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Maurice Crul; Jens Schneider

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Comparative integration context theory: participation and belonging in new diverse European cities

Maurice Crul and Jens Schneider

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Abstract

Drawing upon results from the TIES survey on the second generation in eight European countries the authors propose a new perspective on integration or assimilation. The proposed *comparative integration context theory* argues that participation in social organizations and belonging to local communities across European cities is strongly dependent on the integration context. Differences in integration contexts include institutional arrangements in education, the labour market, housing, religion and legislation. Differences in the social and political context are especially important for social and cultural participation and belonging. The TIES data show high degrees of local involvement in the second generation and the dwindling centrality of single ethnic belongings – a reflection of the dramatically changing ethnic and (sub)cultural landscapes in cities in Europe. The article challenges established notions of ‘newcomers’ and ‘natives’, explores the ‘remaking of the mainstream’ and argues for the investigation of mobility pathways for a better understanding of integration or assimilation as on-going processes.

Keywords: Theory; integration; diversity; second generation; TIES; immigration.

Introduction

Post-war migration flows to Europe have changed the ethnic landscape of large cities to a similar extent as in the United States. Those who in the US are referred to as post-1965 immigrants have a parallel in the labour migrants in Europe, who arrived from the end of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1970s. As a result, European migration scholars have followed the US debate closely, and the ideas put forward by the

authors of segmented assimilation and new assimilation theory have been particularly influential. The central idea of segmented assimilation theory is that there is more than one way to assimilate into American society (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001), while the authors of new assimilation theory convincingly show that the dominant stream remains 'straight-line assimilation' –perhaps not in all regards in the second, but at least in the third generation (Alba and Nee 2003, pp. 271–92). The New York study of the second generation confirms this, and even speaks of a 'second generation advantage' (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008). As early as 1997 there was much debate about the stagnation among some second-generation Mexicans, which is obvious and substantial, affecting one of the largest and fastest growing groups (Rumbaut 2005). From our perspective advancement and stagnation do not need to be mutually exclusive. Among the second generation in Europe the dominant trend is a remarkable upward mobility (Crul and Schneider 2009), but there are also portions of each group that lag behind. In some countries this group is quite sizeable, so both trends are visible and need to be addressed.

Both American theories also point to the importance of *context*. This refers as much to the reception context (see, for instance, the different treatment of illegal migrants compared to invited political refugees) and the societal context (e.g. the level of racism in the US towards certain ethnic groups), as to the different aspects of local context (e.g. neighbourhood and economy; cf. Waldinger 2001). Furthermore, we have learned, especially from the work of Zhou (2005) and Gibson (1989), of the importance of networks in (heterogeneous) communities like the Chinese and the Sikhs.

The most interesting difference from the US is that Europe consists of different countries. This gives us the opportunity to compare outcomes in the second generation across different national contexts. In this regard Europe can be considered a 'natural laboratory' for integration processes. This was the starting point for an international research project on the second generation in fifteen European cities, the TIES survey.¹ European comparative research can offer the American debate insights that are difficult to get at in one-country research settings. The first results of the TIES project show that differences in institutional arrangements have a huge effect. This alerts us to the importance of the specifics of the national integration context, which is a somewhat understudied topic in the US.

The second generation in large European cities

In this first part we want to look at the second generation in European cities. We will discuss how the second generation is claiming its place in the cities, taking up professional positions, and to what extent they are

‘remaking the mainstream’ in the European cities. We discuss all these issues from the perspective of the second generation as active agents of change in the cities. In the second part of the article we will discuss how different integration contexts help or obstruct the second generation in claiming a place in the cities.

The second generation: the established group in the city

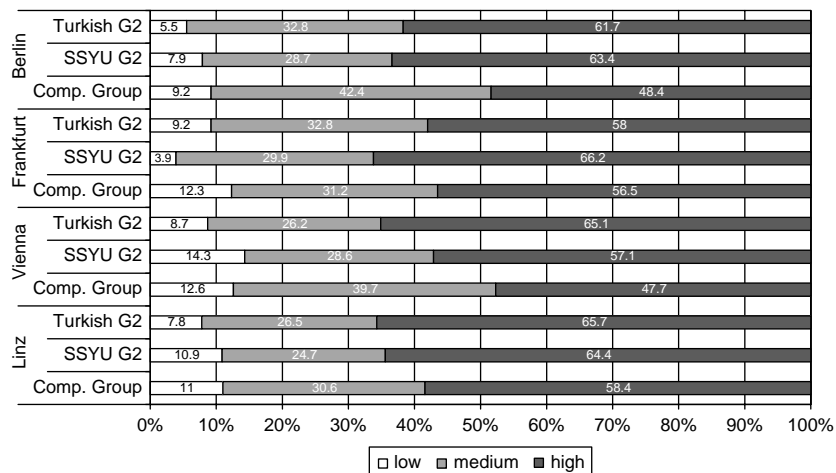
American assimilation theories are mostly based on research on the broad category of children of immigrants. In fact, in the United States this usually includes the native-born children of immigrants as well as those who arrive together with their parents (i.e. the so-called ‘in-between-’ or 1.5 generation).² The term ‘second generation’ in the strict demographic sense refers only to those born in the country of immigration, and we believe that it is important to distinguish clearly these two groups. Second and in-between generations differ radically in at least one central aspect: the second generation is born into the society of immigration and, unlike their parents and the children of the in-between generation, they do not have a migration experience. They do not need to adapt in a society new to them. In Europe, they are also overwhelmingly citizens of that country. As Schinkel (2007) argues, for the second generation there is no such place as ‘outside’ society.

This is an important point for the theoretical debate: if the second generation does not need to integrate or assimilate into society, the common opposition between ‘the society’ (or the ‘natives’, or the ‘autochthonous’, or the ‘residents’), on the one side, and immigrants as ‘newcomers’, on the other, does not apply to the second generation. We are not dealing with a clearly defined group of in- and outsiders (cf. Glick-Schiller and Wimmer 2002).³

Second-generation youngsters are members of the society from the day they are born. As such, we can look at the second generation as being part of (or participating in) a plurality of social organizations (Luhmann 1989) – for example, their families, neighbourhoods, schools, peer groups, work units or more or less organized free-time and leisure activities (sports clubs, etc.).

In fact, changing the perspective, we have to look differently at major cities. Young people from the second generation are frequently the ‘established group’ in these cities today. The TIES data show their biographical continuity – they were born, grew up and are still living in the same city. In contrast, in the TIES study we found that many respondents of native-born parents moved from other parts of the country to the major cities because of study or work. When we look at attachment and involvement at the neighbourhood level, as a result we find stronger involvement among the second generation than among age peers with native-born parents. Figure 1 illustrates this with regard

Figure 1. Degree of involvement with one's neighbourhood (4-item index)
Sources: TIES 2007, 2008



to the German and Austrian cities in the TIES survey.⁴ It compares the neighbourhood involvement of native-born children of immigrants from Turkey and former Yugoslavia, and a comparison group with native-born parents.⁵

This raises new questions about participation and belonging from a societal perspective: a newly arrived college student of native-born parents who moves into a cheap and ethnically diverse working-class neighbourhood in the city will still need some adaptation to this new environment – especially when coming from a small town or the countryside, places which are usually much less diverse in many ways.

This brings us to our second point: all young people, be they children of immigrants or of native-born parents, need to find their place in social organizations which are crucial for ‘survival’ in society (cf. Bommes 2005; Schinkel 2007, pp. 130ff.). In larger European and American cities this includes the need to cope with an environment that is increasingly multi-ethnic and ‘super-diverse’. And in some areas (like certain neighbourhoods or schools or working environments) this is sometimes more difficult for children of native-born parents than for the second generation.

The second generation: professional roles and other sub-cultural identities

Another important issue is the use of the ‘ethnic group’ as an analytical category. Although the critique of the concept of the ‘ethnos’ as a static homogeneous unit has left anthropology (Barth 1969; Cohen 1994) and is now widely spread within the social sciences, much migration

research implicitly assumes that actions and views of migrants and their children are all motivated by the migration experience and/or their 'ethnic heritage'.⁶ Again, looking particularly at the second generation, we think that this is debatable. To illustrate our point, here is the 'case study' of Naima:

Naima is a young unmarried woman of Moroccan descent who studies Spanish and French linguistics in Amsterdam. The young woman speaks Dutch with a slight accent typical for Amsterdam, where she was born and raised. On the other hand, Moroccan Arabic is her mother (and father) tongue; with both parents originally from the North of Morocco the language spoken at home was always Moroccan. Especially on the mobile phone with Moroccan friends and family she frequently switches to her mother tongue – also because it gives more privacy in public situations. She still lives with her parents in the same neighbourhood where she grew up – partly because it allows her to save money on rent, but also because she feels comfortable in the area. At the last Football World Championship 2006 her favourite team was Holland (Morocco was not qualified), but if Morocco had played her sympathies clearly would have been with the Moroccan team. Naima is 'well integrated' into a variety of different *social organizations* like, for example, her family, the neighbourhood, the university and a mentor project that aims to help out disadvantaged children in school. Other domains could most probably be added, for example her workplace: a secondary school where she is currently doing an internship. She wears a headscarf and is engaged to a first-generation Moroccan man who obtained his university diploma from Morocco.

Naima opposes to the idea that she is seen first and foremost as Moroccan simply for the reason that she is a child of immigrant parents. Many, if not most, of her attitudes and actions are not based on the fact of being a child of immigrants. In many aspects she resembles the 'typical' Dutch university student, and the most important driving forces behind most of her actions are her age (and being young at a specific moment in time), her gender and high degree of education. Among many other aspects she certainly is 'Moroccan' too, but this description becomes problematic if it is used *per se*.

Naima belongs to the growing group of highly educated within the Moroccan community in the Netherlands. The second generation, partly because of their entrance into professional careers, is embracing new professional roles and identities. For Naima her professional role as a teacher in secondary school is such a strong identifier.

From the perspective of *culture and identification*, the portrait of our case study offers a much more ambiguous picture: in both main languages she is a native speaker, and both are important and ever-present means of communication in her daily life. She strongly identifies as Moroccan, yet without apparent contradiction to feeling Dutch as well. Now, again the question is: what does that mean for her identification as a young woman living in the Netherlands? Dominant mainstream perceptions and public discourses in most Western countries implicitly or explicitly operate with normative settings here: it is clearly preferable to be well educated and not unemployed, to wear no headscarf, to have ‘native’ friends and not to marry someone from Morocco. But to conclude that her attitudes and actions are primarily motivated by her ethnic background is premature. Naima also strongly identifies as an emancipated woman who wears a headscarf as her own decision. Table 1 compares, for instance, more highly educated (tertiary education) women from the Moroccan second generation and from the comparison group in the Netherlands and their opinions on gender roles. It specifically asks who should be the main person responsible for taking care of the children.

Both groups have almost identical responses on this question. To look at more highly educated women is of course just one possibility. Other meaningful social and (sub)cultural categories, such as, for example, youth, political or bohemian cultures, can also be important for the second generation. While for the first generation their origin is an almost all-encompassing identity (both ascribed and prescribed), this is no longer true for most of the second generation. The idea of ‘super-diversity’ presented by Vertovec (2006) describes the growing diversification among city dwellers. We would add that super-diversity is also becoming visible *across* ethnic lines, sometimes challenging the existing ethnic hierarchies – like, for instance, second-generation Turkish doctors in hospitals in Amsterdam serving many elderly patients who come from lower- or middle-class non-migrant families.

Obviously, in migration research we choose survey respondents because they *demographically* belong to a certain ‘group’, in order to compare them to ‘groups’ with other demographic characteristics.

Table 1. *Who should take care of the children, if you have a family?*

	Mostly the mother	Mostly the father	Both equally	Mostly some family members together
Moroccan G2	9.8%	0%	85.2%	4.9%
Comparison group	9.3%	0%	86.6%	4.1%

Sources: TIES 2007, 2008

That is also one of the ways we looked at the data in the TIES survey. However, we have to be aware that this ‘group’ definition is merely an operational departure point for analysis, to *explain* differences with this *a priori* definition is, in the worst case, tautological (cf. Latour 1999, p. 71). Moreover, taking the ‘group’ hypothesis simultaneously as *explanans* and *explanandum* tends to obscure the fact that the degree of variation *within* a ‘group’, as much as other lines of differentiation, may be more relevant.

The second generation: ‘remaking the mainstream’

Cities are today subject to a gigantic turnover of the population; statistically in many of them almost the entire population is exchanged within less than one generation.⁷ While most of the European cities have been multi-ethnic for a long time – or even since their foundations as *modern* cities – it is a relatively new phenomenon that the formerly clearly defined ethnic majority group is becoming a minority group like the other ethnic groups. In many European cities the majority of the population under the age of 12 is already of immigrant origin. The authors of the New York study also point out that the group of non-Hispanic whites is still sizeable (although only when taking all European groups together), but it has in reality become just one of the many ethnic minority groups in the city. This challenges standard notions of ‘mainstream’ and ‘ethnic majority group’.

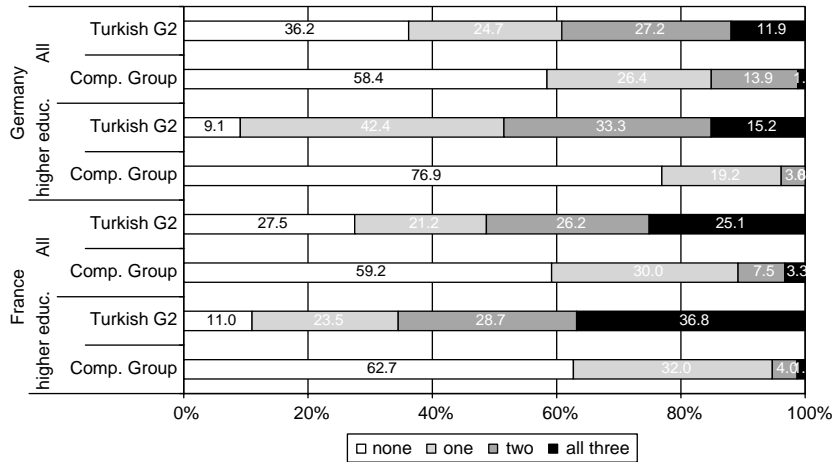
The fact that they are losing their numeric majority position in the younger cohorts of larger cities does not mean that the ‘majority group’ would necessarily also lose its status as the most dominant group in social and economic terms. But Alba (2009) shows that the demographic development of the cities does also challenge the ‘ethnic hierarchy’ in the long run. Alba suggests that in the future the ‘mainstream’, simply for demographic reasons, will incorporate non-white groups as well. From our point of view, we seem to need a new vocabulary to describe this new diverse urban reality.

We turn again to the TIES data to see how the new urban diversity affects the lives of both second-generation groups and the comparison group. We do this by looking at the three best friends of our respondents. Figure 2 compares second-generation Turks and members of the comparison group in Germany and France (juxtaposing the more highly educated group with the entire research population).

The individual reality of the second-generation Turks reflects their multi-ethnic environment in the cities. The TIES survey shows that they have friendships with children of native-born parents, but also from other ethnic minority groups. Looking at the university students here reveals an interesting finding: those of Turkish background have the most mixed friendship groups, while the students in

Figure 2. *The three best friends: how many are from a different ethnic background?*

Sources: TIEs 2007, 2008



the comparison group the least. Their level of interaction with people from other ethnic groups is remarkably low, especially for the age cohorts to which they belong and the neighbourhoods they live in.

The highly educated second generation, through their studies and their work, most often engage with people outside their own group – especially with middle-class friends of native parentage. Their friends, as the TIEs survey shows, are also mostly highly educated. They are often found in jobs in the city administration and in the educational or social work sector. These jobs give them, to some extent, the possibility of influencing city policies and politics (Crul, Pasztor and Lelie 2008). They therefore definitely play an (important) role in ‘remaking the mainstream’. However, the size of this group differs strongly across cities and countries. But the less-well-educated second generation also has, in the majority, one or more best friends outside their own ethnic group – through work, school or their neighbourhood.

There are three groups that mostly interact with their own ethnic group members. These are the more highly educated of native parentage and parts of the less well educated in both the second generation and the comparison group. For the highly educated this is the continuation of the status quo before and a reflection of (still) lower ethnic diversity in the higher streams of society. For the less well educated, both of native parentage and of the second generation, this is more problematic, because their more limited networks (also across ethnic lines) potentially harm their access to better education, work and housing.

'Reconsidering the mainstream' thus may radically shift the focus on which group is more or less 'assimilated' or 'integrated'. Children of native-born parents with no connections outside their own group may find themselves outside the multicultural 'mainstream'.

Comparative integration context theory: theoretical and methodological implications

We have first discussed the position of the second generation from the perspective of their being active agents of change in the cities. But we could already see in the tables that the second generation is not in the same way in all the cities in a position to claim their participation and belonging. Therefore we now want to look at the role of the integration *contexts* that either help or hinder taking up certain positions. We will argue in the following that the participation and belonging of the second generation in European cities is strongly dependent on the integration context.

Differences in integration contexts include institutional arrangements in education, the labour market, housing, religion and legislation. Differences in the social and political context are especially important for social and cultural participation and belonging. Part and parcel of the integration context is the diversity of today's European cities as we discussed it in the previous section. Young people of all ethnic groups (including the group that was formerly known as the ethnic majority group) need to integrate into the reality of a (super-)diverse city youth population with different biographies and with longer or shorter histories living in the city.

In the following we describe our *comparative integration context theory*, as we named it, in more detail and introduce our main concepts, *participation* and *belonging*, briefly.

The context of institutional arrangements

We want to address the importance of local and national contexts in which young persons, second generation or with native-born parents, have to find a position and place. This is not a new topic: the US theories deal extensively with context, for example, with different modes of incorporation (e.g. Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2009) or the neighbourhood context (e.g. Kasinitz *et al.* 2008, pp. 150–8). National school systems and access conditions to the labour market are also generally studied in their differentiating effects on children from different ethnic groups and social classes, but not as part of *the system's idiosyncrasy* – which generally comes to the fore only in comparison across national school or labour market systems.

Taking the institutional arrangements of a country for granted or as given can seriously affect the way we perceive problems of participation and belonging among the second generation. Comparing different ethnic groups in the same local or national contexts automatically sets the focus on the immigrant groups themselves: why do some underperform compared to the 'native' group, but others do not? The seemingly most logical explanation at hand then is culture and class. We are not saying that these explanations are unimportant – far from it – but they do not tell us the whole story.

Jeffrey Reitz, in his book *Warmth of Welcome* (1998), points out the effect of different institutional settings for immigrants in Canada, Australia and the US. We want to take Reitz' argument a step further into the European context, where institutional arrangements are much more diverse than in the three countries he compared. We will concentrate in this article mainly on one key institution: education. But national institutional arrangements in the labour market and housing play similar roles.

If we take, for example, second-generation Turks in Germany, we can explain their predominantly disadvantaged situation in education to a significant degree through their low socio-economic background. The remaining part is then usually attributed to cultural differences. But if we compare second-generation Turks *across* several European countries, we can see that they are doing much better in other countries: only 3 per cent enter higher education in Germany, as compared to almost 40 per cent in Sweden and France. These large differences in outcomes across countries also remain when the analysis controls for the education of the fathers – as in Table 2.⁸

The impressive differences displayed here can largely be explained by the different educational institutional arrangements in each country. Among these the most influential factors are starting age in

Table 2. *Second-generation Turks with a father with maximum primary education: highest diploma of those who left school and the present level of schooling of those still in school*

	Lower secondary at most	Upper secondary	College and university
Austria	35.9%	49.6%	14.5%
Belgium	24.0%	50.2%	24.8%
France	15.8%	44.6%	39.6%
Germany	34.7%	62.3%	3.0%
Netherlands	32.1%	42.3%	25.6%
Sweden	7.9%	55.0%	37.1%
Switzerland	19.8%	67.0%	13.2%

Sources: TIES 2007, 2008

school, age of first track selection, the upward permeability within secondary education and the existence of a long or indirect route to higher education through the vocational stream. In Germany compulsory school starts at age 6 – later than in most other European countries – and in most areas children are selected into the academic or vocational stream at the age of 10, after only four years of joint learning. In countries like the Netherlands this selection occurs after eight years, and, even when selected into the lower qualifying tracks, many still manage to reach higher education through the vocational stream (although at the cost of three years' extra education). In Germany the vocational route to higher education is not seen and used to the same extent as an alternative. These two aspects of the institutional arrangements in German education already determine to a large degree the low educational position of the second-generation Turks.

We should be aware that institutional contexts differ greatly from country to country in Europe (or even from city to city in one country), even though the normative debate is similar – as, for example, the debate in Germany and France about beginning to learn German/French as a second language at an early age. Yet, the general institutional arrangements for second language learning are very different – with obvious relevance for the outcomes in school. At the same time, this is also true the other way round: there is still a lot of difference between national integration policies, on the one side, and government rhetorics across countries, on the other, ranging from multiculturalism to right-wing populist and assimilative stances. However, at the city level, we frequently observe rhetoric-independent, pragmatic ways in which state agencies and societal institutions assess the specific necessities of dealing with immigrants and their children, and with the cultural diversity of their clientele (Vermeulen 1997; Heckmann, Lederer and Worbs 2001; Vermeulen and Stotijn 2009). For this reason we advocate the study of actual practice alongside public discourse and national integration policies.

To look at participation in key institutions in different European cities requires two different perspectives: from the societal perspective it means to look at the national and local 'institutional arrangements' facilitating or hampering participation and access, reproducing or reducing inequality. 'Failed integration' can thus be conceived as an indicator of obstacles to access and participation. An example of the latter could be the late start of compulsory schooling, which has a disproportionately negative effect on children of immigrants. Here we actually invert the common academic and policy perspective on 'integration'. The question is not why individuals fail to participate but why institutions fail to be inclusive. The first findings of the TIES project show that institutional arrangements in education in the

European situation are closely correlated with the level of education the second generation is able to reach.

The second perspective includes the agency of individuals and groups, actively developing options and making choices, challenging given opportunities and structural configurations. In the German half-day primary school system it is, for instance, expected that parents actively help and assist with homework. In the complex Dutch school system information about the school system is of crucial importance. In different contexts different subjective and objective *options* of individuals for gaining access and claiming participation depend on different individual and group resources (i.e. economic, social and cultural capital). With the comparative integration context theory we study both perspectives by looking at the actual practices of both institutions and individuals or groups.

The context of social and political discourse

Independent of their direct impact on policies and institutional practices, government rhetorics have an influence on the political and social climate, directly affecting immigrants' and their children's quest for a place and position in the host society. On the one hand, integration practices are shaped and pre-structured by specific institutional contexts (including legal aspects, such as citizenship regimes and policies, and institutional arrangements in, for instance, education and the labour market). On the other hand, integration practices are shaped by rules and 'habits' (in the sense of Bourdieu's habitus) in establishing and taking care of social relations and social interaction in a given societal setting (Bourdieu 1977, 1984).

We distinguish three basic types of discursive contexts: political discourse, the social discourse of everyday communication and interaction and media discourse. The political climate and implicit or explicit stereotypes and hierarchies of groups have a constant effect on feelings of belonging. In addition, institutional arrangements can have 'discursive qualities'. Citizenship regimes, for example, are frequently reflected in everyday discourse on the national belonging of groups and individuals (Schneider 2007). The term 'belonging' entails the possibility of simultaneousness, of different forms of belonging in different contexts and of possible changes over time. 'Belonging' has an individual and an institutional level: from an individual perspective the challenge is to find a widely unquestioned position and place. Belonging in the sense of 'functional identities' (cf. Devereux 1978, pp. 137ff.) means the ability to develop social relations along 'strong' and 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973) in many different social contexts. From an institutional perspective the second generation is likely to experience *boundaries* 'brightened or blurred'

(Alba 2005) by institutional arrangements, public and social discourses and inclusionary/exclusionary attitudes of groups or individuals. ‘Group factors’ can be part of the boundary-making process too, especially when there is a cultural and/or group dynamic preventing or promoting belonging and participation. Group factors are, however, never static or fixed: no group in any context is immune to external influences. The effects of these influences are generally best noted in the second generation (cf. Alba and Nee 2003, p. 215).

Table 3 shows the ‘warmth’ of feelings among comparison group members in three different cities in the TIES survey towards people of Moroccan descent on a scale from 0 to 100 degrees Celsius. The respondents were told that 50 degrees would be equivalent to neutral feelings. The comparison group was interviewed in the same neighbourhoods where the second generation was sampled, so the results should reflect their opinion of their fellow neighbourhood residents. The social and discursive climate towards Moroccans is apparently rather negative in Amsterdam (almost two-thirds express lower than neutral feelings) and quite positive in Madrid.

The discursive context represents a complex field, in which the feelings of belonging in the second generation are in constant tension with political, media and social representations of their position in society. The wider dominant discursive context in most European countries presents a serious challenge here, because it over-emphasizes the ethnic background as the main signifier in all societal contexts. Depending on the degree to which belonging to the local or national community is discursively called into question, we find ambiguity and ‘hybridity’ in the feelings of belonging of second-generation groups – again probably the most adequate answer to the heterogeneous realities of European cities.

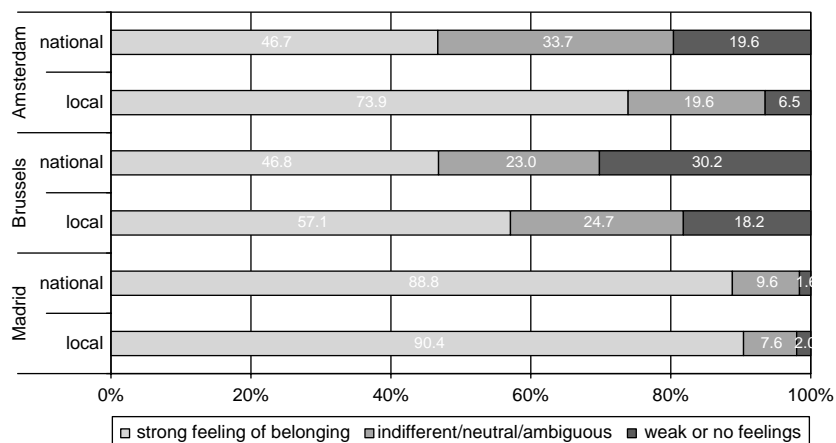
As a consequence, although ‘national identity’ is increasingly embraced and claimed by the second generation, this label especially is often problematic. Going back to the example, as Figure 3 shows,

Table 3. Comparison group: feelings towards people of Moroccan descent (in temperature from 0 to 100 degrees Celsius)

	Amsterdam	Brussels	Madrid
0–25 degrees	14.0%	8.6%	2.8%
26–50 degrees	50.4%	34.0%	24.7%
51–75 degrees	26.0%	29.9%	37.7%
76–100 degrees	9.6%	27.5%	34.8%
N	250	244	247

Sources: TIES 2007, 2008

Figure 3. Moroccan G2: local belonging vs. national belonging
Sources: TIES 2007, 2008



for the Moroccan second generation claiming to be Dutch seems far more problematic than being Spanish or Belgian.

Interestingly, citizenship seems not to play a major role here: the numbers for dual and host-country nationality do not significantly differ for second-generation Moroccans in the three cities. This is an indication that the discursive context is the most important determinant here. At the same time we see that local identity can be a sort of ‘substitute’ for national identity (especially for the second-generation Moroccans in Amsterdam). The differences between ‘national’ and ‘local’ belonging point to the importance of the ‘discursive legitimacy’ of specific ‘labels’. In all TIES survey cities, for the second generation local belonging is more easily self-ascribed than national belonging, while this is not the case with the comparison group.

In summary, with the *comparative integration context theory*, we argue that participation and belonging in new diverse European cities is strongly dependent on the integration context. Differences in integration contexts include institutional arrangements in education, the labour market, housing, religion and legislation. Differences in the social and political context are especially important for social and cultural participation and belonging.

Comparative integration context theory: methodology

The methodological starting point for us is to see how people *in practice* deal with the challenges of finding a place and position in this new diverse urban reality. Here, we borrow from Bourdieu’s notion of the ‘theory of practice’ and the importance of studying concrete practices in societal fields of individuals, groups and institutions in

different contexts and over time. So, instead of trying to fit the empirical complexities into pre-formulated models, we argue in favour of building our insights departing from the actual *practices and options* of individuals and groups.

In most research 'integration' is measured only by the present state or the final outcome in different domains. This could be the highest school diploma or the present job. This approach makes it difficult to link outcomes with institutional arrangements. Present state and final outcomes are the results of underlying processes over time. The analytical emphasis on process transforms the generally more sharp line between 'success' and 'failure' at the end point into a more fuzzy sequence of failures and successes. It uncovers in-between pathways, bifurcating at specific points during school or labour-market careers. To give an example: the educational results of second-generation Turks in the Netherlands as compared to other countries show a middle position (see Table 2 above). The 'classical' conclusion would say that the Dutch school system is not very selective. However, looking at the school *trajectory* reveals that the Dutch school system is, in fact, one of the most selective systems tracking pupils into vocational versus academic tracks as early as age 12. However, the Dutch school system offers some repair for the early selection through the vocational stream. Judging only on the end results actually obscures the severe selection processes in the transition from primary to secondary education. Only by bringing in the *process* is it possible to link the outcomes at different stages of the school career to the institutional arrangements, like early selection and the possibility of moving up from lower vocational education to middle vocational education to be able in the end to enter higher education. It is the crucial methodological link to operationalize our theoretical assumptions.

The controversy between new assimilation and segmented assimilation is partly about looking at different life stages (youngsters versus young adults). The attitude of parents resisting Americanization for their young children, which segmented assimilation theory has shown to be a possible path for upward mobility among Asian groups, may result in 'classical assimilation', once the youngsters reach adulthood and access the middle class. Looking at life courses up and into adult life rather than only a particular part of that trajectory may help to soften the rigidity of certain concepts (and their critique).

Final remarks on the transatlantic debate

The European debate has greatly and critically profited from the theoretical notions developed in the US. Our theoretical framework is actually built on the earlier descriptions of multi-ethnic city realities in the US, in which non-Hispanic whites have already become an ethnic

minority group (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008) and colour lines are increasingly 'blurred' (Alba 2009).

The comparative European study however also triggers questions about the US centredness of the American theoretical frameworks. Are differences in outcomes for the various ethnic groups in the US not partly a reflection of American institutional arrangements in school and labour markets? The New York second generation study, for instance, can be read as an example of how different ethnic groups are able to deal with the school system in place (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008). If a group lives in a poor neighbourhood with low-quality public schools (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco and Todorova 2008, pp. 88–145; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2009, p. 1081), their children will have little chance of entering (prestigious) colleges. Extreme differences in quality of schools are typical features of American institutional arrangements in education (Crul and Holdaway 2009). Although some lower-class ethnic minority groups may find better ways to overcome the inequality of opportunities in American schools than others, the results in the US, above all, reflect the American way of integrating children into educational institutions. These observations should caution us about transferring American assimilation theory to other national contexts. Even if in other countries we find similar segmented outcomes, the mechanisms and institutional settings behind them will most probably be very different from those described by segmented assimilation theory.

We found out through the TIES project that across Europe the different contextual frameworks have (very) different consequences. In some national contexts there is a rapidly growing upcoming elite of immigrant descent in the cities, while in other contexts the second generation is mainly settling among skilled workers (Crul and Schneider 2009). This will obviously have important consequences for how the ethnic communities will develop and how integration or assimilation processes will develop in the future.

The challenge for European researchers is to explain comparatively different integration outcomes across Europe. In this article we have tried to formulate some first building blocks for a theoretical framework for this: a comparative integration context theory.

A similar argument can be made for the influence of the national discourses on ideals of assimilation or integration. They play an important role in who is considered integrated or assimilated in both the public and the academic debate. The implicitly formulated 'ideals of integration or assimilation' differ greatly across countries. We should be aware that in the US debate the notion of 'assimilation', i.e. becoming similar to the 'mainstream population', is built upon the necessity for a country formed by immigrant groups of many different origins to create common denominators and identifiers. In the

Scandinavian countries, by contrast, it is especially the tradition of the strong welfare state and the ideal of overcoming inequalities that formulates the main end goals of integration. In France, the republican model, with its radical egalitarian view of citizenship, poses yet again another normative integration goal. A good example of how this works in practice is religion: strong particularistic ethnic and religious institutions are mostly considered an important stepping-stone for assimilation in the US. The most contrasting case in Europe is certainly France, where religion is mostly looked upon with great scepticism (Foner and Alba 2009). This obviously also has implications for the ways in which immigrant and second-generation religiosity is judged in the two settings.

Especially in the field of identities and social relationships, normative ideas of preferred integration outcomes seem to slip most easily into academic integration models. Implicit normative connotations of terms and concepts frequently prevent us posing the right scientific questions and developing analytical models that address integration dynamics in order to *understand* and not to judge them – or, in other words, the ‘concern with policy problems (should not) impair the search for intellectual problems’ (Banton 2008, p. 7). Cross-country and transatlantic comparisons may greatly help to raise awareness for the specific limits of every national debate between prescriptive and descriptive, normative and analytical.

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Notes

1. TIES [The Integration of the European Second Generation] investigates the second generation of Turkish, Moroccan and former Yugoslavia descent in fifteen cities in eight European countries (www.TIESproject.eu for more details). It has a special focus on the educational, professional and housing careers of the respondents, and it allows both for reconstruction of individual life trajectories and for relating these to background and contextual factors (see Crul and Heering 2008).
2. See, for instance, the CILS, (<http://cmd.princeton.edu/data%20CILS.shtml>) and ISGMNY, (<http://www.urbanresearch.org/projects/second-generation-immigrants>) studies.

3. Another problem with the rather static notion of in- and outsiders is that it presupposes that 'the people', 'the nation' and 'the state' would all fall within the same boundaries. It neglects, as theorists of transnationalism have pointed out, the relationships and constant movements of individuals across nation-state borders (Levitt and Waters 2002).

4. The TIES survey was carried out by survey bureaus under supervision of the eight TIES partner research institutes: the Institute for Social and Political Opinion Research [ISPO], University of Leuven, in Belgium; the National Institute for Demographic Studies [INED] in France; the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies [SFM], University of Neuchâtel, in Switzerland; the Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations [CEIFO], University of Stockholm, in Sweden; the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies [IMIS], University of Osnabruck, in Germany; the Institute for European Integration Research [EIF], Austrian Academy of Sciences, in Austria; The National Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute [NIDI] in The Hague; the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies [IMES] in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

5. This index combines four items in the TIES questionnaire addressing attachment to the neighbourhood, feeling comfortable in it, feeling a responsibility for its life quality and having good contacts with the neighbours. In the other cities only two of these items were asked, but the results are in line with this picture.

6. Practically all the comparative research on various immigrant groups in one national or local context takes the 'group hypothesis' more or less for granted. On the one hand, this is difficult to avoid, because especially quantitative work has to create analytical units in order to make comparisons. On the other hand, we should be aware that these units, in any case, are analytical artefacts, whose relation to reality has to be well considered.

7. It suffices to look at the annually registered moves to and away from a city at hand – accessible through the population registers in many municipalities. Obviously the phenomenon has a similar magnitude in the US and is constantly changing their 'ethnic landscape' in a similar way.

8. Fathers with a primary school diploma at most make up about half of the total Turkish sample. The TIES study compares two cities per country; it is thus no national survey. Yet, with regard to education the outcomes did not significantly differ across the two cities in each country (except for France).

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MAURICE CRUL is Senior Researcher at the University of Amsterdam.

ADDRESS: Oudezijds Achterburgwal 237, 1012 DL Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Email: M.R.J.Crul@uva.nl

JENS SCHNEIDER is Senior Researcher at the University of Amsterdam.

ADDRESS: Dohrnweg 5, 22767 Hamburg, Germany.
Email: sfager@gmx.de