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Governing difference in the city: urban imaginaries and the policy practice of migrant incorporation

Myrte S. Hoekstra

ABSTRACT

Governance in cities: Urban imagination and integration of immigration policy. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. This article examines how urban policy actors organize policy practice according to their understanding of the diverse city. In contrast to the national level, cities are sometimes considered to have a pragmatic approach to governing (ethnic) diversity. Yet urban policies also reflect local norms and identities. As such, the city functions as a local discursive condition for and product of understandings of the social world, including processes of differentiation and boundary-drawing. A comparison of policies dealing with migrant incorporation in Amsterdam and The Hague – two highly diverse cities in The Netherlands – shows a discrepancy may exist between overarching discourses and policy practices. While municipal policy discourses suggest a coherent programme, policy practices are rather fragmented. Even though policy actors explain this divergence (also) in terms of pragmatism, they use distinct, city-specific logics to identify what is ‘pragmatic’ and arrive at different outcomes. ‘Urban imaginaries’ or tacitly shared imaginations about the place of migrants in the urban community serve to provide orientation in this regard.

KEYWORDS

urban policy; integration; diversity; Netherlands; discourse analysis; politics of belonging


摘要

治理城市中的治理：城市想像与整合移民的政策实践。 *Territory, Politics, Governance*。本文检视城市政策行动者如何根据他们对于多样化的城市之理解来组织政策实践。相对于国家层级而言，城市时而被视为在治理（族裔）多样性上具有务实的取向。但城市政策同时也反映了地方常规与身份认同。于此，城市可作为理解包含差异化与边界划定过程的社会世界的地方论述条件，以及该理解的产物。比较荷兰阿姆斯特丹与海牙这两个高度多样化的城市的移民整合政策，显示出总体论述与政策实践之间可能存在着落差。市政层级的政策论述虽主张一致性的方案，但政策实践实则相当破碎化。即便政策行动者（同时）以务实主义来解释此一差异，他们却运用特殊且城市专属的逻辑来指认何谓“务实”，并得出不同的结论。“城市想像”或有关移民在城市社群中的位置之心照不宣的共同想像，在这方面订定了方位。

关键词

城市政策; 整合; 多样性; 荷兰; 论述分析; 归属的政治

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RÉSUMÉ

Gouverner la différence dans la ville: imaginaires urbains et pratique de la politique sur l'intégration des migrants. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. La présente communication examine la façon dont les acteurs de la politique urbaine organisent la pratique de la politique en fonction de leur interprétation de la ville diversifiée. Contrairement au niveau national, les villes sont parfois considérées comme suivant un approche pragmatique en matière de diversité administrative (ethnique). Ceci dit, les politiques urbaines reflètent également des normes locales et des identités. À ce titre, la ville fonctionne comme une condition discursive locale de connaissances sur le monde social, et un produit de celui-ci, y compris des procédés de différenciation et de délimitation des frontières. Une comparaison entre les politiques adoptées en matière d'intégration de migrants, à Amsterdam et à la Hague, deux villes extrêmement différentes des Pays-Bas, révèle l'existence possible d'une divergence entre discours généraux et pratiques de politique. Alors que les discours de politique municipale proposent un programme cohérent, les pratiques de politique sont, elles, plutôt fragmentées. Même si les acteurs de politique expliquent cette divergence également en termes de pragmatisme, ils font usage de logiques distinctes, et spécifique à ces villes, pour identifier ce qui est « pragmatique », et aboutissent à différents résultats. Des « imaginaires urbains » ou des imaginations tacitement communes sur la place des migrants dans une société urbaine servent d'orientation à cet égard.

MOTS CLÉS

politique urbaine; intégration; diversité; Pays-Bas; analyse des discours; politique d'appartenance

RESUMEN

Gobernar la diferencia en la ciudad: imaginarios urbanos y la práctica política de la incorporación migratoria. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. En este artículo se analiza cómo los actores de políticas urbanas organizan prácticas políticas según su modo de entender la ciudad diversa. A diferencia del nivel nacional, a veces se considera que las ciudades tienen un enfoque pragmático hacia la gobernanza de la diversidad (étnica). Sin embargo, las políticas también reflejan las normas e identidades locales. Como tal, la ciudad funciona como una condición discursiva local para entender el mundo social y también es un producto de ello, incluyendo los procesos de diferenciación y la delimitación de las fronteras. Un trabajo comparativo de las políticas que tratan sobre la incorporación de emigrantes en Ámsterdam y La Haya –dos ciudades sumamente diversas en los Países Bajos– muestra que puede existir una discrepancia entre los discursos dominantes y las prácticas políticas. Si bien los discursos políticos de ámbito municipal indican un programa coherente, las prácticas políticas están bastante fragmentadas. Aunque los actores políticos explican esta divergencia (también) en términos de pragmatismo, utilizan lógicas distintas y específicas en cada ciudad a la hora de identificar qué es 'pragmático', y llegan a diferentes resultados. Los 'imaginarios urbanos' o imaginaciones compartidos tácitamente sobre el lugar de los emigrantes en la comunidad urbana sirven para ofrecer orientación a este respecto.

PALABRAS CLAVES

política urbana; integración; diversidad; los Países Bajos; análisis de discursos; política de pertenencia

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INTRODUCTION

This paper concerns cities' role in governing (ethnic) difference through migrant policies that create locally specific signifiers of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2007). Cities create their own narratives about migrant incorporation in urban life, which sometimes may run counter to more exclusionary discourses on migration and diversity at the national level (Ambrosini & Boccagni, 2015; Hoekstra, 2015). Although these (changing) discourses have received quite some attention in the research literature (e.g., Alexander, 2007; Caponio & Borkert, 2010; Garcia, 2006), less attention has been paid to policy practices of 'governing difference' (Uitermark, Rossi, & Van Houtum, 2005).

Studies looking at divergence between local and national migrant policies¹ have related this to differences in policy rationales and problem framing. Some argue that local governments tend to be more pragmatic and efficiency-oriented (Bak Jørgensen, 2012; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008) while national governments focus on symbolic actions in a highly politicized and mediatized context. However, others argue that the reframing and reshaping of national policies at the local level not only result from differing circumstances ‘on the ground’ but also reflect diverging ideas and norms (Schiller, 2015) and imaginaries of local places and communities (Barbehön & Münch, 2016; Walker & Leitner, 2011).

This paper builds on the latter perspective and asks how urban imaginaries inform migrant policy discourse and subsequently influence actual policy practices. As the ‘mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality’ (Soja, 2000, p. 324), imaginaries form a metanarrative connecting notions of urban society’s past, present, and future nature. This paper argues that migrant policy discourses draw upon these imaginaries to construct policy problems and solutions – and that, conversely, these discourses ‘serve as a proxy for debating the self-image of the city’ (Barbehön & Münch, 2016, p. 37).

If, as this paper argues, migrant policies should be understood as constructing difference and belonging in locally specific ways (Yuval-Davis, 2007), this should be visible not only in the ‘paper reality’ of policy documents but also become evident in concrete policy practices across municipal domains. Through a comparative approach, these policy practices can be related to city-specific imaginaries, in particular to understandings of the place of migrants in the urban community (Barbehön & Münch, 2016; Però, 2013).

The next sections briefly discuss previous research which has been concerned with (national and local) paradigms or models of migrant incorporation, as well as criticisms that have focused on the complexity and incoherence of actual policy practices. The notion of urban imaginaries is introduced as offering a different perspective. It is argued that city-specific problem discourses relating to understandings of the city’s past, present, and future provide orientation for policy practices. After describing the case study cities and their situation within the national policy framework, the analysis focuses on the two policy domains which are most salient at the Dutch national level: integration into Dutch society and social cohesion in migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods. The empirical sections compare migrant policy discourses and practices in Amsterdam and The Hague and detail how the sense-making processes employed by policy actors depend on specific understandings of urban reality. The discussion reflects on how local historical and spatial contexts can inform our understanding of ‘governing difference’ as informed by urban imaginaries, and the consequences for the study of urban migrant policies.

UNDERSTANDING URBAN MIGRANT POLICIES

Migrant policy models and their critics

While studies of migrant policies have traditionally focused on the national level, there is growing scholarly attention for local – especially urban – policies. Cities develop policies to deal with migration in the absence of national frameworks (Penninx & Martiniello, 2004), or the responsibility for migrant policies is deferred to the local level (Bak Jørgensen, 2012). Urban policy actors may resist the ‘backlash against multiculturalism’ (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010) that characterizes national debates in twenty-first century Europe (e.g., Ambrosini & Boccagni, 2015; Kos, Maussen, & Doomernik, 2016) or, conversely, they may seek to safeguard their city from unwanted (migrant) Others (e.g., Gilbert, 2009; Van Eijk, 2010).

Like studies of national migrant policies which have sought to construct ideal-typical models (e.g., Brubaker, 1992; Castles, 1995; Favell, 2000), scholars of urban migration policies have also developed typologies. Notably, Alexander (2007) compares four cities’ policy responses to labour migration. He distinguishes four phases, describing the level of involvement from local authorities as well as the desired level of migrants’ adaptation to the host society. They range from ‘non-

policy', where no migrant-specific policy is instituted and problems are reacted to on an ad hoc basis, 'guest worker policy', designed as a temporary solution until migrants return to their home country, 'assimilationist policy', aiming to integrate migrants through minimizing their ethnic difference, to 'pluralist policy', which does not seek to minimize but accommodates or even celebrates ethnic group identity. In recent years, arguments have been made for the addition of a fifth phase, variously labelled diversity, intercultural, or post-multicultural policy (Ambrosini & Boccagni, 2015; Schiller, 2015; Uitermark et al., 2005). What typifies this new form – contra pluralist or multiculturalist policies – is the focus on individuals rather than migrant groups, and the incorporation of other aspects of difference like gender and sexuality.

However, as Schiller (2015) found in her comparison of diversity policies in Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Leeds, while the diversity concept generates new policy ideas, during implementation these are combined with previous paradigms, notably multiculturalism. Thus, she states 'I found that activities for implementing the diversity policies often diverge from the goals formulated in the policies' (p. 11). Others more strongly reject the usefulness of (national) models for explaining policy practices. For example, Freeman (2004, p. 946) states 'one finds ramshackle, multifaceted, loosely connected sets of regulatory rules, institutions, and practices in various domains of society that together make up the frameworks within which migrants and natives work out their differences', while Joppke and Morawska (2014, p. 8) argue 'once we abandon the misleading "national model" talk, we discover a plethora of context-specific ad hoc policies, utterly devoid of an underlying philosophy of integration'. Therefore, even when dominant migrant policy discourses can be identified, these may not neatly correspond with actual policy practices.

This incoherence has been explained in terms of what has been called the 'local pragmatism' hypothesis. Municipal or regional governments would be more directly confronted with the consequences of policy implementation as they are closer to the situation 'on the ground'. Contrary to national governments, they would, therefore, prefer an instrumental or pragmatic approach (Bak Jørgensen, 2012; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). Rather than adhere to specific paradigms, responses to policy problems would be dictated by the practical means and techniques available and the short-term consequences of policy decisions.

However, comparative studies (e.g., De Graauw & Vermeulen, 2016; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2013; Scholten, 2013) also show how the urban context shapes migrant policies beyond 'simple' pragmatism. These authors highlight factors such as city officials' institutional capacities, the role of minority organizations, and local political developments, resulting in city-specific discursive and institutional structures. De Graauw and Vermeulen (2016, p. 19), for example, note that the construction of target groups depends on 'how public officials across cities understand obstacles to immigrant integration'. This paper builds on that insight by proposing that such constructions also depend on understandings of and norms and ideas on governing difference that emerge as a result of distinct urban imaginaries.

Migrant policies and urban imaginaries

While migrant policies might be described as ad hoc, apolitical, or fragmented, they can nevertheless possess a certain internal coherence as a result of being embedded in locally specific experiential spaces. For example, studies show municipal differences in the discursive construction of 'diversity' (Barbehön & Münch, 2016) and 'community' (Walker & Leitner, 2011) which cannot be traced back to either national discursive frameworks or 'pragmatic' decision-making, but depend on how migrants are (not) included in narratives of a city's past, present, and future (Barbehön & Münch, 2016; Però, 2013).

Political geographer Soja (2000) analyses these narratives through the concept of urban imaginaries, which he defines as 'our mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality' (p. 324). These encompass not only 'mental maps' or understandings of urban reality in the present but also 'the envisioning of an urban utopia' (p. 11), the imagined or future reality that 'makes a city not only a

lived place but also a dreamed one' (Lindner, 2006, p. 36). Cities provide spatial and historical contexts which facilitate certain problematizations and policy actions while inhibiting others (Barbehön et al., 2016; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). This should not be seen as the result of an intentional effort by policy actors, but as a 'set of collectively available and routinized ways of doing things that regulate meaningful practices at a particular place and time' (Barbehön & Münch, 2016, p. 3). Although cities may face similar challenges, the ways in which these are interpreted and taken up often depend on locally specific experiences and meaning-making processes, which make up the 'intrinsic logic' of cities (Löw, 2013).

Conceptions of a city's social reality – as well as its imagined and hoped for future – thus serve as orientation for defining and addressing difference. For example, in cities such as New York (Foner, 2007) and Birmingham (Wilson, 2015), their self-understanding as exceptional sites of multicultural experimentation informs a positive outlook on diversity and an inclusive sense of urban belonging, notwithstanding the persistence of structural inequalities. Conversely, Mele (2000) and De Koning (2015) show how discourses that position migrant-dominated neighbourhoods as pathological spaces to legitimate and normalize urban restructuring and resident displacement, draw upon 'symbolic representations and characterizations of the city' (Mele, 2000, p. 628) and 'visions of the normal and the good city' (De Koning, 2015, p. 1203). These studies show how imaginaries of the present and the ideal city are drawn upon to formulate policies that regulate distributions of social groups in urban space. In this way, the construction of difference as a policy concern – through identifying and localizing individuals or groups that are legitimate objects of policy intervention – simultaneously communicates something about the not-different, the mainstream from which migrants (and other Others) are discursively excluded (Schinkel, 2013).

If the city is to be understood as a 'location where identities are constituted [...] not only as a physical entity but also as a narrative device and a plethora of signs and symbols infused with power relations' (Eade & Mele, 2002, p. 11), a discourse-analytical approach is useful to understand how practices develop that draw boundaries between groups and constitute difference as (not) problematic (Atkinson, 2000; Barbehön & Münch, 2016). Such an approach examines the arguments derived from policy discourses and their translation into policy practices (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). As such, it aligns with studies that employ Foucault's governmentality concept to examine the formation of policy problems and 'appropriate' solutions in urban policies (see e.g., Atkinson, 2000; Dikeç, 2007; Raco & Imrie, 2000; Uitermark, 2014). However, these studies focus on analysing urban policy discourses from the perspective of management and control strategies employed by the state (Uitermark, 2014). I use this approach to explore how different ways of imagining the city have different implications for the constitution of migrant policy discourse and associated policy practices.

DUTCH MIGRANT POLICIES

In migrant policy studies, the Netherlands has long been regarded as an exemplary multiculturalist country, that at the turn of the millennium experienced a shift towards a restrictive integration regime with assimilatory underpinnings (see e.g., Joppke & Morawska, 2014; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). Although some argue multiculturalism never existed as a prescriptive policy (Van Reekum & Duyvendak, 2012), its supposed failure led to a 'new realism' (Prins, 2002), whose advocates 'tell things as they are' not hampered by 'political correctness'. 'Multiculturalist' policies such as those subsidizing ethnic organizations and foreign language classes were decried for having caused the formation of an underclass whose members do not feel connected to Dutch society. From a primary concern with socio-economic integration in the 1990s, the focus shifted to migrants' adoption of putatively Dutch norms and values (Schinkel, 2013). The rigid distinction made between *autochtone* (assumed homogeneous) Dutch and their *allochtone* Others (*allochtonen* includes all first- and second-generation migrants, independent of citizenship status) exemplifies

the degree to which foreign culture and descent are problematized and seen as obstacles to overcome before one can be considered a 'full' citizen (Yanow & Van der Haar, 2013). As the policy paper 'Integration, attachment, citizenship' states:

It has been found that multiculturalism has failed because, contrary to what was thought and expected, the different ethnic and cultural groups that became part of European societies in the past decades did not come together in a new unity. (Ministry of Internal Affairs [MIA], 2011, p. 1)

Therefore, the new integration policy makes more explicit normative demands:

Integration is integration into the Dutch society [...] Dutch society in all its diversity is the society in which those who settle in the Netherlands must learn to live, to which they should adapt, and which they should join. (MIA, 2011, p. 5)

Current national – and urban – policies should thus be seen in the light of this disavowed (imagined) multicultural past.

In addition, migrant policies at the national level problematize social cohesion in urban neighbourhoods. In the Dutch context, as well as elsewhere in Western Europe, diversity and integration are discursively linked with the direct living environment, especially 'deprived' neighbourhoods in large cities, which house relatively large numbers of *allochtonen* (Van Gent, Musterd, & Ostendorf, 2009). Such neighbourhoods become emblematic of multiculturalism's perceived failure (Schmidt, 2012). National policy papers on integration identify neighbourhood liveability and social cohesion as major policy concerns and relate this to Dutch discontent with the influx of ethnic and religious Others in 'their' neighbourhoods (MIA, 2011; Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment, 2007). The shift from a group-based ('multicultural') to an area-based approach was expressed in the 2007 establishment of a Ministry for Housing, Neighbourhoods, and Integration. This Ministry was a direct consequence of the then governing coalition's (2007–2010) political vision, which had the slogan 'Working together, living together' and stressed the neighbourhood as 'building block' for a cohesive society.

The disavowal of multiculturalism has thus led to a search for alternative frameworks in which Otherness is essentialized through the focus on permanent cultural differences captured in the *autochtoon/allochtoon* distinction and spatialized through a preoccupation with social cohesion which is considered lacking in ethnically diverse urban neighbourhoods. Although national urban and integration (but not immigration) policies have effectively ended from 2012 onwards (Scholten & Van Breugel, 2017), migrants' Otherness retains its discursive salience at the national level.

CASE STUDY SELECTION

Bearing in mind these national-level developments, this study discusses how policy actors in Amsterdam and The Hague organize migrant policy practice in the light of governing complex, heterogeneous urban communities. As the Netherlands' first and third largest city, they have traditionally attracted a higher number of migrants compared to the rest of the country, and today house the largest and second-largest share of so-called *allochtonen* (Table 1 provides a brief statistical overview). Both cities have a history of formulating policies to govern this diversity. Similar to the national level these have changed significantly over the last decades (Hoekstra, 2015). There are also differences between the cities, notably in their spatial, economic, and political structure, which are based in diverging historical trajectories. While it is expected that these differences are likely to influence discursive opportunity structures and result in different challenges for the design and implementation of migrant policies, the brief description of the two cities is not meant to claim a form of historical path-dependency or a causal relationship resulting in distinct urban imaginaries.

Table 1. Statistical overview Amsterdam and The Hague.

	Amsterdam	The Hague
Population (2016)	834,713	520,697
<i>Ethnic structure</i>		
% Non-Western migrants ^a (2016)	34.8	35.1
% Western migrants ^b (2016)	16.8	16.9
<i>Income structure</i>		
% Low income households (<25.200 Euros, 2013)	50.7	49.0
% High income households (>47.900 Euros, 2013)	17.0	16.8

Source: Statistics Netherlands (2016), OIS Amsterdam (2016), The Hague in Numbers (2016).

^aShare of the population with at least one parent born in an African, Latin-American, or Asian country (including Turkey, excluding Indonesia and Japan).

^bShare of the population with at least one parent born in a Western foreign country (including Indonesia and Japan).

Rather, ‘objective’ aspects such as the material context of a city and urban policy discourse and practice are viewed as mutually constitutive (cf. Richardson & Jensen, 2003), meaning that not only are discourses shaped by the material context, but this context is shaped by discourses as well.

Amsterdam has a long history of housing large numbers of migrants (Lucassen, 2004). Its historical tolerance of religious and ethnic diversity can be viewed as the result of a capitalist and entrepreneurial mentality. It has also been associated with the value placed on religious freedom (during the struggle for independence against the Spanish Empire, many Jewish and Protestant refugees came to Amsterdam). The city’s more recent reimagining as a tolerant, anti-establishment city alludes to this history (Nijman, 1999). Amsterdam has relatively low levels of class and ethnic residential segregation, partly due to limited income inequality and the ubiquity of social housing (approximately half of the housing stock). The urban economy is based primarily in the service sector, with important roles for the financial sector and ICT. Amsterdam has historically been more left-wing than the national level, with a strong dominance of the Labour Party. Its governance style has been described as consensual (Alexander, 2007) and decentralized, as seven sub-municipal districts could until recently (March 2014) design and implement their own policies within the broader municipal framework.

While Amsterdam is the capital and arguably the Netherlands’ most important city, The Hague is the seat of the national government and international diplomacy. It houses around 160 international institutions, many related to peace and justice, among which the International Criminal Court and the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration. The Hague is relatively segregated in terms of both income and ethnicity (Kullberg, Vervoort, & Dagevos, 2009), which can be related to the city’s extension in the second half of the nineteenth century. Luxury housing was built at the sea-side on sandy ground and working-class neighbourhoods on the inland side (Kloosterman & Priemus, 2001). Its urban economy is based mostly on public services: national government and international diplomacy. Compared to Amsterdam, it has a more polarized political climate: it is one of two cities in the Netherlands where the populist anti-immigrant party *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) is represented on the municipal council, and the council also includes two Islamic parties. Policy-making is more centralized as districts function as administrative units without budgetary or policy-making capabilities.

MATERIAL AND APPROACH

The empirical material used in this paper concerns local policy developments during the 2000–2014 period. Two policy domains are studied: diversity/integration² policies and neighbourhood

policies. These were selected because they represent the main focus areas of national migrant policy discourse. They draw boundaries between groups, describing who should be 'integrated' (Schinkel, 2013), and conceptualize and delineate places that should be remade and brought under control (Dikeç, 2007; Uitermark, 2014).

The analysed material consists of 20 semi-structured interviews conducted between June and December 2014 with various 'policy stakeholders': policy actors at the municipal and district level, external experts (e.g., members of advisory committees), and representatives of migrant organizations. The interviewed policy actors are involved in shaping policies at the (sub)municipal level and sometimes also with organizing their implementation, but they do not deal directly with migrants themselves. A previous study (Hoekstra, 2015) showed the existence of a 'diversity' discourse in Amsterdam and an 'integration' discourse in The Hague. This paper considers where these discourses originate and how they are implemented. Interviews discussed respondents' assessment of past and current urban migrant policy discourses and practices. General questions regarding respondents' understanding of (ethnic) diversity and how it is addressed within their field of expertise were supplemented with questions on policy aims, the choice for certain types of policies over others (e.g., general versus group-specific policies), and the relation between policy discourse and policy practices. In addition, respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of policies in achieving their aims. As several respondents requested to remain anonymous, only general information regarding their professional role is provided. Supplementing the interview data, an analysis of relevant local policy documents was conducted. A keyword search on the municipal websites yielded a significant number of documents, and some respondents also suggested material. The empirical sections present a number of interview quotations and extracts from policy documents. These are selected because they can be considered 'typical', expressing dominant understandings, or sometimes because they reveal a dissenting approach. For reasons of space only a limited number can be provided, but many others make similar points.

This study follows a discourse-analytical approach based on the work of Foucault (1977, 1980). Discourse is here defined as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak [...] they constitute them and in doing so conceal their own invention' (Foucault, 1977, p. 49). Discourses determine what can be legitimately said and what is rendered unspeakable, therefore producing 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1980) through which meaning-making and problematizing powers are exercised. While discursive utterances are not pre-determined or static, and dissenting positions can and do occur, actors have to position themselves in relation to dominant meaning structures and 'known categories' (Hajer, 1995, p. 57). This makes it possible to identify the structuring principles that define and delimit possibilities for policy practice, and compare these across policy fields and urban contexts. The aim of the analysis is therefore not to discover the 'real' or underlying meaning of policies, but rather to understand problematizations and sense-making processes.

The analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti. Coding proceeded by looking at the social categories and their associated attributes that are present in the policy documents and interviews. Attention was paid to points of convergence and divergence between policy discourse and stated practice, between groups of policy actors (e.g., municipal scales or departments), and between cities. In a next step, these categories are related to descriptions of the city or urban society. In this way, the understandings of urban reality that inform policy practice can be identified. Such understandings were sometimes explicit but also implied, for example through statements about 'logical' or 'self-evident' courses of action, which nevertheless can be said to legitimate specific knowledge forms and thereby reflect and reproduce particular worldviews (Barbehön et al., 2016). The following sections present the empirical findings. For each city, a brief impression is given of the development of migrant policies in the past two decades. This is followed by a discussion of current policy discourses and practices at the city and neighbourhood level.

AMSTERDAM

Diversity and urban citizenship

In Amsterdam, migrant policy has been subsumed in a more general diversity discourse. A diversity policy was introduced in the late 1990s to signal a move away from earlier ‘multicultural’ policies supporting emancipation within one’s own subculture through ethnic organizations. These policies were considered outdated as they would facilitate intra- rather than intergroup contacts and would not reflect the reality of residents’ lives, which are seen as characterized by multiple, intersecting identifications. Increased (awareness of) diversity within and between social groups is cited as a reason for an individualized and more positive approach (Uitermark et al., 2005). This diversity encompasses ethnicity but also gender, sexuality, age, and (dis)ability, and is appreciated as an integral part of urban life and a motor for economic growth (Amsterdam, 2012a). In the mid-2000s, ‘urban citizenship’ was added to the diversity policy as a common point of identification and a way of formulating shared norms and rules of conduct (‘citizenship competences’). Amsterdam citizenship functions as a superordinate identity category: ‘Every *Amsterdammer* [resident of Amsterdam] is a citizen of the city regardless of age, origin, belief, and ethnicity. Citizenship transcends and bridges the differences among the population of Amsterdam’ (Amsterdam, 2012a, p. 1).

Whereas the national government distinguishes between ‘native’ or ethnic Dutch (*autochtonen*) and first- and second-generation migrants (*allochtonen*), Amsterdam uses an ethnic-cum-city categorization (e.g., *Marokkaanse Amsterdammer*, Moroccan resident of Amsterdam). This is presented as both a symbolic gesture of inclusion towards ethnic minority residents, many of whom perceive the term *allochtoon* as stigmatizing, and a pragmatic way to meet the needs of Amsterdam residents:

[this decision] is highly rooted in this city [...] it’s about being in touch with the city, with *Amsterdammers* [...] on the other hand, it’s also, of course, a symbol and a statement to [national politics]. (Policy-maker Citizenship and Diversity Unit)

Similarly, diversity policy is explained with reference to the character of the city, as highly diverse and as a frontrunner compared to other (Dutch and foreign) cities:

Amsterdam is nearly always a frontrunner [in this domain]. For example, we abolished integration because we’re quite simply a diverse city where people just have to live together [...] then thinking in [terms of] integration and groups is obsolete.

However, the diversity policy itself, which is formulated and implemented by the Citizenship and Diversity Unit (CDU, part of the Social Affairs Department), still primarily consists of policy programmes for specific groups. Five programmatic themes (women’s emancipation, anti-discrimination, LGBT³ acceptance, radicalization and polarization, and citizenship) address those whose (intersectional) identities lead them to perform ‘worse’ than the Amsterdam average on a variety of indicators. While some themes – like women’s and LGBT emancipation – are continuations of earlier policies under the new framing of diversity, others are more recent additions. Notably, the radicalization and polarization programme was developed in the aftermath of the murder of Islam critic Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam in 2004 and incorporated into the diversity policy in 2010.

According to a CDU respondent, attempts are made to ‘open up’ what can be seen as target-group programmes by focusing on their relevance to all *Amsterdammers* and Amsterdam as a diverse city. For example, a programme about the commemoration of slavery history was re-

baptized ‘shared history’ to emphasize its centrality to the city’s historical development, and LGBT policy is connected to city marketing. Nevertheless, there remains a focus on identity markers (gender, sexuality, religion) that signal difference and denote vulnerability and, in the case of Muslim *Amsterdammers*, the danger of radicalization. This is especially the case for ethnic minorities, in particular Muslims, who are targeted within most diversity programmes.

Apart from these five themes, the CDU has a coordinating and agenda-setting role in drawing attention to ‘diversity aspects’ in other policy fields. As Schiller (2015) notes, the Unit cannot impose its vision on other departments but has to rely on the power of persuasion. Many policy programmes with a potentially significant ‘diversity aspect’ – such as civic integration exams for non-Dutch nationals, honour-based violence, and spatial segregation – are located in different departments (the Work and Income, Healthcare, and Housing Department respectively). These issues are not primarily approached from a diversity angle. When diversity aspects are addressed this takes the form of adding projects for specific groups, rather than revising generic policies.

While the CDU provides a general framework, district administrations can formulate their own policies.⁴ Some districts adopt the city’s diversity policy while others focus on specific groups relating to their population composition (LGBT residents in the inner city district, Surinamese organizations in the Southeast district). More often, however, district respondents argue that they do not want to focus on (ethnic) target groups because they want to create inclusive policies: ‘We haven’t made a policy on diversity; we’ve said we’re making policies for everyone. It’s about the aim you want to achieve’. Rather than focusing on ethnicity, these respondents argue that socio-economic arrears should be the main target:

Of course, there are all kinds of other factors in people’s lives or in their background that play a role. That’s true for everybody [...] [socioeconomic] vulnerability is the most important criterion. What you look like or which, you know, that doesn’t matter.

‘Diversity’ is thus mobilized unevenly, in specific policy settings and scales but not in others. Some districts reject the city-wide diversity policy and articulate a different perspective in which residents all have a ‘background’, thus making policy interventions on the basis of identity aspects exclusive and unjust (as these would not benefit all disadvantaged residents). However, the underlying rationale is similar to that of CDU respondents – who also argue that ‘thinking in groups is obsolete’ – and of the diversity policy itself. Both regard the ‘diverse city’ as a given in the context of Amsterdam. However, for the district respondents, this means that socio-economic inequality should take precedence over ethnic or migrant difference. This is especially the case in those districts and neighbourhoods where the diversity policy intersects with neighbourhood policies.

Neighbourhood policy

Amsterdam policy papers describe neighbourhoods as important locations for the practice of ‘citizenship competences’ and ‘living together with difference’ (Amsterdam, 2005, 2012b). The municipality monitors tensions between ethnic groups in neighbourhoods (Broekhuizen & Van Wonderen, 2012), and has developed specific policy programmes for ‘deprived’, often highly ethnically diverse neighbourhoods (continuing a policy developed by the Ministry for Housing, Neighbourhoods, and Integration, see section on national policy).

Notwithstanding the discursive focus on the neighbourhood as location of difference, ‘diversity’ as a dimension or object of policy intervention is conspicuously absent in the narratives of interviewees responsible for neighbourhood policies. When asked whether diversity is relevant in their work, some state they do not connect their work with the diversity policy as they associate it with countering polarization along ethnocultural lines. In contrast, neighbourhood policies

would take a 'different perspective' as they focus on similarities rather than differences and on stimulating connection and empowerment:

I was [concerned with] how to organize collectivities in the best possible way and how to empower people again within the collective in districts and neighbourhoods, regardless of their cultural background. (Programme Manager Neighbourhood Policy)

[Diversity policy] doesn't connect because we weren't so much concerned with polarization but rather wanted to stimulate and enable connection [...] [polarization] is a negative angle. Whereas we're working towards involvement, doing things together ... so in a way, it's a different perspective. (Policy-maker Housing Department)

This concern with enabling connection, rather than fighting ethnocultural polarization, is based on assessments of how residents themselves would relate to each other. Neighbourhood policy actors do not consider (ethnic) diversity to be a relevant dividing line at the neighbourhood level: 'multiculturalism does not cover [what is happening]. The people themselves in districts and neighbourhoods have also moved past that frame' (Programme Manager Neighbourhood Policy). Rather, neighbourhoods are described as neutral, apolitical spaces, largely devoid of tensions, to which residents self-evidently relate. Thus, implementing neighbourhood policies consists of encouraging residents to '[choose] with each other what's important to this neighbourhood' (Policy-maker Housing Department).

For the CDU as well, there is no obvious connection between the diversity policy and neighbourhood policies. One CDU respondent first argues diversity should be taken into account within neighbourhood policies, given the diverse nature of the city, but struggles to define how this should be realized in practice:

You know, [neighbourhood policy] was already very much a reflection of the city. So what's the diversity aspect? Improving neighbourhoods together with residents, if you do that in a diverse neighbourhood, then ... what more should you add to it?

As respondents argue that the diversity of neighbourhood residents should not – and does not – influence the organization or the outcome of neighbourhood development, diversity becomes depoliticized as a merely descriptive characteristic. According to the interviewees, ethnocultural polarization between groups might play a role at the city level but relations in districts and neighbourhoods are not influenced by (ethnic) difference. Their characterization of Amsterdam as diverse by default precludes paying attention to how structural inequalities influence everyday micro-level interactions. In contrast to this perspective, two respondents working in highly ethnically diverse districts point out that some ethnic groups do face structural barriers to participation in their neighbourhood as well as exclusion by better-organized groups.

THE HAGUE

Integration policy

Like Amsterdam, The Hague experienced a discursive shift on 'governing difference'. In the mid-1990s, a minorities policy that mainly provided subsidies for the preservation of cultural customs was reformed into a more general welfare policy. Unlike in Amsterdam, diversity is not a central aspect of the current policy discourse. Rather, the aim is the socio-economic and cultural 'integration' of migrants into 'mainstream' The Hague society – with the exception of the 2006–2010 period, when The Hague's policy was relabelled 'citizenship policy' and the focus shifted towards creating 'encounters' between residents and between residents and the government.

After this period, citizenship remained a policy trope, but its meaning became more normative and focused on the duties of (migrant) residents, rather than mutual encounter and recognition (Hoekstra, 2015). The policy paper 'Differing pasts, one future' warns that 'failed integration' threatens social cohesion within the city, resulting in a lack of 'feeling at home' in one's street and neighbourhood:

Many citizens have been confronted with one large societal change after the other. They no longer feel at home in their street and their city. Every day they experience what failed integration means: neighbours with whom they cannot talk and who cannot be their allies in the struggle for a liveable, safe, and social neighbourhood. We want to win back those justly concerned citizens for our policy [...] by increasing the pace of integration. (The Hague, 2011, p. 2)

As with the diversity policy in Amsterdam, the integration policy is coordinated by an Integration Unit which develops its own policies but also puts integration on the agenda within other departments. Although target-group policies are officially abolished, some ethnic/migrant groups continue to receive special attention. Most prominent among these are Central and Eastern European (CEE) labour migrants, a recent, large migrant group. Whereas in principle, the municipality communicates solely in Dutch, they experimented with a counter and helpline for CEE migrants in their own languages. The three 'integration themes' (policy priorities) formulated by the municipality also show a continued orientation on specific ethnic/migrant groups, although these differ from the 'classic' ones targeted under the old minorities policy.⁵ The themes are EU labour migration, diversity and inclusivity (including anti-discrimination programmes focusing on CEE migrants), and language and participation (focusing on residents of African descent).

Respondents from the Integration Unit justify this targeted approach by referring to group-specific (cultural) characteristics which would hinder integration:

I think you shouldn't put up obstacles for yourself in this [...] we shouldn't talk about whether we have a target group policy. Let's consider whether we have a problem where ethnicity or background or migration might play a role, or not. That it's a part of the analysis you make. (Policy-maker Integration Unit)

Despite an official preference for general policies, The Hague continues to target groups which are presumed to face cultural barriers hindering their integration. This approach is legitimized by the policy's aim of integration – implying a distinction between integrated residents who fully belong to the urban community, and those who are discursively positioned outside of it (Schinkel, 2013). Contrary to the national policy discourse which portrays migrants' integration as an individual responsibility, The Hague respondents argue that integration is also a pressing societal need. Policy documents and respondents portray The Hague as a city that faces a lot of problems as a result of lacking integration and whose urban community is threatened by the arrival of new migrant groups (in particular, CEE migrants). Given these problems, the urgency of which is such that 'non-commitment is not an option' (The Hague, 2011, p. 3), an approach which is 'city-wide, in the interest of everyone' (p. 5) is called for. This means that adapting general policies for different (ethnic/migrant) target groups or even creating group-specific policies is part of a 'well-filled toolkit' (p. 7) to counter spatial and social segregation along ethnic lines. All programmes which reduce migrants' distance to the 'mainstream' (whether general or group-specific) are considered to be in the interest of all The Hague residents.

Neighbourhood policy

Contrary to Amsterdam, respondents in The Hague frequently refer to specific neighbourhoods – such as Schilderswijk and Transvaal – when discussing the integration policy. These neighbourhoods house large numbers of non-Western (Muslim) migrants and experience social deprivation

and liveability issues. Problems associated with migrant incorporation are thus seen to accumulate in specific areas, which are labelled ‘problematic’ and therefore receive additional attention and resources, as a policy-maker of the Integration Unit explains:

I think no city in the Netherlands is as segregated, to use that term, as The Hague. That’s reflected in a number of aspects and we know that some areas require more efforts than others.

One way in which these problems are addressed at the neighbourhood level is through budgets for ‘resident participation’. Individual residents and neighbourhood organizations can apply for subsidies to increase local welfare and ‘liveability’. These budgets originated as part of a national neighbourhood renewal policy, which was implemented in four areas in The Hague from 2008 to 2012. Concentrations of disadvantaged migrant groups were seen as being at the heart of social problems in these areas. Furthermore, although the neighbourhood policy is officially a generic policy, informally, ethnic target groups are distinguished. Neighbourhoods’ internal diversity is thought to result in group-specific policy needs, necessitating a tailored approach. Unlike in Amsterdam, where respondents talk about diversity in abstract terms (e.g., by referring to ‘groups’ or ‘background’), policy actors in The Hague often refer to particular ethnic or (sub)national groups:

[About Schilderswijk] Because there are 123 or, I don’t know how many nationalities, there’s also a kind of multicultural tension internally in that neighbourhood.

Q: Was that also something you considered in the policy implementation?

A: Certainly. Well, in any case, we considered and discussed it [...] you have to approach every group separately. So a general approach doesn’t exist. Berbers are very different from Kurds; Kurds have to be addressed differently from West-Turkish et cetera. Well, there are incredibly many different groups [...] so yes, you have to try to address that in a very focused manner. (Former Programme Manager Neighbourhood Renewal)

Respondents mention the political mobilization of communities of interest and unequal power relations between groups as impediments to creating inclusive neighbourhood facilities. One example provided is the award winning project ‘mothers of Schilderswijk’: a group of female volunteers who function as confidantes of isolated women in the very ethnically diverse Schilderswijk neighbourhood. The chosen approach, which made funding conditional on the project being open to all women in the neighbourhood instead of targeting a particular ethnic group, turned out to be difficult to realize. Rather than organizing on the basis of a shared neighbourhood identity or shared problems, various ethnic groups used their connections within the municipality to demand funding for group-specific programmes. While the project is now regarded as successful, its difficult start demonstrated to the actors involved that cooperation across (ethnic) group lines is difficult to achieve and requires intensive supervision, as is also stressed by a respondent from another district:

Our philosophy involves everyone: young, old, Dutch, or residents from diverse backgrounds [...] we train our employees to deal with that. Sometimes we don’t succeed in getting groups together; then we just visit groups separately. But in the end, we want to create situations in which all groups have their place [...] that’s a precondition. (District Policy-maker)

To sum up, given that policy actors experience The Hague as a city consisting of separate ethnic communities which operate at a distance (literally and figuratively) from ‘mainstream’ The Hague society, they consider ethnic diversity to be highly relevant to formulating and implementing their

policies. The integration policy moreover has a clear spatial dimension. Respondents distinguish 'white' (i.e., predominantly ethnic Dutch) and 'black' (predominantly migrant) neighbourhoods and concentrate their integration efforts on the latter, as physical distance is thought to result in social distance from 'mainstream' The Hague society. Like the city, problematic neighbourhoods are not viewed as cohesive but as consisting of separate ethnic communities whose interests do not necessarily align. While The Hague's integration policy focuses on recent arrivals (CEE migrants) and isolated groups (African migrants), at the neighbourhood level policy actors focus on residents originating from Muslim countries, who are not just portrayed as vulnerable but also as well-organized and politically resourceful.

DISCUSSION

This study explored how urban policy actors imagine the diverse city and organize policy practice accordingly. It starts from the perspective that local migrant policies can be analysed through looking at city-specific imaginaries, which form a metanarrative connecting notions of urban society's past, present, and future nature. Imaginaries provide orientation for policy actors as they locate policy problems and construct solutions that are considered appropriate to the specific local context. The findings show that Amsterdam and The Hague employ distinct, city-specific meaning structures. While policy actors explain their decisions (also) in terms of pragmatism, they use different logics to identify what is 'pragmatic' and arrive at different outcomes. These logics in turn are informed by imaginaries in the form of tacitly shared imaginations about the place of migrants in the urban community. Urban imaginaries come to matter all the more because policy practices in these cities cannot be neatly placed within existing paradigms or models of migrant incorporation. Despite an overarching discourse, actual policy practices are not coherent as policy actors locate difference (at least, the type demanding municipal attention) unevenly across spatial scales, urban areas, and population groups.

In both cities, current policy practices should be considered in light of the rejection of previous 'multicultural' paradigms in favour of a focus on urban society and citizenship, while also resisting adoption of the neo-assimilationist national discourse. Amsterdam's diversity discourse draws attention to various dimensions of difference including gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. Urban citizenship, defined as a shared attachment to the city, is presented as the glue that can keep a diverse city together. Amsterdam policy actors describe diversity as a defining characteristic of the city, but also as self-evident, even banal. Amsterdam's focus on inclusive – and implicitly homogeneous – replacement categories like 'urban citizens' and 'neighbourhood residents', serves to depoliticize migrant incorporation, which becomes more about inclusion into the imagined landscape of the city than a concern with existing inequalities and segregation along lines of places of origin (cf. Wilson, 2015).

This vision of the (future) city aligns with the diversity discourse's neoliberal aspects (Uitermark et al., 2005) whereby (ethnic) difference is one of the many ways in which urban citizens might express their 'lifestyle'. In this sense, diversity's connotations of equality ('we are all diverse') and choice have been criticized as constituting 'a careful concealment of power differences', creating 'an illusion of equality in a highly asymmetrical world' (Makoni, 2012, pp. 192–193). This is an especially relevant insight in the light of recent studies which have argued Amsterdam is moving away from its past reputation as a 'just city' (Musterd, 2017; Uitermark, 2009) and fits into a broader narrative of Amsterdam as highly successful, and its ideal of a diverse yet undivided city as already a reality or within reach.⁶ Similar to Peck's analysis of the adoption of creative cities policies in Amsterdam, thinking in terms of diversity and urban citizenship has had a 'reaffirmative, not transformative' effect (Peck, 2012, p. 482). Through a temporal narrative in which Amsterdam residents have moved past the frame of multiculturalist 'group-thinking' towards seeing themselves as individual urban citizens, Amsterdam legitimizes a move away from national

political discourse – which is seen as polarizing – while at the same time distancing itself from previous, now discredited, target-group approaches.

Conversely, in The Hague policy discourse demands migrants' integration into the 'mainstream' society, the need for which is explained by referring to a (presumably) native Dutch population who 'no longer feel at home in their street and their city' (The Hague, 2011, p. 2). Thus, The Hague draws a sharp distinction between 'native' Dutch and the migrant groups which would threaten their belonging. The Hague is thought to be in need of concepts that have the potential to bridge different worlds: class and ethnic segregation are seen as major challenges, as is the divide between the 'ordinary' city and the world of diplomacy and highly educated international workers (incidentally, a programme to connect expats to 'ordinary' residents is called 'The Bridge'). This social and spatial divide between residents is an urgent problem which should be fixed by any means necessary. While Amsterdam views diversity in the future city as an extension of current reality, in The Hague the lived and the dreamed city are very different.

Contrary to Amsterdam, this alarmist perspective puts ethnic/migrant difference centre stage (and opens up room for target-group policies for groups who pose a particularly severe threat) not only within the integration policy but also in neighbourhood policies. Although rhetorically this aligns The Hague with the Dutch national discourse, in practice The Hague also distances itself from the national approach which is seen as too individualistic and *laissez-faire*. Again referring to the problematic nature of diversity in their city, urban policy actors argue that integration is a pressing societal need and therefore cannot be left to migrants themselves but requires action by the (local) state.

Further research could examine more systematically how historical perspectives and future prospects can be connected to today's meaning-making processes, as well as what role can be attributed to economic infrastructures, cultures of governance, etc. Moreover, this study has not looked at the role (ethnic) difference plays in other policy domains. Both migrant and neighbourhood policies are arguably about encouraging some form of shared identification or cohesion. Findings therefore need not necessarily apply to other policy domains (although Scholten & Van Breugel, 2017, come to a similar conclusion in their analysis of education policies in Amsterdam).

Nevertheless, this study points to the importance of looking at urban imaginaries to understand how policies 'hit the ground'. Although municipal migrant policy discourses suggest a coherent, overarching programme, policy practices were found to be rather fragmented. Rather than adhering to specific paradigms of migrant incorporation, policy practices depend on how municipal policy actors make sense of difference in relation to the urban context. While some argue that local migrant policies are primarily driven by a search for pragmatic, efficient, and instrumental solutions, this paper argues that not only should pragmatic and ideological considerations be seen as not necessarily mutually exclusive, the notion of pragmatism itself should be 'unpacked' to consider how specific policy practices come to be perceived as pragmatic in the first place. Migrant policies – and other urban policies – are informed by broader and locally specific understandings of the real and the imagined city that shape what (and who) is perceived as a policy problem and how it can and should be addressed. In this way, representations of the city are not only the outcome of urban history and development but also itself a factor shaping that development.

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NOTES

1. This paper uses the term ‘migrant policies’ for those policies that (construct and) govern difference which is understood to be located wholly or partially in migrant background or foreign descent.
2. These are the terms used in the respective cities for migrant policies (i.e., Amsterdam uses diversity while The Hague speaks of integration).
3. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.
4. Until March 2014, when the district governments were officially abolished (following national-level legislation).
5. These ‘classic’ target groups are residents of Surinamese, Moroccan, Turkish, and Antillean descent: the four largest non-Western ethnic groups in the Netherlands.
6. The 2010–2014 municipal coalition agreement states (with respect to housing policy) that ‘Amsterdam is and remains an undivided city’ (Amsterdam, 2010, p. 13). Nevertheless, there is evidence that socio-economic and ethnic segregation in Amsterdam is increasing (see e.g., Van Gent & Musterd, 2016).

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