Civilising the 'Uncivilised'

Race and Class in Integration Policies for Indo-European Migrants in the Netherlands, 1952-1960

SUZAN ABOZYID AND LIESBETH ROSEN JACOBSON

This article examines the emergence and application of the policy category 'maladjusted repatriates' in the Netherlands between 1952 and 1960, focusing on the Dutch integration policies for migrants ('repatriates') from the former Dutch East Indies. These policies were embedded in existing integration frameworks for 'anti-social' white Dutch families. Based on a case-study of the re-education facility Het Witte Dorp (The White Village), the article shows how postwar Dutch integration policies reproduced colonial racial, classed, and gendered hierarchies. All 'repatriates' of colour were subjected to racialising forms of governance, yet the category of the 'maladjusted repatriate' made the intersection of race and class particularly explicit. Policymakers framed these families as culturally deficient and insufficiently adaptable to Dutch society, drawing on colonial stereotypes of the 'Eastern other'. At the same time, the instability of categories such as 'anti-social' and 'too Eastern' reveals how race functioned ambiguously in practice. Thus, the article contributes to scholarship on the colonial roots of European integration policy.

Dit artikel onderzoekt het Nederlandse integratiebeleid ten aanzien van migranten ('gerepatrieerden') uit voormalig Nederlands-Indië, met name hoe de beleidscategorie 'onaangepaste repatrianten' in de praktijk tussen 1952 en 1960 werd toegepast. Beleid voor 'repatrianten' was ingebed in bestaand beleid voor 'onmaatschappelijken' dat gericht was op 'anti-sociale' witte Nederlandse families. De hier bestudeerde casestudy, het heropvoedingsproject Het Witte Dorp, onthult hoe koloniale hiërarchieën gebaseerd op ras, klasse en gender gereproduceerd werden in het Nederlandse integratiebeleid. Alle 'gerepatrieerden' van kleur werden geconfronteerd met processen van racialisering binnen beleid en bestuur,

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maar de categorie van de 'onaangepaste gerepatrieerde' maakt expliciet zichtbaar hoe ras en klasse in de praktijk met elkaar verweven waren. Gebruikmakend van koloniale stereotypes over de 'Oosterse ander' typeerden beleidsmakers deze gezinnen als cultureel afwijkend van en onvoldoende aanpasbaar aan de Nederlandse samenleving. Tegelijkertijd laat de instabiliteit van de categorieën 'onmaatschappelijk' en 'te Oosters' zien hoe ras in de praktijk ambigu functioneerde. Het artikel draagt daarmee bij aan onderzoek naar de koloniale wortels van het Europees integratiebeleid.

Introduction[1]

Today, the Dutch village Voorthuizen is known for its two popular holiday parks. In the 1950s, however, it was home to a government-funded re-education facility for a specific group of migrants from the former Dutch East Indies who were considered 'maladjusted'. This facility, located in a holiday village, was called Het Witte Dorp (The White Village). The name referred to the white-plastered bungalows. Yet, it also carries a deeply ironic resonance, as the facility aimed to re-educate those migrants whom Dutch authorities deemed 'too Eastern' – or, put differently, perhaps not white enough.

Between the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1960s, about 300,000 people migrated from the former Dutch East Indies, current-day Indonesia, to the Netherlands. They were referred to by different words. Dutch colonial authorities used the term *Indische Nederlanders* (Indo-Europeans) to describe people with a white European father or grandfather and an 'indigenous' mother or grandmother. In colonial times, this fluid group was positioned between the legal categories of 'indigenous' and 'European'. When their fathers had recognised them, they acquired European (that is, Dutch) citizenship which on paper enabled them to migrate to the Netherlands. However, this was not the case for all of them.[2] This colonial terminology carries problematic connotations, as authorities viewed this blending as degenerative and feared that the assumed European purity was at risk.[3]

1 We extend our gratitude to all members of our project *Dilemmas of Doing Diversity (DIDI): Diversity Policies and Practices in Dutch Towns in the Past, Present, and Future* (NWA.1389.20.002), Alison Fischer, and the reviewers for their insightful feedback which significantly improved the argumentation.

2 On the complexities surrounding citizenship and nationality, see, for instance: Liesbeth Rosen Jacobson, *'The Eurasian Question': the Colonial Position and Postcolonial Options of Colonial Mixed Ancestry Groups from British India, Dutch East Indies and French Indochina Compared* (Verloren 2018) 66.

3 Gurminder Bhambra, 'Historical Sociology, Modernity, and Postcolonial Critique', *The American Historical Review* 116:3 (2011) 653-662. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.116.3.653.

Instead of introducing alternative concepts, we have chosen to use the terminology from the sources between quotation marks, to show that these terms are part of the Dutch colonial cultural archive and to make clear that we are aware of its problematic connotations.[4]

During and after their migration to the Netherlands, Indo-Europeans were mostly referred to as '*repatrianten*' ('repatriates'), a term that presumes a return to the 'mother country', although most of them had never been in the Netherlands before. The word repatriates was favoured in Dutch media and policies because it emphasised belonging.[5] Apart from this group, 12,500 Moluccan migrants also arrived in the Netherlands in this period, of whom the men had served in the Dutch colonial army. We exclude this group from the analysis, as the Dutch policy for Moluccans was very different: it prioritised their return to the Moluccas instead of integration in the Netherlands.[6]

The reception and integration of 'repatriates' became the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Work, established in 1952. The ministry tasked the Centraal Comité van Kerkelijk en Particulier initiatief voor sociale zorg ten behoeve van gerepatrieerden (Central Committee of Clerical and Particular Initiative for Social Care for the Benefit of Repatriates, CCKP) with providing collective housing and immaterial care for 'repatriates'.[7] At the same time, the Ministry of Social Work was also responsible for separate policies concerning 'anti-social' or 'maladjusted' white Dutch families. These policies aimed at re-educating people from the lower classes in special camps and local projects, with the goal of teaching them middle-class norms and integrating them into 'civilised' society.[8] The ministry constructed and treated the policy categories of 'anti-social' white families and 'repatriates' as distinct and unrelated. As a consequence, in historiography, these two policy strands – the integration of 'repatriates' and the re-education of the lower classes – have rarely been

4 Maayke Botman, Nancy Jouwe, and Gloria Wekker, *Caleidoscopische visies. De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen-vrouwenbeweging in Nederland* (Mazirel Pers 2024) 30-31.

5 H.G. Surie, 'De gerepatrieerden', in: Hilda Verwey-Jonker (ed.), *Allochtonen in Nederland. Beschouwingen over de gerepatrieerden, Molukkers, Surinamers, Antillianen, buitenlandse werknemers, Chinezen, vluchtelingen, buitenlandse studenten in onze samenleving* (Staatsdrukkerij- en Uitgeverijbedrijf 1973) 45-108, 45; Charlotte Laarman, *Oude onbekenden. Het politieke en publieke debat over postkoloniale migranten, 1945-2005* (Verloren 2013).

6 Fridus Steijlen and Henk Smeets, *In Nederland gebleven. De geschiedenis van Molukkers 1951-2006* (Bert Bakker 2006).

7 Ido de Haan and Jan-Willem Duyvendak, *In het hart van de verzorgingsstaat. Het ministerie van Maatschappelijk Werk en zijn opvolgers (CRM, WVC, VWS), 1952-2002* (Walburg Pers 2002) 70.

8 Adrianne Dercksen and Loes Verplanke, *Geschiedenis van de onmaatschappelijkheidsbestrijding in Nederland, 1914-1970* (Boom 1987); Ali de Regt, 'Onmaatschappelijke gezinnen. Over het verdwijnen van een categorie', in: Jozef Willem de Beus and Jacques A.A. van Doorn, *De*

studied together.[9] Doing this through the case study of Het Witte Dorp offers a deeper understanding of how class and race intersected in early Dutch integration policies, while also revealing the colonial roots of those policies.

In this article, we examine how and why the category of 'maladjusted repatriates' emerged in Dutch policy and how it was applied between 1952 and 1960. The analysis begins with the establishment of the Ministry of Social Work in 1952 and ends with the closure of Het Witte Dorp in 1960. First, we analyse how policies directed at 'anti-social' families and 'repatriates' in the 1950s were embedded in racialising and classed discourses. Second, we examine how these separate policy categories were related by focusing on the emergence of the category of 'maladjusted repatriates'. The latter were often racialised as 'too Eastern', thus showcasing a convergence of classed and racialised discourses. Finally, we investigate how this category was put into practice in Het Witte Dorp.

Studies of integration policies in the Netherlands often begin their analysis with the introduction of minority policies in the early 1980s, which primarily targeted migrants racialised as non-Western, such as those from Surinam, Turkey, and Morocco.[10] Critical scholars have argued that the idea of integration has a much longer genealogy starting in the nineteenth century with the emergence of sociology as a scientific discipline making society an object of study.[11] Critical migration scholar Iva Dodevska contends that, initially, the concept integration was attached to those deemed 'asocialised' or 'unproductive', before becoming primarily associated with those constructed as migrants.[12] According to Dodevska, this turn to 'immigrant integration' in Northwestern Europe occurred between the 1960s and 1980s. Although

geconstrueerde samenleving. Vormen en gevolgen van classificerend beleid (Boom 1986) 133-154.

9 M.M. Kersbergen, 'Indische probleemgezinnen? Beleid en praktijk in de woonoorden, 1955-1960' (Master's thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam 1995).

10 See, for instance, Peter W.A. Scholten and Frans K.M. van Nispen, 'Building Bridges Across Frames? A Meta-Evaluation of Dutch Integration Policy', *Journal of Public Policy* 28:2 (2008) 181-205. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X08000846; Jan Rath, 'De overheid en het minderhedenonderzoek', in: Frank Bovenkerk et al. (eds.), *Wetenschap en partijdigheid. Opstellen voor André J.F. Köbben* (Van Gorcum 1990); Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, *Winnaars en verliezers. Een nuchtere balans van vijfhonderd jaar immigratie* (Uitgeverij Bert Bakker 2011); Marlou Schrover, 'Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing, Dutch Migration History and the Enforcement of Essentialist Ideas', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 125:2-3 (2010) 329-354. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.7124.

11 Willem Schinkel, 'Transformations of Racism and the Rise of Culturism', in: idem, *Imagined Societies: A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe* (Cambridge University Press 2017) 112-155. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316424230.

12 Iva Dodevska, 'The Genealogy of Integrationism: Ideational Foundations of the Politics of Immigrant Integration', *Frontiers in Political Science* 5:1125012 (2023) 5. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2023.1125012.

Dodevska's long genealogy of the concept of integration is useful, her analysis still overlooks 'immigrant' integration efforts of the 1950s and their colonial roots.

Another point of criticism of mainstream integration research relates to the non-use of the concept of race. Dutch critical race expert Philomena Essed and Dutch sociologist Kwame Nimako noted that many scholars systematically avoid the conceptual use of race when studying migration and minorities in the Netherlands.[13] Often, European scholars tend to prefer the concept ethnicity over race, arguing that race as a biological concept has become obsolete.[14] This preference of ethnicity over race has, as sociologist Melissa Weiner puts it, resulted in scholars 'explaining immigrants' socioeconomic disadvantage as a function of their "inferior" or "backward" cultural differences, while simultaneously obscuring the reality of institutional racism'.[15]

This lack of serious engagement with racialisation as a mechanism of hierarchical ordering is evident in discussions on integration policies. For example, in 1999, Dutch sociologist Jan Rath observed striking parallels between the Dutch anti-social family policies of the 1950s and the ethnic minority integration policies of the 1980s.[16] He used this comparison to dismiss the significance of racism in shaping minority policies, arguing: 'There is no question of racism in [Robert] Miles' sense, because the signified socio-cultural features are not regarded as fixed or naturalised.'[17] This position is part of a general limited understanding of what racism looks like in Europe, which arises from the historical conflation of racism with Second World War Nazi extremism, and disregards its connections to colonialism.[18]

13 Philomena Essed and Kwame Nimako, 'Designs and (Co)Incidents: Cultures of Scholarship and Public Policy on Immigrants/Minorities in the Netherlands', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 47:3/4 (2006) 281-312. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715206065784.

14 Sonali Thakkar, 'The Reeducation of Race: From UNESCO's 1950 Statement on Race to the Postcolonial Critique of Plasticity', *Social Text* 38:2 (2020) 73-96. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-8164764; David Goldberg, 'Racial Europeanization', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29:2 (2006) 331-364. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870500465611.

15 Melissa F. Weiner, 'The Demography of Race and Ethnicity in The Netherlands: An Ambiguous History of Tolerance and Conflict', in: Rogelio Sáenz, David G. Embrick, and Néstor P. Rodríguez (eds.), *The International Handbook of the Demography of Race and Ethnicity* (Springer 2015) 575-596, 576. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8891-8_27.

16 Jan Rath, 'The Netherlands: A Dutch Treat for "Anti-Social Families" and Immigrant Ethnic Minorities', in: Mike Cole and Gareth Dale (eds.), *The European Union and Migrant Labour* (Bloomsbury Academic 1999) 147-170.

17 Rath, 'The Netherlands', 1.

18 Barnor Hesse, 'Im/plausible Deniability: Racism's Conceptual Double Bind', *Social Identities* 10:1 (2004) 10. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630420001909 76; Idem, 'Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: The Postracial Horizon', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110:1 (2011) 155-178. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2010-027.

Racism is often understood as merely a personal trait of individuals or the ideology of a small minority of right-wing extremists.[19] Although sociologists Saskia Bonjour and Jan Willem Duyvendak argued that racialisation did become part of Dutch integration policy, they state this happened only after 2000, when migrants with 'poor prospects' began to be viewed as static and unchangeable.[20] As such, they emphasised a shift from earlier policies, which considered migrants as adaptable, similar to Rath making adaptability central to their understanding of racialisation. Thus, previous studies on integration policy overlook the influence of colonial legacies.

Recently, several scholars in the field of migration and integration studies have started to fill in this gap by theorising the coloniality of integration as a field of study and policy arena. They argue that integration frameworks, embedded in the creation of the nation-state, reproduce colonial power dynamics.[21] Nadine Blankvoort moves beyond theorising by demonstrating empirically how colonial ideas of (un)modernity continue to shape contemporary Dutch civic integration policy practices.[22] Moreover, this coloniality of integration has been sustained through a policy-science nexus in which policymakers and scientists, often sociologists, have collaborated closely and largely uncritically.[23] These studies thus theorise how hegemonic discourses reproduce inequality but pay less attention to how historical legacies materialised in practice. References to the past are common but rarely examined in-depth based on archival material.

Some other scholars have examined how colonial categories shaped Dutch welfare policies, providing historical accounts of colonial continuities beyond the field of integration policy. Yet, this literature mainly focuses on policy on paper rather than policy in practice.[24] Furthermore, several authors

19 Essed and Nimako, 'Designs and (Co)Incidents', 299.

20 Saskia Bonjour and Jan-Willem Duyvendak, 'The "Migrant with Poor Prospects": Racialized Intersections of Class and Culture in Dutch Civic Integration Debates', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41:5 (2018) 882-900. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1339897.

21 Anna C. Korteweg, 'The Failures of "Immigrant Integration": The Gendered Racialized Production of Non-Belonging', *Migration Studies* 5:3 (2017) 428-444. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx025; Willem Schinkel, 'Against "Immigrant Integration": For an End to Neocolonial Knowledge Production', *Comparative Migration Studies* 6:31 (2018) 1-17. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0095-1; Adrian Favell, *The Integration Nation: Immigration and Colonial Power in Liberal Democracies* (Polity Press 2023).

22 Nadine Blankvoort, Debbie Laliberte Rudman, Margo van Hartingsveldt, and Anja Krumeich 'Reproduction of (Un)-Modernity at the Site of the Everyday: Knowledge Production Practices on 'Migrant Families' in the Netherlands, *Journal of Occupational Science* 32:2 (2025) 305-321. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2024.2437765.

23 Nadine Blankvoort, Iva Dodevska, and Stefan Manser-Egli, 'The Coloniality of Integration: Rethinking the Science-Policy Nexus', *Ethnicities* (2026). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/14687968261447880.

24 Emily A. Wolff, *Social Subjecthood? The Inclusion of (Post)Colonial Migrants in Dutch, French and British Welfare States, 1945-1970* (PhD thesis, Leiden

have examined how colonial discourses shaped the reception of 'repatriates' in the Netherlands in the 1950s.[25] For instance, Dutch scholar of colonial legacies Guno Jones has argued that policymakers in the 1950s drew on both racialising and class-based discourses to justify exclusion of impoverished 'Indo-Europeans of colour' from Dutch society.[26] Comparable cases can be found elsewhere in Europe. In the United Kingdom, for example, the category of 'problem families' generated extensive media attention as well as eugenic and psychological analyses in the 1950s.[27] In France, authorities expressed similar concerns about so-called *familles inadaptées*, a category that according to recent scholarship, included both French and immigrant families.[28] French authorities racialised and gendered assimilability by portraying North African migrants as incompatible with white French domesticity.[29]

The racialised and classed aspects of adaptability have not been studied in depth in the Dutch context, as the historiography on Dutch policies for 'repatriates'[30] and policies for 'anti-social' families[31] has been divided into two distinct areas of study, which rarely have been combined. Het Witte Dorp has not been subject of study so far; it is mentioned only briefly in broader analyses of the arrival of 'repatriates'.[32] Several master's theses on Het Witte

University 2024); Eline Westra and Franca van Hooren, 'Social Rights in a Post-Colonial Welfare State: Revisiting "Universality" and "Inclusivity"', *Journal of European Social Policy* 35:2 (2025) 130-142. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/09589287241297540.

25 Laarman, *Oude onbekenden*; John Schuster, *Poortwachters over immigranten. Het debat over immigratie in het naoorlogse Groot-Brittannië en Nederland* (PhD thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam 1999).

26 Guno Jones, *Tussen onderdanen, Rijksgenoten en Nederlanders. Nederlandse politici over burgers uit Oost en West en Nederland, 1945-2005* (PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2007) 168.

27 John Welschman, 'The Social History of Social Work: the Issue of the "Problem Family", 1940-1970', *The British Journal of Social Work* 29:3 (1999) 457-476. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjsw.a011467.

28 Janoé Vulbeau, 'Reloger les familles populaires dans les années 1960, entre gestion des familles "inadaptées" et ethnicisation de la question sociale', *Droit et Ville* 89:1 (2020) 147-163. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3917/dv.089.0147.

29 Rebecca S. Franco, *Between Problematisation and Invisibilisation: The Regulation of Interracialised Intimacies and (Post)Colonial Immigration in France 1954-1979* (PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2023) 108.

30 Ulbe Bosma, Remco Raben, and Wim Willems, *De geschiedenis van Indische Nederlanders* (Bert Bakker 2006); Paul W.J. van der Veur, *Introduction to a Sociopolitical Study of the Eurasians of Indonesia* (Cornell University 1955); Laarman, *Oude onbekenden;* Wim Willems and Leo Lucassen, *Het onbekende vaderland. De repatriëring van Indische Nederlanders (1946-1964)* (SDU 1994).

31 Dercksen and Verplanke, *Geschiedenis*; De Regt, 'Onmaatschappelijke gezinnen'; Ad Knotter, *Rondom de Stokstraat. 'Onmaatschappelijkheid' en 'onderklasse' in de jaren vijftig* (SHCL 1999).

32 Frank von Winckelmann and Wim Willems, 'Zwijgend inburgeren: Indisch in Nederland', in: Wim Willems, Remco Raben, Edy Seriese, Liane van der Linden, and Ulbe Bosma, *Uit Indië geboren. Vier eeuwen familiegeschiedenis* (WBOOKS 1997) 167-181, 177; Griselda Molemans, *Opgevangen in andijvielucht. De opvang*

Dorp inspired our research but offered limited analysis of intersections between class and race.[33]

As such, this article builds on the abovementioned research that shows that Dutch integration policy has been shaped by colonial logics and adds to it by examining how classed and racialised categories were operationalised in practice in our case study of Het Witte Dorp. By doing so, it deepens the historical understanding of current Dutch integration policies, in which ideas of civilising and adjusting the 'other' are deeply embedded.

The first section establishes the theoretical framework that underpins our analysis, after which we introduce our sources and explain our critical use of them. In the second section, the analysis begins with a brief history of policies targeting 'anti-social families' and the arrival of and policies for 'repatriates', before turning to our archival analysis. The article concludes by discussing the implications of our findings.

Theorising race, class, and gender in early Dutch integration policy

This article engages with theoretical discussions about race and its intersections with class and gender. Our aim is to substantiate the thesis that colonial discourses of racial, gendered, and classed hierarchy formed both the Dutch metropole and its overseas colonies.[34] We use anthropologist Amade M'charek's understanding of race both as an 'absent presence' and as a 'relational object'.[35] Race is not a fixed biological reality, but it emerges through relationships and practices that link differences, becoming

van ontheemden uit Indonesië in kampen en contractpensions en de financiële claims op basis van uitgebleven rechtsherstel (Quasar Books 2014) 256; Esther Captain, 'Harmless Identities: Representations of Racial Consciousness Among Three Generations Indo-Europeans', in: Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, *Dutch Racism* (Rodopi 2014) 53-70; Frank von Winckelmann, 'De commissie Werner getoetst. Indische Nederlanders en de sociale dienst in Amsterdam', in: Wim Willems and Leo Lucassen, *Het onbekende vaderland. De repatriëring van Indische Nederlanders (1946-1964)* (SDU 1994) 121-128.

33 Marina Godeschalk, *Assimilatie en heropvoeding. Beleid van de overheid en kerkelijk en particulier initiatief ten aanzien van gerepatrieerden uit Indonesië* (Master's thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen 1988); Kersbergen, *Indische probleemgezinnen?*.

34 Ann Laura Stoler and Frederic Cooper, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (University of California Press 1997) 1-56; Gloria Wekker, *Witte onschuld. Paradoxen van kolonialisme en ras* (Amsterdam University Press 2020).

35 Amade M'charek, 'Beyond Fact or Fiction: On the Materiality of Race in Practice', *Cultural Anthropology* 28 (2013) 420–442. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/cuan.12012; Amade M'charek, Katharina Schramm, and David Skinner, 'Technologies of Belonging: The Absent Presence of Race in Europe', *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 39:4 (2014) 462. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243914531.

relevant in some contexts while absent in others. It results from practices, interrelations, and materialisations, such as the association of physical traits with cultural, religious, or national identities. For this reason, M'charek suggests 'a turn to practice to examine what race is and how it is made relevant'.[36] By turning to Dutch policy practice, this article demonstrates that race played a constant yet ambiguous role in shaping the category of 'maladjusted repatriates', especially in relation to class.

The relationality between class and race is the primary focus of our analysis. In his study on the historical distinctions between the supposedly 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor in Britain and its colonial empire, political scientist Robbie Shilliam has convincingly argued that 'class is race'.[37] He posits that class politics have always been racialised, meaning that the shifting distinctions between those deemed deserving of welfare provisions – characterised as industrious, aspirational, orderly – and those considered undeserving – seen as lazy, dishonest, and parentally irresponsible – were shaped by racialised and moralised narratives rooted in the colonial empire. Following Shilliam's argument, we understand racialisation as 'the way in which racist attributes and hierarchies come to determine the everyday meaning and common-sense valuation of an entity or phenomenon'.[38] We interrogate the extent to which this holds for early Dutch integration policies in which similar distinctions were made between those deemed 'adjusted' and 'maladjusted'.

Lastly, the intersection of class, race, and migration can only be fully understood through a gendered lens.[39] Here, intersectionality serves to analyse power inequalities in discourse rather than to explore the formation of individual identities.[40] We examine how, similar to the French context, in early Dutch integration policies adaptability was constructed through gendered and racialised ideals of domesticity, in which migrant women were assigned the role of assimilating their families into the norms of white Dutch society.[41]

We examined governmental documents, memos, notes, and reports from the Ministry of Social Work and the CCKP spanning the years 1952 to 1960, to study the emergence of the policy category of 'maladjusted repatriates' in both Indonesia and the Netherlands, which culminated in the establishment of Het Witte Dorp.[42] We reviewed materials produced by

36 M'charek, 'Beyond Fact', 421.

37 Robbie Shilliam, *Race and the Undeserving Poor: From Abolition to Brexit* (Agenda Publishing 2018) 180.

38 Shilliam, *Race*, 4.

39 Marlou Schrover and Deirdre M. Moloney (eds.), *Gender, Migration and Categorisation: Making Distinctions Between Migrants in Western Countries, 1945-2010* (Amsterdam University Press 2013).

40 Botman, Jouwe, and Wekker, *Caleidoscopische visies*.

41 Franco, *Between Problematisation and Invisibilisation*, 108.

42 With many thanks to MA student Sem Tuitert, who brought new primary sources to our attention, which he located while doing research for his thesis: Sem Tuitert,

several advisory committees. The main focus of the analysis relies on reports written by social workers employed by the CCPK. This allows us to analyse how they informed policy and how racialised discourse shaped their practices.

We recognise that relying on government archives silences many voices, particularly those of the 'repatriates' who were targeted by these policies. However, if studied critically, these sources created by those in power can still reveal a silenced history. As Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rudolph Trouillot argues, 'repositioning the evidence can generate a new narrative'.[43] Although the sources do not capture the experiences of the marginalised, they do reveal how colonial discourse functioned in policy practice, which is the focus of this article.

The policy category of 'maladjusted repatriates' is a term that is challenging to translate from Dutch. In the original documents, the terminology fluctuates between phrases such as *Indische probleemgezinnen* (Indo-European problem families) and *gezinnen met aanpassingsproblemen onder de gerepatrieerden* (repatriant families with adjustment problems). To gain a clear focus on adjustment issues, we chose to translate these lengthy policy terms as 'maladjusted repatriates'.

Policies for 'anti-social families' and the arrival of racialised 'repatriates'

To understand the construction of the category of 'maladjusted repatriates', we first examine how general repatriate policy was embedded in existing policies for 'anti-social families' and how it was shaped by classed and racialised discourses. Since the nineteenth century, the upcoming bourgeoisie sought to 'civilise' those they deemed 'uncivilised' to construct a bourgeois self-image. Among the so-called uncivilised were both colonised peoples

'"Gevreesd wordt voor eventuele besmetting!" De opkomst en ondergang van de onmaatschappelijkheidsbestrijding voor Indische probleemgezinnen in gezinsoorden, 1952-1960' (Master's thesis, Leiden University 2024); Het Utrechts Archief (hereafter HUA), toegangsnr. 1405 Centraal Comité van kerkelijk en particulier initiatief voor sociale zorg ten behoeve van gerepatrieerden (CCKP) van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, inv.nr. 301-303, Stukken betreffende de "studie- en adviescommissie voor gezinnen met aanpassingsmoeilijkheden" (van het CCKP), alsmede van de werkcommissie voor moeilijk plaatsbare gezinnen van Bureau Bijzondere Maatschappelijke Zorg van het Ministerie van Maatschappelijk Werk, 1958-1966; Nationaal Archief Den Haag (hereafter: NL-HaNa) toegangsnr. 2.27.01.02, Inventaris van het Centraal Maatschappelijk Werkkantoor in Indonesië, 1954-1958, inv.nr. 73, Stukken betreffende probleemgezinnen, met overzichtlijsten van aantallen gezinnen, Verslag betreffende een onderzoek naar 'probleemgezinnen' in de grote steden op Java, voorzien van enige kritische aantekeningen (z.d.).

43 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon 1995) 27.

overseas and marginalised groups within Europe. In other words, the civilising mission served to position the other as uncivilised, against whom a Western, white, middle-class, and civilised European bourgeois identity could be defined and affirmed.[44] Rooted in this civilising mission, in the early twentieth century Dutch policies emerged that targeted the supposedly deviant behaviour of the lower classes. In 1914, housing authorities introduced the policy category of 'inadmissible' as they sought to exclude families from social housing who either failed to pay rent or caused disturbance.[45] These families were moved to supervised neighbourhoods to teach them 'proper' behaviour. In 1933 the Dutch psychiatrist Arie Querido introduced the term 'anti-social behaviour' (*onmaatschappelijkheid*). He emphasised the need to modify behaviour rather than socio-economic circumstances.[46] His ideas influenced postwar policies. In 1952, the new Ministry of Social Work established re-education facilities and local programmes to integrate 'anti-social families' into society. In policy practice, the term 'anti-social' was used interchangeably with 'maladjusted' (*onaangepast*).

Sociologists played a significant role in shaping these policies. The work of the Dutch sociologist and priest Harrie Litjens on 'anti-social families' in Maastricht, for instance, had a lasting impact.[47] Many definitions of 'anti-social behaviour' circulated, but Litjens' 1953 interpretation was the most widely cited: 'An anti-social family is a family that, due to a state of decline in which it finds itself, lives significantly below the minimum standard that is regarded as reasonable and necessary for every family within a given society'.[48] Extra attention should be paid to the phrase 'within a given society'. Litjens' thinking was rooted in the concept of cultural hierarchies. Despite labelling these 'anti-social families' as maladjusted, he implicitly regarded them as belonging in Dutch society. This distinction would later prove significant when Litjens' theories were applied to postcolonial Indonesia. His approach reflects classed discourses in which poor white Dutch families were held responsible for their poverty and seen as not living up to middle-class standards, yet racialised as white/Western.

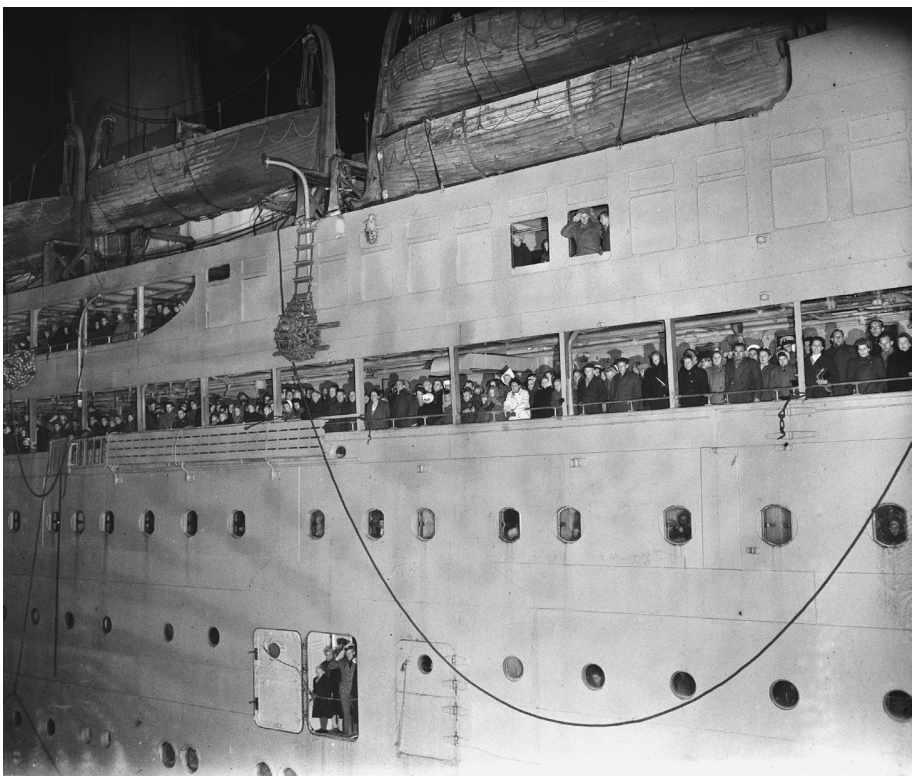
44 Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Duke University Press 1995).

45 Dercksen and Verplanke, *Geschiedenis*, 7.

46 Arie Querido, *Het zeeburgerdorp: een sociaal-psychiatrische studie* (PhD thesis, Leiden University 1933).

47 Harrie P.M. Litjens, *Onmaatschappelijke gezinnen* (Van Gorcum 1953).

48 All translations by the authors. Original: 'Een onmaatschappelijk gezin is een gezin, dat, tengevolge van een vervaltoestand waarin het verkeert, in ernstige mate leeft beneden het minimumniveau, dat in een bepaalde maatschappij voor ieder gezin als redelijk en noodzakelijk beschouwd wordt'; Litjens, *Onmaatschappelijke gezinnen*, 3.



▲

Figure 1. The ss Almanzora with 1900 'repatriates' from Indonesia in the harbour of Amsterdam, 3 January 1946. Photo by Koos Raucamp / Anefo. © Nationaal Archief, 2.24.01.09, 901-3334. http://hdl.handle.net/10648/a892bab6-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84.

Litjens' research aimed to identify causes of 'anti-social behaviour', but primarily focused on symptoms. His observations about those were highly gendered, as he attributed most issues to women's inability to run a household. Litjens' indicators included household neglect, child neglect, irresponsible spending, poor housing, job instability, nuisance, crime, alcohol abuse, sexual misconduct, school absenteeism, prostitution, begging, and political extremism, particularly communism.[49] Despite extensive research, no definitive theory about the causes of this behaviour emerged and politicians deemed the policies to re-educate anti-social families a failure. By 1971, the term 'anti-social families' was no longer used in policy documents. Later, historians attributed the causes of anti-social behaviour to poverty and claimed that it disappeared due to improved living conditions and smaller families.[50] Still, integrating those deemed maladjusted remains a contemporary policy goal, now targeting racialised minorities. This racialisation of Dutch integration policies started with the arrival of migrants from former Dutch colonies.

After the Indonesian independence of 1949, Dutch authorities and Indonesian society perceived Indo-Europeans as neither fully Dutch nor fully Indonesian. Colonial stereotypes previously mainly applied to 'indigenous' populations were now increasingly and more frequently attached to Indo-Europeans, who were portrayed by Dutch policymakers as 'indolent', 'irrational', and 'lethargic'.[51] These racialised stereotypes, which had first appeared in colonial novels, framed Indo-European women as childish, passive, and dependent, and Indo-European men as animal-like, half-hearted, and boring.[52] In Indonesia, increasing discrimination towards Indo-Europeans due to their intermediate position combined with growing unrest in general fuelled their migration to the Netherlands over the course of the late 1940s and 1950s.[53] Migration from Indonesia happened in phases: a group of mainly affluent 'repatriates' who were racialised as white (referred to as *totoks*) left Indonesia first; they either possessed Dutch citizenship or were legally equated to Dutch nationals (Figure 1). Later followed Indo-European repatriates, often racialised as non-white, who could not prove their Dutch nationality or had earlier opted for Indonesian citizenship and had to go through a bureaucratic struggle to get admitted to the Netherlands.[54] Due to racialised and classed stereotypes, the Dutch government initially sought

49 Dercksen and Verplanke, *Geschiedenis*, 240-250.

50 De Regt, 'Onmaatschappelijke gezinnen', 138; Knotter, *Rondom de Stokstraat*.

51 Rosen Jacobson, *The Eurasian Question*, 141.

52 Laarman, *Oude onbekenden*, 46; Petra Boudewijn, *Warm bloed. De representatie van Indo-Europeanen in de Indisch-Nederlandse letterkunde (1860-heden)* (Literatoren 2013).

53 Hans Meijer, *In Indië geworteld. De twintigste eeuw* (Bert Bakker 2004) 313-314.

54 Laarman, *Oude onbekenden*, 54-55.

to discourage specific groups of Indo-Europeans from migrating to the Netherlands, especially those perceived as lower class and with darker skin.[55]

The government aimed to assimilate especially the later groups upon arrival in the Netherlands. Social workers from the CCKP provided them with courses on Dutch domestic skills and assessed whether families were sufficiently adapted to Dutch norms to become eligible for independent housing.[56] Assimilation was deemed crucial, and social workers evaluated migrants' readiness through detailed 'transition reports' on their financial stability, employment, education, and conformity to Dutch norms, often focusing on the mothers' household management.[57]

These integration policies, which targeted all Indo-European repatriates, mirrored the strategies used in policies to re-educate white anti-social families. Yet, within the Ministry of Social Work policymakers maintained a formal distinction between the two groups. This separation was not necessarily deliberate, but rather reflected an administrative logic in which society was organised into distinct, identifiable categories. As such, this embeddedness was not made explicit by policymakers at the time but became visible through the creation of the new policy category of 'maladjusted repatriates'. As will be shown below, the implementation of this category compelled policymakers and social workers to articulate why they regarded repatriates and anti-social families as distinct groups, relying on racialising logics.

The ambiguous racialisation of integration: 'maladjusted repatriates' as a policy problem

In 1955, the category of maladjusted repatriates appeared in documents of officials in the Netherlands for the first time, in a letter from a CCKP advisory commission to the Ministry of Social Work.[58] The emergence of this category can be traced back to postcolonial Indonesia. After Indonesian Independence, the Dutch government remained responsible for impoverished Dutch

55 Jones, *Tussen onderdanen, rijksgenoten en Nederlanders*, 159-163.

56 NL-HaNa, toegangsnr. 2.27.02, Inventaris van het archief van het ministerie van Maatschappelijk werk (1936) 1952-1965 (1970) inv. nr. 1077, Enkele tips bij de lessen in Huishoudelijke Voorlichting aan Gerepatrieerden, mei 1953.

57 Geertje Mak, 'Het huishouden als strijdtoneel. De inburgering van Indische Nederlanders', in: Esther Captain, Marieke Hellevoort, and Marian van der Klein (eds.), *Vertrouwd en vreemd. Ontmoetingen tussen Nederland, Indië en Indonesië* (Verloren 2000) 241-256.

58 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP inv.nr. 251, Correspondentie met Commissie van Maatschappelijk Werk, alsmede met het ministerie van Maatschappelijk Werk, 1956-1960; Nota over uit Indonesië aankomende gezinnen, die bijzondere maatschappelijke verzorging nodig hebben van commissie Maatschappelijk Werk aan Ministerie van Maatschappelijk werk, 10 april 1956.

nationals in Indonesia. In 1954, the Dutch Ministry of Social Work created a Central Council for Social Matters in Jakarta, employing professional social workers to assist Dutch nationals with social and financial aid, to manage repatriation requests, and to discourage mass migration of especially lower-class and darker-skinned Indo-Europeans to the Netherlands.[59]

In 1952, the Dutch government commissioned the jurist Philip Werner to study the circumstances of Indo-Europeans still living in Indonesia. Later that year his committee published a report on the 'Indo-European question'.[60] The report recommended limiting 'undesirable' Indo-European migration to the Netherlands.[61] It made racist claims, stating that due to their inherent Eastern characteristics, Indo-Europeans in the Netherlands 'will never assimilate' and would 'remain a burden on society'.[62] It distinguished between 'Western'-oriented – those who were often affluent, racialised as white, and thus considered likely to integrate – and 'Eastern'-oriented, who were often from the lower classes and darker skinned, and therefore deemed unlikely to assimilate.[63] Although initially kept secret, the report leaked and caused outrage in Dutch parliament, but it still shaped policies labelling 'Eastern' migrants as socially and economically undesirable.[64]

Yet, around 1956, influenced by increasing turmoil in Indonesia, Dutch political opinions on the migration of Indo-Europeans shifted, and the Dutch government decided to slowly allow the remaining Indo-European Dutch nationals in Indonesia to repatriate in phases.[65] This expansion of migration opportunities raised concerns within the CCKP and the Rijksarbeidsbureau (National Labour Bureau, RAB) about the arrival of new groups of possibly maladjusted 'Eastern repatriates'. For this reason, in 1955-1956, Dutch authorities initiated an investigation to assess the prevalence of supposed problem families among Dutch nationals, including those of mixed ancestry, in the four major cities of Java: Djakarta, Bandung, Semarang, and Surabaya.[66] Four white Dutch social workers (*totoks*) conducted the research in these cities. Based on Litjens' work on 'anti-social

59 NL-HaNA, 2.27.01.01, Inventaris van het archief van de Raad voor Sociale Aangelegenheden in Indonesië, 1954-1958 https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.27.01.01?query=raad%20voor%20sociale%20aangelegenheden&search-type=description. 23 June 2021.

60 Philip Werner, *Verslag van de commissie ter bestudering van het Indo-Europese vraagstuk in Indonesië* (Staatsuitgeverij 1952) 30.

61 Laarman, *Oude onbekenden*, 60.

62 Werner, *Verslag van de commissie*, 30.

63 Laarman, *Oude onbekenden*, 61.

64 Wolff, *Social Subjecthood?*, 190-191.

65 Jones, *Tussen onderdanen, rijksgenoten en Nederlanders*, 170; Rosen Jacobson, *The Eurasian Question*, 170-178.

66 NL-HaNa toegangsnr. 2.27.01.02, Inventaris van het Centraal Maatschappelijk Werkkantoor in Indonesië, 1954-1958, inv.nr. 73, Stukken betreffende probleemgezinnen, met overzichtlijsten van aantallen gezinnen, Verslag betreffende een onderzoek naar 'probleemgezinnen' in de grote steden op Java.



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Figure 2. Street scenes of a kampong. Photo by J.G. / DLC Enkelaar, 24 August 1948. Public domain. National Archief Den Haag, 2.24.04.02-3473, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/b668ec31-2462-ef55-9a25-65a75c9c308b?searchKey=42ec207eae4a037101ab30c4fdf117ac.

families', the introduction of their reports outlined criteria for identifying an alleged problem family in Indonesia such as: '1) Household neglect; 2) Poor financial management; 3) Difficulty raising children; 4) Aversion to work and laziness'.[67]

The report incorporated Litjens' thinking on cultural hierarchies, especially his notion that anti-social behaviour should be understood within the confines of a given society. Social workers argued that the concept of anti-sociality might not apply in the Indonesian context, as these families were following local cultural customs.[68] On Java, no attention had been paid before to 'problem families' in any district; this started in 1956 at the request of the CCKP and the Ministry of Social Work. Thus, ideas about maladjustment that had initially been developed in the Netherlands later made their way into research on Java. There, they became intertwined with existing colonial modes of thought, in which race and class were already closely linked.

The impossibility to disconnect class-based and racialised categorisations is reflected in the RAB's concerns about the arrival of potentially problematic repatriates from 1956 onwards. The RAB was responsible for placing repatriates into employment and, according to its own account, had been successful in doing so up to that point.[69] In a 1956 memorandum to the Regional Head of Social Work in Bandung and Semarang, the RAB conveyed the following concerns:

> Does this mean there is no longer a repatriate labour problem??? Of course there is, in my opinion in the following respects: […] the 'kampong group' has not yet arrived *en masse* […] For this group, in my view, a basic part-time training program should be developed; a kind of training for assistant-toekang [Malay for craftsman] in general industrial service, so that in time they may work their way up to the level of trained Dutch workers.[70]

In Dutch colonial contexts, Europeans used the word *kampong* to describe 'indigenous' and poor residential areas (Figure 2). The RAB's use of 'kampong

67 Ibid., 4, 8.

68 Ibid.

69 NL-HaNa toegangsnr. 2.27.01.02, Inventaris van het Centraal Maatschappelijk Werkkantoor in Indonesië, 1954-1958. Centraal Maatschappelijk Werkkantoor, inv. nr. 63, Stukken betreffende de inschakeling van gerepatrieerden in het Nederlandse arbeidsproces. Nota "arbeidsinschakeling der gerepatrieerden in Nederland" 11 februari 1956, van de Raad voor Sociale Aangelegenheden in Indonesië aan het Rayonhoofd voor Maatschappelijk Werk te Bandung en Semarang.

70 Original: 'Bestaat er qua arbeid dan geen gerepatrieerden-probleem meer??? Natuurlijk wel, m.i. in de volgende opzichten […] de "kamponggroep" is nog niet en masse over gekomen […] Voor deze groep zal m.i. een summiere deeltaakopleiding uitgewerkt dienen te worden; een soort opleiding voor hulptoekang in algemene bedrijfsdienst, opdat zij t.z.t. tegen de geoefende Nederlandse werknemers kunnen opwerken'; Ibid., 6.

group' reflects this colonial frame, referring to poor 'repatriates' racialised as Eastern and framing them as inherently unfit for the Dutch labour market. In January 1956, a subcommittee of the RAB, which advised on the integration of 'repatriates' into the labour process, devoted a meeting to the possible arrival of new groups of 'repatriates'. During this meeting, expectations about this 'kampong group' were outlined:

> With regard to the average quality of the future repatriates, the following can be observed:
>
> 1. This [average quality] will show a downward trend; the so-called kampong group will become increasingly prominent
> 2. The work pace will initially be considerably too low by Dutch standards; retraining and re-education within the RWP (Rijkswerkplaats, 'national labour facility') should therefore be encouraged
> 3. Measures to promote general assimilation after arrival in the Netherlands should be strongly intensified
> 4. The anti-social elements among the so-called kampong group will become increasingly apparent […] The speaker asks whether, for this group, the lower work pace is to some extent compensated by greater precision. Drs. Bouricius states that the expected group is biologically predominantly of Indonesian blood, which indeed implies a certain aptitude for precision work.[71]

Within the RAB, explicitly racist ideas regarding the suitability for work of 'the kampong group' thus played an important role. Apart from the gradual relaxation of immigration regulations, 1956 marked a turning point in how the RAB viewed the integration of 'repatriates' and their perceived

71 Original: 'Omtrent het doorsnee-gehalte van de a.s. repatrianten kan het volgende worden opgemerkt: 1) Dit zal een dalende lijn aangeven, de zgn. kamponggroep zal steeds sterker aanwezig zijn 2) het arbeidstempo zal aanvankelijk naar Nederlandse begrippen beduidend te laag liggen, her- en omscholing op de RWP zal daarom gestimuleerd dienen te worden 3) maatregelen ter bevordering van de algemene assimilatie na aankomst in Nederland dienen krachtig te worden geactiveerd 4) het a-sociale element onder zgn. kamponggroep zal meer en meer aanwezig blijken te zijn. […] Spreker vraagt, of voor die groep het lagere arbeidstempo in het algemeen ook in zekere mate wordt gecompenseerd door een grotere nauwkeurigheid. Drs. Bouricius stelt, dat de te verwachten groep biologisch overwegend van Indonesische bloed is, waardoor inderdaad in beginsel een zekere mate van geschiktheid voor precisie-arbeid aanwezig is'; NL-HaNa toegangsnr. 2.27.01.02, Inventaris van het Centraal Maatschappelijk Werkkantoor in Indonesië, 1954-1958 Centraal Maatschappelijk Werkkantoor, inv. nr. 63, Stukken betreffende de inschakeling van gerepatrieerden in het Nederlandse arbeidsproces, Afschrift commissie van bijstand en advies van het rijksarbeidsbureau sub-commissie van advies voor de gerepatrieerden – Notulen van de 18e vergadering dd. 21 januari 1956, 4-5.

maladjustment, which they expected would show a downward trend. Additionally, members of the RAB subcommittee observed the possible presence of 'anti-social elements' among 'the kampong group'. This showcases that ideas on the categories 'anti-social' versus 'Eastern-oriented' were intertwined in practice, while policies for both categories were separated on paper. Shilliam's thesis that class becomes race is partly applicable in this case, as a perceived inaptitude for work apparently had a different cause for those racialised as 'Eastern' than for white Dutch 'anti-social families'. Yet, this distinction between class and race remains instable in policy practice, as is showcased by our analysis of Het Witte Dorp, to which we shall turn now.

The 'kampong group' arrives: 'Maladjusted repatriates' in Het Witte Dorp

By 1956, the Ministry of Social Work and the CCKP planned a re-education facility for 'maladjusted repatriates'. While officials proposed an observation boarding house staffed by personnel experienced with repatriates and 'families with societal adjustment disorders',[72] the ministry preferred bungalows, arguing that independent housing would better prepare families to run their households according to Dutch norms.[73]

In December 1956, Het Witte Dorp was identified as a facility for re-education. This holiday village in Voorthuizen, in the municipality of Barneveld, was rented from a private person who described himself as an Indo-European repatriate.[74] The Ministry of Social Work, the Barneveld municipality, and Het Witte Dorp's management ran by the CCKP had an expense-sharing agreement: the municipality would cover material needs for the 'repatriates', and in return, the latter would not be housed in Barneveld after their re-education.[75] Het Witte Dorp was not the only facility of its kind: a similar centre for 'problematic Eastern families' was established in Medemblik. However, this one was short-lived, as the town's mayor cancelled the agreement to facilitate the centre within months because he was not pleased with the 'deviant lifestyles' of the families.[76]

72 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP inv.nr. 251, Nota over uit Indonesië aankomende gezinnen, 10 april 1956.

73 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP inv.nr. 251, Brief van Ministerie van Maatschappelijk werk aan de voorzitter van de commissie van Maatschappelijk werk, 4 mei 1956.

74 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP inv.nr. 251, Brief van voorzitter van de commissie van Maatschappelijk werk aan Ministerie van Maatschappelijk werk, 5 december 1956.

75 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP inv.nr. 251, Brief van de Commissie van MaWe van het CCKP aan de minister van MaWe, 5 december 1956; HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 253, Correspondentie van de directie van Het Witte Dorp met het bureau sociale zaken van de gemeente Barneveld 1956-1960; brief van BenW Barneveld aan com. MaWe CCKP, 30 juli 1959.

76 HUA, CCKP, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv. nr. 261, Algemene correspondentie betreffende

Female	Male
Untidy household/household too Eastern	Unbalanced attitude (mental health)
Child rearing not up to standards	Causing (violent) nuisance
Lack of Dutch language skills	Unemployment
Cooking style too Eastern	Lack of personal hygiene
Lack of personal hygiene	Criminal offenses
Domestic abuse (victim)	Domestic abuse (perpetrator)
Timid attitude	Irresponsible budgeting
Irresponsible budgeting	

Table 1. Problems mentioned in the applications written by Dutch social workers for the relocation of 'maladjusted' repatriate families in Het Witte Dorp.

A selection procedure was established to determine which families qualified for Het Witte Dorp. Social workers based in boarding houses all over the Netherlands nominated them. In their application reports, these social workers detailed multiple issues with the 'maladjusted' families who should be considered for relocation.[77] Notably, the selection criteria excluded families exhibiting or expected to exhibit 'anti-social behaviour' from re-education in Het Witte Dorp.[78] We analysed seventeen of these reports by examining in what terms these families were problematised, and how racialised, classed, and gendered discourses intersected in policy practice.

The reports presented a complex picture. Table 1 displays the problems that social workers repeatedly identified as reasons for placement in Het Witte Dorp, which were highly gendered, as especially women were targeted. The problematisation of these families mirrored that of white 'anti-social families', but for repatriate families, the problematic aspect was in many cases racialised as 'Eastern'. The social workers linked two gendered problems to their 'Eastern' background: language skills and cooking style. Cooking served as a straightforward indicator of assimilation.[79] Whether rice or potatoes were cooked was mentioned in every report. Similarly, women's poor Dutch language skills were viewed as problematic because this would affect their children's language acquisition at home. Certain personality traits were discussed in more depth. For example, in an October 1958 report,

het ontstaan en functioneren van woonoord Medemblik, 1958, Afschrift van het Ministerie van Maatschappelijk Werk aan de Minister van Sociale Zake en Volksgezondheid, 14 maart 1958; HUA, CCKP, inv. nr. 261, Woonoord Medemblik, Brief van de burgemeester van Medemblik, 2.

77 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 256, Rapporten door maatschappelijk werkster of werker over kandidaatgezinnen voor Het Witte Dorp, 1957-1959.

78 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 254, Werkteam en maandverslagen van de maatschappelijk werkster van Het Witte Dorp, 1957-1960; maandverslag november 1958, 2.

79 Wolff, *Social Subjecthood?*.

a professional advised for the family to be placed in Het Witte Dorp because of the 'primitive and shy attitude of the woman from which the children also suffer'.[80] This observation may stem from the transferred colonial belief that 'indigenous' women were incapable of caring for their mixed-ancestry children.[81] The burden to adapt was indeed placed mostly on women. This becomes even clearer in a report from September 1959 in which professionals advised against the placement of another family in Het Witte Dorp:

> The man is an Indo-European who treats his wife in an entirely Eastern manner and demands a submissive attitude. The woman, on the other hand – an intelligent Timorese – has come to other ideas through her stay in the Netherlands. […] The man presents himself as a disappointed repatriate, who calls himself an 'evacuee' because of his disillusionment (he still feels his work as a labourer is not suitable for him). He sees Indonesia as his fatherland. He feels cheated by every Dutch person so far.[82]

Even though the man was explicitly described as 'too Eastern', re-education was deemed unnecessary. Apparently, the woman in question did not adhere to the submissive attitude both her husband and the social worker expected of her. According to the social worker, her stay in the Netherlands enabled her to do so. Here, the colonial idea that women's independence is reserved for those racialised as Western resurfaces. This is also related to the woman's Timorese background. As Portuguese colonialism had made Catholicism the dominant religion in Timor, Dutch social workers associated Timorese people with a familiar religious identity. This quote also illustrates how social workers received self-identification with disdain. The man who referred to himself as an evacuee rather than a repatriate in order to avoid the implication that he

80 Original: 'de primitieve en schuwe instelling der vrouw waaronder ook de kinderen lijden'; HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 256, Rapporten door maatschappelijk werkster of werker over kandidaatgezinnen voor Het Witte Dorp, 1957-1959, rapport 6 juni 1958, 3.

81 Currently researched by Maaike Derksen et al. in the project 'Child separation': https://www.ru.nl/en/research/research-projects/child-separation (consulted 1 May 2026). See also the BMGN–LCHR special issue on *Child Separation: (Post) Colonial Policies and Practices in the Netherlands and Belgium* 135: 3-4 (2020). DOI: https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10871.

82 Original: 'De man is een Indo-Europeaan die zijn vrouw geheel op Oosterse manier behandelt en verlangt een onderdanige houding. De vrouw daarentegen – een intelligente Timorese – is door haar verblijf in Nederland tot andere ideeën gekomen. De man toont zich een teleurgestelde gerepatrieerde, die zich door de desillusies (hij voelt de werkzaamheden als arbeider tav hem nog altijd als misplaatsing) "geevacueerde" noemt. Hij ziet Indonesië als zijn Vaderland. Hij voelt zich tot nu toe door elke Nederlander bedrogen'; HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 256, Rapporten door maatschappelijk werkster of werker over kandidaatgezinnen voor Het Witte Dorp, 1957-1959, rapport 18 september 1959.

had returned to his fatherland, was denounced as disillusioned by the social worker.

According to the selection criteria, on paper, 'too Eastern' and 'maladjusted repatriates' were assumed to be different from anti-social families. However, the reports reveal a rather ambivalent distinction between the two categories as social workers seldom clarified the reasons for labelling a family as 'anti-social' or 'too Eastern'. This is illustrated by a selection report from December 1957, in which a family was described as 'too Eastern' and possibly 'anti-social':

> The man does not belong in society, he should remain committed [to a mental institution]; he is very unbalanced and a Belanda hater [detester of Dutch people]. He is definitely not suited for independent housing, nor is the woman, as she does not yet speak the Dutch language and has not yet adapted to Dutch society. […] The man always blames the Totoks for the labour difficulties in Indonesia, he seems to have lived on the Indonesian side of society there. […] The woman is definitely not yet capable of running her own household without the help of a sensible man who assists her. She cannot handle money, has not yet adapted to Dutch society. The man cannot handle money either. […] If this family cannot be admitted to Het Witte Dorp, because they do not want antisocial types there, what then?'[83]

This quote illustrates the instability of the categories, in which race was in some cases seen as more important than in others. In policy practice, race was mostly an absent presence, as M'charek has theorised. Explicit racism was often absent, yet the practice of social workers was shaped by colonial ideologies that linked behaviour and cultural traits to racialised hierarchies. The family's difficulties with household management and budgeting were recognised as the behaviour of anti-social families. Simultaneously, these repatriates were racialised as 'not adapted to Dutch society' and portrayed as hostile towards the Dutch.

83 Original: 'S. (de man) hoort eigenlijk niet in de maatschappij thuis, zou opgenomen moeten blijven; hij is zeer onevenwichtig en Belanda-hater. Is beslist niet geschikt voor zelfstandige huisvesting, ook de vrouw niet, daar ze de Ned. taal nog niet machtig is en nog niet aangepast aan de Ned. samenleving. […] S. wijt de arbeidsmoeilijkheden in Indonesië steeds aan de Totoks daar, hij schijnt aan de Indonesische kant van de maatschappij daar te hebben geleefd. De vrouw is bepaald nog niet in staat eigen huishouden zonder hulp van een verstandige man, die haar bijstaat, te voeren. Ze kan niet met geld omgaan, is nog niet aangepast aan de Ned. samenleving. S. zelf kan ook niet met geld omgaan. […] Als dit gezin nu niet in het Witte Dorp kan worden opgenomen, omdat men daar geen a-sociaal aangelegde typen wil hebben, wat dan?' HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv. nr. 256, Rapporten door maatschappelijk werkster of werker over kandidaatgezinnen voor het Witte Dorp, 1957-1959, rapport 12 december 1957.

Having analysed the selection reports, we now turn to social workers' reports on the behaviour of people who already lived in Het Witte Dorp. In general, the reports illustrate the residents as living a quiet and orderly life. Women attended language courses and a social worker, who also lived in Het Witte Dorp, visited on a regular basis to teach them how to run a Dutch household. Men were guided towards a regular job, although not always successfully. The children attended school or were sent to boarding schools. In their reports, social workers struggled with and questioned the way problems were framed in previous applications, as outlined in the quote below from a monthly report of a social worker of November 1958:

> Upon closer examination of the families, I have found that because the application report for Het Witte Dorp too explicitly states that 'Het Witte Dorp is not suitable for asocial and anti-social families', there is a tendency to try to 'mould' such a family [into the selection criteria] for Voorthuizen when no other option is available. […] Would it not be possible to remove all these restrictions so that any family that is difficult to accommodate in a boarding house can be recommended?[84]

Clearly, the categorisation in the selection process – distinguishing between 'anti-social' and 'too Eastern' – did not match the practical reality that social workers encountered in Het Witte Dorp. In her monthly report of November 1959, a social worker mentioned that the supposed problems with a particular family were unclear. She wrote:

> Personally, I have not yet gotten around to investigate where the difficulties lie here. On the surface, they lie in the fact that Mrs. K is Indonesian and therefore her household and her entire way of life are Eastern. I have not seen family difficulties here.[85]

84 Original: 'Bij een nadere beschouwing van de gezinnen heb ik geconstateerd, dat door het feit dat het voordrachtsrapport voor het Witte Dorp te uitdrukkelijk stelt, dat "voor asociale en antisociale gezinnen het Witte Dorp niet adequaat is" de tendens bestaat, doordat er voor een gezin geen andere mogelijkheid gezien wordt, het gezin "om te bouwen voor Voorthuizen". Ik meen, dat alle genoemde restricties belemmerend werken voor een eerlijk, onbevoordeeld rapport. Is het niet mogelijk alle restricties hieruit weg te laten, zodat ieder in een contractpension niet of moeilijk te handhaven gezin wordt voorgedragen.'; HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 254, Werkteam en maandverslagen van de maatschappelijk werkster van het Witte Dorp, 1957-1960; maandverslag november 1958, 2.

85 Original: 'Persoonlijk ben ik er nog niet aan toe gekomen om te onderzoeken waar hier de moeilijkheden liggen. Oppervlakkig gezien ligt dit in het feit dat Mevr. K. Indonesisch is en derhalve haar huishouden en haar gehele levenswijze Oosters is. Gezinsmoeilijkheden schijnen hier niet te zijn.'; HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 254, Werkteam en maandverslagen van de maatschappelijk werkster van het Witte Dorp, 1957-1960; Verslag werkteambespreking 8 oktober 1959, 5.

However, the occasional realisation that the distinction between 'anti-social' and 'too Eastern' was complex did not mean that social workers in Het Witte Dorp deviated from existing racialising discourse. In the same report the social worker describes the numerous problems attributed to another family with apparent Chinese roots housed in Het Witte Dorp:

> The difficulties in this family, in my opinion, lie in the fact that her husband died a week after arriving and she, as an Eastern [woman], was left completely unprepared. Coming from a wealthy Chinese family by Eastern standards […] she thinks she can sort out her financial affairs herself. Unfortunately, she does so in a sneaky way, as was common among most Chinese in Indonesia. […]. Compared to her life in Indonesia – where they lived in a very good neighbourhood – her stay in Het Witte Dorp is a bitter experience. […] The difficulties surrounding xx [anonymised name of the youngest child] – who recently stole eggs from a farmer and confessed – have a deeper cause. The mother likely did not think this was a big deal, given her Eastern mentality, and only punished her child for appearance's sake.[86]

Here, class does become race. The mentioned problems – unreliable financial behaviour and misbehaving children – are exact copies of problems associated with anti-social families but are in this report solely ascribed to the racialised background of the mother and linked to a generalisation about 'most Chinese' in Indonesia. Thus, although there was a multiplicity in problematising discourses, it was unthinkable for social workers to completely divest from their perspective embedded in Western superiority.[87]

By 1958, migration from Indonesia had decreased, reducing the number of eligible families for Het Witte Dorp and exposing an 'unsolvable problem' of 'residual' families – those deemed unable to live independently

86 Original: 'De moeilijkheden in dit gezin liggen m.i. in het feit, dat haar man een week na aankomst is overleden en zij als Oosterse geheel onvoorgelicht is achtergebleven. Uit een voor Oosterse begrippen welgesteld Chinees gezin […] meent zij haar geldzaken zelf te kunnen opknappen. Helaas op een gladde wijze, zoals bij de meeste Chinezen in Indonesië gangbaar was. Nu ze gemerkt heeft dat deze methode voor Nederland onvoldoende is, is zij angstig en achterdochtig geworden. […] In vergelijking tot haar leven in Indonesië – waar zij in een heel goede buurt gewoond hebben – is het verblijf van haar in het Witte Dorp een bittere ervaring. […] De moeilijkheden rondom Ingrid – zij heeft kort geleden eieren bij de boer gestolen en bekend – hebben een diepere oorzaak. Ma zal – gezien haar Oosterse mentaliteit – dit niet erg hebben gevonden en zal voor het oog van de wereld haar kind hebben gestraft.' HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 254, Werkteam en maandverslagen van de maatschappelijk werkster van het Witte Dorp, 1957-1960; Verslag werkteambespreking 8 oktober 1959, 6.

87 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 81.

but unfit for boarding houses.[88] At this time, the argument that prolonged boarding house stays hindered adaption gained ground.[89] This marked the gradual phase-out of boarding houses for repatriates and a shift towards independent housing and receiving help from general social work agencies.[90] A commission led by the Dutch civil servant M.J. Hoytink was charged with overseeing this process. During a meeting, Hoytink, who had served on the Werner commission, argued that although social workers commonly used the term anti-social with regard to the repatriates, this was not comparable 'to anti-social behaviour among Dutch families, since the cause is principally different among Indo-European families, namely "in being completely foreign in this country"'.[91] He thus articulated an explicit racialisation of integration.

Het Witte Dorp closed in June 1960 due to operational challenges and the general decline in 'repatriations' from Indonesia. Over the course of four years, 37 families stayed there, and almost all of them stayed for longer than the agreed one-year period. This was mainly because they were unable to find independent housing afterwards. The institution's management committee produced a report reflecting on its successes and failures, highlighting ongoing struggles in effectively categorising and addressing the needs of its residents.[92] They acknowledged difficulties in determining whether families' issues stemmed from cultural transitions, broader societal disadvantages, or other factors. However, rather than addressing the structural similarities between the struggles of 'anti-social' Dutch families and 'maladjusted repatriates', the committee concluded that negative perceptions amongst the local population contributed to the isolation of the inhabitants of Het Witte Dorp and hindered their integration.[93]

88 HUA, CCKP, inv. nr. 301, 'Studie- en adviescommissie voor gezinnen met aanpassingsmoeilijkheden', Nota van de Commissie Voorthuizen aan de Commissie van Maatschappelijk Werk van het C.C.K.P., 's-Gravenhage, 12 augustus 1958.

89 Ibid., brief van Ministerie van Maatschappelijk Werk aan de hoofden van de bureaux in de onderscheidende provincies, 23 juli 1959, 2; Nota van de Landelijke Stichting Katholieke Gerepatrieerdenzorg aan de besturen van de Diocesane en Grootstedelijke Organen, 11 augustus 1959, 1; Verslag voor de Studie- en Adviescommissie, Kort verslag omtrent de werkzaamheden van de maatschappelijk werker met bijzondere opdracht, Den Haag, 12 september 1959, 2-3.

90 Liesbeth Rosen Jacobson, 'Forever an Isolated Caste? "Mainstreaming" of Repatriate Care in General Dutch Bodies of Social Work, 1960-1967', *Journal of Migration History* 10 (2024) 175-201. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/23519924-10020001.

91 Original: 'Deze factor is beslist niet te vergelijken met de asocialiteit onder Hollandse gezinnen, daar de oorzaak bij de Indische gezinnen principieel anders ligt, nl. "in het totaal vreemd zijn in dit land"'; HUA, CCKP, inv. nr. 301, 'Studie- en adviescommissie voor gezinnen met aanpassingsmoeilijkheden', verslag van de eerste vergadering op 8 december 1958, 4.

92 HUA, toegangsnr. 1405 CCKP, inv.nr. 257, Verslagen van teambesprekingen, 1958-1959; jaarverslag 1960.

93 Ibid.

Conclusion

In this article, we examined the emergence and application of the category of 'maladjusted repatriates' in the Netherlands between 1952 and 1960. We analysed repatriation policy in general and the re-education facility Het Witte Dorp in particular to show how postwar Dutch integration policy reproduced colonial racial, classed, and gendered hierarchies in practice.

Our findings demonstrate that policies for repatriates from postcolonial Indonesia were shaped by existing policies for so-called anti-social families. Policymakers established Het Witte Dorp as a specialised facility for 'maladjusted repatriates', a subcategory that emerged within broader policies for repatriates. Although all repatriates of colour were subjected to racialising forms of governance, the category of the 'maladjusted repatriate' made the colonial intersection of race and class particularly explicit. Both white Dutch 'anti-social families' and 'maladjusted repatriates' were framed as socially deviant and in need of being civilised, but policymakers distinguished between them through racialising logics. Whereas 'anti-social families' were understood as deviant but Dutch, 'maladjusted repatriates' were racialised as 'Eastern others'.

This 'Easternness' drew on colonial stereotypes previously attached to 'indigenous' populations in the Dutch East Indies, including characterisations of supposedly lazy men and timid women. Their behaviour was treated as evidence of inherent cultural deviance, making them appear less adaptable to Dutch society. Accordingly, the terminology used to describe those deemed in need of integration changed over time, from 'uncivilised' to 'anti-social', 'maladjusted', and 'too Eastern'. The coloniality underpinning these labels remained, making classed and racialised discourses difficult to distinguish.

The case of Het Witte Dorp reveals that the categories of race and class were unstable in practice. Social workers frequently struggled to distinguish between behaviour considered 'anti-social' and behaviour regarded as 'too Eastern'. They viewed these problems as changeable through housing, work, and re-education, while simultaneously treating them as rooted in supposedly inherent racial-cultural characteristics. This operational instability demonstrates how race functioned in practice: at times as an absent presence in M'charek's sense, and at others through the explicit racialisation of class, as theorised by Shilliam.

We contributed to existing scholarship on integration policies by tracing the genealogy of Dutch 'immigrant integration' policy back to the 1950s, showing that thinking about integration did not begin with the minority policies of the 1980s. Additionally, we demonstrated empirically by using archival material how categories such as anti-social, maladjusted, and too Eastern were produced, negotiated, and applied in practice, thus showing how colonial legacies materialised. In other words, the history of Het Witte Dorp shows that postwar Dutch integration policies were shaped by colonial

ideas about civilisation, adaptability, and national belonging. These ideas continue to resonate in contemporary public debates on integration, national identity, and the rhetoric of the extreme right.

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