

Imagining society. Logics of visualization in images of immigrant integration

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Abstract

This paper looks at how expert and scientific graphic images of immigrant integration in the Netherlands and Germany portray a distance between minority groups and a dominant imagination of society. It specifically explicates the ways “images of alterity” in assessments of immigrant integration are visually structured by means of a pictorial display of spatial markers of distance. It does so by means of a close examination of the visual expression of Dutch and German national classification systems relating to immigrant integration. Using analytical tools from visual studies, the paper illustrates the ways immigrant integration images enable a “seeing” or “imagining of otherness” by means of a spatialization of the relation between “society” and “immigrant groups,” and it shows how such a spatialized visualization has performative effects.

Keywords

Visualization, spatialization, immigrant integration, classification, distance, otherness, “society”

Images of immigrant otherness in the Netherlands and Germany

Population measurements figure centrally both in nation formation and in governing populations. Forms of enumeration and classification are vital to modern democratic capitalist government (Desrosières, 1993; Hacking, 1990; Mitchell, 2002; Porter, 1996). Nations and societies are not immediately visible objects, but they are produced and made visible through, among others, population measurements expressed in graphic visualizations such as tables, graphs, and plots. Such visualization techniques aid in what Ian Hacking has called “making up people” (Hacking, 1986). Through their effects on daily governance, migration statistics have deep impacts on people’s lives. In this contribution, we focus on the enumeration, classification, and subsequent graphic visualization of subpopulations considered as “other.” In particular, we look at the ways immigrant populations in Germany and the Netherlands are graphically visualized as residing at a certain distance from what is—in the statistical work we take as object of our analysis—either called “society,” the “natives,” or “autochthones.” As an example of the type of statistical visualizations we focus on, consider Figure 1.

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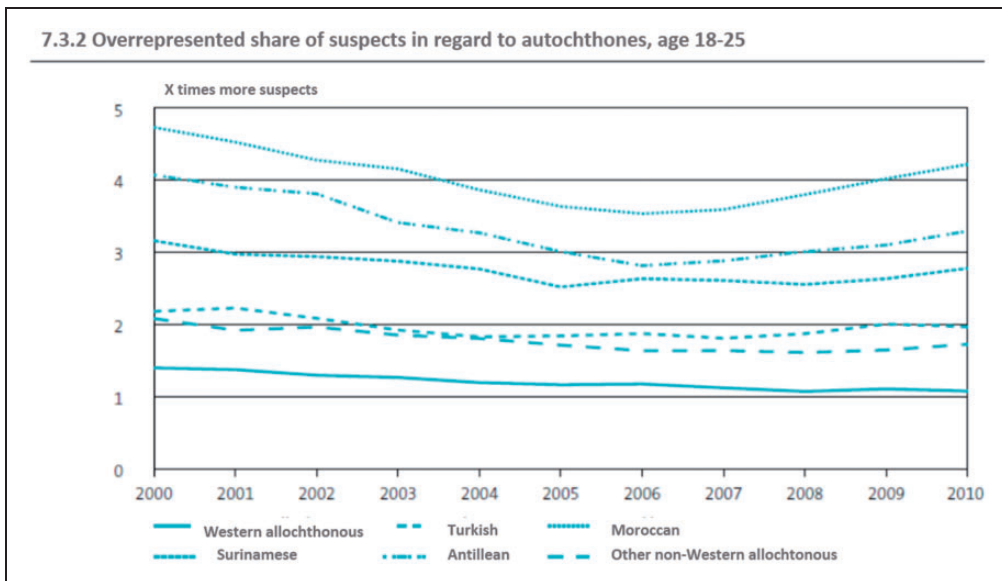


Figure 1. Source: CBS Netherlands, *Jaarrapport Integratie 2012*, p. 185.

The figure reports the “overrepresentation” of various subpopulations in the Netherlands in crime suspect figures over against a group called “autochthonous Dutch.” It reports this as part of a measurement of “immigrant integration” considered as the degree to which groups classified as “(non-)Western allochthones” (of non-Dutch descent: *allochtonen*) are incorporated into Dutch society. Such measurements are part of a longitudinal monitoring system that tracks the relative social positions of groups classified as “immigrants,” “allochthones,” or “people with a migration background.” We seek to show how such monitoring practices reproduce dominant images of “society” and help to exclude “immigrant groups” from it. Hegemonic conceptions of society are augmented by measuring immigrant integration, since these “objectively” establish migrant otherness as deviations from society’s norms and help to construct “immigrant groups” as a constitutive outside of society. We argue that images of otherness, such as statistical graphs of the integration of “immigrant groups,” are especially potent in reifying a “distance” between “immigrant” populations and society. Figure 1, for instance, conveys an image of society as consisting of bounded “immigrant” populations recognizable by their distance from the norm of the crime rate, embodied by “autochthonous Dutch.” The latter group is both included in the figure as a neutral threshold or benchmark, and excluded from it as it constitutes the degree zero or “normal” rate from which the other categories, differentiated to ethnic groups here, deviate, indicating their relative lack of integration and hence their social distance to what constitutes the norm for their integration.

We argue that immigrant integration graphs contribute to the visual constitution of what is, in immigrant integration research, portrayed regularly as “society.” Immigrant integration statistics and the graphic images constructed on the basis of such statistics help to give visual shape to container-like conceptions of “society” in the Netherlands and Germany vis-à-vis various minority populations that have been measured and calculated to reside “at a distance from society.” In other words, we highlight a specific

visual rendering of a *spatialization* of the relation between “society” and “immigrant groups.”

Such visualizations play an as yet neglected role in sustaining and reifying asymmetries between “society” and “immigrant groups,” i.e., between sameness and difference. They reaffirm norms as to what constitutes the core of society in a context of Western–European immigration, and they help circumscribe forms of otherness that come to play a role as society’s constitutive outside. Edward Said has perhaps most influentially emphasized how discourses on “the Orient” served not merely, or even primarily, as descriptions of the Other, but how they, as such, confirmed the dominance of Europe itself (Said, 2003). Various scholars in postcolonial studies have argued that, where the science of the Other has been concerned, such descriptions were indeed potent ways of governing non-European populations in the manner described by Foucault as “governmentality” (Foucault, 2004; Mitchell, 2002; Stoler, 2002). What we seek to contribute to such work is, first, attention to the social science that analyses the Other in Europe, whom it variously construes as “the immigrant,” “the non-indigenous,” or the “allochthonous citizen.” Second, we contribute to analyses of the relationship between statistics and the circumscription of national populations and societies (Hacking, 1990; Poovey, 1995; Porter, 1996) by focusing on the pivotal role played by *images of alterity*. Work on the representation of populations has emphasized the political importance of counting, for instance in the context of censuses (Hannah, 2001; Leibler and Breislau, 2006). The role of visualizations and images in statistical work, such as the production of graphs and tables, has been of much less consideration.

One type of visualization that has received much attention in geography is maps. Maps have been specifically related to the “legibility” of nations (Scott, 1998) and to the circumscription of minority groups (Mood, 1946). Maps have been shown to be potent forms of visualization that have effects not reducible to other media, such as text. In a study of British colonial surveys of India, Edney (1997) for instance shows how modern survey techniques helped craft a spatial image of the British Empire. He argues that the spatial image of the Empire itself was constitutive of the Empire, for instance in terms of its legitimation. Cartographic images conveyed a sense of boundedness and hence of reality. Similarly, Thonchai Winichakul has argued that the “geo-body” of Siam was “born in a map” and that, as such, “a map created a nation, though not singlehandedly” (Winichakul, 1994: 174). Denis Cosgrove has argued that such images are intricately bound up with meaning, morality, and dominant forms of imagination (Cosgrove, 2001). Maps are thus one type of visualization, familiar to geographers, with performative effects, as also argued by scholars in visual studies (Elkins, 1999; Mitchell, 2005). James Elkins in particular has called for attention to “non-art images” such as scientific graphs and charts (Elkins, 1999). But wherein does that power consist, and, concomitantly, why undertake a specifically visually focused analysis of images of alterity in the context of Western European discourses of migrant otherness?

The performativity of visualizations: The translation of difference into distance

In visual studies, one way to get a feel of the “life” of images is given by W.J.T. Mitchell, who asks his readers to take a picture of a loved one and stab out the eyes with a knife—an action many will hesitate to undertake due to apparently “irrational” reasons, as images are often considered impotent and passive (Mitchell, 2005). That is an assumption, Mitchell and others conclude, is belied by people’s stance and actions toward images. But, given that images have qualities that are often ill-definable, especially when translated into words, what

do visualizations of migrant alterity “do” precisely? To ask this is to inquire into the performativity of images. In general, for something to have performative power, it needs, as Donald MacKenzie has said, to make a difference (2006: 18). In a very general sense, in images this difference is constituted by the difference in their mode of operating vis-à-vis text. Edney for instance cites the first superintendent of the British Royal Military College: “everything which is put down in writing of necessity takes on some color from the opinion of the writer. *A sketch map allows of no opinion*” (Edney, 1997: 55). Images add credibility to text, and theirs can hence be argued to be a *performativity of persuasion*. They render the realities referenced in text more plausible, credible, and hence more real in terms of the acceptance of realities by readers of texts and viewers of the accompanying images. Performativity of persuasion highlights a related but slightly different effect that issues from images. It entails the effectiveness of images in finding acceptance for observations as realities. By being persuasive, such images therefore reiterate and help sustain certain norms of belonging and certain hierarchies of difference and otherness. There is, however, another way in which the images analyzed in this paper can be seen to do work.

The strongest sense of performativity involves the use of an image in such a way that the reality depicted by the image is reinforced. The image, in that sense, makes itself “more true” (MacKenzie, 2006: 19). Using such a conception, MacKenzie for instance analyses financial models not as “camera’s” that depict realities but as “engines” that drive them (2006). Maps of crime in urban neighborhoods are one example. Rather than merely depict crime, they influence people’s decisions to move, and thereby the class composition of neighborhoods, which are strongly related to crime figures. Performativity in this sense is part of what Thrift has called “non-representational theory” (1999). Typical of the image in Figure 1 and in the other images, we analyze is the fact that they contribute to a highly visual mode of thinking about populations. These consist of separate, bounded chunks made up of (immigrant) subpopulations, and these can be considered as set apart from the native core of “society.” What the images help constitute and fix is a social field of populations as an object of both discourse and (policy) intervention. Performativity is indeed often considered prescriptive (Callon, 2007), and here, prescription involves the visual “scripting” of populations as consisting of bounded, discrete subpopulations. When such subpopulations become acted upon through policy measures, they get articulated in various ways, and they for instance solidify by responding, by resisting, and by thus becoming, in what Foucault (1990) called the “tactical polyvalence” of discourse, more “real” than they were. Our point here is to show how classification and visualization, by providing persuasive images of bounded populations, enable such reality effects to emerge in the first place.

Statistical images are often intricately tied up with discourse and text. In policy briefs and presentations, for instance, researchers use the images analyzed here as their main message. In other words, the differences between populations become viable objects of discourse in part because the reality of those objects is strengthened by their visualizations. In the images we analyze, this occurs because they visually embody the strong discursive figure of “distance.” Dutch and German discourse on the “place” of minorities “in” society is, as these words already denote, strongly *spatial*. There is talk of “distances,” of “lagging behind,” of minority groups “having a ways to go” and, most significantly, of “being at a remove from society,” and of being or threatening to be “outside society.” We argue in this contribution that visualizations are potent and, indeed, performative tools for fixing such constructions both as problem definitions, as frames of analysis and as fields of intervention. This is possible on the basis of what can be called a *performativity of embodiment*. The images embody what they depict, which is a certain *distance*. More precisely, they *translate social distance into visual distance*, expressible for instance in inches on a graph,

and from this they draw their appeal. The social distance between groups that is statistically calculated finds expression in the graphic separation of columns in tables, of lines in graphs, and of bars in charts—where column, line, and bar each stand for discrete chunks of “immigrant groups” of different sizes, each at different remove from the native norm. Fabian (2014: 16) has argued how, in anthropological discourse, temporalized notions of lag turn difference into distance. Such transformations, we argue, are augmented by the use of images that embody distance in a spatial sense. Taking graphic representations of space (cf. Lefebvre, 1991) seriously enables us to recognize how such visualizations facilitate the role of immigrant groups as a constitutive outside of the native norm (usually dubbed “society”), which derives some of its solidity from the fact that images can *embody distance*.

In the following second section, we provide an overview of the history of official integration monitoring in Germany and the Netherlands. Then, we briefly pay attention to the ways in which the images produced by semi- and official statistical research agencies are effective in policy making and the media. Next, we analyze in detail the variations of a *logic of distance* present in various images of immigrant integration. We show how *persuasive images* of (minority) populations are performative tools in legitimizing formal classifications, mediating forms of otherness and consequently imagining society.

Classification systems of immigrant integration in Germany and the Netherlands

One of the defining characteristics of modern states is the highly rationalized ability to sort populations. In *Seeing Like a State*, anthropologist James Scott makes a convincing argument for the role of formalized knowledge and expertise in the ways states render the world (both natural and social) “legible” (Scott, 1998). As Valentin Groebner has illustrated, this has a long history, since states have at least since the late Middle Ages been highly interested in identifying citizens and in surveilling them through official registration, so as to identify strangers and to mark unwanted persons (Groebner, 2007). In this section, we describe the emergence of official monitoring apparatuses of immigrant integration in Germany and the Netherlands. Each year, Dutch and German immigrant integration experts and scientists undertake measurements of immigrant integration, often in the form of commissioned work assigned by ministries and policy makers. This work, in Adrian Favell’s words “often serves to ‘think’ for the state” and hence helps to articulate political positions, social problems, and their solution. Much more than in the United States, the academic research community’s work in Europe is structured by specific national policy agendas (Favell, 2003). Such measurements are intended to assess the degree to which a variety of minority groups can be considered to have become part of the society at large. They are based on population statistics that incorporate specific classifications of belonging to society and of otherness. We focus on Dutch and German classifications of “immigrants” versus “natives”—which we put between quotation marks here because the concepts already entail a classifying practice. We do not attempt a comparative study of the two national classification systems involved here. Rather, we look at how, despite different ways of classifying and monitoring, immigrant integration images are produced that follow similar logics of spatial visualization. Nevertheless, some background with regard to the classifications concerned is needed first.

Germany: Fragmented and reticent

Up until the late 1990s, one cannot speak of official immigration or integration policies in Germany, because the government neglected the need of integrating immigrants

(Aumüller, 2007). Only recently has immigrant integration become a terrain officially dealt with by the German federal government. Consequently, the monitoring agencies focused on integration as a specific field of expertise emerged mainly in the last decade (Aumüller, 2007). For instance, the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees), became a “competence centre for issues concerning integration and migration” parallel to the development of the first official Immigration Act in the first years of the 21st century. Before, BAMF was solely an authority for asylum.¹ Together with the installment of the Immigration Act in 2005 and emergence of a center of expertise for integration, the concepts of “integration” and “immigration” are (re-)conceptualized and specific indicators and classifications for surveillance of immigrant integration are set up.

The fragmented and unofficial approach of immigration and integration by the federal government complicated the installment of an effective monitoring system on integration. This is not only due to the fragmentation of data sources because of an extremely fragmented approach of immigration up until the late 1990s but also by the historical background of the Second World War and Nazism and consequently the reluctance in German society to collect racial, ethnic, or religious population data by the state (Aumüller, 2007). Nevertheless, in 2005, the first immigrant integration specific indicators were implemented in the yearly Microcensus of the Federal Statistical Office that monitors the population and the labor market (Aumüller, 2007). Besides the Microcensus, there are several panel surveys of immigrant integration with less restrained indicators in Germany. One of the most comprehensive and influential ones, the Social Economic Panel Study, carries out a longitudinal study of the total resident population in German society since 1984 and includes integration indicators such as country of origin, citizenship, language proficiency, connection to country of origin and host country, and “feeling German.”² This study is mainly made available for research and teaching purposes (Aumüller, 2007). Furthermore, since 2008, the BAMF provides statistical reports on integration courses, with a focus specifically on the participation, dropouts, and the level of the courses.³ Also since 2008, *Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration* (SVR) publishes an annual report on integration and immigration, however strongly focuses on how people with and without migration background in Germany experience the progress of integration in Germany and the debates concerning the topic.⁴ The Federal Statistical Office, Destatis, classifies the population in the following way; “foreign population” (*Ausländische Bevölkerung*); “civically integrated persons” (*Eingebürgerte Personen*); and “population with migration background” (*Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund*).⁵ The latter are described by Destatis as “all people who migrated to Germany after 1949, including all foreigners born in Germany and all German-born with at least one parent who migrated to Germany or was born in Germany as foreigner” (Destatis, 2011). The design of the Federal Statistical Office shows a detailed overview of migration statuses in Germany and is one object of examination in this paper (Figure 2). Here, the “native” population is classified as “Germans without a migration background” (*Deutsche ohne Migrationshintergrund*).

The Netherlands: Embedded and explicit

In contrast to Germany’s reluctance of specifying ethnic minority groups for the measurements of immigrant integration, *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* (CBS) introduced an ethnicity indicator in the mid-1980s. This ethnicity indicator was embedded in national statistics and standardized social surveys, which are published at regular time intervals since then (Muskens, 2007). From the start of the measurements of immigrant integration in the Netherlands, integration experts have developed an official classification

system with a main focus on the “four classic migrant groups” (SCP Annual Reports); Turks, Moroccans, Antilleans, and Surinamese (cf. *Allochtonenbeleid*, 1989; *Etnische Minderheden*, 1979). In general, statistics on the Dutch population are provided by *Gemeentelijke basisadministratie* (GBA), *Korps Landelijke Politiediensten* (KLDP), and the various surveys run by ocular centers such as Statistics Netherlands (CBS), *Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau* (SCP), and *Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum* (WODC). Besides the ethnicity indicator present in each survey on social and economic issues, the SCP carries out surveys with a specific focus on immigrants and integration. Many of the surveys are carried out on assignment of the Dutch government and consequently most of the research is policy oriented.

While issues such as social contacts with autochthones (of Dutch descent: *autochtonen*) and attitudes toward the Dutch society of “allochthones” (of non-Dutch descent: *allochtonen*) were already present in the minority reports of the 1990s, institutions such as SCP, CBS, and WODC started to include chapters on “socio-cultural integration” in the annual reports of 2005 until 2010. Besides contacts and attitudes, also modern beliefs, religion, and feelings are included as indicators (CBS Jaarrapport, 2008, 2010; Netherlands Institute for Social Research SCP, 2007, 2009; Rapportage Minderheden, 1995, Concentratie en Segregatie; Jaarrapport Integratie, 2005, 2007, 2009; WODC Integratiekaart, 2006).

The Dutch way of classification of on the one hand “autochthonous Dutch” and on the other hand “allochthones” is widely accepted and applied in political debates, administrative practices, and the broader public discourse (Yanow and Van der Haar, 2012). Although one can speak of a continuous highly tensed discourse on immigrant integration (Schinkel, 2007; Van Reekum et al., 2012), the classification of the “four classic groups”; Turks, Moroccans, Antilleans, and Surinamese, in comparison to autochthones seems never to be problematized or replaced. In 1999, the national statistical agency CBS presented a more detailed classification of the overarching category of allochthones, discerning “Western-allochthones” and “non-Western allochthones,” which were separated in “first-” and “second generation” (Yanow and Van der Haar, 2012) The following authoritative definitions are then in use:⁶

- “Autochthon”: a person whose parents were both born in the Netherlands.
- “Western allochthon”: a person with a “Western background”; someone originating from a country in Europe (excl. Turkey), North America or Oceania, or Indonesia or Japan.
- “Non-Western allochthon”: a person with a “non-Western background”; someone originating from a country in Africa, South America, or Asia (excluding Indonesia and Japan) or Turkey.
- “First-generation allochthonous”: a person with a first-generation foreign background; someone born abroad with at least one parent born abroad.
- “Second generation allochthonous”: a person with a “second generation foreign background”; someone born in the Netherlands who has at least one parent born abroad.
- “Third-generation allochthonous”: a person born in the Netherlands of parents who were also born in the Netherlands, however one of whose grandparents was born in a foreign country. Ranked by CBS as “autochthon.”

These classification systems in Germany and the Netherlands of the “native” or “autochthones” population and differentiation of “immigrant groups” are the basis of understanding the concept of “integration” in the field of immigrant integration monitoring in West-European nation-states. The SCP describes “integration” in its Annual Report of 2005 as: “Many definitions of ‘integration’ are possible, however in general one can say that integration refers to the degree of participation by allochthones in the host society” (SCP,

2005; our translation). By distinguishing in this definition, the “immigrant group” called “allochthones” and the “host society” (the “natives” or ‘autochthones’) shows how the classificatory logic informs the understanding of the concept integration in the field of immigrant integration measurements. Recently, the SCP described integration as a “two-way process” in which both “immigrants” and the “receiving society” are involved (SCP, 2013b). Nevertheless, the classifications remain in place and the autochthones, representing the “receiving society,” still form the point of reference. Furthermore, the concept of integration is often described in relation to certain “terrains” or “domains” of “structural integration” and “socio-cultural integration” (SCP Annual Reports, 2010, 2013a). These “terrains” and “domains” are made into specific indicators that are crucial for measuring integration.

Classifications and indicators are taken-for-granted through membership of the experts in the communities producing and working on the basis of the statistics: researchers, politicians, and journalists (cf. Bowker and Star, 1999). It is reproduced and made plausible in the results of the measurements of immigrant integration, i.e. the tables, graphs, and designs. Here, it is not our aim to contrast this understanding of “integration” with an alternative. We are concerned with the performativity of the images of immigrant integration that are produced on the basis of these “operative concepts” of integration (Schinkel, 2013). In the following sections, we scrutinize how these images incorporate, in visual ways, classificatory logics and, have a certain authoritative character in shaping images of otherness (cf. Daston and Galison, 2007; Joyce, 2005).

The logic of distance. Distance making in images of immigrant integration

The images analyzed here provide information directly used by policy makers and the media. The performativity of the images is first of all effective in the input they provide to policy makers, and it forms the epistemic and often conceptual basis on which policy decisions are being made. The Dutch reports published by for instance the SCP and CBS are funded and commissioned by the government (currently by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, but this has been shifting over the past decades between ministries). The SCP describes itself as a “governmental agency, which conducts research into the social aspects of all areas over government policy” and says about its output: “The reports published by SCP are widely used by government, civil servants, local authorities and academics.”⁷ Indeed, debates on “integration” issues in Dutch Parliament are often scheduled at the occasion of the publication of such an annual report, where they provide in itself usually undisputed factual and conceptual basis for debate (Köller R, Koopmans R and Höhne J; 2009, 2011). Likewise, in Germany, the first (2009) and second (2011) “Integration Briefs” (*Erster and Zweiter Integrationsindikatorenbericht*) were commissioned by the German government to the Institution for Social Research in Cologne (ISG) and the Social Science Research Center in Berlin (WZB), after relevant ministries and experts set a 100 integration indicators under the leadership of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration (Brandt and Fincke, 2012). In the final reports, tables comparable to the ones by the Federal Statistical Bureau analyzed in this article are used in their analyses. Here, the way categorizations are adapted by the government on the one hand and media and research on the other hand differs, while the German government restricts its use of classifications to “with and without migration background,” “with and without migration experience,” and “foreigners,” with in some cases an exception of those coming from “EU- or non-EU states.” The images analyzed here are also input in

media coverage of immigrant integration.⁸ The major Dutch and German broadcasting stations and newspapers report on integration on the basis of the reports, and news websites persuade the newsreader with the tables and graphs published in the reports.⁹ The discursive formation of the populations in terms of “natives,” “allochthones,” or “people with or without migration background” in media and policy debates is built upon the way categorizations are defined at the bureaus for official statistics, used in the reports and composed in particular ways in the images.

The relative spacing of categories of alterity (i.e. “ethnic categories” or “people with migration background”) vis-à-vis some reference category (i.e., “society,” or a “native,” or “autochthonous” population) recurs in the spatial design and conceptualization of these images. We discuss four variations in the visual logic of distance: (1) conceptualization; (2) the “presence in absence” of the reference category; (3) the specific display of elements and the relative horizontal and vertical relations in the spatial design; and (4) oscillation of categories and normalization. The specific cases chosen for analysis are context dependent (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006)—located and produced by a particular institution within the context of a specific nation-state—however illustrative for the image production in the larger infrastructure of immigrant integration at the same time. A detailed analysis by zooming in on only a few cases here allows us to demonstrate sophisticatedly the visual logics within these images and subsequently how immigrant integration is a marker of distance toward society.

1. *Conceptualization*

Classifications involve the creation of what Zerubavel has called “islands of meaning.” These are carved out of reality by the twin processes of “lumping” and “splitting,” with the effect that reality, which is continuous, “we experience it as discrete chunks” (Zerubavel, 1996: 421). A similar definition is given by Bowker and Star, who describe classification as “a spatial, temporal, or spatio-temporal segmentation of the world. A ‘classification system’ is a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put to then do some kind of work—bureaucratic or knowledge production” (Bowker and Star, 1999: 10). The design in Figure 2, published by Destatis in an annual report of 2011 on population and employment, is a spatial conceptual ordering of migration statuses in German society that constitutes a figurative expression of such a classification. The total population of Germany is split in two categories, people *without* (1) and *with* (2) a migration background. The conceptualizations are arranged by a sequence of digits from “1,” described as “people without a migration background,” to “2.2.2.2.2.2,” conceptualized as “Germans without migration experience but of whom both or one of the parents has migrated to Germany or was born in Germany as a foreigner.” Location “1” in the design represents the “indigenous” part of the German population, representing “society,” and is not further specified. “1” functions as the neutral and unmarked reference category, which remains constant over against the variable conceptualizations following below “1” within the design. Location “2” in the design is conceptualized as “people with migration background,” that is the marked category from which an internal differentiation of conceptualizations occurs up to 2.2.2.2.2.2.

Each of the conceptualizations can be perceived as a separate space that expresses a relative distance from the top of the design, location “1,” i.e. the “societal space.” In this way, a variety of distances becomes visible in the design. For instance, the category 2.2.2 conceptualized as “people without actual migration experience” is located on a relative distance from the “societal space.” The variety of distances does not only occur along the sequence of conceptualizations from top to bottom, the internal differentiation by indentations also

Übersicht: In den Tabellen verwendete Ausprägungen des detaillierten Migrationsstatus

- Bevölkerung insgesamt
 - 1 Deutsche ohne Migrationshintergrund
 - 2 Personen mit Migrationshintergrund im weiteren Sinn insgesamt
 - 2.1 darunter: Migrationshintergrund nicht durchgehend bestimmbar
 - 2.2 Personen mit Migrationshintergrund im engeren Sinn insgesamt
nach Staatsangehörigkeit einschließlich ,ohne Angabe', nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.1 Personen mit eigener Migrationserfahrung (Zugewanderte) insgesamt
nach Staatsangehörigkeit einschließlich ,ohne Angabe', nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.1.1 Ausländer
nach Staatsangehörigkeit, nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.1.2 Deutsche
nach Staatsangehörigkeit einschließlich ,ohne Angabe', nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.1.2.1 (Spät-)Aussiedler
nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.1.2.2 Eingebürgerte
nach Staatsangehörigkeit, nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.2 Personen ohne eigene Migrationserfahrung (nicht Zugewanderte) insgesamt
nach Staatsangehörigkeit einschließlich ,ohne Angabe', nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.2.1 Ausländer (2. und 3. Generation)
nach Staatsangehörigkeit, nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.2.2 Deutsche
nach Staatsangehörigkeit einschließlich ,ohne Angabe', nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.2.2.1 Eingebürgerte
nach Staatsangehörigkeit, nach Alter oder Aufenthaltsdauer
 - 2.2.2.2.2 Deutsche mit mindestens einem zugewanderten oder als Ausländer in Deutschland geborenen Elternteil
 - 2.2.2.2.2.1 mit beidseitigem Migrationshintergrund
 - 2.2.2.2.2.2 mit einseitigem Migrationshintergrund

Figure 2. Used forms of detailed migration statuses. Source: Destatis (2011: 7).¹⁰

participates in this logic of distance making. Each indentation produces a new conceptualization that occupies a space further away from “1,” the neutral space representing “society.” In this way, the conceptualization of migration statuses in this spatial design operates as a marker of a variety of distances from “society.” It thereby gives a highly spatial expression to the twin processes of *lumping* and *splitting* that characterize classifications (Zerubavel, 1996). The classifications present in integration images are carved out of a national population and lumped together in groups, in which emphasis is put on similarities over differences within the groups. Parallel to this lumping process, splitting among groups occurs, which stresses the differences between groups while exceeding the similarities. The latter entails an increase of distance between the separate groups shaped out of the national population. Analogous to the way Zerubavel discusses the parting of what he calls “discrete chunks” in “acquaintances” and “strangers,” Figure 2 illustrates the classification of the reference category as familiar in contrast to the immigrants as categories of alterity. And, we argue, it is the figurative shape of the figure itself that does most of the work. The performativity of persuasion at work here means that it is hard *not* to think of Germany’s population as a population of native Germans and a variety of *different* populations.

2. “Presence in absence” of the reference category

Processes of lumping and splitting a national population and in particular the neutral character of the reference category become more revealing in the light of the Gestalt

principle *figure-ground* or the *figure-ground reversal* (Gross and Harmon, 2014, Strathern, 2002). Gross and Harmon argue that in perceiving visual representations, we see the components of the image as shaped against a seemingly shapeless background (Gross and Harmon, 2014: 38). Perception of a scientific table or graph occurs between a “superstructure,” that are the axis, and “data-elements,” the bars, or lines. The principle of figure ground allows for the foregrounding of certain bars over against the axis (Gross and Harmon, 2014: 58). Strathern’s study of the workings of figure and ground in images helps to focus on the uneven relationship of fore- and background. Strathern describes “ground” as “a continuum of characteristics as the background to any singular or specific one,” which she calls “figure.” According to her, the ground obtains the value of an “unmarked category” that is imagined as the “natural world.” In contrast, the figure is the specific characteristic that is visualized against the background (Strathern, 2002: 89). This is what happens in Figure 3, where the x-axis of the bar chart (published in the 2011 annual report on integration in the Netherlands by the SCP) shows a classification of four ethnic groups, separated from the overarching category “non-western migrants,” that is referred to in the text accompanying the chart. The category of “non-western migrants” itself is carved out of the national population and lumped together, in which the similarities attributed to “ethnic groups” surpass their differences. After this initial lumping and splitting, which has occurred in a sense “prior to” the image, this category is split into separate ethnic groups, which emphasizes the differences between the groups over the similarities that initially set them apart from a reference category that thus appears in the

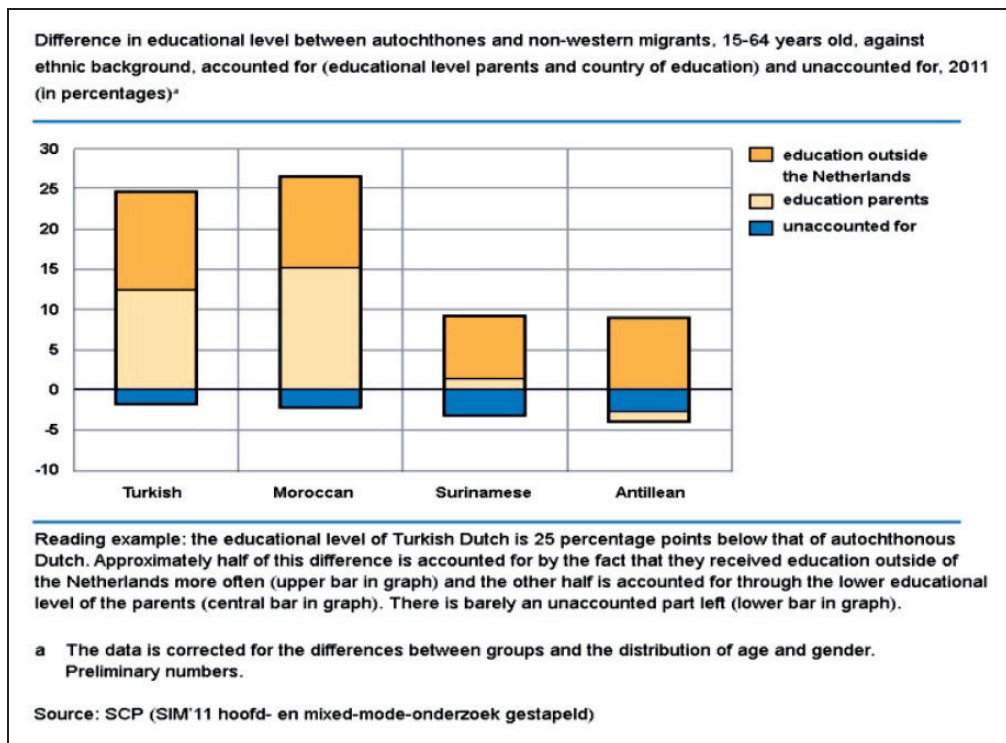


Figure 3. Source: SCP (2011: 85).

image by not directly making an appearance. It is, so to speak, “present in absence” and can as such function as a reference category that “silently” orders the logic of the image. Thus, observing the y-axis shows that not the differences among these categories are at stake in the visualization, but the difference from each of these categories to this reference or standard, which is not literally visible in the image.

The y-axis shows certain percentage points, which refer to what is “absent” in the visualization: an indicator and a reference category. Only indirectly becomes clear, through the texts accompanying the chart, that the y-axis represents both indicator, i.e., the average of educational level in society, and the reference category attached to this, which in this case is conceptualized in the text surrounding the image as “autochthones.” These are given the value “0,” which is the reference value for all “ethnic groups” and as such conveys the neutrality they represent in the image. These elements of the image—“present by their absence”—produce a space separate from the elements literally visualized in the graph. In the image, the highest bar representing the ethnic category “Moroccans” is furthest from the reference category, i.e. “society.” Over against “autochthonous society” as the degree zero of educational deviation, the bars show the “*negative* difference in educational level by non-western migrants in the age of 15–64.” This is how measuring social distance is translated in visual distance.

Positioning the reference category in Figure 3 outside the image emphasizes the “natural,” “neutral,” and “unmarked” character of this category. As such, its absence is conspicuous and plays an important role in the image. As Strathern states: “The (general) frame is already within the (particular) picture” (Strathern, 2002: 92). The educational level of “autochthones” is the frame or “ground” against which the specific characteristics of the educational levels of ethnic categories are portrayed. Gross and Harmon (2014) call this the “superstructure” of the image. Nevertheless, the “absence” of the reference category initiates the reversal of ground and figure (cf. Strathern, 2002). To understand the figures, i.e. the bars representing the ethnic categories along certain percentage points, the relation to their ground needs to be understood. In the image, the ground is absent from the actual visualization and needs to be discovered through the accompanying text. Yet in the realization of this understanding, the ground appears as figure. However, it is located at the zero point of the x-axis, which grounds the logic of distance. The appearance of the reference category in this specific location of the bar chart emphasizes the distance of the bars representing the “immigrants” vis-à-vis the zero point of the x-axis, i.e. “society.” In this way, the image can be perceived as a space of expression of distances and consequently immigrant integration as a marker of distance.

Furthermore, in Figure 3 slippages (cf. Star and Lampland, 2009) occur within the interplay between text and image. The “unexplained part” of the immigrant’s lower educational level is visualized in the blue bars along the negative y-axis and is dismissed in the formulation as a minor element. However, following the logic of the image, the specific location of this unexplained part in the bar chart challenges the distance between reference category and ethnic categories. The reference category, given the value “0” remains constant in its appearance at the zero point of the x-axis. What appears in the positive y-axis, i.e., the *negative* difference in educational level, would, conversely, be a *positive* difference in educational level on the negative y-axis. The location of this “unexplained part,” although minor, renders visible a decrease in distance between the ethnic groups and “society.” However, a Gestalt switch of figure becoming ground is actively averted. Moreover, the part that remains *unexplained* seems to be the part that fits in “society,” however this fitting part cannot be explained. Such anomalies in the image denote the slippages between a standard and its realization in the image (Star and Lampland, 2009). They require a

textual work of normalization, which compensates for this slippage in the *visual* logic of the image. The interplay between text and image remains effective in creating and sustaining a space of “society” of which the immigrant categories are not (yet) part of. Thus, while images performatively enhance text, they in turn at times require the support of textual elements.

3. Spatial design of images

The line chart in Figure 4 (also published by SCP in the 2011 annual report on integration) shows a specific design for the reference category autochthones: a dotted line. This line is set off against four colored lines representing ethnic categories. Here, the dotted line can be seen to operate as a marker of distance first, in its specific location in the graph and second, its appearance as designed differently from the other lines.

The empty space in the chart between the colored lines and the dotted line visualizes a distance. This distance is actually an ensemble of distances that are specified by category, in which the yellow line (representing Surinamese) is closest to, and the red line (representing Antilleans) is furthest from the reference category, representing the “societal space,” floating far above and apart from these lines. The various ethnic groups in a sense appear as “relative distances,” whereas the former, though of course relative as well, appears much more “absolute,” which is a visual effect of spacing predicated upon the scale and selection of the y-axis. The neutrality of the reference category becomes visible here in its visual “unattainability,” hovering so far above the other lines as it does. Significant is also the

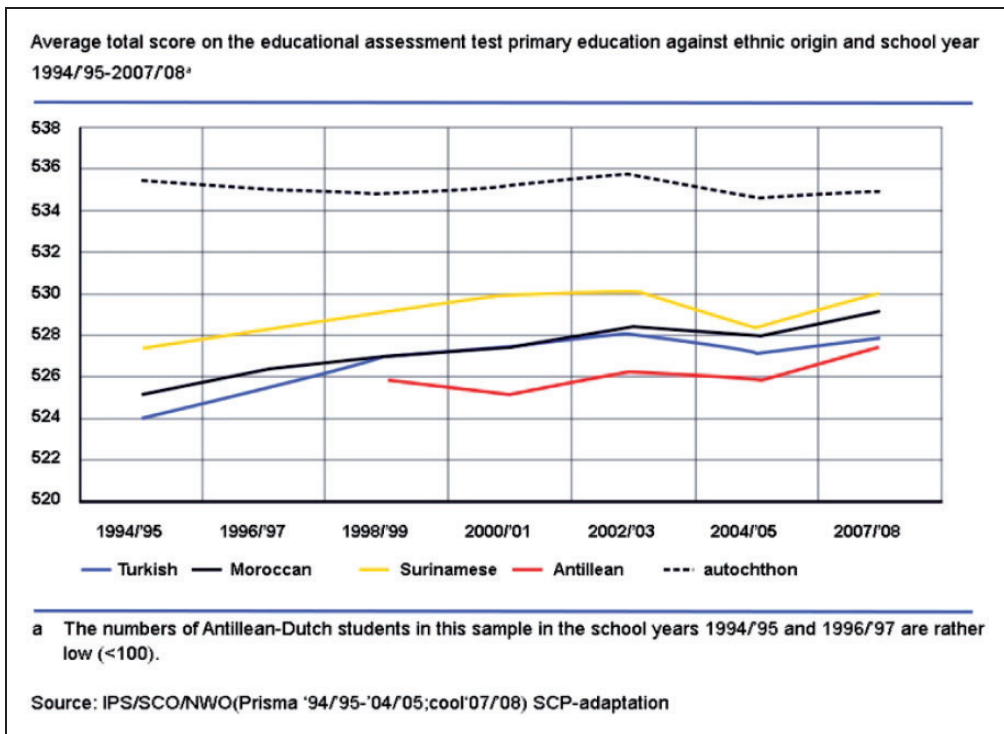


Figure 4. Source: SCP (2011: 91).

distinction between the various colored lines below and the line used for the reference group, which is of a wholly other type. The choice of line itself can here be seen to mark a difference and, thereby, a distance. Whereas, the neutrality of a reference category often functions as “ground” in the sense of the familiar background or frame surrounding an image, the specific type of design may also allow the neutral category to appear in the “figure,” such as in Figure 4. However, its relative location within the image as a whole clearly marks a visual logic of distance.

In Figure 4, distance is also created through a slippage in the interplay between text and image. The categories realized in the chart are split from the Dutch national population in Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, Antillean, and autochthones. Whereas, in the text, one of the ethnic groups is referred to as Antillean-Dutch, the chart represents the second-generation immigrants—classified as “often born in the Netherlands, with migrant parents”—as purely “Antillean,” “Surinamese,” “Moroccan,” and “Turkish.” By omitting the part of the categorization that corresponds or rather overlaps with the reference category and that would “pollute” its boundedness, the logic of distance is accentuated through the visualization. In this way, the persuasive character of the image helps to sustain the hierarchies of otherness.

Very often, the use of horizontality and verticality and the relative spacings on these dimensions operate as visual markers of difference. In 2012, the Federal Statistical Office Destatis published a table of the German census divided over regions, specified toward migration background (Figure 5).

The table visualizes a classification in which first of all the total population (first column) is split in “population *without* a migration background” (second column) and “population *with* a migration background” (columns three to seven). This division creates separate spaces, the first referring to the “indigenous” German population, i.e. the “familiar” and reference category representing “society,” the second to people in Germany with a background in another country, i.e. the “strangers” and categories of alterity. Within the latter space, internal differentiation occurs in the image from left to right, which results in the visualization of columns three to seven. Here, the categorization of “people *with* migration background” is extended into four separate categories:

- (1) “Germans with migration experience”
- (2) “Germans without migration experience”
- (3) “Foreigners with migration experience”
- (4) “Foreigners without migration experience”

Through this internal differentiation in the table from left to right, a variety of distances from the “societal space” are visualized. The specific locations of these categorizations along the horizontal line in the image stress certain degrees of distance between the categories of alterity from the column of the reference category. For instance, the column furthest to the right, representing “people with a citizenship status of ‘foreigner’, however without actual migration experience,” shows a relative distance from the neutral reference category. In this way, the horizontal spatial lining from left to right in the table operates as a marker of a variety of distances to “society.”

The vertical lines of the table participate in the visual logic of distance as well. Whereas, the horizontal lines represent the borders between different regions, the vertical lines can be perceived as borders between different groups present in the national population. Especially, the vertical line between the column of the reference category and the columns of the

Bevölkerung nach Migrationshintergrund

Bevölkerung 2012 nach Migrationshintergrund und Ländern

Länder	Bevölkerung		mit Migrationshintergrund im engeren Sinne				
	insgesamt	ohne Migrationshintergrund	zusammen	Deutsche		Ausländer	
				mit	ohne	mit	ohne
				eigene(r) Migrationserfahrung			
				in 1 000			

Detailliertere Ergebnisse finden Sie in der Fachveröffentlichung [Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund](#).

Quelle: Mikrozensus.

Deutschland	81 913	65 570	16 343	5 059	3 914	5 860	1 511
Früheres Bundesgebiet und Berlin	69 143	53 410	15 733	4 871	3 811	5 566	1 485
Baden-Württemberg	10 810	7 925	2 885	894	688	985	319
Bayern	12 630	10 101	2 529	740	554	1 012	223
Berlin	3 521	2 614	907	198	218	414	77
Bremen	661	471	190	60	47	67	16
Hamburg	1 805	1 308	497	130	120	207	40
Hessen	6 105	4 525	1 580	490	395	551	144
Niedersachsen	7 917	6 504	1 413	521	347	446	99
Nordrhein-Westfalen	17 843	13 444	4 399	1 381	1 118	1 437	463
Rheinland-Pfalz	3 998	3 214	785	275	196	254	59
Saarland	1 014	829	185	57	41	68	20
Schleswig-Holstein	2 840	2 477	363	126	89	124	25
Neue Länder	12 770	12 160	610	187	104	294	26

Detailliertere Ergebnisse finden Sie in der Fachveröffentlichung [Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund](#).

Quelle: Mikrozensus.

Figure 5. Source: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/Migrationshintergrund/Tabellen/MigrationshintergrundLaender.html> (09/03/2015)
 Translation: Bevölkerung nach Migrationshintergrund: Population by migration background, Bevölkerung 2012 nach Migrationshintergrund und Ländern: Population 2012 by migration background and states, Länder: states, insgesamt: altogether, ohne Migrationshintergrund: without migration background, Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund im engeren Sinne: Population by migration background in a strict sense, Zusammen: together, Deutsche mit/ohne eigene(r) Migrationserfahrung: German with/without personal migration experience, Ausländer mit/ohne eigene(r) Migrationserfahrung: Foreigner with/without personal migration experience.

categories of alterity stress the logic of distance between on the left side the “societal space” and on the right side the categories of alterity. These “borders” make the classifications as homogenous entities plausible. This homogenization by columns expresses separate spaces, as well as population differences and thereby distances.

4. Oscillation of categories and normalization

This concluding example of variations in the logic of distance in images of immigrant integration focuses on category problems. Category problems occur in Figure 6, a table published by SCP in the 2005 annual report concerning the “spare time contacts by ethnic groups in the age of 15–65.” The classification rendered visible in the table consists of 10 “discrete chunks”: nine represented as ethnic categories and one category for the autochthonous population. Three options of spare time contacts are measured: “more with members of own group,” “equally much with both,” and “more with autochthones.” What is problematized in and through this visualization is having most contacts with members of one’s “own ethnic group” and the relative lack of contacts with the reference group (“autochthones”). This problematization entails an ensemble of distances between the categories of alterity and the reference category representing “society.” Each of the ethnic categories is measured according to the task they are assigned to, however a slippage occurs in the locations of numbers measured for the category of autochthones.

In the table, the category autochthones explicitly refer to the accompanying text by a footnote, in which is explained that at this point in the table the reading changes: “more with members of own group” is replaced by “more with allochthonous groups.” The paradox of representing distance from society while including a reference category of society itself results in a figure-ground reversal, i.e. by switching perspective in case of a slippage of categories (Star and Lampland, 2009). Without switching, the neutral reference category that functions as background would suddenly appear as one of the specific elements of figure in the image (Figure 7). In that case, the logic of distance would come to be applied to the reference category as well, which would cause an oscillation between the “familiar” reference category and the categories of alterity.

The reference category then becomes visible as the one whose members spend most time with members of their own group in contrast to the ethnic categories who in comparison spend more time with members of other groups. This would mean that the autochthones are furthest from the “societal space,” which they themselves represent. As noted, precisely this

Ethnic signature of spare time contacts by ethnic group, ages 15-65, 2003 and 2004/2005 (in percentages)			
	More with members of own group	Equally much with both	More with autochthones
Turks	64	26	9
Moroccans	51	34	16
Surinamese	35	43	32
Antilleans	35	32	33
(former) Yugoslavs	30	38	32
Iraqi's	42	32	26
Afghans	34	37	29
Iranians	24	37	39
Somaliens	50	32	18
autochthones (a)	3	12	85

(a) Category ‘more with members of own group’ means, in case of autochthones: more with allochthonous groups

Figure 6. Source: SCP (2005: 111.)

	More with members of own group
Turks	64
Moroccans	51
Surinamese	35
Antilleans	35
(former) Yugoslavs	30
Iraqi's	42
Afghans	34
Iranians	24
Somaliens	50
autochthones	85

Figure 7. Source: SCP (2005: 111), our adaptation.

“contact with the own group” is problematized in the context of “integration in the national society.” Switching perspective, i.e., effectuating a figure-ground reversal, normalizes this slippage of categories. That is, when the reference category is likely to be incorporated into the figure of the image, thereby losing its visual ordering role, it shifts to the background, in this case explicitly by way of an exception clause.

Conclusion: The role of expertise in visualizing society

We have argued that immigrant integration research plays a crucial role in imagining national society (cf. Anderson, 1991) by producing tables, graphs, and figures. The performativity of the visualization of a distance of immigrants to a posited societal space lies in the plausibility it grants to notions of bounded national societies that *can be meaningfully distinguished* from their immigrant populations. We analyzed in detail how the internal spatial orders of the images embody what they represent, distance. Hence, social distance is translated into visual distance, which is performative in reiterating hierarchies of otherness. The images are persuasive in imagining “society” through a logic of distance, which can be understood in two ways. First, the distances visualized in the images express relative distances from a “society” that is represented as meeting the “right criteria.” It shows the distances of the categories of alterity from “fitting in,” “belonging,” and “participating.” Second, the visual logic produces images of what “society” is *not*. In this way, by visualizing a figure of what is *not* (yet), i.e. the “migrant other,” one makes plausible what *is*, i.e. “society” as ground. In this way, the images produced by expert institutions in the field of immigrant integration *do* (part of) the imaginary work on which national societies are based.

Whereas, our focus has been on the *imagination* of the “immigrant other” vis-à-vis “society” through expertise as coupled to forms of *classification*, we would emphasize that classification can become the basis for forms of *calculation* as well. Most of the images we

have analyzed in this paper are either products of calculation or can function as a basis for further calculation. The field of immigrant integration expertise, then, can be perceived as what Mitchell (2002) calls “a sphere of calculability.” He shows how modern forms of expertise involved forms of calculation, mapping, and measurement that were crucial to the imagination of both the state and the economy in Egypt (Mitchell, 2002). Likewise, the monitoring institutions can be interpreted as “centres of calculation” (Latour, 1987). More generally, similar things have been noted about the rise of statistics in the modern era (Desrosières, 1993). Through monitoring practices, immigrant integration research contributes to the production of knowledge of a national population, which is crystalized and rendered visible in images. For critical geography and social science, we argue it is pertinent to focus on the visual means by which space is represented, expressed, and thereby performatively shaped. Through what we have called a performativity of persuasion, monitoring practices deploy images that help sustain categories and distinctions used to govern populations. Through what we have called a performativity of embodiment, we have shown how figurative space can become an expression of spatialized forms of difference. Therefore, attention to such mundane objects as graphs, figures, and charts that are part of monitoring practices can help geography and critical social science understand the complexities of the spatial organization of difference.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Notes

1. <http://www.bamf.de/EN/DasBAMF/Chronik/Bundesamt/bundesamt-node.html> (11 June 2015).
2. http://www.diw.de/en/diw_02.c.222729.en/questionnaires.html (11 June 2015).
3. <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Infothek/Statistiken/InGe/inge-node.html> (11 June 2015).
4. <http://www.svr-migration.de/en/annual-report/> (11 June 2015)
5. <https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/MigrationIntegration.html> (11 June 2015).
6. <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/methoden/begrippen/default.htm?Languageswitch=on&ConceptID=315> (11 June 2015).
7. http://www.scp.nl/english/Organisation/About_SCP (11 June 2015).
8. <http://nos.nl/video/336830-scp-allochtone-jongeren-vaak-in-aanraking-met-politie.html> (11 June 2015).
9. <http://www.nu.nl/algemeen/3932500/integratie-van-niet-westerse-jongeren-verloopt-moeizaam.html> (11 June 2015).
10. The relevant features of the two figures in German (Figures 2 and 5) are translated in the text; Figures 1, 3 and 4 in Dutch are translated, Figure 6 has been directly translated in the text.

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