶⁵ More even, he was suspicious of gestures of friendliness.

²⁶¹ Original quote: 'De haakjes van het hakenkruis staan in de verkeerde richting. Ze wijzen nu naar links, terwijl dat naar rechts zou moeten zijn. Dat zullen de rechtse jongeren meteen doorhebben.' 'Kledingverkoper met T-shirts "wite power" en hakenkruizen'.

²⁶² Prins, 'The Nerve to Break Taboos', 376.

²⁶³ 'Praatstaal'.

²⁶⁴ Original quote: [Ria] 'Trouwens, die meneer Mustafa is een hartstikke leuke man. Die zegt altijd goeiemorgen!' [Fred] 'Wat heb je er nou aan als iemand goeiemorgen zegt en zich daarna opblaast in de bus?' [Ria] 'Hij heeft zich toch helemaal niet opgeblazen?' [Fred] 'Bij wijze van spreken, Ria. Bij wijze van spreken. Het gaat erom dat je tegenwoordig niet meer weet wie je kan vertrouwen. Voor je het weet doe je de deur open, ligt de hele straat vol met opgerukte benen en open armen.' 'Fred en Ria: moslims'.

²⁶⁵ In another sketch, Fred indicated that he was afraid to be murdered. Fred indignantly told the viewers that he had found out that donations to charities often ended up in the wrong hands: 'So ultimately, I am sponsoring the Taliban. Soon I'll be shot at my own front door with my own gun, you know? You have to be so careful'. Original quote: 'Ben ik dus uiteindelijk de Taliban aan het sponsoren. Word ik dadelijk in mijn eigen voordeur doodgeschoten door mijn eigen pistool, snap je? Je moet zo op je hoede lopen.' 'Fred en Ria: goede doelen'.

While the comedians presented the xenophiles and xenophobes as two opposite groups with fundamentally different ideals, indirectly they also brought out the similarities between them. Just like with the ideal interpretation of integration, the comedians suggested that in reality the attitudes of the xenophiles and xenophobes were more complex. Something the xenophiles and xenophobes had in common according to the comedians was that they were not aware of the discrepancy between their words and actions. Highlighting this contrast – directly or indirectly – was a common humorous strategy. For the xenophiles this discrepancy suggested that they were hypocrites. Regarding the xenophobes, this flaw just made them extra stupid.

In the following sketch, the makers of *Jiskefet* (1990-2005), indirectly brought out the contrast between what the ladies of *Stichting Hulp* said – namely that they were not prejudiced against immigrants – and their comments, which suggested otherwise. In the sketch, which is almost half an hour long, Oda (Prins), Guusje (Romeyn) and Femke (Koch) from *Stichting Hulp* staged an educational play.²⁶⁶ They explained to their audience of teenagers that it was their objective to address a number of societal phenomena, among other things, cultural diversity, sexual misconduct and exploitation. During the play the ladies frequently reflected on the multicultural society they lived in and argued in favour of more mutual understanding and tolerance. Ironically, the three ladies themselves did not suit the action to the word and were unable to put aside their prejudices. For example, in the second part of the play, Guusje spoke about Moroccan youngsters in a very biased way. The following quote is only part of the speech she delivered:

Nowadays there is a group of youngsters in our society that is fiery and prone to go off the rails. We refer to the group of Moroccans. Moroccans originally come from North Africa. And we come from a country in which we've had a lot of education and upbringing. A Moroccan, in contrast, was brought up with actions in a Berber tent and does not know what to do with himself on the street. As a result, these youngsters are at the mercy of one another and stick together and often get few job opportunities. Yes, what happens next? Moroccans become ... [Guusje waits for the audience to reply, but finishes the sentence herself.] aggressive. And? [The audience reacts.] *Thieves*. And what more? ... Ruthless of course, right?²⁶⁷

In a sketch from *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993) van Kooten and de Bie even suggested that people who presented themselves as passionate xenophiles did so to hide their xenophobic attitudes. In the sketch, Jet and Koosje, two well-to-do sisters, protested against racism [Appendix 2]. It started with images of Jet (de

²⁶⁶ 'Stichting Hulp: de drie dames voeren een multicultureel en maatschappelijk verantwoorde theatervoorstelling op'.

²⁶⁷ Original quote: 'Nu is er een groep jongeren in onze maatschappij die licht ontbrandbaar is en zeer gevoelig voor het feit te gaan ontsporen, en we bedoelen hier de groep Marokkanen. Marokkanen komen van oorsprong uit Noord-Afrika. En wij komen uit een land waar we natuurlijk veel educatie en veel opvoeding hebben gehad. Een Marokkaan daarentegen krijgt zijn opvoeding van huis uit in de berbertent alleen met daden en weet zich geen raad op straat. Zodat deze jongeren overgeleverd zijn aan elkander en elkander opzoeken en vaak weinig kansen krijgen op de arbeidsmarkt. Ja, wat gebeurt er dan? Dan worden Marokkanen... [Guusje wacht tot het publiek antwoordt, maar maakt de zin dan zelf af.] *agressief*. En? [Het publiek reageert.] *Dieven*. En wat nog meer? ... En niets ontziend natuurlijk, hé.' 'Stichting Hulp: de drie dames voeren een multicultureel en maatschappelijk verantwoorde theatervoorstelling op'.

Bie) and Koosje (van Kooten) walking arm in arm in a street in a quiet residential neighbourhood. Jet carried a megaphone and chanted slogans against racism. Compared to Jet, Koosje seemed less enthusiastic. She suggested that in Laricum – this was where Jet and Koosje lived – racism was not a problem. Since there were no people of colour around, one could not just conclude that the people in Laricum were racist. Koosje argued: ‘At the most there is xenophobia in our village’.²⁶⁸ Along the way, it became clear that Koosje was not referring to people in general, but mostly to her sister, who, as it turned out, had refused to travel to Amsterdam and join a large anti-racism demonstration there, according to Koosje, for fear of ‘foreigners in Amsterdam’.²⁶⁹ By fervently protesting in Laricum, Jet was arguably overcompensating. Above all she wanted to hide the fact that she herself had xenophobic attitudes.

Lastly, the makers of *Draadstaal* (2007-2009) left it up to the viewers to recognise the contrast and inconsistency between the idea Fred (van Koningsbrugge) had of himself and his actions, which went against it. This inconsistency made him a hypocrite, but it mostly strengthened the idea that he was stupid. In one sketch, Fred expressed that he condemned the oppression of women in Islamic culture. However, the things he said to his wife Ria (van de Ven) during his tirade about female oppression revealed his own sexist views:

The point is that those girls no longer dare to wear what they would like to. And they want us to behave like them, so as to oppress those girls. That’s not me. I’ll have another beer, Ria. I don’t like that. No, Ria, I respect Ria. Do I respect you or not? *Yeah, whatever?* What kind of ingratitude is that? Give me that beer!²⁷⁰

Ultimately, the criticism concerning the discrepancy between the words and actions of both the xenophiles and xenophobes boiled down to the aforementioned point about how people struggled to question their assumptions and go beyond their own perspective. What the comedians did was to problematise the assumptions the native Dutch had of immigrants.

On a side note, at times, the viewers were also criticised for being prejudiced. The most effective way for comedians to do so was to construct their jokes in such a way that in the end the viewers were confronted with their prejudice. To clarify my point, I added an example from Jandino’s comedy routine in *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007) [Appendix 2].²⁷¹ Jandino intelligently used a play on stereotypes. He re-appropriated the negative stereotype of laziness, associated with people from the Antilles, and turned it into something they could use in their favour. To do so, he brought up the Polish:

²⁶⁸ Original quote : ‘Er is hooguit vreemdelingenangst in ons dorp.’ ‘Anti-racisme-betoging’.

²⁶⁹ Original quote : ‘buitenlanders in Amsterdam’ ‘Anti-racisme-betoging’.

²⁷⁰ Original quote: ‘Het gaat erom dat die meisjes niet meer durven te dragen wat ze zouden willen. En ze willen dat wij ons net zo gaan gedragen als zij doen, zodat we die meisjes onderdrukken. Daar ben ik dus niet van. Doe mij nog maar een biertje, Ria. Daar houd ik niet van. Nee, Ria, ik heb respect voor Ria. Heb ik respect voor jou of niet? *Jaja?* Wat is dat nou ondankbaarheid? Geef dat biertje!’ ‘Fred en Ria: shoarma’.

²⁷¹ Jandino, ‘Jandino’.

Because I know, I know, there are problems with *allochtonen*. Problems with Antilleans. And that is why every day I thank God for the Polish. Thank God for the Polish. Thank God for the Polish. Really, because everyone is afraid of the Polish. Everyone, except for the Antilleans. But the thing is, the more they talk about the Polish, the less about us. (...) Because all news about the Polish is good news for us. What is the number one thing the Dutch say about the Polish? [pause] The Polish are only here to take our jobs. See, there's many things you can say about Antilleans...²⁷²

The ingenious thing about this joke is that Jandino did not actually say that Antilleans are lazy. He constructed the joke in such a way that this was the logical conclusion. By doing so, he confronted the audience with their prejudice.

POLITICIANS

In the previous examples, the comedians criticised the xenophiles and xenophobes, two opposite groups in Dutch society. They were criticised indirectly through fictional characters that were representative of them. Time after time, ordinary people like Mr. Oosting and Fred were both the butt of the joke and the target of criticism. Besides ordinary people, comedians also criticised people that were directly involved in the integration policy, namely politicians. They were usually criticised for their measures and/or public statements on the topic of integration. Throughout time both actual and fictional politicians were targeted. The real life politicians that encountered most opposition were Frits Bolkestein (VVD), Rita Verdonk (VVD) and Geert Wilders (PVV).²⁷³ They were criticised for propagating an irrational fear of immigrants.²⁷⁴ After giving two examples of how Rita Verdonk was criticised in *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007), I consider sketches from *Simplisties Verbond* (1974-1978) and *Keek op de Week* (1988-1993), which addressed fictional politicians and criticised their mentality and/or policies. In those cases the fictional politicians were representative of politicians in general.

Between 2002 and 2007, Rita Verdonk was the Minister of Immigration and Integration. She was the one who put in place the Integration Policy New Style, which was unmistakably more assimilationist than

²⁷² Original quote: 'Want ik weet, ik weet, er zijn problemen met allochtonen. Problemen met Antillianen. En daarom dank ik God op mijn blote knieën elke dag voor de Polen. Godzijdank voor de Polen. Godzijdank voor de Polen. Echt waar. Want iedereen is bang voor de Polen. Iedereen, behalve de Antillianen. Maar het ding is, hoe meer ze praten over de Polen, hoe minder over ons. (...) Want alle nieuws over de Polen is goed nieuws voor ons. Wat is de nummer één ding dat Nederlanders zeggen over de Polen? [pauze] De Polen komen hier alleen maar om onze banen in te pikken. Kijk, je kan veel zeggen over Antillianen...' Jandino.

²⁷³ The VVD is a conservative-liberal political party. The PVV, on the other hand, is a right-wing populist political party.

²⁷⁴ [Bolkestein] 'Uitlatingen van Bolkestein over allochtonen', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 16 February 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Uitlatingen van Bolkestein', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 22 February 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Bolkestein', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 18 October 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Bolkestein over vreemdelingen', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 14 March 1993), Beeld en Geluid; [Verdonk] Jandino, 'Jandino'; Soundos, 'Soundos', *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 28 July 2006), Beeld en Geluid; [Wilders] Rachid Larouz, 'Rachid Larouz', *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 12 January 2007), Beeld en Geluid; 'Fred en Ria: het Nederlands van buitenlanders'; 'Fred en Ria: horrorfilms'; 'Fitna', *Draadstaal* (VPRO, 28 December 2008), NPO3.

earlier policies.²⁷⁵ In her comedy routine in *The Comedy Factory* in 2006, Soundos discussed Verdonk's idea to ban burkas in the Netherlands [Appendix 2]. Soundos mentioned that she thought this was a stupid idea.²⁷⁶ Instead of arguing why women should be allowed to wear a burka, she condemned Verdonk's beliefs, which she suggested had led her to suggest something like that: 'Come on! It's the only garment that makes her [Verdonk] sexy. [The audience laughs.] Well, I think she has one. A white one with a pointed cap. [The audience laughs. Soundos smiles. A couple of people in the audience start applauding.] Yes, she has a burka-k-k. [The audience laughs.] I'm clearly not a fan'.²⁷⁷ One year later, Jandino used a completely different approach to criticise Rita Verdonk.²⁷⁸ Rather than criticising particular measures she had taken or openly stating that he did not like her, he praised her and the things she had done for *allochtonen* in the Netherlands. The irony in his voice, however, gave away that he meant the opposite of what he said:

'I love Rita. If it comes down to it I'll vote for Rita. I think she's a nice bloke. Truly! [The audience laughs and applauds.] That's a bloke, that's a bloke after my heart. Because do you know what it is? (...) There has never been anyone who has done as much for us *allochtonen* than Rita Verdonk'.²⁷⁹

Both Soundos and Jandino expressed their dissatisfaction with Verdonk's general xenophobic attitudes towards integration and her policies in particular. Their description of her fit the description of a xenophobe. It was suggested that she was a racist and that she did not care for the wellbeing of people of migrant background. Soundos and Jandino did not only criticise Verdonk in her capacity as the Minister of Immigration and Integration. They also addressed her as a person and specifically made fun of her appearance.

Apart from *The Comedy Factory*, the other humorous television programmes criticised fictional politicians more frequently than actual politicians. I suspect that this had to do with the fact that it gave the comedians more creative freedom. Nevertheless, the fictional politicians and their respective policies likely referred to then politicians and their mentalities and/or policies.²⁸⁰ This genre of sketches was most prominent in the programmes by van Kooten and de Bie. This nuances Kuipers statement that the humour of van Kooten and de Bie was 'satirical but seldom explicitly political'.²⁸¹ Below, I included two examples in

²⁷⁵ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 104; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en Gaan*, 316–18.

²⁷⁶ Soundos, 'Soundos'.

²⁷⁷ Original quote: Kom op! Het is het enige kledingstuk dat haar [Verdonk] nog sexy maakt. [Het publiek lacht.] Nou, volgens mij heeft ze er wel een. Zo'n witte met een puntmuts. [Het publiek lacht. Soundos glimlacht. Enkele mensen in het publiek beginnen te applaudiseren.] Ja, ze heeft gewoon een boerka-k-k. [Het publiek lacht.] Ik ben duidelijk geen fan.' Soundos.

²⁷⁸ Jandino, 'Jandino'.

²⁷⁹ Original quote: 'Ik hou van Rita. Als het erop neerkomt stem ik op Ria. Ik vind haar zo een topkerel. Echt waar. [Het publiek lacht en applaudeert.] Dat is een vent. Dat is een vent naar mijn hart. Want weet je wat het is? Er is nog nooit iemand geweest die zoveel heeft gedaan voor ons allochtonen dan Rita Verdonk.' Jandino.

²⁸⁰ With regard to policy, there were also sketches which particularly criticised the police or the bureaucratic procedures immigrants had to follow. Two examples are: 'Politiejacht op allochtonen', *Keek Op de Week* (VPRO, 29 March 1992), Beeld en Geluid; 'Ondertitel mannetje', *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 8 September 1991), Beeld en Geluid.

²⁸¹ Kuipers, *Good Humor, Bad Taste*, 126.

which – just like the xenophiles and xenophobes – fictional politicians were denounced for not living up to their proclaimed ideals.²⁸²

In one of the sketches from *Keek op de Week*, Mehmet Pamuk (van Kooten) was a candidate for the local elections of the imaginary municipality of Ter Weksel.²⁸³ The PvdA, the social democratic party Pamuk was a member of, only expected to obtain five seats. Yet, due to unexpected circumstances the PvdA obtained six seats. Thereupon Pamuk was asked by the chairman of the PvdA in Ter Weksel to step aside in favour of the person who held number seven on the list. Pamuk did not reconcile himself to this unfair situation – Pamuk repeatedly stated that he was number six on the list – and accused the PvdA of only putting him on the list of candidates for the sake of appearances. To quote Pamuk: ‘Unless you put me in sixth place and thought, *well, Pamuk won’t be elected*. Isn’t that a little bit what happened? Isn’t that a little bit true? Did you maybe try to show off a little by putting a member of an ethnic minority on the list?’²⁸⁴ Pamuk concluded that the party clearly did not care about the Turkish community in Ter Weksel.²⁸⁵ In a similarly lively way, Milos Pecik (de Bie) expressed his disappointment in the Dutch attitude towards the war in Yugoslavia. Pecik, who was referred to as a ‘refugee from former Yugoslavia’, openly criticised the Netherlands for not undertaking action when they said they wanted to: ‘Holland wants to fight in Yugoslavia, but when? My wife dead first? My children dead first? My parents dead? All people in Yugoslavia dead?’²⁸⁶ Since Pecik felt the Netherlands were not going to interfere, he took charge and started accosting people in the street asking whether they would sign his form declaring that they were willing to go fight.²⁸⁷

With the following two sketches from *Simplisties Verbond*, I further discuss what criticism van Kooten and de Bie voiced with regard to how politicians thought about and dealt with the topic of integration.²⁸⁸ Of the two sketches, the first one was the least explicitly critical. In the sketch, two politicians (van Kooten and de Bie) went to Schiphol to pick up a refugee from the airport.²⁸⁹ It did not take a long time for the viewers to realise that the politicians were not concerned about the refugee. Rather, they were there to make a good media impression. At first the politicians payed attention to the refugee. They tried to ask him some

²⁸² ‘Mehmet Pamuk weigert bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen zijn plaats af te staan’; ‘Milos Pecik probeert krijgers te ronselen om in Joegoslavië te gaan vechten’.

²⁸³ ‘Mehmet Pamuk weigert bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen zijn plaats af te staan’.

²⁸⁴ Original quote: ‘Tenzij u mij op de zesde plaats heeft gezet en u dacht, *nou Pamuk wordt toch niet verkozen*. Is dat niet een beetje zo? Is dat niet een heel klein beetje zo? Heeft u misschien een heel klein beetje goede sier willen maken door een lid van een etnische minderheid op de lijst te zetten?’ ‘Mehmet Pamuk weigert bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen zijn plaats af te staan’.

²⁸⁵ In response to Pamuk’s complaints, the chairman only argued that the other man had lived in Ter Weksel for thirty years (more than Pamuk’s sixteen years), and thus knew the problems of the municipality better. ‘Mehmet Pamuk weigert bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen zijn plaats af te staan’.

²⁸⁶ Original quote (in German): ‘Holland will fechten in Jugoslawien, aber wenn? Erst meine Frau tot? Erst meine Kinder tot? Meine Eltern tot? Alle Menschen in Jugoslawien tot?’ ‘Milos Pecik probeert krijgers te ronselen om in Joegoslavië te gaan vechten’.

²⁸⁷ ‘Milos Pecik probeert krijgers te ronselen om in Joegoslavië te gaan vechten’.

²⁸⁸ ‘Politici halen een politiek vluchteling op van Schiphol’; ‘Onderzoek naar de bekendheid van buitenlanders met de Nederlandse cultuur’, *Simplisties Verbond* (VPRO, 17 November 1982), Beeld en Geluid.

²⁸⁹ ‘Politici halen een politiek vluchteling op van Schiphol’.

questions in broken English. As they failed to communicate with him, they jumped to conclusions which illustrated their ignorance. For example, in the press conference held at the airport they stated that Mr. Hiawata, the refugee, was from Katamonga, a police state in East-West Central Africa. The press conference quickly degenerated in a fierce discussion between the two politicians. While at first they talked about their parties' views on refugee policy, soon the politicians brought up other points of their party programme. They got so carried away that, in the end, when the press conference was over, they even forgot the refugee at Schiphol. The criticism expressed towards the two politicians strongly resembled the criticism directed at xenophiles. Just like Mr. Oosting and the ladies from *Stichting Hulp*, the two politicians were portrayed as ignorant, paternalistic and highly self-involved.

In the following famous sketch from 1982, van Kooten and de Bie criticised xenophobic ideas regarding what the Dutch integration policy should be like [Appendix 2]. The protagonists of the sketch were two university professors, called Prof. Dr. H. Goring (de Bie) and Prof. Dr. J. Gobels (van Kooten).²⁹⁰ The fact that they were xenophobic was immediately clear from their names and Hitler-like appearance. In the beginning of the sketch, the professors stated that with their 'adaptation research among a group of test-Moroccans' they wished to provide the government with the fundamentals upon which they could build their integration policy in such a way to defend the Dutch national culture.²⁹¹ Specifically, they wanted to find out to what extent the Moroccans were willing to and able of adapting to the national culture. Again, the objective itself and the scientific air to it were in line with the Nazi discourse.²⁹² Throughout the sketch there were a few more references to Nazism. I mention these further on.

During most of the sketch images were shown of a group of Moroccan men, recognizable by their curly hair, while they were taking different tests. At each table in the room they had to prove that they were able to adopt something stereotypically Dutch. At one table they were asked to prepare a slice of bread with chocolate sprinkles. Other tests were as superficial. The professors examined, for instance, whether the 'test Moroccans' were able to clap along in the right rhythm to Dutch songs and take part in a conversation about soap operas that were popular in the Netherlands. Overall, the Moroccans seemed to have difficulties with the tasks. However, if they would have succeeded, the professors explained that they would have earned a button which said 'Me okay'.²⁹³ Just like Jews had to wear a Star of David, the professors stated that it was of the utmost importance that the Moroccans wore this button at all times and at a visible spot. In short, even if they adapted, they were still not to be trusted and had to be watched closely.

In light of this research, this sketch is particularly interesting for a couple of reasons. At first sight, it seems to suggest a different interpretation of integration than the one presented in the first section of this chapter. Integration was indeed presented as a process of adaptation, but the Moroccans were the only ones who had to adapt. More even, they were tested. This is remarkable since the sketch dates from 1982, when

²⁹⁰ 'Onderzoek naar de bekendheid van buitenlanders met de Nederlandse cultuur'.

²⁹¹ Original quote: 'aanpassingsonderzoek onder een aantal proef Marokkanen' This research was said to take place in Juinen. 'Onderzoek naar de bekendheid van buitenlanders met de Nederlandse cultuur'.

²⁹² Prof. Dr. H. Goring and Prof. Dr. J. Gobels both also wore a doctor's white coat.

²⁹³ Original quote: 'ikke ok' 'Onderzoek naar de bekendheid van buitenlanders met de Nederlandse cultuur'.

civic integration programmes did not yet exist in the Netherlands.²⁹⁴ By exaggerating the then discourse about integration, van Kooten and de Bie can be said to have predicted how integration would be dealt with in the future. Even though the proposed definition of integration seems different, I argue that this is not really the case. Since this integration research, inspired by the professors' sense of being threatened, was so heavily criticised in the sketch – it was compared to Nazism – van Kooten and de Bie suggested that this was not what the integration policy should be like. It was the worst case scenario. In conclusion, this example corroborates Vos' argument that television does not necessarily reflect an existing reality. In this case, the sketch brought to life a reality in which negatively perceived current trends had attained their hypothetical full development.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Scholten, 'The Dutch Multicultural Myth', 105.

²⁹⁵ Vos, *Bewegend Verleden: Inleiding in de Analyse van Films en Televisieprogramma's*, 121.

4. RAISING QUESTIONS: THE SELF AND THE OTHER

If based on the previous sections it seemed as if the comedians had all the answers to the question of integration, this section shows that that this is not entirely the case. Through their jokes the comedians raised many questions as well. Think, for example, of the sketch from *Jiskefet* (1990-2005) in which the ladies of *Stichting Hulp* – in an attempt to explain that integration was to be seen as a process of adaptation – confused the viewers with their imagery of apples and pears.²⁹⁶ This section demonstrates that comedians did not only express criticism, but also urged the viewers to stop and think about how they themselves thought about and dealt with the topic of integration in daily life. I argue that they were mostly challenged to think about the distinction between the Self (the native Dutch) and the Other (the non-native Dutch). The best illustration of how comedians problematised the distinction between the Self and the Other is the character of Oboema Sestetokoe (Romeyn) from *Jiskefet* (1990-2005). In this case, the distinction was problematised to such an extent that it puzzled the viewers. Therefore, in this section, I address his character in a small case study. By no means do I want to imply that *Jiskefet* was the only humorous programme which problematised this distinction.²⁹⁷ What is remarkable about *Jiskefet*, however, is that it explicitly addressed race, an aspect that otherwise was mostly left undiscussed.²⁹⁸

OBOEMA SESETOKOE, ‘THE WHITE NEGRO FROM AMSTERDAM-OOST’²⁹⁹

Oboema, who was often referred to as ‘the white negro from Amsterdam-Oost’, was one of the recurring characters in *Jiskefet* [Appendix 2].³⁰⁰ Oboema appeared in sketches throughout the whole period between 1990 and 2005. In most of these sketches, he was the main character. Oboema was born in the Netherlands, but claimed to be a descendant of the Jarobe tribe, a tribe which, according to him, originated in West-Africa, but could also be found in the West.³⁰¹ Because of this, Oboema was presented in *Jiskefet* as a character who

²⁹⁶ ‘Stichting Hulp: de drie dames voeren een multicultureel en maatschappelijk verantwoorde theatervoorstelling op’.

²⁹⁷ Another way to look at the “us” versus “them” dichotomy is terminology, notably the use of the terms ‘autochtoon’ and ‘allochtoon’ in the humorous television programmes. In *100% AB*, the terms ‘autochtoon’ and ‘allochtoon’ were very frequently used. For instance, every person Ab interviewed was referred to in the caption by name and by status, that is either ‘autochtoon’ or ‘allochtoon’. Considering that by this time the terms were highly contested, I interpret Ab’s overt and extensive use of them to be ironic, as a critique of the difficulty people – both ‘autochtonen’ and ‘allochtonen’ – had to go beyond these meaningless categories. ‘100% AB’, Beeld en Geluid Wiki, accessed 3 October 2018, https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/100%25_AB.

²⁹⁸ Race was addressed in the other five programmes as well, but less frequently and often in a more implicit way.

²⁹⁹ Original quote: ‘de witte neger uit Amsterdam-Oost’ ‘Interview met Oboema Sestetokoe’, *Jiskefet* (VPRO, 31 January 1994), Beeld en Geluid.

³⁰⁰ ‘Jiskefet’.

³⁰¹ In an episode of another humorous television programme called *30 Minuten (30 Minutes)*, Arjan Ederveen presented a similar character. The mockumentary told the story of a Dutch farmer from Groningen who believed he was born in the wrong body. He argued that he was actually African. ‘Geboren in een verkeerd lichaam - 30 Minuten’, VPRO, accessed 9 June 2019, https://www.vpro.nl/spel~VPWON_1155451~geboren-in-een-verkeerd-lichaam-30-minuten~.html.

established a 'direct link between African cultures and the culture of the West'.³⁰² Even though he was white, with his appearance Oboema arguably wanted to express his so called 'real roots'.³⁰³ Oboema had a big ginger Afro and typically wore a suit with a wax print sash wrapped around his shoulders. Furthermore, when he spoke, Oboema mixed Dutch words with words in an unspecified African language and at times he would spontaneously burst out in an African song.

Throughout all seasons of *Jiskefet*, Oboema Sestetokoe himself and the viewers struggled with his multiple identities. It can be said that Oboema was simultaneously a member of the following collectivities: (Dutch) men, husbands, colleagues, descendants of the Jarobe tribe, amateur football players, nature lovers, poets and so on. While Oboema's life was influenced by his multiple identities in both trivial and more serious ways, in the sketches of *Jiskefet*, however, most attention was brought to Oboema's African and Dutch identity. Through the peculiar character of Oboema, the makers of *Jiskefet* raised more questions than they provided answers. I argue that they challenged their viewers to reflect upon the criteria they employed in making a distinction between who they perceived to be the Self (the native Dutch) and who they saw as the Other (the non-native Dutch). It was not clear which group Oboema belonged to. Did Oboema represent the Self because he was born, lived and worked in the Netherlands, or was he rather to be seen as the Other, because he clearly looked differently with his big Afro and wax print sash and explicitly identified as African?³⁰⁴ Besides, was it even possible for someone to be a so-called 'white negro'?³⁰⁵ Throughout the series, the makers left these questions unanswered. They took advantage of the ambiguity and used it to create humorous situations. Regardless of the exact intentions of the makers of *Jiskefet*, it is beyond doubt that they at least aimed to make the viewer laugh by going against conventions.

Interestingly, in *Jiskefet* Oboema seldomly mentioned how other people saw him, nor did he reflect on how he dealt with their perception of him. On reflection, this is not surprising since Oboema was a self-obsessed character who seemed to only care about his own opinions. Furthermore, it served the makers' objective to confuse and challenge the viewers. Not knowing how Oboema dealt with other peoples' perceptions of him, including the ones of the viewers, maintained a certain tension. Hence, the following quote by Oboema is a rare exception. In an interview, Oboema explained: 'Jarobes are white negroes. In Africa they are... because of their skin-colour, they cannot participate fully. And here, yes... because they are completely black in their heart, in their soul, let's say, of course they encounter all sorts of mild discrimination in the West as well'.³⁰⁶ In this quote, Oboema hinted at a feeling of being reduced to one

³⁰² 'Filmfestival: Een film van Oboema Sestetokoe'; 'Interview met Oboema Sestetokoe'.

³⁰³ 'Filmfestival: Een film van Oboema Sestetokoe'.

³⁰⁴ It is no coincidence that Oboema is presented with an Afro and wax print. These elements serve the recognizability of the cliché that Oboema was. Here, however, they were used ironically. According to Leerssen, in this ironic mode, such peculiarities are 'presented as something to be smiled at rather than as something to be believed in'. It is only the question to what extent this ironic use is recognised as such. Joep Leerssen, 'Imagology: On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World', *Revue d'études Ibériques et Ibérico-Américaines* 10 (2016): 13–31; Joep Leerssen, 'The Rhetoric of National Character: A Programmatic Survey', *Poetics Today* 21, no. 2 (2000): 267–92.

³⁰⁵ The notion of a 'white negro' is difficult to grasp because it problematises what the concept of race is understood to mean. It forces the viewer to ask how important skin colour is. 'Interview met Oboema Sestetokoe'.

³⁰⁶ Oboema style of speaking was very incoherent. Original quote: 'Jarobes zijn witte negers. In Afrika zijn ze ... vanwege hun huidskleur kunnen ze niet helemaal goed meedraaien. En hier, ja ... omdat ze toch in hun hart, in hun soul,

singular identity. In Africa, he did not fit in because of his skin colour. By contrast, in the Netherlands, his skin colour was not what made him different. There, he was seen as the Other and even discriminated because he was culturally different. In sum, Oboema was caught between two worlds, none of which he could ever fully be a part of. Even if he wanted to, he could not fit in, for there was no way for him to change his skin colour, which was the main element that hindered Oboema in convincing others to see him the way he saw himself. Much to his regret, both in Africa and in the Netherlands, Oboema was not seen as black.

zeg maar, volkomen zwart zijn krijgen ze natuurlijk in het Westen ook te maken met allerlei vormen van kleine discriminatie.' 'Filmfestival: Een film van Oboema Sesetokoe'.

CONCLUSION

My thesis, which analysed what humorous interpretations of integration existed in the discursive space opened up by Dutch humorous television programmes between 1975 and 2010, gives insight into both the understanding of integration and the working of humour regarding integration. In what follows, I elaborate on these two aspects. I present my concluding reflections and specify what further questions this research raised.

What struck me most during the research is that the six television programmes, which taken together covered the thirty-five year period under research, all understood integration in a similar way. As mentioned, the key elements that were central to the ideal of integration were adaptation, reciprocity and responsibility. This was the case from the late 1970s up and until the first decennium of the 21st century. This continuity in the humorous television programmes is remarkable, because during the same period the framing of the question of integration in the political and public debate changed frequently and profoundly.³⁰⁷ While the comedians each referred to the dominant discourses regarding integration of the time and stressed that the reality of integration was complex, their normative understanding of what integration should be was the same. The fact that these programmes were broadcasted by public broadcasting stations, notably the progressive and intellectual broadcasting corporation VPRO, might explain why this was the common interpretation of integration.³⁰⁸ Programmes by comedians who proposed a fundamentally different interpretation of integration would probably not have been broadcasted.

However, my focus on these programmes instead of others, does not explain why the ideal of integration did not change over time.³⁰⁹ I argue that as the integration debate turned more and more pessimistic starting from the 1990s, holding on to this interpretation of integration – and more generally the ideals of the ethical revolution, such as the principle of non-discrimination – became a form of resistance. The more multiculturalism assumed a life of its own and the more it was actively presented by adherents of the realist and hyperrealist discourse as an ideal held by naïve leftists, the more meaningful it became for those who were optimistic about integration, including comedians, to adhere to it. By doing so, they made a statement. The interpretation of integration as it was presented in the humorous television programmes thus set those who were optimistic about integration apart from those who were not.

³⁰⁷ Scholten and Snel, 'Van Gastarbeiders Tot Het Multiculturele Drama,' 1.

³⁰⁸ All programmes except for *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007) were broadcasted by the VPRO. Today, on its website the VPRO writes that it has a long tradition of free-thinking and humour. It sees itself as a broadcasting corporation for people who are willing to step outside of their comfort zone and be introduced to new ideas. *The Comedy Factory* was broadcasted by NPS, which became the NTR in 2010. Just like the VPRO, NPS was a national station. It focussed specifically on programmes concerning art, youth and minorities. 'Welke omroepen zijn er?'; 'Over de Vpro', VPRO, accessed 17 June 2019, <https://www.vpro.nl/over-de-vpro/organisatie.html>.

³⁰⁹ The archive collection the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision* almost exclusively consists of programmes broadcasted by public broadcasting stations. Commercial broadcasting stations keep their own archives. Hogenkamp, Leeuw, and Fickers, *Een Eeuw van Beeld en Geluid*.

The sharp contrast between integration optimists and pessimists is an important contextual factor to take into account, but in the programmes themselves it did not play that much of a role. The humour central to the analysed television programmes suggests that the programmes were made by and for the in-group, that is the group of highly educated viewers who were optimistic about integration. By that I mean that comedians did not intend to reach the integration pessimists with their programmes, let alone did they try to persuade them to change their views. Remember how xenophobic characters were presented as too stupid to realise that their views were logically incorrect and reprehensible. It is likely that comedians thought of xenophobic viewers in a similar way.

If the programmes were indeed made for an audience of viewers who were not xenophobic, one might ask why the xenophiles, who arguably belonged to the in-group, were targeted and criticised as well. While xenophiles certainly received criticism, two remarks are to be made. First, the crucial difference between the comedians' criticism of the xenophiles and the xenophobes was that the intrinsic worth of the ideals of the xenophiles was never questioned. Xenophiles were only criticised for the way they lived up to them. Second, it can be argued that the xenophiles who were criticised were in fact not part of the in-group. As these characters were presented in an extreme way, they arguably represented an out-group within the larger in-group of people who were optimistic about integration. Therefore, these jokes probably could make both the integration optimists and – if they watched – the integration pessimists laugh. Viewers who shared the proposed ideal of integration laughed because the introspective jokes did not criticise them – the *good xenophiles* – but the *bad xenophiles*, whose behaviour showed signs of xenophobia. To viewers who disagreed with the proposed ideal of integration, on the other hand, there was no distinction between good and bad xenophiles. To them all xenophiles were like the xenophiles ridiculed in the humorous programmes.

THE HIERARCHY OF SUPERIORITY AND THE BLIND SPOT OF PRIVILEGE

The aforementioned points about the target audience of the humorous programmes raise the question of how effective the criticism expressed by these humorous television programmes actually was. In other words, to what extent did the viewers feel like the criticism was directed at them? This question was always on my mind during the research. My conclusion is that the degree of association was rather limited. While the comedians did present integration as a matter that concerned the entire society, it is crucial to be aware of the fact that there was a hierarchy nonetheless. The guiding principle of this hierarchy was superiority.

At the bottom of the hierarchy were the immigrant characters. Leaving aside *The Comedy Factory* (1999-2007), in which it was accepted for ethno-comedians to ridicule immigrants because they themselves belonged to that group, immigrants were never the butt of the joke or criticism. Furthermore, immigrant characters were often presented as passive and docile characters in supporting roles. The reasoning behind this common portrayal arguably was that it worked to emphasise the questionable behaviour of the ones interacting with them, notably the xenophiles and the xenophobes. The only immigrant characters that were the protagonists in their own sketches were Mehmet Pamuk, Milos Pecik, Oboema Sestetokoe, Ab and Sayid N'gish. One level above the immigrant characters were the ordinary Dutch people, both the xenophiles and the xenophobes, who each in their own way felt superior. Xenophiles like Mr. Oosting and Oda, Guusje and Femke from *Stichting Hulp* can be said to have felt superior because they saw themselves as benefactors

coming to the rescue of helpless refugees. Xenophobes like Fred on the other hand, did not want to have anything to do with immigrants. Their sense of superiority was in essence a feeling of having a culture that was more advanced and sophisticated.

Finally, the viewers were at the top of the hierarchy. This was the result of the fact that laughter was most commonly generated at the expense of the xenophiles and xenophobes. Through these jokes, the viewers in their turn, felt superior.³¹⁰ As mentioned before, the characters of the xenophiles and xenophobes were so exaggerated, that it is quite unlikely that viewers took the criticism directed at them personal. Even if they recognised that they were resemblances, it was easy for the viewers to convince themselves that they were not really like them. These jokes thus provided them with a way out. Coming back to Kuipers' claim mentioned in the introduction, it is thus important to note that viewers who opted for this way out did not necessarily ignore the 'potential serious import of the joke'.³¹¹ I argue that the viewers of the humorous television programmes analysed in this thesis most likely recognised what serious message(s) about integration these jokes expressed. Consequently, what they did was not to deny the serious message about integration, but to distance themselves from the target of criticism. It was exactly this superiority hierarchy that allowed for them to feel like the criticism did not concern them.

Having pointed at the role of superiority, I would even go one step further and argue that exactly this focus on superiority caused a blind spot. To the xenophiles and xenophobes their sense of superiority was so natural that they were never aware of their own privileged position in society. To only criticise these characters' sense of superiority, but never to allude at their privileged position in society – only, at times, at the disadvantaged position of the immigrants – is a pitiful simplification of reality. This seems to be the limit of the comedians' perspective introspection, for if they would touch upon privilege and question the image of the Dutch society as a meritocracy, they would in all probability make the viewers uncomfortable. The viewers would have more trouble distancing themselves from the butt of criticism, because if you are in a privileged position, you can change your behaviour, but not the thing that got you there in the first place, that is your place of origin or ethnicity.

It is important to note that comedians are far from the only participants in the integration debate who suffer from selective blindness. To this day, privilege is a topic that is rarely brought up by politicians, journalists or opinion makers. This extensive form of introspection simply makes people uncomfortable. However, considering humour's capacity to open up a discursive space within which silenced matters can be discussed, it can be assumed that this lack of regard for privilege will not be everlasting.³¹² It is not unlikely that in the future, comedians will take the lead and make not only the Dutch people's sense of superiority, but also their privileged position in Dutch society a subject of discussion. However, in the remainder of this conclusion, I argue that in order to effectively propose such a new progressive interpretation of integration, future comedians will have to change their approach.

³¹⁰ Ruch, 'Psychology of Humor', 29–31.

³¹¹ Kuipers, "The sociology of humor," 374.

³¹² Kuipers, "The Sociology of Humor", 370.

CREATING AND RELEASING TENSION

It is crucial to stress that comedians rely on tension to generate laughter. What they do time after time when making jokes is to create tension and then release that tension. The moment the tension is released, the audience heaves a sigh of relief and starts laughing. However, at that moment the audience rarely stops to consider a potential critical message conveyed through the joke. To really get across a critical point about integration, comedians would have to keep the attention of the audience by letting the tension exist. However, if they would do so, they would not get any laughs.

While this goes for both the native Dutch comedians and the ethno-comedians, when joking about integration, the latter arguably have less freedom to do so. First, at least in stand-up comedy they are expected to address the topic of integration and draw from their personal experiences as immigrants. Even if they would prefer to joke about different topics and not to focus on their immigrant identity, the audience is likely to still do so and interpret everything they say from that perspective.³¹³ Second, the superiority hierarchy does not only apply to immigrant characters, but to comedians as well. As people of migrant background, ethno-comedians can thus be said to be at the bottom of the hierarchy. For them, releasing the tension in the audience, can feel as if they are putting themselves down. I recently re-watched a comedy special by Hannah Gadsby in which she explained that she wanted to quit comedy, because she was tired of releasing the tension and by doing so deprecating herself and implicitly justifying her negative experiences as a lesbian. Gadsby said:

Because do you understand what self-deprecation means when it comes from somebody who already exists in the margins? It's not humility. It's humiliation. I put myself down in order to speak, in order to seek permission to speak. And I simply will not do that anymore. (...) You learn from the part of the story you focus on. I need to tell my story properly.³¹⁴

From that point onwards, Gadsby continued to make jokes, but none of them were self-deprecating. She told her stories as they actually happened. And often, as they did not have a punchline, the audience was left with the tension. Her original and balanced style of humour made a deep impression on me personally. Only once did I experience something similar while I analysed the six humorous television programmes for this thesis. It was a comment made by Rachid Larouz, a Moroccan-Dutch comedian, at the very end of his routine in *The Comedy Factory* [Appendix 2]. The joke started as follows:

After the show Dutch people always come up to me and then they say: *Er, Rachid, how do you feel: Moroccan or Dutch?* I say: *It depends.* [pause] *Yes, when I go to Albert Heijn and the cashier asks for my bonuskaart (...), then I feel Dutch.* [The audience laughs.] *And when the cash register opens I feel Moroccan*³¹⁵

³¹³ Leerssen, 'Imagology: On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World', 25–26.

³¹⁴ *Nanette*, Netflix, 2018, <https://www.netflix.com/search?q=nanette&jbv=80233611&jbp=0&jbr=0>.

³¹⁵ Original quote: 'Na de show komen er altijd Hollanders naar mij toe en dan zeggen ze: *Eh, Rachid, hoe voel je je: Marokkaans of Nederlands?* Ik zeg: *Het ligt eraan.* [pauze] *Ja, als ik naar de Albert Heijn ga en de kassière vraagt om mijn bonuskaart (...), dan voel ik me Nederlander. En als de kassa opengaat voel ik me Marokkaans.'* Rachid Larouz, 'Rachid Larouz', *The Comedy Factory* (NPS, 6 January 2006), Beeld en Geluid.

At this point the audience heaved a sigh of relief and started laughing. Yet, Larouz was not done yet. He paused and then added one more comment, after which the audience went completely silent. He said: 'As long as you are going to laugh at this, I will continue to feel like this. My name is Rachid. Thank you'.³¹⁶

In my opinion, in order to challenge the more and more pessimistic views on integration, comedians should not focus on coming up with a new progressive interpretation of integration. Instead, the Dutch society would arguably benefit more from a type of humour in which comedians balance between making the audience share a laugh with them, on the one hand, and making them tense and uncomfortable, on the other hand.

³¹⁶ Original quote: 'Zolang jullie om dit moeten lachen, ga ik me voorlopig zo voelen. Mijn naam is Rachid. Dank je wel.' Larouz.

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APPENDIX

1. TABLE WITH ALL THE SELECTED FRAGMENTS, EPISODES AND COMEDY ROUTINES

Legend

SV = *Simplisties Verbond*

KW = *Keek op de Week*

JIS = *Jiskefet*

TCF = *The Comedy Factory*

DRS = *Draadstaal*

Note: The titles/descriptions of the sketches are my own.

| | | | |
|------|----|---|--|
| 1974 | SV | 06/11 26/11 18/12 | |
| 1975 | SV | 07/01 29/01 18/02 12/03 01/04 23/04 13/05 04/06 30/10 06/11 27/11 11/12 18/12 31/12 | |
| 1976 | SV | 22/01 29/01 19/02 04/03 11/03 01/04 15/04 22/04 13/05 27/05 03/06 30/09 11/11 | 27/05 - Playmobil als weerspiegeling van de werkelijkheid? |
| 1977 | SV | 03/02 28/04 | |
| 1978 | SV | 11/06 24/09 01/10 08/10 15/10 22/10 29/10 05/11 12/11 19/11 26/11 03/12 10/12 17/12 31/12 | |
| 1979 | | | |
| 1980 | SV | 25/05 28/09 26/10 21/12 | |

| | | | |
|------|----|---|---|
| 1981 | SV | 18/01 15/02 15/03 12/04 20/05 25/10 22/11 20/12 | 18/01 - Waar zijn Nederlanders bang voor? 20/12 - Racistische lectuur |
| 1982 | SV | 17/01 14/02 14/03 11/04 09/05 20/10 17/11 15/12 | 17/01 - Cursus Chinees eten 17/11 - Onderdak aan buitenlandse werknemers - Onderzoek naar de bekendheid van buitenlanders met de Nederlandse cultuur 15/12 - Kledingverkoper met T-shirts 'wite power' en hakenkruizen |
| 1983 | SV | 12/01 09/02 09/03 06/04 19/10 16/11 14/12 | |
| 1984 | SV | 11/01 08/02 07/03 04/04 23/12 | 08/02 - Mehmet Pamuk bij de groenteboer 23/12 - Ophaal-Chinees |
| 1985 | SV | 03/02 03/03 06/10 10/11 | 03/02 - De broer van Mehmet Pamuk 03/03 - Surinamer Harold 10/11 - Politici halen politiek vluchteling op van Schiphol |
| 1986 | SV | 02/02 16/03 27/04 05/10 21/12 | 02/02 - Concept van een straat 16/03 - De Chrislam |

| | | | |
|------|--------------|---|---|
| 1987 | SV | 01/02 15/03 26/04 04/10 15/11 27/12 | |
| 1988 | SV KW | 07/02 01/05 02/10 09/10 16/10 23/10 30/10 06/11 13/11 20/11 27/11 04/12 11/12 18/12 | 06/11 - Zigeunerbeleid van minister Van Dijk 18/12 - Noodwet m.b.t. asielzoekers op Schiphol |
| 1989 | KW | 22/01 29/01 05/02 12/02 19/02 26/02 05/03 12/03 19/03 26/03 02/04 09/04 16/04 23/04 01/10 08/10 15/10 22/10 29/10 05/11 12/11 19/11 26/11 03/12 10/12 17/12 | 05/02 - Oosting neemt een vluchteling in huis |
| 1990 | KW | 28/01 04/02 11/02 18/02 | 11/02 - Mehmet Pamuk weigert bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen zijn plaats af te staan |

| | | | |
|------|-----|---|---|
| | | <p>25/02 04/03 11/03 25/03 01/04 08/04</p> | <p>08/04 - Zwerver Dirk brengt asielzoekers onder in zijn nieuwe leegstaande villa</p> |
| | | <p>15/04 22/04 29/04</p> | <p>29/04 - Mehmet Pamuk over het ontbreken van Turkse en Marokkaanse namen bij de lintjesregen</p> |
| | JIS | <p>14/10 21/10 28/10 04/11 11/11 18/11 25/11 02/12 09/12 26/12</p> | |
| | | <p>09/09</p> | <p>09/09 - C. Luimen, Norenhater</p> |
| | | <p>16/09 23/09</p> | <p>23/09 - Filmfestival: een film van Oboema Sesetokoe</p> |
| | | <p>30/09</p> | |
| 1991 | KW | <p>03/02</p> | <p>03/02 - Discriminatie veroorzaakt door de Golfoorlog</p> |
| | | <p>10/02 17/02 24/02 03/03 10/03 17/03 24/03 31/03 07/04 13/10</p> | <p>13/10 - Interview met G.M. Ganesh</p> |
| | JIS | <p>20/10 27/10 03/11 10/11 17/11 24/11 01/12 08/12 15/12</p> | |
| | | <p>01/09 08/09</p> | <p>08/09 - Ondertitel mannetje</p> |
| | | <p>15/09</p> | |

| | | | |
|------|----|--------------------------------|---|
| | | 22/09 | 22/09 - Oboema Sestetokoe op de motor vanuit Amsterdam |
| | | 29/09 06/10 | |
| 1992 | KW | 02/02 | 02/02 - Jet en Koosje leggen een bos tulpen neer bij een moskee |
| | | 09/02 16/02 | 16/02 - Uitlatingen van Bolkestein over allochtonen - Toenemende discriminatie door de komst van illegalen uit Oost-Europa |
| | | 22/02 | 22/02 - Uitlatingen van Bolkestein |
| | | 01/03 08/03 | 08/03 - De Bie geschorst omwille van racistische opmerkingen - Visie op allochtonen van het Wetenschappelijk Bureau van het Simplisties Verbond - De gekleurde medemens |
| | | 15/03 | 15/03 - Boekenweek met als thema Nederlands-Indië - Emigratie van Nederlanders |
| | | 22/03 | 22/03 - Anti-racisme-betoging |
| | | 29/03 | 29/03 - "Neokoloniale" betweterigheid van Nederland m.b.t. Indonesië - Politiejacht op allochtonen |
| | | 05/04 | 05/04 - Asielzoekers |
| | | 18/10 | 18/10 - Minderheden - Bolkestein |
| | | 25/10 01/11 | 01/11 - Illegalen in Juinen |
| | | 08/11 | 08/11 - Inzetten van goochelaars om illegalen te laten 'verdwijnen' |
| | | 15/11 | 15/11 - Aanpak van illegalen door PvdA |
| | | 22/11 29/11 | 29/11 - Oprukkend racisme in het Journaal |
| | | 06/12 13/12 | 13/12 - Honger in voormalig Joegoslavië |
| | | 20/12 06/09 13/09 | 13/09 - Oboema de jachtopziener |

| | | | |
|------|-----|---|--|
| | | 20/09 27/09 04/10 12/10 | 20/09 - Zuidamerikaanse voetballer, Ramon Guadelagara, komt aan op Schiphol 04/10 - Roodharigen in een strandhut 12/10 - Reünie Oboema en zijn lievelingsbroer |
| 1993 | KW | 07/02 14/02 21/02 28/02 07/03 14/03 21/03 28/03 04/04 11/04 | 14/02 - Milos Pecik verkoopt winterijs en vertelt over Joegoslavië - Denktank praat over Joegoslavië 28/02 - Milos Pecik verkoopt winterijs en praat over de voedseldroppings in Joegoslavië 14/03 - Milos Pecik probeert krijgers te ronselen om in Joegoslavië te gaan vechten - Bolkestein over vreemdelingen 21/03 - Anti-racisme-demonstratie - Cursus 'Nederlands eten' 28/03 - Milos Pecik over illegale arbeid en het vechten in Joegoslavië 04/04 - Milos Pecik heeft zijn ijskar terug en krijgt een verblijfsvergunning |
| 1994 | JIS | 03/01 10/01 17/01 24/01 31/01 07/02 14/02 21/02 28/02 | 10/01 - Achter de Wolken met Oboema en José 1 (Drank) 17/01 - Achter de Wolken met Oboema en José 2 (Voetbal) 24/01 - Achter de Wolken met Oboema en José 3 (Gierst) 31/01 - Interview Oboema Sestetokoe - Oboema's alternatieve multiculturele volkslied 07/02 - Achter de Wolken met Oboema en José 4 (Japan) 14/02 - Achter de Wolken met Oboema en José 5 (Cadeau) 21/02 - Achter de Wolken met Oboema en José 5 (Ziek) 28/02 - Interview met Oboema en José |
| 1995 | JIS | 13/02 20/02 27/02 | 13/02 - SS-er als vluchteling bij twee dames |

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|------|-----|--|---|
| | | 06/03 13/03 20/03 27/03 03/04 10/04 10/10 24/10 14/11 21/11 28/11 05/12 12/12 19/12 26/12 | |
| 1996 | JIS | 02/01 04/03 11/03 18/03 25/03 01/04 08/04 15/04 22/04 29/04 06/05 | 01/04 - Gedicht van Oboema (Man die bakt) 08/04 - Stichting Hulp: drie dames en de asielzoeker 15/04 - Liefdadigheidsspeech van Femke |
| 1997 | JIS | 16/02 23/02 02/03 09/03 16/03 30/03 06/04 13/04 20/04 27/04 06/05 11/05 13/05 18/05 20/05 25/05 27/05 03/06 10/06 17/06 24/06 01/07 08/07 | 18/05 - Stichting Hulp: Worden ze alleen door buitenlanders gebeld? |
| 1998 | JIS | 01/11 08/11 | |

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|------|--|---|---|
| | | 15/11 22/11 29/11 06/12 13/12 27/12 | 06/12 - Advocaat Oboema kan niet vinden wat hij zoekt |
| 1999 | JIS TCF | 14/03 21/03 28/03 11/04 18/04 25/04 09/05 16/05 30/04 07/05 14/05 21/05 28/05 04/06 11/06 18/06 | 21/03 - Stichting Hulp: de drie dames voeren een multicultureel en maatschappelijk verantwoorde theatervoorstelling op 28/03 - 'Koken met Oboema' 11/04 - Inwijding van een bekende muzikant in de Nederlandse cultuur en samenleving 14/05 - Arie Koomen (Amsterdam) 28/05 - Roué Verveer (Paramaribo) |
| 2000 | JIS | 02/01 09/01 16/01 23/01 30/01 02/04 09/04 16/04 23/04 30/04 21/05 28/05 10/12 17/12 24/12 | 23/01 - Turkse pizzabezorger 02/04 - Nederlandse conventies t.a.v. allochtone mensen - Cabaret act over een Turkse man die over integratie praat - Interview met de cabaretier over het thema - Lied van cabaretier 'Ik ben Hassan' 17/12 - Stichting Hulp: de drie dames over asielzoekers |

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| | TCF | 12/06 13/06 14/06 15/06 16/06 19/06 20/06 21/06 22/06 23/06 26/06 27/06 28/06 29/06 30/06 | 12/06 - Jim Speelmans (Nederland) 16/06 - Nilgün Yerli (Turkije/Nederland) |
| 2001 | JIS | 07/01 14/01 21/01 28/01 04/02 | 07/01 - Flirten met Italiaanse ober |
| | TCF | 12/03 19/03 26/03 02/04 09/04 23/04 30/04 07/05 14/05 21/05 28/05 11/06 18/06 25/06 | 12/03 - Javier Guzman (Spanje/Nederland) |
| 2002 | JIS | 08/09 15/09 22/09 13/10 20/10 27/10 03/11 | 08/09 - 'Klussen met sterren' (Oboema) 03/11 - Oboema en een wielrenner in een tulpenveld |
| | TCF | 10/11 10/04 17/04 | |

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|--|-----|--------------|---|
| | | 02/02 | 02/02 - Anuar (Marokko/Nederland) |
| | | 09/02 | 09/02 - Bram van de Velde (Nederland) |
| | | 16/02 | |
| | | 25/02 | 25/02 - Martijn Oosterhuis (Nederland) |
| | | 11/08 | |
| | | 18/08 | 18/08 - Jandino (Antillen/Nederland) |
| | | 25/08 | |
| | | 01/09 | |
| | | 08/09 | 08/09 - Jeffrey Spalburg (Nederland) |
| | | 15/09 | |
| | DRS | 26/09 | 26/09 - Auditie zelfmoordterrorist - Schoonmaker Sayid - Sayid bij de politie - Fred en Ria: shoarma |
| | | 28/09 | 28/09 - Taxichauffeur Sayid - Tegeltjes - Moskeeën – Islam - Fred en Ria: moslims |
| | | 05/10 | 05/10 - Fred en Ria: het Nederlands van buitenlanders |
| | | 12/10 | 12/10 - Dikke Mannen gaan bij een Chinees restaurant eten - Fred en Ria: goede doelen - Maagdevliespil - Sayid als stand-up comedian |
| | | 19/10 | 19/10 - Sayid – EHBO - Man op straat geeft zijn mening over Marokkanen |
| | | 27/10 | 27/10 - Polen - Auditie multiculturele theatergroep - Fred en Ria: terroristen - Sayid in restaurant |
| | | 04/11 | 04/11 - Fred en Ria: horrorfilms |
| | | 09/11 | 09/11 - Sayid heeft een computervirus |
| | | 16/11 | 16/11 - Marokkaanse vrienden - Sayid probeert te integreren |
| | | 23/11 | |

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|------|-----|--------------|--|
| | | 30/11 | 30/11 - Sayid in de supermarkt |
| | | 07/12 | 07/12 - Sayid praat over zijn kinderen |
| | | 14/12 | 14/12 - De boeren: televisieprogramma's - Sayid heeft het over het feit dat mensen bang van hem zijn |
| | | 21/12 | 21/12 - Sayid over de manier waarop Nederlandse vrouwen zich kleden - Buitenlanders in de kunst |
| | | 28/12 | 28/12 - Fred en Ria: kerstpakket - Kerstliedje - Aankondiging <i>Draadstaal</i> 2008 |
| 2008 | DRS | 07/01 | 07/01 - Dikke Mannen gaan bij een Chinees restaurant eten (herhaling) |
| | | 08/01 | 08/01 - Auditie zelfmoordterrorist (herhaling) - Marokkaanse vrienden (herhaling) - Schoonmaker Sayid (herhaling) |
| | | 09/01 | 09/01 - Fred en Ria: horrorfilms (herhaling) |
| | | 10/01 | 10/01 - Man op straat geeft mening over Marokkanen (herhaling) - Taxichauffeur Sayid (herhaling) - Fred en Ria: terroristen (herhaling) |
| | | 07/12 | 07/12 - Zwarte Piet geeft een speech - Fred en Ria: voetballers - Knuffelmarokkaan - Sayid over Sinterklaas |
| | | 14/12 | 14/12 - Sayid over showbusiness |
| | | 21/12 | 21/12 - Sayid over de man die een schoen naar George W. Bush gooide - Van de Ven en van Koningsbrugge over de man die een schoen naar George W. Bush gooide |
| | | 28/12 | 28/12 - Praatstaal - <i>Fitna</i> - Mensenrechten |
| 2009 | DRS | 04/01 | 04/01 - Sayid over nieuwjaarswensen - Sayid over het conflict tussen Israël en Palestina |

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