Dutch society is diverse in religious denominations, beliefs, ideologies and practices. Different approaches to cultural integration have been taken, ranging from pillarization (1900s-1960s) to multiculturalism (1970s-2000s) and the current demand for assimilation. Tension exists between the latter two regarding the space granted to cultural minorities to execute their cultural identities. Actors from government, civil society, and the business sector contribute to the different discourses. This dissertation discusses the following questions:

How do different societal actors position themselves with regards to the space given for cultural identity and diversity?

Which opportunities and barriers do these actors encounter in different societal spheres and how can these be explained?

What are the consequences of the findings of the two former questions for the discourses on integration?

Four empirical chapters answer these questions from different angles, respectively the parliamentary debate about non-stunned ritual slaughter, halal governance in the market place, tolerance in the news media, and views of ethnic/Islamic organizations on integration. This dissertation concludes that there are various interests at stake which hamper actors to take a stance. Furthermore, space for cultural diversity is being commodified and is path dependent. Sensitivity to popular opinion by politicians, sensitivity to economic interests by business actors and power differences may be barriers. An opportunity may arise through taking a stance on the local level and with regards to concrete situations, and by enabling different actors to gain access to public discourse. The findings allow the definition of possible contributions by each actor to the societal discourse on integration. Governmental actors may draft, enact, execute, and enforce laws and policies that influence the space granted for cultural identities and diversity. By facilitating a participatory process on a levelled playing field, majority and minority interests may be reconciled and compromises might be found. Business actors may facilitate or withdraw from the provision of products needed for the expression of cultural identity and diversity. Certification may help to make the facilitation profitable, due to the added value of transparency and benefits of marketing. By producing and selectively publishing news items, media contributes to the discourses of assimilation and multiculturalism. Thus, they should be aware that by adopting e.g. populist language, even in criticisms, they reproduce the respective discourse. Ethnic/Islamic organizations may profit from professionalization, more engagement with the Dutch public sphere, and a common position regarding integration to gain access to the political process on an equal footing with other societal actors. Moreover, a professional appearance may reduce prejudices and misunderstandings in society and public discourse.