

Beyond The Integration Norm:

Negotiating and performing citizenship within the integration course 'Knowledge of the Dutch society'



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Abstract

Within the integration course Knowledge of the Dutch Society (*Kennis van de Nederlandse Maatschappij*), newcomers are expected to acquire practical knowledge of the Dutch society and to gain a better understanding of 'core values'. By adopting a relational perspective, this thesis investigates the ways in which Dutch state, teachers and newcomers interact and negotiate citizenship within the KNM course. It analyses (underlying) criteria and everyday practices to create a deeper understanding of how citizenship practices unfold. High and culturally focused expectations within the course uncovers discursive power mechanisms of the state. The criteria are not only formally enacted but are also grounded in discursive imaginaries of Dutchness, which (re)construct exclusionary binaries. Though, citizenship is not only articulated by the state. This study examines how newcomers navigate through within deriving criteria. Moreover, it considers the role of teachers as they are both critical and 'the voice' of the integration course. By adopting a performative approach, this thesis reveals that citizenship can both function as domination and empowerment mechanism (Isin, 2017) and separately or simultaneously break through structure/agency relationships as newcomer's negotiations and performance blur through demarcated norms.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

From January 2022 the new Civic Integration Act changes the integration obligations for newcomers in the Netherlands. The Dutch government intended to implement the new integration law in January 2020, but it got postponed for the third time because of the disruptive COVID-19 virus. The new integration law has some big alterations compared to the current integration policy, as the old system has proven itself insufficient (Koolmees, 2019; Rijksoverheid, 2018¹). Several factors contributed to failure of the old integration system, namely it took too long for many newcomers to pass integration requirements, newcomers were insufficiently encouraged to attain a high language level and within the system was sensitive for fraud, committed by newcomers during language classes (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Furthermore, the decentralisation of the government, with an emphasis on market forces, led to the vulnerable position of newcomers, as fraud was regularly committed by institutions that found ways to exploit the loan system (Koolmees, 2019). The governmental strategy based on neoliberalist ideas not only viewed market freedom as the basis for a healthy socio-political order (Suvarierol & Kirk, 2015) but held newcomers responsible for organising their own integration as neoliberalism has a strong emphasis on self-regulation, individual responsibility and self-sufficiency. The Dutch integration programme has been identified as a particular restrictive programme within Europe that requires newcomers to earn their citizenship status through a complex and market-oriented programme (Suvarierol & Kirk 2015; Joppke 2007; Scholten, Ghebreab, & De Waal 2019 in Blankvoort, van Hartingsveldt, Rudman & Krumeich, 2021, p. 2).

The new Civic Integration Act provides newcomers with the opportunity to follow a personal trajectory suited to their possibilities, including customised language courses, financial support and personal counselling (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Municipalities will become supervisory responsible for the integration, instead of the great responsibility for newcomers to organize their own integration course. These new measurements have attention for migrants' personal situation, which can be identified as an improvement of the current integration system. However, the Dutch government plans to increase the language requirement, another component is added, and the other integration requirements remain unchanged (De Waal, 2021a).

This is also the case for the exam *Kennis Nederlandse Maatschappij* [Knowledge of Dutch society]. In the KNM course, newcomers learn about the core values of the Dutch society and gain broader practical knowledge.² This concerns for example, knowledge about the Dutch history, education and healthcare. However, one third of the questions currently relates to the theme 'norms and values' even though there are eight themes in the exam.³ Recently, Blankvoort et al. (2021, p. 16) argued that the new civic integration programme mandates newcomers to spend more time

¹ Evaluation Civic Integration Law (2013). Accessed September 7, 2021.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/06/27/evaluatie-van-de-wet-inburgering-2013>

² Draft decision of implementation Civic Integration Act 20... (p.47). Accessed on October 24, 2021.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/12/21/bijlage-1-ontwerp-besluit-inburgering-20>

³ Asscher, L.F. (2017). Integration Policy [Letter of Parliament]. Accessed November 10, 2021. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-196.html#ID-807447-d36e85>

understanding values presented as ‘universal’. According to Entzinger, (2013), Professor Emeritus of Migration and Integration Studies, this is also the case for the exam Knowledge of the Dutch society as many questions within the integration exam are too normative and detailed, as it requires knowledge that most Dutch people do not even have. Examples includes specific information of Dutch administrative layers and its responsibilities or facts like the year the Netherlands became an independent country. The Knowledge of Dutch society (hereafter KNM) exam also received criticism in the public debate. In a well-viewed episode of Sunday with Lubach (2017), Lubach called into question the ambiguous and seemingly odd questions of the KNM practice exam.

In 2018, Koolmees, former Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, promised to review and possibly renew of the end terms of the KNM exam⁴, after a motion of parliament.⁵ Explicit attention will be given to an up-to date image of the Dutch society and if there is any reason, the appendix with the learning outcomes will be adjusted accordingly.⁶ However, compared to the previous Integration System, no changes have been made considering the learning objectives of the KNM exam.⁷ Though, in 2021 the KNM has gone through a tendering procedure which is considered as an opportunity for a thorough review of the KNM objectives (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2021).

This thesis analyses the KNM exam (‘Knowledge of Dutch society’) by engaging a dialogue with relevant actors to gain a relational framework. It examines the ways in which the Dutch state, teachers and newcomers negotiate and perform citizenship within the KNM course. In order do so, this research investigates formal and implicit criteria to evaluate (underlying) goals and conceptions and everyday practices to create a deeper understanding of citizenship practices. Formal for this research is defined as official criteria set by the government (Civic Integration Act, 2022) and the (practice)exams and teaching methods that are compose accordingly. Besides, this research seeks to unpack underlying imaginaries of Dutch integration by analysing implicit criteria. To understand how citizenship is enacted, it is crucial to consider if and to what extend normative and essentialist constructions manifest in the integration landscape in the Netherlands. Academic identify a renewed interest in assimilationism, (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018) neoliberal communitarianism (Van Houdt, Suvarierol & Schinkel, 2011) and culturalization of citizenship (Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2016) dominate integration policies. These trends reveal a stronger emphasis on active and cultural membership to access citizenship resources. These practices are vital to study “as they can have immediate and lived effects for those who encounter them” (Blankvoort et al., 2021). However, while the investigation of dominant discourse and representations are of great importance, they tend to overlook bottom-up

⁴ Koolmees, W. (2018) Outline Changes Civic Integration Act. [Letter to Parliament]. Accessed on September 12, 2021.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2018/07/02/kamerbrief-hoofdlijnen-veranderopgave-inburgering>

⁵ Paternotte, J.M. & Bekker, B. (2018). Motion by Member Paternotte and Becker. Accessed on October 20, 2021.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-211.html>

⁶ Draft decision of implementation Civic Integration Act 20... (p.46-47)

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/12/21/bijlage-1-ontwerp-besluit-inburgering-20>

⁷ Draft decision of regulation Civic Integration Act 20... (p.36). Accessed on September 20, 2021.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/12/21/bijlage-2-ontwerp-regeling-inburgering-20>

processes and everyday acts that break through structure/agency relationships. To elucidate the multifariousness layers inherent to citizenship processes this thesis analyses citizenship from a performative perspective, highlighting the ways in which actors interact and articulate and contest its content in the KNM course.

1.1 Societal relevance

Over the last decades a ‘moral panic’ has emerged in Europe about immigration and ethnic diversity, in which populist politicians and media have “portrayed immigrants as a threat to security, social cohesion and the welfare system” (Vasta, 2007, p. 713). This panic seems to be triggered by ‘cultural anxiety’, which can be explained as a growing “fear that someone is robbing ‘us’ of our culture” (Grillo, in Vertovec, 2011, p. 244). These concerns related to losing a particular cultural identity has stimulated a debate on “how much and what kind of cultural differentiation is to be allowed in the public domain” (Tonkens, Hurenkamp, & Duyvendak, 2010, p. 1). The growing emphasis on cultural diversity seems to reflect the fiercely debated topic of immigration in the Netherlands (Nisic, 2008). Within these debates the ‘Dutch identity’ and ‘the identity of newcomers’ is often articulated as a static and homogenous entity. Here, a fixed and collective core set of cultural characteristics are (self)attributed to a given group, known as essentialism (Wade, 2015). Different groups are divided along cultural lines, through particular signifiers that construct sameness and otherness. An essentialist understanding is problematic in the way we comprehend social processes like migration and integration because identities, people’s characteristics feelings of belonging are socially constructed and tend to change over life course (De Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020). Cultural essentialism further fails to notice that cultures are dynamic with change as a basic element in all of them (Nussbaum, 2000). Consequently, diversity within and across groups becomes overlooked.

These debates are reflected in the Dutch integration system with a trend of increased requirements for newcomers to obtain formalized citizenship (*inburgeren*), which are a reflective of an implicit goal of reducing migration (Suvarierol & Kirk, 2015). Furthermore, a growing body of research identifies a focus towards assimilationist traits in integration policy, a process in which the substantive culture of the majority society becomes imposed on newcomers (Entzinger, 2016; Joppke, 2007; Schinkel, 2013; Vasta, 2007). As said above, the current Dutch civic integration programme is identified as one of the most restrictive programmes in Europe even though it claims to provide newcomers with the necessary tools for successful integration. The civic integration policy further urges newcomers to adopt and adjust ‘Dutch’ norms and values (Joppke, 2007) and to show loyalty towards dominant values (Van Houdt, Suvarierol & Schinkel, 2011). Consequently, newcomers’ citizenship is often based on how well they have adjusted and adopted norms and values as the integration exam became compulsory and failing to do so can lead to a fine or even to denial of permanent settlement rights (Entzinger, 2014). This is problematic insofar it leaves little to no room to cultural diversity.

With the implementation of the new integration system, the Civic Integration Act has been submitted for consultation which included Refugee support organization Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (VWN). In its response, the organization indicated that the KNM exam is still based on normative questions and that the Netherlands is portrayed as an ‘ideal country’.⁸ In the ‘new version’ of the KNM objectives a few textual changes were amended to actuality e.g., first aid has been replaced by emergency aid. However, the rest of the objectives i.e., the structure, layout, and content have remained unchanged since 2015. The original outline and structure of the KNM has not changed since 2007 (Civic Integration Act, 2022). In 2018, Paternotte and Becker already requested to modernize of the KNM objectives when KNM is reviewed, as they stated that the KNM integration exam would not contribute to its stated goal and teaching materials would contain stereotypes.⁹ More recently Entzinger (2020) chairman of a guidance committee with newcomers, commissioned by the Dutch parliament advocates for a thorough review to distil useful questions.¹⁰

As stated above, Minister Koolmees promised end of 2020 that the exam objectives will be reviewed. When the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment will start to review the KNM objectives, it is important to create more social support and consensus for the KNM objectives. In order to do so, the experience and perspective of newcomers and relevant actors concerning the KNM exam should be analysed and incorporated in the decision-making process. This is in line with a report of the Institute for Societal Resilience, in which Ponzoni, Ghorashi and Badran (2020) argue for a structural place for the perspective of refugees and newcomers in policymaking. Especially newcomers can have a great contribution, by sharing their personal stories and experiences with the direct effects of the Dutch integration policy. This can increase the empathic imagination of people who do not have these experiences (Ponzoni et al., 2020, p. 18). These stories can further stimulate the attention of policymakers and call into question their self-evident images. This makes room for more reflection, emphatic connection and an overall different way of thinking. This thesis contributes herein by analysing newcomers’ process of citizenship amidst encompassing formal and implicit criteria of the KNM exam. Though, through a relational framework it evaluates citizenship processes on a broader level, as it focusses on the practices that constitute and destabilize exclusionary constructions in the course and thereby revealing creative and transformative acts in which newcomers shape and perform citizenship.

On a broader societal level, it is imperative to problematise an assimilationist and essentialist tendency in Western countries such as the Netherlands. This research will try to transpose this tendency with the goal of creating more inclusion and inter-cultural understanding in the Netherlands.

⁸ Draft decision of implementation Civic Integration Act 20... (p.46)

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/12/21/bijlage-1-ontwerp-besluit-inburgering-20>

⁹ Paternotte, J.M. & Bekker, B. (2018). Motion by Member Paternotte and Becker. Accessed on October 20, 2021.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-211.html>

¹⁰ Prof. Entzinger. (2020). Final report of guidance committee newcomers.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/06/22/eindverslag-klankbordgroep-nieuwkomers>

1.2 Scientific relevance

Within the academic literature, there is quite an extensive body of research on the historical processes in integration policies, recent tendencies towards assimilationism and culturalism and dominant narratives in the public and political discourses related to migration and integration. My proposed thesis takes a step further by analysing the ways in which newcomers negotiate their position in the integration discourse.

This research will add to the upcoming interest on lived citizenship and narrative knowledge of people with a migration background in the Netherlands, especially newcomers during their integration course. Bloemraad and Sheares (2017) for example argue that holding citizenship has real effects in ordinary immigrant's lives, however, empirical work on the impact of citizenship relative to a residence permit is limited. Immigrants are (perhaps not intentionally) portrayed as passive, namely academics evaluate current tendencies but forget to pay attention to the lived experiences and negotiations of immigrants. Tonkens et al. (2010) for example examine the 'culturalization' of citizenship, which can be defined as the growing emphasis on the (necessity) of cultural adaption of newcomers in the Netherlands. The authors identify a transformation from citizenship based on citizens' rights and duties to the importance of adapting and obtaining Dutch cultural norms and values. Additionally, Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010) argue that citizenship is not only characterised by cultural terms but also in moralising way. Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010, p. 698) define this as the transformation from formal to moral citizenship, in which the cultural adaption entails a moral notion of a 'good' and 'active' citizen as an 'extra-juridical normative concept'. Becoming a 'full' citizen thus does only entail certain rights and duties but also the 'active' demonstration of cultural adaption and loyalty towards the Netherlands. "Citizenship thereby changes from a right to be different to a duty to be similar, i.e., assimilated" (Van Gunsteren in Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010, p. 704).

Even though Schinkel & Van Houdt (2010) and later Tonkens & Duyendak (2016) problematize these processes, they seem to overlook the fact that citizenship is always performed, practised, and lived. Citizenship is not only produced through dominant discourses but is an embodied practice as well, that negotiates and questions precisely those norms (Lazar 2014; Nyhagen & Halsaa 2016). This study argues to move beyond concepts of 'culturalization and moralisation of citizenship' and adopt the perspective of 'lived citizenship'. Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016, p.60) define this term as a practice that is "contested, fluid and dynamic processes of negotiation and struggle". This perspective refers to the enactment of citizenship through the embodied practices of marginalized groups. It would be very fruitful to incorporate the emphasis of 'lived citizenship' into studies on the integration course of newcomers as it considers migrants' agency as they relate to, perform and negotiate criteria and citizenship. These actions of negotiation can contribute to change dominant perceptions of citizenship as it is a dynamic construct (Van den Bogert, 2020). The acknowledgement of practices of lived citizenship as significant political agency can it turn provide a step "towards developing more proficient participatory policies and practices" (Kallio, Wood & Häkli, 2020, p. 717).

In addition, within theoretical debates that discuss processes of othering and the formation of the ‘Dutch identity’ and migrant identity, identity often becomes essentialised as categories are reproduced. Used categories such as Us and Them and in- and exclusion in these debates provide insufficient acknowledgment for diversity and individuality. According to Barbero (2012, p. 758) the academic field legitimizes selective and strict measurements of the government of populations that are characterised as threatening or dangerous “[to] values considered ‘universal’, ‘democratic’, ‘European’ or ‘Western’”. Hereby, the recognition of the fluidity of identity and the diversity within groups becomes neglected. This study will consider the changing, heterogenous and contested nature of culture. Grillo (in Vertovec, 2011, p. 250) asserts that if social sciences can deliver this perspective on culture, they may provide a much-needed check on what in recent times has become a dangerous ‘othering’ of immigrants and their descendants.

Furthermore, this thesis will examine if and in what ways the ‘culturalization’ of citizenship and processes of othering are present in the KNM exam as it is important to consider how discourses are enacted in texts in practice. Blankvoort et al. (2021) argue that limited research has moved beyond policy to focus on discourse in texts in practice. The authors analyse texts in the civic integration programme to examine how imagines of ‘Us’ and ‘the Other’ constructed and reproduced. This study analyses different texts particularly for the KNM exam and will give a up to date analysis of texts and teaching methods in the KNM course. Besides studying texts, this study will conduct participant observations and interviews to consider the experiences of newcomers themselves.

Lastly, this thesis adopts a relational framework as it analyses the interaction, relation, and performativity between different actors (e.g., teachers and newcomers, governmental regulations). Newcomers’ experiences cannot be studied independently, as there is a constant interaction between every-day experiences and broader structures that are constantly impacting positions, perceptions and practices of involved actors (Gluckman & Mitchell, in Vertovec, 2018). According to Williams (in Lister, 2007) interactions of actors are both academically and politically important yet have too often been subject of separate areas of study. Ghorashi, Boer and Holder (2018) argue that the current challenge for scholars is to articulate practices of social actors in their everyday interactions while considering structures. This research will analyse the interplay between actors and the field of tension between structures and deriving criteria that have the ability to constrain and enable (inter)actions between newcomers and the state (Scholten et al., 2019). Furthermore, it will investigate processes of performance that can both act in accordance with systems and protocols and claim and enact concepts like citizenship, identity and integration in new ways beyond given and prescribed positions and networks.

1.3 A brief history of Civic integration policies in the Netherlands

The Dutch immigration history has been both dynamic and diverse (Entzinger, 2014). From 1998 till today, the Dutch integration policy has changed 20 times (De Waal, 2021a). This section analyses

historical and ongoing processes of integration policies in the Netherlands to understand contemporary societal and scientific debates and to interpret the current stance of the KNM course.

From the 1960s on, immigrants from Southern-Europe, Turkey and Morocco were recruited for manual labour in the Netherlands. In the following decades, ongoing migration from Turkey and Morocco increased by immigrants from former colony Suriname and the Dutch Caribbeans. Policies that existed in this period focused on economic participation. There were no existing policies related to the integration of ‘guestworkers’ as preserving one’s language, religion and cultural identity within a socio-cultural sphere was regarded as agreeable while it was assumed that the majority would return to their countries of origin (Entzinger, 2014). The first shift took place between the end of the 1970 to the mid-1990s as the Dutch government announced the ‘Ethnic Minorities Policy’. This policy can be identified as a multicultural approach as it celebrated cultural pluralism, promoted equal opportunities, and facilitated diversity. Supporting socio-cultural dimension would improve migrants’ integration, which would lead to an improved socio-economic status. Only basic language skills were required for naturalization at this point (Fermin, 2009, as cited in Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010, p. 701). From the early 1990s the Minority Policy faced increasing doubts about its effectiveness known as the backlash or retreat of multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2010). A ‘integrationist approach’ gradually arose in which the emancipation of minorities was no longer seen as the responsibility of the government, “cultural matters were considered private rather than a government concern” (Bonjour, 2013, p. 840). The policy stressed the importance of individual socio-economic participation as a condition for a better position in the socio-cultural sphere (Scholten, 2010). This principle led to the implementation of the Law on Civic Integration of Newcomers (*Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers*, WIN) in 1998, which laid down the new measurements for immigrants to participate in courses, namely Dutch as second language, familiarisation with the Dutch society and the labour market in the Netherlands (Kurvers & Spotti, 2015). The provided courses were free of charge and there was no requirement for set language level, however failure to participate within the obligatory programme led to a fine. This new aim would have been ‘almost unthinkable under the minorities’ policy’ (Entzinger, 2003 in Vasta, 2007, p. 718).

Since the turn millennium, harsh public and political debates around immigration and integration gained territory. National debates were triggered in the media by public intellectual Paul Scheffer. Scheffer’s work ‘The Multicultural Drama’ (2000) focused on the relation between socio-economic deprivation and socio-cultural differences. Scheffer defined immigrant integration as ‘the social question of this age’ and warned of the development of an ‘ethnic underclass’ in Dutch society. Even though work arose from concern and not aversion he is sometimes considered as the pioneer for Fortuyn, Wilders and Baudet arguing that Dutch language, culture and history should be taken more seriously (Scholten, 2011). However, Van Boxtel, former Minister of Integration and Urban Affairs, denied the claims of a ‘multicultural tragedy’. Van Boxtel argued “against an unbalanced idea about

the position of minorities in Dutch society. [...] Besides problems, there is also progress” (2000, p. 12).

However, the political discourse was mostly offensive towards migrants. Populist politician Pim Fortuyn framed immigrant integration in an assimilationist and obligatory way “in order to preserve Dutch culture and identity and to compensate for the social-cultural deprivation of migrants.” (Scholten, 2011, p. 196). The terror attacks of 9/11 in the United States, the murders on Fortuyn and Islam critic and film-director Theo van Gogh strengthened the sensitivity towards immigration. Cultural differences became depicted as a threat to the ‘Dutch’ identity, in which the ‘clash of civilisations’ (Huntington, 1996) between Western and Muslim values was propagated. Populist anti-immigrants’ parties such as Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party grew, which in turn led to the politicization of immigrant integration. A new ambition arose to preserve the national identity within the Dutch society, “[integration policy] was just as much about the integration of the Dutch society as such as about the integration of migrants in this society” (Scholten, 2010, p. 81). Socio-cultural differences were now considered to be a hindrance of immigrant integration (Ibid., 2013).

The response of the rising concerns led to the adjustment of citizenship criteria for immigrants (van Houdt et al., 2011). The preparation of a new legislation was assigned to Conservative Minister Rita Verdonk which resulted in the fundamental revision of the Civic integration policies. This led to the implementation of the Law on Civic Integration Abroad (WIB) in 2006 and Law on Civic Integration (WI) in 2007. The WIB entailed an entrance examination for all non-Western immigrants before entering the Netherlands based on an operationalization of the country’s economic success (Spijkerboer, 2007). The Civic Integration Law (WI) in 2007 added another three exams to the civic integration course: oral and written Dutch (up to a specified level) and the introduction of (essential) Knowledge of the Dutch society (KNS), the predecessor of the KNM exam. Additionally, new measurements were expanded to ‘oldcomers’ with no education (migrants that were already staying in the Netherland). Failure to pass the exams could not only cause a fine (as in 1998) but could now lead to the denial of permanent settlement rights. The integration course shifted from an ‘effort obligation’ to a ‘result obligation’ (Schinkel & van Houdt, 2010, p. 705). The content of the integration courses changed as well as it contained aspects of identification and feelings of belong by ‘showing’ knowledge of Dutch norms and values and political institutions. Though these developments did not reflect all integration policies. For instance, on a local level chose Amsterdam major Job Cohen a more dialogical and pragmatic approach instead of an assimilationist one by stressing the “possibilities for identification as a means of creating social cohesion” (Scholten, 2011, p. 280) as migrants tend to identify with the cities, they reside in with the national identity at large (Tonkens & Hurenkamp, 2016; Van der Welle & Mamadouh, 2019). With Cohens slogan ‘keeping things together’, he called for the development of tailer-made projects and the recognition of groups to reach effective policies.

De Nationale Ombudsman (2018) notes that before 2013, the emphasis of the amendments to the Civic Integration Act was mainly on facilitating newcomers. However, when the desired results

failed, additional requirements were imposed on newcomers. Under the revised legislation (Wi2013) the responsibility shifted from municipalities to newcomers to arrange the integration course. The focus on individual responsibility grew, which stemmed from a neoliberal ideology, resulting in a renewed emphasis on duties that should accompany rights (Entzinger, 2003; Scholten, 2007; Bonjour, 2009, in Bonjour, 2013, p. 840). The Wi2013 has been repeatedly criticised, as it is excessively ineffective, inadequate, and complex (Driouichi, 2007; SER, 2018; Algemene Rekenkamer, 2017; Engbersen et al., 2015; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018 in Scholten et al., 2019, p. 15). This due to several indicators such as the lack of transparency and monitoring of the integration market, a trend towards self-reliance and the adoption of values (Verwey-Jonkers, 2020).

In July 2018, the Minister of Social Affairs announced a new Civic integration system implemented in 2022. Municipalities are once again responsible for the integration. The integration law facilitates financial support and a personal trajectory. Municipalities will guide newcomers with an individual plan (Plan Integration and Participation, PIP) and the extension of workforce orientation (labour market and participation module) will expedite the participation of newcomers from day one. Newcomers will remain responsible for complying with the integration obligation (Divosa, 2021). The government further announced its plan to increase the language requirement from A2 to B1 (elementary to intermediate). This proposal already received a lot of criticism.¹¹ The increased requirement can hinder the integration of newcomers to obtain citizenship. Besides, low literacy and illiteracy also occur among the Dutch society (with around 11%). It is therefore strange to say that newcomers who do not write or speak Dutch well enough ‘do not belong’ (De Waal, 2019). The proposal can create second-class citizens as it will complicate the integration of newcomers (Krösschell & de Bruin-Boonstra, 2021). Besides, the individual plan (PIP) is an extra component to the integration requirements newcomers already had to pass and possible sanction moment, even though, evaluations revealed that sanctions are not effective within the integration process.¹² Moreover, the loan system will continue to exist for family migrants and migrants that fall in the category ‘other’. Consequently, the distinction between groups will not be diminished (Achbab & de Waal, 2021).

1.4 Research objectives & research questions

It is important to consider in what ways current tendencies and societal and scientific debates are reflected in the integration course, specifically in the integration exam ‘Knowledge of the Dutch society’ (*Kennis van de Nederlandse Maatschappij*). In KNM exam, newcomers must learn core values of Dutch society and acquire practical knowledge, such as the labour market, education or authorities outlined in eight different themes (Asscher, 2017). This thesis aims to grasp

¹¹ See Draft decision of implementation Civic Integration Act 20... (p.45-46). Accessed on December 21, 2021. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/12/21/bijlage-1-ontwerp-besluit-inburgering-20>.

¹² Evaluation Civic Integration Act 2013. Accessed on January 4, 2022. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/06/27/evaluatie-van-de-wet-inburgering-2013>.

(underlying) conceptions and expectations within the course, to identify negotiations and performative acts and to destabilize exclusionary constructions. This adds to a deeper understanding of citizenship practices within the integration course. Based on a relational perspective, this study provides insight into how actors interact and act beyond given 'integration norms'.

Considering the need for the recognition of narrative and interactive knowledge within the integration course, the following research question is formulated:

How do newcomers perform and negotiate citizenship during their integration course 'Knowledge of the Dutch society', amidst formal and implicit criteria concerning the exam?

By analysing different layers of the process, this thesis aims to create in depth insights and understanding of citizenship practices and the experiences of newcomers amidst prescribed and implicit criteria of the KNM exam. To answer the main research question, this thesis has chosen to operationalize three sub-questions as a means of answering the main research question.

1. What are the formal criteria of the KNM exam?

This first sub question will analyse the formal criteria of the integration exams. Formal criteria in this research consider the regulations for KNM within the Civic Integration Act (2022). This consists of the learning objectives, themes, Crucial Acts, and so forth. These regulations are essential to analyse as they provide the set conditions of what newcomers require learn and as they are used to compose (practice)exams and teaching methods. The practice exams and teaching methods are examined this section as well. The material analysis is further added through an analysis of teachers and newcomers' perspective. Overall, this section considers if the learning objectives reach their goal to prepare newcomers as self-sufficient citizens. Even though this chapter has a more descriptive nature, this thesis deems it important to consider the scope of expected knowledge and skills. This is a vital step to analyse the performative side of citizenship practices.

2. What are the implicit criteria of the KNM exam?

Secondly, this thesis will investigate the implicit criteria within the KNM exam. This research aims to grasp underlying and unwritten ideas of what newcomers are expected to learn by focussing on how dominant narratives of the 'Dutch' culture are communicated and educated in KNM texts but also by observing how KNM lessons unfold. This is done by focusing on how current discourses of Dutch integration policy is reflected in KNM texts, photos and materials which include (neo-)colonial constructions and imaginaries of concepts such as 'Dutchness', Us and Them. Thereby creating binaries and arrangements of otherness (Isin, 2017). In addition to the texts, this study aims to identify tacit and implicit structures through the evaluation of everyday activities and interactions in KNM classes. This interaction, between migrant and teacher, could reveal an interesting discourse of

underlying ideas of ('the Dutch') culture. Evaluating (underlying) practices is a key step towards analysing everyday citizenship practices.

3. How is citizenship performed and negotiated in the KNM course?

The last sub question aims to navigate between personal experiences, negotiations and performative citizenship and structures and deriving criteria. It considers how citizenship practices unfold in relation to the power and empowerment processes. This helps to steer away of seeing newcomers as passive or objects of policy. Though, since citizenship goes beyond the individual/state dyad it also considers and implicates other interlocutors (Bloemraad & Sheares, 2017), in this case KNM teachers. This research tried to focus on the reflective dialogical aspects of research relationships by focusing to the social interaction performed in social spaces. It attempts to subvert the sovereignty of the political authority in an integration framework (Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014), by considering the embodied encounter and creative acts in which newcomers transform citizenship.

1.5 Research focus

This thesis analyses processes of performativity and everyday practices in relation to citizenship and integration. In addition to material analysis, this study conducted (online) fieldwork within six integration schools in the city of Nijmegen and Utrecht focusing on 32 newcomers. The participants in this research prepare themselves via languages schools for the exam Knowledge of the Dutch society, often besides the other five exams that newcomers are required to pass (reading, listening, speaking, writing and preparation for the workforce). In the Netherlands, newcomers with a temporary residence permit with the goal of permanent settlement have an integration obligation.¹³ This group consists of asylum seekers including family members that reunite with a refugee, family migrants and a small group falls in the category 'other'. This category consists of persons with a residence permit for a specific purpose of residence. According to the Ministry of Justice and Security (2021) the current number of migrants that need to integrate is around twenty thousand newcomers of which around thirteen thousand asylum seekers, seven thousand family migrants and around five hundred migrants in the category 'other'. Newcomers are required to pass the exams within three years and live for at least five consecutive years in the Netherlands to naturalize i.e., granting Dutch citizenship. Not meeting the requirements can lead to a fine or even to denial of permanent settlement rights (Entzinger, 2014). Most participants in this study are asylum seekers, only three newcomers came to the Netherlands through family reunification. None of the participants fall in the categorisation 'other'.

Newcomers in this study are from different nationalities, namely from four teen different countries. One particular nationality was not chosen as this study focused on newcomers 'in general',

¹³ From outside the EU and from Turkey, with a few exceptions like expats or temporary students. See <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/immigratie-naar-nederland/vraag-en-antwoord/moet-ik-als-nieuwkomer-inburgeren> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2020/04/10/vanaf-dit-voorjaar-verplicht-inburgeren-voor-turkse-asielstatushouders> for more information.

to recognize possible influences of different backgrounds, statuses, practices on the experiences of citizenship during the KNM course. The variety of experiences and perceptions across nationality and other axes could actually contribute to a more in-depth insight for this research.

1.6 Thesis outline

In the upcoming chapter, this research discusses the conceptual framework that forms the fundament for this thesis to understand political, social and cultural phenomena regarding the course. This is done by analysing concepts of citizenship, integration, culturalism and performativity. Chapter three provides a discussion on the methodology of this study. The fourth chapter discusses the structure and outline of the formal criteria through a multi-layered material analysis. The following chapter focusses on the implicit criteria as it considers discursive processes of colonial recursions and the construction of the binary Us and Them. The last empirical chapter goes in depth in the performative citizenship, (re)negotiates of everyday practices and the interplay of multiple actors within their KNM course. In the conclusion, this thesis recapitulates the most important findings of this research followed by recommendations for future policy and constructions of the KNM course.

Chapter 2 Conceptual framework

The category of citizenship is becoming a powerful tool in the hands of nation-states for managing the question of “who belongs in the age of diversity” (Zapata-Barrero, 2017, p. 5). After the Second World War for a long period of time political philosophical focused on the development of the liberal conception, but since 1980s communitarian thinkers criticised the liberal conceptions as the value of cultural connectedness and identity were underestimated (Waal, 2019). Alongside political-philosophical discussions, European states have come increasingly under pressure from forces of globalization (Habermas 2001, p.65), which led to political and demographic changes.

This generated new debates on cultural and religious diversity and the recognition of difference. Citizenship was no longer viewed as merely a formal status but was contested and broadened to include “struggles of recognition and redistribution on a political and social level” (Isin & Turner, 2002, p.2). A universalistic discourse within Western democracies recognised and accommodated cultural emancipation and diversity. The Neverlands too has been put forward as an example of multiculturalism as Givens (2007) asserts, favouring cultural pluralism. Apart from the scholarly discussion if there ever truly was a multicultural approach, academics agree on a tendency of increasing ideas of the formation of the nation-state. Immigration has induced concerns in the Western Europe related to the rise of ethnic diversity, which has led widespread anxiety about a geographical imagination of a ‘threatening’ outside (Van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2017). The formation of the national identity has become more prominent and in need of protection, as the incorporation of newcomers could undermine the myths of cultural homogeneity of the nation-state (De Haas, Miller & Castles, 2020).

The purpose this chapter is to outline current academic debates regarding citizenship and integration and to discuss theoretical concepts that are relevant for this thesis. This conceptual framework outlines four relevant concepts for this thesis, namely citizenship, integration, cultural essentialism and performativity. This chapter examines how the concepts relate to one another and considers how involved actors such as the states and newcomers perform and embody them. The combination of these elements allows for the construction of the conceptual framework of this study and by doing so, the presentation of its intended approach.

2.1 Citizenship

In the last few decades, citizenship has emerged as a fast-growing field of study with a renewed interest in academia and national policies in Europe (Bauböck, Ersbøll, Groenendijk & Waldrauch, 2006; Goodman, 2015; Joppke, 2008; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Schinkel & van Houdt, 2010). The boundaries citizenship and the sovereignty of nation-states are constantly challenged in an era of globalization and migration. Migration has brought about “profound change to conceptions of national membership and belonging in nation-states (Goodman, 2015, p. 2). Bachmann and Stearklé (2003) assert that even though the idea of citizenship might be universal, its meaning is not. Definitions of

what citizenship entails differ from state to state as the content and domestic regulations vary across national contexts.

Citizenship typologies

Western perceptions of citizenship usually have two traditions as point of reference, namely the liberal and republican approach to citizenship. The liberal conception primarily views citizenship as a juridical status, with a strong emphasis on equality, individual rights and liberties. The role of the state is to protect the freedom of its citizens. This typology holds a more inclusive and passive conception of citizenship as it focused on citizens' rights and freedoms and does not imply collective participation or responsibilities (Delanty, 2002).

The republican tradition focuses on the practices and rights of citizenship participation to accomplish common good. The conception emphasis both on the individual, rights and collective responsibilities in which rights are mainly articulated in terms of powers and claims. The republican conception prioritises the role of conflict and with it the expansion of rights (Bachmann et al., 2003). This typology holds a more process-orientated and active character (Honohan, 2017).

The liberal and republican traditions have developed in a variety of different approaches over time in which the trajectory of citizenship has experienced a shift towards a more substantive character of citizenship, namely the communitarian tradition (Delanty, 2002). Communitarianism has a strong emphasis on community with the goal of creating a cohesion within society organised around a set of common values "which community members are expected to endorse and defend" (Janoski & Gran, 2002, p.19). Group action, mutual support and collective rights form the bases for a good society, rather than individual liberties and self-interest. This typology holds an active and responsible character. According to Fermin (2009) citizenship always implies in-and exclusion but the exclusivity is most prominent in the republican and communitarian perspectives as they focus on active involvement, duties to the community, social morality, and shared identity.

These citizenship traditions are important to consider as they are not only a political philosophy but also a mode of governing (Delanty as cited in Schinkel & Van Houdt, 699). These theories no longer capture the changing nature of citizenship in the twenty-first century (Isin & Gran, 2002). Nevertheless, it is helpful to consider the typologies and dimensions analysed below, to break down the concept of citizenship and the discourses related to it.

Dimensions & approaches in contemporary citizenship

The concept of citizenship within academic literature is often composed of three dimensions: citizenship as a legal status coupled with rights (Waal, 2019; Fermin, 2009), citizenship as participation (Leydet, 2017) and citizenship that furnishes a source of belonging (Bloemraad et al., 2008; Bloemraad & Sheares, 2017)

Citizenship can be defined as a form of membership in a political and geographical community (Bloemraad & Sheares, 2017). The juridical status is examined in terms of those who are entitled to hold the status of citizen. Citizenship can be granted on the bases of birthplace (*jus soli*) or parental origins (*jus sanguinis*), or a combination of the two. For those who cannot require citizenship through this way, citizenship can be acquired through naturalization. This is the case for the majority of international migrants (Bloemraad et al., 2008). The requirements for naturalisation differ in each country. However, most European countries are often reluctant to grant migrants citizenship rights (Waal, 2019) as the European border regime increasingly focusses on creating a selective migration system in which borders are continuously managed, controlled, and securitized (Barbero, 2012; Laine, 2017). The naturalization process often requires a period of residence and several test to demonstrate knowledge of the country's language and society, as also discussed in the introduction to this thesis. A more expanded form of legal or formal citizenship concentrates on the rights that accompany citizenship. It entails the specifics of citizens recognition and provides a formal basis of the individual in relation to the state (Sassen, in Bachmann et al., 2003, p.18). The relation between the state and individuals can be viewed as a contract which both sides have rights and obligations (Yuval-Davis as cited in Bloemraad et al., 2008, p. 156). As citizen, one of the most important rights is the protection of the state and an unrestricted access to the territory (Vink, 2005). Citizenship further provides the right of a permanent residence permit and several privileges such as the right to vote and to receive equal fundamental rights (Waal, 2019). Moreover, rights also encompass the socioeconomical sphere as the right to education, housing and social security. To uphold the relationship between the state and the individual, the state thus provides basic rights while citizens have the responsibility to pay taxes, to obey the law and to tolerate and acknowledge the liberties and rights of other persons (Janoski & Gran, 2002).

The second dimension considers citizenship as participation, in which citizens are viewed as political agents who participate in society's political institutions (Leydet, 2017). Citizens have the right to access and to participate in political parties and unions as it gives citizens the "right to participate in the exercise of political power" (Marshall, 1950, p.11). Traditionally, participation is analysed in political dimension. However, this dimension also reaches the socioeconomic sphere as it provides access into structures like the labour market and education or social networks such as associations. Marshall (1950) argues that the capacity to politically participate partly depends on social and economic inclusion. The privilege of political participation has historically been exclusionary by gender, class, ethnicity, race and religion. With time, barriers were formally thorn down but struggles against exclusions remain. For instance, newcomers with a residence permit but without the right to vote raises legitimacy problems in a liberal democracy (Fermin, 2009). Political participation is increasingly seen as an individual or even human right that should be detached from legal status (Brysk & Shafir 2004, Hayduk 2006 in Bloemraad et al., 2008, p. 156). Though, citizens participation can also be articulated as a responsibility or obligation to be an active or 'good' member to contribute

to society. In the face of retreating government responsibilities, “citizens in the neo-liberal state need to be more active in ensuring both the standards and types of services to which they are entitled to (Kennedy 2007, p. 307). As considered in relation to civic integration policies, the focus on civic engagement also becomes apparent considering newcomers’ integration obligations.

The last dimension of citizenship furnishes a distinct source of belonging. Citizenship as belonging expresses the notion of ‘feeling at home’ within a community (Yuval-Davis 2006 in Nyhagen & Halsaa, 2016, p. 60). Yuval-Davis (2006) differentiates this concept between belonging and the politics of belonging. The first notion refers to the emotional attachment i.e., the feeling that one is at home. The politics of belonging leans towards an official meaning regulated through policies, which can be for example manifested through formal citizenship (Antonsich, 2010). The notion of belonging encompasses experiences of in- and exclusion, for a ‘we’ to exist some automatically fall outside the founded and bounded community (Bosniak 2006 in Bloemraad et al., 2008). Nation-states mobilize a shared sense of belonging and loyalty to create a collective identity. This can serve as a mechanism to control its boundaries, by describing specific norms which citizens should meet to be included. Here, the notion of belonging can be related to concepts of identity, individual and collective level and social integration as citizens sense of belonging effect’s collective identity of the political community (Leydet, 2017). According to Ghorashi (2003) feelings of belonging, identifying with and feeling at home in a community largely dependent on the extent of inclusion in the community and being recognized as a citizen. This recognition or inclusion can have multiple forms such as status, socio-economic participation or emotional attachment.

The relations between the three dimensions are complex. For example, newcomers’ sense of belonging can grow or can be restricted depended on different forms and contexts. The restriction of status and rights can hinder the participation and feelings of belonging in a society or restrictive naturalization rules can complicate socioeconomic inclusion or cultural integration. Conversely, Bloemraad et al. (2008, p. 156) argue that if rights are “understood broadly and guaranteed regardless of foreign birth, immigrants’ legal equality and participation might challenge existing understandings of belonging”. Though, the legal position, participation and sense of belonging is influenced by political and public discourses as well as every-day practices experiences and negotiations of newcomers themselves.

Lived citizenship

According to Lister (2007) there is a growing academic interest in everyday life “[in] the meaning that citizenship actually has in people’s lives and the ways in which people’s social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens” (Hall & Williamson in Lister 2007, p. 55). Besides the domains above, this thesis aims to capture a broader understanding of citizenship as practice. This is crucial for this thesis in order to analyse individual experiences and every-day practices the KNM course.

Citizenship as practice or lived citizenship is defined by Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016, p. 60) as an idea that “citizenship is not so much a fixed attribute of a particular group but rather involves contested, fluid and dynamic processes of negotiation and struggle.” In lived citizenship practices, acts, experiences and personal understanding are emphasized, rather than legal status or formal practice (Kallio et al., 2020, p. 23). This practice is intimately linked with individual identities, participation in different contexts and their sense of belonging (Lister in Nyhagen & Halsaa, 2016, p. 60). To add to Kallio et al., (2020) this research focusses on formal practices as well besides personal experiences, as the practices and interaction between actors are key to understand how integration policies unfold. This perspective can be essential it provides an analytical tool to consider the dynamism and multifariousness of citizenship beyond fixed frameworks. This in turn, can add to examinations of as citizenship as a concept and as practice from an everyday perspective of newcomers, as it considers individual experiences and negotiations within different dimensions of citizenship within society.

The upcoming interest on personal experiences is even more crucial when considering the national models of integration that seem to include a normative construction that not only describes the process of immigrant incorporation into a nation-state, but also reflect an ideal self-image of that nation-state (Entzinger, 2014).

The cultural turn of citizenship

In the last few decades, the Dutch discourse is increasingly occupied with the formation and retainment of the nation-state centred on notions of culture with focus on ‘Dutch core values’ that have become attached to being ‘Dutch’. As a result of these developments, culture is increasingly emphasized in integration debates as an essential component for immigrants to become ‘full’ citizen.

Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010) consider this process as an ‘extra-juridical normative concept of citizenship’. More specifically a transformation from formally held rights to a more substantive and moral consideration of citizenship. Nowadays, ‘moral citizenship, “comes first and afterwards a formal status can be obtained after demonstrating good citizenship” (Van Houdt et al., 2011, p. 419). The authors further assert that migrants are not only expected but even made responsible for their own integration and adaption, a governmental strategy defined as neo-liberal communitarianism. Neo-liberalism is an extension of the liberal typology as a mode of governing populations as it has an emphasis on individual responsibility and self-sufficiently, in combination communitarian a focus on common values.

The growing emphasis on cultural adjustment is defined by Duyvendak, Hurenkamp & Tonkens (2010) and later by Tonkens and Duyvendak (2016) as the ‘culturalization’ of citizenship. “[it describes] a process in which more meaning is attached to cultural adaption (in terms of norms, values, practices and traditions), either as an alternative or in addition to citizenship as rights and socioeconomic participation” (Duyvendak et al., 2010, p. 7). Here, Duyvendak et al. (2010) justly

wonder if there is an actual ‘Dutch culture’ as it implies a reified idea of ‘Dutch’ norms and values. It assumes fixed ‘Dutch’ core values which makes up a Dutch citizen. This emphasis is elaborated further in the third section. In order to dive deeper in the current tendencies that influence citizenship requirements it is important to firstly examine the concept of integration.

2.2 Integration

The notion of immigration integration is a hugely complex and problematic concept that has been extensively researched, but academics encounter much difficulty to define the concept and to define when a person is integrated (Favell, 2003). Even though integration has been broadly researched academically, the concept also has “become both a key policy objective related to the resettlement of refugee and other migrants and a matter of significant public discussion” (Ager & Strang 2008, p. 167). For this research it is important to consider the concept of integration both on an academic and policy level to operationalize integration and to analyse how integration policies in the Netherlands unfold. This can add to the understanding of how integration exams are constructed, in particular the exam Knowledge of the Dutch society. Furthermore, it is relevant to investigate the research-policy nexus to examine interplay of current policy trends and academic research.

The term integration is defined by Esser (in Penninx, 2019, p. 3) as “the inclusion [of individual actors] in already existing social systems”. Or in similar vein “the incorporation of new elements [immigrants] into an existing social system” (Snel, Engbersen & Leerkes, 2006, p. 267). For Heckmann (2006, p.18) integration is “a generations lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society”. These definitions view integration as a one-sided process, as migrants integrate into a given society. However, as some consider integration as a linear process, others a multi-dimensional and two-way process (Barry in Bakker et al., 2016, p. 5).

To grasp the concept of integration, Entzinger (2003) and Penninx (2005, 2019) roughly outline three analytical dimensions in which immigrants may (or may not) become member in several parts of society: (i) the legal-political, (ii) the socio-economic, and (iii) the cultural dimension. The dimensions include:

- i. The legal-political dimension refers to citizenship and political rights and duties. This dimension also considers when newcomers become formal members of a community i.e., acquire legal citizenship.
- ii. The socio-economic dimension involves to the social and economic position of residents. It examines the access to and participation in institutional facilities such as labour market, education, health care, housing.

- iii. The cultural dimension considers a common basis to create mutual understanding. It further pertains the perceptions and practices of immigrants and the receiving society as well as their reciprocal reactions to difference and diversity.

The legal-political dimension is important to examine in relation to the position of newcomers as it considers the varieties between 'full' membership and irregular migrants. Newcomers in this study with a temporary residence permit receive the same rights and obligations as Dutch residence, without formalized citizenship. The question arises when someone is regarded as full-fledge member. Are newcomers regarded as 'full' member once they are naturalized or is there an extension of formal criteria with other expectations? Furthermore, it is important to examine the effects of naturalization rules on socioeconomic inclusion and cultural integration.

The socio-economic dimension is essential to consider the difference between the position of natives and immigrants, particular when they are unequal as they provide useful inputs for integration policies (Entzinger, 2003). Besides, this study questions what level of participation and responsibility is expected of newcomers and if this differs from 'native' citizens.

The last dimension is particularly interesting for this research. It refers to social contacts and the extent newcomers endorse and negotiate prevailing moral standards and values of the host society (Vermeulen & Penninx, in Snel et al., 2006, p. 268). However, this dimension is difficult to measure as it is less about objective differences and more about (ethnic, cultural, and religious) diversity, tacit and unwritten perceptions and categorizations. Though, this research aims to grasp how these tacit and implicit criteria are enacted in the KNM exam. It is important to analyse these categorizations as Penninx (2019) argues, as they may become stereotypes or prejudices.

The dimensions are not fully independent of one another, as one may condition the other. Nevertheless, with help of the dimensions above we can measure a certain degree of integration within a society. Though, the extent of integration includes non-newcomers as well. Klarenbeek (2021) asserts that integration "not only depends on the commitments, efforts and achievements of 'immigrants' and their offspring but also on the structure and the openness of 'the receiving society'" p. 36). Within academic research there is often consensus that integration should be considered as a dynamic and two-sided process instead of a static one. For example, Penninx (2019) delineates integration as the process of settlement of newcomers in a given society, as the interaction of newcomers with the host society and to the social change that follows immigration. Integration then suggest that adaption is a gradual process that requires some degree of mutual accommodation (De Haas, Miller & Castles, 2020). This two-sidedness is a relational concept because it can only be complete if both parts (host society and immigrants) are willing to work together and interact (Bakker, 2016).

From integration to normativity?

However, the perception of integration as a two-sided process is questionable as it this description implies “that immigrants have to integrate into a fixed image of the receiving society” (Scholten et al., 2019). Integration than encompasses a normative character as it entails a ‘fixed’ standard with an idea of an already integrated or naturalized society. In this case, ‘community’ i.e., ‘the Dutch community’ is assumed to be an already mobilized community (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010).

This normative construction is also reflected in current integration policies, with an increasing emphasis on the necessity of cultural adaption of newcomers in the articulated ‘Dutch’ community. It entails an emphasis on earning one’s citizenship, in which newcomers must pass more and more requirements to obtain Dutch nationality (Suvarierol & Kirk, 2015; De Waal, 2020) with a growing focus on ‘active’ citizenship and common cultural norms and values (Schinkel & Van Houdt 2010; Tonkens & Duyvendak 2016). Furthermore, a growing body of research identifies this as an assimilationist direction in integration policy, i.e., a process in which the substantive culture of the majority society becomes imposed on newcomers (Entzinger, 2014; Joppke, 2007; Schinkel, 2013; Vasta, 2007). This study considers if and to what extend this emphasis is reflected in the KNM exam in the in the upcoming chapters.

Scholten et al. (2019, p. 8) assert that “integration policies should be assessed based on their measurable effects on a set of societal outcomes that are specified as their policy objectives (e.g., increased language proficiency levels or participation in the labour market). Rather than on a normative ideal-typical construction which not only describe the process of immigrant incorporation into a state, but also reflect an ideal self-image of that nation-state that is considered as bounded. It is essential to note that apart from migration, societies are already fragmented and decentred. Scholten et al. (2019) argue that academics and policy makers are critical on the increasingly normative nature of the concept of integration nowadays.

So, when studying integration policies, it is important to analyse how different political and social actors perceive and frame immigrant integration (Penninx, 2019). This thesis questions the extent of normative perception, especially as the KNM exam is already defined as having a normative character by Entzinger (2013) and VluchtelingenWerk Nederland (2020). Furthermore, it is important to consider the current tendencies within policies in relation to academic work, as it is difficult to avoid assumed and toxic notions. In Schinkel’s contribution (2018) ‘Against immigrant integration’, the author indicates that research today on migration and integration in Western Europe occurs amidst a highly toxic public discourse. As researcher it is essential to be aware of the interface between policymaking and knowledge production and the nature to which research is used to make policy decisions.

This research therefore acknowledges the importance of distinguishing analytic from common sense categories by viewing integration as a multidimensional, contextual, non-linear and diverse process (Dahinden, 2016). Moreover, integration is regarded as a negotiation between contexts and cultures which is contested and constantly moving.

2.3 Cultural essentialism & lived citizenship

This following paragraph scrutinizes processes of framing and culturalization within citizenship requirements and integration policies and explores different perspectives to move beyond current tendencies by analysing diversity and lived citizenship. More specifically, it introduces its research approach of enacting citizenship as the interplay between actors and the ways in which related discursive and transformative acts can unfold.

The growing diversity over the last decades has sparked a certain panic and ‘cultural anxiety’, “a concern about cultural identity and cultural loss, the fear that someone is robbing ‘us’ of our culture” (Grillo, in Vertovec, 2011, p. 244). Western nation-states mobilize a shared sense of belonging and loyalty based on a common language, cultural traditions and beliefs and are often conceived as founded and bounded (Stolcke in Vertovec, 2011, p. 244). Such a nation is not primordial, but rather an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2006; Bloemraad & Sheares, 2017), for example someone is ‘Dutch’ not just a Dutch citizen. Stolcke (in Vertovec, 2011, p.44) argues that immigration can be constructed as a problem to the nation-state, as it possesses a threat to the national identity and integrity on account of immigrants’ cultural diversity. Here, discourses have become riddled with references of culture, which are often conflated with identity, ethnicity, religion or nationality (Vertovec, 2011)

In the Netherlands the formation of the ‘the Dutch identity’ has become more distinguished and prominent. Being ‘Dutch’ often comes with the connotation of someone with ‘modern’ western values on issues such equal rights, secularism and sexuality (Tonkens, Hurenkamp & Duyvendak, 2018). Universalistic modern values are (re)produced including the articulation of being progressive. The creation of ‘us’ i.e., being non-religious’, individualist and egalitarian, has automatically created the formation of ‘the other’. A significant premises is that “we know who ‘we’ are and what constitutes our sameness, precisely because we know who ‘we’ are not and what constitutes our difference from others” (Banks & Gingrich in Vertovec, 2011, p. 245).

‘The other’ often includes non-Western immigrants, often targeted towards Muslims, that are considered to be sexually repressed and incapable of respecting social and political equality of sexual minorities and women (Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens, 2010). Moreover, Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens (2010) outline an antithetical discourse of modernity versus tradition where tolerance versus fundamentalism, individualism and the lack thereof frame an “imagined modern self against an imagined traditional other” (p. 970). The process of othering (creating an ‘us’ and them’ divide) (re)produces the mechanism of ‘cultural essentialism’. Cultural essentialism conceives cultures as static, reified and homogeneous across bounded groups, where fixed and collective core sets of cultural characteristics are (self)attributed to a group (Vertovec, 2011; Wade, 2015).

The polarised and hardened debates related to on the one hand social cohesion and on the other cultural diversity have influenced the Dutch integration policies. Currently, the Dutch integration programme has been identified as particularly restrictive that requires newcomers to earn their

citizenship (Blankvoort et al., 2021). This has led to additional requirements for newcomers and a growing emphasis on the demonstration of feelings of attachment, belonging, connectedness and loyalty toward the Netherlands (Tonkens & Duyvendak 2016). How do these requirements influence newcomers' feelings of belonging in the Netherlands? According to Ghorashi (2003) the process of 'othering' can cause newcomers to be seen as living in, but not belonging to the nation. However, numerous studies in the Netherlands have shown that immigrants more readily identify with the neighbourhoods and cities they reside in than belonging on a national level (Tonkens & Hurenkamp in De Waal, 2019). This in comparison to 'native' Dutch who primarily identify at the level of the nation.

Academics have problematized the 'culturalization of citizenship' and static and monolithic conceptions of culture. Scholten et al. (2019) argue that these processes indicate a bias against specific groups as cultural differences between ethnic groups are viewed as the cause of social problems. It is crucial to examine the possible consequences of the exclusionary notions of citizenship throughout this research considering its social relevance. Namely, static conceptions of culture can fuel polarization within society and may increase social tensions (Duyvendak et al., 2010). In the upcoming chapters, this study considers if and in what ways this cultural emphasis is enacted and communicated in the KNM objectives and course. However, while the cultural dimension is an important aspect, it is essential to analyse legal and socio-economic aspects as well to avoid an overemphasis. The analysis of formal criteria will predominantly focus on the requirements in these dimensions.

Besides, while the above-mentioned studies are of great importance to investigate the dominant discourses and representations of citizenship, they often neglect to consider the diversity within the two groups ('Dutch' versus 'the migrant/newcomer') as categories are reproduced. This study aims to examine individual experiences of newcomers as well by considering personal agency, as migrants are (perhaps not intentionally) portrayed as passive. An interesting question is in what ways newcomers position themselves in current discourses. This is done by adopting the perspective of lived citizenship, is as stated above, a practice which considers citizenship as a contested, fluid and dynamic process of negotiation and struggle (Nyhagen & Halsaa, 2016). This practice provides an analytical tool while conducting relational ethnographic fieldwork. This study further aims to be critical of studying differences as seems to be a paradoxical one-sided difference in immigrant integration, i.e., difference that is exclusively attributed to 'others'. (Schinkel, 2018, p.8). It is therefore important to consider differences within and across society by questioning the seemingly homogenous 'the Dutch culture and core values' presented in the KNM exam by regarding cultures as dynamic, as change is a very basic element in all of them' (Nussbaum, 2000). This notion can in turn contribute to public debates by promoting more distributive and processual understandings of culture (Vertovec, 2011).

To understand how citizenship is enacted, we need to understand how normative aspects of citizenship and integration are lived and performed. The next section adds to this analysis by

examining the concept of performativity. It explores how social imaginaries of Us and Them are performed and reproduced in society and integration policies and perhaps more importantly, the potential of performative acts that arise from bottom-up processes.

2.4 Performativity

The concept of performativity arrived in the 1950s as philosopher J.L. Austin developed a theory on speech acts, in which Austin argued that language is performative as it has the capacity to act. Language has no truth value as it does not describe the world but acts upon it, as a way of ‘doing things with words’ (Hall, 1999). In this line of thinking, language becomes a form of social action.

In the 1990s, Judith Butler a well-cited philosopher and feminist, conceived performativity as the “reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (Butler, 1993, p. xii). Butler specifically analyses the concept of gender and asserts that gender is not an essence but rather an embodied discourse “as speaking itself is a bodily act”. Here, gender is not something one ‘has’, but something someone ‘does’. The repetitions acts are crucial here, because the subject has no ontological status, “apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality” (Butler, 1999, p.173). With lacking ontological foundation, subjects are socially constructed through discourse and dynamics of social life.

According to Feldman (2005) not only the subject, but also notions of nation, state, man, woman, immigrant, minority etc. are socially constructed through repetitious and interactive performative acts, both by actors and broader structures within society. Though, Feldman asserts that performativity not only concerns the social construction of subjects, but also relates to regulated practices that “inscribe boundaries between subjects and reify them in that very process” (2005, p. 222). Performativity then can become a site of power struggle, with competing interest as viewpoints differ and voices are articulated (Gonquergood, 1989).

Current forms of performative power can be found in the demarcated and inscribed boundaries within nation-states that are often articulated as ‘the self’ against the ‘other’ through repetitious practices. Anderson (2006) argues that nation-states exercise their power through a mechanism of boundary making to create a ‘imagined community’. Such a community often consists of a shared sense of belonging based on traditions, history, beliefs, and a common language.

Nation-states are increasingly occupied with regulating immigrant integration as migration has induced concerns related to diversity which have challenged the national sovereignty. Here, sovereigntist conception of performativity comes into being, “as a performative force of expression through the exercise of sovereign authority to ‘maintain a status quo’” (Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014, p. 7). Bonjour and Duyvendak (2017) assert that integration policies of nation-states are part of this mechanism in which they “perform in their perpetual endeavour to make the population in their territories match with the imagined communities they are deemed to represent” (p. 883). Integration requirements then can focalize an imagination of a ‘good’ or ‘Dutch’ citizen as they articulate certain

attributes. Here, citizenship can become a commodity as newcomers need to ‘earn’ citizenship by performing a series of tasks and duties which prove integration and investment in society (Van Houdt et al., 2011). This study examines how these power mechanisms, that construct a (imagined) collective identity through the (re)production of representations of ‘we’ against the ‘other’, classify and influences newcomers’ belongingness and experiences of citizenship.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that performativity is not only spoken by someone delegated with authority through politics or protocols. Power relations should not be taken-for-granted, as it is also what people make of it. Namely, performativity can be a bottom-up process as well, reflected in social practices or civic inscription (Bachmann et al., 2003). These processes can be related to agency and practices of lived citizenship where newcomers can perform and articulate citizenship in their own terms. According to Santos “bodies are performative and thus renegotiate and expand or subvert the existing reality through what they do” (in Haile, 2020, p. 48). This study analyses processes of citizenship on a day-to-day bases by listening to unfolding voices, nuances, and intonations of performed meaning (Gonquergood, 1989). Here, the perspective performativity can help to steer away from treating immigrants as passive as they can (re)produce, resist and transform discourses through their performative acts. Elements that demand full attention regarding this research include daily and performative struggles for rights and recognition within the KNM course.

Thus, citizenship from a performative perspective can be both a domination and empowerment separately or simultaneously (Isin, 2017). Citizenship as practice can serve as a mechanism of in- and exclusion but can be shaped, negotiated and resisted in every-day practices of newcomers. The claiming and contesting of rights and practices by several actors is known as performative citizenship (Isin & Nielsen 2008; Isin 2009; Zivi 2012 in Bloemraad & Sheares, 2017, p. 854). Bloemraad & Sheares (2017) argue that claim-making draws attention to actors that articulate the content of citizenship, explicitly or implicitly.

This research examines the notion of performativity within a relational framework. It considers performative acts of the state, newcomers, and other actors in relation to the KNM course. It investigates the processes that constitute performative power relations amongst actors, e.g., the constructions of binaries such as we/them, citizen/alien or native/immigrant in which citizenship can become a power mechanism of the state. Besides, this study analyses how newcomers navigate through and within structures and deriving criteria and considers the ways in which newcomers perform and shape citizenship. Moreover, it considers the role of integration schools and gatekeepers such as teachers that work towards integration (exams). This provides an analytical exercise to examine the interplay between actors as processes where performance can act in accordance with systems and protocols and can claim and enact concepts like citizenship and integration in new ways “beyond already given subject positions and institutional networks” (Hildebrandt & Peters, 2019, p. 5).

2.5 Concluding thoughts

This chapter analysed the concepts of citizenship, integration, performativity, and cultural essentialism. The several concepts provide a framework to operationalize citizenship and integration alongside different spheres and in current tendencies. Here, it is essential to note that citizenship is a highly complex and multifaced and therefore not a clear-cut and stable analytical concept and according to Bauchmann et al. (2003, p. 14) “constantly modified in political practices and accommodated to changing historical situations” (p.14). This aids to examination of the role citizenship practices in current discourses and in the every-day experiences of newcomers.

This chapter forms the conceptual basis for this research necessary to consider (discursive) criteria and arising performative acts regarding the KNM course. Through this framework, this study can question the formal criteria in light of the increasingly restrictive integration policies and to examine implicit acts that, in all probability, stem from cultural and essentialist notions. This is crucial to consider as it can create exclusionary arrangements and undermine the foundations of equal citizenship. The concept of performativity further enables this study to analyse performative processes of dominance and empowerment. This thesis – combining theoretical, analytical and methodological perspectives – aims to analyse how citizenship practices are enacted within a relational framework.

To create a relational framework this study combined multiple methodological collection methods, which will be extensively elaborated in the following chapter. Moreover, chapter three considers the disruptive COVID-19 virus, research positionality and ethical dilemmas which made this a challenging research project.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The research conducted ethnographic fieldwork, as it has the potential to reveal lived experiences embedded within sociocultural contexts. The anthropologist Geertz (1973) terms an ethnography as an interpretive science in search of meaning. Ethnographic studies hold much potential for analysing and interpreting lived experiences of migrants and has the potential of revealing the interplay between migration and sociocultural change (McHugh, 2000). More specifically, this research conducts a relational ethnography. A relational ethnography can enable an analysis that goes beyond studying places or groups, by focusing on the dialogical aspects of research relationships (Simon, 2013). This study has goal to broaden fieldwork focused on either group or places as most sociological ethnographies do. It observes a set of interactions that take account of not only “meaning of interactions to participants themselves, but also the encompassing criteria and structures impacting upon the positions, perceptions and practices of these actors” (Gluckman & Mitchell in Vertovec, 2007, p. 1047).

This research further adopts a performative lens to study performative effects of power mechanisms and processes of citizenship on a day-to-day bases by listening to unfolding voices, nuances, and intonations of performed meaning (Gonquergood, 1989). This study investigates newcomers’ everyday experiences during their KNM integration course within a relational framework by considering their position, perceptions, and practices by analysing the interaction and relationship between newcomers and with teachers, government regulations, (practice)exams and KNM methods. According to Gonquergood (1989, p. 83) this process-centred way of thinking alerts ethnographers to the irreducible and evanescent dynamics of social life. The concept of performativity is elaborated above in the conceptual framework of this study.

3.1 Data collection

This research used ethnography as a family of methods that together enabled me to delve into the performativity and practices related to citizenship and integration. In concrete terms, the data collection included participant observations, interviews both online and offline due to the COVID-19 virus and a material analysis. The first two methods focused on (the interaction of) newcomers and teachers and the ways in which the course material of the KNM exam was considered. The material analysis enabled this research to scrutinize practice exams, the exam objectives and corresponding learning materials. The combination of methods allowed for a relational framework as multiple actors were involved in the analysis. It provided a fruitful situation to study negotiations and performativity of citizenship processes amidst formal and implicit criteria of the KNM course.

This study conducted (online) fieldwork in several integration schools the city of Nijmegen and Utrecht from the 29th of March unto the 16th of July 2021, covering fifteen weeks of research. To

access my research population, I had to gain access to integration classes and become actively involved in several schools in Utrecht and Nijmegen as ‘being there’ was an important instrument for the data collection. Due to COVID-19 restrictions this was not always viable, but fortunately most participant observations and interviews were conducted offline. The most successful way to find schools was by using the site Blik op Werk, which provides an overview of all the integration schools in the Netherlands. In this way, I gained more insight in the number of schools in different cities, and which courses they offered. Although this information was not always provided or at times not up to date, it allowed me to contact different language schools. In total forty-five schools in eight different cities were contacted. Collecting data at the schools was often hindered because half of the schools did not offer the KNM course as they exclusively focused on language exams or offered education for higher educated. In this case, the KNM course was studied independently by newcomers. In addition, some schools could not receive me as the (online) classes were too intense or consuming for teachers related to COVID-19 measurements. It was thus challenging to find schools that were able and willing to receive me. Nevertheless, I was able to attend classes in multiple cities offline as online.

The selected field locations are Utrecht and Nijmegen, where I attended in several classes (offline and online) in six schools. Research that examines citizenship and integration processes of newcomers are often conducted in the biggest cities of the Netherlands. Catling (2018) and Scremac (2020) for example examine Dutch integration policy in everyday lives of (Eritrean) newcomers in Amsterdam and Van Bemt (2021) analyses citizenship processes in language integration of Syrian newcomers in Rotterdam. This study wants to add to examine citizenship and integration experiences of newcomers in a relatively large and middle-sized city and not the typical global cities. Empirical data is scarcer in these cities, yet these cities are important locations where newcomers settle. Even more so for newcomers ‘in general’ as one nationality is often chosen as a focus point in research. Furthermore, two sites for this research were chosen to consider possible differences between municipalities. Both municipalities are occupied with creating an inclusive integration policy.

Nijmegen is a city with more than one hundred and seventy thousand citizens the tenth biggest city in the east of the Netherlands. In Nijmegen, more than twenty-five percent of its citizens has a migration background (CBS, 2021). This city constitutes an interesting context for research on integration and citizenship of newcomers, because its municipality explicitly welcomes newcomers and claims to find it important that people with different backgrounds can all participate and feel at home in Nijmegen (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2021). The municipality of Nijmegen facilitates housing, provides guidance, language courses and will help newcomers to participate in the region through work, education or other daytime activities. The expected number of newcomers with an integration obligation in Nijmegen is between 120 and 170 in 2021. Most of them have a Syrian (60%) and Eritrean (20%) nationality.¹⁴

¹⁴ Gemeente Nijmegen. 2021. “Beleidsnota voor de invoering van de nieuwe Wet inburgering”. Accessed on November 10, 2021. <https://nijmegen.bestuurlijkeinformatie.nl>

Utrecht is the fourth largest city in the Netherlands located in the middle of the country. Utrecht has more than three hundred thousand citizens with a diverse population of 172 different nationalities. One in three citizens has a migration background of which more than half are born abroad. This year, the number of newcomers with a residence status was 2.287, though in 2019 and 2020 this number was round three thousand (Utrecht Monitor, 2021). The municipality of Utrecht expected number of newcomers with an integration obligation for 2021 is 210 (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020). Just as in this research and Nijmegen, the most common nationalities are Syrian and Eritrean with 60 and 14 percent (Utrecht Monitor, 2021). Utrecht is engaged in facilitating and organizing many projects to promote the (socio-cultural) integration of newcomers (Van Dam, 2017). The municipality as it has the ambition, besides its legal tasks, to provide and facilitate newcomers in all areas such as health care, education, language and social work through several pilots (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020).

This research focuses on citizenship processes within six schools with a focus on thirty-two newcomers that participated in the KNM course in the selected schools. This section provides some important characteristics of the participants. Before this elaboration, it is important to note that these aspects do not fully define the research population as other aspects such as gender, ethnicity, education and so forth should be considered too. Besides, processes like migration and integration are dynamic as people's characteristics, identities, perceptions and aspirations change over time (De Bree et al., 2010). It is essential to acknowledge that the research population of this research is highly diverse, result should therefore not be generalized for 'all newcomers'.

Twenty-nine participants in this research are asylum seekers with a temporary residence permit. Three participants came to the Netherlands through family reunification. The participants in this study have a temporary residence permit. Once they pass the integration requirements in a period of five years, they can apply for a permit of an indefinite period of time. The most common nationalities of the research population are Eritrea, Syria, Thailand and Iran. On a national level, the most frequent nationalities of asylum seekers are Syria and Afghanistan followed by Yemen, Morocco and Eritrea (CBS, 2021). Family migrants from outside the EU were mostly from Syria, India and Morocco. Besides, twenty participants in this study are female and twelve males. Compared to the national level, there are more male asylum seekers namely more than half and only 20% female (CBS, 2021). Nonetheless, in the category family migrant's is around 60% is female (WODC, 2018). The age differed as some were in their early twenties and other in their late fifties. Most participants live in the Netherlands for a period ranging from eight months to four years, as not every newcomer immediately starts with the integration course when they arrive in the Netherlands. Though, in some cases it was not clear how long they lived in the Netherlands or how old they were as some respondents were hesitant to share this information or there was no opportunity to ask all newcomers this information

during the observed classes. Furthermore, the newcomers that were interviewed followed the KNM classes from just three months to one and a half year.

Interviews and participant observations

This study conducted 7 semi-structured and three unstructured interviews with the research population. The names of the participants, informants, and teachers in this research are (with some exceptions if permission was granted) replaced with pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.

The interviews with the participants covered their experiences with the course, the KNM themes, the teaching materials, and the overall KNM course. In some interviews the KNM exam was also discussed, as some newcomers completed their exam. It was at times difficult to interview the participants because of a language barrier, as newcomers were still learning the Dutch language. Some interviews were (partly) conducted in English, however, some spoke for example Classical Arabic or French, languages I could not speak. After the first two interviews I changed my questions to make it more graspable. Clearer and easier words, using examples and asking questions one by one were effective adjustments to successfully conduct the interviews. This helped me to gain communicative competence. Furthermore, to get more insight in the themes newcomers viewed as important or interesting, I made cards for each theme to put them in order. In this way, I could obtain more data. However, the language proficiency of the newcomers differed so at times the above adjustments were not (all) necessary as newcomers could easier express their viewpoints.

In addition to the interviews with newcomers, this study conducted 4 semi-structured interviews and two unstructured interviews with teachers. The interviews with the teachers gave me more insight in the interaction and structures between the teachers and newcomers and how they teach KNM classes. Besides, the interviews provided information about their experiences and perceptions with the integration system and the KNM course specifically. The unstructured interviews often took place within the class, at times initiated by teachers as they were willing to help me and at times eager to share their experiences.

Furthermore, this research interviewed four informants. The informants consisted of two newcomers that participated in the KNM classes but were not obliged to pass the exam as they were from the EU. They voluntarily participated in the course as they were eager to learn more about the Dutch society. The informants offered their opinion and experiences. The other two informants were teachers from other schools, that provided me with valuable information about the integration system, research population and tips for the interviews and participant observations.

Besides interviews, this study conducted participant observations which has proven itself essential for this research. According to Musante and DeWalt (2011, p. 1-2), participant observation is a method in which a researcher participates in the daily activities, interactions, and events of a certain group of individuals. This allowed me to gain more insight in the explicit and tacit aspects of newcomers'

routines, interactions, and practices. This method adds to the interviews with newcomers and teachers as it tries to bridge the discrepancy between answers and actual behaviour. It considers both explicit aspects i.e., the level of knowledge people can communicate with relative ease and implicit aspects which largely remain outside of our awareness or consciousness (Musante & De Walt 2011, p. 13). Besides the explicit and implicit aspects, this research focused on the interaction between several actors that are concerned with and/or actively participate in the KNM course.

During the participant observations it was important to consider how the KNM objectives are educated. KNM course has the goal to provide newcomers with practical information and teaching 'core values' of the Dutch society. According to Koehler (2009) is education an important aspect in the integration process, specifically in teaching norms and values. As researcher I focused on how teachers approached these 'core values' and cultural or behavioural differences in class. Besides, the participant observations were useful to examine daily interactions and conversations and analysed the position and practices newcomers in their interaction with others and the teacher. The position of the teachers was interesting as they often were simultaneously critical and 'the voice' of the integration course for newcomers. Furthermore, the participants observations helped me to gain knowledge in what important aspects were for newcomers related to their lives in the Netherlands. The participant observation further enabled me to analyse the presence of material aspects (such as teaching methods, posters etc.) in the class. During the participant observations I used an observation scheme with help of the conceptual framework, to narrow my focus as it was sometimes easy to lose myself in the details and interactions in class. Supplementary, I used a little notebook to note down interesting events, important facial expressions or body language during the participant observations.

To capture a relational ethnography, this research specifically focused on dialogical aspects of research actors during the participant observations. The classes provided essential information to understand how dialogues and interplay between teachers and research participants unfolded. Besides the material analysis, which will be further elaborated below, this thesis could take a step further to understand how criteria and materials were discussed and negotiated in class. Both teachers and newcomers positioned themselves in a critical and reflective manner. But it also revealed the ways in which the expectations and imaginaries of the criteria had its influences within the course. Thus, both teachers, newcomers and the Dutch state (through criteria) performed and negotiated citizenship in the course. The enactment of criteria and the narrative knowledge helped to gain a better understanding of citizenship practices.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic some interviews and participant observations were conducted in digital form. According to Lo Lacono, Symonds and Brown (2016) internet-based methods of communication are becoming more important and influence researchers' options. I was able to follow a few online classes through Microsoft Teams, Skype and Zoom. An advantage of online ethnography was that I was still able to reach participants and join classes despite the pandemic. Besides, joining the online

classes gave me insight in the differences between online and offline classes. During the online classes, I mostly observed but also participated by assisting the teacher. This study also conducted a few online interviews with newcomers and teachers to gain more insight in online teaching and the overall experiences with the KNM course. Though, the online classes were at times difficult to observe, because of internet disruptions or plenary discussions where participants were talking simultaneously which made it harder to follow the conversations. The interactions and events occurring during the lessons were harder to observe in digital form. It was harder or even impossible to see their facial expressions or bodily responses, which sometimes can be really telling how a person feels about a certain subject. This made it also more difficult to adjust to the language level of newcomers as it was harder to estimate the rights level. In addition, not everyone had their camera on. Though, online classes allow participants not to look at the researcher in the eye which might be an advantage in helping shy people to open up (Lo Lacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016). Nevertheless, nonverbal cues might be missed, and daily interactions and events are very hard, if not impossible, to observe in a digital form.

All things considered, I argue that offline participant observations, interviews and informal conversations were more beneficial for this research as I gained more relevant data by 'being there'. The physical classes allowed me to dive deeper in the experiences and feelings of newcomers and to have longer conversations.

Material analysis

Besides interviews and participant observations, this research conducted material analysis of teaching methods, KNM practice exams (as there is no perusal in the official KNM exams) and the 'end terms' for a thorough analysis. Here, texts, videos, and photos were analysed to examine what newcomers encounter as this could influence their experiences, perceptions and practices as well.

This study analysed two books developed for the KNM course *Welkom in Nederland* [Welcome in the Netherlands] and *Taal Compleet* [Language Complete]. Commonly, one of these two methods are used for the KNM course. Four schools used *Taal Compleet* by Van den Broek (2018), published by Kleurrijker. Two schools used *Welkom in Nederland* (Gathier, 2015) published by Countinho. Most often, the method by Van den Broek (2018) was chosen as it provided a more relevant and up to date information than Gathier (2015). One school exclusively used *Welkom in Nederland* and the other regularly used exercises from the book. Only one school did not use one of these methods as it released its own KNM book. The course books were analysed through a round of free reading, followed by a critical examination. This was done a second and third time after a theoretical analysis took place and empirical data was gathered. A set of themes was composed which helped identifying main criteria and discourse presented. This research also considered how the books were used in the classes, and if the methods had leading or a supportive role for teachers.

Besides, newcomers can study the exams for the preparation of the official exam as DUO offers two practice exams.¹⁵ These test questions were selected as representative questions newcomers encounter during the exam, as they in probability resemble the official exam. Furthermore, KNM objectives, that are included in the Civic integration law (2022) are analysed as well to consider the official criteria set by the government.

Through material analysis, this research gained more insight in how criteria are enacted through teaching materials, practice exams and objectives to grasp underlying ideas of (the Dutch) culture and the integration requirements for newcomers. Besides, the different data collection methods made triangulation of the data possible. Triangulation provides a cross-check for interpretations and emerging theories (Koehler, 2009) with the goals of conducting a layered and all-compassing study.

3.2 Methodological reflections

While collecting the data, it was essential to reflect on my research position by taking my presence and behaviour into account as it could influence the behaviour of the participants (Musanta & DeWalt, 2011, p. 29-30). While I gathered data, I reflected on my positionality and ethical issues that I encountered during my fieldwork.

This research was not without its challenges, while I represented the ‘norm’ as a white and Dutch citizen. Being in this position and simultaneously discussing expectations and normative constructions of the integration course with participants – people outside the ‘norm’ – was at times difficult. Participants could be hesitant of being critical of ‘Dutch culture’ or the Dutch integration system. Besides, I frequently questioned to what extent I could emphasize with research participants and analyse ‘Dutch’ constructions since I was already part of them. However, I did not have this feeling as participants were very friendly and open. Participants saw it as a positive way to improve their Dutch. It was valuable and interesting to speak with the participants to understand their every-day experiences, what makes them enthusiastic and how they envision their life in the Netherlands. This study helped me doing research *with* the people rather than *on* the people (Ingold 2011). Nevertheless, it is important to consider that this friendliness could be a part of newcomers’ performativity while I thus represented the ‘Dutch norm’. My position was therefore not neutral and in turn the relationship with research participants was not as well.

When engaging research participants, I tried to destabilize this unbalanced situation by being attentive to stay as neutral and objective as possible and to create a safe environment during the interviews. To achieve this, I encouraged participants to share their thoughts and allowing space for serendipity on respondents’ part to tell their viewpoints. Besides, observations of participants were included in the material analysis to enhance its examination. Regarding the classes, I aimed to limit participation and take on the observers’ role. In some classes I only introduced myself and stayed in

¹⁵ DUO. 2021. Inburgeren. Examen oefenen. Accessed on November 30, 2021. <https://www.inburgeren.nl/examen-doen/oefenen.jsp>

the background. At times, sensitive topics were discussed such as gay marriage or abortion. Teachers or newcomers sometimes asked my opinion certain subjects. Participants were often eager to learn more about the 'Dutch' society. It was difficult to decide to what extent I wanted or needed to share this as researcher. Therefore, I tried answering the questions in a (generalized) idea of why for example students move out at a young age or why youngsters not immediately marry once they live together. The questions of newcomers made me reflect on my own 'normal' when discussing the Dutch society. In addition to answering questions, I assisted teachers and participated with assignments as well. Actively participating and interacting with the newcomers provided me with insightful information and helped me to have conversations about KNM. But active involvement and being part of the teaching team might have influenced research relationships. Throughout this research, I moved back and forth between the role as observer and participant. Though I primarily positioned myself in the observers' role.

Moreover, this research was challenging due to its relationality. During the lessons, both teachers as newcomers expressed their opinions and beliefs regarding the KNM course. Sometimes simultaneously and contradictory. At times, not agreeing with one another. It was therefore challenging to take a position, both teachers and newcomers occasionally looked at me for verification after a statement. And even though teachers were critical, they were also prejudiced at times which made it difficult for me to stay objective or to jump in. Here, I remained as objective as possible by staying in the background. It was namely particularly interesting for this study to grasp how criteria and citizenship practices were negotiated in the classes.

Besides the participant-observer ratio, I made several adjustments during my fieldwork and learned what the best way was to do the participant observations. In the first classes I tried to grasp all conversations or interactions, though with time I learned to be more selective. Being preoccupied with making notes, cause for less interaction with newcomers or that I missed facial expressions. Wrote down the particular assignments that were being discussed instead of writing them all down and studied them after school. Being more active and selective with fieldwork notations, actively listening, nodding or using prompts helped course participants or teachers to elaborate. This turned out to be more valuable than the notation at that moment.

In addition to the positionality of this study, I encountered some ethical dilemmas in the field. It was now and then difficult to find a balance between being a researcher and a friend or buddy. Participants asked my help with for example the enrolment of the exam or how to get a COVID vaccine. Often the teachers or the school helped them with these questions, but sometimes seemed to need some extra help. I referred them to the teacher or the schools, even though I wanted to help I decided this was not my position as researcher. Helped them with KNM exam/course tried to be as helpful and to learn them as much as I could. Furthermore, sensitive and emotional conversations with newcomers during my fieldwork led to an ethical dilemma as well. During class, a Afghan newcomer explained to me the precarious and dangerous situation in Afghanistan as we spoke about his life

before he arrived in the Netherlands. He got emotional as he told his story, and I was afraid I had asked a painful question. A few weeks later a Syrian man told me about his nightmares he had that night. He was frightened to be back in Syria. He told me his dream after I had asked if he felt at home in the Netherlands. The man felt safe and secure in the Netherlands and expressed how grateful he was. Later, a Moroccan woman got emotional during the interview. I asked the period living in the Netherlands and if she felt at home. She began to cry and explained to me that I took a long time for her to finally get to the Netherlands and reunite with her husband, she was so happy being here. In the interview, she repeatedly apologized for getting emotional. During these moments, I tried to reassure the participants that they did not need to answer certain questions if they did not feel comfortable answering them. I became more cautious and tried to be open, understanding, and sincere. In these moments, collecting data became less imperative as I felt that it was more important to listen to their stories. I am grateful that these participants were willing to share their stories with me.

In addition to the consideration of the positionality and ethnical challenges, it is vital to acknowledge the limitations of this research. Even though the multiplicity of research method created a thorough review, this study conducted a small-scale research. This means I only reached a small number of newcomers following the KNM course. Because of this, this research cannot be generalized. Additionally, the period of fieldwork was limited; often ethnographic fieldwork takes a year or longer and the COVID-19 virus limited the options to collect data. This has also affected the material analysis, to consider how prominent the several learning methods were and how these were enacted and communicated in class. The inclusion of more participants, actors and a longer period in the field would have led to a more encompassing study. Moreover, a more diverse team of researchers could have decreased biases and representation of 'the Dutch norm'. Despite its limitations and challenges, this thesis created an in-depth analysis of citizenship practices within the KNM course. The following chapters outline the empirical part of this thesis wherein formal and implicit criteria and performative practices are examined within a relational framework.

Chapter 4 Formal criteria: construction of the KNM exam

Apart from the language's exams and preparation for the workforce, newcomers are required to pass the exam Knowledge of the Dutch Society (*Kennis van de Nederlandse Maatschappij*). The KNM exam has the goal to teach newcomers the core values of the Dutch society and acquire practical knowledge outlined in eight different themes (Asscher, 2017). Compared to the other integration exams, the success rate for KNM is the highest as 72% passes the exam on the first attempt (Significant, 2018). Passing the exam is thus not necessarily the issue, it is however important to consider the content of the exam.

This chapter provides a thorough overview of the learning objectives and related themes in line with the Civic Integration Act and considers how formal criteria are communicated throughout the KNM course. To understand current formal criteria, this chapter shortly outlines historical changes of the KNM exam, followed by its format and then dives deeper into construction of the formal objectives. The themes provide the guideline of this chapter as they form the foundation of the objectives and learning materials of the course. This chapter maybe not empirical rich, however, it provides an understanding of the scope of the expected knowledge and skills which is a necessary step to deepen citizenship practices for chapters five and six.

The constructed criteria for the KNM course are examined on multiple levels within this chapter, namely the learning objectives part of the Civic Integration Law, the practice exams of DUO (2021a-b) and the teaching methods that are used in the classes. The latter two materials are composed in accordance with the regulations. Together they provide an encompassing framework of the set criteria. The practice exams offered by DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs) are included in the analyses as they provide an indication of the official KNM exam. This research was unable to include the official exams, while there is no perusal the official exams as it contains a standardized question database. This research further considers the two most used KNM methods by Gathier (2015) *Welkom in Nederland* and Van den Broek (2018) *Taal compleet* (see Appendix B for a complete overview of the chapters). In addition to material analysis, this research conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and newcomers to gain a more thorough analysis of the formal criteria. This chapter aims to create a comprehensive and multi-layered analysis of the set criteria and by doing so, it considers if the learning objectives reach their goal to prepare newcomers as self-sufficient citizens.

4.1 KNM through time: historical context of the integration exam

In 2007 the exam Knowledge of the Dutch society (KNS) was introduced, the predecessor of the current KNM exam. The exam became mandatory under the Civic Integration Law (WI), which increased the integration requirements in the Netherlands. The exam, as part of the Integration Act, emerged in the context of a rising political need to ensure that immigrants would sufficiently integrate.

Both oldcomers (migrants already staying in the Netherland) and newcomers needed to learn the Dutch language and acquire knowledge of the society at a (minimum) level to fully participate and function in society (Halewijn & Pit, 2014). Language requirements were no longer considered sufficient. Through eight themes, which were already formulated in 2005, the KNS exam provided practical information in multiple fields of the Dutch society. The themes are still used today, which consist of the themes: work, norms and values, living, health and healthcare, authorities, history and geography, politics and law and lastly, education and upbringing. In 2013, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment requested for revision of the exam. It was due to two factors, namely that the target group changed as oldcomers were no longer included. The KNM exam solely focused on newcomers. Additionally, in the political arena requested Dibi and Van Dam (2012) to review the exam as:

There is great consensus in the Netherlands on principles such as gender equality, non-discrimination, freedom of expression and separation of church and state; notes that the teaching materials of this section for newcomers is insufficiently focused on this consensus and the customs, norms and values in Dutch society; requests the government to redesign the exam, by paying considerable attention to fundamental rights, principles and customs in the Netherlands.¹⁶

The motion resulted in an increased emphasis on theme norms and values in KNM exam. As a consequence, one third of the questions relates to the theme norms and values, even though the exam has eight different themes.¹⁷ The upcoming empirical chapter consider how this emphasis is enacted in the criteria. Besides the emphasis on culture, integration discourse witnessed a rising trend towards self-reliance (Verwey-Jonkers, 2020). A greater focus on individual responsibility grew led to a renewed emphasis on duties that should accompany rights (Entzinger, 2003; Scholten, 2007; Bonjour, 2009, in Bonjour, 2013, p. 840). These criteria were, in all probability, interwoven in the KNM exam.

In 2015, the KNS changed to its current name *Kennis van de Nederlandse Maatschappij* and the questions were adjusted to the new learning objectives. Apart from small changes in formulation and actualization, no changes were made regarding the lay-out or structure. Though, the actual display of desired behaviour was replaced by knowledge of the desired behaviour, for instance one invokes legal rights when one encounters discrimination changed to one *can explain* how she/she can invoke legal rights (Halewijn & Pit, 2014). Besides, the formulation changed in such a way that newcomers no longer *needed to be aware* of common rules of conduct but were *expected to inform* him/herself of what common rules of conduct are i.e., it is not expected that someone waits in line, but that someone

¹⁶ Dibi and Van Dam (2012). Motion by Member Dibi & Van Dam. Accessed on December 20, 2021. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33086-40.html>

¹⁷ Asscher, L.F. (2017). Integration Policy [Letter of Parliament]. Accessed November 10, 2021. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-196.html#ID-807447-d36e85>

knows he/she should wait in line (Ibid., 2014, p. 17). Here, newcomers are responsible to become self-sufficient citizens by studying the objectives.

Though, as stated above, multiple members of the House of Representatives requested the government to modernize of the KNM objectives in 2018. The KNM would not contribute to its stated goal to, in addition to language and work, discussed the ‘core values’ of Dutch society such as the rule of law, norms, values and freedoms. Besides, members Paternotte, and Bekker argued that the teaching materials would contain stereotypes.¹⁸ Moreover, member Özdil filed a motion in which he asserted:

Whereas newcomers have to learn useless and inadequate things for the KNM exam that do not contribute to the skills to participate in our society; requests the government to revise the KNM exam in a way that it really contributes to acquiring useful and adequate knowledge about Dutch society.¹⁹

The KNM objectives have been repeatedly criticised, not only criticised in the political arena, but also by Vluchtelingenwerk (VWN) and academic Han Entzinger as considered above. Yet, limited changes have been made so far. This chapter will analyse the content of the KNM component to understand what is formally expected of newcomers. This will be a first step to understand how citizenship is shaped and negotiated during the course.

4.2 Structure: learning objectives of the Civic Integration Act

The KNM exam consist of 40 to 43 multiple choice questions of which candidates can answer 26 incorrectly (DUO, 2021a). The exam is taken on the computer and takes 45 minutes. The aim of the exam is to provide newcomers with practical knowledge in multiple domains of society and gain broader knowledge about the core values of the Dutch society. The upcoming paragraph discusses the structures of the learning objectives from the Civic Integration Act (2022).²⁰

The learning objectives are constructed around the KNM themes and are gradually outlined, specifying the knowledge and actions that newcomers are required to obtain. The objectives are subdivided into five levels: Crucial practical situations, Themes, Crucial Acts, Crucial knowledge, and Successful indicators. Firstly, the Crucial practical situations (CPs) are overarching spheres and outline essential situations for newcomers to properly function in the Netherlands. There are four Crucial Practical situations: I. Function on the labour market, II. Function in own living environment,

¹⁸ Paternotte, J.M. & Bekker, B. (2018). Motion by Member Paternotte and Becker. Accessed on October 20, 2021. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-211.html>

¹⁹ Özdil (2018). Motion by Member Özdil. Accessed on Februari 22, 2021. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-209.html#gerelateerd>

²⁰ See appendix 2 of the KNM objectives belonging to article 3.2 for the complete learning objectives. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0045574/2022-01-01#Bijlage2>

III. Function in contacts with authorities and government and IV. Function as citizen in the Netherlands.

Based on these practical situations, eight different themes were constructed:

1. Work and income
2. Interactions, values and norms
3. Living
4. Health and healthcare
5. History and geography
6. Authorities
7. Politics and law
8. Education and upbringing

The themes can play a role in several crucial practical situations, e.g., norms and values are necessary in every situation. Theme work for instance only relates to practical situations regarding the labour market. Though why these crucial practical situations are formulated in the course, besides the other levels, remains dubious. Besides the situations, there are thus eight themes constructed, each theme with its own objectives. Each objective consists of Crucial acts (CA) (see Appendix A for a complete overview) with accompanying Crucial knowledge (CK) and related Successful indicators. These are gradually outlined, each more specific:

1. Theme

1.1. The Crucial acts provides essential information to adequately function in society

1.1.1. The Crucial knowledge provide information to successfully execute/perform act

- Successful indicators indicate when an action can be considered as adequate

Thus, every act has its corresponding knowledge and successful indicators. Each action or crucial knowledge in the objectives has been 'translated' into indicators. The indicators state when a one has performed the relevant action or has acquired the intended knowledge. These indicators are always closely aligned with the themes, actions and knowledge. The successful indicators are leading for the content of the KNM exam, as the test questions are developed on this level. The following example clarifies how the learning objectives are structured:

1. Work and Income (*theme*)

Newcomer can take the steps to find and preserve work and to provide for oneself (*general learning objective of theme*)

1.1. Finding (new) work fast and efficiently (*Crucial act i.e., desired action or knowledge*)

1.1.1. Is aware with the unemployment procedures of the municipality (*Crucial knowledge i.e., knowledge to execute act*)

- Directly contacts the municipality in case of unemployment for the purpose of registration/enrolment (*Successful indicator i.e., indicates that act has been successfully acquired*)

The five different levels and its corresponding information make the formal criteria (perhaps unnecessary) complicated. Within the objectives, crucial knowledge and successful indicators are articulated in a very similar way. The complexity is acknowledged in Integration Act, as it states, ‘they may initially give the impression of referring to complex situations.’ To increase the accessibility, the objectives are linked to a specific cognitive and language level. In the cognitive level, newcomers’ competence requires a limited repertoire of actions in familiar, non-complex situations. Newcomers do not start immediately with the KNM course as this would be too difficult. Besides, the language requirement of the KNM exam is set on a A2 (elementary) language level. In this way, the exam will remain accessible for all newcomers, even if B1 is not feasible (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2021). Moreover, the test questions are supported by visual materials. Although, the learning objectives are constructed on these levels and the successful indicators are formulated in an abstract way, the indicators alone consist of around two hundred elements. This chapter will analyse these criteria and expectations to grasp the formal objectives.

4.3 Examination of the formal criteria

The following subparagraphs outline the formal criteria used in this study. Besides the learning objectives, discussed in the previous paragraph, this section incorporates several learning methods (Van den Broek, 2018; Gathier, 2015) used in classes, practice exams of DUO (2021a-b) and semi-structured interviews with newcomers and teachers in order to provide a clear outline of the formal criteria of the KNM course. For the upcoming empirical chapters, the step to examine the formal criteria is imperative in the analyses of expectations and citizenship practices. The themes, originally from the Civic Integration Act, form the basis of this chapter as learning methods of the course are constructed in a similar way. In next sections each theme will be elaborated.

1. Work & Income

Learning objective: newcomer can take the steps to find and preserve work and to provide for oneself

The first crucial act is to find (new) work fast and efficiently, which is discussed in the first paragraphs both books explain how newcomers can find and apply for a job. A newcomer can find work through their own network, employment agency or vacancies online (Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). The books provide tips for a job interview, common working hours, and the difference between parttime and fulltime. Newcomers learn relevant parts of the labour market in relation to own qualifications and career opportunities, experience for the Dutch labour market and how to equvalate education. This is further specified by Van den Broek (2018, p. 66), as newcomers can equvalate their education at the IDW or at ROC for the recognition of a qualification certificate. Within this theme, citizens’ rights and duties are elaborated regarding different types of employment contracts and explanation of gross- and net salary. Rights are elaborated through collective labour agreement and

trade unions which can give advice about minimum wage, holiday fees or help with salary negotiates or conflicts at work. However, this section also considers that citizens have the obligation to pay taxes, to uphold the relationship between the state and citizen (Janoski & Gran, 2002). Additionally, it is considered crucial to be aware of the procedures of the municipality and UWV for those who are unemployed or seeking employment, including benefits.

Being an active member of a work organisation is further articulated as essential for the integration of newcomers. Forms of work participation are elaborated in relation to the participation in trade unions or staff associations or the contribution to the company council to talk about employee or human rights (DUO, 2021a; Van den Broek, 2018). Work participation is further elaborated relation to codes of conduct towards co-workers and supervisors, for example Van den Broek (2018) explains the importance of collaboration and consultation with colleagues, taking initiative and expected independence. Here, the KNM course encompasses a similar emphasis on ‘active citizenship’ (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010), as part of a broader integration framework.

Besides, legal rights and procedures in case of discrimination are described in the third section. The books discuss potential issues at work such as an unsafe environment, amount of workload or discrimination. Van den Broek (2018) and Gathier (2015) clarify that discrimination based on age, gender, health religion or skin colour is forbidden in the Netherlands. If someone encounters discrimination, one can go to a confidential advisor. The following chapters will provide a more in-dept analyses of discrimination, as it is crucial to consider related discursive texts and implicit constructions. The last crucial act discusses the option of starting an own business and the requirements and the necessities to start one. For example, registration in KVK (*Kamer van Koophandel*), creating a business plan (DUO, 2021b; Gathier, 2015) and investments to finance own company (Van den Broek, 2018).

2. Interactions, values & norms

Learning objective: newcomer can familiarize oneself with Dutch customs, norms and values

It is deemed crucial that newcomers understand that customs, values and norms differ per culture, religion and social class and that one acquaints him/herself with unspoken rules of conduct (Civic Integration Act, 2022). This crucial act is incorporated by Van den Broek (2018), which begins with ‘Dé Nederlander bestaat niet [The Dutchman does not exist]. Not everyone thinks the same.’ (p. 22). Though, the texts consider ‘typical’ Dutch norms and values. Van den Broek (2018) gives a couple of examples of what is ‘common’, being polite towards elderly, eating stamppot at 6 o’clock stamppot, making an appointment or Dutch people bring flowers to visits (DUO, 2021b). The texts also display rules of conduct in the most common situations for in public transportation discussed: ‘stand up in public transportation for pregnant woman’ (DUO, 2021b), ‘you wait in line for your turn (Van den Broek, 2018, p.22). Besides, one is aware that Dutch people can express themselves very directly,

without wanting to be hurtful or rude (Civic Integration Act, 2022). It is crucial for this research to consider how ‘Dutch citizens’ are constructed in the texts. The texts above present quite a narrow idea of what/who a ‘Dutch’ citizen is. It is highly unlikely that everyone would identify or would act in the same way as these stated examples. Of course, it is important to provide information about general customs, norms, and values, however e.g., eating stamppot at 6 o’clock could be considered as a more traditional custom. Moreover, the multiple-choice outline of the exam limits other possible answers, for instance, is bringing flowers to a visit the only right answer? The other options i.e., giving a present or offering to pay for the food can be considered right as well. The following chapters consider constructions more in-depth regarding representations of ‘Dutch’ and potential consequences for newcomers or citizens that do not identify or fit within these demarcated ideas.

The second criterion provides information on the most important public holidays in the Netherlands such as King’s Day, Liberation Day, Saint Nicolas (*Sinterklaas*) and Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter. On these holidays Dutch often free. But there are more public holidays that are celebrated in the Netherlands e.g., Chinese New Year or Eid (*Suikerfeest*) (Van den Broek, 2015). Gathier (2015) additionally discusses Father’s- and Mother’s Day, Carnival and Valentine. Though not very one celebrates all public holidays (Gathier, 2015, p. 40). A specific assignment in Gathier (2015) considers which public holidays are Christian. This is a remarkable assignment considering that the Netherlands is secular country, with a ‘consensus on principles of secularism’ (Dibi & van Dam, 2017). Moreover, there are currently more atheist than religious citizens in the Netherlands.²¹ Perhaps the origin of public history is informative, though it is questionable whether this information is relevant for newcomers. Establishing and maintaining everyday social contacts is the third crucial act. Membership of associations can contribute to participation in social networks (Civic Integration Act, 2021). Besides, social contacts can be established and maintained by knowing important family events for neighbours and acquaintances. The learning methods explain the most important family events and what is commonly done on those days, such a birthdays, marriage, or funerals and how to appropriately contact neighbours and acquaintances (Civic Integration Act, 2022). When a child is born Dutch people often eat rusks with small blue or pink candy-coated aniseed (Van den Broek, 2018). Gathier (2015) discusses what is expected when someone passes away for instance by sending a condolence. Establishing and maintaining everyday social contacts is further discussed in relation to nuisance and transgressive behaviour. It is customary in the Netherlands to discuss nuisance and transgressive behaviour of others for example discuss nuisance with neighbours (DUO, 2021a). Besides, one can take appropriate measures in case of suspected nuisance of oneself.

The last act states the importance of dealing with unusual or conflicting customs, norms and values. Newcomers are expected to be aware that the relationship between man and woman is equal, also in the home environment (Civic Integration Act, 2022). Additionally, newcomers understands

²¹ SCP (2022). Voor het eerst meer niet-gelovigen dan gelovigen in Nederland. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2422444-scp-voor-het-eerst-meer-niet-gelovigen-dan-gelovigen-in-nederland>

that (unmarried) cohabitation (also of people of the same sex) is accepted in the Netherlands; gay marriage is allowed, you can believe what you want, marry who you want (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 26) and wear the clothes you want (DUO, 2021b). Though, not everything is allowed. You cannot marry under 18 and (you) cannot harass someone (Van den Broek, 2018). Besides, female circumcision, honour killings and violence are forbidden (Gathier, 2015). In addition to the formal criteria, the next chapter assesses implicit notions related to norms and values in order to examine discursive mechanisms that underpin KNM criteria.

3. Living

Learning objective: newcomer is able to find suitable housing and to arrange utilities. He/she is responsible for the safety in his/her home, takes care of the environment and contributes to a clean-living environment

The first crucial act concerns steps to arrange suitable housing either by renting or buying a house. Both books explain how one can find a house to rent through a social housing association (Van den Broek, 2018) or in the free sector (Gathier, 2015). Newcomers can register with a suitable housing agency and are aware of the possibility to apply for housing benefits (DUO, 2021b) and ‘can (possibly with help) find out which rules apply for benefits (Civic Integration Act, 2022). Furthermore, newcomers are expected to know the procedures for buying a house. Newcomers can obtain information and advice from the bank for a mortgage, can use a real estate agent and inform the municipality when one relocates (Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). After finding a house it is important to arrange utilities and communication methods. The books explain one can arrange and apply for energy, water and internet. It explains how to use electricity and gas and related payments. Newcomers learn how to be spare and ensure their safety in house, e.g., turning of the lights and heater or clothes on the clothesline instead of in the dryer. This relates to the crucial knowledge of the second act, which discusses sustainability and safety in and around the house. Besides, newcomers learn what to do when you smell gas or when fire breaks out (Van den Broek, 2018), or steps to undertake when there is a malfunction of electricity (DUO, 2021a). Gathier (2015) further explain safety precautions such as installing a smoke detector or regularly checking the hearth. The last criteria discuss waste, maintenance, and renovating and furnishing the living environment. The books explain the rules related to environmental issues, it is important to separate waste i.e., textile, organic waste and to follow the garbage schedule of the municipality (Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). *Welkom in Nederland* further explains water and sewage taxes and (need for) permits for renovating a house (Gathier, 2015). Besides, crucial knowledge states that most Dutch people place great importance on the orderly appearance of their home and garden. This however differs and varies in extend.

Overall, theme living is regarded as one of the most important themes both by participants and teachers. It provides newcomers with practical information as one teacher states: “*living concerns*

everyone, so this chapter is useful for all of them. However, newcomers often already own a house by the time they get this information.”²² This is in line with Jemal, a young man from Eritrea, he asserts that the information about living came too late because he had already moved and the arrangements for electricity and insurances were already made.²³ Though, the teacher further argues, “*On the other hand, they often don't realize how they arranged because someone else did it for them. They were barely able to speak Dutch, so they did not know how to make the proper arrangements.*” The information regarding living arrangements might thus be useful for newcomers in the future.

4. Health & healthcare

Learning objective: newcomer can use healthcare according to the rules of the Dutch healthcare system

The first learning objective discusses how to make conscious choices regarding one’s own health and lifestyle. Van den Broek (2018) for example discusses eating vegetables, sport and sufficient sleep. *Welkom in Nederland* has a bit different approach as it considers negative health choices in relation to life expectancy as well, such as smoking, overuse of medicines and consumption of alcohol. Furthermore, Gathier (2015, p. 71) addresses the importance of conscious choices related to birth control and having safe sex (e.g., use of a condom to avoid STDs such as aids).

The next indicator explains using primary health care i.e., general practitioner. The books explain how to find, choose and register with a GP, and explain with what complains one can go to a GP. In addition to primary care, the texts provide information about secondary medical care i.e., a dentist, physiotherapy, or a psychologist (Van den Broek 2018, p. 48). These texts provide crucial information about the healthcare system in the Netherlands, however, data revealed that participants struggled to engage with medical assistance. Nuru, a female newcomer from Eritrea, explains that she frequently calls the GP because she has five children though she struggles to articulate symptoms or illnesses. At times, she asks the pharmacy, the teacher, or others to help her.²⁴ According to Nuru’s teacher it is very important to practice practical situations to prepare newcomers for any difficult situations they may daily encounter: “*sometimes newcomers don’t know what to say when they call the GP. I try to explain the information the assistant always needs, such as birthdate and symptoms. Telephone conversations like these can be quite challenging.*”²⁵ The next section explains how to act in medical emergencies, for example calling the alarm number (112) if someone had an accident or when someone’s life is in danger. If necessary, an ambulance will arrive which will take the patient to the first aid (Van den Broek, 2018; Gathier, 2015).

²² Semi-structured interview with Maud, KNM-teacher, 07-04-2021.

²³ Semi-structured interview with Jemal, 17-06-2021.

²⁴ Semi-structured interview with Nuru, 06-07-2021.

²⁵ Semi-structured interview with Anouk, KNM teacher, 02-04-2021.

The seventh crucial act relates to specialized care, Van den Broek (2018) and Gathier (2015) discusses specialized care for elderly, chronic ill or disabled people.²⁶ Gathier (2015, p. 118) shortly elaborates the possibility to request home care, or the possibility for out- or inpatient care (Civic Integration Act, 2022). Van den Broek (2018) explains that most elderly stay at home as long as possible. If elderly need extra help at home a district nurse can help to arrange extra care. Elderly that cannot live at home can go to a (intensive) nursing home. The next section provides information on how to arrange and use health insurance policies such as the declaration of healthcare expenses (DUO, 2021b) and arrangements concerning contribution. The last act discusses the importance for newcomers to know where to find advice to initiate specialized care such as the admission and application for procedures (Civic Integration Act, 2022). The related indicator states ‘[one] can (possibly with help) find out how one can initiate the procedure for admission and contacts appropriate authorities’. This is the second and therewith the last text within the learning objectives that discusses the possibility for newcomers to ask for help.

5. History & geography

Learning objective: by knowing the history and geography of the Netherlands, newcomer can engage in the Netherlands and the Dutch society

Van den Broek (2018) and Gathier (2015) both start with the geography of the Netherlands. Even though this is the third crucial act, this section will shortly elaborate geography before discussing the history as the methods and KNM classes start with the geography. The crucial indicator for newcomers is to use geographic knowledge in daily life, in which the provinces and most important places and areas are explained e.g., the Randstad which consists of the four biggest cities in terms of population (Van den Broek, 2018). Here, newcomers can learn how to orientate in the Netherlands for example how far from Amsterdam to the beach by train (DUO, 2021a).

The learning objectives outline history of the Netherlands as it considers the Golden Age / wealth, colonialism, seafaring, waterwork and migration flows in the 20th century (Civic Integration Act, 2022). The books explain the literal meaning of the Netherlands, ‘low land’, and its relationship with water. The learning methods delve in the history of the Netherlands, by discussing the Middle Ages and the Eighty Years’ War uprising against Spain led by Willem van Oranje (Prince of Orange) in the sixteenth century, which resulted in the independence of the Netherlands in 1588. The Dutch national anthem, *Het Wilhelmus*, dates from that time (Gathier, 2015, p. 196; Van den Broek, 2018, p. 25). In the seventh century, the Netherlands become a republic and thrived; ‘the time of the republic was a good time for the Netherlands, known as the Golden Age’ (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 13). The richest directed to build canal houses and famous paintings (such as *De Nachtwacht*) were made (Gathier, 2015). The Netherlands, colonised Surinam, Antilles, Indonesia and Dutch ships from the

²⁶ Specialized care is also considered in relation to pregnancy, childbirth, and young children. This is discussed in theme upbringing.

VOC traded spices and slaves. Gathier (2015), in comparison to Van den Broek (2018), considers the independence of Dutch colonies such as Indonesia and Suriname. The learning methods swiftly consider the colonial history of the Netherlands in regard to slavery. In line with the learning objectives the emphasis lays on the Golden Age. In the objectives, the slave past of the Netherlands is not explicitly mentioned. However, the Netherlands played a significant role in European colonialism and the current politics of citizenship and inequality are according to Jones (p.605) not new “but rather, present-day expressions of a much older Dutch political phenomenon.” It is therefore crucial to acknowledge the colonial history of the Netherlands. The following chapter considers how and to what extent unwritten constructions regarding Dutch history are enacted and evident within the KNM course.

The period after 1800 outlines the beginning of democracy with the first constitution and parliament in the Netherlands (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 16). In addition, Gathier (2015) discusses the industrialisation, the period that led to World War I and the position of the Netherlands as neutral country. In the next criteria newcomers are expected to ‘deal with the sensitive relationships and events for the Netherlands (Civic Integration Act, 2022), which relates to the second World War. The war is extensively elaborated in the texts, by explaining the occupation of the Netherlands by Germany and the precarious and dangerous situation of particularly Jews in the war (both books consider Anne Frank’s diary ‘Het Achterhuis’). The text further state: ‘the war was a difficult time, especially in the hunger winter of 1944’ (Gathier, 2015), ‘many died of starvation as food was scarce’ (Van den Broek, 2018). On the 5th of May 1945 the Netherlands was liberated by the Allies (DUO, 2021b). Liberation day (*Bevrijdingsdag*) is annually celebrated followed by the Remembrance of the Death (*Dodenherkening*) on 4 May (DUO, 2021b). A related indicator, which is reflected in the learning materials, is to show respect for Dutch feelings of expressions of anti-Semitism. After the WWII the United Nations was established with the aim of preventing future wars (Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). The texts further discuss migration in the 20th century. In the 1960s and 1970s labour migrants arrived, as stated above, from Southern-Europe, Morocco and Turkey (Gathier, 2015). After a few years, guestworkers wanted to return to their country or origin, though most of them stayed in the Netherlands (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 18). Van den Broek (2018) briefly discuss refugees as well ‘from 1980s refugees arrived in the Netherlands. They migrate as it is unsafe in their country’ (p. 18).

The last crucial act relates to the awareness of the notions and ideas that are accepted in the Netherlands (since the 1970s). The learning objective expect that newcomers are aware of equality between man and woman equal, girls and woman expected to build an independent existence and that homosexuality is not prohibited. After 1970 woman (like Aletta Jacobs) fought for equal rights and woman eventually received voting rights 1919 (Gathier, 2015, p. 199). Later, more women went to college, work and gained more agency (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 18).

The course objectives of this theme were questioned by several newcomers and teachers questioned. Often, the criteria were regarded as too specific, e.g., information about Thorbecke. This is

in line with Entzinger (2013), that argued that the KNM objectives require knowledge that most Dutch people do not even have. The next chapter will dive deeper in the historical curriculum of the KNM course, considering implicit constructions of Dutch history.

6. Authorities

Learning objective: newcomer is aware of the services provided by the local government, tax authorities, the police and institutions for social and legal services. If necessary, he/she can request information or help from the legal aid office and/or social work

The first crucial act discusses the services of the municipalities. At the municipality, one can arrange civil affairs to request documents such as abstract of BRP (basis registration persons) (Gathier (2015) mentions its predecessor GBA), identity card or unemployment benefits. Besides, at the municipality one can further renew documents or declare personal changes. Besides, this section discusses requesting Dutch nationality at the municipality, to receive a Dutch passport (Civic Integration Act, 2022; DUO, 2021a). Van den Broek (2018, p. 74) and Gathier (2015) provide information about the conditions to become naturalized, though naturalization is discussed more extensively in Gathier (2015, p. 114-117). Tax authorities is elaborated in this theme as well. Newcomers must comprehend tax return, refunds and understand how to apply for benefits. The learning methods explain how one can arrange tax returns and refunds e.g., with civil service number (BSN) or financial statement of income (Van den Broek, 2018). Furthermore, the course provides information for newcomers how to request benefits for housing, day-care, child benefits or health allowance (DUO, 2021a; Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). The third crucial act provides information about the services and instructions from the police. Newcomers are expected to be aware that everyone at age 14 and older has an identification obligation and newcomers must comprehend the duties of the police towards citizens. The police can help in case of in case of accidents, violence, or nuisance. In case of emergencies one can call 112, the police have a regular number for other issues. This information is crucial for newcomers Anouk, KNM-teacher, discussed emergency number and was surprised when she noticed that not everyone knew the 112 number *“What is so obvious to us is not apparent to others. I thought the students already knew this, but then again how would they? Where do you learn something like this?”*²⁷

Furthermore, legal aid and social services is elaborated. Social services can help newcomers if they face personal problems or issues with the authorities. Crucial knowledge is to know how to protest ill-treatment of the government. The national ombudsman can give advice if one encounters problems with government e.g., bad experience with police or issues with allowances. This informs newcomers about juridical rights. Ill-treatment of the government with consideration of child allowances will be elaborated in chapter six. The legal counter can provide free juridical advice on

²⁷ Semi-structured interview with Anouk, KNM teacher, 02-04-2021.

citizens' rights. If one is in need for extended advice, the legal desk refers you to another authority for example a lawyer. Additionally, social work can help for personal or mental issues, GGZ can provide mental healthcare and *Veilig Thuis* offers help and advice when someone encounters or suspects domestic violence. Besides, Youth services can provide guidance if any troubles with upbringing or health of the child.

The last indicator relates to insurances. Newcomers are expected to be aware that it is customary to cover risks with insurances (Civic Integration Act, 2022) and the learning materials outline e.g., mandatory insurances and insurances related to housing such as home, furniture or a liability insurance. Insurances are often regarded as difficult since they contain many long and complex words such as *aansprakelijkheidsverzekering* [liability insurance] or *verzekeringsmaatschappij* [insurance company]. Besides, the information is extensive and complex according to participants e.g., the difference between personal contribution or own risk. In similar lines, Nibud (2021) addresses that Dutch financial system is unknown and complicated for newcomers. They are not familiar with agencies that provide assistance. Besides, newcomers often do not yet master Dutch at A2 or B1 level. In terms of finances, language skills are extremely important, for example even for post or emails, let alone tax returns or insurance matters. For these reasons, it becomes extra challenging to become self-sufficient or financially viable.

7. Politics & Law

Learning objective: by knowing the states' structure, newcomer is capable to engage in the Netherlands and the Dutch society

First crucial act is the implement the Dutch constitution in day-to-day activities. The constitution outlines the most important laws. Two important rights that are mentioned in the texts are freedom of speech and freedom of religion. 'You can always give your opinion, but you must respect others' and 'you can decide for yourself if and what you believe' (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 88), though everyone must be treated equally regardless of religion, belief, political opinion, race, sex or any other ground (Civic Integration Act, 2022). The Netherlands is a democracy, which means that the power of the state does not rest with a monarch or one political leader, but among all the citizens of the country as they elect the government (Gathier, 2015, p. 212; Van den Broek, 2018, p. 84). The objectives outline the content and importance of elective system within the Dutch democracy. Everyone with Dutch nationality has elective rights on a national, provincial and municipal level. Indicator of this crucial act is to apprehend when and which elections non-neutralized citizens may participate. There are a few exceptions in which newcomers can vote for municipal elections (Kiesraad, n.d). It is considered crucial to providing oneself with sufficient information to make an informed choice for elections (Civic Integration Act, 2022; DUO, 2021b; Van den Broek, 2018, p. 84; Gathier, 2015, p. 216-217). Here, voting rights are not only articulated as a right but also as an obligation; newcomers must make

an informed decisions and voting is regarded necessary. Besides, active and passive voting rights are explained in DUO (2021a) and Gathier (2015, p. 219).

The next crucial act delves into the responsibilities of the Dutch administrative layers. The main elements of the parliamentary system are Tweede Kamer [House of Representatives of the Dutch Parliament] and the Eerste Kamer [Senate]. Together they form the Dutch parliament. In the Netherlands, there is a separation of power which includes the legislative power by the parliament, the executive power of the Ministers and King and the juridical power of the judges (Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). The King's power is limited, though the King addresses the country in his annual speech from the throne outline of the plans of the government (DUO, 2021a; Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). Both methods further briefly clarify the European Union (EU). Other administrative layers consist of provincial department. This department decide on roads and environmental issues. The municipality is responsible for the city and villages. This council is responsible for permissions, safety, environment, police within the municipality. The chairman of city council is mayor (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 86). Whether it is necessary to notify newcomers about the specific duties of their municipality is debatable. Besides, participants perceive the objectives regarding politics and laws as complicated by for instance Ahmed, a newcomer from Syria, states: *"I don't understand everything, the rules of the Senate and House of Representatives are complex and difficult, but most of all abstract. I don't use this information in my daily life. It is good to know something about politics of course, but I do not necessary need this information."*²⁸ Complexity and specific information such as the role of the King's commissioner or the number of members of the Senate diminish space for practical information. Of course, a general idea overview is important but these objectives seem to be too detailed.

The following crucial act of this theme concerns the separation of the state and the church. Newcomers are expected to acknowledge separatism in the Netherlands. The law is above religion and tradition (Civic Integration Act, 2022; Gathier, 2015). Every religion has its own rules, but one must obey the law (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 88). Applying laws and regulations is the last crucial act, regarding abortion, euthanasia, (homo)sexuality. One must respect others who deviate from own views (Civic Integration Act, 2022), as citizens have the responsibility to obey the law and to tolerate and acknowledge liberties and rights of other persons (Janoski & Gran, 2002). However, there are certain limits to freedom for example violence is punishable by law (Van den Broek, 2018). The last two acts are more extensively elaborated in chapter five as this thesis detects the need to dive deeper in discursive discourses that (re)produce imaginaries of the nation-state and mechanisms of exclusion.

²⁸ Semi-structured interview with Ahmed, 25-06-2021.

8. Education & upbringing

Learning objective: newcomer is familiar with the Dutch educational system and recognizes the importance of education in the Dutch knowledge economy. Newcomers allow their children to participate in education and are aware of the role that is expected of parents in the Netherlands

The first crucial act discusses the Dutch education system, in which a newcomer can explain the different school types in the Netherlands. Schools can have their own philosophical, religious and educational basis such as public, Christian, Islamic schools (Van den Broek, 2018). Besides, there are educational facilities for students with disability (Civic Integration Act, 2022). In accordance with the first crucial act, the KNM methods explain the school system in the Netherlands consist of primary education (preschool, primary school and high school) and secondary education (mbo, hbo and university). The text further explain that education is compulsory children from age five till eighteen (DUO, 2021b; Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). The education system is, just as politics and laws, considered to be complex. Romy, a KNM teacher, argues that the rules can be confusing: *“Sometimes I think all those rules, do they really need to know that? It is those little things, for example, is a child obligated to attend school at the age of four or five? I need to explain that children start school at four but are apparently not compulsory to go to school for another year.”*²⁹

Aside from providing information about the Dutch education system, the objectives also consider upbringing. The second crucial act concerns the responsibility for the behaviour of minor children. As considered in theme work, the formal criteria reveal an emphasis on ‘active citizenship’ (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). Namely, parental involvement is deemed important which is reflected in practice exam and learning methods by attending craft afternoons (DUO, 2021b), helping with school trips (Gathier, 2015, p. 138) or parent-teacher conversations (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 57). Newcomers are expected to be aware of childcare and related child allowance options (Civic Integration Act, 2022). The last crucial act considers school costs and allowances for school cost and student finance. School costs include for example parental contribution or education materials (Civic Integration Act, 2022). In addition to the learning objectives, Van den Broek (2018) and Gathier (2015) provide information of care during pregnancy and childbirth. A midwife, gynaecologist, maternity nurse can give guidance and advise during pregnancy and childbirth. The infant health agency checks children’s health and give advice on health and vaccinations. The texts provide information for parental support from the GP or school (van den Broek, 2018). Consultation bureau can help as well, but if the issues continue, youth care office can help (Gathier, 2015).

Some participants will benefit from the information provided in this theme, especially if they have children or are pursuing an education. However, not for everyone necessary or valuable. Yin, a female newcomer from China, states: *“I don’t have any children and I am already retired, so I don’t work or need an education anymore. Therefore, I find education and upbringing to be the least*

²⁹ Semi-structured interview with Romy, KNM teacher, 04-06-2021.

*interesting theme.*³⁰ It is understandable that not every theme is regarded as equally important, but considering the specifics in, for example this theme, raises the question what it does to the intrinsic motivation of newcomers to learn all the formulated objectives. Overall, the formal criterion of the course presents a variety of considerations.

4.3 Concluding thoughts

This chapter has considered the formal criteria of the KNM course, necessary for an analytical step towards a better understanding of citizenship practices within the course. Even though this chapter has a more descriptive instead of analytical or ethnographic nature, this thesis deems it important to consider the scope of expected knowledge and skills within the criteria to understand the performative side of citizenship.

The stated goal of KNM is to provide newcomers with sufficient knowledge of practicalities and core values, which are deemed necessary to successfully participate in the Dutch society. The emphasis throughout the formal criteria of the KNM course tends to work, politics and democracy, education and norms and values considering the number of objectives and emphasis within the (practice) KNM exam (Civic Integration Act, 2022; DUO, 2021a-b). In line with the current emphasis of the integration policies are independence and responsibility considered evident to become ‘successful’ citizens. Navigating within the society is articulated as the sole responsibility of the newcomers as the acts and indicators are phrased as ‘... knows how to, is aware of, must learn to, deals with, is able to’ etc. (Civic Integration Act, 2022). Newcomers are expected to be fully aware of regulations and required arrangements. Though, it is unrealistic to expect newcomers to understand the Dutch system and language and find their way in society from day one. Besides, it is questionable whether newcomers are sufficiently equipped to navigate in the Dutch society as there is minimal attention for process or possible barriers that newcomers face. There are only two indicators that state the possibility for newcomers to ask for help. Specific content or how one should go about misses. Besides, the suggested sites in the course e.g., of IND, can be quite complex, even more so for newcomers considering that most information is only available in Dutch. The KNM classes add herein by discussing practical situations and potential obstacles, but the emphasis remains on the learning objectives. Seemingly contrary, this thesis argues that the formal criteria are too detailed which is in line with Entzinger, (2013). The KNM requires knowledge that Dutch people do not even have. Is it genuinely necessary to discuss the Eighty Years’ War uprising against Spain what a IDW certificate is or how many politicians there are in the Senate? Even more so when keeping in mind that the KNM exam is only one part of the integration requirements. Overall, it is crucial to distil and thoroughly review the KNM objectives.

³⁰ Semi-structured interview with Yin, 17-06-2021.

Chapter 5 Implicit criteria: discursive acts towards an Us/Them divide

A growing body of academic research has questioned the underlying discourse of Dutch integration policies and programmes, yet as argued above, limited research focusses on discourse in texts in practice. Compared to the previous chapter, which discussed the formal criteria, this chapter focusses on historical constructions and discursive processes to determine how and to what extent implicit criteria are communicated and enacted throughout the KNM course. It considers the criteria through a critical discourse analysis of unwritten constructions and mechanisms of exclusion.

Discursive practices are examined through material analysis to consider underlying ideas of what is expected of newcomers during the integration course and to scrutinize dominant narratives of the Dutch nation-state. This section also examines how teachers engage with criteria as they enact, (re)produce and/or critically evaluate them. Nonetheless, this chapter mainly focuses on class dynamics as it analyses everyday activities and interaction in KNM classes. Participant observations add to the examination of implicit aspects as they often remain outside of our awareness or consciousness (Musante & De Walt 2011, p. 13). Besides, this method enables an analysis of interaction and interplay between several actors. A more in-depth examination of criteria is crucial to understand how concepts of integration and citizenship and integration are shaped in practice.

5.1 History: collective stories of the Dutch nation-state

In the previous chapter history was outlined with reference to the formal criteria. This section dives deeper in KNM objectives concerning the Dutch history to unravel implicit constructions. This theme has interesting stance as it provides an opportunity to analyse how the Dutch history is presented as nation-states can mobilize their power through history, which adds to the creation of a collective and imagined community (Anderson, 2006)

As elaborated above, theme history has four crucial acts. After a discussion of the history of the Netherlands, the learning objectives considers sensitive relationships and events for the Netherlands. This section regards the Second World War and the following liberation of Western Europe by the Allies. This is broadly discussed in the learning methods, practice exams and in classes, with an emphasis on 4th and 5th of May, the persecution of Jews and related sensitivity towards expressions of anti-Semitism. It is interesting to consider this emphasis as the Netherlands might be constructed as an ‘innocent victim’ of German occupation. Wekker (2016) argues that there is a unidirectional memory with a focus on the holocaust, which is seemingly erasing all other traumas such as the role of the Netherlands in the war. Besides, Wekker (2016) refers to the long-time metropolitan grief which overlook e.g., blacks, gays, Sinti and Roma that were persecuted (p. 12, 177).

Furthermore, the word choice of the second crucial act is interesting here as it considers sensitive occurrences *for* instead of sensitive relationships and events *of* the Netherlands. This section

could provide an opportunity to include the history of slavery and the effects of colonialism in society today. The Dutch played a significant role in European colonialism as they controlled the territory of Indonesia ('The Dutch East Indies') as well as territories in 'the West Indies' (Jones, 2016). An unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge and feelings based on four hundred years of imperial rule have played a vital but unacknowledged part in the dominant meaning-making processes taking place in Dutch society (Wekker, 2016, p. 3). Acknowledgment via education could be a step towards fighting (institutional) racism in the Dutch society (NOS, 2021). The KNM integration course should be added to this debate as well.

In the texts, Gathier (2015, p. 201) uses two pages to discuss the history of WWII, although there are not even five sentences that consider the colonial history. This thesis does not want to dismiss the significance of the WWII, but it aims to address the need for the deliberation of sensitive historical events of the Netherlands. During class one newcomer reads from the book by Gathier (2015), which states:

*'After the second World War, the Dutch colony Indonesia wanted independence. Though, the Netherlands did not agree. After years of war, Indonesia became independent in 1949.' The teacher laughs sarcastically and specifies "well this a bit too simplistically described. The Netherlands did not allow Indonesia to become independent, which led to a brutal four-year war."*³¹

Moreover, Wekker (2016, p. 75) argues "Indonesia freed itself from the Dutch in 1945, although most Dutch believe Indonesian independence only happened in 1949." This is however reflected in Van den Broek (2018, p. 14-15), that states 'in the 20th century, colonies became independent. The Netherlands was no longer the boss. The Dutch-Indies became independent in 1945'. Though, a dominant Dutch self-representation conveniently forgets that the Netherlands perpetrated excessive violence against Indonesia which was fighting for its independence. Euphemistic terms such as 'the Netherlands did not agree' Gathier (2015) or terms as 'political action' speak according to Wekker (2016) volumes about a self-image that embraces innocence. Just recently, Prime Minister Rutte offered 'deep apologies' to the people of Indonesia and everyone in the Netherlands that was affected by it. Rutte acknowledged the systematic and excessive violence in Indonesia.³² It is crucial to realize the value of statements by the Dutch state, as they recognize the violent role of the Dutch state and contest imaginaries of a 'just' nation.

In addition, the texts discuss the slave history of the Netherlands. Van den Broek (2018, p. 14-15) explains 'the Netherlands traded slaves. Slaves were not free. They had to hard work and their lives were often challenging. In 1863 slavery was abolished. from then on people got money for their

³¹ Participant observation with Alicia, KNM-teacher, and research participants, 25-06-2021.

³² NOS, 17-02-2022. See <https://nos.nl/artikel/2417780-rutte-diepe-excuses-voor-structureel-geweld-in-indonesie> for more information.

work. Though, only after a long-time people were really all free.’ Slavery could be more elaborated in Van den Broek (2018) although more attention has been given in comparison to Gathier (2015) which only states ‘during the Golden Age the Netherlands bought and sold goods such as gold and spices, but also people: slaves’ (p. 197). Furthermore, the official practice exam state ‘Jan Hanna and Emma are at the market in The Hague. There are flower bulbs for sale. Jan says flower bulbs were very expensive in the golden age. Emma asks what is the Golden Age? What is the best thing Jan can say? The right answer is ‘that was the time the Netherlands made a lot of money with trade’ (DUO, 2021b). Is this truly what ‘we’ choose to discuss from the Golden Age? The construction of the Dutch history is discussed during the participant observation, as newcomers discuss how history is elaborated in the KNM course and more specifically in *Taal Compleet* by van den Broek (2018):

Christopher argues “some things should be elaborated more when it comes to slavery and theme history is too short. It brushes over things. For example, the WOII, America and England liberated the Netherlands, but where is India?” Noor, the teacher agrees “Yes, and what about Morocco? Morocco has sent a whole army. Many of them are buried in the Netherlands”. Then Christopher continues: “And by slavery, the text it states, ‘The Netherlands bought slaves in Africa and Asia and brought them as slaves to colonies’ [Van den Broek, 2018, p. 15]. They call it the Golden Age, but it was the peak of slavery and genocide. Why Golden Age then? For who?” Noor responds: “yes, it is definitely denigrating.”³³

The construction of the Dutch history within the KNM course often silences a colonial history and prides itself on being non-racist and being a small but ethical nation. Mills (2007 in Tausher, 2019, p. 49) describes the role of collective social memory in identity formation, “if we need to understand collective memory, we also need to understand collective amnesia.” In these instances, this research revealed how newcomers and teachers ‘speak back’ to the integration material as they are not considered to be rightful. Here citizenship becomes performative, as entities claim, exercise and (re)negotiate rights (Isin, 2017) and undisputed notions. Here, dialogues within the class can encompass a meaning-making and recognition process. Not only for newcomers themselves but also in a broader perspective of society. The following chapter analyses performative acts in a more comprehensive manner regarding citizenship practices in the course.

Apart from Dutch colonialism, it is striking how guest workers and their descendants are elaborated in the texts. Gathier (2015, p. 203) states ‘currently, the contact between Dutch people and allochtonen is often a problem. Some people think that there are too many allochtonen in the Netherlands.’ Alicia, a KNM-teacher, responds to this sentence as she states: “*I think this is really weird and just too much. This is actually an opinion. My son and daughter recently said ‘well, we don’t want to hang with that group allochtonen’. I said you are allochtonen as well! I am from Italy,*

³³ Participant observation with Yasir, Christopher and various research participants, 08-06-2021.

and I am thus an allochtoon. But the word allochtoon may have become more of a swear word."³⁴

This is in line with Noor who argues:

*Every theme of KNM is important but there is no mention of the fact that labour migrants and their children worked very hard to rebuild the Netherlands. It should be mentioned that allochtonen (of 'foreign descent') are still called allochtoon even though there are already fifth generation Moroccans in the Netherlands for example. It should be more nuanced.*³⁵

This becomes clear in Gathier (2015, p. 27) which states 'the children of labour migrants sometimes want to marry someone from their own country'. Here, descendants are regarded as full fledged members of Dutch society. Is the Netherlands not their own country (too)? Blankvoort et al. (2021, p. 5) argue that these categories [allochtoon/autochtoon] contribute to an understanding of a group of people who will never truly be 'Dutch' and "although these terms have been officially abandoned by government institutions, the discursive foundation that informed this distinction has not changed" (Ghorashi, 2020, p. 95) and the negative connotation within the public space remains. Even if newcomers are naturalized, speak the Dutch and actively participate within society is often still not enough for newcomers to be seen as a full citizen, to have an equal chance at a job and to feel included in society (Ghorashi & Van Tilburg 2006). Othering of 'allochtonen' leads to exclusions, hindrance of feelings of belonging and supposed distance between perceived 'native' and 'alien' citizens. Ghorashi (2020) further argues that this demonstrates an integration paradox, even if immigrants "have high levels of participation in society and a willingness to engage, they face othering practices that lead to a sense of nonbelonging" (p. 95).

5.2 Creation of the binary: the production of Us as modern

This section will analyse how current representation of Dutch citizenship are enacted and articulated within the KNM course. In the debates on integration in the Netherlands, Dutch values and norms are represented as modern, liberal, and equal and morally progressive. The Us is presented as embracing these concepts.

The Us is presented as embracing modern concepts such as emancipation. Within the texts emancipation is constructed as a struggle towards modernity e.g., by Gathier (2015, p. 203) 'after 1960, more woman worked and studied' and by Van den Broek (2018, p. 18) 'women are allowed to vote from 1919. Later, women received more rights.' A key figure of the emancipation in the texts is Aletta Jacobs, as she was the first woman that went to university and the first female general practitioner in the Netherlands (Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018). Newcomers must comprehend that woman and girls are expected to build an independent existence (Civic Integration Act, 2022).

³⁴ Semi-structured interview with Alicia, 28-05-2021.

³⁵ Semi-structured interview with Noor, 08-06-2021.

Additionally, the equal position of the woman is addressed in the practice exams ‘Emma is working on a paper with classmates. She is the leader of the group. A boy does not want her to be the leader and says girls cannot be good leaders. Emma tells girls are equally good leaders as boys’ (DUO, 2021a). Equality is also constructed in relation to work and household divisions. In class, Yaro, Eritrean young man, asks the teacher if men are at home raising the children or work fulltime. Louise, the teacher responds: “*Often men help at home, but every family can make its own plan. It depends on generation as well. My mom was fired as soon as she got married. In this generation woman work too.*”³⁶ Here, the statement of the teachers adds to the imaginary of nation-state as progressive, modern, and equal. This imaginary also addressed in the texts in relation to emancipation and work productivity; ‘Amel works parttime and is home at 6 o’clock. She is not at home when Malika school is finishes. She wants to find day care’ and ‘Su is pregnant. Su wants to work again and finds day care for her baby’ (DUO, 2021a). Having children does not hinder woman to stop working in the Netherlands. This sets an example for newcomers; female newcomers can still work even if they have children. However, combining work and taking care of children can be a difficult or even an impossible task for newcomers. This became visible in class:

The class starts with theme upbringing by discussing which participants have children and what they consider important during upbringing. The teacher asks Sunee, a Thai woman sitting in the right corner of the class: “Sunee, you have children, right? What is your parenting style? Sunee answers “well, my children have to listen to me of course [She laughs] but it is very hard for me to combine care and work. My children still live in Thailand and their grandparents look after them. Only, once a year I visit them. Alisa, another newcomer from Thailand adds: “My family still lives in Thailand as well. It is difficult. Whenever I skype with my children they quickly leave because they want to play, or they don’t understand that I am their mother. I think in a few years they will understand that I am their mother.”³⁷

The presented idea that woman can work and simultaneously take care of the children is not always attainable for newcomers. Here, the representation of the ‘norm’ might be more focused on the reaffirmation and construction of the modern and productive Us. Newcomers contest the criteria as the norms around family and the premise that family, as thus children, are nearby in the integration literature is irreconcilable with the life of newcomers. Here, the obviousness in the text grates against migrant reality. What is integration then when criteria are unattainable?

The Us is further constructed as sustainable: ‘Zara turns off the lights when she leaves the house. Zara also turns off all electronic devises (DUO, 2021b) or by separating waste, which is better for the environment (Gathier, 2015, p. 90). The us is also presented as a nation embracing secularism.

³⁶ Participant observation with Louise, KNM teacher, Yaro, Sunee, Alisa and other research participants, 29-06-2021.

³⁷ See previous footnote.

‘Every religion has its own rules, but everyone must obey the law’ (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 88) and Gathier (2015, p. 222) specifies ‘In the Netherlands everyone lives by the law. The law is more important than religion’. Secularism encompasses a struggle towards modernity and progressiveness. According to Tonkens and Duyvendak, after process of de-pillarization after the 1960s “religion was framed as out of sync with progressive secular morality” (2016, p. 9).

The production of Us further relates to concepts as self-sufficiency, responsibility, and individuality. Citizens are expected to make conscious choices regarding one’s health, by playing sports and gaining awareness of a healthy lifestyle (Van den Broek, 2018; Gathier, 2015). ‘Everyone regards their health as important’, newcomers should too as ‘no one wants to be sick’ (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 44). Citizens are further expected to be self-reliant: ‘if a Dutch person has the flu, he does not go to the doctor quickly’ (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 45). Moreover, self-reliance is also articulated towards fellow citizens ‘most elderly stay at home as long as possible in the Netherlands, they can have home care or informal care from family or relatives’ (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 50) or by taking care or helping elderly neighbours (DUO, 2021a-b). Self-reliance limits reliance on governmental support, in line with a neo-liberal ideology (Van Houdt et al., 2011). Though, data revealed that these values might contradict each other. During class the participants and teachers discuss theme four regarding health and healthcare. Louise, the teacher begins the chapter by asking the newcomers how healthcare is arranged in their country of origin.

“Is there home care in Syria for the elderly for example?” the teacher asks. Emir, a Syrian man in his forties responds: “No, the family takes care of the parents.” Louise, the teacher, says: “Okay so it's more informal care? Here in the Netherlands, it is often a combination of informal care and home care. For example, my sister does the shopping for my mother, but she also receives home care at home. Jemal, a newcomer from Eritrea, asks “why do they need extra home care if they have children?” “Well, home care cannot do everything, for example there are volunteers who go for a walk with elders or sometimes provide groceries. But care can be difficult sometimes.” Jemal is seemingly interested wonders why this is. Louise answers “Well, for example, I live far away so it’s harder for me to take care of my mom.” “But can't you live together then?” he responds. “Yes, sometimes, but that's not really tradition in the Netherlands.”³⁸

Here, family values and self-reliance, both individually and towards family, clearly have it limits as on the other hand individuality and labour participation are valued. These values, specifically cohesion and individuality, might even become contradicting ones. In the following chapter, this is examined more extensively by taking into account the perspective of newcomers themselves.

³⁸ Participant observation with Louise, Jemal, Emir and other research participants, 29-06-2021.

The emphasis on individual responsibility and self-sufficiency affects newcomers throughout the KNM course as they are held responsible for e.g., finding general practitioner, arrange adequate housing, insurances, and for education. This is articulated in class by Anouk, a KNM teacher: “*In the Netherlands, learning how to arrange everything on your own is very important.*”³⁹

Self-reliance and citizen’s responsibility is furthermore outlined in relation to work e.g., working independently (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 68), reading instructions or following a course (DUO, 2021a-b). Work i.e., paid work enables citizens to become economically productive, as employment is presented as central in society. This is characterised by productivity and life-long learning, where paid employment is considered as central modus of participation (Blankvoort et al., 2021). ‘In the Netherlands, most people between the ages of 15 and 65 have a job. Men and women work, also women with young children. If you work you can earn your own money, have contact with other people, learn new things and learn the language better.’ (Gathier, 2015, p. 151). The stated participation of Dutch citizens is transposed unto participation of newcomers within the KNM course. Work participation is articulated in the first crucial act of finding work fast and efficiency. As elaborated above, the books provide steps to find vacancies, write motivation and tips for interviews (Van den Broek, 2018; Gathier, 2015), to equip newcomers to find work. Actively and independently finding work is deemed imperative to contribute to society, e.g., ‘Jan wants to find work. Jan already went to UWV (work intermediary). Jan doesn’t think that’s enough. Jan can go to employment agency (DUO, 2021a). Work participation is also discussed in relation to lifelong learning ‘Zara wants to study as nurse’, in both practice exams, Zara can study nurse even though she is older than most students or Zara can follow education if it is deemed necessary for the job (DUO, 2021b). Furthermore, actively working on long-term career by making a business plan to start an own business (DUO, 2021a). Additionality, being an active member or a work organisation is regarded as necessary and required. By taking initiative, participation in councils (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 67) or participation in staff meetings ‘Mo participates in meetings of the staff association’ or ‘Mo wants to join Workers’ council’ (DUO, 2021a).

The envisioned participation of newcomers not only articulated in relation to work but is reflected in multiple spheres. Citizenship provides the right to vote, and citizens participation provides the access to political and socioeconomic sphere and states citizens right to vote (Leydet, 2017). Though, participation is articulated as an obligation. Instead of the right to access, one must inform oneself with sufficient information to make an informed choice for elections and e.g., participate in social networks and in the education of the child. Focus on participation can be identified as trend towards active citizenship. Here, participation is presented as necessary for betterment of the community to improve life for all members of the community (Schinkel, 2017).

The modern values that are (re)constructed above seem to include a normative-ideal construction that describes an ideal self-image of that nation-state. Hereby, the values are presented

³⁹ Participant observation with Anouk, KNM-teacher, and other research participants, 16-07-2021.

and articulated as universal or fact e.g., '[one] is aware of notions that are accepted in the Netherlands (since the 1970s) (Civic Integration Act, 2022) or 'there is consensus in the Netherlands on principles of equality, emancipation, secularism, non-discrimination (Dibi & van Dam, 2017). Core values and active citizenship becomes aligned with Dutch culture implying that core values are the same as Dutch culture and integrating in 'the Dutch' community entails a notion that all Dutch citizens share the same norms and values (De Waal, 2017). Here, Dutch citizenship becomes strongly coupled to national culture which includes constructions of the citizens as good, active, moral, sustainable, and embracing equality and emancipation. The articulation of Us throughout the KNM course strengthens homogenous and normative construction of Dutch citizens, which leaves little to no room for diversity or nuance. However, there is no standard for the perspective or actions of the 'integrated Dutch person'. This generalisation and presenting 'core values' as universal might affect view of newcomers towards the Netherlands or effect feelings of belonging. Furthermore, the creation of 'us' has automatically created the formation of the Other'.

5.3 The other side of the coin: the construction of the Other as unmodern

After construction of 'the modern us' 'the other' becomes is automatically created; without the 'other,' the nation-state and 'its modern citizens' are empty signifiers. For this section, it is crucial to consider how this is articulated in texts to consider a wider perspective of implicit notions towards the other.

Prime examples of modern values related to emancipation, equality, homosexuality by Van den Broek (2018, p. 29-30), woman can be the boss of a company, man can walk hand in hand and can take care of the children and 'while man and woman are equal in the Netherlands and Dutch citizens have a lot of freedom, 'they' are free to decide what they belief or who they want to marry'. An emphasis and repeatedly modern values and gender norms displays an underlying assumption that newcomers would not possess or do not understand presented values. This is reflected in the learning objectives as well which state '[one] is aware of the equal relationship between man and woman, also in the home environment and one is aware that (unmarried) cohabitation, also for people of the same sex, is accepted in the Netherlands' (Civic Integration Act, 2022). Van den Broek (2018, p. 30) considers a possible situation newcomers can encounter at work 'you have a new job. Your boss is gay. What do you do?' The assignment is constructed, just as the KNM exam, as a multiple-choice question: 'I look for another job, I don't want my boss to be gay! 'I don't mind if my boss is gay or not. It is important if he is a good boss or not' or 'I give him gifts. Maybe he will be extra nice to me.' These options are quite limited as there is for instance no option like; 'I still do mind that my boss would be gay, but I respect it.' The three answers limit the possibilities for a more nuanced option. Since homosexuality is paramount subject within the integration course corresponding discussions or answers should be formed in a more open and nuanced way.

Besides, the texts uphold an underlying idea of the Other as 'unmodern' as homosexuality could presumably cause a problem for newcomers. Even subtle things such as an explanation mark

decide the emphases. The crucial act that belongs to successful indicators stated above, expects newcomers to ‘deal with unusual or conflicting customs, norms and values’ (Civic Integration Act, 2022). This already assumes that the equal relationship between man and woman or an (unmarried) cohabitation of people of the same sex is ‘not normal’, conflicts with the perspective and ideas newcomers. Can this truly be stated for all newcomers? Assumptions becomes clear in class. After a discussion about homosexuality, Alicia, the teacher, asks the participants:

“Do you give your children sexual education or is that taboo as well?” [even though homosexuality did not pose a problem for all participants, the teacher describes it as a taboo]. Lejla, a female newcomer from Afghanistan, quickly responds to the teacher’s statement: “No, no it is no taboo! I do it for my two daughters, they are nine and eleven. I think it is very important to talk about sex and give education about it from an early age. Talking about sex with my children is no problem for me.”⁴⁰

Positioning newcomers as having religious or cultural background that deviates from the dominant Dutch norm contributes to the image of “migrant others as absolute others, resulting in a situation in which it is almost unimaginable to consider immigrants as belonging to the nation” (Ghorashi, 2020, p. 91). The discussions in class reveal how newcomers contest not only criteria but also statements by teachers by negotiating and indicating prejudices and biases.

The texts further generate the divide by the assumption of the Other as having a Muslim identity. Gathier (2015) considers multiple examples of homosexuality e.g., ‘Jochem is gay and is pastor. Even though homosexuality is not accepted in the bible, the people of the church did not mind that Jochem was gay. Here, the Us presented as accepting and thoughtful, but when Ali is gay his friends will not speak to him anymore: ‘Ali is Muslim and is gay. He told his friends that he was gay. Most friends don’t want to talk to him anymore’ (p. 180). Here, the Other as constructed as traditional and not accepting or understanding the presented ‘modern’ values. This text reveals an asymmetric tolerance, as Jochem’s Christian environment is ethical and more tolerant than Ali’s environment which is Muslim. This adds to the oppositional construction of Us and Them. The texts further focus on Islamic dress or traditions such as the use of headscarves (Van den Broek, 2018) or Ramadan (Gathier, 2015). Gathier (2015) considers discrimination at the workplace for example, ‘Mustafa is Muslim and has a job interview, he does not want to shake a woman a hand and during the Ramadan’ or ‘Mustafa abstains from eating any food, his colleague thinks it’s crazy that he does not eat’ (Gathier, 2015, p. 168). This reveals an asymmetric focus on Muslim traditions and ‘related’ issues. In addition, the Other is constructed as in need to understand the Dutch democracy. Democratic values are repeatedly articulated in the criteria and texts, which encourage newcomers to understand electoral

⁴⁰ Participant observation with Alicia, Lejla and other research participants, 11-06-2021.

systems and nation-state structure. Moreover, the Other is also articulated as conflicting with the Dutch democracy as stated by Romy, a KNM teacher:

“Well, the [Arabic] culture is contrary with our democracy. It's not a secular. The Quran has such high requirements that no one can actually meet them. Then they have to 'get used' to Dutch society. Students from Arab countries have a cognitive dissonance with the West and think that people drink, and all have sex with each other. But when they're here it's not too bad. They really must experience that. Democracy could thus be elaborated a bit more extensively; it is of course difficult to grasp and abstract if you are not from the Netherlands.”⁴¹

The Other is perceived as alien and in need of civilization. Here, the construction of the ‘Oriental other’ comes forth. According to Said (1978), these discourses derive from orientalism, which is a complex and discursive practice through which “the West produced an Orient, categorized as backward, primitive or inferior, and in doing so justified the civilizing mission of the former” (Barbero, 2012, p. 785).

Besides these constructions, the texts also display the Other with a tendency towards violence. Van den Broek e.g., you cannot harass women, use sexual language against a woman at work or on street, beat or touch someone without consent (p. 29) and violence such as child abuse, honour killing, and circumcision is forbidden’ (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 88). During an online participant observation, the course participants start with assignment of *Taal Compleet* online related to education and upbringing, e.g., when children go to school. One of the questions in the assignments concerns Sarah:

‘Sarah is divorced and has two children. The children are annoying and do not listen. What can Sarah do?’ The multiple-choice answers are A) hit the children, so they listen. B) go to the teacher and the GP to talk about it. C) send the children outside, so Sarah can rest. Most participants go for answer B. Romy, the teacher responds, “does everyone agree with answer B or something else? [after asking plenary, the teacher asks two participants explicitly if they would answer B. Both agree.] Indeed, it is answers B. Hitting the children is not the way to do it, ok?”⁴²

Even though this is only one example of the question list this question striking because of two reasons; the options are quite limited and extreme and the emphasis of the teacher to assure that none of them would answer B. This implies a potential danger of violence against children by newcomers. In a similar vein Gathier (2015, p. 183) outlines multiple examples of what is forbidden in the Netherlands, the examples include circumcision, incest, rape, sex with a minor, violence, violence and honor killings. These types of violence are also considered by Ghorashi (2010), as she asserts that these types dominate the public debate where woman are portrayed as passive victim and migrant man as

⁴¹ Unstructured interview with Romy, KNM-teacher, 04-06-2021.

⁴² Participant observation with Romy, KNM teacher, and research participants, 08-07-2021.

aggressors. Here, violence is often described exclusively through the lens of culture. Additionally, the text clarifies that the law is more important than religion ‘A Muslim would like their children to be circumcised. According to the law, this is only allowed for boys and not for girls. Thus, his daughters are not allowed to be circumcised (Gathier, 2015, p. 222). The Other as a potential threat becomes articulated in the learning objectives as well that state ‘[one] is aware that certain dressing behaviour should not be interpreted as unchaste or inviting.’ What is meant here? Is there an ominous possibility that certain dressing leads to comments or violence, and would this be inherently different from the possible reaction of (male) Dutch citizens?

Furthermore, the texts are articulated in a sense that it is the responsibility of newcomers to adjust or ‘to deal with’ encountered situations. Gathier (2015, p. 167) discusses discrimination in relation to work:⁴³

As a foreigner you can encounter discrimination at your workplace. For example: you are a Muslim and your colleagues are annoyed that you want to pray. It can help if you do not get mad too quickly. At times, it can be a joke or something that is not that important. It often stops when you are a good colleague.

Van den Broek (2018, p. 80) gives the following advice about discrimination: ‘first talk to the person(s) who discriminate you, if it does not help’ or ‘when you are *really* face discrimination, then you can go to the police.’ Small words such as *really* make these texts implicit while it assumes that newcomers might perceive something as discrimination when in reality it is not or that a space would exist where perceived discrimination is not severe enough to be considered as such. Besides, classes revealed how discrimination is enacted by teachers. Maud discusses discrimination as she explains: “*it is important to talk to someone first when you are discriminated by them. Maybe they made a mistake, have regrets, or did not realize that they were discriminating. Therefore, you should speak with someone otherwise you risk friction or a dispute if you go to the police.*”⁴⁴ Here, the teacher warns the participants that a situation could escalate if one goes to the police. This assumes that newcomers might struggle to assess these situations. Besides, if newcomers wish to contact the police, this should be possible without any potential consequences. Teachers, however, also take a more critical stance in class regarding discrimination as Noor, a KNM- teacher, states:

“Discrimination is not allowed. You can be prosecuted. There is freedom of speech but to a certain degree. Nevertheless, it happens by for example job interviews. [the teacher holds two pieces of paper omhoog]. Imagine, both papers are CVs, the one is from Jan and the other from... [the teacher pauses as she tries to find the right words] Anwer, a newcomer from Afghanistan, adds: “you mean a foreigner?” “Yes, from a foreigner. Despite having fewer certificates or a

⁴³ In accordance with crucial knowledge 1.3 ‘dealing with (hidden) discrimination in the workforce’.

⁴⁴ Participant observation with Maud, KNM teacher, and research participants, 01-06-2021.

lower education, Jan is chosen more often. Or discrimination is also the difference between man and woman, woman earn less in the work force.” Nassim, a middle aged man from Iran, responds: “Ohh, was that case in the Netherlands?” The teacher responds: “No, this is still the case in the Netherlands.”⁴⁵

The information obtained from this conversation indicates that some participants are aware of possible discrimination in the Netherlands; Anwer acknowledges that a foreigner/immigrant or Jan/a ‘native Dutch’ might be treated differently. Though, discrimination (between man and woman) is not always recognized. The position of the teacher is therefore crucial for newcomers to underline potential and everyday acts of discrimination. These conversations in class are vital as they critically question the imaginary of Dutch nation-state which embraces principles such as non-discrimination (Civic Integration Act, 2022; Dibi & van Dam, 2017).

Furthermore, the texts emphasize the importance of comprehending that ‘Dutch people can express themselves very directly, without wanting to be hurtful or rude (Civic Integration Act, 2022; Van den Broek, 2018, p. 22). The successful indicator related to this act states ‘one does not take direct feedback and criticism personally’. This is reflected in Gathier (2015, p. 48-49) ‘if you are bothered, you can say it but on a friendly and calm way, even if you are mad’ and DUO (2021a) ‘Miss van Dam is unkind towards Zara. What should Zara do? Zara should remain calm and tell miss Dam that she did not like it’.

These texts contain a form of victim blaming, as it is up to the newcomer how to react or deal with criticism or discrimination and not with the person who discriminates or criticises. According to Koehler (2009) the freedom of speech is traditionally associated with tolerance, however these texts reveal that this freedom is stretched to “incorporate an attitude of ‘say whatever you want’, following on the heels of Pim Fortuyn [...] often directed against particular immigrant groups, especially Muslims” (p. 164). Besides, it can be patronizing as ‘we’ are going to teach ‘you’ how to be ‘Dutch’, which can create a certain hierarchy. Here, integration is highly unbalanced as the inclusion of newcomers in the Dutch nation-state is sole responsibility of newcomers not the responsibility of Dutch people. Does the integration of newcomers then depend on their willingness to accept or deal with the host community?

5.3 Divide: mechanisms that further the binary

Not only the texts include implicit criteria, but the dichotomy is strengthened within photos and names presenting an assumed state of the Other as non-white and the Us as predominantly white. The ‘integrated’ Dutch people are almost always associated with ‘Dutch’ names, such as Jan, Hans or Lisa. The Other is often racialised with a foreign outlook and ‘typical’ Arabic names. *“There is always an*

⁴⁵ Participant observation with Noor, KNM teacher, Anwer, Nassim and other research participants, 08-06-2021.

Ali or a Mohammed, but where are the Marie's for example? Always those names, I don't think that is necessary."⁴⁶ Yasir, a young man from Egypt, further considers (a lack of) diversity in the KNM course:

As the teacher ends the class, she explains the homework and hands out the previous assignment; collages that each participant made of the KNM course. I walk around the class and ask newcomers individually if they can tell me something about what they made and what KNM means for them. After seeing the first two collages, I walk across the class to last table on the left. Yasir looks up and smiles at me "Do you want to see my collage?" "Yes of course" I answer, "can you tell me something about your collage? What is important for you in this course?" Both of us look down at the collage that lays on the table. The paper of the collage is brown and fills his table A1 format. In the upper corners is a picture of Rutte with 'democratic government' and an AJAX football player with 'sports are good for you'. On the bottom right a photo of a VOC ship and in the other corner pictures of typical Dutch food such as oliebollen [doughnuts]. In the middle of the collage is a rainbow pasted with the words 'vrijheid' [freedom] above. The rainbow is surrounded with a collection of pictures cut and pasted from magazines: two men hug each other with written underneath 'I love the person that I want to love' a woman in a hijab 'I wear what I want', a man and wife 'yes, my wife is black'. Yasir says "In the second theme, about Dutch customs, norms and values, I think there is not enough information about different groups in the Netherlands such as Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese and more representation of diversity" [He points towards the examples and adds] "or for example 'my wife is black or yes, my child is black even though the mother white.'" I ask him what he would like to change about the course. [Yasir frowns his eyebrows, clearly thinking as he scans his collage.] After a few moments he says: "KNM is really missing diversity. I had to learn a lot from others about life in the Netherlands. I would like to know more about different kinds of people and that is something we do not learn in this book. Diversity is very important for me."⁴⁷

The scene above discloses the observed representation of the unanimous identity of 'the Dutch citizen' in the course, which is negotiated and contested by Yasir. This identity silences any possibility for diversity (Blankvoort et al, 2021). Moreover, these constructions add to processes of othering. In the course, it is often the Other that faces issues. Within the learning methods it is Mustafa, that encounters problems at work during Ramadan or Ali without accepting friends (Gathier, 2015). The practice exams use names such as Fatma, Amel, Said and Ali compared to Jan, Hanna or Vera that embrace Dutch values or educate the racialised Other; Jan actively tries to find work, Jan explains to Ali information for elections and Jan tells Rashid everyone can dress how they want to. Lisa (the

⁴⁶ Semi-structured interview with Alicia, 26-06-2021.

⁴⁷ Unstructured interview with Yasir, 08-06-2021.

daughter of Zara and Ali) learns about Dutch customs such as bringing flowers when visiting her boyfriends' family and Lisa learns about liberation day. Said finds information about elections, Malikas school report is not good (the child of Amel and Mo) or Ali doesn't have enough money to pay his taxes. On the other hand, Emma (the daughter of Jan and Hanna) tells her classmates that girls are good leaders too or Jan and Hanna discuss nuisance with their neighbour. The only exception is that Mo joins staff associations or makes business plan (DUO, 2021a).

Besides, solicitor, bosses, politicians, or doctors that 'help the newcomer' are predominantly illustrated by white males (DUO, 2021a-b; Gathier, 2015; Van den Broek, 2018), this can (unfairly) influence the ambition of newcomer. Perhaps even more so for female newcomers. Within the texts and photos, it is often the woman that supports man while signing a contract, doctor assistants (DUO, 2021a), woman more often in household or take care of the children (Van den Broek, 2018; Gathier, 2015). Moreover, it is essential to address that there are no examples of homosexual or transgender people in the practice exams. So even though the texts present Dutch as emancipated or equal, this is not fully reflected in the course. In addition, it is striking that the learning methods and official practice exams do not represent a multicultural society, due to the homogenised version of Us.

5.4 Concluding thoughts

In the debates on integration and emancipation in the Netherlands, Dutch values are represented as modern, liberal, equal, and active. The other is constructed as antithetical to that: traditional, backward and characterised by a lack of women's gender and sexual freedom (Mepschen et al., 2010; Scott, 2009 in Bogert, 2019, p. 179). These constructions are reflected throughout the criteria of the KNM course as discursive acts of framing and culturalization create a binary of Us and Them. The Other, that live their life differently from Us, must make the proper adjustments for a supposedly modern way of living. Within KNM texts active and common citizenship is endorsed; newcomers inclusion becomes narrowly tied to the labour market and 'core' values due to its substantial emphasis throughout the KNM course. Active citizenship becomes motivated by the image of society 'as a machinery of performance' (Haahr, 2004 in Joppke, 2007, p. 17) and cultural adaptation is considered crucial to retrain the collective identity and shared values of the nation-state.

The course neglects to discuss diversity within both groups. Diversity is 'tolerated' to exist within the nation-state but is excluded from the category 'Dutchness' (Bregman, 2019). There is no diversity in the interaction, perception, or participation of Dutch citizens. Though, the presumed common national identity may be based on a rather vague or ambiguous content (Vertovec, 2011, p. 245). Dutch 'core values' are still big and loosely defined concepts. There is often no distinction made between 'norms' and 'values' as the terms are often used simultaneously. Besides, constructing limited core values further disregards the multiformity and fluidity of values within society.

These implicit mechanism underly an exclusionary practice and even if immigrants and descendants are formally integrated, display high levels of participation and willingness to engage

within society, they can still face othering processes. The construction of Dutch colonialism, its present-day recursions and current classifications can, in a variety of ways, undermine equal citizenship. Implicit and subtle emphasis or choices in relation to texts, names or photos can construct exclusion and can lead to a sense of non-belonging. The implicit criteria can have real effects for those who encounter them. Though, this chapter also observed how teachers and especially newcomers contest and ‘speak back’ to integration norms when they are not considered rightful. Here, dialogues within class encompass a recognition and meaning-making process in which newcomers claim, exercise and (re)negotiate citizenship.

This thesis urges for a critical reflection of culturalist and racialised constructions which are embedded within the KNM course. In order to create a diverse and inclusive exam, the (re)production of Us and Them should be acknowledged and a thorough consideration of how neo-colonial powers shape conceptualisations within the course is necessary.

Chapter 6 Performative citizenship: negotiations and intersubjectivity

Performing citizenship – in this chapter – is examined within a relational framework, as it considers performative acts of multiple actors. It dives deeper in the bottom-up processes of citizenship by examining how citizenship processes unfold in their performative interaction with the criteria of the KNM course. As considered in the previous chapters, performativity refers to the reiterative power through discursive acts that inscribe and demarcate the boundaries of the nation-state and simultaneously creating arrangements of otherness (Isin, 2017). Citizenship becomes performative when entities enact citizenship by claiming, exercising and (re)negotiate rights and duties. Though, performativity is not only spoken by those who hold power. Bodies are performative and thus “renegotiate and expand or subvert the existing reality through what they do” (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 89). In Isin’s influential work on ‘performative citizenship’ (2017, p. 501) the author defines a performative perspective on citizenship “as making rights claims across multiple social groups and polities reveals its creative and transformative possibilities”, which often arise from asymmetric power relations. Making rights claims are crucial to analyse participants struggle for the right to be present and acknowledged in a polity. It reveals the interplay to act in accordance and to claim and enact citizenship in new ways. In the process of self-assessment, newcomers’ interpretation and understanding of what is required to be part of the Dutch society plays a significant role in the valuation of their own place in society (Haile, 2020, p. 51).

Citizenship criteria are often considered a more or less stable, a performative perspective considers citizenship as anything but stable or static (Isin, 2017). This chapter aims to capture citizenship process by focusing on real workings and experiences and not on enhancing an emphasis of cultural citizenship stressing newcomers as inherently ‘other’. This research tried to focus on reflective and dialogical aspects of research relationships by paying attention to social interaction performed in social spaces. It considers the embodied encounter and creative acts in which newcomers transform citizenship, hereby attempting to subvert the sovereignty of the political authority in an integration framework (Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014).

6.1 Participation: a critical view stance on active citizenship

Language and work are presented as the first steps of becoming a successful citizen. Throughout the course, newcomers express the added value of the integration course in their daily lives. Work is often regarded as the most important theme of the KNM course followed by healthcare, living and authorities. These themes provide newcomers with practical information that they can immediately apply to their lives in the Netherlands, as one participant put it: *“Don’t get us wrong. The history or holidays discussed in chapter one is important for our lives but living, working and authorities are way more important to build an existence in the Netherlands.”* Many newcomers in this research express their eagerness to work, follow education or start their own business. Ahmed, a Syrian middle-

aged man, express during a class session that he wants to be an *ijverig burger* [hardworking citizen]; “*I want to contribute to society*”.⁴⁸ Another newcomer, Tariq, wishes to start his own employment agency in the Netherlands, just like he had in Iran.⁴⁹

Citizenship participation is traditionally articulated as the right to access the socioeconomic sphere i.e., the labour market and education (Leydet, 2017), though often closely aligned with the obligation and responsibility of newcomer to contribute to society by being an active member. This is presented as necessary in the integration programmes: “values [of the Dutch nation-state] can only be maintained if everyone actively contributes toward society” (DUO, 2016b in Blankvoort et al., 2021, p. 10). Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010, p. 706) discuss the trend towards active citizenship and assert that with the articulation of ‘good’ and ‘active’ citizenship a binary is created as “inactive or risky citizens are increasingly articulated along ethnic lines”. In this research, newcomers implicitly and actively negotiate the idea of Other as potential inactive citizen and by doing so actively negotiate the (over)emphasis and prejudices related to economic involvement. The idea that not everyone is willing to work is especially focused on female newcomers, while much of the course focuses on the emancipation of migrant woman, particularly Muslim woman. It is often argued that migrant women do not possess the required skills e.g., knowledge of the language and education – to become active participants in Dutch society. Ghorashi (2020, p. 13) indicates that dominant discourses hold that migrant women that are considered “‘prisoners’ within their culture, or at least within their homes, are socially isolated and need to be freed from isolation and released from their marginalized position.” As Louise, a KNM-teacher, explains: “*The course states, woman and man both work and equally. But this can clash with cultures of others [newcomers]. Here in Nijmegen the policy is quite strict. Newcomers have to work in a social sheltered workshop for their benefits, also female newcomers. Some newcomers really did not like this.*”⁵⁰ The imaginary discussed in the previous chapter, the migrant man is often portrayed as potentially violent and migrant woman as passive (victims). Thus, these constructions encompass besides an ethnic delineation a gender component.

These claims are contested by several newcomers. Farah, a young woman from Morocco, stated: “*I am going to work, and I want to follow an education, so it is very important to know how things are done and what life is like here. The other things of KNM are interesting as well, but I use them less often. Work and education are the most important things of the course.*”⁵¹ There are many examples throughout this research, while most participants have a clear view of education or work path they wish to follow, in mind that there is an emphasis in the integration course on participation from day one. Motivation, ambition, and potential are rarely problem that seem to hinder successful participation of newcomers. Work is considered as a counter stone to build a new life in the Netherlands. Some are, on the other hand, more eager than others to participate in the Dutch labour

⁴⁸ Participant observation with Ahmed and other research participants, 28-05-2021.

⁴⁹ Semi-structured interview with Tariq, 25-06-2021.

⁵⁰ Semi-structured interview with Louise, KNM-teacher, 29-06-2021.

⁵¹ Semi-structured interview Farah, 25-06-2021.

market. Some participants prefer to stay at home and full-time care of their children or elderly family members. Though, research participants are more reserved to express these wishes in class, ambitious goals such as Farah's are often more celebrated by teachers.

Moreover, in contrast with The Us, inactivity or un-paid volunteer work is not a valued form of participation for the Other (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in Blankvoort et al., 2021, p. 12). The focus on economic participation, namely towards female newcomers, reveals an asymmetric expectation. Namely, this level is not expected from native female citizens e.g., parttime or stay at home moms. Louise, KNM-teacher, discusses 'equal' work ratio between man and woman "*in practice this is often not the case, woman work more parttime or do more household chores than man but in theory it is equal, so it's good that this is stated in the KNM book.*"⁵² It is an unrealistic as the assumption that all native Dutch contribute actively to society (Bergman, 2019, p. 40-41), but the assumption or expectation that all newcomers would is unrealistic as well.

In addition, the focus on participation in the labour force occasionally contradicts with values of newcomers. Individualistic behaviour that is promoted in the integration course, but with this promotion, family is often presented as less important e.g., texts state: "In the Netherlands, family is less important than in Turkey or Africa. Sometimes family members only see each other on birthdays (Gathier, 2015, p. 45). A newcomer reflects on this statement as she states:

*"I don't think family is important in the Netherlands, children live alone and do not learn enough if they move out at a young age. They live alone and forget their father and mother. With us you help each other more, for example I take care of my mom. My mother is important to me and taking care of her is good. But that is not necessary here either, there are good hospitals or there is a lot of care that can be arranged, but then the feeling is gone."*⁵³

This reveals a paradox. From the perspective of the receiving country, the integration and placement of "strangers are often conceived of as a threat to nationally cohesively ordered space and identity" (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002, p. 130). More specifically, Haile (2020, p. 7) argues that socio-cultural and religious attributes are often presumed to be counterproductive to the objectives of integration. But the structures which are strong in a communal value system e.g., family and neighbourhood are also thought to enhance social cohesion. Howbeit, in an individualistic-based value system these structures are often weakened. Then, integration policy, in its promotion of individualistic behaviour, may undermine the very thing it hopes to strengthen (Koehler, 2019, p. 166).

⁵² Semi-structured interview with Louise, KNM-teacher, 29-06-2021.

⁵³ Participant observation with Maryam and other research participants, 11-06-2021.

6.2 Freedom: an ambiguous value

Today's class starts with chapter eight, Living together in the Netherlands. When the participants open their book on page 177, they see a photo Mirjam and Galo as each chapter is introduced with an example of the couple. This time, Mirjam is kissing Galo on the cheek while standing on the pavement with a buggy. Lejla, a newcomer from Afghanistan, sits in the back of the class asks the teacher: "is this normal in the Netherlands, to kiss in public?" The teacher responds, "yes this is normal. What do you think of this?" In the midst of Lejla's thought and reflection, Ahmed jumps into the conversation. the Syrian man smiles and quickly responds "That's beautiful, that's love!" Bilen, a woman from Eritrea, sits behind Ahmed and seems to disagree as she frowns her eyebrows and says "No, it's not good, they should kiss at home and not on the street." After a few moments Bilen nuances her statement and says "well, maybe just a kiss, that is normal, but snogging goes too far for me." The teacher responds "Ok class, and what if two men would kiss? [The participants begin to murmur, whispering inaudibly to their neighbours.] The teacher tries to reassure the participants as she states: "nothing is wrong; you can say what you think here." Meryam is the first to say something "my neighbour is a lesbian. It's not good." Teacher "do you find it difficult?" Lejla adds "yes, it is difficult for us. This is not in Afghanistan. Now it is possible in the Netherlands, there are different rules here than in my country, but still difficult to make contact or to accept it."⁵⁴

Occasionally, participants in this research indicate to struggle when they encounter unfamiliar situations in the exam and in daily life. This pertains for instance the example above regarding kissing in public or homosexuality as it is not 'normal' for them to see (two) males or females kissing or having a lesbian neighbour. Research participants find themselves in a cultural transition throughout the course as they are exposed to new norms and values. According to Van den Bos (in Al Abdallah & Bijl, 2021) the adjustment and the transition from one to another culture can be a confusion period, people adapt in many ways and that can be a long process. Besides, it is understandable that individuals object these issues or specifically homosexuality when they are raised in other culture where it is not allowed or even an unspoken subject. For example, Rahwa, an Eritrean newcomer, experiences more difficulty when it comes to homosexuality:

"I would say hello to someone who is gay, but I would not eat with them. I am scared." The teacher asks why Rahwa would be scared. Rahwa responds "in our heads it is haram, so the Netherlands is a bit different, it is weird for us. It is a different culture then in our heads. In the Netherlands if I don't have any contact with people that are gay, but if I would it would be a problem for me."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Participant observation with Lejla and other research participants, 11-06-2021.

⁵⁵ Participant observation with Rahwa, Lejla and other research participants, 11-06-2021.

It becomes visible that some have to adjust to a society where homosexuality is tolerated and even promoted as one of the fundamental core values of the nation-state.

This also becomes visible in the KNM exam. Besides factual knowledge, the KNM exam requires insight into desired and expected behaviour in social situations. The KNM exam the questions are constructed in third person narration as “someone with whom the person integrating can identify with” (Asscher, 2017). The KNM exam sketches event or situations for candidate what someone best can do in this (particular) situation. The third person perspective in all probability stems from a narrator, reciting the Dutch nation-state while exam questions are focused on teaching the ‘core values’ of the Dutch society (Asscher, 2017; Paternotte & Becker, 2018). The integration requirements of the KNM course are thus not only articulated in terms of active involvement but also through cultural constructions on issues like gay marriage, abortion, and euthanasia all in line with the progressive and modern imaginary of the nation-state. As considered in the previous chapter, the culturalization citizenship becomes aligned with an imagination of ‘the society’ as a bounded space of moral citizens. An extra-judicial normative concept of citizenship increasing emphasis attached to the cultural adaption of newcomers (Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2016). This thesis argues that the KNM course should provide more consideration to the cultural transition of newcomers, but perhaps more importantly, should respect newcomers’ beliefs as they are entitled to their own standpoint and ideas.

‘There is a lot of freedom in the Netherlands’ is a citation that is repeatedly mentioned cited throughout the course, both in texts and by teachers (e.g., in Van den Broek 2018, p. 88). Though, this constitutional freedom of thought seems to be ambiguous and selective; there is a lot of freedom of citizens that embrace modern values, but freedom for those who hold other beliefs seems to be demarcated. Butler (2008, p. 3) argues, “a certain conception of freedom is invoked precisely as a rationale and instrument for certain practices of coercion.” This process can be defined as a performative force of expression exercised to ‘maintain a status quo’ (Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014, p. 7). Butler (2008, p. 3) further asserts “[practices of coercion] place those of us who have conventionally understood ourselves as advocating a progressive sexual politics in a rather serious bind.” Additionally, Mepschen et al., (2010) argue a Dutch gay identity helps to shape the contours of ‘liberal’ and ‘tolerant’ Dutch national culture and can even reinforce or mobilize nationalist and orientalist politics. Even though, “lesbian and gay rights have a rather short history in the Netherlands, they are nonetheless mobilized as exemplary of a Dutch ‘tradition of tolerance’” (Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 972). Normative constructions in relation to the KNM exam can also be identified in political arena by Dibi and Van Dam (2012) “there is great consensus in the Netherlands on principles such as gender equality, non-discrimination, freedom of expression.”⁵⁶ However, this statement is nuanced by Noor, a KNM-teacher, as she asserts: “*In the Netherlands it makes a difference whether you are gay in Amsterdam or in Schapendonk. There is also discussion in the Netherlands about this. In theory*

⁵⁶ Dibi and Van Dam (2012). Motion by Member Dibi & Van Dam. Accessed on December 20, 2021. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33086-40.html>

*everyone is equal as the KNM book states, but in practice it probably isn't.*⁵⁷ The proclaimed consensus is in reality not embraced by all members of the nation-state. Nevertheless, this consensus is promoted throughout the course which creates a seemingly homogenous entity. This silences the variety of perspectives and beliefs in the Netherlands. Once again, an asymmetric expectation towards newcomers becomes evident. This becomes evident by integration obligations such as the participation declaration (only needs to be signed by newcomers and not native citizens) and the KNM exam which contains similar imaginations of cultural tropes “the extent to which you will be recognized or excluded by Dutch society is entirely up to you: we tell you who we are and, simultaneously, although not explicit, we explain exactly what our cultural codes are – thus, what you need to do to be included in the Dutch ‘we’” (De Leeuw & Van Wichelen 2012, p. 199). Then, the balance between “shared state values (liberalism) and toleration of religious or ethnic values (ostensibly illiberal), as well the idea of promoting autonomy and liberal values through mandatory and potential illiberal means, raises a question as to how liberal these tests and requirements really are” (Goodman, 2014, p. 33).

6.3 Performativity in an intersubjective space

*As I enter the building, I see a sign on the entrance door ‘PAIR, together for succes’ with a red arrow pointed to the left. I walk behind the corner and I see the two classrooms, the one on the left is open. As I walk in I see a young woman behind a desk that looks up ‘hi are you Anneke? Nice to see you, come in! While I find my seat, the first course participants enter the classroom. The teacher asks how they are and ask one of them if he passed his KNM exam. “No, no results yet!” He sits down a couple of rows in front of me, puts his green backpack on his lap and pulls out his course book *Taal Compleet*. The teacher looks at me and says: “Anneke will follow today’s class. She is doing her research on KNM exam.” After a quick introduction round, I ask him what he thought of the exam. He smiles at me and says “Well, I was a bit short on time and there was one question that I really did not know... It was about an elderly woman, who wanted to die. The asked me ‘what should you do? A. stop talking, B. Then I will no longer take care of you or C. Alright, you can die if you want to.’” The teacher quickly responds “Ok, that is clear. It is definitely not one of the first two answers.” “What?!” [His facial expression changes, instead of smiling he now looks confused] “you just let someone die, no right? Really, was that the right answer?” [He lifts his hands up and looks to me and the teacher] “I don’t understand why C would be the right answer. Is that what KNM wants? Do Dutch people want that? It is not what I think. I don’t get it...” Teacher responds “Yes, in the Netherlands that is allowed. We talked about euthanasia in class, do you remember? The teacher looks at me and says: “some really do not understand it, this can be a culture shock for them.” “Alright, I remember learning about euthanasia, but I did not expect a question like this in the exam.” The teacher asks “well, now we have considered this section again, what would you choose? A, B or C? Maybe not how*

⁵⁷ Semi-structured interview with Noor, KNM-teacher, 08-06-2021.

you feel about it but for the exam". He responds, "with heart no, but for exam I choose C." Teacher: "yes, maybe if you answer with your heart, the right answer is not C. It is very complex, isn't it? We all have our own values and customs."

This vignette reveals an interesting scene as it disclosed creative and transformative possibilities in the ways newcomers shape citizenship. The classroom becomes a performative site as KNM criteria are questioned, in which newcomers (re)negotiate articulated core values. According to Butler (1990) performance can be understood in the sense of an act, that someone does, a doing, a particular type of process "a set of repeated acts *within a highly rigid regulatory frame*" (p. 25). This frame can be observed in light of the value acquisition in the course, that is promoted as non-negotiable in integration as it becomes a "necessary tool to participate and establish feelings of belonging in the Dutch society" (Blankvoort et al., 2021, p. 12). Nevertheless, performative acts can, besides power constructions, destabilize and denaturalize precisely those acts and broader regimes. To capture this process this study focusses on personal understanding and experiences, a practice known as lived citizenship, which reveals in which ways participates negotiate duties and expectations, and, in this process, creatively reframe citizenship.

Throughout the course, participants question and struggle to identify with given statements, for example in the example above, as the 'right' answer conflicts with own beliefs. At the same time, research participants become aware of the desired answers in the course and exam. In the KNM-classes consensus is established of expected answers which creates an intersubjective space of intercultural communication concerning ideas and values. Within an intersubjective state of shared experience, "a dialogue offers paths both to establishing intersubjectivity and consensus, and to creating a degree of understanding across (unresolved) differences" (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 409). Banathy & Jenlink (2005, p. 327) argue that movements within this intersubjective field "provide yet another level of experience that accompanies the implicit and explicit experiences of storytelling-listening." According to Burbules and Rice (1991) a dialogue exchange is a spectrum with on the one hand complete agreement and consensus on the other irreconcilable and incommensurable difference. In class there is no agreement, but a common understanding is observed in which actors [newcomer-teacher] do not agree but establish common meanings in which to discuss their differences. This becomes visible in the interaction between teacher and participant as Ahmed questions:

Homosexuality is normal of course, but I would not like to have too much contact. I would say hello to someone who is gay, but I would not eat with them. Can I say it in the exam that I don't like it, or would that be wrong? The teacher responds: "You should not answer from without your own culture, but from the Dutch culture. Ahmed: "So, in the exam, I should answer from the book but not my opinion? The rules are ok, I know them. But if they ask in the exam; what do you

*think? Can I answer it then?" The teacher responds: "No, in the exam they will not ask what you think but will give you situations where you should choose the most fitting answer."*⁵⁸

An example of the third person narration regarding gay marriage is as follows; 'two men walk hand in hand in the park. What do you do? A) Call the police B) tell them to stop holding hands, or C) do nothing.' (Van den Broek, 2018). In order to pass the exam, participants know they have to choose the last option, even though it is not in line with their own perspective. Ahmed for example is aware of what is 'normal' in the Netherlands, and even though it is not normal for him, he states it is. The situations that are sketched have highly identifying traits and pertain a powerful example of how elements of assimilation predominate integration landscape in the Netherlands. The emphasis remains on the dominant culture. Another example of this is when newcomers are asked "do you think that Dutch people think this is normal?" (Gathier, 2015, p. 181) instead of creating a dialogue where differences and commonalities are discussed. This research argues that the civic integration is based on a 'result obligation', which means the immigrant must pass all tests (Schinkel & van Houdt, 2010). This becomes evident in a statement of a teacher:

*"Newcomers express the fact that gay marriage is not allowed in their country because you will die for being a homosexual. But they do know that it is allowed in the Netherlands. I don't think they will be quick to say that they do not agree with it, because they know that it is normal in the Netherlands. But I think they're just trying to pass the exam right now."*⁵⁹

Due to intersubjectivity, a shared yet unequal space, newcomers come to understand 'rules of the game'. 'Core' values are not always attainable, but to pass the exam participants forge socially desirable answers. Thus, in an attempt to transpose the values deemed necessary to become successful citizens, participants position themselves across, in opposing or alternative positions. In this case, performativity does not affect content and scope of the right, it might even confirm rather than contest it (Isin, 2017). However, they find innovative ways to shape and claim citizenship. Performativity becomes literal in a sense of performance/imitation. Performativity should not be analysed as a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practices by which discourse produces the effects that it names (Butler 1993 in Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014, p. 1). By doing so, research participants renegotiate expected and 'third person' narration in KNM course. Besides, the teachers contribute to this negotiation of citizenship – in these instances they 'teach to test'. This reveals a struggle for the teachers, as they hold a broker function; both in service of integration course [teaching information] and newcomers [helping to pass the exam].

⁵⁸ Participant observation with Alicia, KNM-teacher, Ahmed and other research participants, 25-06-2021.

⁵⁹ Semi-structured interview with Maud, KNM-teacher, 07-04-2021.

It is important to create room and understanding that not everything is (immediately) agreeable or attainable. According to Mepschen et al. (2010, p. 972) disagreement should be distinguished from dismissal, “it is possible to promote (sexual) freedom in an inviting and inclusive manner, without dismissing (Muslim/other) cultures and to claim and to get beyond the false dichotomy of defending the religious and cultural rights of minorities versus the (sexual) rights of elderly, women and gays. Dismissal and limited freedom can lead to performativity and marginalization, as it hinders feelings of belonging. Process of normalization and assimilation cause newcomers to be living in, but not belonging to the nation (Ghorashi, 2003, p. 136). Participants transform their social navigation and sense making but it can still create divisions, even though integration policy is aimed to retrain social cohesion. In these performative instances it is crucial to consider the added value of the KNM exam as participants literally ‘perform’ citizenship and do not in fact ‘integrate’. It would be fruitful to facilitate a dialogue in the KNM course, not to create consensus (at all costs) but to establish common meanings in which similarities and differences are discussed.

6.4 Reflectivity: construction of the Dutch nation-state as ethical and transparent

“If performative citizenship is a struggle over the subjects of rights, this struggle creates a scene in which social groups contest their similarities and differences (Isin, 2017, p. 502). The last paragraph analysed in which ways and to what extent newcomers encounter difficulties on issues such as homosexuality and euthanasia. With it, it might have ratified the assumption that participants would not value norms and values like equality or freedom. Though, this premise is just as unrealistic as the assumption that native Dutch embrace all values and actively contribute to society (Bergman, 2019, p. 40-41). Beliefs and perspectives of research participants are highly diverse and differ in extent. This becomes visible in the following scene:

Anouk, a KNM-teacher, explains to the class that the divorce rates in the Netherlands are quite high. One in three marriages leads to a divorce. Imana, a female newcomer from Ethiopia, shakes her head in disapproval. Shereen, a young woman from Syria, sits in front of her on the heater, looks back and says well divorce can be good thing “when people argue a lot [as she struggles to find the words, Shereen gestures fighting by putting her fist in her other hand palm] when people argue or... fight, that is not good. Then it is good to separate. I am in the Netherlands and separated. There is a lot of freedom, that is the Dutch culture. Man and woman are equal for the law. Imana [from her facial expression and intonation she shows her disapproval] “well, who’s fault was it then you got separated?” Shereen seemingly bothered by Imana’s statement, gets up and walks back to her place and stops talking to her. The teacher picks up the conversation and asserts that every person can make their own choices in life and even if you do not agree with everything, you must respect each other’s decisions.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Participant observation with Anouk, KNM-teacher, Shereen, Imana and other research participants, 16-07-2021.

Considering the spectrum of dialogue of Burbules and Rice (1991) displays variety of beliefs and at times little understanding or even irreconcilable difference between newcomers. In these moments, the teacher can play an essential role of mediator. The teachers mediate the conversation by trying to establish respect and mutual appreciation by seeing “each other but other has a thoughtful, conscientious position, they can come to appreciate and respect even positions they disagree with” (1991, p. 409).

The participant observation reveals citizenship in a performative sense as ‘rights claiming’, which involves a claim for the right to have rights by contesting and negotiating prejudice, including gender struggles (Isin, 2017, p. 506). The number of divorces among Syrian status holders in the Netherlands is remarkably high. “Syrian women are overjoyed with freedom in Western Europe. They can make their own choices for the first time (Saadi in Al Abdallah & Bijl, 2021). Immigrant woman are not passive victims, as they (re)claim their position. The struggle of performative citizenship includes people deemed not capable of fulfilling citizenship duties or embracing ‘core values’ of the nation-state. Though, many newcomers come to the Netherlands exactly for the sake of those values (Bregman, 2019). Democracy is often a leading reason to come to the Netherland. In this research, newcomers frequently indicate to contend dictatorship and additional violence. One newcomer for example explains “*there are no rules in Syria. Assad holds all the power as the power. There is a secular democracy but that is just symbolic, it is far from democratic.*” In response Anwar, another newcomer, talks about the situation in Afghanistan:

“There are no rules and there is a lot of panic. Poorer and older children are forced to go in the army, women are mistreated if they do anything wrong and have no rights at all. I come from Kabul, where it is slightly better, but in the provinces young girls are sold to marry. It’s awful and difficult. If you are there a lot of stress and pain, I don’t want to be there anymore.”

Equality and democracy are thus imperative and decisive values for newcomers in the Netherlands. Many research participants view the Netherlands as a democratic and progressive modern nation-state. This corresponds with the construction of Us, as a nation that embodies modern values of equality and non-discrimination. Wekker (2016) asserts that these arrangements volume an imaginary about a self-image that embraces innocence. This discursive construction is particularly interesting in consideration of the child welfare scandal, where thousands of families were wrongly accused of welfare fraud. Families suffered an “unparalleled wrong tax officials, politicians, judges, and civil servants leaving them powerless. Many of those affected were from an immigrant background” (BBC, 2022). The welfare scandal sheds a different light on whether people with a migration background are institutionally integrated. Issues and complaints of parents date back from 2004, as it led to enormous consequences for the duped families. Though, only recently the authorities acknowledged its missteps.

The welfare fraud was considered during a participant observation. The class discussed the governmental structures and democracy in the Netherlands compared to their country of origin:

“In America the government is quite complex, with a congress and house of parliament. The government in the Netherlands it’s clearer and self-evident” Another newcomer agrees: “Yes and the Dutch government is more transparent than in Egypt. Egypt is corrupt.” The teacher questions their statements “and that is not the case in the Netherlands?” [Both newcomers look confused] The teacher continues “well this is in the Netherlands as well. Do you know we had the child welfare fraud? The government allowed the tax authorities to do that and did nothing.”⁶¹

The discussion followed a review of theme authorities, an important theme of formal criteria of the KNM course. In line with the criteria, the KNM method used in the class discusses how newcomers can protest ill-treatment of the government e.g., issues with receiving child allowances’ (Van den Broek, 2018, p. 79). A related indicator of ill-treatment is the act to ‘oversee the consequences of submitting a complaint against the government (Civic Integration Act, 2022). This indicator raises questions; is there a reason to not file a complaint or should newcomers think twice when they file a complaint against government? This is intriguing considering the obstacles but also the injustice families encountered during the welfare scandal. As considered in the previous chapter, even if immigrants and descendants are formally integrated and display high levels of participation, they can still face othering processes (Ghorashi & Van Tilburg 2006). In this regard, this research questions whether integration reaches its goals of integrating *all* citizens in society while this process contains many mechanisms that contribute to placing citizens vis-à-vis society. These structures are then disadvantageous and run counterproductive to integration.

This research draws attention to the conversation in class and stated criteria to avoid similar recurrences. Governmental authorities should facilitate and empower newcomers to make rights claims in cases of aberration to maintain ambition of equal and transparent nation. Ironically, the crucial knowledge that follows ill-treatment of the government, considers discrimination. It is crucial to acknowledge that integration can be a “generations lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society” (Heckmann, 2006, p. 18). According to Bloemraad & Sheares (2017, p. 855) “allocating differential rights to citizens compared to noncitizens is a manifestation of normative judgements of deservingness.” ‘The Dutch core values’ are not only Dutch and are, like everywhere, not always upheld in reality. Besides, there is no guarantee that citizenship automatically provides the right to receive equal fundamental rights (Waal, 2019). In these instances, performative citizenship can play a vital role as claims-making approach. It draws attention to what actors (i.e., immigrants, state and teachers) articulate as the

⁶¹ Participant observation with Noor, KNM-teacher, Christopher, Yasir and other research participants, 08-06-2021.

content of citizenship, explicitly or implicitly and enables individuals to make rights claims (Bloemraad & Sheares, 2017; Isin, 2017). Dialogues and critical stance of teachers can add to this process by doing so, societal relevance occurs in KNM classes. It enables nuance and empowers newcomers to claim rights. Performativity can enable and a struggle of rights claimed towards institutions by means of minority recognition.

Moreover, performative citizenship signifies both a struggle of the rights claims but also brings into being the right to claim rights. Newcomer's stage creative and transformative resistances and articulate claims against domination and prejudice (e.g., oppression, repression, discrimination, inequality) and the injustices it precipitates (Isin, 2017). This is less on the content of these rights but rather on making rights claims. In this study, newcomers negotiate, contest and resist implicit ideas of teachers. Here, claims-making is about symbolic recognition and access and deservingness to opportunities and equal treatment. During class assignment learning method states 'In the Netherlands parents search for a partner for their children (Gathier, 2015, p. 180).

The teacher asks, "in the Netherlands this is not the case, but is this still the case in your countries?" Tariq "this is sometimes In Iran." "In Morocco you can choose yourself" says Farah. Rahwa, a young woman states "In Eritrea yes. The family chooses." Alicia responds, "do they marry a cousin then?" The class begins to murmur. Most participants firmly shake their head from left to right and seem surprised by the teacher's question. Rahwa reacts first by explaining "No, no! That is not the case in Eritrea, there must be minimal five steps between family relations to marry someone. Tariq replies "no not with a direct cousin, the one thing that is allowed to marry the children of your cousin."'⁶²

Prejudices and normative constructions in class are problematic, insofar that it can produce hierarchies between native-born and immigrant citizens. Karimi (2021) argues racist prejudices can affect your self-esteem, even more so when personally orientated, especially if once base is strong. This is often the case for newcomers, still finding their way in Dutch society. Moreover, it can have significant effect on feelings of belonging. A sense of belonging is defined as the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment such that individuals feel that they are an integral part of the system or environment in which they are situated (Scholten et al., 2019, p. 50). Belonging further relates to the degree to which an individual feels safe in the environment in which he or she is embedded (Weinstock, 2017, p. 270-271). Participants disclose to feel at home and safe in a more literal sense (outside of war and conflict) but consider themselves not always safe from bigotry or racism. Besides, participant consider themselves as part of Dutch society when it comes to socioeconomic spheres such as work or living but generally tend to place themselves outside society on a sociocultural level. The limited proximity towards society is articulated by Rahwa, she explains

⁶² Participant observation with Alicia, KNM-teacher, Tariq, Farah, Rahwa, and other research participants, 11-06-2021.

that even though she learns Dutch norms and values she never actually sees Dutch customs or celebrates Dutch holidays or goes to Dutch birthday party, as she has very limited contact with Dutch people. She does not understand Dutch well or Dutch people speak to fast.⁶³ Ager and Strang (2001) emphasize the importance of social connections for newcomers. Social connections allow newcomers to feel at home and experience a sense of belonging to Dutch communities. Though, besides core values the acquisition of customs is challenging too mostly due to language proficiency and exposure of new norms, which are even more challenging in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Newcomers' (mental) health has a large influence on their degree of resilience. Newcomers' characteristics and (mental) health influence their capacity to recover (rapidly) from difficulties and obstacles in the host state (Ghorashi, 2016 in Scholten et al., 2019, p. 43). The discursive processes within the KNM course can hinder emotional citizenship. Simultaneously, newcomers move across and between positions and break down (imagined) boundaries in their struggles over recognition, rights, and equal citizenship.

6.5 Concluding thoughts

Citizenship from a performative perspective draws attention in which ways actors articulate the content of citizenship, both as a form of domination or empowerment – separately or simultaneously (Isin, 2017). Performative citizenship pertains the struggle, claiming and contesting of rights and practices. Citizenship practices are complex and entangled. To set up a linear and structured argument within this chapter was therefore difficult as it does not fit with reality of citizenship practices. This chapter considered the meaning that citizenship has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds circumstances affect their lives as citizens" (Hall & Williamson, 1999, p. 2). Newcomers are required to prove their integration and investment in society by performing certain duties and tasks (van Houdt et al., 2011). A focus on a 'machinery of performance' in terms of participation and cultural adaption and an unbalanced level of expectation towards newcomers can have immediate and lived effects for those who encounter them (Blankvoort et al., 2021, p. 2). Newcomers have to meet a much stricter standard of participation or morality than 'native' Dutch people.

In this study, there is a huge variety in the ways newcomers enact citizenship and move through and across demarcated and new practices of citizenship. Participants actively use the information of the KNM course with the goal to become full-fledged citizens in the Dutch society. But are also occupied with contesting prejudice, claiming recognition and (literally) perform citizenship. The narrative knowledge illustrates the ways in which they creatively and transform the meaning and function of citizenship in the integration exam. The transformative acts to fit in ideal model of a 'good' citizen – literally becomes a performance.

⁶³ Unstructured interview with Rahwa, 15-06-2021.

Teaching and conveying 'core values' do not succeed at bringing into being the very effect that they proclaim namely, to establish social cohesion. Individualizing conceptions of integration can work counterproductive as it puts barriers to participation and inclusion of newcomers (Waal, 2021b). The goal to diminish cultural differences and to promote 'ideal' image of the nation-state is not desirable creates feelings of non-belonging. Instead, a dialogue should be facilitated where differences is maintained and not eliminated (Burbules & Rice, 1991). A dialogue – communicative act not aimed towards 'the truth', but with the purpose of creating partial understandings (if not agreements) across cultural differences "within a larger social compact of toleration and respect" (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005, p. 11).

Chapter 7 Conclusion & recommendations

In the last few decades, civic integration requirements have been increasingly implemented in the Netherlands, which reflect new and especially hardened debates on migrant integration. The integration programmes aim to assist newcomers in acquiring societal knowledge, language proficiency and skills necessary for successful labour participation. Individual responsibility, self-sufficiency and active contribution are highly valued in the neoliberal philosophy that underlies civic integration. The government has withdrawn itself from, considering decentralisation and limited governmental support, but also increased its presence in the integration process (Joppke, 2007). In order to receive residency permit, one must successfully pass all the integration tests. Often, however, this is not enough. Lengthy procedures and symbolic access to obtain ‘full’ citizenship hinder citizenship acquisition. Nowadays “one must demonstrate cultural membership or moral blamelessness to access resources, rather than receive public assistance as a formal right extended to anyone in the national community” (Bloemraad et al., 2019, p. 72).

This research uncovered the ways Dutch state, teachers and newcomers shape, perform and negotiate citizenship within the civic integration course Knowledge of the Dutch society (KNM). In light of the recent trends, it determined how criteria are communicated and enacted throughout the course, but it also analysed narrative experiences to create a deeper understanding of citizenship practices unfold. By engaging in a dialogue with multiple actors enabled this study to develop a relational framework, wherein actors occupied multiple spaces. Due to its complexity and multifaceted nature, citizenship can both function as domination and empowerment (Isin, 2017), yet also break through structure/agency relationships. Hereby, this thesis introduced citizenship from a performative perspective. This draws attention to the ways actors interact and articulate the content of citizenship where performance can act in accordance, shape and enact concepts like citizenship and integration in new ways “beyond already given subject positions and institutional networks” (Hildebrandt & Peters, 2019, p. 5).

Through the KNM course, newcomers are expected to gain a better understanding of 'core values' and learn practical information. The course covers multiple facets of society with an emphasis on work, politics and law, followed by norms and values. Research participants regard work, as well as authorities, living and healthcare, as the most informative themes necessary to build a life in the Netherlands. Newcomers are expected to be familiar with regulations, necessary arrangements and requirements, customs and so forth. These formal criteria are outlined in the Civic Integration Act (2022), encompassing of around two hundred successful indicators, are leading for the content of the KNM exam. Materials and classes are developed accordingly. Besides crucial information, participants consider criteria as detailed, abstract and complex, specifically concerning history, politics and law. Besides, norms, values and customs are considered useful yet challenging due to a limited proximity towards society which is even more challenging in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data revealed newcomers' processes or potential barriers they may encounter receive minimal

attention. It is unrealistic to expect newcomers to comprehend the Dutch system, speak the language and to become integrated into society the moment they arrive. Here, one can identify a tension between the concept of integration and integration policies. Integration is a process rather than an end situation; however, the integration exam is just a ‘snapshot’. When newcomers pass the course, are they considered integrated?

High and culturally focused expectations are not only formally enacted but are also grounded in discursive and implicit criteria. The examination of implicit criteria unveiled discursive practices in the course that shape an imagined ‘Dutch citizen’. ‘Being Dutch’ for instance includes someone that eats stamppot at 6 o’clock, is direct or values the orderly appearance of their garden. These presentations may at first sight be regarded as harmless and trivial pieces of everyday discourse, though “they may become less innocent when they are repeatedly brought to the fore, establishing a vast cultural norm” (Spotti & Van Rooij, 2020, p. 401). The texts also enact a more substantive and cultural consideration of citizenship in which cultural tropes such as gender equality, freedom, individualism, secularism, which are amplified as emblems of ‘Dutchness’. Though “thereby mummifying the Dutch self-image and immunising it from anti-racist criticism” (Cankaya & Mepschen, 2019, p. 636). Modern values, besides self-sufficiency and active contribution, are highly valued and interwoven in the criteria aiming to represent a cohesive and bounded whole. These ideal-normative constructions constitute a performative power to ‘maintain a status quo’ (Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014) in which the nation-state demarcates its imagined homogenous community, and simultaneously amplifies its external boundedness. The reiterative construction of Us, has automatically created the Other – the ones that do not (yet) belong.

The Other is often explicitly framed along race, class and gendered lines reflected in the learning objectives and teaching materials. Repeatedly, the texts and teachers stress ‘others’ as inherently different with antithetical values i.e., having a Muslim identity, tendency towards violence and in need of civilization. By enhancing ideas around, Us and Them and the expectations and obligations that are built on them, cause the integration of newcomers rather resemble ‘internal exclusion’, that is, newcomers to be living in, but not belonging to the nation (Ghorashi, 2003). The Other must make the proper adjustments to preserve the social cohesion, prove their investment by performing duties and tasks and by actively contributing to society. However, high expectations and exclusionary constructions deny the fluidity and diversity and sharpen the distances in society. By not including newcomers or citizens with a migration background in the conceptions of society, the integration discourse “essentially creates and produce the difference they claim to combat” (Haile, 2020, p. 62). Implicit criteria which underly an exclusionary practice raises question who and when is someone identified as a full-fledged member. The integration policies are ‘contractualised’, namely they demand newcomers to complete their individual integration processes by satisfying formalized requirements in return for the citizenship rights delivered by the state and residency (De Waal, 2021b). This contains a performative element as newcomers need ‘to prove their right to exist’. Yet, even if

(they) display willingness and participation they can still face othering processes, which encompasses asymmetric expectations and questions of deservingness. Though, keeping in mind that newcomers become permanent citizens after five years, their presence should be enough and equal to other citizens (born) in the Netherlands.

Nonetheless, lived experiences of newcomers in the course blur through demarcated lines of the imagined 'other'. Amid the information the KNM course newcomers use to navigate in society, they contest prejudice, claim rights and recognition, and literally perform citizenship. As participants face barriers, they find creative ways to negotiate and perform citizenship to (re)articulate the content of citizenship. There is a huge variety in the ways newcomers shape citizenship; participants are eager to actively engage in society, they embrace norms and values and find themselves in a cultural transition. Though, norms and expectations are not always attainable or considered rightful. Newcomers negotiated ideal-normative and homogenous constructions of Us, prejudices, and expectations. Hereby, the classroom became a performative site of meaning-making process. This thesis revealed that performative acts can, besides rigid power constructions, can destabilize and reinvigorate those acts by 'speaking back' to the integration norms. The position of the teachers was herein particularly interesting as 'broker', moving back and forth between spaces. They were simultaneously critical and voice of the integration course, thereby facing enormous challenges. Teachers attended newcomers of potential obstacles, questioned expectations but are at times prejudiced themselves. Yet teachers and newcomers came together in intersubjective space, in which they established a consensus of expected answers. Ideas and constructions came together which offered a space for intercultural dialogue about criteria and expectations "creating a degree of understanding across (unresolved) differences" (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 409).

In 2015, the actual display of desired behaviour was replaced by knowledge of the desired behaviour (Halewijn & Pit, 2014). Nevertheless, the test questions are constructed in 'third person' and the has therefore highly identifying traits. This pertains a powerful example of how elements of assimilation predominate the integration exam. However, the statements not always attainable or agreeable for newcomers. Though result counts to receive citizenship status. In this intersubjective yet unequal space, newcomers literally perform citizenship as an act of imitation – they choose the desired answer even though it is not in line with their beliefs. Knowing national values and believing in them are two different things. The vignette regarding euthanasia perfectly represents the struggle and performativity in an intersubjective space. "The state can mandate knowledge and the professing of loyalty, but not morality or belief" (Goodman 2014, p. 33). Newcomers creatively transformed the meaning of citizenship and simultaneously question the function of the exam. A valuable process in which they become part of the integration process. The objectives may result in the transference of norms and values but not, in fact, the adaption. In this line of thought, the exam tests perhaps more the ability to reproduce 'normative' and 'ideal' behaviour while newcomers do not unquestionably adopt it. Then what is the added value of the KNM exam?

The narrow and steering test questions are contradictory to the imaginary of the Netherlands with encompass a consensus on equality, freedom and tolerance. The expectations of the course can produce a backlash; they represent the demands of society rather than being based on experiences and negotiations of newcomers. Identifying elements and exclusionary arrangements have the inherit danger of undermining equal citizenship and fundamentals of democracy. This thesis calls for the need for a dialogue, one that does not eliminate differences, but creates a space for toleration and respect, to create social cohesion and avoid exclusions. A dialogue with the goal to establish common meanings or at least understand each other's positions (Burbules & Rice, 1991). It is crucial to acknowledge that nothing will fundamentally change if 'we', as society, do not engage in a debate about integration and citizenship. An open and intercultural dialogue, in which nuance, understanding and agency are vital, may change the integration landscape.

Recommendations

The learning objectives are currently reviewed by Cito BV, an organisation which develops test and exams. The organisation oversees the process to formulate new exam questions. Based on the KNM objectives, new exam questions are developed. This thesis does not aim to diminish the importance of the course, as it contains vital information for newcomers. It does however present several recommendations as it observes the need for a critical examination towards effective and pragmatic criteria.

Throughout the course and criteria, it should be emphasized that integration is a process; language and knowledge cannot be immediately obtained but take time. It is therefore unrealistic to assume high levels of self-sufficiency. The course should consider the possible barriers that newcomers face during their integration in society. It's fine to ask for help and this should be encouraged and facilitated. There should be more opportunities for newcomers to discuss practical situations in class. Moreover, the information of authorities or healthcare is provided, but how one should go about misses. It is crucial to proactively inform newcomers to participate and access resources and rights. Besides the names or sites, it is important to provide additional information to do e.g., tax return. Digital accessibility is hereby important as well. Integration will benefit from offering important information in English. Additionally, this thesis calls for the need to distil necessary information. The themes that consider history and politics and law have proven to be quite detailed. It is questionable whether information about Thorbecke, the Eighty Years' War uprising against Spain, responsibilities of the municipality or King's commissioner are necessary for newcomers at this stage of their integration. This information is perhaps sufficient to discuss but not to be tested. Besides, the learning objectives outline necessary information, but specifics are only partly mentioned. Teaching materials and teachers therefore formulate their own indicators, often questioning if the information is even necessary. A more definite and explicit objectives are thus necessary.

Further recommendations regard a critical review of the (re)production of exclusionary notions and binary of Us and Them. A critical reflection on cultural, racialised and normative constructions embedded in the course, would add to the quality of the KNM exam. It is necessary to avoid normative and ideal constructions on the one hand and prejudice or orientalist notions on the other.

This thesis addresses the need for the deliberation of sensitive historical events of the Netherlands. The construction of Dutch history within the KNM course regularly silences the colonial past. By doing so, the objectives and methods add to the imaginary of an image of the Dutch nation-state that embraces innocence and is a 'just' nation. The first two crucial acts provide the room to add, the first outlines the history of the Netherlands such as the Golden Age / wealth, colonialism (Civic Integration Act, 2022, 5.1). Given the extend of slave trade and current recursions (e.g., the welfare fraud or discrimination against immigrants), this should be explicitly mentioned in the Civic Integration Act. Slavery is just as much part of Dutch colonialism and the Golden Age as its wealth

gained from it. The second act considers sensitive relationships for the Netherlands, which regards the Second World War. Is the Dutch slave trade or the excessive violence in Indonesia not just as sensitive for the Netherlands? Of course, this violence was inflicted, yet acknowledgement by discussing Dutch imperialism adds to a more realistic and transparent understanding. Besides, the acknowledgement in the historical canon can be a step towards the consideration of neo-colonial recursions in daily life to fight (institutional) racism and unequal citizenship.

Moreover, dominant images of migrant man as aggressor and migrant woman as passive victims should be avoided. An exclusive focus on culture can have “enormous implications both for policymaking and for the space allowed for cultural diversity within the country” (Ghorashi 2010, p. 11). New objectives and learning materials can question and destabilize exclusionary constructions, as implicit and subtle messages within the KNM course can (together) have a substantive effect. A focus on violence, ‘modern’ or ‘unmodern’ and dichotomizing of non-native Dutch citizens as cultural others. These constructions contain mechanisms that contribute to placing citizens vis-à-vis society. Criteria that could be adjusted is e.g., [one] is aware that certain dressing behaviour should not be interpreted as unchaste or inviting.’ (Civic Integration Act, 2022). This assumes a possible tendency towards violence. Such criteria may pertain prejudice, as it is questionable if the reaction of newcomers would be inherently different from e.g., male or ‘Dutch’ citizens. Besides, types of victims blaming, which mainly occurs in Gathier (2015) regarding discrimination and in relation to directness in the criteria and practice exams and Van den Broek (2018) should be subtracted from materials.

In addition, a discussion of customs or common values and norms is acceptable, even wishful for newcomers. However, generalizations are not. Small adjustments such as the word *most* or *often* can avoid unnecessary generalizations. Besides, newcomers are expected to be aware that the relationship between man and woman is equal, also in the home environment (Civic Integration Act, 2022). Act). It unlikely that relationships in the Netherlands are always equal. These criteria imply that all Dutch citizens would act alike and share the same norms and values. Though there is no standard for the perspective or actions of the ‘integrated Dutch person’. Stating it as a goal, but not as a fact would add to a more realistic and nuanced perspective of the Netherlands.

Besides, normative and contradictory constructions can be diminished when diversity is incorporated. It is the differences that define each of us as unique individuals such as culture, ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, experiences, opinions and beliefs (Vertovec, 2012, p. 296). The texts present the Netherlands as equal and emancipated and explicit attention is given to teach newcomers these ‘core values’. Though high positions (doctors/bosses) are generally reserved for white males. There are no examples of homosexual or transgender people in the practice exams and the texts overall fail to represent a multicultural society, due to the homogenised version of Us. Diversity should and can be embedded on multiple levels in the KNM course which present more non-white, non-cisgenders, and non-heterosexuals. This can be incorporated in texts, photos, and names. The criteria should encourage an image of society of equity

and tolerance and one where positions are obtainable for everyone regardless of gender or background. These subtle messages maintain differences. But representation is crucial for emancipation.

Besides, this thesis advises the KNM exam to avoid a ‘third person’ perspective with highly identifying traits when it comes to ‘core values’. This tests if newcomers are aware of desirable behaviour but does not in fact help them to shape citizenship. This can further hinder feelings of belonging if the statements are not attainable for newcomers. It is crucial to ask whether KNM exam is the best method to test or educate ‘core values’, as they are fluid and diverse. Perhaps a more factual approach e.g., in which cases euthanasia is allowed would be more suitable or exam questions with an open-ended structure. In the current structure, the exam choices are limited, at times steering, which dismisses nuance and diversity. Though an open-ended structure would probably result in revision difficulties for DUO. This thesis therefore argues that norms and values discussed in KNM classes or in line with conversations for the participation statement. Hereby, the goal would be to facilitate a dialogue without an obligatory part attached to it. This to avoid identifying or assimilationist elements or performative acts. Moreover, buddy programmes could also add to the consideration and teaching of criteria. Especially norms and values could be obtained from a local level, which could be more graspable and accessible than on a national level or from textbooks. Hereby, the goal would not be agreement but respect, understanding and tolerance to bridge differences and find commonalities. It is unrealistic and unwishful to assume that everyone thinks alike. On a broader societal level ‘we’ need to ask ourselves what ‘we’ want to represent as ‘Dutch society’ and ‘core values’. What knowledge, acts, norms or values constitutes being Dutch and can this even be stated?

Overall, the new attainments should incorporate an up-to-date image of Dutch society, avoiding binaries and stereotypes and creating useful and essential information for newcomers to navigate in society. “If a state promotes its values as inclusive and equally accessible to all citizens, this can help create the conditions under which all citizens can be(come) committed to nurturing a shared society and can recognise each other as equally belonging to it” (De Waal, 2021b, p. 148). To ensure that the criteria fit with the everyday realities of newcomers focus groups could add to the decision-making process for the new learning objectives, if they reflect lived experiences of newcomers obtained within an open and equal space. Stimulating and facilitating objectives can in all probability enable feelings of belonging and citizenship.

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Appendix A

Theme	Learning objective	Crucial Act
1. Work & income	Newcomer can take the steps to find and preserve work and to provide for oneself	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Finding (new) work fast and efficiently 1.2. Being an active member of a work organisation 1.3. Handling/dealing with (hidden/concealed/invisible) discrimination in the labour market 1.4. Prepare to start an own business
2. Interactions, values & norms	Newcomer can familiarize oneself with Dutch customs, norms and values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Interpreting and using different codes of conduct/customs in the Netherlands 2.2. Dealing with unusual or conflicting customs/habits, norms and values 2.3. Participating in social networks 2.4. Establishing and maintaining everyday social contacts
3. Living	Newcomer is able to find suitable housing and to arrange utilities. He/she is responsible for the safety in his/her home, takes care of the environment and contributes to a clean-living environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Arrange adequate/proper housing 3.2. Arranging and handling utilities and communication methods in (one's) own home 3.3. Manage/deal with/handle customs related to the maintenance and decoration of the living environment
4. Health & health care	Newcomer can use healthcare according to the rules of the Dutch healthcare system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1. Making conscious choices regarding one's own health and lifestyle 4.2. Using Primary health care (GP) 4.3. Using secondary health care 4.4. Make use of pharmacy 4.5. Using a dentist 4.6. Acting in medical emergencies 4.7. Using specialized care for pregnancy, childbirth and (the) young child 4.8. Arranging and using health insurance policy 4.9. Using and/or arranging care for elderly, chronically ill and disabled persons
5. History & geography	By knowing the history and geography of the Netherlands, newcomer can engage in the Netherlands and Dutch society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Delve into the history of the Netherlands 5.2. Dealing with sensitive relationships and events (for/of) the Netherlands 5.3. Using geographic knowledge of the Netherlands in daily life 5.4. Is aware of views/notions/ ideas that are accepted in the Netherlands (since the 1970s)
6. Authorities	Newcomer is aware of the services provided by the local government, tax authorities, the police and institutions for social and legal services. If necessary, he/she can request information or help from the legal aid office and/or social work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1. Using the services of the municipality (meant) for citizens 6.2. Dealing with tax returns, refunds and applying for benefits (healthcare, childcare, and housing benefit) 6.3. Dealing with services and instructions from the police 6.4. Use legal aid (social counsel) and social services 6.5. Act(ing) responsible with insurances
7. Politics & law	By knowing the states' structure, newcomer is capable to engage in the Netherlands and the Dutch society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1. Implement the Dutch constitution in day-to-day activities 7.2. Delve into the responsibilities of the Dutch levels of governance 7.3. Dealing with the separation between church (religion) and the state 7.4. Applies laws and regulations
8. Education & upbringing	Newcomer is familiar with the Dutch educational system and recognizes the importance of education in the Dutch knowledge economy. Newcomers allow their children to participate in education and are aware of the role that is expected of parents in the Netherlands	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8.1. Uses the Dutch education system for themselves or their (own) children 8.2. Is responsible for the behaviour of its (own) minor children 8.3. Uses childcare/day-care and kindergarten 8.4. Dealing with school costs and allowances for school cost and student finance

Thema	Leerdoel	Cruciale Handling (CH)
1. Werk & inkomen	De inburgeraar is in staat stappen te zetten om werk te zoeken, te behouden en in eigen onderhoud te voorzien	1.1 snel en efficiënt (nieuw) werk zoeken 1.2 actief deel uit maken van een arbeidsorganisatie 1.3 omgaan met (verborgen) discriminatie op de arbeidsmarkt 1.4 voorbereidingen treffen om een eigen bedrijf te starten
2. Omgangsvormen, waarden & normen	De inburgeraar is in staat om om te gaan met de Nederlandse omgangsvormen, waarden en normen	2.1 duiden en hanteren van verschillende omgangsvormen in Nederland 2.2 omgaan met ongewone of botsende gewoonten, waarden en normen 2.3 deelnemen aan sociale netwerken 2.4 aangaan en onderhouden van alledaagse sociale contacten
3. Wonen	De inburgeraar is in staat passende huisvesting te vinden en nutsvoorzieningen te regelen. Hij draagt zorg voor de veiligheid in de woning. En draagt zorg voor milieu en schone leefomgeving	3.1 passende huisvesting regelen 3.2 regelen van en omgaan met nutsvoorzieningen en communicatiemiddelen in de eigen woning 3.3 omgaan met gebruiken met betrekking tot de aankleding en onderhoud van de woonomgeving
4. Gezondheid & gezondheidszorg	Inburgeraars zijn in staat om volgens de regels van het Nederlandse zorgstelsel gebruik te maken van de gezondheidszorg	4.1 bewuste keuzes doen ten aanzien van de eigen gezondheid en levensstijl 4.2 gebruik maken van eerstelijnsgezondheidszorg (huisarts) 4.3 gebruik maken van tweedelijns gezondheidszorg 4.4 gebruik maken van de apotheek 4.5 gebruik maken van de tandarts 4.6 handelen bij medische spoedgevallen 4.7 gebruik maken van gespecialiseerde zorg rondom zwangerschap, bevalling en het jonge kind 4.8 een zorgverzekering afsluiten en gebruiken 4.9 gebruik maken van en/of regelen van zorg voor ouderen, chronisch zieken en gehandicapten
5. Geschiedenis & geografie	De inburgeraar is in staat om, door de geschiedenis en geografie van Nederland te kennen, betrokken te zijn bij Nederland en de Nederlandse samenleving.	5.1 zich verdiepen in de geschiedenis van Nederland 5.2 omgaan met voor Nederland gevoelige relaties en gebeurtenissen 5.3 geografische kennis van Nederland gebruiken in het dagelijkse leven 5.4 kent de denkbeelden die in Nederland geaccepteerd zijn (sinds de jaren '70)
6. Instanties	De inburgeraar is op de hoogte van de dienstverlening van de lokale overheid, de belastingdienst, de politie en instanties voor sociale en juridische dienstverlening. Wanneer nodig is hij/zij in staat om informatie of hulp te vragen bij Juridische Hulpverlening en/of maatschappelijk werk.	6.1 gebruik maken van de dienstverlening van de gemeente aan de burger 6.2 omgaan met belastingaangifte, -teruggave en aanvragen van toeslagen (zorg-, kinderopvang-, woontoeslag) 6.3 omgaan met dienstverlening en aanwijzingen van de politie 6.4 gebruik maken van juridische hulp (sociale raadslieden) en sociale dienstverlening 6.5 verantwoord omgaan met verzekeringen
7. Regering & wetten	De inburgeraar is in staat om, door de staatsinrichting van Nederland te kennen, betrokken te zijn bij Nederland en de Nederlandse samenleving.	7.1 in het dagelijks handelen invulling geven aan de Nederlandse grondwet 7.2 zich verdiepen in de verantwoordelijkheden van de Nederlandse bestuurslagen 7.3 omgaan met de scheiding tussen kerk (religie) en staat 7.4 hanteert wet- en regelgeving
8. Opvoeding & onderwijs	De inburgeraar kent het Nederlandse onderwijssysteem en onderkent het belang van onderwijs in de Nederlandse kenniseconomie. Inburgeraars laten hun kinderen aan onderwijs deelnemen en kennen de rol die van ouders wordt verwacht.	8.1 maakt gebruik van het Nederlandse onderwijssysteem voor zichzelf of de eigen kinderen 8.2 draagt verantwoordelijkheid voor het gedrag van de eigen minderjarige kinderen 8.3 maakt gebruik van kinderopvang en speelzaal 8.4 omgaan met schoolkosten en tegemoetkomingen in schoolkosten en studiefinanciering

Appendix B

Van den Broek (2018) Taal Compleet		Gathier (2015) Welkom in Nederland	
1. The Netherlands	1.1 Map of the Netherlands 1.2 De Randstad 1.3 Netherlands as water land 1.4 Willem of Orange 1.5 The Golden Age 1.6 Dutch colonies 1.7 The start of the democracy 1.8 The Second World War 1.9 From 1945 till now	1. Getting to know the Netherlands	1.1 Introduction 1.2 The country 1.3 The seasons 1.4 The people
2. Dutch customs	2.1 Customs 2.2 Holidays 2.3 <i>Het Wilhelmus</i> 2.4 Family days 2.5 Leisure 2.6 Freedom	2. The people in the Netherlands	2.1 Introduction 2.2 Holidays 2.3 Important family days 2.4 Contacts
3. Living	3.1 Finding a house 3.2 Energy, water and internet 3.3 Safety in house 3.4 Insurances 3.5 Waste	3. Health & Healthcare	3.1 Introduction 3.2 GP 3.3 Medicines 3.4 If the GP cannot help 3.5 Emergency care 3.6 Healthcare 3.7 Staying healthy 3.8 Leisure
4. Health	4.1 Staying healthy 4.2 GP and pharmacy 4.3 To the hospital 4.4 Dentist, physiotherapist and psychologist 4.5 Having a child 4.6 Elderly care 4.7 Health insurance	4. Living	4.1 Introduction 4.2 Buying a house 4.3 Renting a house 4.4 Other things to think about 4.5 What else you must pay for
5. Upbringing & education	5.1 Upbringing 5.2 Day care 5.3 Education in the Netherlands 5.4 To school 5.5 Secondary education	5. Authorities	5.1 Introduction 5.2 Police 5.3 Tax authority 5.4 Payment 5.5 Residence permit and naturalisation 5.6 Help with issues
6. Work	6.1 Finding a job 6.2 Applying 6.3 Contract 6.4 At work 6.5 More than work 6.6 Own company 6.7 Benefits	6. Upbringing & education	6.1 Introduction 6.2 Taking care of your children 6.3 Education
7. Authorities	7.1 The municipality 7.2 The police 7.3 Tax authority 7.4 Social assistance	7. Work	7.1 Introduction 7.2 What I want and what I can 7.3 Who can help 7.4 Applying 7.5 Starting an own company 7.6 Rights and duties when you have a job 7.7 Collaboration with others
8. Politics & Law	8.1 Democracy 8.2 Government 8.3 Laws and duties 8.4 Freedom and respect	8. Living together	8.1 Introduction 8.2 Relations and sexuality 8.3 Interact with each other
		9. History	9.1 Introduction 9.2 The time before 1800 9.3 The time after 1800
		10. Politics	10.1 Introduction 10.2 Government of the Netherlands

			10.3 Elections 10.4 The rules
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Van den Broek (2018) Taal Compleet		Gathier (2015) Welkom in Nederland	
1. Nederland	1.1 De kaart van Nederland 1.2 De Randstad 1.3 Nederland waterland 1.4 Willem van Oranje 1.5 De Gouden Eeuw 1.6 Nederlandse koloniën 1.7 Het begin van de democratie 1.8 De Tweede Wereldoorlog van 1945 tot nu 1.9	1. Nederland leren kennen	1.1 Introductie 1.2 Het land 1.3 De seizoenen 1.4 De mensen
2. Nederlandse gewoonten	2.1 Gewoonten 2.2 Feestdagen 2.3 Het Wilhelmus 2.4 Familiedagen 2.5 Vrije tijd 2.6 Vrijheid	2. De mensen in Nederland	2.1 Introductie 2.2 Feestdagen 2.3 Belangrijke familiedagen 2.4 Contacten
3. Wonen	3.1 Een huis vinden 3.2 Energie, water en internet 3.3 Veiligheid in huis 3.4 Verzekeringen 3.5 Afval	3. Gezondheid & gezondheidszorg	3.1 Introductie 3.2 De huisarts 3.3 Medicijnen 3.4 Als de huisarts niet kan helpen 3.5 Snel hulp nodig 3.6 Zorgverzekering 3.7 Gezond blijven 3.8 Vrije tijd
4. Gezondheid	4.1 Gezond blijven 4.2 De huisarts en de apotheek 4.3 Naar het ziekenhuis 4.4 De tandarts, fysiotherapeut en psycholoog 4.5 Een kind krijgen 4.6 Zorg voor ouderen 4.7 De zorgverzekering	4. Wonen in Nederland	4.1 Introductie 4.2 Een huis kopen 4.3 Een huis huren 4.4 Waar je ook aan moet denken 4.5 Waar je nog meer voor moet betalen
5. Opvoeding & onderwijs	5.1 Opvoeden 5.2 Kinderopvang 5.3 Onderwijs in Nederland 5.4 Naar school 5.5 Vervolgonderwijs	5. Dienstverlening in Nederland	5.1 Introductie 5.2 Politie 5.3 Belastingdienst 5.4 Betalen 5.5 Verblijfsvergunning en naturalisatie 5.6 Hulp bij problemen
6. Werk	6.1 Werk zoeken 6.2 Solliciteren 6.3 Het contract 6.4 Op het werk 6.5 Meer dan werken 6.6 Een eigen bedrijf 6.7 Uitkeringen	6. Opvoeding & onderwijs in Nederland	6.1 Introductie 6.2 Zorgen voor je kinderen 6.3 Onderwijs
7. Instanties	7.1 De gemeente 7.2 De politie 7.3 De belastingdienst 7.4 Hulpverlening	7. Werken in Nederland	7.1 Introductie 7.2 Wat wil ik en wat kan ik 7.3 Wie kunnen je helpen 7.4 Solliciteren 7.5 Een eigen bedrijf beginnen 7.6 Rechten en plichten als je werk hebt 7.7 Samenwerken met anderen
8. Regering & wet	8.1 Democratie 8.2 Het bestuur 8.3 Wetten en taken 8.4 Vrijheid en respect	8. Samenleven in Nederland	8.1 Introductie 8.2 Relaties en seksualiteit 8.3 Omgaan met elkaar
		9. De geschiedenis van Nederland	9.1 Introductie 9.2 De tijd voor 1800 9.3 De tijd na 1800

		10. Politiek in Nederland	10.1 Introductie 10.2 Het bestuur van Nederland 10.3 Verkiezingen 10.1 De regels
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