



Utrecht University

A Brexit from Britain or Europe?

An assessment of identifications with
Europe among British expats living in
the Netherlands



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ABSTRACT

The majority of studies concerning the UK's Brexit have focused on its impacts on the UK domestic population. However, Brexit is much more than a domestic issue; it is also a unique occurrence in EU history that a member state leaves the EU for the first time. For the 785,000 British expatriates living in the continental EU, Brexit entails the first ever en-masse loss of European citizenship. This may consequent a choice between Britain and Europe, between national and supranational identities. European identity has long been contested, but if expats from the most Eurosceptic EU member state come to feel more European than British, Brexit may prove to be a litmus test for the existence of just such a European identity.

As such, this current study asked in what ways the Brexit process of February 2016 to March 2019 had affected identifications with Europe of British expats living in the Netherlands. The study used a case study of the Netherlands, interviewing a diverse sample of twelve British expats. The interviews used a novel, narrative, semi-structured approach, which guided expats through their responses to four main events of the Brexit process in order to track changes to their connections with the UK, connections with Europe and practical connections (housing, employment, finance). The interviews were each about an hour long and conducted between March and April 2019.

The study's results corroborated previous work on Brexit and expats, finding that as the Brexit process proceeded, Britain was viewed more negatively and the expats' identifications with it weakened. However, the current study went further, finding that expats' identifications with Europe strengthened during the Brexit process. By basing the research on the Brexit timeline, the study tracked when these identification changes occurred. It found that the expats' negative identifications with the UK occurred first, immediately after the Leave result of June 2016. However, the strengthening identifications with Europe, only occurred in the later stages of the Brexit process, during the Brexit negotiations of 2018 and early 2019, as the threat of Brexit to the sustainability of their European lifestyles became clearer. This was demonstrated through actions such as an increasing necessity to learn Dutch, concern for the ability to move to another EU country in the future and finding ways to retain EU citizenship.

In sum, the shifting identifications of the expats from Britain to Europe show that it is possible for people from even the most Eurosceptic EU populations to identify with the EU. However, the timing of the identity shift is significant because it suggests that a person only becomes aware of their identifications with the EU and Europe when their EU benefits are removed from them. Otherwise, Europe is perhaps taken for granted as a part of everyday life, without enough salience to encourage identifications, attachment or loyalty.

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INTRODUCTION

In February 2016, David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, announced that the United Kingdom would hold a non-binding in/out referendum considering its membership of the European Union (EU). This referendum was held in response to a perceived rise in Euroscepticism among the British population over the preceding years. In the 2014 European Parliament elections, UKIP, the UK's main Eurosceptical party, achieved its best ever result, gaining more seats than any other British party. Then Cameron's Conservative Party won the 2015 General Election with a campaign which promised that an EU referendum would be held after a renegotiation of the UK's position in the EU (*Conservative Manifesto*, 2015). Perhaps then it is not surprising that when the referendum was held on 23 June 2016, a 52% majority voted to leave the EU, triggering a process of UK-EU withdrawal negotiations which have become commonly known as Brexit.

A unique occurrence in British history, the Brexit process has already resulted in the resignation of two prime ministers, damage to the pound sterling and divisions both in Parliament and the public. However, Brexit is much more than a domestic issue; it will also be a unique occurrence in EU history, with a member state leaving the EU for the first time. For the 785,000 (Office of National Statistics, 2018) British expatriates living in the EU (not including Ireland), Brexit entails the first ever en-masse loss of European¹ citizenship. This is a population which has made use of those open borders which many Leave voters opposed, in order to live and work in continental Europe. For these expatriates (hereafter: expats), Brexit poses a threat to their everyday lives, with the resulting loss of European citizenship meaning the possibility of tougher residency and employment rights and higher cost of living (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016; Mindus, 2017). Yet the majority of academic Brexit studies have focused on impacts for the UK's domestic population.

However, there have been a few studies of British expats' reactions to Brexit. Of these, the study of Katie Higgins (2018), a geographer from University of Sheffield, has been cited most

¹ In this text the terms "Europe" and "European" are used in reference to the EU

in social and political research in order to illustrate such expat reactions. Her study is possibly the most significant since the EU referendum, having administered a survey of over 900 British expats across twenty EU member states between 13 and 20 July 2017. Higgins found that a majority of these experienced feelings of shame, loss and dislocation concerning Britain; they were no longer proud to be British and felt they could not identify with Britain anymore, feeling a need to distance themselves from the country. The study also found that many respondents exhibited a 'growing sense of affection and attachment to their Europeanness' (Higgins, 2018: 4), but did not expand on this for 'reasons of space' (Higgins, 2018: 4). This current study, by contrast, will further investigate these feelings of distancing from Britain and growing identifications with Europe during the Brexit process, in order to explain them and investigate if one leads to another.

From the perspective of international relations (IR), it is important to focus on the impact of the Brexit process on British expats because they are caught in the middle between Britain and Europe, between their national and supranational identities. European integration, as well as the forms it should take, has always been contested, as Zimmerman and Dür (2016) illustrate with the essays that they compiled in *Key Controversies in European Integration*. European identity is not exempt from this contestation, with questions asked over what a European identity is, how it can exist alongside national identity, or if it exists at all. Brexit will put British expats in a unique position; their loyalties will be tested and they may need to choose between living in Britain or Europe. If British expats no longer feel attached to Britain, but instead feel more European, then it will show that there is a sense of European identity among those who have made use of the EU's open borders. In this way, the identifications of British expats can be a litmus test for the success of European integration. It can indicate the extent to which a united Europe has in fact fostered a supranational identity.

The current study, therefore, investigates how expats' identifications with Europe have been impacted by the Brexit process. To this end, in-depth interviews with a sample of British expats in the Netherlands were conducted to gain a deep understanding of their identifications, sense of belonging and loyalty to Europe. These interviews took a narrative approach, whereby participants described changes to their identities in the context of four major events in the Brexit process: the announcement of the referendum; the victory of

Leave; the release of Theresa May's Chequers Deal; and, most recently, the defeat of May's deal and resultant extension of the Brexit negotiations. As such, this study is not only one of the first to use interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of ordinary people's reactions to Brexit; but it is also one of the first to analyse how these reactions have changed over time, as a result of the major events of the Brexit process.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Before delving into the findings of the current study, it is first necessary to situate it within its wider context by explaining the history of and connections between its key themes: European integration and identity, expats and Brexit.

Is there a "Europe"?

The formal process of European integration began in 1951, in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded as an economic and social vehicle for lasting peace in Europe. Unlike the multilateral United Nations, the ECSC was the world's first supranational organisation. It attempted to create '*de facto* solidarity' (Virtual Centre for Knowledge on Europe, 2016: 2) between its populations, by working towards common European goals which transcended nation-state differences. Political scientist Ernst Haas (1958) found that initially these common goals were mainly economic, such as eliminating trade tariffs. However, social and political interdependencies would also be needed to create complete and lasting solidarity between Europeans; therefore, there was an impetus for the cultivation of a European identity and sense of community.

The formal search for such a European identity reached its apex at the 1973 Copenhagen Conference when the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of what was then known as the European Economic Community (EEC) officially defined a European identity (Beers, 2007). They declared that the nine member states shared 'norms of representative democracy, rule of law, social justice and human rights' (Liebert, 2016: 99). This declaration was intended to foster increased unity between the nine EEC member states by highlighting the commonalities between them and their differences from other countries around the world (Beers, 2011).

Since then, the European Economic Community has become the European Union, and European integration has deepened with the introduction of EU treaties (notably, Maastricht 1993 and Lisbon 2009); the removal of borders for the Single Market and Schengen Zone; and the creation of the Euro. This increasing integration has continued to serve the economic goals that Haas (1958) highlighted, but the cross-cultural spillovers have concurrently eroded nation-state differences drawing the EU member states towards a cohesive sense of “Europe”.

The theories of influential scholars of nationalism predict that such commonalities should unite the EU’s constituent populations in a new European supranational identity. For example, Anthony D. Smith (1991), formerly Professor Emeritus of Nationalism and Ethnicity at LSE, theorised that the components required for a national identity are territory, common institutions, common rights, and common culture, all components which have become increasingly unified in the EU, testament to increasing European integration. Michael Billig’s (1995) theory of “banal nationalism” later predicted that the population becomes conditioned in favour of this collective identity as a result of iconography which makes the collective identity a part of everyday lives and personal identity. Such iconography associated with Europe can be observed in, for example, the EU flag, the concept of “Brussels” and of course the Euro, so it could be expected for EU citizens to feel a sense of European identity and attachment.

However, in the opinion of IR scholars Jeffrey Checkel and Peter Katzenstein (2009), much of European integration and the creation of European symbols has occurred as a consequence of unchallenged decisions of EU elites, creating a top-down European identity to suit their political-economic project. Checkel and Katzenstein claim that this “Europe as Project”, a concept of what and how Europe should be, has evolved quite separately from “Europe as Process”, the actual shared experiences of European people. For them it would seem that the conditioning process of Billig’s (1995) “banal nationalism” has not been successful; European icons and culture have not become a positive part of Europeans’ everyday lives. Instead, Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) claim that many Europeans see “Europe as Project” as a threat to their nation-states, leading to a populist nationalist backlash or “constraining dissensus”, as Hooghe and Marks’s (2009) theory of postfunctionalism describes. IR scholar Thomas Risse (2010) introduces identifications to Checkel and Katzenstein’s theory, stating

that those who would endorse “Europe as Project” are able to identify with both their nation-state and with Europe; while those who are against it only identify with their nation-state. Such a disconnect between “Europe as Project” and “Europe as Process” is of interest both academically and politically. Academically, it is interesting to know if and why support for the EU is lacking amongst the European public, despite increasing European integration which should, in theory, have fostered a common identity and culture. Politically, a disconnect between the EU elites and the European people is important because the EU is said to lack democratic legitimacy if it is not supported by the European public (Bellamy, 2016). Therefore, as LSE politics professor Jonathan White (2016) describes, support for the EU, and ultimately a collective European identity, is necessary for its political survival.

Brexit and Nationalism

The UK’s Brexit could be seen as a case supporting Risse (2010) and Checkel and Katzenstein’s (2009) theories, since Brexit is often viewed as a nationalist backlash against the “Europe as Project” integration measures. Subsequent studies based on both Eurobarometer data (Carl et al., 2019) and original longitudinal quantitative surveys (Carl, 2017) found that Britons with stronger national identification were more likely to vote Leave. Furthermore, the Brexit vote was not unexpected because the UK has been persistently more Eurosceptical than other member states. The UK is the lowest ranked EU member for European identity, with two thirds of Britons not identifying as European at all in a 2015 Eurobarometer survey (Dennison and Carl, 2016); a situation that has persisted since 1992 (Curtice, 2017). Political scholars Sofia Vasilopoulou (2015) and James Dennison and sociologist Noah Carl (2016) attributed these findings to the UK’s historical lack of European character, basing their analysis on secondary historical and geographical accounts. They stated that the UK’s island geography has sometimes isolated it from European developments; for example, it was the only European Allied power not occupied during the Second World War. This, as well as close ties, particularly linguistic ones, with its former colonies and the USA has given Britons a sense of exceptionalism and confidence to go it alone. Such ties to the USA and the Commonwealth can somewhat explain why the majority of Britain’s expatriate population, 61%, live in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, compared to only 26% in the EU (ONS, 2018), despite the geographical proximity of Europe. If Britons traditionally find it hard to join with Europe, a question arises as to whether this is

also reflected in the identifications, sense of belonging and loyalties of Britain's expat population living in the EU. If so, then the British expat condition can be said to be an indicator for the success of European integration.

Expatriates and European Identity

Expats are broadly defined as people who *live* (and often work) outside their native country with an intention to stay *temporarily* (McNulty and Brewster, 2017). Adrian Favell (2009), specialist of intra-EU migration, describes highly-skilled European expats as the embodiment of the EU elites' vision when conceiving Schengen. Following Favell, these expats are able to combine "Europe as Project" and "Europe as Process" (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009) by making use of the EU's integration policies, such as free movement and the Erasmus study scheme, in their everyday work and lives. Consequently, in Favell's view expats would be the most likely Europeans to identify with Europe. In this case, Billig's (1995) claims about the conditioning effects of iconography resulting in "banal nationalism" appear to be vindicated.

However, international expat studies conducted by sociologists Byron G. Adams and Fons van de Vijver (2015) and Eeva Kohonen (2008) found that not all expats adopted a supranational identity during their time abroad. They found that some expats were "identity shifters", open to adopt the culture of wherever they stayed, much like Favell (2009) found was typical among intra-EU expats. However, Adams and Van de Vijver (2015) and Kohonen (2008) also discovered "identity non-shifters", expats who made a lot of effort to retain their national identity while abroad and perceived cultural differences as a threat, much like the nationalist reaction to "Europe as Project". In the case of British expats, it is possible that they may differ from the typical cross-cultural identities of intra-EU expats described by Favell (2009) and instead have strong exclusive national identities, like Kohonen's (2008) "identity non-shifters" and many of their compatriots who voted for Leave.

Identifications of British Expatriates

A report produced by Finch et al. (2010) of the British think tank Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), suggests that this hypothesis may be correct. It found that all British expats maintain significant attachments to the UK and typically only go abroad for short stays of between one and four years, implying that they may predominantly identify with Britain whilst abroad. For these expats, repatriating may seem the most obvious post-referendum

plan because the complications of living abroad post-Brexit would far outweigh their loose commitments and ties to their European host countries.

However, the IPPR report (Finch et al., 2010) also found many expats who successfully integrated abroad, engaging in community activities and speaking the local language. Furthermore, sociologist Michelle Lawson's (2016) pre-referendum study of a British expatriate community in France found that expats were often disapproving of the stereotypical "Brit abroad", who would sit around in bars, depend on British services and cluster together in "ghettos". As a result, British expats would make a special effort to integrate with the locals, moving away from typical identifications as British. Other studies, such as Higgins's (2018) post-referendum expat study, have also noted such a "bad Britain" discourse, with British expats viewing the UK as increasingly insular and xenophobic and emigrating to escape from this. These British expats, described by Finch et al. (2010), Lawson (2016) and Higgins (2018) are more typical supranationally-identifying intra-EU expats; for them, Brexit could be a serious challenge as their everyday lives and connections with others come into conflict with the status of their passport.

Clearly the British expat population has diverse levels of inclusion within the host community, so it can provide an interesting case for how levels of inclusion may affect identification with Europe. The Brexit process, and all the uncertainty and challenges that accompany it, then provides an effective test of expats' strength of identification with Europe. As such, the current study will investigate if and how Brexit has impacted expats' identifications of Europe by using this central research question:

In what ways has the Brexit process of February 2016 to March 2019 affected the identification with Europe of British expats living in the Netherlands?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING IDENTITY

Political scientist Michael Bruter (2004: 25) of LSE defines identity as 'feelings of belonging to, and exclusion from, human subgroups'. The behaviours and preferences of people in these groups often exhibit common dispositions and continuity of these commonalities over time (White, 2016). This has led many studies of European identity to take a top-down approach, investigating if Europeans adhere to a pre-defined European identity (Checkel

and Katzenstein, 2009): an identity often based upon Europe's perceived commonalities, such as shared heritage, values, geography and politics (Bruter, 2004) – the “Europe as Project”.

However, Bruter (2004) also claims that because these approaches ignore other associations with Europe beyond a pre-defined identity, they do not explain fully why only some citizens identify with Europe. This issue will be addressed in the current study, as it aims to address the diversity of British expats' identifications. By investigating practices of *identification* – how someone interprets and connects with a concept (White, 2016), this study adopts a bottom-up, interpretivist approach. For, as Adams and Van de Vijver (2015) claim, personal identity is developed during a person's adolescence, so does not change much during, for example, expatriation as an adult worker. It is true that values and interests may be constant during this time; however Brexit is highly likely to affect personal goals and aspirations, as expats may lose financial, housing and job security during this time. For this reason, a focus on identification rather than identity will elucidate the necessary broader spectrum of associations with Europe.

The Adams and Van de Vijver (2015) study offers a theoretical framework for studying expatriate identification which is highly appropriate for this current IR study, due to its emphasis on relationships and connections. They identify three main contexts by which expats' experiences of inclusion and identification differ: *cultural distance* (between host country and origin); *purpose and rewards of expatriation*; and *support network* (family and local communities). These factors can influence the extent to which expats identify with their host country. For example, in the current study's case of the Netherlands, the main *cultural difference* is language. Those unable to speak Dutch may feel excluded from the local community and unable to fully integrate, as Favell (2009) and sociologists Marianne van Bochove and Godfried Engbersen (2015) found in their independent studies of expats living in Dutch cities. Magnus Andersson's (2013) study of Swedish expats in the Netherlands also found that the *purpose of expatriation* and resulting timeframe of stay can influence the extent to which expats may attempt to involve themselves in the community, as those with a longer-term commitment to their stay were more likely to put down firmer roots, such as buying property. Finally, Adams and Van de Vijver (2015) found that an expat is more likely to successfully integrate into the host society if they do not feel alone, but are

supported by friends and family. It is especially helpful for inclusion if this *support network* is local, for example if an expat's close family stays in the host country with them.

Clearly, all three of these factors can influence an expat's levels of inclusion in and identification with the host community during their stay abroad, and as such these factors will form the framework of the current study's sub-questions. For each factor, the strength of *connections* with both the host and origin countries was influential for levels of inclusion and identifications. These connections could be with people, such as family, partners or local associations; or could be more practical connections linking an individual to a place, such as political participation or buying a property there. As such, the current study will use connections to measure expats' identification:

1. In what ways have expats' connections with the culture and community in their country of origin (i.e. the UK) changed throughout the Brexit process?
2. In what ways have expats' connections with the culture and community in the host country changed throughout the Brexit process?
3. In what ways have expats' practical, professional and financial connections changed throughout the Brexit process?

The first two sub-questions focus on expats' cultural distance and support network both with the host country and the country of origin. Topics that will be addressed are, for example, social situations and communities which they experience and engage with during their stay. This will indicate to what extent British expats feel included both in their host country and country of origin while staying in the EU and how Brexit has affected this sense of inclusion. By including sub-questions on inclusion in both the host and origin countries, it will be possible to test if the "bad Britain" discourse found by other studies (Lawson, 2016; Higgins, 2018) also exists in the context of the Netherlands, and if this has resulted in a switch of identification from Britain to Europe.

The final sub-question focuses on the potential rewards that the expat experience offers. This question aims to investigate the potential threat to fundamental, practical matters that Brexit poses for expats, who may lose job, financial and housing security during this time; as well as the effects of this on their aspirations for the future.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

There is limited data on present day, post-referendum, expat identifications with Europe, so it was necessary to create new primary data. The study's focus on expats' own interpretations and experiences of Europe meant that semi-structured in-depth interviews were the natural choice for this data collection. Many authors writing on the subject of identity (such as: Armbruster et al., 2003; Bruter, 2004; Gatti, 2009; Scalise, 2015; Higgins, 2018) emphasise the importance of in-depth interviews to go beyond theoretical, researcher-led understandings of identity, and situate expats' identifications and experiences within their broader biographies or narrative. The interviews were analysed using a content analysis to draw out key themes and similarities in participants' identifications with and experiences of Britain, Europe and Brexit.

The study is partly a follow-up to Katie Higgins's (2018) study of post-referendum expatriate identifications with Britain, looking conversely at expat identifications with Europe, so some of the more direct interview questions were based on hers. For example, "How would you define the term "European"?" and "How did the Leave result change your view of the future?"² However, the interpretivist approach of this current study meant that the interviews were more open-ended than Higgins's surveys, with main topics used as signposts in a more conversational approach, as used by Andersson (2013). To probe connections to people in Britain and Europe the topics covered physical connections, such as involvement in expat communities and relationships with locals; digital (online) connections with individuals in both locations; and passive and active participation in politics, cultural life and media. For the third sub-question, topics related mainly to plans for the future, such as living situation and financial and job security. Indicators for identifications with Europe include a strong commitment to their life in the Netherlands; contact with a pan-European community; and activities which differ from the British stereotypes mentioned by Lawson (2016). As in Bruter's (2004) interpretivist study of European identity, the interviews did not explicitly mention the concept of "European identity" until the end, in order to avoid skewing participants' own interpretations of the concept.

² Full interview schedule in Appendix 1

In order to structure the interviews and later analysis, participants were asked to address their changing experiences of the aforementioned topics during four distinct post-referendum events. The first of these was David Cameron's announcement of the EU referendum in February 2016. At this point, it is expected that expats would begin to be worried about their position living in the EU. The second event was immediately after the announcement of the EU referendum Leave result on 24 June 2016, when expats are expected to have the strongest reactions to Brexit and identifications with Britain, such as the shame that Higgins (2018) found. The third event was the release of Theresa May's Chequers deal on 6 July 2018 (*i News*, 24 December 2018, online). It was expected that this gave expats a better idea of what form Brexit would take, and therefore more certainty concerning its effect on their lives. The final event, brought participants to the present day (at time of interviews) in March 2019, with the House of Commons votes against May's deal, against a "no-deal Brexit" and for an extension of negotiations beyond the original leaving date of 29 March 2019. This resulted once again in much uncertainty over Brexit's form, with no deal guaranteeing the UK's connections to the EU; and no guarantee for when or if Brexit would actually happen (*BBC News*, 14 March 2019, online).

By using these events as the framework for the interviews, it was possible to build a complete narrative of participants' *changing* identifications as a result of Brexit. Using such a narrative approach was also useful for avoiding the use of leading or abstract concepts, typical of Eurobarometer surveys, such as "attachment", "pride" and "identity", which can often give unrealistic answers, as people's attitudes may differ from their lived actions (Armbruster et al., 2003; Scalise, 2015). Accordingly, the interviewer noted how participants' attitudes towards Britain and Europe manifested themselves in their actions as they responded to these events, such as promotion of Europe to Britons "back home" or attempts to claim Dutch citizenship.

The study interviewed a sample of twelve British expats (descriptions of each participant can be found in Table 1, at the end of this chapter). Expats were defined similarly to Van Bochove and Engbersen's (2015) study of expats in Rotterdam, as a highly-skilled migrant who has moved with the intention of staying *temporarily* and has lived abroad for over six months. They were recruited using expat groups on Facebook, predominantly *Expats Utrecht* and *British in the Netherlands*, as well as snowball sampling. In order to gain expats'

experiences of the whole Brexit timeline, the study prioritised recruitment of expats who had lived in the Netherlands since the beginning of 2016, although some participants emigrated to the Netherlands during the Brexit process, providing a different perspective. The sample only included expats who had lived in the Netherlands for ten years or less, in order to focus on temporary expats and not fully-integrated migrants. The sample was very diverse, including expats of different age groups, genders, professions and lengths of stay, as well as those from different parts of the UK and living in different parts of the Netherlands. This enabled the study's results to make some general statements about both the British population and the British expat population in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands was chosen for the study because of all the EU member-states it has one of the closest cultures to the UK. This is due to strong historical and political ties between the two countries (Ashton, 2001) which have led to shared international political outlooks and the creation of shared companies, such as Royal Dutch Shell. Additionally, 90% of Dutch people can speak English (Special Eurobarometer, 2012), which could enable British people to integrate more easily than in other EU countries. As a result of these similarities, the Netherlands could make an interesting case for studying supranational identifications, with the possibility that British expats may find themselves identifying easily with the national culture of the Netherlands, rather than with Europe. Nevertheless, it would be useful for this study to be repeated in the future in some of the more populous British expat destinations, such as Spain and France (ONS, 2018) to investigate the effect of the Brexit process on expat identification in different host countries.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis will be divided into four chapters. Each of the next three chapters will focus on a different Brexit event, moving chronologically through the process. Chapter 1 focuses on Cameron's announcement of the referendum in February 2016, as well as the referendum campaign trail. Chapter 2 will then look at the announcement of the Leave result in June 2016; then Chapter 3 will briefly cover the release of May's Chequer's Deal in July 2018; before focusing on the three-time defeat of May's Withdrawal Deal and subsequent Brexit extension, in March 2019. Each chapter will be introduced using participants' reactions to the event. The analysis of each chapter will then move through each of the three sub-questions, looking at interview responses concerning connections to the UK, then to Europe,

then practical connections and how these have changed within the context of the Brexit event.

A penultimate chapter, Chapter 4, will then explicitly consider the participants' thoughts and opinions about identifying with Europe and European identity, in order to contribute to the main research field of this thesis. This chapter will give a chance to consider if the expat participants identified with Europe even before the Brexit process began. This will then naturally progress into the Conclusion chapter, which will draw the analysis to a close and answer the main question of the thesis.

Table 1 - Interview Participant Demographics

Names have been changed in an attempt to protect anonymity.

Participant	Age	Sex	Occupation	UK Origin	NL Residence	Arrival in NL	Previous Expatriations	Family
Colin	26	Male	Private sector health researcher	Liverpool	Utrecht	December 2016	None	Parents in UK
David	26	Male	PhD researcher	Bristol	Utrecht	2014	Utrecht for year-long internship in 2012	Parents in UK, German partner in NL
Donna	38	Female	Physiotherapist	Born South Africa to British parents, Moved to England aged 20 years old	Maastricht	August 2017	Saudi Arabia , Lebanon and Dubai	Parents still in South Africa
Douglas	26	Male	Nautical route analyst	Dunoon, Scotland	Ede, Gelderland	September 2017	Worked on container ships	Parents in UK, Dutch partner in NL
Eleanor	22	Female	Master's student; part-time shop assistant	Cockermouth, Cumbria	Utrecht	September 2015	None	Parents in UK
Isaac	46	Male	European Patent Office	Newcastle	Rijswijk, near The Hague	July 2016	Munich for 20 years	English Wife and children in UK
Isobel	35	Female	Unemployed, not looking for work	Egham, Surrey	Utrecht	December 2018	None	Dutch partner in NL
Joseph	31	Male	PhD researcher; intern at NGO	Pembroke, Wales	The Hague	June 2018	Spain for a short time	English wife with him in NL
Kevin	53	Male	European Patent Office	Reybridge, Surrey	Leiden	2011	South America, Switzerland, Spain	Dutch Wife and children in Leiden, father from

							and China	Glasgow, mother from Madrid
Lewis	27	Male	Meteorologist	Newcastle	Utrecht	January 2017	Scotland	Parents in UK, Dutch partner in NL
Penelope	36	Female	Photographer	South Shields, Tyne and Wear	Eindhoven	June 2016	None	Dutch fiancée and children in NL
Sean	26	Male	Enablement Specialist, electric car company	Northampton	Utrecht	2014	Utrecht for Master's study in 2013	Parents in UK

CHAPTER 1 – ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE EU REFERENDUM, FEBRUARY 2016

‘When I left [in 2012] things weren’t that bad in the UK really. Brexit hadn’t really started. Everything was fine.’ – David

On 20 February 2016, Prime Minister David Cameron announced the UK’s plans to hold a referendum on membership of the EU just four months later, on 23 June 2016. In his announcement speech outside 10 Downing Street, Cameron was clear that he believed the UK’s security and economy would be safer and stronger if the UK remained in the EU, concluding his speech by recommending that Britain should remain a member of a reformed EU (*The Independent*, 20 February 2016, online). Yet even this pro-European speech painted the UK as an “awkward partner” of the EU, with references to the UK’s exceptionalism and tendency not to identify as European, as described by Vasilopoulou (2015) and Dennison and Carl (2016). Cameron included lines such as, ‘I do not love Brussels. I love Britain’ and ‘We are Great Britain – we can achieve great things’; as well as a reminder of the UK’s ability to opt out of major EU integration projects, such as the Euro and Schengen. This contributed to a sense that this speech and the referendum more generally, were concerned with the UK, not Europe. Furthermore, it seems that this lack of concern with Europe extended to British expats living in the EU, with the speech mentioning the families, safety and jobs of Britons in Britain, but not Britons living abroad.

In their reactions to Cameron’s announcement of the referendum, the current study’s participants echoed this concern for the British domestic situation and not for the EU. One-third felt that the referendum would not even be significant, believing it was a ‘waste of time’ (Isobel, 35, Appendix 3.7) because no-one was asking for it. This suggests that Europe was an unimportant non-issue for them; but they also believed that generally the British public were happy with the status quo and had no desire to leave the EU. At the time of the announcement all four of these participants were still living in the UK, so it is significant that they thought no-one wanted a referendum, because of all the expat participants they were the most exposed to the British public in the media, on the streets and in their social networks. As shown in Table 1, the expats interviewed in the current study were diverse,

from different origins in the UK, occupations and ages, so they represent a range of outlooks and social networks.

Conversely, another third of the participants were shocked and concerned about the announcement of the referendum; and all four of them were already living abroad. Yet their concerns were mainly Britain-centric. Two of them were concerned that “the people” were not well-informed enough to make a decision on EU membership, once again emphasising the view that Britons know little about the issue of Europe. While another was the first to mention concern about xenophobia and racism, believing that by holding a referendum the government would be facilitating a platform for such viewpoints.

Only one expat reacted to this Brexit event with concern for their expat life: the one with the longest experience of living abroad. Kevin (53, Appendix 3.9) felt angry with and disenfranchised by the announcement of the referendum, because he had been away from the UK for more than fifteen years. Under UK law, British expats can only vote in UK elections for up to fifteen years after emigrating (Waldrauch, 2006), so Kevin thought that he would not be able to vote on a ‘referendum about people like me who’ve benefitted from the freedom that Europe has given’. He continued by saying that a ‘whole generation has taken advantage of these freedoms in good faith and then not being able to vote was really a significant mistake’. Kevin felt the referendum *was* about Europe and those who lived there; therefore himself and other British expats should have a say. However, it is hard to say if his motivations for this are founded in identifications with Europe and perceiving the referendum as a threat to those; or in fact in identifications with Britain and feeling left out from political participation there due to the fifteen-year electoral ruling.

Participants’ initial reactions to the announcement of the referendum reinforce the theme of Cameron’s speech that the referendum was about the UK and not Europe. However, does this mean that participants also identified more with Britain than Europe at this early stage? The remaining analysis of this chapter will answer this by looking at the expats’ connections with the UK, connections with Europe and practical connections. The sections on connections to the UK and Europe will address sub-questions one and two respectively, tracking changes to the expats’ support networks (family, friends and community) and cultural distance from host and origin countries. The final section on practical connections

will address sub-question three, to track changes to the expats' purpose and rewards of expatriation.

Connections to the UK

In the context of the announcement of the referendum, the main way in which participants identified with and maintained connections to Britain was through engagement with the domestic political situation. The majority of participants were actively following the referendum campaigning and half even commented on the referendum in the context of British party politics, blaming the need for a referendum on 'struggles in the Conservative Party' (Kevin, Appendix 3.9) or the rise of UKIP. However, the majority of participants were only following the campaigning using digital media and not contributing to the debate themselves, which raises the possibility that it was still an unimportant issue for them, which did not require immediate action.

Sean (26, Appendix 3.12) was an exception to this. When the referendum was announced he had already been living in the Netherlands for two years and felt passionately about remaining in the EU. Unlike the others, Sean campaigned for Remain through social media and even telephoned family members in the UK in an attempt to persuade them to vote Remain. He knew that they were likely to vote Leave, but still tried hard to change their minds and promote the benefits of Europe to them. Ultimately, he even visited the UK to vote in the referendum, despite always postal voting before, because the vote meant so much to him that he could not risk it getting lost in the mail. This was a good example of using connections with the UK to promote identifying with Europe, but at this stage of the Brexit process, it was an exception, not the norm.

Connections to Europe

Sean (Appendix 3.12) was also the only expat for whom the announcement of the referendum provoked a strong reaction due to his connections with Europe. He stated that he had 'dreaded from the very beginning what the outcome would be', but he 'had the faith that the [...] traditionally European countries, like France, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, probably wouldn't deport [him]'. He trusted the continental European governments, but not the British government. As a result, he was concerned not so much for himself, but for his Italian grandmother living in the UK, who had never naturalised and therefore was at risk of deportation by the (in Sean's opinion) less kind British government.

The other expats who already had connections to Europe, either by living there or by travelling to see family and friends, did not react very strongly to the announcement of the referendum. They were concerned about losing freedom of movement, but the referendum was by no means interpreted as an affront to their identity. For example, Kevin (Appendix 3.9) had 'always been passionate about Europe and passionately in favour of the good that it's done for the whole continent', but this identification with Europe existed long before the Brexit process began and did not prompt him to take action and campaign for Europe.

A lack of interest in campaigning for Europe was also echoed by those participants who still lived in the UK. Isobel (Appendix 3.7) noticed a substantial number of UKIP flags during her walks in the countryside, but only mentioned seeing one European flag. Joseph (31, Appendix 3.8) even experienced a lack of interest at a Remain campaign meeting, where he sensed that the campaign was emotionally weak compared to the Leave campaign. The campaign did not encourage people to identify with the positive sides of Europe and therefore:

'nobody really was going around in the streets wearing the European flag. They were not singing the Ode to Joy. They weren't wearing European hats. [...] And that wasn't really considered a thing to do, to campaign *for* the European Union' (Joseph, Appendix 3.8).

This lack of positive emotions in the Remain campaign was commented on by Trineke Palm, a politics and international history scholar, specialising in emotions and ideas surrounding Europe. In a 2018 blog (Palm, 2018), she described how the referendum campaign was dominated by negative emotions: fear from both sides and hate from Leave. However, it was only the Leave campaign which introduced a positive emotion – that of hope – as it highlighted the opportunities that leaving the EU would create for Britain. Therefore, during the campaign, Britons were exposed to few positive emotions or identifications with Europe; only fear at the prospect of leaving and disrupting the status quo. Yet the lack of concern about the referendum from the expats of the current study, all of whom voted Remain, suggests that the Remain campaign's use of fear did not effectively prompt a reaction.

The emotions surrounding the EU referendum campaigning also fit within the wider academic debate on the existence of a European identity. White (2016) argued that “Europe” rarely promotes an emotional response from the EU population, instead receiving resignation and indifference, much like the response of the current study’s participants to the referendum announcement. Anthropologist Heidi Armbruster even found that EU border communities, who like expats should benefit from EU freedom of movement, were indifferent about Europe. It was ‘experientially intangible’ (Armbruster et al., 2003: 884) to them, illustrating Checkel and Katzenstein’s (2009) findings that “Europe as Project”, the EU’s attempts to unite Europe through integration measures, does not successfully translate into “Europe as Process”, European peoples’ everyday lives and experiences.

Perhaps for the expats of the current study, the referendum was not a concern for their connections to Europe because of a similar disconnect between Europe as Project and as Process. Although the EU’s “Project” of freedom of movement had allowed them to move, few of them felt emotionally strongly about this project within their everyday lives (“Europe as Process”), particularly as their access to the EU’s benefits were not seen as under threat at this time.

Practical Connections

Finally, the lack of concern with the announcement of the referendum was echoed in the practical concerns of expats. Five of the expats commented on practical concerns after this event; and of those comments, all but one said that they were unconcerned about the referendum. They felt that even if the referendum were to happen, it would not become an immediate barrier between the UK and Europe. It would simply ‘introduce hassle, a little bit of hassle’ (Lewis, 27, Appendix 3.10).

Conclusion

In sum, the announcement of the referendum in February 2016 had a very limited impact on expats’ identifications with Europe. The main reason for this was a lack of concern, stemming from a belief that the referendum would produce a Remain result. Therefore, those expats who already identified with Europe did not feel that this identification was under threat, while identifications with Britain were not strongly negative like the “bad Britain” discourse described by Higgins (2018). Instead, the main impact of this event was for identifications with Britain, whereby the referendum created a moment for the expats to

reconnect with the British political situation, following it with interest or even doing a little bit of campaigning themselves. In February 2016, the referendum was mostly a Britain-centric issue, prompting little identification with Europe.

CHAPTER 2 – EU REFERENDUM LEAVE RESULT, JUNE 2016

‘I’d never thought of moving to another country before that. Certainly not for a person. [...] It’s almost like I’m being thrown a buoyancy aid, a lifeline.’ – Isobel

On 24 June 2016, the day after the UK’s referendum on membership of the EU, it was announced that a 52% majority had voted to Leave the EU. This result should not have come as a surprise because the UK was already the EU’s most Eurosceptic member-state (Curtice, 2017) and had experienced a rise in Euroscepticism in the years preceding the referendum. Yet, for many politicians and citizens within the UK and the rest of the EU, it did come as a big surprise (Menon and Salter, 2016; Nedergaard and Henriksen, 2018).

This surprise was echoed in the reactions of the majority of this study’s participants. The consensus was that the Leave vote was unexpected because they ‘[came] from such a bubble’ and ‘didn’t know of anyone who was planning to vote Leave, or supported Leave’ (David, 26, Appendix 3.2). This same “bubble” can explain why most participants were unconcerned about the referendum at the time of the announcement. For the majority, their surprise was accompanied by a strong emotional response, in stark contrast to the indifference experienced after the announcement of the referendum. They often described their initial reactions to the result in detail, indicating the importance of this day within their memories:

‘I’m usually quite calm, but I was like, “I can’t believe this, what’s going on? What are we doing? This is ridiculous.”’ (David, Appendix 3.2)

‘I felt absolutely sick! Physically sick!’ (Isobel, Appendix 3.7)

‘I sobbed and sobbed and sobbed, on and off for three days.’ (Donna, 38, Appendix 3.3)

Sean (Appendix 3.12) was an exception again as one of the only participants who was not surprised about the result, because he had already been exposed to a lot of Leave voters within his family and English hometown. Still this did not prevent him from being ‘deeply saddened and shocked’ by the result.

About half of the participants then disputed the Leave result, blaming it on the misinformation of politicians and the press who persuaded Britons to leave. Some blamed it on the ‘country’s most ignorant people’ (Sean, Appendix 3.12), pointing out a division between educated Remain voters and uneducated Leave voters amongst their contacts in the UK. For example, Sean (Appendix 3.12), noticed that his upper- and middle-class friends from Oxford University complained about ‘stupid plebs voting Leave’ while those from his working class hometown of Northampton were unsurprised by the result. Others lay the blame with manipulation by the Leave campaigners:

‘I chastised myself that I shouldn’t be calling people stupid, they were just misled. You don’t call the little old lady who’s conned out of her life savings, you don’t call her stupid. That would be a bit incredulous. But these conmen are very good at their jobs!’ (Isobel, Appendix 3.7)

A prominent UK think tank, UK in a Changing Europe, has since discovered that there is no evidence that Remain voters were better informed about the EU than Leave voters (Carl, 2019). Nevertheless, the discourse around ignorant Leave voters persists and corroborates the results of Higgins (2018: 5), whose sample of British expats were also ashamed of their “‘ignorant”, “uneducated” and “small-minded” compatriots who voted Leave. Higgins believed that the expats were attempting to claim the moral high ground by blaming Brexit on “other” Brits who were different from them.

This chapter will now delve deeper into these main reactions to the Leave result – surprise, sadness and blame – to investigate if they are rooted in identifications with Britain and Europe.

Connections to the UK

For two of the expats who had been away from the UK the longest, Isaac (46, Appendix 3.6) and Kevin, there was a distinct “bad Britain” discourse after the referendum, with substantial similarities to that which was discussed by Lawson (2016) and Higgins (2018). Isaac would fly back to the UK every weekend, but for his return flight on Monday mornings he was often disturbed to see British tourists in the airport, already drinking beer at 4a.m. He gave this as an example of why he ‘struggled to identify with a lot of [his] British compatriots’ (Isaac, Appendix 3.6). This response to other Brits is similar to what Lawson

(2016) found amongst British expats in France, who would distance themselves from stereotypical “Brits in bars”. Kevin (Appendix 3.9), who had long identified with Europe, also felt ashamed to be British because of the Leave result, feeling that there was a ‘lack of solidarity with the rest of Europe’, echoing Higgins’s (2018) finding that shame of Britain was the dominant response of expats to the Leave result. However, for Isaac and Kevin, this “bad Britain” discourse was mostly a reaction to the referendum and other Britons and did not result in the personal dislocation and ‘visceral pulling away of their Britishness’ that Higgins (2018: 5) found. At this stage of the Brexit process, the only expat who experienced this was David (Appendix 3.2), who felt that the referendum had changed the country completely stating, ‘It’s not as bad as what was going on in Greece, I guess. But it’s definitely not stable and I don’t really have much confidence in the future of the UK, really’, confirming for him that he never wants to live there again.

For some participants, the “bad Britain” discourse took a different form because they disapproved not of British stereotypes, but British racism. Donna, Joseph and Sean were all worried that racism would occur because of the referendum and were sad to be vindicated when ‘there was an upsurge [of racist violence] straight after the referendum’ (Joseph, Appendix 3.8). This is similar to the findings of Higgins (2018) regarding the “bad Britain” discourse, since she found that disapproval of racism was another way in which expats could claim the moral high ground, emphasising their identification with British tolerance and not the small-mindedness of racists, but without taking any real action against such racism. For Joseph and Donna, though, their concern for racism was not born out of shoring up their ‘moral legitimacy’ (Higgins, 2018: 5), as Higgins found, but from genuine concern for the safety of their ethnic minority partners and themselves (in Donna’s case, as a South African). Unlike in Higgins’s 2018 study, their concerns had real impacts on their identifications, with both of them feeling unable to return to the UK while such a threat of racism existed.

The dislocating effects of “bad Britain” on David, Donna and Joseph, making them unable to return, could be labelled as merely minority cases. However, the other participants also discussed the impacts of their shame and surprise at the Leave result, but in the context of their everyday actions and relationships.

After the Leave result, about half of the participants said that they were concerned not for themselves, but for family, friends and others “left behind” in the UK. David’s concern developed directly from his perception of instability in Britain:

‘I was worried for my family’s sake because I knew that they’re not going to leave the UK. [...] It seemed like everything is going to shit in the UK and they’re stuck there. [...] Here everything is fine.’ (David, Appendix 3.2)

Colin (26, Appendix 3.1) was also concerned for his family in the UK, since they were living in a more deprived part of the UK where decreasing supplies and increasing prices may occur after Brexit. He stated that for ‘me voting to remain wasn’t so much about me as it was about everyone else’, a sentiment that was echoed by Isobel and Donna, who said, ‘[I]t doesn’t just help me; it helps everyone I know and care about’ (Donna, Appendix 3.3). These feelings of selflessness and concern for those in the UK give a sense that expat identifications were beginning to turn towards Europe, due to its stability in comparison to the UK. There is a feeling that they have been “saved”.

However, this concern for family generally did not extend to increased communication and visits. For example, Isobel (Appendix 3.7) was concerned about the political situation in the UK, but kept in touch with everyone via WhatsApp, so she did not feel the need to visit the UK in person. She even believed her frequency of visits to the UK would decrease if there was increased ‘faff at the airport’ or need to ‘apply for special visas’. Three others would also go home less frequently if flights were impacted by Brexit, perhaps indicating a low desire to go to the UK.

Relationships with family and friends in the UK were perhaps even more affected by what people had voted in the referendum. All of the interviewed expats had voted Remain, but some of their family and friends had voted Leave. Sean and Colin both lost contact with family members who voted Leave; while Eleanor (22, Appendix 3.5), Donna and Isobel had all experienced tension or loss of contact with friends who voted Leave. This could indicate a conflict of identifications between Britain and Europe, but may also be a conflict between Leave and Remain identities, a symptom of the rising “politics of resentment” in the UK. Will Jennings, Gerry Stoker and Ian Warren (2019) of think tank The UK in a Changing Europe, say that this entails a lack of contact between different groups (in this case Remain and Leave

voters) who then use each other for blame and antipathy (p. 54). Therefore, by focusing on Leave vs. Remain identifications, rather than Britain vs. Europe, expats may feel they can continue to identify with Britain and Britons, but only those who voted Remain.

This “politics of resentment” could be a driving force for expats’ surprise at the Leave result, due to lack of contact with Leave voters; as well as their blaming of ill-informed Leave voters for making Brexit happen. It could also be a driving force, to some extent, for the emergence of the “bad Britain” discourse, highlighting the bad aspects of the UK. However, at this stage of the Brexit process, there is still not really a strong pulling away from Britain. Participants view the situation in Britain with disdain and believe they may not return there if Brexit causes complications; but soon after the Leave vote, most still identify with Britain, as indicated by their continued communication with and care for those who still live there.

Connections to Europe

For the expats of this study, connections to Europe after the Leave vote were mostly mentioned in the context of workplace friendships and romantic relationships. In terms of Adams and Van de Vijver’s (2015) theoretical framework, these aspects of expat life concern their support network, whilst living in the EU.

Unlike UK relationships, which were either neutral or negatively affected by the Leave vote, workplace relationships in the Netherlands were almost always mentioned positively by the participants. Isaac and Sean both experienced ‘a few jibes and comments’ (Sean, Appendix 3.12) about British people at work, but it was never taken too far. Isaac (Appendix 3.6) described jokes made by his Catalanian colleagues fighting for their independence as a sense of ‘mutual camaraderie’, with them ‘point[ing] the finger back to the UK [and Spain] and saying “what a mess.”’ David and Sean felt the Leave vote even improved their relationships because friends and colleagues wanted to offer help and sympathy. However, the joking was not always positive. David (Appendix 3.2) believed that ‘the perception of British people ha[d] been [...] damaged by Brexit’ and this was experienced in person by Donna (Appendix 3.3), who would be told ‘you’re British, you’re crazy’ and ‘you deserve everything you get’, by Dutch and German people whilst on her regular hikes in the countryside. Yet, again these were minority cases and the majority of expats felt strong ties

to their European support network, unlike the gradual and/or anticipated distancing from their UK support network.

The Leave vote had much more of an impact on romantic relationships. Of the twelve expats, eight were currently in romantic relationships and almost all of these were with people of Dutch or other European nationalities. Two were already married, but for two of those in more recent relationships the Leave vote added a complicating dimension. For David (Appendix 3.2), his reluctance to return to the UK caused him to consider marrying his German girlfriend for EU citizenship, but he did not feel it was particularly romantic or appropriate to marry for 'residency reasons'. While for Isobel (Appendix 3.7), who started dating her Dutch partner in summer 2017, the Leave vote 'lit a fire under things', motivating her to move to live with her partner before the original Brexit date of 29 March 2019. In both these cases, the Leave vote created a need to deepen or rush relationships and use them to distance themselves from Britain and get closer to Europe. While David and Isobel's relationships were strongly impacted by the Leave vote, the others only experienced some practical concerns, such as the anticipated complications of travelling with families of mixed British-EU nationality. Two expats did not experience any impact of the Leave vote on their romantic relationships, so the impact of the Leave vote on romantic relationships can be said to be negligible in terms of numbers. However, for those who were impacted, the impact was sizeable, illustrated by Isobel (Appendix 3.7): 'I'd never thought of moving to another country before that. Certainly not for a person.'

A final way in which connections to Europe changed after the Leave vote was with the appearance of minor concerns about freedom of movement. Kevin was not concerned about travel, but lamented that Britons would no longer be able to live where they wanted after a 'whole generation has taken advantage of these freedoms' (Kevin, Appendix 3.9). Colin (Appendix 3.1) felt he would be more personally affected by this because 'not having freedom of movement across the continent anymore [...] could become a blocker to anything that [he] might want to do in the future'.

In short, the Leave vote affected expats' connections with Europe much more than the announcement of the referendum. When talking about the Leave vote, it seemed as if the participants had realised that their European way of life, their "Europe as Process" as

described by Checkel and Katzenstein (2009), might be in jeopardy. The starkest demonstrations of this were the deepening and rushing of romantic relationships for David and Isobel, as well as rising concerns about freedom of movement and a slightly tarnished reputation of Britons amongst their European friends. However, for most, identifications with Europe were strong, but still unchallenged by the Brexit process.

Practical Connections

The lack of concern about the Brexit process and their identifications with Europe can be explained for the majority of the expats by their employment situation. Almost all of those in work or study knew that they would be protected from the Leave result because their workplaces were internationally oriented, with guarantees or sponsorship already in place for non-EU nationals:

‘I didn’t and still don’t feel that worried because I’m in science and it’s very international.’ (David, Appendix 3.2)

‘I think the company will probably sort something out.’ (Lewis, Appendix 3.10)

‘At that stage, I didn’t think [it was] going to affect me that much.’ (Eleanor, Appendix 3.5)

However, seven of the expats moved to the Netherlands between the Leave result and the original Brexit date of 29 March 2019, so for most, the Brexit process was integral to their expatriation. For example, Isobel’s (Appendix 3.7) move to the Netherlands was accelerated by the Brexit process. She felt she moved before having enough money and proficiency in Dutch, but was determined to be registered as living in the Netherlands before Brexit day. Despite the urgent nature of her move, she spoke very positively of it, comparing it to being thrown a lifeline. Colin and Joseph also said they had moved to the Netherlands ‘sooner rather than later’ (Joseph, Appendix 3.8) because of Brexit, with Colin (Appendix 3.1) continuing the sinking ship metaphor by saying ‘I jumped before I was pushed’. He felt that moving to the Netherlands before Brexit made things more difficult for himself, but it was safer than Brexit risks and lack of job opportunities in the UK.

Conversely, three of the expats were not motivated by the Leave result, but by romantic relationships and/or employment opportunities. One of these was Penelope (36, Appendix

3.11), who moved to the Netherlands with her Dutch fiancé and two children. They moved to learn Dutch and be closer to her fiancé's family, but were still impacted by Brexit, feeling that the Leave result caused them to lose control of their move. It should have been a happy moment to bring their family closer together, but instead was marred by complications and stress.

Although the expats had different motivations for their expatriations to the Netherlands after the Leave vote, all of them had very positive accounts of their immediate experiences of the Netherlands, speaking of 'a happier atmosphere' (Douglas, 26, Appendix 3.4), higher quality of life (Colin, Appendix 3.1), 'better education' (Penelope, Appendix 3.11) and 'a very nice lifestyle' (Isobel, Appendix 3.7). This, as well as the positive accounts of expat support networks in the Netherlands, suggests a contrast to the findings of Favell (2009) and Van Bochove and Engbersen (2015) who found expats in the Netherlands to feel excluded from the national culture.

Conclusion

The dominant development caused by the Leave result of June 2016 was the development of the "bad Britain" discourse. For some of the expats this was indicated by their blaming of ill-informed Leave voters; for those already there it caused concern for their British families; while for others it even caused them to move away from the UK to the Netherlands. This all suggests an increasing cultural distance between the expats and the UK, as they feel ashamed of and dislocated from Britain, as Higgins (2018) found in her study. This has been accompanied by a decreasing cultural distance between the expats and the Netherlands (and Europe) as they integrated and built support networks there. However, it is not yet clear how strongly they identify with Europe. Although their identifications and loyalty appear to have switched from Britain to Europe, it may be that they only identify with Europe as a "lifeline" from the "sinking ship" of Britain and not because they truly feel European.

CHAPTER 3 – DEFEAT OF WITHDRAWAL DEAL, MARCH 2019

‘I just can’t get over how much the UK feels like an island to me now. I never felt it before. Now I go back and I’m like, “Wow! I’m back on the island!” It makes me sad.’ – Sean

‘We never expected any of this to change. We thought we were all European and we had one happy family. We’re feeling a bit split and we need to get back on the same page again.’ – Penelope

On 6 July 2018, Theresa May released her Chequer’s Deal, which gave the first solid ideas of how the British government planned to deliver Brexit. Some saw it as an indication that the government favoured a “softer” Brexit, because it included a “combined customs territory” and a “mobility framework” for easy migration for work and study (*The Guardian*, 6 July 2018, online), which would be better for British expats living in the EU. Half of this study’s expats were indeed happy with what the deal would mean for them, due to short-term certainty provided by a proposed transition period and a lack of restrictions on free movement. However, the majority worried that it was bad for Britain as a whole, and therefore was unlikely to be accepted by the British parliament and public. The expats were correct because by the end of March 2019, after the Chequer’s Deal had been reworked into the Withdrawal Deal (*i News*, 24 December 2018, online), it had been defeated in the House of Commons three times and the Brexit departure date had been postponed. The lack of support for May’s Withdrawal Deal was largely due to the inability of Parliament to agree on the form Brexit should take, particularly due to divisions within the two main parties, Conservative and Labour (*BBC News*, 14 March 2019, online).

The expats’ reactions to these most recent events in the Brexit process were more muted than the reactions to the Leave result. The consensus was that the Brexit process was exhausting to follow and some wanted it to end, regardless of the outcome. The mood was encapsulated by Eleanor (Appendix 3.5): ‘I think just getting bombarded with it every day had a bit of strain on me.’ Three of the expats still felt that Brexit was wrong because such a narrow majority voted for it, echoing the blame and politics of resentment from immediately after the Leave vote. After the Brexit extension, another four even felt hopeful that Brexit would not happen at all, or that a better deal would be reached. However, these

four expats were also the ones least concerned about Brexit at the time of the Leave result, so perhaps were feeling optimistic.

This chapter will now explore if these changed emotions surrounding the Brexit process have been accompanied by changing identifications with Britain and Europe. In particular, this chapter will investigate if the expats' cultural distance from the UK has grown further and from the EU has decreased, in the two-and-a-half years since the referendum.

Connections to the UK

By March 2019, all of this study's expats had been living in the Netherlands for at least nine months (with the exception of Isobel), so their connections with the UK were all experienced from a distance. Despite this distance, all of the expats were still engaged with British politics and society and all had opinions on Brexit, even those who felt personally unaffected by it. For most, this engagement entailed keenly following Brexit events on the news and expressing personal reactions to national politics. However, for some their engagement went even further, such as Isobel's (Appendix 3.7) desire to go to a Remain march in London and visit the UK in the event of a second referendum; and Colin's (Appendix 3.1) pro-Remain replies to the comments of Leave voters on the website of the pro-Leave *Daily Express* newspaper. This engagement with Brexit reflects the UK domestic situation, where think tank The UK in a Changing Europe found that by mid-2018 "Brexit identities" were even stronger than traditional party political affiliations, so that at that time only 6% of respondents did not identify with either Leave or Remain (Evans and Schaffner, 2019). The current study would suggest that the UK's "Brexit identities" also extend to its expat population, with all of the participants identifying with Remain and staying within the EU. Carl (2017) found that those who supported Remain are more likely to identify with Europe, but so far the evidence of this study would suggest that the expats' support for Remain indicates continued identification with and concern for Britain and not for Europe.

The expats' main concerns regarding Britain were the increasing divisions and politics of resentment within the UK as discussed by Jennings et al. (2019). However, all of these expats live in the Netherlands, away from these divisions, so why should they be of interest to them? A possible answer, mentioned by three of the expats, is that these divisions act as a barrier to consensus over Brexit, with any deal likely to cause anger within at least half the

UK population. British expats' lives will likely be greatly affected by any Brexit result, so they would be concerned about the effect of such divisions on the government's deal. However, if these British divisions are regarded as contributing to the "bad Britain" discourse, this could be another reason not to return to the UK. For example, Joseph's (Appendix 3.8) wife is of an ethnic minority, so divisions and racism in the UK could make it more difficult to return in the future; while Colin explicitly gave UK divisions as a reason for staying in the Netherlands: 'even if [Brexit] was put to bed and cancelled, it's brought to light elements of my country that I don't like. You see the divisions that exist between people' (Colin, Appendix 3.1).

Jennings et al. (2019) highlighted in their explanation of the "politics of resentment" that the areas which voted Leave were those disadvantaged towns and regions excluded from mainstream British politics and economy. Colin (Appendix 3.1) also mentioned such divisions comparing London and 'nice areas in the Cotswolds' with 'the North'. As shown in Table 1, almost all of this study's expats come from such disadvantaged areas, so they may have even moved to the Netherlands due to a lack of economic opportunities or to move away from Leave voters with whom they could not identify, all of which would contribute to a sense of "bad Britain". As such, their engagement with British politics may be contributing more to their dislike of Britain, rather than indicating a continued identification with Britain.

By March 2019, the "bad Britain" discourse had become even stronger than after the Leave vote. At that time only David experienced a dislocation from Britain, feeling unable to return. At this stage of the Brexit process, over half of the expats spoke of a similar sense of dislocation, which indeed originated mainly from disappointment over Brexit and political inaction. Sean and Donna had the strongest accounts of this dislocation. For Sean (Appendix 3.12), the longer Brexit goes on and the worse it becomes, 'it will only make [him] want to stay here more'. He does not feel he belongs in Britain anymore because the whole Brexit process has exposed Britain's "island mentality", as Dennison and Carl (2016) also mentioned as a reason for Britain's differences from the rest of Europe. Similarly, for Donna, Brexit makes her want to stay in Europe as long as possible:

'You look at home and you're just like, "that's an absolute joke!" It's a joke. And so I definitely don't want to go home. I'm going to fight tooth and nail to stay in Europe

and get myself a work visa, because the misery of going to a country that cannot organise a piss-up in a brewery – truly horrifying. [...] Why would I go home to rain and shit politics? [...] I'd rather put up with a terrible landlord here than do that.' (Donna, Appendix 3.3)

This is in stark contrast to how she spoke about the Netherlands, where she was even happy to pay more tax because it would contribute to a better life for everyone. Sean and Donna's shame and dislocation from Britain is more than anger about British politics and lack of belonging as neither of them identified strongly with Britain in their everyday expat lives. Neither of them made a special effort to consume British food and culture and when asked about British expat Facebook groups, Sean (Appendix 3.12) replied, 'That sounds awful!'

Similarly, amongst all of the expats there was a tendency to have predominantly Dutch or international friendship groups, with no strong desire to associate with other Brits. However, these friendships and Sean and Donna's avoidance of British culture do not necessarily exist because of the Brexit process. It is just as likely that these friendships and cultural preferences could have existed before the Brexit process began, and as such they are not conclusive in showing changed identifications with Britain and Europe.

However, a more conclusive development at this stage of the Brexit process is that almost all the expats were considering changing their citizenship. For those who no longer identified with Britain this was easy. But for a strong minority, the inability to get Dutch-British dual nationality was a problem because they were still attached to Britain. For example, Eleanor (Appendix 3.5) still wanted her British citizenship so that she could 'go home' to her family. While Joseph's (Appendix 3.8) wife would find it hard to give up the British citizenship which her family (who were migrants to the UK) fought so hard to get. These strong identifications with British nationality make it even more significant that the Brexit process has resulted in almost all the expats considering surrendering it in order to keep their European citizenship.

Connections to Europe

Of the twelve expats interviewed for this study, only three of them had children to look after. Other than having to queue longer at airports, neither Isaac nor Kevin would be particularly affected by Brexit, since Isaac's (Appendix 3.6) family lived in Britain and Kevin

(Appendix 3.9) had dual Spanish-British nationality so would not lose his EU citizenship. However, for Penelope (Appendix 3.11), who had a Dutch fiancé and children registered as Dutch-British, her British citizenship had become a worry. Before the referendum, she had felt that her family was “European”, as well as feeling ‘like all the European countries were one happy family’. However, in this later stage of the Brexit process, after gaining awareness of the complications Brexit could cause, Penelope was feeling left out as a British person, in contrast to her Dutch family. Since her family wished to migrate to other EU countries in the future, Penelope feared that she had become a problem, holding the family back. As a result, she had been eagerly researching the Dutch procedure for gaining citizenship through marriage, so that she could be ‘back on the same page’ as her family. Though it was not within the scope of this study, it would be very useful for future studies to focus on the effect of the Brexit process on British-EU mixed nationality families, to see if they too feel a division of identifications between the British and EU parts of the family and if they too resolve it by pursuing EU citizenship.

The pursuit of EU citizenship also led some of the expats to increase their identifications with Europe by learning the Dutch language. Both Joseph and Douglas were motivated to do so because proficiency in Dutch is required to pass the Dutch citizenship tests. Eleanor and Colin were also motivated to learn Dutch to increase their job opportunities in case of Brexit and the possibility of a “No Deal”. This is significant because these same expats felt at the time of the Leave vote that there was limited necessity to learn Dutch due to their international occupations and the Dutch population’s proficiency in English. There were, however, still two others who wanted to learn Dutch not because of Brexit, but in order to feel closer to the Dutch culture, suggesting identification with the Netherlands.

A final development for the expats’ connections with Europe by March 2019 was experiencing increased interest in Brexit and British people from their European friends due to their exposure to the Brexit process, which featured more heavily in international news during the first months of 2019:

‘[M]y European colleagues were all talking about it over lunch. [Before] they didn’t really say much, but I think [they are now] because there’s so much happening and it’s close to the deadline.’ (Kevin, Appendix 3.9)

‘I’ve been enjoying the fact that a lot more people in the continent have been exposed to British politics because it’s always in the news.’ (Lewis, Appendix 3.10)

‘I feel like they look at me like, “Ooh, you come from England. What is going on in your country?” [...] They are interested in what’s happening and they ask me if I know [...] but of course I don’t know.’ (Penelope, Appendix 3.11)

This was mentioned by about half of the expats, but often with a hint of negativity. Lewis and Joseph both believed that Britain was being mocked. While for Eleanor and Penelope it added to the stress that Brexit was already causing them, reminding them of a situation they were already tired of. Penelope (Appendix 3.11) felt that for her European friends Brexit was a new, interesting topic; they were not tired of it because it did not affect their daily lives.

This effect of Brexit on daily lives is representative of the expats’ connections to Europe at this stage of the Brexit process. Immediately after the Leave vote, Europe was used by many of them as an “escape” from Britain. However, after nearly three years of Brexit negotiations and events, Brexit had become a concern in their daily European lives. It could no longer be avoided even amongst their European friends and was causing concerns over citizenship and integration. Following Finch et al.’s (2010) findings about the loose commitment and short stays typical of British expats when living abroad, it could be surmised that such an unsettling of the expats’ daily European lives could test their identifications with Europe and instil in them a wish to move elsewhere, to a place of safety.

Practical Connections

This experience of Brexit following the expats from Britain to Europe can also be seen in their practical connections. After the Leave vote, the shared belief was that Brexit would not affect them due to their international jobs; however, the events culminating in March 2019 had introduced insecurity for some on an individual basis.

Eleanor (Appendix 3.5) was previously unconcerned about Brexit, because she knew her Dutch university would protect her rights. However, she had a very stressful fortnight in November 2018 when her student loan halted due to Brexit, at the same time that she was uncertain about retaining her part-time job. She described a ‘transition from seeing the news and being like, “oh this is sad, [...] this is my country”, to then being really personally

affected' by Brexit. These events impacted her so because she had made her life in Utrecht and was not ready to abandon it. In addition, the proposal for a Brexit transition period led her to begin a Master's degree right away, rather than take a year out from studying, so that she could complete her studies before the conclusion of the transition. She described the student situation as 'our own little timeline and time constraints', with Brexit adding an extra dimension to an already stressful study-abroad experience. This effect of the Brexit process on British students in the EU would be another interesting avenue for further study.

Another new concern of several expats by March 2019 was the negative effect of Brexit on employment. Joseph and Donna were both finding it difficult to gain employment because of the uncertainty over when and how Brexit would occur. As a result, Joseph (Appendix 3.8) and his wife moved from Eindhoven to The Hague in order to increase their job opportunities. Donna (Appendix 3.3) was even rejected from a job because it was only for European passport holders, despite her presently holding an EU passport. Although only a minority of the expats were looking for employment, some of those expats in secure international jobs were concerned about their ability to change to different jobs in the future.

As the Brexit deadline came closer, the expats became increasingly concerned about freedom of movement. After the Leave vote, freedom of movement was only mentioned by some as a connection to Europe that they would be sad to lose. However, by March 2019, it was a major practical concern, as it began to threaten the purpose and rewards of expatriation mentioned by Adams and Van de Vijver (2015), which in turn adversely affected identifications. Colin and David were both in secure international jobs; however, neither of them identified strongly with the Netherlands, so both were concerned about their ability to move to another EU country if they changed jobs in the future:

'[I]f I decide I want to move to another EU country, the rules of freedom of movement are not gonna extend potentially to another move.' (Colin, Appendix 3.1)

'[M]aybe I'd like to start working in Germany [...] but a few years down the line, maybe it's gonna be harder to emigrate to Germany.' (David, Appendix 3.2)

These responses from Colin and David to losing their freedom of movement indicated identifications to Europe which were under threat. They identified with Europe as a whole, rather than any one European country, and by this point neither of them wanted to return to the UK, but Brexit would cause them to be trapped in the Netherlands, unable to move anywhere else.

For Joseph (Appendix 3.8) and his wife, freedom of movement was essential, not just for the freedom to choose their home, but also for their work as academics in universities around Europe. As a result of this they also felt trapped in the Netherlands for the foreseeable future while Joseph's wife, who had lived there for four years already, waited to be eligible for Dutch naturalisation after her fifth year. Sean (Appendix 3.12) also recognised this need to continue living in Europe, in order to preserve any chance of keeping EU citizenship. For these expats, the Brexit process has changed the main purpose of their expatriation into a mission to keep their European citizenship.

For almost all of the expats, the only thing that allayed their concerns during the uncertainty of the recent Brexit process was the temporary residence permit, sent to them by the Dutch government, which grants residence until at least May 2020:

‘the only thing that gave me any relief and sense of confidence that my life wouldn't be affected was when I received a letter from the Dutch government [...] saying I could stay’ (Sean, Appendix 3.12)

‘Now it's all fine because I've got my residence permit’ (Eleanor, Appendix 3.5)

‘Netherlands government has been absolutely wonderful’ (Isobel, Appendix 3.7)

‘thank God for the Dutch government being organised and arranging something in case the UK couldn't get its finger out. At least I have one date to work towards.’ (Donna, Appendix 3.3)

This praise for the Dutch government stands in contrast to the participants reactions to the inaction of the British government, giving a strong indication that the expats have moved away from Britain and towards Europe, both physically and in their identifications and sense of belonging.

Conclusion

For most of the expats of this study, their shame and dislike of Britain originally mentioned after the Leave result has transformed into intense disgust, dislocation and lack of belonging after nearly three years of Brexit negotiations exposed divisions within both the British population and politics. It is this period of the Brexit process which has really concluded the expats' identifications with Britain, because for almost all of them their expatriation has transformed from being temporary into something more permanent, with 'I'm not going back' being a common phrase among responses for this period. The Brexit negotiations have also exposed new unforeseen problems amongst their practical connections, such as citizenship, employment, language and freedom of movement, which are often all tied together, in the sense that one is needed to enable another.

These negative connections to Britain and practical connections both lead to a need to stay and fight for the right to be in Europe and strengthen their identifications with Europe, using methods such as gaining citizenship. It is as if by March 2019, the expats realised that they actually identify with Europe quite a lot, as it has become a part of their everyday life that they do not wish to lose.

CHAPTER 4 – EUROPEAN IDENTITY

‘If you’d asked me before the Brexit vote if I felt European, I’d probably go, “I haven’t really thought about it”. Post Brexit vote and all of this and having lived in Europe, I do feel European.’ – Donna

When asked about their experiences of the Brexit process, the participants of the current study provided a general idea of how the identifications with Europe have changed for British expats living in the Netherlands. Before the referendum, some had already made use of the freedom of movement offered by the EU (“Europe as Project”) to create new lives abroad. During the Brexit process still more Britons did so, expatriating abroad for new opportunities, but often also to escape from Britain. For some, the threats that the Brexit process posed to their lives in Europe, caused them to realise that they actually identified substantially with Europe in their everyday lives (“Europe as Process”) and did not want to lose the benefits. The interviews of the study then concluded with questions which asked the expats to explicitly talk about their identifications and associations with Europe, much like in Michael Bruter’s (2004) study of ‘what citizens mean by feeling “European”’.

Bruter’s study conducted focus groups with domestic populations in the UK, France and the Netherlands, in which participants discussed their experiences of Europe, as in the current study. He found that the disappearance of physical and symbolic borders was participants’ most significant experience of Europe, despite his study not having a focus on expats, whom Favell (2009) thought would benefit the most from disappearing borders. Bruter then concluded his study with explicit questions on defining European identity. He found that a civic European identity, emphasising free movement, democracy and EU institutions (much like “Europe as Project”), was more important for the French and Dutch participants. However, for the UK participants, cultural identifications with Europe were more important (like “Europe as Process”), with British participants emphasising Europe as a continent (not the EU), with common values across its nations, leading to peace, harmony and cooperation.

British expats' identifications with Europe

During the earlier parts of the current study's interviews some expats mentioned definitions of and associations with "Europe" without being prompted. Their responses supported Bruter's (2004) findings, with an emphasis on cultural identifications with Europe, although in reference to the European Union, rather than Europe as a continent. The EU was said to have provided 'peace and stability' (Kevin, Appendix 3.9) and 'one big family' (Penelope, Appendix 3.11). However, as an addition to Bruter's study, a minority of the current study's expats also mentioned civic identifications with Europe. Sean (Appendix 3.12) praised its democracy and Lewis (Appendix 3.10) felt that it kept the activities of Westminster in check. The civic sense of identity was also present within the cultural associations because although cooperation was mentioned by a strong minority of expats, it was in the context of working together for a shared increased in productivity and prosperity. Cooperation was also seen as a European value which would be beneficial for Britain's political system, when Kevin contrasted the coalitions of Europe, with the inefficient majority rules of Britain, which he felt had led to the March 2019 Brexit deadlock: 'people are not willing to bend at all to reach some sort of compromise. [...] It's not in our mentality' (Kevin, Appendix 3.9). The identification of the expats with a more civic sense of Europe could indicate that after living in the Netherlands they now think of Europe in a similar way to Bruter's (2004) findings among the Dutch. However, it is also possible that the threat of Brexit to the UK's participation in the civic aspects of Europe causes the expats to value civic identifications more.

How would you describe the term "European"?

The analysis will now focus on the questions asked about Europe at the end of each interview. When asked to describe the term "European", one third of the expats did in fact give a cultural definition, referencing the geographical continent of Europe, like Bruter's (2004) British participants. A further half also described European in terms of a sense of community and common values, such as tolerance and work ethic. It can be inferred from references to people being 'nice to each other on the streets' (Sean, Appendix 3.12) and 'the feeling of comradeship with other people from Europe' (Joseph, Appendix 3.8) that Europe is a part of everyday life for most of the expats. Yet when explicitly defining Europe, none of the expats mentioned the EU or civic identity. It was insinuated that someone could be a European if they were from Europe or followed European values, regardless of whether they

lived in an EU country or supported “Europe as Project”. Although, if the expats only identified with a cultural definition of Europe, then Brexit should not matter to them because Brexit does not affect the UK’s position in geographical Europe and European culture. However, the results of the current study would indicate that Brexit does matter, quite a lot, for the majority of the expats.

Are you more European or British?

The expats were much more divided when asked if they felt more European or British. A majority of five said that they felt European first. Three of these had already felt European before Brexit, as a result of upbringing or previous experience of living in Europe. For example, Kevin (Appendix 3.9) had long been in favour of Europe due to his pro-European upbringing by a Scottish father and Spanish mother. The other two who felt European first, Colin (Appendix 3.1) and Donna (Appendix 3.3), felt that the Brexit process had indeed changed their identifications, causing a switch from feeling more British to feeling more European. Donna’s response was particularly interesting because she had not even thought about feeling European before the referendum, but after the EU referendum made her aware of the benefits of Europe and what she might lose, she realised that she does feel more strongly European than British.

A minority of three expats said that they felt British first. Two of these were also the same expats that were least concerned and affected by the Brexit process, which concurs with a correlation of decreasing identification with Britain with increasing personal impact from the Brexit process. However, Penelope (Appendix 3.11) also said she felt more English or Dutch than European, despite speaking of feeling European during her interview. For these three expats, being European was an addition to their identifications with Britain and not a replacement. For example, Penelope spoke of Europe being a ‘family’, but perhaps saw herself as an English person within that family.

A further three expats defined themselves as equally European and British, again showing that identifying with Europe does not threaten national identity. Surprisingly this group of expats included Sean and David, whom had both given some of the most impassioned contributions to the “bad Britain” discourse when describing experiences of the Brexit process and never wanted to return to Britain. Accordingly, it could be expected that they

no longer defined themselves as British. Yet Sean (Appendix 3.12) claimed 'I will always be British. I will always have been born and raised in the UK'; and David (Appendix 3.2) stated 'being British has more of an influence on my character than being European'. This gives support for Adams and Van de Vijver's (2015) theory of personal identity, which is developed during upbringing and adolescence and stable throughout remaining life, because it seems that Sean and David will always identify as British, even when their identifications with and opinions of Britain are at their lowest. Eleanor was the final expat who did not identify more with Britain or Europe, but she also said:

'I feel because of Brexit, that it's [European identity] become something more important to me. [...] it's become something that's more significant than it was before and something that I really don't want to lose.' (Eleanor, Appendix 3.5)

Like with Donna, Eleanor has become more aware of her identifications with Europe as a result of Brexit and wants to strengthen her ties to Europe as a result. For Eleanor, her identifications with Britain and Europe directly echo the feelings she recounted about citizenship earlier in her interview, whereby she is interested in getting European citizenship, but not ready to leave Britain behind.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the importance to Britons of cultural identifications with Europe, showing that this view of Europe is shared not just by Britain's domestic population, as Bruter (2004) found, but also amongst British expats in the EU. However, the current study also found some acknowledgement of civic identifications with Europe amongst the expats, suggesting a combination of "Europe as Project" and "Europe as Process", as predicted by Favell (2009).

When asked to define their identifications, three expats felt a definite strengthening of their European identity as a result of Brexit. However, three already felt European before Brexit, although the Brexit process has still impacted them; and some identified quite strongly with Britain, despite speaking earlier of a "bad Britain" discourse. This shows again why it is important to use narrative interviews for studies of identification, in order to track changes to and explanations for identifications which could not be captured by tick-box categories on a questionnaire. Overall, this chapter supports the current study's hypothesis that the

Brexit process has caused a shift of identifications from Britain to Europe. However, this chapter alone does not do so conclusively, since only three of the expats were explicitly aware of their changing identifications.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The objective of the current study was to investigate in what ways the identifications with Europe of British expats living in the Netherlands have changed as they experienced the major events of the Brexit process, from February 2016 to March 2019. It was hoped that this would contribute to the debate on the existence of a European identity. As the most Eurosceptic EU member state, British people tend not to identify strongly with Europe. As such, it was assumed that this was also the case for British expats living in the rest of Europe. Therefore, as the Brexit process has challenged the ability of British expats to continue living and working in the EU, it provides a test of their identifications and attachments, as they may have to choose between living in Britain or the EU as Britain departs from the bloc. In particular, this study has built upon the findings of Katie Higgins (2018) who concluded that many British expats experienced shame, loss and dislocation from Britain after Brexit. The current study has investigated if this weakening of identifications with Britain led to strengthening identifications with Europe.

The study took a novel approach, by using narrative in-depth interviews to build a timeline of British expat responses to the Brexit process, tracking changes to their connections with the UK, connections with Europe and practical connections (housing, employment and finance). The sample was diverse and included twelve British expats.

The interviews found that for almost all of the expats, identifications with Britain and Europe changed as the Brexit process progressed. In February 2016, with the announcement of the EU referendum date, the possibility of leaving the EU was mainly a Britain-centric issue. The expats had few practical concerns or strong emotions regarding Europe. Instead, the referendum was a stimulus for them to reconnect with British politics. After the Leave vote in June 2016, a “bad Britain” discourse similar to that found by Higgins (2018) was also recognisable amongst the expats. They were ashamed of the result and concerned for their families who were still in Britain. This study went beyond what Higgins (2018) found, since quite a number of the participants even expatriated to the Netherlands in response to their shame and dislike of Brexit Britain. Europe was seen as a “lifeline” to escape the “sinking

ship” of Britain. By March 2019, when the Withdrawal Bill had been defeated and Brexit extended, the “bad Britain” discourse was even stronger, since a majority of the expats experienced dislocation from Britain and no desire to ever return. Their temporary expatriation had become something more permanent because of Brexit’s effects on their identifications with Britain. The impact of this was that almost all the expats were interested in forging closer ties with Europe. For some this meant learning Dutch, or having a romantic relationship with a “European”, but for almost all it entailed finding ways to retain their EU citizenship, in order to remain in Europe after the UK leaves the EU.

The effects of the Brexit process on identifications with Britain are quite clear and corroborate the findings of Higgins (2018). As the Brexit process proceeded, Britain was seen as a worse place to live and the expats identified with it less and less. Using Adams and Van de Vijver’s (2015) theoretical framework of identity, it should now be possible to show if the Brexit process and weakening identifications with Britain resulted in a corresponding strengthening of identifications with Europe. Firstly, as the *cultural distance* between the expats and the UK increased (illustrated by shame, loss and dislocation), it appeared conversely to decrease between the expats and the Netherlands, with most feeling that they had integrated well. The positive language used to describe their Dutch lives contrasted with the strong, expletive-filled language used to describe the UK. Secondly, the *support network* of most of the expats appeared to transfer from Britain to the Netherlands, with most feeling supported and comfortable amongst their international friends in the Netherlands and willing to leave behind British contacts if travel or “Brexit identities” would make those relationships more difficult. Such a transfer of both cultural distance and support networks from the UK to Europe may suggest that “Europe as Process” has become a part of the expats’ lives. However, these factors alone cannot decisively measure changing identifications with Europe, because for most of the expats their inclusion and friendships in the Netherlands were likely to have existed before the Brexit process and developed independently of it. Indeed, three of the expats had felt European long before Brexit.

The *purpose and rewards of expatriation*, however, give a further and more persuasive indicator of the ways in which the expats’ identifications with Europe have changed as a result of the Brexit process. Initially, the expats were unconcerned about the practical matters of their expatriation, often due to their international jobs which they believed

would protect them from changes to “Europe as Project”, such as reduced freedom of movement. However, between the Leave result and March 2019, as more details emerged of Brexit’s possible impact on expats’ rights to live and work in the EU, most of the expats began finding ways to fight against such developments, on the one hand learning Dutch in order to integrate more, while also finding ways to retain EU citizenship, as they did not wish to lose their lives in Europe. The threat to the benefits of “Europe as Project” motivated them to increase their attachments to Europe in their everyday lives, combining “Europe as Project” and “Europe as Process”, as Favell (2009) predicted for all intra-EU expats. However, it was not until this threat arose that the expats cared. Before the referendum, few of the expats were campaigning to highlight the benefits of the EU; and two thirds of them only moved to Europe as a response to the referendum. Indeed, three of the expats even admitted that they had not considered or thought about identifying with Europe until the Brexit process began. Yet in March 2019, after the true nature of the threat became clear, almost all of the expats planned to stay in the EU and eight regarded themselves primarily or partly as European.

These findings break from the previous consensus on the (supra)national identifications of British expats, illustrated by the IPPR report of Finch et al. (2010), which found that British expats typically only stayed abroad for short stays and maintained significant attachments to Britain. Kohonen (2008) would describe such expats as “identity non-shifters”. Instead, the current study has found that the Brexit process had severely maimed the expats’ identifications with Britain, motivating them to become “identity shifters” (Kohonen, 2008), adopting the European culture and staying more permanently. This shows that it is possible for typically Eurosceptic Britons to identify with Europe. However, the identify shift did not occur for most of the expats until the later stages of the Brexit process. This is a significant finding for the field of European identity because it suggests that a person only becomes aware of their identifications with the EU and Europe when their EU benefits are removed from them. Otherwise, Europe is perhaps taken for granted in everyday life, without enough salience to encourage identifications, attachment and loyalty to it. In sum, the interplay between “Europe as Project” and “Europe as Process” is key, with expats only strongly identifying with Europe when they become aware that the Project (EU benefits) enables them to live the Process (everyday lives in Europe).

Methodological Evaluation

During the interviews, the expats predominantly discussed their identifications with the UK, rather than Europe, with most only explicitly talking about European identity when asked about it in the questions discussed in Chapter 4. This meant that less data was collected for identifications with Europe, compared to identifications with the UK, and therefore the correlations and conclusions drawn by this study are tentative. This skewing of the data stems partly from the use of Brexit as the main topic and framework for the interviews, which was used in order to emphasise the identification changes as a result of the Brexit process. The expats may have talked about their connections to the UK the most because for them Brexit represents the UK. News of the Brexit process was one of the only ways by which they experienced the UK while living in the Netherlands; whereas Europe was experienced all the time, with Brexit only playing a minor part in this. As such, the influence of the Brexit process on their identifications with Britain was easier for the expats to talk about than its influence on identifications with Europe. This could perhaps be improved by including events in the Brexit process which take a European point of reference, such as the distribution of temporary residence permits by the Dutch government. However, a Britain-centric point of view is something that future researchers will always need to be aware of when researching Brexit.

This research is also unable to come to definitive conclusions because of its methodology. The sample of expats was diverse, but because interviews take a lot of time, the sample was only small, reducing the ability to make generalisations for the wider British expat population in the EU. Similarly, while the use of semi-structured narrative interviews was the most appropriate method for this research, it meant that each participant had a different interview and not all answered the same questions, reducing the possibility for comparability. This meant that responses were sometimes anecdotal and will need to be corroborated by further research. Nonetheless, the current study attempted to highlight the key trends and themes mentioned by the expats, while also drawing attention to remarkable exceptions.

In terms of the sample demographic, this study only included expats who had lived in the Netherlands for less than ten years and most had moved to the Netherlands during the Brexit process. This has produced a very unique narrative of Britons who moved to the

Netherlands because of Brexit. However, including expats who had lived in the Netherlands for longer than ten years could have moved the focus away from Britain and emphasised identifications with Europe, as those expats would likely be less connected to Britain and more integrated into the Netherlands. Recruitment for the study also told prospective participants that it was on the topic of Brexit. This may have led to the recruitment predominantly of expats with opinions on Brexit, therefore skewing the results and explaining why only two expats in this sample were less affected by it.

Recommendations for Further Research

As such, the first recommendation for further research would be to repeat this study with a different sample, to see if the same results are repeated. One such different sample would include long-term British migrants. Further research could also focus on some of those remarkable exceptions which the current study found, such as the case for British-EU mixed families and for British students, represented by Penelope and Eleanor, respectively, in this research.

There is also a strong need to repeat this research in another EU country, with a different British expat population. One of the main findings of the current study was an increasing cultural distance from the UK and decreasing distance from the Netherlands (and Europe). However, since the Netherlands is one of the most culturally similar member states to the UK, this exchange of belonging from one country to the other could be said to be quite easy. Therefore, it would be interesting to know if cultural distance and identifications changed during the Brexit process for British expats in EU countries such as France, Spain or the Czech Republic, where cultural distances, like language, could cause identifying and connecting with the host European culture to be more challenging.

Finally, it was not within the scope of this study to conduct a large survey of British expats residing in Europe, with regard to how they voted in the EU referendum, but the fact that twelve out of twelve participants in the current study voted Remain does raise the question of the balance of Remain and Leave across the rest of the expat population. Although many expats may have voted Remain due to self-interest, to protect their jobs, homes and families in continental Europe; a vote for Remain, even if for self-interest, shows an awareness of and possibly an attachment to the benefits of Europe, as shown in the

practical connections of the expats in the current study. Therefore, a comparison of the Remain/Leave vote split amongst Britain's domestic and expat populations could indicate stronger identifications with Europe amongst those living abroad and experiencing Europe in their everyday lives. This could further develop literature on the sources and reasons for identifying with Europe.

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APPENDIX 1 – Interview Schedule

The interviews will be semi-structured and last for about 45 minutes – 1 hour.

Ethical Disclaimer - Before participating in the study, the participant will be required to agree to audio recording of the interview and use of their responses as quotes

- Responses will be anonymised, but demographic details may be included

Warm-Up and Profiling

- Demographics – age, gender, occupation (to give idea of income level), place of origin in UK (e.g. England, Wales, Scotland, N Ireland)
- Family situation – do they have spouse/kids?, Are they in UK, NL or elsewhere?
- Circumstances of Expatriation – length of stay in the Netherlands
 - Why did they come to the Netherlands? (assigned or self-initiated?, why NL instead of somewhere else?)
- Main social roles during expatriation – work, family, leisure roles

Experiences of the Brexit Process

3 Brexit Events:

1. February 2016 Announcement of the Referendum
2. June 2016 Leave vote
3. 6 July 2018 – release of Chequer’s Deal
4. March 2019 – defeat of May’s deal and (possible) extension of Brexit

The participant will be introduced to each of these events using a visual news excerpt (video or newspaper headline) from the time.³

They will then be asked to describe their immediate reactions and emotions to the event.

For each event the conversation will then be directed through each of these three topics.

(Time spent on each topic will depend on its importance for the participant.)

Connections with UK – contact with British family/friends, contact with British expats

Connections with host community – local family/friends, engagement with local community, contact with non-British expats, language skills

- Are these connections with NL or Europe more broadly?

For both connections with Britain and host I will ask about:

- Physical connections (e.g. visits to UK, clubs and associations) – who do they spend their time with most?
- Digital connections (e.g. social media) – are these connections meaningful?
 - Do online connections result in “real life” physical meetups?
- Passive and active participation in politics, cultural life and media

Changes to practical, professional and financial connections – house, job, money

- Is the **purpose** of expatriation under threat? e.g. job, study
- Are the **rewards** of expatriation under threat? E.g. housing and financial security
- Aspirations for the future

Final Wrap-Up

³ With the exception of March 2019, which was the present day at time of interviews

At this point I will ask explicit questions on **identifying with Europe**, such as:

- How would you describe the term “European”?
- What do you think a European identity is? (Is it associated with the EU?)
- Do you identify more with Britain, Europe or both? Or do you feel more Dutch?
- Do you think these identifications affect your choice to live abroad as an expatriate?
- Do you think other expats/Britons/Europeans think of themselves as European?

At all times look for references to:

- Commonalities (e.g. shared heritage, values, geography, politics)
- Strength of inclusion and attachment
- Changing national loyalties
- British, Dutch or European stereotypes
- Attempts to combine home and host cultures/lifestyles

Key theories to test include:

- Europe as Project (support for EU policies and symbols) vs. Europe as Process (experience of EU/Europe in everyday lives) – do identifications with Europe arise as a result of EU policy or local contexts?
- “Bad Britain” discourse – shame, loss, dislocation, avoiding British stereotypes

Link to news video for announcement of referendum Feb 2016:

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/20/cameron-set-to-name-eu-referendum-date-after-cabinet-meeting>

APPENDIX 2 – Newspaper headlines used in interviews

5AM REFERENDUM SPECIAL

Daily Mail

FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2016 www.dailymail.co.uk DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 65p



Overjoyed: A jubilant Nigel Farage in London early today celebrating the stunning victory for the Leave campaign

WE'RE OUT!

■ After 43 years UK freed from shackles of EU ■ PM in crisis as voters reject Project Fear ■ Leave surge sends pound to a 31-year low

A HUGE revolt by Middle England last night gave a stunning victory to Brexit. On a massive turnout, there was a historic rejection of Brussels in safe Tory seats and Labour working-class heartlands as Leave scored an astonishing success. The pound fluctuated wildly before plunging to a 31-year low as traders reacted to the shock news. In Japan shares were in freefall. In key English areas including Birmingham, the North East, Dorset, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent and the North West there was a massive protest against the London-based political class. At 4.48am, the BBC and ITV declared Leave had won – reversing the decision in 1975 to commit to the Brussels club. The

rejection of Project Fear came despite months of doom-mongering by the Prime Minister and raised questions about whether he can survive. Labour immediately called for him to consider his position. When the polls closed the chances of Britain quitting were rated at nearly 18 per cent. UKIP leader Nigel Farage declared 'independence day'. In South Wales, a string of areas fell to Leave, including Swansea, Newport, Neath-Port Talbot and Merthyr Tydfil.

In swathes of East Anglia and the West Midlands the trend was overwhelmingly to Leave. Hereford, where the arch European Nick Clegg's constituency is based, voted Out in a shock result. In Bromsgrove, where the MP is former Eurosceptic turned Remain campaigner Business Secretary David Davis, Leave claimed another victory. The Remain camp hit back by recording a string of resounding successes in

turn to Page 2

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Published in London and Manchester

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Cameron faces fight for survival as Britain sets course for Brexit

4.45am edition

- Pound plunges by 9% to lowest level since 1985
- Farage claims victory as leave stretches ahead
- Tory leave MPs pledge to back PM come what may

Amabella Athanas
Ben Quinn
Dan Milmo

David Cameron was facing recommitments this morning as Britain appeared to be on the brink of voting to leave the EU, triggering chaos in the currency markets, including the biggest ever one-day fall in sterling. The value of the pound fell by 9% as the financial markets prepared for a Brexit economic shock potentially greater than Black Wednesday in 1992. UKIP's leader, Nigel Farage, declared victory to jubilant supporters shortly after 4am. "The production was amazing. This will be a victory for real people, a victory for ordinary people, a victory for decent people. We have fought against the establishment, against the big merchant banks, against big politics, against lies, corruption and deceit... and today honesty and decency and belief in nation I think now is going to win. "We will have done it without having to fight, without a single bullet having been fired," he said, calling it the country's "independence day". There was a tense mood in Downing Street while Labour remain campaigners



Stronger in supporters react with dismay as they hear results at London's Royal Festival Hall Photograph: Rob Stothard/PA

break down in tears, saying people were "scared and confused". Jeremy Cook, chief economist and head of currency strategy at WoodGundy, said, "Sterling has collapsed... it can go a lot further as well." The pound was trading at \$1.35, its lowest level since 1985. Cameron is expected to address the country from Downing Street this morning. He had earlier received the support of 86 Conservative MPs who have campaigned for out, including Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Chris Grayling, who said it was his "mandate and a duty to continue implementing the party's 2015 manifesto". But Labour's shadow foreign secretary, Hilary Benn, said he could not see how the prime minister could remain in position. Jeremy Corbyn, who is also facing recommitments and the possibility of a leadership challenge, will declare Britain a "divided country" and also indicate that the prime minister will need to consider

his position. The Labour leader will say the expected result demonstrates a split between areas of high deprivation, where people feel left behind, and other areas. A senior Labour source said there was an urgent need to address the concerns of working class communities, including over immigration and public services. But he also argued that areas with the highest levels of deprivation voted to remain, suggesting the issue was more complex. Senior Tories called for calm. Gauthier Brady, one of the most important figures in uniting the party because of his leadership of the key 1922 backbench committee, said: "The debate over Britain's relationship with the EU is a vitally important

EU referendum

Inside How Britain went to the polls – and what might happen next Pages 2-7 →

Continued on page 3 →

Figure 1 – headlines used for the Leave result, June 2016

Figure 2 - headline used for release of Chequer's Deal, July 2018



May wins cabinet agreement for soft Brexit plan

**Dan Snijs
Jessica Elgot
Peter Walker**

Theresa May has secured approval to negotiate a soft Brexit deal with the EU, signing up her far-right cabinet at a Chequer's away day to what had been a counter-revolution to make headlines on food and goods.

The prime minister is believed to have secured the support of all 24 Conservative MPs voting at an announcement following the official announcement of her long-awaited summit, in which she also announced she had won over the cabinet to her customs arrangements ending

individual views. Agreement on this proposal marks the point where it is no longer the case and collective responsibility is now fully restored.

Ministers had been told to consider the implications in line with what was described as a "standard practice" for cabinet meetings when they are read at Chequer's on a Monday. With some of the decisions passed, meaning that they are not able to immediately present their views to the public.

May had asked everyone with the right to attend cabinet to be present, a total of 29 people, meaning that a greater proportion of those present were expected to be loyal to her.

And despite speculation that some ministers could stage a walk-out through the Buckingham Palace courtyard to the nearest railway station, there was no sign of Boris Johnson or any of the hard-line Tories leaving before the end.

The cabinet agreed to set down for a debate of no less and no more. They then heard the presentation from the vice-chancellor after the "common sense" proposal was laid.

So far, it is almost unanimous, led by Johnson, had not to discuss their concerns at the Foreign Office. The other day were David Davis, Liam Fox, Michael Gove, Andrea Leadsom, Esther McAvoy and Penny Mordaunt.

Johnson met David Cameron on their way to Downing Street, discussing what happened there.

May was able to release the text of the three-page agreement to most before a cabinet meeting on Wednesday for a debate of no less and no more. They then heard the presentation from the vice-chancellor after the "common sense" proposal was laid.

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Johnson met David Cameron on their way to Downing Street, discussing what happened there.

Diet could help drugs to combat cancer

Hannah Devlin
www.theguardian.com

A groundbreaking clinical trial on whether diet can boost the effectiveness of cancer drugs is to be launched by one of the world's leading oncologists.

The work, led by Siddhartha Mathur at Columbia University Medical Center in New York, will investigate whether a high fat, low carbohydrate diet could improve outcomes for patients with lymphoma and endometrial cancer.

The trial, which is initially recruiting 40 patients, will be first in a series being planned to continue in the US and Europe by members of a new international working group focused on "rethinking immunotherapy for cancer", said Mathur.

"Physicians are discovering

individual views. Agreement on this proposal marks the point where it is no longer the case and collective responsibility is now fully restored.

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May suffers historic defeat as Tories turn against her



A rare glimpse of a packed No lobby, with MPs walking through to vote against Theresa May's Brexit deal. Boris Johnson can be seen in the left of the picture PHOTOGRAPH: BILL EMBERTON

- Brexit vote is an unprecedented loss for government
- Jeremy Corbyn tables vote of no confidence in PM
- EU warns 'time is almost up' to strike a deal

**Heather Stewart
Daniel Boffey**

Theresa May pledged last night to face down a vote of no confidence in her government after her Brexit deal was rejected by MPs in the heaviest parliamentary defeat of the democratic era.

On a day of extraordinary drama at Westminster, the House of Commons delivered a devastating verdict on May's deal, voting against it by 432 to 202. The scale of the defeat, by a majority of 230, was unprecedented in the modern parliamentary era and saw ardent Brexiters such as Jacob Rees-Mogg and Boris Johnson walk through

How they voted

Yes	202
No	432
Majority	230

How the no-confidence vote could play out today
News Page 4

He told MPs: "This is a catastrophic defeat. The house has delivered its verdict on her deal. Delay and denial has reached the end of the line".

The Brexit-backing European Research Group (ERG) and the Democratic Unionist party (DUP) later said they would support May, making it unlikely Labour can succeed in triggering a general election.

The prime minister said that if she survived today's vote, she would hold meetings with "senior parliamentarians" from all parties to identify what would be required to secure the backing of the house.

May's spokesman later said that she would be contacting Brexit MPs, DUP MPs as well.

Figure 3 - headline used for first defeat of Withdrawal Deal, January 2019

APPENDIX 3 – Interview transcripts (arranged alphabetically)

Appendix 3.1 – Colin

Interview Setting: Chique O Latte, Utrecht; 5pm, 27/03/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So I guess we'll just start with your name, introduce yourself, like your name, age, whereabouts you're living in the Netherlands.

C: My name is [Colin], I'm 25 years-old, well 26 in about 3 days. I live in Utrecht.

T: When did you first move to the Netherlands from the UK?

C: December 2017.

T: Where were you based in the UK beforehand?

C: Before this, Liverpool.

T: Where are you currently working?

C: I've been working for Nutricia research in the Science Park in Utrecht.

T: Have you been with them the whole time since you came to Utrecht?

C: Yeah. So just the one job. Wait. It was December 2016. It feels shorter.

T: So that was two and a bit years?

C: 2 years, 3 months.

T: And how come you chose to come to the Netherlands?

C: I didn't really choose actually, it was kind of an accident. I got a message from my recruiter about a job that was supposed to be based in Liverpool, working at the same company. I had interviews there. They ultimately picked someone else, but they liked me so they offered me the same job, essentially, in the Netherlands instead. So, with the whole Brexit situation going on, it seemed like an obvious choice.

T: So you thought maybe coming here would be a good way to get away from the Brexit situation?

C: Well. Maybe. I mean it made the decision easier I think. But I'd wanted to try and move and live abroad and travel. This was basically the first opportunity I had, so I thought "why not take it"?

T: Are your family all based in England still?

C: Yeah.

T: What kind of experience had you had of Europe beforehand? Like travelling here, or people you know that live here?

C: Well I'd never worked here before on the continent. But I've travelled quite extensively. I think I've visited most European countries at this point, at least once. But I'd already been quite exposed to European culture and life because before this I worked at Unilever, so I had quite a large network of international friends. So I already kind of had that mind-set I think. Maybe that's why I said yes.

T: Maybe that's why you had the idea to come here. Are you here on your own?

C: On my own, yes.

T: So your choice to come to the Netherlands, to explore that a little more. Was it a mixture of being assigned and self-initiated? Did you get the choice and then you chose it?

C: Yeah. I mean it wasn't part of the plan initially. It was very much thrust upon me. Like a rollercoaster of emotions: "you didn't get the job, but we want to offer you another job, but it's a sea away". So it was like, "ok". But yeah it wasn't a difficult decision, ultimately.

T: The Netherlands was the only option?

C: When the offer was made yeah.

T: Well I think we've already gone very quickly through the warm-up. That's the quickest I've done that bit. Some of the others have been very complicated, like they've lived in various other places and had their family with them.

C: I wish it was more so. I wish my story was more interesting, but I was born, raised, went to school, went to university and had my first job in Liverpool, and then just moved to the Netherlands.

T: Mine was very similar to that actually, but in Wiltshire instead of Liverpool. And with university instead of a job.

Experiences of Brexit

T: So I guess we'll talk about Brexit then.

C: Oh yay! [Sarcastic laugh]

T: Even that is useful information. So it was originally announced back in February 2016 by David Cameron. At that time you would have been living in England still. So can you remember it happening?

Announcement of Referendum, Feb 2016

C: The announcement of the referendum, or the referendum itself?

T: The announcement of the referendum.

C: Vaguely. I remember the discussions going on around December the previous year and there was all the build up to it in terms of what the question should be. I don't particularly remember registering it as something hugely significant at the time, I guess.

T: Because at that time you wouldn't necessarily have known you were going to come here.

C: Yeah. That and I think I wasn't quite as engaged with politics as I am now.

T: So when do you think you became more engaged with politics?

C: I mean I generally got engaged with it when it came to elections, I attempted to do some research, but I think ongoing, keeping up to date on an ongoing basis about what's going on probably happened maybe a couple of months before the referendum, like April time.

T: When you started becoming in touch with it [politics], how did you follow it? What kind of media did you use?

C: Mostly through the internet. I don't particularly read much printed news these days. So it was a mix of TV and various online newspapers, sometimes social media, trying to get as wider view as possible.

T: Using different political orientations of media sites?

C: Oh yeah. I would consider myself a dead centrist, so I always think if you wanna get the most balanced viewpoint, you've got to look down the two extremes.

T: Did you vote in the referendum?

C: I did.

T: And you were still living in the UK?

C: Yeah.

T: And what did you vote for?

C: I voted Remain.

T: So if it was before you had the opportunity to move to the Netherlands, then what kind of things motivated you to vote for Remain?

C: I think it's probably more the "big picture". I knew at least on the surface, at the time, it didn't seem that leaving the EU would affect my life directly, as it stood then. But I was also thinking more about the future as well. I thought the chance of not having freedom of movement across the continent anymore; plus the opportunity of getting funding from the university as an EU citizen, could become a blocker to anything that I might want to do in the future.

Leave Vote June 2016

T: So then, how did the Leave vote affect your decision to move to the Netherlands? You said earlier it was kind of a way to escape it.

C: I think at first it was, like a lot people, I had quite a reactionary response to it. The sense of “that’s it, I’m leaving the country, getting out of here!” But I suppose I never really considered actually entertaining the thought at first. My job was going ok. There wasn’t any particular reason why I needed to move. But it became apparent as I was going through the interview process for this new job and also as the lead-up to the start of triggering Article 50 as more information came to light. Brexit became more of an issue, but also my job wasn’t as stable as I thought. It turns out they were planning on getting rid of some employees in the New Year. So in effect, I jumped before I was pushed.

T: So you came to the Netherlands. How easy did you find it to integrate into life here? To find a house and...

C: housing is difficult in the Netherlands anyway, especially if it’s a university city like Utrecht. But, I was lucky because it was made a bit easier by the company: because I was being recruited from abroad, they offered assistance in terms of registration with the Gemeente and setting up a bank account. They didn’t help with accommodation, but they did give me some recommendations so I was able to find something that way. So it was probably smoother than your average person would experience in the same situation.

T: And will that support from your work follow over onto the threats over Brexit?

C: I hope so. We’ve had discussions with HR about this and they try to keep us updated as much as possible. But obviously they know basically as much as we do at this point. So they’ve just said watch this space for now. But whatever happens, in terms of should we need migrant visas or anything like that, they will support us with that. It’s good. I do feel slightly more secure because of the job.

T: And what kind of people do you hang around with. Poorly-phrased. People you spend your time with here, are they other Brits, or Dutch?

C: There’s a couple of Brits. Well there’s one British guy who moved relatively recently to Utrecht, but he’d been living in a lot of European countries before this. And one Australian friend who is in the Netherlands on his British passport, so kind of the same boat. But yeah generally, it’s quite an eclectic, international bunch of friends. Couple of Dutch thrown in there as well, so that’s always nice to kind of get the integrated feel.

T: Was your workplace international as well?

C: Yeah it’s very international. So it’s basically working product development for infant nutrition. And I’d say that on the site of about 600, there’s probably 50% Dutch and 50% international. So I always like to make the joke that I’ve now got a friend on every continent.

T: Does that affect your feeling of being European in any way?

C: In what way?

T: If you have friends from around the world, then do you feel like a British person as part of that, or more as a European as part of that?

C: I haven't gotten away from my Britishness. It's still a big part of me and who I am. It still does cause issues in the group sometimes when I'm saying really sarcastic, witty humour and no-one understands it. It does happen more than I'd care to admit.

T: But the Dutch are good with too I find.

C: Yeah that's true. The Dutch bluntness, that did take a while to get used to. But I think it applied even before I came to the Netherlands. Having a group of international friends had started to change my mind-set a little bit, open it up. I started to embrace other parts of other European cultures into my habit and how I socialise. Not necessarily replacing what I do as a Brit, but complementary. I think that's just become even stronger and even more so living here with such a wide group of people.

T: Can you think of an example of one of those habits that might have changed?

C: Good question actually. Definitely the way I speak, I think that's come from the Dutch, that I'm far more direct than I used to be. I get to the point more. Eating habit, I think. I mean the Dutch generally eat at the same time as the British, but there's an awful lot of people from Spanish and French speaking countries as well, who generally tend to eat later, around 7 or 8 o'clock. Mostly because if I ever want to socialise them then that's [adopting their dinner times] what I have to do. So a few things. I still constantly get confused by the number of kisses on the cheek between my friends. Some want 3, some want 2, it's just too complicated! [laughs]

T: Brits just want to give none.

C: Maybe one. One peck on the cheek if it's a good friend, or your mother.

T: With that group of friends, what was the reaction to Brexit?

C: They ask me a question about it every week at this point.

T: But when the Leave vote came out originally?

C: I was still in England, but I still had a lot of those international friends. It was mixed. It's funny, we'd been making jokes the day before. I said to one of my French friends "don't worry, if it's a vote to Leave, I'll walk you down to Dover myself the next day –give you a nice send-off!" Obviously it happened, so working at Unilever with a lot of scientists and well-educated people, it was obviously a big shock. Some friends were dumbfounded, others didn't know what was going to happen, one of my friends spent the whole day crying. It was a real emotional mixed bag, is the best way of putting it.

T: Did your family also vote to Remain?

C: Well my mum and my maternal grandmother definitely did. I know that my grandmother on my Dad's side voted Leave. I'm not sure about my Dad, but I suspect he voted Leave as well.

T: Has that affected your relationship with them at all?

C: Not with them. It's affected my relationship with a few other members of the family. But to be fair the cracks were already there. This was just the straw that broke the camel's back I guess.

Chequers Deal, Summer 2018

T: You were living in the Netherlands at the time that the Chequers Deal was announced, in summer 2018. The deal gave an idea of what form Brexit would take and moved it towards a softer Brexit. Did that make you feel any more certainty about what would happen?

C: Realistically it provided certainty in the short-term. But I was wise enough to realise that essentially it was just pushing the cliff-edge back until the end of December 2020.

T: So that was when they first announced the transition period as well I guess.

C: I think so yeah.

March 2019 Events

T: So moving forward to now we have the defeat of May's deal twice and the possible extension of Brexit to various different dates.

C: Yeah I've spent the last few days trying to keep up and get my head around it and it's definitely difficult.

T: Have you been following it a lot because of the fact you live here?

C: I think even if I lived in the UK, I probably would still be following it. Maybe not with such fervour. But I wouldn't be disengaged from it just because of political fatigue. I know a lot of people are just sick of it at this point, but I think it's too important an issue to not be engaged in.

T: I'm interested to know what you would like to happen of all the possible scenarios at the moment.

C: God, that is the question isn't it. I mean I'd like to say just unilaterally withdraw Article 50. There was a 3 line phrase that came up recently. It was 3 R's: revoke, re-join, reform, or something like that. We're better having a seat at the table and being able to make meaningful changes. I mean a good start would be not electing UKIP to the European Parliament. Get someone who will actually make a difference. I don't know, cos I question how democratic the referendum actually was, considering that it's fundamentally incompatible with the representative democracy of the UK, to have direct democracy. I dunno. I spend probably too much of my time commenting on the likes of the Daily Express. With some of the more rabid Leave voters. Mainly just for my own catharsis I guess.

T: What kind of comments are you making there?

C: I try and be as polite as possible. I was always taught "don't argue with an idiot, because they'll drag you down to their level and beat you with experience". But I never throw the insults. I always try and just come up with reasons, well-researched arguments. There are different levels of victory to that. Sometimes they'll just throw insults back at you. Occasionally they can't fight back, and they'll delete the comment – that's always good. I dunno. I guess I'm probably a Brexit troll, aren't I?

T: On the other side.

C: Yeah a Remain Troll.

T: Didn't know they existed.

C: Oh yeah there's a few of us.

Settlement/aspirations for the future

T: So has the whole Brexit Process affected the extent to which you've tried to settle here?

C: I believe so. I've gotten to the point where I-. I mean obviously the citizenship laws here are a bit more strict in the sense of having dual citizenship. It's not out of the realms of possibility that I might marry a Dutch girl one day and then I can get a passport and keep the British one. But I've been here 2 and a bit years, so I'd need to be here at least another 3, actually learn Dutch properly in order to pass the integration exam and then stay. But I have gotten to the point recently where I would genuinely consider giving up my British passport in order to stay here on a more permanent basis.

T: What triggered that for you? There might not be 1 particular event.

C: Not really. I guess it's just a collective reflection on the future and not even just the possible outcomes of Brexit, but just the possible personal outcomes I guess. Where do I see my career and my future more? And honestly I think that's shifted more to the Netherlands and that's not just because of Brexit I think that's also because of the country as a whole. The public transport here is better, it's generally cleaner, standard of living is higher. Especially when you compare that to Liverpool, which until relatively recently was a bit shit! So maybe it's not even just the Brexit thing. Maybe if I'd been living in a nicer part of the UK and born into a middle-class family, rather than a working class, I might not have had the same opinion. So who knows.

Speaking Dutch

T: You mentioned Dutch briefly there. How much do you know?

C: Enough to get through your average conversation at the supermarket and order a beer. Get by on a day-to-day basis, but I can't do any in-depth conversation. I think it's doubly difficult because with my job the business language is English.

T: So you don't get to practice at work.

C: Not especially. I think I'm gonna make more of an effort this year to. Maybe triggered by Brexit, the possibility of No-Deal as well, that this year I will make more of a concerted effort to actually learn it and rely more on my Dutch friends that I've now made, to help and insist that they speak Dutch to me until I get it right!

T: It's nice that you've made them speak Dutch to you.

C: Most of the time you know, I'm at the point where I can in least in work anyway, I can listen and generally understand the gist of what's going on. It's just the responding that's the problem. It's like with learning any new language, isn't it? It always sounds like the other person is talking way too fast.

T: I was the same. Recently my housemates realised I was understanding more than they had realised. And they were like "oh we can't gossip about you anymore!"

C: That sounds like something the Dutch would say.

T: I can't speak it myself. I can just understand some of it.

C: That's always the first step I think.

Involvement in local community

T: What people do you live with?

C: I live alone.

T: OK. In a-. I was thinking if it was a student place it would either be international or Dutch.

C: It's just like a regular Dutch house. It's one of those like in the suburby areas, where it's like a 3-storey and then bottom floor might be 1 house and then second would be 2 house. It's one of those.

T: Do you get to see your neighbours much?

C: Yeah! Maybe not my neighbours left and right. But I've got one person below me, so we do interact on a regular basis. And I think mostly because I've got wooden floors, so apparently it makes quite loud noise when I move around. But still she's quite nice. Generally try and interact with them. Plus the neighbourhood does seem to have a lot of events and activities that go on. Like, they built one of those haunted house runs for the kids when it was Halloween. It was quite funny.

T: That's unusual. I didn't think the Dutch really did Halloween.

C: I'm pretty sure Americans live across the road.

T: OK. That makes sense. Did you take part in the elections the other day?

C: I did.

T: For the waterschappen.

C: Yeah.

T: Because I guess you weren't able to do the provincial one.

C: No. I think it's permanent residency that you have to have, so at least 5 years.

T: Would Brexit actually give you more of an opportunity to get permanent residency here? Because you can't really get that as a European citizen.

C: Well you can get the EU-derived permanent residency. It's usually automatic after 5 years of living in another EU state continuously. But, other than that I'm not 100% sure. Because I know that the rules governing British citizens here before Brexit, in the case of a no-deal situation, will be different to regular non-EU citizens. Non-EU citizens after 3 years have to take the integration exam. But I think British people will still be exempt from that, which is nice. Although probably less encouragement to learn Dutch, but you know.

T: There's already so little encouragement to learn Dutch.

C: Recently I find really annoying is that, so there's a lot people who've been in the Netherlands for more than 15 years. They've lived here a long time, but they've never got Dutch citizenship because it wasn't a requirement. So they're gonna end up in a situation where, and potentially I could if I didn't get Dutch citizenship, where they will not be able to vote in any Dutch elections potentially, not be able to vote in EU elections, and because they've lived outside the UK for 15 years, won't be able to vote in UK general elections either. They won't be able to vote anywhere, which I'm pretty sure is illegal under international law!

T: I think Britain is planning to change that law.

C: I think it's said that for the last decade or so.

T: But it can certainly be annoying if they were unable to vote in the EU referendum.

C: Oh yeah that potentially could have changed the entire outcome.

T: Do you spend much time with other British nationals over here?

C: Yeah. Socially. There isn't many in our office, where we work, but I do have a couple of British friends outside of work that I do spend time with yeah.

T: What's the general feeling about Brexit?

C: Mixed. Some people are engaged, some people are like sit back and wait and see, some of them have no idea what's going on. I had to tell one of my friends recently to actually make sure they had their registration and stuff up to date to be sent the temporary residence documents. So yeah it's a bit of mix.

Brexit Worries

T: What was your biggest worry about Brexit and the consequences of it?

C: I suppose it's funny, it's almost a problem of my own making because by moving here after it, I intentionally made things more difficult for myself. Well potentially, it depends on the outcome obviously. I guess the biggest worry is lack of opportunity for the future. I like the Netherlands but I might not necessarily stay here for the rest of my life. One thing I'm pretty sure of is I don't want to go back to the UK. So if I decide I want to move to another EU country, the rules of freedom of movement are not gonna extend potentially to another move. So it changes the whole landscape and I have to compete with the rest of the world, without having the benefits of EU laws.

T: So if you decided you didn't want to live in the Netherlands anymore, it would then make it harder to move to say Germany or Belgium instead?

C: Yeah. I think a lot of the other issues like increase in food prices and things like that, probably aren't gonna affect me that much nowadays. So I'm worried for my family as well, they're not exactly rich. But, for myself I don't really worry about it.

T: More worried about the effect on your family back in Britain.

C: and the effect on other people. So many people in the UK live on the breadline. It doesn't take much of a shift to cause undue suffering and more people to fall into poverty. Me voting to remain in the UK wasn't so much about me as it was about everyone else.

T: Are you worried about the effect on you being able to visit your family?

C: Yeah. Especially considering that beyond the emergency measures the EU has come up with, there aren't really any long-term agreements on how flights or anything is going to work. It could potentially become a lot more expensive. The immigration side shouldn't be an issue, except for the fact we might have to wait in the Rest of the World queue on the way back, which could be super annoying. So it's more an inconvenience than a worry.

T: Just to go back briefly to your job. Brexit won't affect your job, you think?

C: I shouldn't think so. We do a lot of cross-border work between the UK and the Netherlands, so I generally work a lot with our team in Liverpool. So, I guess there might be some disruption in those ways of working. But also sometimes we occasionally go and do days work in Germany as well, for our other sites. So there might be tax consequences then for working across borders. I don't know if it counts as exception if we do it under business travel. But that's the thing; no-one knows!

T: Are there other non-EU people at work that already are going through that kind of thing?

C: Yeah. Well there are agreements in place for that sort of stuff, course, but no-one knows if it's going to apply to the UK or not, yet. Whether it will be something different.

T: Because we don't know if the UK will be more like Switzerland, or like the USA and Canada.

C: Yeah. Exactly. I mean will we need a Schengen visa? I dunno. I wish I did.

T: I wish somebody did. Anywhere.

C: Yeah. Anyone please, just come up with an idea and I'll support it.

European Identity

T: So we'll conclude now with some more explicit questions as to how you identify with continental Europe and the European Union. Starting with: how would you describe the term "European"?

C: Good question. I think I'd define it more than one way. You could say European as in an EU citizen. European as in the continent. Or European as - . I think for me it's more of a cultural than a political identity. For all of our differences, generally speaking we do share a lot of similarities between all of our brethren on this side of the water.

T: And can you see that with the people that you know from Europe?

C: I think so.

T: In contrast to other places.

C: I feel yeah. I mean, depends from where. I think Latin America probably shares quite a few similarities as well, just because most of them are Spanish or Portuguese. More big differences

between Asian cultures and American for instance. It's interesting. I guess the longer I've lived here and the more people you get exposed to, the more similar you realise you actually are.

T: Well that's cool. And do you see Britain as part of Europe? The cultural identity.

C: More so in recent years I think.

T: Oh more so in recent years?

C: I guess I just wasn't very aware of it. People in Britain will say they're going to Europe when they go on holiday to Spain, despite the fact that we are part of Europe. Something about island mentality.

T: You have to cross the water.

C: Cos I guess I would previously have thought of myself as British first and then European second, but now it's the other way around.

T: So you'd put European before your passport nationality.

C: Pretty much.

T: Although European is also on the passport at the moment.

C: I recently renewed my passport early, just so it still said European Union on it for another decade. I can't process much, but I could do that.

T: Well we don't know what's gonna happen. We might still be able to use the e-Gates.

T: Do you think there's a European identity? Do you think there is a particularly strong European identity?

C: See I think that it's an interesting dynamic because I think in some ways that European identity after Brexit has become stronger, or at the very least more to the front of people's minds. For all the faults of the EU, one thing we can say is that they've definitely kept a unified front through all this Greek tragedy. But then at the same time, with the rise of more nationalism across Europe in recent years, it's difficult to say. But I think in general, yeah, there is a European identity.

T: And do you think that the European identity is associated with the EU?

C: I think the EU has probably facilitated it. I wouldn't say it was the reason for it.

T: Kind of existed before hand. Cultural similarities already?

C: Yeah. Like I said, it's our similarities that make us strong. That was the whole point of the EU really. It was to bring countries together that had been warring with each other for a thousand years and make it so that it wasn't necessary anymore.

T: And you've said now that you think of yourself now as European before British. Is that European rather than Dutch?

C: I wouldn't say I was Dutch.

T: No?

C: Not yet. Maybe after I've got a passport and lived here for another decade, I might say that. I don't know if I'll ever not identify being British. Even if I don't have the passport. I mean ultimately it's just a piece of paper. So, I think it would culturally always be a part of me. Maybe a smaller part as I get older, but still there.

T: Because it was where you were born?

C: Yeah. I'm still gonna have classic British manners, be awkward and say please and thank you far too much and sorry. That's never going away unfortunately.

T: And do you think that other Britons living here think of themselves as European?

C: Good question. I mean I know of some people. Like there was a British expats in the Netherlands Facebook page and I know of some people on that who are Leave voters. Whether they think of themselves as European is a debate. Can you think of yourself as European and be a Leave voter? So I guess I'd air on the side of caution and say if you're a Leave voter and living here, then maybe not. But I think most people who were Remain voters, who live in the Netherlands, think of themselves as European. But it is definitely a symptom of Brits who live abroad, that will often import their culture with them, or go on holidays to places like Benidorm which are basically Blackpool, but with better weather.

Final Question: Stay or Return

T: We can wrap-up with a final question. So as a result of the whole Brexit Process and everything, do you see yourself staying here, or moving back to Britain?

C: Staying here. I think even if the whole issue was put to bed and cancelled; it's brought to light elements of my country that I don't like. You see the divisions that exist, between people, between families, between the countries of the UK itself. It's not the rosy place that a lot of people think it is. For some people it is. I'm sure for a lot of people who live in nice areas in the Cotswolds, or work in finance in London, it's pretty great. For your average citizen, especially the ones in the North, it's not fantastic, and it's probably one of the reasons why the Leave vote happened.

T: So Brexit has exposed more than just Britain's relationship with Europe. It's also exposed –

C: - It's relationship with itself.

T: The divisions within the UK.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.2 – David

Interview Setting: David's office, 4:30pm, 28/03/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So I guess we'll start with your name, age, introduce yourself a bit.

D: Alright. My name's [David]. I'm 26. I'm from Bristol, in the UK. I'm doing my PhD here at the UMC. I'm just going into my third year.

T: So you've been in the Netherlands for that whole time?

D: Yeah. And actually, the reason I came here. I did an internship here during my Bachelor's and I really liked it. So I came back to do my Master's here and then made a load of connections and ended up with this PhD position. So I've been here since. I first moved here in 2012 and then stayed for a year and went back to the UK for a year, then moved back again in 2014. Then, with a few interruptions I've basically been here ever since.

T: What was your Master's?

D: It was Drug Innovation.

T: Also here at the UMC?

D: Yeah.

T: So why did you choose to come to do your Master's originally in the Netherlands?

D: I guess I really liked living here during my internship during my Bachelor's. The other factor is the cost. I didn't want to take on more student debt and then do another course in the UK. So I thought it was more attractive to come here.

T: Because it's cheaper to study here?

D: Yeah. And I just really like living here, so that was another reason.

T: What are some of the reasons you like living here then?

D: I like how functional everything is. I can cycle around everywhere without feeling afraid of getting hit by a car. I can take buses around easily. Things just work really well. Life is straightforward because everything is dependable. And in the UK things aren't so reliable, I've found sometimes. That was the feeling. I still have that feeling, but the longer I stay here the more and more I appreciate certain aspects about the UK.

T: So you kind've think negative aspects about the UK have pushed you away?

D: At the time I think that maybe I was a bit too negative about the UK. When I left things weren't that bad in the UK really. Brexit hadn't really started. Everything was fine. I'd like coming here experiencing something different. Being with a lot of international people I like as well.

T: From not just Europe, but other places as well.

D: Yeah. From all around the world.

T: Are your family still in the UK?

D: Yeah. All of them, apart from my brother who's now doing his Bachelor's in Leipzig.

T: Ahh in Germany?

D: I think I influenced him a bit. I think so.

T: I think I did the same with my sister. She's now going to move to Sweden.

Experiences of Brexit

T: So let's move on to your experiences of the Brexit Process.

D: Ah right.

Announcement of the Referendum, Feb 2016

T: Starting off with the announcement of the referendum back in February 2016. When David Cameron announced that there would be a referendum, following on from his manifesto promises. Can you remember that? What went through your mind at the time?

D: Well I remember that there was a lot of talk about it up until that point. So I wasn't too surprised. I don't really remember hearing of the announcement itself. I remember seeing for the first time, they just started to creep in, adverts for Leave and Remain. But actually at that point I left for the US for 6 months. So it was strange for me. I left just after all the campaigning started and when I returned, it was a couple of months after the result. So it was strange. I left the UK, everything was normal. I came back and the country had changed completely. So that was strange. But yeah I don't really remember the announcement. The call about the referendum itself. But I do remember the start of campaigning and thinking, "oh wow this is actually happening, this has actually arrived".

T: And where were you able to follow the campaigning?

D: Mostly. Well I was in the US at the time. So mostly I looked on the BBC website a lot.

[tea break]

Leave Result June 2016

T: So you were in America at the time of the referendum itself, when it actually happened?

D: Yeah. Just after the start of campaigning until the vote. So I voted from the US. And then about 2 months afterwards I came back in August.

T: What was the impression you were getting from the campaign and the way that it might have gone?

D: As in which way did I think it was going to go?

T: Yeah

D: I was pretty confident it was going to go with Remain, up until probably about 2 weeks before. Then the polls were really fluctuating and then they went for the first time towards Leave and I thought “well ok. This is scary”. Also, I come from such a bubble. I didn’t know of anyone who was planning to vote Leave, or supported Leave. So I was pretty confident. But just from looking around online and seeing these polls, I was getting more and more nervous as it came to it. But I was still very shocked when the result came in, yeah.

T: So when the Leave result happened, I have some pictures.

D: Wow alright. Yeah.

T: Do you remember how you initially felt when it happened? Were you still in America then?

D: Yeah. I was in the US. So what actually happened was, so it was a 6 hour time difference, so I had the voting started, or the results started coming in just as I was finishing work. I can’t remember what day it was, but it was the day that we would have our drinks in the lab. So we were all sitting around just having a few drinks and watching the results come in. It was getting more and more obvious that Leave were gonna win. And I started drinking more and more. And I got pretty drunk actually because it was really just strange. I thought “what the hell’s going on”. I didn’t know what it would mean. I was really shocked. I didn’t know how to process it. Well maybe that sounds a bit dramatic. But I didn’t feel good. I was pretty shocked and I didn’t feel happy about it at all. So I drank quite a bit and went home. And my housemates thought it was quite funny, because I’m usually quite calm, but I was like “I can’t believe this what’s going on? What are we doing? This is ridiculous!” Then my girlfriend called me up. She woke up in the morning, here in Europe, and then called me. It must have been about 3 or 4 in the morning there, like “yeah it’s confirmed. The result is Leave”. So that’s how it went for me.

T: Were you worried about what life would be like when you came back to Europe again?

D: At that point, not really. I was worried for my family’s sake because I know that they’re not gonna leave the UK. So I was worried for them. But, I didn’t and I still don’t, feel that worried because I’m in science and it’s very international and there are people from all around the world. Even from Iran and places like that where it’s a lot more difficult to get residency or something. I didn’t feel that worried about myself, personally. But maybe I felt worried about how it would affect my family.

T: They might be like stuck in Britain.

D: It seemed like everything is going to go to shit in the UK, and they’re stuck there.

T: Like food and medicine and stuff.

D: Yeah yeah. I just feel a bit worried about them. Here everything is fine.

T: Do you worry it will affect their [his family’s] ability to come and see you here?

D: It did. But from what I understand at the moment is even with a No Deal the EU have said that there's gonna be a sort of e-visa thing for British citizens, it's gonna be 10 years or something. And you get 90 days access to the EU or something.

T: Like the one that Brits use to go to America?

D: Yeah. Something like that. So, I'm not too worried about them. It will be more inconvenient at the airport, but I'm not too worried about not being able to see them.

T: When the Leave result was announced, what happened to your relationships with colleagues and things? Did they come and talk to you about it?

D: Yeah they were pretty sympathetic. They maybe thought it was a bit funny as well, cos it didn't really affect them directly. But yeah they were sympathetic and they wanted to talk to me about it a lot. Actually my boss, so my professor who's much higher than me and who is kinda hard to get at times; she was quite interested in what it meant for me and was coming to ask me about British politics and things. So that was funny.

T: What about your friends over here? Same with them?

D: The friends that I was living with in Boston, I actually made here [the Netherlands]. They were mostly Spanish. They were very sympathetic. They were also very shocked. They couldn't really believe. I think a lot of European people are more shocked than we are, because I think they only encounter the British people who are more outward thinking and are more willing to travel to Europe, and they're not really exposed to the weird, right-wing, nationalistic part of our society. They know about it; they know that it exists, but they're not really exposed to it that often. So I think they were more shocked than me actually, yeah.

T: Cos most of the ones who may have voted Leave were the ones who don't leave the UK that often.

D: Yeah. Exactly, exactly.

T: You mentioned your girlfriend earlier. Is she also British?

D: She's German. So, there's a lot of talk about maybe if things get very complicated I will marry her and get German citizenship. Which is really strange for me and it's not – well I wouldn't be happy with that situation. I mean it's nice that she's offering that, but it's a bit strange. And it would also involve me maybe – because I'm also an American citizen – so I'd probably have to give up my British or American citizenship. That would be strange. Yeah. So it wouldn't be ideal, but I don't want to go and live in the UK again. I don't want to go and live in the US again.

T: And German is easier to get than Dutch because you can't get dual with Dutch.

D: Yeah exactly. I've looked a bit into the rules and regulations and I think. So yeah my girlfriend is German, so I can just marry her and then I have German residency rights. But here, I need to live here for like another year and I need to do another inburgering exam thing. And that costs quite a bit of money and you'd have to study and I'd have to improve my Dutch.

Dutch integration and friends

T: What level is your Dutch at, at the moment?

D: It's ok. I speak pretty good Dutch. I don't know if it's good enough to pass the exam, but it's ok.

T: Do you have to speak it here at UMC?

D: No. In social situations it's nice to speak Dutch. But work is all in English.

T: Oh interesting. I didn't know that about the UMC.

D: And in science in general. All the papers are published in English and all the meetings are conducted in English as well. It's just kind of the language of science. But of course most people here are Dutch, so they all speak Dutch together.

T: And does Brexit motivate you to learn Dutch more? You might not even have thought about it.

D: No they're not really connected. I like learning languages in general. But no, I don't so to be honest.

T: I have a question, less related to Brexit. And I think we've touched on it a little bit already. What people do you spend your most time with while in the Netherlands?

D: As in their nationality? What sort of people?

T: Groups of friends or colleagues and what nationalities they are. Because some of the people I've spoken to for this only really hang around with their colleagues, because they go to Britain at the weekends.

D: Ah I wouldn't like to do that. So here most of my colleagues are Dutch, but I have to say most of my friends are not Dutch. I have a lot of Spanish friends, Italian friends. My girlfriend is German; I have a lot German friends through here. [Sean], our mutual friend; he's British of course. I've got American friends as well. But I think actually, here [Sean] is my only British friend. Oh no, there's two more.

T: Do you follow any of the British expat groups?

D: Not really, no. Do they exist?

T: Yeah [laughs]

D: Ok, ok. Maybe I should. Get more in touch with my British side. British heritage.

T: Oh you don't have to!

D: No!! It would be nice. The longer I'm here the more I appreciate British things.

T: But wouldn't want to go back to Britain?

D: If things were more stable. Brexit really confirms for me that I don't wanna go back. But maybe without Brexit I'd consider it.

Practical Matters

T: Don't you think it happened really suddenly though, the instability in Britain?

D: Yeah yeah. I remember being here and thinking "oh I'm really pleased that my country is stable". Because I was speaking to people from Greece and Italy. It was terrible for them; they had to move here, there were no opportunities in their own country. They didn't want to leave, but they had to really. And I thought "oh I'm very grateful to come from a stable, functioning country". There were its problems, but. Yeah, I appreciated that. And now, that's kind've gone. It's not as bad as what was going on in Greece, I guess. But it's definitely not stable and I don't really have much confidence in the future of the UK really.

T: Have you done anything over here as a result of that, seeing the instability in the UK? Like buying a house or getting a mortgage or anything like that?

D: Maybe I'd like to but science isn't the best paid career, so no I haven't. Well actually to be honest I had some money leftover in the UK and I always, if I ever needed to buy flight tickets for example, I would always use my pounds because I could see that the value was decreasing, so I thought "ok, let's just spend up this money while it has a higher value. So I guess that's the only sort of financial change I made. Spending all my pounds.

T: And you get paid in Euros here of course?

D: Yeah yeah. So that's nice.

T: I still only have pounds.

D: We have one guy here who's Dutch, but he was working in Oxford and he gets paid through a grant from the British biomedical research council, so he gets paid in pounds. So the value of his salary's been decreasing and decreasing.

T: It's interesting because most of the people I've spoken to for this get paid in euros and so Brexit's actually better for them because the euro is gaining value in terms of the pound. But I'm the other round... it distresses me.

D: No, but that's um. Maybe I shouldn't say this, now you've told me that. But it is nice getting paid in euros. Before whenever I'd go back to the UK things were more expensive than they were here. And now it's the other way round and I can enjoy myself when I go back to Bristol. Cos Bristol's not the cheapest place. But now it's kinda like "oh ok I can enjoy myself here", which never used to be the case.

Dutch integration (cont.)

T: Do you spend much time with your Dutch, assuming they're Dutch, your neighbours here?

D: Not really. I feel more drawn to international people, which I think is maybe a bit of a problem. I like to cycle.

T: Why's it a problem?

D: Because I think it's nice when a community is well-mixed. And I really feel that there's a separation, I guess it's probably the same anywhere, but I feel much more affinity to other foreigners, than I do the local people here. Even though I live within Dutch society. So I feel sometimes a bit, err, separate. Maybe I should integrate a bit more, or they should make it a bit easier to integrate. I don't know. It's not, I feel a bit uneasy about it. Because it's so easy just to live here in your foreign bubble – have a really insular life and not be part of the community. And I think that's not too good. In the short-term, one or two years, that's fine. But I'm going to be here for another 2 years at least and I'll have been here quite a while. But I don't know if that's related to Brexit.

T: No, that's fine. If you don't think it's been affected by Brexit.

D: No, I think perhaps the perception of British people has been a bit damaged by Brexit. A bit. But most people just react with disbelief. Martijn here was watching videos from the House of Commons last night and thought "what the hell is going on"!

T: I don't even know what happened yesterday.

D: That's the other thing. I really find it hard to keep up because there are so many developments so quickly. I try. But it all seems so dramatic. Everyday something else really dramatic happens.

T: I think the only way to follow properly would be to be watching something like BBC News every night.

D: Yeah yeah. Writing everything down. It's too much for me.

T: I'm trying to keep up with it in order to do this study.

D: Oh wow.

T: Did you get to vote at all in the elections last week?

D: I voted in the gemeente ones last year. But this time, I didn't vote because I thought, what was it the water council elections or something, and I thought "I have absolutely no idea about the water council; I'm not gonna vote". Maybe I should have. I recycled my stempas and my girlfriend was not pleased with me.

T: At least you recycled it.

D: Yeah.

T: I didn't realise how important the water thing was until afterwards, when my parents were like "well the Dutch have a lot of water".

D: Yeah it needs to be managed.

T: So it's probably very important. But you were able to vote last year?

D: Yeah

T: What was it last year for?

D: It was for the local council elections.

T: And you still can't vote for the provincial ones?

D: Um I don't think so. That was the one that was alongside the water council one.

T: I think you need Dutch citizenship maybe.

D: Yeah. I think so.

T: They should make it like a length of time, rather than a citizenship thing. And are you still able to vote in the UK?

D: I was, but I didn't get around to renewing my electoral registration thing, so I need to do that again.

T: Just in case something happens very soon.

D: Yeah just in case. I keep thinking "shit, something could happen. I should get that done". But it was a hassle, to get my vote from the US, was really a hassle. They didn't make it easy.

T: But you still have a registered address in the UK?

D: I did. But that's what I need to renew. I was registered in Bristol, yeah.

Chequer's Deal Summer 2018

T: Let's bring it back to Brexit. In summer 2018, Theresa May released her Chequers Deal, which gave a better idea of what Brexit would be like.

D: Yeah!

T: There is a headline from it there. The newspapers were all more concerned with the World Cup. It was more of a soft Brexit than people thought it initially might be. So did you feel it might be better for you?

D: Yeah, to be honest, in a maybe selfish way. Yeah, I would've been happy if they accepted that. In general, Brexit is not good for the UK and neither is the deal that they have now. But it would have been nice just to have a bit of clarity; to know what was gonna happen and if it was a soft-ish Brexit then I guess my rights here would've been maintained and we could have free movement. And I would've been happy with things just staying as similar as they are to now, as possible.

T: And that being better than a No Deal?

D: Yeah. But then I can see why people would have a lot of problems with that. Because if they're gonna do this they might as well change something. And that's not gonna satisfy a lot of people. And then we lose our say in the EU, so it's like we're in the EU without any say. I wouldn't have minded that situation, but I can see why it wasn't accepted.

T: And I feel like at the moment people are still trying to make Brexit not happen at all.

D: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. The thing that worries me is if that happens there's gonna be a lot of very, very angry people in the UK and they're already very angry and disillusioned I wouldn't like to see it get even more like that, so that worries me a bit.

T: You feel like the UK has become quite divided now?

D: Uh, extremely!

March 2019 Events

T: And then we move forward to the current events of 2019. This is a headline from January when May's deal got voted down the first time. It's developed even more since then. It's been voted down again and now we're seeing the possibility of an extension to the negotiations. How does that make you feel?

D: I feel like Theresa May is desperate to get this deal through. And her tactic is, I think she's confident that people realise that No Deal is kinda a disaster situation. And she's trying to blackmail them. She's making it so the only options are her deal or No Deal. Nobody wants No Deal, so kinda pushing them into accepting her deal. It seems to be almost working, because it seems to be as if opinion is really shifting now to accepting the deal. Yeah. From what I understand, what's in the deal now is the only thing the EU is gonna accept. So it's kinda the best possible option that we have, if we're actually gonna go through with this. So yeah. I'm reluctant, but I would say just accept it, what else are you gonna do? You can have no deal, or we can have another referendum. There's absolutely no good option for me. There's nothing that will satisfy me. I'd be happiest if we just remained, just pretended this never happened. But I realise that's not possible. And a second referendum I know is quite popular now, but I also wouldn't be too comfortable with that. So there's no situation that I'm happy with.

T: A second referendum could cause even more division.

D: Yeah. And I'm not entirely confident that it would go the way of Remain.

T: Yeah. And then if it's Leave then do they have to negotiate again?

D: Yeah. So that's how I feel. It's a lot.

T: So you would most want to Remain. But then, realistically what would you most like to happen?

D: Yeah. In an ideal world, I'd like to Remain. Realistically, I think they should just accept the deal. The more I think about it, I don't know. [conflicted faces] Or should we have another referendum? I really –. It's hard to say, it's hard to say. I think we should just accept the deal, maybe see what happens, and a few years down the line consider joining again. I think that might be the most sensible way of dealing with this.

T: Although they might not let us back in again.

D: Why not? Why not? Let's see.

T: The accession criteria would still apply I guess.

D: What are they?

T: Stuff like democracy and rule of law. Although at the moment Britain's democracy is..

D: Troubled.

Aspirations for the Future

T: Yeah. This is a very broad question, but we can see where it leads. Do you think Brexit will affect where you see yourself in the future? In terms of, where you live?

D: I hope not. But, potentially. I think for the next couple of years I'm not gonna be affected, but further down the line, maybe. Because now as an EU citizen I can just apply to any job in the EU and there's not really any bias against me. There's nothing to hinder me getting the job. But after Brexit, then maybe there's gonna be a lot of immigration stuff to deal with and it's gonna make it harder to find a job. Yeah, like I mentioned, maybe I get married and become German. But I don't wanna get married for residency reasons.

T: That's not the circumstances you want it to be in.

D: Exactly! So, yeah. Yeah I think it might, but I can't really definitively say at this point. But I can see that happening yeah.

T: Would it annoy you if you were unable to move as easily from the Netherlands to Germany, say?

D: Yeah, a lot. By now, I'm not particularly attached to the Netherlands. I've been working here a long time, but my girlfriend is from Germany, I go to Germany a lot, I have connections there now, maybe I'd like to start working in Germany. There are lots of jobs there. That could happen. But if things remain the way they are now, a few years down the line, maybe it's gonna be harder to emigrate to Germany and could be challenging. But it's really hard to say at this point. But I could see some hindrance taking place, yeah.

T: But at the moment it will be mostly fine.

D: Yeah. I don't know if you got one of those letters saying that till 2021 nothing is gonna change. Is it 2021 or next year?

T: It's 2 years, to originally match the transition period that was meant to start tomorrow.

D: Ok. Well that's nice. 2 years that I have to think about it. Also I have my contract until 2021 as well, so no matter what happens I don't think I'm going to get kicked out until I finish my PhD, but after that, eh.

T: I think I read somewhere that the Netherlands has a law that means they have to preferentially employ EU citizens.

D: Could be, yeah. Something like what they have in Switzerland?

T: Yeah.

D: But also, I can imagine you have 2 equally qualified applicants and one is an EU citizen, one is not; they are of course going to go for the EU citizen because it save a lot of paperwork and hassle.

European Identity

T: I think we're done mostly with the Brexit part. I'm going to wrap up with some questions about Europe, more generally. So starting with, how would you describe the term "European"?

D: I don't really know. Obviously someone from Europe geographically is what it makes me think of first. But I don't really know if there's a shared European identity. The EU hasn't been around long enough for something like that to form. Maybe in our generation, something like that is starting to form. But I think it's only present in, sort of, the more privileged parts of society where you can travel and you can live in other countries, go on Erasmus and things. I think that those in the middle, upper-middle class around Europe, there's a stronger feeling of a common European identity. But I think in the working classes in a lot of different countries it doesn't really exist. People see themselves as French, or Spanish, or British, or whatever.

T: So you'd say it comes from being able to move around and experience other parts of Europe?

D: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And having friends and encounters with people from other parts of Europe. I think people's attitudes, Europeans' attitudes are a lot more similar, compared to attitudes you'd find from the US or India, for instance. And that sort of helps to form a European identity.

T: And you've lived in the US so.

D: Yeah and I found people very different to how they are here, of course.

T: That's interesting because Britain is trying to more push the similarities to America, rather than the similarities to Europe. What's your opinion on that?

D: Well we share a lot more culture with the US, for sure. But I think people's attitudes and the way, oh it's hard to say. But I think in some aspects we're a lot more like the Dutch than we are the Americans. Yeah. I think probably, we're somewhere in between. So I find it really hard to generalise with whole populations, personalities and it's hard.

T: This might be hard for you, but if you had to rank your identifying with Britain or Europe, what would you say? And they can be equal as well.

D: I identify...Oh that's hard because I have to say I don't really, I think I'm quite a bit stubborn and I like to see myself as independent: I'm just myself and not part of the group that, well I am part of a lot of different groups, but I like to see myself as myself and not as a British person, as a European person, whatever. [pause] No, I think yeah I grew up in the UK so I'm British most, yeah. But, it doesn't affect how I interact with people or, you know what I mean. I identify more as British. Well, I dunno, also I think they're the same thing. Yeah, I'm British, but to be also European, the UK is part of Europe geographically and historically we've had a lot of connections with Europe. So yeah I'm British and European. I don't think you can separate those things. But I think being British has more of an influence on my character than being European, if that makes sense.

T: Do you think that's because that's where you were brought up?

D: Yeah yeah yeah. I grew up there. But I also I think because, like I said, I don't think Europe really has that much of an identity or a character. It's just a sort of confederation of different nations whose histories are much longer and cultures are much more defined than the EU. So there a lots of different, yeah...

T: So there's a lot of diversity, but Europeans are similar compared to other places in the world.

D: Yea yeah yeah. That's true. I also think there's a lot more similarities between different sort of classes. Different, sort of, groups of people within different countries have a lot more in common with each other through different countries. Maybe I have much more in common with a scientist, someone doing the same sort of work that I do, in the UK, or in Germany, or Sweden, whatever, as I would to a working class person in the UK or a upper class person in the UK, if you see what I mean. I think those differences are maybe more important, or have more of an influence on your life or your character, than national differences.

T: We're coming to the end now. I'm just going to check that I've covered everything.

Random Questions

T: I have a question that isn't related to what we've just been talking about, but I forgot it earlier. How frequently do you visit Britain?

D: Er. Once every couple of months or so. Maybe a bit less. Yeah I try to go back once every couple of months.

T: And do you think the frequency of visits will be affected by Brexit?

D: I hope not. I hope not. My grandparents are in quite ill health at the moment, so I'm trying to go back as much as possible. So I really hope it's not going to be difficult in the next few months. But yeah, potentially it will be, but we'll see.

Final Question: Britain or Europe?

T: So one last question to end with. Although I think I already know what you're going to say. But, as a result of all of the Brexit Process, do you think you will stay in the Netherlands or go back to Britain?

D: Well I'm not going to go back to Britain; I don't know if I'll stay in the Netherlands, basically. But I'm not going back. I'm pretty certain.

T: But if you didn't stay in the Netherlands, then where would you go instead?

D: At this point, most likely Germany. But I'm open to anything. It doesn't necessarily have to be Europe. But uh, yeah. I'm done with the UK unfortunately.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.3 – Donna

Interview Setting: Skype, 11am, 15/04/19

[Start of Interview]

T: So I'm gonna basically ask you about your experiences of living in the Netherlands during the Brexit Process and how that has affected your experience of being an expat here.

D: Alright, I can do that.

Demographics

T: But we'll start off with getting to know you a little bit better. So, what's your name and age firstly?

D: OK. My name is [Donna]. I am 38 years old.

T: Where are you from in the UK originally?

D: So originally I'm actually South African, I was born to British parents. Then I relocated back to the UK as I turned 20 and stayed there for just over 10 years. I got married there and started following my ex-husband's career. Pratted round after him. But I had always had dual nationality and grew up in a very British-centric household: my mum was Scots, my dad is English, so it was very English. And I lived mostly in Guildford, which is just south-east of London, between London and Portsmouth.

T: Then at what point did you move to the Netherlands?

D: I moved to the Netherlands in August of 2017. Yeah. I had been planning it for a little while. I wanted to go back to doing studies and I felt I could either go to England or the Netherlands. When I looked into it, the entrance requirements were far more flexible in the Netherlands. It sounds cheeky, but slightly softer touch for somebody who'd lived outside of the UK for quite a while. I could pay home fees, as a British passport holder and the courses looked really good and the rankings of the universities looked incredibly good. So I came over and I did that.

T: Which university did you go to?

D: University of Maastricht. So I did that and I've decided to stay on and try and get work. It [Brexit] happened just before I moved. So as I was planning to move and as I came for my first visit, Brexit hit.

T: So are you still in Maastricht now?

D: I am. And I've actually moved all my animals over here, gradually over time. And I'm looking for work generally in the Netherlands. I'm intending to work, hopefully in the Netherlands if I can find some. It's not very good, but then I don't think it's particularly much better in the UK either at this point in time.

T: What was your study?

D: Human Movement Sciences, which is a rehabilitation-based research.

T: How many animals do you have in the Netherlands with you now?

D: I have 3. I have 2 rescue rabbits and 1 rescue horse. The white rabbit came out of Saudi, the grey and white rabbit which you will see on my Facebook profile came out of Dubai, and a horse. They've all had the dream of moving to the nice green Netherlands with nice weather after the desert. It was my promise to them; they'd see green fields, either in England or here.

T: Are your family still in the UK?

D: Some of my family are. Both my parents are actually still in South Africa, although in different parts. I don't know what's gonna happen as my parents age because there's no social welfare or care, or not very good anything in South Africa. So my father got re-married and unfortunately she would never be allowed to stay in the UK because of the 35k income, which they would never be able to do. Even though they could live on their income, they just couldn't produce that. So she'd never get a visa, so I don't think he will ever move back. But my mum, I don't know what will happen. Currently we have what's called "rolling blackouts", so the electricity goes off for hours at a time and we've had massive water shortages where she lives. As her friends die off I'm concerned that she will need to move somewhere. That will probably be where I am living. So if I am in the Netherlands, she will fit very well into the Netherlands because she's quite bilingual. She's quite sociable so she'll get on well here. But if I go back to the UK, if I'm forced back there, then she would probably at some point have to join me there, somehow. Preferably not live together. It's fun when your parents get old, love! It comes.

Experiences of Brexit

T: Let's talk about Brexit now then.

D: Uh huh.

T: So I have a timeline of Brexit events to talk you through it and help you remember what your situation was at each time.

D: OK

T: Can you see me?

D: Yes, I can see you. Sometimes it breaks up.

Announcement of Referendum Feb 2016

T: Well we'll start off firstly with February 2016 when David Cameron originally announced that there would be a referendum. So not the result, but when he announced that there would be a referendum. What were you doing at that time in your life? Do you remember it?

D: Yes I do. So I was in Dubai. At that point I was still living with my ex-husband. We had already decided that I was going to come back to Europe to study. I'd had 3 offers from different universities and I was trying to get the maths to get into Amsterdam because that was a physiotherapy course, which is my original background. And in February, around that date, I managed to have a massive crash off a bicycle, so I think I was in the hospital. I'd seen it in the morning, but then I had a massive crash off a bicycle and ended up tearing an acyl and breaking teeth and all sorts of things. So that was a very good day – not! So I wasn't particularly happy about him [Cameron] putting it to the vote,

because about the only thing I can agree with Margaret Thatcher on is that I don't think people at that point were well enough informed to make the decision. I do have to say that, I think she was wise not putting it to the general electorate.

T: At that point were you thinking that it would affect your being able to study in Amsterdam or anything?

D: Massively. I was already aware that it could. Timeline-wise it might not stop my studies, but it would probably affect how I was perceived in the Netherlands. Subtle little things like if a professor is anti-Brexit they might not give you as much time, or you might not be as welcome to events. I was aware that might. But I was also concerned that if we suddenly crashed out then they'll turn round and "no, we don't want you here". They might find some grounds.

T: And did that make you want to apply for the UK instead?

D: No. I still knew that in order for me to go back to the UK and get home fees, I'd have to go back and work for 3 years before I would be eligible for home fees, because I hadn't lived in the UK for quite a long time. Also, looking at the courses that were available in the UK, I would've had to have worked at least 2 years in physiotherapy to get into the kind of courses I wanted to get into.

T: Because of experience requirements?

D: Yeah. Whereas here [NL] they could see that I had been working in my field, but in a different country. When I spoke to the UK they were saying "well we're not so sure that you are working" and they immediately got really iffy and I was just like "yeah you just want me to pay foreign fees". I'm not there. So I didn't have a problem with returning to the UK, per se. But then once that started to raise its head, you started to see the racism. That really then put me off. I know that happens a little bit after that timeline, but in the run-up you started to see really xenophobic attitudes. That's not for me. We're an island nation and we need to keep our doors open.

T: How long were you away from the UK then?

D: So I was away 7 years. I'd done 1 year in Chicago, then went back to the UK, so that's not included in that 7 years. And then after that we went to Saudi. I had a little bit of time, on and off, in Lebanon. And then Dubai. So I've seen quite a bit of the Middle East.

T: And was that going because your husband was going?

D: Yeah. His career, all of that.

T: And now you're here for your choice?

D: Yes. The plan was we were both going to move back, and then he just decided he couldn't anymore. I don't think Brexit helped. I think Brexit probably affected his decision to move back because he felt he wouldn't be welcome in Europe. Because he's originally Lebanese, he wouldn't be welcome in the UK. So he feels racism in two points: when he's here [NL] and when he gets racism in the UK on at least 1 point and then sometimes just the fact that we've had incidents where people have tried to assault him on the street in the UK. Yeah that 10 years ago.

T: Even before all the Brexit stuff.

D: A long time before all the Brexit stuff, we've had issues. And little things, like people can't be bothered to pronounce his name correctly. Just they look at his name and they're like "aaah, I don't know what to do with that". And then they just call him – his name is [unsure] – and they would call him Nigel Cheddar.

T: That's not even trying.

D: It is just incredibly ridiculous that it just comes out like that.

T: That's really sad.

D: Yeah. He's had it hard, bless him. Not the nicest man on Earth and racist in his own right, but...

Referendum Campaign

T: So were you able to follow along with the campaigning at all?

D: I did. I followed it quite closely. I heard what both sides were saying, so I could give a rational argument to both. For me it was immediately obvious, from my point of view, what I wanted. That remaining in Europe, not just for myself, but for my friends and family, would be best. I've heard the term used that I would be called a "champagne socialist" because I come from a reasonably good background, but I will always vote along lines that require me to pay perhaps more tax or require me to give up a little bit, if it makes things better for other people, because obviously in my social circle there are a lot of people who do not have as much, or did not have the nice background. I'd rather, particularly having worked in the NHS and having seen what the impact of a bad childhood can be, I really wanna ensure that that doesn't happen to somebody else. That's the same with when it came to the Brexit. I looked at everything and weighed everything up and I went "well what's going to be best for my nieces and nephews? What's going to be best for my friends who are working in this field? Who is going to benefit if I vote *for* Brexit?" And I sat and weighed it all up and I went "no, it doesn't just help me, it helps everybody I know and care about". Perhaps there is bias in that, but I can't see it helping many people to Brexit. So I decided yes, I'm gonna Remain and I wanna have rational arguments to back that up. I followed it quite closely. And honestly there weren't many rational arguments [laughs] put forward by any politicians, frankly, at some point. And the bus, just! Oh the flipping bus! You look at that and, you know, when it comes to legal changes, the only people who profit are the lawyers. They're the ones, and the politicians, who have to sit down and negotiate all these things. You can just see that £350 million, or whatever it was, get swallowed up by all the time and the effort. And already, if it was there, if it was ever going to be there, which I can't see how he did the math. We have a South African politician, Jacob Zuma, who couldn't count, and I swear Boris Johnson is getting math lessons from him, because you could just see it was never gonna exist, even in 50 years, it's never gonna exist, but you pay so much out to make these things happen. And then you end up like the US. Having lived in the US, but not worked in it, but having experienced their wonderful [sarcastic] healthcare as a patient, they pay double what anybody else pays for healthcare because they don't have the negotiating power that the EU does. They're trading hospital by hospital, they're negotiating prices for their drugs and their medicines and things like that. They have no collective power. Whereas the EU says to pharma "no, this is what we're paying", whether it's a German pharmaceutical company or an American pharmaceutical company "this is it".

And the NHS has that collective bargaining power. Now the NHS is going to sit on its own, and it's gradually being privatised, and eventually we're gonna just pay what the Americans just pay, and we're gonna pay double for everything. Ironically, doctors in the States are going bankrupt because they can't afford to keep running at the costs that they're running at, and supply their patients and look after them, because the equipment is outrageously priced and all of that. And knowing that and having worked in the NHS, you can just see it go horribly, horribly wrong. Their bus was just complete and utter lie from the outset. That's my rant for the day I think!

T: So losing that collective bargaining power was one of the reasons maybe that you voted for Remain. But what were some of the other reasons you thought of for why it would be better for your family and friends?

D: So freedom of movement. Freedom of academia, because academics in Europe collaborate extensively. If you're reading any paper that's currently out, they always list 3 or 4 universities, across the globe, but usually within Europe. And there's a lot of facilitated work between the Netherlands, Germany and the UK. Trade was a massive one and I don't think all these middle class people are quite prepared for how much they're going to have to pay for flowers after Brexit because all the flowers come through Amsterdam. We do trade, a massive trade, between the Netherlands and the UK – everything goes through Rotterdam. Banking was another one because we share a lot of banking structures, a lot of legal structures, in terms of that. EU employment because EU employment law has improved the UK's own employment law. I know nothing is completely standard, and this country could do to improve paternity law in line with the UK, but it has pushed us along. Without it, I think we would still be sitting on US-type laws. Right, what else? The transportation of goods is cheaper because we have no borders, there's no checks; the freedom of goods can move. The fact that there were expats living overseas, I was aware. Probably wasn't aware of how many people were living here [the Netherlands], but I was definitely aware that I have family who are living in Portugal – they're practically family, they're actually friends – but they're living in Portugal and that they would be uprooted, and I know other British passport holders who live in France and work in France and have for quite a long time and are they gonna have to swap passports? So that's a big one. I have many, many friends who cross-border work: so they live in the UK, but they work 2 days out of Germany, 2 days out of Brussels. Just the fact that it would cost so much to leave!

D: When you look at things like Arab Spring, classic example, not Brexit I know, but sometimes it's better the devil you know. And Egypt, the uprising happened and it was all students saying "yes we want this, we want work, we want better everything" and what they got was actually hell on Earth. Very quickly it turned into Sharia Law, they very much didn't really calculate how many of them there were compared to the [other group] and they ended up being a minority and screwed over and it ruined the country and now they're back at square one under a dictator. Libya, complete mess, it's on the news this morning, that's what happens. Sometimes you need to very gently make things change and I don't think there's fundamentally anything so terrible in the UK that we couldn't eventually fix and we could opt-in and opt-out of a lot of things. So we weren't having to do everything. We didn't have the Schengen; we didn't have total freedom of movement, we put restrictions on a lot of people, which probably was unnecessary because a lot of the Polish ended up going home anyway and certainly have since Brexit. I worked alongside a lot of Europeans in the NHS and those people deserve to stay and remain and work because they were contributing and being

productive. Whereas a good deal of the British people I worked with were not as highly qualified; they were lovely people, but you didn't see a lot of Europeans needing social welfare, they were there to work and there to do as best as they could. So in terms of contribution, I didn't feel like getting rid of them was a particularly productive way to help our economy. God I can think of half a dozen things. The fact that I've been brought up to believe that I am European and not an island: the world doesn't work like that, we have to trade with everybody, we have to work with everybody. And I've travelled across the world and perhaps that has contributed to it because I know that being able to have good employment rights in a country, having that ease of moving countries, makes a huge, huge difference. If you've had to get a Saudi visa as a woman, I can tell you it's very interesting. So I think I'll stop there. I might think of other things as we go along.

Leave Vote, June 2016

T: So, I imagine when the Leave vote was announced you weren't particularly happy? Here's some pictures.

D: I actually cried for 3 days. I sobbed and sobbed and sobbed, on and off for 3 days. As I predicted, the violence spiked and people got physically hurt and you could see it coming, you could see the right rise and the violence, the threats were already made and then they happened. Everything I predicted, unfortunately, immediately, in the aftermath did happen: the pound crashed, well it sank quite substantially and hasn't recovered as much; people I cared about quite dearly were caught up in that because they were moving from the UK to the Netherlands at the time, Dutch people who had decided to move back anyway, in part because they didn't feel welcome anymore, already. But yeah, it was just catastrophic. I cried and cried and cried and I still haven't come to terms about it. I still hope that someone will come to their senses and revoke Article 50. I know we can't put the genie back in the bottle, but something better needs to be found because what's going on now is a disaster.

T: Did it at that point affect your decision-making about where to study?

D: I knew I had 2 years at least. So I had my offers already in place, I had been to Maastricht, I'd been to Groningen and obviously I'd been before to Amsterdam and I made my decision and the universities were like "it's still fine, you'll still be ok". So I was just like "well, I'll go and at least do that and see if I can get work and if I can then get a work visa", knowing that we would probably crash out. But, of course, didn't quite predict how difficult work would be to get – still battling with that one.

Difficulties getting work

T: Why are you finding it hard to get work then?

D: So one, there is a language barrier. So I have some Dutch, but it is not always extensive enough for a professional setting. I have been told a couple of times by companies that "we don't need to get you a visa now, but we will need to get you a visa in the future" and it's gonna cost them too much. So they're just turning me down flat, just on the Brexit issue. I've had someone actually say "to be blunt, we have to get you a visa and we only offer these jobs to European passport holders. For the moment you are, but then we'll have to replace you and the cost isn't worth it". Couple of times, I've applied for jobs that I thought were pretty good, but I'm overqualified and got turned

down for that. Other times I think this is the Netherlands and fair enough they will choose to employ Dutch people, with Dutch education and Dutch cultural knowledge, before they'll employ somebody who isn't. So it doesn't help. And generally speaking, from my course we've all struggled. A lot of people are only just getting employed now, 6-7 months on, who were perfectly capable and good marks. And there are people from the year before who still haven't found employment. And there are people 5 years on who still haven't found employment, or not employment at the level they should be employed at.

T: So quite a hard field to get into.

D: Yeah. Especially if you want to do a PhD, there's a lot of competition for it.

T: Was the course quite international?

D: No. There were, I think, 40 of us in total. There was one guy who held a Dutch passport, but was originally from Trinidad and didn't speak a word of Dutch. There was a Turk; I say Turk, but he was a Cypriot Turk. There were 2 Italians, a Finn, myself and 2 Germans. So 7 of us out of 40, not even 20%. 1 other Brit, sorry I forgot the crazy lady. So 20% of us, just about. Very, very Dutch-centric and being in Limburg, sometimes very Limburg-centric as well, sometimes quite regional: we had a few lectures in English that I didn't think were in English.

T: Really? Haha

D: I'm learning Dutch here and when they speak Dutch it's fine, but when they speak English, sometimes I can't follow along. So it does get a little bit tricky. But we'll get there.

T: A stronger accent isn't it?

D: Particularly near the border it gets quite manic.

T: So you've had some real issues with Brexit and finding work and things then?

D: I think so.

Other Practical Matters (Money and Housing)

T: Has it affected anything else, like housing or money, anything like that?

D: Obviously the amount of pounds that I have isn't as valuable coming over. But, so far in terms of housing, it hasn't affected it. I was a bit sneaky and got my housing on my South African passport, rather than my British one, because for some reason they prefer foreigners in this accommodation. But, housing in Maastricht is terribly in demand.

T: Yeah I think so everywhere in the Netherlands. It's the same in Utrecht where I live.

D: I don't know what it is, but currently they're making life very difficult for me in my accommodation. I think it's surely based on the demand, that the amount of people looking for accommodation and they're not very good at regulating who gets it. Strictly speaking, I'm in a social housing, so they're trying to investigate me to see if I'm earning above 42,000 Euros, which made me laugh, because even if I've got a PhD I wouldn't earn above 42,000. The moment that I can move

out of this accommodation I would, because we have unfortunately, some drug addicts and things in the building. But I suspect it's also because I make complaints.

T: Oh really?

D: I contribute to the housing, but at the same time, when one of the neighbours upstairs has been using drugs quite heavily and being antisocial, so not just myself but a couple of us have made complaints. When things are broken, if I can't fix it then I ask them to fix it and they get upset about that because it's work. It's quite entertaining, because when we had a bit of problems with residents dumping items in the common areas, they tried to charge us for that. I was like "no you charge the person who dumped it, you don't charge the current residents, because it's the person who just moved out who did that, not the current tenants". So they got a bit of the hump with me saying I refuse to pay. They refused to turn off the heating for months and months. We had heating on in the full 30 degree mid-June heatwave that we had last year. I'd been emailing since the end of April saying "hey guys, can we turn the heating off". And then I said "I'm not paying from May onwards, I absolutely refuse". Then they turned the heating off. I was like "If I take this to court, I've sent you 5 emails. If you want to play this game, I'll play this game with you." At the same time, somebody did dump a load of stuff in the fire escape and I said "look, this has happened I'm willing to clean it up". I cleaned it up and sent them a photo. I said "it's all done and dusted, I know which apartment it came from, I'll let you guys sort it out, but I've put the rubbish out for you. It's done, here's the evidence". Not to be snotty to the person who did it, but it was a fairly nasty previous tenant, who they evicted anyway. So I'm happy to contribute and do stuff in the accommodation, but I think they don't like the extra work, so they're trying to make life quite hard for me at the moment. They won't fix my broken toilet and they won't fix the broken boiler which I have to pay extra, special rent for, I kid you not. So the moment I get a job, I'm moving out. But I feel sorry for whoever ends up coming in afterwards. But I'm not loud and not troublesome.

T: Wow!

D: Haha yeah. Welcome to Maastricht. It gets worse. There are worse landlords than that. Problem is, in the UK I have a little house that I have to maintain for somebody else. I keep everything absolutely pristine and nice and if they have any problems I want to know about it. Even if the fridge is getting just a little bit old, I'm like "well we've had the fridge for this many years, would you like a new one?" Just because I know as a tenant how shitty things can be.

T: So now you know how to be a really good landlord.

D: Yeah. And I don't charge that much rent either. Just enough to cover all the bills.

T: So you still have a house in the UK?

D: I do, yeah. I got a little place [in the UK] while I was living out in Saudi. I managed to earn more than I could ever have earned in the UK. Being female and a physiotherapist, I was in demand, so I was able to earn and save. Otherwise it would never have happened for me. It's a tiny little thing, it's not even freehold, it's lease hold, so it's not quite an apartment, but almost. It's just suitable for 1 person; it is an investment property, but if I get to stay here longer I might just sell it and then buy a little equivalent here [in NL] for myself rather than remain a tenant, because it's not fun at all. I hope your accommodation is better to you [laughs].

T: Yeah it's fine. Only problem I've had is that they come to do maintenance when everyone is still sleeping.

D: Ours as well, they come at the crack of dawn. I've had guys come at 7am which I'm pretty sure breaks the law, but hey.

Chequer's Deal July 2018

T: So you moved over to the Netherlands between the Leave vote and everything that's happening at the moment. Do you remember when the Chequer's Deal was released in July 2018?

D: [chuckles to herself] Yes I do.

T: There's another picture there.

D: I do remember that and I laughed endlessly.

T: Why did you laugh about it?

D: Because I knew that no politicians were going to let it pass just based on their want to cause trouble and get her [May] out and just their own political ambitions. So it wasn't a bad deal and I had no issue with it, but it didn't matter what deal it was, it was just never gonna pass, by that point it was quite clear.

T: Because of party splits and that kind of thing.

D: Yeah, people's private ambitions whether it's Jeremy Corby, or Boris, or any of those. They all have their own goal to screw everybody else over in order to serve themselves. It doesn't matter who they are, there's very few politicians at this point that I have any respect for.

T: So for you, do you think that the Chequer's Deal didn't really have much of an impact on you personally, because you didn't think it would have any real impact at all?

D: I think it probably had a little bit of a softening effect here in the Netherlands, from other people's views. They were like "finally they're gonna agree on something". Before I'd received, I wouldn't say open hostility, but a lot of people were like "ahh you're British, so daft!" I was like "yeah, yeah, I don't disagree with you" and they were shocked that I agreed with them. Afterwards people were a little less quick to say "ahh you're British, you have a crazy government", slightly. But I think that's about the only affect it had because it very quickly became clear that we wouldn't put it through.

T: So have you had people in the Netherlands assume that you were on the side of Leave and Brexit?

D: Yeah [laughs] Quite a few times, online and in person. I quite like to go hiking, not particularly challenging terrain, but I'll just go for 3-4 hours just walking and stop at a café. I frequently met both Dutch and German people who are walking in the area, usually much older people and they're like "ah you British, you're crazy" and I'm like "absolutely"! Then they're quite shocked, they're taken aback that not only do I agree with them and I want to stay in Europe, but that I have a good argument as to why we should stay in Europe. They're like "gees you actually understand" and I'm like "Yes! It was really a split vote and it has split the country" and they're like "wow! Ok". That stops them and then you get less hostility. But to begin with it's often quite nasty. A lot of people are like

“ahh you deserve everything you get” and I’m like “gee thanks. I voted Remain, so I didn’t vote for that”. They’re like “oh you voted them in”, I said “no actually, I voted for the opposition”, not that they’re any better, but hey.

T: So you find that people in the Netherlands, Europeans, Dutch, they don’t realise how close the vote was?

D: Yeah. I think they have no idea how divisive it has been. I’ve literally have friends refuse to be friends any further.

T: European friends?

D: No, British friends.

T: Oh like Leave voters?

D: Yeah. So they couldn’t understand why I was saying to them “you do realise the full impact of your vote?” and they were like “well, you know, it doesn’t matter, we want to Leave”. Theirs was a protest vote and unfortunately what they’ve done is not just gonna be a protest in the short-term, it’s going to create long-term damage. And the racism: it’s given a voice to those who have always been allowed to hide in the shadows, but never been allowed to act on it, and now they can act on it. And they were quite shocked at that. But, so be it. They themselves might not have done anything wrong, but they’ve given power to those who will do wrong. That was the end of a 15 year friendship.

T: Wow!

D: Yeah. Just no rational thought process involved with them. I do have other Leave friends who have stuck around. But yeah, the majority of my friends voted Remain, I think largely based on age and the fact that a lot of them were living overseas and like myself either had a proxy vote or did a postal vote. They understood the impact that it would have on them and their business and their lifestyle. Some of them either wanted to retire in Europe proper or be able to go on holiday trips. Small and pity as that may seem, the freedom to be able to just pop over to France on a “booze cruise” is rather attractive for a lot of people. Why not? Just being able to buy a bottle of French champagne in the supermarket is a luxury afforded to us by the EU because we’d have to pay stupid amounts of tax on it. We do pay tax, but not stupid amounts. People forget how expensive and how much of a luxury that was prior to the EU. It really wasn’t something that we routinely had. It wasn’t my generation by any means, but my mother was telling me just how it really was an upper and very upper middle class thing to have wine occasionally. You really didn’t have it that often and now everybody has a bottle and you can Marks and Sparks with the special meal deal. French wine, it may not be champagne, the little luxuries we have and they’ve made us very bourgeois and have come a lot through the EU. Our financial uplift that occurred as a result of the EU in the 80s boom was a good deal to do with the fact that our banking sector opened up. But hey we have very short memories; everyone always does.

March 2019 Events

T: Now with Brexit getting a bit more real and this happening back in January [shows headline of defeat of May's deal] and then twice more since then.

D: Only twice? Are you sure? [laughs] It's just. It's a joke. We have the most paralysed parliament in Europe, I think. I'm dating an American and I think we are running head to head on who has the most stupid and ridiculous government. And only at one point has Trump brought his government to a standstill and yet ours has gone on for months, at the cost of everything else; spiralling knife crime because we've got no money, because we're spending all the money on Brexit. We have now these No deal Brexit preparations that we're not gonna need. And children aren't getting meals in school. You look at home and you're just like "that's an absolute joke!" It is a joke. And so I definitely don't want to go home. I'm going to fight tooth and nail to stay in Europe and get myself a work visa because the misery of going to a country that cannot organise a piss-up in a brewery. Truly horrifying. So I'm just going to stick it out and fight to stay.

T: Does it make you appreciate the benefits of Europe more?

D: Oh yeah. I mean they were able to agree a deal and get it voted and we are still sitting on our hands. They joke about the cat that was sitting at the open door and now it doesn't wanna go out; but it is that and it is absolutely ludicrous that we got the best deal we could and people are still gonna play politics with it for their own profit, whether it's Farage with his German citizenship and his EU pension, or Boris who's desperate to become the boss, but nobody's ever gonna vote for him. It's horrendous. It's absolutely awful. And then the little racist twerp that is Corbyn. I just can't get; they're all horrible, there's no good vote, there's no-one you wanna see succeed. I don't wanna go home, why would I go home to rain and shit politics, only to be possibly facing a disastrous situation? I know that worst comes to worst and it probably won't be that bad, but honestly I'd rather have to put up with a terrible landlord here than do that. Also my roads here don't have potholes, but my roads in the UK do.

T: Can you imagine potholes with all the cycling though; it would be impossible.

D: It would be impossible! But at the same time, I'll have to send you the story of how cycling became the main thing in the Netherlands. In the 1970s, 3 children were killed in separate cycling incidents and it was enough that the people turned around in mass protest and said enough is enough, the car will not rule. It had been heading towards, like in the UK, a car-centric culture, and they turned around and said "absolutely no! Not on our children's lives". So they changed the centre of cities, they made them pedestrianised, they made them cycle-centric, they made public transport more accessible and that is how it had been forever. We get a lot people saying "well get on your sodding bicycle and come", even when it's not actually practical. It is a much more cycle-centric. You couldn't get that through the UK! It took us 2 years to get upskirting banned because there's been so much energy spent on this Brexit thing that what is literally an assault on people, as it happens to be female people for the most part, but an assault on people that was happening to 7 year-old girls in school, we couldn't stop it. That is just horrendous! And we have children being stabbed on the street, because of horrendous government decisions. We've spent so much time and energy on Brexit! It doesn't feel like the UK is a nice place to go to anymore. Anyway, I hope I'm actually answering your questions.

Aspirations for the future/ life in NL

T: Yeah, yeah you are. What's your kind of plan for the future? Staying in the Netherlands?

D: Current plan is, keep plugging away, to stay in the Netherlands. And if it looks like because we have the deal the Dutch, thank God for the Dutch government being organised and arranging something in case the UK couldn't get its finger out. I know at least 1 date that I have to work towards and that date gets moved further back, then that's fine. I don't think it could ever get moved further forward. But the idea is to work up to about 3 months before that date and if at that time it doesn't look realistic, then I will have to pack up and go back to the UK. Because I've got the animals, I can't wait to the last moment to do it and I'd have to do it in shifts, because I would then need to get this apartment rented out. That's going to be horrendously expensive as well, to do that. I have to move my house, my contents and the animals themselves and I'd far rather just find a job here, if I can, and stay on for as long as possible. I like the Dutch culture. It is somewhere between the South African and British, so in terms of that, I generally find it fairly easy-going. After having lived in the Middle East, I feel like I've won the lottery living here. When people complain about how hard it is to live here, it is always hard to be an expat, it doesn't matter where you are. I have lots and lots of tips for people on how to be an expat. But, this is the easiest place I've ever moved to. People do speak English; people will make friends with you if you make the effort. But you have to make the effort and you can't do the British thing of saying "oh come round for a cup of tea" and then not invite them, because it is an insult. But it does fit quite well to me and I live it. Especially in Maastricht, the weather's quite good. It's not as good in the middle of the country where you are, but it's not as bad as say in Holland. And I have friends there who are practically family. My boyfriend isn't going to stick around here for longer than the Dutch date, so in terms of that it's not why I'm planning to stay, but I have a lot of good friends here and I have friends in the UK, but they've now dispersed from where I used to live, so I have to up sticks. Ironically, they've all mostly ended up around Birmingham, so I'd probably end up there if I wanted to go back.

T: Strange.

D: Yeah. All the work seems to, all my really close friends have ended up either around Birmingham or Hull, so it would be one of those. So it seems all the work's going that way. But again, going back to the UK, it would be incredibly difficult for me to return to work. A lot of academic institutions are starting to go under, PhDs are not paid for, like they are here, where you're treated here like an adult and you're paid a salary and your work is valued. I think it's quite evident elsewhere that it's not really and as a PhD you're just slave labour.

D: I like the Netherlands, I really do. I like the fact that shops aren't open 24/7; and that people are not expected to work every public holiday; and they do have off days; and they are paid a decent minimum wage, so if you don't tip somebody, you don't feel bad; if you have money you do and if you don't, you don't; and you don't feel guilty about your hairdresser having to scrape by on social benefits or any rubbish like that. They are looked after and children's schooling is decent. Even things that might never affect me, I feel better living here knowing that generally speaking life is easier for everybody, even though I'm going to pay more tax, and I will pay more tax than I will in the UK.

T: Do you think you will ever move to another European country, or is the Netherlands the place for you?

D: I think the Netherlands is the place for me, but I wouldn't rule out one of the northern European countries. So Germany, or Belgium. Not Luxembourg, but Luxembourg is part of that link. Probably less likely France, because I really don't speak French and I don't get on with the language very well, but I'm sure I could suffer through. But when it comes to countries like Spain, Portugal, Italy, I think there's just a little bit too much of a cultural gap. Having lived in the Middle East, I don't really want to struggle through back through that cultural gap again. I could do it and I'm glad I did it and I don't regret it, but at the same breath, I've done that now and I want it a bit easier. I like living and not having to worry about extra things. I can see northern Europe being an option. Maybe not the Scandinavian countries because it's just too cold for me.

T: Yeah. And dark too much of the year.

D: Yeah. Even this winter [in NL] wasn't the nicest, so.

Bringing mum to join her

T: I have a quick question which is a bit of a side point. You spoke earlier about maybe bringing your mum across. Do you think that will be possible or made harder because of Brexit?

D: So if I stay in the Netherlands, Dutch law allows me to do that, because she would technically be a dependent. She has a British passport, so if I go back to the UK, they can't refuse her, even though we would never hit that £35k mark. So in terms of that, we should be ok. There's no guarantee, but hopefully we could make it happen.

Other British expats

T: I have another random question. We're nearing the end and there's a few left-overs from my list of topics. Do you have much contact with other British expats?

D: Not immediately in my area. Every now and again I will meet 1 or 2. I have obviously online, we have that little community where you found me. I chat to them a little bit, but it's very Randstad-centric because Limburg is the far-flung region of the empire, practically. It's very nice down here actually, very pretty.

T: Some hills and things I've heard.

D: Yeah. Of course I chose the hilliest part of the country to come and cycle in. But generally speaking, not that I can think of. I'm trying to think of any that I socialise with. Occasionally I come across one at the university, because I'm still not at university, but I'm doing a literature review with my university, unpaid of course. So occasionally I come across 1 or 2 there, or on the bus or on the train. And if I walk my boyfriend's dogs, sometimes I'll meet people there. But not really. I'm not obsessed with it. It's nice to get British foods and it's nice to have a wee chat about home and understand the value of a good cup of tea. But I don't think that it is critical to my wellbeing. I quite like the Dutch saying, better a good neighbour than a far friend and I think that is very, very true. When my neighbours have needed my help, I'm very much there for them. Some of them don't speak English and at the same time, when I've needed help, they have stepped in and stepped up

and I very much value that. I don't really care where they're from. Maastricht's very international in that respect. The majority may be Dutch, but there are people from all sorts of places, just on my floor and then in my apartment. We sometimes discuss music and post and all sorts of silly little things. We all generally speaking get along. I would say the majority of my social circle are Dutch, with 1 or 2 exceptions who are student based and unrelated.

Identifying with Europe

T: I have some wrapping up questions now about identifying with Europe. So how would you describe the term "European"?

D: Pretty much anyone who's in Europe. I think there's a certain thought process, I guess. To give you an example, have you done the KNN or have you seen it? So that's the citizenship test and it's very much like the citizenship test for the UK. It's things like "a woman can wear what they like and it shouldn't be something that's puts under question" and "if your child's teacher is gay, there is nothing to be said about it, it's nobody else's business". And that to me, it's that value of human rights, a certain amount of work ethic. You do have the opportunities to study, you study and you work and it doesn't matter if you're a plumber, a postman or a post-doctoral student, you apply for it and you work for it. There is a political sense about it. We do have a lot of wealth in that, in terms of corruption is not gone, but it's not well-tolerated and when it's found it's dealt with; whereas, if you've ever lived in Africa, corruption is part and parcel of everything. If you live in the Middle East, they're trying to get rid of it, but bribery and corruption is standard practice. It's attitude to negotiation, which might sound very strange, but if you tried to negotiate in the Middle East, they will try and waste your time as much as possible. So, maybe it's that we value time in Europe. Certainly most parts of Europe, we value our time quite a lot, whereas in the Middle East, they will try and spend your time and drag the negotiation out as long as possible until you give in and give them what they want. So, if you're good at wasting your time, you're good at negotiating in the Middle East, I can tell you that. We see things quite differently in terms of family. So we often will use professional carers to care for our family, rather than DIY, because we see the value in that professional care; whereas elsewhere in the world, having somebody live-in and be there 24/7, rather than having granny live independently and having visitors 3 or 4 times a day. There is a certain amount of wealth about being European. I'm not saying that poverty doesn't exist in Europe, by any means, but the poverty is very different. We largely have flushing toilets, we largely have some form of social structure that can pick up the fall and we have some kind of healthcare that can help the sick. For me, that is what being European is.

T: And do you think those things unite Europe, across even the North-South cultural divide that you spoke about earlier?

D: I believe, largely so. There will be certain differences. So I suspect in the South, things like how family is valued is greater. I think in the North there is much more emphasis on the self, perhaps, than family. This is terrible generalisation, but from what I've seen within Italian families, there's very big emphasis on meeting and staying together; family meals are eaten together. In France, paternity leave is just amazing, it's absolutely fantastic, flawless. But, in England, or certainly here in the Netherlands, they get 9 days! I don't have kids, but I'm outraged by this; children should have their daddy. So I think there are splits down that line, but we're very uncomfortable seeing poverty, we're *all* uncomfortable seeing poverty, so we try to deal with it and all of us feel that corruption

really needs to go now. I know Italy has struggled, but they are getting there and they're working on it because they want something better. So, yes they may decide to close during the middle of the day, at the shops, but they still work in the evening, so you can't say they're not working, it's just different. I do believe that for the most part, we do just kind of need to accept that people see things differently, but we do essentially value the same things.

T: Uh huh. In contrast to other places in the world that you've lived, yeah?

D: Yeeeah. Definitely. The idea of repeatedly voting in a party that refuses to supply you with electricity, but can build themselves a palace, just boggles my mind. It's slightly unfair on the Middle East, because 70 years ago people were living in tents! I kid you not, they were living genuinely in tents on the desert, moving around with their camel herds and now they are having to rapidly come out of that and live along the same lines as we do. And they don't have the same values. We value freedom of speech. Recently somebody had the audacity to try and censor what I posted on my Facebook. Didn't affect them. They said "oh, you can't post that" and I might have torn them a new one, but pretty much said "absolutely no way are you in any way shape or form ever going to censor me. This is my private Facebook." But neither of us live in Dubai. Whereas in Dubai, I don't know if you saw that British woman got arrested for calling her ex-husband's new wife a "horse". She shouldn't have done it and had I posted what I posted in Dubai, it would have been sketchy. It wouldn't have been trouble-causing, but you do have to watch what you post. Censorship just doesn't fly here in Europe, within reason, you can't go promoting the Nazi party. You can call your ex-husband an idiot and that's absolutely ok. Things like that. That is 1 big thing. The way we treat women. There are still gaps, but it's come a lot further along and it's seriously not to do with the religion at all. But when you live in the Middle East, you have to live and work with a lot of Indian-subcontinent people and they are actually the most misogynist of all cultures I've ever come across. They really have zero respect for women; if they're not their mother or their sister, they're fair game. And even then sometimes I wonder. Things like slavery happen on a fairly regular basis in the Middle East. Not paying a fair wage is a normal practice in the Middle East. Taking someone's passport away and keeping them in the house happens on a regular basis. Raping your maid does happen. We've had children rape maids. You look at it and you seriously wonder. And then I worked in healthcare there and after a while I was like "I actually can't keep doing this", because it was about making money from the patient, didn't care about the health or the wellbeing of the staff. A visitor to the hospital tried to rape a staff member in a closet and he was never banned from the hospital.

T: Wow!

D: You know you're just constantly having to deal with that kind of stuff. And particularly as a woman. It's the lack of respect for decency: the way people drive, the way people treat each other in the street, it's horrendous. You just can't look at someone's skin colour and make a judgement based on that and that was normal practice in the Middle East. It warps your mind after a while, so you have to get out. It wasn't fun.

T: So you appreciate being back in Europe?

D: Oh God yeah! I know racism happens here, but it's much lower and you can confront it for the most part. It's much better, much easier.

Moreno Question:

T: Do you feel more European or British? Or both?

D: Hmm. I find this tricky.

T: Or South African?

D: Ironically, I don't generally feel that [South African]. I definitely feel more British than South African. If you'd asked me before the Brexit vote if I felt European, I'd probably go "mm yeah, I haven't really thought about it". Post-Brexit vote and all of this and having lived in Europe, I *do* feel European. I am a British European, but I am European. And now I'm sitting in this kind of weird situation and eventually if I have some luck, I might have the option to even apply for Dutch citizenship. I will have to see where the UK is. But I'm not completely ruling that out, even though it would mean having to give up my South African nationality, unless the law changes. And that in itself has its own troubles while my mother lives in South Africa. But, I don't know what I am and that's the honest-to-God truth. I'm kind of sitting in this weird limbo of personal values, versus practical considerations, versus actual living and lifestyle, because I come back to Europe and I feel I settle in here. But, if I go back to the UK, I've been away long enough that I know, certainly if I go back to my old area, it will not be the same; it will not be anything like the same. But, having lived now in Europe for a while, I will have certain expectations of how I want things to be and it won't be like that. I will object to that because it will irritate me, just as when things here could work better, but don't. I'm just saying "well in the UK we did this, or in the Middle East we did this. Why can't we do that here? Why can't we have some flexibility, or protection for tenants or whatever it is?" I have to say, the DPS in the UK is amazing. The Deposit Protection Scheme, and here there's none and I have loads of friends who've lost money to unscrupulous private landlords. It's a big gripe of mine. I'm like "this country should have that".

T: Constant comparison between places.

D: Exactly. "Oh in the States we had this." It's terrible because you know that nowhere can have everything, but at the same time, for me this has the most of everything I want. And I'm hoping, by some miracle, I will find some work. Now I don't know. I'm going to say European for the sake of the study, because I think if I go back to the UK I'm just going to be miserable and angry at the country.

Final Question: Britain or NL?

T: So a final question to conclude everything here. Do you think in the short-term and then in the next 5 years, you will stay in the Netherlands or go back to Britain?

D: If I have my way, I will stay in the Netherlands. As things stand, I may be forced back to the UK. So that is the situation as is. And I will keep applying for work here in the Netherlands, even if I go back to the UK. I think I'd like to stay here.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.4 – Douglas

Interview Setting: Skype, 11:30am, 16/04/19

[Start of Interview]

T: I'm basically going to ask you about how your experience of being an expat in the Netherlands has been affected by the Brexit Process.

D: OK.

Demographics

T: But we'll start off firstly with a chance for you to introduce yourself. So starting off with your name and your age.

D: Ok. Just my name and my age?

T: Yeah. Other things as well, but I'll get to that.

D: My name is [Douglas] and I'm 26.

T: What's your current occupation?

D: I work as a nautical route analyst with a weather company.

T: How long have you been there for?

D: I've been doing that for 17 months, which is the same amount of time I've been in the Netherlands.

T: Oh cool. So did you move to the Netherlands for the job?

D: Yes.

T: When was that exactly, 17 months ago?

D: September 3rd 2017.

T: Where are you from originally in the UK?

D: I'm from the West Coast Highlands, a small town called Dunoon in Scotland.

T: Ok cool. Are your family still there?

D: Yes.

T: So how come you chose to move to the Netherlands? Other than for the job. Why did you choose to do the job there?

D: It was more that I went for the job; that's the main reason. The maritime industry of the Netherlands is 10 times bigger than in Scotland or most places. Another place I could have went was

Singapore, which is too far away for me. So, I preferred just to go to the Netherlands. It's just an hour away in the plane, so it's not an issue.

T: And had you been to the Netherlands beforehand?

D: Yes.

T: For holidays or for work?

D: For work. I used to work at sea on container ships and I went all round the world, so I was in the Netherlands a few times.

T: When you moved over, was it with the intention to stay temporarily or did you have any long-term plans?

D: If the job was good, then I would've stayed long-term. And the job is good, so I'm staying long-term. But it was purely based on if the job was gonna work out. If not, then I would've come home and tried something else.

T: We'll probably come back to that again later.

Experiences of Brexit

T: So I think now we'll talk about the Brexit Process. I'm going to talk you through it using some of the main events that have happened, to help you remember what you were doing at each time.

D: OK.

Announcement of Referendum, Feb 2016

T: Starting off with February 2016 when David Cameron first announced that there would be a referendum.

D: I was in nautical college in Glasgow, studying.

T: Still studying?

D: Yeah.

T: What were the emotions that you had when the referendum was announced? Were you surprised or concerned or anything?

D: So this is before the actual result of the referendum? I was surprised that we would be having this referendum. I didn't think that enough people would want to leave to make a referendum needed. But, I guess I was wrong.

T: Then, did you follow along with the campaigning at all?

D: Yeah. I think I did.

T: So what was the impression you got of the campaigning?

D: I think mostly lies, but lies from both sides. Both sides did a terrible job and both sides lied quite a lot, it seems. In hindsight it seemed that both were lying.

T: Was the reactions and impressions different in Scotland, if you knew? Was there a Scottish flavour to it?

D: I really couldn't say because I wasn't aware of what they were saying in England, or Wales, or Northern Ireland.

Leave Result, June 2016

T: Then in June 2016, of course, the Leave vote was announced. What was your reaction that?

D: I actually found out, I was on a vessel, and I found out, I was in Houston and the first person that came on the ship from the Port of Houston heard my accent and started talking about it. So that's how I actually found out, was from some random person in Houston.

T: Oh gosh.

D: At first I thought he was joking because again I didn't think it was possible that people wanted to leave. I thought he was joking, until eventually when I got in my phone sorted out for the WiFi, I text my mum and then she confirmed the news. So yeah, I was pretty surprised that the vote went that way.

T: Were you able to vote for it?

D: Yeah. I'd done my proxy vote.

T: For which side?

D: To Remain.

T: And what were some of the reasons that you wanted to Remain?

D: In my feeling, I'm not an expert on the subject. But, more people together is better than a lot of different groups apart. I think we can be more productive if we're all in 1 group, rather than all a hundred groups doing different things; that doesn't seem productive to me, it just seems efficient to do. We all in one control, we're all doing the same thing in one direction.

T: you said you were on a vessel at the time. What were some of the reactions of other British people on the vessel?

D: There was 1 other British person and then the majority, the other maybe 20, were a mix between Bulgarian, Ukrainian and Indian people, and Russian. I must say that their reaction was similar to mine, as being surprised.

T: No-one was expecting it then?

D: No.

Moving to the Netherlands, September 2017

T: So you then moved to the Netherlands in September 2017, was it?

D: Yeah.

T: So how did that come about?

D: Me finishing my education and then looking for jobs and then seeing that there was a lot more options in the Netherlands. I started applying for jobs all over Northern Europe and then the company I'm with now were the only one to even give me an interview. I went for the interview and got the job.

T: Did the thought that Brexit would happen soon, did that affect your choice to look for those jobs in continental Europe?

D: No. I wasn't really thinking about Brexit at the time.

T: More just about job opportunities?

D: Yes, yes.

T: Have you started thinking about Brexit more since then?

March 2019 Events

D: Not really. After the first extension, in my head it's not gonna happen now, it's gonna take years to figure out, or it's gonna be No Deal. And again this is just my opinion. But, the Dutch government have already sent me a letter to say I can stay no matter what. So I really don't care anymore. I don't want it to happen, but if it does happen then I can stay here and it's not a problem.

T: So it won't affect your job or anything like that?

D: No. They've given me a temporary visa until everything is cleared and after that I go for a permanent one. They said it won't be a problem for that, as long as you've lived here before [Brexit].

T: What kind of things do you have to do to get the permanent visa?

D: So if there's a deal, I don't have to do anything. And if there's No Deal, I have to pay €60. But for both of them I just need to sign up, basically. I don't need to interview; I just need to ask for it.

T: Would you ever think of taking the Inbergerings test?

D: Yeah. The only problem is you need to speak Dutch, which I *am* learning, but not fast enough. Yeah, when I speak Dutch, then I would take my citizenship and get a Dutch passport, rather than a British passport.

T: So you wouldn't have any problem giving up your British passport.

D: It's a bit of paper; changing it for another bit of paper. So in my mind it doesn't matter.

T: So in your mind a passport isn't equivalent to who you are?

D: No. I honestly just see it as a bit of paper. It doesn't mean much to me, other than it just lets me travel. I know it's important, but I'm not attached to it.

Friendships and Relationships

T: Could you tell me a bit more about your relationships and friendships in the Netherlands? Are they with other British people, or a mixture of nationalities?

D: I would say at work, I don't have any British friends, other than [Lewis]. Outside work, it's mostly Dutch and a few international students that are in the same town as me. I'd say it's mostly Dutch, I would say.

T: Did you think that has affected your wanting to stay here longer?

D: It makes life easier, I'll admit, yeah. So yeah. But in the same hand, I'm sure if I lived back home, I'd have friends as well. It's not a defining factor I would say.

T: What's their reaction to Brexit? Are they concerned about you?

D: I wouldn't say they were concerned because I've explained to them that I can stay no matter what. So, again they're not really caring. Again, they don't want it to happen as well. I think the most people I've talked to about it are just sick and tired of the whole thing; including me, I'm sick and tired of it as well.

T: Because of the fact that it goes on and on?

D: Yeah. It's a bit of a farce.

T: I don't know whether I asked you where you are living in the Netherlands?

D: I live in a city called Ede, which is about 100,000 people. I work in a town called Wageningen, which is about 20,000 people, but it's a student town, so student population is huge there.

[tangent about his work office moving to Utrecht from Gelderland]

T: How often do you go back to Britain, if at all?

D: Last year, I went once. So I moved 2017 and then 2018, I went back for a weekend in September. Then this year, because I didn't take any holidays last year, I had to take loads of holidays this year. In March, I went for 10 days back home and then in May as well, I'm going for 7 days.

T: Just because you have to take lots of holiday?

D: Yeah.

T: Are those to see your family and friends?

D: Both. All of them are just to go and stay with my mum.

T: Do you think there will be any difficulties for them or you to travel in the future?

D: It depends on what kind of deal we get. But, I don't think it would be wise for any side just to make it difficult for anyone. I think, it doesn't make sense for the British government to make it hard for Dutch citizens to go to Britain and it doesn't make sense for the Dutch government. They would both lose in that situation. So, I think if there is a No Deal and it's worse-case scenario, I both think that both sides will be sensible and try hard to get it easy for travel.

T: I wonder if Britain will be able to discriminate between different EU countries or if they will have to make an agreement with them as a whole.

D: But if it was as a whole, then it would just be the European Union again. I think, again I'm not an expert on politics, but I guess if they end up doing an agreement with the whole of them again, then there probably wasn't much point to leave.

T: What kind of place are you living in, in the Netherlands?

D: I live in an apartment.

T: With anyone else, or on your own.

D: Not with anyone else, but in June I will move into a new apartment with my girlfriend.

T: Is she Dutch or English, or something else?

D: She's Dutch.

T: Did you meet her in the Netherlands?

D: Yes.

T: How long have you been together? Sorry for all the personal questions!

D: No, no. It's not a problem. 6 months I think. Round about 6 months together.

T: Does Brexit affect that relationship at all? Do you talk about it, joke about it?

D: She didn't have a passport and I kinda forced her to get a passport to make travelling easier because she's also coming in May. I wanted to make sure there was no issue if she didn't have a passport, so I made her get a passport. Apart from that, no I wouldn't say it affects us that much.

T: We've gone through the questions a lot quicker than I expected. [laughs] Some people have had a lot to say about Brexit.

D: You're just doing British people?

T: Yeah.

D: Ok. Yeah, I can imagine there are some people; when I was home in March, a lot of people were talking to me about it.

Brexit's Effect on the Future

T: Do you find that people expect you to have an opinion on it and be affected by it just because you're living in Europe?

D: Probably from their point of view, then they would expect that, which is quite logical as well. But I wouldn't say that my views are very strong. I do have views that I don't think we should leave, but they're not that strong.

T: Just kind of for practical reasons?

D: Yeah. Just to make things a bit easier. But I think even if there is No Deal, my life would be a bit more difficult, but I wouldn't be out on the street begging for money. I don't think it's going to be too much of a disaster. Everyone will lose in the situation of Brexit, but I think it should be ok for me.

T: Do you think it will affect you in the future? If you change jobs, or moved somewhere else?

D: I was thinking about this as well. If I was to apply for a job now, I don't think they would be too... I think it would put me down more than it would put me up. But obviously I even think legally they wouldn't be allowed to say that, because that's against the law. But I think employers would kind of avoid employing British people right now because of the uncertainty. Even though I have the letter saying I can stay, but it's still pretty uncertain. So I think that's probably a downside. But it's a downside on both sides. I think British companies would maybe not like to hire Europeans as much right now, as well. I think moving jobs right now is probably not the easiest thing to do as a British citizen, living abroad, or living in Europe.

T: But then I guess it will be made easier again once there's a deal or no deal; once something is decided.

D: Yeah, once something is decided it will be easier, but I wouldn't say it would be as easy because there might be some restrictions on who they can employ. Like they have the 30% ruling in the Netherlands, I don't know if you know about it?

T: Yeah yeah.

D: Things like that might have to change.

T: But for you, do you see yourself changing jobs anytime soon?

D: No.

T: So I guess it doesn't matter that much at the moment?

D: No. Not for me anyway. But I was thinking about this and if I was to change jobs, then that would be an issue.

T: Do you have any British friends who are being affected by it?

D: Well, I would say everyone British is getting affected by it [laughs]. But you mean negatively affected?

T: Yeah.

D: It's not noticeable anyway. Same with me, I would say I don't think anyone's suffering more than me or less than me. I think we're all kind of in the same position right now. There's probably people that are worrying more about it, but I don't tend to worry about things.

T: Cos there's like this idea that it's like a crisis and there's going to be loads of people losing out loads. But maybe it's not actually like that.

D: Yeah.

March 2019 Events (Cont.)

T: So recently, of course, we've had May's deal getting voted down 3 times and then the extension, which you touched on a little bit earlier. Has that affected your view of it?

D: No. I thought it was a bad decision at the start and then after all of these deals are not passing, again. Even May's deal was quite beneficial to me. It means I can stay here. There's no restriction or anything. So May's deal was actually good for me, but from what I read of it, it still probably wasn't the best for the country. To be honest, someone has to lose in this situation between Britain and Europe. Europe have all the power, so it's simple negotiation that we're gonna lose in this. Europe don't need to lose, but May has the pressure of keeping this democratic vote, so she has to make a deal that Europe agree to. Europe don't need to do that, so they have all the cards, but that's our fault for giving them all the cards, to be honest.

T: what would you most like to happen? Not what you think would happen, but what would you personally most like to happen?

D: What I'd most like to happen is that they just revoke Article 50 and cancel Brexit. But I think the fairest thing to happen would be to have another vote; even though that's a touchy subject of course, having 2 referendums on the same thing. But I think, have another vote and if the results are still very close, then we continue. But if the results are now 75/25, then take the 75. Even in my view – What was the vote? 51 to 49?

T: 52 to 48.

D: In my view. By meaning, it's a majority, but I don't think it's a wise move to upset half the country to please the other half. I think at that point they should have been "ok we have to make sure that the vote is more of a majority. It's not good that half the country is unhappy".

T: Like they should have done a second referendum immediately?

D: No. Well not immediately. But I think they should have went back to the public and said "unless we have a mandate of say 60 or 70 percent, then we're not gonna change things". But it was the same with the Scottish vote. That was also 50/50, which is a bad idea, even though whatever happened. But I don't think it's good that half the country are upset about a vote. They shouldn't take that. They should work to make one side go to the other side.

T: Like at that point they can't talk about "will of the people".

D: Yeah. I think although yes a majority did vote, it was 17 million people I believe. But still, 16,900,000 said something else. So it's a difficult situation, but that's to do with politics and how we deal with politics in this country. In my view the referendums shouldn't pass on 50%; they should be more.

T: Like when they, I don't remember what it's called, when they need to have a really proper majority, like 2/3 majority.

D: I also don't remember the name.

T: Like they do in the EU.

D: Yeah! What a great idea that was [sarcastic]

T: So I guess we're coming towards the end a bit now.

Tangent about my thesis

D: So this is a dissertation that you're writing.

T: Yeah. My Master's dissertation. I did my Bachelor's one on Brexit as well.

D: Do you have a name for thesis yet?

T: Yeah. It's called "A Brexit from Britain or Europe?"

D: how many people do you have to interview?

T: 10 roughly.

D: I don't know if [Lewis] told you, but we also did another thing like this. I don't know what university she was studying at, but she was doing her thesis on Brexit as well.

European Identity

T: Well I have a few concluding questions which are to do with one of the main topics, which is identifying with Europe.

D: OK.

T: So, starting with: how would you describe the term "European"?

D: Someone from the European continent. Or someone I guess, from Portugal, to Iceland, to Moscow, to Istanbul, I would say would be the continent of Europe.

T: And do you think there's any kind of shared identity between Europeans?

D: Hmm. That's tough. For sure within each nation there's a bigger identity that they hold on to. But at the same time, I feel Europeans are closer together than maybe Asians or Africans. It seems they are more split in their things. I think we're more similar to South America. I would say South America are more together with their beliefs. I think most of the European countries share the same core

beliefs and core rules and regulations, because of the European Union of course, but even before that most of us were on the same page of things.

T: So I guess that can kind of create a mutual understanding between nations.

D: Yeah.

T: So we're able to work with each other better.

D: Yeah I would say so.

T: And for you personally, do you identify more with Britain, Europe or both, or maybe the Netherlands?

D: I would say I would identify first as being Scottish. But European, yeah I would say I was European as well. If someone asked me where I was from, I wouldn't say Europe, I would say Scotland, obviously. But I do feel I am very pro-European.

T: And why do you feel pro-European? Is it just the same as the reasons you gave for voting Remain? Or deeper than that?

D: No I would say it's the same that a group together will work better than groups split. It's more just an efficiency thing.

T: And do you feel yourself becoming closer to Europe or to the Netherlands whilst living here?

D: Yeah, yeah. I would say so, yeah. But I think. Has anyone answered no to that question?

T: No I don't think so really.

D: I would say everyone. Wherever you're living, if you're living there, unless you're having a terrible time, then you are going to get closer to the people and the culture.

T: I guess for that question, it's also better because of Brexit, because they don't like Britain as much anymore.

D: OK I can understand that yeah.

Final Question: Britain or Europe?

T: Well I think we're pretty much out of questions, except for 1 final one, which is a concluding question to wrap up. We've kind of answered it already, but bearing in mind everything we've talked about and Brexit; will you stay in the Netherlands or move back to Britain? And answer that for the short-term and then the next 5 years.

D: I can quite confidently say that at least for the next 20 years I'll be living in the Netherlands.

T: Wow! The next 20 years!

D: Yeah.

T: Why such a long time?

D: Because I don't see anything happening in the next 20 years that will make me want to leave.

T: No Brexit agreements or any other thing that might happen?

D: Well unless I have to leave, but I think that's a bit extreme. But, no, I'm happy here. The opportunities here to live are good. So I don't see any reason to leave. It's a good country to live in.

T: We haven't actually touched upon that. Why do you think the Netherlands is a good country to live in?

D: It seems it's a lot more healthy atmosphere. Not just as in healthy eating, but a healthy, happy atmosphere. Because I remember, when I went home in September for the weekend, I lived here for 1 year, almost exactly. I never really saw any extreme poverty or drug addicts on the street and things like that. I never saw that in the Netherlands. Then I got off the plane at Glasgow airport, got on the train and within 5 minutes I'm surrounded by it. At that moment I was like "yeah wow". This is such a different country. It's so different, the atmosphere, I feel. It's a lot happier, which I like. There are downsides of course because I have to pay €100 a month for health insurance, which I'd get for free in Scotland. If I wanted to go to university, I'd have to pay for it, which I get for free in Scotland. So there is downsides, but there's upsides as well. Roadworks here can be finished in 1 day, which is unheard of in Scotland. It's usually months it takes for roadworks to get completely finished. Here they just close the road overnight, do the work and then in the morning it's all done. So they're a lot better at that. But of course it's easier to build roads in a flat country, than it is in Scotland, so I can understand there is gonna be a difference. They seem to be a lot more efficient at it.

T: My dad would say less health and safety.

D: Yeah I've noticed that as well actually. Once I left school, I worked in construction for a few years. Looking from that point of view, the health and safety does seem a lot more lax in the Netherlands.

T: I remember seeing them craning some materials in the air and the road was still mostly open.

D: Not the first time I came to Amsterdam Airport, but one of the time, they were re-doing the terminal and the same thing was happening over a walkway of everyone. "Ah well, ok".

T: So the benefits of living in the Netherlands outweigh the benefits of living in Scotland then?

D: In my view, yes, quite heavily. Mostly because of the job opportunity; that's probably the biggest factor.

T: I'm really intrigued as well by your confidence to say 20 years. That's the longest anyone has been committed to!

D: Yeah. I don't know what to say. I've lived here for a long enough period to know what to expect, I think. Apart from, my bike got stolen twice. I got my bike stolen, but my life's pretty good if my biggest complaint in the last 17 months has been that my bike's been stolen. Judging by that then I see my life being pretty well off here.

T: Sounds like you're happy to settle here for a while. Well it is pretty bad to lose your bike here as well though.

D: Yeah. I was in holiday in Prague for the weekend. And then I got back to the station at 12 o'clock at night and it stolen, so I had to walk for half an hour back to my flat!

T: From like the bike park, outside?

D: From the bike parking outside the train station. The other bike that got stolen 6 months ago was in the exact same place. So maybe it's my fault for putting it back there.

T: Like an undercover one?

D: Nah it was the open-air, but the wheel lock was on, so I thought that was enough. Everyone else seemed to be just using the wheel lock.

T: Yeah because it's pretty suspicious to steal a bike by carrying it away.

D: Yeah I know. They must have had some amount of confidence to do that. But yeah I bought a new bike and then I bought a chain that's probably worth more than the bike now.

T: Well we live and learn. Cool, well that's all the questions now.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.5 – Eleanor

Interview Setting: Skype, 9am, 07/04/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So we'll begin with giving you a chance to introduce yourself, like your age, your occupation, where you're from in the UK and where you're living in the Netherlands.

E: I'm [Eleanor]. I'm 22 years old. I come from, bit of an unfortunate name, a place called Cockermonth.

[tangent about how I know Cockermonth]

E: My occupation. I'm a student, with a part-time job. Studying my Master's right now. But I did my Bachelor here, the last 3 years as well. So that's why I've been here all that time. I've just lived in Utrecht that whole time, so since September 2015.

T: Which university are you at? The main one?

E: The main one, yeah. Utrecht University.

T: So why did you decide to move to the Netherlands for your Bachelor's and then Master's.

E: Yeah. I just wanted to experience a different culture, but somewhere that wasn't too far from home, as such. There was just something more exciting about going abroad. As well at the time my Bachelor was offering a different course that wasn't offered in the UK as much. It was a Liberal Arts and Science degree, which is offered in some parts of the UK, but not as much as here.

[tangent about Liberal Arts courses]

E: I think it appeals to people because you don't know what you want to do straight out of A-Levels sometimes. You can just do a bit of everything.

T: Did you go straight to university out of A-levels?

E: I did, because I actually took an extra year at high school for A-levels. I was definitely ready to just start uni then basically.

T: Are your family still back in the UK?

E: Yes. Yeah all my family. I have no family over here. [pause] Sad.

Experiences of Brexit

T: I guess we can now talk about your experiences of the Brexit Process.

E: Hmm.

T: So I'm going to talk you through it using a timeline of it, to help you remember where you were at each part. So, starting off with the announcement of the referendum.

Leave Vote June 2016

E: I remember. I think I woke up to the news. I checked my phone immediately because I didn't think it would be Leave. I really just thought it would be Remain, because to me, from what I'd seen, it was clear-cut Remain. But I just broke down crying, I guess, because it was a very emotional experience. It was weird because my best friend at the time, she's a Leave supporter. So I kinda called with her. I'm on the phone crying and we're just talking about it, having such different responses you know. Like of course she wasn't in my face like "oh yes, we won", but it was just a bit of a weird experience. But at the same time, I think I was just upset because I was just disappointed, but at the same time I thought ok at that stage I didn't think it's going to affect me that much; there's going to be certain changes, but it's not going to impact my life that much.

T: Did that effect your relationship with your friend at all, going on from there?

E: I think the fact that she lives in the UK and I live here, we have grown distant. But I think because of Brexit, I still see her when I go home and I don't think we're as close as we were, but maybe that has impacted, maybe there's a small proportion that has impacted that, I think, because it's something that's just so politically important to me and not necessarily politically important to her. So I think there is that sort of tension about Brexit, as such. So I kinda dance around the subject very lightly.

T: Avoiding the subject.

E: Yeah, basically. Like a true Brit I am.

T: But probably, the fact you live abroad has more of an impact than Brexit would.

E: Yeah. But this is thing. My friend, she went on exchange to Germany on Erasmus, so meant she got funds from the EU for her Erasmus. And this was after the referendum! I was like [exasperated face]. She was saying to me she wants to live in Europe in the future and I'm like but, I dunno. I was shocked that she went on an Erasmus and kinda, I dunno, it didn't feel right. It just didn't feel right, you know.

T: Went on an Erasmus after having voted Leave.

E: Basically yeah. It just didn't sit well with me! I mean fair enough if she's going to take up that opportunity. But I think even after her exchange in Germany, she was still like yeah "this is right", because for her she voted Brexit based off helping small businesses in the UK, like British businesses. I guess your multi-European corporations coming in, I think.

Referendum Campaign

T: While you were living in the Netherlands, did you see much of the referendum campaigning going on?

E: Oooo. No. Like physically in the Netherlands?

T: No, I mean like were able to follow it going on back home, back in the UK.

E: Oh. Yeah. Um. No. I definitely saw it from social media quite a lot. But in terms of physically in the Netherlands I didn't see anything of course.

T: Were people talking about it in the Netherlands?

Reactions of friends:

E: Yeah. Yeh. But I think that was just because I was at an international campus, so people follow the same sort of news outlets. I got shouted "Brexit!" by some friends for quite a long time after it, because I was bitter. I dunno. I was kinda like "ok, it's just a matter of fact now, it's happening, so I have to just accept it", at that time. But it was emotional.

T: Do you have many British friends over in the Netherlands?

E: I do actually. One or two. There's a few in my study. And there's a few from my previous study. But within my close circle, I'd say no, not here. I have them back home, but not here.

T: So how did your friends over here react to the news of Brexit? You said about heckling.

E: Yeah. No. Yeah. They were also, all my British friends that I had in my previous study, they were also in the same situation that they were just devastated. Even speaking to one of them recently, I think very pessimistic outlook and I'm kinda looking for some hope somewhere.

2019 Brexit Situation

E: But as well, I'm sorry I'm jumping around on the timeline, but on my current study it's so interesting because the British people I've spoken to on my study right now, haven't read about in-depth politically about what's going on and knowing exactly what's happening. I feel like there's been a bit of miscommunication, cos I feel at this point it's really important that you have all the information and stuff. And I feel like they haven't been fully informed about things. So it's kinda like a mismatch of level of availability of communication about Brexit.

T: Have those more recent coursemates been in the Netherlands for less time?

E: Yeah. Most of them. There is one that has been here a few years, but for whatever reason. But I think maybe he just doesn't have it plugged into it with his social media every day, like I do. But I dunno. Like with certain things I'd be like "how do you feel about this?", and he'd be like "Wait. What? That's happening?" And I'm like "[pause] yeah!"

T: And you're wondering "Why would you not be informed about this?"

E: Yeah! I'm like "aaah". A bit stressed for him. But ok sure. I guess his ignorance is bliss right, to a certain extent.

Living Situation

T: A few questions about your situation over here. What kind of place are you living in? What's your living situation?

E: I live in a student house. How would you like me to expand on that?

T: Student house is fine. But is it with other internationals, or Dutch people, or a mixture?

E: So yeah it's quite close. It's just a Dutch guy and an international, my best friend who is German-Belgian. But yeah. So everyone is pretty much pro-European here.

Chequers Deal, Summer 2018

T: So later on in Summer 2018, May released her Chequers Deal and they had the idea about the transition period. Do you remember if that changed your view of what might happen for the future?

E: Summer 2018.

T: That was when they started thinking about whether we would stay in the Customs Union or not. That kind of thing.

E: That really was important for me because to me, I was like I just want security to know that I can make it to the end of my study and not stress and not worry about anything. And the fact it said "to 2020", so I was like I can already maybe start looking at labour market opportunities before that. So I sort of saw it as a sort of security. Yeah. It's a shame that they didn't go for a -. I'm not really sure exactly what is happening with that. Cos I hear that they have a transition period, even in an event of No Deal, but I'm not sure if that's the exact same as the Withdrawal Agreement. So I'm also not sure, not fully informed as I want to be. But yeah I saw that as a sense of security though.

Between Leave vote and Chequer's Deal (finishing her Bachelor's)

T: When did you finish your Bachelor's?

E: It was August 2018.

T: And before that, did you worry between the Leave vote and the Chequers Deal that you would maybe have to pay higher tuition fees or anything?

E: Yeah. Actually, now I remember. Yeah that's the reason I chose to do my Master's now was because, I think, the Withdrawal Agreement. Because I was like, ok I can literally do a Master's in 2 years, get it done with over here, perfect. And I don't need to worry about that. Whereas I was like "ok do I wait another year, do a gap year, or whatever". There's a chance that I'm going to have to be subjected to 10 grand extra for tuition fees and visa and God knows what. So I was like "ok, get straight in there", you know. I guess you feel the same.

[tangent about interviewer]

E: We've got our own little timeline and time constraints I feel. Which is a lot of pressure as well because you can't just take an extra semester.

T: I have to get an internship done before August.

E: Yeah?! Oh gosh, ok, good luck! [laughs] You got this.

T: It's not just getting it done that's the problem; it's finding one as well.

E: Fair. That's a whole another ball game of course.

Job/Financial Security (November 2018-March 2019)

T: You said that you also had a part-time job here?

E: Yeah. I work at a supermarket. [...] That's really not giving me anonymity, but ok, because I tell everyone this. But it's a food market, so it's got kitchen, so I just make pizza basically, and sushi sometimes.

T: One of the fancy ones.

E: One of the few ones. Only 5 or so in the country. Actually it pays my rent, so I'm pretty happy with it. The Brexit situation, I really, really was stressed that I was gonna lose that job security because I really needed it. There was a particular point, last year around November. My student loan halted from the Dutch government and it said that my nationality was illegible to get it from March onwards.

T: Which year was that?

E: That was November 2018 and it didn't halt then and there. It said in November that it was going to halt my student loan in March 2019, because my nationality was illegible. So I knew straight away it was Brexit and I tried to call them and they were like "yeah, we can't really say about the situation right now. We don't know enough information right now." But that was then a very, very stressful 2 weeks because I discovered that-, essentially I knew at that point that "oh, my student loan's going to get halted and there was nothing I could do about it. And then I also didn't know if I'd still be able to keep my job. There was no news of securing my employment rights as such. So I was like "ok double whammy. Am I going to be able to afford to stay here, as such?" It was a scary 2 weeks!

T: Have they halted your student loan in the end?

E: No. So they changed it last month. So up until last month I was like "ok, so this is going to just halt next month and I'm just going to deal with it". But they changed the reason from Brexit to the fact that my job contract runs out in March, which was very inconvenient, that it's the same time as Brexit! I don't know if you know the DUO system. So Dutch students, they can just loan money, depending on their situation. But for European students, European Union students, you are required to work 14 hours a week, so 56 hours a month, in order to have the student loan. So I have to work and have proof of contract in order to get this. So that's why, when my contract expired in March, they were like "ok, we're going to halt, we're just going to continue halting it". I sent them a renewal and now I've got it back again, until November this year. I don't know why it's just this November. Maybe that's also because of my job contract expiring then, I'm thinking probably. But yeah, who knows.

T: So has that secured your financial security for a while now?

E: Yeah. Yeah it really has. Cos like I said, those 2 weeks my parents had said "ok, we'll support you. No worries". But it was just; I felt my financial independence was completely taken away from me. And that really affected me. But now, it's fine again. It's running smoothly again, as such.

T: So the Brexit process is hitting you in sudden bursts of stress, and then?

E: Yeah. Like I think, just seeing sort of news and I had this sort of transition from seeing the news and being like “oh this is sad, this is really sad, this is my country”, to then being really personally effected like that 2 weeks that I had. To being like I might lose, I might have to leave because I can’t afford my study, and say goodbye to the life I’ve built up over the past 3 years. And I had a lot of friends who were, like my international friends and Dutch friends, who really, really supported me. Like my housemate, who would help me call the DUO, email the university; just gathering information. I had a friend who wrote to the Dutch parliament to ask about my status. And yeah, just friends there for me in case I financially needed help or anything. A lot of support in that sense.

T: That’s nice that everyone’s rallied around you.

E: Yeaah! I really needed that at the time. It was a crazy, crazy 2 weeks.

March 2019 Events

T: So then in January and then March of this year, May’s deal got voted against, 3 times now I think [both laugh]. Then the possible extension of Brexit. Have you been following along with it?

E: I have. Only the last couple of days, I’ve stopped, just because I think at this stage I’m not sure if it’s-. I think just getting bombarded with it every day kinda had a bit of strain on me and I’m like, hmhm, you know what, right now I just want to focus on study. Now I’ve got my residence permit through and things are fine for now.

T: You got your residence permit already?

E: Yeah, yeah. Are you waiting on yours?

T: No, I’ve got mine. I’ve noticed that people who’ve been here less time have already got it. And it seems to be the people who’ve been here for a really long time who are still waiting.

E: Aaah I see.

[tangent about interviewer]

E: Sorry what was the question again? About the Chequer’s Deal?

T: About the defeat of the deal. The Withdrawal Deal.

E: Yeah. I’m not sure. I wasn’t sure how to feel about that, because – oo, I remember actually what I said to people. I said that I felt a collision between political interest and personal interest. So, I think – hmm, which way did I say it. I think personal interest was, I was happy with the Chequer’s Deal because it meant keeping most things the same, as such, certain conditions, but you know, I don’t need to worry about the stress of a No Deal and just politically secure. But I was also like, politically conflicted, in the sense that I knew it was not yet, that we’d I think essentially have sort of similar to the Economic Area status; that we would have less say democratically on things. And I was like “yeah, the population didn’t vote for that”; we might as well stay in the European Union and then have a say. So I didn’t know how to feel when it got rejected. I was kinda bit like “hmmm”. Yeah I wasn’t sure.

T: And like “what now?”

E: Yeah, exactly. What now? Now it's just, when people ask me now I don't even know where to begin. And it's interesting because now I get asked about it on the daily from people who are just internationals, they are just very interested, but it is really on the daily that, especially my colleagues who want to know about what's going on. That also adds to just sort of the stress of being reminded about it.

Brexit Deadlock

E: I don't really see where they can go from this now. I think it's really at quite a big sort of deadlock. Because how I see it is that. But, first of all, they haven't voted the majority in any option. Then second of all, that they're sort of playing between should we say "oh yeah democracy is wrong, we should re-vote again" and then cause a revolt; and then revoke Article 50 because I think that would cause maybe a revolt, I dunno. I think that would really upset a lot of people. But, at the same time, we see how chaotic a No Deal Brexit is, of course, and we see that that is potentially going to harm everything. So I understand this complete political deadlock and I don't have the solution myself and that's why I'm just, I guess, focusing on my own things, because I'm hoping that the politicians will come up with something that will safeguard everyone in the end and respect political democracy. But, I think maybe the only option now, if I was going to choose an option, I think a second referendum would be necessary. Yeah. As well as it being bizarre that the Leave campaign's technically illegal. I find it incredibly bizarre that we are still going through with something. But you know, that's money and power for you [laughs]. I dunno.

Aspirations for the future

T: Can you see it all affecting you're future, here in the Netherlands?

E: Yeah. So, when I was worried about my employment, I was really worried about the future in terms of, I guess becoming a...

T: Third country national?

E: Yeah. A third country national, yeah. And in terms of being able to get into the job market. Because I'll already have the language barrier in the sense that my Dutch isn't, of course, as fluent as Dutch nationals.

T: But you do have some Dutch?

E: I learnt some Dutch, yeah. But it's still not, I guess you could say, on the continental European standard of fluent, you know. It's nowhere near that. It's just broken Dutch to be honest. But, yeah. I really worry because, as well, I know that my international friends who aren't European Union are already considering citizenship in order to be able to access that job market, because otherwise they have to get sponsorship. And I hear as well that there's employment rules; that the employer has to go through all the Dutch and European Union applicants first, and be like "is anyone suitable for the job?" and then they can look at the other candidates that are third country nationals. And to me, that just puts me at a massive disadvantage. So I've been like, is there a chance of maybe getting dual citizenship? It doesn't sound like it's feasible, because I think the Netherlands particularly really like you to give up your previous nationality. For me, at this stage, I'm not wanting to do that, just so that I know that in myself I can just go home in case of emergency, see my family without worrying

about visas, or anything. It's my home. Yeah. Can't give that up. So, that really I think, just in terms of employment opportunities, that does still really concern me. As well, this residence permit only lasts till 15 months and my study, I think, might be 16 months. Yeah. No, that doesn't sound right. [pause for thought] Yeah! Because I'm graduating not this summer, but next summer. And the residence permit finishes in June next summer. So I think I might just be a month or 2 short for my study, which is not good! [laughs nervously] Hopefully something will get figured out by then.

T: Maybe they'll send another residence permit.

E: Yeah. Maybe Theresa May will be already still trying to get her vote through for her Chequer's Deal.

T: For like the tenth time!

Anecdote of EU Integration Classroom Discussion

E: Yeah exactly! Never ending! But I just remembered something, going back a few year's actually. I don't know if it's any interest. [pause] So in my second year of my Bachelor, I did a European integration course, which was a bit ironic because it was after Brexit. So it would be 2017. Spring 2017. It was interesting because there was a few British nationals in that class. Yeah it was a complete mix of mainly European Union students, as well. We talked a bit about Brexit, we talked about the European Union and maybe that it's not completely as perfect as everyone may think. But, of course, not every institution is necessarily perfect; so, there are still flaws of course. But I do remember, it was a very particular moment, we were talking and debating about Brexit and I remember this Dutch guy literally saying, because we were talking about should the European Union look, in the future, forward and become a super physical state, as such.

T: Like the United States?

E: Yeah, essentially. And we were discussing about that and there was one Dutch guy who was like saying how he wanted Britain to "burn to the ground"! And I was in a class discussion for what they did because of us voting Leave. You could see that he wasn't joking when he said that statement; he really was angry at what Britain as a country had done. I guess at that time there was also the chance of other countries being like "oh, maybe this is a good idea". But now I think that force is completely eradicated. Everyone is like "no, maybe this is not something we want to join in". But I felt kind of personally attacked and also my country, yeah.

T: It's an awkward comment for someone to make when British people are in the class.

E: Yeah! It was really awkward. I was just in shock.

Family in the UK

T: Have your family supported you throughout the process?

E: Yeah. They really have and my mum even did my proxy vote, over there, for the referendum. But yeah, it's I think, we're all sort of in different states of either pessimism, or optimism. Thankfully though, we were all on the same sort of political level, that there's no family members that have been Leave voters. So that has really helped. Because that would be very difficult circumstances I

feel for anyone, especially if you're living over here abroad and then you have family that's Leave voters, then yeah I imagine the support's not as great in that sense, for that particular aspect, yeah.

T: Do you think that they will be able to visit you and you will be able to visit them? Do you worry at all about that?

E: Yeah. That concerns me. They actually came over the week that Brexit was supposed to be. And they were leaving on the day of Brexit, and that originally was the day of Brexit, so that's how we saw it. They brought food over and stuff and I said "ah this is gonna be the last time you'll ever be able to bring food for me". It was a really emotional day because, at that time, it was sort of saying goodbye, I was like I don't know because I hadn't got my residence permit that time, and I was like "I don't know when I'm going to next see them and how easy that it's going to be to next see them. Cos I need to stay in the country and yeah. But now it's fine. Now it's all fine because I've got my residence permit. I can just go to immigration control; and yeah, stand in a longer queue. It's fine.

Aspirations for the Future

T: You've been here for pretty much the same length of time as Brexit has been as a process, happening. Have you really noticed the fact that the two things have been intertwined at all?

E: I mean. Yeah. I'm just fortunate that I happened to coincidentally be on a Bachelor abroad already when Brexit was just maybe mentioned as a possibility of voting on this. I think it was just perfectly timed that I was in the Netherlands and I was really happy with my life here. But I think yeah, certain decision like doing my Masters now has definitely been because of Brexit. Cos I think maybe I would've preferred to have a Gap Year. Yeah, I do feel as well that I do sense that maybe in terms of job market, there's more for me here than back home. I know a lot of people probably argue against that, but I come from a very rural area. So of course I could always just move to a city and get a job there or something, in my study. But, to me I feel more comfortable; I feel there's more opportunities right now because I can see more opportunities visibly right here, right now. So I think that's why I've decided I want to stay here because I felt "ok I can build a life here". Yeah.

T: Would you want to stay in the Netherlands or maybe move to another European country? How important is the Netherlands in particular to you?

E: I definitely want to stay in the Netherlands because the people and the culture are just amazing! I was even, the other day, admiring the fact that some streets have little libraries where you can grab a book and put a book back in there. It's just like small little things that you just really kinda appreciate. I just really love the culture here. And cycling! Which is very stereotypical, but yeah. Of course I want to be able to travel, in the future, to other European countries, but I'm very happy with staying here in particular. Just as hobbies go to different European countries.

Identifying with Europe

T: Well we shall wrap-up now with some questions about identifying with Europe in particular.

E: OK.

T: Starting with: how would you describe the term "European"?

E: Oooo. Hmm. Ok. European I think is more geographical than political, I feel. Yeah, definitely I'd say if you are from the continent of Europe, then you have the right to say you're a European.

T: Nice simple answer 😊. And do you personally identify more with Britain, Europe, or both?

E: Oooo man!!! What a horrible question! [laughs with hand over mouth] Oh my gosh! Oh wow, ok. I don't know. I think I'd have to go with both. It has swayed between, but I feel that I'm still not ready to just drop my British ties from my identity.

T: Yeah you said you didn't feel ready to revoke your citizenship.

E: Yeah exactly. So I'm gonna say both to that. But, good question! Wow.

T: And do you also feel pulled towards the Netherlands, rather than Europe?

E: Yes. I still am pulled to Europe because I think the sense of my international European friends. That sense of unity, as such. But yeah the Netherlands is how I view, as such, my second home.

T: Do you think there is much of a European identity? Do you see that with your European friends and in your social circles?

E: I feel because of Brexit, that it's become something more important to me. I don't know if my friends feel any change, as such, from it. But for me it's become something that's more significant than it was before and something that I really don't want to lose. I feel like I'm losing rights, which probably isn't true. [pauses reflectively] Yeee, black and white area [laughs]. But yeah I don't want to lose what makes me a European Union citizen.

T: Do you think that your identification with Europe affected your choice to live abroad originally?

E: Hmm. I think so. Yeah. I'm going to say yes for that, because I always I think enjoyed visiting continental Europe. I saw all these different cultures that I want to explore and get to know. I, like I said, coming from a small, rural area we had a French exchange and that was only really the time that you got to, sort of talk to people from different countries.

T: There's always the school French exchange. [laughs]

E: Exactly, yeah! It's so strange. Over here it's completely opposite because they're exposed to all different European nationalities. But, over there [Britain] it's just like "ooh, someone's French. Ahh this is really new! Amazing." I really wanted to come to Europe and I think maybe I was drawn to Europe because of identity. Yeah. I'm gonna say yeah to that.

T: So you've kind of noticed Britain being on the edge of European culture, with the French exchange?

E: Yeah and the sense of, I think it is down as well partly because of geography, the fact that we're on an island. I was talking to my housemate and I said to her that I feel for my European friends, that travelling from here to Germany: to me that's amazing, that's like "ooh a completely different country, woo let's go!" But to them it's like us driving to Scotland or to Wales. Which is like just normal, you know. You don't feel like the whole "ooo, it's a different European country". I dunno, that's just my opinion, but yeah even if we just cross the border of Belgium or Germany I'm like "yes,

new culture, new experiences". I mean not to say it's bad to travel to Scotland and Wales, because Scotland and Wales are also lovely. But, it just doesn't feel international, you know. It just feels, still in the United Kingdom.

T: Yeah. Travelling within Schengen does change your idea of European travel.

E: Yeah exactly.

T: Because if you had gone to any of those places from Britain, you'd have to go through immigration, use your passport. But doing it from here is completely different.

E: Exactly, precisely, yeah. So chill.

T: It's interesting what you said about the French exchange because I remember my school tried to set up a Spanish exchange and there just wasn't enough demand for it. It was too far out there! So they had to cancel it.

E: Oh really? That's such a shame!

T: And they also stopped doing German lessons at my school. They only did French and Spanish.

E: You're joking! Really?! It's so interesting because I do hear that languages admission rates are just dropping. And I really feel that we're so, UK is so behind with picking up languages compared to the rest of Europe. It's kind of embarrassing. I wish that I had starting learning French or German even from an earlier age, because yeah. I haven't continued with my language since high school. Well partly French over here. But, something I do notice is that I feel that Europeans tend to be more confident to try and speak other languages, whereas the Brits kind of by default will just speak English. And I want to kind of break that stereotype, as such.

T: That even happens to me. I'm saying English to my Dutch housemates, then I remember that I do actually know the Dutch for it. So I'm like "why didn't I just say the Dutch?"

E: Fair. But it's just, I guess, all about confidence and comfortability. Yeah. Little steps.

Final Question: Europe or Britain?

T: Well I am all out of questions. I have one final question that I've been asking as the last one for everyone.

E: Ooo, ok.

T: Although I think you've already really answered it. So to echo the title of my study, as a result of Brexit will you staying Europe or going back to Britain; in the future, where do you see yourself in the next 5 years' time.

E: The Netherlands, yeah. Unless there is a dramatic change of status, that my residence permit can't be extended. I think if I do become a third country national and I can't access the employment market, then I'll have to go. But yeah, for now I'm staying: I'm putting up a good fight; I'm going to try and improve my Dutch; I'm going to try and just take up any opportunities I have; and just do whatever I can to prevent it.

[Official end of interview at about 50 minutes]

Making plans for the future

E: How about you though? What do you think?

[tangent about interviewer]

E: Yeah it all just depends, doesn't it, on how things go.

T: Like you I'm also from a really rural area with no job opportunities, so if I did go back to Britain, I would then have to move somewhere else in Britain.

E: Yeah. Because I feel that a lot of friends from uni kinda have situated themselves in different cities. But for me I feel so far from that, that I don't feel I can just drop by and be like "Hey guys!!! So I'm not back home, but I'm just joining you guys, because you live here." No starting a new life is just terrifying; it's not ideal. Anything but going back home and ending up with my supermarket job, back home. That would be depressing. And you see people from high school, it's like "oh hey!".

T: And you're like "I wasn't always working here. I've gone off and done other things as well."

E: Exactly. Ahh man. But yeah, who knows. I guess, as well, a certain number of people, there's a lot of people as well that do graduate from university and just end up back in their normal job back home. But I'm hoping that I have the determination to sort of do anything against that.

T: Well, one of the people I've interviewed told me that if you believe in it enough, then you can get a job wherever you want it.

E: Ahhh, that's so nice! Ahh. I mean, one of my British friends from my previous study, she, I think, did an internship at the British embassy whilst Brexit negotiations were happening. She also kept me updated about things as well. Kept me optimistic.

[tangent about interviewer]

E: Brexit negotiations might even open some job opportunities, in terms of negotiation of companies or advising people. Literally getting a job because of something you hate.

[tangent about interviewer]

E: At least there's some jobs being created from it, to make up for the many we've lost. But, you know, sure. It should be fine. I'm feeling more optimistic. At the end of the day, the government wants to make money and they're going to try and do whatever they can to make sure they're not losing as much money. So, in that sense, I feel that No Deal is not going to happen.

T: I just worry for where British politics goes from here because all the parties suck. I don't know who I would vote for if there was an election.

E: Yeah, I feel like an election is a massive no-go. It's so fragmented that no-one really knows exactly what they're voting for anymore because the parties don't uniformly represent the same. They all have different ideas and different opinions. I think, partly as well, being over here is kind of escape.

It's sort of like escaping the reality that is Britain. Yeah I feel like European friends are so embarrassed about our situation. I'm like "it's not our fault". But yeah.

[Eleanor requests to be informed about my thesis]

E: It's interesting as well, because going back home, my friends from home kinda see me already as a bit foreign, in the sense that I've left the pond, as such. Which is a weird one because it's like British unity, but also then you're different now. And I'm like "ah, I'm sorry".

[tangent about interviewer]

T: I got loads of those memes about going on Erasmus and coming back "really cultured".

E: [laughs a lot] True, yeah. One of those people who just gets in just before they stop it. No at the end of the day, you've gotta make good use of the opportunities that you can get. If you see all of a sudden that there's going to be a timeline, of course, it makes sense that you're going to get on it.

[end of transcript]

Appendix 3.6 – Isaac

Interview Setting: Skype, 8:30pm, 13/03/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: Where do you work actually?

I: I'm at the European Patent Office, in Rijswijk, not far from The Hague, between The Hague and Delft.

I: In terms of your survey, I don't know how much of a match I am to the typical expat because of the fact I'm flying in and out all the time. I have a slightly different status, but we'll see how it works.

T: But you have a home over here [the Netherlands] don't you?

I: Yeah yeah. I am not registered at the gemeente or anything like that... I'm centrally registered. So if there's any questions about voting or involvement locally or anything, then I'm not here at weekends and I'm not registered so I'm not allowed to vote, and things like that.

T: Do you usually fly back to the UK in the weekends then?

I: Yeah! Yeah it depends, sometimes on a Friday, sometimes on a Thursday. But Monday mornings are difficult cos it's a 6 o'clock flight on a Monday morning, so I get up at 4:15 on a Monday morning. It's a bit of a killer.

[pause to talk about my studying]

T: How long have you been living and working in the Netherlands?

I: Since July 2016 and before that I was based in Munich, with the same employer but in a different office. I was often commuting from Munich up into the Netherlands for about a week a month, for a good few years before that.

T: So you live in the Netherlands more because your work assigns you here? Rather than as a choice?

I: Um yeah basically, because my work has offices in Munich and the Hague (Rijswijk). It was more convenient to be in the Netherlands because the family was getting to that stage where the kids were thinking about studying in the UK and we were considering going back to the UK maybe at some point. Saw a house that we liked [in the UK] and got kinda mentally trapped, desperately wanting to have that house and decided that the family would move back to the UK and I would relocate to the Netherlands, to the office there.

T: Because they were with you in Germany before, weren't they?

I: Yeah they were with me in Germany. The kids were born in Germany. But they were getting to the age of university level and yah. They were keen to discover their roots in the UK. And the Netherlands is closer to the UK. So it kind of worked.

T: And where does your family live in the UK?

I: They're in Newcastle. So there's direct flight between Schipol and Newcastle, 4 times a day.

T: Do you ever have trouble flying because of the weather?

I: Ironically in the 3 years or so that I've been doing this, this week was the first week when I had an hour delay on Monday morning. Usually Monday morning is clockwork. There's sometimes a little bit of delay due to fog here, but that's about it. Going home sometimes on a Friday, or on a Thursday night, I've had some delays, but it's usually been pretty good. It's also KLM so more chance of flying.

T: What's your age category?

I: I'm 46

Experiences of Brexit

Feb 2016 Announcement of referendum

T: When the referendum was announced originally, you would have been in Germany I think, because it was Feb 2016. Do you remember your reactions to it?

I: Yeah I was surprised. I didn't think it was a particularly clever move at the time. I feel vindicated in that at the moment. No I think it's very dangerous to put a vote to the people on a subject that they don't have all of the information or the, um, real ability to be able to make a proper informed decision. Not just because of the lack of information, but also because of, you know... It ends up becoming a decision based on emotions, rather than based on a more considered thought process. And that's why we have a democracy: it's to vote for people who are fully informed, with access to the relevant information, and also able to properly consider the pros and cons without getting as influenced by more emotional things.

T: Did you feel in any way disconnected from the campaigning or anything because of living in Europe, rather than over there [in the UK]?

I: Um, not really. I tend to use digital media to follow things anyway, rather than watching television or reading newspapers. So, even now that I spend more time in the UK I tend to rely on apps on the phone for various newspapers, etc. In particular, to expose my allegiances, The Guardian. I tend to talk to colleagues and use digital media rather than TV or more direct campaigning on the streets.

T: So it doesn't make much of a difference that you're not physically in the UK.

I: No, not really

T: At the time the referendum was announced did you have any worries about your connections to the UK? Like being able to travel home? Although you wouldn't have needed to fly that regularly back then I guess.

I: a) I wouldn't have needed to fly so regularly, but also because of the... well firstly, because the UK is not in Schengen anyway, I don't really believe that for passenger transport it should make such a big deal, but in terms of working visa or etc to continue working in Munich or the Netherlands, because of the status of the European Patent Office I have a kind of special status anyway, in that I'm more centrally registered. In Munich it was with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Berlin directly.

Here in the Netherlands it's similar. The EPO is not a normal corporate employer and they're also not a European agency. They're set up with member states, one of which is the UK, and that's something that the UK signed up to as a convention, completely separate from the European instrument of the Commission.

T: So it's not part of the EU in a way?

I: So the EPO is actually nothing to do with the EU or any of its institutions. It's a separate legal convention, legal setup, that the UK is a member state of, as are non "European" countries. For example, Norway, Switzerland, etc are members of that convention as well. And we also have staff working from Switzerland, Norway, at the office on the basis of that status, without need for a work visa or anything.

T: So the referendum doesn't directly affect your right to work. OK

I: The main effect that I could see, just to complete that, would be that if there were less, particularly in my current situation now, if there were less people travelling back and forth because of the impact on them and their right to work and companies moving out of the UK to have instead a European base, it could impact the flights. So that's one thing. And the other thing is the fact I earn Euros, so any impact on the currency is something that I feel as well. So far it's worked in my advantage because all of the fear around Brexit has pushed the pound down.

June 2016 Leave vote

T: So when the actual referendum arrived were you able to vote in it?

I: Yeah because we actually bought our house in the UK in the November of 2015. When we did we registered there, knowing that there were rumblings of things potentially happening with Brexit and the referendum. We registered with the electoral roll as soon as we had that house. Because we also started to move over at that point. So it's a little bit different in terms of the typical expat setup. I have one foot in the UK and one foot in the Netherlands and that enables me to vote. At the time, it was one foot in Germany and one foot in the UK.

T: Did you have any other relatives still in the UK?

I: Yeah quite a lot of family and certainly more on my side than my wife's side, but yeah my parents are still in the Newcastle area. Also my brothers.

T: So you were able to vote in the referendum. What did you vote for?

I: To Remain.

T: When you found out what the result was, then what did you first think? I have some pictures to trigger those emotions again...

I: I was extremely shocked. I can remember vividly. You know there's various times in history where you always remember where you were, what you were doing at the time. Things like 9/11, etc. and the time when the Iraq War started and the wall went down in Berlin. I can remember I was on a duty travel from Munich to the office here [Rijswijk] and I was in one of the local hotels. I know that

it was the last time that I was due to be in that hotel before moving into my own apartment. It was just before basically, we made our big move. It's a hotel that has some caravans in a courtyard that they also hire out as rooms. I was in one of those caravans because they said you've stayed in every other room with all your visits, but never in one of the caravans, so here you go, you can stay in the caravan. I remember it was thundering and lightning, it was very appropriate for the mood that I was feeling, of shock and horror, that this ploy by Cameron to try and get the people to make the hard decision for him, blew up in his face, the wrong way. And also the fact that Farage who was trying to make a statement just also didn't believe it. It was quite disappointed; shocked and disappointed that such an important thing could be swayed by what the popular press were printing in terms of "foreigner out" and the kind of emotions around immigration policy, etc. And it was really dominated by those, or at least that's what I saw from where I was. So it was dominated by those kinds of feelings.

T: Do you think there was a lack of pro-European media and it was mainly anti?

I: Um yeah. The media that mattered in terms of what influences a large majority of folks on the street. You know the likes of the Daily Mail, etc.

T: The ones with the biggest readership.

I: Also the ones which have the most striking emotional headlines that capture the attention of those that are potentially less informed about the consequences.

T: When the result was revealed did it affect your relationships with your colleagues? Being an English person, did they react or come to you for information?

I: No, not at all because in the EPO it's already, well it's not like working as an expat in a Dutch company, for example. It's already a very international community. I also work with people from Catalonia who are fighting for independence from Spain. There's a lot of stuff that goes on that we discuss on a fairly mature level as it were. There's less of the kind of stigmas and things like that with that sort of thing. We laugh together about it. I was myself more in favour of Remain and see the whole thing as a big mistake. I struggle to identify with a lot of my British compatriots. Actually most of the colleagues in Munich at the time started to pursue German nationality, dual passport. Unfortunately the process was too slow, so by the time we left Germany it was too late to complete the application process, even though I and the family had done everything necessary, we just couldn't deliver the papers in time. But I think there was a common feeling among the Brits as well as the other nationalities. It wasn't as if it was us against them or anything.

T: So solidarity between everyone in the workplace?

I: Yeah, pointing the finger back to the UK and saying "what a mess".

T: Do you think in your workplace then there's a sense of going beyond nationality? That nationality doesn't really matter that much?

I: Yeah very much so. And I think that's one thing that lacks in the UK a bit, and is more present in the rest of Europe. In mainland Europe, there's more fluidity between the different countries. There's more general movement. A large number of folks that are more based in the UK, if they do

go abroad they tend to very often go to places where it's essentially "Little England" and they're less exposed to more normal non-touristic aspects of the other countries in Europe. On the whole, I mean it's easy to generalise, but I think there's a stronger focus on that. ... I meet them all in the bar on Monday morning and I always wonder how they can start drinking at the time that they do. All off to Benidorm or whatever.

T: Early on a Monday morning before you go to work, they're already drinking at the airport?

I: Yeah 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock in the morning they're already hitting the beers, and not only that.

T: Do you spend that much time with other Brits while you're over in the Netherlands?

I: Not really. I've now got a lodger in the flat here who's from Britain. He's doing the same thing, he's moving back and forth from Gatwick using EasyJet every weekend. He might actually have some different views from me. He's a Telegraph reader. He's a lot less Remain than I am. We haven't outright asked each other, but I get the impression that he probably voted to Leave.

I: In terms of going out with Brits, I mean yeah there's a few guys from work. In Munich it was the same. People from work and/or the church that were involved in in Munich, because we actually lived in Munich so it was little bit different to the situation here. We very much were expats situated in Munich, rather than this commuting thing that I'm doing now. But also, in Munich when we were actually living there we tended to actually integrate an awful lot more with the local people as well, with our neighbours, etc. Whereas here because I'm back and forth every weekend I don't have any connection with the non-work colleagues around me. The only contacts are through work.

T: So your integration is more affected by your expat situation than Brexit?

I: Yeah

T: Not really affected by Brexit at all.

July 2018 Chequers Deal

T: So the next event I have on the Brexit timeline was when Theresa May first agreed her Chequers Deal, which was over summer 2018. The headlines were more focused on the headlines than the actual deal. When that deal came out and it was more of a soft Brexit plan, how did you feel about that because it wasn't going towards the hard Brexit that they originally thought it might do?

I: I mean May obviously herself, previously, personally, was a Remainer. She was against Brexit. I didn't necessarily expect her to come out with anything particularly hard to be honest. So I wasn't so surprised, but I was also very sceptical knowing the emotions around the vote and the fact that it went the way it did. I was very sceptical as to whether it would have any success.

March 2019

T: And now of course in 2019 her deal has been voted against twice. So does that make you feel happier now? What emotions are surrounding that for you?

I: I mean in some ways the devil inside me says I hope we hit a no-deal Brexit, just to show all of those that voted for it what chaos it creates, at least to start with. And also because that would have

an impact on the pound, which would enable me to send some Euros over at a good rate. But the more serious person in me hopes that the whole thing just dies down and that Brexit is basically taken off the agenda, which is a strong possibility as well now.

T: You mentioned transferring money. Does the current events of the Brexit process make you worried for your family back in England?

I: Not worry, because I don't think the currency would shift. Even if there were now to be no Brexit, or even a delay for a while, then it would bolster the pound for a bit. I don't see the pound going up to particularly high levels nevertheless, not in the short term. Anything else would be more to my favour. Anything else, like a no-deal Brexit, for example. I didn't even get to see the vote.

T: Do you want me to tell you? They voted for there to be no no-deal. There has to be a deal.

I: I was talking with my flatmate last night and we both decided it would be not quite bang on the line, but very close.

T: And tomorrow, there's another vote.

I: Yeah, tomorrow is about the delay.

T: So much going on! It's like a TV serial!

I: And of course if there's no delay, then basically there are only the options of revoking Article 50. If you can't delay and you can't agree a deal, then you have to revoke Article 50 or somehow speed through a referendum now.

T: That would be unfair to people like us.

I: It's not gonna happen. I don't see a referendum happening, I see a strong likelihood for a delay to be voted for tomorrow, rather than a revoking of Article 50. But, we'll see.

T: So it might end up not happening at all.

European Identity

T: So one of the aims of talking to you was to try to work out how much you identify with Europe and whether that's been changed by Brexit. I've saved this bit to the end because I was trying not to skew your answers based on the knowledge of the actual topic. So I have some final wrap-up questions to more explicitly ask you about identifying with Europe. Firstly, how would you describe the term "European"? You've already mentioned how Britain sets itself apart from Europe. But how would you saw "European" would be?

I: I see myself firstly as European and secondly as British, having lived the time I have in Munich as well.

T: How much time were you in Munich?

I: I was there for about 20 years, 21 years. So yeah a significant period. More than I've lived in any single place in the UK. "European" is an identity that goes beyond.... I don't know how I would

describe it really... Even when I was in Munich to start with I was working at Siemens. I was working in a setting that was less international and a lot more German. So there I was very much more a normal expat as it were, in terms of really having exposure to the locals, having come from my own background in England. And even talking to them at the time there was a feeling of togetherness, of being European, that meant more to me somehow than any identity of being English. But when it comes to football, then England is more important. But for everything else I very much identify with something much bigger than just England.

T: In the German workplace then, would they feel more European or German?

I: That was interesting one because the Germans have a very, in contrast the English, have quite a stigma about being seen to be nationalist. So the Germans have really consciously tried to distance themselves from nationalism since the wars. In a way that England, I mean when we were in Munich we were constantly frustrated even with our own family at the obsession with the war, jokes around the war, etc., which really kind of wears thin. I mean when England played Germany at football in 2001, for example, I went to the game at Munich stadium and saw them beat them 5-1, which was great. But at the time I remember all of the newspaper articles focusing on references to the war and all this sort of thing. The media were also, I was in the centre of Munich at the time, and the media were inciting fans to start fights. And it was really, this kind of aggressive and nationalist thing which was also being incited by the media. The Germans are the opposite. Remember when they hosted the World Cup it was a really big deal that Germans were going round with German flags, because up until then they've really been avoiding that sort of thing entirely. Finally, they were starting to be able to embrace their nationality in a way that was positive rather than negative. I was almost embarrassed of my own heritage to kind of see how seriously they took that compared to all this British bulldog, war-type thing.

I: Britain gets more like America in that sort of respect as well. You get a lot of that coming from America. I see Britain being closer to America culturally than the rest of Europe is to itself. The connection between the French and the Germans, for example, or even the Germans the Dutch where there's some rivalry. I think that connection is stronger between Britain and America, than it is between Britain and Germany or Britain and France. This same kind of closeness goes across the water rather than the shorter "hop" to mainland Europe. I see the influence as well of America on English as a language. On a lot of English thinking, etc. They tend to get more influenced by America than their real traditional roots in the European mainland. Which is a bit of a shame.

T: Do you think maybe that had an influence on Brexit, making it happen?

I: Yeah. I mean we see it in America with Trump and the kind of nationalist stance taken there. I mean obviously there's a lot of talk of populist politics and the impact that that's had. I think there's definitely something to be said there for the influence from that side of things.

T: It's also a bit interesting how when Brexit happened they thought it would lead to a "domino effect" in the rest of Europe, but it really hasn't done. Macron got voted in instead of La Front National and Geert Wilders didn't succeed in the Netherlands and it just hasn't really appeared in Europe, compared to in Britain.

I: No and I think if anything Brexit has brought the rest of Europe closer together. It's a wrong analogy saying that fighting against a common enemy unites people because it's not an enemy. The rest of Europe would be very happy for Brexit not to go ahead. But, this is one of the reasons why the other European states are so cautious with their negotiation and what they surrender in terms of things to the UK, is the impact it could have on other states that were thinking about it [leaving the EU] potentially. Also the impact of Brexit, or even the Scottish referendum before it. So also maybe you have to add to the timeline the independence of Scotland. The impact that that event also had on the struggles in Spain and the independence in Spain. I'm responsible for a development contract at the EPO in the IT area and we've got about 100 external contractors all working from, partly working from Morocco, but mainly working from Seville and southern Spain. But the main office is in Barcelona, so I've a lot of contact with folks from Barcelona and again they're watching carefully the whole Brexit thing. But if anything the chaos around Brexit is uniting the rest of Europe, also encouraging them to consider what needs to be improved in the collaboration across Europe. I think there's some positive things coming out of it.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.7 – Isobel

Interview Setting: Koffie Leute, Utrecht, 11:30am, 29/03/19 (original Brexit Leave date)

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So we're basically gonna talk about you and why you came to the Netherlands and then how Brexit is affecting your life over here.

I: Ok. Shall we?

T: So we'll start with just introducing yourself. Your age, your name, and where you work in the Netherlands.

I: I'm [Isobel]. I'm 35 years old. I came from Egham, which is in Surrey, the United Kingdom. And I was working there as a picture-framer, for a long time. I came to the Netherlands in December and since then I haven't been working yet.

T: December 2018?

I: Yeah just the one gone. Because the one before that I should like to think my Dutch would be better.

T: So why did you come over to the Netherlands?

I: I came to be with my partner. We've been together for a year and a half now and so it was going to be a matter of either him moving to me or me moving to him. And I suppose Brexit just sped it all up really. He came to visit me for a couple of months, but we decided that it would be better for all involved if we settled here [Utrecht].

T: Because of Brexit?

I: Quite a big portion. I don't know whether it just lit a fire under things and stirred the process up. I mean I should've liked to continue working and save some money up and improve my Dutch and stuff before coming here and everything. But I think I would have ended up here eventually. But I wanted to make sure I got in before today.

T: Yeah today is the official Brexit day.

I: The original.

T: Is your partner Dutch?

I: Yeah

T: Are your family still in the UK?

I: My mother is and my brother is. My father is deceased and I suppose that's the only immediate family I have. Aunts and uncles and grandparents all moved to America and then South Africa and then Australia decades past. Long long time ago.

T: But you didn't feel like going to any of those places?

I: Oh heavens no! [laughs]

T: And so now you've come over here you said you're not working yet?

I: Not yet, no. We've found an apartment which was difficult enough on its own and just sharing with him [her partner] in the student digs at the moment, kinda unofficially. So I couldn't really kinda register for a bank account or even a mobile phone or anything like that until I'm kind of settled down in our new lives.

T: You haven't registered with the city yet?

I: Not with this city. I've said that I'm living with his mother in [indecipherable Dutch placename]. Just for a couple of months, just to make sure that I'm

[pause for drinks to arrive]

I: Just to make sure that I was registered before any perceived departure date.

T: So did you get the letter explaining Brexit?

I: Yes. I went for my interview to kinda announce that I'd arrived and I got the letter about 12 or 13 days later. It was under 2 weeks! I thought it would be the last to get to get the letter. But other people that I've asked, or not asked but I've seen them posting on the expat forums and things, saying that they're really worried because it's been months. But no, it's all been incredibly smooth. Yeah.

T: You're living here in Utrecht?

I: Yeah.

T: In student digs?

I: Yeah, sharing with 10 other people.

T: Is it with SSH? The main student housing thing. Or is it an independent one?

I: I honestly don't know. It's this big box of flats up in Tuinwijk. And yeah I think we have 8 rooms to an apartment and some of them have double that. So yeah. A lot of people and a very dirty kitchen.

[tangent as we discovered we live in the same block of flats!]

I: We're moving into our new apartment 17 April. I can't wait! It's a lovely little one. Kinda newly-built place down in Lombok. So it's just a little bit closer to the centre.

Experiences of Brexit

Feb 2016 Announcement of Referendum

T: OK so now we'll move on and talk about how you've experienced Brexit. Right from the start when they first announced the referendum to the current stuff happening at the moment. You

might have even thought so much about moving to the Netherlands when it first started, but we'll see. So when David Cameron first announced the referendum back in Feb 2016 what was your life like at that time and how did you respond to the announcement?

I: My life was ticking along OK. I live in a part, or I *lived* in a part of the country that was I suppose fairly well-to-do and people didn't generally talk about politics. And so I knew that there were some people that were Eurosceptic but my experience was that everyone seemed quite happy with the status quo. And also the town has a large student population and large international student population.

T: Royal Holloway?

I: Yeah. So just walking down a very small high street you might hear 4 or 5 different languages and I didn't imagine that I lived in a part of the country that saw that as a bad thing. So when the referendum was announced I thought well that's a waste of time. He's decided that he needs to do it to appease the idiots in his party. But I don't know if, looking back, I'm just projecting my feelings now onto my feelings then. But I think I thought that he could've just told them to screw it, to just carry on and whatever, because there was more important business of the day. I previously had voted Conservative and shan't ever again! [coy smile] I'll be voting for one of 20 different parties from now on I suppose. But yeah that's what I was feeling at the time.

Campaigning:

I: All through the campaign everyone was just "eugh Brexit, this is so boring. Let's not talk about Brexit". On all of the topical comedy shows, everyone would just be like "not this again!" And it did lead me to believe that everybody felt that it was just a stupid waste of time and it was just a foregone conclusion that people couldn't be so stupid to vote to leave, given all of the uncertainties and how even then none of the people who wanted to leave could agree on how they wanted to leave. It's such an easy campaign to make fun of, that yeah it really did seem like a foregone conclusion.

Leave Result June 2016

I: But then on the night of the results, it was quite amusing that my boss actually went and voted and he never goes! But I encouraged him to go because I said it was important, and he voted for Remain. He's a small business owner and he understood that a lot of raw materials came from Europe. Quite apart from any other reason, it might be difficult to continue in business if he can't get the materials that he needs to do his job. But that was ok.

I: But on the actual night of the result, the early morning I should say; I felt absolutely sick! Physically sick! So disappointed, so unhappy! I felt myself getting choked up at work the next day. I just couldn't believe the utter stupidity of it. That was what my main feeling was. Like how could people be *sooo* stupid. That was the feeling. I chastised myself that I shouldn't be calling people stupid, they were just misled. You don't call the little old lady who's conned out of her life savings; you don't call her stupid. That would be a bit incredulous. But these conmen are very good at their jobs!

T: But it seemed to come out of nowhere for you?

I: Yeah! It was a surprise. Obviously it was always gonna be a possibility, but not a possibility that I gave many seconds thought to.

T: How did you follow along with the campaigning? You mentioned comedy shows...

I: I don't read newspapers. The only news website that I would read would be the BBC because at least they've got to nod towards impartiality. Things like Have I Got News For You and things like that. That's an entertaining way to get your news. Just the silly stories of the week and that's the only news I really want to hear.

T: And they're also meant to be impartial on that I think.

I: They are because of the kind of satire element there is I think an exemption to their impartiality clause. They are really able to express a view, just so long as they say it's not the view of the BBC.

[pause while I checked that the recording was working]

I: So it did feel like it came out of nowhere, getting my news from comedy shows. I did notice, there's a small apartment block at the end of my road [in the UK] and somebody hung out a European flag and it kinda made my heart spin a little. But, I like walking around in the countryside and during the campaign I did notice an alarming number of little UKIP posters that people had put out in the area in windows, down little country lanes. That was odd. I didn't imagine that they would be thinking "coming over here taking our jobs" in their massive mansions in the middle of nowhere. Weirdos.

T: You only really saw it in the countryside, not in the town?

I: Not in the town, no. Going to the pub there would be the contrary guy at the bar who would always kinda argue "Bloody Romanians!" But you would expect it from him. Everybody else seemed to be perfect- And this was in a pub run by a German lady, who's now moved to Spain to get out of it all. And taken quite a few people with her as well. They've all decided to go to Spain. Just don't feel welcome in England. And I don't blame them.

T: Had you travelled much in Europe, had much experience in continental Europe in 2016?

I: Yes actually. I think I did. I came to the Netherlands I think in the spring. I'm not sure. And then in the summer I went to Prague and Budapest and yeah I do remember it was on everybody's lips back then. And we met one or two Americans that worked in politics and we did kinda combine the two discussing how awful it was. He couldn't conceive that Trump would win. And I said "well you never know, look what happened to us".

Effect of her relationship with a Dutch man:

T: Were you with your Dutch partner at the time?

I: No we only started dating end of the summer in 2017.

T: So that relationship and the Brexit process are kind of intertwined for you?

I: Yeah yah yah. I didn't have it in the back of my mind the entire time. In fact I'd never thought about moving to another country before that. Certainly not for a person. But yeah it's just turned out that way and looking back now it's almost like I'm being thrown a buoyancy aid, a lifeline. It's just kind of a happy coincidence that we just get out of all that.

T: So what's motivated you particularly to leave Britain then?

I: Just to be with my partner without the complications of visiting there and visiting there and are we even allowed to?, what kind of special visas would we have to get? Just kind of making solid plans. Because we knew that we wanted to be together for the long-run. So it was a case of "well why not now?"

T: And you were happy to leave behind your job and things?

I: Yeah yeah. I'd been at my previous job for 11 years. Quite a long time. And I was enjoying it the most I possibly could. So I was leaving a job I enjoyed. And I was obviously leaving friends and family. But, I didn't really give that a second thought. I mean I'll probably end up seeing my friends more here than I did there; because obviously people to move away. A lot of my friends moved into London. And I like being tucked up in bed by half 10 really so I don't really go in for that kind of nightlife thing. So I'd only really see them when they come to visit or for day trips and things like that. So we'd see each other fairly often. But yeah people will no doubt come to see me here. I've got one of my best friends coming to visit on Koningsdag. That should be fun.

T: So for you it doesn't really matter if you were living there or here. They would still have to visit you?

I: Yeah.

T: So when the Leave vote came you were completely surprised by it. Do you remember what your British friends were thinking?

I: I must have like a lot of other people been living in a bubble, because I didn't know a single person that thought we should leave. Not a single one. A few have come out of the woodwork since. I wouldn't call them friends, but kind of acquaintances that have posted things on Facebook that have made me go "oh really!?" – not my friend now.

T: It has been hard to find Leave voters. I did my Bachelor's thesis on why people voted for what they did, with a huge imbalance of Remain to Leave voters.

I: You'd have had to go on a fact-finding mission to Boston, Lincolnshire or something. You'd be hard-pressed to find Remainers but from what I gather there's more and more of them now. Quite a lot of people changing their minds. Just simply the turnover of population. I looked it up the other day. The margin of Leave over Remain was 1.3 million. Since 2016, about 2.4 million kids have turned 18. It's utterly ridiculous that they should just blindly carry on.

T: And if they were able to vote at the time they probably would have voted Remain, as was the trend.

I: As was the trend of the age group yeah. And I'm sure that they're absolutely sick to their eyeballs of everything they've seen in the past 3 years. If they weren't political before they certainly would be now.

Summer 2018 Chequers Deal

T: I have some headline pages from when the Chequers Deal was announced, 7 July 2018. That would have been approaching when you moved away. Did it change your perspective on how Brexit would play out?

I: Not at all. I remember hearing on the news that May had won Cabinet approval, but it was about 6 hours later that the first people came out saying "well we only said that" [sarcastic]. I think it was Boris Johnson was just kinda like "we said had agreed to it, but we're not actually gonna agree to it". So it just seemed like more of the same pointless chat and agreements, when nobody can agree with anything. Theresa May said she was a "Strong and stable leader" but that was already a joke the second – a strong and stable leader would be a bit more autocratic and just say "right, this is what we're doing". She didn't have any credibility as far as I'm concerned because she triggered Article 50 when she didn't have to. Sure, she had pressure from certain quarters to "get on with it", but you don't just jump in without a plan, it's utterly ridiculous. Just sit down for a couple of weeks with some decent civil servants on it, and they could've – although I'm pretty sure that a lot of civil servants probably didn't want any part of it. They didn't want to put their name to that. They've got a career that's longer than the prime-minister.

T: How quickly did she trigger Article 50?

I: It was about 2 weeks if I recall. Something between 2 weeks and a month after the vote. Perhaps it was about 2 weeks after she cobbled together a majority. I won't say that she won the election. But yeah after she had won her "massive mandate" [sarcastic] it was only a couple of weeks, if I remember correctly. I don't know for certain. But I have a memory of it being quite speedy. I thought "you don't have to do that yet". Obviously part of it was like "I don't want you to do it". But I didn't see there being any need to. So she just appeared very weak to me doing what certain people- I suppose she had to prove that she was going to do Brexit, because she had weakly campaigned for Remain, so she had to prove to certain quarters of the party that she was the man for the job. But in doing that, she's just capitulating, as far as I'm concerned.

Moving to the Netherlands, Dec 2018

T: Then not long after that of course you moved to the Netherlands.

I: A couple of months after that, yeah. But we started making plans about July. That's when I said "right Christmas, that's when I'll come over". And so the whole faff of reducing 35 years' worth of possessions to a couple of cardboard boxes to send to another country. All of that kinda stuff. Just, clearing out my life. A bit cathartic actually. But very very stressful. They say that moving house is a really stressful part of your life. Moving house to another country is pretty stressful as well.

T: Did you fly?

I: No, I took the bus. Well I've been coming to and from so frequently. My house is 10 minutes' drive from Heathrow Airport. But, unless I planned and bought my air tickets exactly 3 months in advance, they'd be really expensive. So I'm just used to getting a 35 euro WeBus takes 9 and half hours. But I can sit and watch Netflix and be absolutely fine.

T: It would mean you couldn't take as much stuff I guess.

I: Well I sent a man with a van separately. And then I think he was gonna be continuing onto Berlin or something anyway, so he had part of the van free. So, I could fit all my boxes in there. That was a bit stressful; putting your whole life in somebody else's hands that you've only just met that day really. But he was fabulous and arrived exactly when he said he was going to arrive. And nothing was broken. And so all of my possessions are in storage at the moment, which is fun [sarcastic].

T: That's quite normal for the Netherlands I think. They have tiny houses.

I: Well there's no point in unpacking into this 12 square-metre room. But yeah it will be nice to get stuff out of storage. Then I'll have felt like I've actually kind of arrived and I'll find a little job or something.

T: So you haven't quite fully moved here, as it were?

I: No, no.

T: For the first 3 months.

I: But I've just been, decompressing I suppose. For the past 10-15 years I've not really taken any holidays. I certainly didn't take my full allocation of holidays, and it was really nice to just not have to do anything for a couple of months. My partner's been wonderful. He's not put me under any pressure, so that's another reason why it's quite nice being in the student with him for months, is that it's so CHEAP! So it gave me that allowance I suppose that offer, to not have pressure.

T: What were your first impressions of living here?

I: Well it's lovely. I've not encountered anything bad. It's just really, really sweet, really nice. I'm used to it now. But for the first couple of weeks I did have a bit of a hard time getting used to the driving on the right. I don't drive so it's absolutely lovely to come to a place where everybody goes on a bicycle. The only things I have to do is go out and cook and clean and shop. Quite domestic at the moment. And go out for a nice little ride of the bicycle now that the weather has improved. The first couple of months it was very, very cold, very, very wet, very, very rainy, very snowy at one point. The weather is perfect now [looks outside]. I quite often just go on a nice loop around the Singel and get my groceries on the way back. It's a very nice lifestyle. Perhaps I'll only get a part-time job.

T: What kind of groups of people do you spend your time with? Are they Dutch or other Brits?

I: I think everybody in our apartment is Dutch. And the people that I hang out with are mostly in the apartment or my partner's family and they're obviously Dutch as well. There's this one girl from the islands, I think Curacao. But apart from her I think they're all fairly local to here [Utrecht] actually.

T: So do you have much contact with British expats at all?

I: No. I signed up to the Facebook group just so that I could keep an eye out for posting vacancies and stuff, for when that happens. But it's been very interesting to see the kind of things that people do share, and how absolutely trusting and sweet it seems as well. Stuff like "I'm going out for a drink on Friday. Would anybody like to join me?" It just seems quite odd. I think you must be very [indecipherable] to just ask a group of 20,000 strangers if anybody wants to have a drink.

T: Telling them exactly where they'll be at this time.

I: Yeah. I suppose I do come from a slightly less trusting culture. It just seems really sweet that everybody just wants to help everybody else out. Like "Oh I've got some moving boxes, would anybody like them?" or "I've got this". But a million people are trying to get an apartment. So it's by no means straightforward. But we got incredibly lucky because one of my boyfriend's colleagues was buying a house and so his apartment was going to become vacant.

T: Have you ever felt lonely at all that you're just with Dutch people and no British people?

I: No, they all speak perfect English, which has made it quite difficult to practice. But, no I don't particularly. It's not like you miss hearing your own language because it's everywhere. Just walking down the street it's like "oh more and more and more". Especially in the old part of town where you hear tourists on a Saturday or something. It's just more of English and it actually makes me feel quite bad.

T: Have you learnt much Dutch?

I: I can understand a very great deal. But I don't have the confidence yet to actually allow any of it to come out of my mouth. That's the hardest thing. But I'm hoping that will improve. I suppose that's why I'd like a little part-time job. I think maybe in a shop or something, where there's just a few stock-phrases that you have to rehearse and get really comfortable interacting with people. So I think that would probably be my best bet of learning.

T: Then you can get comfortable with the pronunciation and use that for all the other words.

T: Do you keep in contact much with your family?

I: Umm yeah. With the wonderful world of WhatsApp they can contact me anytime like-

[pencil falls down a hole]

I: I'm basically in contact with people just as much as I was before. Kinda like "how's it going blah, blah, blah.", "this is going on in my life, blah, blah, blah". I'm going back in August because one of my best friends is getting married, so I have to go to that. So that should be fun. I'll see people there. But obviously because she's getting married and she's decided I'm her bridesmaid, there's been quite a lot of back and forth with discussions all via WhatsApp. So yeah I'm just in contact with people just as much as I would be anyway. I was not really in contact with my mother very much before I left, but that was a matter of choice. I probably talk to her now than I was before. Just to put her mind at rest, especially after what happened the other week and it making it onto the BBC News. Suddenly, I just had loads of people going "Are you ok!?" I replied "It's a fairly big town". It's just that kind of Mum syndrome: you're away from home; you're in the same continent, so "are you ok?".

T: Do you see Brexit effecting the amount that you would visit home?

I: Yeah, yeah. I imagine going forward I'll have to have a really solid reason to go. If there's to be kind of faff at the airport. There's enough faff as it is. If it's gonna be more arduous to get there; if I have to apply for special visas or something, I just won't bother.

2019 Brexit Events

T: Then of course recently we've had all the polava, throughout all of 2019. This headline is from the first time Theresa May's deal got voted down in January. And then of course in March, we've had it get voted down again, and extension. How have you interpreted all of that from while you've been over here?

I: I'm constantly guessing at people's motivations. Are these Brexiteers actually right in thinking that she's just trying to kick it down the road long enough that we all give up? But they seem so absolutely insistent that they will absolutely not have a second referendum. I should've like to have gone to be part of the march [in London] last weekend, but. I know at least 30 or 40 of my friends that did go and made themselves visible. Yes, so I don't know whether she genuinely believes this. I don't know the genuine beliefs of any of the politicians, any of the leading figures. All you do know is that they're not working in your best interests, or in the people's best interest. I don't know whether they're doing it selfishly, or whether they're doing it for the benefit of a small group of probably very wealthy individuals. Because they certainly can't be doing it for the good of the country. To argue that it's for the good of the country is blatantly untrue. This "Will of the people" bollocks is very, very difficult to hear people say repeatedly. I was watching this morning, Liam Fox blathering on about how we have to obey the democratic mandate that was given to the government to do this. And one of his colleagues also saying that people demanded, "they went into the referendum understanding that it was an instruction to the government". No they didn't! The way it was worded was advisory but nobody wants to hear about that because it's been covered to death. Just because it's true, doesn't mean people want to hear it. And likewise Liam Fox and his colleague, they just kept on repeating this same thing, that was blatantly untrue and an absolute lie. They must just think that if you repeat it enough times it suddenly becomes true. They were just making me angry this morning. I was surprised last week, or earlier on this week, when Jeremy Corbyn suddenly changed his mind. Because his motivations seemed to be to Brexit the European Union at any cost or more accurately he just wanted a General Election because he thought he could win perhaps. But just, as I say, trying to guess the motivations of anybody involved in the politics of this was just impossible. And therefore, the only conclusion that I could draw is that they're not working for us. It just makes me so angry.

T: What would you most like to happen?

I: I would like them to call a second referendum. That's the only thing I think. I mean what are these guys so afraid of. If it comes out Leave again, it's confirmation for them. If it's not Leave, by perhaps an even wider margin and it shows that people have changed their mind, it's an even more legitimate result I think, because people have had time to really listen to the nuts and bolts of it.

T: And see the negotiations and what could happen.

I: Yeah. And actually think about what could happen. Because I don't think anybody really did think about what could happen at the time of the vote. I think everyone was just bored by the whole talking about Brexit. "The function of the European government and the European Parliament, euugggh [yawn], this boring stuff again!" It was always painted as a really boring subject that nobody wanted to talk about. But now people have been forced to talk about it and forced to look at it, they've seen the lemon that they would be buying now, and if they still choose to buy it, fair dos. But I think it's the only decent outcome. After, depending on what that referendum says, then obviously a number of different things could happen. But I don't think leaving for the sake of leaving, at any cost, it's not the best for the people. I don't want to sound like I know better than the people who voted for Brexit, but I think I do.

T: Are you still able to vote in the UK?

I: I didn't take myself off the electoral roll. I was thinking the other day actually that I might apply for a proxy vote. Send my mother to vote for me. But, I'm thinking I'd quite like to make an occasion of it if there is a referendum and go visit and make a big show and dance of it. I think I would in a heartbeat. I would go back.

T: It's that important to you?

I: Yeah. I'd hang the expense and get on the plane.

T: Because in the long run it would be better for you?

I: Yeah, yeah. Well I'm not even thinking about me! I'm here now. This is my life. This is going to be my life going forward. But, the generations to come, they don't deserve this. They've had no say in it, they don't deserve it.

T: So you don't worry about the practical effects on your life over here? Like access to jobs or that kind of thing?

I: What do you mean? In what way? How Brexit would effect that?

T: Yeah. Like not being a European citizen anymore.

I: Oooh ok. Well. The Netherlands government has been absolutely wonderful in the way they've communicated and the way that they passed the legislation needed to cover all eventualities and to protect the people living here and their citizens living there. As I've said, they've communicated it thoroughly, they've made good on their promises to keep people informed. So I'm not so worried about that. I know that they've effectively given me permission to stay for x number of years. By the end of that I'll probably have either married or gone into a civil partnership or whatever they call it here. Registered cohabitation, something less romantic sounding [laughs]. But I'll have entered into that anyway and then I'll take up some shifts through that, if that was necessary.

T: So you're confident about staying in the Netherlands for the foreseeable future?

I: Yeah, I have no desire to leave. I'm fairly confident that things will only continue to get better for living situation, etc. here.

European Identity

T: So we'll move on to the final wrap-up questions, where I'll ask you a bit more about identifying with Europe and the European Union. Starting with, how would you describe the term "European".

I: I suppose European is anything related to the continent of Europe. Dictionary definition really.

T: And does that include Britain, in your opinion?

I: Yes, it does. I think a lot of people would probably like to make the distinction between northern Europeans to those "lazy southerners". But I just think it's all the same. You can have your own identity within a larger identity. You aren't the country you were born in. You are your own person. You have affinity for your hometown, then the region, then the country, then the continent and then the world. We're all citizens of the planet.

T: So you can be all of those things.

I: Yeah I think you can be all of those things simultaneously, to varying degrees. It's a very individual thing.

T: And what do you see yourself as?

I: I see myself as a citizen of the world [smiling]. And everything, you know those really twee things that people say. But no I genuinely believe that, and I am a human being. I like being part of the European club. I think that people are stronger together, in groups. When they are so many people, obviously it's going to be long, drawn out conversations that lead to legislation and make everyone happier, healthier and safer. It's gonna take time and it's going to be boring occasionally, but it's important work I think. Unfortunately it does to line some unpleasant people's pockets and that's another thing that people disagree with. But the actual work they do is very important. It's worth the price I think.

T: And do you see Europe as a special thing distinct from America, China or Japan?

I: Well certainly yeah. It's the differences that make us. They've got their club, we've got ours, but we're part of the bigger club as well. Obviously you can't argue that we're the same as China; that would be utterly ridiculous. But we are the same because we all have the same basic needs. Safety, food, shelter, health and happiness.

T: That goes beyond all nationalities.

I: Yeah, exactly.

T: And do you think you will ever feel Dutch as well?

I: I was joking about it with my boyfriend the other day. I said "I suppose I'll know I'm properly Dutch when I can complain about the trains". Because they still seem ever so good to me in comparison to SouthWest Trains. On the rare occasion that they don't leave on time, it's usually only 5 minutes.

[tangent about Dutch train delays]

I: When I can properly complain in Dutch. I think that will be the deciding factor. But, no I think I'll certainly get there. Obviously I'll never be completely Dutch feeling. But yeah I can see myself eventually being kind of 95% feeling Dutch.

T: One final question, just to sum it all up, although I think you already answered it a bit. After everything that's happened with Brexit, would you stay in the Netherlands or go back to Britain?

I: My plan is to stay.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.8 – Joseph

Interview Setting: Skype, 2pm, 06/04/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So we'll start off with a chance for you to introduce yourself, so your age, occupation, that kind of thing, your name.

J: So I'm 31 years old. My name is [Joseph] and I'm basically a researcher myself. So I'm doing a PhD at Oxford Brookes University. I'm kind of taking a break from it at that moment; I've been doing it for a few years now. I've done the majority of my research which is in social enterprise engagement. So I'm looking at the community aspect of social enterprises, specifically in the UK, mainly in Oxfordshire, and looking at how they engage with the wider community and other businesses. So issues like social value development and engagement mechanisms. Also how they're affected or not basically on what stakeholders are saying, so beneficiaries and the people involved. So I've been doing that since 2015 off and on. So I finished most of the empirical research and I just need the write-up.

J: I've just moved here myself, last August. My wife had been living here for quite a long time. So she is from the UK as well. I'm from Wales and she's from England.

T: How long has she been living here for?

J: She's been here since January 2015. So she came 18 months before the referendum. So she registered in the 19th January, or something like that, back in that year. But I drove her over that time. We never really did used to come to the Netherlands. It was just her opportunity for her PhD; so she had a funding opportunity here. So she decided to come. So basically we lived away from each other a lot of the time in the last few years and we've had a lot times where we've been together a lot as well, in the holiday times. So, now we're together.

J: So obviously I decided to come last year, obviously to be together, but the Brexit debate and the looming Article 50; it's another reason for coming sooner rather than later. That was definitely a reason to come here. So we're both researchers and we're doing PhDs kinda remotely. I'm doing it remotely and my wife is still in a contract. So I'm basically looking for work myself here and I've got an internship at a place in Amsterdam, which is working for an NGO, which is 3 days a week.

T: Which NGO?

J: It's called [name removed for anonymity]. They work with children and young people for social and financial education. They're based in the Netherlands, but work mainly in African countries, Asia and South America. So they don't work on the ground here. But they've got their headquarters here. It's mainly an English-speaking office and Spanish a bit as well, so they nab Spanish people. But, it's a good place to be and it's also good, it's not easy to find opportunities here; especially at the moment, with all the stuff with Brexit it's a bit unsure for a lot of things. But let's say I'm grateful to be in that opportunity right now, just to get the experience and get a stamp from the Netherlands that I'm trustworthy and here for good reasons.

T: Is that a paid internship?

J: Yes. It's a paid internship yeah. Not lots and lots of money, but it's 3 days a week, it's enough for me. If I wanted to do 4 days, I probably could, so it just depends how I get on with other stuff. I might decide to do more, or I might decide to leave it next month, I dunno. It's kinda up in the air and I'm not quite sure.

T: Will you have to go back to the UK eventually for your PhD?

J: No I've finished all my scholarship. So I had a scholarship at Oxford Brookes, that was a very good scholarship and I had to do teaching and marking people's work as well, which was the last couple of years of it. So that finished in May and June last year [2018], so I didn't need to be there after that time. I'd completed all of it. So obviously when I start it again, I'll probably start it again fully in September, maybe 1 or 2 days a week whilst I'm working, to finish up writing. So I'll probably start back then, but I won't need to be back in the UK that often. Sometimes I'll need to go back obviously for certain things, but I won't need to be back for anything like exams or courses, or anything. I can stay here. So that's partly the reason why I left last August. I actually left last June, but I registered here in August. But I left last summer, because I don't need to be there for a course. I can be remote, which is the reason why I left.

T: So are you starting to think that you will try and stay here a bit longer?

J: Well, we just signed a contract for a house for 18 months, so we're gonna have to try and stick around. Obviously, my wife's been here for a long time, but she's not needed to learn Dutch in the time that she's been here. She wasn't really encouraged to [learn Dutch], but at the moment now we're starting to think about it more. So we've started learning a little bit, but in terms of our house contract, we just moved here from a temporary stay in Den Bosch, where we previously lived and now we live in The Hague. So we just moved here last month and we've got 18 months here, possibly move that to 12, so we're at least here for 12 months again. Part of our thinking is to be here whilst all this Brexit stuff is playing out and riding out in its entirety. So that's part of the reason for being here for that long. And I think specifically to do with Brexit, just the fact that you're citizen's rights might not be as easy to obtain if you're moving around to different places when you've got a track record in another country. Obviously we've not left yet. But say Britain leaves and I move to Belgium, I have to be a third country national in certain situations. So obviously it depends on the deal, or anything that happens. But, it's definitely impacted us in terms of staying here rather than travelling elsewhere. We had thought of going somewhere else that was a lot cheaper to live and just finish our PhDs, probably within the European Union, but it could have been elsewhere. But, mainly because my wife has got 4 years here already and she can have 1 more year before she can apply for residency, or maybe citizenship. That's one of the main reasons why we're sticking here, not particularly because we love it, but for practical reasons.

Origin in the UK

T: Backtracking a bit quickly, where did you say you were both from in the UK?

J: So I'm from Wales, from the south-west in Pembrokeshire. I'm from right at the end of Pembrokeshire, at the Pembroke Docks. So we're in the ferry port to Ireland, so I've always had a

very close connection to Ireland, just from being there at the ferry port, which is always bringing people from Ireland over and then going over to Ireland.

[tangent about Pembrokeshire]

J: Then my wife is from a mixture of places, so she's from Indian descent. Her parents were born in India and then they came over here when they were teenagers. She was born in Luton, then she moved to Somerset, for a while, to Frome. Then she went to Birmingham, as a family, so that was until she was 18/19. That's where they are based now; we've been back. So she's got a mixture of a lot of places that she's come from.

J: So I've always been in Pembrokeshire, but I've lived in England a lot as well in the last few years. Hence my accent is very mixed.

T: Did you have to live in Oxford for your PhD?

J: Yeah I lived in Oxford for 3 and half years overall. I've lived in Oxfordshire actually; I was in Wallingford as well, which is about 45 minutes away from Oxford. I lived there for about 6 months as well. So I've lived in Oxfordshire for about 3 or 4 years. So quite a while. And I've lived in Cardiff for my previous degree and also lived in Northern Ireland actually for my Master's degree in 2010/11.

T: So you're used to living in lots of different places.

Youth In Action, Erasmus+ experience

J: Yeah, yeah absolutely, very used to it. And also stayed in Spain for 6 months in 2012 for a specific European programme which would now be called the Erasmus+ scheme. It was then called the European Voluntary Service, I think it's still called that; but, it was Youth in Action at the time. I think it was mobility for people from around the European Union, but also places like Russia and other places. For people from just outside the European Union to live and to volunteer and get paid a certain amount of money for between 2 and 12 months. So I had 6 months in Spain.

T: When did it become called Erasmus?

J: It's Erasmus now. There are a lot of different works around the programme. So Erasmus+ is for anyone around the European Union and all partner countries as well. And they can travel. They stay somewhere for 6 months and they get their stipend and they get their accommodation payed for. They're basically there to volunteer and work, get experience. So it was called Youth in Action. I think European Voluntary Service would be the thing that I specifically did. And then I actually helped other people in a job that I had for 6 months, to do those European Voluntary Services as well. So I had 6 months in a period of time in a job doing that as well; so I've got a lot of experience of that. So I feel very European!

T: So it's properly involved in your life and in your job then.

J: Yeah! Yeah yeah absolutely.

Experiences of Brexit

T: Ok so let's move on to Brexit.

J: OK. Let's get on to the tough subject.

T: And your experiences of it so far.

Announcement of Referendum, Feb 2016

T: Starting with the announcement of the referendum by David Cameron in February 2016.

J: The announcement itself was not a surprise, because obviously the 2015 – well it goes past 2015 obviously, like the 2013, 2014 and that period, it was especially the UKIP getting so many votes in the European elections and the polls were very very strong for them. So there was a lot of talk with Cameron around that time about having this referendum, trying to puncture the issue. So the announcement in February 2016 was more a surprise in a way that it was a short campaign. So I know he wanted to get it out of the way, so he could do more with his premiership. He wanted to get it finished with, but he never imagined he'd actually lose the referendum. So I thought I was worried at that time, because it was such a short time that they were going to do it and the campaign I didn't think was really ready for the other campaign, the Leave campaign. I always thought it [the Leave campaign] was gonna be strong with the way that they talk about things and the way that they used people's emotions. So I was really worried even from the outset how it would be framed. I guess I was complacent as well. I thought Leave was gonna lose at the end of the day because people will think about their own economic standing. So my primary feeling was shock that it was a short campaign, I wasn't shocked with the announcement itself.

T: Yeah it was a very short campaign from February until June.

J: Yeah so short really, it was.

T: And when they originally said in the Conservative Manifesto that there would be a referendum, I think they were thinking 2017 maybe, then they brought it forward.

J: Well they said by the end of 2017. That could've meant December 2017, or the autumn. Which is what I imagined it would be. But obviously from a political standpoint, and I'm a political graduate from my first degree and my second, I was not surprised the way they wanted to do it. Obviously he wants to finish the issue, he wants to get it out of the way, he doesn't want it to be dominating 2 or 3 years of his term, as he was surprised that he won. So that commitment [holding a referendum] was not one that he really thought he was gonna actually have to do, because he thought there would be another hung parliament. That's what most people thought. But obviously it almost was a hung parliament. It was a blessing in disguise obviously for the Cameron government; he didn't really want to do it, didn't imagine it, but he did.

Referendum Campaign

T: You were in the UK at the time of the campaigning.

J: Yes I was. My wife was not for the whole time. But I was in the UK for most of the time, apart from right at the end.

T: Were you able to follow it? What were your impressions of it?

J: I was following it pretty much every day. My impressions were that it was getting tighter and tighter as it went along. And it made me think, because it wasn't long after the Scottish referendum the 2 years before in 2014. I thought the campaign for Remain was quite divided in a sense. Because the Scottish referendum one was also quite united, but that didn't serve the Labour Party very well. So I thought the Remain campaign wasn't feeding into people's emotions at all and I could feel that when speaking to individuals on the street. When I went to an event actually, it was in Oxford with, at the time she was the MEP for Oxfordshire, Labour MEP for Oxfordshire, and I could feel at that event actually that this was about staying in the European Union. But at the event itself, speaking to some of the people who, I think were from the university themselves, but speaking to them about it I could sense how their emotions and how their feelings about the European Union had been quite radically changed by the social media that was around then. I came away from that feeling quite disheartened. It was like a campaign event and it felt like it being lost in a sense. I still thought that Remain would win, but I thought that, probably the emotional argument was being lost.

J: So I was following it in that sense – I did do a lot of those campaign meetings. I was mainly following it whilst I was doing my PhD, I was doing a lot of my research at the time. So I was just following it from there really. I don't like the News, obviously in general. I was on Facebook, on Twitter a little bit.

T: So do you think that the Remain campaign could have done more to tap into people's emotions surrounding Europe and Europeanness? In the same way that the Leave campaign tapped into people's emotions against those things?

J: That's an interesting question. I think they were always going to struggle because the Remain campaign was a defensive campaign. So it was basically supporting the status quo as it is, with some changes. So in the context of 6 years of austerity and retrenchments of funding for all local government, which is not really covered in the national news in any great sense. So no wonder that people then found the bogeyman to throw their eggs at and that became the European Union. So I think the Remain campaign, obviously now I think if there was another referendum, I think it would be a different kind of campaign than it was then. But in that context I think yeah obviously they could've done a lot more. But I think the political situation at the time made it very difficult to do that because it was always going to be a defensive, protecting the status quo. And nobody really was going around in the streets wearing the European flag, they were not singing the Ode to Joy, they weren't wearing European Union hats, they weren't doing those things. And that wasn't really considered a thing to do to campaign For the European Union, it was kind of – I think Jeremy Corbyn summed it up reasonably well even though he was criticised, by saying that he was 7 in 10 in favour of staying in the EU. It wasn't with the heart, in that sense, for a lot of people. I think when you're talking to individuals in the street, particularly in communities that had a lot of investment for years, they're not going to react to that, they won't think anything needs to change. So it's always hard, always difficult, for the Remain campaign in that year.

T: Back at that time, during the campaigning, were you worried at all about being able to travel to continental Europe to see your wife, or anything like that?

J: I wasn't worried then because I knew that even if we voted, it wouldn't be straight away. I was worried about, thinking 5 or 10 years in the future. And I was worried about how other people were also reacting about these things and saying "oh I'm sure it will be fine, it'll work out", whether we

leave or not. I'd still say to people even if they say that now, I was so complacent. Like with what my wife knew about it, she was like "we can't know that's going to happen in that way. We don't know what the political situation is going to be like". No guarantee that your rights are gonna be safeguarded, that you're gonna be able to easily travel. When we see it through the Windrush example, maybe that's something that could happen again, specifically for European citizens in the UK and also away from the UK. No I wasn't worried then of me travelling to see my wife, in the short term, but I think collectively that we were concerned about our freedom of movement. It's the biggest thing is freedom of movement.

Leave Vote June 2016

T: Did that change at all when the Leave vote was actually announced?

J: Definitely, yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Again, not in the short term. So actually on the day of the referendum I was in the Netherlands. It was really sad actually: my wife was meant to vote, I was meant to vote and we couldn't end up voting because there were some problems with my wife's health at the time. And I had to come out, the day before the referendum, I had to be here. And I didn't have a proxy vote, I didn't have any of that. I was going to vote and it was really, really difficult to come out and do that.[pause] It still hurts talking about it, not being able to vote. Actually my wife was meant to vote through a postal vote and they made a mistake with the address. So they actually sent through to the address that they'd made a mistake. So it all didn't make much sense. So we both couldn't vote and then we were in the Netherlands, in Eindhoven at the time. I saw the result in the morning and let's say I didn't tell my wife straight away, she was still sleeping. And then we spoke about it and we had quite a crazy weekend actually, because I think it was the Friday actually that it was announced. And we had a crazy weekend; it was just talking about it all the time and thinking about it, speaking to our Slovakian friend that we met up with. And we went to a British-style pub in Eindhoven as well. And then we went to The Hague the next day, which was already planned, and we saw a friend out there. And then we were just talking about it all the time. And we were worried! We worried more back then about the violence that was going to happen. We knew that there would be a lot of tensions. And obviously the violence did happen, there was an upsurge straight after the referendum, wasn't there?

T: There was a what, sorry?

J: Straight after the referendum there was an upsurge of violence.

T: What were the reactions of those friends that you were talking with over that weekend?

J: Shock was the biggest reaction that people had. They were like "why is the UK doing this to themselves? They don't know what they've done." There was actually a lot of talk about a second referendum, even straight away. We knew what the campaigning had consisted of. It was so narrow, the victory. So there was a lot of talk actually about that as well, among the friends that we had at the time. So there was that talk, shock and just trying to understand it, in a sense, speaking to us about it. Shock would be the main emotion that we had from all of our friends. And shock from the general public as well. I remember going out in the morning and it was market day in Eindhoven. A few people spoke to us about it because they couldn't understand how this had happened. So shock I would say, from friends and from other people, just in general.

Moving to the Netherlands

T: So then at what point did you start planning to move to the Netherlands, yourself?

J: It was always a long-term plan that I'd come here. My plan was to probably move slightly sooner. But, there were a lot of reasons why that didn't happen at the time. So, I was going to move out sooner than last year. But I think because of my teaching and stuff I just stayed there. And we also went to Malaysia in this time, between the referendum and now, my wife was in Malaysia for 11 months; I was there for 5 months. She was doing her research. So I just lived out there with her a little bit, in the place she had. So I wasn't registered there or anything. It was just doing some research. So there was that time out of it. And that was only coming back last year, for my wife, in May. So it was only really after May last year [2018] that I could be out here with her and registered in Den Bosch. We probably planned 6 months earlier, but because of her research taking longer it just took longer to do that. So I think we'd always planned to come, especially after the referendum and the Article 50 time. After that happened we decided of course we'll move out before the end of that.

T: Just to help me to keep up: so she was living in Eindhoven and then Malaysia.

J: So she lived in Eindhoven and then after she went to Malaysia in 2017, in July 2017. So actually, a month before that she was staying with me in the UK, in Oxford. This was her last time actually in the UK, was in June 2017. So she's not been in the UK since. She's just been away or here [NL]. So that was the last time she was here. Malaysia was July 2017 to May 2018.

Chequers Deal July 2018

T: And then straight after that the Chequers Deal came out in July 2018.

J: July 2018, that's the one, yeah.

T: That was supposedly when they first started deciding it would be a softer Brexit. They had some idea of what it would be like and the transition phase was introduced. How did you interpret that?

J: I interpreted it still as a fudge, as a hard Brexit, in most regards. Obviously there's the saving grace of having a transition period so you can sort yourself out for a little while. But it just basically a triangulation between all the different views in her party, to try and please them all. And it worked to a certain extent. Obviously there were some very large resignations in the short period after Chequers. But, it still worked in the sense that there was a momentum behind that. It kind of gave the Conservatives and their negotiation team a bit more time. So Chequers itself I always thought would not last for that long and it didn't really in the end. But, I thought of it as a hard Brexit, not a soft Brexit. I don't really buy into those terms too much. I think any Brexit to me is hard enough, really. But the Chequers deal itself was, I dunno. Another impression about it is that it's all been behind closed doors. There's very little conversation, it's only a Conservative party process. No conversation with the other parties. Especially in a hung parliament, there's no guarantee it would get through Parliament, no guarantee it would be accepted by the European Union. It's part of a process to get to that stage and still not really known whether it can really happen like that, just 9 months before the leave date.

Moving to the Netherlands, June 2018

T: So then you moved over to the Netherlands before the end of the year [2018].

J: Well I moved over to the Netherlands in June 2018.

T: Oh beforehand.

J: Yeah. So just before Chequers happened I moved over. I came over with my bike and my suitcase on the Eurostar in June 2018. So I'd already stayed in the Netherlands probably over the last 4 years before now, for 3 and a half years before I moved out here permanently. I'd already stayed here so many months; I knew the country well enough to be here, so it wasn't a big shock. And obviously the Dutch are quite similar to the English in some ways. So it didn't really feel too much like a shock being out here. But that was before Chequers.

T: What is your average social time like here? Do you hang around with continental Europeans or other British expats?

J: It depended on our place. So obviously in Den Bosch we were in a kind of Den Bosch for well less than a month. Our contacts were pretty much only Dutch people there. So we didn't really have many contacts, we did have a few. There was a café that was very near our house that was owned by a British couple who had lived here for 17 years and they had their children. So we had them as contacts. But in terms of friends there, that would be Dutch people. But in terms of our friends in Eindhoven and also Tilburg, which is where my wife is doing her PhD, which is where she came here. Our friends there would be continental European or from outside of European Union, Europe, in general. So not so many Dutch friends there, but in Den Bosch. Because also, last year we got a little puppy, so that changed our perspective of getting friends, because people would start speaking to you because you have a dog.

T: When you're walking it.

J: Yeah. People would say "you have such a cute puppy" in Dutch and then we'd speak to them. So that made a big difference actually. So we made a few acquaintances rather than friends. We haven't had a great social life in the past 9 months I'd say, it's not been brilliant. Most of the friends that we had there would be acquaintances and they'd be Dutch. Then outside of that city would be people from outside of the Netherlands.

T: And that's because you were relatively new there I guess.

J: Definitely yeah.

T: Were you only in Den Bosch temporarily. Did you know that from the start?

J: We knew it from the start that we'd be there. So actually it was a bit random that we chose that in the end. So my wife came back from her research in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia last year. And then she only had a couple of weeks, she was staying with a friend in Tilburg. She only had a couple of weeks to find a place before I came over. And I wasn't there to help her particularly. So she looked on a previous company we'd used, Holland2Stay, which didn't need to have a lot of information. You don't want to stay there and be registered there. So we decided to go with another Holland2Stay,

which is our second or third one, I think. So it's a bit more expensive and just paying on a month-to-month basis. So we thought "you have to stay there 6 months", so we decided we'd be there for 6 months, until at least December. And then we just extended by a few months, up until March. So yeah we always knew it would be a temporary place to be and it was almost a healing place for us because we'd been away from each other for so long. We'd only had short periods of time. So it was a quiet city, it's not as crazy busy as here [The Hague]. It was a bit more quiet for us, so that's why we were there. But we knew it would always be a temporary place.

T: With all of your moves, have you encountered any difficulties or anything because of Brexit?

J: Um. Not because of Brexit in terms of here. It's never been mentioned in the town halls, in any of the discussions we've had. It's never been mentioned, Brexit itself. It's just been, kinda, European Union citizenship, so that's fine. When I registered it's obviously last year after Article 50 being triggered, well after that time, and I just found their questions easy. So in terms of on a governmental level, no; in terms of speaking to individuals, speaking to people, it's a lot of talk about it. I guess there's been a slight change in people's attitudes, maybe, towards how the Brits are. Because we were seen as a cautious and kinda conservative people who would not jump into hasty decisions or do things stupidly. I think there has been definitely a change, maybe not in directly talking to us, but in terms of talking about this whole situation. Definitely noticed that. But no difficulty, at least for us specifically; apart from, which we can't measure, getting opportunities and jobs is probably more difficult at the moment because of all the uncertainty. And I wouldn't be helped if there was a No Deal Brexit, for sure. But it's kinda a wait-and-see thing at the moment, I guess.

T: The change in perceptions about British people that you mentioned. Have you noticed that among people you've talked to yourself or in the media more generally?

J: I've noticed it a little bit in how people have talked to us ourselves. But there's generally a very favourable view towards Brits here in the Netherlands; it's not a negative view and I don't think it's become that really on a general basis. I think it's media confusion and almost amusement at the process, which has probably changed people's perceptions, and this is only me thinking about it and surmising about it. I don't really know whether it's changed. All I know is from my feelings of talking to people, that things have changed a bit in how people think of the UK system as a government, not particularly as a people, but the government.

March 2019 Events

T: Of course it's been in the news almost daily over March 2019.

J: Yeah. Constantly, yeah.

T: What were your impressions of all the things that have been going on with the 3 times defeat of May's deal?

J: 230, 150 and then 58.

T: It's impressive. It is getting smaller.

J: It's getting smaller, it is. I think my impression of that is just a failed strategy, a constantly failed strategy all the time. I've been following it, we've been following it, and talking about it as well, but I most definitely being here feel a bit removed from the whole process. Because obviously now living here instead of England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland it is removed from the process.

T: Even though you can follow it online and stuff?

J: Slightly removed from it in that offline sense. But online no, of course you can just go on The Guardian or The Times or whatever and you can see it all. Go on the BBC and you can see the news. It's the same way as any other way, so it's not a problem in that sense. So in terms of the day-to-day speaking to my family, or whatever, there's definitely a bit more removed from it, like speaking to friends. In terms of media, I follow it every day, just like I'm sure a lot of people have. I've been staying up a little bit later sometimes to look at what the Commons has been doing. Things like that. Because it's been very consequential decisions. Then I think probably especially March and maybe a part of February it's like every single week seems to be the most important week and it's up not being the most important week. So it's very exhausting really following it and then trying to keep track of what's happening is hard. Now I'm saying that as someone who's a politics graduate, it's not easy, so.

T: You feel almost like it's about to conclude and something will happen and then it just rolls over.

J: Yeah exactly. It gets extended by another couple of weeks. It seems the only pressure that is happening really is time pressure cos that seems to force the hands of government quite significantly. I guess I've been a bit heartened in the way that... Not saying that a No Deal is not going to happen because it is still in the top position that, you know, the decision by actually May, so many months was saying No Deal is better than a bad deal; it was almost a broken record, robotic, in terms of the way of talking about it, as in the "May Bot", right? Finally, now they're actually like a No Deal is worse than anything else and that's finally I think being accepted by her [May], but not by her party. So that party is completely riven with Euroscepticism, sometimes the most extreme forms. So I think it's been a little bit cooler in the sense of how I'm feeling about it. Specifically being ethnic, my wife is a lot more emotional about some parts of it sometimes, because she's been here [NL] for longer and I think being an ethnic minority she feels it's a bit more hurtful, in a sense, how things could be. Especially how the perceptions of people in the UK have changed: the violence against ethnic minorities of all kinds of colours and creeds has been stronger than it was before. So I think for her it's a lot more emotional in that way and I've seen that.

Living in Britain or Europe?

T: Does that then make the pair of you worried to go back to the UK at all?

J: For sure, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And obviously when I went to the UK, I lived in the UK for the last years in Oxford. So Oxford is one of the most Remain cities outside of London. It's very much a pro-European, kinda multi-racial city, especially in the city and the places I was living as well, they were very much like it. So I even felt like, in the UK, I wasn't really living how people are actually perceiving how things are happening in the European Union with Brexit. So I think going back to where I'm from, in Pembrokeshire, it was a most definite Leave constituency, in Wales. So I'd probably be worried about going back there. I think for me myself going there, I'm fine. But I think

for my wife it would be a little bit more difficult. Not that it would be possible, but it would be a bit more difficult. But going back to the UK is something that is kind of a long-term plan, it might happen, but also might not happen and that's Brexit definitely moulded that.

T: So Brexit makes it less likely?

J: Much less likely.

T: Despite the possible complications of living in the European Union?

J: Despite the possible complications. I guess as pro-Europeans, as me and my wife would definitely identify ourselves as very strongly. We kind've want to fight here about it, rather than just kind've giving up and going back to the UK and accept it. I think that's one of the reasons for staying on and trying. So practical reasons, but also we both feel very identified with the European project in general. We know there's many flaws and kinda highlight that, but we definitely identify with it. Even with the possible complications, they could be big complications, but we wanna stick around as long as we can.

T: Did you receive any of the documents from the Dutch government?

J: I've received it myself. My wife hasn't received hers yet. But I received mine on the 28th March.

T: The temporary residence permit?

J: Yeah. Temporary residency. We both got out other form in January.

T: That's interesting. I've also already got mine. The expat groups were all like "we haven't got ours yet". Maybe they've sent the most recent people theirs first?

J: That could be a possibility actually. Could be because people were receiving in in March and even before that I think. So their doing it in batches they keep on saying. And actually onto that temporary residency as well: like there was someone in my work who's actually employed there, a British guy, and then actually he gave his form to his employer. I was tempted to say to him actually cos I thought "it's not even happened yet and you're already giving a form there". Like I just wouldn't give it. I just wouldn't give the form until you're legally obliged to do so. So the fact that he gave it, I thought was kind've playing into the hands. Even the decision itself to have a temporary residency when we've been born with these European Union rights. Then, I'm struggling to think actually legally whether they can actually take them away from those who were born into them. I don't feel like I want to show those things, because I think that's an admission of really something that just almost seems like a whimsical decision to make, to do this, on such a small majority of people. Saying it was binding when it wasn't binding and all these various things together. So the Dutch government, I have to commend them for making a very good effort just to actually unilaterally guarantee these rights, not just after Brexit had happened. I do think that's really good, but I also think the whole process of having temporary residence permits like this is flawed. That's my view. It's kinda beside the point, but it just came to my mind.

T: Like it came to light today that the UK has been starting issuing passports without the European Union written on it.

J: Yes.

T: Even though the UK hasn't even left yet.

J: I know, I know and they've said that of course those passports will have the same rights as the ones with the European Union, as long as we're in the European Union, but we haven't even left yet and doing that, it's a bit shambolic isn't it really.

Practical Matters

T: But you don't feel particularly worried at all about jobs or financial security or anything?

J: I feel worried about both actually. I feel worried about financial security. My wife's finishing her contract. We're both looking for relatively full-time positions. Like, one of the reasons for moving here to The Hague was because there's more opportunities here. Especially, I was in Den Bosch and in that area, Noord Brabant, Eindhoven, Tilburg, for our kind of work it's not really very good. So for her and university work it was obviously where she was based. But yeah, definitely worried about both of them really. Financial security is most definitely a concern, we need to find work. I'm not so worried about us being able to find work because we're qualified individuals, but it's the whole situation around us that makes it harder to secure work. I can imagine it will make it harder for a lot of people. It depends on how the politics go and also the economics plays out as well. Quite a lot depends on that, so I'd say worried about both of them, yes. It's not something that we're not worried about, every day we're thinking about it.

T: What difficulties do you think might arise for getting a job?

J: I think our own personal circumstances, we both had some difficulties, both our physical health and our mental health, which is not connected to Brexit. So I think those things with then actually working full-time and also doing your own studies and various other kind've things is something to think about. So that's not in terms of getting the job, but it's staying in it and staying in it well. So this 1 week, I've done part-time internship because I've had a few physical health problems, so doing a part-time internship is to see how I get on and it's been fine so far, so I feel more confident in that way. So that's the main thing. I don't know if it's connected to Brexit. I think the whole Brexit thing mentally plays on your mind, that it might make it harder for Brits to be working here. Just we don't even know if there even is a big demand for Brits to be working in the Netherlands. It's not something that is a small little niche area, there's a lot of Brits here who are working. So I don't feel that's a thing. But I think it's more the perception and the mental side of it than maybe them applying and then getting jobs, at the moment at least, I think it's more about that.

T: Then that can also roll over onto the actual ability to get the jobs I suppose; the perceptions.

J: Most probably, yeah. I guess you could plot a correlation here somewhere, probably.

Random Questions (Visits to the UK, European citizenship)

T: Well I have a few random questions now before we get onto the final questions, just so that I can say that I've asked you all of the topics that I'm meant to cover. So, firstly, do you think that Brexit will affect your contact and ability to visit friends and family in the UK?

J: Not in the UK, because obviously travelling back to the UK, we're citizens there so it should be pretty easy to go back to visit people. That really is fine. I'm way more concerned about people coming out here, because we've actually got some of our stuff in the UK still. We got married 6 years ago and we've still got some furniture and other stuff that we've had in the UK with some of our family, so it's about them coming over to bring that out for us. Obviously it depends on things like customs or whatever to come out and for them to be able to come. So we've always wanted them to come before Brexit happens, but it's not happened yet. So that's just an example of being concerned about other people coming here, rather than us going back to the UK and us coming back here. As long as we have our permits. The worst scenario would be that we're not allowed back in, but that's fine. So not concerned about going to the UK to visit people, that's not a specific concern about doing that.

T: Just bringing stuff like your furniture with changing customs laws.

J: Yeah. I mean even people coming over with food and whatever, you know. I think that's what people don't realise; it's very small, everyday things that are going to be amplified.

T: Do you think as a result of Brexit you would try to become more integrated in Dutch society, like get citizenship or anything like that?

J: Most definitely for my wife because she's been registered here for over 4 years. So there's definitely the possibility that she could get citizenship. It's hard because here there's only single nationality unless you've got certain circumstances like being married to a Dutch person. So, there's a possibility that my wife, if we wanna keep hold of our European Union rights and obviously we don't know the future, but if we want to it would be beneficial for us both if she then became Dutch, which would be obviously hard to do that because she would need to learn the language fully and do the exam. So she could potentially do that next year. So yeah we were following quite closely the parliament debates, the D66, in the parliament here. Specifically for Brits they have proposed that they have a dual nationality clause for those. So we have been following that and writing letters to the government actually, about that ourselves, and writing to representatives.

T: Yeah because I think some nationalities, if you're not allowed to revoke your citizenship at home, you can keep dual, like Morocco I think.

J: Yeah it's Morocco and Turkey I think, 2 examples. But obviously the UK doesn't fit into that bracket. I still think that's probably a possibility because my wife, especially being of Indian descent actually, people in her country had to fight very hard to get British nationality in the first place, so just to give it up would be very difficult. So on a practical basis, yeah it would make sense. But on an emotional and familial basis, it would be very hard. But that's not something in my mind personally, because I've only been here for less than a year, I have no choice but to carry on. So for her it's definitely made us both talk about it and think about it.

T: And do you think it's necessary to get European citizenship?

J: I think we want freedom of movement rights, yeah probably. I think so. We're not so concerned about many of the other things, but for us it's freedom of movement or nothing really. So that's why we'd say either Remain or at the very least it would be like getting rid of the political institutions for the UK, but staying in all of the economic single market things.

T: Like Customs Union 2.0.

J: So Customs Union 2.0, even though I would probably if I was in Parliament I wouldn't have voted for it because I would just vote for the referendum. Practically, that would be something that I would accept as probably being a compromise solution. I don't know if it's, just to answer your question finally about that, I think it probably is necessary if there's a prospect of working across the European Union. So just for easily doing it without having to have a lot of paperwork and other things. Like if you wanted to work in Belgium as well as the Netherlands it would be perhaps some paperwork to fill out and other stuff. So in terms of that, yeah it could be necessary.

T: And I guess for your line of work as academics, it is useful to be able to move around easily.

J: Very useful, yeah absolutely, very, very useful. For things like you wanna do a Post Doc, or you wanna work in a think tank research institute. They look favourably upon people who can move around because research in different parts of the world. Absolutely, for our specific line of work.

European identity

T: OK, let's wrap-up finally with some more explicit questions about identifying with Europe. You've already said that you're quite pro-European project. Let's start firstly with, how would you describe the term "European"?

J: European. I'd say it's a very wide concept. So, obviously it goes from people who might identify themselves as European right in the far east of Europe, to people in Spain and the UK and Ireland. So it's become a unifying term to me, that's what I'd see it as. It can be a unifying term because it would be for people from all kind've areas of this continent, in a sense. And also for people who are not ethnically European, if that even exists, but actually they are born in Europe, they are a European, in that sense. So European for me is most definitely a positive association and something I would identify myself as, over and above my nationalities that I have, Welsh and British. I kind've see myself firstly as European, so obviously I'm going to be seeing it as something that is very positive.

T: At what point do you think you would say that you would put European first? At what point in your life did that happen?

J: 2006 or 2007, one of those years. I can actually remember it, yeah. So one of my modules was in European Studies. I was in a European Studies kind've department in Cardiff, it was Languages and European Studies. So this European Studies lecture I had, they asked basically the whole class how you identify yourselves as first of all. What would you immediately identify yourselves as: European, your own nationality, you might be Spanish, Portuguese, English, Welsh, whatever, or with your whole country, especially in terms of the UK saying British. I was only one of two or three who put their hands up for European. And I partly did that in terms of being a bit controversial, but also because I actually felt it. Obviously I can't say that but when it comes to filling out a form, I'd say I'm British, so I'd put down that I identify as that. Yeah, if someone asks me I would say definitely I am European, I identify as European. So that was one point I had that probably realised that that's how I actually feel, rather than just kind've an understanding it was actually a tangible thing, I could put my hand up for it.

T: So how does that identifying as European feel for you? How does it manifest itself?

J: I think it manifests itself with the feeling of comradeship with other people from Europe. So, that would be the main thing that I feel from it really. There's a link especially with the European Union, between all the countries of the European Union, being able to go to those countries, stay and live there and your rights there are exactly the same as a Dutch citizen or a French citizen. You've got the same rights in terms of everything that you do in your life; within law you cannot discriminate. So for me that kind've makes it so I'm no different to someone from France, no different to someone from Spain. And they're no different to me, or they're no different to someone who was there and became British. That's probably how I would frame it, in that terms. So, solidarity.

T: Similar interests and needs and desires.

J: Yeah. Exactly. For me the European Union, although it's not a fashionable thing in Britain to think it or say it, I definitely see the political side as much more important than the economic side. And on that side I find is quite separate from how people actually work, it's kinda alien in terms of just how we think. We think in terms of our social relationships with people, so that's how I would think of the European Union, just connecting people. They might have marriages or the amount of people who've got work through it; social connections from the very sense of being within that clump is far greater.

T: Do you think there is a difference between a European compared with an American or an Asian?

J: I think no, in the sense of the humanity of the person. In terms of the advantages of being a European Union citizen, like being a European citizen in general, it definitely gives you advantages over some countries in Asia, for example. That's partly to do with the history of colonialism which is negative in my eyes. But in terms of the individuals themselves, no, I wouldn't say personally it's any different. But obviously politically there is a difference being part of a whole member club like that. And even the other counties that are associate members or waiting to accede and things like that are ones that would be a part of that as well in my eyes. So just saying like the United States itself is a union of countries in a sense; it's got 50 different states that would all be very different in some way. So there are similarities like that yeah. Lesser Asia, perhaps, because you've got 2 massive countries, China and India, and then a lot of smaller, but also very large countries and a much looser political union, like ASEAN which would be in Asia.

T: Yeah. More regional agreements, rather than the whole of Asia I suppose.

J: Yeah. I would say.

Final Question: Britain or Europe?

T: OK. Well let's conclude with one final question, which I've been using as the concluding question for everyone. Based on everything we've talked about so far and the Brexit process, do you see yourself in 5 years' time or so staying in continental Europe or going back to Britain?

J: Interesting question. In 5 years' time probably see ourselves in continental Europe. Hopefully not the Netherlands, if I'm honest. Don't wanna be here for that many years, but could be here. I can't imagine being in the UK in that period of time; we still could be of course, but I'd imagine continental Europe.

T: Why not the Netherlands?

J: It's flat. It's a bit cold something and the attitude can be a little bit cold. We wanna be somewhere maybe a bit warmer. There's a lot of value being here and it's a very sustainable country, but there's also political issues happening here, [like with the Provincial Elections], I don't know how it's going to play out. Maybe that would be one of the reasons would be the environment: it's a bit flat and a bit dull sometimes. Very simple answer, but.

T: So for you being able to stay in the EU and have European citizenship would be really useful?

J: It would be crucial and if we have to leave the European Union as Britain, I would be campaigning to come back in or at the very least finding different solutions for ourselves, working around this limbo position. Within the European Union you could be trapped in one country in the sense of without easy movement. Just being here, it's harder to get elsewhere. So I'll continue fighting for that.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.9 – Kevin

Interview Setting: Skype, 8:30pm, 18/03/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So whereabouts are you living in the Netherlands, then?

K: I live in Lieden

T: Between Amsterdam and The Hague I think?

K: Yes that's right. Right in between the two, so about 20km north of The Hague. It's about 45/50km away from Utrecht, so that sort of area. So it's an old university city, beautiful place and I've been living here for 8 years now. So I moved to Holland in 2011. My wife is Dutch.

T: Ah cool. Was that [your wife's nationality] part of the motivation for coming here?

K: Well it definitely puts Holland as one of the countries we could potentially move to. When we were exploring coming back to Europe after a few years in China. But we weren't too fussed actually. UK was one of the countries, not necessarily first choice. Holland, Switzerland, was there. I spent a couple of years in Switzerland a while back, so that was a nice place. Spain was also very interesting - I'm half Spanish. Anyway, Holland won! My wife and I both worked abroad for years. When she came back here it was after nearly 20 years away from Holland, so she was probably the most worried about it because she was coming back to her home country and seeing if she would be happy being back at home after living abroad for so many years. But it's worked out fantastically and Leiden is a lovely city, it's a great place to live. We've got 2 kids. They're now 17 and 15 years old. But it's true what they say about Holland. Holland is a paradise for kids. It's a really, really good place to bring up kids. So it's really worked out well. Leiden is great. So we've been here since 2011.

T: And did your kids go with you to China and Switzerland?

K: When we were in Switzerland we hadn't got married then even, so that was before we had the kids. Back in 1994 we moved to Switzerland. So we moved there from the UK. I went with work, so I was working for a consulting company at the time, Parks Warner House [I think]. And they had some projects going in Switzerland, so they asked me if I fancied moving there. So I relocated to the Swiss office, spent a couple of years there. But I was really interested in going to Spain, and then eventually after 2 years an opportunity came up at the Spanish office in Madrid. So my wife and I, we were still partners at the time, we moved together to Madrid. That was in 1996. We got married in 1997. Actually both our kids are adopted, they're from South America, but they were adopted at different times. So we adopted the kids in 2002 and 2004. So that was around that time. We were still living in Madrid. And then we decided. We had both lived outside Europe, when we were younger. I'd had a couple of years in South America when I was 21, and my wife had spent a couple of years in the Philippines. She used to work for Shell and loved to move. We both had some time outside Europe. And we had this feeling it would be great to get another opportunity like that. And I had just completed an executive masters in Madrid at the time. Every class in the course they were talking about China. China, China, everything's happening in China. So we literally, on quite a bit of

whim said, let's go to China! And we had 2 little kiddies, little babies. We said "they're too young, they won't notice". So we went off to China and spent 6 years there. My wife was running the Dutch primary school in Shanghai and I worked for an American multinational. So we spent 6 years there, but there was a time, a point. So we had the kids with us then. And they went to primary school in Shanghai international school for the 6 years we were there. But they received Dutch education every day because of my wife. I was running a Dutch school in Shanghai, but it wasn't a full-time school, just extra lessons for the kids who wanted to keep their Dutch up to scratch, in case they wanted to move back to Holland. So my kids got that as well.

T: So can they speak Dutch, English and Mandarin?

K: No we didn't force the Mandarin down our kids' throat. We decided it was enough with Dutch and English, it's fine for us as a family. No, but seriously though if we had decided to stay for the long-term in China, we would definitely have made a big push. They were getting some Chinese lessons at school. They knew the occasional word, so knew how to say "apple".

T: Now you work in the same place as [Isaac]?

K: Yes that's right, the European Patent Office. So I joined them in 2014. Ian's been with them a bit longer. This is now my fourth, getting on for 5 years. July will be 5 years for me. Great place to work. We have 35 nationalities in our office in Rijswijk, which is near The Hague. All from around Europe, so we cover the European Union, plus another 10 countries as well. Turkey is a member of our organisation for example. We've got about 2.5 thousand people at the office here in the Netherlands. So it's a really nice international environment. It's public sector, but we're self-funding as well, so we're a bit different from the regular European Commission stuff. We don't receive any taxpayer money. We make our own money through the fees that are charged to inventors and companies who want patents in Europe. That's how we make our living as an organisation. So I also work in IT. Our overall organisation is about 7 thousand employees and of those 4.5 thousand are examiners. So those are the guys who really examine the applications for patents when they come in. Then we've got various administrative staff and so on. Anyway, IT's really important. The tools that are used by examiners are really fundamental in helping to search for information about patents and then to be able to make a good judgement about whether an application is going to be able to stand up in a court of law, which is really the key part of the work. That's more or less the organisation.

T: It sounds a very interesting place to work.

K: Yeah, we have big changes as well now, it's very interesting. So every 5 years we get a new president. When a new president comes in to the organisation. This is the first time I'm experiencing it now. New president comes in, everything changes. So that also makes it quite an interesting place to work.

T: Do you represent countries? Or is it more like the Commission in that you just work for Europe?

K: So none of us represent one country. We're not employed because we represent a country. So we're all here to work for any applicants, any companies or individuals who want patents, and who want to register their patents in Europe. By Europe we mean the European Union, plus the other 10 countries. So they can come to us. What we do try to do as an organisation is to try and have as

much diversity in nationality of the employees. So we're covering the whole of Europe in terms of our staff. There's an interesting thing about language. So, in the patent industry in Europe you're allowed to submit your application for a patent in French, German or English. We can handle any of those. So everyone who works in our organisation has to have a minimum level of the 3 languages. Although in practice English is really the *lingua franca*, it's what we use every day. But everyone has to have some French and German as well. In my case actually, when I joined I had French, but I didn't have German. So I had 3 years to learn it. It was a lovely experience, but they gave really good language classes and within 18 months I'd got the certificate, the minimum level necessary to continue. So it's quite interesting from that respect.

T: Well I had a few more extra questions before we start the main Brexit interview topics. Firstly, your age if you don't mind.

K: I'm 53

T: What is your place of origin the UK, even though you've been away for so long, so I'm not sure it matters.

K: I'll tell you anyway. I'm from Surrey. I was born and grew up in Reybridge. I had a very stable childhood. That's really my childhood 18 years. Then, I went to university and studied at Cambridge for 3 years and then that was the end of my education. In terms of my background, my family we're 6 kids. My father's from Glasgow, his father was from Ireland. My mother is from Madrid. I'm the 5th of the 6 children, so 5 boys and a girl. So it's been quite interesting to see where we've all ended up around the world. So there's 2 of us that live abroad. Myself and another brother, who lives in Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh. He's been there for 22 years or so. Even longer actually. It must be 25 years he's been there. Then the rest of the family, my brothers live in the UK and my sister as well.

T: It's good to know because it might come up later. I have a very open interview.

Experiences of Brexit

Voting in the Referendum

K: We're all very passionate about what's happening with Brexit by the way, within the family. We all have strong, same opinion about it. Very strongly against Brexit.

T: So did you vote in the referendum, were you able to?

K: So I actually thought I wasn't going to be able to vote, because I'd been outside the UK for more than 15 years. So I was really upset when the referendum was coming up, thinking that I wouldn't be able to vote. But I heard from a colleague that because we work for the European Patent Office, then we qualify as *Crown Servants* so that means you're like an international civil servant. So that's one group of people who are allowed to vote in UK elections. So I only discovered this about a month before the referendum took place and managed quickly to apply. They gave it to me very quick as well. So I did vote and only found out I could a week before. But before that, I thought I wasn't going to be able to vote and I was really mad. Totally disenfranchised, because this referendum is about people like me who've benefitted from the freedom that Europe has given and have travelled around Europe and made our home in different countries and I've married a

European, and so forth. And all of a sudden there's a vote happening which I'm not allowed to vote. But on top of that, what made it really bitter was the fact that Australians or people from all other countries in the Commonwealth; if they happen to be living in England or if an Australian student is going for a couple of years in London; they were allowed to vote. Random! People from all over the world, but not Brits living in Europe. So that was really scandalous!

T: It's things that will affect you.

K: Things that will directly effect. And a whole generation has taken advantage of these freedoms in good faith and then to not be able to vote was really a significant mistake. I actually wrote to the MP in my hometown of Redbridge, who was also at the time the foreign secretary; Philipp Hammond, he's now the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I wrote to him and I wrote to the ambassador in the Netherlands as well to complain about being disenfranchised. The ambassador ignored me, wisely probably. But Philip Hammond's team did respond and they sent a really good letter actually. Basically he said, so the Conservative party position about this law is actually that they agreed it was wrong. It's a law that's been in place always, or however many years. So his storyline was "yes you're right. You really should be able to vote for this sort of stuff. Conservative party does have it on its programme eventually to change this law, but we won't be doing it for the referendum because there's no time. So that was the answer. In the meantime I discovered I could vote.

T: But the referendum is more important than a General Election because it actually affects people aboard rather than just in the country.

K: Correct, yeah. It has much more impact, particularly direct impact if you're a Brit living in Europe. So that was interesting. The other thing that was interesting about my situation I this thing about being a *Crown Servant*. So I heard from some colleague at the EPO who also applied for the status of *Crown Servant*, but they didn't all get it. So it wasn't consistently applied and it seemed to depend on your constituency. So the part of the country that you'd vote in. Whether they understood or not. So depending on the guy on the other end a the electoral commission in the borough, whether they understood that the European Patent Office was one of these organisations like the European Commission. I think the European Commission is obvious for everyone, but European Patent Office isn't so well known. So some people didn't realise. So that was another interesting factor, that some of my colleagues who are also British and applied to vote and should've been able to, didn't get the *Crown Service* status recognised for local reasons.

T: If you've been away for that length of time, then how do they know what your constituency is in the UK?

K: So you go back to the last place that you resided and voted. You just have to give that information on the online form. And they also recommend if you're going to be voting in this way, it's good to have someone who can vote for you in proxy, because you're outside the country. I just picked my hometown because it's where I've always voted and I knew my father and sister were still there, so they could proxy for me. But there was no question about it. I'm sure they did some kind of check on the records to see if you really did come from there, like looking at the birth certificate and so forth.

Announcement of Referendum Feb 2016

T: So do you remember when the referendum was originally announced in Feb 2016 by David Cameron? How did it make you feel? Did you think it was significant when they first announced it?

K: Yeah sure. I knew this was a huge decision and a huge potential impact, and what could come out of such a vote. I've always been passionate about Europe and passionately in favour of the good that it's done for the whole continent. And also being a beneficiary, I've loved it from the beginning. So the whole idea of frictionless trade. For me it's really been a fundamental thing about peace in Europe, and stability. Those are really important things for me. And I think also the heritage a bit from my father. So my father's- Both my parents of course. My mother's Spanish. But my father is a Glaswegian. He's always said to me he feels first European and then Scottish [pause] and then British. But first European. So I think that rubbed off on all of us as kids. So I knew this was going to be significant, very important. And of course with UKIP, Nigel Farage and all those guys kicking up a big fuss about it, the struggles in the Conservative party, it became doubly important.

T: Did you feel during the campaign like you were connected to Britain? Were you able to keep up with the campaign trail?

K: yes, yup, totally! So I'm totally hooked on social media, on news. So in Holland, as you know, we get BBC and BBC2 for free. But I'm quite a consumer of YouTube and programmes like Newsnight. So I try and watch the news; most evenings I will probably watch the 10 o'clock New and then Newsnight. If I miss it then I'll catch up on Newsnight the next day when it's published on YouTube. So I follow things quite well. But having said that it's all via the media right, so in my immediate environment there's no, other than a few colleagues who would talk about it. But there's no hustings, no debate happening here in the Netherlands, so I never took part in anything like that. So I'm very much a consumer of media and news.

T: So you get the ideas of it from the media, rather than from other people around you, and that's how you form your opinion for it?

K: Yeah, so heavily influenced by media. Very heavily. I'd say I knew what my opinion was anyway before. So from that and then with certain friends I'm closely in touch with and my brothers in particular, we're very close. We have a WhatsApp group and we talk every day. Certain groups of friends, particularly I'd say some of my school friends. And what's interesting, I remember actually December 2015 we had a reunion of some school friends in Paris. So at dinner were talking about this referendum idea that came up. I remember that one of my school friends, Greg, he was thought "we gotta leave Europe it's rubbish, it's not doing anything for us." And we had a really, really, I wouldn't say heated, but deep and good conversation about it over dinner and I remember Greg at the end when he went back said "actually maybe you're right, it's not the right thing to do". In my environment, other than Greg, I really don't know anyone who voted to Leave. Even he in the end didn't vote to leave. So I'm probably a bit biased on that front because my environment is like that. And I'm not living in the UK, in a provincial town or anything. So in terms of direct interaction of people who really don't like Europe, I simply don't have it and I've never really had it.

Leave result June 2016

T: So when the Leave vote arrived, did it come as a surprise to you then?

K: Yes. It was massively disappointing. I felt like “what the hell is my country doing? What have we done?” A real feeling of utter, utter shock. I remember going into work. Although I use social media I’m not often very active on Facebook or stuff. But when it came to the referendum, as the day came closer I began posting stuff, which I never normally do, about “I’m a Remainer” and that sort of thing. I sort of expressed my grief on Facebook. “I’m an apologist and I don’t know how we got here”. That was sort of an indication of how strongly I felt about it.

T: You said you were apologising?

K: Yeah for the country. There’s just a lack of solidarity with the rest of Europe that I felt ashamed of. I felt ashamed to be British with that decision. There were a couple of interesting writers I read at the time. So there’s a Spanish journalist, a guy called John Carlin. He’s actually English. He’s a bit like us. I think his mother was Spanish, so he’s a Spanish/British mix. Anyway he wrote for many years for El Pais, one of the big newspapers in Madrid. He writes articles for all sorts of newspapers around Europe. And he did a brilliant YouTube video just after of the folly of Brexit and why it was all wrong. And I thought “he’s right!”. It’s really a shocking thing for this country to have made that decision. And particularly the risk for Europe would be terrible if the European Union were to break up as a result. But even if it didn’t it can’t be good for us collectively as a people. So I was really quite upset and angry about it for a few days, but then I started thinking if Europe really is a good thing, then give it another 10 years and the UK will come back! But the other thing is it brought up all sorts of scenarios: say Scotland and how Scottish independence could be triggered by it. And later thoughts about Northern Ireland and “wouldn’t it be a good thing for island of Ireland to be reunited”. Sad that it takes Brexit, that process, to have that sort of outcome. I think there’s been a very good political solution thank to the European Union with regard to Ireland. I was brought up in Surrey and I remember when the IRA bombed some pubs in Guildford. My father has an Irish name and the police were coming round to our house and interrogating. And all those troubles went away thanks to the structure of the European Union that’s been around us. So it’s been a positive thing.

K: I had a very clear strong feeling of disappointment and shame, like “why is my country doing this?”

T: And who did you turn to to discuss that with? If at all? With family or colleagues?

K: So family. Lots of colleagues had lots of interesting discussions at the time, with my European colleagues. And my wife and close friends as well.

T: Did the people at your workplace respond to it?

K: I’d say with my British colleagues I don’t know anyone who had voted to Leave, so we were all pretty much of similar mind-sets. Yeah and I think most of the other colleagues just didn’t understand why this was happening. So that’s pretty much it.

Practical matters

T: Did hearing about Brexit make you feel insecure about anything like your work or your home, or anything like that?

K: I think in my case, because of my Spanish mother, I actually have dual nationality at the time. So I had a British and a Spanish passport. So I knew because of that I would be protected as I would continue to be a European Union citizen. There's obviously mass uncertainty about what it will mean if you're British living in the Netherlands because it wasn't defined in the referendum and the negotiations have to take place. I was protected from that to some extent because of my Spanish nationality. With regard to where I work, so European Patent Office, we're broader than the European Union so there is no impact if you're an employee. If we were European Commission then we would be losing our jobs. But we're not in that situation so we're protected on that front. But I think where you do start to worry. If I hadn't had my Spanish passport I would've worried about if I left the European Patent Office, just the right to continue living in the Netherlands and working would depend on me finding a job with a company in a very different environment to what it has been for me in Europe for all of my career. It really has been freedom; if you're in the country then you're of course allowed to stay there and apply for other jobs. But as I say, I was protected because of my second, Spanish passport. But one thing I did do. I was so angry about Brexit. My grandfather is Irish, so I decided to apply for an Irish passport. I didn't need it, but purely as a protest.

T: Did you manage to get one?

K: Yeah. It was very efficient. It took 5 months and then my passport arrived.

T: So you have 3 now?

K: Yeah I 3 now, so I'm hedging all my bets.

T: Just in case something goes wrong.

K: Yeah but I think one of the reflections I've had is that no matter how much you think you're living in an environment where you think things are stable and you know how things will develop in the future. I think what Brexit has done has made you realise that it's never like that. The unexpected can always happen. Those talks when Spain was going through a tough time, maybe Spain would be kicked out of the Euro. Who knows, maybe Spain could've been kicked out of the European Union. So that kind of uncertainty is a possibility in the future.

T: Makes you think you need to plan for the future more maybe?

K: I think you just have to be aware that kind of long-term picture can- things can dramatically change in life. But I think if in my case I'm already quite old, relatively speaking. I think definitely for the perspective for younger people is quite dramatically different.

Travelling to Britain:

T: Do you think Brexit would complicate the ability of your family to come and visit you?

K: No I don't believe so. We're still part of Europe. I can't believe it's gonna get ridiculously complicated. No-one wants that. If it's not an amicable divorce then of course things will be uncomfortable for a while. But just the concept of no friction. There will be a lot of friction introduced but I don't believe it will be. They are talking about some visa-like arrangement like you have with the USA. So it's kind of a waiver thing. Of course we're all going to be able to travel around Europe. It's just you won't be able to go and live where you want to, where you feel like it. I

wouldn't see any issue with that. It would be annoying travelling with my family. My wife and kids all have Dutch nationalities so travelling to the UK will be a pain, having to queue up probably at passport control if that hasn't been sorted out. But the Swiss go through the same line as European Union so..

T: It will be interesting to see what happens because the Swiss and Norwegians. People will still have the European passports with the e-thing on it. So will that still work even after Brexit? Or will they put some system thing so it doesn't let you through anymore?

K: It sounds counterintuitive. It would be silly. It all depends on what flavour Brexit is and how tough we get. So Switzerland has freedom of movement I think.

T: Yeah, they joined the Schengen I think.

K: Switzerland had to because it's surrounded by European countries anyway. So it didn't make any sense not to.

T: But you do still have to stop at the border don't you? To pick up a car pass or something like that.

K: Yeah that's true, but that's the vignette to travel on the motorway, but everyone needs that who's driving, that's not a passport/nationality thing. That's just cos cars have to have a vignette to show they have payed the tax to be able to drive on motorways.

Brexit Events January/March 2019

T: So that brings us now to the current events. So have you been following what's been going on for the past couple of days, the past week?

K: I've been following the drama for the past 6 months. It was back in October when originally the deal would have to be struck and then it would go to Parliament and then it would go to the European Parliament and the 27 countries. So actually this has been going on for 6 months, this dramatic period. It's been incredible because it's like every month or every week you think "now is the crunch moment where it will all have to be decided", but it hasn't happened!

T: They've been holding off so long.

K: It's just been postponed. Some agreement has been reached. Then the whole thing about the rejection of the deal has been really dramatic. I had never expected it to be quite so bad. I'm really, really surprised and shocked, but it's like the best soap opera at the moment, that I'm watching everything. There was something special about last week. I noticed it at work as well, so my European colleagues were all talking about it over lunch. Often they didn't really say much, but I think because there's so much happening and it's so close to the deadline.

T: Yeah there's a new vote every day.

Characteristics of British politics:

K: Yeah, a new vote every day and then kind of "how the hell did we get into this place and how the hell and we going to get out of it?" So the European Union guys feel they've done their job and now the problem is in the UK to try and reach some sort of agreement. So there seems to be, it's just a

demonstration of a lack of consensus that there's always been about this topic, combined with some very entrenched views that people are not willing to bend at all to reach some sort of compromise. On the one hand there's something quite British about that. With the government it's always first past the post and one party decides things. So it doesn't come naturally at all to compromise. We never have coalitions and if we have coalition governments it always fails. In the last one the Liberal party came out very badly. It's not in our mentality.

T: In Europe it's mostly coalition governments.

K: Yeah. A lot of Europe and Holland is nothing but. So they're used to reaching some sort of consensus across enough parties to rule. So to some extent these hard positions I can understand where they come from because of the British political mentality. There's always a winning party. But the fact is there isn't a winning party here. None of the factions are winners. So the difficulty of reaching a consensus is quite surprising, quite shocking in many respects for something like this. But it also made me think, this national decision and we're now seeing the issue. The party in power, the government are the ones who make all the decisions. And what we're seeing now is that that's inappropriate for this kind of decision. This really has to be something that should have gone to some sort of cross-party approach from the beginning. It wouldn't have given the ERG group or those guys what they want. It probably wouldn't have even come out with this deal that Theresa May has come up with. But it just feels that that would have been a more mature way of addressing such a major decision for a country. But I think we're just incapable of doing that in Britain, we simply can't. The reality of the situation is that there are a bunch of factions who all want to win. It's incredible, last-minute chaos. But I love it all, it's great fun. It's really fascinating watching what's going on. My own personal preference would be for it to go back to a vote, a people's vote. I never wanted Brexit. So Parliament can't make its mind up, then some kind of vote makes sense. I think General Election is not the right thing. General Election would just lead to voting for *who* you like. It's the same path, the same MPs. A General Election should really be about the whole country and everything you're doing and not just about one topic, which is Brexit in this case. If Parliament had been able to make up its mind, that would have been fair enough.

[tangent about if Brexit has been extended, which is irrelevant now it has been confirmed]

K: I think everyone is so fed up with this. We're all running out of patience. But we're getting a bit bored of it, so it's a bit painful. We can't have the pain continue for too long.

T: Well it's interesting that you're so connected and up-to-speed with it, despite living in the Netherlands.

K: Well it's easy with social media.

European Identity

Moreno question:

T: So to move towards wrapping up I've got a few questions about identifying with Europe, which is one of the main topics of my thesis investigation. I think you mentioned earlier that your Dad said he's European and Scottish, then British. What would you say for yourself?

K: So definitely European. [pause for thought]. For me then it's a toss-up between Britain and Spain as number 2. Not so much Britain though; I feel English. Having said that.

T: That's interesting with having a Scottish father.

K: Yeah that's true. I was brought up in Surrey, so my culture is very, very strongly English. Irish is not though. I'm a "Passport Paddy". So I've always had a bit of an affinity to Ireland to some extent. My family's Catholic as well. I love Irish music. I remember when I was a kid, there were no dreams of getting Irish nationality at the time, but I used to listen to Irish music. So there's something culturally in me which I appreciate in Ireland. And then culturally, Spain. Definitely English. I love so much about England and Britain as well. The whole culture and that stuff. I also love, deeply love, Spain. I spent a long time living in Madrid. But I will never go back and retire in the UK. I know that for sure. I remember a time when I was working in Madrid and I had a chance to go and work on a project back in the UK. So I was commuting from Madrid back to the UK for a while. And it could have turned into a 12 month project, could've gone longer. I remember thinking, "I've been away for a while so I'll go back and just try it out, see what it's like and who knows, see what happens". I hated it! I hated it! I found it really difficult to adapt. It was all weird.

T: Even though you stayed connected with the UK all the time?

K: Even though I'm passionate about the UK, I'm passionate about the politics, I follow football, Liverpool's my team. But I just knew it would feel... Maybe I have this idea of my country which is not what it is these days and then it becomes more difficult to adapt. When you're living there it's easier to adapt to the different regions and the different ways of doing things. But I've been living outside for such a long time, I know I really don't think I'd be happy living back in the UK. So maybe the Brexiteers were right not to give me the vote! [laughs]. So that's an interesting thing. I could imagine going to Spain, because I loved the years we lived in Spain. Then Holland, I would stay here for a time. Only if a family we decide to stay here. There's lots very nice about Holland.

Choosing the Netherlands:

K: But it's a good question. So how do I associate myself? I remember when we came back from China, we had to make a choice then about whether we stayed in China with the American multinational. They offered me a job with their headquarters in the States. But it would have been a bit of a one-way ticket. They say "you come over, but it doesn't mean you'll go to Europe". They weren't expanding in Europe. So we had a choice. We were gonna become an American family. Or we could have stayed in China and become a weird Chinese expat family. Or go back to Europe. But we said "No. We are European". We strongly felt that. But within the European Union it could have been 3 or 4 places that we could've gone to live and been happy.

T: And that was when you were choosing the Netherlands?

K: That's when we ended up coming to the Netherlands because the first job I found was in the Netherlands.

T: So you chose the Netherlands because it was European, rather than because it was the Netherlands?

K: Yeah. So I was in China applying for jobs back in Europe. It wasn't necessarily that easy, because you're just not there and you can't just pop over for interviews and stuff. I got a really nice job with a company based in Leiden where we're now living. But if I had found a job with the multinational in Basel or Brussels that could've been it as well. Spain was the other option, but Spain had been really badly hit by the crisis at that point, so there was absolutely no sense, no possibility. You could always go back to a country, but it would have been a bad career move to go to Spain, even though I really love it.

Defining European identity:

T: Do you think that there is much of a sense of a united European identity? So you work in a European workplace so maybe you have noticed it.

K: I think we're proud of the differences.

T: United in Diversity is the motto I think.

K: I didn't know that one. I shudder at the thought of all countries in Europe becoming the same. That would be a pity. It would be a watering down of our cultures, our identities, if we ended up like the USA. So I think that's one of the strengths of Europe. I love the way that there's this pride in your country within Europe. It's one of the things that I love about the Spaniards as well, there's like a microcosm of Europe if you like. If you speak to any Spaniard, they're proud of the village that they were born in and it's like their village is the best. They'll talk in these terms, wherever they are and wherever their village is in Spain, but that's the only place you could possibly be from. But I think there's a sense, an aspect of Europe that I really like. The pride of your local culture and traditions and things. But it's interesting, it's a generational thing. So I have that strong feeling about England because I was brought up in England the whole of my childhood. But I can imagine kids of parents from different nationalities like in our case: do they have the same understanding, same feeling for one place? But I guess it depends on if you move around or not when you're a kid. I think that really defines you. If you stay put, that's your culture, that's what you believe in.

T: It's really interesting that you still have such a strong connection to the UK despite moving around so much.

K: Yeah, it's funny isn't it. [laughs] My wife gets really upset that I don't watch the Dutch news the whole time. But I don't have to. She says "you're living in a sort of bubble". "I know, you're probably right". But it's funny. There are some people that really thrive working abroad and they like being a duck out of water. I've certainly had that feeling myself sometimes. When you're not living in your own country, you can observe things a bit more. Be a little more observant than committed.

T: Because you're not actively part of it, you can look at it from a distance?

K: Yeah, yeah. And I think some people enjoy that. And it's something I've often thought. I remember when we moved to Holland as well from China, I thought "God, Holland is really ethnic!" It was really different. And you noticed it because living in China was a really strongly different culture. But it just made me realise how different the Dutch culture was at the time, compared with England as well. It was really different and I really loved it. It's like biting into a strong cheese, you

love the flavour and the flavour in Holland is great. Having lived here 8 years now I don't notice it anymore. It's home.

T: I find it really similar to the UK.

K: Yeah. It is. I think there's a lot that the Dutch have in common.

T: More so than any other European country I've been to.

K: Yeah. Yeah I definitely think you're right.

T: Except for Ireland of course.

K: The Dutch are really direct. Otherwise the Dutch have a nice sense of humour and they're quite clear about things and not sentimental. They don't like sentimentality. But I was in Spain, I loved Spain. I have a love for Spain that I don't have for the Netherlands in the same way. It's interesting.

T: Just seeing if I have a powerful question to end with. How would you describe the term European? There is clear diversity between European countries, but what's the thing that unites them?

K: I think after all that we've suffered over the years, what unites us is that we've learnt to live with each other. In particular since the Second World War that's led to a drive for solidarity and cooperation and some common values. It makes me very proud whenever you hear about Europe to be leading the way in something that is ethically admirable; climate change or upholding certain human rights – democracy and that sort of stuff. I think the years that we've lived here I've liked the tolerance there has been in Europe; I think it's under threat at the moment. But there's been a fair amount of tolerance and respect. I think it's interesting the discussion about the European Union, the political arrangement there. I do actually agree with the statement that it's not a democracy but bureaucracy. So I actually get that very strongly. But I think it's a bit of an experiment, an unfinished experiment. It's far from perfect and we see the cracks that are appearing as a result of the crisis, the Euro under threat, etc. It's far from fully-baked. But as something, an ideal to cling on to, the solidarity between countries, it's very powerful for me and I think it's a really good thing.

T: Something that other parts of the world can learn from?

K: Yeah for sure. I think there's a lot that we should be proud of because of what's been achieved in Europe. And also the concept of peace in Europe, that's very important. So the opening of Europe to the countries in the East and the Balkans and that. It's been challenging. It could've been an explicit choice not to do; we could've just stuck to the Rich Western Europe after the Berlin Wall was fallen. We could've just stuck to those countries, but it was an explicit decision to go East and to open it up. And the main reason was to build the stability, the chance of peace. Those are 2 important drivers behind the European idea and heavily influenced by the Germans I'd say. I've never really had that much contact with the Germans the whole of my life, until I started working at the European Patent Office which has its headquarters in Munich. So over the last 4 years I've been going to Munich once a month and it's just opened my eyes to the Germans, I've got to know the Germans a bit. I have a great admiration for them, for their incredible stability. It's funny. Maybe won the war after all!
[laughs]

T: In a weird way. There they are leading the EU and we're just doing Brexit.

K: We were all conned!

T: Well that's a funny sentiment to end on.

[official end of interview]

After interview talk

T: We shouldn't push for a United States of Europe. I think Europe works well as it is at the moment.

K: Maybe a loosening of the institutions.

Influence of different news outlets/social media:

K: It's interesting your point about social media [living in a bubble]. We kind of get into this existence, if you're going to social media for a lot of your news, that you only really see the stuff you're interested in. I do a lot of YouTube and recently YouTube has only given me back stuff that it knows I've been interested in the past. So your perspective on life gets limited. I've been getting really irritated recently, thinking "stop sending me the same stuff, I want to see something new!". And I don't know how to break out of it. It's like they've got me profiled so well, that they just target exactly. It's kind of annoying.

T: It's good to keep an eye on a neutral news outlet, like BBC News.

K: I quite like going around different European ones as well because that gives you a different perspective. I've been reading the Spanish press and Dutch news a bit. It bursts you out of your bubble a bit.

Finding international jobs:

K: When I first did my degree I really wanted to go to Spain. Spain wasn't a full member of the common market then, so you still needed to have a work permit. So I actually spent a year doing voluntary work and decided I like it so much in Spain, I decided to see if I could stay there. I'd done a Maths degree. But you had to have a work permit. So I thought "what can I offer? Well I can teach English of course". So I went back to London and did a 1-month course as an English teacher with the idea of going back to Barcelona. But then a job opportunity came up in South America with the British Council, the day the course finished. So I walked into International House (which was teaching the course) into their career department and asked "any interesting jobs there" and they said they're trying to find someone for Ecuador. They interviewed me in the afternoon and I was offered the job in the evening. I said "ok I'm going!". It's all relative eh? We can get really worried about the European job situation, but if you're inspired enough to get a job anywhere in the world, then you can get a job anywhere in the world. It's just a question of finding the opportunity. But you gotta get the job.

T: Yeah you probably have to get the job first before you can stay here.

K: Yeah. But it's not impossible.

[end of transcript]

Appendix 3.10 – Lewis

Interview Setting: Skype, 11:30am, 08/04/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So I guess we'll just begin with giving you a chance to introduce yourself. So your age, name, occupation, that kind of thing.

L: 27, since a couple of days ago. And I'm working, as a meteorologist, which is in the Netherlands, for a Dutch [weather] company. My name is [Lewis] and I'm from Newcastle in England. So I moved to the Netherlands 2 years ago for a few reasons. One is that I had a boyfriend in the Netherlands, I still have a boyfriend in the Netherlands. I'm living with him now. And also, I was already working for a Dutch company. And the Dutch company kinda wanted me to move to the Netherlands. Well they didn't want to, but I wanted to move to the Netherlands, to work there, because it was the headquarters. Also, I was living in Aberdeen. A lot of my friends in Aberdeen were moving away, because no-one in Aberdeen wants to stay in Aberdeen a long time. They were moving to Edinburgh or London or something. So everything kind of lined up for me to move to the Netherlands.

T: So you moved over 2 years ago?

L: On 1 January 2017.

T: So part way through the Brexit process I guess.

L: Well I think the vote was 2016. But I wasn't really thinking about it – I'm still not really thinking about it that much to be honest. I knew it might be an issue in a couple of years, but it wasn't on my mind.

T: Where are you living in the Netherlands?

L: Utrecht. Right next to the Central station. It's nice and handy. First I was living in Ede, which is about half an hour from Utrecht on the train. And that's closer to where I work, because I work in Wageningen. But the office where I work is going to move to Utrecht in a few months. So then it will be handy, sort itself out. So I've got like a 1 hour commute to work. But, it's fine. And it's nice to live in Utrecht.

[tangent about interviewer]

T: Are your family still in the UK?

L: Yeah. So I'm at my mam and dad's house now. So they still live in the UK in Northumberland, which is just north of Newcastle, by about half an hour.

T: In the Netherlands, are you living alone or with people?

L: Yeah, I'm living with my boyfriend, yeah. So now it's just like a studio flat, so it's just basically one room. But it's quite nice. I've been living with him since July last year [2018]. Before then, I was living by myself in Ede. It was also similar, a kind of studio flat thing. I think the accommodations are better

in the Netherlands, because even though you pay a bit more for it, it's kind of better maintained. The ceilings are quite high and it kind of feels quite nice.

T: Big windows.

L: Yeah exactly, like floor-length mirrors. So everyone can see what you're up to.

T: Did you move over, you said it was for multiple reasons, was your boyfriend one of the reasons?

L: Yeah, that was the main reason really. I was already travelling to the Netherlands a little bit before I met him and before I moved to the Netherlands. So I would say that he was the main reason. But because I already worked for the Dutch company and I was already experiencing the Netherlands a bit more. Since 2013, I had been working for this Dutch company, so I had been travelling to the Netherlands a little bit. I already knew that I liked it there. Of course your impression of a country is very different visiting temporarily, than it is actually trying to live there, which I discovered. I already knew I liked it, so I was happy to live there, already. So I was kinda familiar with the place, but I met him in the process of travelling for work. So it made sense to move there.

T: Is he Dutch?

L: Yeah he's Dutch. He's Chinese. He's from Amsterdam. He's ethnically Chinese, his mum and dad are from Hong Kong and he was born in Amsterdam.

T: Like first generation.

L: Yeah. I think so. That's right yeah.

Differences between the Dutch and the English

T: What were some of the differences you've noticed between visiting temporarily and living there longer?

L: Well, when you visit temporarily you don't really get a sense of what the people are like. I kinda knew what they were superficially like, because you know they're kinda like, they're actually very much like English people, I think. They're very friendly. They're nice. Obviously, they're more blunt and you pick that up when you're travelling temporarily. But then, when you get to [parents interrupt] What was I saying?

T: How the Dutch are different when you get to know them a bit better.

L: When I first moved there I started comparing the Dutch and the English a lot and I'm still doing that now, so I've thought a lot about this, but it's hard to kind of sum it up. And it's also hard to be not biased about it because when you're from somewhere you wanna kind of be loyal to that country. You also don't want to kind of live somewhere with a building resentment. You also don't wanna kind of romanticise where you are and how it's better than where you're from. So all these factors right. I think when I look at other, let's say "expats" in the Netherlands from the UK, I find different patterns. Like some people, I just don't think they wanna be there anymore and some people, they never wanna go back. So I'm finding it hard to get a balance, but I think the differences are, what I've found over the long-term is, that the Dutch are much more interested in saving

money. They think about the future much more than the English. I think that's the easy way to sum it up. They're more interested in sorting themselves out in the future, than having a good time today. But, I think the British are a bit more impulsive. So I think that kind of feeds into everything. [pause] I've noticed increasingly that if you have a retail park in the UK, it's all just clothes shops, a Boots and an Argos, a Next and a Costa. It's all about leisure and clothes shops. And it's kind of fun. If you have retail park in the Netherlands, it's all home furniture shops. There's nothing else. I think the Dutch are really interested in looking after their own house and kind of showing it off to other people. Because I think the way the Dutch spend their leisure time is very different from the British. Because the Dutch like to have people over to their house and then look after them in their house. And I think the British like to meet each other in a pub, or external venue. So I think the way that both cultures spend their money is very different. So I think the Dutch want to save their money and spend it on really nice things for their house. And the British are probably a bit looser with their money and they want to have a nice time today. They want to go out and socialise – well the Dutch socialise as well, they just do it in a different way. I think the British are more likely to want to spend some time in the pub.

T: The Dutch like to be outside a lot.

L: If it's warm enough; otherwise they like being in their own homes. But I dunno because whenever I say this I feel very conflicted about whether my opinions are all just really biased and I'm wrong about it. But I think I've got somewhere now.

T: Well you've had enough time to think about it and notice it.

L: Yeah.

Experiences of Brexit

T: Cool. Well now let's talk about the main topic. Brexit. So I'm going to talk you through the Brexit process and help you remember what you were doing at the time, by going through a timeline of the events.

Feb 2016 Announcement of Referendum

T: Starting off in February 2016 when David Cameron first announced that there would be a referendum.

L: I was in Aberdeen. February 2016, was that before the election?

T: It was after the General Election.

L: Oh right. I remember the run-up to the General Election, right, listening to Radio 2 a lot because I used to like Jeremy Vine and he would always debate about the election. Every single Tory when they got onto the radio made a point of saying "the only way you can have an in-out referendum on membership of the EU is by voting for the Conservatives at the General Election". And I remember them saying that over and over again like it was a broken record. I remember thinking "I don't think anyone cares about this", but they're making it into a big thing. Because I know that UKIP's main policy was getting out of the EU, but it wasn't really because they're main policy was just get rid of the foreigners, right. But I think the Tories thought "we're worried about UKIP", but they were

probably more worried than they needed to be about UKIP. So they made this huge thing about “you can have a referendum if you vote for us”. So I remember listening to the radio and listening to David Cameron, or it could’ve been Boris Johnson, saying “the only way you can have an in-out referendum is by voting for us” and I remember thinking it was bizarre because I don’t think anyone was asking for one. So that’s what I remember. And when he announced the referendum, I expected it because they kept promising it.

T: I guess it was also to sort out his own party as well.

L: In what way do you think? To stop them from leaving and going to UKIP?

T: Because there was Euroscepticism within his party.

L: Oh right. OK. Well I wasn’t aware of that as much. I know that there was kind of a rise of UKIP. So there was already people in the Tories that wanted to leave the EU? Is that right?

T: Yeah.

L: So he was doing it less for the country’s demands, but more for his own members of his own party.

T: Yeah, that’s one of the ways to view.

L: OK. No. I wasn’t away of that side of it. Because I was really into the Labour Party at the time. Because one of my best friends in Aberdeen was running in that election [2015 General Election] and I was really deeply into what they were talking about. I guess actually when you’re in Aberdeen there’s a bit more of a Scottish angle on everything and that affects what you read, what you see and what you talk about, a lot more as well.

T: And like Scottish Labour and Scottish Conservative, I guess.

L: They’re slightly different parties, though they’re technically the same. Yeah. So you’re voting for the Scottish Conservative, not the Conservatives.

Referendum Campaign 2016 (Experiencing it in Scotland)

T: Were you still in the Scotland during the campaigning for the referendum?

L: Yeah. Right. So, I was still in Aberdeen during the campaign. It was weird in Scotland because they’d already had an independence referendum, like a couple of years before. And they were much more motivated about that, much more into that one. And the EU referendum kinda felt like an anti-climax after that one. I don’t think anyone cared about it that much. But you definitely got the sense in Scotland that they don’t like Westminster and they don’t like south-east England. Basically, staying in the EU is a way of making sure that they’re not completely controlled by London. So the message in Scotland was always just to stay in the EU and I felt that most people wanted to stay in the EU. Having said that, my friend that did the Labour thing that I just told you about: he did a strange thing where he kinda decided that he was for Leaving the EU. Then he got a job with the Scottish Vote.Leave campaign. And then he surprised all of his friends, because no-one thought he would do that. He made a very big deal of wanting to leave the EU. But, I think, and a lot of his

friends thought, that it was just an opportunity for him to get a good job in politics. Because he was an economics student, he was 21 and for the Leave campaign that looked good because most people that were supporting Leave were older, like the stereotype of a Leave supporter. So anyone that joined the Leave campaign that was maybe younger, or ethnically diverse, or just different in any way; they wanted to put them to the front and make a big deal of them, so it would look good for the campaign. So we thought he was just doing it for those reasons.

T: What kind of media channels did you use to follow the referendum campaign?

L: Radio 2 and probably The Guardian. Yeah probably just those two things. At the time, that's where I got all my news from. Probably Facebook as well. But I think back then you saw a lot more news on Facebook. Especially, while maybe I just saw a lot more news on Facebook; I saw a lot more Guardian news on Facebook. So it was really just The Guardian, and Radio 2 and Radio 1 and other stations. But the BBC I don't really think has much of a bias. Well. I don't know.

T: It's not meant to.

L: It's not meant to and I think it's bias is probably towards the Right, just because it has to follow the newspapers and the newspapers are generally towards the Right. But I don't know. I'm not sure about that.

T: At this time, were you worried about your job, or travelling, with having links to the Netherlands?

L: No, not really. Because I think like a lot people I've got this kind of arrogance that everything's going to be ok. I still have it now and I'm not worried about it. So, I thought it might introduce hassle, a little bit of hassle, but I thought it would never become like a barrier or problem.

T: Were you exposed to many, other than the friend you've already mentioned, many Leave voters?

L: No, not really. I'm trying to think. Cos he didn't really introduce me to many Leave people either. My mam and dad were quite Remain because they go to Spain a lot and stuff. And I don't know of anyone else. Actually, a couple of people, or at least 1 person, voted Leave when they always said they were gonna vote Remain. He was one of my friends in Aberdeen and he was actually Irish, but he was allowed to vote, cos I think you're allowed to vote if you're resident in the UK.

T: I think if you're a Commonwealth resident.

L: Oh is that what it is? OK. So he voted to Leave the EU and then we said "why did you do that?". And he said in the moment it was quite an exciting thing. It kind of felt exciting. Also everyone believed that we wouldn't leave the EU, so everyone already had this assumption that the result of the referendum would be that we Remain. And I think a lot of people used that as opportunity to vote Leave, so that in the future when everything inevitably gets worse, because it does, they could always say "well, I actually voted to Leave the EU". It's almost like you're making a little anecdote for yourself in the future, because everyone was quite sure that we'd stay in the EU. So if you could vote to Leave you were kind of doing something interesting. But it didn't feel like there was a risk of actually leaving the EU, because you don't really feel like your vote really matters. It doesn't really matter. It's just that, obviously it does, but you know what I mean?

T: Yeah. Just as one person.

L: Yeah, exactly.

Leave Result June 2016

T: So later on, when the Leave vote was announced, do you remember where you were and how it made you feel?

L: Yeah. I had just woken up from a night-shift in Aberdeen. I probably looked at my phone and saw the speech of David Cameron. Did he on the same day resign as Prime Minister?

T: Yeah I think so.

L: Yeah, so I remember that whole thing, feeling quite scary. It felt like everyone had made a big mistake, including him. I had this sense of “aah, look what you’ve done”. But it also did kind of feel like he was just running away from the mess, that he’d just made a big mess and just wanted to get out of it. I understand that that’s what you have to do as a politician if you’ve campaigned for one thing, then it doesn’t work. It doesn’t make sense for you to continue. But he was just too slick about it. He clearly just didn’t give a shit one way or the other. It felt a little bit like “ok some people have fucked up here”, so you just felt very interested to continue watching it, to see what would happen. So I said it was scary, but it wasn’t really scary, but it was like surprising and everyone got more interested in politics from that day.

T: Including you?

L: I was already quite into it really. I don’t think I got more interested. I probably got less interested in it [politics] because I had less political friends because I was more and more thinking about the Netherlands. I got sort of disenfranchised with it. I went and did some door-knocking for Labour. So we walked about Aberdeen and tried to canvas. And it was a horrible experience and I only did it 3 times and it was just quite miserable. It was frustrating because you realised that most people don’t take much of an interest in politics. So when it comes to voting, most people vote on the background kind of narrative that they’ve picked up from the media. That background narrative, even though it’s quite wishy-washy in a way; no-one ever spells it out. But it’s the most powerful force in the country at the time and there’s nothing you can do about it. So I think if you want to live a meaningful life, you have to not get too involved in politics because you have such little control over it and you’re just constantly faced with people who are angry, and don’t know why.

T: Is that why you felt a bit disenfranchised from it?

L: Yeah. Also because he, this guy who ran for Labour and then voted Leave; well after that he joined the Tories. He actually ran for Labour in North Aberdeen. He ran against Alex Salmond, who’s properly like a candidate, to be an MP. Then after the whole Leave thing he decided to join the Tories. Then when we asked him why he had such a shit answer. He said like “oh because the Tories are the only party in Scotland that are gonna make sure that Scotland and England stays together”. Which I think was a rubbish answer because they weren’t going to have another referendum any time soon anyway. But I think there was more opportunity in the Tories for him than in Labour.

Moving to the Netherlands (Jan 2017)

T: So you said that after the referendum you started thinking more and more about the Netherlands?

L: Yeah because there was a few things that happened. I was getting more into this relationship with Jeremy. Obviously you can't have a long-distance relationship for very long. It's just not gonna last. It was kinda like "well I'm gonna have to do something soon or we shouldn't bother having this relationship". So it was like that. And also I didn't really have any career path in the job that I had because I was an offshore weather forecaster. I didn't actually work offshore, I worked in an office, but I did a lot of night shifts and weird shifts. My weekends were all messed up. I knew that would just continue forever if I was to stay in Aberdeen. Also, because you got paid more for night-shifts I just kept doing loads of night-shifts because I just wanted more money. I was just becoming so nocturnal. I was always working at night and I was always up in the afternoons and it was a really rubbish life. So even though I had a nice amount of money, it was a bit crap. There was something else. I don't remember. I mean that's enough reasons anyway. I applied to work in the Netherlands through a different company. That's how I got my company to let me move to the Netherlands, because they're quite bad with making promises and following up on them. They were quite happy with me in Aberdeen because it was cheaper to employ people in the UK. So I got this offer from another weather company, that was based in Soest which is between Utrecht and-

T: I know that one.

L: I'd never been to it [Soest] before, I didn't know about it. But it was this nice Japanese weather company and I was quite excited. Then they offered me a job, but then I ended up using it as leverage to get a job in the Dutch office of the company I was working for. So that was good and then they let me move over. So it was a bit of hassle because I'd already foolishly bought a house in Aberdeen. It was quite small and it wasn't even in Aberdeen. It was half an hour south of Aberdeen. It was all I could afford really. I had this obsession with buying a house when I first got a job and it was a stupid thing to do because I still have the house; I can't sell it because the oil crisis in Aberdeen means that no-one wants to buy any houses. So even to this day, I still have this house. Now this girl lives in it. After this call with you I have to go up there [from Northumberland]. So I have this legacy that I don't really want anymore. I tried to sell it for ages, but no-one would buy it, so then I had to rent it out. But, yeah. Sorry that's probably completely not what you asked. I keep forgetting what question you asked.

T: No it's fine. I just wanted to see what point you started thinking about moving to the Netherlands.

L: Well I just saw this opportunity to apply for this Japanese company and then I applied for it. Then the wheels started turning then, and this was about 2016, like November. And then, everything started coming into place and my company said "you can work here from January". So then I started to follow up on that.

T: Were you worried at all about Brexit? Moving to the EU while all of it was going on.

L: No, I wasn't really. I wasn't bothered because I thought "it's still gonna be another couple of years before we actually leave". Like all things with politics, or all things at that level, you can't plan for it. Especially for Brexit, you can't plan for it. I think it would be really stupid to go "aah I better not

move” or “I better do things differently because of Brexit”. It would just be a stupid thing to do. I felt like I shouldn’t base any decisions in my life around Brexit because it’s a stupid thing. It might not even happen, you know.

T: So you thought you’d just go ahead with anyway.

L: Yeah, just carry on. That’s what they told you to do. The government, even they’re saying now “just carry on as you are”. So I was just following the advice of the government really. Yeah, you couldn’t plan for it.

Chequers Deal Summer 2018

T: So I guess in summer 2018 when the Chequer’s Deal was announced and they came up with the idea for the transition... there’s a headline from it.

L: “May wins Cabinet agreement for soft Brexit plan”. Ah right yeah.

T: Did that really affect you in any way, if you didn’t really care that much about Brexit and were carrying on anyway?

L: Well I was happy because I still want there to be as softer Brexit as possible. When Theresa May became prime minister I was happy because I thought “oh I see what they’re doing now”. They’re trying to just stay in the EU in as many ways as possible, apart from officially. So I was pleased with the way the government were handling it, I suppose. I knew that they had to honour the result of the referendum otherwise everyone would hate them. They knew that as well. So they were doing it in a kind of soft way, I think.

T: More of a symbolic way.

L: Yeah. That’s good yeah, more of a symbolic way.

2019 Events

T: Now in 2019 we’ve seen all the stuff going on with this [shows headline of May’s Deal defeat] and then again and again after that. Have you been following along with all of it?

L: I try to. It’s hard to follow it. But I followed this Instagram account called *Simple Politics*. It’s really good. Do you know about it? Every day with whatever happens with Brexit, it Tweets about in the most plain English; it really simplifies it. So I’ve found that that’s the easiest way to follow it because if you try and follow it on the news it’s like trying to start watching *Emmerdale*: you can’t start at the beginning, but you’re gonna have to somehow pick it up as you start watching it. It’s like that with Brexit because it’s moving so fast. You might look at the news 2 days later and then you need to kind of catch up somehow. So this *Simple Politics* Instagram feed was really useful for me. I still check it now. It just simplifies everything.

T: That’s a good comparison, between a soap opera and Brexit. Will your job be affected at all by Brexit?

L: I don’t know really. Probably not. But, it’s still not clear, so I don’t wanna say no because I sometimes think I’m being a little bit overconfident about it. And people at work have kind’ve asked

me that question. I mean there's a few British people at work, so I'm not kind've like on my own in this situation. But obviously everyone's situation is slightly different. I don't think it will be affected really because I think if they have to sort something out, then they'll probably just sort it out. I think the company will probably sort something out. Or, if I have to fill in some forms and pay like 70 Euros, or something, then I can do that. It's fine.

T: Did you receive the temporary residence permit yet?

L: Yeah. It's funny because now I'm back in the UK I brought it with me, just in case I had to use it to get back in. But it looks like we're not leaving the EU on the 12th April. I don't know. But we can't be now because it's Monday 8th. But, I don't know. Are we or not? You must know?

T: I don't know. I'm not completely up to date. I haven't been looking for the past 3 days or so because as you say it's hard to keep up with it all.

L: I'm coming back to the Netherlands on this Friday [12 April], so I thought "this might be horrible actually trying to get back in on the day of Brexit". And it still might be, cos I actually don't really know what's going on.

T: Do you worry at all about your ability to come home [to the UK]?

L: Yeah. I do actually, I do a bit because I know that one of the realistic effects of Brexit might be that the flights get more expensive. And I don't want that to happen. Do you mean like come home on holiday, or come home permanently?

T: Come home on holiday.

L: Yeah, it's just flights getting more expensive. I noticed that when EasyJet stopped doing their route from Amsterdam to Newcastle and then it was only KLM. The flights got like 4 times more expensive. Thinking about that: that small thing has a big impact on my life because now if I wanna go home I either have to go to Edinburgh or just pay more. So actually price of flights will have a big impact on my life. So, I hope price of flights doesn't go up too much. So that's what I'm a bit worried about.

T: Would you go home less if the flights went up in price?

L: Realistically, yeah probably. Because I would know, like mentally, that it's more expensive to go home.

Integration in the Netherlands

T: Could you tell me a bit more about your integration in the Netherlands? Like your language skills or your amount of Dutch friends...

L: Yeah, that's I guess part and probably the most bit that I'm not very good with and I probably could've done a better job of getting more integrated in the Netherlands. Because I've only started this year to take proper Dutch classes. It's very like low-level, A1 level.

T: What was the motivation for that?

L: Well it was basically just that I found some really cheap ones. Because most of the Dutch classes that were available were like 1000 Euros or something. At least 600 Euros. And I just never wanted to pay that. I kept telling myself that I could learn it through Duolingo, or like memorise. And this one was like 6 Euros an hour. And because it was right next to work, like another person from work, who's Portuguese, wanted to do it as well. So then we both did it together. So there was kinda like this cost motivation, but also being able to do it with someone that I already knew. That was the motivation. So, it's only 2 hours a week, but it is something and it is helping a lot. I should've probably done more by now because I've been there for 2 years. But I think in the Netherlands it's – I mean I'm not blaming the Netherlands – but it's harder to learn Dutch than it would be if I'd moved to France and had to learn French. Because I think if I'd moved to France in January 2017, I could be fluent in French by now.

T: Yeah because you have to speak French.

L: Yeah because they don't speak English.

[tangent about Dutch language tips]

L: Do you have any tips for learning Dutch?

T: Try and force yourself to use it. If you know any words, then use them when you can.

L: Yeah. I try and do that sometimes. But only with Jeremy, I don't like doing it at work or anything.

T: It's also good to practice using online group chats, like WhatsApp.

L: Oh that's a good idea. But in terms of Dutch friends.. Well anyone I would call a friend that speaks Dutch, we only ever speak to each other in English. Jeremy's got a lot of Dutch friends and when they get together and I'm there I try to follow what's going on and reply in English. I try and do that. And sometimes I can do that, but I find it uncomfortable. It's a shame because it's a proper like friction. It's the biggest friction about living in the Netherlands, is not really being able to speak Dutch. So that's still a big problem. I do wonder what it would be like if one day I could just fluently speak Dutch. It would be really nice I think.

T: I think it would be possible if you live here for a long time.

L: Yeah. I think that one of the reasons that I've been so slow with it is that I don't feel like it's realistic. Because I was always really bad with languages at school. I was really shit with French and I always just thought this is just not for me, like I can't do languages. But I think if I had a different attitude towards it, I'd probably learn a bit faster.

T: So language is like the main thing you think you need to feel like you belong here?

L: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I feel like I know how to live there comfortably. I know how everything works. But, it's just, and I know how to get by, but it still relies on everyone being able to speak English to me.

T: I have a few random questions now, just to make sure I've covered all the topics.

T: So, firstly, your workplace is an international workplace, yeah?

L: Yeah.

Friends' Reactions to Brexit

T: What were the reactions of different people towards Brexit?

L: Well I remember that my friend in Aberdeen, who's Portuguese but working in the Aberdeen office, we used to have these long night shifts together where we'd have these deep conversations about everything. He would go always like to go on about the fact that Germany's always been trying to rule Europe. In Portugal they really feel like that, they really hate the Germans because Portugal had a lot of money problems a few years ago and the Germans just started telling them what to do and the Portuguese really don't like that. And so Gonzalo he was kinda saying like, he thinks that the British don't take themselves seriously enough in terms of how powerful they are in the EU. He's really disappointed that we chose to leave, because now he thinks that the rest of Europe is going to be controlled even more by Germany. Whereas previously you could argue that it was controlled by the UK, Germany, France. And now it's now just Germany and France, but really it's just Germany. So, he had his own opinions from a Portuguese perspective; but a Portuguese person living in the UK. I don't think he was worried about more racism, but maybe he just wouldn't have told me about that. And then other people in the company. Well the Dutch people are very Dutch, so they don't really have opinions. No, they have opinions, but they don't really have like, I don't think they would, I don't know actually. You wouldn't find them being expressively racist or having these opinions about, let's say the British being too arrogant or being worried about the Germans – well no they are actually, they do say things like that, so I don't know what I'm talking about really. I don't know. The different people in the company: we've had discussions about Brexit, but there's never been like a pattern that I could pick out and say "all the Dutch people feel like this", or "all the British people feel like this". People have their own opinion about it. I think cos it hasn't happened yet, it's all speculation. And everyone's just still speculating on their own. And we can't see what's going to happen, so it's hard to talk about it like that.

Plans for the Future

T: So until something firm happens, it isn't really affecting you that much?

L: No. Just that I'm thinking about it a bit more now because, obviously having had this letter from IND. I mean I went to an information session a few months ago in The Hague, with someone from work, and that was really interesting to watch. It was the British ambassador to the Netherlands and then a couple of Dutch government people. They kind've answered our questions. It was really interesting because obviously they couldn't answer most questions. But the way they tried to be really diplomatic, I found really interesting. It was interesting to just watch Dutch people and British people be diplomatic in front of you, live. It was really interesting. And there was a lot of British people in the audience, cos it was an information session for British people living in the Netherlands. And there was a lot of British people in the audience that were just getting unnecessarily aggressive. I think they problem had their own problems, but they were just turning into Brexit problems. But, it was really interesting watching my friend from work, she brought this point about how you should be allowed to have dual nationality in the Netherlands, because you are but only in certain circumstances. And then the ambassador and the Dutch government guy started actually talking

about it, like actually like “would you be prepared to do this?”, like in front of us, and it was really interesting.

T: Would you ever think of changing your citizenship?

L: I would never say never, but probably not. If I could get dual citizenship, then I probably would yeah. But I wouldn't like to give up the British citizenship for the Dutch one.

T: Even if it meant keeping European citizenship?

L: Yeah. No, I think I feel too British to give up the British citizenship. I think I have this sense of, maybe incorrectly, have this sense of trust towards the British more than the Dutch. That feels like it's gonna be there for a long time. So I feel like, I dunno if that's just because of history, but I feel like if everything kicks off and if there's some horrible wars, I feel like I'd be much safer in the UK than I would in the Netherlands. You know, like last summer there was a big problem with water running out in all parts of Europe because it was too warm. We had like droughts. Well, we didn't have droughts but it was like they kept saying that “oh we only have like 2 weeks of water left”. And it made me think about it a bit and I thought if I was in the Netherlands and they started running out of water, I'd be completely fucked. It wouldn't take long before.. Well that's not true because the Dutch are surrounded by water, but I don't know how much of it's freshwater and how much is not. But I started to think about these and I thought I'd be much better off in Scotland, let's say, because the population density's so much lower. So I have this sense that when it all comes down to it I'd be safer in the UK. Also probably because if you need to rely on all the people that are around you in a time of crisis, it's much better if they are from the same culture as you. Then they're more predictable and they're more likely to trust you, and you're more likely to trust them. I would hate there to be World War Three, then I have to do it from the Netherlands. You know what I mean. I have this feeling. I think it's because secretly, eventually I want to move back to the UK, probably. Not secretly – I mean, I do. Not in the short term, but probably after like 5 years or something.

T: So you've gone to the Netherlands with the intention of it being temporary.

L: Yeah, probably. But not temporary like – No it's kinda open-ended, because I am willing to accept that if once I learn Dutch, I might just end up staying forever. I'm willing to accept that that might happen, but at the moment I don't really want it to. Jeremy's happy to move back to the UK with me, eventually as well. Cos he's not really that bothered about it.

T: And not bothered about Brexit either?

L: No. Not really [laughs]. We've been following it on the news and stuff, but he's not really bothered about it, or doesn't really think it's going to be a problem. It's [Brexit has] just been entertainment, that's all it's been, more than anything else. You just think like “oh what's happening today” and it's just been funny to watch. The speaker has been really funny. He's been my favourite character in the whole thing now. And I've been enjoying the fact that a lot more people in the continent have been exposed to British politics because it's always in the news. So, I had someone in Germany who I work with, who was saying to me, they heard the Speaker on the radio in Germany, and he was saying “eyes to the rights and no's to the left”. She was like “I found that really weird cos it's like eyes to the rights and nose to the left”. And she thought it was like you had to look a certain direction or point

you nose in a different direction to vote. So it's nice that British politics is getting mocked by sharing it with the rest of Europe.

Identifying with Europe

T: I'm going to finish off now with a few questions about identifying with Europe, which is one of the themes of the study. You've already said that you still feel very loyal to Britain. So if you were asked to rank Britain and Europe, then how would you say you identified?

L: If I had to choose between British or European. Probably, reluctantly British, because I think I don't want that to be the answer. I want it to be – actually, I don't know, I'll still say British.

T: How would you describe the term "European"?

L: Like I think I would describe it as basically synonymous with "Western". European means like the colonial, the people who kind've for good and bad, conquered the world. The Europeans did that, not the British. I think they kind've organised the world into a functioning planet with all of its kind've negative and positive consequences. And they killed a lot of people in the process and had a lot of slavery in the process. I think the Europeans did that with their Judaeo-Christian kind've rules that they followed. So I think the "European" is a complicated thing because I think different cultures in Europe are very different from each other, but I think the diversity in Europe is maybe one of the reasons that it was so successful. [pause for thought] From the point of view of someone that's never been to Earth, that's how I'd describe Europe. Otherwise, I don't know, I can't see it having another more coherent identity. Like, the USA does because they have so many cultural similarities, even though it's so big, and it's made up of all these different European DNA. It does still have kind've a coherent identity. I don't see that Europe does. But it might be that it does, just that you'd need to live away in order to notice it. Like the Americans think that all Europeans have small cars and stuff. But then, from the point of view of like a Chinese person, then maybe they wouldn't even notice that. So I guess it depends where you are. But, from where I am, I don't know.

Random Questions (House in Scotland & Reasons for Remaining)

T: From where you are *looks out the window*! Before asking the final question I had 2 quick ones that I haven't had a chance to ask yet.. Firstly, you said you still have a house in Aberdeen. Does Brexit worry you about that, cos the rent will be in Sterling, I guess.

L: Yeah, a little bit. Because if the exchange rate changes too much, then it's gonna be more expensive for me. Because I've got this girl living there, so she pays the rent. So it doesn't worry me too much. If she moves out and I have to pay the mortgage on my own, then it's gonna be more expensive. And the exchange rate will effect that a lot more. But also interest rates affect that as well. And that's equally uncertain. I feel like we might be on the verge of another economic, 2008 thing, and I think that might have more of an impact on everyone's financial situation than Brexit, potentially much much bigger. So I feel like that is more of a threat than Brexit.

T: What were your main motivations for voting Remain? I'm not sure if we've covered it much.

L: Just that I like the way things are. I like the fact that Europe has a united government. I think that makes a lot of sense and it's a very progressive. I also would say that a lot of people used to say "oh I

trust the people from my own country to make laws and I don't trust some French or German people". And I would always just say "why? Because the French and Germans, they do things really well. They do some things better than we do. So I don't mind outsourcing all the law-making to countries which can show that they do it better than us, in some ways. I'm quite happy to do that. I don't think it's necessary just to have all the laws made in England just because we're English, cos we don't do everything perfectly.

T: Having a shared experience of different nations?

L: Yeah. Just more heads together. You end up, obviously, with more compromises. But in the end, actually you can be more powerful with things, like when you have rules like GDPR and then whatever it was called Article 30 or 9 or whatever. Then you can have quite a lot of weight with those things and you can influence and change all the problems that we're getting with the internet. I don't think either of those things are very good, but I think the intention's good. I think the intention of trying to kind've make the internet a safer place and a better place is good. I think we can do those things much better as part of the UK, than as just Westminster, because I think if it's just Westminster then it's more vulnerable to business interests. I feel like that. I know the EU is as well, but I just feel like we trust our politicians much more than we should. Like I think the politicians in London are so flexible with their morals and they're so willing to take money from businesses. Obviously it's a lot worse in America, but I actually think in Europe, in general, it's probably better. So then it makes me more pro-Europe for those reasons. I just feel like, in summary, Europeans can come up with some good ideas with honest intentions, whereas the British can as well, but they're maybe not as honestly.

Final Question: Britain or Europe?

T: I have one final question which I've been using as the last question for everybody. As a result of Brexit and everything that's been happening, will you stay in Europe, in the Netherlands, or go back to Britain? So answer that question for now and also in 5 years' time.

L: I'll stay for now. Then, in 5 years' time probably go back, but I don't know, haven't decided. Yeah. That's my answer.

[end of interview]

Appendix 3.11 – Penelope

Interview Setting: Skype, 10:30am, 17/04/19

[Start of Interview]

T: So the interview is basically going to be about your experiences of being a British expat in the Netherlands, whilst the Brexit Process has been going on.

P: OK.

Demographics

T: But first of all, I'd like to start with getting to know you a bit better, so if you could introduce yourself with your name, age, your occupation, what you do generally.

P: OK. I'm [Penelope]. I'm 36. I have 2 children. I've lived in the Netherlands now for 2 and a half years. Most of that time has been settling everybody in, including the children. So I'm not working yet. I've been working on getting used to the culture and figuring out where I can fit in because in England I was a photographer. So here I'm still working on figuring out the market.

T: So you're looking for a job, figuring out the market.

P: Yeah. I'm not sure if I want to work for somebody else, or if I'm gonna set something up myself. Still looking at the options there.

T: Where are you from originally in the UK?

P: The North-East. We were living in South Shields. We did used to travel between the 2 countries often, because we lived not far from the boats that go from Newcastle to Amsterdam.

T: Where are you living in the Netherlands?

P: We're living in the south. We're living in Eindhoven.

T: In Brabant.

P: Yeah Brabant. I still don't know the names of all those different areas.

T: I only just learnt all the ones in the east.

P: Noord Brabant, I think it's called.

T: And you've been living there for 2 and half years? Why did you move to the Netherlands?

P: My partner is Dutch.

T: How long have you been together?

P: 18 years. So he spent 15 years in England and now it's my turn! We felt like the education system here was better for the children. We did wanna try other countries; we wanted to explore the world. But I wanted to live here first, for me and the children to also learn Dutch. So we both had a bit of each other's culture as well.

T: Interesting. So you wanted to learn Dutch so you speak better to him I guess.

P: So we would be more a unit as a family. We would know a bit more about each other's upbringing, as well as the culture and the language. From there, we will probably move on again. It depends on what's happening with my freedom of movement within Europe now, as to where we go from here.

T: So it's only intended to be temporary then?

P: To a certain extent, yes.

T: Are your children in a Dutch school or an international one?

P: They've gone straight into Dutch school because they took in enough Dutch from their father, even while we were in England. So they've managed to do well straight into Dutch school.

Experiences of Brexit

T: Let's talk about Brexit now, then.

P: Yeah. We're struggling to understand what that's going to mean for our future.

T: So I'm going to talk you through it using a timeline of the process, so you can track the developments of it over time.

Announcement of the Referendum, February 2016

T: Starting off with the original announcement of the referendum in February 2016. Not the announcement of the result, but the fact that there would be a referendum. Do you remember it and what were your thoughts on it?

P: I don't remember the announcement because I'm not sure how long that was before -. We were in the process already of planning to leave the UK, so we were not planning on Brexit happening. We had decided we were moving country before that started. What I do know is that the voting was 2 weeks before we left, before our leaving date. So we were very busy at the time and then suddenly something else was happening within the UK, during the time that we were busy packing, so I don't remember exactly when the announcement was before the voting happened.

T: Were you surprised that there would be a referendum?

P: Yes. We were surprised and confused over what that-. We're still as much confused then as we are now over what it's all going to mean. And why? I do not remember knowing why it even started. We felt like it came out of the blue, all of a sudden. That's what we felt.

T: Were you at that point concerned about your move, or was it just uncertainty over what it would mean at all.

P: We were not concerned about the move at that point. I don't think it had sunk in yet what was going on and that it would have any effect over any of our rights, because we already had everything planned for the move. We had work planned here, we had a place to stay, we didn't say any issues

with the travel at that point, everybody had up-to-date passports. We brought pets with us, so they had all their injections and were micro-chipped and had their passports. So there wasn't any issues for us at that point.

T: Did you follow the campaigning, or were you too busy?

P: No we didn't follow the campaigning. We were busy at that point, yeah. I had a 2 and a half year old boy at that point, so I was busy with him and unpacking. And my partner was very busy arranging, finishing one job and starting another one in another country. So we were very busy with that, so we didn't follow the campaigning.

T: How old are your children actually?

P: Now they are 5 and 8.

Leave Result, June 2016

T: Cool. Did the Leave vote get announced 2 weeks after you moved over? June 2016.

P: It was 2 weeks before. I can't remember the exact date sorry. I think it might have been even closer actually. I'm sure I was here June the twenty-something, that I was here already; 27th or so. For some reason I always thought there was 2 weeks in-between. But I voted. Within a very short space of time I was on an aeroplane.

T: What did you vote for?

P: To Remain.

T: And what were some of the motivations behind that?

P: Keeping in contact; being able to move between the countries, between the rest of Europe and Britain. Being able to visit family and friends, without needing any extra visas or whatever else that might change. I feel like we would be more-. It was already a really hard time for us meeting family and friends. I didn't believe that leaving Europe was going to help that in any way.

T: Were you frequently travelling between the Netherlands and Britain to visit both your and your partner's family?

P: Sorry, you mean were we visiting the Netherlands before?

T: Yes

P: Yes at least a couple of times a year.

T: And now do you do the same, but to England?

P: Yes. We're going tomorrow actually.

T: Oh yeah you said before. So when the Leave vote was announced, what were your feelings and initial thoughts on that?

P: Very emotional. It feels like there's more cutting off of contact. Not as much now that we have things like video calling. But becoming an expat, it becomes more apparent what things mean throughout the world. So with Brexit, well it wasn't called Brexit in the beginning, but with leaving Europe it felt like some of that stuff was to go even further and take out of our own control. We were controlling everything at that point, with regards to moving, but then it felt like if Britain was to leave Europe, that was going to take a lot more things out of our control, during what was already a stressful time for us, figuring out the rules and regulations between being an expat family within Europe.

T: What kind of rules and regulations are there for that?

P: Initially it was regarding getting passports for animals and injections. At the moment, we're going to be getting married as well, so we're trying to figure out what that changes with regards to laws and rulings over working, studying, taxation. Name-changing: name-changing here works differently to in England. So we don't know what's going to be possible.

T: So Brexit just complicates that, makes you feel like you've lost control over it.

P: So I don't know what's going to happen. I had a study in the UK; I was at university in the UK and I believe that I would need to get those certificates again certified by the Dutch DUO. I don't know what DUO is, but they're a certification people. I don't know what that's going to mean in the future; if they're still going to accept those or which certificates are going to be accepted of study from the UK, within the rest of Europe. I don't know what's going to be accepted or what else is going to need paying for. What I have learned is that if I want to study further, if I wait until Brexit happens, it's going to cost a lot more money.

T: Yeah, it will go up.

P: I think if I do the teaching degree which should cost a couple of thousand a year. If while I'm living here, I become *not* a European citizen, it's going to cost me about 8000 a year. That's a huge difference! That's what I've read so far.

[tangent about interviewer]

T: So you're looking to study again.

P: Yeah.

T: When might you do that?

P: Possibly this September. I don't feel like I can study in Dutch, so I'm trying to find something that's in English. To be able to do that, it may end up being online, like with the Open University, or it could be from any country in the world if the whole thing is online. Just as long as it's in English because my Dutch is not that good yet. So maybe this September. In the meantime, I don't know what's going to change.

T: Yeah so just waiting, seeing what happens.

P: Trying to find the right course in the right language for the right money. And which kind of qualifications are recognised here or in the UK.

T: So having a course that's recognised in the UK is still important to you, as well as having it recognised here in the Netherlands?

P: Yeah, I'm not sure about that. I don't know.

Chequer's Deal, Summer 2018

T: In Summer 2018, Theresa May released the Chequer's Deal. I have a headline from it.

P: A soft Brexit plan.

T: Do you remember that happening?

P: No. No, I must have missed that. Because I don't remember any agreements so far.

T: How much of the developments have you had brought to your attention whilst living in the Netherlands? Is it just the main ones?

P: Just the main ones yeah. Quite a bit lately because I've found some group to join from *British in the Netherlands*. So I've been getting a lot more information lately. But I was also on the IND website, I get emails from and the British Embassy, I get emails from. But I feel that you always have to try and read between the lines, like what it means for yourself, which is a bit of a headache. I've not heard so much from the British Embassy.

T: They've started doing targeted advertising on Facebook, I've seen.

P: I don't know so much about it. I've had a few emails. I didn't feel like it was very professional. It looked like they'd tried to make some kind of newsletter from some kind of information that they were trying to put together. But I also got some emails that weren't meant to be sent and then an email later saying "sorry about that; that was incorrect information". None of it seemed professional at all.

T: To contrast with that, what's been your experience of the Netherlands and how they've helped you during Brexit?

P: Sorry what was the first part?

T: What about your impressions of the Dutch government during Brexit?

P: I feel like they've done everything they can, so far. I have a letter from them, that's a temporary residence permit, in case of whatever happens. So I think that's very preparatory of the Dutch government. Very helpful. And taking care of the British citizens in that way; I guess they didn't have to do that. They could just take it on themselves and all the phone calls that they will probably get, saying "what can we do". But I think that's helped, probably, calm nerves. One thing that they keep saying is, you get the temporary residence permit and then you will get an invitation to apply for a permanent residence permit. Because the temporary one I believe is until June/July 2020. But what I

haven't found out yet is if it's actually possible to if you apply – people use words like “apply for” – but nobody says what happens if you actually don't qualify in 2020.

T: So the assumption has kind of been that you will qualify. But then-

P: And that's where a lot of anxiety, I believe, comes on.

Being a “multi-national” family

T: Does the fact that you are a multinational family, different nationals, does that concern you?

P: Yes. We've had some conversations here in the house over the past few weeks, looking at my options for becoming Dutch as well.

T: What nationalities do your children have?

P: They're classed as dual national. They are British and Dutch, because their parents are one of each. At the moment they have a British birth certificate, they have a British passport at the moment; but they can get a Dutch passport too, cos of their father. When we registered them here at the town hall, they put their nationality as Dutch, so they have both.

T: Do you feel like it matters more now that Britain's leaving the EU, to have European citizenship?

P: Yes.

T: Because obviously before it didn't matter that much.

P: It wasn't such an issue, no. But for us, even just going on holiday, we find that it can cause a lot of problems. Even with say holiday insurance or driving, so the different driving licenses and insurances and what we can get. But within Europe I don't know what I'm gonna need. Even if we just drive – because we can drive from here to anywhere without crossing water – we're not sure what we're gonna need, if we get stopped anywhere or because you can still drive across borders – we can still drive to France or Germany from here, or Italy, or Portugal, or Spain, I believe. But at the moment I don't know what I need and if we go to England and my partner is Dutch, he doesn't know what he needs. I'm ok going to England, my children are ok going to England, but he needs something probably, being a European; for me, the other way around. We just want to be on the same page. We never expected any of this to change. We thought we were all European and we had one happy family. We're feeling a bit split and we need to get back on the same page again. So if I become a Dutch citizen as well, we're a bit more back on the same page as a family, with regards to travelling, visiting the UK or travelling around Europe.

T: So it's just created lots of difficulties that you really didn't expect to have.

P: I worry what else I might not have found out yet, or what else we might need.

T: So there's like unknown unknowns, things you don't even know will be a problem.

P: My partner called. We're going to England tomorrow and we're driving, so. My sister had come across some issue online and she said “look ,you're gonna need to check what travel insurance you've got for the car”. Taking the Dutch car to England. I was like “oh I hadn't thought about that

yet". Here we are after March 29th. So my partner called his Dutch insurers and said "look am I insured to drive in the UK". And they said "well yeah, that's fine. You've got your insurance to drive". And he said "yeah, but it's after March 29th". And they said "yeah ok". He said "yeah, but that's going to Brexit". Then they said "oh, wait a minute. You're the first person to ask that question. We're going to have to get back to you". So they didn't get back to him straight away. They got back a week later, I think. They managed to find out that he is still covered under whatever insurance they've arranged for him. But it was interesting to suddenly come across things that you just don't know yet.

T: With you planning to become a Dutch citizen; what kind of route are you planning to do for that?

P: Well that is a lot of reading. I thought they just had the 2 routes, but then there's this third option because I was learning Dutch anyway. But there's an option route and there's a naturalisation route. And everybody kept directing me to the option route, because they thought I could do it as an option because I don't need to do it through naturalisation because-

T: It broke up just then. The video broke up; I didn't hear what you said before doing the naturalisation route.

P: Yeah I believe I can do an option route instead of the naturalisation route because we will be married this summer, so I end up married to a Dutch national. And then we have to have been living together, usually it's 5 years you have to have been living together. But also this summer, I will have been here 3 years and they have an exception – I can't remember what the exception is – but if you've been here 3 years you can apply. In reading, writing, listening and speaking in the language; you have to do a test over the Dutch market place, working and studying in the Netherlands, and you have to sign a participation statement. I don't know exactly what that is yet. But, I believe there is another test, I can't remember what it's called in Dutch or English, sorry. But we would qualify for the rules to be able to do that. Then there's another route if you do an NT2 exam, because then it's a higher level of Dutch. But I don't know if I can do that yet.

T: Would you be able to keep your British citizenship?

P: I believe so. At the moment.

T: Because of through marriage.

P: Because I'll be married to a Dutch national and it's all through naturalisation.

T: Will you have any concerns about property, either in the Netherlands or in the UK?

P: No. Not property.

March 2019 Brexit Events

T: Now I want to ask you what you've been thinking about the most recent events in Brexit, with the defeat of May's deal and then the extension. What were your thoughts about that?

P: It gives me a little bit of hope actually, that she might find a better deal. Or that the possibility of a second referendum can be higher. Or some other route coming out of this that could at least be given to the people. I don't know because I'm not in politics. But I know the longer it goes on, the

more chance there is of getting the best out of a deal, because the longer something goes on, the more people will say “right ok we’ll do this” or “ok we’ll do that”, the longer something goes on. It doesn’t help anybody’s anxiety. But it does just push people a bit and I think that’s what they do, a politicians’ technique really.

T: So gives you hope for a better deal.

P: Yeah.

T: What would you most like to happen?

P: I would most like Article 50 to be revoked. But I don’t think politically they can do that because that would go back on the agreement between the government and the people who voted, because of the percentage outcome. So that wouldn’t be fair. Any outcome that would stop it from happening would be nice. So we can keep all the contacts and we don’t visas and green cards, expensive studying. Best outcome I guess would then probably be either a People’s Vote or a second referendum. I think the longer it goes on, there should be a second referendum, because it’s giving the people time to learn, as well, what’s happening and what the outcomes are going to be, because nobody knew before and people are more informed now. So I think there should be a second vote.

T: And that would just give the politicians something to help them break the deadlock, I suppose.

P: That as well, because they’re not agreeing.

Moving to Another Country

T: You said earlier about the possibility of moving to another country in the future.

P: Yeah that was the original plan.

T: What are your plans around that?

P: I know my partner at least wants to work another year in his current role because the longer you work in a role, the more you build up knowledge, as well as respect for your role; then you really know what it’s all about. So he wanted to work at least another year there and then look at our options again. We feel like our options were not restricted before. Possibly after Brexit, going ahead, there are restrictions. If I was not to become a Dutch national, we would have more restrictions, I think. [pause] The rest of the family, my children and my husband, can do what they like, but I would be the problem; I would be the one with the problems. We will probably still move within Europe, but I would need to become a Dutch national, I think.

T: And you would have the European citizenship. And why would you move within Europe and not somewhere else?

P: Oh, I don’t know really. I always felt like Europe was one big family. And we could move maybe a bit more closer to the equator, you know, somewhere a bit warmer. I don’t know really. There is also the option to go and live in China for 3 years with my partner’s current job. Their head office is in Paris and they also have a head office in Belgium, so maybe we would move to France; probably not

Belgium. That's just what I've always looked at, so moving not too far from the UK, so that I can still visit family easily enough. And I hadn't yet considered moving further away, like China.

T: Even though in China the issues of European citizenship might not matter that much.

P: Well sure. I haven't looked into it yet.

T: But Europe is more culturally similar, I suppose, and closer to both of your homes.

P: Yes yeah.

Being an expat (Random Questions)

T: I have a few questions about just being an expat, less related to Brexit. Have you encountered any kind of problems with integration or anything, just from being an expat in the Netherlands?

P: I think the only issues have been very basic ones, like just not being able to speak Dutch. But with regards to any other problems, no. In the beginning I had an issue that was my own fault: my birth certificate didn't match my passport, which was an issue. I changed my surname when I was younger. So that got solved. Everything else has been fine. I was able to get a BSN number here, no problems and a bank account and a Dutch driving license, which was super easy to get.

T: Did you have to take a test for that?

P: No. Everything's been pretty easy. Probably because of Europe.

T: Yeah. Might be different in the future, but you wouldn't know.

P: I know everybody that hasn't done it yet has been advised to get their Dutch driving license, because I think it's not going to be possible after Brexit.

T: Well I'll have a think about that.

P: Yeah. I can't remember, I read somewhere that something was going to change and you wouldn't be able to get a Ditch driving license. I didn't read into it much because I've already got mine.

T: Are you particularly involved in the community in your local area?

P: Not loads. My partner's family live nearby, so I at least have contact with some Dutch people. And I made good friends with one of the neighbours in the street, so that's good as well. So a little bit with the Dutch, but mostly more than 50% I'm still in contact with other internationals. I help out with the International Women's Club, where a lot of people come from all over and we talk about life as an expat, together.

T: What was the reaction of that group towards Brexit?

P: I feel like they look at me like "oo, you come from England. What is going on in your country?" I hate when they approach me and they go "so, Brexit." So they are interested in what's happening and they ask me if I know what's happening, but of course I don't know what's happening.

T: Does it annoy you that you're associated with that? Do you want to get away from it all?

P: Yes. It does, yeah.

T: And that they expect you to have the answers just because you're British.

P: Yeah. And I told them that I'm going to England tomorrow, but that doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to find out anything more. But, what they do ask me, a lot of people ask me, especially my partner's family, they've been saying so "how do people feel that are in England?" because I have contact with people in England, friends and family. They're interested to know because they listen to the news and they know maybe what's going on politically, but they don't have contact with people in England. So talking about the feeling in England. If I actually try and approach the subject with anyone in England, they don't wanna talk about it.

T: They're tired of it.

P: So again I have nothing to say because all I can tell them is I feel people are putting their head in the sand because they're tired of the constant wondering what's happening next.

T: And I suppose internationals aren't as tired of it because they only see the big events. They're not completely involved in it all the time.

P: They're not. No, it's not affecting their daily life at all. So they're intrigued in what's happening and how it's affecting people.

T: Did you join the British expat group because of Brexit? Or were there other reasons?

P: Yes I did. No I joined because of Brexit, to see what else comes up; what else I might come across. I didn't know anything would change with the driving licenses; I only found that out being in the group. Luckily I had mine already. So maybe there's other things that will come up that people hear about. They come from all over the UK and maybe they come up against things and maybe there I can find out first because somebody finds out something first and then shares it with the rest. So yeah, I did join that because of Brexit.

T: Not because you wanted contact with other British expats?

P: No because I already have plenty of contacts here in Eindhoven. There's an expat hub in the city centre, which I personally visit and meet people. And then there's the International Women's Club where I already help, so I already have quite a few expats.

T: Sounds like you're involved with a lot of different groups and things. Very nice. I'm just checking my topic list.

European Identity

T: Well I think we can talk about some final wrap-up questions now, which are about identifying with Europe, more generally, outside of Brexit, just more about European identity. So firstly, how would you describe the term "European"?

P: Like I mentioned at some point earlier, it felt like all of the European countries were one happy family. It's easy to travel and easy to work and easier to study and get to know people in any of those countries that are all joint together.

T: Because of freedom of movement and shared citizenship.

P: Yeah. And the Euro, though not everywhere has the Euro. Mostly things for us, like you joined and you were able to just go to any countries and things would work similar to another country.

T: How did you meet your partner? That's a question I didn't ask.

P: At university. He was able to study in England, at that point, for his final year. I was just starting university, so we met there.

T: So your relationship came about, your family came about, because of the benefits of Europe, I suppose?

P: Yeah! And then we were easily able to travel in between the 2 countries.

T: Do you personally identify more with Britain, Europe, or both? Or maybe the Netherlands?

P: I still heavily identify with England. I guess, a bit more these days with the Netherlands, but still mostly with England.

T: But mostly with the national identities, rather than Europe?

P: Yes, yes.

T: And would you ever move back to Britain?

P: A large percentage, not. No. It depends what comes up with work or study. Not because I miss the land. Land is land. It depends on career routes.

T: Do you think there is much of a European identity, as a result of the being a European family, as you said?

P: Yeah I guess. We're a European family. World-minded, I guess. Open-minded to the world and the options.

Final Question: Britain or Europe?

T: Yeah. I guess I just have 1 final question, which I ask as the final question to everyone, so you might have already answered it really. As a result of Brexit and your stay in the Netherlands, will you stay in the Netherlands, or move back to Britain? And that's for in the short-term and in the next 5 years.

P: Sorry as a result of Brexit? We would still stay here. Still stay in the Netherlands. We just have to deal with whatever fallout there will be. As much as that might be costly to us, it's not gonna make me have to go back to England.

T: So just carry on with the plans, but there might be complications.

P: It will probably be costly, as far as I can tell, because I'm going to need to pay to do all the tests and things and become Dutch. It's not going to make me go back to the UK. In the next 5 years, no we'll still move forwards, not backwards [to the UK]. I don't think it's going to change anything so

that we would have benefits; I don't think we will benefit from looking for work in the UK. You never know, because I have all of my certificates from throughout college and university, or any extra courses I've done, are all in England, in English and from England. I don't think that's going to change anything with regards to moving anywhere else. English, I think, is still a widely, worldly spoken language. So there's not going to be anything overly significant to make us go back to the UK, as far as I can tell.

Motivations for moving to NL

T: One thing I've just thought of that I don't know whether I really understand is, if you'd been living in the UK for quite a while, then what motivated your move to the Netherlands, at the time that you did it?

P: We wanted to work. We wanted to move around the world. We stayed in England longer than we wanted to because my partner was doing a PhD. So we needed to wait until it was finished and then we needed to wait a bit longer because the process of finalising it and doing any corrections and then getting a print of that and doing the interview thing with it in front of the judges took like an extra year in total. But ideally I wanted to move before the children started school. So there was various reasons why I wanted to move here. 1 was for work and my partner's work; 1 was for a better education for the children, because as far as I'd learned there was a few things that were better here in the schools, than in the ones I went to. So they were mostly the two reasons. The third reason was to get to know my Dutch family better, as well, before we go anywhere else.

T: So in the future, you would just move forward to a different country, not "go backwards"?

P: Yeah. We were working in the north-east of England and the more educated my partner got, the less work there was. He was doing the same job he started on, he had worked with the same company for 12 years, but he wasn't getting higher or better paid and there was nothing else nearby. So we were gonna need to move and we didn't look at moving to the south of England; we looked at the Netherlands. Cos he had his PhD, but he wasn't getting forward in the company he was in. So when we looked for work, we looked over here, to see what the possibilities are based on the level of education.

T: Great. Well I think that's everything now then.

[end of interview]

P: So what is the title of the research you are doing?

T: It's called "Brexit from Britain or Europe?"

P: So getting both sides of the story. OK interesting, yeah.

T: Cos the question, while Britain is leaving Europe, will the expats living in Europe want to go with that or stay in Europe?

P: That's a very interesting thing to know from people. How it's influencing things. And you can plot the answers in some way?

T: Yeah I'm going to try to.

P: Is there any way of us finding out the outcome, what the general idea is of how things are going for people; not individuals, but more a general idea of how it's influencing people.

T: You mean of the study? Yeah. I can tell you, like generally, people are just gonna carry on in the Netherlands the best they can, like you said yourself. But, a lot of people said they really wouldn't go back to Britain, like it's made it completely impossible for them and they don't want to anymore.

P: Ok. Alright. Yeah. OK. Well thanks for that information.

[end of transcript]

Appendix 3.12 – Sean

Interview Setting: Koffie Leute, Utrecht; 4:30pm, 21/03/19

[Start of Interview]

Demographics

T: So we're going to start with the usual warm-up questions. Like your age.

S: I'm 26.

T: And your current occupation. I think I know a little bit already but.

S: So my actual job title is Enablement Specialist at an electric car company.

T: how long have you been there?

S: There for 4 years.

T: And the whole time living in the Netherlands?

S: Since 2013, so since July 2013.

T: Why did you come to the Netherlands originally?

S: Originally for a Master's degree.

T: And then you just stayed on afterwards?

S: I finished the Master's degree, moved away for a job, decided I hated that job, so quit a year later and then moved to the Netherlands because I wanted to move back to Europe, but I didn't know where. Didn't want to move back to the UK. I like living in the Netherlands to do my Master's, so thought "Why not move there and build my life there?" And I did.

T: So you went back to England.

S: No I went to India. So I finished my Master's in the Netherlands in 2014. I actually moved to India before I finished in January of 2014. Lived there until the end of November 2014 when I quit my job. Then I moved back to the Netherlands at the end of 2014 and I've been here ever since.

T: Your choice to come here was partly because it was Europe, rather than because it was the Netherlands?

S: Interesting question, because I definitely consider the UK to be part of Europe anyway. But yes continental Europe indeed. Yeah definitely.

T: Where are you from originally in the UK?

S: I grew up just outside Northampton.

T: Where are your family?

S: My family, uuh big question! My parents, so I guess my only actual close family, still live where I grew up, just outside Northampton. The rest of my mother's family live in Surrey and Sussex. My dad's family live in Belgium and Italy.

T: So on your dad's side you have more continental European connections.

S: Yeah my Dad was born in Italy and grew up in the UK. So my grandparents growing up, they were Italian.

Experiences of Brexit

T: So I think that's all of the opening questions. We're gonna talk now about your experiences of the Brexit Process moving through a timeline.

S: OK. I'll try and remember.

T: And how that affected your different connections within the UK and also the Netherlands, or Europe generally.

Feb 2016 Announcement of Referendum

T: So starting off in February 2016 when the referendum was announced. What was your initial thoughts when that happened.

S: It's a good question. I'm not sure I can remember exactly. But I was definitely... I wouldn't say I was shocked about the fact that there was going to be a referendum. No sorry, about that people wanted a referendum. I was shocked that it was actually happening, that we were actually paying attention, that the government was paying attention to populist rhetoric and pandering to this nationalism, horrible right-wing, you know xenophobic, racist point of view, whatever you want to call it. The rhetoric that was being voiced. The fact that they were actually paying it attention and giving the country a vote on something the people at the time knew nothing about. How could this be done. Nothing about what it meant to be a member of the EU or not be a member of the EU. I dreaded from the very beginning what the outcome would be. Was just terrified. I thought "surely this can't actually happen". But here's the chance that it can happen and it made me so sad, especially looking at 20th century European history, that we were giving this opportunity for a scapegoat for the country's problems to be named and the chance to actually blame it, "do something about it". So, horrified, is probably my way to put it simply.

T: Did you worry about the affect it would have on your life in the Netherlands?

S: Perhaps a little bit. But part of me always, well most of me, had the faith that continental European countries and members of the EU, especially early members, like the traditionally European countries, like France, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, probably wouldn't deport me. I felt safer here, than for example, I would have perhaps as an EU national living in the UK. My grandmother was still alive at the time and we had genuine concerns about what would happen to her because she never naturalised. She lived in the UK since the 1950s, but she was not British in any formal way. So we were immediately concerned about what would happen to her. She's since died. But yeah there was a concern. But for me, not really.

T: So you thought the main, original, EU countries would treat Britons better than Britain would treat them?

S: Definitely

June 2016 Leave Vote

T: Moving on to when the Leave vote actually happened. What happened for you then?

S: I actually went back to the UK to vote. Just because I didn't trust a post. I'd never voted by post before. I was 23 when the Leave vote happened. Having voted in an election or 2, because I lost count of how many we actually had recently.

T: It was a lot!

S: I had voted before and I'd always postal voted because I'd never had any reason to go to a polling station. I could do a postal vote which was great. But for something as important as the referendum I was not risking my vote not getting there, so I went back to the UK and voted. And I remember seeing the first results coming in from Gibraltar and being overwhelmingly Remain. Duh! Like we all expected that, it's not really a surprise. Going to bed and waking up in the morning my mother came into the room, woke me up, she was crying. And I was deeply saddened and shocked, but really not surprised.

T: Not surprised?

S: Really not at all. No.

T: Why was that?

S: Like my family in the UK are very, white working class. And I think if you ask anybody from that background, they weren't surprised. All of them voted Leave, generally. I'm the first person in my family to ever go to university. Even finishing secondary school. I don't know if... no-one in my family has even got GCSEs or O-Levels. It did not surprise me at all that people just read things in the Daily Mail and voted Leave. It does not surprise me. I campaigned intensely through social media, even phoned a bunch of my family in the run-up to the referendum to try and convince them. Of my mother's seven siblings, I convinced 1, apart from my mother, 1 person, one of my aunts, to vote Remain because her husband is from the EU, he's Greek. So she was more easily convinced. But the rest... No. Not a chance. They were disgruntled with the system. You know. Things, the way the UK was recovering or not from the financial crisis and going through all kinds of things. They just thought it must be the EU, what else could be to blame? And I saw this huge divide on social media between people I'd been to university with, you know Oxford's a very big bubble of upper and middle class people, who were like "uhh, stupid plebs voting Leave". Compared to everyone from my hometown and who I'd grown up with and my family who like "Oh yeah, of course". And then there were a few of us from university who I'm still in touch with who were like "yeah, well obviously this happened. Because it was going to happen". I think we all secretly wanted it not to happen, but I was really not surprised.

T: If lots of your family voted Leave, did that affect your relationship with them at all?

S: I'm not particularly close with them anyway. I never was. There were so many other reasons than the fact I'm educated and living in a different country. Definitely some of them, yeah. Partly because in the run-up to the referendum, through the Leave campaigning, my family were sharing lots of – how do I put this nicely – unpleasant things on social media, mostly xenophobic, Islamophobic, racist. And I would call them out on it and I still do. Yeah it did. There were people in my family that I have no contact with now. Although I don't know if the referendum necessarily triggered that, but they were always dicks and I don't think there's anything that would have changed that. But I think the referendum gave them a bigger space and platform to express their unpleasant views. Yeah. So definitely has with some of them yeah.

T: Has it affected your relationships at all with people in the Netherlands?

S: Um. No. Not really. They were a few jokes. A few jibes and comments at work, but nothing really no. I mean to be honest, before the referendum, UK's hardly ever been viewed as a happily European-identifying country, however you want to call it. When I first moved here in 2013 and tried to get a phone contract, I went into the phone store and they were convinced that I was not an EU citizen, despite it saying European Union on my passport. They had to phone their head office, where customer services checked that my passport was an EU passport. So no. I don't think it's changed much.

[tangent about passports]

S: There was definitely an air of concern and if anything it maybe even improved my relationship with people here because they felt sorry for me. But I wouldn't say it impacted me negatively, no. Perhaps, personally there was a little bit more concern because of the uncertainty of my future, but nothing really. I already have a job with a contract, so I was pretty sure I would be able to stay here and everything. I wasn't too worried. I don't think it had that much impact.

T: What kind of uncertainties about the future do you have then?

S: I bought a house, an apartment, in 2016, in April.

T: Oh between the announcement and the outcome.

S: So I'd already started the process when it was announced and then formalised the sale in April. So I was concerned about the future of my mortgage. Would I still be able to... Would I need a residence permit to live here? Would I need a visa? Would my parents be able to come and visit me? Could I go and visit them? Would I need to renounce my British citizenship and become Dutch if I wanted to stay here? Those kind of things.

Chequer's Deal and Withdrawal Agreement, 2018

T: Very big things. And do you think any of those concerns are being allayed since that time? For example, when they started releasing the Chequer's deal and the Withdrawal Agreement.

S: Those did not help. The only thing that gave me any relief and sense of confidence that my life wouldn't be affected, was when I received a letter from the Dutch government a few months ago, saying I could stay. Until that I had absolutely no idea.

T: That letter says about the transition agreement doesn't it?

S: Yes. It basically states that if there's a No Deal I can stay, I just have to apply for a residence permit. If there is a deal I have until the end of the transition period to decide. Something like that; it's been a while since I read it. Basically it says we can stay. So that makes me very happy.

T: Does it affect your job at all.

S: No! Well I don't think so. Assuming that the offer that Dutch government have put on the table. Assuming the UK either leaves without a deal or with a deal that allows me to stay, I'm pretty sure it shouldn't be affected because I'll still be able to work here. I also have a permanent employment contract, which doesn't state it is contingent on me being able to work here, because it wasn't necessary before. However, we have a lot of non-EU nationals working at the company, so I assume I'll get my visa sponsored. Really no idea, but I think it would be fine. Yeah. I don't think it's in their best interest to fire me. But who knows! [laughs] I mean also, I'm 26. If everything goes to shit, I can probably move and find another job somewhere else. It's not ideal. But the UK wouldn't be my first choice.

Connections with Britain:

T: Why is that?

S: Why would I not go back to the UK? I don't feel I belong there anymore. Whenever I go back to the UK, so many things annoy me. Like, I went back recently, about 2 weeks ago, and I landed at Birmingham Airport. All of the trains had been cancelled, to and from Birmingham from Euston, because somebody had been trespassing on the tracks at Euston about 12 hours earlier! For some reason, the highly incompetent British public transport network couldn't cope with that, so all trains were cancelled, with no refund of my ticket until afterwards when I had to claim it back. No offers of alternative transport. Nothing! No staff anywhere to help you. Just stuck! Thanks. Thanks Britain. The front pages of half the newspapers every day. I mean the Dutch newspapers aren't perfect, but every single day is this tirade. To me it all contributes to this, whenever I'm in the UK, this strong insular mentality. I mean it's an island. People are still under the impression that we're living in the 19th century and Britain's empire is going to be great again. I think even people like my aunt need to put the great back in Britain.

T: yeah the "great" thing is in all the country advertising.

S: It is yeah. "We'll never take the Euro because the Pound is so strong". Is it? Are you missing something? Did we ever have to join the Euro? No. We had an agreement. I mean, I just think about the UK and it just makes me sad, just this little island stuck in the 19th Century, Britannia ruling the waves. It just shocks me how people can be so set in their ways and stuck and forget that the world around them exists and the UK isn't this power it used to be. And I think what scares me most is when I talk to my older family members or acquaintances. They have lived through wars, or have childhood memories of the Second World War, and they think that leaving a union that helped keep peace for the longest period ever in European history, is a good thing? I just can't get over how much the UK feels like an island to me now. I never felt it before. Now I go back and am like "wow! I'm back on the island!" It makes me sad.

T: Endemic attitudes and no connections.

S: Exactly. Yeah.

T: But do you have relationships with British people in Europe?

S: Yes. I do. I'm trying to think who's British. Some of my colleagues are British. In my current job I have several British colleagues, but I'm only really friends with one of them, who left the UK pretty much for the same reason as I did. But she lived in Finland before she lived in the Netherlands. Yeah I have some British colleagues from my last job who are of very similar opinions to me. But I wouldn't say I actively pursue finding other British people. I have no interest in doing that whatsoever. I'm definitely not one of those people who misses things about the UK, like beans. I mean, I like baked beans but you can buy them here. I mean Heinz isn't even a British company so...

T: Isn't it?

S: No they're American!

T: But Cadbury's though?

S: No, not fussed. Give me Tony's Chocoloney any day over Cadbury's. Yeah it's much more ethical, tastes better.

T: That's true. It is more ethical.

[tangent about ethics of Cadbury's]

T: So you would just make friends with people based on who they are and not their nationality or anything like that?

S: Yes. I really hope. I know it happens, but I would hope that people do.

T: I mean because stuff exists like Facebook groups specifically for British expats and that kind of thing.

S: That sounds awful! I think I would get it if I were from a country like Sweden or Finland or maybe even somewhere with a stronger sense of national identity that isn't ... Well when some people see the flag of St George, the flag of England flying, they are maybe instilled with pride. But I think for most people in Britain, especially younger people, it's more a symbol of aggressive nationalism. That's obviously very different from somewhere like Sweden who really love their flag. I recently had a very brief lecture from one of my Swedish colleague about how beautiful their flag is, and especially how good it looks against a blue sky. Not everyone speaks Swedish or Finnish, or even Italian, Maltese, Swahili. So I imagine you might want to then mix with other expats or immigrants, foreigners, whatever; people from that culture. But I don't think the UK has a strong enough national identity that it's really necessary or worth celebrating outside of the UK.

T: But a lot of people that voted to Leave in the referendum would disagree I guess.

S: I agree and I would love to hear their answers as to what makes people British, apart from being xenophobic.

T: I guess the fact English is spread around everywhere kind of diffuses it.

S: Exactly.

T: Like a lot of the British cultural things are also everywhere. Like BBC is all over Netflix.

S: Yeah, which is a great testament to the superpower Britain once was, both culturally and politically, militarily. We had a huge global influence and that's great. Therefore, why is the fact that we're such a far-reaching multicultural society not a good thing? If we're celebrating how good we used to be with interacting with the world, albeit it in a negative way, why not celebrate the multiculturalism that brought to our island, rather than berating it as a problem?

T: That's true. Like the government is promoting multiculturalism on one side and is being nationalist on the other.

Languages

T: Let's bring it back to Brexit a little bit. Well actually, have you tried learning Dutch.

S: Yes. I have.

T: When did you try learning Dutch?

S: Twice. I tried at university, when I was a student. And then a couple of years later I started a Dutch course. But never completed it [pause] because it was terrible.

T: Why was it terrible?

S: Because it was overpriced, poorly organised, not very well taught. Everything I've learnt, I've either taught myself or I've picked up. I think if we were in a different country I would have tried a lot harder. But Netherlands is a great example of [inaudible]. I also don't work in Dutch. I work in English and Spanish, so to be honest there was never a huge amount of necessity for me to learn Dutch. I really should, but yeah.

T: Can you speak Spanish as well then?

S: Yes! Especially when it comes to work. I'd say my casual conversational Spanish is not what it used to be, but my professional Spanish is great.

T: That's quite unusual!

S: It is, yeah. [smiles]

News outlets

T: What kind of news outlets do you use? You mentioned earlier Dutch newspapers.

S: So I try whenever I can to always read the free Dutch newspaper that's on the train because there's always one lying around just to pick up. Just to try and pick up a few little words and see what's going on in the country. I read a De Volkskrant, the Dutch newspaper, on my phone. I usually check the BBC, also. Based on how the BBC reports about the company I work for, I do not trust

them anymore because its facts – facts is a strong word – the content is littered with inaccuracies, so I wonder where they find their information.

T: Yeah I was wondering the same with their reporting of the shooting on Monday.

S: Yeah exactly. I don't think anyone at the BBC speaks Dutch. They really should get Nick Clegg; I wonder what he's doing these days.

T: That could be a useful career idea actually!

S: Then I also look at The Guardian for that side of the spectrum and The Telegraph for the opposite end.

T: Ah so you deliberately read a variety of newspapers.

S: I love The Guardian but sometimes it's a little bit...

T: Too far?

S: Too far. I also use Euronews a lot, because I like how impartial they are. Which is probably why everyone thinks they're useless. But if I need to know the facts about something that's happening in Europe, or anywhere around the world pretty much, I find Euronews most useful for that.

T: And which one would you have followed for the referendum?

S: Ah, good question.

T: To get ideas of facts and what kind of thing to vote for, and developments.

S: At the time I'd probably use the BBC most. But then I would always balance that out with The Guardian, The Telegraph and also probably see what's going on in The New York Times, quite often as well just to check what other people have thought. But yeah, I think that probably the BBC was my main source because honestly at the time I thought they were the most balanced and accurate. My thoughts have since changed. And they have a really user friendly website.

T: That's true. So the fact it's British doesn't have anything to do with it?

S: No. Any English language would be fine.

2019 Brexit Extension

T: So let's move forward to the current events.

S: Oh great! [sarcastic]

T: The drama. So in March 2019 May's deal has been defeated twice and they've voted against the No Deal and there's now a possible extension of Brexit. I don't know if it's been agreed yet.

S: I don't think so, no.

T: But how has this been making you feel? Again with those uncertainties.

S: Ooh. How many bad adjectives can I think of? Annoyed, frustrated, exhausted, irritated. I just I don't really know what to think anymore. Frustrated is definitely the one I would use, I think everybody would. I cannot believe Theresa May seriously thinks she's making a success of this, if she is. If she thinks that then she's extremely delusional. I think the thing that makes me possibly the most angry is the fact that Brexit is seen as the will of the people because by a tiny margin there was a vote to leave the European Union. There were no conditions; just to leave the European Union. The deal that was negotiated supposedly on their behalf, was then rejected by the people who directly represent them in Parliament. Which to me says, this is not what the people want. If 52% of MPs had backed the deal, then yeah sure. But clearly that's not the case. So, I think it's time to ask the people what they want again.

T: So you'd support a Second Referendum?

S: Unfortunately, yes. I think it would be in some ways a terrible idea logistically because it would cost a fortune, it would take forever to organise. I think the turnout would be extremely low. Is there even a minimum threshold turnout for a referendum? I don't know. And this might sound awful, but I hope some of the people who have voted in the last referendum, the older people who decided it was a great idea to leave, have since died! Horrible thing to say probably, but you know. The fewer the old people voting, the better. Hopefully young people would turnout more for this. I don't know. I think the second referendum is a great idea. I don't know how well it would work in practice, but at this point I think it's maybe the only option. Yeah. And maybe the Remain campaign would do a better job. By just doing something; that would be a good start.

T: Rather than just responding to Leave.

S: Give everyone a free glass of Prosecco; tell them it comes from Europe; might change their mind.

T: So do you think Brexit will eventually happen?

S: Um. Honestly, yes. Unfortunately, as much as I would love to say no. Yes because I have a horrible feeling that Theresa May will continue to just run down the clock until, can't believe I'm saying this, next week; and we will leave because nothing else will have been done.

T: By next week?

S: I think there's a very strong possibility of it happening. Because the MPs have to agree on the deal next week right. That's the condition the EU has given for the extension, that they agree on a deal next week. Nothing has changed in the deal, again. So unless Theresa May is secretly a witch and magic is real. Or there's some sort of Guy Fawkes's ghost that comes back and blows up Parliament. I have honestly no idea what could happen in the next week. Kinda excited and terrified to find out. Do I think it will happen. Yes. Next week. Potentially. By the end of June. Probably. I just, I think yeah, as much as I would love to think otherwise, sadly yes.

T: If it actually happens will you be sad.

S: Yeah, I will be extremely sad. I think politicians, Theresa May in particular loves to talk about Brexit being this incredible democratic exercise. Are we forgetting the incredible democratic exercise which is the EU, was the EU, the formation of it, joining it. That's what should be celebrated, not the

fact that half of the country's most ignorant people decided to... You know there's nothing wrong with being ignorant, well there is, but you know, but you can't help. But half the country decided to say they wanted to leave because they were ill-informed about the benefits of being a member of the European Union. Yeah I think that's what the sad thing is really. The fact that what's so great about the EU has never been fully realised or known. I think being an island is definitely part of that. But, you know, Malta can manage, Cyprus can. Ireland get on pretty well. Yeah you can't get an abortion there legally, but Christ at least they know that being part of the European Union is good for them.

T: Maybe Britain's size makes it different because it thinks it's more powerful.

S: You mean in terms of like a Napoleon Complex, or because it's bigger.

T: Like geographically bigger and population, compared to the other islands in the EU

S: yeah, it's possible. I wish that it were that simple.

Identifying with Europe

T: We're going to wrap-up now with some questions on identifying with Europe.

S: OK

T: Starting with. I think you've basically answered this already, but do you identify with Britain, Europe or both?

S: Both.

T: Both?

S: Yeah. If someone asked me where I'm from... Actually this is an interesting question, probably because I'm a difficult person sometimes. If someone from outside of Europe asks me where I'm from I might just say Europe, especially in America. Or I might even say I'm from the Netherlands, because there will almost certainly come a point in my life when I've lived outside the UK longer than I've lived in it. If someone from Europe asked me where I'm from, I'd probably say I'm from Britain, but I live in the Netherlands. Yeah, I will always be British. I will always have been born and raised in the UK. How much I identify as being British, I don't know. But I always think that when I'm moving to other places: if I move within Europe, it doesn't really daunt me. Europe is, to me, at a level of homogeneity that I can feel comfortable in. I think I could be happy living more or less anywhere within Europe.

T: Western Europe or all of Europe?

S: Within the European Union, let's say that. Within the European Economic Area. Don't know if I'll be moving to the Ukraine in a hurry. But yeah, like the possibility of moving to Norway, or to Spain, or to Portugal, or to Italy, France, Germany, whatever, doesn't really... It feels like I would just be moving from one city to another. Moving to another continent would be completely different. I'd say culturally my identity is maybe superficially British, but at the core, European.

T: That's an interesting way to describe it. Would you find it easier to move somewhere else in Europe, like Germany, as opposed to back to Britain.

S: Probably. Yeah.

T: Because of all the things you mentioned earlier.

S: Yeah [raises voice]. I also had this problem for a long time- probably one of the reasons I left Britain in the first place was that there is nowhere I like enough in the UK to want to live there. Except maybe Edinburgh, but then I see Scotland as somewhat separate. I could probably live in Scotland if it weren't so cold and rainy all the time.

T: But then you'd have a whole new collection of identity problems about being English in Scotland.

S: I think I could probably put on a Scottish accent faster than I could learn German, so. I could give it a try.

T: It's funny how much I've heard people mention Edinburgh as a utopia.

S: I mean Glasgow is not without its problems, but it's a nice place.

Characteristics of Europe

T: You said about Europe having like a homogeneity. How would you describe the characteristics of that?

S: Good question. It's whether I'd describe it profoundly or on a superficial level, is where I'm stuck. But I think certain things that it's easy to notice. There's much more of a sense of community. Something that's always puzzled me about the UK and Brexit is that people often talk about things the way they were "before". There's no idea about when actually "before" is. They have this idea of this idyll in Britain when everyone was nice to each other and we were all friends. And there was this sense of "community". Now we've joined this huge community, we're part of this big community, but we choose not to participate in it. And I think in the rest of Europe there is much more of a sense of community on every level. Yeah. People are nice to each other on the streets more. There's much more a sense of collective good. People pay more taxes for things that are for the greater good. Like no-one in the UK thinks "oh I pay my tax and it goes towards the NHS or it goes towards keeping up the roads". They just see it as a burden. Whereas I feel like here I pay a lot of tax, but I see it going places and I'm used to it. Like my neighbours are nice to me here. But in the UK everyone is suspicious and so private. So there's definitely, in general Europe has a much more open mind. And I would say that comes from the way we're educated. In the UK, everyone's got this insular mind-set that comes from being taught from a very early age in school, in history and whatever, that Britain was [inaudible]. I can't believe we still teach people about the Empire and that it's taught as a positive thing. Um. And we're taught that English is the only language you ever need to learn. OK it's not the same for everyone, but it's very much the experience I had at school. Languages were not important. Most people in Europe speak 2 languages, not to a level of fluency, but I would love to know the statistics of the number of people that speak more than 1 language to like a basic conversational level. Like I think of my mother, for example, she could not probably order in a

restaurant in any language other than English. I doubt that that's the same in most places. So yeah. It's a mind-set thing, it's a cultural thing. Does that answer the question?

T: Yeah I think so. And do you experience that in your everyday life?

S: Yes.

T: Like with your neighbours and things like that?

S: Yeah, I really do. And at work. I mean I work in a place full of people from all over the world, but mostly from Europe. I just don't know if you could set up this kind of company in a place like the UK. I don't know if it would work in the UK. Maybe London is a bad example, because it's such a bubble in itself. But yeah. The fact that they also live in the capital city, would that happen in the UK. Are Italians rushing to live in High Wycombe? Maybe Edinburgh, big cities. But I don't think- But also that's because of universities like, mostly, or economic migrants, I don't think anybody's rushing to live in Cardiff for a better quality of life. Maybe if you're from Eastern Europe, Eastern Ukraine, but I can't imagine anyone running from Utrecht or The Hague to go and live in Aberystwyth, at least not for any good reason. Didn't need to rag on Wales there too much.

T: There are some pretty bits, but I wouldn't want to live there.

S: No, me neither.

T: Do you think that other British migrants would think of themselves as European?

S: No. Well, sometimes maybe. Do you mean here?

T: To here.

S: To here, probably. I don't know if the answer would be the same if you asked British people living in other places. Like retirees in Spain, for example. But I think here [the Netherlands], most people move to the Netherlands, at least in my experience, for work or to study, or a better quality of life, some kind of reason, personal reasons. But I think yeah, they probably have experienced life off the island, because they've met their significant other, or they've worked for an international company. So I think yeah, that's probably why. But I think here yeah, at least in my experience.

Aspirations for the Future

T: Well when you think about where you see yourself in 3/5 years' time. Firstly, where would you see yourself?

S: Probably still here [Utrecht]. I have no reason to leave. Yeah. Maybe in a different job at the same company. But I like my life. I have no reason to move.

T: And do you think that Brexit will impact that or not really?

S: I don't really know at this stage. If you asked me in a month's time I might have a better idea. Might have even less of an idea!

T: Is that because we still don't really know what Brexit will be like?

S: Yeah. And if there's no deal. Actually to be honest I think if Brexit happens and it happens badly, no deal, huge chaos, it will only make me want to stay here. Because there is no way I would want to move back to the UK. Absolutely no way. If it happens with a good deal and the UK somehow ends up like Norway. That could be a mess as well. Probably it wouldn't convince me to go back either. I think the thing is I never want to lose the right to live and work in the rest of Europe if I want to. And going back to the UK would do that immediately, if there's any kind of Brexit. If it doesn't happen maybe I will move back to the UK, who knows. It means I can keep my options open, but I'm not gonna risk it otherwise.

T: Because you don't want the risk of not being able to come back again?

S: Yeah, exactly, or go somewhere else. It sounds like a miserable life.

T: So you feel like your status is changing from a secure migrant to more insecure?

S: Yes, but I think only temporarily. Honestly, I think the uncertainty for me all comes from the fact that we don't know what's gonna happen. Hopefully what's going to happen, deal or no deal, no Brexit, whatever, I would be fine. But the fact that we have no idea is where the uncertainty comes from for me. I am certain, regardless of the outcome, that I will be fine. But the uncertainty comes from the fact that they don't know what the outcome is. I think I'm very lucky I've found a place that will not be kicking me out.

T: Do you know if any of the other countries have said differently?

S: I don't think so. I just don't think most of them have decided. I think Germany and the Netherlands both have. Or maybe other have and we just haven't heard about it, I don't know. They've probably got bigger things to think about. Let's face it, we're just a handful of people who don't – The Netherlands is not an example that's easy to use because there are so many Brits here. But how many British people live in the Czech Republic? Probably not that many. So why should the Czech Republic care?

[end of interview]