What Is New about Dutch Populism? Dutch Colonialism, Hierarchical Citizenship and Contemporary Populist Debates and Policies in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT
This article discusses how Dutch politics of citizenship in the (colonial) past and the present create distinctions, distribute status, rights, opportunities, securities and wealth and how they evoke agency. This process is analysed first by exploring the politics of citizenship in colonial times; second, the implications of political decolonisation for citizenship are discussed; third, present day dynamics around Dutch populism and how they connect to autochthony and Islamophobia are discussed; fourth, a present-day example of the phenomenon termed ‘citizenship alienism’ will be analysed. These historical and contemporary discourses demonstrate how through the years, Dutch majoritarian politicians have constructed a distinction between ‘conditional’ versus ‘unconditional’ citizens through references to a mythical core Dutch nation. The politics of inequality under populism are in that sense not new, but, rather, present-day expressions of a much older Dutch political phenomenon.

KEYWORDS
Migration; citizenship; colonialism; populism; Islamophobia

The more you gaze, the less you see; the more you seize, the less you capture; the more you measure, the less you know.
Reality always escapes us.1

Europe’s current modernity is characterised by the rise of right-wing populist parties that advocate a politics of inequality recalling the days of colonialism. In this article, I will focus on the Dutch situation in this regard. The history of Dutch dynamics of citizenship is inconsistent with self-congratulating discourses that represent the Netherlands as an essentially innocent, morally progressive, non-hierarchical, enlightened, and ‘just’ nation prone to equality (see, for example, Essed and Hoving 2014; Wekker 2016). Rather, it reveals a deeply hierarchical logic. Seen from a historical perspective, the politics of inequality as proposed by Dutch populists in the Netherlands in the last 15 years are not a defensive novelty: they are not the response of a Dutch nation that has come under siege by the hordes of Babylon and as a result has suddenly become less enlightened. Rather, these politics may be viewed as an integral part of a longer imperial Dutch history. What the older and present day politics of citizenship have in common is that they all ‘need’, utilise, time specific
constructions of a mythical core Dutch nation. The instabilities of citizenship that the colonised and their offspring experienced reveal under-researched dynamics of citizenship. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the racialised, gendered and classed processes inherent in these politics of citizenship do not only render a category of non-citizens/second class citizens/conditional citizens but also a category of privileged, elevated unconditional citizens that is largely overlooked in Dutch scholarship on citizenship, and in the dominant Dutch integration research paradigm. In this sense, the long history of these Dutch politics may also be read as an economics of citizenship, via which securities, opportunities and wealth are unevenly distributed.

I will look at the ‘sending’ side of these discourses, by analysing discourses of members of the Dutch parliament and government, while also analysing the responses of those targeted. These responses may be viewed as counter-discourses to top-down formations. In other words, I am inspired by a conception of power that is not exclusively ‘top-down’ and monolithic but multi-directional and unpredictable in its consequences. A focus on agency moves away from conceptions that are inherent in dominant integration discourse and signify the imperious gaze of the imagined ‘we’, which may be paraphrased as follows:

Their cultures are so different from our culture; we have to make sense of their otherness by studying their morals and identity politics and socioeconomic position because these influence how they relate to Dutch society. But whatever we do, in the end it’s up to them to adapt to our society, we cannot influence this process, we only respond.

My deployment of agency departs from essentialist ascriptions of ‘identity’ that negate power, privilege and exclusion while elevating the imagined ‘we’. I am not interested in domesticated, docile agency that conforms to dominant frames of thinking. My interest is in disconcerting, unwanted, unexpected forms of agency that escape the gaze, frames, agendas and aims of the ruling political class and the dominant epistemological order. I am interested in an agency that breaks loose, dissects ‘us’, exposes hidden pretentions of ‘us’, shatters ‘us’ – an agency that escapes and ironises the politics of ruling Dutch political classes concerning the citizenship of Othered people by turning their political aims into unexpected and reversed outcomes.

I will highlight Dutch politics of citizenship – how they create distinctions, distribute status, rights, opportunities, securities and wealth, and how they provoke particular agencies. Specifically I will look at politics of citizenship in colonial times, the instability of citizenship during political decolonisation and, lastly, present-day dynamics around right-wing Dutch populism and hierarchies of citizenship as they connect to autochthony, Islamophobia and citizens from the Dutch Caribbean Islands.

**Situating Citizenship: Lessons from Colonial and Postcolonial Hierarchies**

I see continuities between the Dutch present, and Dutch colonial hierarchies of citizenship. Both colonial as well as contemporary dynamics of citizenship underscore the need for a situated understanding of citizenship: (equal) citizenship means different things to differentially positioned people in different times. The resonance of a situated conception of citizenship is broad. For instance, feminist perspectives, the workers movement, the LGBT movement and illegalised activists have critiqued the phallocentric, classed (Fraser and Gordon 1992), heteronormative and legal-nationalist nature of dominant
conceptions and politics of citizenship, while asserting versions of ‘equal citizenship’ in accordance with their specific position and needs. A postcolonial critique of citizenship in this context may include the above dimensions (see, for example, Alexander 1994), but also contains some distinct blind spots.

I have argued elsewhere that the dynamics of citizenship under colonialism and in the ‘postcolonial present’ are inconsistent with universalist-inclusive and progressive conceptions of citizenship (Jones 2007, 2014c). The development of ‘modern citizenship’ in the motherland via expansion of civil and political rights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was paralleled by its negation in the overseas colonies, as evidenced by the enduring institution of slavery in the ‘West Indies’ and ‘the Dutch East Indies’ and the introduction of first and second class citizenship in colonial nationality law in the ‘the Dutch East Indies’. Furthermore, the history of Dutch political debates and policies on/towards people from the colonies after 1945 reveals a variety of instabilities I have termed citizenship alienism: the symbolic, social, political and legal processes in which the polity effectively renders status citizens as aliens or semi-citizens (Jones 2014a). Citizenship status is not safe if you are defined as not belonging to the ethno-nation. This is true even for people whose Dutch citizenship is ‘inherited’ via a long ancestral line and who never possessed another nationality, as I will demonstrate.

Even rights that are assumed to be ‘basic rights’ in conventional citizenship theory, such as the right to move and reside into the country of nationality, are not safe, as is evidenced by Dutch debates, policies and bills targeted at people both from the colonies in the twentieth century and recently. Contrary to modernist notions of citizenship (‘equality for all’), colonialism and its aftermath demonstrates that the meaning of citizenship depends on agonistic processes in society. While these power dynamics of citizenship have flourished in pre-populist time, what they have in common with present-day Dutch populism is a reference to the integrity and interests of an imagined Dutch nation. These politics of citizenship are often activated in times of a perceived crisis of a varying nature, often formulated in connection with an anxious politics (Terlouw 2009; Modest and de Koning 2016).

I understand Dutch politics of citizenship as relational formations that produce time specific classes of conditional and unconditional citizens (see Kim 2008). I will address both the disadvantages of being Othered as well as the benefits of being normalised. Dominant Dutch research paradigms and policies on ‘integration’ and citizenship – next to situating inequality in the presumed lack of skills of minorities, while silencing systemic racism as an explanatory factor (Essed and Nimako 2006) – pay almost no attention to privileged citizenship (Jones 2015: 47–9).

My inclusion of privileged citizenship in the analysis is part of a tiny (in the Dutch context) subfield of postcolonial scholarship that explores the implications of colonialism for majoritarian subjectivities (see Wekker 2016). I will combine an analytics of disadvantage with an analytics of privilege, addressing the various agencies that these relational politics of citizenship produce, and look at how they function as mechanisms for the distribution of basic securities and socioeconomic opportunities.

**Colonialism and Citizenship**

European colonialism was a form of invasive nomadism (see Glissant 2010: 11–22). Driven by the myth of linear progress and growth, and justified by ideologies that
postulated innate differences between the peoples of the world, Europeans established hierarchies between themselves and a variety of colonised. The Dutch played a significant role in European colonialism as they controlled the territory that is now known as Indonesia (referred to as ‘The Dutch East Indies’ in colonial discourse) as well as territories in ‘the West Indies’, consisting of Suriname and the Caribbean Islands of Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, Saba, Sint-Eustacius and Sint-Maarten. Subsequent politics of ascribed identity were instrumental in justifying slavery and exploitation in the earlier phase of colonialism, followed by late-colonial forms of control, such as the so-called ethical policies in ‘the Dutch East-Indies’ and assimilation policies in Suriname. While religiously inspired ideas about differences between Europeans, Africans and Asians and biological essentialism usually accompanied forms of brutal exploitation, cultural essentialism became more prominent during the so-called ethical policies and assimilation policies, the latter two being the Dutch version of a civilising mission (Jones 2007).

**Slavery as Legal Anti-Citizenship**

During the days of slavery in the Dutch empire the political development of modern citizenship had a very different trajectory in the motherland than in the colonies. Whereas citizenship in the motherland revolved around the struggle for and the expansion of civil and political rights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries among persons, initially taking only males as the implicit norm (Fraser and Gordon 1992; van Houdt and van Schinkel 2009), the situation in the colonies primarily concerned the issue of whether a human body – male or female – was recognised as a person or not. In the colonies, the expansion of civil and limited political rights was of interest only for members of a small male-dominated colonial elite recognised as citizens. For the enslaved, the main issue was how to get your body to be recognised as person. This issue was irrelevant for bodies in the Netherlands: the Dutch government upheld slavery in the colonies well into the nineteenth century while it was long banned in the Netherlands (Balai 2011). Notwithstanding deep inequalities in terms of gender, class and religion, all bodies in the motherland in principle held legal personhood. In the colonies only bodies recognised as persons were rights-bearing subjects (Heijs 1995: 34; de Groot 2005: 399–401; Jones 2007: 61).

So what is slavery, from a legal citizenship perspective? A metaphor drawn from the natural sciences is useful here. Physics tell us that universe consists of matter and anti-matter. The condition of the enslaved may be viewed as a situation of legal anti-citizenship: the absolute opposite of the idea of rights. Hence, the most important ‘citizenship issue’ for the enslaved was manumission (via which an enslaved body could transform into a free person under certain conditions), and not primarily obtaining civic or political rights (Hoogbergen and Hove 2001). Notwithstanding manumission and the phenomenon of ‘coloured slave owners’, the system of slavery remained a highly racialised phenomenon in the Dutch empire.

The absence of slavery and the introduction of modern citizenship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the motherland was paralleled by a situation in the colonies that was characterised by the omnipresence of legal anti-citizenship, a situation easily overlooked when applying a single-territory lens to the study of citizenship. Indeed, respect for civil rights (such as property rights) for some was a condition sine qua non for owning the
bodies of others (see Fraser and Gordon 1992). In this connection, we might also wonder to what extent the fruits of hundreds of years of legal anti-citizenship was helpful in not only creating the (material) conditions for the development of Dutch capitalism but the extension of social rights and the welfare state in the twentieth century Netherlands as well (see Brandon 2015).

*Legal Inclusion and Second Class Citizenship*

Structural male European privilege and power did not end after the abolition of slavery in 1862 (Dutch East Indies) and 1863 (West Indies). The post-slavery period clearly demonstrates that ascribing legal membership to some people is not necessarily an inclusive act. Although the Dutch government transformed all enslaved bodies into persons, which in terms of legal citizenship is progress, gaining legal personhood did not signify a trajectory to equal citizenship. The Dutch government, via the introduction of dual nationality in the Dutch East Indies in 1892, divided the population into ‘native’ Dutch subjects and ‘European’ Dutch citizens. Citizens held the exclusive right to leading socioeconomic, military and political positions in the colony, while subjects were legally excluded from these positions (Jones 2007: 59).

It is worth mentioning that Dutch colonial authorities at the time did not need populist rhetoric to justify the legalisation of first and second class citizenship since racialised grammars of thinking were deeply entrenched in the nineteenth century. The Dutch authorities deemed the legalisation of first and second class citizenship acceptable in the context of colonial discourses in which those classified as ‘natives’ were constructed as people who carried essential biological and cultural trait and different legal needs, whereas the ‘Europeans’ were represented as a group that had a special mission for uplifting ‘the natives’ (Jones 2007). The legally recognised inter-racialised offspring of male ‘European’ Dutch citizens and female ‘native’ subjects, referred to as ‘Indo-Europeans’ in colonial discourse, also held Dutch citizenship, but did not enjoy equal opportunities because of widespread skin-colour-based discrimination within colonial Dutch East Indies society (Jones 2007: 60).

Regarding the formerly enslaved in the Dutch West Indies, the Dutch government granted all full Dutch citizenship after the abolition of slavery, but this was, as I have argued elsewhere, not based on essentially different discourses of identity but on different modalities of colonial power that the Dutch applied in different parts of the empire (Marshall 2003: 26–7; Jones 2007). Notwithstanding these different modalities of power, male white Europeans (and also ‘Jews and fair-skinned Creoles’ in Suriname) for a long time dominated both colonies, while the (white male dominated) Dutch government and parliament held sovereign power until 1949 and 1975 respectively.

Colonialism was a phallocentric hierarchy of citizenship, in which gender, race, class and sexuality intersected. The leading citizens both in the motherland as well as the colonies were usually white European men of privileged social classes. The citizenship of white European women was meant to be a subsidiary, servient citizenship. For instance, white European mothers in ‘the Dutch East Indies’ could not transfer their Dutch citizenship to their children, which had far reaching consequences for the legal and social position of their multi-racialised offspring with Indonesian men (de Hart 2003: 78–80; Jones 2007: 84–5, 152; see also, van Walsum 2008). Far reaching sexual freedoms for white
European men were paralleled by a regime that legally treated relationships between ‘white’ European women and ‘coloured’ men as ‘a serious transgression of racialised sexual boundaries’ (Wekker 2001: 180–2).

**Sex, Citizenship and Nation**

The maintenance of gendered ‘ethno-sexual frontiers’ (see Nagel 2003) during colonialism was succeeded by the construction of gendered and classed ethno-sexual frontiers of the Dutch nation when (following the members of the middle classes and the elites) working-class Surinamese Dutch men started to relocate to the Netherlands in greater numbers in the twentieth century. While traditionally, the concept of ‘mixed relationship’ in Dutch society referred to marriages between Protestants and Catholics, in the twentieth century colonial discourses of miscegenation surfaced in the motherland (Jones 2010: 123–5; see Hondius 2001). Municipal Dutch authorities as well as members of the Dutch parliament problematised relationships between working-class men ‘of colour’ and ‘white’ women, from the 1930s to the 1960s (Schuster 1999). Instigated by secretary of interior affairs Van Boeijen, local authorities in Amsterdam retracted, and those in the Hague scrutinised, the working permission of ‘Surinamese negroes, working in the entertainment industry’ in 1937 in order to hinder these relationships. Local authorities in these cities viewed these ‘black skinned Dutch men’ as they were referred to by some members in Dutch parliament, as a threat to the honour of ‘white daughters of Eve’ (Jones 2010: 124–5). In the 1960s, members of the civil service as well as journalists disapprovingly reported about relationships between working-class ‘creole’ men and ‘white’ women (Schuster 1999: 119–28). While the public debates in the Dutch parliament about these inter-racialised relationships in the 1960s were more euphemistic in tone, they nonetheless functioned as a one of the subtexts for reflecting on the restricting free settlement of Surinamese Dutch to the Netherlands long before independence (Schuster 1999; Jones 2007).

Equal citizenship in sexual matters is manifold. My aim is not to normalise sexual activity at the expense of a-sexual oriented individuals. But if we assume that the free choice (free from social, legal or political pressure or restrictions) of intimate partner(s), regardless of ‘gender, race, class, religion’ and so on, is of existential importance for sexually inclined humans, than the history of the Netherlands is one of unevenness along lines of gender, race and class.

**Political Decolonisation: Losing and Keeping Dutch Nationality**

To equate political decolonisation exclusively with ‘freedom’ risks obscuring the unequal distribution of means of existence this constitutional change implied. The politics of citizenship in the context of decolonisation can be viewed as a legal-symbolic-material complex. Those Dutch nationals who were classified as akin to the Dutch nation remained Dutch citizens, while the remaining Dutch nationals – the colonised – collectively lost Dutch nationality and were transferred into Indonesian or Surinamese nationals. This transfer implied that the Netherlands, the wealthier part of the Dutch empire that had appropriated the rich resources of the colonies, became sealed off for the formerly colonised. While for nationalists in ‘the Dutch East Indies'/Indonesia and Suriname this transfer of nationality was an expression of freedom, for others, the loss of an age-old Dutch
nationality status was felt as a great injustice because of the implications for material and physical security.

Dutch political debates on Suriname demonstrate how a seemingly progressive political agenda of decolonisation became connected with an exclusionary citizenship agenda. In the context of fearing an increase in Surinamese Dutch relocation to the Netherlands, Dutch politicians started representing constitutional relations between the Netherlands, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles as a neocolonial anachronism. While political parties that we would nowadays term populist, such as the DS70, explicitly made the connection between Surinamese independence and migration control, most members of parliament articulated a different discourse to the same end. The latter represented the populations of Suriname and the Dutch Antilles as ‘victims of Dutch citizenship’. The movement of Surinamese Dutch to the Netherlands was represented as constituting ‘irreparable uprootedness’ while South America and the Caribbean were represented as the proper socio-cultural habitat for Surinamese Dutch citizens. From the perspective of the population of Suriname who, as a result of Dutch assimilation politics was socialised in the Dutch language and was very familiar with Dutch culture, these Dutch political discourses may be viewed as an opportunistic falsification of history. The Dutch government rejected pleas of the opposition for a local referendum (among the population in Suriname) on independence (Jones 2007: 222–51). The opposition against independence in Suriname was well aware of the consequences of ascribed Surinamese citizenship in terms of socio-economic and physical wellbeing. As Surinamese opposition leader, Jaggernath Lachmon, stated:

I challenge everyone to go to Suriname and ask the people if they want to give up their Dutch nationality [...]. I will not cooperate to deprive them of their [Dutch] nationality [...]. We who are left behind in Suriname, who are struggling to uplift Suriname, we lose our [Dutch] nationality overnight. Those living here [the Netherlands, G.J.] may keep their nationality. I grant them [Dutch nationality], but the principle of justice requires that I also fight for people, who like me remained behind in order to get Suriname out of the puddle and transform it into an independent state that can present itself among the peoples of the world. (Jones 2007: 248–9)

The Dutch parliament voted for Surinamese independence, while a very small parliamentary majority in Suriname voted in favour of independence on 25 November 1975. Yet, the preparation for Surinamese independence to a large extent undermined Dutch political aims regarding independence. Many Surinamese Dutch, deprived of a referendum, ‘voted with their feet’ by moving to the Netherlands in unprecedented numbers before independence: one-third of the population succeeded in relocating to the Netherlands.

The dynamics of citizenship are not only about the transfer of nationality status at independence, however. Developments after the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia in 1949 illustrate that remaining a Dutch citizen after independence meant non-acceptance for some, whereas others were readily accepted on Dutch soil. The privileged position of the latter becomes clear if we look at the disadvantages of the former. Citizenship Alienism, the symbolic and political dynamics involved in the non-acceptance of certain citizens, exclusively targeted the so-called Indo-Europeans (Eurasians). The Dutch government heavily pressured the ‘Indo-European’ Dutch citizens who still remained in Indonesia after 1949 to opt for Indonesian nationality, regardless of the serious predicaments this group met in Indonesian society. When this policy proved to be ineffective (the people
concerned strongly identified with Dutch nationality and the majority did not opt for Indonesian nationality), the Dutch governments started what is known as discouragement policies in the first half of the 1950s. Those Dutch citizens who were constructed as ‘Eastern Oriented Dutch Citizens’ were discouraged from moving to the Netherlands: the Dutch government, backed by parliament, rejected their requests for necessary loans for the travel expenses. Next to referring to the economic conditions in the Netherlands, political justifications were a combination of cultural and biological essentialism: the Dutch government, backed by the majority parliament, represented ‘Indo-Europeans’ as mentally, socially and physically maladapted to Dutch society. These identity discourses were deeply embedded in the higher echelons of the civil service and Dutch parliament and government and resonated with socio-biological ontologies of race that also served as justifications for colonial rule. The racialised nature of the resulting policies is underscored by the fact that the Dutch government unconditionally granted the so-called Western oriented Dutch citizens (the totoks or white Dutch citizens) the necessary loans to travel to the Netherlands. In other words, this category could effectively utilise the right of free settlement in the Netherlands. In the context of severe deterioration of the position of remaining Eurasian Dutch in Indonesia and after the political activism of prominent members of the target group, the Dutch government eventually ended its discouragement policies in 1956 (Schuster 1999: 85–106; Jones 2007: 141–72).

The above examples show that political decolonisation was not exclusively part of a ‘progressive’ political agenda, but was also an important context in which the Dutch government constructed a racialised distinction between unconditional and conditional citizens. While the citizenship of the former proved to be secure and their movement, physical safety and material living conditions guaranteed, the citizenship of the latter was subject to great uncertainty with regard to these issues.

**Political Citizenship: Silencing**

Today, the Dutch citizens from the former colonies of Suriname and ‘the Dutch East Indies’ are more or less accepted members of Dutch society: after the closure of the Dutch borders they gradually ceased to be at the centre of Dutch political discourses, and are sometimes even represented as examples of ‘successful integration’ into Dutch society (Jones 2007; Captain 2014). They are perceived as ‘harmless identities’ (Captain 2014), as long as they do not choose radically different frames for discussing ‘integration problems’ such as voicing criticism on everyday racism, racialised cultural traditions such as Zwarte Piet and the Dutch neglect of war crimes committed by the Dutch East Indies Army in Indonesia (Jones 2012; Captain 2014).

**Dutch Populism, Autochthony and Hierarchies of Citizenship**

Dutch populists rearticulate dominant discourses of ‘real Dutch-ness’ in connection with a renovated politics of inequality. I am particularly referring to Geert Wilders’ right-wing populist Party for Freedom (PVV) which promotes an exclusionary political agenda that is, for instance, unlike the progressive populism of the Social-Liberal Party D66 in the past. While right-wing Dutch populism, because of the political style in which its exclusionary agenda is presented, may seem like a novel phenomenon, its racialised
hierarchical logic with regard to citizenship and nation is consistent with a longer colonial and political Dutch history. From this perspective, the hierarchies proposed in right-wing populist discourse are, following Ann Stoler (2016), recursive rather than new. Those targeted, as well as the concrete signifiers of difference and policies, may differ in present-day Dutch populism but the underlying hierarchical political grammar repeats itself.

Right-wing Dutch populist discourse utilises the binary between ‘autochthones’ (of ‘Dutch descent’) and ‘allochthones’ (of ‘foreign descent’) that was introduced by mainstream political parties in the late-twentieth century. Until recently, the Dutch government officially used these categories in policies and research. While officially based on descent, the binary connotes a racialised idea of true Dutch-ness (Yanow and Van der Haar 2013: 227; Jones 2014b: 74–5). Racialisation in Dutch political discourse utilises a variety of signifiers to construct difference, such as appearances (descent/external bodily features, dress), things deemed ‘cultural’ (such as behaviour, religion, sexuality, speech and accent) and class. From a relational perspective on the politics of citizenship, racialisation has two sides to it: it is disadvantageous for those deemed allochthones and advantageous for the privileged citizens, the ‘autochthones’. Dutch discourses rely on the intersectional effects of time specific signifiers of difference to distinguish the ‘real Dutch’, the ‘autochthones’, from the (symbolically wasted) rest, the ‘allochthones’.

Biological racism in combination with culturalist constructions of difference played a major role in the construction of the Dutch nation and its others in twentieth century, as the previous section demonstrates. Especially people from ‘the Dutch East Indies’ and Suriname figured as others in these discourses. Today, in the context of present-day Dutch Islamophobia, especially ‘allochthones’ deemed ‘Muslims’ are targeted by right-wing populists. In contrast, Dutch citizens whose genealogies can (partly) be traced back to the former colonies of ‘the Dutch East Indies’ (Indonesia) and Suriname are seemingly accepted: when opportune, politicians and others use their ascribed reinvention as ‘integrated’ to represent Dutch citizens of Muslim background as ultimate others (Jones 2007: 177–82, 263–4). While right-wing populist rhetoric is more directly discriminatory in tone, the discursive hierarchies that are constructed between on ‘us’ and ‘them’, and their detrimental effect on equal citizenship also continue to be part of mainstream politics, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

It is useful at this point to address the concept of autochthony, the idea that there is ‘in the end’ a core original Dutch nation that is as such entitled to the full fruits of Dutch citizenship. In order to thoroughly delegitimise the claims of populists and others with regard to citizenship-privilege we need to remember that autochthony, although ‘real’ in its felt consequences, is based on myths. No one is naturally of Dutch soil, since none of the citizens can trace their lineage back to ancestors that literally (as a Dutch sub-species) evolved on the territory presently known as the Netherlands. Like all nations on earth, the existence of the Dutch nation is enabled by a history of ongoing human (re-)settlements. In that sense no one in the Netherlands is indigenous. Furthermore, ‘autochthones’ propagates a photo-image of the nation: as if our present-day discourse of the Dutch nation is a trans-historical fact. Through the ages however, dominant groups in the Netherlands (as elsewhere) used different criteria and concepts for distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them’. From this perspective, the Dutch imagined community may rather be viewed as a series of ever-changing constructions, in which ‘us’ and ‘them’ are constantly reinvented. In other words, the use of ‘autochthones’ obscures the eternal becoming of the population,
the historical specificity of the discourses about the Dutch nation and the territorial and constitutional transformations of the entity presently known as the Netherlands. The concept of ‘autochthones’ implies a history of forgetting (Jones 2007: 33–4).

In my view, including parts of those once considered ‘allochthones’ in the category of ‘autochthones’, redistributing the status as it were, is not the solution to unequal citizenship. Rather, the majoritarian politics of nativism that inform this binary as such need critical attention. Politics of nativism may be instrumental in lessening injustices when groups claiming indigenous status have suffered historical wrongs and have become disenfranchised as a result, such as different communities in the Americas. Yet, in the context of the Netherlands, where those classified as ‘autochthones’ (as ‘natives’) are structurally and historically privileged and racism is systemic (Essed and Hoving 2014; Wekker 2016), politics of nativism reproduce and enhance already existing hierarchies between citizens.

Like earlier politics of nativism, such as the construction of ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ Dutch citizens in the political discourses of the 1950s, the use of the ‘autochthone’/‘allochthone’ binary has been instrumental in creating a hierarchical distinction between ‘conditional’ and ‘unconditional’ Dutch citizens. Claire Jean Kim, referring to the instability of US citizenship for racialised groups, defines conditional citizenship as, ‘formal citizenship whose meaning is contingent upon variable forces in a given place and time [...]. Unlike unconditional citizenship typically enjoyed by whites, conditional citizenship is always on the verge of being compromised’ (Kim 2008: 157).

The binary between ‘autochthones’ and ‘allochthones’, the more recent Dutch incarnation of conditional versus unconditional citizens, have provided fertile ground for populist parties. Populist politicians, evoking the image of a Dutch (ethno)nation under siege by the ‘EU, refugees and terrorists’, use this binary and take it to new extremes. Particularly ‘Muslims’ identified as ‘allochthones’ are targeted by the PVV. On different occasions, Geert Wilders, the leader of the PVV has voiced intentions to reduce the number of ‘Moroccans’ on Dutch soil, making a case for collective de-nationalisation. Dutch citizens of Moroccan background massively resisted these threats by asserting their Dutch citizenships (for example, by showing pictures of their Dutch passports) and by initiating legal proceedings in which they accuse Wilders of discrimination and sowing hatred (see Jones 2014b). As I write, these lawsuits remain undecided. On other occasions, the PVV, in an attempt to undermine political citizenship, has raised formal objections against Dutch citizens of Moroccan background occupying influential positions in parliament, government and municipalities and has made proposals for taxing women wearing headscarves. It goes without saying that these PVV proposals clearly mark the target groups as conditional citizens; however, they have not prevented some Dutch citizens of Moroccan background from occupying senior positions, such as the chair of the Dutch parliament and the mayor of Rotterdam.

Dutch populism uses forms of political communication that are hard to engage with. Dutch populists use hyper-speech: excessive political speech that is proudly un-nuanced and firmly non-dialogical (see Baudrillard 2002). Social-democrat Adri Duivensteijn, the former mayor of Almere, referred to the modes of communication used by PVV politicians as ‘active-non-communication’. The PVV’s rejection of practices of deliberative democracy in favour of mono-directional hyper-speech has been very successful in silencing criticism and in denying political citizenship to opponents. Geert Wilders usually does not enter into a substantive dialogue with his critics, but simply disqualifies them
as remnants of ‘politically correct and obsolete multiculturalism’. The PVV, if brought to power, is even prepared to change the anti-discrimination clause in the Dutch constitution in order implement proposals that pursue unequal treatment of certain citizens (see Sturm 2006).

Moreover, in contrast to Belgium, where a *cordon sanitaire* has effectively diminished the influence of the extreme right Vlaams Belang, it is alarming that mainstream Dutch political parties such as the liberal VVD and the Christian-democratic CDA have demonstrated a willingness to collaborate with PVV in the past (Lanoye 2016). This willingness poses huge challenges for upholding the principle of equal citizenship in Dutch society, even only in its minimal formal-legal sense.

While present day right-wing Dutch populism clearly proposes the enactment of unequal citizenship, Dutch politics of inequality certainly do not ‘need’ populism. Politics of inequality also continue after the recent request by the Dutch parliament to abandon the autochthone – allochthone binary in policy documents⁴ since the underlying politics of nativism that preceded this binary continues to this day (see Balkenhol *et al.* 2016). Hierarchical logics of citizenship have been part of mainstream Dutch politics for a very long time. Recently, mainstream political parties have proposed and implemented acts that have resulted in unequal treatment (Terlouw 2009) and they continue to do so.

**Present-day Citizenship Alienism**

Dutch politicians up until this day regard the retraction of rights of Othered citizens as appropriate modalities of power and control. Even the citizenship of people who are, and whose ancestors have always been, Dutch citizens – such as citizens in and from the Dutch Caribbean Islands – is not safe. Paradoxically, precisely the continuation of constitutional relations between the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean Islands is one of the conditions of possibility for problematising ‘Antillean Dutch’ identity and their presence in the Netherlands. In contrast with the Eurasian Dutch, Moluccan Dutch and Surinamese Dutch in the Netherlands, whose histories of settlement are considered to be a more or less closed matter, the free movement of ‘Antillean Dutch’ between the Dutch Caribbean Islands and the Netherlands is the subject of recurrent political debates.

Since 1980s, members of parliament and government increasingly tend to disregard the Dutch citizenship of Caribbean Dutch. In the 1980s and the 1990s when not only elite and middle-class people but also working-class people moved from the Antilles to the Netherlands in greater numbers, a *pars pro toto* mechanism gained prominence in Dutch political discourses: politicians started magnifying stories about a small group of the ‘Antillean Dutch’ who were not readymade success-stories according to dominant bourgeois norms at the expense of the overwhelming majority of the Antillean Dutch who were ‘successful’ according to these norms (Jones 2007: 206–329). From the 1990s onwards, Dutch politicians recurrently discussed proposals to end free settlement in the Netherlands, but eventually withdrew them because of ‘constitutional obstacles’ and because they conceded that ‘the majority of the Antillean Dutch is doing well’ (Jones 2007: 299–329).

In 2014, VVD-member of parliament André Bosman went a step further and presented a bill to the Dutch parliament that would end free settlement and much more. Populist discourse provided a fertile ideological context for the bill: the PVV took the *pars pro toto* mechanism to new extremes by representing ‘criminal Antilleans’ as a huge...
problem that needed drastic political measures. In this discursive context the Bosman bill was aimed at keeping the ‘Disadvantaged Antilleans’ out of Dutch territory. I argued elsewhere that in the figure of the ‘Disadvantaged Antilleans’, emancipation within the Dutch Kingdom was both territorialised and ethno-nationalised since disadvantaged Dutch citizens from one of the less richer provinces in the Netherlands would not be excluded from moving to the richer regions of the Netherlands (Jones 2014a: 73–7). This rhetorical figure furthermore obscures the fact that the socioeconomic position of the designated individuals is not static, but may change in the course of life when conditions, such as moving to the richer part of the Kingdom, improve. As Danitza Jacobs, now a successful businesswoman, explained in response to Bosman:

Fifteen years ago, I did not view myself as a disadvantaged youngster, I was someone with opportunities in a disadvantaged environment. (Jones 2014a: 73–4)

While keeping the ‘Disadvantaged Antilleans’ out in itself would undermine equal citizenship, it is worth noting that the bill would affect all those designated as ‘Antillean Dutch’. The bill first proposed to end free settlement in the Netherlands by the targeted people in Aruba, Curacao and Saint Maarten by introducing a residence permit for a maximum of five years. They would have to apply for this permit after having stayed in the Netherlands for six months. Those from the Islands who did not meet certain socioeconomic requirements would have to leave the Netherlands. Furthermore, the bill proposed to expel and imprison those of the target group lacking such a permit. Once expelled, future access to Dutch territory would be denied. Also, the members of the target group lacking such a permit would be prohibited to register at one of the municipalities and excluded from the housing market and Dutch social services. Furthermore, the bill would legalise ethnic profiling, a phenomenon already quite common among the Dutch police, since the bill grants the police and the military police the right to stop and check people of whom there is ‘reason to believe’ that their presence is not in accordance with the bill to establish their ‘identity, nationality and residence position’ (Jones 2014a: 77). In fact, the OCaN and The Standing Committee of Experts on International Immigration, Refugee and Criminal Law (Meijers Committee) argued that all Dutch citizens who do not fit the normative somatic image of ‘real’ Dutch-ness would potentially be affected by the bill. As the Meijers Committee argued:

The provision […] in article 13 creates clear risks for all Dutch citizens with a dark complexion to be stopped and checked by the police. How may the police otherwise recognize the relatively small group of Antillean Dutch citizens without the necessary permit on the streets? This risk for many hundreds of thousands Dutch citizens is taken for granted. White Dutch citizens will never suffer from this practice. (Jones 2014a: 77)

The Bosman bill is a telling expression of citizenship alienism: the targeted citizens from the Islands would come to be treated as foreigners in certain important respects. The bill is a modern day reiteration and extension of colonial distinctions between subjects and citizens and between ‘Eastern oriented’ and ‘Western oriented’ citizens in the context of discouragement policies in the 1950s. The racialised effect of the bill becomes even more visible if we look at those exempted. The bill was not aimed at Dutch citizens, living in places such as Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada. Moreover, those who are classified as ‘European Dutch’ on the Caribbean Islands, disadvantaged or not, would
be exempted by the act. As the Meijers Committee noted, the bill would ‘make a direct
distinction based on race or ethnic origin in the legal sense of these concepts’ (Jones
2014a: 72). The ‘European Dutch’ from the Islands would still enjoy the right of unrestric-
ted settlement in the Netherlands, while they would also keep the right to register in
Dutch municipalities and access to the housing market and the social services. Furthe-
more, they would not suffer the risk of expulsion or ethnic profiling. In other words, if
the bill were to be enacted, the socioeconomic advantages of having access to the richer
part of the Dutch Kingdom would be reserved for those classified as ‘European Dutch’.

Although the bill, after sharp criticism by the OCaN, the Meijers Committee and the
Dutch Human Rights Commission, was retracted because of legal complications and
insufficient political support within the Dutch parliament, it is alarming that it was pro-
posed by the largest mainstream (at least in perception) coalition party (VVD). As I write,
a revised version of the bill is under consideration by the Dutch parliament.5 While having
the ‘Antillean Dutch’ as a target group, the bill sends a message to all Othered Dutch citi-
zens that their citizenship is not safe (Jones 2014a: 80–1).

**Conclusion: The Problems of ‘Integration’**

Privileged Dutch citizenship is a symbolic-legal-material complex that is supported by an
epistemological order. It is the pampered part of the autochthone/allochthone binary. The
detrimental effect the myth of real Dutch-ness has on the citizenship of Othered citizens
necessitates a refocus on the substance, subjectivities, practices and epistemologies that
produce privileged citizenship.

The widely used concepts of ‘integration’ is inappropriate for this purpose, because it is
an essentialist, normative, hierarchical and divisive concept. As mentioned, there is a long
Dutch research tradition of ‘measuring integration of ethnic minorities’, which has had a
deep impact on Dutch political and public discourses. In terms of this dominant epistemo-
logical, political and social order, Eurasian Dutch and Surinamese Dutch are tacitly and
sometimes explicitly represented as being ‘integrated’, ‘harmless’ groups. Conceding to
the idea of being an integrated citizen, however, is highly problematic. First, because inte-
gration discourses reproduce hierarchical and evolutionary colonial schemes. The image of
‘being integrated’ creates the idea that those qualified as ‘less integrated’ should make more
efforts to improve their position in society, that they – instead of the power structures and
frames that try to freeze them – are in the end to blame. In this way, ‘Surinamese Dutch’ and
‘Eurasian Dutch’ risk becoming a blunt instrument in the hands of majoritarian politicians
for disqualifying Others. Second, this myth divides conditional citizens, thus narrowing the
base for political action against exclusion. Third, the myth of Surinamese Dutch and Eura-
sian Dutch ‘integration success’ obscures the histories and experiences of exclusion that
members of these groups went through in the past and still experience in the present. Domi-
nant Dutch integration discourse silences epistemological and political agendas that aim at a
deeper understanding of, and combatting these scenes of exclusion.

Dutch colonialism and its present-day recursions demonstrate how politics of classifi-
cation, in a variety of contexts, undermine equal citizenship. From this perspective, the
‘crisis’ of our multicultural society is not a crisis of religious, cultural, socioeconomic mala-
daptiveness, but a crisis of the Dutch culture of classification. Hence, these classifications,
and their political and epistemological expressions, produce privileged and conditional
citizens and thus should be critically reflected upon. The discursive context of Dutch populism runs counter to such a reflection.

Notes

1. These sentences refer to the felt experiences of the author in this particular moment in time: I do not pretend them to be factual statements about ‘reality’ to be verified or falsified.
2. These are the main colonies; the Netherlands once controlled other territories in a variety of places.
3. The Netherlands held sovereign power over the local representative bodies.
4. On 22 March 2016, after years of criticism that pointed to the exclusionary nature of the autochthone allochthone binary, a narrow majority of the Dutch parliament has requested the Dutch government to abstain from using this terminology in future policy documents. Kamerstuk (Parliamentary Paper) 32824, nr. 125, 17 March 2016; Handelingen (Proceedings of Parliament) 2015–2016, nr. 67, item 21, 22 March 2016.
5. Kamerstuk 33325, nr. 12, 17 May 2016 (Parliamentary Papers).

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