

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Summary

This paper examines three forms of political participation and the relationship between them and looks at the reasons why migrant organisations are important for political participation. We have investigated the turn out rates and voting behaviour of migrants. We have investigated active political participation that means we have interviewed councillors from ethnic minority groups and party officials in four cities. The third part of our research concerns organizations of ethnic minorities. We gathered data on Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Ghanaian and Chinese organizations and conducted network analyses to see if organizations have common board members. The combination of all this information supplies us with a picture of the civic community of the ethnic groups in the Netherlands. We theorize about explanations on differences between these groups and give more insight in the role of migrant organisations.

1. Introduction

The Netherlands has a population of about 16 million, of which 7% is usually considered part of ethnic minority groups. Ethnic minority groups are immigrant groups with a consistent lower socio-economic status in terms of educational level and income. The main ethnic minority groups are 1) immigrants from former Dutch colonies with Dutch passports, like Surinamese and Antilleans, 2) immigrants that arrived as temporary labourers between 1960–1980, mainly from Turkey and Morocco and their offspring 3) immigrants that arrived more recently as refugees, from a variety of countries like Vietnam, Somalia, Iran, Iraq. National and local policies are formulated to improve the situation of these specific groups. In our study we focus mainly on the four largest ethnic minority groups, namely Surinamese, Antilleans, Turks and Moroccans. When I use the terms migrants and ethnic minorities, these groups are targeted.

Possibilities for political participation of members of ethnic minority groups vary for the three categories mentioned. Immigrants from the former colonies keep Dutch passports and have a right to vote in national, provincial and local elections and to become local or provincial councillor, parliamentarian or governor. The second category has a right for dual nationality since 1992: about two third of the Turks and half of the Moroccans took Dutch nationality and kept their Turkish or Moroccan passport so they have dual nationality. The Turks and Moroccans with a Dutch passport can actively or passively participate in all elections. Non-nationals have been granted voting right on the municipal level, when they have lived more than five years in the Netherlands. That means the number of Turks and Moroccans that can vote in local elections is considerably higher than in national elections. The concentration of ethnic minorities in the larger cities in the Netherlands is 30 % in Amsterdam and 31 % in Rotterdam so a representation of these groups in the municipal council is urgent: social problems in city areas are often problems related to ethnic minorities. A minister of Big Cities Policy was introduced in 1998, who deals with the issues of ethnic minorities.

The third target category of the ethnic minority policy is refugees, a divers group with mainly four types of legal status: – 1 – asylum seeker, – 2 – all kinds of in between status like permit for temporary stay (v-VTV), – 3 – A- status: accepted refugees with a refugee passport (who are officially stateless) or C-status (VTV), and – 4 – refugees that have taken Dutch nationality. Asylum seekers do not have any voting rights and for all "accepted" refugees without Dutch nationality including the temporarily accepted ones, the five year-rule applies for voting right on municipal level.

Becoming a councillor or parliamentarian is only possible with a Dutch passport; a second nationality is not a problem.

2. Theoretical Perspective: the Civic Communities Perspective

In this paper we want to address the following question: what is the relationship between different forms of political participation and the civic participation in organisations of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. The civic community perspective, which was (re) introduced by Robert Putnam in his *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam, 1993) can help to explain different levels of political participation of migrants. In his study of the regional councils in Italy, Putnam has shown that civic culture explains a large part of the different political performances among the Italian regions. Putnam has measured the 'civic ness' of regions by the density of the local cultural and recreational associations, by newspaper circulation, by the referendum turnout and by (lack of) preference voting. These different measurements have a high interrelation and thus form a robust 'civic community index'. "When two citizens meet on the street in a civic region, both of them are likely to have seen a newspaper at home that day; when two people in a less civic region meet, probably neither of them has. More than half of the citizens in the civic regions have never cast a preference ballot in their lives; more than half of the voters in the less civic regions say they always have. Membership in sports clubs, cultural and recreational groups, community and social action organisations, educational and youth groups, and so on is roughly twice as common in the most civic regions as in the least civic regions." (Putnam, 1993: 97–98). Fennema & Tillie (2000) suggest that what is true for the Italian regions may also be true for the Dutch multicultural society. The civic culture of ethnic groups, that is their degree of civic community, will most likely contribute to the working of democracy in a multicultural democracy. In this paper we will study indicators of political participation and indicators of civic community and discuss the outcomes. Fennema & Tillie have tested their hypothesis on the local situation in Amsterdam. We will follow the reasoning of Fennema & Tillie, but analyse the situation on national level regarding organisations to test their hypothesis further.

3. Results on Political Participation

We have used two indicators of political participation, namely turn out rates in municipal elections and participation in city councils. Because this article not only test the civic community perspective, but also wants to provide information on the situation in the Netherlands, we added some information concerning content, on party choice and experiences of migrants.

Turn out rates and voting behaviour

Aggregated data on voting behaviour of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands are not available from the bodies that organize the elections. The municipal registry supplies the election registry only with names and addresses and not with place of birth to protect the privacy of the voters. That means that we depend on exit polls and surveys to know more about the characteristics of the voters.

In 1994 and in 1998 exit polls were organized during the municipal elections in a number of Dutch cities. The cities with the highest percentage of ethnic minorities were chosen: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Utrecht and Arnhem. In table 1 we present some results on the turnout of migrant voters during the local elections of 1994 and 1998 in five cities in the Netherlands.

Table 1 – Turn out rates of five ethnic groups at the local elections of 1994 and 1998

Background	Amsterdam	Rotterdam	Den Haag	Utrecht	Arnhem
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	1994	1998	1994	1998	1994	1998	1994	1998	1994	1998
Turks	67%	39	28	42	-	36	55	39	56	50
Moroccans	49	23	23	33	-	23	44	26	51	18
Surinamese/ Antilleans	30	21	24	25	-	27	-	22	-	20
Capo Verdans	-	-	34	33	-	-	-	-	-	-
City Turn Out	56,8	45,7	56,9	48,4	57,6	57,6	59,8	56,5	57,2	52,0
* Den Haag 1994: no data										

As shown in table 1 the turnout rates of Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans differ considerably.

The city turn out rate is in general higher than the turn out of ethnic minorities. Between 1994 and 1998 the general and migrant turn out went down in an alarming way. This was partly caused by diminishing clarity on the differences between the parties after the fall of the Berlin wall: former left wing parties moved to the centre, and left-right coalitions that had never been possible before took shape. A general loss of interest in politics was noticeable, that was more clear for marginal groups. Low turn out of minority groups in 1994 provoked the city of Rotterdam to start a campaign to stimulate the participation of ethnic minority groups in 1998. This campaign was successful. As Fennema & Tillie (2000) remarked earlier there is a difference between Turks and other groups: Turks tend to turn up more at the polls than the other ethnic groups.

To give the reader some insight in the voting behaviour of migrants, the actual party preferences are shown in table 2, where the voting patterns of migrants is compared to voting patterns of the total Dutch population.

Table 2 Voting behavior of four ethnic groups in the local elections of 1998.

ethnic/party	PvdA	D'66	Groen Links	SP	CDA	VVD	SGP/ GPV RPF	other (local) parties	N(100%)
Turks	30%	2	16	1	29	1	0	21	2209
Moroccans	42	1	45	1	4	1	0	6	1040
Surinamers	62	4	11	3	5	2	1	12	1354
Antilleans	51	5	13	6	8	5	2	10	174
Other Migrants	41	6	19	6	10	6	1	11	1408
Total Migrants	42	3	20	3	15	2	1	14	6185
Total Dutch	18	4	4	2	24	18	3	27	7.000.941

(Source: Tillie, et al 2000)

As shown in table 2 migrants tend to vote more on the left wing parties (PvdA and the Green Left Party) than the general population does. Migrants nearly don't vote for parties that are usually considered to the right side of continuum (VVD, SGP, GPV and RPF).

In our book on migrant voting (Tillie et al, 2000) we analyse the underlying reasons for party

choice. We asked people what they could possibly vote and what they would never vote for. If voting behaviour were ideologically determined, a leftist person would never take voting on a right wing party into account. From that analysis we conclude that the voting behaviour of migrants was ideologically determined. We found few examples of voting that is determined by the ethnic background of a candidate, but usually this occurs within the limits of party preference. We find only a few exceptions in which a famous Turkish or Moroccan politician attracted a lot of votes for a certain party. We saw this effect more prominently the very first time non-nationals could participate in local elections. The second time, the number of Turkish and Moroccan politicians had increased; they appeared in all parties and because of that, the effect of specific politicians diminished.

Participation of migrants in municipal councils

Above we have described passive political participation, and we will now turn to active political participation. With the introduction of voting rights for non-nationals, the number of councillors from ethnic minority groups in local councils increased also. We were interested in the way councillors from ethnic minority groups are selected, the way they function and the attitudes of the parties and policy makers towards them. We interviewed the migrant councillors, other party members and officials in the civil service of four cities (see: Berger, Fennema, Heelsum, Tillie & Wolff, 2000). The number of migrants in the councils of six cities from 1986 onwards is shown in table 3.

Table 3 Number of migrants in the council of six cities.

City \ year	1986–1990	1990–1994	1994–1998	1998–2000
Amsterdam	3	4	8	11
Rotterdam	1	2	2	8
Den Haag	1	3	2	6
Utrecht	0	3	4	6
Eindhoven	2	1	2	1
Zaanstad	1	1	3	3

Table 3 shows a substantial difference between the two big cities (Amsterdam and Rotterdam) and the medium towns. In Amsterdam nearly a third of the councillors is of migrant origin in 1998. That means that migrants are nearly proportionally represented in the council of Amsterdam. In Rotterdam slightly more than a fifth of the councillors is of migrant origin, while the percentage of migrant inhabitants of Rotterdam is 30 percent. In Zaanstad, a smaller town, the percentage of migrant councillors is 7,5 percent, while the percentage of migrant in the population is 10,2 percent. In Den Haag and Utrecht the percentage of migrants in the council is 3 percent, while 12,5 percent of the population in both cities is of migrant origin. Eindhoven is far behind and has only one migrant councillor, while with a proportional representation the amount of migrants should have been 4 in Eindhoven. Our general conclusion is positive: 13 years after the introduction of voting rights for non-nationals, migrants have become clearly visible in numbers in the councils of the big cities, even though they are not as often going to the polls as Dutch. The political institutions are accessible for migrants.

For smaller towns and villages in the countryside things are not the same. During the local elections of 1998 the total number of migrant councillors in the Netherlands has doubled from 74 (in 1994) to 150. That means, they constitute 1,5 percent of all chosen councillors,

while ethnic minorities constitute 7 percent of the Dutch population. That means that migrants are underrepresented outside the big cities. The number of migrants has to increase up to 700 to become representative of the total migrant population.

Surinamese were the first to enter politics, because of their Dutch passports. In 1990 Surinamese and Turkish councillors dominated among the councillors. When we look at the migrant politicians in 1998, Turks have become the largest group (Lakmaker, 2000). Lakmaker finds in a larger study 40% Turkish, 27% Surinamese, 14% Moroccan councillors and 19% with another background (see table 4). The number of Moroccans did not increase to the expected level. In the four cities of our research we found eight Surinamese, eight Turkish, five Moroccan, one Antillean and one Ghanaian councillor.

Table 4 Turks, Moroccans and Surinamese, as percentage of all migrant councillors in the Netherlands (Lakmaker 2000).

Ethnic Group \ year	1998
Turks	40%
Moroccans	14%
Surinamese	27%
other non dutch	19%

Migrant councillors are relatively new to the Dutch political parties. In the last ten years all parties have put considerable effort into finding suitable Surinamese, Turkish and Moroccan candidates. According to some members of the selection commissions of the different parties this has led sometimes to premature choice of candidates, in the sense that some of them were inexperienced and unprepared for Dutch politics. Migrant candidates are supposed to attract voters from ethnic communities, to have contacts in ethnic communities, and to know more about issues that are important to these communities than their Dutch colleagues. In general the councillors themselves report to be satisfied about the influence they have on the policy of their party and about the attention that is paid to their views. Half of the interviewed has been a member of the committee that determined the party program before the elections. Most of the interviewees report no clear discrimination in the party or in their political life, though some of them have more indirect examples. Strong party loyalty is reported among migrant councillors. We are somewhat suspicious about the amount of pressure put on these councillors to conform to the existing system. There seems to be a fear among their white counterparts that migrants could formulate their own "ethnic" program. Our interviews show that it is not always easy for the councillors to cope with contradictory demands like representing the views of the ethnic community on the one hand and on the other not moving too much away from the requested line of thinking. An example is the position towards religious facilities of Muslims within a socialist perspective: most Turkish and Moroccan voters would find a mosque in their town a basic requirement, but a Dutch left wing party usually does not encourage that state subsidies are spent on religious facilities. In Van Heelsum & Penninx (1999) an example on the level of an Amsterdam borough is described. The three mosques in this borough divided their building into a religious and a social-cultural space, and asked subsidy for the social-cultural space and for the social-cultural activities from the mainly socialist borough-council. In this manner they tried to avoid the socialist policy not to support religious facilities.

The relationship between migrant councillors and ethnic organisations is an interesting one. Some councillors have ended on the list of election candidate because they were known in their community and in ethnic organisations. We asked the councillors about their membership of organisations. The majority (18 out of 27) is a member of one or more migrant organisations. It occurred rather frequently that they gave up their memberships after they were elected and took office. The reason they present is incompatibility of posts. Organisations ask councillors to look after their interests. The general view is that a councillor should not be subjected to too much pressure from organisations, so one has to be able to cope with this as a politician. They are aware of the problems it can cause when Dutch colleagues think that they are working for a specific (ethnic) rank and file. Expectations are contradictory: councillors are recruited because of their specific ethnic rank and file, but they are not supposed to pay too much attention to their ethnic community, because that would easily lead to accusations of "clientelism". Clientelism is understood as an exchange of favours: a voter casts a preferential vote and in exchange the candidate settles the affairs of a voter. This kind of arrangements is supposed to be more common in the home countries of the migrants.

Half of the councillors were chosen with preferential votes. A quarter of the councillors think that people from their own ethnic communities casted these preferential votes. It would be strange not to take care of the interests of your specific voters under these circumstances. Some councillors have given attention during their campaign to needs of the ethnic community in their town. On the other hand we found that a considerable group of councillors has not been campaigning at all, or stressed the party's points of view during their campaign an not their own background.

We asked the councillors if it is possible as a councillor from an ethnic minority group not to deal with minority issues at all. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam some councillors dislike to be addressed as a representative of an ethnic minority group and stress that they represent everyone in the city. In these bigger cities, there is enough room for them to work on general issues like economic policy or healthcare. In smaller cities, with only two or three councillors from an ethnic minority group, it looks less realistic that one can avoid minority issues. A councillor stated: " There are simply not enough colleagues with the necessary knowledge and experience. And besides, I'm very involved with these issues."

Some feel pushed into minority issues. A councillor gave me an example, he stated: "I had liked to be send as a representative to the Exchange, since I'm a foreign exchange dealer. But they think: he does not know anything about that, because he is Surinamese." Another example of wrong assumptions is shown in the following case: a non religious leftist Turkish representative was asked by other party members to visit the local mosque to talk about their request to expand the mosque, while this representative was considered anti-religious in Turkish circles.

4. Results: Indicators of Civic Community: amount and density of migrant organisations

The third part of our research concerns migrant organisations and the networks between these organisations. Migrant groups have built up many ethnic organisations to produce collective goods for their group. We find ethnic sport-organisations, mosques, cultural organisations, political organisations and interest groups (see also Lindo, van Heelsum and Penninx, 1997). Each of these organisations makes an appeal to its members to work towards a common goal. Fennema & Tillie state that successful organisations, cause a higher level of social trust among its members; when organisations have more contacts, social trust will spread to a greater part of the ethnic group. In this manner a community develops with more social capital. To measure civic community of ethnic groups Fennema & Tillie focused on

ethnic organisations and the contacts they have through joint board members in the case of Amsterdam. We will now use new data on organisations on national level to test the relationship again.

Migrant organisations in the Netherlands

Since 1998, we have broadened the analysis of organisations from Amsterdam to the national level. The networks of Turkish organisations in the Netherlands (Van Heelsum & Tillie, 1999) and Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands (Van Heelsum, 2000) and Surinamese organisations (Van Heelsum & Voorthuysen, in press) have been analysed. The number of Turkish organisations (1100) in the Netherlands is one and a half times as high as the number of Moroccan organisations (720); the number of Surinamese organisations is 881.

Not only the number of organisations varies between ethnic groups, also the size of the largest interconnected network varies. The largest network of Turkish organisations consists of 150 organisations; the largest network of Surinamese organisations consists of 143 organisations and in the case of Moroccan organisations only 53 were part of the largest cluster.

We have made pictures of the Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese organisations. The picture on Moroccan organisations (figure 1) is the least complicated, since we are able to show all interlocking directorates. The largest Moroccan network is concentrated around two Islamic federations and the advisory board of Moroccans to the municipal in Amsterdam.

The second pictures of the Surinamese (figure 2) had to be simplified, because drawings so many organisations would not become very clear. The Surinamese network is characterised by many lines, not so much in clusters but in all directions. Out of 143 organisations, 39 are put into the drawing; the criterion was that they have at least five interconnections. The Surinamese community consist of two mayor ethnic subgroups, namely the Surinamese Creoles and the Surinamese Hindustanis. The central organisations in the Surinamese network are Hindustani organisations in The Hague; they have links with Creole organisations in other cities.

The third picture (figure 3) shows the network of Turkish organisations in the Netherlands; it is simplified in a slightly different way. In the picture of the Turkish organisations 34 out of 150 organisations are shown. The circles indicate a group of connected organisations, which are all connected to the one in the middle of the circle. The largest Turkish network is characterised by eight clusters of more organisations (circles in the picture). It was easy to interpret these clusters, since they are actually the main Turkish Islamic denominations.

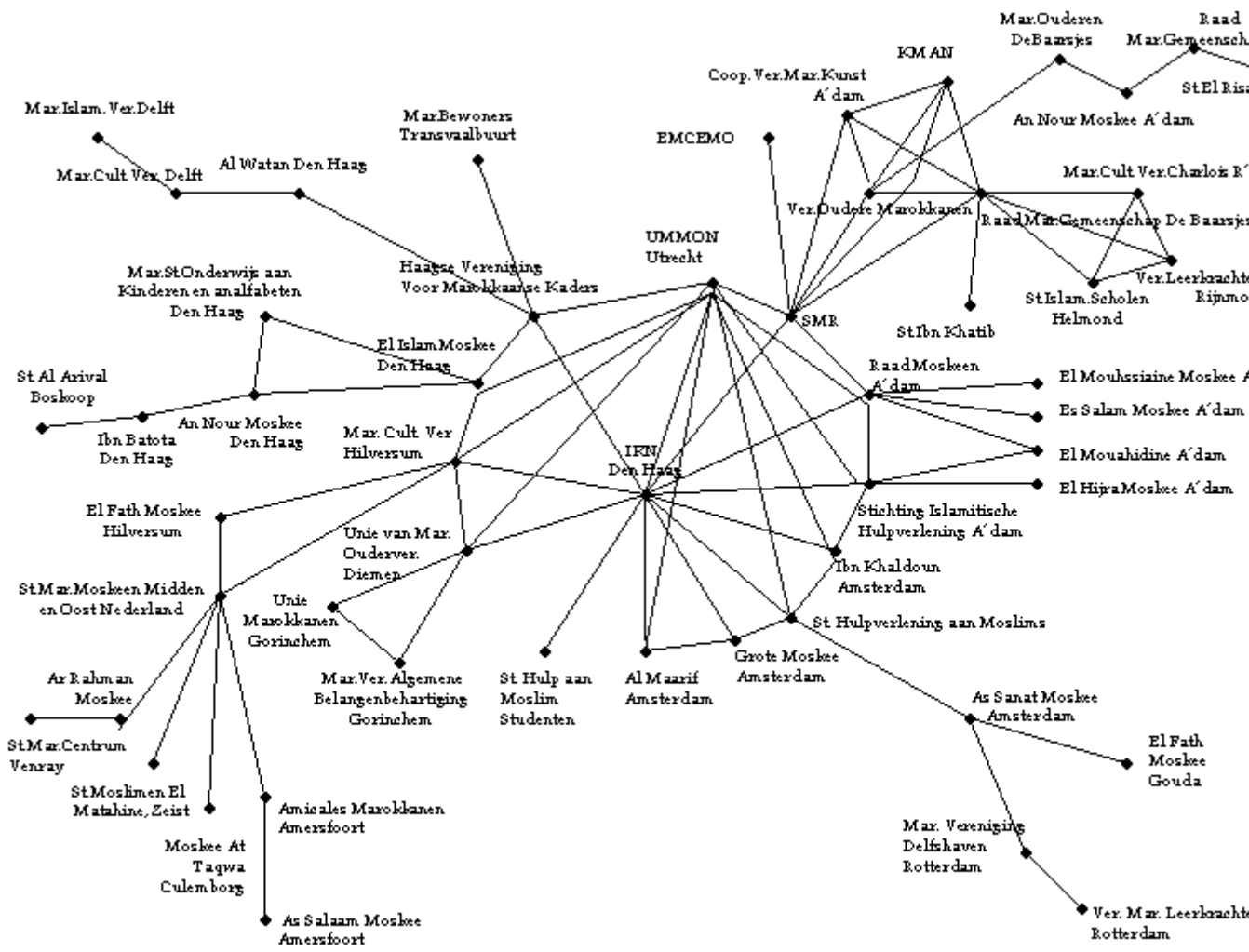


Figure 1 The network of Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands, based on common board members (Van Heelsum, 2000).

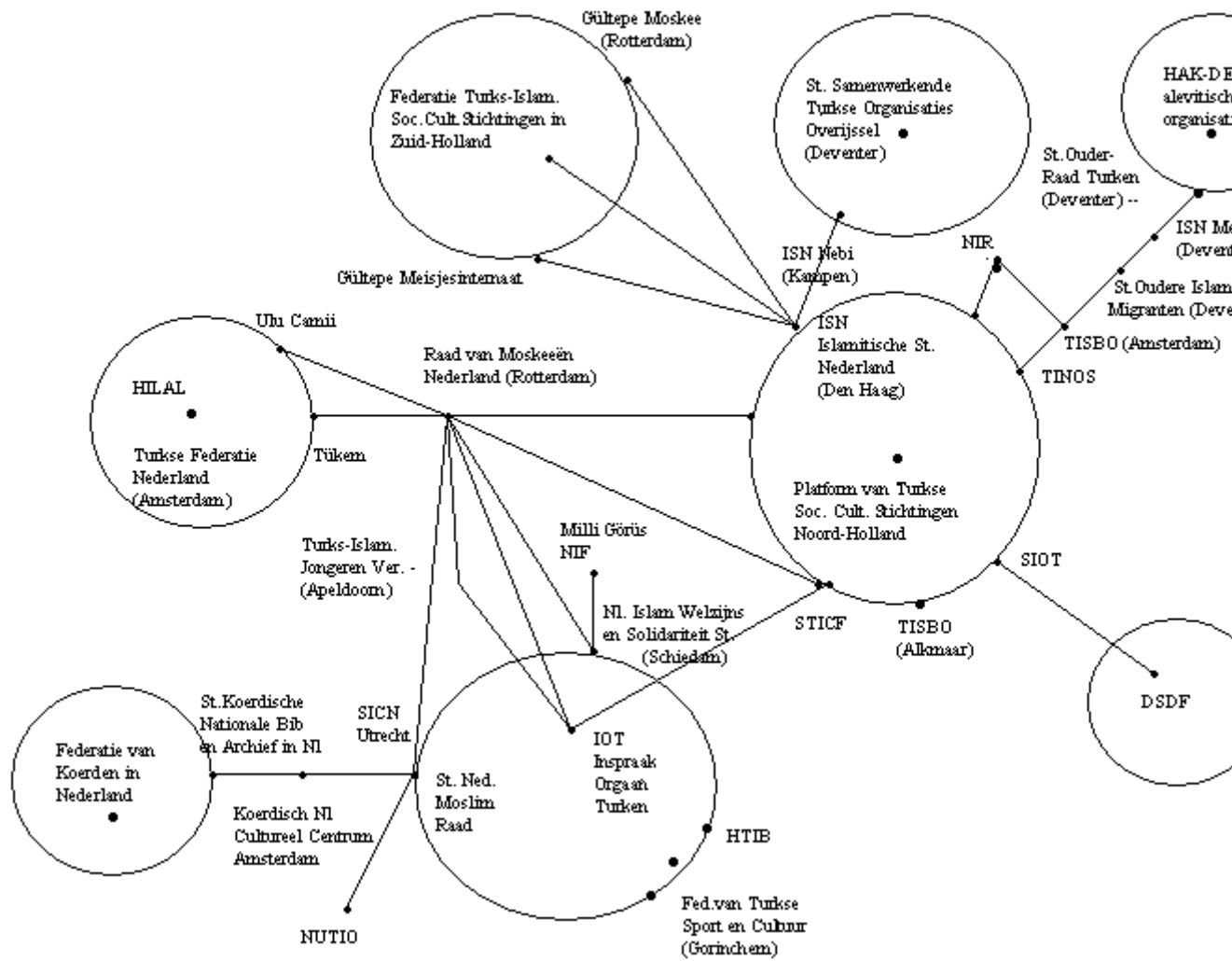


Figure 3 Simplified version of the network of Turkish organisations in the Netherlands, based on common board members (Van Heelsum & Tillie, 1999)

When we compare the networks, the number of contacts between the Turkish organisations are the largest; Turks have more federations, and Turks have more representatives to advisory boards to the Dutch government than Moroccans. But the Surinamese organisations have a network with more interrelations than the Moroccans have. 48% of the Turkish organisations were not related through common board member, 53% of the Surinamese organisations and 64% if the Moroccan organisations are not related through common board members with other organisations. The rank order becomes clear in table 5: Turkish organisations are most interrelated, than Surinamese, than Moroccans.

Table 5. Ethnic groups in the Netherlands (per 1-1-2001) and their organizational density .

	population *	organisations **	density b/a
Dutch	16 mil		
Surinamese	308.625	881 ***	2,85
Moroccans	272.000	720	2,65

Turks	319.600	1100	3,44
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Sources: *. <http://statline.cbs.nl>; ** Our own research *** of which about 400 Hindustani.

The density of Turkish organisations is higher than followed by Surinamese and then by Moroccans, though the density score does not differ much between the Surinamese and Moroccan organisations.

5. Discussion: combining the results on elections, local councillors and ethnic organisations.

Explanatory Factors of the Civic Community Perspective

Participating as a voter in elections, participating as a councillor in a municipal council and participation in ethnic organisations are not independent issues. Fennema and Tillie have made plausible that differences in political participation have a correlation with the civic communities of ethnic groups (Fennema & Tillie, 1999, 2000). When we rank order voter turn out, amount of councillors per ethnic group and amount of organisations per ethnic minority group, they pointed at similarities. Voting turn out rates of Turks are highest, number of Turkish councillors is highest, the amount of organisations in Amsterdam and the network between organisations in the Turkish community is strongest. This finding is repeated at national level. Our results show that the rankorder relationship of political participation and civic community on national level follow the same logic as in Amsterdam. The general idea that civic community and political participation are interrelated is thus supported.

The actual order of ethnic groups, is different on national level from the situation in Amsterdam. Turks are in both cases more politically active and have more organisations. But on national level Surinamese are second and Moroccans third, while in Amsterdam the opposite is true. A reason for this difference might be the specific Surinamese population of Amsterdam.

A difference between the situation in Amsterdam and the situation on national level is shown when we look at the second and third place in the list. On national level Surinamese are second in number of councillors, and also in number of organisations and density of organisations. Moroccans are behind in number of councillors and in number of organisations, but only slightly behind in density of organisations. We conclude that the rank correlation between the degree of civic community of the various ethnic groups and the levels of political participation, is still there, but there must be other factors that explain the difference between Amsterdam and the national level. A strong interrelated ethnic community is not a danger to the functioning of a multi cultural democracy and does not per definition to separate independent communities of migrants. As the case of the Turkish community in the Netherlands shows, a strong interconnected ethnic civic community and a high level of active and passive political participation go hand in hand. The perspective of Putnam has helped to see that a strong civic community can also have the opposite effect, namely it enhances the functioning of a democracy. Political trust is one of the factors that explain the relationship between political participation and civic community, according to Fennema & Tillie (2001). But more factors have to be taken into account to reach a complete explanation.

Discussion: other explaining factors

We want to draw the attention to some other factors, which can also play an important role. One such hypothetical factor is the size of a community; it looks reasonable that a very small community like the Antillean, the need to look for alliances outside the group is high. The largest minority community in the Netherlands is the Turkish one; it can more easily establish a large amount of internal organisations and federations. But the difference in size between

the Turkish and the Surinamese community is not that considerable, that the size can explain the difference completely.

A second and more important factor are the cultural and historical characteristics of ethnic groups. The number of cleavages and ethnic subgroups within a community are consequences of cultural and historical factors. The Surinamese community consists of two major ethnic subgroups, Hindustanis and Creoles and many other ethnic subgroups like Javanese, Indians, and Jews. Networks within the Hindustani subgroups are stronger than between subgroups, which is shown in the above picture of the Surinamese organisations. The Turkish community in the Netherlands is characterised by a lot of Islamic denominations, that all have federations and local organisations.

Other cultural characteristics are shown by Landman (1992) Den Exter & Massaro (1999) and Van Gemert (1998). They explain the lack of cohesion of the Moroccan community in the Netherlands pointing at clan traditions in the isolated Berber villages in Morocco. These traditions, but also the low level of education are seen as causes of lack of cooperation between organisations. That 85% of the Moroccan Berbers in the Netherlands came from the Rif Mountains, a region with a tradition of resistance against the Moroccan central government (Hart, 2001), can help to explain why levels of political trust among Moroccans in the Netherlands are relatively low. People from this region have a history of not trusting the central government. This can remain an attitude outside Morocco and can even influence the way they educate their children. This set of historical-cultural factors could explain that there is a lack of cooperation between Moroccan organisations. Comparison of Moroccans in the Netherlands (peripheral region) and Belgium (originating from the central region of Morocco – the region that was directly connected to the centre of power) would be interesting and could provoke the following hypothesis: we expect more political trust among the Belgian Moroccans than among Dutch Moroccans.

A prerequisite for political participation and better functioning of the democracy is of course that the receiving society has to give opportunities to the participation of ethnic minority groups. The interrelation between the political opportunity structure and the possibilities for migrant organisations to develop has to be stressed. Rath, Penninx, Groenendijk & Meyer (1999) describe the institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands and clearly show the interaction between the immigrants and the receiving society. The Dutch political opportunity structure has for the last 200 years been characterized by possibilities for religious denominations. When we take a closer look at migrant organisations, the prevailing type of organisation is religious. The fact that Turks have a lot of Islamic denominations, might fit to the Dutch opportunity model, while Moroccans in the Netherlands are not very divided on religious basis. In the case of the Surinamese, the largest number of organisations are religious Hindu organisations. Among the subgroup of the Hindustani Surinamese, there is a strong organisational network.

In future research, we will look at the influence of the political opportunity structure, cultural and historical factors, amount of cleavages within an ethnic group and the size of a community. These factors need attention to come to a full explanatory model of the political participation of migrants.

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