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My contribution to this symposium reflects on recent developments in Dutch integration policy. From a policy to accommodate foreign workers in the fifties and sixties, via the so called *minorities policy* in the seventies and eighties it has changed into an overt commitment to assimilation as a way of integrating migrants into Dutch society. Where the *minorities policy* explicitly underlined the meaning of the original culture (language and religion included) nowadays ‘becoming Dutch’ , ‘sharing Dutch values’<sup>1</sup> plays an overriding role in government policy.

It was Michael Goldfarb’s stimulating book on the emancipation of Jews in Europe<sup>2</sup> that gave me the idea to try to answer a simple question: is there anything we can learn from the Jewish integration into Dutch society that could benefit the development of an integration policy for the immigrants and their children of today? But as simple questions go, they most times have only complex answers...<sup>3</sup>

The history of Jewish integration into Dutch society is as much a part of Jewish history as it is a part of the development of Dutch society. It is as much about ‘who is a Jew’ as it is about “what is a Dutchman”. Because successful integration is a story of dual identities: it deals with the way a Jewish community in the Netherlands was able to remain Jewish while fully participating in Dutch society.

When we look at the experiences of the Jews in the Netherlands, with all its ups and downs, it can be regarded as a source of information about the way Dutch society deals with people who are different from mainstream Dutchmen. And it tells us a lot about what it means to be a Dutchman without estranging oneself from fundamental identities as there are : religion and the cultural history of your ancestors. And perhaps we can learn from these experiences. Perhaps, because

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<sup>1</sup> Minister Donner: Integratienota, Integratie, binding, burgerschap, brief aan Tweede Kamer, 16-06-2011

<sup>2</sup> Michael Goldfarb: De weg uit het getto, Meulenhoff Amsterdam, 2011

<sup>3</sup> In a even more complex study Sander L. Gilman is looking for “The Parallels of Islam and Judaism in Diaspora”, Chronicle of Higher Education, 00095982, 4/8/2005

- it is not easy to draw general conclusions from the history of Jewish integration and
- secondly one should be careful to use these conclusions in the social and political circumstances in the Netherlands of today. Dutch society has changed profoundly since the time there were relatively large Jewish communities. And
- in the third place the quest for 'lessons learned' is a risky one because there are fundamental differences between the integration of Jews on one hand and the road to full citizenship of e.g. the Catholics, the Dutch-reformed during several centuries or the Muslims of today in the Netherlands.

But there are also fascinating similarities when you look at the history of Jewish integration as the development of dual identities. It shows the tension between the safe island of the own community versus the necessity of building bridges towards the country one wants to (or has to) live in.

In the declaration that gave Jews their civil rights in the Netherlands in 1796 the basic idea was not that Jews were the same as the other inhabitants, but that they were different, separate in a sense, but nevertheless that they would be equal before the law.

Again and again Jews had to choose between integration while maintaining their identity and assimilation. Between joining Dutch society on their own conditions or joining by becoming unrecognizable as Jews. Most times this was not a free choice. And there certainly was not a stable level of freedom: circumstances in society dictated that level of freedom. In relaxed periods there was a wide range of choices, in tense periods the choices were more or less forced on the Jewish community. And in the darkest of times there was no choice at all.

My grandparents Wallage and Cohen lived in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a relatively relaxed period. There were strong Jewish communities and although anti-semitism still was a reality, Dutch society opened up to their children as it did to the children of other - not yet fully emancipated- groups: workers, women, Catholics. My grandparents lived their lives in the Jewish community in Groningen. They expected their children to marry Jews, celebrated Jewish holy days, in no way they would see assimilation as an acceptable way of living. But as my grandparents Wallage named three of their children Moses, Lea and Sarah, they gave the other three gentile names Bets (that is: Elisabeth), Philip and Jacques. My grandparents Cohen were as Jewish as Jews could be, my grandfather, Levi Benjamin Cohen, sang in the choir of the big synagogue, but both their daughters got non-Jewish names: Heika and Tonny. My mother's name 'Heika' was not even a common Dutch name, it was the female equivalent of the very Groninger name of 'Heiko'. The search for a balance into dual identities goes along a narrow path. They didn't give up their identification with Jewish life, but they identified with their Groningen surroundings as well.

This delicate balance is symbolic for the way integration of minorities into Dutch society has developed in general. It was the strong connection with the own group that gave comfort enough to require equal rights within the Netherlands. It is a classical example of what Berry called 'from bonding to bridging'<sup>4</sup> You need to be connected in a comfort giving way to your own community, to feel safe enough to bridge the gap with society as a whole. And even then the attitude of the majority defines the possibilities for the minority.

Jews did not come to the Dutch provinces primarily as nationals from another country, but as Jews. They did not come as Bohemians or Prussians, Hungarians or for that matter as people from the plains of Wallachia. Many of them had been wandering Jews before they settled down. They defined themselves as Jews as did their Dutch surrounding. The decree of 1796 that gave Jews their civil rights defined the group it was dealing with as 'the Jewish nation'. But what was clearly meant was not a nationality, but a religion. It treated – at least officially – Jews as members of a religious group not as foreigners.<sup>5</sup> The subjects of this decree got their civil rights although their religion differed from the other Dutchmen. As van der Poel wrote: Before the decree they were Dutch Jews and after 1796 they became – in the jargon of those days – Israelite Dutchmen.<sup>6</sup>

Although Dutch society has characterized itself often as 'tolerant' it has always been a form of restricted tolerance.<sup>7</sup> Often it took the form of non-intervention, live and let live. What much later, first half 20<sup>th</sup> century, was called the pillarisation<sup>8</sup> of Dutch society created a platform for integration on one hand, but seen from the point of view of the state it also created an instrument to deal with all those different religions and political persuasions. It made it possible to define common rules and regulations while maintaining enough room for the distinct identities within the pillars.

The regulations under which the Jews could integrate often had an economic background. When e.g. Middelburg allowed more Jews into the city in 1650 they did so not because of civil rights arguments, but because they wanted more economic impulses and expected that

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<sup>4</sup> J.W.Berry : "Immigrant youth in cultural transition", 2006 Erlbaum

<sup>5</sup> See for the distinction between 'nation', 'ethnicity' and 'religion': Wout Jac.van Bekkum, *Wie is Jood ? De geschiedenis van een identiteit*.

<sup>6</sup> Stefan van der Poel, *Joodse stadgers. De joodse gemeenschap in de stad Groningen 1796-1945*. Van Gorkum, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Wallage: "Identiteit: drempel of drager", inaugurale rede Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 8 febr.2010, Boom Uitgevers 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek*. Becht, Haarlem 1990 (8<sup>e</sup> druk)

the incoming Jews would help them realize this ambition.<sup>9</sup> One of the arguments against allowing more Jews into the city came from religious Christian quarters, where people warned (among other things) for the noise the Jewish religious service would make<sup>10</sup>...an interesting echo we can hear today when people in the Netherlands complain about the consequences of having a mosque in their neighborhood...

Not only economics determined the development or the limitation of the integration of Jews into Dutch society, religious competition had a great impact as well. Although freedom of religion can be regarded as a foundation stone of the United Provinces, doing away with the catholic state religion of the Spanish rulers, there always has been strong advocates to regard the Netherlands as a protestant nation. The position of other religious minorities cannot be understood without keeping this struggle for religious dominance of the Dutch reformed church in mind.<sup>11</sup>

The influence of the Enlightenment on the emancipation process of the Jews in the Low Countries has been well documented. It was the fresh air that stimulated many Jews to demand equal rights, to use the growing possibilities for schooling. But while society is opening up you also see the tension between the requirements from the own community versus the necessity to adapt to the rules and regulations of the society into which one hoped to integrate.<sup>12</sup> To have one's own, Jewish, schools was crucial for the development as a community. Speaking Yiddish or Hebrew was perhaps what part of the religious leadership wanted, but soon enough the pragmatic attitude won. And although learning Hebrew remained an important part of the curriculum, Dutch became the language in which all subjects were taught. The official government Inspectorate of the Jewish schools was very keen on the general level of education on these schools, and checked whether the Hebrew-teachers themselves spoke well enough Dutch.<sup>13</sup>

This debate on the position of the Dutch language in schools of minority communities is one of the fascinating similarities between the history of Jewish integration and the Muslims integration into Dutch society of today I spoke of. I faced this problem in 1991 as junior minister of Education when we had to decide whether we wanted Arabic or Turkish lessons to be continued in Dutch public schools. The Arabic or Turkish teachers had an important

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<sup>9</sup> J.Michman, H.Beem en D.Michman. PINKAS. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschappen in Nederland. 1985

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Wallage: "Plaats van Bestemming", Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 2009, blz. 67 Minderheden tussen aanpassing en emancipatie.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Israel: "The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806.Oxford 1995

<sup>12</sup> See Michael Goldfarb, o.c.

<sup>13</sup> Bart Walleet, Nieuwe Nederlanders. De integratie van de joden in Nederland. 1814-1851

problem, their Dutch language proficiency was not acceptable. It was not a new problem, Hebrew teachers some centuries ago did not speak well enough Dutch either to be acceptable in the Dutch school system.

The influence of education on the process of integration cannot be underestimated. First of all because the Jews did what other religious groups in the Netherlands did: they organized their own schools. Beginning as a form of introducing young people into religion, the Jewish schools secularized just like the schools of other religious groups. But it was the opening up of a state school system that provided the carrier for the formation of an elite, that became the spokesmen in the struggle for civil rights for the whole Jewish community.

So, in many ways the Jewish community could enhance its position in society helped by general developments in the Netherlands.

- Freedom of religion as part of the struggle for the creation of an independent Republic
- The loosening of restrictions because of economic dynamics, the contribution of Jews became necessary or at least welcome
- The consequences of the Enlightenment especially for the development of the idea of citizenship
- The development of a state subsidized school system regardless of the religious identity of schools end 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century
- The combination of pillarisation and fair representation brought members of a developing Jewish elite into parliament and other high offices of state.<sup>14</sup>

Although it was never easy, anti-semitism never far away, the integration into Dutch society was in a sense the product of a combination of loosening economic restrictions, the rising of the level of education and the formation of an elite, that had a serious position in several segments of society (science, banking, culture, journalism) while identifying strongly with the Jewish community in the Netherlands. So when the interests of that community had to be taking care of, the representatives could do so as important members of Dutch society.

Even the poorest members of the Jewish community in the beginning of last century had their elite-representation in some important members of the leadership of the socialist trade unions or the leading social-democratic party. It was indeed a large

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<sup>14</sup> Karin Hofmeester in Jewish Parliamentary Representatives in the Netherlands 1848-1914. Crossing Borders, Encountering Boundaries? In: Borders and Boundaries in and around Dutch Jewish History, Frishman, Wertheim, de Haan and Cahen, editors. Aksant Amsterdam, 2011

'lumpenproletariat', but as Bloemgarten explained, even their voice was heard.<sup>15</sup> They owed it to the same factors that made the emancipation of other groups, the workers in general, Catholics, women, many other groups, successful. The refusal to remain a second class citizen became part of the general accepted ideal of Dutch democracy. And all those minorities worked themselves up to a fair share of participation via their own, well educated, elites.

The road from 'bonding' to 'bridging' requires a strong feeling of community amongst minorities. Being Jewish, having internalized strong restrictions or at least a lot of overt or hidden xenophobic reactions, was formative in creating a strong sense of community. There were great social and economic differences within the Jewish minority but that didn't limit this sense of community. My own important source of oral history, my mother, once explained that in Groningen before the Shoah the Jewish community was deeply divided along social lines. There were Jewish gymnastic clubs for Jewish middle class children and a separate one for poorer children. The same was the case in the cultural field. This social stratification mirrored the social differences in Dutch society. Those differences were reflected into the power system within the synagogue. But it was their common synagogue and their common holy days.

Here we see a fundamental difference with the Muslims in the Netherlands of today. First of all: although in the political debate of these years their religion is the main focus, social reality is profoundly different. Most migrants and their children do not define themselves as Muslims in the first place, but as people from Moroccan or Turkish descent. The cultural differences between the countries of origin are more articulated than that a common religion would bond them. And the role religion plays in daily life is more and more reflecting the limited position of religion in Dutch society in general. While in public debate migrants are more often than not addressed as 'Muslims', only one third of the men visit the mosque every week.<sup>16</sup>

And unlike the Jewish experience higher educated migrants, and their children do not play their role in society as an elite of an underprivileged group, but they are individuals as all other higher educated in the Netherlands most times are.

Lacking an elite, divided along lines of national identities and confronted with a strong political pressure to assimilate instead of emancipate, migrants from different parts of the world find themselves today in a position that many Jews have experienced during the centuries of their integration into Dutch society. They are legally allowed to be there,

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<sup>15</sup> Salvador Bloemgarten: "Henri Polak: a Jew and a Dutchman" in : Dutch Jewish History. Proceedings of the Symposium on the history of the Jews in the Netherlands. Jeruzalem, 1984

<sup>16</sup> CBS, 2009

but they still are in many respects, education, participation, income and living circumstances second class citizens. Perhaps, as in the case of Jewish integration, economic dynamics will require changes of which migrants could benefit, but at this time the influx of workers from eastern Europe limit the perspectives of earlier migrants.

The described developments in Dutch society that opened opportunities for the Jews, the struggle for religious freedom by the United Provinces, the changes the Enlightenment brought, the development of the idea of citizenship, the pillarisation as means to cope with profound differences between groups in a cultural, political and religious sense, all these changes widened the path the Jewish community in the Netherlands took. It helped bridging the difference between the Jewish community and Dutch society as a whole.

Migrants of today face a society where individuals, not groups create the dynamics. Where the interface between individual creativity and technology has a much deeper impact on society than specific religions or specific group characteristics. The pillarisation as a means to integrate different groups doesn't function anymore, neither is it a platform for policymaking. The role of defined elites, thoroughly linked with education, has changed. What Luuk van Middelaar<sup>17</sup> calls 'the change of a party-democracy into a public-democracy' makes migrants more dependant of the opinions in the public square than groups that tried to integrate while democracy still was in the making.

Not only contributed Jewish integration to the development of the democratic ideal of the Netherlands, till the Nazi's destroyed the delicate balance between identity and participation, the position of the Jews in the Netherlands was in a sense proof of the quality of that democracy.

To understand how different the positions of Muslim migrants and their children nowadays is it is interesting to look into the report by an expert Task Force President Obama created after 9/11. The report is called "Strengthening America". Two quotes:

"...Before September 11 many Muslim Americans had begun following the path to integration taken by millions of immigrants and minorities before them...Yet the integration of Muslim Americans was not yet well underway in September 2001. *Their institutions were underdeveloped, and they lacked strong, visible leaders.*"

"Like previous immigrants and other minorities they have not yet developed the capacity to speak out and be heard clearly in the public square."

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<sup>17</sup> Luuk van Middelaar: De onmisbare band tussen politiek en publiek ontbreekt. NRC Handelsblad, Opinie &Debat, 6 juni 2009.

The Jews in the Netherlands by developing their own institutions, by accepting leadership from those Jews who were in elite positions to represent them because they were respected in Dutch society, emancipation and pride in their own identity went hand in hand. It is in short the defense of dual identities that created not only civil rights but also the freedom to choose between assimilation and emancipation. It is precisely this choice that many populist parties in Europe are denying Muslim migrants of today.

One could argue that the integration process of the migrants of today could benefit more from hyphenated identities, recent research in the Netherlands shows that the majority thinks more positive about minorities when migrants connect their own identity with that of the country as a whole <sup>18</sup>

Dual identities, that perhaps is the most evident lesson learned from Jewish integration into Dutch society, requires from the leadership of a country respect for essential elements in the culture of minorities. And it requires from minorities that they, while maintaining a strong identification with the group they feel they belong to, a permanent investment in the society they will remain part of. Neither the actual integration policy of the Dutch government nor the identifications of many minorities of today show that the experiences of the Jews during centuries belong to the lessons learned of Dutch society. So it remains very useful to keep studying the history of the Jews in the Netherlands, not only because of the meaning it has for Jews all over the world, but also because it can help to understand the complexity of the position of migrants of today.

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<sup>18</sup> Verkuyten, M (2007) What do people think about ethnic minorities? A reality check for survey research. In E. Poppe & M. Verkuyten (Eds), Culture and conflict. Amsterdam, Aksent.