

## **ANTI-IMMIGRANT POLITICS AND THE CRISIS OF MODELS OF INTEGRATION IN WESTERN EUROPE: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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The idea that France is the striking illustration of what multiculturalism is not (Jennings 2000), or that, to the contrary, the Netherlands and Britain have epitomized a European version of multiculturalism (Hentzinger 2003) has been held as self-evident wisdom by scholars, journalists, politicians, and ordinary citizens at least since the 1980s. Who would challenge the existence of contradictions among French republican assimilation, British race relations, or Dutch pillarization? Such differences have been stylized into national models. For a long time, these models have sparked strong interest in international social science literature. Models were used to account for national idiomatic integration policies, the structure of public discourses, processes of immigrants' socio-economic and socio-cultural incorporation, and the reaction of European societies to immigration, race, ethnicity, and so forth (for a recent illustration, see Fetzer and Soper 2005).

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, these traditional models began to go into crisis. The British and Dutch versions of multiculturalism were publicly declared failures, and French republicanism was portrayed as going through a profound crisis, mainly after the 2005 riots (Fassin and Fassin 2006). In the wake of these new discourses, Islam was dramatized as a challenge to liberal democracy and national identity; integration and citizenship were framed as institutional and symbolic sites of a cultural conflict—if not a clash of civilizations—and immigrants as the main agents of the crisis. While they attempted to explain this crisis, scholars who had been confident until then in the existence of stylized models of citizenship became embarrassed. How could the “crisis of models” that burst through in the 2000s be explained with the classical notion of “models” that had been so useful to them before?

Scholars tried to overcome this embarrassment, pointing to different possible explanations. Some speculated about the possible convergence among Western European countries' integration policies, and the crisis of models was conceived of as the indicator of a retreat from classical versions of multiculturalism and republicanism in favor of coercive integration coupled with anti-discrimination measures (Joppke 2007; Wallace Goodman 2010). Others pointed to the lack of flexibility, adaptation, or pragmatism of traditional conceptions of citizenship, at a time of increasing

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socio-cultural and religious diversity; models were much too path-dependent to adapt easily to new problems, and produced “pathologies” in public discourses and policies (Amiriaux 2010; Guiraudon 2006; Favell 1998). Finally, some scholars presented the uniqueness of Islam as the main agent of the crisis; that is, classical approaches to citizenship and integration were not appropriate anymore in the face of such an unprecedented challenge (Koopmans et al. 2005; Koopmans and Statham 2005).

I contend that these analyses help us make sense of the European anti-Islam and anti-immigrant politics that took the form of a “multicultural backlash” in the decade from 2000 to 2010 (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2009). I argue that these new discourses are not merely a political puzzle that scholars must address but an epistemological challenge that calls for a critical reappraisal of notions long held as appropriate and relevant in the scholarship, such as “national models of integration.”

This is what I propose we do in this article, by answering the following question: Can “models of integration” help us explain the scenario of their crisis that seems to weigh so heavily in the explanations of new anti-immigrant and anti-Islam public discourses? My answer is that this is not the case, because the notion of models is strongly biased and ill-founded. Models are a preconceived notion rather than a genuine analytical framework, which scholars cannot use without their research paying considerable costs. However, one should not throw the baby out with the bathwater and discard models entirely. Instead, we can think about them in a way that is more useful for the social sciences.

### **The Crisis of National Models of Integration: A New Stage of Anti-Immigrant Discourses**

On October 16, 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that “the approach [to building] a multicultural [society] and to liv[ing] side-by-side and enjoy[ing] each other... has failed, utterly failed” (*Die Welt* 2010). Only a few months later, on February 5, 2011, the newly elected British Prime Minister David Cameron challenged the United Kingdom’s multicultural integration policies, and connected multiculturalism to radical Islamism. He declared, “Instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we —as governments and societies— have got to confront it. Instead of encouraging people to live apart, we need a clear sense of shared national identity, open to everyone” (Wright and Taylor 2011). Eventually, the president of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, asked during a February 10, 2011, TV talk show what he thought about the question of immigrant integration, answered, “Yes, multiculturalism is a failure. In all our democracies, we have paid too much attention to the identity of the [immigrants] who arrived in France, and not enough to the identity of the country” (*Libération* 2011).

It would, of course, be hazardous to assign to “multiculturalism” any consistent definition that would encompass the differences among the national contexts of reference in these discourses. However, these anti-multicultural contentions

participate in a new framing of integration issues in the public and political debates, most salient since the 2000s.

This framing superimposes several repertoires. It focuses strictly on Islam as the main challenge to citizenship and the values of liberalism. The issue is heavily culturalized, and socio-economic dimensions disappear from the dominant frames about the “problems of integration.” Gender and sexual equality are major instrumental references in these debates about the incommensurability of Islam and Western liberal citizenship.

Another aspect is that extreme right-wing parties do not monopolize these strategic discourses about Islam and Muslims. Of course, they have a massive impact on the definition of the agenda in countries like the Netherlands or France. Populist movements and public figures such as Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders have played key roles in the emergence of anti-multicultural discourses since 2002. However, the debate started a decade before, initiated by the liberal leader Fritz Bolkenstein as early as 1991, and was visible in discussions among Social-Democrats. The publication of an article by Paul Scheffer in 2000 on “the multicultural tragedy” and the 2002 murder of Theo Van Gogh sparked a new debate, in which the Dutch multicultural integration model that had supposedly been implemented in the 1980s was accused of being the main reason for the “tragedy.”

The situation in France in the present decade is another cause for concern. A March 2011 poll forecast that Marine Le Pen, the president of the French extreme right-wing National Front party, could be in first place in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections, with 23 percent of the votes, compared to 21 percent for Nicolas Sarkozy and 21 percent for the leader of the Socialist Party (*Le Monde* 2011). This is a direct outcome of the politics of French secularism, Islam, and immigration since 2002, which accelerated after the 2007 presidential election and the creation of a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, and National Identity. In a July 2010 public speech in Grenoble, Nicolas Sarkozy (2010) stated that the French republican model was failing because of “30 years of uncontrolled immigration.”

How can we analyze this situation? As mentioned above, the literature has been increasingly concerned with this so-called “crisis of integration” connected to a “crisis of identities.” In turn, this identity crisis has been framed as a problem of the competition between, on the one hand, national conceptions of citizenship and, on the other hand, collective identity claims made by migrants in general and “Muslims” in particular (Joppke 2009; Koopmans et al. 2005). And countries like France, Germany, Britain, or the Netherlands have been held up as laboratories of this “crisis” by scholars committed to demonstrating the comparative advantages of the various “national models” they identified in each national context: that is, republicanism for France (Favell 1998), ethno-nationalism for Germany (Brubaker 1992), and multiculturalism for the Netherlands or Britain (Koopmans et al. 2005; Koopmans and Statham 2005; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007). Underlying the crisis of traditional models of citizenship, some authors have argued about a convergence of national self-conceptions of citizenship and a retreat from

multiculturalism (Joppke 2004, 2007). Others, on the contrary, argue that these national models are strongly path-dependent (Schain, 2008) and that France remains a powerful illustration of what multiculturalism is not, while in countries like Britain or the Netherlands, multiculturalism remains something indisputably un-French (see Jennings 2000).

What this scholarship shares in common is the idea that “national integration models” would be a useful framework for the comparative study of citizenship. From this perspective, nothing could be understood about immigrants and minorities in France outside a narrative that identifies republicanism as the French model, or British “race relations” and the Dutch “multiculturalism” as national models for Britain and the Netherlands.

Instead of these understandings, I think the real cause for concern that sociologists, historians, or political scientists should be aware of is less about this “crisis of national models” that attracts so much attention in the literature, than the inability of this literature to provide us with a viable definition of these models as analytical frameworks. In other words, the scholarly notions of a British and Dutch multiculturalism—and, for similar reasons, of a French republicanism—are problematic because they are also used by other non-scholarly agents, who have structured the public and political debates along the idea of models and their crises. My point here is that models are not simply a neutral tool social scientists use when they work on immigrant integration. They are also part of the public and political discourses about immigrant integration, and an argument in the new public discourses against immigration and Islam. It is thus difficult to use an analytical framework that participates actively in the construction of the puzzling reality it proposes to analyze. This leads us to confront the notion of models and assess its virtues and drawbacks.

## Key Problems with Models

A national model of integration and citizenship is usually defined as a public philosophy (Schain 2008), a policy paradigm (Favell 1998; Guiraudon 2006), an institutional and discursive opportunity structure (Koopmans et al. 2005), or a national cultural idiom (Brubaker 1992). All these concepts attempt to show how social reality is structured by pre-existing ideas about a nation’s self-understanding (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Hall 1993; Müller 2005; Goffman 1974; Skocpol 1985).<sup>1</sup>

Within this perspective, France is conceived as an assimilationist country (as opposed to multiculturalist countries like Britain or the Netherlands), whose national identity is based on a universalistic public philosophy (as opposed to an ethno-cultural national identity, as in the case in Germany). In turn, because France is a republican country, its notion of the Republic is seen as all-encompassing: the Republic organizes the separation between public and private realms (through a

<sup>1</sup> The following sections were first published in Bertossi (2011).

strict color-blind approach to ethnicity and race), between the state and the church (the philosophy of French secularism, *laïcité*), and it underpins the specifically French “political, open definition” of citizenship and immigrant incorporation through nationality (for a summary of all these interrelated dimensions of the French model, see Schnapper 1994a). By contrast, in Britain and the Netherlands, different idealistic structures are viewed as enabling people to mobilize on the basis of ethnic or racial identities, while integration policies aim at promoting group-based identities instead of a common citizenship (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Koopmans and Statham 2005; Koopmans et al. 2005; Joppke 2009).

This perspective on integration models emphasizes first that agency and collective interests are marginal dimensions of institutional arrangements (in the field of education or health, for example) and the structure of public debates (Brubaker 1992, 13-16; Bleich 2003). Instead, normative and idealistic “frames,” “structures,” “idioms,” or “paradigms” are seen as being the primary and main driving force of policies and practices related to identity, citizenship, immigration, religious diversity, and so on. Social actors, from politicians to veiled Muslim women, are portrayed as simply inheriting these ideas, using and adapting to them. In turn, a public speech on immigrants or a woman’s decision to wear the *hijab* are also brought down to a single cause, namely the power of French republicanism or British and Dutch multiculturalism to drive individual behavior, social movements, institutional arrangements, and policies (Koopmans et al. 2005; Favell 1998; Schnapper 1994b).

When it comes to explaining precisely how this causal relation works and where these models come from, however, the literature is unclear. Assumptions about the aprioristic existence of a French republic, which supposedly started on July 14, 1789, and ended on October 11, 2010, with the prohibition of the *niqab*, are common, as are assumptions about the Dutch and British multicultural models. But a convincing explanation for the origins of these models and why they are emphasized in public discourse and policy is never offered. The notion of a national model is held as self-evident. It provides an account of a social world with no agency but a top-down elite-driven structure (see Mathieu 2002), with no real historicity—no substantial difference is seen between France’s republican identity in 1789, under the Third Republic, or today—but a strong path dependency—French republicanism and British and Dutch multiculturalism cannot easily be replaced by other conceptions—and in which ideas have paramount power. It gives no detailed account of where these ideas get their power from, or the processes and mechanisms through which they shape social reality and are accepted and used by social actors in different contexts. In other words, in order to accept the relevance of the notion of national models, one also has to accept as a given the pre-existence of national public philosophies with sufficient influence to shape a whole society.

Another problem is that the notion of a model of integration and citizenship used by scholars is borrowed from the discourse of a variety of stakeholders in political, media, and academic spheres. Analytical ideal types of French republicanism or British and Dutch multiculturalism are akin to political stereotypes, commonly held in public and political debates in each country. When sociologists,

political scientists, historians, or philosophers discuss republican or multicultural models, they are not writing about anything different from what politicians and journalists talk and write about, even if scholars —sometimes— discuss the models in a different way. The notion of model used by scholars is heteronomous: academic discussions on models are pervaded by normative, political, and moral interests that stem from ideological debates in the public arena in which scholars also take part (Bowen 2007; Scholten 2009; Essed and Nimako 2006; Bertossi and Duyvendak 2009). The problem here is the extent to which scholarly notions of integration models reflect and are influenced by public debates, which in turn are structured by dominant and elite-shaped frames. Often, scholarly writings presented as analyzing social and political phenomena are heavily normative. This normative dimension is strikingly obvious in the literature that has addressed the issue of a possible “crisis” of national integration models in Europe since the beginning of the 2000s (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2009). Research on the integration of immigrants in Europe has turned into discussions about the success or failure of traditional integration policies on the one hand, and on the other, about the legitimacy of ethnic minorities’ claims, particularly those made by Muslims (Joppke 2007, 2009; Koopmans and Statham 2005; Klausen 2005). By the same token, these debates have reinforced questions about Muslims’ loyalty and incorporation —“Are they with us or against us?”— and the relevance of a category (“Muslims”) that is used in and is the subject of political debates.

Finally, the notion of an integration and citizenship model has a totalizing tendency: it tends to bundle together social, institutional, and political facets of citizenship and the integration of migrants, treating these different aspects as a “cultural totality” (Foucault 1969, 25), even when scholarly discussions of models are nuanced. For instance, scholars commonly point to the contradictions, inconsistencies, and limits of the republican model in France or of multiculturalism in the Netherlands and Britain. What is usually assumed, however, and not questioned, is that France has a republication model or that the Netherlands has represented the ideal type of a European form of institutional and normative multiculturalism. This common acceptance of a French republican or a Dutch multicultural model in the social science literature hinders our understanding of diversity and integration in two ways.

First, discussions of racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination, or the integration problems of a variety of immigrant groups in a country tend to be limited to considerations of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the different models. The research questions thus become: Does French republicanism produce more or less discrimination than Dutch and British multiculturalism? Does the former integrate immigrants better than the latter (Koopmans et al. 2005; Favell 1998; Schain 2008; Brubaker 1992)?

The precise meanings of the republican and multicultural models are often forgotten in such discussions. Of course, republicanism and multiculturalism refer to clear normative systems in the writings of political philosophers (Laborde 2010; Pettit 1997; Guérard de Latour 2010). But it is far from certain that these systems

provide manageable and relevant frameworks of analysis for social and political scientists looking at institutions and social interactions in different national contexts. As mentioned above, the assumption that models are an independent variable that can account for the socio-cultural and socio-economic integration of immigrants and minority groups leaves partially unanswered the question of how normative systems are translated into a complex institutional and social reality, and how they affect policies and the functioning of institutions such as schools, hospitals, the military, or the labor market. Of particular concern is the reification of the models, even when they are addressed within a frame analysis perspective inspired by Goffman (1974) (for a formulation of the reification issue, see Mathieu [2002]; for an illustration of the problem, Passy and Guigni [2005]). The ideological or symbolic dimensions of the incorporation of migrants or minority groups are reified into models, which serve, for certain scholars, as legitimate substitutes for in-depth research and analysis of empirical reality.

Secondly, this tendency affects the selection of and the analytical importance placed on various indicators that scholars use to understand differences among national contexts. It is not uncommon for scholars to derive their indicators from their *a priori* and reified notion in order to prove that these very models exist. For example, Muslim chaplaincies in prisons or in the military have been presented as proof of multiculturalism in the Netherlands (e.g., Koopmans and Statham 2005, 156). However, such institutional roles are perceived as either irrelevant or “pathological” within the French context since it is difficult to argue that Muslim chaplains in the French armed forces or prisons prove that France is a multicultural country (on the notion of “pathologies” in national philosophies of citizenship, see Favell [1998]; on ethnicity in the French military and prisons, Bertossi and Wihtol de Wenden [2007]; Beckford, Joly, and Khosrokhavar [2005]).

This example not only raises the “one-country-one-indicator” issue in comparative research, but also shows that other possible independent variables can be lost in the analysis through the use of preconceived national models. The fact is that the shift from conscription to an all-volunteer military (i.e., the specific institutional logic) has played a more important role in the implementation of Muslim chaplaincies in the French military than the general conception of French citizenship. Finally, this example also demonstrates the tendency of models to strikingly limit the predictive potential usually attributed to them: the French color-blind model of citizenship cannot predict the institutionalization of cultural accommodation in a public institution like the military (for a similar argument about policies, see Wallace Goodman [2010]).

In the end, the question concerning national models is empirical: when scholars go into the field to conduct research, how can they make sense of the behavior and attitudes of people who justify their actions using notions like the “republic,” “secularism,” “integration,” “multiculturalism,” “pillarization,” “ethnicity,” “Islam,” or “race”? I argue that, taken as a comprehensive analytical framework and independent variable, models of integration are not much use in answering this question, for all the reasons mentioned above.

In the next two sections, I propose to look at these key reasons in context. That is, I suggest that we need to observe how the notion of models has been used in recent discussions about the incorporation of immigrants and minority groups in Western European countries. Interestingly enough, these discussions have increasingly focused on a so-called “crisis” or “failure” of traditional integration models in France, Britain, and the Netherlands.

### **French Scholarly Politics of Republicanism: Debating the Model or Modeling the Debate?**

The current debate about republicanism among French scholars has highlighted the political power of the contradictions between the republican ideal of color-blind equality, supposedly at the source of the French integration policies, and the actual discrimination suffered by immigrants and their offspring, and their stigmatization in public and political debates as members of racial and ethnic groups (De Rudder et al. 2000; Fassin and Fassin 2006). One key topic of these debates has concerned the use of “ethnic categories” to assess the level of racial and ethnic discrimination (Sabbagh and Peer 2008). The dilemma hinges on considering these categories as a breach of the traditional color-blind republican approach to citizenship—the French state does not formally recognize ethnic or racial groups—or, conversely, considering the color-blind approach an impediment to an in-depth understanding of the extent and nature of discrimination against French minority group members, a discrimination that contradicts the principle of republican equality (Martiniello and Simon 2005; Simon 2003). This discussion of ethnic categories has not been limited to the question of the state’s use of ethnic categories in the national census. It has focused on the legitimacy of their use by social scientists researching integration in France; this is a burning issue in France, which has nothing to do with the legitimate questions involved in scientific discourse and everything to do with the ideological nature of public debates (Simon and Amiraux 2006).

This debate over the use of ethnic categories reveals two mutually exclusive conceptions of the French model. For those against using ethnic categories, the immense value of French republicanism is that it emancipates individuals through its specific universalistic program, despite actual discrimination. By refusing any reference to ethnicity in research on integration and citizenship, many authors call for preserving this fundamental value (Schnapper 1994a, 1994b). They criticize fellow scholars for using ethnic and racial categories in their research, sometimes accusing them of “creating” ethnic groups in France (Pierrot 1998, 235). Those in favor of adopting ethnic categories argue that the color-blindness of the French model impedes efforts to improve the status of ethnic and racial minority group members and reduce the discrimination they suffer, and that this model must be corrected in order to restore its initial value, upholding the motto of “liberty, equality, fraternity” (Weil 2005; Laborde 2010; Guérard de Latour 2010).



Regardless of the way in which French scholars approach the question of ethnic categories, they do share a similar conception of the value of republicanism: that is, republicanism is the model France has inherited from her political tradition, and it stands, compared to other models, as the best ideological and policy framework to incorporate migrants and minority groups into French society. The existence of a singular French model remains undisputed. Scholars who criticize the contradictions and costs of republicanism nonetheless continue to accept or assume what I would call an imagined normative republic, characterized by abstract universalism, individual equality, and state neutrality in matters of religion. The French model, in other words, is at once a product of wishful thinking, a normative position, and an analytical framework.

Finally, such debates concern not only French academics or students. They have an impact of their own on the international literature for various reasons: French scholars' work is read outside of France; French scholars are often the first interviewees that foreign —junior as well as senior— researchers meet in their initial days of research in France; and French scholars are also involved in writing public or policy-oriented documents (Scholten 2009) or articles in newspapers that often end up on the desks of international academics and are used in analyzing the French situation. This circulation of French debates outside the boundaries of the republic contributes to reinforcing the belief in the existence of the French model, in the form of wishful thinking, a normative stand, or a useful analytical framework that helps explain the idiomatic approach used in France when it comes to migrants and minority groups.

More generally, what this example of French scholarly debates shows is that we cannot break with a discourse that turns unique national characteristics into a normative and explicative model simply by pointing out its contradictions. Quite the opposite. By discussing the model, we end up —reluctantly?— confirming its existence even if the discussion of its principles is nuanced. Debating republicanism does not explain what the republican model is. This leaves the field researcher without a specific answer to our initial question: Does a national integration and citizenship model exist that explains observed reality?

### **Debates on the European “Multicultural Backlash”: A New Normative Turn**

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the question of models has taken a specific turn in public debates in Western Europe, reinforcing their normative power in the academic literature. The difference between multiculturalism and republicanism, a difference long considered a major element in citizenship policies, is less sharp than it used to be (Joppke 2007). A “backlash” seems to have emerged against multiculturalism in the Netherlands and Britain (for a critique of backlash arguments, see Vertovec and Wessendorf [2009]). Some authors, arguing against the conception of strongly path-dependent models, have addressed this multicultural backlash by

describing a convergence of national self-conceptions of citizenship, and a retreat from multiculturalism in favor of a new “civic integration” approach (Joppke 2004, 2007; Wallace Goodman 2010).

A pivotal notion of the convergence hypothesis is multiculturalism’s failure to integrate Muslims. For example, Christian Joppke emphasizes the “puzzling disjunction between an apparently ill-adapted and dissatisfied Muslim minority and a rather accommodative state policy” in Britain (2009, 455), and concludes that “the most deceptive and pernicious [wrong things to expect from the state] perhaps are ‘respect and recognition’” (2009, 470). Interestingly, authors who emphasize the path-dependent dimension of national models seem to share this view when it comes to criticizing multiculturalism as a form of “segregationism” (Koopmans et al. 2005, 11). In their comparison of Muslim collective claims in Britain and the Netherlands, Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham emphasize the singularity of Muslim groups. They argue that, in contrast to other groups, “Muslims based in the Netherlands dare to demand new group exceptions in a dynamic way” (2005, 155) in the public arena and that “claims made by certain ethnic minority groups are less easy to satisfy because they bring into question the very essence of liberal values” (2005, 140).

This discussion on the limits of multiculturalism in Britain and the Netherlands calls for two comments. First, the argument of a multicultural backlash appears merely as a stylized replication of political discourses. This argument is similar to the new politics of anti-multiculturalism that has emerged in Britain and the Netherlands since the beginning of the 2000s. In 2004, Trevor Phillips, then-president of the British Commission for Racial Equality, explained that “multiculturalism is a solution of the past. . . . It implies separation” (*Times* 2004). The statement had a strong echo within the heated debate on the future of British multiculturalism that had begun few years before (Parekh 2000; Barry 2001) in Britain and in other European countries. In the Netherlands, Paul Scheffer’s article on “The Multicultural Tragedy” (2000) generated considerable public discussion about the failure of the Dutch multicultural model, and, among other things, provided legitimacy to radical critiques of Dutch immigrant integration policies (see, among others, Duyvendak and Scholten [2009]).

Second, spurred by this new debate, scholars have become engrossed in the attempt to understand the much-announced crisis of the Dutch and British models, and the reasons for the failure of multiculturalism. Regardless of the way they look at the multicultural backlash (from a convergence or a path-dependency perspective), many authors use national multicultural integration models as an independent variable for explaining the multicultural crisis. In doing so, they strengthen the notion’s normative dimension, which is increasingly connected to the predominant political and public debates on the issue. It also reinforces the apparently obvious existence of a causal relationship between national models, policy developments, and collective mobilizations in a national context, without clarifying definitions of the models, or assessing their power to make sense of empirical reality. This has given rise to a striking paradox: never have we taken for granted so indis-

putably the analytical usefulness of these models than since we started discussing their crisis, failure, or end.

### **The Elusiveness of Models**

Despite the problems with models that I have mentioned, the fact is that the notion of national models can still be useful for the comparative study of immigrant integration on the condition that what scholars construct as national frameworks reflects empirical reality, including instances where the constructs are an official version of this reality. In other words, in order to conduct a debate on the heuristic values of republicanism or multiculturalism as models of a given country, we ought to be able to extract a sufficiently stable definition of French republicanism or of multiculturalism in the Netherlands or Britain as normative value systems to be able to use the models as explanatory tools.

However, the normative consistency of national integration models becomes difficult to grasp when we look back at the last three decades of politics and public policies of integration in the Netherlands, Britain, and France. Indeed, the debates on republicanism and multiculturalism seem to act as a fig leaf hiding the widely varied and contradictory framings of integration and citizenship issues in each country.

In the Netherlands, the idea of a multicultural model has had a complex trajectory.<sup>2</sup> The integration of migrants was not a public issue until the late 1970s, when the guest worker program ended and it became clear that migrants were there to stay. A “minority policy” was developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, close to the idea of Dutch multiculturalism described by Koopmans (2005) and Joppke (2007). Even though the minority policy was the reflection of a pragmatic approach rather than the political and institutional expression of “normative multiculturalism,” it was nonetheless based on the idea that, in order to optimize migrants’ socioeconomic integration, the country needed to promote their socio-cultural identities.

This minority policy, however, lasted less than a decade. Starting in the early 1990s, Dutch integration policies were reformulated to focus on the participation of immigrants and their children in the labor market and on individual equality against the backdrop of a crisis of the welfare state. The categories *allochtoon* (those with at least one parent born abroad) and *autochtoon* (those born to Dutch-born parents) were adopted to distinguish non-Western migrants from the native Dutch. This was also a time when concerns about Islam as generating integration problems became a central political issue and were taken up by the liberal parliamentary leader Frits Bolkestein from 1991 onward. In the early twenty-first century, integration policies changed, with the advent of an assimilationist approach that ended up mak-

<sup>2</sup> The following paragraphs on the Dutch case are directly inspired by Duyvendak and Scholten (2009).

ing the previous concept of Dutch multiculturalism a model of the past, and an anti-model in the present.

This account of variations in Dutch integration policies challenges the perception that multiculturalism has been an unequivocal model in the Netherlands, a question sharply debated by Dutch scholars nowadays. Thus, the significant issue is not which normative type of multiculturalism could have produced the “Dutch model,” but rather understanding why, despite repeated reversals in the way Dutch policies and integration politics were publicly conceptualized, the Netherlands is said to have a multicultural model, although that “model” was applied for barely a decade and was actually abandoned 20 years ago (Duyvendak and Scholten 2009).

Finding a multicultural model in Britain is no easy task either. The very idea of a stylized public philosophy of integration is even more difficult to grasp than in the Netherlands. The reason is that British policymakers and collective minority actors have mostly opted for a pragmatic approach to integration, rather than for a sophisticated normative model like in France (Joly 2007; Garbaye 2005; compare Favell 1998). In this context, the work done today by the most influential British scholars on this issue may in fact be seen as an attempt to move away from this traditional pragmatic approach and to promote a public normative conception of multiculturalism (i.e., Modood 2005; Parekh 2000).

In any case, before what is currently referred to as a multicultural model, policies of assimilation were the norm in Britain. It was only in the 1960s that public debates focused on the dilemma of a liberal citizenship fraught with racial discrimination (Rose and Deakin 1969). The new Commonwealth migrants from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, who dominated the migrant flow to Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s, were then British citizens on arrival. This had a direct impact on how public debates about immigration were framed. The public issue of integration was framed by two objectives, namely the fight against discrimination and the promotion of good relations among the various groups in Britain (Bleich 2003). The categories used to define these groups were racial in the beginning, with ethnicity becoming more important in the 1980s. Since the late 1990s, these categories have been reformulated in the country, and religion is now a central one. In 2001, the census included a question about religious identity for the first time. Interfaith dialogue is now a significant tool of public interventions on questions of integration, and one of the major topics of debate is the demand by Muslim groups for the recognition of religious categories in anti-discrimination legislation. In summary, the British “multicultural crisis” is only a discursive strategy that serves as a proxy for a new wave of changes in the frameworks defining public debates and public interventions on integration.

Finally, a comparable analysis can be done regarding the republican model in France. Ever since the question of immigrant minorities’ integration emerged on the political agenda in the mid-1980s, there have been at least four normative conceptualizations of the French model. Each of these sees integration and the corresponding public response in a specific way that clashes with the three others (Bertossi

2009): the groups labeled as “immigrants” are never defined in the same way;<sup>3</sup> the origin of the challenge posed to the republican concept of common belonging is never perceived as being the same; behind the constant call for “tradition” and the “principles of the Republic” (Feldblum 1999), the public response is always different and always clashes with the historical republican foundation.

A first “normative republic” conception held sway in the mid-1980s with the end of the myth of the return of immigrants to their countries of origin: immigrants had become part of French society (see Sayad 1999). At the same time, the National Front, France’s extreme right-wing party, began to take on weight in the public debate, achieving its first electoral successes in local (1983), European (1984), and national (1986) elections. The public issue of the integration of immigrant minorities was defined in terms of loyalty (the *Français de papiers* or “identity-card-citizens”), allegiance (the issue of mandatory military service for individuals with dual nationalities) (Bertossi 2001), and, soon thereafter, religion (with the first headscarf affair in 1989) (Kepel 1987). After several attempts, the Law of 1993 set new conditions for access to citizenship, requiring a *manifestation de volonté* (an explicit request) and thereby eliminating the century-old tradition of automatic access to citizenship for those born in France (Weil 2002).

This first conceptualization of the republican model was replaced at the end of the 1990s by a new normative program based on the “French invention of discrimination” (Fassin 2002), which drastically changed the integration debate. The notion of formal equality (having French citizenship) became secondary to a substantive definition of equality (having French citizenship and not being discriminated against) (Conseil d’État 1997). The issue was no longer one of foreigners wanting to become French citizens, but of French citizens needing to be provided with equal opportunities by French society and institutions.

Soon afterwards, the public conceptualization of republican principles evolved toward a third normative republic that denounced the anti-discriminatory element as a “purely moral approach” unsuitable for confronting “a stream of converging indices reflected in various forms of identity-related movements and tensions” (Haut Conseil à l’Intégration 2006, 17). In the early 2000s, the secular republic appeared as the new yardstick in the integration debate. However, far from being defined in the terms of the 1905 law, the founding law on *laïcité*, secularism became a moral framework that defined identity and was linked to new debates on gender equality, sexuality, and the “deviance” of immigrant family structures (e.g., accusations of polygamy and machismo or concerns about overcrowded households in immigrant neighborhoods). The public response to this evolution is summed up in the Law of March 15, 2004, which disallowed “conspicuous religious signs” in public schools and imposed the posting of a “secularism charter” in the hallways of public buildings, namely hospitals (Haut Conseil à l’Intégration 2007).

<sup>3</sup> The term “immigrant” is used in public discourse and debates in France to refer to people who are not immigrants at all, but French-born children and grandchildren of immigrants.

It seems to me that a fourth normative republic is in the making. Behind the conspicuous secular dimension of the current debate about banning the burka in public places, which affects fewer than 2 000 women, something else appears to mark a new stage in the republican framework. Current debates about integration, and in particular the integration of Muslim groups, are no longer enclosed within the limits of abstract universalism, but are part of a “civilizational program,” which Nicholas Sarkozy explicitly described in a November 12, 2009, speech on integration and French national identity. Sarkozy’s remarks heralded the return of a notion that had been explicitly abandoned by the republican integration model since the 1980s: assimilation is now supported by the notion of “immaterial public order” (meaning that sociocultural integration is a matter of public order and security) (Conseil d’État 2010).

This discussion of the four notions of the republic raises a key question: Which conceptualization are we using when we discuss the republican model? Is it the republic of nationality, anti-discrimination, secularism, or the republic of moral assimilation and public order? These four frameworks lead to different and mutually contradictory diagnoses of existing social problems, and give rise to different normative programs.

This brief comparison of the Netherlands, Britain, and France shows the limits of the idea of an unequivocal integration model prevailing in each country. It also repositions the “crisis of models” discourse beyond a before-and-after perception of a glorious past that has given way to the current decline. This repositioning allows us to rid ourselves of the idea of normative blocks being put to the test of multicultural and Muslim claims or nationalist reaction since the early twenty-first century. These highly stylized national models, as we often imagine them, have never existed, not because of the contradictions or the gap between their precepts and observable reality, but for the simple reason that they were never institutionalized or internalized on the basis of stable, univocal, and coherent normative systems over the last 30 years.

### **Finding the Models: Five Working Propositions**

So, we come back to my original question: Do national models provide either a partial or a complete explanation of reality as empirically observed by field researchers? What can national integration models teach us about the practices of those who speak about the French Republic, multiculturalism, integration, and ethnicity? It is not enough to show, as I have done, the problems with concepts like national integration models. The fact that these models are not institutionally consistent, normatively coherent, culturally defined, or historically stable does not mean that they are simply figments of the imagination of researchers engaged in ideological debates on immigrants’ integration.

Models are not an illusion created by public or political debates. This is the most important element of my argument: when trying to address issues such as

the integration of migrants and citizenship in a context of diversity, we are confronted with a wide range of social actors (including scholars) who believe in the existence of these models and use them to justify strategic choices and their own practices.

It is not enough to conclude that national models do not exist, because the reality scholars observe is, in fact, saturated with “modelized” thoughts and “modelizing” practices. The subjects of our research (social actors) believe in the existence of a French model built on principles inherited from the French Revolution or in the existence of a Dutch and a British multiculturalism. Models are discussed everywhere: in working-class pubs, hospital hallways, at the desks of family allowance organizations, in police stations, in school staff rooms, in union or NGO meetings, in the reader commentary sections of newspaper websites, in summits of European ministers of the interior, to name just a few.

It is therefore wrong to say that national models of integration should not be taken seriously because many people do take these models very seriously. The model concepts are used, imagined, negotiated, affirmed, contested, and challenged by different types of people. Models should not be studied as if they exist in a stable and consistent normative, cultural, historical, and institutional context. It is critical to be aware of the diverse uses of models and the negotiations, discussions — and misunderstandings — in which they play a role. The cognitive turn in the social science literature on ethnicity, which conceptualizes “ethnicity, race, and nation as perspectives on the world rather than entities in the world” (Brubaker et al. 2004, 31), is therefore a promising perspective for repositioning the notion of national integration models (see also Weber 1991, 58-59; Schütz 1982). This perspective helps avoid a positivist approach that often reduces questions about national models to questions about “how institutions think” (Douglas 1986) and how members of a society are configured in idealistic structures and shaped by societal institutions. The perspective helps place social actors’ agency front and center, removing it from behind the screen of official and formal narratives of nations’ cultural self-understandings.

Models are not the *a priori* resource for action or an *ex ante* normative framework through which actors give shape to their strategies. Instead, these strategies give shape to varying, polysemic, and contradictory models. Models do not impose on social actors ready-made ways for deciding what to do and how to do it. A wide range of social actors contribute to the construction of national models through the definition of agendas, specific problematization of issues at stake, the understanding of situations, categorization of social groups, and moral entrepreneurship (Becker 1963), to which they attribute substantial content (e.g., a normative value system, a matrix of justification, typified categories within the sense of a social hierarchy, a moral judgment) (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991; Lamont 2002; Bowen 2009).

If we take models as cognition, involving more than merely the policymaking community and telling much more than a mere univocal official narrative about how nations define their self-identity, we no longer conceive of them as an independent but as a dependent variable. This way, we can avoid two major drawbacks:

we can free ourselves from a totalizing and non-reflexive use of models (i.e., republicanism or multiculturalism as fully explaining citizenship in France, the Netherlands, and Britain) and steer clear of overly dismissive conceptions of models (i.e., they count for nothing at all). In other words, French republicanism, British and Dutch multiculturalism, or other national stylized conceptions of citizenship cannot be held up as objective entities. They cannot be turned into the explanatory framework for the differences that exist among national contexts. Rather, they work as what I call “cognitive vanishing-points.” These points are used as structures of reference in various contexts to frame the questions of identity, of common belonging, and of inclusion and exclusion. However, this framing activity is not monopolized by one social group (policymakers or national elites) and does not produce univocal, coherent, and homogeneous normative entities. Five inter-related working propositions about national models summarize the argument I have laid out here:

- Far from being homogeneous blocks, national models are constantly contradicted by social, political, and institutional practices. Contradictions are part of these models and can represent exogenous divergences —the precepts of a model are contradicted by public policies in certain sectors— or endogenous divergences —contradictory principles may be claimed in the name of the same model.
- Models are not stable and allow varying problematizations across time. To speak of republicanism as the French model or multiculturalism in Britain or the Netherlands leaves much to be said about the stark differences that characterize public discussions on the integration of migrants and the project of equality and inclusion of diversity within the existing national context.
- Models are not an *a priori* normative matrix but an *a posteriori* problematization. French universalism, Dutch tolerance, or British racial equality are not the starting point but the temporary outcome of public discussions. Models are the result of chaotic negotiations on the meaning of “the integration problem” and its solution. Debates about models are aimed at imposing a dominant framework, which is never given before the discussion reaches a very provisional stage. To speak of republicanism, multiculturalism, and the crisis of European national models is part of the attempt to impose a dominant frame in public discussion.
- Models are not absolute but polysemic expressions. Thus, they offer a strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg 1984; Leitch and Davenport 2007) that makes them easily manipulated by different actors who seek different outcomes from the discussion. If scholars refer in their analyses to French republicanism or Dutch and British multiculturalism, so do journalists, politicians, immigrant associations, and other actors. However, the content that each attaches to these or other similar concepts (secularism, pillarization, state neutrality, integration, etc.) is very often different. They may seem to be discussing the same issues, but behind the seeming linguistic stability of these



concepts, people attribute widely different, even opposite, normative connotations to the models. What do assertions such as “France is republican,” “republican principles require the banning of the burka,” or “because France is republican, we cannot use ethnic statistics” have in common? Each use of the word “republic” has different implications (a political regime with a constitution, a moral judgment about religious freedom, a statement about the consequence of an ideology for research). The closely-knit interrelationship among these different dimensions cannot be taken as a given—are they really part of a consistent and integrated single scheme?—but must be explained (how each belongs to different schemes and affects the others). Not only are contradictions an inherent feature of models (the first proposition), but the model-constructing process involves a variety of “spheres of justice” or “worlds of justification” (Walzer 1983; Boltanski and Thévenot 1991; Bowen 2009; Schütz 1982). The possible discrepancy between one sphere and another may lead to misunderstandings by concerned actors, which, in turn, reinforces the contradictions I already mentioned. For instance, the principle of gender equality may be used to try to liberate those viewed as being oppressed (for example, women wearing the *niqab* and seen as dominated by husbands or brothers) and, at the same time, deprive these same women of their status as citizens (by refusing them access to nationality because they wear the *niqab*). In the Netherlands, tolerance (toward same sex couples, for instance) may be used as a basis for intolerant discourse (against Muslim populations, for example).

- While they lack any stable normative content, models represent a performative practice (Austin 1962). This type of practice produces additional meaning in routine social relations between actors who share a belief in a normatively consistent and coherent social and political world but attribute very different meanings to this fact (proposition 4). Behind the various uses, contradictory practices, disagreements regarding future action, disputes on the normative approach of what the integration of migrants ought to be, or on citizenship in a context of cultural, religious, ethnic or racial diversity, actors in fact discuss the contradictions, drifting, and limitations of the models without ever doubting their existence. These discussions routinize the idea that France is undeniably republican or that Britain and the Netherlands are multicultural, the effects of which are real, including the institutionalization of the narrative. This performative effect should not only be explored in the realm of official institutions and policies, but also in the cognitive construction of social reality, in which all the segments that make up a society participate.

## Conclusion

My aim in this article has not been to propose a new theory of the notion of national integration models. Instead, I have argued that models of integration are an

inappropriate tool for the comparative study of integration inasmuch as the objective of that research is to assess the success or failure of a national approach to integrating migrants and minority groups. I have shown that the notion of national models is polluted by normative (if not moral) connotations that hinder social scientists' ability to address empirical reality.

If models tend to be taken as a substitute for reality and distort research strategies, we should not discard them entirely. The five working propositions I have presented suggest a way forward to shift research on national models. A considerable amount of energy has been expended in trying to extract a complex social reality from national integration models, with the risk of caricaturing the world that we study by using extremely attractive, but limited, narratives. It seems to me that it is time for us to move backward, so to speak, inducing models from reality and conceiving of them as fluctuating dependent variables that must be explained. If we really want to understand the injustices of our societies, I believe that we need to study the actors who develop a multiplicity of conceptions of equality, inclusion, and identity, and understand from a sociological perspective how national models of integration play a role in these developments.

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