Performing as a professional: How civil servants shape Dutch integration policy

Theory

- Anthropology of policy
- Insider's understanding of policy making by zooming in on the people working in bureaucracy
- Symbolic anthropology
- Performance, categorisation, materiality
- Bourdieu (field, change)

Problem

Dutch integration policies have become politicised, but we do not know how this affects the policy making process; for that matter, we do not know what happens in the black box of policy making in general

- Goals: in-depth reconstruction of how Dutch immigrant integration policies have been shaped; inside understanding of bureaucratic processes of policy making
- Question: how do civil servants shape Dutch integration policies?

Relevance

- Dutch integration policies have pervasive effects: they exclude people, define a national identity, evoke emotional debates and seemingly neutral terms categorise people
- However, it is unclear how policies are shaped and, thus, how these effects are made possible

Input

- Political discourse and ideas (politicisation)
- 'Zeitgeist'
- Science
- Personal affinities

BLACK BOX OF POLICY MAKING

Output

- •Rules, regulations, laws
- Discourse
- Actions
- Categorisation

Methods

- Directorate for Integration and Society
- In-depth interviews with experts: civil servants, scientists, NGO, business
- Archival research: internal directorate dossiers
- Analysis of public documents
- Observations: parliamentary meetings, conferences, symposia

Results

- Civil servants are crucial actors in the policy making process, they act as spiders in the web
- Their actions are both determined by and in turn shape the bureaucratic context they work in
- There are several tensions they have to negotiate, e.g. when their personal affinities conflict with government plans on integration
- There have been important changes in the type of civil servant, which have influenced the shaping of Dutch integration policies

Analysis

- Civil servants translate normative ideas into technical policy terms, they neutralise a tensed discourse;
- They enact bureaucracy: role performance, symbols, categorisation, materiality;
- Bureaucratic processes induce both individual and collective agency