To Obtain a Dutch Passport, Without Being a ‘Nederlander’

How immigrants and refugees act upon the culturalized image of the Dutch nationality in the process of obtaining a passport

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I hereby declare that this thesis meets the rules and regulations for fraud and plagiarism as set out by the Examination Committee of the MSc Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. This thesis is entirely my own original work, and all sources have been properly acknowledged.

24/06/2019
Gabriëlle Bruggeling
Abstract

In the last two decades integration policies in European nation-states have become imbued with culturalized images of a national identity. Many scholars have written about the way these images are shaped and how they function as a means of in-and exclusion. Fewer scholars focused on how this image is experienced on a local level and influences immigrant’s personal lives. In this thesis I show the different ways in which immigrants and refugees in the process of obtaining a Dutch passport are influenced by these culturalized images and how they act upon them. I argue that the image of the Dutch nationality, both in integration courses and in the naturalization ceremony, is created through a particular set of values of the Dutch constitution that refers to a free and equal society. These values in reality function as marking the lines between the Nederlander (Dutch citizen) and the ethnic-Other. During the integration process this results in institutional racism wherein refugees and immigrants experience lack of recognition of their legal, social and economic status. During the naturalization process, wherein immigrants obtain the Dutch passport, their legal status is recognized. This gives them room to interpret what it means to be a Nederlander. Through the development of three discursive repertoires I show how people who obtained the passport find different ways of defining themselves after they are legally a Dutch citizen. The diversity in meaning-making demonstrates that culture is not static and homogeneous, like the culturalized image implies, but instead fluid and forever-changing. I argue that the impact of the culturalized image reflects in these repertoires through immigrant’s doubts about their status as a ‘Nederlander’
Acknowledgement

Words are not enough to describe my gratitude and respect towards the people who have partaken in this research. Many times during my fieldwork people’s (sometimes painful) stories gave me a heavy heart, but at the same time their perseverance inspired me. I am thankful for their generosity and openness towards me. I am especially grateful to my friend Sayid who invested time and effort in arranging interviews for me and participating as a translator.

I would also like to thank those who have guided me during the development of this research, my fieldwork period and the writing process, especially my supervisor Oskar Verkaaik. It was an honor to be guided by the professor whose book generated my interest in this topic in the first place. Next to that, I value his supportive attitude which gave me new energy to work on the thesis after each meeting. Additionally I like to thank the different staff members of the anthropology department who have gave me helpful input during the development of this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction
During interviews in this fieldwork I was often asked: “where do you come from?”, or “are you Dutch?” When I affirmed this, I wondered what difference it made for them to know this information about me. What kind of expectations do people have of me within the image of the Dutch nationality and would I fit within this image? It turned out I did not always fit within this image. Some people therefore asked me if I really am Dutch. In an attempt to answer this I often said that “well, my last name is derived from a Belgium city: Brugge and my mother’s mother used to claim that she has forefathers from Spanish descent.” Some people felt more comfortable fitting me in the image of a Spanish nationality, while others guessed me to be from Poland, Russia or Albania.

I have never been as conscious of my nationality as I have been during this fieldwork. I didn’t only ask other people about what their nationality means to them, but also asked this question to myself. What does it mean for me to be Dutch? The few times before this fieldwork that I did think on this topic, was when residing in foreign countries and other people would ask me where I am from. The reply I got most of the time when I answered with ‘The Netherlands’ was something like: “oh Amsterdam! Weed and red lights”. So these stereotypes, is that what defines my nationality? I figured that nationality only means something to me in the light that it means something to others. The images that people have about a country and its people, unwillingly, becomes a part of my identity whenever I am in contact with people from other nationalities. Although I can’t always find myself in these images about ‘Dutchness’, it is not something that affects my daily life in a negative way.

The main actors in my fieldwork however are unconsciously or consciously affected by the images about nationality. These images are very closely related to someone’s appearance. If I mind the stereotypes people have about me when I am in foreign, I can hardly imagine how confronting it will be to live with stereotypes of for instance Arabic countries when residing in the Netherlands. Especially in today’s world - where we both live an online and offline life, where the information we have about other countries is mostly through the screens of our cellphones, computers and televisions- especially here and now images are crucial for defining yourself and the other. These images- in more ways than we think-determine our lives.
The interest in the topic about obtaining a Dutch passport started through a television screen: I saw a program that showed the naturalization ceremony in the Netherlands. It was the first time I got to know about this event in the Netherlands and while watching it I felt odd. Now that I have carried out this fieldwork I understand where this odd feeling derived from: an image about the Dutch culture was portrayed that existed of cliché’s and stereotypes. Through reading Verkaaik (2009) book on *Ritueel Burgerschap*¹, I understood better how and why the Dutch nationality was portrayed through these images in the ceremonies. However, what I was more interested in was how people, who are originally born in another country and obtain a Dutch passport, feel about these images. To what extend do they feel like they have to align to these images and do they believe in these images themselves? I therefore ask the question in this thesis:

*How do naturalisandi and inburgeraars² act upon the culturalized image of the Dutch nationality in the process of obtaining a passport?*

In this thesis I will use the Dutch word ‘Nederlander’, which translates to a Dutch person or citizen, to refer to the culturalized image that is created in the integration policies about what it would mean to be Dutch (‘Nederlanders’, adding the ‘s’ refers, to the plural form: Dutch people or citizens). I believe it to be an emic term, but also a highly political term since whenever ‘Nederlander’ is used by politicians, within ceremonies or integration courses, implicitly it is referred to this image of a homogenized national identity of the average Dutch person.

Even though the process of obtaining a passport is an interesting framework for making sense of how concepts of nationality and culture are used in current nation-states, only few social scientists have written on this topic. Researches that did focus on these topics mostly wrote about the image of nationality and culture that are portrayed by the government and politicians. The perspective of the local lived bureaucracy- basically the perspective of the citizens- is however missing. In this thesis I therefore aim to give insights about the local experience of bureaucratic integration programs wherein I argue that a culturalized image of nationality functions as a means of drawing the lines between a ‘Nederlander’ and an ethnic-

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¹ *Ritueel Burgerschap* could be translated to: ‘ritual citizenship’. Verkaaik focuses mainly in his book on the perspective of the municipality officials: how they organize the ceremonies and how they position themselves in these ceremonies.

² Naturalisandi and inburgeraars are the terms that I use in this thesis to refer to immigrants and refugees who are in the process of obtaining a passport or have recently obtained a passport. More elaborate definitions will be given in this chapter.
Other. In this chapter I will introduce my research by showing the theoretical meaning behind current integration policies, presenting the Dutch integration regulations, introducing my focus-group and methodology.

1.2. The origin of integration policies

*Integration* has become a powerful political term by which nation-states categorize who does and who does not belong within the outlines of a country (Olwig 2011). Integration is a social phenomenon and a political practice which first started to develop in Europe in 1960 and 1970s. In response to the increasing immigrant flows from people originally settled in other places in the world, integration developed into a mechanism that functioned as a protector of the concept *nation-state.*

The concept of nation-state is in conflict with its meaning due to immigration flows. It suggests that the ‘nation’ and the ‘state’ are interconnected, with ‘state’ referring to an institution that grants legal citizens political, social and cultural rights in order to sustain a life within a certain territory (Brubaker 2010), and ‘nation’ referring to an ‘imagined national community’ wherein a community shares a sense of belonging and loyalty founded on a common language, cultural traditions and beliefs (Anderson 1983). Where in the *state* members are perceived through legal documents, within the *nation* members are imagined to be part of a national community.

The concept of nation-state implies that an ideal citizen possesses both the legal and national membership (Brubaker 2010). The member is the bearer of political and democratic rights and duties of the state, but is also immersed in national values and traditions of the society. In reality, legal citizenship does not always lead to acceptance into the national community, and the other way around. An outsider, who migrates into a nation-state without legal membership, can still nationally be involved with the host society. The same way, a legal citizen can lose its connection with the national community by for example living abroad. Mobility of people is therefore the cause of tension between the fusion of the concepts ‘nation’ and ‘state’.

In practice the nation-state has never been a sealed institution and therefore had to seek ways to deal with mobility and membership of people outside the frontiers of the nation-state. These coping strategies are what Brubaker (2010) calls *the politics of belonging.* Within these policies that are defined in integration debates, it is decided which citizens are legal and illegal citizens, but also which citizens are part of the national community and which are not.
In this way citizenship through integration policies functions as a mechanism of in-and exclusion of people within the nation-state (Schinkel 2008).

1.3. Cultural essentialism as mechanism of in-and exclusion

In the sixties and seventies, integration policies in European countries mainly focused on preparing new citizens to be able to socially and economically sustain themselves in the new environment when becoming an official citizen. Since the 21st century, however politicians have proclaimed the importance of a moral and cultural citizenship, wherein new citizens are expected to conform to the values of a so-called ‘national culture’ (Olwig 2011, Verkaaik 2009). This phenomenon can be referred to as what Schinkel (2008) calls the moralization of citizenship, or what Slootman & Duyvendak (2015) call the culturalization of citizenship. Where a newcomer first obtained a formal (legal) citizenship and was expected to become a moral citizen eventually afterwards, the newcomer now has to ‘earn’ the citizenship by proving its conformity with the host-society’s norms and values in order to obtain legal citizenship.

This culturalization of citizenship is an outcome of cultural essentialist notions which developed in Europe since the constitution of nation-states (Grillo 2003). Cultural essentialism refers to “a system of belief grounded in conception of human beings as ‘cultural’ (and under certain conditions territorial and national) subjects i.e. bearers of a culture, located within a boundaried world, which defines them and differentiates them from others” (ibid. 158). In Europe culture has mostly been associated with ethnicity. With an increasing flow of immigrants, this essentialist idea of culture is threatened and often leads to ‘cultural anxiety’: being afraid of losing one’s own ‘culture’. In dealing with this fear, nation-states create policies to refuse mixing of cultures, and in the case mixing is unavoidable ‘naturalization’ of the population is suggested.

The essentialist explanation of ‘culture’ is opposed to the way anthropologists have been defining culture the last few decades. In essentialist form of thoughts, a “culture is like an ‘extended family’ representing one language, one culture, one people and ‘one national character and should at all costs avoid dilution and loss of its internal coherence” (Parekh 2000 in Grillo 2003, 166). Within anthropology culture refers to an interchangeable, internally contradicting collection of social behavior and collective thoughts (Verkaaik 2009, 17). In contrast to the essentialist notion, culture as the way understood by anthropologists, is not a static but a fluid and forever changing phenomena. Cultural essentialism is still an
important belief, since it is widely used in politics deciding on in- and exclusion within countries and communities; it is the leading ideology of the current integration policies and national images implied in most countries of Europe, if not worldwide.

1.4. The development of integration policies in the Netherlands.
Although the Netherlands had a positive migration surplus since the sixties, integration only became a highly debated topic in Dutch politics in the nineties (Meeteren et al 2013). This was due to the realization that temporarily settlers (guest workers) of the sixties were actually settling in the country. Next to that, in the nineties a rapidly growing flow of asylum seekers developed.

As a reaction to this inflow and the importance the integration debate gained, many political parties started to take up a definite stance in the debates (Van der Brug et al 2009, 6-11). As a result of this, the integration policy *Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers* was introduced in 1998. In this law immigrants were expected to follow an integration program (*inburgeringscursus*) wherein they attend Dutch language courses, social orientation and vocational training. To prove their knowledge of the Dutch language and society, they were obliged to pass the integration exam. Only after passing the exams newcomers have the opportunity to opt for full citizenship. The focus of integration was on socio-economic integration of the new citizens.

Within the nineties and at the start of the 21st century, essentialist notions of culture as mentioned above imbued the political debates about integration. Immigrants were increasingly portrayed in the media as a threat to the ‘Dutch culture’, therefore it was debated whether integration policies should also focus on Dutch history and cultural values (Vasta 2007, 713-719). With the start of the 21st century anti-immigrant parties in Europe increasingly gained popularity, in particular after the terrorist attack of 9/11. In these parties mostly Muslims were portrayed as a threat to the ‘Western society’. In the Netherlands this was the case for the party of the right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn. When Fortuyn was murdered, a right-wing coalition came to power in the Netherlands.

According to right-wing parties the integration policies in the Netherlands had failed its purpose. The critics argued that the focus on socio-economic integration did not inspire new citizens to conform to the norms and values of the Dutch ‘culture’ (Verkaaik 2009, 23-42). Politicians therefore increasingly promoted the Dutch nationality as a crucial aspect of the society and pleaded that it should be preserved. In order to sustain these national values,
immigrants would have to assimilate their cultural values to the Dutch values and norms. To the integration requirements an exam about the ‘socio-cultural orientation of the Dutch society’ was added (KNM). Inspired by the naturalization ceremonies in Canada, the integration minister Rita Verdonk implemented the naturalization ceremony in the Netherlands in 2006 wherein obtaining the Dutch nationality would be celebrated. Until this day, participation of the new national citizens in the ceremony is required in order to receive the passport. Within this ceremony, naturalisandi promise loyalty to the state by performing an official pledge.

Until 2006 municipalities were almost fully responsible for integrating new residents. However, since the introduction of the Integration Act in 2013 (Wi2013), immigrants are expected to arrange meeting the integration requirements independently (Algemene Rekenkamer 2017). The responsibility of integration courses has thus shifted from the government to the consumer market, wherein an immigrant is the consumer of the courses.

The current situation of the integration process and the practicalities that I have witnessed in my fieldwork are the outcome of the law of 2013. In political and public debates, these policies have been criticized. The current minister of SZW (Social affairs and employment), who is the first responsible actor in the integration trajectories, argues that the integration policies have failed on multiple aspects (SZW 2018). Koolmees (minister of SZW) states that the current system is ‘too complicated and non-effective’. Some of the points of his critique are that immigrants do not have enough resources to be fully responsible in choosing their integration trajectory, that too less immigrants pass the exam and that the integration courses lack quality. To improve current policies, Koolmees (2018) suggests giving back an important role to the municipalities to accompany an immigrant or refugee in the integration trajectory. Next to that he wants to increase the level of language proficiency from A2 to B1. The policies are still to be discussed and are expected to be implemented in 2020.

1.5 The content of integration and naturalization requirements
For a better understanding of the practicalities that immigrants and refugees have to perform in order to receive legal settlement, I will -in summary- mention the regulations of the integration policies in the Netherlands. In the table below I made an overview of the general requirements, resources and time frame of the integration and naturalization process (see table 1). Important is to notice that this information is presented in its most basic form. It is not my
intention to give an expanded explanation about the details and exceptions in these policies, but instead to give a brief overview of what is needed and expected in the process.

Integration
As the table shows, for refugees and most immigrants integration is mandatory. European, Swiss and Turkish immigrants are not obligated to follow an integration trajectory\(^3\). They can however still choose to follow it, but in contrast to most of the refugees, the loan from DUO will not be remitted afterwards. DUO is the Dutch institute for education that is responsible for granting information and loans to people in the integration process. For a refugee the integration process starts once he or she has received a temporary residence and moves from the asylum seeker center to a house appointed by the government. For immigrants from European countries, residence permits are not necessary. Immigrants from other countries can apply for the residence once they settle in the Netherlands.\(^4\) The temporary residence permit is valid for 5 years.

For immigrants and refugees who are obligated to go through the integration process, it is required to sign the participation statement wherein they agree to participate in the process. In the program exams on the following topics are required: language levels A0 to A2 (speaking, writing, reading, listening), orientation on the job market (ONA) and social and cultural orientation on the Dutch society (KNM). In KNM the immigrant is taught information about national history, democratic and liberal values, and systems of finances, care, insurances, schooling and more. Additionally it has a topic about cultural values of Nederlanders and about the constitution laws. In chapter 2 I will elaborate on the content of KNM, since it plays an important role in the culturalization of Dutch citizenship. Once the exams are passed, after three years\(^5\) of living on a residence permit, refugees without a nationality (stateless/staatloos) can apply for a passport. For other immigrants and refugees a time period of five years applies, where they can either apply for an unlimited residence permit or for the passport.

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3 The exception of Turkish immigrants is due to the Association Agreement between the Netherlands and Turkey. This agreement is however questioned recently. See the article of NRC: https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/03/13/remt-verdrag-met-turkije-inburgering-migranten-af-7356273-a1550111
Switzerland is not part of the EU but is a Schengen country and mobility of people is therefore secured: https://zwitserlaan.wordpress.com/als-nederlander-in-zwitserland-hoe-werkt-dat/verblijfsvergunning/


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mandatory Integration</th>
<th>Voluntary integration</th>
<th>Naturalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who?</strong></td>
<td>Immigrants or refugees:</td>
<td>Immigrants:</td>
<td>Immigrants or refugees:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- who are settling in the Netherlands;</td>
<td>- who are from EEA, Switzerland and Turkey, who want to opt for naturalization.</td>
<td>- Who are 18 years or older, living in the Netherlands for 5 or more years on a valid residence permit (EEA/EU or Switzerland nationals do not need a residence permit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- who are from countries outside the EEA, Switzerland or Turkey</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Who passed the integration exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- between the age of 18 and retirement-age <em>(AOW-leeftijd)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>- who in the last 5 years have not carried out any criminal activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- who want to opt for naturalization.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- who are willing to give up one’s own nationality (excluding the exceptions) and to perform the pledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
<td>Following integration courses and passing the exams on:</td>
<td>Following integration courses and passing the exams on:</td>
<td>- Having met the integration requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Language on level A0-A2</td>
<td>- Language on level A0-A2</td>
<td>- Requesting at the municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Orientation of the job market</td>
<td>- Orientation of the job market</td>
<td>- Paying an amount of 800 to 1000 euro for the application and around 60 euro for the passport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Socio-cultural information about the Netherlands</td>
<td>- Socio-cultural information about the Netherlands</td>
<td>- Performing the pledge in the naturalization ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signing the participation statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources:</strong></td>
<td>Loan from DUO (governmental institution for education). For refugees the loan will be a gift once the exams are passed within the required time period.</td>
<td>An applicant can be granted a loan from DUO adapted to someone’s financial status. It will however not be remitted.</td>
<td>An applicant is responsible for it’s own financial resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time period:</strong></td>
<td>Within 3 years</td>
<td>No time period</td>
<td>From application until the ceremony takes approximately one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Result after successful meeting the requirements:</strong></td>
<td>Integration certificate (inburgeringsdiploma) with which a passport or unlimited residence permit can be requested after 5 years of settlement</td>
<td>Integration certificate (inburgeringsdiploma) with which a passport or unlimited residence permit can be requested after 5 years of settlement</td>
<td>A Dutch passport with full citizenship rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. integration and naturalization requirements and results

(IND 2018⁶, Rijksoverheid 2018⁷, DUO 2018⁸)

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https://ind.nl/Nederlanderschap/Paginas/Naturalisatie.aspx
The time period in which immigrants have to pass the integration exams is three years. When this time period is exceeded immigrants can receive a fine and in the worst case can be deprived of their temporary residence permit (Algemene Rekenkamer 2017). In practice however, many people within the process ask for extension of the date which is possible under certain circumstances. Next to that it is possible to not pass the exam and still be granted the integration certificate. For this, effort must be shown in the hours of courses an immigrant has followed and the times he/she has showed up for the exam

Naturalization

To apply for the passport means to go through the process of naturalization. To apply for this, there are two different processes. The quickest and easiest process is naturalization through ‘Optie’\(^\text{10}\). In this process the nationality can be obtained within 13 weeks and the payments are significantly lower (180 to 320 euro) than the regular procedure. On the website of the integration institute (IND) there is a long list of the kind of background a person needs to have in order to opt for this procedure\(^\text{11}\). A few examples are: being married to a Dutch spouse for 3 years while living in the Netherlands for at least 15 years, being born in the Netherlands while living without a nationality for years, and being adopted by a Dutch mother. For most people who opt for naturalization the regular procedure as mentioned in table 1 applies. The exact steps that an applicant has to follow are:

1. Submitting a request for naturalization in the local municipality and signing papers
2. Paying an amount of money (around 800- 1000 euro for an adult)
3. The municipality checks if the immigrant meets the requirements
4. Municipality sends the documents to IND who then makes the decision (ideally) within 12 months
5. When the decision is positive, the immigrant receives an invitation for the naturalization ceremony


\(^10\) IND 2018. Optie. Accessed on November 26\(^\text{th}\), 2018 [https://ind.nl/Nederlanderschap/Paginas/Optie.aspx#categorieen](https://ind.nl/Nederlanderschap/Paginas/Optie.aspx#categorieen)

6. The immigrant is obligated to attend the ceremony and to perform the pledge in order to receive Dutch citizenship\textsuperscript{12}.

Naturalization is not a procedure that everyone, who first lives on a temporary residence permit, would opt for. A cheaper option is to opt for the unlimited residence permit which, in the Netherlands, grants you the same rights as a passport, except for being able to vote nationally and to be allowed to work in civil services, police or the national army\textsuperscript{13}. To obtain the Dutch citizenship in most instances, means -in case you possessed a nationality- to give up on your previous national status. The naturalization process namely asks for a willingness to give up on a previous nationality and to pledge loyalty towards the Dutch nation-state. There are some cases in which a dual nationality is allowed, this depends on the rules of the country of birth.

1.6. The participants: ‘inburgeraars’ and ‘naturalisandi’

In my fieldwork I have focused on a very diverse group of people, this makes writing about them as a group unrealistic. As shown before, there are two different processes that together will lead to obtaining citizenship. I divide the people I spoke with in inburgeraars and naturalisandi. The first term refers to the people who are in the trajectory of following integration courses and are trying to pass the exams (see table 1: ‘mandatory and voluntary integration’). This term is derived from the websites of main actors in the integration trajectory who use ‘inburgeraars’ to refer to this group of people: IND (institute for immigration and naturalization), Rijksoverheid (the government) and DUO. Since the term is used by politicians and officials I view this term as an emic term. Naturalisandi refers to the people who are passed the ‘inburgeraars’ category. These people have passed the integration exam and have lived on a residence permit before requesting the Dutch passport. The term naturalisandi is derived from Verkaaik’s (2009) book on ritualized citizenship in the Netherlands. Naturalisandi is not an emic term, but I choose to use this term to clarify to which trajectory I am referring.

In my fieldwork I met people with various nationalities and backgrounds. I decided to not make any categories within my writing, since diversity is the one thing they have in common and therefore a characteristic of inburgeraars and naturalisandi. It is also to show that

\textsuperscript{12} IND 2019 Naturalisatie. Accessed May 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2019 https://ind.nl/Nederlandserschap/Paginas/Naturalisatie.aspx

the different ways an integration or naturalization trajectory is experienced can only be understood through people’s personal situations, instead of national or ethnic backgrounds.

To still give an idea about the composition of the participants that played a major role in my fieldwork, I show an overview of the inburgeraars and naturalisandi in table 2 and chart 1. In order to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants, their names have been changed. In this thesis I handled the shared information with respect and consent was given for the material I used. Most of the people I met during my fieldwork have a refugee background. They came here to flee their country for multiple reasons but, mostly for seeking safety. With love migrants I refer to migrants who migrated to the Netherlands to live with their Dutch spouse. With economic migrants I refer to migrants who came here- in the first place- for job opportunities. Half of the naturalisandi and inburgeraars were female and the biggest age group are men between 30 and 40 years old.

Next to these main interlocutors there are also other people who play an important role, but with whom I could not have an in-depth conversation. These people are: the students in the integration classes, the volunteers of an NGO that support refugees in the Netherlands, teachers of the integration courses, certain friends or family of interlocutors and people in the naturalization ceremonies: municipality officials, guests and mayors.

The largest group of asylum seekers in the Netherlands is from Syrian descent, this is also the biggest group of refugees in my fieldwork. In 2015 Syrian refugees asking for asylum reached a high peak (CBS 201914). Many stateless people also entered the Netherlands in that year; these are mainly people from Palestinian background. After Syria, refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Morocco are the largest groups. Refugees asking asylum from the country Eritrea also strongly increased in the year 2015. To see the information on groups of refugees in the Netherlands in numbers, see table 2 in Annex at the end of this thesis.

Considering the fact that most people I met in the naturalization ceremony had a refugee background, I assume that the majority of the people who ask for naturalization are refugees. Economic migrants and family migrants have a smaller interest in obtaining the passport and are therefore a minority within the ceremonies. Finally, all of the people I approached and who were willing to talk with me, had a middle or high-educated background.

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I do not know whether this was coincidence or whether the people who successfully finish the integration courses and obtain a passport are the people with more ‘resources’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Migrated from:</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Sayid, Khaled, Fahmi, Yazen,</td>
<td>11 men 8 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Including Palestinian refugees)</td>
<td>Karim, Malik, Tamir, Mustafa,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amira, Fatma, Lina, Yasmin, Nadia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>Maya</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Elvin, Ramil, Seva</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Mahdi</td>
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<td>Love migrants</td>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>4 women</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
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<td>Economic migrants</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Akash</td>
<td>1 Woman, 2 men</td>
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<td>Scotland</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
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Table 2: Inburgeraars and naturalisandi in my fieldwork

![Chart 1: age and gender of my interlocutors](image)

Now that I have introduced the main actors in my fieldwork, I would like to put extra emphasis on the background of the refugees in this thesis. Their past experiences and struggles play an important role in their current way of living and perceiving in the Netherlands. This should be kept in mind when reading this thesis. To illustrate this, I will introduce some of the refugee’s struggles in the Netherlands due to bad experiences in the country they fled from and their time the AZC:
It was only after a while that I started to notice he might not be as ‘okay’ as he is always saying he is. I guess he was really good at pretending to have everything under control. Bit by bit I found out about his past and the influence it has on his daily life. Only then it made me see clearly that he was non-verbally showing me signs of a person that struggles with himself and his past. He was taking pain killers as if they were candies, he only ate once a day and he often bumped into things on the street when we were walking. It made me realize how naïve I am, to think that even after the first interview in which he told me he had been kept hostage by ISIS when he was in Syria while pointing to his scar and saying ‘they did very bad things to me’, I still believed in his act of pretending to be okay.

Weeks later he told me what really happened: he was kidnapped by ISIS just for money; his parents had to pay a high amount for him to be released. He was forced to put his hands on the Quran, while they cut through the area of his hand and arm. Next to that his friends who were kidnapped in the same place, were killed in front of him. Nightmares haunt him, and his health haunts him too. He still feels numb in his hand from time to time, despite having had multiple operations. Next to that him bumping into everything was explainable: he went to the eye doctor and it turned out that his eyes had gotten very bad. He would need an operation to fix them. He doesn’t have the money for it, since he is trying to support his family in Syria who are trying to survive in an unsafe area.

Struggles like these are part of Sayid’s daily life, I could make a long list of all the hardships he is trying to go through and all the things of his past that hit back at him on different levels. The weird thing is that even though I realized the seriousness of his situation, we often were joking around about the hardships of his life. There wasn’t much left to joke however, when one evening he told me that he is going back to Syria. The reason was not, as I had suspected, that he wanted to be with his family since he lived isolated in a small Dutch village, but because going back to Syria would give him more chance to die, than when he would stay here. Fortunately I can say that he is still here and is trying to continue his life, but that evening definitely broke me.

(Fieldwork diary, March 2019)
As much as I have mixed feelings of writing about his sensitive information so openly (but anonymously), as important I think it is to show how fragile refugees’ mental and health situation can be because of a haunting past. It is crucial for the experiences they have in the Netherlands and for the social and economic position they create within the society. Refugees enter the Netherlands with a baggage of past memories that are sometimes impossible to let go off and can thus impact their capability of finding a job and maintaining social contacts.

Their bad memories are not only gathered outside of the Netherlands, but also once they arrive in the asylum seeker centers (AZC). Seva (52) from Azerbaijan, stayed in the AZC with her husband and children for eight years. During these eight years she was used to moving from one city to another. When after those eight years, she was finally allowed to settle in one place, she did not buy furniture for her house until after months of living in the same place. She carried the fear with her that she would be send away to another city, another AZC. Once she realized she had the freedom to work on a new life here, she started to learn the Dutch language and became really good at it. One day however she had a blackout and fell down, when she woke up she had lost her memory:

*Luckily I did not forget my children, I was almost dead, I forgot who I was and why I was here [...] according to psychologists and doctors this happened because of all the bad years. Now everything is finished, now I am free and that is when everything stopped.*

(Seva, Almere, February 2019)

After her blackout she literally had to start over with her life, she learned the language all over and started doing volunteer work in elderly care. Because of her health issues she is not able to do any other job and lives on financial support from the government. The blackout which was caused by years of stress and uncertainty has thus scarred her for life.

For the two brothers Ramil (37) and Elvin (34), who fled from Azerbaijan, the inability to work during their seven years in the AZC, caused them to have disgust towards authority:

15 In my research most of the interviews were in Dutch, therefore most of the quotes have been translated to English. In case the quote was originally in English I will specify this in a footnote.
I do not accept to work for a boss, you know bosses are always complaining and I could not accept. [...] I cannot accept injustice, they treat you unjustified and I cannot deal with that. For seven years I had to accept, I had to shut my mouth. And now I am able to finally speak and that is when I say here [he puts up his middle finger]. Seven years we had to accept, every week you had to collect a stamp, you have to show your face to let them know you did not disappear, and the security was checking your house every month. So you have to, every day, every day, every day. You have to walk on your toes and then you fight with people around you, there are disturbed people around and psychological unwell people. You live with five hundred people who come from different countries and who are all out of their minds.  

(Ramil, , Amsterdam, November 2019)

Here again, the current life has been influenced by the refugees past. Living in an AZC accumulated frustrations that made Ramil unable to work for a boss. Instead Ramil and Elvin started self-employed companies, and are now successful in their business and work almost seven days a week. Their frustration to not work for years, turned into a desire for work that made them full-time hard workers once they settled in the Netherlands. Because of their current success, Elvin believes that the AZC made him stronger and to think back on it makes him proud of where he has ended up now. Experiences in refugees’ past can thus both function as a current motivation or demotivation depending on their social and economic status. In chapter 2 and 3 I will elaborate on the experiences of refugees in the Netherlands, important is to realize that those experiences are influenced by their past (often) traumatic experiences.

1.7 Method

I started my fieldwork with focusing on the core element in the process of obtaining the nationality: the naturalization ceremonies. Next to the ceremony being an important place for my observations, to see how officials framed the national image and how naturalisandi responded to this, the event offered me a dense group of people to approach. I focused on having small talk with the people while approaching and planning an interview later on through calling or e-mailing them. It was also here that I realized the language barrier could be a problem. I had expected that people who obtain the passport speak sufficiently Dutch, at least that much to have a conversation with mutual understanding. However there were still quite some people who I approached and who either did not understand what I wanted or who
were just saying ‘yes’ to my request and later on did not respond to my calls. Because of this language barrier, I was not able to interview people who did not speak sufficient English or Dutch (except for the few times Sayid participated as a translator). The interviews were mostly planned at either a public places like a library or cafe or in someone’s house. The interviews were informal, I had prepared some questions but throughout the conversation the topics could go in different directions. My interviews took, depending on how talkative the person was, about one hour and could take up to three hours.

Only later in my fieldwork I got access to integration courses and followed in total six lessons in two different organizations. I contacted multiple organizations but most of them declined my request to witness some of their integration classes. The two organizations who agreed gave me both the opportunity to see what integration classes look like and to have some small talk with ‘inburgeraars’. In the integration courses the teachers showed me material that inburgeraars work with in order to pass the exams. I therefore also analyzed some of these books. Important for this research is the topic KNM (Kennis van de Nederlandse Samenleving) which I introduced before and will be elaborated on in chapter 2. Next to that I contacted municipality officials to have an interview with them; all of them however declined my request.

My first intention was to focus on a few individuals and have an in-depth experience with them by involving myself into their daily life. In reality I turned out doing multiple in-depth interviews with people from diverse backgrounds. This gave me the opportunity to look for similarities and differences in people’s experiences. Some of my interlocutors tagged along longer than one conversation. This was especially the case for Sayid (23), a Palestinian refugee from Syria whose story I introduced in the above paragraph. I met him in one of the ceremonies where his friend obtained the passport. Through him I met some other refugees with a Palestinian background who were around the age of thirty. He arranged interviews for me with people he knew and in some of them functioned as a translator. Next to that, as a friend, I got involved in his daily struggles and tried to help him there where I could. Through meeting Sayid in my fieldwork I did not only talk with people who had just obtained their passport, but was also able to meet a small group of people from Palestine or Syria who are still in the process of obtaining a passport. These inburgeraars helped me to understand the experiences of the trajectory before the passport is obtained, this will be presented in chapter 2.

Finally I focused on different places in the Netherlands for doing observations in different ceremonies and integration courses. The cities where I had my observations of the
integration courses and naturalization ceremonies were: Alkmaar, Almere, Amsterdam and The Hague. These were also the places where I had my interviews. Throughout the research I also had interviews in Rotterdam and a village near Utrecht.

1.8 Positionality

My position in this fieldwork is important to keep in mind when reading the following chapters. In contrast to most of the people I spoke in my interview, I possess a Dutch passport that I obtained through the event of birth. Because of the Dutch nationality I possess, it is not politically innocent when I would ask questions to a first or second generation (Muslim) immigrant about the ways they feel at home in the Netherlands. As Termeer (2016, 15-18) rightly states, it can be seen as a form of ‘Othering’, since these notions are part of the integration discourse wherein foreigners are responsible for making themselves feel at home within the Netherlands. And to do so, the Netherlands offers integration policies to make sure minorities adapt themselves to Dutch standards.

I was aware of this position and tried to be careful with the way I formulated my questions. However, sometimes I still felt odd asking certain questions about the trajectory people went through. A few refugees gave me very short answers and had a bit distant attitude towards me. I realized that within the process, the people that they are dependent on are mostly Dutch officials and volunteers. In the case of refugees, they have interviews with IND (the institute responsible for carrying out naturalization and residence permit requests) who also asks questions about their travel to the Netherlands and other background information. In one case a refugee mentioned to me that my questions were similar to those of the IND. In most of the cases I had the feeling that people were comfortable opening up to me, or after sometime in the conversation became more open to me. Still it is important to realize, that even though I tried to take a neutral position within the conversations, for most of them I will still be a representative of ‘Dutch people’. This, as a result, will have influenced the answers of some of my interviewees.

This positionality was also strongly felt within the integration courses. I went to different classes with different inburgeraars and in every class I had to introduce myself, wherein either me or the teacher would need to explain that I am not here ‘to check on them’. The teachers of the integration courses also told me that they adapted the courses for me, so that I could see different aspects of the courses. Next to that people were aware of my
presence and often looked at me with an insecure smile when they were saying things in class, looking for an approval that whatever they are saying in Dutch is correct.

This chapter aimed at introducing the topic and the background information for having a better understanding of the following chapters. Chapter 2 will focus on the first phase of the process towards a passport: the integration trajectory. Before answering how inburgeraars experience the culturalized image portrayed to them through the KNM course, I will illustrate what this culturalized image entails and which messages it conveys. I will argue that these images put inburgeraars in a dependent position where their legal, economic and social status is barely recognized. These experiences are important for the way immigrants and refugees experience obtaining a passport after this integration trajectory, which will then be elaborated on in chapter 3.
Chapter 2: Integrating into a normalized society

2.1 introduction

Integrating in the society is important. Who does not integrate will not find a job and will barely have contact with Nederlanders. Living on the welfare is that really pleasant?

What can we do to integrate in the society? Do we need to eat as Nederlanders? Should we only speak Dutch inside our house? No, none of this is required. You do not have to do this. Nobody asks this of you.

So what does the society expect of us? In the first place, to understand and to speak the Dutch language. In the second place, to have knowledge about the Dutch society. To do this mothers can for example help in primary or high schools. Fathers can help in sport clubs of their children.

It is about the very ordinary, normal things. In the third place you need to know how to find a job. For yourself or for your family. Maybe you first need to study a subject. This will give you the best chance for a job.

(Capabel Taal 2013)

This is a translated piece from an integration book on the topic that I introduced in chapter 1: KNM (which translates as ‘knowledge about the Dutch society’). This piece explains to the immigrants in the course (inburgeraars) why it is important to take part in the integration process. The three most important things for integration according to this text are learning the language, learning something about the ‘Dutch society’ and learning to understand the job market.

To learn the language, it is suggested to participate in the society through for example a school or a sport club. It is notable that within this suggestion traditional gender roles are implicated (father goes to the sport school and mother to the primary school). These traditional gender roles are still implicitly present in the integration exams and books
(especially through images), while one of the emphasized national values in the book is to not discriminate on sex. This is an important characteristic of the integration trajectory: contradicting images of the Netherlands are portrayed wherein on the one hand traditional roles are portrayed, while on the other hand values such as freedom and equality are constantly emphasized. Next to that the values that are portrayed are constantly ‘normalized’. In this piece it is stated that the integration process is about very ‘normal’ things, while it is not stated what is meant by normal.

In this chapter I will answer the question: how does the culturalized image of integration policies influence the experiences of inburgeraars in the integration process? To answer this I will first show what this culturalized image in Dutch integration policies entails. I will argue that the way the Netherlands is framed to inburgeraars in integration trajectories is anything but ‘normal’ or neutral. The image is based on a selective set of national-perceived values that function as a mechanism of in-and exclusion. My argument will be built upon Baumann’s work (1996) on the ways the concept of culture is used by people in power and people on the local level and on Vasta’s work (2007) on how the integration programs implemented by politicians homogenize the ‘inburgeraar’ as the forever ‘ethnic Other’. Finally I will show that inburgeraars experience lack of recognition in their social, economic and legal position in the society due to the powerful images of the integration programs portrayed to them and about them.

2.2. Dominant discourse versus demotic discourse in the integration policies.

In the chapter 1 I explained that culturalization of integration policies is a means of in- and exclusion. It is a means to protect the concept of the nation-state. To make culture into a static concept means to not do justice to the reality of how culture of people’s can be explained in daily life. Where at the macro, political, level culture is communicated as a static discourse, on the micro- citizen-level, culture is both practiced as a fluid concept and often framed as a static concept. In his study about the culture of Southallians Bauman (1996) discovered that Southallians identified themselves with multiple (sometimes conflicting) communities and cultures at the same time. The culture or community they would identify or refer to were dependent on the context. Framing culture in this way is what Bauman calls the demotic

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16 With Southallians Baumann refers to people who live in the suburbs of Southall London, which is a community consisting of multiple ethnicities.
discourse, wherein people can identify (unconsciously) with different cultures and communities at the same time based on context and purpose. As Bauman daintily articulated in an interview about his book: “Every human is a universe; human are universes of ten or twenty different identities which capable people are able to gage in context”\textsuperscript{17}.

The demotic discourse stands in contrast with the dominant discourse (ibid.). Recognition of the dominant discourse- which is built upon homogeneous, bounded and timelessness notions of culture- is crucial: it cannot be renounced as a false interpretation of culture, since it is a big part of people’s interpretations of daily life. The question someone needs to ask about this definition of culture is how it is being defined and by whom. In case of the integration policies of the Netherlands the dominant discourse of culture is used to decide on in- and exclusion. Within these policies the complexity of a person’s identity is reduced to a single identity, namely the national identity: the country where the person was born and feels connected with. The images of a Dutch culture are political means to create a contrast between Nederlanders and people without an official document to be a Nederlander. In the same way legal documents are important means for in- and exclusion within the nation-state (Fassin 2011).

In the integration courses the topic KNM represents the dominant discourse of the culture in the Netherlands. Lems & Semin (2012, 7-9) show that within class books of KNM there are certain constitution laws that are emphasized more than others. Equality and to not discriminate is one of the most named laws, within this law ‘to not discriminate on sexuality’ is an important topic. Next to that ‘freedom of religion, education and opinion’ is mentioned regularly. Additionally it is warned that different forms of maltreatment are illegal in the Netherlands, such as honor killing. The Dutch constitution exists of a wide arrange of values and laws, yet in integration policies it is chosen to focus the attention explicitly on these laws.

So why are these values given extra attention to in Dutch integration policies? Verkaaik (2009) argues that these cultural values are a way to make a division between the secular values in the Netherlands and religious values of (mostly Muslim) foreign countries. The secular perceived values such as freedom and individuality are opposed to the ‘culture’ of immigrants from other countries who are expected to lack personal freedom. To secure that with the arrival of increasing streams of immigrants, the secular values of the Dutch culture are preserved, the other extreme of these values are ascribed to the new settlers. The fact that

\textsuperscript{17} “Interview with Gerd Baumann by Erik Snel” on Youtube, uploaded 9-9-2014

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRxW9ZseWQ0&t=366s
the KNM books focus on these particular values of freedom and individuality is therefore a political stance of who is in- and excluded within the Netherlands.

2.3. Normalization of the Nederlander

Sometimes we are very concerned about the way we get along with one another. Sometimes it seems like no one is acting normal anymore. [...] We feel a growing discomfort when people, who actually came here for freedom, misuse our freedom. People who do not want to adjust, who oppose themselves to our habits and decline our values. Who harass homosexuals, who boo at women in short skirts or who accuse normal Nederlanders for being a racist. I understand very well that people are thinking: if you reject our country so fundamentally, I rather would want you to leave. I have the same feeling. Act normal or leave.

(Rutte 2017)

This is a part of a letter written to ‘the Nederlander’ by the prime minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, the language he uses in the text is closely connected to the debates about integration in the Netherlands. Notable is that he talks in a form of ‘we’ and ‘they’ in which, ‘we’ are the people who are considered as a Nederlander and act according to culturalized images of Dutch values and ‘they’ are the people in the Netherlands ‘who came here for freedom’. Without naming it, Rutte is implicitly referring to immigrants or refugees who are to be blamed for Dutch values that are threatened. He uses the words ‘normal Nederlanders’ to refer to the born-Dutch citizens who would want a society in which people live according to these national values. To act ‘normal’ means to act according to the pre-ascribed cultural values that Nederlanders would share. If you cannot act upon it, you are not welcome.

Rutte uses the Dutch word ‘normaal’ when conveying his message, this word has however two different implications in the Dutch language. On the one hand ‘normaal’ refers to acting according to the norms and on the other hand it refers to decency, or to act according to the communal morality. These meanings are closely related, but politically they have different implications about the meaning of citizenship. Parties such as the Christian-

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https://www.vvd.nl/nieuws/lees-hier-de-brief-van-mark/
(the quote is originally written in Dutch, the translation could therefore be less accurate to the original meanings.)
democrats (CDA) convey the message that citizenship involves a sense of communual morality. Rutte’s liberal party (VVD) cannot convey this message of morality since it stands for individualistic values. On the other hand he does want to ask for a sense of morality with his ‘letter to the Nederlander’, he therefore uses the word normal to play with the word’s double meaning, and to still differentiate his liberal party from the way other’s convey messages about immigrants and morality.

This constant contrast between a normal acting Nederlander and an abnormal acting foreigner is a critical part of the integration classes on KNM. The word ‘normal’ plays a crucial role in referring to the dominant discourse of culture in the Netherlands. What is ‘normal’ is expected to be widely agreed on in the Dutch society; while at the same time it is rarely spoken what is meant by ‘normal’. The word categorizes which values are part of a Dutch culture and which values are opposed to it. People who are new to that what is considered ‘normal’ should therefore be taught about it. I would like to illustrate this with the following example of an integration class I attended on the topic KNM:

_The inburgeraars open the book on the chapter about the topic ‘social living in the Netherlands’, the picture of this chapter shows a man kissing a woman on a summer day in public spaces. The teacher asks what the inburgeraars see, the inburgeraars explain that the man is kissing the woman, a man from Syria mentions that he always sees this and is used to it. The teacher then asks whether this is normal in their ‘own country’ and asks every inburgeraar individually. The man from Syria and the woman from Vietnam answer that it is okay in their country. The young man from Afghanistan mentions that it is not allowed. The teacher then moves on to the next topic, questioning whether it is okay for women in their country to wear T-shirts and short skirts like the woman in the picture is wearing. Again the man from Syria and the woman from Vietnam say that it is okay in their country, and the young man from Afghanistan says it is not. In an attempt to find a more common difference between living in the Netherlands and living in one of the countries of his students he then asks:_

**Teacher:** what do you think is different about life in the Netherlands and life in your own country in regards to the relationship between man and woman?

**Man from Syria (M):** man and woman living together in the same house before marriage
**Teacher:** Yes they live together in the same house without being married. And do you think it is okay that man and woman live together in the Netherlands?

**M:** Me? For people here it is normal.

**Teacher:** Yea but is it a problem for you?

**M:** In the Netherlands it is normal.

**Teacher:** But do you also think it is normal?

**M:** Yes no problem! They first live together and then they marry. They will have experience, this is good. [...] I think it is better than foreigners; they first think about it and then marry, while we marry and then divorce.

(Observation fieldnotes, January 2018)

In this passage it is shown that the teacher is trying to receive a certain response from the inburgeraars that points out the difference between them and the Nederlander. The students however focus on the similarities between their country and the Netherlands and mention to not differ that much. The teacher searches for the friction between the ‘normal’ Nederlander and the abnormal other in the way that Rutte framed this in his letter. In this class the word ‘normal’ was emphasized most, the teacher used this word every time he explained a law or value of social living in the Netherlands. The phrase “this is very normal in the Netherlands” was repeated multiple times when he was going through topics like homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia. To normalize certain values here is a mean to make the division between a Nederlander and a foreigner clear.

The normalization of values within KNM classes means that class material about topics such as history, laws and relationships in the Netherlands are generalized and simplified. This way of teaching has of course practical purposes: to make it easier to understand for people who do not speak the language sufficiently or come from countries with different traditions. On the other hand simplifying and generalizing is what makes the information less adequate.

In one of the KNM classes I attended, the teacher played a game with guessing the descriptions to the words of KNM. The class content was about the Dutch society and the values of living together. The meanings that were given to the words were simplified, which in some cases gave a false interpretation of the word. For example, ‘homosexuality’ was defined as ‘sex between man and man’. During the game I told the teacher that this meaning
does not qualify for the word. He agreed that the description of the word was false, while mentioning that this is how the book formalizes the words and he needs to follow the book since it is closely connected to the final exam.

As a cause of the way terms were formulated in KNM, I failed more quiz questions than the other inburgeraars in the class when we played an online game with guessing the meaning of the words. In the following quote Scholten (2011, 37) shows why simplification of values is dangerous: “Naming- wording- reality is the first step to framing reality. Language is more than a neutral description; it not only describes but also makes reality.” Language lectures in integration courses, especially designed for inburgeraars, were not always using neutral language. Many language exercises tell stories about people with a different national background who are in low-paying jobs. The culturalized questions in integration exams exists of stories in which the question is always: ‘what is the best thing to do or to say in this situation?’ It can be questioned whether there is one best way, what the exam is however aiming at is to teach the inburgeraar the ‘normal way’ of doing or saying things as a Nederlander.

Image 1 shows an example of a question in an integration exam that expresses the value of equality in the Netherlands and respecting individual choices. In the exam a male voice says:

*Jan [common Dutch name] and Rasheed [seemingly Arabic name] are in the city, they see people walk who only wear black clothes. Rasheed mentions: these people look weird, they have to wear normal clothes right?*

Again the word normal is used here, but this time to refer to the mainstream Nederlander. Option A is conflicting, implicitly saying that the way these people dress is not part of the Dutch culture (when showing a picture of the girl and boy wearing ‘average’ clothing), while on the other hand the question is trying to convey the message that in the Netherlands it doesn’t matter what you wear.

Conflicting portrayals of the Dutch values is part of the content of integration courses and exams. In an article with the (Dutch) title: ‘integrating into a country that doesn’t exist’ Van Liere (2018)\(^{19}\) notices that in the integration exam images do not show a ‘multicultural’ society: the people with an ethnic look or name represent the inburgeraar, the people who represent Dutch nationals in the role of a doctor, neighbor or politician are only represented as

\(^{19}\) One World. 2018. *inburgeren in een land dat niet bestaat*. 30-05-2018
‘white’ people. Next to that traditional gender roles are portrayed and homosexuals and transgender are left out of the picture. Contradictory, the emphasis on equality and freedom of sexuality is highly valued in integration policies; still final exams show the contrary of the equality and freedom and instead portray images of a society with traditional (gender) roles.

2.4. Inburgeraars and institutional racism
The above paragraph shows, both in KNM and in Rutte’s speech the difference between the immigrant and the Nederlander is nowhere explicitly stated, however implicitly through naming liberal values -that stand opposed to traditional values and thus traditional ways of living- the line between the (perceived) culturally different immigrant and the Nederlander are drawn (Verkaaik 2007). Additionally, images of ‘white’ Nederlanders and the ethnically

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different appearing immigrant play an important role in appointing the traditional values to the ‘ethnic Other’. In the KNM exam the inburgeraar is always the person who has a lack of knowledge about the cultural values and customs of the society and at the same time the person who has a different ethnic appearance than the ‘white Nederlander’. For the inburgeraar who does not identify him- or herself as the traditional ‘ethnic Other’, the content of the KNM exam can feel conflicting:

It’s a very funny exam. Yea maybe for some people who have difficulties with the language it is not but it is a very funny exam [laughs]. [...] The book is okay but the exam has weird questions, for example the question is: you are going with your Dutch neighbor to a restaurant or café and your neighbor orders a beer. Because of your religion you cannot have beer, so what do you do? [laughs] Your neighbor is homosexual what eh [laughs] if you know this, what is your reaction? And maybe this is difficult for people who did not study in their own countries or they are traditional in their religion, maybe for them, but for us it was a joke [laughs].

(Mahdi, February 2019, Alkmaar)

Mahdi (43), a refugee from Iran, shows in this excerpt that the content makes him laugh, Without his consent, the KNM content puts him in the frame of a traditional Other. To clarify that he does not identify himself like this he states that for him to be asked these questions are experienced as a ‘joke.’ He however does believe that there are inburgeraars for whom these questions could be useful. What this example shows is that the integration programs (like KNM) implemented for inburgeraars, homogenize the inburgeraar as such, into a single image of the immigrant or refugee that stands opposed to the Dutch liberal values. As Baumann (1996) shows, the dominant discourse is a produced cultural image by political power, while the way culture is experienced locally is fluid and forever-changing. KNM is introduced as information that helps the inburgeraar with settling in the Netherlands and thus with obtaining a legal, social and economic status. In reality however-since static culture is not the practiced form of culture- the culture portrayed in KNM is a non-existent and fabricated image about what all Nederlanders would have in common. What Mahdi’s excerpt shows is that in reality not every inburgeraar is backwards and traditional and not every Nederlander is liberal and secularized.
Integration courses are perceived as necessary since the ‘culture’ of the inburgeraar would differ from the Nederlander and therefore education on national values would be needed. The integration programs are thus supposed to help the inburgeraar settle. Vasta (2007, 727-732) argues that the Netherlands keeps up the image of tolerant society wherein racist discrimination does not occur. Instead any form of discrimination is swept together as ‘cultural discrimination’, which perceives the cause of discrimination as a result of a migrant’s background. The reason for discrimination is then framed as the migrant’s deviating culture: failure of integration of immigrants is the cause of cultural difference between them and the Nederlander. However, the aspects that are actually discriminated on through integration programs are external characteristics of inburgeraars, such as ethnic-appearance, skin-color and national background. This is what Vasta (2007, 728) calls institutional racism, which is defined “as the role played by the state and its institutions in reproducing the social exclusion of immigrants or ethnic minorities. […] The power of the dominant group is sustained through its structures and institutions, such as laws, policies and administrative practices, education, housing, indicating marginalization.”

Vasta (ibid.) chooses to call it racism instead of discrimination since racism focuses more particularly on the “phenotypical characteristics, cultural markers and the national origin” of immigrant groups, while discrimination focuses more on ‘cultural background’ in general. At the same time the term racism is silenced in Dutch politics in order to keep up the image of (multicultural) tolerance. The reason for the inequality between the Nederlander and the immigrant in for example the job market is consequently framed to be due to the immigrant deviating cultural values and expectations in comparison to the Nederlander.

How is this institutional racism experienced by the inburgeraars in the integration process? I will argue that most inburgeraars, because of this institutional racism, experience lack of recognition of their social, economic and legal position in the society. The three spheres in which they experience this institutional discrimination are through bureaucracy, through language and through social supporters.

**Bureaucracy**

The first institutional racism starts as soon as refugees enter the country, the refugees are segregated from the rest of the population with their settlement in asylum centers (AZC). In this place where they are not allowed to work on a societal position or status, refugees wait until they either receive a legal status or are send away. Their status of a potential legal citizen is not recognized as long as IND- the institute that decides on granting immigrants and
refugees legal documents - does not approve their request for a residence permit (Korac 2003, 7-8). The wait can vary from months till years. This activity leads to feelings of purposeless and aimlessness. In the following example, Malik (30)- Sayid’s friend- who is a Palestinian refugee from Syria described this aimlessness as follows:

Malik: *In Germany it’s a little bit better than in the Netherlands, in Germany they give language classes from the first day you arrive there. But here [in the Netherlands] I waited 13 months; I could start the classes only after I got my house. So this period is very long, only waiting, I couldn’t do anything.*

[He then says something in Arabic to Sayid, and Sayid translates it]

Sayid: *you can say his mind felt like it was freezed*

Gabrielle: *yea okay*

Malik: *do you understand? Didn’t do anything, just sleeping, eating, sleeping, eating*\(^{21}\)

(Rotterdam, March 2019)

Malik dependency on the decision of bureaucratic actors thus made his time and mind stand still, or as Al Galidi (2016, 97)\(^{22}\) describes in his novel about his experiences in the AZC: “Imagine a building with five hundred people, some people have become too tired or too crazy because of the long waiting. Such a building changes into a grave, wherein the time of a few hundred people has been buried”. The feelings of aimlessness, frustration and loneliness are a result of the waiting activity. They are at the same time the local experience of what IGupta (1995) calls the *ethnography of the state*, or in this case the local experiences of bureaucracy Experiences citizens have with the nation-state on a local level also decide most of the images that local people create about the state, which will be crucial for the way they perceive their place in the society when they obtain legal documents (*chapter 3*).

Even after leaving the AZC and having entered the integration trajectory refugees find themselves again in a period of waiting. Korac (2003, 11-12) shows in her comparative studies on experiences of refugees in the Netherlands and Italy that the stay in the asylum center is decisive for the way refugees live in the Netherlands after settlement. In the AZC people were isolated from the economic market and the social society, after settlement this

\(^{21}\)This quote was originally spoken in Dutch, except for Sayid who translated to me in English

\(^{22}\)This book is originally written in Dutch, the quotes I used have been carefully translated to English
backlog often lingers on. This is the case for Sayid’s friends Malik (30) and Karim (33). They both finished the integration exam but are struggling to find a meaningful job and lack social contact with Dutch citizens. They opted for the Dutch nationality to obtain their first status (since they are Palestinian refugees and in Netherlands they are viewed as stateless), they still have to wait around a year before they will obtain it. In the meanwhile they wait, in a similar way to when they were in the AZC:

In the interview these young men were sitting together in Karim’s living room in Rotterdam, smoking cigarettes, watching soccer and drinking Yerba Mate tea with sugar. They had told me that when they were in the AZC they used to pass time by playing cards. For me the event of them coming together did not feel like it was just for fun, but felt more like their way to feel a sense of security within their unsecure lives. To feel secure around people who are in a similar situation as oneself.

(Diary observation, March 2019)

Malik told me that he moved from Amsterdam to Rotterdam just to live close to his friends. In Amsterdam he did not have any contacts, and the only contacts he has in the Netherlands are his Palestinian friends in Rotterdam. Even though they have each other, they do not have the social contacts they wish for: befriending Nederlanders or finding a partner. These single men hope to find a girlfriend that they either bring from Syria to the Netherlands or a Dutch girlfriend. For a Dutch girlfriend they need language capacity that they were not able to obtain through the language courses, while for a Syrian girlfriend they would need to find a job, to show to the state that they can sustain the partner economically. Both the language capacity and work are interrelated, to find work the inburgeraar needs to have a sufficient language capacity and to have sufficient language capacity inburgeraars need practice to either work or social contacts with native-speakers. They end up in a vicious circle where it is hard to obtain one goal without the possession of the other. This again can lead to feelings of loneliness, or as Malik mentioned:

The biggest problem for the Syrian people here, or eh for the refugees, is loneliness

(Rotterdam, March 2019).
Waiting and the feelings that derive from waiting: loneliness, frustration and aimlessness, are the local experiences of bureaucracy inburgeraars experience. These experiences are the outcome of the *indifference of bureaucracy* (Herzfeld 1993, 1-17). Herzfeld argues that bureaucracy should be understood as a social phenomenon, in which we have expectations of the unfairness of bureaucratic systems, and in which everyone blames everyone but in the end no one can be blamed. Bureaucrats themselves often blame the organizational system of bureaucracy for its slowness. In reality however bureaucracy is built upon symbolic systems derived from a framed ‘Western identity’, functioning as a means of deciding who belongs and who does not. The slowness of the bureaucracy is locally experienced by the refugees who are requested to wait for their legal status. For a born-Dutch the process of obtaining a passport or document is on the other hand much easier. These results of bureaucratic rules designed for means of in-and exclusion are an outcome of the institutional racism present in the Dutch society.

**Language**

Similarly to bureaucracy, the process of mastering the Dutch language can be experienced as slow and frustrating. Inburgeraars are expected to follow courses on the Dutch language, KNM and job orientation. With the implementation of this program it is ignored that inburgeraars will have to cope with discrimination based on their ethnic-appearance (Vasta 2007). Instead the image is portrayed that once inburgeraars successfully complete the integration courses they will have the same chances in the job market and the social sphere as the Nederlander. In case the inburgeraar still fails to have the same chances after passing the exams, it is due to lack of effort and training. In my fieldwork I experienced that many inburgeraars were frustrated with the lack of language proficiency they had after passing the exams. At the same time their eagerness to learn and adapt was not recognized. Lina (29) from Palestine, just like many other inburgeraars, was unsatisfied with the efficiency of the integration courses in regards to the duration it took her to learn the language. She only had integration classes once per week and expressed that if she had more classes in the week she would’ve learned the language much faster, her teacher however did not support her request for this. She was frustrated about it mainly for the following reason:

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23 Lina had an actual Palestinian passport, in the Netherlands this nationality is however not recognized. She is therefore recognized as a stateless refugee.
I am serious about this because I am serious about time, you know. So now it took me two years, I lost two years of my life to learn Dutch, while in that time I could have learned it so much better than now. I passed all the integration exams in one time but I do not think this is enough.

(Almere, March 2019)

Lina thus felt that her need to learn the language in a proper way was not recognized. Instead the teacher told her to go out and talk with people to learn the language. She however explained that this was not possible, firstly because she didn’t have any Dutch friends and secondly when she tried to talk Dutch with her neighbors misunderstandings lead to end the conversation quickly. Vasta (2007 727-732) argues that the institutional racism can, among others, be felt through the results of the integration programs. In the Netherlands the lack of intended effects of the integration courses are often either perceived as the fault of the policies or as the fault of the inburgeraar’s effort. In reality the inburgeraars- as a group - are homogenized through implementing the same program on a group of people with diversity in needs and ways of studying. Mustafa (55) and Amira (44) for instance noted that their integration course expected them to work with computers; they however never studied through computers before and found it hard to adjust. Inburgeraars are thus expected to put in effort for learning the language, while at the same time the implemented integration programs are often felt as ineffective by the inburgeraar.

Not being recognized as wanting to learn the language but at the same time being dependent on the language for feeling a sense of inclusion in the society can be experienced as frustrations. Language is perceived as important for the inburgeraar since it can help them to sustain an socially and economic independent position in the society:

In the break of the integration course an inburgeraar mentioned: “because of the Dutch language I do not have a job”. He compared himself to his friend -another inburgeraar- who had found a job as garbage collector; he explained that he does not accept to do a job like that. He applied for a driver job but he was told that he does not speak Dutch properly to work in the function. He was frustrated about this fact and mentioned “I can drive, I drove in my country too, but I do not speak Dutch and therefore I cannot do a driver job!”

(Observation field notes, Almere, March 2019)
Without sufficient language proficiency inburgeraars either have to work in low standard jobs, like collecting garbage or wait for applying for jobs until they talk sufficient Dutch. In the excerpt the capability of the inburgeraar to work a job as a driver is not recognized because his language is perceived as insufficient. Language sufficiency therefore functions as a form of in- and exclusion both on the job market and in the social sphere. Language is at the same time a form of embodiment, since sufficient language gives the impression to a native-speaker that the inburgeraar is hard working because he has adapted to the societal norms (Vasta 2007). On the other hand to not have mastered the language and a good accent, can lead to discrimination:

*When people first see me they think that I am from European descent and some people think that I am a Nederlander. But when they heard me talk they realized that I am a foreigner and then I sense that their attitude towards me changes. [...] they started treating me with lack of respect and with prejudices. They think of me as shallow and joke about me. It’s not a good situation.*

(Village near Utrecht, March 2019)

Tamir’s ethnic appearance gives an impression of him being a Nederlander, however as he experiences, as long as his language does not resonate with the image of a ‘Nederlander’ he will not be seen and treated like one. As I experienced in the conversations with inburgeraars and the way teachers talked with the inburgeraars, to talk with insufficient language skills makes native-speakers turn into the role of a teacher. One moment I was asked by a teacher to help some students with a language exercise. I started using my hands a lot to portray what I was referring to and next to that used a language as the way parents talk to their small children: skipping certain words and using a lot of intonation. This role-play leads to an unfair ratio in which the native-speaker has more power because of its linguistic knowledge, while the inburgeraar is dependent on the native-speaker.

The lack of Dutch sufficiency and the lack of knowledge about the classes inburgeraars can partake in, can be misused by integration courses. Berat, a teacher of integration courses, gave me a few examples in which integration courses can easily sustain as an organization even though their quality is bad. Integration courses, for instance, can ask more money from inburgeraars than necessary. Most inburgeraars namely receive a loan from DUO to follow classes, with this loan they can pay the integration course. Since inburgeraars are unaware of the choices they have in classes and what is expected in these classes, schools
can offer unnecessary accessories such as laptops for inburgeraars in order to increase the organization’s profit.

**Supporting actors**

Supporting actors are the people who – through different roles- guide inburgeraars in their integration trajectory. The main supporting actors I witnessed in my fieldwork were integration teachers, municipality officials and volunteers from organizations that support refugees once they have left the AZC and settle in a house. Institutional racism takes place through these supportive actors in the way that in each of these relationships the refugee is dependent on the supportive actor. Because of this relationship supporting actors can implement their own kind of ‘integration program’ on the inburgeraar. They can then both help with giving access to different social and economic resources, but can also function as a disruptive factor in the development of the image a refugee forms about the Netherlands. Below I will give some examples of what these dependent relationships can entail.

Mahdi (43) a refugee from Iran, had positive experiences with his supportive actors. The volunteers (a Dutch couple) who helped him settle in the Netherlands also became his friends. The couple helped him with information about good integration schools and trainings. Mahdi then followed an intensive language course and job market skills course for high-educated refugees. In Iran he had a high-valued job and through the language and job courses he was able to get an exact same function in the Netherlands. In the interview he explained how thankful he was to those volunteers and showed me a picture of his family together with the Dutch couple while saying that they are his best friends. The supportive actors thus helped Mahdi to change his dependent status into independence.

Most refugees have a contact person in the municipality and often a contact person through volunteer organizations that function as societal supporters. These volunteers play a crucial role in the first experiences refugees create of the Netherlands and the image of a Nederlander. On the other hand this gives a role of power to the supportive actors: they have the freedom to frame the ‘Nederlander’ to the refugee with their own interpretations since they are assigned the status of a representative of a ‘Nederlander’. Most refugees in my fieldwork expressed to have good experiences with the voluntary supporters, however Sayid had a rather bad experience. Even though his case might be uncommon, it does show the crucial danger of the dependency relationship. Sayid’s contact person was a man around sixty, who was a volunteer for an organization that supports refugees in their first stages of
settlement. The man helped Sayid with his settlement in his apartment and arranging administrative things. After sometime the man however misused his position:

*He tried to kiss me three times and he send me once like eh sexual words in Dutch, I could not understand it. He told me strange things like that is is normal here in the Netherlands, it is normal here in Dutch culture that when someone kisses, like when an old man kiss a young man its just eh normal kind of eh respect. And I was confused, I almost believed him.*

(Amsterdam, February 2019)

Sayid had no clue whether, what he was being told by the man, was true or whether the man was just using him. Since he did help Sayid, Sayid felt like he had to show respect towards him and reject his requests in a kind way. The vulnerable position of an inburger who is perceived to depend it’s resources on supportive actors, can thus easily be misused on different levels.

Next to volunteers, contact persons in the municipality play an important part in the local interaction inburgeraars have with bureaucratic actors. The function of the contact person in the municipality is mainly to make living in the Netherlands possible through financial support and through for instance help the inburgeraar to look for a job and to support attendance of integration courses. Since the inburgeraar is dependent on the help of the municipality, inburgeraars are often asked to give something back and can be obligated to follow all kinds of courses or to have a job that they rather not want to do. As Gupta (1995) showed before: the local contact people have with bureaucratic actors is decisive for the images they have about bureaucracy. Mostly refugees have a sense of distrust towards the municipality officials; this is often because of the bureaucratic slowness and indifference (Herzfeld 1993):

*On a Tuesday morning, 8:50 AM I went with Sayid to the municipality, he was going to request the Dutch nationality. Last time he was there he was told to bring documents of his family members to this meeting. It was a while ago since he had his last meeting. The municipality was far away from Sayid’s home since he lived in a small village, we took a bus for 15 minutes and had to walk 20 minutes. When we arrived and were called up for Sayid’s appointment, we sat inside for not more than 5*
minutes. The woman in the office saw the documents and told Sayid that the documents need to be translated into Dutch, since the documents were in Arabic language. In order to request the passport, Sayid had to wait another month. On our way back Sayid asked me if I thought the woman was nice, I responded ‘why?’ and he said: “well if she would be nice, why does something like this always happen when I meet her.” He was suggested to translate the documents for free through the volunteer organization where he had the old man as a contact person, he however decided to translate it through a company where he had to pay for translation. His reason for choosing the more expensive option was his distrust towards the volunteer organization: “I don’t want to do it through [the volunteer organization] because I know they will make it worse for me like what they did before”.

(Observation field notes February 2019)

The excerpt shows that because of Sayid’s experiences with the contact person of the municipality and of the volunteer organization, he has lost his trust in receiving help from either of them. The experiences refugees have with bureaucratic actors is closely related to the aspects I mentioned before about bureaucracy. The aspect of waiting is illustrated in the excerpt: Sayid both needs to wait a long time for his passport and spend a long time traveling back and forth to the municipality, while the meetings and the progress of obtaining his passport show little results. The slowness of his process then makes him blame both the bureaucratic actors and himself. Days after he namely told me that he doubts whether he deserves the nationality, since if he would deserve it, it wouldn’t take so much time. Next to that he would blame the slow progress of his requests on his ‘bad luck’.

Contact with the municipality officials is mainly experiences through these short meetings, rest of the contact happens through letters and e-mails. When I asked Yazen (25), a Palestinian refugee from Syria what he thought could be described as ‘typical Dutch’ he replied: “lots of papers, lots of papers from the municipality and the tax authorities, always paper, paper. And fines too, they are also very expensive” (village near Utrecht, March 2019). Contact thus mainly exists of formal letters and formal meetings with officials.

An important actor in inburgeraars’ experiences with people in the Netherlands are the teachers of integration courses. I noticed in the integration classes that teachers do not just function as teachers, but they also uptake a role of tutor or as a source for information, or even a friend. In Berat’s classes I noticed how the inburgeraars where mostly enjoying Berat’s classes and acted around each other as if they were friends. The inburgeraars in his class were
very happy with him as their teacher. Next to that Berat told his students that they are allowed to contact him 24/7 when they have questions. In another class I saw a teacher in the break helping an inburgeraar with an application for a job, she showed on internet how the inburgeraar should look for jobs. Berat often got asked by students about letters they received. In an interview I mentioned to him that I saw him help students with multiple things and asked him to what extend he was capable to help, he replied:

Yes, they come with letters to me many times. ‘What does this mean? ’ ‘What does that mean?’ I am not an ombudsman or a lawyer or whatever, I am not a municipality official, I am a teacher. But I do help them until a certain limit of course. If I believe that I can help for a bit, of course it must be something I also have knowledge of, but then of course I want to help. However I am not going to help with something I have no knowledge about. They do make a habit of it, at a certain point they will ask everything to me. But they have to learn themselves and experience it themselves.

(Berat, Alkmaar, March 2019)

The dependence on a teacher for learning the language and understanding the system (including KNM) in the Netherlands can therefore be therefore big. Many inburgeraars lack contact with Dutch speaking citizens and often inburgeraars mentioned to me that they wish to find Dutch friends. They expressed that they thought Nederlanders were nice people, while on the other hand they did not have any Dutch friends in their network. Sometimes contact inburgeraars make with other Dutch citizen can work in the opposite direction: instead of forming a network of Dutch-speaking people, the experiences they have with them can create a bigger distance. Lina (29), a refugee from Palestina, shared that she struggles to trust people in her neighborhood because of the following situation she experienced in the Netherlands:

When I was giving birth to my son, I needed someone to look after my children. I was going to the hospital with my husband. I spend one hour just calling calling calling, and no one could help me. [...] Therefore I don’t trust people here you know. They say they are your friends, but when you really need them, they are all gone. While they said we can help you, but nobody came. So after that I said okay so you do not understand what it means to be a friend. Until now, I cannot forget this day.
This experience was an important moment for Lina’s view about people in her neighborhood. Because of this event she lost her trust in the people that told her they were friends, which caused her to rarely ask for favors or help afterwards.

Even though inburgeraars feel many dependencies on supportive actors, they have agency themselves too. Their distrust towards the volunteers, municipality officials or other Nederlanders can result in building their own inside information network. When I was around Sayid, he got calls and messages from people at least every hour. He made it his time pass to help other refugees that struggle with the Dutch language and understanding of governmental requests, therefore he was often occupied with tasks like: translating Dutch letters to Arabic, making calls for them and going with pregnant families to the doctor.

2.5. Conclusion
In this chapter I answered the question: how does the culturalized image of integration policies influence the experiences of inburgeraars in the integration process? This question has been answered by showing both the culturalized image about the Nederlander that is created within the integration trajectory and the local experience of the inburgeraars in the process. Arguing that the culturalized image is a means through which implicitly inburgeraars are homogenized as a group that opposes it to the liberal and secularized values of a so called Nederlander. This phenomenon is called institutional racism, in which an image of a tolerant society is held up through normalization of the homogenization of inburgeraars.

Inburgeraars experience ignorance of their social, economic and legal status through the spheres of bureaucracy, language and social supporters. Bureaucratic systems and actors do not recognize their legal status through the slowness and indifference of their operation towards the refugees. Language is the factor that is often discriminated against in providing inburgeraars with a social and economic status in the society, on the other hand integration courses are often experienced as insufficient for inburgeraars to master the language quickly. Finally inburgeraars experience dependency relationships with social supporters such as volunteers, integration teachers and municipality officials. These relationships imply that the inburgeraar has a social backlog in comparison to the ‘Nederlander’ and therefore should
depend on the social supporters who implement their own ‘integration programs’ on inburgeraars.

The integration trajectory is the first phase in the process of obtaining a passport in the Netherlands and thus also the first experiences inburgeraars have with the culturalized image the Netherlands implemented on them. This chapter showed that the phase is mainly characterized by ignorance’s of inburgeraars status in the society. They are dependent on the above mentioned spheres in order to obtain a legal, social and economic status. The following step is obtaining the passport, wherein inburgeraars legal status are recognized by turning into a naturalisandi. This is also the first phase in which naturalisandi think about what the culturalized image of a Nederlander means to them and whether they believe they have obtained the status of a Nederlander, hope to still obtain it or do not believe to ever obtain this status now that they possess the Dutch passport. The experience naturalisandi had when being an inburgeraar, influences the meaning it entails to obtain a passport.
Chapter 3: The naturalization ceremony: to become a ‘Nederlander’?

You know that feeling when you are a kid and you go to bed when you know that the next day you are going somewhere? Then you can’t sleep. That is how I felt. I really couldn’t sleep. And the next day I had to be in my internship and I was making all kinds of mistakes. I told people ‘sorry if I am doing something wrong, but I am becoming a Nederlander today’. […] My friend came with me and normally I would just dress up really simple just wearing a trousers, sneakers and a T-shirt. But my friend was like ‘no you are going to wear something nice, because there will be many people and you need to look nice.’ But then I got to the ceremony and I saw all the people and I was like ‘oh so this is it?’ I was nervous for the whole day until I got there. […] it wasn’t exciting anymore, because I saw that for the other people it wasn’t exciting either. Everybody was like ‘it is not a big deal’; we are ‘just’ becoming a Nederlander. Then afterwards I was talking with my friend about why people were not excited and we realized that for some people it might not be such a big deal because of their different backgrounds. For example there was a woman from Iceland and she already had a nationality and could thus keep both nationalities. I mean then it’s not exciting to become a Nederlander.

(Grace, Almere, January 2019)

In this excerpt Grace, a refugee from Nigeria, explains how she felt about the naturalization ceremony wherein she obtained the Dutch nationality. Grace thought of it as a big moment in her life, however seeing the reactions from other naturalisandi in the ceremony made her loose some of her excitement. She gives an example of a woman in the ceremony who was from Iceland and could keep both her nationalities. Grace thinks that for this woman obtaining the passport could be less exciting. With this excerpt I intend to show that the way the ceremony is experienced is very diverse and dependent on multiple aspects, such as the immigrant background and the motivation for obtaining the passport. In this chapter I will explore the different ways that naturalisandi make sense of obtaining a Dutch passport after successfully having finished the integration trajectory of chapter 2. How do they experience the ceremony, what does the Dutch passport mean to them and how do they perceive their place in the society now that they are a Nederlander?
I will start this chapter with explaining the different ways in which the culturalized image is portrayed to naturalisandi in the naturalization ceremony. As a response to the images of a Nederlander formed in the ceremony, I will ask the question ‘how do naturalisandi act upon this image when obtaining the passport and thus the status of a Nederlander?’ The answer unfolds in three discursive repertoires: the disbeliever, the hopeful and the believer repertoire. In these repertoires naturalisandi create their own reality about what it means to be a Nederlander. The diversity in responses will give insight to the local experiences of bureaucracy and will show that even though culture is framed as static, the way people experience the dominant image is fluid and dependent on individual’s experiences.

3.1 Performing national allegiance
The naturalization ceremony grants the immigrants citizenship and could therefore be perceived as a moment of inclusion. However, in the same way as in the integration trajectory in chapter 2, the naturalization ceremony in its existence functions as a means of in- and exclusion (Hage 2000, 49-52). In order to obtain the passport the immigrant has to perform a pre-ascribed act within a room of the municipality isolated from the outside society, this act needs to be approved by the representatives of the state: the municipality officials or counselors. For the born-Dutch citizen the representative that approves his or her national status is the (public) territory of the nation-state that the citizen is born in. The difference between the ‘natural’ way of obtaining a passport for a born-Dutch and the effort-requested way of obtaining a passport for an immigrant is the result of institutional racism as introduced in chapter 2 (Vasta 2007, 727-732). Image 2 and 3 show the setting where this effort-requested way of obtaining the passport is performed.

In the room the naturalisandi are placed on the seats faced towards the platform where the officials are the main performers of the ceremony. The ceremony takes about an hour and consists of the following elements: introduction of the ceremony, the speech, the pledge and other additional activities that differentiate per municipality. The municipality officials are granted the responsibility to organize the ceremonies and can therefore, next to the core elements, implement events according to their own preferences. In the municipality of Alkmaar (image 3) for example, an act was performed by someone representing the historical figure Willem van Nassau. In The Hague (image 2) a small concert was performed wherein a Dutch singer sang a few Dutch songs. A more frequent element of the ceremony is the communal singing of Het Wilhelmus, the national anthem.
The most important acts in the ceremony are however the pledge and the speech. The speech functions as the reminder of what it will mean to become a legal Dutch citizen and a Nederlander, I will elaborate on this content in the following paragraph. After the speech the most crucial part of the ceremony follows: the pledge. Where born-Dutch citizens are expected to have naturally obtained the values of the nation-state, immigrants are expected to
pledge loyalty to the values that are perceived to not come naturally to them (Hage 2000, 49-52.). The statement they have to promise is formulated in the ceremonies as follows:

\[ I \text{declare that I respect the freedom and rights of the constitutional order of the kingdom the Netherlands. And I promise to faithfully fulfill the obligations that come with the state’s citizenship}^{24}. \]

The official in the ceremony reads these words out loud where after the naturalisandi needs to answer with: “I declare and I promise” (“dat verklaar en beloof ik”). Next to that there is also a religious version to declare a citizens’ loyalty by saying: “zowaarlijk helpe mij God almachtig”. In this version new citizens are asking ‘God almighty’ to help them with fulfilling their citizen obligations. Often this last sentence is perceived to be difficult to pronounce for naturalisandi, because of which people often choose to say the first sentence. While saying those sentences naturalisandi are expected to raise either their right hand or the fore- and middle finger. In which exact form naturalisandi have to raise their hand or fingers, has remained unclear to me since it differed in every ceremony.

Because of the ritual nature of the naturalization ceremony, it has the characteristics of being rehearsed, repeated and standardized. Verkaaik (2009, 43-69) shows that in the first phases of the implementation of the ceremony in the Netherlands, municipality officials often felt conscious of their performance within the ceremony, especially because of the cliché images they portray through their speeches (see next paragraph) about the image of a Nederlander. This led them to feel shame and irony about the act they put up in the ceremony. After constant repetition of the ceremony, however, the officials become comfortable in their role and internalize the performance. The performance of the pledge is however not rehearsed by the naturalisandi and can therefore appear rather chaotic. The municipality officials do not have much control over this little chaos and therefore the ritual nature of the ceremony is blurred during the pledge. The result is that the audience behavior changes from formal silence into a noisy crowd, which makes the most crucial moment of the ceremony, appear the least formal. The excerpt below describes the moment of the pledge in the municipality from Amsterdam:

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24 This is quotes from the observations in the naturalization ceremonies, in every ceremony the statement is the same.
The ceremony host explains how the pledge is supposed to be performed, while he is explaining the audience increases its volume. Many people start talking with their neighbors, I mainly hear my neighbors discuss on how they should exactly perform the pledge and which of the two versions of the statements they should choose. When the first naturalisandi is called up on stage, he walks to the microphone and looks at the text that is displayed in front of him. He pronounces the words but forgets to raise his hand, the mayor then tells him to raise the hand and say it again. The naturalisandi follows up the advice, whereafter the audience claps. The naturalisandi is handed his official paper and shakes hands with the mayor and the ceremony host. Throughout the course of calling people on stage and the individual performances of the pledge, people in the crowd become more and more noisy. At times the attention goes back to the stage when a naturalisandi struggles to say the words and the mayor helps him or her with the pronunciation. Often the uneasy behavior of naturalisandi performing the pledge is a reason for laughter in the audience.

(Observation field notes, Amsterdam, October 2018)

Where the officials have become comfortable in their performance, naturalisandi often feel uneasy or nervous about the performance of the pledge. For naturalisandi who lack confidence in their language capability- as shown in the excerpt- performing the pledge can be experienced as confusing. On the other hand the naturalisandi who mastered the language often expressed to me to feel surprised about lack of language proficiency most naturalisandi had when performing the pledge. The diversity of how people experience obtaining a passport is observable in the ceremony: some of the naturalisandi respond enthusiastically after they successfully perform the pledge while others show no face expressions and walk off fast. I will go into this diversity of experiences later in this chapter.

The role of the official in the pledge is crucial, since he functions as the approver of who performed the pledge in the right way and whose performance does not align with the expectations. Hage (2000, 55-67) shows that to determine who is a real nationalist and who is not, is a means to exclude the ‘ethnic Other’ from the space that the nationalist perceives as its own. In this case the ethnic Other is perceived to intrude the space of the Netherlands and thus the space of the Nederlander. To be accepted within the space, the naturalisandi –in this case- is dependent on the approval of the embodiment of a Nederlander in order to be legally included. During the pledge the municipality official consequently functions as the
gatekeeper, by approving whether the allegiance for the state has been performed in the right way. Pronouncing the sentences wrong, raising the wrong hand or wrong fingers often results in officials asking the naturalisandi to perform the pledge again. When the applause follows it means that the naturalisandi has performed the pledge according to the expectation.

3.2 Framing national citizenship
Next to the performance of allegiance to the nation-state, naturalisandi are evoked in the ceremony to think about what it means to become a legal citizen of the state and a moral member of the national society. To inform naturalisandi about what they are promising in the pledge, this speech always takes place before the official performance of allegiance. With the implementation of the naturalization ceremony, Dutch politicians in favor of the ritual, aim at reaching the following effects: (1) to mark an important change of identity, (2) to ‘teach’ the new nationals the Dutch national values and identity and (3) lastly to strengthen the feeling of being Dutch and to be a loyal citizen (Verkaaik 2009, 92-96). The speech is the most direct way in which these goals are attempted to be reached. In my fieldwork I have witnessed multiple ceremonies in four different municipalities (Alkmaar, Amsterdam, The Hague and Almere), and when analyzing the speeches I found many similarities of the content. Through inspiration of Aptekar (2012) who made an analysis of multiple ceremonies in the United States, I came to the conclusion that there are four different frames wherein officials construct their speech, and thus wherein officials portray the culturalized image of a Nederlander to the naturalisandi. These images have the function of drawing the lines between what it means to be a Nederlander and what is not seen as a Nederlander.

1. The contract between the state and the citizen
Every ceremony I have been to appointed the importance of the rights and obligations that the new citizen will obtain when being granted Dutch citizenship. Just like the integration courses the rights and obligations were only a selected set of rights and obligations of the overall constitution laws. The core of the named rights were freedom and equality, with the obligation to tolerate and respect. The municipality official of The Hague used to following words to explain what the contract between the citizen and the state entails:

Adopting the Dutch nationality is an important step to make. It is a radical step. A step which you have deliberately chosen. Because you will be a Nederlander 24 hours, 7
days, for the rest of your life. Being a Nederlander, however, does also mean that you have to respect and carry out important values in our society. Soon you will be Nederlander, with all the rights and obligations that are part of this. Men and women in the Netherlands are for example equal. But not only this, we also have freedom of religion; everybody can believe whatever he wants. We have freedom of sexual preference, man and man, woman and woman, transsexual: it is all allowed. That is what we think is important, everybody can be their selves and because you are a Nederlander, you also believe this and will carry this out.

(November 2018, The Hague)

The tone wherein the official expressed his words was strict which made the speech feel like a class on how to be a ‘loyal’ citizen. To become a Nederlander, according to the official, means to feel responsible for preservation of the rights and obligations of Dutch citizenship. This responsibility needs to be act upon ‘24/7 for the rest of your life’.

With granting naturalisandi citizenship, it is expected of them to perform this citizenship by respecting their rights and obligations as a citizen. Through naming these liberal values, as mentioned in chapter 2, a division is implicated between religious ideologies of immigrants from mainly considered backwards (Muslim) societies and the perceived secularized values of the Dutch (Verkaaik 2009). This division is emphasized by using terms like ‘we’ and ‘you’ or the ‘Nederlanders’ and ‘you’ in the speech. Finally, the obligation of tolerance and respect are often mentioned in the speech as core value of Dutch citizenship. According to Aptekar (2012) these are mentioned to aim at—preventing the opposite: intolerance and disrespect, which are often perceived to be aspects of improvement within immigrant groups. These values are also represented through images. Many ceremonies namely show slideshows with images that portray the core values in the society. Image 4 shows a slideshow in the ceremony with a picture of two women getting married, referring to the freedom of sexuality.
2. The contract between the (national) society and the new member
To pledge loyalty to the nation-state does nowadays not only meant to be loyal to the constitution - written down laws- but also means to pledge loyalty to the national society. This is what hints most explicitly to the culturalized image of the Dutch nationality. The contract between the state and the legal citizen is mostly based on obligations and rights, within the contract between the society and the new member it is based on participation. It is common in most ceremonies I witnessed to call out naturalisandi to participate in the society: through learning the language, through investing in relationships with other Nederlanders and through involvement in the civil society. In the following citation the mayor of Almere emphasizes the importance of learning the language:
Learn the Dutch language, make it your own. Nelson Mandela for instance was imprisoned on an island and he was studying the South-African culture and language and the prisoners asked him: ‘why do you do this?’ and he explained: ‘they do their job and I want to communicate with them, I want to understand them, why they do what they do and why they think what they think.’ You are now a part of this country, you live here and you lay the foundation for not only yourself, but also your children. So master the language, go to the library, listen to the radio. Only then you will be able to talk with your neighbors and explain why you do things the way you do them. Master the language, it is too important to let it slip away. And make mistakes, it is okay, you are allowed to. The effort for this comes from your side, not any other way.

(Almere, February 2019)

The speech shows that the language is not only perceived to be important for the sake of being able to express what you mean, but it is also a condition to integrate into the society. With ‘integrate’ it is meant that through language the immigrant is able to connect with other Nederlanders and able to create a better future for their children. With this call out, the mayor implicitly states that having passed the integration courses does not guarantee a Dutch proficiency (this refers to chapter 2).

To become a Nederlander, according to the people in favor of the naturalization ceremony, means to internalize the unwritten characteristics of a Nederlander. A few of the often named characteristics of a Nederlander in the speech are: frugal, hard-working, kind, respectful and tolerant. Other stereotypes were for instance: a Nederlander always has the curtains wide open and a Nederlander likes to complain about the weather. What is the use of mentioning this stereotypical image of a Nederlander in the ceremony? According to Aptekar (2012) immigrants are expected to have a social backlog compared to a national born citizen, therefore they would not have the same inner drive to be – let’s say- as hard working and frugal like an average Nederlander. Consequently it needs to be spelled out to immigrants what is expected of them. To educate naturalisandi on the values implicated that the immigrants do not have the, let’s say, ‘cultural knowledge’ of what it means to be a Nederlander, while the born-Dutch is perceived to have internalized these values by his or her birth into the nation-state.

Verkaaik (2009, 56-68) noticed that the speech which has an ironical critical tone to it, is the most effective (as in leads to the most response from the audience) in the setting of the
naturalization ceremony. In these speeches cliché images about the Nederlander are temporarily changed into reality, these images then function as a parody on the reality. An example below:

_The Nederlander likes to complain, and the two favorite topics a Nederlander likes to complain about- maybe you already know the answer- is the weather and illnesses. So if you become a Nederlander and you want to show this to the community, then you can demonstrate it by elaborately complaining about the weather, no matter if it’s cold, raining, or anything [audience laughs]._

(Almere, January 2019)

In this speech the ironical tone - to be critical about the Nederlanders in a joking manner- is what connects the official with the audience and evokes the audience to relate by assuming they had similar experiences. The ‘Dutch culture’ in the ceremony is presented as a clear-cut composition; it however does not lead to critical feelings in the audience due the ceremony’s ritualized nature. Because of repetition and standardization, the ceremony allows for a sphere wherein the performances are turned into a temporary reality (Verkaaik 2009, 71-86).

3. **History and the nation**

In the speech officials often refer to historical events or actors that define the national image the Netherlands wants to portray. Brand (2010, 81-83) argues that the national narratives that are chosen also function as a mean to silence the stories that do not strengthen the relationship between the nation-state and the citizen. Any nation has to be “narrated” since there is nothing natural about the story the nation portrays. Focusing on particular historical events or actors within the speech is another way to convey the nationalistic values to the naturalisandi. In the integration process there are certain historical events that are focused upon, which can be found in the KNM book. Some of those historical events and actors are mentioned within

25 I have based the analysis of the KNM course on three different KNM books:


the speech, such as: the Eighty Years War (Tachtigjarige Oorlog), the fight against water and Willem van Nassau. In most speeches officials claim that the Netherlands has been welcome to people from other countries since centuries. The age that is mentioned to illustrate this is the Golden Age (Gouden Eeuw), in which the Netherlands was open towards trading goods internationally. The stories that are silenced are however the history of colonialism in the Netherlands and the slave trade, most probably because these stories would stand in conflict with the image of tolerance that politicians wants to convey. At the same time these stories would assume that Nederlanders have been racist, while racism is perceived to not exist in the Dutch society.

In the excerpt below I give an example of the glorification of Dutch history within the speech of the ceremony. The aim in this speech is to strengthen the feeling of the national identity but at the same time to refer to essential characteristics of the Nederlanders. This quotation is from the ceremony in Alkmaar, where the municipality hired an actor who plays the role of Willem van Nassau, the historical figure who is seen as the forefather of the Netherlands. The actor talks about the historical events, in this case the Eighty Year war against the Spanish king, while putting extra emphasis on the local aspect:

*Alkmaar’s victory, Alkmaar was the first city who won against the Spanish people, this was also thanks to the water. The Nederlanders won the war through wrecking the dikes.*

(Alkmaar, January 2019)

In this fragment the historical event of the victory from Alkmaar against the Spanish soldiers consists of three different messages. Firstly the victory of the local city is appraised by referring to Alkmaar being the first city winning against the Spanish in the war. Secondly by showing that this victory was won through water the actor is referring to a national characteristic of the Netherlands: its skillful way of managing water above sea-level. Not only to protect its country from the water but to use the water as a weapon in the war. Thirdly, the historical event of the national victory in the war against the Spanish soldiers indicates the national pride: something the citizens in the country achieved together.

Historical events mentioned in the speech of the ceremony symbolize the continual of the unity of the nation-state: to show with the national narrative that the values conveyed within
these historical events should continue in further generations. To refer to this continuity officials often named the importance of children’s upbringing in their speech. Children, with an important role for the parents, function as a symbol of the continuation and preservation of the nation-state. They form the future citizens of the nation-state and therefore should be brought up with a national mindset.

4. Multiculturalism
Multiculturalism is a concept which has lost its popularity in the Netherlands since the mid-nineties (Vasta 2007, 732-733). Especially since multiculturalist policies had been criticized and often seen as failed. Since then the focus in Dutch policies has been on individual identity. Multiculturalism is therefore not a concept which is named in the naturalization ceremonies I attended, but instead the national tone had the main role in all the speeches. The multicultural aspect, however, was conveyed through the presence of the audience, in which different bodies represented multiple nationalities. In Amsterdam the host at the end of the ceremony named all the different countries that the naturalisandi in the room come from, this was followed by applause. In the Hague’s ceremony the multicultural aspect was portrayed through images on the slideshow depicting hands with different skin colors, the word ‘hello’ in different languages and this portrayal in Image 5 of a Muslim woman eating herring. Herring is a typical Dutch fish often a dish to eat on the market. This embodiment of an ‘ethnic Other’ eating the fish, could represent the internalization of the Dutch values by this Other.

The multiculturalism is thus mentioned indirectly in the ceremonies. In one of the ceremonies the municipality official started asking small questions to naturalisandi who just performed the pledge. She asked the question through her microphone and then pointed it to the naturalisandi after their performance of the pledge. When she asked one of the naturalisandi where he came from, he responded that he was born in the Netherlands. Judging by his ethnic appearance she however continued with the question, “No but I mean what are your roots?” Just as I mentioned in chapter 2, racism- treating people different on the basis of their ethnic-appearance, skin-color or nationality- is implicitly and sometimes explicitly imbued in daily practices (Vasta 2007, 727-732). Baumann (1999, 39) states that discrimination in so called ‘multicultural societies’ is an everyday practice, even though it is forbidden by law. The official’s intention was to show the multicultural aspect of the Netherlands and to show it’s tolerance towards foreigners in the Netherlands (Vasta 2007, 727-732). Instead she practiced a form of institutional racism, since in another situation in
which someone would ethnically appear ‘Dutch’ the follow-up question about ‘roots’ would not have been asked. It is however not recognized as racism by the respondent, since it is framed as a question about multiculturalism. Under this concept the Netherlands is able to still differentiate between ethnic appearance, skin-color and nationality without it being perceived as racism.

3.3 Discursive repertoires of naturalisandi
The content of the naturalization ceremony shows the different ways of the division that is created between the Nederlander and the immigrant who wants to obtain the status of a Nederlander. Behind the act of tolerance, images are depicted to the immigrant that show in what ways the Netherlands differs from other countries and the way the Nederlander differs from the ethnic-Other in particular. The question remains how do naturalisandi act upon this image of a Nederlander when they obtain the passport? In chapter 2 Baumann’s (1996) demotic discourse showed that people identify themselves with multiple communities and cultures at the same time. In my fieldwork I experienced this complexity of defining culture,
meaning that answering the question how naturalisandi act upon the culturalized image of the Dutch nationality will result in a multi-sided answer.

The way the image of a Nederlander is perceived is dependent on past experiences of immigration, interaction with bureaucratic actors and supporting actors, social and economic opportunities, language sufficiency and many more factors. Looking at people’s personal experiences, I found three different attitudes towards obtaining the Dutch nationality; these are the discursive repertoires of people’s experiences. Discursive repertoires can be best explained as: “patterns of meaning which evaluate our experiences and narrate events from a personal view-point. They create versions of reality which are always ideological, that is, constructed according to the values of the author or speaker” (Engberg 2011, 83). Just as culture is a fluid concept, people in my fieldwork who I characterize as representatives of these repertoires can also change their stance anytime or in some cases move from one repertoire to the other.

The repertoires I distinguished are named the disbeliever repertoire, the hopeful repertoire and the believer repertoire. These repertoires answer the question how naturalisandi act upon the culturalized image of the Netherlands when obtaining a passport. In my fieldwork the repertoire represented by the least naturalisandi was the disbeliever repertoire, with three people. The first hopeful repertoire is most represented by fourteen people and the disbeliever repertoire by eleven people (including the people who switch). In the following paragraphs I will explain these repertoires by the narratives of the naturalisandi.

The disbeliever repertoire.
To understand the viewpoint of the naturalisandi in the repertoires it is important to refer back to the naturalisandi’s past experiences in the Netherlands. The experiences naturalisandi have in the spheres of bureaucracy, language and social supporters that I elaborated on in chapter 2 is decisive for the way they experience obtaining the passport. In the disbeliever repertoire naturalisandi have had rather negative experiences in these spheres which lead them to feel skeptical and indifferent towards the image surrounding a Nederlander. As the elements of the speech show: becoming a Nederlander implies to both receive the legal rights as well as the social inclusion into the society. Naturalisandi in this repertoire however either feel currently socially excluded or their past experiences of this social exclusion forms their current attitude towards the image of a Nederlander. To obtain a passport without being socially included as a
Nederlander than leads to a skeptical attitude towards the false promise conveyed in the ceremony.

**Skepticism and humor**

Naturalisandi in the disbeliever repertoire are aware of the message of the integration policies wherein the image is portrayed that each citizen has equal rights and chances. The dominant image in the integration policies (e.g. Baumann’s dominant discourse) stands opposed to the reality (the demotic discourse) that naturalisandi face in their day to day life. Tamir (33) is a refugee from Syria who had a high-valued job and status when living in Syria, in the Netherlands he however experiences to be valued through low-paying jobs and social exclusion. He therefore shows skepticism towards the image of a Dutch community:

**Gabrielle: how would you define ‘the Dutch culture’?**

**Tamir:** actually, I hear things about what the Dutch culture is, but what I see in reality is different. Not everyone likes the same food, has the same customs. It depends on where you live, in a village or in the city, or it depends on your salary, your social position.

(Village near Utrecht, March 2019)

Tamir believes that whatever the culture in the Netherlands is, is dependent on multiple aspects of a person’s life (what Baumann would call the demotic discourse). An example of the difference between the image portrayed to him and the reality that he experiences was demonstrated in the interview I had with him in a restaurant. We met around dinner time and Tamir hadn’t eaten yet, he therefore wondered if he could eat in this restaurant. The scene developed as follows:

*The waitress stopped at our table, Tamir took a few seconds to think about how to ask for the menu in proper Dutch. He then said ‘I am hungry’, I laughed because of his bold statement but then realized that he did not mean it as a joke but he just couldn’t find proper words. The waitress was silent for a few seconds and seemed a bit confused about how to respond. She then answered: so you want to have the menu? Tamir answered: ‘eh yea that is what I meant’. When the waitress left I sensed that Tamir felt a bit embarrassed and mentioned how he always struggles to find the right words. When we saw the menu me and Tamir both realized that eating here will be a*
little bit expensive for both of our budgets. We decided to leave and tell the waitress that we are not going to order anything. When the waitress comes up to us- for lack of better words- Tamir said: ‘I was hungry, but now I am not hungry anymore.’ again I couldn’t help but chuckle about this response. The waitress however did not appreciate it and gave a rather offended look while she replied ‘okay’ and took away the menu's. Outside of the restaurant Tamir asked me why the waitress would feel humiliated, since people tell him that Nederlanders are used to directness: ‘Why do people say here that this is a free country, you are free to say what you want?’

(Observation field notes, village near Utrecht, March 2019)

Tamir has an open personality and talks in a direct way about what he thinks. This personality should suit the image of a ‘direct Nederlander’, however –just as the excerpt shows- he experiences that his directness is rarely appreciated by the Nederlanders. His reality thus conflicts with the Dutch image portrays to him, which leads to his skepticism. At the other hand the excerpt shows the institutional racism (Vasta 2007), in which Tamir’s treatment towards him changes because of his lack of language sufficiency and with that the realization that he is not a Nederlanders.

With this in mind, it can also be understood why for some naturalisandi the naturalization ceremony can feel like an act that stands opposed to their reality. Ramil and Elvin who I introduced in chapter 1, have spent eight years in the AZC which gave them an attitude of distrust towards bureaucratic actors. This past experience influenced their attitude during the naturalization ceremony:

**Gabrielle:** what did you think of the ceremony?

**Ramil:** it was boring

**Elvin:** yea, a foreigner who is born in the Netherlands doesn’t even know the national anthem, we also don’t know the anthem but when you are in the ceremony you have to put on an act. […] At least in our country people know the national anthem, everybody knows the anthem, when you go to school you sing it every day. But people who are born here they don’t even know the national anthem. So what is the use to sing it in the ceremony? Just because I want to be a Dutch citizen I have to sing the national anthem?

**Gabrielle:** Yea I never sing it either
Ramil: *but you know, the thing is, in the Netherlands this is the system. You know they can undress us with money but they have the image of hospitality.*

Elvin: *Yes to put on a jacket, right? A kind of formal jacket and hat*\(^\text{26}\), *to make it look extraordinary.*

(Amsterdam, November 2018)

One of the definitions of ritual is: “a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are” (Smith 1982 in Verkaaik 2009, 83-84). This tension between reality and the image portrayed by officials is what Ramil and Elvin experience in the ceremony. According to Verkaaik (2009, 83-84), these tensions within the ceremony can lead to conflicting feelings for the participants. This tension is mainly felt by the people who are aware of the fake reality that is portrayed in the ceremony, such as the officials and people who live in the Netherlands since a long time, Ramil and Elvin inclusively. Since they got bored in the ceremony they also started playing gambling games while joking around about other people in the audience. Verkaaik (ibid.) shows that humor is a way to deal with the conflicting feelings that arise in the ceremony. Ramil and Elvin’s behavior in the ceremony is thus explainable: it is their way of dealing with the image in the ceremony that is portrayed as a reality but experienced as an act performed by the state.

Ramil mentions in the excerpt that on the one hand the Netherlands ‘undresses us with money’ while on the other hand it needs to hold up an image of hospitality. With the former Ramil refers to the high costs of obtaining a passport, many naturalisandi expressed how expensive it was for them to pay for the passport and others were also devastated by the time it took until they could obtain it. These elements can take away people’s excitement of obtaining a passport.

**Instrumental value of the passport**

The value of the passport for naturalisandi in the disbeliever repertoire is mainly instrumental (Poganyi 2018, 3). Ramil gave the following comparison when expressing the kind of status the passport gives him:

> *For example, if you have a Dutch company and you need to pay this amount of money until you receive a quality mark. You know you need to pay money to be seen as*

\(^{26}\) ‘A kind of formal jacket and hat’ is translated from what he called in Dutch: ‘jasje aan doen en hoedje op’ with this metaphor Elvin refers to the formalities of the ceremony.
reliable. To show that your company has been tested. You know it is the same feeling when obtaining a passport.

(Amsterdam, October 2019)

With the Dutch passport he thus obtained a status of reliability in the society. Ramil and Elvin explained me how they use the capability of ‘thinking with a Dutch mind’ to increase their economic well-being: by advertising their enterprises through giving reliable and clear services, adapted to business life in the Netherlands.

Other instrumental values that of the passport can be to help obtain a passport for a family member. This is the case for Seva (52), a refugee from Azerbaijan, who obtained a passport so that her son would be able to escape from being called up for the military in Azerbaijan. Her son was turning 18 and since his name was still registered in the government of Azerbaijan there is a chance that he would be forced to the national army. Seva explained that it was stressful to ask for the passport since they first had to save up money to be able to pay the passport and felt pressured to obtain the passport in time. Giving up her Azerbaijan passport was a necessity for her son, if it was for her she wouldn’t have given up her nationality since she still feels herself to be an Azerbaijani.

The disbeliever

Just like Seva still feels connected with her Azerbaijan background, in the same way naturalisandi within this repertoire are unwilling or feel incapable to see themselves as a Nederlander after obtaining the passport. This is what makes them the disbelievers of the culturalized image of the Dutch nationality. For them the legal status is obtained for functional reasons, but the status of a Nederlander is perceived to be unreachable. Berat (44), the integration teacher I introduced in chapter 2, has been living in the Netherlands longer than he has been living in Turkey and he possesses the Dutch passport since years. When I asked him whether he felt more like he was a Turk or a Nederlander he responded:

*I think this is a weird question. See ‘feeling’ is very abstract. I ám a Turk and I don’t need to feel anything. I can switch very easily to how a Nederlander lives or acts. But to feel it? I can never feel like a Nederlander. And I also don’t want to feel like it.*

(Alkmaar, February 2019)
Berat thus strongly believes that his nationality is a fixed identity that he cannot change or adapt. It is something he is instead of something he feels to be. Even though it is his job to teach immigrants the Dutch values of KNM book, it is not something he believes to have internalized. Instead he distances his identity from it, but at the same time he can easily adapt himself to the frame of a Nederlander.

To see your nationality as fixed is not always due to the strong believe Berat has for instance, but is sometimes also decided by the people in your neighborhood. Lina, a Palestinian refugee for instance told me that she cannot say to people that she is a Nederlander because she ‘doesn’t look like it’. She is therefore conscious of her appearance when talking about her nationality. Similarly Khaled, a refugee from Syria, recognizes that in front of the ‘Nederlander’ he will always be a foreigner:

Khaled: We had house in Syria, we had a job, we had work, but we have lost [puts extra emphasis on:] every-thing, [...] I came here and I had to start from zero, I have to do everything all over, getting a house, a job, a study, everything. Now that I am here I am a foreigner and I will always stay a foreigner, even after twenty years.

Gabrielle: yea ? do you think so? Even in Amsterdam?

Khaled: For the Nederlander I will always stay a foreigner

Gabrielle: even though you obtained a Dutch passport now?

Khaled: even though I obtained a Dutch passport, I will always stay a foreigner [...] but [sighs] I will do my best to study, to get a job and to have a good future here.

(Amsterdam, January 2019)

Being a Nederlander is according to Khaled a status that is impossible to reach, mainly because the other ‘Nederlander’ will never see him as a Nederlander. Most of the naturalisansidi in my fieldwork expressed this to me, the difference between the disbeliever repertoire and other repertoires is that in the disbeliever repertoire naturalisansidi have accepted that they will never obtain the status of Nederlander, while in the other repertoires people still are hopeful to become a Nederlander even when they feel to not have obtained this status yet. On the other hand Khaled does want to put effort in arranging a position in the society wherein he has a secured social and economic future.
Elvin and Ramil showed me in their interview two different attitudes towards the Dutch nationality: a skeptical and a hopeful one. Their skepticism is mainly due to their past experiences in the Netherlands, while their hopeful attitude towards their future in the Netherlands is based on their current success with their enterprises and experiences with Nederlanders. They believe that other people will always see them as a foreigner, but at the other hand they have internalized the Dutch values so closely that their behavior could be ascribed to a Nederlander. They feel comfortable in this ‘Dutch behavior’ and talked positive about ‘the kind Nederlander’ in contrast to the ‘always complaining foreigner.’ Because of this reason Elvin and Ramil could switch from the disbeliever to the hopeful repertoire.

**The hopeful repertoire**

The hopeful repertoire is characterized by naturalisandi who have positive outlooks towards their future in the Netherlands and are hopeful to obtain (partly) the status of a Nederlander. In this repertoire naturalisandi find themselves ‘in-between’ two nationalities. They feel connected with both their past nationality and their current one. To integrate within a new society, but to still feel connected with the country of origin, is what Grillo (2007) calls feeling ‘in-between or betwixt’. This refers to feeling like belonging ‘neither here nor there’ or ‘here and there’, or ‘everywhere and nowhere’. For most naturalisandi they feel themselves to be part of a transition from feeling more connected to one than the other, while still being defined by both. Being in the middle at the same time gives them choice freedom.

**In-between and in transition**

The interview with Grace (22) offers a clear example of how this ‘in-between’ which, as Grillo shows, can be experienced as confusing is being felt. Grace is a refugee from Nigeria, who has been smuggled to the Netherlands when she was a teenager. She arrived in a house for prostitution but was able to escape in time and consequently arrived in the AZC. She had been in the Netherlands since seven years when she obtained her passport. In the meanwhile she has been granted with a place to live, started a study and mastered the language. Since she has been building up her life in the Netherlands but wasn’t originally born there she struggles to identify her nationality:
Grace: Lately I have been saying that I became Nederlander on paper. Because I have not been born here and my parents have not been born here. I am a refugee and that is how I became a Nederlander.

Gabrielle: but don’t you feel like a Nederlander somewhere? Since you have been in the Netherlands since a young age?

Grace: Yea I was young, but I did not decide to live with Dutch foster parents, I have not been raised in a Dutch way.

Gabrielle: yea so actually you have raised yourself

Grace: yea I have raised myself. So maybe I can say that I feel like a Nederlander because I live here. But I cannot say that I am 100% Dutch.

Gabrielle: so what would you say?

Grace: a friend of my said ‘you are lost’. I just am inbetween. If I am around Dutch people then I can be like a Dutch, and if I am with Nigerian people it’s the same kind of thing. I am just, I am just myself. I just feel like inbetween. It is not like I have changed now that I got the Duth nationality, I am still myself.

(Almere, January 2019)

Grace’s excerpt shows that she is in doubt about how to define herself. At first she mentions seeing the Dutch nationality as ‘just’ a legal status, which would put her in the disbeliever repertoire. However when questioning her statement Grace admits that she does feel connected to the Dutch nationality but believes that she is not fully a Nederlander. At the moment she cannot identify with either her Nigerian or Dutch nationality. She can adapt herself to the Dutch customs, but she feels like she cannot see herself as Dutch since she has not been raised by Dutch parents, but instead raised herself. Her identity thus becomes hard to define, to solve this feeling of inbetween Grace mentions that she is ‘just herself’, she does not need to make a choice between Nederlander and Nigerian, she is both and that is what defines her.

Most of the naturalisandi in this repertoire are contend with the fact that they feel somewhere inbetween. In most cases naturalisandi claim that the nationality they have obtained in their birth is the nationality that will always stick with them and in most of the cases be their ‘true’ nationality. In the disbeliever repertoire I gave an example of Berat who believes himself to be a Turk, but will never be a Nederlander. His viewpoint differs with the naturalisandi in this repertoire since these naturalisandi somewhere believe they can become
(partly) a Nederlander in the near future. The hopeful repertoire thus consists of people who often feel themselves to be in a transition. This is also the case for Sophie (36), an economic migrant from Scotland who has a dual citizenship and was able to keep her nationality of birth:

*I am right there in the middle just now. When I fly back to Schiphol I feel like I'm coming home, definitely and when I go to Scotland I feel every time a little bit less connected, less connected, less connected, less connected. Which is sad in all ways but that's going to happen when I only go home two to three times a year.*

(Sophie, Haarlem, January 2019)

Sophie believes that her connection with her Scottish nationality will decrease in time, on the other hand she explained to me that this nationality will always be part of who she is. Sophie has come to the Netherlands for work, recently she has married a Dutch man and has thus decided to stay in the Netherlands. She believes the longer she will live in the Netherlands the less connected she will feel with Scotland and the more of a Nederlander she will become. She gave examples of her still trying to learn things about the Dutch culture through for instance contact with the family of her husband and through watching TV. Naturalisandi in the hopeful repertoire can thus move between their two nationalities and make their own interpretations of those nationalities.

**Freedom of choice**

Feeling inbetween means also to have more choice freedom: naturalisandi have the options to interpret their life through the images of two different nationalities. In a conversation with the two friends Yasmin (24) and Nadia (28) who are both refugees from Syria and live in the Netherlands with their families, comparisons were made between Dutch and Arabic men:

_Yasmin_: *I always said to my parents I want a Dutch man and not an Arabic man. So then I had a Dutch boyfriend and he was so ehm so serious with me. He wanted to talk with my parents and integrate into my culture. And it made me doubt. So I made my distance. But he was really sweet, like really really sweet._

_Nadia_: *so what is the problem? Why wouldn’t you go with him?*

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27 This quote has not been translated. It was originally spoken in English.
**Yasmin:** because I thought about my future. How will I fight with a Dutch man? I cannot fight with a Nederlander. I cannot become loud around him. I would feel like I am stronger or I am standing above him.

**Nadia:** oh yea I know what you mean.

**Yasmin:** we wouldn’t be on the same level.

**Nadia:** yea but I heard Dutch men they are a little stingy, for example if you go with them to a restaurant then you need to pay for yourself. Or they do not always bring a gift for you. But on the other hand Dutch men are really open minded, more democratic. And I think that is nice. Sometimes Arabic men are too jealous and I don’t like that.

**Gabrielle:** but doesn’t it depend where the Arabic man comes from whether he will be open minded or not?

**Nadia:** no sometimes the men in the city, they are not open minded at all. They are always asking do not dress like this, do not go there, with whom are you talking and with whom are you going? And it gives me a headache. My [Arabic] boyfriend he is very sweet and good and we are always together. But I think he is a bit jealous. And that is a little suffocating for me. But still he treat me like a princess, always gives me presents and is always asking about me. Yea and Dutch men might not give much attention, wouldn’t call every day.

(Alkmaar, March 2019)

Nadia and Yasmin found reasons to both appreciate Dutch men and Arabic men. Dutch men in general were described by them as sweet, stingy, willing to adapt and open-minded, while Arabic men were described as sweet, jealous, possessive and caring. These generalizations made about Dutch and Arabic men then will decide whether they will perceive themselves to be a better fit to a Dutch man or an Arabic man. Being inbetween two nationalities thus gives them the freedom to imagine them in both situations and to choose with which values they identify more than others.

**Obtaining a feeling of hope**

To obtain the passport for naturalisandi in this repertoire is to obtain a feeling of hope for their future in the Netherlands. Sayid introduced me to some of his friends who have requested the passport. They are all from Syria and are recognized as stateless since they have a Palestinian
background. Malik (30) expressed what the difference will be when he obtains the Dutch passport compared to living on a residence permit:

*I think there is no difference between being a refugee in the Netherlands and being a Nederlander, except for the feeling. Inside me, the feeling is different. The feeling that I belong in this society. That the government will stand behind us.*

(Malik, Rotterdam, March 2019)

Malik shows clearly in this quote that the passport will not change elements in his life but it will give him a more secure feeling. Sayid explained me that for them to obtain a passport gives them a more secure feeling since they have a country that they are recognized in and that they can return to when they travel. To obtain the status of a Nederlander symbolizes recognition of their right to be part of a nation-state. It is their first passport in their life and thus their first recognition as a legal citizen with full rights. One of the first friend’s in Sayid’s network to obtain the passport was Fahmi (34), Sayid and his friends all went to the ceremony and told me later that the ceremony gave them hope. To see that one of them got the passport gave them more confidence that they could obtain the passport too. For Sayid’s friends the passport symbolizes their official acceptance into the society. A similar feeling of inclusion is what Lara experienced when she went to the ceremony to obtain the passport. At first she didn’t see it as a big deal but once she was there she experienced it as an important moment since her husband and colleagues enjoyed the ceremony so much:

*My husband liked the event very much, even more than me. I was like this is just average. And my colleagues also liked it a lot. Then I realized, yea it is something that you just want to belong, you want to be one of them. You don’t want to be a foreigner anymore. That was the feeling I had. I was really surprised. [...] yea they really liked that I did this and I was like all right, this is nice.*

(Almere, January 2019)

Lara thus only realized the importance of the ceremony to her when she saw that her family and colleagues were so enthusiastic about her becoming a Nederlander. The value of the nationality is therefore due to the reactions of the people around her. It is a feeling of communal belonging that made the ceremony a special moment to her.
The believer repertoire

An emotionally valued status

Finally, people who embrace the culturalized image and believe to become a Nederlander, is what I call the believer repertoire. These people are convinced that their first national identity should be left in the past and that in order to function well within the Dutch society they need to immerse themselves into learning the language and the values to become like a Nederlander. In my fieldwork this repertoire was the least represented.

For the naturalisandi in this repertoire obtaining the passport through the ceremony was experienced as an important moment in their life. Maya (36), a refugee from Libya, experienced happiness during the ceremony and expressed that it was an important moment for her since it was her first passport in her life. In Libya she had the status of a Palestinian refugee and would’ve never been able to receive a passport:

*Yea I was really happy, I am really happy. For me it was the first time. I felt peace and happiness because this is my first passport. Maybe people do not understand why I am so happy. But I was born as a refugee, and in Arabic countries there is a lot of discrimination for people who do not have the papers. Even in my university. Even when I got here it was really difficult, and I felt like going back to Libya but I told myself to continue.*

(Almere, February 2019)

I could see happiness in her eyes when she was talking about the ceremony and what it meant to her to obtain a Dutch passport. The passport gave her hope that even though after the hardships she experienced with her refugee status, she now can secure a better life for her but also for her children. She did not only praise the Netherlands for giving her a nationality, she expressed at the same time that she obtained the status due to her endurance of hard times. She showed her gratitude also on her Facebook by posting the pictures of the ceremony when capturing it in Arabic with:

*After 36 years of living as a refugee, today Netherlands gives me a nationality. After only four years. I didn’t give anything to this country, but this country gave me everything.*
Pogonyi (2018, 2) shows that obtaining the passport can function as affirming a status that people were denied before. For Maya being recognized as a full legal citizen after 36 years of being denied this status, can be experienced as an emotional moment.

On the other hand a passport can be “an important means of identity management” (Pogonyi 2018, 2). This was the case for the economic immigrant Akash (42), who obtained the passport to confirm his status of being a Nederlander. When I started the interview with Akash and explained why I was doing this fieldwork, the first thing he responded was: “well for me it’s very simple, I obtained the passport because I feel Dutch, I feel at home here.” I learned during the interview and through talking with his friend that Akash has put a lot of effort in obtaining the status of a Nederlander, he studied the KNM book thoroughly and tries to master the Dutch language through a personal teacher. The ceremony was also experienced as an important celebration for him, he therefore prepared himself by for example practicing the national anthem:

Gabrielle: did you know the song Wilhelmus?
Akash: of course!
Gabrielle: you practiced it in the book?
Akash: not in the book. But before going to the ceremony I practiced. Because my Dutch friends, again, they gave me a gift. So it’s a cup with het Wilhelmus [he shows me a picture of the cup: the cup has the lyrics of the song on it]
Gabrielle: oh really! So you practiced with your cup? [laughs]
Akash: I practice with my cup, it’s a music cup so every time you lift the cup it will play the Wilhelmus. [...] And then of course like when you’re watching any matches where Holland is playing you listen to the national anthem, the Volkslied.

(Amsterdam, January 2019)

As the example shows, Akash is very aware of the national symbols in the Netherlands and actively tries to participate in national images.

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28 This quote has not been translated. It was originally spoken in English.
Participation and internalization

The naturalisandi in this repertoire believe themselves to be a Nederlander and therefore also feel the need of participation in the society. Maya for instance feels responsible towards the Netherlands because of her gratitude to the status that she obtained in this country:

I feel like the Netherlands gave me a lot and now it is time for me to give something back. So I help refugees, because they do not understand anything here. If they don’t receive good information about how things work here, they will have problems here. They stay together in groups and have a difficult time living here. So I help the refugees to give them information about education and other things. Especially for women who stay home and do not want to be in contact with anyone.

(Almere, February 2019)

The excerpt shows that the relationship between the state and the citizen is according to Maya based on reciprocity. This is exactly how politicians frame the relationship between the citizen and the nation-state. In the believer repertoire naturalisandi thus frame their national status according to the culturalized framework portrayed by the nation-state.

Naturalisandi the believer repertoire feel that to become a Nederlander means to internalize those values: Maya, Akash and Mahdi conveyed to me that they believe someone needs to give up the loyalty to the past nationality in order to become a Nederland. When I asked Mahdi (43)- a refugee from Iran- what he thought about the ceremony and the performing of the pledge he told me:

I think you cannot stay and live in the Netherlands if you cannot accept the law, the freedom in the Netherlands, homosexuality, and freedom of religion. It is weird. I often see foreigners who say no we want to live here like we did in Suadi Arabia or Iran. But why? You can choose yourself. Here we have mosques, churches, and disco. You have to choose yourself. You cannot say: I am going to live here but people here cannot take alcohol because of my religion. You must accept it. And I hope that all the people who take the nationality here will accept the rules and laws in the Netherlands.

(Alkmaar February 2019)
Mahdi’s view on what it means to be a Nederlander aligns strongly with the content of the naturalization speeches. Both refer to the importance of adaption: in order to live here and to become an official citizen, someone needs to adapt to the countries way of doing things. He names the specific values of the constitution law that are also named in the ceremonies and integration courses. For him to become a Nederlander means to internalize the values of the dominant discourse in the Dutch integration policies.

To internalize the values of a Nederlander means, according to the naturalisandi in this repertoire, to give up on their past nationality. To obtain the Dutch passport means to become a Nederlander and to therefore to adjust. This is what differentiates them from the other repertoires where naturalisandi either believe to never be able to obtain the status of Nederlander, or are hopeful to (partly) become a Nederlander in the near future. The naturalisandi in the believer repertoire share the following view:

*You are Dutch, after you taken the Dutch citizenship you're Dutch. It's not me who is also saying this; I mean I think Prime Minister said the same thing. […] If you're not loyal to Netherlands, then you should not live in the Netherlands. there you go. Some Dutch bluntness for you. If you're not loyal to your country, if you're not loyal than why are you living here? that's my question. […] We should make a choice. They should make a choice. Who you really are, you could be both you could be Indian Dutch, Indian Nederlander, but your allegiance has to be, there should not be a conflict, you just have one allegiance. If you start making multiple loyalties, you're confusing for yourself and you're confusing. You're stressing yourself out and you're burning yourself out.*

*(Amsterdam, January 2019)*

What is most interesting to this excerpt is that Akash is referring to the prime minister, who – as I have shown in chapter 2- made a similar comment about integration: if you are not ready to respect the values you should not live in the Netherlands. Akash has thus taken up the framework of the nation-state when talking about nationality and the status of a Nederlander. Akash opinion stands against the people in the hopeful view who believe that someone can

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29 This quote has not been translated. It was originally spoken in English.
have more than one national ‘loyalty’, Akash states that to have ‘multiple loyalties’ is confusing to people and therefore it is best to choose one loyalty.

The believer?
Eventhough Akash thinks of himself as a Nederlander, he still has a slight doubt whether he can say that he is Dutch. He explained that in America migrants are always called two things like Indian-American or African-American, for him this shouldn’t be necessary. He was also referring that this is due to appearance that people would have a feeling of calling him Indian Nederlander. It seemed to me that because of his Indian appearance he doubted whether he could call himself a ‘real’ Nederlander in the context of the society:

Akash: Yea I mean people who want to call me Indian Dutch I don’t think it resonates well as my identity, I would still say my identity would be [ takes a few seconds] I’m Dutch, or modern Dutch, right? Not real Nederlander, but Cosmopolitan Nederlander.

Gabrielle: cosmopolitan?
Akash: Well I'm Dutch , [in a doubtful tone:] cosmopolitan..[in an affirming tone:] No I am Dutch.

Does this slight doubt mean that even the believer (unconsciously) feels the influence of the institutional racism?

3.4. Conclusion:
As I mentioned before, with the implementation of naturalization ceremonies in the Netherlands the following effects are aimed at: to mark an important change of identity, to educate new nationals the national values and to strengthen the feeling of being a loyal citizen. These effects reflect in the speeches given by municipality officials where naturalisandi are lectured about the obligations and rights they obtain as a legal citizen and the responsibility of participation they obtain with the status of a Nederlander. Next to that officials can frame their speeches through the framework of national historical events and multicultural references. I argued that to spell out the liberal, cultural and historical values in the speeches aim to prevent naturalisandi from interpreting the image of a Nederlander in their own way, but at the same time to educate the naturalisandi on his or her place in the
society. These values do not only refer to what is expected of the new nationals, but especially point out that what is not accepted within the boundaries of the constitution law.

The way naturalisandi perceive these culturalized images are, in most cases, not aligned to the desired effects officials have in mind when performing the naturalization ceremony. On the micro level the way a Nederlander is defined by naturalisandi is context dependent, therefore my fieldwork showed a variety of people’s ideological realities. In answering the question how do naturalisandi act upon this culturalized image and the status of a Nederlander, I developed three discursive repertoires. The disbeliever, hopeful and believer repertoire analyze the different ways people make sense of obtaining the Dutch passport and whether they perceive themselves to be a Nederlander. The diversity in experiences and opinions illustrates the different ways in which people shape their culture, which refers back to Baumann’s demotic discourse.

At the same time the repertoires show how the in-and exclusion performed by bureaucratic powers is experienced locally and mainly results in naturalisandi being doubtful about their inclusion into the society as a Nederlander. Even naturalisandi who claim to believe that they are a Nederlander, are still doubtful to express this in the societal context.
Conclusion

I started this thesis by stating that nationality means something to me in the way that it means something to others, since the images people have about my Dutch nationality is what helps them define me. According to the images people have about what a Nederlander looks like, some people –basing mostly on my appearance- asked me whether ‘I am really Dutch’. This question is what participants in this research are implicitly being asked during the process of obtaining the passport. Culturalized images portrayed in integration policies is what makes immigrants doubtful whether they can identify themselves as a Nederlander. To grasp the impact these culturalized images have on the daily lives of immigrants I asked the question in this thesis: How do naturalisandi and inburgeraars act upon the culturalized image of the Dutch nationality in the process of obtaining a passport?

The fact that people feel conflictual about calling themselves a Nederlander when they are not originally from the Netherlands is first of all due to the concept of the nation-state. In this concept the official citizen is both a legal member of the state and a social member of the national community. Possessing a passport while living abroad of the country or feeling connected to the national community while not having legal documents is consequently in conflict with the concept of the nation-state. Mobility thus leads to friction in this concept. In the Netherlands this friction has increasingly been felt since the start of the 21st century, wherein the increasing flow of immigrants lead to the fear of losing the national culture. To preserve the image of a national culture and thus the nation-state, right-wing politicians started to promote the culturalized images of what the Dutch nationality entails. This phenomenon is what Slootman & Duyvendak (2015) called the culturalization of citizenship. The result is that the programs designed for inburgeraars to integrate are imbued with culturalized images of what a Nederlander is and what it is not.

In chapter 2 I showed through Buamann’s dominant and demotic discourses (1996) that culture is not as bounded and static as it is portrayed in integration programs. Instead the way culture is practiced and perceived locally is context and situation dependent. The static (dominant) discourse is however a powerful tool to decide on who belongs and who does not. I showed that the language and images in the topic KNM functions as the dominant discourse that politicians use to frame who is the insider and who is the outsider in the nation-state. At the same time these culturalized images are normalized in the integration programs and implemented on all the immigrants and refugees who are merged together under the title ‘inburgeraar’. As a result ‘the inburgeraar’ is homogenized into an image that stands opposed
the image of a liberal and secularized Nederlander. This practice is what Vasta (2007) calls *institutional racism*. The racism is hidden in the power of the institutional programs, wherein daily racist practices such as the (ethnic) inequality in the job market are normalized when integration programs are discussed. The cause of integration failures is appointed to the cultural differences between the Nederlander and the inburgeraar, wherein discrimination on basis of ethnic appearance, skin-color and nationality are ignored.

This institutional racism is experienced by inburgeraars as the ignorance of their social, economic and legal status. Refugees first settlement in the Netherlands is inside of the AZC, this building segregates the refugees from the rest of the nation-state which is then also their first experience with institutional racism. This division makes them experience the slowness and *indifference of bureaucracy* which puts refugees in a position of waiting (Herzfeld 1993). The segregation between the refugee and the Nederlander lingers on once refugees settle in the nation-state where their social and economic status is barely recognized.

Within the job market and through social contacts inburgeraars often experience discrimination based on their language proficiency and ethnic-appearance. Supporting actors can give access to economic and social statuses, but on the other hand these dependent relationships deny the social status of the inburgeraar which makes the inburgeraar’s position vulnerable for misuse. These local experiences of bureaucracy thus show that through the culturalized image imbued in the integration programs, inburgeraars are denied their status on different levels and therefore struggle to build an independent position in the Netherlands.

Since inburgeraars are still in the process of creating an independent position in the nation-state, they do often not yet define what they think about the culturalized images in this first phase. The experiences in the integration trajectory are however crucial for when they obtain their passport. The passport recognizes naturalisandi legal status and gives therefore room for naturalisandi to think about what the culturalized image of a Nederlander means to them. I argued that the naturalization ceremony, just as much as the KNM courses, functions as an event where the boundaries between the naturalisandi and the Nederlander are drawn. The fact that naturalisandi have to perform their allegiance to the nation, in contrast to the born-Dutch citizen who obtains the passport through birth, marks the division between the ‘natural’ citizen and the citizen who needs to perform an act to be accepted. Next to that I have shown the different ways through which the culturalized image is conveyed in the speech of the naturalization ceremony. Both the legal and national membership are emphasized, wherein the naturalisandi is reminded of its rights, obligations and responsibility of participation in the society. Through mentioning historical events in the speech, the
continuity of the (dominant) culture in the nation-state is emphasized, wherein it’s the new citizen’s task to preserve the values of the past nation-state. Finally the multicultural aspect is implicitly referred to in the naturalization ceremony through noticing people’s ethnic-appearance and national background. This aspect is used to show the tolerance of the Netherlands, while at the same time it is a form of institutional racism.

Even though the naturalization ceremony explains in detail what it should entail to become a Nederlander, the way it is experienced to obtain the Dutch passport depends on the personal context. This is again because of the contrast between how integration policies want to portray the nationality and how local experiences frame people’s personal view of what it means to obtain the passport. This diversity is reflected in the different discursive repertoires I developed in this thesis. In the disbeliever repertoire naturalisandi feel skeptical about a national image of a Nederlander. Obtaining the passport for them is mainly a legal status, they do not identify themselves as a Nederlander and also believe never to be part of this image. In the hopeful repertoire, naturalisandi believe that they are either partly a Nederlander or feel themselves to be in a transition in which they will obtain this status eventually. This repertoire is characterized by the feelings of being inbetween two nationalities and the freedom of moving between those identities. In the believer repertoire naturalisandi have obtained the culturalized framework of the officials and believe to be a Nederlander now that they have obtained the passport. The characteristics of this repertoire are that naturalisandi feel a responsibility towards the nation-state and actively try to participate and adopt the values of the culturalized image of a Nederlander. Naturalisandi in the disbeliever and hopeful repertoire do not see themselves as a Nederlander (yet) mainly because within the social context they cannot be recognized as this. In the believer repertoire people believe themselves to be a Nederlander, however when the social context is added, naturalisandi in this repertoire still show a slight doubt.

This fact that rarely anyone in this research who obtained the passport feels like he or she cannot identify as a Nederlander, shows the effect the culturalized image has. Even though the Netherlands portrays an image of inclusion, implicitly it is conveying that to obtain a Dutch passport does not mean that one obtains the status of a Nederlander. The outcome of naturalisandi who feel, in different ways and different degrees, a sense of exclusion shows the deceitful character of the message portrayed in the integration trajectory. A national culture is portrayed as a natural truth of the way things ‘are’, while in reality it functions to marginalize the people in the country who do not ethnically fit into the image of the nation-state representatives.
In this thesis I showed the impact culturalized images of nationality have on people living within the nation-state but who are not ‘from’ the nation-state. Where many scholars wrote about the images the nation-state portrays, the local, citizen, experiences have been underrepresented. Through the method of *ethnography of the state* (Gupta 1995) this research contributed to understanding the diverse ways through which bureaucracy can be experienced on the local level. This research was based in the Netherlands, but refers to wider phenomena of the use of culturalized images in the nation-state. It shows that these images are very powerful since on the local level they are capable of marginalizing certain groups in the society. Finally, with developing three discursive repertoires I hope to contribute to ways of thinking in which we recognize the diversity of people’s personal experiences, instead of generalizing people’s ethnical or national background to their ways of acting.
Annex

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Table 2: amount of asylum seekers per year (CBS 2019\(^{30}\))

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