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The Changing Relationships between Research, Society, and Policy in the Netherlands

Reflections on the WRR ‘Máxima Report’

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Introduction

‘Unscientific’, ‘political’, ‘naive’, ‘leftist’, ‘cosmopolitan’, ‘out of touch with the people’, but also ‘courageous’—these were among the many different, but overwhelmingly critical, reactions towards the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid*—WRR) on the publication of its 2007 report *Identificatie met Nederland* (*Identification with the Netherlands*). In the report, the WRR, one of the Dutch government’s leading scientific think tanks, advised against an immigrant integration policy that promotes ‘the [Dutch] national identity’ in favour of a strategy focusing on processes of identification in education, in the labour market, and in the community. The message incensed many, among them politicians, scientists, and royalists.

The heated reception of *Identification with the Netherlands* (WRR 2007)—rechristened the Máxima report after a speech by the then Crown Princess became a lightning rod for criticism—marked a turning point in the provision of scientific advice on migration and integration issues in the Netherlands. The WRR had been a key advisory body in this field since the late 1970s and, although some of its reports had sustained criticism, many went on to influence the course of subsequent policy. In the wake of the Máxima report, the status of the WRR’s advice was no longer so self-evident.

This chapter considers the case of the Máxima report—not its content but its heated reception—which shows that scientifically informed policy advice must increasingly address two interrelated developments that are visible in many societal domains but are particularly pronounced in the field of migration and integration: the growing significance of public opinion and the changing relationship between science, policy, and politics. We also consider how scientists can better advise policy-makers in this new reality. But, before turning to the lessons contained in the reception of *Identification with the Netherlands*, we describe the role of the Scientific Council for Government Policy in Dutch policy-making.

The WRR and the Policy Advisory System in the Netherlands

The WRR is an independent scientific think tank subsidized by the national government. Its role is to advise—and, where necessary, criticize—the government. Established in 1975 alongside other policy assessment agencies including the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (for economic issues) and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (for social and cultural issues), the WRR operates within its own statutory framework and reports directly to the Ministry of General Affairs, the ministry headed by the prime minister.

The WRR's statutory responsibility is to 'furnish scientifically sound information on trends and developments that may influence society in the longer term. It is the Council's duty to draw timely attention to anomalies and anticipated bottlenecks and to focus on identifying problems associated with major policy issues, and to propose policy alternatives.' The WRR is independent and—unlike many think tanks in other countries—has no political affiliation. While it offers both solicited and unsolicited advice, the emphasis is on the latter. The WRR draws up its own work programme and decides which issues appear on its agenda. The act establishing the WRR also states that the government must comment on its reports. These comments are usually discussed in the House of Representatives. While the government is not required to comment on the WRR's other publications, foresight studies and policy briefs, it has in recent years done so on a growing number of occasions, in part because the media tend to report on most WRR publications.

The WRR produces its advice by combining its scientific expertise with its knowledge of policy-making. It gathers scientific evidence by asking university-based researchers to contribute to its studies by having its staff conduct academic literature and policy studies, and, in some cases, by performing statistical analyses of data provided by Statistics Netherlands, the

national statistics office. Advising policy-makers based on scientific evidence is a specialized endeavour that involves building bridges between science and policy. In recent decades, the WRR has come to see its role as that of what Pielke (2003) calls the 'honest broker': a body that integrates scientific knowledge in order to arrive at policy alternatives (Den Hoed and Keizer 2007).

The WRR in the Field of Immigration

In his dissertation 'Constructing Immigrant Policies', Peter Scholten (2008) describes how the WRR, from its founding until the turn of the millennium, functioned at the intersections of science and policy. In his view, it had a 'solid reputation' (Scholten 2008: 203) in the domain of immigration and integration. In 1979, a WRR report laid the foundations for the government's subsequent minorities policy, focusing on disadvantaged minorities and emphasizing socio-economic integration *and* cultural emancipation; for example, by teaching minority languages and culture. In 1989, another WRR report, *Allochtonenbeleid (Immigrant Policy)*, informed the transition to a new minorities policy that focused on socio-economic integration, rather than ethno-cultural origins. It introduced the term *allochtoon* (while difficult to translate precisely, this infers an 'alien' or 'foreigner') as a uniquely Dutch policy concept, referring to 'all those who have migrated to the Netherlands plus their descendants up to the third generation, insofar as the latter wish to regard themselves as non-indigenous'.

Since the turn of the millennium, the WRR's impact on policy-making in the domain of immigration and integration has dwindled. When its third report, *Nederland als immigratiesamenleving (The Netherlands as an Immigration Society)*, appeared in 2001, it was overshadowed by the events and aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September (WRR 2001). For the first time, a WRR report on integration had little influence on the direction of policy. The scientific council had seemingly gone too far by calling the Netherlands an 'immigration society'. The same period saw a motion introduced in parliament asserting that Dutch integration policy had failed. The WRR's report was criticized but otherwise largely ignored by the press and politicians.

This encouraged the WRR to embark on another project that eventually led to *Identification with the Netherlands*. The report addressed the theme of 'national identity', which was then omnipresent within public debate. To some extent, the Netherlands' concern with national identity can be traced to Paul Scheffer's essay 'Het Multiculturele Drama' (The Multicultural Drama),

published in one of the country's leading newspapers in 2000. In it, Scheffer argued that a whole generation of *allochtonen* was lagging behind in the education system, as well as on the labour market. Immigrants had also brought with them values incompatible with the liberal foundations of Dutch society. 'Indifferent multiculturalism'—one that preserved minority identities rather than emphasizing integration into Dutch society—had given rise to a new social question. He concluded that if 'the Dutch' were better able to define and communicate the boundaries of their national identity—especially for their own language, history, and culture—immigrants would know better what they were integrating into.

Although scholars disagree on the extent to which the Netherlands ever truly embraced multiculturalism (Duyvendak et al. 2016), most agree that 'national identity' has become central within public debate, as well as in policy-making. For example, Dutch lawmakers in 2004 enacted legislation severely restricting dual citizenship, with prohibitions unique to the Netherlands and a few other countries. National identity was to be espoused in education through the introduction of a canon for Dutch history and through an envisioned 'museum of national identity'. Sociologists have labelled this shift from previous policy the 'culturalization of citizenship' (Duyvendak et al. 2016)—that is, citizenship becoming less a formal matter of legal rights and obligations, and more a subjective state of mind, of belonging. More concretely, it means that newcomers must prove their cultural integration into Dutch society. For instance, they must pass a mandatory language and culture test within five years lest they be fined and disqualified for permanent settlement. The test includes questions on what to do when one's neighbour has given birth to a child.

Identification with the Netherlands was critical of such rigid, ancestry-based interpretations of national identity which allow scant space for multiple identities. Emphasizing the fluidity of national identity, the report advised the government to look to the future, rather than to the past, and to adopt a more dynamic, pluralistic approach to belonging. Rather than offering a blueprint for Dutch national identity, it espoused the idea that there can be multiple routes towards identification with the Netherlands. In particular, the report distinguished between three processes of identification: emotional (feelings of belonging), normative (shared norms), and functional (when people meet not as a member of an ethnic group but rather as an individual with numerous functional relationships at work, in the community, and so on). The authors of the report further argued that functional identification could lead to emotional and normative bonding, and eventually to a new 'we'.¹

Two Responses to the Maxima Report

In September 2007, the WRR presented *Identification with the Netherlands* to the then Minister of the Interior and Justice, Ernst Hirsch Ballin (a Christian Democrat), and Crown Princess (now Queen) Maxima, herself an *allochtoon*—she had come from Argentina to marry Crown Prince Willem Alexander. In her speech at the report’s unveiling, the popular Crown Princess said that she had been searching for the Dutch identity for quite some time and had so far failed to find it. ‘The typical Dutch person doesn’t exist’, were her words. She also made other comments: that the typical Argentinean also didn’t exist; that Dutch identity could not be summed up in cliches; and that it was not a good idea, even for newcomers, to think in terms of stereotypes. But these other comments were largely ignored by the media. In her speech, which had been vetted by the responsible ministers and read by the WRR, Crown Princess Maxima focused mainly on the importance of diversity and less on the report’s other message: the importance of functional identification (shared experiences such as attending school, going to work, and being active in the community) in promoting normative identification (shared values) and emotional identification (a sense of belonging). She said: ‘So I find it very interesting that the title of the WRR’s report is not “the Dutch identity” but “Identification with the Netherlands”. That allows space for evolution. And for diversity’ (Koninklijk Huis 2007).

Upon its release, the report received considerable media coverage: interviews with its main authors in the leading national (quality) newspapers and a slot on the televised evening news. While, at first, the reporting was mostly neutral, this changed quickly when *De Telegraaf*—the country’s largest circulation daily newspaper billing itself as the newspaper of ‘Wide-awake Netherlands’—ran an interview with Michiel Zonneville, the chairman of the *Oranjevereniging* (Association of Royalists). Zonneville was outraged by Crown Princess Maxima’s statement that ‘the typical Dutch person doesn’t exist’ as it denied there was such a thing as a Dutch identity. ‘The princess is a classic example of a young, upper-class cosmopolitan who works and lives all over the world. Her description of our culture is simply not representative of the ordinary man’ (*Telegraaf* 2007). It later became clear just how many people shared Zonneville’s views, with many venting their feelings in the newspapers, on TV, and at public meetings. How dare these academics suggest that we ‘Dutch’ don’t have an identity? Paul Scheffer, author of ‘The Multicultural Drama’, stated in a television interview that the Crown Princess’s comments were irresponsible and implicitly rejected all those voters who valued their Dutch identity and who had voted for right-wing nationalists such as Geert Wilders and Rita Verdonk or for the Dutch Socialist Party.

The WRR was accused of being 'alienated from the world' and 'out of touch with society'—particularly with the 'majority' of society. Some people nevertheless praised the WRR for its courage. Minister of Justice Ernst Hirsch Ballin, when he accepted the report, called the WRR brave for going against the general consensus. Many later journal articles and academic treatises referred to the report as 'brave' and 'courageous'. While immigrant groups also generally welcomed *Identification with the Netherlands*, this only encouraged the perception that the WRR was out of touch with the majority of society.

Politicians also reacted to the report. The right-wing anti-Islam member of Parliament Geert Wilders denounced it as 'politically correct tittle-tattle'; the WRR was 'a club of naive people. Get rid of it.' 'The WRR has completely missed the mark,' said member of Parliament Halbe Zijlstra of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). 'They want to keep harping on that multicultural drivel. They're about fifteen years behind the times. In this way the WRR is gradually calling its own *raison d'être* into question' (*Volkskrant* 2007).

Zijlstra's statement represents a second prominent way in which the report was framed: as the product of politics, not of science. More specifically, it was the product of a particular kind of politics—that of 'politically correct multiculturalists'. The WRR was assigned to the camp of 'multiculti' leftists, migration advocates, problem-deniers, migrant-huggers, and bleeding-heart liberals, while the opposite camp was populated by realists, those who loved the Netherlands, who called a spade a spade and valued a firm hand. Although the authors of *Identification with the Netherlands* had addressed precisely this division and maintained that they were following a 'third way', the WRR was conflated with one side in the debate.

Some politicians were more positive about the report. The Minister of Integration and Housing, Ella Vogelaar of the Labour Party, pointed to its scientific merits; she considered *Identification with the Netherlands* 'well-researched and valuable'. Alexander Pechtold of the progressive-liberal Democrats' 66 also defended the WRR, stating that 'I was already very happy with the previous report and the tone of this one is even more to my liking. I'm a big fan of these researchers' (*Volkskrant* 2007). But, by emphasizing his appreciation of the report's tone, he also turned it into a political missive.

A few days later, the report drew sharp criticism from several well-established professors—the most effective fault-finders for a scientific council such as the WRR—commenting in the major newspapers. In his article in the national broadsheet *NRC*, sociologist Ruud Koopmans (2007) criticized the report's 'unscientific nature'; choices had been made that were not dictated by scientific motives, the report lacked empirical underpinnings and did not advance any scientific facts. Koopmans felt that it painted an all-too-frivolous picture of dual identities and asserted that there was not enough evidence that

being critical of immigrants affected their behaviour. 'By allowing itself to stray from its scientific bedrock, the WRR is jeopardizing its own legitimacy and may also be eroding its credibility precisely in subject areas about which it undeniably has sensible things to say—for example, when it argues against segregation in education and in favour of banning the term *allochtoon*.' Historian Frank Ankersmit (2007) fanned the flames further. In his article 'This is politics, not science', he criticized the report for being murky in its definitions and for lacking long-term statistical analyses, insinuating that it was a pet project: 'It will not do to crown the private political opinions of a few ladies and gentlemen in the WRR with the halo of scientific dispassion. The WRR should either be scientifically respectable or throw in the towel altogether.'

Identification with the Netherlands ultimately had little direct impact on policy. Although the government came out in support of the report's main conclusions in its (compulsory) comments—that national identity should not be the overriding concept in integration policy and that dual citizenship is unrelated to loyalty—it ignored all of the report's policy recommendations. Until the present day, and in contrast to most countries of the world, dual citizenship remains problematic under Dutch law. Many politicians continue to portray Dutch citizenship as an achievement, something that is granted to an individual on the basis of successful integration (Groenendijk 2011); as Dutch nationality is a precious gift, people with other nationalities must first renounce them. Neither has much changed in the realms of education and labour market segregation. The hardening of political discourse, which the report also addressed, has only continued.

While the museum celebrating Dutch national identity never materialized, this was largely due to financial reasons and mismanagement. Funding for all sorts of ethnicity-based public participation bodies was cancelled without new forms of public participation to replace them, as the report recommended. In 2016, the WRR—this time acting in concert with the Netherlands Institute for Social Research and Statistics Netherlands, and at the explicit request of the Minister of Social Affairs (Lodewijk Asscher of the Labour Party)—suggested an alternative for the politically charged and inappropriate term *allochtoon*. The *Máxima* report may have, almost a decade earlier, planted the seeds for this long overdue change in terminology.

When asked on television about the critical reception of *Identification with the Netherlands*, WRR chairman Wim van de Donk replied: 'Don't worry, our head will grow back' (*Buitenhof* 2007). The WRR has often encountered push-back before; for example, against its 1989 report *Allochtonenbeleid*. It can be years before ideas and insights take hold and usher in change. Impact is never immediate, let alone quantifiable. Nevertheless, the critical response to the *Máxima* report, I argue, points to broader challenges in the provision of scientifically informed policy advice: the growing importance of public

opinion and the changing relationship between science and policy. What do these developments mean in practice?

The Growing Weight of Public Opinion

The charge that the WRR was 'alienated from the majority of citizens' illustrates the growing importance of public opinion within political debate. While some lauded the WRR as 'courageous' for largely ignoring public opinion, others said it was 'naive' for disregarding the feelings of 'the Dutch people'. Both viewpoints share the premise that the study was not in line with (majority) feelings in society. Although the report did discuss tensions within communities, crime, uneasiness about Europeanization and globalization, and the importance of a sense of belonging for native Dutch people also, the report—and especially Crown Princess Máxima's speech—did not emphasize these dimensions.² To what extent was the message, indeed, not in line with 'the public'?

It is too reductionist to argue that Dutch public opinion has turned against immigrants and immigration, and that the WRR is therefore out of touch with society. There was, and still is, no overwhelming Dutch majority against immigration; neither is there any clear upward trend in negative feelings. When the report was published in 2007, a minority—40 per cent—said that the Netherlands would be a better place with fewer foreigners. This was *less* than in 2000, when more than 50 per cent said the same thing (SCP 2012). In fact, negative feelings towards immigration decreased from 2001 until the more recent arrival of refugees in the Netherlands (SCP 2016).

That said, the issue of national identity goes much deeper than opinions about immigration. Although *Identification with the Netherlands* acknowledged the importance of a sense of belonging—including for Dutch 'natives'—the WRR at the time may have underestimated the importance of feelings of national identity for many people, who interpreted the phrase 'The typical Dutch person doesn't exist' as a denial of national identity. Survey research in the ensuing years indeed revealed that the majority of the Dutch population (52 per cent) said that the Netherlands' open borders were 'placing Dutch national identity at risk' (SCP 2012). National surveys in the ensuing years confirmed national identity to be among citizens' major worries (SCP 2015).

This suggests that scientifically informed policy advice must be more aware of deeper public worries and emotions, without of course being captured by public opinion. It is also important to relate to various 'publics' (plural). The populist politician Geert Wilders often states that he represents the average Dutchman—'Henk and Ingrid' who are fed up with immigration. Although 'Henk and Ingrid' do exist, so do many other citizens who are less vocal in

their opinions. The opinions and feelings of the Dutch population do not fall into two oppositional ‘black and white’ camps. This can be seen in more recent surveys of public opinion (SCP 2016) concerning the arrival of refugees, where a small minority was explicitly and unconditionally in favour of welcoming refugees, a small minority was explicitly against this, and the majority held much more nuanced views (SCP 2016). All this suggests that criticisms of ‘not being in touch with society’ build on the mistaken premise that there is such a thing as a singular ‘public opinion’.

Nevertheless, to be effective, scientifically informed policy advice must be aware of attitudes and feelings across the host society. When *Identification in the Netherlands* was written in the mid-2000s, there was only fragmented scientific data about native Dutch citizens’ feelings towards immigrants and immigration—an important gap in our knowledge. More recently, there has been much more scientific attention to analysing and explaining citizen discontent (e.g. for the USA, Hochschild 2016; for the UK, Goodhart 2017; for the Netherlands, Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Van der Waal and Houtman 2011; Van der Waal et al. 2017; see also: Larsen 2013)—a trend that will most likely intensify in the wake of Brexit and President Trump’s election. In addition, we also need to know more about the feelings of first- and second-generation immigrants, who should also be considered as part of the host society.

The criticism that the WRR is ‘out of touch with society’ does not acknowledge the diversity and the roots of opinions, feelings, and interests in the country. ‘Society’ or ‘the public’ consists of groups with different, often ambiguous feelings towards issues surrounding immigration and national identity. Acknowledging this is crucial since ‘publics’ are increasingly important audiences of scientifically informed policy advice, especially as immigration policy becomes politicized—the subject of the next section.

Changing Relationships between Policy, Politics, and Science

A prominent response to *Identification in the Netherlands* was that ‘science has gone political’—a slogan that captures the changing relationships between policy, politics, and science. Peter Scholten (2008)—who, in his dissertation, examined the evolution of the relationship between policy and science in the Netherlands—argues that a ‘technocratic symbiosis’ held sway in the 1970s, with academic researchers deeply involved in and influential in policy-making, especially through their relationships with bureaucrats. The 1979 WRR report, in which the WRR worked closely with the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies at the University of Amsterdam, directly informed the government’s subsequent minorities policy. In the 1980s, a new ‘enlightenment model’ emerged in which researchers often advocated

'paradigm shifts' to existing policy; here, a report was deemed successful if the government initially distanced itself from it. The year 2000 saw the dawn of a new phase of political primacy; under what Scholten terms the 'engineering model', the role of research was now to support politics. Put more negatively, politicians can shop around for truths that suit their views (Den Hoed and Keizer 2007). One could argue that the WRR was naive in its belief that, with the Máxima report, one could still press for a paradigm shift as in the 1990s—hence its conclusion: from national identity to pathways of identification. The WRR may have been insufficiently aware that times had changed; presenting an alternative view was now more easily considered as being political—that is, not being neutral.

This was certainly the case in the highly politicized domain of immigration and integration. Since the rise of Pim Fortuyn in the first years of this century, anti-Islam and anti-immigration politicians have dominated political discourse. Although they never broke through at the ballot box—Pim Fortuyn's LPF party won 17 per cent of the vote in 2002 and Geert Wilder's PVV 13 per cent in 2017—other political parties, in particular the VVD (the right-wing liberal party, now the biggest political party in the Netherlands) have adopted some of their viewpoints and themes, as well as tone.³ Prins (2002) argues that Dutch opinion leaders since the 1990s have embraced a new political genre—'new realism'—that emphasizes 'facing the truth', being the 'voice of the (ordinary, native-born, ethnically Dutch) people', and the desire to bring down 'leftist' progressives, the politically correct 'libtards'. Under this 'new realism', scientists are often said to 'cover up' the facts and are quickly deemed to be 'political'.

This is the primacy of politics that scientists and evidence-informed policy advice must deal with in the twenty-first century. Academic advisers have little direct influence on politics and policy-making, except through the media or through citizens. Communicating directly through the media has become necessary, as Dutch politicians tend to set their agendas and ask parliamentary questions on the basis of media coverage (Vliegthart 2007). This, however, is no easy task as the logic of science often collides with a media logic in which images are more important than words and issues are often portrayed in black and white—migration is either 'good' or 'bad' (see Chapter 4 in this volume). We also need to communicate directly to citizens—for instance, through public meetings and social media—not only because this may generate media attention, but also because citizens are voters and crucial stakeholders in the public debate on immigration and integration.

At the same time, science no longer has the authority it once enjoyed (Scholten 2008), although in the Dutch context it is an exaggeration to speak of 'science in crisis' or 'the death of expertise'—as, for instance, Nichols (2017) does. Public opinion research shows that people trust science

more than government, parliament, newspapers, trade unions, and courts (Tiemeijer and De Jonge 2013). Then again, many people place high trust in democracy but are distrustful of politicians, an analogy that may apply here as well: people trust science but not necessarily all scientists. Science is not self-evidently credible. As Jasanoff (2012: 14) puts it: 'At the turn of the twenty-first century, many things that seemed self-evident about science even fifty years back no longer seem so. In particular, the image of an impersonal science, standing apart from human interest and values, and sternly committed to the delivery of truths, has given way to an awareness that science is frequently commissioned to serve political ends, is constrained by the limits of human imagination and capability, and, through its very ambition, extends the horizons of uncertainty while producing new knowledge.'

Moreover, science pursued at universities can be out of touch with social and policy issues. Science is growing more specialized and more focused on publications in academic journals. 'Impact' often means impact on other scientists as measured by the h-index (an author-level metric based on a researcher's most cited papers and citations in other academic publications) and not impact on policy. There is little funding for provocative research which may or may not produce useful findings (Dijstelbloem et al. 2013). This 'narrowing of science' has made it all the more necessary for the WRR to act as an honest broker, a role that has become harder to perform at a time when politicians can shop around for truths and the media logic often differs from that of research.

In the Wake of the Maxima Report: Lessons for Scientific Policy Advice

What can scientifically informed policy advice learn from the response to the WRR report *Identification with the Netherlands*? Given the changing (power) balance between science, policy, and politics, scientific policy advisers must learn to cultivate greater modesty; Jasanoff (2012) speaks about a shift from 'technologies of hubris' to 'technologies of humility'. Indeed, the 1990s buzzword 'paradigm shift' is scarcely heard in the WRR's offices today. Those who, like the WRR, are charged with 'producing long-range views and policy alternatives' would do better to acknowledge that scientific research is *always* subject to bias in its choices and that uncertainty is intrinsic to science. Scientifically informed policy advice needs to go beyond the simple model of 'speaking truth to power'.

The provision of scientific policy advice today also requires greater collaboration and stakeholder involvement. If science has less authority than it once had and politicians can 'shop around for convenient truths', researchers

and academics cannot always operate on their own to advise government; knowledge coalitions matter. For example, the WRR in recent years has collaborated more often with other Dutch research and public knowledge organizations working in the domain of migration and integration, including the Netherlands Institute for Social Research and Statistics Netherlands (e.g. Engbersen et al. 2015) as well as with international scientists (e.g. Holtslag et al. 2012). Although it is crucial to stress that academic research rarely produces consensus, it is possible to come up with composite views on specific themes. Some truths are more plausible than others. Moreover, different stakeholders are now more likely to be drawn into the process of producing WRR reports and foresight studies, consisting both of a variety of academics (including critics of the WRR), policy-makers, and civil society organizations such as employers' associations and trade unions. This consultation and participation process hardly existed in the early 2000s when *Identification with the Netherlands* was written. At the WRR today, there is a greater emphasis on the role of the 'honest broker'.

Academic think tanks such as the WRR depend on extant research and scientific knowledge. This is a strength, but also a vulnerability. To do justice to their role as honest brokers, science must be diverse and funding must be made available for research that roams beyond the beaten paths and whose conclusions are not known in advance. Although scientific conclusions seldom lead directly to policy alternatives, it is crucial that social scientists look beyond academia. They must be willing and allowed to play a public role.

To fulfil its role as honest broker, scientific policy advice in the domain of immigration and integration must be aware of the breadth of academic and other stakeholder opinion; the research should be varied and focus on the host society, as well as on immigrants. This does not mean that researchers should bow to societal majorities. On the contrary, one must at times be brave, as one of the ministers stressed at the launch of the Máxima report. Nevertheless, without a deeper understanding of the impact of immigration across the breadth of society, policy recommendations will often miss their mark. For instance, the WRR may have underestimated the various feelings of the citizenry towards the idea of national identity. Better understanding of the breadth of feelings and experiences in society is necessary in an age when reaching out to the publics—often via media—appears as the most effective route to impact on politicians and policy-making.

Notes

1. The report was supported by two background studies: *In debat over Nederland* (Slegers 2007) and *Nationale identiteit en meervoudig verleden* (Grever and Ribbens 2007). The WRR also staged a creative intervention in the public debate by

commissioning a documentary film-maker from the Dutch public broadcasting association VPRO to produce a film on immigrants in the Dutch army and their (at times strained) feelings of loyalty. The documentary was broadcast a few days prior to the report's publication.

2. According to the WRR's internal evaluation, the report's message was not always univocal, in places too multi-layered and ambiguous to communicate clearly.
3. Political scientists debate whether political parties mainly express the feelings of 'the people' or whether they are also catalysts of resistance to immigration. For Koopmans and Muis (2009), who refer to a 'spiral of discursive escalation', it is the latter. Others, such as Van der Meer (2017), argue that democracy is doing a good job as new parties arise giving voice to otherwise hidden feelings and voices.

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