



Immigrant Integration as Broken Promise
A Thesis on Social Imaginaries and Performativity

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Acknowledgment

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Abstract

The concept and practice of immigrant integration – in its current form – were introduced in many European countries to deal with post-immigration societal dynamics. The Netherlands – following the alleged failure of multicultural policies – was one of the first EU countries to introduce an integration policy. The social and political dynamics of early 2000's invigorated the debate on the existence of parallel societies or clash of civilizations across Europe. Complex socio-cultural and socio-economic societal dynamics of immigrant communities came to be understood in terms of integration and were reduced to narrow qualifications, dividing individuals or/and groups into 'well integrated' and 'not well integrated'. To support this description, the 'society' in which immigrants were expected to integrate themselves, came to be imagined as a bounded and unproblematized whole. Simultaneously, immigrant integration – since its inception – has consistently been presented as a failure or failing and the reason of its failure is attributed to immigrants unwillingness or inability to integrate. To explore this, the thesis hypothesizes that immigrant integration through reproduction and institutionalization of difference, contradicts its presumed outcomes of achieving an integrated whole. Using critical frame analysis, it explores the extent to, and the manner in which, society was framed as a bounded whole with its immigrant others as residing at its margins – in Dutch parliamentary debates. By conceptualizing immigrant integration discourse as a social practice, it brings the analysis into dialogue with Judith Butler's performativity theory. Through semi-structured interview data with persons subjected to integration policies, it identified these subject's performativity through reproduction, resistance and transformation of social imaginaries of integration. By so doing, it concludes that immigrant integration discourse and practice creates a mirage of mobility towards the inevitable destination of joining 'society', which provides a glimpse of hope for newcomers, but a sense of broken promise to oldcomers, after realizing its dissociation from their own reality.

“ [...] the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient, but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured” *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1970, p. 4)

I. CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction

Immigrant integration policies were presented as a solution to the alleged failure of the multicultural societies in postⁱ-immigration Europe. Several countries introduced laws and policies that include, among other things, tests that evaluate immigrants' knowledge of language and culture of the host country. This in turn was used to evaluate the immigrants' degree of integration in the host society and, thus, their deservingness to some form of citizenship in the receiving country (Kostakopoulou, 2010; van Oers, 2013). In other words, "the idea of migrants as different from citizens and the perceived need for nation states to manage this difference is institutionalized" (Dahinden, 2016, pp. 2219). The Netherlands is one of the first few European countries to introduce immigrant integration policies (Bruquetas Callejo et.al, 2007). Nevertheless, since its inception in the late 90's, immigrant integration has been constantly denoted as a failure and its policies have been subjected to several revisions. This perceived failure – which takes central place in Dutch integration policy debates – is often "attributed to immigrant's unwillingness to adapt to their new situation" (Belabas, 2020, p. 33). Despite the notion's overwhelming presence in policy and academic research, however, the aim of integration had never been clearly defined. The consequences of the inherent discursive space that results from the open-endedness of the notion merit continuous research. Furthermore, the basic assumptions from which it departs are yet to be fully brought to light and challenged. Why is immigrant integration consistently presumed as a failure or failing? What does immigrant integration mean and to what end does it function? What discursive meaning and social imaginaries are reverberated in policy documents and the immigrants' subjective understanding and experience with the concept of integration and its practice?

Inspired by critical literature on immigrant integration policies and practices, this thesis makes an attempt to explore the following assumptionsⁱⁱ. First – the concept of immigrant integration flows from an imagination of a host society that is unproblematized and an integrated whole prior to its contact with the immigrant other (Schinkel, 2011; Horst, Erdal, & Jdid, 2019). Secondly – this assumption shapes the perceived position of the immigrant as an outsider – inside the host society. Finally – by highlighting differences among the host society and the immigrant 'other' – this thesis argues that – the concept of integration contradicts its

presumed outcomes and objective of achieving an *'integrated whole'*. The thesis utilizes previous critical research that conceives of immigrant integration policies as a “states bordering process” that symbolically re/produce “social and cultural lines of inclusion and difference”(Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, & Cassidy, 2019, p. 4). In a similar way, Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos (2013, p. 110) argue the immigrant policies deepen the “distinction between individuals of particular background and the host society” – while claiming to enable immigrants participation. Integration is measured in terms of individual’s degree of success in coming closer to the circle ‘we’ of the dominant ‘society’. In times of failure, however, the individual’s association to collective socio-cultural and religious attributes – that are presumed to be counterproductive to the objectives of integration – are scrutinized. As a result, “subjects participating in the economy or other spheres can yet be said to remain ‘outside society’ – as discourse on integration illustrates”(Schinkel, 2008, p. 16).

To explore these assumptions – the thesis analyzes two sets of data; Dutch parliamentary debates and deliberations from early 2000s up until 2017 – and semi-structured interviews with Eritrean ‘new’ and ‘old’ arrivals residing in the Netherlands. It considers the parliamentary debates as boundary re/making practice informed by assumptions of an imagined host society as ‘unproblematized – integrated whole prior to its contact with the immigrant other’(Schinkel, 2017). On the other hand, the subjects of these policies – and their embodied encounter with the practice and discourse of integration – are hypothesized as capable of reproducing, transforming and resisting the status quo. It is an inquiry inspired by research works that treat immigrant integration as a construction of “an idealized subject against whom the to-be integrated subject can be compared”(Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 115).

1.1. Research objective and research question

There are two main objectives in this thesis project. First – identify and map the underlying assumptions and social imaginaries of integration in Dutch parliamentary debates that inform immigrant integration policy and practices. Secondly – to explore how those imaginaries impact the way in which immigrants who are subjected to it perceive themselves and their own position in society. By mirroring these two objectives, it aims to show how social imaginaries of migration and integration such as host/immigrant, insider/outsider, destination/origin are constitutively (re)produced. To achieve this aim, it explores the extent to which the policy debates around immigrant integration depart from a construct of an imagined host society as unproblematized whole prior to its contact with the immigrant other. It argues that immigrant

integration practice and discourses reiterate an imagination of an insider and outsider in society through integration performatives which are reproduced, transformed and resisted by persons subjected to these policies. Particular focus is placed on debates that shaped and influenced the multiple revisions of the policies. Immigrant integration policies have been critically analyzed and scrutinized from different perspectives such as; the multi-level governance of migration and integration (Scholten & Penninx, 2016), administering belonging in the Netherlands (Swinkels, 2019); and governing diversity (Bonjour, 2013) to mention but a few. Informed by the wide range of existing literature on critical research on immigrant integration, this inquiry relies on a selective sampling of policy debates that influenced major immigrant integration policy changes as empirical data for analysis. In addition, through semi-structured interviews with Eritrean new and old comers, it researches the subjective experience of the immigrants who are subjected to the integration discourse *directly* and/or *indirectly*.

The thesis aims to answer the following two main **research questions**:

1. To what extent do Dutch policy debates on immigrant integration re/produce a frame of a host society as unproblematized and integrated whole?
2. How can this frame be understood and observed through the subjective experience and perceived position of immigrants in the host society?

1.2. Societal relevance

In the last several decades, a considerable number of diaspora communities have established themselves outside their country of origin. In 2015, the Netherlands registered 11.7% of its population having a migration backgroundⁱⁱⁱ. Nonetheless, Bruquetas Callejo et.al, (2007) argue that the Netherlands has been reluctant to consider itself as an immigrant country and that this has shaped the various immigration and integration policies it pursued. On the other hand, when migration and immigrant integration is highly politicized (Schinkel, 2017), receiving countries find themselves under political and societal pressure to create and sustain social cohesion among their diverse communities. Various social and economic situations of immigrants such as women's headscarf, socio-economic participation of immigrants, double nationality/loyalty – to mention but a few – have become highly politicized source of public and policy debates (Korteweg, 2017). Often times, the normative and descriptive interpretation of immigrant integration is used as an indicator of the extent and severity of, and presumed solution to, immigration related 'social pathologies' in the 'host society'. To the contrary, several public research on immigrants shows that they – particularly the so-called second or

third-generation migrants – often feel unaccepted, constantly spoken to in terms of integration and feel not at home in the land they are born and grown up^{ivv}. In a recent documentary on Dutch television – Back to Akbar street^{vi} – one person with a Turkish background articulated what Willem Schinkel called the ‘genealogization of integration’ in which the discourse runs deep into future generations by using labels such as second or third generation migrants (Schinkel, 2017, p. 104). In his conversation with the documentary maker the person states (see Endnote)^{vii}:

“It is always said that you are Dutch. But why does it not feel that way? Then I always say: yes, Since I can remember, it is always said 'immigrant children' [allochtone] and 'native children' [autochtone] in the classroom. If I had perhaps heard 'Dutch Turks', maybe it would have given a different feeling. [...] We will never be seen as a Dutchman. That is a fact in my eyes.

The documentary maker: “That is intense, that you say that.”

“Yes. How does it feel when you are in a country, you were born here, you only hear integration. You are viewed as if you are wrong because you have a beard. Emotionally, I'm talking about, Felix. It is not that they say hey! But the feeling, that feeling. Why is that feeling continuous? [...] I talk, believe me, for a lot of people. To what extent should we continue with integration? I speak the language, I pay taxes. I am working, I am an entrepreneur. How far should we go? What is the endpoint to say, yes I am integrated in its entirety? Celebrate Christmas? I did [that] too. When does it stop? When does the word integration stop?”^{viii}

From the above encounter, it is not hard to conclude that this so-called second or third generation migrant believes that he ticked all the “integration indicator” boxes. Nonetheless he perceives his position as in outsider-inside in ‘society’. One of the participants in the semi-structured interviews in this thesis described the above scenario in what she called her biggest disillusion as follows: *“it feels like it's almost like you're promising someone something, if you do this and that, and then you will get this”^{OCe}*. She claims that the lack of acceptance from the Dutch society is an indication that the ‘Dutch society’ is not integrated into this diverse ‘new society’. In a scholarly work on ‘European Others’, Fatima El-Tayeb similarly claims that the so-called second and third generation migrants are excluded through a “seemingly very precise, racialized understanding of Europeanness” (El-Tayeb, 2011, p. Xii) though they are as European as those who worry about them. One of the reasons – the thesis

argues – is that immigrant integration discourse assumes ‘ a genealogy of cultural differences that cuts deep into generations. By so doing, it re/produces symbolic borders among the ‘imagined societies’^{ix}.

By identifying such assumptions that inform integration policy and by exploring subject performativity, this inquiry intends to demonstrate that immigrant integration discourse not only insufficiently encompasses complex social issues, but also works counterproductive by imagining immigrants as being outside the imagination of ‘Dutch society’. Moreover, it argues that integration – by drawing on symbolic differences – re/produces and institutionalizes difference. Consequently, it plays a significant role in highlighting and re/making virtual boundaries among imagined societies.

1.3. Scientific relevance

In the second half of the last century, following the assimilationist discourse of 1960’s & 70’s and the alleged weakness of multicultural policies that followed (Kostakopoulou, 2010), debates around immigrant integration in *Western*^x countries became central in policy and media discourses. According to Kymlicka (2010), the rhetoric, around the multicultural societal model as a failed experiment, was reliant on an incomplete understanding and representation of these multicultural policies. He argues that the policies were based on a universalist understanding of human rights and ethno-cultural inclusion, including the question of indigenous groups within those countries. He states that;

“Many of these groups have their own histories of ethnic and racial prejudice, of anti-Semitism, of caste and gender exclusion, of religious triumphalism and of political authoritarianism, all of which are delegitimized by the norms of liberal-democratic multiculturalism and minority rights”(Kymlicka, 2010, p. 103)

In other words, the policies were not unrestrained and unconditional towards minority groups. This partial reading in addition to simplifying the understanding of multiculturalism, also allowed for, and redirected the attention to, a perceived incompatibility of immigrant cultures and practices with that of the host society. Accordingly, assimilationist sentiments disguised as integration policies seemed to return back to the stage, particularly in Western Europe. Since their inception in the late 90’s, immigrant integration policies became subject to political scrutiny and public debates that resulted in repeated policy revisions. Nevertheless, despite its overwhelming presence in policy and public discourses as a failure, the need for integration

and the underlying assumptions were cemented rather than questioned. The thesis explores some of the diverse critical literature regarding the Dutch immigrant integration policies, with a particular focus on legal/policy and sociological aspects of the concept of integration.

From a legal view point, questions are raised with regard to the effectiveness of the current complex integration policy and its accompanying sanctions and calls were made for a simpler and more stimulating policy (Groenendijk, 2019)^{xi}. On legal-philosophical ground, immigrant integration is criticized for being instrumentalized as a selective gatekeeper for access to the road for citizenship by pointing out conditional belonging it perpetuates in the process. While this line of critique generally refrains from questioning the legitimacy of the state to introduce integration policies, it proposes an institutional fire wall to create a clear distinction between integration and the road map to citizenship in the Dutch context (de Waal, 2020). In the field of political science, Bonjour (2013) investigated various Dutch parliamentary debates across political party lines on whether, or the degree to which, the state should intervene in governing diversity. She highlighted the influence of political ideologies and philosophies on the outcome of integration laws and policies that handed power to the state to administer the socio-cultural dimension of immigrant populations and their integration.

In recent years, sociological critics of the concept of ‘integration’ and ‘society’ are becoming a prominent voices in the debate on immigrant integration discourse. According to Schinkel (2018), integration is an old concept that has its roots in 19th century colonial settlements and 20th century post-colonial resettlements of people from former colonies to the Netherlands. He argues the post-colonial settlers “were met with the setting up of an increasingly elaborate system of monitoring and record keeping that reproduces their otherness [...]” (Schinkel, 2018, p. 12). He claims that current social sciences of immigrant integration and Dutch social scientists in particular depart from previous works of integration that is not free from a colonial past.

Furthermore, Schinkel (2019) argues that “integration itself is but one outgrowth of a more general fetish with a position called ‘modernity’, an imagined project of ‘us’, the civilized, secular, liberal, liberated who have the courtesy to take up the burden of bringing ‘them’ up to speed, of including ‘them’ in what is inevitable anyway” (pp. 1). In other words, it is part of a historical exercise that renders certain social attributes universal in order to make ‘society’ and its imagined boundaries plausible. He further questions the uncritical application of concepts such as ‘integration’ and ‘society’ in social science studies of migration and

integration. Other scholars counter Schinkel's approach by claiming it is 'throwing the baby with the bath water' (Lea, 2019) or criticized his 'deconstruction effort without providing solutions' (Penninx, 2019). However, Schinkel and his critics agree on one major element – the vagueness and problematic conceptions of integration and society in integration policy and academic research. Leila Hadj (2019) argues that "integration in itself is not a political program. Conversely, it is and always has been an extremely vague concept. It is exactly its looseness, and the extensibility of the concept 'integration', that renders it (politically) successful"(p. 3). Agreeing on the problematic conception of integration – she claims that integration could better be conceptualized as a "governing technique rendering ethno-cultural differences purposeful for certain ends"(p. 1). At a policy level, there have been debates on whether a centralized or decentralized coordination of the civic integration practice – for example language learning responsibilities – is the best practice to the alleged failure of immigrant integration (Bruquetas Callejo et.al, 2007).

On the other hand, immigrant integration policy and practices are scrutinized for reproducing the decades old narrative of civilizing certain sectors of the imagined society as it was prevalent during what was famously known as the 'social question' (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018, p. 885). From a sociological perspective, critics argue that integration should not be used as an analytical tool of research and rather should be "an object of research" (Schinkel, 2018) by itself. Other scholars, while recognizing the 'problematic conceptualization of integration'(Penninx, 2019) and 'the reflexivity required in using the concept in generating academic and non-academic knowledge'(Lea, 2019), claim that integration still can be used as a tool to understand post-immigration societal phenomenon.

In line with the arguments in this thesis – theories of boundary formation can support the premise that integration policies work counter-productive to their presumed objective of enabling participation by deepening difference between immigrants and host societies (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 110). Inspired by growing criticism of integration – particularly the view on integration as a form of boundary formation – this thesis intends to add an empirical element to the discussion on the alleged imagination of an integrated and unproblematized self and the problematized other. By selectively choosing and analyzing Dutch parliamentary debates on immigrant integration since early 2000s up to 2017, it explores the extent to which boundaries of host and immigrant society are discursively re/produced. Through semi-structured interviews – it explores the

subjective position of the subjects of integration policies through their performativity of, and attitudes towards, immigrant integration policies and practices. By so doing, it investigates immigrant integration as a mutually constitutive production and institutionalization of difference. This – the thesis argues – seals a theoretical blind spot in which research on integration as a concept and policy is focused on rendering immigrants as observable objects while keeping them invisible mutually constitutive subjects.

II. CHAPTER TWO – Analytical Grounding and Theoretical Lens

2.1. Analytical Grounding – Social imaginaries of immigrant integration

This thesis cannot fully escape the reproduction of ‘society’ as a relevant and empirical notion within the social sciences of immigrant integration. Nonetheless, it subscribes to the claim that the function of ‘society’ – in this field – has deeper roots into sociological imaginations of selective boundedness that still inform social science studies (Schinkel, 2017). Here, the basis to this approach is Charles Taylor’s definition of social imaginaries “not as a set of ideas; rather it is what enables, through making sense of, the practice of society” (Taylor 2004, p. 91). Therefore, it explores the extent to which society as a bounded entity is central in immigrant integration and enables the practice of differences between ‘society’ – self – and the immigrant – ‘other’. Throughout this thesis, the term *social imaginaries of integration* will be used to refer to the imagined ‘host society’ and imagined ‘immigrant other’ – unless it is specified differently. It argues that various social statistic indicators are used in re/producing differences by observationally mapping individuals and groups in terms of their position, distance and time deviation from ‘society’. Prior to this process, however, ‘society’ must be objectified either as a unified entity that pleads for care and protection or as a unit made up of separate parts that requires an intervention in order to generate the presumed outcome of ‘wholeness’. This type of imagination – according to Schinkel (2017) – is termed as organicism in which the human body takes a central place. He argues that ‘society’ delimits its boundaries and selects its members, while simultaneously re/producing an imagination of outsiders and insiders in its borders. In other words, it perpetuates the existence of some form imagination of shared values and set of characters of the insiders that separates them from the outsiders. The imagination of ‘society’ as a bounded whole is identifiable in “the ways in which immigrants’ integration and the society in which it is sought to occur are imagined” (Schinkel, 2017, p. 38). Immigrant integration, in this case, makes society plausible by taking the coordinating role in the interaction between a(n) individual part(s) and the social whole with an intentions of producing a better *unity*. This thesis argues that immigrant integration is the knot that ties these social imaginaries and therewith produces differences as (pre-)existing realities.

When discussing immigrant integration, two interrelated terminologies will be interchangeably used – unless specified. First, integration (*inburgering*) as the legal contract between the Dutch state and migrants under the Dutch Integration Law (Wet-Inburgering)^{xii};

and civic integration (*integratie*) – a metaphorical notion of migrant integration that often informs policy and public debates. While the first terminology has somewhat clearer and contractual boundaries through rights, duties and sanctions, the second draws its existence and longevity from its abstraction, undelimited and undefined boundaries. Entzinger and Biezeveld (2003) claim that “integration refers to a characteristics of a social system” (p.6) in which the concept of ‘society’ is one example. They argue that the more integrated a society is the more its constituent parts are intensely or closely relate to each other. Regardless of the distinction between the two terminologies in immigrant integration, both depart from an assumption of a pre-existing difference and call upon the need for intervention to narrow those differences. The articulation of this difference, however, is not free from a disproportionate power relationship between the designator and the designated. In this process, it is hard to escape the categories of ‘self’ – which is equivalent to ‘society’ – and the ‘other’ – which is the immigrant in need of integration. In this context, society maintains a particular unproblematized character by problematizing what it excludes (Schinkel, 2017). In the Dutch integration discourse, the social imaginaries of a host society in relation to the immigrant can be observed in the so-called ‘participation statement’ (*participatieverklaring*)^{xiii} – an obligation in the Dutch integration law that was introduced in 2017. The statement became part of the Dutch integration requirements and must be signed by the individual who is obliged to follow the integration trajectory. It contains similar imaginations and cultural tropes to the ones that can be observed in ‘civic integration courses on knowledge of the Dutch society and culture’ (de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012). In other words, they clearly state what the attributes of the Dutch society are and what you need to performatively include yourself to the bounded space of ‘society’ (see section 4.1.6).

Regardless of the constant changes of policy and practice of integration, immigrants are held accountable for not ‘fitting in’ in a ‘society’ that they are part of. As Nadia Bouras – a Dutch-Moroccan historian – recently put it “you always have to prove that you really belong. That is an unfair battle, because the rules are constantly changing”^{xiv}. This statement, furthermore, highlights that the intervention through integration is directed at migrant groups only – with the presumption of pulling them inside from the margins. In so doing, it simultaneously establishes another group/individuals for whom integration is not an issues – through what Schinkel called the “dispensation of integration” (Schinkel, 2017). The dispensation of integration attributed to the host society and its citizens makes them applicable to be used as benchmarks upon which immigrants’ position and performativity is scaled. One

cross-sectional study compared “national identification” of ‘Dutch natives’ and migrants with Moroccan and Turkish background (De Vroome, Verkuyten, & Martinovic, 2014) in order to measure the latter’s sense of belonging to the national identity. The results of the study showed that socio-economic and socio-cultural position has a direct relationship with *both* ‘natives’ and migrants’ sense of national belonging. The results debunk the claim that “immigrants have divided loyalties and a lack of attachment to the host society and therefore undermine a cohesive national identity”(p.23). Regardless of the effort to challenge the framing of lack of loyalty of migrants to host national identity – however – the study could not escape from reproducing the categories of migrants and natives as ontologically and epistemologically separate entities of society. In other words – and presumably to the disappointment of Dahinden’s plea for de-migranticization of research on migration and integration’(Dahinden, 2016) – the relatively uncontested position that integration policies are a necessity – relies on the “centrality of the nation state, the focus on control and the location of deviant behavior outside ‘society’”(Feldman, 2005). This is conceivable only when we accept the ‘taken-for-granted’ historical and political conception of ‘society’ – referring to national society – as a bounded whole that bestows the courtesy on outsiders to join through some form of integration initiation. Immigrant integration, to borrow Feldman’s expression, deploys “the idea that cultures are discrete and originate from distinct territorial spaces and generates opposing subjectivities whose unregulated co-existence in the same state constitutes a national security threat” (Feldman, 2005, p. 220).

2.2. Theoretical lens – Postcoloniality

The two overarching theoretical lens that will appear implicitly or explicitly throughout this thesis are postcolonial and structuration theory. Here, postcoloniality will be understood both as a condition that shapes cultural, social and economic relationships of both the *colonized* and the *colonizer* that is still present in immigrant integration discourse. It is also understood as a metaphysical and ethical approach to address issues such as identity, race, ethnicity and gender, the challenges of developing post-colonial national identities (McEwan, 2018). In other words, it is a theoretical lens used to interrogates the processes of knowledge production with regard to ‘the self’ – host society – and, by problematizing ‘the other’ – as in need of integration initiation to join the former.

The thesis identifies parliamentary deliberations and debates on immigrant integration as sites of production where differences are re/produced in the processes of framing problems and

outlining solutions for immigrant integration. Postcoloniality, in this context, will then be used as a multidimensional critique of geographical and social imaginations that boxes the world into core and peripheries – ascribed with civilization and modernity or lack of it respectively. The multidimensionality of the postcolonial theoretical lens helps this thesis to bring an assemblage of social, cultural and geographical imaginations and their critiques into dialogue. King – as cited in (Hubbard, 2006) – argues that former imperial cities in the northern hemisphere can be understood as postcolonial in the sense that they are now home to diverse diasporic communities whose image remain shaped by the ideologies and imaginations of the empire (Hubbard, 2018, pp. 96). The insertion of immigrant integration to the scene – in Europe and elsewhere – speaks to the uneven relationship of power and knowledge shaped through a long history of interaction. In the Dutch context, integration policies and indicators are shaped to render the position of migrants and their descendants in the ‘Dutch society’ observable – through a performance that articulates ‘the self’ by defining the ‘Other’ (W. Schinkel, 2013; Swinkels, 2019).

Integration translate this observational form into a binary existence of a host society and an immigrant other by describing what the latter needs to do to join the former. In this encounter, an imagination of difference of time and distance between the two entities emerge that corresponds to concepts such as; civilization, culture and/or modernity. In Mignolo (2012, p. 10) expression, culture became a word between ‘nature’ and ‘civilization’ by classifying the planet into sign systems (language, food, dress, religion) and ethnicity (skin color, geographical location). The abstraction of the of the host society universalizes certain socio-cultural attributes, therefore leaves the ‘other’ to be visible only in relation to it – the host society. This, scholars argue, is part of a broader imaginations and constructs of Europe and its ‘Others’ as mutually constitutive. It is a way of thinking – in Santos’ expression – “an abyssal thinking that draws a radical line that divides social reality into two realm, the realm of ‘this side of the line’ and the realm of ‘the other side of the line’” (Santos, 2007, p. 1). The two realms, however, cannot exist independent of each other. In Edward Said’s ‘*Orientalism*’ (1979) the notion that the Orient and the Occident as “inert fact of nature” (p. 4) is challenged. He rather claims that they are better understood as geographical and cultural entities that constitute and reflect on each other. This thesis argues that exploring concepts such as modernity, culture, secularism and sexuality – which are implicitly or explicitly present in the discourse and practice of immigrant integration – through a postcolonial prism adds another dimension to the ongoing debates of integration.

2.3. Analytical grounding – Performativity of immigrant integration

Schinkel (2019) examines the unquestioned concepts in immigrant integration such as ‘society’ and ‘integration’ from which social imaginaries of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ re/emerge. Using Charles Tylor’s (2004) understanding of social imaginaries – as reified abstractions through making sense of societal practices – this thesis sets the groundwork for the interpretation of immigrant integration as a social practice. It follows a line of argumentation that immigrant integration is a form of practice of society that defines and demarcates social imaginaries by “rendering a certain object observable” (Schinkel, 2017). However, Schinkel’s critics of social sciences of integration as a concept and policy fell short in recognizing immigrants – as subject necessary for the conception of integration and society as such. He identified historical patterns in which ‘the others’ of society are rendered in order to keep them observable and make their mobility visible. Nonetheless – without the performativity of its subjects – Schinkel’s conception of society as a bounded whole is borderless and its binoculars useless. This thesis explores the subjects of integration as mutually constituting the concepts of society and integration by introducing Judith Butler’s performativity theory as an opposite in a dialogical process. This approach helps it to conceptualize immigrants’ integration process as performativity in the discourse of integration programs and practices. This dialogical view helps to understand the extent to which the social imaginaries of integration are performed, negotiated, resisted or/and transformed. In other words, it is an attempt to show the mutual constitution of production of subjects of immigrant integration through its discourse and practice and performativity of immigrants. This boundary producing practice requires measurements that transform the invisible into observable and measurable entity using different indicators. The measurements and the performative practice attached to them are discussed – in chapter four and five of this thesis

This dialogical understanding ‘society’ and its immigrants ‘others’ becomes more relevant when the different versions of immigrant integration used in the Netherlands are viewed as *framing approaches* rather than as neutral policy models (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2012). Framing approaches create an opportunity to ask questions that are often taken-for-granted or diffused into spaces of abstraction. It provides a different entry point when one asks questions such as; how is immigrant integration problematized? What does it mean and what matrix of power and knowledge are involved? Who are the objects/subjects of integration and how are they understood? Are they considered as potential citizens or potential threat?

(Feldman, 2005). This thesis adopts the premise that the different framing approaches – often used to analyze problems assembled under immigrant integration – play a key role in re/producing social imaginaries of integration. It attempts to show the mutually constative nature of immigrant integration and immigrants’ performativity in re/producing social imaginaries of integration. To do so, it draws on Willem Schinkel’s “imagined societies” (Schinkel, 2017) in immigrant integration and Judith Butler’s “performativity” (Butler, 2009) which provides the analytical grounding of the discussion and analysis of the empirical data.

2.4. Theoretical lens – Structuration theory

On the other hand, it refrains itself from claiming that immigrants are deprived of agency and are unknowing subjects in the integration practice and discourse. Using Anthony Giddens structuration approach, it explores the relationship between migrants as knowledgeable human agents and integration programs as social structures (Nelson, 2010). It recognizes the multi-faceted experiences of people who are, in one way or the other, exposed to the discourse and practice of immigrant integration. It treats immigrants as selves – through their engagement with their socio-cultural environment – “reinforce and sometimes change the ideas, practice, and institutions of these environments” (Rose & Shinobu, 2010, p. 420). In this research, the practice of immigrant integration – which in the Netherlands has a duration of only 30 years in its current form – is viewed as “social practice ordered across time and space” (Giddens, 1984). To borrow Giddens’ term, it is the migrants’ ‘knowledgeability’ and their involvement in the discourse of immigrant integration that will be central to this relationship. The thesis takes the liberty to argue that immigrant integration – regardless of its short life span as a social practice – has become a reflexive form of knowledge for migrants who are subjected to it. It is this reflexive knowledge – in Giddens expression – which is “deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices” (p. 3) that safeguards its reiterative continuity. Structuration theoretical lens, therefore, helps this thesis to incorporate social reproduction – resulted from migrants integration performativity – and social transformation – a change that arises from the interaction between subjects and the integration practice and discourse (Inglis, 2018). It helps the thesis to recognize social structures – immigrant integration policy and practice – as “both medium and outcome of social practices by knowledgeable persons”(Nelson, 2010, p. 334).

The thesis – using a bricolage of methodological, analytical and theoretical approach – attempts to explain the complexity of the embodied encounter between immigrant integration as a social practice and the immigrants’ experiences as performativity. It attempts to bring into

dialogue two analytical groundings based on Schinkel's Imagined Societies and Judith Butler's Performativity. The postcolonial and structuration theoretical lenses add a different dimension to the discussion of post-immigration societal dynamics often simplified as integration or lack of it of immigrants in the host society.

III. CHAPTER THREE – Methods and Methodology

3.1. Method of data collection – Archival on Dutch Parliamentary documents

The methodology and method of data collection used in this thesis employs two distinct datasets for empirical investigation. In an attempt to answer the two main research questions, Dutch parliamentary deliberations and debates on immigrant integration and semi-structured interviews Eritrean new and old comers in the Netherlands are analyzed. The different nature of these data sets required different approaches to, and processes of, collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. To answer the first research question i.e. – *to what extent do Dutch policy debates on immigrant integration re/produce a frame of a host society as unproblematized and integrated whole?* – documents of integration policy debates in Dutch first and second chamber of parliament were systematically searched. The search engine for the Dutch government’s official announcement of policies^{xv} was used to collect the data. To narrow the search, two timelines were zoomed in on; deliberation related to immigrant integration before 2007 and after 2007 – two prominent periods of substantial policy shifts. The legislative process of such shifts passes through stages, starting from its initiation as a policy agenda – often presented by a minister responsible for immigrant integration – to its final output as a policy or law. Roughly, the steps are as follows; draft bill → the council of state for legal advice and questions → deliberations and debates in the second chamber of parliament (all members or members of small committee) → deliberations by the members of the first chamber of parliament → adoption and entry into force of the law (see figure 1). In this thesis, these four steps will be referred as sites – sites of production immigrant integration imaginaries. The legislative process follows a back and forth process between different parties in an attempt to come to a consensus – which can take months and sometimes years. The thesis treats the data generated in this process not as a parliamentary archival records rather “as cultural artifacts of fact production” (Stoler, 2002, p. 92) of social imaginaries in immigrant integration. The four sites of production are not equally important sources of data required to answer the research questions raised here. Therefore, the focus is placed on the first two sites – the initial policy draft where the justification of need is presented – and the long lasting parliamentary debates that eventually shape the outcome. It is here where the problem analysis, underlying facts and the presumed outcomes of such a policy are concisely argued and justified. The review by the Council of State is deemed a site of less importance, as this is where primarily the legality of the policy is scrutinized. The first chamber of parliaments tends to review proposed acts with more restraint than the second chamber.

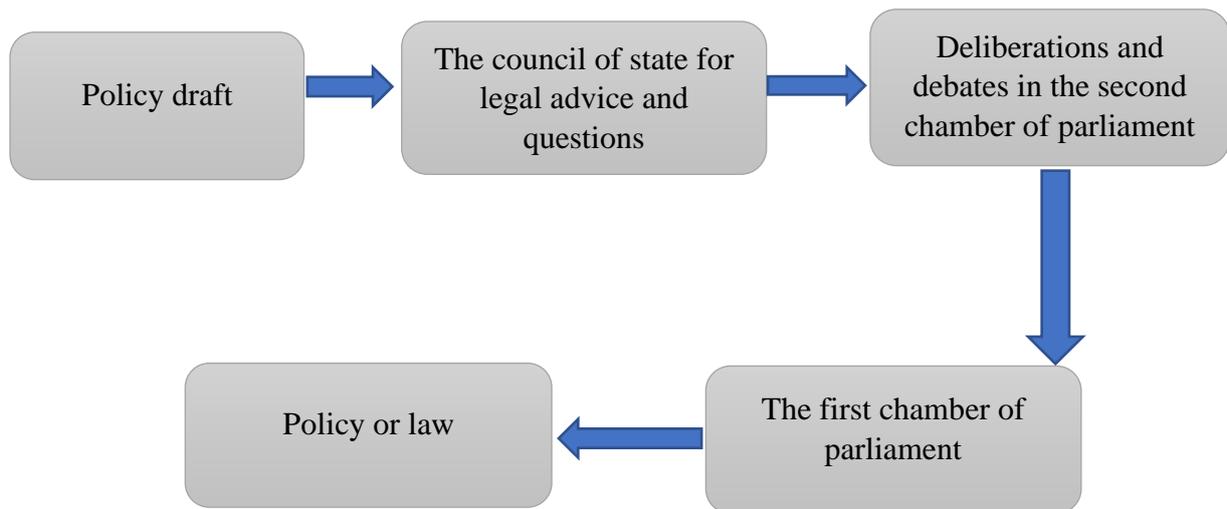


Figure 1. Legislator process where problems are framed in terms of immigrant integration, debated and the proposed interventions are transformed into policies and law.

3.1.1. Data collection – parliamentary documents before 2007

The early (rocky) years – within and outside the Netherlands – of this millennium have played a pivotal role in influencing the discussion around migration and immigrant integration policy and public discourse (Scholten, 2011). These new developments came in succession to the radical break from multiculturalist discourse and characterization of civic integration in state policy as citizenship in mid-1990’s (Van Houdt, 2014). Emboldened by the alleged weakness of multicultural policies (Kostakopoulou, 2010), debates around immigrant integration in many western countries – including in the Netherlands – took what some scholars referred as the ‘assimilationist turn’ (Scholten, 2011). Despite claims that “multiculturalism is equally transformative of the identities and practices of minority groups” (Kymlicka, 2010, p. 103), several countries sought for ways to demarcate their imagined society by canonizing certain norms and values. In the Netherlands, this shift came in 2006 in what scholars named as the ‘culturalization’ of citizenship – where an act of migrants joining the ‘Dutch society’ through citizenship’s ceremonial performance also requires them to embody the ‘norms’ and ‘values’ of the ‘Dutch culture’(Verkaaik, 2010). In other words “society is defined so as to automatically exclude certain categories of people” (Schrover & Schinkel, 2013, p. 1123). Using the above literature as a departure – this thesis sets a timeline between 2001 and 2007 to demarcate the data collection. From the vast data about immigrant integration, 54 parliamentary documents were scanned as a preliminary process of data selection. Key words such as – integration, Dutch society, Dutch culture, migrants – and specific Dutch terms such

as – *Inburgering*^{xvi}, *allochtoon/allochtonen*^{xvii}, *autochtoon/autochtonen*, *Wet Inburgering*^{xviii}, were used to narrow the selection. Out of the 54 scanned document, 10 documents – ranging from 2 paged response of a minister for questions from members of parliament to 91 paged report of general deliberation of the second chamber parliament – were analyzed in Atlas-Ti.

3.1.2. Data collection – parliamentary documents after 2007

In the last two decades, the Dutch integration policy has been changed a dozen times (Groenendijk, 2019), taking different characterization of problem analysis and new approaches for solutions. Scholten (2011, p. 69) summarizes the number of changes into four major policy frame shifts namely; the lack of immigrant integration policy until 1979 – followed by a minorities policy until the early 1990’s – followed by an integration policy the turn of the millennium – and finally the integration policy new style that still has components in the current policy. The final shift – after successfully demarcating and incorporating the boundaries of the ‘Dutch cultural identity’ into integration courses and policy of 2007 (Swinkels, 2019) – have seen multiple amendments in approach, tone and re/involvement of several parties to the process. The Civic Integration Act placed in 2007 – which still informs the current integration regime – “has been informed by neoliberal ideology, which deems market freedom to be the basis of a healthy socio-political order” (Suvarierol and Kirk, 2015). In the years that followed, the focus became on the mandatory nature of civic integration program with a strong emphasis on migrants’ own responsibility to navigate the market. Informed by the above mentioned acute change of approach, the parliamentary deliberation following the Civic Integration Act of 2007 were explored. The main objective of this inquiry is to identify and highlight the shift from an ‘imagined society’ to an ‘imagined citizen’ as a benchmark for immigrant integration’s observational measurements. This analysis not only lays bare and demonstrates how this shift occurred, it also shows that the underlying assumptions about insider/outsidiers did not shift but became cemented and further entrenched. The ‘imaginary society’ and ‘imaginary citizen’ are both presumed unproblematic and the imaginary citizen is envisioned as part of homogenous bounded whole. Informed by literature, key words such as – ‘your own responsibility’, ‘self-sufficiency’, ‘active citizenship’, ‘participation’, and Dutch terms such as ‘*inburgering*’, ‘*zelfredzaamheid*’ (roughly translated as self-sufficiency), ‘*participatieverklaring*’ (roughly translated as participation statement) – were used to narrow the search. Using the above key words, 31 parliamentary documents were scanned, out of which 13 were analyzed in Atlas-Ti.

3.2. Methodology – critical frame analysis

This thesis adopts critical frame analysis – as a methodological approach – to analyze the parliamentary documents in order to address the first research question. It draws on Verloo’s work in understanding the different conceptions of gender inequality as a problem and gender mainstreaming policies’ implementation problems as a strategic solution by various EU Member States (Verloo, 2005). She showed how different studies revealed the disparity in understanding and adaptation of gender mainstreaming strategy as the reason for the lack of a common understanding of the concept across EU Member States. Accordingly, the studies highlighted the need to involve discussions about its goals, how gender equality is framed, what the problem is, who is responsible for the problem, what are the causes and effects of the problem (Verloo, 2005). According to Verloo (2005), a frame is understood as “an interpretation scheme that structures the meaning of reality” and she defines policy frame as “an organizing principle that transforms fragmentary or incidental information into a structured and meaningful policy problem, in which a solution is implicitly or explicitly enclosed” (pp. 19-20). The adoption of a critical frame analysis – as a methodological approach in this thesis – is based on commonalities between ‘gender equality’ and ‘integration of migrants’ as both are understood as concepts and goals. They are both framed as problems and in both cases strategies are adopted to address these problems and to achieve the overarching goal. As a methodological approach, it provides a useful framework to interrogate (1) the diagnosis; what the problem is presumed to be, (2) the attribution of causality; what causes the problem, and (3) the prognosis; what is the solution – of issues related to immigrant integration. In Verloo’s work, critical frame analysis is applied to answer similar, if not the same, questions raised in this thesis. The starting point for this thesis is based on an assumption of immigrant integration as a dynamic and contested concept that takes various connotations and meanings at different temporal contexts. While Verloo looks at similarities, differences and shifting patterns in which gender inequality is understood across Europe. This thesis aims to understand the extent to which social imaginaries in the process of framing immigrant integration have shifted – both as a problem encompassing complex societal issues and as a goal of moving immigrants from the outside to the inside of society. Another common denominator is the assumption that “a policy proposal will always contain an implicit or explicit representation of diagnosis, connected to an implicit and explicit prognosis [...]” (Verloo, 2005, p. 22). However, the main emphasis of this thesis’s enquiry is placed on the diagnosis – the presumed problem that required a policy intervention – and the attribution of causality – what causes the problem.

There are two main reasons as to why this choice is made. First, the back and forth in parliamentary deliberation and debates on the policy draft before 2007 were to a large extent focused on justifying the need for such a policy. The systematic search showed that the deliberations and debates adopted analyses in which problems were attributed to pre-existing differences between the groups in need of integration and the host society. Different groups and their members were cast as in a peripheral position in the host society and integration was presented as a bridge with a potential to narrow the distance and pull them from the margins. Therefore, the diagnosis and the attribution of causality are the two main dimensions that appeared relevant to answer the first research question in this thesis. The second reason is because of the fact that immigrant integration, in general, is presented as prognosis – what is the solution for the problem. Hence, the prognosis will be discussed when it is explicitly present in the data. Adapting to Verloo’s critical frame analysis framework, the thesis took the liberty to put emphasis on dimensions appeared relevant to the research objective (see table 1.).

Strategy	Diagnosis	Attribution of causality	Prognosis
Immigrant integration	What is wrong?	Who/what is responsible for the problem	What should be done?

Table 1. Critical frame analysis as a methodological framework of analysis

Critical frame analysis – as a comparative methodological approach – is applied in Verloo’s work to conduct a comparative study between different gender equality policy strategies and their implementation across countries in the EU. Similar methodological approach was applied to analyze Dutch parliamentary debates in an inquiry to understand how ‘migrants with poor prospects’ of integration are constructed at the intersection of class, culture and gender (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2017). In this thesis, a comparison is made with regard to the shifting characterization of the problem analysis and proposed solution in the parliamentary deliberations before 2007 and after 2007. The year 2007 is marked as the benchmark of the data collection for two reasons. First, the Integration Act of 2007 – marked as Integration Policy New Style – was an outcome of turbulent years of tension and politicization of cultural differences (Scholten, 2011; Swinkels, 2019) between migrant groups and the Dutch society. It incorporates the ideologies of neoliberalism – with an emphasis on individual responsibility – and cultural assimilationism – highlighting the shared Dutch values and norms that migrants

are expected to adhere (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). Secondly, the systematic search of parliamentary deliberation and debates showed a substantial distinction of focus on cultural assimilationism in the years before 2007 and the focus on individual responsibility after 2007. The search of parliamentary deliberations and debates after 2007 shows that the emphasis shifted towards the purpose and presumed outcomes of integration policy and programs. Accordingly, the emphasis of analysis is placed on prognosis – what is the solution – and the presumed results of immigrant integration as an intervention of managing differences.

Immigrant integration is an observational exercise that makes a distinction not between “well integrated persons and not well integrated persons” (Schinkel, 2017, p. 103) rather between those for whom integration is meant to open the gate to come inside and the insiders for whom integration is not an issue. Swinkels (2019) argues that integration policy in the Netherlands is “closely related to a heated political debate about belonging in the Dutch nation [...] and is created as a means to deal with the position of migrants and their descendants in the Dutch society”(p.2-3). In other words, it is a form of highlighting the distinction between individuals and groups that are problematized and those that are not. Hence, different versions of integration policies and programs are presented as partial interventions to solve problems various nature related to migrant societies by placing them into measurable and observable problem frames. In this performative process of problem analysis by members of the parliament – sometimes supported by external research recommendations – boundaries of the host societies and the ‘immigrant other’ are demarcated and rearticulated.

3.3. Methods of data collection – Semi-structured interviews

While Schinkel’s critic on integration and the conception of society in relation to its immigrant other was a valuable framework in this thesis, it has limitations. It stops at rendering immigrants as objects rather than the necessary subjects integration and thus the conception of society as bounded whole. This thesis departs with an assumption to explore this limitation and complete the cycle by introducing immigrants performativity as an inevitable element. In order to address this topic, it constructed a second research question i.e. – to what extent can the frame(a host society as unproblematized and integrated whole) be understood and observed through the subjective experience and perceived position of immigrants in the host society. To answer this question, semi-structured interview data is collected. A total of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Eritreans living in the Netherlands. The first nine interviews were collected during the author’s research assistant position at the Radboud University, Faculty of

Social Sciences. As a member of a university work group, I was engaged in supporting young Eritrean status holders lived at the former student complex in Lent-Nijmegen. In the eighteen months of employment until August 31, 2019, I coordinated a project that facilitated integration-related support for the young newcomers while engaging with different institutions that were formally or informally responsible for their integration process. In that last months of the project, from June until September 2019, I conducted interviews under the supervision of prof. Toon van Meijl, head of the department of Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies (see Appendix C). Sampling of participants for the interviews was conducted from a relatively homogenous group of young men between the age of 19 to 24, who have been in the Netherlands less than five years. In comparison with the second set of interviews, this group was relatively new and active in the integration programs and has a fresh experience. Parallel to my employment and engagement with the target group, I finished a pre-master program in Human Geography where – early on – my intention arose to conduct a master thesis research in the area of integration. At the same time, I was engaged with my own obligatory integration trajectory. This embodied encounter with the institutions involved in the integration processes together and the constant negotiation of my positionality, have informed the topic of this master thesis and the assumptions and the research questions it raised.

The second set of interviews includes Eritreans who have lived in the Netherlands for a longer period of time or who are born and have grown up here. The main purpose of this addition is to diversify the data and to explore the shifting social imaginaries of immigrant integration through the experience of those who witnessed the different transitions of its conception. This latter addition was made during the months of May and June – during the time where (some) restrictions of movement were in place due to Covid-19. Reaching for participants was conducted through the author's networks across the country. The information letter was spread through various digital groupings and gathering. The author's experience of conducting interviews from previous employment showed that meetings in person help establish trust. Regardless of the opportunity to establish trust, six participants were willing to participate in the interview. All participants – except one – felt more comfortable to conduct the interview in English. This was because they could barely speak Tigrigna – the official Eritrean language – and the author did not feel equipped enough to conduct the interviews in Dutch. It is a particular dynamics where six immigrants – including the author – of different age and arrival in the Netherlands were unable to communicate in their 'mother tongue'. The combination of new and old comers in this thesis brings a different insight by adding spatial

and temporal component to the integration performativity. It highlights parallels, converging and diverging experiences of reproduction, tension and transformation in the interaction between immigrant integration practice and discourse and the diversity of its subjects.

3.4. Methodology – Performativity at an intersection of modernity and culture in immigrant integration

The decision to add Judith Butler’s understanding of performativity as analytical grounding in order to analyze the semi-structured interviews was made on the basis the first set of interviews. It builds on observations made during the author’s work experience with immigrants and their performativity in immigration integration practice. It is an attempt to explore the extent in which social imaginaries of immigrant integration are performed/reproduced (*subjectivity*), are transformed (*social change*) and/or are resisted/negotiated (*agency*). It is with caution that this thesis introduces Butler’s performativity approach to understand the relationship between immigrants – as subjects of the discourse of integration – and immigrant integration – as a hegemonic social practice. Here, the intention is not to portray immigrants as helpless subjects nor is it an attempt to see them as knowledgeable subjects. It is an analytical exercise to highlight the space in-between, that is the space between reproduction/transformation and resistance/negotiation. The space of betweenness, Nelson (2010, p. 349) argues, is “a space that captures the instability, partiality and situatedness of intersubjective relationships, self-reflexivity and knowledge production”. The manifestation of instability and inconsistency in the space of betweenness are as relevant in intra-subjective relationships as they are in intersubjective. In Nelsons expression, “how individual and collective subjects negotiate multiple and contradictory discourses, how they *do* identity, is an inherently unstable and partial process” (p. 348). In other words, it is an effort to explore the extent to which the social imaginaries of integration are internalized, contested, resisted and transformed through the experience of those who are subjected to the discourse of immigrant integration.

The injection of a structuration lens in this thesis is an element that helps prevent the interpretation of the experience of the subjects from falling into structure and agency binary. It draws from Butler’s subjectification process through performativity, a process “by which subjects are compelled through structures of meaning to participate in reproducing dominant discourses of identity [...]” (Nelson, 2010, p. 336). The thesis recognizes immigrant integration as a performative social practice that actively produces social imaginaries through repetitive interaction with its subjects. According to Gregson and Rose (2000) the suggestion that social

life resembles some sort of performance is one that has been elaborated on by many social theorists working within very different analytical traditions. Performance and performativity was associated with Judith Butler's work on gender performativity which this thesis will apply as a guiding tool in the exploration of the performativity of immigrants in the discourse of integration. In revisiting her previous work, Butler elaborated on her definition of performativity as follows;

“To say that gender is performative is to say that it is a certain kind of enactment; the “appearance” of gender is often mistaken as a sign of its internal or inherent truth; gender is prompted by obligatory norms to be one gender or the other (usually within a strictly binary frame), and the reproduction of gender is thus always a negotiation with power [...]” (Butler, 2009, p. 1).

She argues that “the theory of gender performativity presupposes that norms are acting on us before we have a chance to act at all, and that when we do act, we recapitulate the norms that act upon us [...]”(p. 11). The central argument of Butler's theory is transferred – to this thesis's research objective – as the view that a certain type of discourse, often accompanied with power, creates the position of the subjects that are exposed to it. Butler (2002) claims that the act that one does, the act that one performs is, in a sense, an act that's been going on before one arrived on the scene. According to her “the performativity of gender is thus bound up with the differential ways in which subjects become eligible for recognition. Although of course I accept that full recognition is never fully possible, I also accept that there are differential ways of allocating recognizability” (2009, p. 4) . The thesis argues that at the core of immigrant integration practice and discourse, similar arguments of performativity for recognition as a ‘deserving refugee through victimhood’ (Häkli & Kallio, 2020, p. 3); to meet “the state's sexual desire”(Hertoghs & Schinkel, 2018, p. 691) could be made. On a similar note, Graef (2019) argues that the “understanding of recognition as a political problem is rooted in historical changes from stable social hierarchies structured by honor for a few to the creation of pluralist, mobile societies built on the human dignity of *all* its members” (p. 3). While Butler takes heteronormativity as a mirror against which gender is performed, this thesis departs from the imagined society that is produced and reproduced in integration discourse to explore the performativity of immigrants.

In this chapter, the thesis discusses the rationale behind the methods of data collection, methodological and theoretical groundings used to answer two separate research questions that

emulate each other. The conceptual understanding in this thesis is drawn from this mirror image of immigrant integration discourse and practice – retrieved from Dutch parliamentary debates – and immigrant performativity – gathered from semi-structured interviews with Eritrean old and new comers. Using Schinkel’s critic on the sociological imaginations such as ‘society’ and the concept of ‘integration’ that inform immigrant discourse and practice as a basis it brings immigrants performativity as subjects of integration the inevitable puzzle that completes the mutual *constitutiveness* of social imaginaries of integration.

4. CHAPTER FOUR – Sites of production and reproduction of social imaginaries of integration

4.1. Sites of Production of social imaginaries of integration

4.1.1. Setting the stage

According to Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010, p. 705) “the 2007 Civic Integration Act established new civic integration courses that now contained aspects of identification and emotional feeling of belonging”. With this new style, immigrants’ effort to learn the Dutch language and participate in society was not enough and showing results became obligatory, followed by sanctions in case of non-completion. In examining social imaginaries of integration, there is a risk of freezing ‘the host society’ and ‘immigrants’ in a relationship in which the former is viewed as a destination where the latter is on a constant move to arrive. It is a logic of imagination that Boersma and Schinkel (2018, p. 308) termed as the ‘arrival narrative’ in postcolonial and diasporic studies – where immigrants and their descendants are scrutinized for whether or not they have really arrived. Immigrants integration – since its inception two decades ago in its current form – has taken the role of an observational form to discursively or/and non-discursively measure the narrative of arrival. The view of integration as a social practice – rather than a policy or program – helps this thesis to put an emphasis on representations and interpretations of realities of immigrant integration through discursive problem analysis in Dutch parliamentary debates. In this process, the boundaries of social imaginaries of integration – a society in need of articulation against an alien intrusion – becomes vividly present. This is particularly the case after the inclusion of the “culturalization of citizenship” (Verkaaik, 2010) in the new style integration law of 2007. In the preceding years towards the build-up of this controversial law, the primary focus of the parliamentary deliberations and debates was justifying the need to delimit Dutch norms, values and culture – thus ‘the Dutch society’. Verkaaik (2010, pp. 69-70) argues the combination of ceremonial citizenship processes of immigrants and the demarcation of the Dutch norms and values “was part of a larger effort to redefine Dutch national culture in terms of [*nativity*] and belonging”. It is an effort to generate a social imaginary of the Dutch society as a bounded entity with clearly demarcated cultural borders that immigrants should aspire to join. One member of parliament argued “Dutch society does not consist of a collection of separate cultures and

institutions, but it has a cultural identity itself^{xix}. In the analysis of the parliamentary documents, efforts of bordering the Dutch society were highlighted through discursive description of the ‘other’ as inherently lagging behind.

In the Netherlands – being one of the first European countries to introduce integration policies – the parliamentary debates in the first years of the 2000’s show an emphasis on, and the production of, differences between the host and immigrant societies. Particularly – in the aftermath of 9/11 and terrorist attacks in Western countries – the issue of immigration and integration was politicized in many European countries. It was done with the implication that “some migrants seem to have turned themselves against liberal democracy as the foundation principle of western countries”(van Meijl, 2019, p. 236). This was particularly observed in the Dutch case where openly anti-immigrant parties have joined parliament and parliamentary debates around the issue (van Heerden, de Lange, van der Brug, & Fennema, 2013, pp. 122-123). The parliamentary debates on integration shifted significantly from socio-economic participation of immigrants in the 90’s towards the need for cultural integration in the 2000’s (van Heerden et al., 2013, p. 128). The debates around this shift are identified in this thesis as processes that set the stage – and created the conditions – for the conception and introduction of the Dutch Integration Act of 2007. The parliamentary deliberations around immigration and integration reveal a reliance on characterizations of host and immigrant societies as inherently incompatible. Thus, calls for the need for government intervention to narrow the difference and to render immigrants into ‘tolerable’ citizens became immanent. Various scholarly contributions explored the extent to which external narratives – such as the infamous clash of civilization from Samuel Huntington – influenced the politicization of immigrant integration. After 2000’s – the terrorist attacks were interpreted as underscoring the incompatibility of cultures, particularly Islamic traditions were perceived as an inherent threat (Eskelinen & Verkuyten, 2018) to ‘Western’ culture and values. Thus, the need for some form of a ‘civilizing’ offensive was growing to address political and public opinions. Immigrant integration policies and practices involve “ways of knowing or getting to know who migrants are and how to recognize the problem” (Gray, 2006, p. 121). It aims to turn “foreigners into subjects who engage in a practice that makes them fit into dominant societies” (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 115). Van Heerden et al., (2013) attempted to examine the extent to which anti-immigration parties contributed to the politicization of immigration and integration issues in the Netherlands. They demonstrated a general increase of interest from political parties on immigration and integration, with a shift from socio-economic participation to

cultural assimilation. The parliamentary debates were reinvigorated by the addition of Paul Scheffer's peice – *'the multicultural drama'* – to the scene in which he “noted a segregation of an ethnic underclass of mainly Muslims who in his view were not only unable but also unwilling to integrate”(van Meijl, 2019, p. 238). To delve into sites of production in the debates the thesis applies two categories; i.e. diagnosis – the process of problem analysis where the immigrant ‘other’ was problematized at multi-layered societal issues; and prognosis – in which the intervention through immigrant integration and its presumed outcome was laid out and reinvigorated.

4.1.2. Diagnosis – Society under threat

Research has shown that there are various ways in which the state and the society it represents reiterate itself through bordering and social practices “to redefine contemporary notions of citizenship, identity and belonging”(Yuval-Davis et al., 2019, p. 1). One particular type of this reiteration practice is the act of imagining, identifying and placing threats as residing outside virtual or physical boundaries of the state or/and society. In migration and immigrant integration policies and practices, the state identifies immigrants and their descendants as intrusions to its “cultural and territorial spaces” (Feldman, 2005). Bauman – in his anecdotal analysis of friends/enemies opposition – argues that “the outside is negativity to the inside’s positivity. The outside is what the inside is not” (Bauman, 1990). In a similar way, the parliamentary deliberations and debates solidified and articulated the Dutch society by defining, classifying and assigning what the ‘other’ is. In the documents analyzed, it is very rare to see the description of Dutch society itself. It is rather a taken-for-granted norm used as benchmark to define the ‘other’ and triangulate its position. One member of parliament voiced this sentiment as follows,

“the arrival of non-Western migrants is both a gain and a challenge. It is profit because we are forced to see what we have and are in danger of losing”^{xx}.

It shows the imagination of an outside/inside opposition generated from the “effects of pre-given and mutually exclusive ‘sovereign nations’ and ‘immigrants’”(Feldman, 2005, p. 214) – in this case ‘non-western’ immigrants. Immigrant integration’s articulation of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ as preexisting, hides their mutually constitutive nature through integration practices, measurements and performatives. Frequently, the nation-state is portrayed as “an entity in crisis”(Feldman, 2005, p. 213). In the Dutch case, this was prominently present when integration policy was linked with immigration policy in 2001^{xxi}. This intermingle connects

immigration – as a threat that should be deterred and limited – and integration – as a process of redemption for those who have managed to reach the destination. It is a form of boundary making that resides at the intersection of modernity and culture “in a world of territorial borders whose main purpose is to mark differences in space” (Popescu, 2011, p. 13). The parliamentary deliberations and debates in the years that led up to integration law of 2007 showed a similar focus. The portrayal of society under threat takes center by defining and analyzing social and economic problems related to immigrants as an integration question. The idea that certain groups in the society and their alien cultures dwell outside the spaces of order and dominant norms became a common narrative. In other words the description of the “unassimilated, the deviant or abnormal [is used] as a way of learning about what was assimilated and normal”(Schinkel, 2008, p. 11). In one report of integration of minorities presented in the Dutch parliament, the above friction was stated as follows:

“Immigration, in addition to the opportunities for the multi-ethnic society, also presents problems and risks. Low-skilled immigrants start out at a disadvantage in several areas. In addition, [immigrants] from non-Western countries [form] striking cultural differences”^{xxii}.

The Minister of Immigration and Integration in a written response regarding the new construction of integration as linked to an immigration perspective said “*restricted immigration is an absolute precondition for the success of integration policy. The number of immigrants must be reduced to an acceptable level so that integration policies have a chance*”^{xxiii}. In Leo Lucassen’s expression “the fear of social disorder and underclass formation was eclipsed by a more fundamental cultural and philosophical discomfort with the conflicting values of non-Western migrants” (Lucassen, 2005, p. 1). In this process of demarcation, society interchangeably takes on a normative imagination as a container – in which it holds diverse and inherently incompatible parts – or as a bounded whole – where the immigrant ‘other’ resides at its outside margins (Schinkel, 2017). In a written response to members of parliament, the minister of immigration and integration states “*it is essential to emphasize society as a unity and to build bridges between the people and the population groups*”^{xxiv}. Here, the term ‘the people’ discursively reproduces an imagination of a homogenous whole – the host society – and the parts – the immigrant groups – as spatially disconnected. Parliamentary deliberations and debates regarding immigrants and their depiction as a threat to society were not fully

¹ “de mensen en de bevolkingsgroepen”

unchallenged. There were parties that disagreed with the problem analysis and the proposed government interventions. Although the majority of Dutch political parties adopted a strict and disciplinarian positions in terms of the need for the state's intervention in protecting Dutch culture and identity (Bonjour, 2013), the representation of society under threat was challenged by some members of parliament. One member expressed his disagreement of the portrayal of the Dutch society as a sinking ship as follows

“The establishment of the ministry of immigration and integration is justified as an expression of the importance of protecting the sinking ship from destruction. The sinking ship of the multicultural society must be turned. From the beginning of the discussion about integration[...], however, responsibility for this integration was placed solely on non-Western migrants living here. They are held accountable for their reduced [failed] integration. They are held accountable for the fact that there is a backlog in terms of language, social orientation and participation”.^{xxv}

However, these rhetorical argumentations besides creating dialogical interaction among members of parliament seems to have little effect to the general outcome of integration policies and laws. Although it questions the asymmetrical *responsibilization* of immigrants, it does re/produce their inherent *behindness*. This is partly because, Groenendijk (2019)^{xxvi} argues, the fact that the modifications were not to simplify the policy but to make it even more complex. He argues the initial version of Dutch Integration Act of 2007 – which contained 75 articles – has evolved to 100 articles out of which 65 elaborate the obligations and sanctions involved in the integration process in 2013. Regardless of concerns of burden and over-complication of rules in immigrant integration, the parliamentary debates were focused on the ‘problematic alien’. By identifying and placing the threat as pre-existing and outside its boundaries, these debates assisted the host society in imagining itself as an unproblematized whole through the discourse and practice of immigrant integration. By so doing, they diagnostically re/establish an image of a static position or location of a host society. Simultaneously, they create an impression of an ‘immigrant other’ on the move towards the location of ‘society’ or/and in times of failure as a static destined to remain on the fringes of society. The latter echoes the logical consequences of a failed integration and the inherent incompatibility of difference.

4.1.3. Diagnosis - Integration measurements: Socio-economic and socio-cultural measurements

One common characteristic of integration measurements is that it allows for the identification of what does not belong. They are based on an assumption that “there exists a society that is whole and healthy”(Schinkel, 2017, p. 3) – where immigrants reside outside of its boundaries. It is a metaphorical base that informs the various measurements used in immigrant integration to make the ‘other’ visible and measurable. At the EU level, immigrant integration has been encouraged as a means to measure the impact of immigration policies on member states and immigrant societies in order to establish a coordinated immigration approach (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003). The link between immigration and integration often stems from an idea of a state and/or society at risk of falling apart and in need of cohesion. One member of parliament argues for the need to clearly demarcate the Dutch norms and values – which has universality validity – against which immigrants should be scrutinized. She states:

“The freedom of the individual, the equality between men and women, the principle of non-discrimination, the separation of church and state, the freedom of speech, [...], mutual trust of citizens, individual and social progress through self-criticism and the ability to learning from criticism from others, government monopoly on violence, freedom of religion and tolerance between religions. These are principles with universal validity. It is also a challenge because many immigrants bring along values and norms that do not fit in our society. Many but not all”

These discursive and broad markings of boundary of the host society are translated to measurements of integration of immigrants through socio-cultural indicators. Feldman (2005) argues the nation-state identifies an external intrusion into its territorial and cultural space and discursively produces pre-existing and mutually exclusive categories of a sovereign nation and immigrants. He claims that the invention of ‘crisis’ - resulting from the entry of the latter into the states’ space - functions as the production of difference upon which the identity of the state is re/articulated. In a similar way, in immigrant integration, society only appears by articulating its difference from the non-integrated immigrant other. Therefore, it seems usual for measurements of integration to imagine immigrants as residing at a distance from society. In Schinkel’s expression “you may encounter ‘them’ on the streets, but they are not really ‘in’ society”(Schinkel, 2017, p. 3). Besides time and distance – it adds a spatial dimension to the imaginaries of integration by assuming immigrants as being invisible bodies in the spaces of

society. This is so, regardless of the blurred territorial and social spaces in which ‘society’ and its individual components occupy.

There is – however – growing criticism on the use of social statistics and measurements as indicators of an individual as less or more integrated in society. Favell (2019) argues that “integration is a concept and not a metaphor” and “there is a need for a theory of society if we want to actually do sociology as opposed to social statics”(p. 2). The indicators of socio-cultural and socio-economic position of immigrants – in relation to ‘society’ – focalize the imagination of the deviation into measurable units and help translate immigrant integration into a performative practice. Schinkel (2017) identified – what he called – *programs* and *diagrammers* of integration as logics of identification that are immanent in the measurements of integration. He claims that “‘culture’ and ‘modernity’ are *programs* that [...] offer discursive spaces for the subjects and the topics of the problematization of integration. Whereas, the *diagrammers* of integration discourse shape the landscape of discourse within these spaces”(Schinkel, 2017, p. 100). In the initial stage of research on immigrant integrations, questions were raised on the concept of integration, its discursive meaning and measurements. Attempts were made to define integration and what the concept constituents. Structural and cultural integration of immigrants – as containers different attributes of social reality – are often taken as indicators to measure the degree of the immigrants’ deviation from society (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003). Social sciences of integration on issues such as – immigrants’ sense of belonging, cultural identification, contact with the host society, and their socio-economic position – legitimize and give symbolic meaning to the imagination of mobility immigrants towards the presumed destination. One member of parliament expressed his mixed concern and optimism of mobility as follows:

“A disproportionate number of people from ethnic minorities are on disability benefits and social assistance benefits. While the school performance of young people from ethnic minorities is increasing, insufficient command of the Dutch language still proves to be a stumbling block.”^{xxvii}

This form of imagination produces and reproduces, what Van Reekum and Schinkel (2017) called “a myth of arrival of immigrants and a myth of primordial settlement of natives”. They claimed that the myth of primordial settlement is what justifies integration – treated as an adjustment to society – to be systematically observed and calculated. The results of such research, then, inform policy interventions while simultaneously substantiate the

institutionalization of social imaginaries of difference and the need to narrow that difference. By so doing, they substantiate the normative social imaginaries immigrant integration. Schinkel (2017) argues, polices use numbers to “specify the location of problematization”(p. 69) – which in turn informs the production of hierarchies of difference in immigrant groups. Immigrant integration measurements, therefore, function as an observation form that construed immigrants residing outside society. It locate itself at a position where following the mobility of immigrants towards the presumed destination is possible. While the location of problematization falls in the space at the intersection of ethnicity, culture, modernity, the imagined bounded society disappears into abstraction and/or form a benchmark of upon which the ‘other’ is scaled. This space obscures “the diversity of migrants’ relationships to their place of settlement”(Boersma & Schinkel, 2018, p. 309) by monitoring their mobility through the lens of ethnicity and culture. Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos (2013) support this notion by arguing that “intersectional subject construction informs understanding of the social problems that integration policies are meant to address”(p. 110). As a positive indication of the arrival narrative, a report on youth and integration states:

“It can be concluded that good results can be observed, particularly among the second generation, both in the field of education and in terms of participation in the labor market. The second generation is also active in entrepreneurship.”^{xxviii}

This intersectional subjects are constructed through what called the ‘*diagrammers* of integration’ (Schinkel, 2017). They shape the asymmetric landscape of discursive spaces where the host society is portrayed as ‘non-ethnic’ – representing modernity and citizens for whom integration is non-issues.

4.1.4. Attribution of causality - Governing intimacy and *genealogization* of problems

In the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe, there is a history of government interventions targeting people ‘with poor prospects’ through social policies to rehabilitate their social and economic position in society (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2017). Similar patterns of intervention were uncovered by numerous immigrant integration scholarly works. The link between immigration of certain groups and integration was based on the claim of the society’s vulnerability against a chain of problems coming in. In the Dutch context, this thesis identified such manifestations within diverse socio-cultural discursive spaces . In a report on ethnic minorities it is stated that:

“The identified disadvantages of ethnic minorities are largely caused by the permanent large influx of new asylum seekers and subsequent migrants. As a result, the problem of the first generation, in ever-increasing diversity, remains”^{xxxix}.

Here society is perceived as fighting a genealogy of problems from diverse groups. To shed more light on this claim, this inquiry looks at two pieces of legislation – the Integration Act which is the main focus of this thesis – and Integration Abroad Act^{xxx}. The latter is introduced to tackle the *genealogization* of problems which are subsequently seen as sustained by family migration into ‘the Dutch society’. The Integration Abroad Act applies to third country nationals, with some exemptions (De Vries, 2013). The Act requires someone – who intends to join their partner or family members on family reunification processes – to show proof of Dutch language competence and socio-cultural knowledge of the Netherlands before they could be granted a visa (De Vries, 2013). In other words, Van Walsum, (2008) claims it “only targets family migrants originating from ‘non-western’ countries: i.e countries in Africa, Asia (excluding Japan and later South Korea) and Latin America” (pp. 5). The Dutch government – in its justification for the exemption and non-exemption of countries – states “the countries that are exempted^{xxxix} from the examination abroad requirement are developed and western – oriented. Nationals of these nations are presumed not to lead to unwanted and unbridled migration flows and substantial integration problems^{xxxix}”. In other words, the Act regulates intimacy by making a distinction between desirable and undesirable partners. This, however, was only possible by categorizing migrants – who are likely to be a burden for their family and the welfare state – based on their country of origin. One member of parliament expressed this sentiment as follows;

“It must be prevented that, as sometimes it happened in the past, with the continuous admission of family migrants with poor prospects [kansarme] in every generation, partners, children and other family members from the country of origin come to the Netherlands, with all kinds of socially unfavorable consequences, not only for the integration process, but also for themselves”.

When viewed through a postcolonial lens, and in Mignolo’s expression; “modernity is not an ontological unfolding of history but the hegemonic narrative of Western civilization. So, there is no need to be modern” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 279). Moreover, Schinkel (2019) elaborate this notion by linking the conception of modernity to the discourse of immigrant integration – which is always implicitly present. He claims that:

“integration itself is but one outgrowth of a more general fetish with a position called ‘modernity’, an imagined project of ‘us’, the civilized, secular, liberal, liberated who have the courtesy to take up the burden of bringing ‘them’ up to speed, of including ‘them’ in what is inevitable anyway” (pp. 1).

In other words in and in Leila Hadj (2019) expression – “immigrant integration has to be understood and approached as a phenomenon that reveals more about those who articulate ideas about integration and decide on integration measures than it does about those who are the target of integration (i.e. the migrant ‘other’)”(p. 1). In other words, it is part of this constant social practice of re/defining ‘self’ in a changing world. In a similar way, Penninx (2013) claims that the specific meaning of integration in policy has changed through time from its concern on the position of the newcomers in the host society into comparing commonalities. To compare commonalities – however – questions on the conception of the host society and its identity as modern, liberal, democratic, equal, and enlightened needed to be articulated. The purpose behind Integration Act Abroad was presented as a means to help family migrants to start ahead by learning the Dutch language and culture before they arrive. Nonetheless, it simultaneously deters those who are cognitively and/or logistically incapable of completing the requirements. One member of parliament justified his support for this rationale in a rather paternalistic manner as:

“ultimately, it is about giving someone opportunities to successfully participate in society in the Netherlands. We do not want to put people in a relationship of dependence. People must be able to take steps independently”^{xxxiii}.

The second piece of legislation – the Integration Act – serves the purpose of emancipating those who managed to arrive and constitute diasporic communities. In one particular research in Berlin, a program focusing on neighborhood migrant mothers “targets domestic and intimate spaces as sites of inspection and intervention and appoints migrant women as ‘door openers’ for entry of the state into the regulation of families and communities”(Marquardt & Schreiber, 2015, p. 44). In Dutch parliamentary deliberations and debates, issues of governing intimacy were identified at the intersection of family and gender role in the process of defining and examining problems of immigrant integration. Often, women were perceived as agency-less subjects of a traditional family in which the Dutch freedom is only available and utilized by their men counterparts. That is one of the reasons why integration policies often interpret “immigrants’ gender relations as problematic” (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 109).

One prominent focalization of this observation was stated by a member of parliament as follows:

“The fathers participated in all kinds of association activities [...] at school; they spoke Dutch quite well. The children participated fully [...]. The mothers [...] did not come to parents' evenings, they were not seen at school activities or at events in the village”^{xxxiv}.

With mothers perceived as lagging behind in the integration process and their limited contact with society, the whole family is scrutinized for moving backwards in the integration ladder. Women were seen as responsible not only for their own integration mobility but also as bearers of social values and norms that shape their children – for good or bad. The circumstances of women, thus, were perceived as a double edged sword that explained the success or failure of both the integration of the individual and the integration of a given family. Parliamentarians often redefine complex and diverse identities of immigrant women in a single category of “Muslim women [...] as a particular salient subject position” (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 110) One member of parliament drew an equivalence of Dutch women in catholic households and their significant role in secularization process of the church, their families and society in general. Referring to one research he stated;

“ for centuries women in the Catholic community were in fact the socio-cultural bearers of the religious identity of Catholics [...] they passed on that identity to their children. Their contribution [...] promoted the socio-economic emancipation of the children. Mothers also played an important role in that emancipation [...] secularization among Catholics was mainly a consequence of the inability of the church to keep up with the socio-cultural development of women.”^{xxxv}

This anecdote was given in order to put an emphasis not only on the context of framing emancipation of immigrant women as a significant element of the integration process but also to highlight the undesirability of bringing a partner from home country. Marriage with a person from the country of origin was seen as traditional which causes degeneration in the integration ladder. One member of parliament argued “due to marriages with brides and grooms in the country of origin, there is a continuous regeneration of first-generation problems^{xxxvi}”. It was seen as the main reason why emancipation through integration would have to start over and over again with every arrival of *behindness*. Traditional marriage was also considered as having an effect on children and their development due to the degeneration caused by one parent who

had to start at the bottom of the integration ladder. One member of parliament argued that this has a trickle effect on children's school drop outs and involvement in criminality and called for "obligatory parenting intervention from the government^{xxxvii}". Moreover, 'the growing popularity' of choosing a partner from one's home country was interpreted as a signal of an already failed integration of that particular individual. In other words, a person who chooses a partner from country of origin is interpreted as someone who is unable to function in a 'modern society'. The above descriptions of the 'other' and the implicit messages it conveys, sometimes, is more strong and present in a discursive back and forth among members of parliament. In one interaction a member of parliament expressed his skepticism as follows "[...] *it must be avoided that [...] a certain modern majority morality is imposed as the norm, because then majority of dissenting thoughts about marriage, sexuality and the like will be regarded as an integration problem*"^{xxxviii}. According to Bonjour and Duyvendak (2017) it is part of a discursive mechanism of boundary making that nation-states "perform in their perpetual endeavor to make the population on their territories match with the imagined communities they are deemed to represent"(p. 883). Other research on Dutch parliamentary debates has also shown how "parliamentarians redefine diverse identities in narrow terms to cohere to specific conceptions of self and other" (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 110)

4.1.5. Prognosis: The purpose of integration and the process of social imaginaries of integration

After setting the stage through diagnostic analysis of immigrants and their inherent incompatibility with the Dutch norms and the Western values, an intervention through immigrant integration policies and programs was seen as a possible solution. The fear that this incompatibility eventually will lead to some sort of dystopia was amplified in the parliamentary deliberation that were analyzed. One member of parliament stated a reason for the need of integration programs as follows; "*a more compulsory integration policy is necessary and justified, because otherwise society will gradually grow apart, citizens will start to live alongside each other and ultimately no one will feel at home in the Netherlands*"^{xxxix}. It reflects a form of imagining society in disintegration where harmony and cohesion between and among citizens is at stake. Schinkel (2017) argues that immigrant integration, stemming from a long history of organicist view of society similar to human body, "is one field in which 'society' is actively imagined"(p. 4). Indicators of integration based on social statistics are used as a caliber to measure the distance at which immigrants are placed in relation to the host society. Simultaneously, they help demarcate the boundaries of the imagined society without

necessarily defining it. Integration, thus, becomes the knot that ties imaginations through reiterative practices of duties and tasks that immigrants perform – must perform. As a theoretical concept, integration implies the existence of a bounded system (Favell, 2019); some form of social or moral order (Taylor, 2004); unproblematized whole (Schinkel, 2017) into which the immigrant ‘others’ are obliged to achieve their inclusion – through their performativity. In other words, it infers, without question, the imagination of a “society as people that is, as a meta-topical agency that is thought to preexist and found the politically organized society” (Taylor, 2004, p. 116) In this sense, the host society and the immigrant ‘other’ are treated as two mutually constitutive subjects that negotiate and rearticulate their relationship and position through the integration discourse and practice. Therefore, the myth of nation bounded integration of immigrants, in Favell’s expression, is the hope of achieving “an alignment of the individual with the norms (the “mean”) of the mainstream society” (Favell 2019, p. 5).

The thesis claims that integration performatives, through formalized repetition of acts in policy and practice, assist in sustaining and maintaining the difference. Drawing from Schinkel’s (2018) argument this constitutive nature is one of the reasons why integration itself should be an object of research rather than a project of research. Integration is, thus, a knot that ties the imaginations of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ as pre-existingonyms that require intervention. This claims stands because integration – both as a practice and popular discourse – lays the ground for institutionalization of the idea of difference between ‘self’ and the ‘other’. It lays groundwork for the state to manage this difference by articulating different conception of its role in managing social cohesion by governing diversity (Bonjour 2012, pp. 837). In other words, in Willem Schinkel’s expression, “integration is a concept that helps the function of society [self] to remain plausible, but it does so by marking immigrants [other] not belonging to it” (Schinkel 2017, pp. 227).

Starting early 2000’s the parliamentary debates and deliberations were focused on demarcating and articulating the boundaries of the imagined societies – both the host and immigrant society. This boundary making process was done based on a diagnostic description of the immigrant other as inherently starting from a position of *behindness*. Non-western migrants and their socio-cultural *behindness* in relation to the host society was perceived as a threat. In one deliberation, a member of parliament states “ many immigrants bring along values and norms that do not fit in our society^{x1}”. While supporting the emancipation through integration practice – if successful – in the long run could help migrants from non-Western

countries to export our liberal values to their countries of origin^{xli}. Discussions in the parliament with the regard to the characterization of the host society as homogeneous – however – was not unchallenged. One member of parliament – while expressing her agreement with the characterization of Dutch fundamental right, laws and regulation – questioned the existence of a Dutch cultural identity that immigrants should adhere to^{xlii}. The imagined society needs to actively perform bordering or boundary making as a form of reiterating itself in what appears to be a cyclical process. Although discussed in (Feldman, 2005) the process often involves inter-changing claims of place by the nation-state through constitutional laws that abide all citizens – thus considered as neutral – and the national cultural identity – which is performative and open to interpretation. In occasions of high tension – such as the interaction between members of parliament – the imagined society dis/appears in the spaces culture and the state’s laws and regulations. The addition of a program of about knowledge of the Dutch society and culture to the integration practice and policy was presented as a solution to the controversial discussion of demarcating the Dutch society and its cultural identity as a homogenous whole^{xliii}.

4.1.6. Shifting imaginaries of integration and a self-sufficient citizen

In the early years of 2000’s – once the problem analysis difference was established and institution – questions regarding the concept of integration disappears. The Integration Act of 2007 in various scholarship was described as the ‘neoliberal turn in immigrant integration practice and discourse (Schinkel, 2018; Swinkels, 2019; van Houdt, Suvarierol, & Schinkel, 2011). Through the boundary – producing practice of demarcating the Dutch cultural identity in the parliamentary debates, the Knowledge of the Dutch society and culture integration program took the cultural assimilation mission. The neoliberal turn was manifested through individual ‘*responsibilization*’ of integration and ‘moralization of citizenship’ (Schinkel, 2008; Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010; Suvarierol and Kirk, 2015) This prompt integration scholars to coin this new turn as the “double helix of cultural assimilationism and neoliberalism”(Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010, p. 698). This thesis identifies this turn as the shift from the re/production of an imagined society – as discussed above – to an imagined citizen in immigrant integration discourse and practice. Moreover, it also shows the bureaucratization of integration as a preferred track to avoid the core discussions in defining integration, and its end result. The ideological debates and back and forth in the early 2000’s in the second chamber of parliament has shown the urgency for a pragmatic solution. Non-natives’ of lack of equal

treatment and political participation due to their deficiency of mastery of the language and knowledge of the Dutch society was often used as a positive justification for the intervention of integration. In other words, it is an exercise of universalization the imagined citizen as an active user of those presumed rights and particularization of the immigrant ‘other’ as lacking accessibility of utilizing those same rights. Integration – therefore – intervenes with an idea that this inaccessibility can be bridged when migrants are able to prove their mastery of the Dutch language and their knowledge of the Dutch society. This positive justification often touches upon other complex societal issues such as marriage, family life and child upbringing.

The parliamentary deliberations echoed the growing rhetoric of *responsibilization* of immigrants for their own integration process into the Dutch society. The proposed amendments to the Integration Act of 2007 – that build up to the amended version of 2013 – was centered around *responsibilization*, self-reliance and sanctions for those who failed to meet the conditions. Immigrants were held accountable to the standards of the imagined citizen. The government explained the intentions and the presumed outcomes of the proposed amendments as follows:

“the basic principle here is that every citizen can be expected to make a contribution to society and to be self-reliant in this respect. This also applies to persons obliged to integrate who choose to settle in the Netherlands”^{xliv}.

With this new approach, the imagined society resigns to the background and the imagined citizens took over the benchmarking upon which immigrants are scaled. While integration is measured in terms of individual’s degree of success in resembling to the imagined citizen. In times of failure the individual’s association to collective socio-cultural and religious attributes – that are presumed to be counterproductive to the objectives of integration – are scrutinized. This is what Schinkel (2017, p. 30) called the “deindividualization of individualization” in which an asymmetric attribute of responsibility of individuals in need of integration is mingled scrutinizing and monitoring the group the individual belongs in terms of failure. According to Schinkel (2008, p. 19), the new vision of integration discourse combined the dominant culture centered view of an ‘active citizen’ and a ‘good citizen’ who showed loyalty to society through their participation.

Moreover, these imaginations of a host society in relation to the immigrant can be observed in the so-called ‘participation statement’ or ‘participatieverklaring^{xlv}’ one of the obligations in the Dutch integration discourse that was introduced in 2017. The statement

became part of the Dutch integration requirements that should be signed by the individual who is obliged to follow the integration trajectory. It contains similar imaginations of cultural tropes that one can see in ‘civic integration courses on knowledge of the Dutch society and culture’ (De Leeuw & Van Wichelen, 2012). The statement states:

“For the participation declaration you learn what is important in the Netherlands, how we treat each other in the Netherlands and why we do it that way. For example: Everyone in the Netherlands is equal. Everyone can choose their own partner. Everyone can choose what they believe. Everyone can go to school. Everyone can say what he thinks. But you cannot discriminate against another. We take care of ourselves. But also for each other. The government helps people who need it”^{xlvi}

In a similar tone, De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2012) argues that the implicit message of the Dutch integration test, which seems to echo similar assumptions as the participation statement, is “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’” (pp. 199). To compare commonalities, issues regarding the boundaries of the host society and its identity as modern, liberal, democratic, equal, and enlightened needed to be articulated.

In this chapter the thesis found that regardless of some resistance – in the debates leading to integration act of 2007 – the need for integration and the tenets that have underpinned policies ever since were unchallenged and often reproduced. The lack of discussion on these underlying presuppositions – such as the inherent *behindness* of immigrants – indicate that they have become more and more commonsensical and entrenched in the discourse. The identification of the year 2007 – the year that the first integration act (*Wet Inburgering*) went into force – as pivotal in this regard, indicates that integration policies played an important role in solidifying views on society as bounded and, as this thesis argues, integration as a difference (re)producing practice. The literature review, complemented by the analysis of the parliamentary debates, identified a number of techniques that help to explain how the conception of society as a bounded whole has become entrenched to the point that an alternative conception is arguably no longer within the range of the imaginable by looking at examining the problem analyses and solutions put forward (*diagnosis, attribution of causality and prognosis*). The discourse on integration imagines society by making visible what does not belong to it; who is spoken of in terms of integration and who is not. The ‘outsiders’ are mainly

made visible through (1) casting immigrants as a (potential) threat to society and (2) by measuring the performance of persons 'with an immigration background' in relation to the performance of persons 'without an immigration' background. The analysis revealed that immigrants can be constructed as a threat in various ways. One way is to assign certain pre-existing qualities to certain types of immigrants. For example, non-western migrants were imagined as vessels containing values and norms that were deemed inherently at odds with the norms that were considered 'Dutch'. Another way is to envision a 'dystopia' where society is no longer a bounded whole but rather a sum of several 'parallel' societies. The second technique relies heavily on the *genealogization* of integration. By measuring the data of multiple generations of immigrants against the data of so-called natives in order to establish and evaluate the degree of 'integration into society', nativity is established as the norm and equated with 'society'. In the process of (re)producing differences, society – which is associated with Dutchness – appears and disappears in the discourse of immigrant integration as bounded spaces or dystopia in need of care by regulating its members or an intangible destination that disappears in abstraction.

5. Chapter five – Integration performativity

Integration performativity – in this thesis – refers to the embodied encounter of immigrants as subjects of integration discourse and practice and the embodied knowledge generated from it. Immigrant bodies – collective or individual – are the “ones conducting the struggle against oppression; they are the bodies that suffer with the defeats and rejoice with the victories” (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 87). In immigrant integration research, the embodied experience of immigrants resulting from their encounter with integration apparatus is often relegated to the background as subjective and non-narrative knowledge. Integration policy research is focused on the promise of outcomes that subsequently – to a large extent - fail to materialize. Popular or policy narratives of a successful integration are rare. The common popular narration of immigrant integration is often as a failure or failing, therefore there is a constant need for a new policy and a different approach of intervention. The Council of State – in their legislator review – raised a concern regarding frequent changes of immigrant integration policies and its consequences for its subjects – the immigrants. They stated “ [...] such changes create uncertainty for the [...] persons obliged to integrate [...]”.^{xlvi} This thesis made an attempt to highlight not only immigrants uncertainties but also the necessity to navigate and renegotiate against the frequent changes. Drawing from Butler’s performativity theory and structuration theoretical lens, it steers away from treating immigrants as helpless subjects in the binary narration of structure and agency. Rather, it tried to capture markers of reproduction, tension, navigation and renegotiation in a narrative self of immigrants drawn from semi-structured interviews.

Based on fifteen semi-structured interviews, the thesis tried to identify the performatives of integration and the subjectification, friction, tension and renegotiation that arise from it. It is an attempt to explore the embodied encounter of immigrants – as interacting bodies – with the apparatus of integration discourse’s quest to “discipline migrants to become recognizable and tolerable citizens” (de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2012, p. 196). In Santos’ expression “the bodies are performative and thus renegotiate and expand or subvert the existing reality through what they do” (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 89). The interview questions were thematically designed to explore this encounter through the experience of Eritreans living in the Netherlands. The participants were asked to share their experiences through a description and interpretation of two broad concepts in immigrant integration practice and discourse; i.e. their understanding of immigrant integration as a concept and practice and their comprehension and

interpretation of what it means to participate in society or to be part of the Dutch ‘society’ – concepts procured from normativities of integration. In this process, the recognition of the sites reproduction, tension and negotiation of immigrant integration imaginaries takes up a central place. The thesis identified those sites, which are in a dialogical space between social imaginaries of integration - generated through discursive and non-discursive process in the parliamentary debates - and the embodied encounter of immigrants subjected to it. In this process, the analysis set the participants’ understanding and interpretation of this encounter as the main objective of the inquiry. By so doing, it made an effort to answer the second research question in this thesis i.e – to what extent can this frame – of a host society as unproblematized, integrated whole in integration discourse and practice – be understood and observed through the embodied experience and perceived position of immigrants in the host society? Due to Covid-19 and the subsequent restrictions of movement, possibilities of reaching a diverse group was limited. However, both new comers and Eritreans who have lived in the Netherlands for longer period of time were included. The composition of the target group looks as follows:

No	Age group	Sex	Years in NL	Code in the text
9 (interviewed in person)	< 30 years	M	<5 yrs	NC (new comer)
4 (interviewed via Zoom)	>30	F	>30 yrs	OC (old comer)
2 (interviewed via Zoom)	>30	M	>30yrs	OC (old comer)

Table 2. Composition of the target group interviewed

The composition of the participants – new and old comers – allows this thesis to examine their experience as a non-linear process of negotiation and renegotiation in relation to integration discourse and practice through time. Although a general line could be drawn between the two groups of participants in terms of their embodied knowledge in relation to the longevity of their stay in the Netherlands,

5.1. Subjectivity – Reproduction

Significant amount of scholarship focused on understanding the interaction between immigrants integration and immigrant’s transnational navigation of belonging (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013). With the integration turn in late 2000’s which was marked by obligatory civic integration programs and practice in Western Europe (Suvarierol and Kirk, 2015), immigrants were required to actively earn their citizenship and position in their destination. Migrants were required to prove their integration and investment in society by performing certain duties and

tasks through integration programs (van Houdt et al., 2011). Performativity approach, Feldman argues “focuses on how subject positions are constituted as effects of reiterative and citational practices that construct fundamental differences between subjects and conceal those subjects' lack of ontological foundations” (Feldman, 2005, p. 214). In this section, the thesis explores the extent to which immigrants reproduce, social imaginaries of integration through their performative interaction with the practice of integration. As discussed in the previous sections, *inburgering* (the practice of integration) is presented as the first step towards becoming part of ‘the society’. The idea that ‘the society’ is only reachable after successfully finishing several tasks and duties is consolidated in integration programs. The imagination of ‘the society’ as a bounded space of active and responsible citizens and the role of *inburgering* as a gate keeper is reinvigorated by the participants views. As one participant put it “*if I can't speak the language, I cannot understand the Dutch culture. [...] to be part of the society and live and function in the Dutch system, I have to speak the language*”^(NC4). Learning Dutch language – together with knowledge of Dutch society and culture – takes up a central place in *inburgering* programs.

Van Houdt et al., claim that in the last two decades, “Dutch discourse on integration has increasingly centered on notions of ‘culture’, ‘norms and values’ and proper definitions of ‘Dutchness’ and of ‘Dutch society’” (van Houdt et al., 2011, p. 418). Integration programs were seen as opportunity for migrants to gain new skills on their quest to become self-governing citizens “within the boundaries of the social norms that state delineates” (Suvarierol and Kirk, 2015, pp. 3-4). In other words, it is the “articulation of immigrant subjectivity and the institutional translation of that subjectivity in the political field of policy making” (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 116). One participant – an oldcomer – explains why certain cultural and religious background could cause tension because of their non-proximity to the Dutch tradition and culture. He argues that the labor migrants from Morocco and Turkey came because they were needed. He stated:

“Well, if you look in the eighties and the nineties, it's a different migration of people that came in. So from that perspective, the conversation about it changes as well. Right? because, one it's a different culture that comes in. That's a new culture. So the topic about them around integration will be different. And you can see that, right? New immigrants are coming here, African immigrants or Arabic immigrants, it's a different kind of topics of integration” ^{OCn}.

The implication of the boundness of society and social norms can be viewed in light of the newcomers interpretation of *inburgering* and its presumed outcomes. *Inburgering* – as a legally binding practice – is perceived as a precondition that should be fulfilled in order to continue further education and most importantly to receive Dutch nationality. Thus, it is seen as a practical first step in a contractual arrangement between the state and the newcomers and as passage to be part of ‘the society’ – that they are already part of by their very existence in it. As one respondent put it *“if you want to be part of society, you have to study and have a diploma to find a proper job”*^(NC5). According to Mahendran (2013) “Social actors are collectively influenced by dominant macro-narratives or hegemonic social representations—often understood as an unquestioned common sense”(p. 3). Here a distinction could be made among the newcomers and oldcomers who participated in the interviews in terms of reproducing the macro-narratives of integration. Generally the newcomers showed more tendency to place themselves outside the imagination of the Dutch society – mainly for not speaking the language good enough. The newcomers are fresh in their exposure to norms of integration that acting on them “before [they] have a chance to act at all, and that when [they] do act, [they] recapitulate the norms that act upon us [...]”(Butler, 2009, p. 11). This enactment is identified in the newcomers’ own assessment of integration and their position in society – whether or not they see themselves as are part of the Dutch society. In the process of self-assessment, their understanding and interpretation of what is required to be part of the Dutch society plays a significant role in the valuation of their own place in society. As one participant put it *“when they ask you to be part of the society – I believe – it means to strive for success and express yourself freely the way they do it”*^(NC3). Here the participant used the word ‘they’ with an implication of homogeneity of a society comprise of successful citizens who freely express themselves. Referring to his experience with his language buddy, the participant expressed his testimony of the Dutch society through the lens of his embodied encounter as follows *“she does what she wants but I wouldn’t do the same because I don’t feel liberated as she is”*^(NC6). The (re)production of difference in the interviews with oldcomers was particularly present when discussing about the other groups or/and new comers. One oldcomer made a distinction among Eritrean newcomers and their background in relation to their proximity to the Dutch society and argues:

“If someone is coming from a very totally different background, cultural background, just like our people. We have there Muslims and we also have Roman Catholic, as the two biggest religions over there. So if we are part of the religion of

Roman Catholic, we have a lot of values from Europe in it, the 10 commandments, for instance. So you should think that if we come here, then, we have more advantage than people from the Muslim side because they have totally different cultural things, the same value but culturally different.”^{OCg}

Having the discussion regarding the purpose of integration and the presumed outcomes in mind, this reiterative assessment of new and old comers reflects the production of difference between the host and immigrant societies in integration discourse. In an expression of distance between himself and the Dutch society, one newcomer states *“for example, the Dutch people are always busy at work or they work five days a week or they are at school the whole week”*.^(NC1) This assessment is not far from how the imagination of society is portrayed in the parliamentary deliberation about the Dutch integration discourse. As one member of parliament put it *“This own responsibility is no different from the responsibility that is expected of everyone in the Netherlands to be self-reliant, to participate in society and to invest in their own knowledge and skills”*^{xlviii}. The purpose of *inburgering* was often presented as the first step in the long process of integration to become part of the Dutch society. Therefore the idea that immigrants reside on the margins and/or outside the boundaries of the imagined society is a reiterative process of figurative and indicator based measurements of integration and self-assessment of the newcomers interviewed in this thesis. This reiterative interaction and the imagination of measurements of movement towards the inevitable destination often inform integration policy research and policy revisions. Mahendran (2013, p. 2) argues that “public debate around integration plays a decisive role in the framing of policy agendas”. Using dialogical approach to understand social knowledge or discourse formation, she regards the public as “having the dialogical capacity to enact, reason, and debate”(2013, p. 2) in integration discourse.

In a similar way, the thesis argues that immigrants constitute part of this public debate through their dialogical navigation of their relationship with the host society in integration discourse. As one participant put it *“I don’t think ‘inburgering’ alone is enough to learn and understand the system and the Dutch society, you have to immerse yourself within the fabrics of the society to understand their mindset and how they function”*.^(NC2) This is another example of dialogical interaction – even after five years being in society – there is an imagination of movement towards and a position of non-arrival in society reproduced by those who are subjected to it. This can be observed from one participant’s characterization of his position and

movement as follows; *“I know that I don’t have everything I need to be part of the society, I still have to work for it, but finally I will be. There are things that I should improve”*. (NC4)

Although the aim of this thesis is not a social psychological inquiry, several scholarship has shown the relationship between self-identification versus agency and culture – in a broader sense of the term culture. In their work on mutual constitution of culture and self, Rose and Shinobu (2010, p. 420) argue that selves – as a continually developing sense of awareness and agency – reinforces ideas and practices in an interaction with their sociocultural context and environment. They claim that this interaction doesn’t always result in reinforcing ideas and practice but it can also change and transform them – an interpretation that will be discussed in the sections below.

5.2. Social change – Transformation

The method employed created a space of interpretation of the interview data using structuration theoretical lens. It is an addition that helps avoid the trap of portraying immigrants as helpless subjects of integration practice and discourse. This section discusses the ways in which immigrants transform the issues of immigrant integration through their social navigation and sense making. It is a way of exploring “the process by which people creatively rework social knowledge to develop their position [...]”(Mahendran, 2013, p. 2). Transformation in relation to integration practice and discourse is presented in two categories of interpretation; multiplicity of self-identification and the shifting imaginaries of integration. By narrowly conceptualizing belonging and diverse identities of immigrants into ethnic minority groups, “integration policy debates are usefully thought of as negotiations over how best to craft a shared national identity in a social context transformed by immigration” (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013, p. 115). This is in spite of a great deal of scholarship dealing with the complexity of the diverse and transnational sense of belonging of post-immigration diasporic communities. According to Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002) “from the perspective of the receiving country, the actual placement of strangers is often conceived of as a threat to nationally cohesively ordered space and identity”(p. 130). On the other hand, the ties transnational belonging of immigrants represent are problematized in integration political and policy fields (Schrover & Schinkel, 2013). The lived experience of the Eritrean participants in this research reflects this discrepancy through their multiplicity of self-identification and sense making of integration imaginaries.

5.2.1. Multiplicity of self-identification

Regardless of the narrow interpretation integration policies and boundary making of belonging to either inside or outside ‘society’, the transnational experience of immigrants and their descendants blurs those demarcating lines. It transforms the socio-cultural order of things in integration discourse often echoed as ‘us’ and ‘them’ into an assemblage of dynamic encounters of everyday life. In the semi-structured interviews of Eritrean new and old comers, the participants responded differently when asked to introduce themselves. While the new comers connect their self-identification with their specific place origin – a town or/and a village in Eritrea – the old comers bring a diverse and complex identification. One participant who came to the Netherlands a child said *“if you want to understand me, you have to know my background”*^{OC1} because – he believes – that is what shaped his identity. Identifying himself as a Dutch person due to his involvement in the Dutch educational system since childhood, he argued that that alone could not be able to describe his transcultural belonging residing at an intersection of multiple encounters of cultures. He put this diverse description as follows;

“I had a lot of influence from my original culture, [...] Eritrean but I've got a stepfather from Indonesia [...] have got an influence from Indonesian culture. And then I have friends, from Surinam, Morocco, Turkey, and so on. And my family is [...] my brother had, for many years, a partner from Sudan and now from Dominican Republic. My sister live with a nice guy from Cape Verde island and I am leaving for many years married with a Dutch women. Actually, we are the United nations. I like it”.^{OC8}

In other words, the concept of integration and its presumed outcomes do not necessarily reflect the everydayness of life of immigrants. Pink (2012, p. 143) argues that everydayness is “at the center of human existence, the essence of who we are and our location in the world”. The above mentioned participant – by simultaneously placing himself as an insider and outsider the boundary of ‘society’ – reflects the everydayness of his experience. By placing himself as an insider he expresses his thoughts on integration as follows:

“And I think sometimes we are harsh. We are tough to people from outside. [...]it's not that they are not integrated. We have other reasons for that, economically and social [they are] different than the Dutch. Because I know a lot of expats who are speaking only English, but they're working. We don't bother them [...] but if I come

and I speak only English, they say you have to speak Dutch, you are living here, you are this or that”.

This interchangeable self-identification of an insider and outsider shows – this thesis argues – the dynamics and everydayness of belonging in society. It is a form of belonging hard to contain in the integration matrix of a clearly bounded entities of an insider – us and an outsider – them. In a similar way and challenging the idea of boundedness, another participant who arrived in the Netherlands as a child introduced herself as *“I think, I consider myself an Eritrean, Dutch, a refugee – still after forty years – but also as a Dutch citizen, an immigrant, an expat and a global citizen, just not one specific identity”*.^{OCw}

5.2.2. The shifting imaginaries of integration

The framing of post-immigration social problems has always been contentious and political. Scholten (2011, p. 35) argues that in the Netherlands there is a “persistent disagreement about what immigrant integration is, why is it important, who is involved, who us to blame and what is to be done about”. The thesis identified these disagreements in the Dutch parliamentary debates particularly the years before the first Integration Act of 2007. They led to multiple changes and amendments of policy, policy implementations and practices. It is submitted here that the contentiousness around immigrant integration resulted in experiments that affected the lives of real people. Immigrants – through their dialogical interaction – are as involved in the public debate as policy makers though limited to sharing experiences, rather than being involved in any meaningful way. The gathered (interview) data shed light on the experience of these shifting imaginaries of integration through the immigrants’ perspective. One participant described the rationale behind changing integration debates as follows:

“I think [...] economic status of the country[...] shapes the conversation of integration. If there is a crisis situation or an economic downturn, integration becomes much more turbulent and much more, you know, I wouldn't say aggressive but much more on the edge. [...] if there is, you know, enough work, or everyone has enough money in his pocket or is making good money, no one seems to be bothered about integration issues.”^{OCn}

There is wide range of research on external factors that influenced integration policy and public debates. The current atmosphere of partially due to Corona and the racial justice movements around the world, different conversations are coming into surface regarding the politics of

recognition in public media. One Dutch public journal – One World – wrote a story about the shifting imaginaries of integration through the experience of Moroccan labor migrants’ of 1970’s. One participant of the interview described his experience as follows:

“In the beginning we were guest workers: necessary for the economy, [...] Due to the poor living and working conditions, I immediately became active in labor movements [...] there was solidarity, especially ‘left’ movements and unions appreciated us, and just saw us as workers, just like them. I also saw myself in the first place as a worker, then as a migrant, then as a Moroccan. [...] Suddenly everyone spoke negatively about us, and people dared to express their racist opinions. Our own community has also changed. We are not all workers anymore, and more people see themselves mainly as Muslims. There is less involvement, which I think is a shame”^{xlix}.

These are voices that disappear to the background while immigrant integration is often portrayed as failing or a failure and various policy remedies are proposed. To what extent do these experiences matter and what contributions can they make to epistemologies of immigrant integration is something integration research should incorporate.

5.3. Agency - Tension and resistance

In discussing tension and resistance – as a form of agency – the thesis draws attention to self-reflexivity of subjects in their interaction with discourse and practice of integration. It acknowledges subjects as “both constituted by discursive processes and potentially aware of them, potentially able to actively appropriate, reject or reshape the subject position(s) offered by dominant discourse”(Nelson, 2010, p. 350). Both participants in this research – newcomers and oldcomers – were asked about their understanding of the concepts of integration, participation and what it means to be part of the Dutch ‘society’. The thesis identified a mixture of negotiation, tension and resistance in their interaction with a form of assimilationist messaging echoing through the concept of integration – as discussed in previous chapters. As one participant put it:

“your culture is your culture; you cannot completely change that. But you have to learn how to function in the society and learn the way they do things. You are not going to walk naked if they walk naked in the street. While preserving your own culture, you have to look at their success and what they did to be successful”. ^{NC4}

This newcomer's social navigation of the different messaging of integration echoes the intersection of cultural assimilationism and neo-liberal *responsibilization* (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010) in integration discourse. The different conceptions of integration inform research and public debates on immigrants' socio-cultural or socio-economic participation (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003); their identification to the host national identity (De Vroome, Verkuyten, & Martinovic, 2014). This in turn seems to influence the dialogical interaction and self-valuation of immigrants in relation to the concept of integration and their position in society. One participant expressed her navigation

“But at the same time, we did not want to be treated as second class citizen because this has to become our country too. What do you need? What more do we need to do for this country to, to have it, to call it your own? You know, if you are born here, you are raised here and this is all you've known, then you know that this is your country too”.^{OCe}

It is a relevant concern and aspiration of recognition when one brings research on the host society's acceptance of foreigners into discussion. A report on ethnic minorities stated that acceptance of foreigners by host society increased from 29% in 1986 to 44% in 2000 who believes they are an asset to society^l. The frequently changed conceptions of integration and its presumed outcomes – and the negative consequences of which on its subjects was once referred to by the Dutch Council of state^{li} – shapes the course policy and public debates. Nonetheless, there is little research on the extent to which these changes affect the everyday dialogical interaction of immigrants with their surrounding social environment. In the semi-structured interviews laid bare some of the tensions and latent resistance to changing concepts of integration. One participant – who was born and had grown up in the Netherlands – described her experience with the concept of participation and integration as whole as follows:

“You know, that's very interesting because this participation has been a relatively new concepts. So and I, to be honest, I've not really dived into it, because I felt like, okay, it's just another new concept to tell us that we have to integrate”.^{OCe}

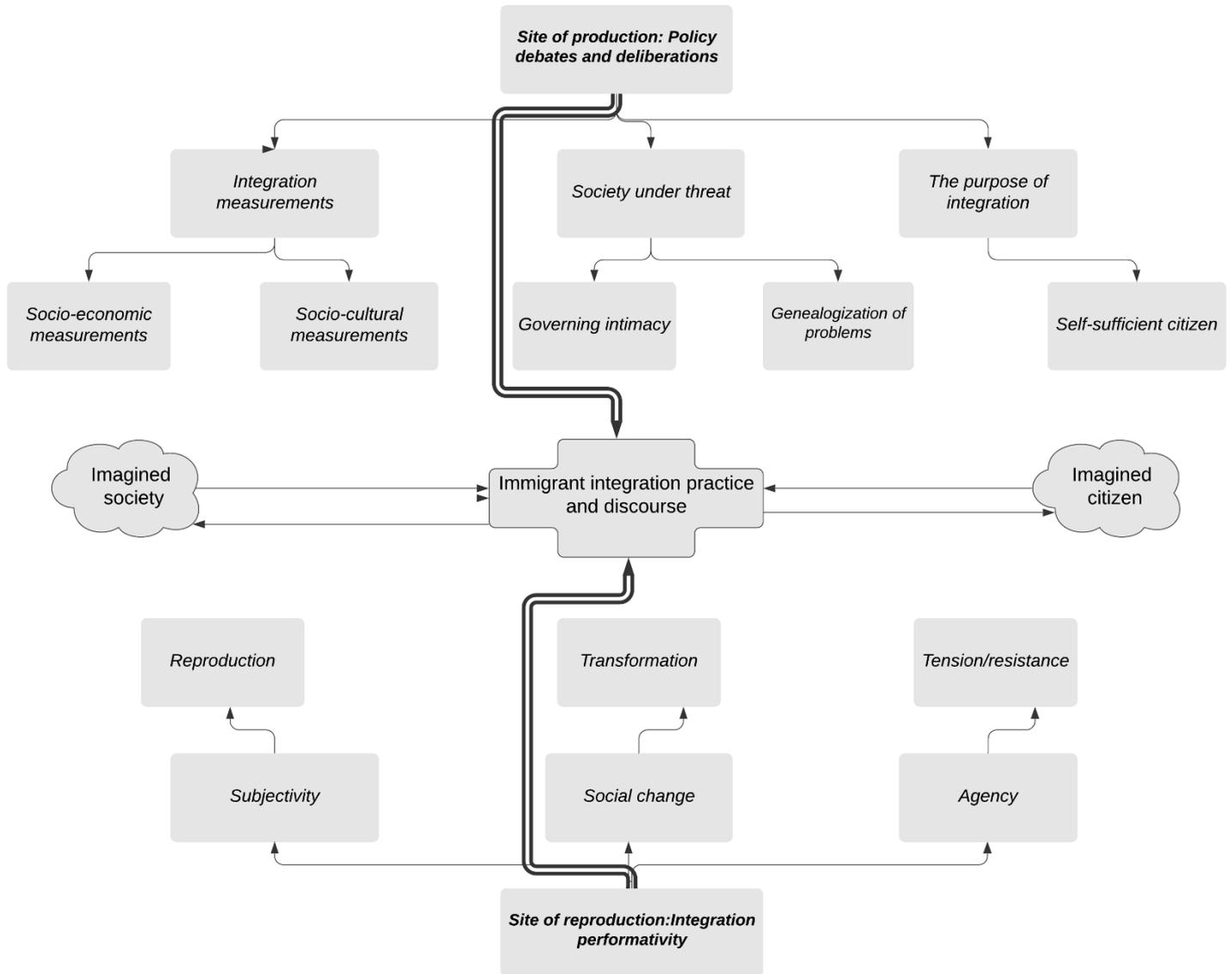
This expression is not uncommon when viewed through a dialogical interaction between integration discourse and practice and immigrants performativity. Immigrants – second and third generation migrants in particular – are implicitly or explicitly spoken to in terms of their progress or mobility towards the cultural views of the majority, often uncritically taken as ‘the society’ (Boersma & Schinkel, 2018). They further argue that –in the asymmetrical relationship

between ‘society’ and the ‘immigrant other’ – society is used as “a gaze from which the ‘other’ and his or her relation to the native self is seen”(Boersma & Schinkel, 2018, p. 310). It is a form of (re)producing and institutionalizing difference through integration discourse by establishing a category for whom integration is not an issue – what Schinkel (2017, p. 102) called ‘integration dispensation’. It is another way of sorting individuals and groups in ‘society’ into an outsider and insider while at same time make the imagination of ‘society’ plausible. Lea (2019, pp. 2-3) argues that when an immigrant performs well in terms of integration indicators (s)he become a ‘well-integrated immigrant – rather than receiving integration dispensation’. This way – she claims – integration becomes a game that cannot be won. The above participant – though born and grown up in the Netherlands – felt that she is spoken to in terms of integration. She described her own trajectory to be different than her parents who were merely surviving what was alien to them. She believes that her generation – the so-called second-generation migrants – has different demands. She stated her experience as follows:

“I think I would be considered fully integrated. I've checked all the boxes more than, I should have, maybe I did. But there is still a part of me that is actually, I think we are still in a kind of in a struggle to be recognized as being Dutch”. ^{OCe}

This brings the discussion to the start of this research project in which an anecdote from an documentary ‘Terug naar Akbarstraat^{lii}’ was used to highlight the societal relevance of this thesis. In that segment similar sentiment of a broken promise of the concept of integration and it presumed outcomes of achieving an integrated whole was conveyed by a second-generation Turkish person.

Figure 2. *The conceptual model of sites of production and reproduction of social imaginaries of integration*



In this chapter, the thesis discussed the performativity of immigrants in their encounter with the discourse and practice of integration. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews showed that immigrants – through their performativity – reproduce, resist and transform social imaginaries of integration. Social imaginaries of integration (re)produced in the parliamentary debates analyzed in this thesis, newcomers in particular reproduce perceptions of being outside society and the notion of mobility towards society. Here society is often imagined – spatially – as a destination yet to be reached. Moreover, a temporal element in the newcomers evaluation of their integration adds an evolutionary conception of distance from society that will be bridged

with time. This is – the thesis argues – partly a reflection of the conception of immigrants position as inherent *behindness* when compared to the host society identified in the parliamentary debates analyzed in this thesis (see figure 2). On other hand, oldcomers often resist and transform social imaginaries of integration through the multiplicity of self-identification and/or pointing out the unmet needs of integration. The analysis showed the tension perpetuates with the conception of society as bounded whole and integration as a gate keeper to its entrance in immigrant integration discourses and practices. It is expressed as a broken promise where immigrants still stand at the gate of society even when they fulfilled what is required in the integration process. It is a sober acceptance in which the (mis)conception of integration and its social imaginaries of ‘society’ and its ‘others’ are (re)produced that doesn’t reflect their lived experiences. As one oldcomer – who throughout the interview interchangeably referred as an insider and outsider – said “ integration is like telling a joke. Only others can tell if your joke is funny or not”^{OCg}.

6. Conclusion

The concept and practice of immigrant integration – in its current form – was introduced in many European countries to deal with post-immigration societal dynamics. The Netherlands – following the alleged failure of multicultural policies – is one of the first EU countries to introduce an integration policy. The social and political dynamics of early 2000's invigorated the debate on the existence of parallel societies or clash of civilizations across Europe. This played a role to justify measures of control that led to the practice of surveillance for those who are depicted of residing outside society through integration and its measurements. Complex socio-cultural and socio-economic societal dynamics of immigrant communities took narrow description of a 'well integrated' and 'not well integrated' individuals or/and groups. To support this description 'the society' upon which immigrants are expected to integrate themselves needed to be imagined as a bounded and unproblematized whole. However, immigrant integration since its inception is often coined as a failure or failing and the reason of its failure is attributed to immigrants unwillingness or inability to integrate. It creates a mirage of mobility towards the inevitable destination of joining 'the society', which gives a glimpse of promise for newcomers but a sense of broken promise to oldcomers who realized its abstraction and detachment from their reality.

To reach this conclusion, the thesis selectively analyzed two decades of Dutch parliamentary debates around immigrant integration policies and practice. It treated the debates as sites of (re)production of a society as a bounded entity in which immigrants reside at its boundaries. Using analytical dimensioned – diagnosis, attribute of causality and prognosis – informed by critical frame analysis, the analysis uncovered that immigrants are construed as a threat as various ways. On one hand, immigrants and their values are cast as inherently incompatible through the *genealogization* of problems that often diagnostically link to their origin countries. On the other hand, through the dimension of attribution of causality demonstrated that the *behindness* of immigrant integration – a construction that relies on genealogized data that is presumed to have explanatory power – was made sense of through gendered notions of mother and fatherhood in combination with the attribution of pre-existing social-cultural qualities related. The prognosis and inclusion of data before and after 2007 showed that, as the assumption of *behindness* of immigrant communities became an increasingly accepted and commonsensical explanation for societal phenomena, focus shifted from the why to the how question; how are immigrants to overcome the distance and 'arrive'

as it were in society? When certain value or qualities are envisioned as a threat to society, a mirror image of society is produced; if, for example archaic conceptions of gender roles are cast as a threat to society, an image of society as modern, equal and free of archaic conceptions is implied. When integration is cast as an individual characteristic and responsibility, a mirror image of a society that is comprised of individuals possessing such characteristics is produced. What all of these imaginaries have in common, however, is that they rely on a conceptualization of society as an unproblematic, bounded and homogeneous whole. By not including immigrants and descendants of immigrants in these conceptions of society, integration discourse and policies essentially create and produce the difference they claim to combat.

By analyzing semi-structured interviews to uncover the extent which immigrants reproduce, resist and transform social imaginaries of integration, the thesis brought immigrant performativity to the scene. The interview results uncovered the extent to which newcomers reproduce their perceived distance from society and what qualities they must attain or what activities they must undertake to narrow it. They speak from a position of an outsider with a viable promise of joining in. On the other hand, oldcomers resist the discourse by conceptualizing integration as acceptance by the host society, which places the question of integration in the sphere of society's willingness or unwillingness to accept its 'new' members. Adding performativity of immigrants to Schinkel's critique on immigrant integration as based on imagined societies, the thesis highlighted the mutual *constitutiveness* of social imaginaries of integration – where 'society' and its 'immigrant others' occupy separate spaces.

The thesis shows that the 'failure' of integration policies is a logical consequence of its deeply flawed conceptual underpinnings; 'immigrant integration' contradicts its aim of achieving an integrated whole as it (re)produced and institutionalizes difference.

IV. Reflexivity

While going up and down in this piece I was surprised with my own realization of not finding myself, my own voice. In a ‘story’ that is intertwined with my fresh embodied experience as a ‘refugee in need of integration’ – not finding my voice felt like infidelity. Deep down, it felt this ‘story’ is as much about myself as it is about the subjects I speak of, with and about from a distance. To some extent it reflects my own navigation, my latent and active resistance to an immigrant integration process that I believe is working counterproductive to what it preaches and intends to achieve. It applies concepts of ‘integration’ and ‘society’ that I believe doesn’t really reflect my lived experience and those whom I have come to know and work with. What is even more interesting is the fact that I – myself – was in the middle of the Dutch integration processes and obligations while simultaneously thinking and writing critically about it. This is to say that I have a “different level of investment in the identities and controversies” (Bell, Binnie, Cream, & Valentine, 1994) of immigrant integration that I discuss in this thesis. Throughout the whole writing process, there was this constant struggle between what I thought I should write, what is valued as ‘objective research’ and/or finding a more established researchers who would be able to say it for me, even in a much more convincing manner. In my head, it felt like a real dilemma to think critically against an integration practice to which I am actively subjected to. This compels me to think about the classic debate of the prevalence of subject over social structures and vice versa, in the structure – agency binarism. To what extent was/am I the helpless subject that reproduces, or the knowledgeable subject that resists and transforms in the integration discourse. Or was/am I the conscious, reflective and negotiating subject without necessarily being autonomous and free from subjectification from the integration process I underwent in the last five years. I am afraid I don’t have an answer for that. One thing that I can do is reflect on my own positionality, my positionality not as a subject of integration or a researcher in this case but as an individual constituted of multiple dialogical identities.

In this thesis – I argued – that immigrant integration policy and practice and immigrants’ performativity are mutually constitutive in the discourse. I attempted to uncover whether and how immigrants – through their performativity – reproduce, transform and resist integration discourse and practice. While analyzing and writing about the information I gathered through interviews with the participants of this study, I was in a dialogical processes with my own experiences. I had to think of my own latent resistance against a practice and discourse I

thought was – to the least – misplaced when viewed from the ontological and epistemological understanding of integration from the view point of its subjects. When you spent your youth in an oppressive regime – like the one in my country – and when you finally manage to put it behind you, freedom becomes everything and One becomes particularly attuned to recognizing other forms of oppression. This is not to argue that integration can be paralleled with dictatorship but to claim that it is a form of disciplining and control by rendering certain people visible and their mobility observable. It started early on when the burden of proof of your *refugeeness* – and thus your deservingness to some form of state protection – is up to you. I would argue that ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum seeker’ as a policy and as political categories play a significant role, not only in their later embodiment by its subjects, but also how they constitute a ‘status holder’. A subject whose status is realized through the courtesy of a society to which s/he may always be considered indebted. Encountering this complex system of governance of integration where its very presence is framed to support the ‘status holder’ in the process of becoming part of ‘the society’, the subject is left with no other choice but to be grateful. There are two elements here; the complex system of governance of integration – which the thesis made an attempt to challenge as counterproductive since it actively (re)produces and institutionalizes difference, and gratefulness – which I will discuss below.

People express their gratefulness for certain acts in writing or verbally to the subject in question. This could be a onetime incident and sometimes may come up at a family dinner table as a flashback story. When it comes to integration – however – the cloud of ‘you must be grateful’ always lingers around your head, if it is not about you it is about another ‘status holder’ who received some form of support – and thus should feel indebted. It is common to hear the ‘helping hands’ telling stories such as; “today I helped an Eritrean mother whose kid has some issue at school, she doesn’t speak the language nor understand the system”; “yesterday I visited a doctor with a Syrian family”; “Last week we took Afghan mothers who are always inside the house and have no contact with ‘society’” etc etc. The ‘helping hands’ appear in different forms and terminologies; language buddies, guest family, contact person, volunteers, including formal organizations established to support the newcomers. Several scholars have tried to uncover the complexity of the relationships that may arise in the embodied encounter of these different subjects and its overall contribution to the (re)construction of perceptions among each other. Aparna (2020) calls for re-imagining practices and geographies of ‘migrant help’ “which fix the migrant in a perpetual penumbra of gratefulness, un/deservedness and un/belonging” (p. 183). It is not my intention to discuss these

relationships here but it is something that I believe significantly shapes the everyday inter and intra-subjective dialogue and is thus worth researching. Nor is it my intention to place judgment on the actions of the ‘helping hands’ regardless of their intentions. It is – however – to express the difficult inter-subjective and intra-subjective dialogue that surfaces when you critically think and write about integration – the very subject that you experience in body and soul more than those who impose it. While in this reiterative processes of writing and reflection I came across an article in OneWorld² – a Dutch magazine – with a title: “Een vluchteling heeft niets te zeggen over integratie”. It translates to English as: “A refugee has nothing to say about integration”. It discussed a story of a Syrian man – the same age as I am – who on top of his own integration process tried to help others and while so doing expressed what goes wrong in immigrant integration. He said “if I, a refugee say this system doesn’t work, it will not be tolerated”. This sentiment resonates with the experience of writing this thesis in the dialogical space that encompasses my own embodiment of refugeeness, being an indebted ‘status holder’, a subject of integration and a person of multiple identities prior of being a refugee.

² <https://www.oneworld.nl/lezen/politiek/migratie/een-vluchteling-heeft-niets-te-zeggen-over-integratie/>

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