EMANCIPATING MIGRANT WOMEN?
GENDERED CIVIC INTEGRATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

Katherine Margaret Kirk & Semin Suvarierol

Published in Social Politics 21 (2): 241-260

Abstract: One of the primary goals of the Dutch civic integration policy is the emancipation of migrant women. Emancipation herein implies both the ability to make choices about one’s personal life as well as participation in the labour market. However, the content and implementation of the programme fails to meet this goal due to a double bind: migrants women are portrayed as culturally oppressed yet addressed primarily as mothers and voluntary social workers. As such the policy focuses on the former aspects of emancipation while neglecting the later; personal choice and freedom for women are difficult to achieve without financial independence and the sharing of care work between men and women. Using feminist literature on care work and the ‘adult worker model’ of citizenship we show that civic integration needs to be analysed within the Dutch structural and cultural constraints to emancipation that make combining employment and care difficult. Cultural stereotypes of migrant women’s supposed oppression serve to obscure these broader Dutch obstacles to emancipation. This analysis relies on a unique combination of qualitative data consisting of civic integration material, interviews and non-participant observation in civic integration courses. Our data reveals that within Dutch civic integration efforts to promote independence through labour market participation are subordinate to promoting women’s role in (unpaid) care work.
1. Introduction

Gender plays a pivotal role in recent discourses on the failed integration of migrants. Oppressive gender relations are interpreted as signs of defective ideological integration with respect to fundamental European gender values (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007, 213). In recent Dutch integration debates “migrant [Islamic] woman are not only represented as victims of [a] misogynous culture but —surprisingly— also as the principle key to solving problems of integration and emancipation” (Roggeband and Verloo 2007, 272). Specific emphasis has been put on migrant ‘mothers’ in their role as child bearers and educators; they have become a necessary ally in (forced) integration (Spijkerboer 2007, 46). Paradoxically, integration policies attempt to straddle the agency of migrant women while at the same time stereotyping them as passive bearers of ‘their culture’ and largely focusing on their role in the home. This is part of broader ‘culturalisation’; a trend wherein cultural differences between diverse ethnic groups are seen as the most decisive factor in explaining social problems (Ghorashi 2006: 3).

Obligatory civic integration courses and exams have been introduced in the Netherlands to reduce the ‘cultural integration gap’ and to facilitate the emancipation of migrant women. Emancipation is understood to primarily involve the ability to make personal choices such as leaving oppressive marriages. Following feminist scholars such as Mary Daly (2002) we include both financial and legal independence as well as shared care work in our definition of emancipation. To what extent do the content and organization of the Dutch civic integration courses serve their official emancipatory policy goal?

This paper discusses the approach to migrant women’s civic Integration taken by the two current Dutch civic integration laws: Civic Integration Abroad (Wib) (Wet inburgering in het buitenland – Wib) and Civic Integration Law (Wet inburgering – Wi). Our discussion is based on an integrated analysis of civic integration courses and test preparation materials between 2007 and 2011. This is supplemented by ethnographic fieldwork data. Even though Dutch civic integration policies have been receiving a great deal of attention in the literature, analyses of their content and implementation, especially with an eye on gender aspects are scarce. Our primary aim in this article is thus to provide a critical analysis of the discrepancies between
the official policy goal of emancipating migrant women and how this is brought to life in the design of the civic integration courses and material.

From 2007-2008 the first author conducted her fieldwork in Amsterdam and Utrecht. This included participant observation in civic integration classes and among municipal policy makers, 63 semi-structured interviews with municipal and national policy makers, course providers, migrants, and teachers. The second author conducted her fieldwork in 2011 in Breda, The Hague and Utrecht. She conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews with national policy makers and civic integration course providers and five open interviews with teachers. During their non-participant observations in civic integration classes, both authors also conducted informal conversational interviews with participants.

Our empirical data incorporates both the rationale of policy makers and practitioners as well as the experience of the migrant women. Whereas the policy makers were actors who played key roles in the process of designing the content of the courses, the course providers/managers and teachers — who were selected on the basis of access their classes — had little say over content because of the fixed exam criteria prescribed by the Wi. The vast majority of civic integration candidates interviewed were women between the ages of 30 and 60 of Turkish or Moroccan decent who had come to the Netherlands for family reunification/formation. Many older women had little to no prior education while younger women tended to have at least attended primary school if not high school. Some were doing the course voluntarily as they had already obtained Dutch citizenship, but the vast majority were legally obliged to take the course. Although we do not claim to have a representative sample of all migrant women, many civic integration class would have demographically similar migrants due to the obligatory nature of the classes and the policy focus on this particular group of women.

This paper is organised around the two primary issues limiting Dutch civic integration policy’s effort to emancipate migrant women: the framing of migrant women as victims of ‘non-Western’ gender inequalities and the emphasis of care work in their integration. We first introduce the strands of feminist theory informing our understanding of emancipation. We then give a brief summary of the state of
emancipation the Netherlands followed by an overview of the policies and politics of migrant women’s emancipation. Thereafter we analyse the way in which cultural stereotypes of migrant women are translated in the content and organisation of civic integration courses. Finally, we examine the focus on care work within the civic integration regime. Our research shows that Dutch civic integration policies do not meet their emancipatory goals on the whole due to their focus on migrant women’s role as mothers and volunteers.

2. Emancipation in theory and in Dutch practice

2a. Emancipation in Feminist Theory
The balance between paid work and unpaid care tasks between women and men are indicators of the extent of emancipation. The “gender equity model” posits that both women and men participate equally in paid and unpaid work (Hobson 2004: 79). It thus sees both work and care tasks equally as tasks of women and men and proposes a “dual earner-dual carer model” (Pascall and Lewis 2004). The realization of this model would require a cultural as well as structural shift; paid and unpaid work would have to be recognized as an expression of citizenship obligation or responsibility (Lister 2002).

Current social policies in Western Europe are informed by “adult worker model” in which (potential) citizens are viewed as actual or potential workers in the market economy (Daly 2011, 4-5). Adult is meant to depict a move to gender neutrality (ibid, 6). Yet, women tend to be seen as primary carers as well as individuals responsible for earning their own income (Pascall and Lewis 2004, 382). Care work is often undervalued and carried out under poor conditions, even if it is organized as employment (Daly 2002, 262). The woman as carer principle is coupled with individualist ideals that assume women are ‘free’ to enter the labour market (Knijn 2004, 57). The resulting rhetoric of choice (to work or to care) contradicts the expectations placed on women to take on the burden of care “even when this interferes with their own (income security and other) needs” (Daly 2002, 262).

Women’s responsibility in care work has limited their access to incomes, but also to a voice in the public and private sphere (Pascall and Lewis 2004, 383). Unpaid and paid care work can serve to undermine the emancipation of women; gender equity
and the valuing of care work are very closely intertwined (Daly 2002, 263). Many women in Western European countries work part-time and still do most of the unpaid work of care (Lewis and Bennett 2004, 43). Social and labour market policies designed for families where a gendered division of labour exists in the household, may in fact institutionalise gender inequality by deepening the power gap between men and women in the family and society (Hobson 1990, 239).

2b. Emancipation in the Netherlands

The institutionalised work and care arrangements in the Netherlands enable us to put its emancipation policies and practices such as civic integration into perspective. Since the 1990s the Dutch government supports a 32 hours working week both for men and women (Lewis et al. 2008, 275). In theory this “combination scenario” allows for an equal sharing of work and care tasks. In the case of the Netherlands, however, this has done little to change the “one-and-a half earner model” in which women work part-time (Pascall and Lewis 2004, 286). At 72% the labour market participation of Dutch women is rather high by European standards (Merens et al. 2011, 12). Nonetheless, only about 48% of Dutch women are financially independent (Merens et al. 2011, 14). This discrepancy can be explained by the prevalence of part time work: Almost 75% of the women with a job (of at least one hour a week) works part time with an average of 25.3 hours a week (Merens et al. 2011, 12).

This has become institutionalised to such an extent that many functions within organisations are now only part-time, which makes it difficult for women to work more even if they wish to do so (Portegijs et al. 2008, 9). Furthermore, if Dutch women wish to work more than part-time they must make complex care arrangements, which are not always supported by their surroundings. The school times and other social services are organised around the assumption that there is always a parent at home during the day (Portegijs et al. 2008, 128). Until the 1990s the Netherlands had the lowest level of state funded childcare facilities in Europe (Antonen and Sipila 1996 as cited in Bussemaker 1998, 71). The commercialisation of childcare in this century has rested on a system of subsidising parents through tax refunds (Lewis et al. 2008, 273-274). The 2005 Childcare Law (Wet Kinderopvang) streamlined childcare costs and decreased the amount parents were expect to pay by granting subside per hour of childcare (Merens et al. 2011, 121). This led to an increase in the use of formal
childcare facilities and consequently to an increase in the labour market participation of women.\textsuperscript{4} However, dominant social ideals about being a good mother continue to impact the availability and flexibility of day care (Van Daalen 2007: 621).

The Dutch cultural norms prioritise the mother’s caring responsibilities (see Kremer 2007, Van Daalen 2007, Van den Berg and Duyvendak 2012). Recent surveys show that 40% of the Dutch population denounces full-time work by mothers of young children (Merens et al. 2011, 13). Many Dutch women, even those without small children, state that they do not wish to work full-time (ibid). This choice is valued by women who wish to spend more time with their children, doing household chores and or on social activities, hobbies and studies (ibid). The framing of part-time work as a choice can obscure the aforementioned structural constraints and problems this poses for women’s emancipation: traditional gender relations in the home are maintained and women’s careers suffer (ibid). Even though part-time work is better valued in the Netherlands than in other countries like the UK (Pascall and Lewis 2004, 386), Dutch women’s labour market / earning potential is constrained by part-time work (Portegijs et al. 2008).

The structure of the Dutch labour market impacts the chances of migrant women who are further hampered by the burden of stereotypes and presumed language deficiencies (Ghorashi and van Tilburg 2006). Migrant women’s employment has proven to be much more sensitive to economic downturns, which has led to raising unemployment in the recent years (Merens et al. 2011, 12). Thus, migrant women can be said to be negatively impacted by both stereotypes inherent in the culturalisation of integration and the broader socio-economic structures determining women’s chances on the labour market.

3. Migrant Women and Civic Integration Policies in the Netherlands
In July 2003, the Commission for the Participation of Ethnic Minority Women (PaVEM) was created by the Dutch cabinet. The reasoning behind the creation of this advice committee was the “isolated position of women from ethnic minorities”, and its goal was to find ways to improve the participation of women from minority groups in society though: improved access to employment; promoting Dutch language learning;
reducing anti-immigrant sentiments; creating a network of successful migrant women; and encouraging municipalities to engage in dialogue with migrants.\textsuperscript{5}

However, the guiding philosophy behind the efforts of the committee was “If you educate a mother, you educate a family”.\textsuperscript{6} The standpoint taken was that not only the woman herself but also her family would benefit from civic integration. Thus, many of the PaVEM spin off projects addressed women in her role as a mother. Although PaVEM stressed that civic integration is more than learning the Dutch language, it still maintained that the basic ingredient for social participation is language.\textsuperscript{7} The commission thus proposed the ‘National Action Plan Total Language’ to stimulate the civic integration of migrant women through both civic integration courses and participation.

From the parliamentary debates on civic integration in the country of origin, it becomes clear that Dutch politicians find it particularly necessary for migrants to be aware of Dutch enlightened sexual morals and relations between the sexes before they come to the Netherlands. In particular, the former minister of Integration, Rita Verdonk stressed that the primary impulse behind the law is the emancipation of women.\textsuperscript{8} One of the reasons for the broad political consensus for \textit{Wib} and \textit{Wi} in the Netherlands was arguably the issue linkage between civic integration and the emancipation of (especially Muslim) migrant women (Entzinger, Saharso and Scholten 2011).

Civic integration become mandatory for all aliens—newcomers and resident immigrants—who were born outside the territory of the EU/EEA and who had come to live in the Netherlands on a non-temporary basis with the enactment of the Civic Integration Law (\textit{Wet Inburgering - Wi}) in 2007. According to the 2006 Civic Integration Abroad Law (\textit{Wib}), migrants who pass the civic integration abroad exam would first receive an Authorization for Provisional Stay (\textit{mvv, machtiging tot voorlopig verblijf}) in their country of origin. A residence permit would be issued once they arrived in the Netherlands, but in order to extend or change this permit migrants would be expected to pass the civic integration exam in the Netherlands within three and a half years. The exam tests an applicant’s knowledge of Dutch society as well as Dutch language proficiency and practical skills.
4. Emancipation gap: Gender equality as a ‘cultural’ issue

Immigration policies and materials produced by the state for newcomers projects demonstrate (and impose) the key characteristics and values of the nation at a specific point of time (Wilton 2009, 438). This analysis of the civic integration material covering gender issues as well as interviews from our research demonstrates the idealisation of Dutch women’s emancipation and the perceived lack thereof among the imagined migrant (Muslim) other. The culturalisation of integration makes the policy blind to structural constraints to emancipation.

Civic integration abroad is aided by the ‘pre-integration package’ containing the film *Naar Nederland* (Going to the Netherlands), together with the practice book and questions on the basis of which the migrant has to pass an exam to demonstrate her/his basic knowledge of the Dutch language and society. *Naar Nederland* is the official publication that is designed to assist the migrant’s integration abroad. In contrast, the Dutch government does not provide an official learning package for civic integration courses in the Netherlands. It is up to private publishers and course providers to design books. The terms of examination are however fixed, thus the content of different course materials are similar.

In this section, we analyse the teacher’s instructions of the course package *Dutch at work. Civic integration: we will work at it. (Nederlands aan het werk. Inburgeren: daar gaan we werk van maken)*, which, according to the publisher’s website, is used by 48 civic integration course providers. The following analysis deconstructs the textual material; teachers may not always follow the directions supplied by the package, but this material indicates the dominant interpretation and translation of the Dutch cultural integration requirements.

Dutch civic integration courses are designed so as to make sure that participants learn the Dutch language whilst using it in daily practical situations, called CP’s (*Cruciale Praktijksituaties*) that have been streamlined to the content of the civic integration exam. The headings citizenship (*burgerschap*) and knowledge of the Dutch society (*Kennis van de Nederlandse Samenleving – KNS*), which constitute approximately the half of the content, are common to all participants, whereas the
other half is tailored to the needs of the participant who ‘chooses’ a track during the registration procedure. We first analyse the CP’s on citizenship and Dutch society before moving on to the tracks in section 5.

In *Nederlands aan het Werk*, the central goal of the CP on ‘state institutions and the rule of law’ is formulated as “enabling involvement in the Netherlands and Dutch society through knowledge of Dutch state institutions”. The crucial practices related to this CP are summarized under four headings:

- putting the Dutch constitution into daily practice
- obtaining deeper knowledge of the responsibilities of the Dutch administrative levels
- dealing with the separation of church (religion) and state
- applying laws and regulations.

The first two headings concentrate on the formal rights and institutions as the heading of this chapter also suggests. As with the Dutch history chapter, religion and gender receive separate attention under the two last headings. Remarkably, gender and family related issues are the only subjects (with the exception of street violence) that are explicitly mentioned under the heading ‘applying laws and regulations’. The crucial knowledge in this terrain is thus listed as:

- knowing the laws and regulations on abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, sexuality
- knowing that all kind of violence is punishable (domestic violence, honour killing, beating children, circumcision of girls, street violence, etc.).

The information on the laws and regulations on these issues seems to be informed by an assumption that these issues are new to the migrants. Though it might be legitimate to inform migrants on laws and regulations on these issues, the fact that reducing the treatment of a subject that is as wide as ‘laws and regulations’ to topics on sexuality and domestic affairs highlights how these highly politicized issues take centre stage in the civic integration material.

Similarly, the pre-integration film *Naar Nederland* also highlights these ‘Dutch’ gender norms in the ‘Politics and the Constitution’ chapter. By referring to Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution, the film stresses that everyone in the Netherlands has equal rights:
Women have the same rights as men. Women and men are equal. They each make their own choices. They both are allowed to express their opinions. Women and men have the right to marry or live with the partner of their own choice. Homosexual couples can also get married.\textsuperscript{16}

As such the explanation of equality is explained by highlighting gender equality and freedom of choice in the personal and sexual domain. Afterwards, it is stressed that freedom also has its limits.

There's a lot of freedom, but there are limits to this freedom. The Constitution states that men and women are equal, so it's against the law and punishable to discriminate against women. It is against the law to discriminate against either men or women because they are homosexual.\textsuperscript{17}

This discussion is predominantly reserved for making it clear that the Dutch law is particularly strict in domains related to – what is framed in the Dutch public debate as – the equality between the sexes. The only topics that are mentioned are Dutch laws against honour killings, domestic violence and female genital mutilation, which is again a very selective treatment of gender equality reflecting the image of the ‘information gap’ of the target migrant audience in the eyes of the Dutch state. The narrator stresses that Dutch law is strict when it comes to honour killings, female circumcision, and domestic abuse. The presentation of these issues is supported by newspaper headlines highlighting the fact that the selection of these topics reflects the Dutch integration debate. Though this excerpt does not explicitly refer to migrants, against the backdrop of the Dutch public debate on these issues and the target audience of this film, it can be concluded that it is highly gendered and essentialist in its imagination of ‘the non-Western migrant woman’. Echoing the image of the Oriental woman of the colonial age (Said 1995), the migrant woman is portrayed as passive and submissive and the Dutch state as the paternal saviour.

It is also in this chapter that we see images of a kissing homosexual couple while introducing the Dutch law legalizing homosexual marriages. This chapter defines the Netherlands as a liberal democratic society that stands in contrast to the ‘traditional
migrant’ who needs to be taught about secularism, democracy, freedom and women’s rights. The migrant man is portrayed as a patriarchal figure who believes in traditional family roles whereas the native Dutch man standing behind the cooker wearing an apron is emancipated.

The course material pack *Nederlands aan het werk* includes short films playing out certain situations related to practical issues. Most of the film characters are migrants, which is presumably designed on the one hand to facilitate the identification of the participants with the characters and on the other hand to urge discussion on these issues. This does, however, lead to stereotypical representations of migrants. The migrant man is pictured, for example, as someone who works in a snack bar and who does not want his mother to attend a course to become a baker, but in the end he “lets her go”. The migrant man is portrayed as a patriarchal figure who believes in traditional family roles.

The history of women’s emancipation is highlighted as a separate heading in the history chapter of *Nederlands aan het Werk*. This section details the different phases of the Dutch feminist movement starting from the 19th century by explaining which rights Dutch women obtained at every historical juncture and the lives of women in practice:

> Until the 1960s the woman was still very limited with regard to her life choices: Women had fewer opportunities for education; they received a lower salary than male colleagues with the same job. If a woman civil servant got married, she was automatically fired. The most important task of married women was to have many children and to care for them. [Authors’ translation from Dutch]

In this excerpt, the inequalities between men and women on the job market are framed as belonging to the past; as such it denies the need for further emancipation.

Current Dutch gender relations, which are defined in supporting materials for students using *Nederlands aan het werk*, described as equal regardless of the unequal division of tasks at home:
Men and women are equal. Many women study and work. They decide themselves whether to have children. But men do not do so much at home: cleaning, cooking, washing, or taking care of the children. The woman usually does these things.\textsuperscript{22} [Authors’ translation from Dutch]

Paradoxically, whereas the preceding excerpt had defined the task of having children and caring for them as a task women conducted before the 1960s, the excerpt describing current affairs suggests that women are still taking care of the children and doing domestic chores. The fact that the current situation is still qualified as gender equality seems to be due to the fact that women nowadays study and work. The unequal distribution of care tasks is thus normalized and presented as achieved equality. Even though Dutch women are far from the emancipation ideal, their role and position is thus set as a norm for migrant women (Van den Berg and Schinkel 2009, 399).

Whilst the pre-integration film \textit{Naar Nederland} embraces the policy aim that both women and men work and earn their own income, the film fragments supporting this message show a general practitioner, school teacher, and a nurse.\textsuperscript{23} Likewise, the migrant woman presented as a success story in the film, is the boss of a cleaning firm. These representations of women are thus gendered: “the images of working women in the Netherlands who are working in the education, health, or sanitation sectors [reproduce] the presence of women in the typically female dominated sectors” (Suvarierol 2012, 219).

While the image of the emancipated Dutch women obscures the need for continued emancipation for all women, the unemancipated stereotype of migrant women has a negative impact on their integration. The detrimental impact of broader structural constraints to women’s emancipation in the Netherlands seems to be largely ignored by those implementing the civic integration policy. They focus rather on domestic constraints to emancipation. An interviewed course manager claims that the concrete emancipatory effect of civic integration courses is that women become ‘more assertive in the home’.
A goal of civic integration is of course to make people more assertive... Where we see that it becomes problematic is the situation of the women who suddenly become more outspoken. They become more impudent at home, let's say.... Then [their husbands] come with a complaint like, ‘That isn’t correct’ and ‘What are you doing with our wives?’ Well, we make sure that they become independent women, yes. That is than one, let me say, an additional advantage, but it is then a goal of civic integration. We are just proud if I get an angry man from the Hague at our office who says, ‘What have you done with my wife?’ 24 [Authors’ translation from Dutch]

In this excerpt, we see that the course manager’s discourse on the migrant women resembles that of the course material: It is the migrant man who stands in the way of emancipation of migrant women. The civic integration courses aim to empower women. This excerpt is remarkable as the ‘observed change’ resulting from civic integration is told indirectly through the voice of the migrant man who is not happy with an emancipated woman.

Ironically the policy itself may have increased a woman’s dependence on her husband. Newcomers who come to the Netherlands for the purpose of family formation/reunions are legally dependent on their partner until they receive a permanent residence permit. The initial temporary permit can often not be renewed if the purpose for residence changes; If her relationship ends a woman risks losing her legal residency. This state of reliance is exacerbated by the civic integration policy because payment and fines must often be paid by partners, as newcomers rarely have their own income. 25 In the case that the partner is not prepared to make this financial investment, the newcomer will not be able to participate. Those newcomers that do not pass the civic integration exam are ineligible for an independent residence permit and thus remain dependent on their relationship for legal status.

In all our interviews with course participants and participant observations not a single woman mentioned her husband as being an obstacle to her civic integration. While both younger and older women often mentioned illness as an obstacle many younger women and teachers complained that there was an absence of flexible childcare. The 2010 evaluation report of Civic Integration states that the lack of childcare facilities is
one of the four most common reasons why migrants do not start a civic integration course. These women, especially those without employment, only need childcare for part of the day. This form of flexible childcare is difficult to find because existing childcare facilities will only provide services for a set number of full days. For those migrants who have obtained the Dutch nationality but nevertheless wish to follow a civic integration course voluntarily, childcare is not reimbursed by the government under the Childcare Law. The deficiency in childcare facilities demonstrates the contradiction between emancipatory political discourses and the persistence of traditional gender ideals and their structural consequences in the Netherlands.

5. Civic Integration: Training for (unpaid) care work

There are four civic integration educational tracks for migrants: work (Werk), education, health, and upbringing (Onderwijs, gezondheid en opvoeding – OGO), societal participation (Maatschappelijke participatie – MP), and entrepreneurship (ondernemerschap), the first two being the most popular and widespread. Migrants must complete one track and in principle have a choice over which one they will follow. It is questionable, however, to what extent this choice is being made by migrants themselves (Suvarierol and Kirk 2012). Both the education, health, and upbringing (OGO) track and the societal participation (MP) track are followed almost exclusively by women. Migrants are placed in a trajectory after an intake meeting in which they cannot always communicate fully because the meeting is often conducted in Dutch. As such the policy homogenises migrant women and leaves them with little power to contest this. According to the former Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations Donner, since 2007 87% of the participants of OGO course have been women while only 13% have been men. Some women do follow the work track (52% of those following a work track have been women) but the majority of our informants were in the OGO programme. Grouping ‘housewives and mothers’ together limits the future possibilities of migrant women. A women’s potential citizenship is framed in relation to her responsibilities as a mother (McDaniel 2002). The future perspectives of the mother herself seem to be an afterthought. This is worrying given that research has shown that there is a close relationship between women’s economic independence and their voice in the household (Hobson 1990).
The OGO is meant to prepare a parent “to guide his or her own child in Dutch education, institutions and the health system” and to “be a part of activities that are important to the rearing of children, sometimes with extra language support”. Such a programme is composed of several elements. First, it should prepare candidates for the A1/A2 language level required to pass the civic integration exam. More specifically, the programme should be geared toward rearing children. Second, it should include information about Dutch society, particularly on support for child rearing with attention on schooling for children. The former government run website gear at informing municipalities about the stated that the programme should also include “orientation about educational and job possibilities in the Netherlands if that is suitable in the future”.

With the exception of the chapters on looking for a job and conducting a job interview, the OGO track is almost exclusively focused on mothering tasks. The topics that are covered include: going to the paediatrician, choosing a school for the children, safety in traffic, reading and playing, leisure activities, and visiting the doctor or the dentist. As such, not only are these OGO tasks defined as women’s tasks, but the contents of this track mainly prepares migrant women to assume roles as mothers. The same topics are also covered in the practical civic integration exam (Electronisch Praktijk Examen, EPE). The official practice questions are guided by short film fragments. Whereas the OGO tasks are played out by women, the societal participation (MP) tasks, which include participation at a local decision-making meeting or entrepreneurship tasks such as setting up a business are played out by men. The civic integration test preparation material thus projects a division of public roles between women and men.

Migrant women are characterized as being in need of education into the Dutch norms, values and practices in practicing their roles in the Netherlands. As a Dutch policy maker explained: “We have special civic integration courses for women because… you see [...] there are a lot of problems with immigrant youths.” This suggests that the courses are tailored to meet the needs of the Dutch state; this policy maker was referring to problems with migrant youth and puts the responsibility for educating them on the shoulders of migrant women. Civic integration courses thus become a means to solving societal problems instead of meeting the needs of
migrant women or of emancipating them. Furthermore, the migrant women are told what their mothering role should entail and how they should fulfil it according to Dutch societal and cultural standards.

The idea behind the division of participants in tracks stems from the linguistic approach arguing that the best method to teach language to the low-educated is by translating it into practical situations that reflect their daily world situations and not by going through grammatical structures thought to be too abstract for this group of learners. Indeed, it seems that the migrant women participating in the courses can fulfil some of their responsibilities as mothers, yet it is unclear whether participants can survive in practical situations other than those they learned during their course. After the exam, migrants are still dependent users as the target language level of the courses is A1/A2, which corresponds to a ‘basic user’. In practice, this means that they can only be understood by those ‘who take the trouble to understand them’. As such, the level attained at the course is thus only sufficient for accessing low-skilled jobs. As a result, course participants are often frustrated as the course does not allow them to advance their language skills and thus to achieve the jobs they would be interested in getting (Bjørnson 2007, Kirk 2010). This is problematic for all ambitious migrants who would like to achieve more. Interviewed course managers admitted that they had underestimated the women in the OGO track. They realized too late how motivated migrant women were. Some enjoyed the courses so much that they want to continue the lessons even when they were ready to take the civic integration exam. This is an indication that the full potential of migrant women is not being realised by assigning to them to the OGO track and addressing them solely as mothers.

The interviewed course managers indicated that they were contemplating new plans to offer vocational training courses for migrant women in sectors where there is labour shortage. In this particular company, they were concentrating on vocational training for working in the ‘care and well-being (zorg en welzijn) sector’ – varying from caretaking at home to becoming a nurse, supplemented with extra sector-related language lessons. They are convinced that civic integration courses are just the beginning of the road to labour participation:
Course Manager 1: You are not there yet when you have obtained your civic integration diploma. Ok, look, you can then participate, but that is different from professional participation. … What we are talking about is the group we have seen. They have obtained a diploma, a civic integration diploma. They are now sitting at home again, pick up the kids from school, doing their stroll at the market. Why can’t we get these people to work? We have enormous shortages, labour shortages.

Course Manager 2: The idea for us of course is that we say: You are not there yet when you have finished your civic integration course. It just begins then, but these people have the basis then, so it is possible. They have now the mentality to say, ‘Hey, it is really nice to stand up for myself and to work for my own future.’[Authors’ translation from Dutch]

Both of these course managers embrace the motivation of migrant women to learn but stress that there is a need for further vocational education in order for them to participate in the labour market. In that sense, they admit that the civic integration course only provides basic skills and fails to prepare participants for a job. However, the areas of work migrant women should ideally choose lie in sectors with labour shortage, i.e. in the care sector. In a similar vein, the Dutch Council for Work and Income (Raad voor Werk en Inkomen - RWI) also sees a role for migrant women in filling up the labour shortages in the healthcare sector and has indeed called for more investments in order to overcome existing obstacles.41

One of the spin off projects resulting from the PaVEM commission, called ‘The Force of a Thousand and One (Duizend en één kracht)42, was initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in 2007 and tries to activate migrant women to participate through volunteer work. The project’s goal was to stimulate “50,000 migrant women to become socially active in order to completely participate in Dutch society”.43 The project was initiated despite research done by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), suggesting that most migrant women would prefer paid work (Keuzenkamp and Merens 2006, 229). Some of the arguments against volunteer work given during the SCP research include: “Why should I do that if I won’t get paid?; “I also care for my household and my children, and I also do that voluntarily, that is enough”; others mentioned that such work does not bring with it any higher social status (ibid).44 Unofficial reports suggest that the project did not
reach its target; migrant women from low income families do not wish to perform more unpaid work than they already do. The project was discontinued in 2011.\textsuperscript{45}

Although the voluntary work is said to be a route towards paid employment, the primary goal of the project seems simply to get the women to participate in society. Unfortunately, the conspicuous absence of men for this volunteer project has not been critiqued. According to the SCP, migrant men do participate in volunteer work, but that volunteer work is also highly gendered. Women participate in activities at school and men in activities concerning urban renewal and meeting of the tenants associations (ibid). Unfortunately, volunteer work seems to reinforced the gendered division of labour by providing women primarily with care work in hospital, elderly homes, schools, and childcare facilities. Work that, as the migrant women in the SCP research pointed out, has little status or respect in Dutch society (Van Daalen 2007).

It is not surprising that the both paid and unpaid jobs earmarked for migrant women are in the gendered care sector. Care work is often low paid and carried out under poor conditions, even if it is organized as employment (Daly 2002, 262). As Daly (ibid, 263) reminds us gender equity and the valuing of care work are very closely intertwined.

6. Conclusion
Our analysis of Dutch civic integration policies has shown how the gendered content and implementation of the civic integration courses stands in the way of the acclaimed policy goal to emancipate migrant women when emancipation is understood to involve both financial and legal independence and shared care work (Daly 2002). Civic integration’s emancipatory potential was thought to lay in providing migrant women with language skills and knowledge of Dutch society. The pedagogic approach, which placed emphasis on practical topics and tracks, has however lead to a division between training to work and training to care. Many migrant housewives do in fact hope to work one day and some women report being forced to do the \textit{OGO} trajectory. \textit{OGO} maintains a gendered division of work that is not alien to the Netherlands. Despite progressive gender ideals, staunch motherhood ideals and the normalisation of part-time work means that many Dutch women do the bulk of unpaid care work.
The perceived cultural oppression of migrant women is used to strengthen the boundaries between the “Dutch emancipated self” and the “unemancipated other” (Ghorashi 2010). Policies dealing with migrant women are framed with the belief that Dutch women are [almost] already liberated (Roggeband and Verloo 2007). This political and policy discourse obscures the socio-cultural factors constraining all women’s emancipation in the Netherlands. In our research school managers and teachers of civic integration courses placed the blame for migrant women’s difficulties with completing a course on men. However, according to women themselves and independent research conducted on civic integration, the lack of flexible and affordable childcare is one of the highest obstacles for migrant women; an issue working Dutch women also have to deal with.

Civic integration’s emancipatory potential was thought to lay in providing migrant women with language skills and knowledge of Dutch society. The pedagogic approach, which placed emphasis on practical topics and tracks, has however led to a division between training to work and training to care. Providing men with information regarding healthcare and schooling would be a step in the right direction but the maintenance of a distinct profile concerned with childrearing upholds a gendered division between the public realm of work and politics and the private space of the home. By addressing women as carers, Dutch civic integration policy falls short in its emancipatory goals by confining many women’s citizenship to the domestic. Ironically, this approach reproduces Dutch cultural norms by prioritising the mother’s caring responsibilities (see Kremer 2007, Van Daalen 2007, Van den Berg and Duyvendak 2012).

The emphasis on emancipating the migrant woman whilst performing her mothering tasks neglects feminist insights that women’s emancipation at home is partly dependent on their financial independence (Hobson 1990). Moreover, it contradicts policy goals of integration through labour market participation as it does not address migrant women as potential workers (and migrant men as potential carers). The real way forward in the Dutch context would have been the creation of a general civic integration programme providing the basic skills needed to survive and flourish in the Netherlands, which addresses all migrants as potential workers and carers.
If migrant women are at all encouraged to participate in the labour market through volunteer projects like ‘The force of a thousand and one’ (duizend en een kracht), the policy target remains unpaid or poorly paid care jobs outside the home. The Dutch Council of Work and Income indicates that the new role for migrant in the ‘national struggle’ should lie in filling up the labour shortage in the healthcare sector, a notoriously female-dominated and underpaid sector with poor working conditions. The promotion of care work outside the home for women does little for emancipation as it maintains a gendered labour market in which women earn less than men (Daly 2011). Here again, the expectation from migrant women seems at best to be one of fitting the Dutch ‘one-and-half-earner’ model (Pascall and Lewis 2004) wherein migrant women will to join the 48% of financially dependent women (Merens et al. 2011). Are these the progressive Dutch gender norms migrant women should be taught to emulate?

NOTES

1 The target group for integration and emancipation policies goes by different labels in the Netherlands: allochtoon (or foreign) women and girls, black, migrant and refugee women, women from ethnic minorities and more recently, ‘non-Western immigrant women’. We have chosen to use the term migrant women in this article because it captures the commonality within the group targeted by civic integration: all the women are or have been migrants to the Netherlands.

2 This labour pattern began to take form in the 1950s due to labour shortages (Portegijs et al. 2008, 9). Its normalisation is to a large extent, the result of a 1982 consensus reached between trade unions, employers’ organisations and the government that included a redistribution of employment through part-time jobs (Kremer 2006, 183).

3 According to the SCP the Dutch are second only to Denmark, when the international labour market participation norms of a paid work of at least one hour a week is taken into consideration (Merens et al. 2011, 12).


6 Ibid.


10 The actual content of the package was prepared by a consultancy firm, CINOP, and produced by a film company Odyssee Producties, yet commissioned and supervised by the Dutch Ministry of Justice.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Naar Nederland, 2005, Politics and the Constitution.

17 Ibid.


22 Ibid.

23 Naar Nederland, 2005, Employment and Income.

24 Interview at Capabel Taal, October 2011, Utrecht, the Netherlands.


26 E-quality, Meer Rendement Mogelijk Bij Inburgering vrouwen, Advies naar aanleiding van de evaluatie van de Wet Inburgering, 2010.

27 Ibid.

28 Also see: E-quality, 2010.


30 Tweede Kamer, 19 January 2011, 31143, nr. 87.

31 Tweede Kamer, 19 January 2011, 31143, nr. 87.

33 ibid.


37 Interview with Wim Coumou, November 2011, Vaassen.

38 See http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/Portfolio/?M=/main_pages/levels.html (accessed on 1 June 2012).


40 Interview at Capabel Taal, October 2011, Utrecht, the Netherlands.


42 The name of the programme seems to be a play on the collection of Arabic short stories “A thousand and one nights”.


44 This priority for paid work is also mentioned in other research into volunteer work among ethnic minorities (Münz 2003 as cited in Keuzenkamp and Merens 2006, 229).


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Tweede Kamer. 19 January 2011, 31143, nr. 87.


