

Being Dutch in Argentina

Contemporary Dutch migration to Buenos Aires



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Thesis
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December 2010

Latin American
and Caribbean
Studies

El Holandes¹

Jinete[¶] de ojos azules
Sobre la pampa del mar
Y asi pudistes llegar
A esta tierra tan divina
Nuestra querida Argentina
que te supo covijar..

Gringo cabellos del sol
Con ojos color del mar
Comenzaste a galopar
Sobre el lomo de esta tierra
Que se brinda y que te aferra
Para no largarte más...

Tus hijos fueron llegando
A este suelo montaráz
El Chaco te dio la paz
Y un lugar para tu nido
Donde has llorado, has sufrido
Pero aprendiste a luchar..

Holanda quedó tan lejos
Pero esta tan dentro tuyo
Que hoy tu estampa con orgull[o]
Sobre el lomo de un caballo,
Luce en los actos centrales
De un veinticinco de Mayo...

Gracias mi gringo holandes
Por abrazar mi bandera
Bandera que tambien es tuya
Como tuya es esta tierra
Donde juntaste en silencio
Los granitos de tu siembra

¹ Blad Nederland 4 (november 2009).

* This poem was placed in Blad Nederland. A tiny caption states that this poem was written in memory of ‘el gaucho Holandés’.

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been enjoyable and fascinating at the same time, not only because the subject remained interesting to me all along and the fact that I was able to experience the adventure of doing field research in Argentina, but mostly because of the help and friendliness of the people that have participated and supported me throughout the process. I would like to thank all of my informants for taking the time to help me with my research, in particular Pepijn Boot and his wife who helped me in times of need. I would also like to express my gratitude towards Rob Pijpers, Saskia van Alphen, Bas Ovink, and Dieuwke van den Noort: your contributions to my research were very helpful and I thank you for being so warm and open towards me. I am also very grateful for my friends and family who have been very supportive and motivating. And most of all I would like to thank my supervisor Kees Koonings, who has been, without exaggeration, the best supervisor of all time to me. Without his critique and advice this thesis would not have looked the same. I hope you all enjoy the final result!

Abstract

This thesis seeks to analyze and understand how migration affects the Dutch identity of contemporary Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires. This subject is very atypical for migration studies as the underlying motivations to migrate are personal and non-economical in nature. In this day and age migration has become easier and less definite, making it a gradual process. The Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires all followed the integration strategy, are very individualistic and have not formed a tight Dutch community. The life phase in which the migration has taken place as well as the time spent in Argentina have some affect on national identity. The Dutch identity of the immigrants gradually starts to refer to ‘roots’, not to the contemporary Dutch society. A hint of disengagement with national identification may also occur. Nevertheless a gradual development to national identification with both the Netherlands as well as Argentina does not occur. The influence of migration to Argentina on the Dutch national identity remains very gradual and subtle. Nationality proves to still be a very strong identity.

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1. Introduction

“Why would anyone from the Netherlands want to come live here?” a cab driver in Buenos Aires once responded, after I told him what I was doing there. “If I could live in Europe, I would do so immediately!” This reaction wasn’t a unique one; I have often heard variations of it during my research period in Buenos Aires. It is true that the group of migrants that I was about to study, the contemporary first generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, is a special one. Migration research seems to always be about ‘others’ and why they want to come to ‘our land’, whether they were Mexican migrants in the United States or Turkish migrant workers in the Netherlands. But why not turn this around and research ‘ourselves’? Why do Dutch migrants move to Argentina, and how does this affect them?

Migration to a different society can have a strong influence on immigrants as it affects a lot of aspects of people’s lives. Dutch migration to Argentina is not a new phenomenon, as there has been a colony of Dutch settlers in the town of Tres Arroyos since 1889. This colony has been studied extensively by Fred Jonkind³ in the 1990s, but recent Dutch migration to Argentina has not been studied at all. The people that moved to Tres Arroyos did so in a completely different setting. Nowadays migration is a totally different matter because of new technologies and societal changes. This thesis is meant to shed some light on what migration means to contemporary Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires and how it influences their identification with their country of origin, the Netherlands. Consequently my research question is: how does migration affect the Dutch identity of Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires?

Migration, acculturation and identity form the conceptual storyline of this thesis. Since the Second World War migration theory has been growing in popularity and has become an object of study for various sciences. Even though perspectives on migration have changed theories often presuppose an economical motive behind migration.⁴ In that aspect contemporary Dutch migration to Buenos Aires is very atypical, and can therefore provide migration theory with new insights. Immigrants have to adjust to a new society, as they are no longer members of a majority group. Acculturation strategy theory suggests that there are different ways for immigrants to find their place in their new society and during this process

³ Fred Jonkind, ‘Ethnic identity, societal integration and migrants’ alienation: state policy and academic research in the Netherlands’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15 (1992).

⁴C.B. Brettell, and J.F. Hollifield, *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines* (2000).

are influenced by several different factors.⁵ The Dutch immigrants are atypical compared to most migration research so the choices in acculturation strategies that they make could provide us with significant insights. Following up, identity theory changed, also after the Second World War, from thinking of group identities as given features to considering group identity as gradually changing, but still referring to the past.⁶ The latest paradigm has put identity construction into the centre of attention; group identities do not necessarily have to refer to a past, but are constructed through imagining.⁷ Through the distinctive point of view of this thesis I hope to increase the understanding of how migration might influence identification.

In Buenos Aires I sought contact with different Dutch immigrants through the help of various Dutch organizations, as well as by using the snowball sampling method. This proved to be a very effective approach as everyone was very willing to cooperate. For my research findings I primarily used open interviews and participant observation. I participated in several social events like the ‘Holland borrel’ and the Queen’s day party to find out more about the Dutch society in Buenos Aires. I also visited several organizations like the ‘Asociación Holandesa de Beneficencia’, the ‘Cámara de Comercio Argentino-Holandesa’, the Dutch school ‘de Knikkers’ and the Dutch social club the ‘Nederlandse Vereniging’. On occasion I also visited two bars that were indicated as being Dutch; the bars ‘van Koning’ and ‘Dudui’. Furthermore I visited the town of Tres Arroyos where I stayed in the home of a family of second generation Dutch immigrants. Even though visiting Dutch organizations and participating in several events proved to be very productive, the open interviews were very revealing as well. My participants were very willing to discuss their migration with me, and provided me with surprising insights into how their migration had influenced their Dutch identity. I came back to the Netherlands with an abundance of usable material and some very pleasant memories.

It is important to note that my own Dutch national identity has played a role in my research as well. Because of this identity it was relatively easy for me to relate to my participants, and for my participants to relate to me. There was no language barrier between us and cultural differences between the Netherlands and Argentina also applied to me. It could be that because of this I was accepted more easily or that people spoke to me more frankly than they otherwise might have done. My Dutch identity however might also have

⁵ Michiel Baud ao., *Ethniciteit als Strategie in Latijns-Amerika en de Cariben*, (Amsterdam 1994).

⁶ Jorge Larraín, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* (2000).

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (1983).

made it difficult for me to distance myself from my research at times. I did my research while conscious of the pros and cons of my own Dutch identity in the process, but in how far it has affected my investigation and thesis is hard to say. I tried to use my Dutch identity to my advantage and hope it has given my research an extra level of meaning.

This thesis is structured into two sections: the first is the theoretical framework in which first migration theory, then acculturation and finally identity theory will be discussed. The chapter starts off with a section on globalization, the setting in which all the to be discussed concepts should be understood. In the following section the most important migration theories and their relevance to my research will be considered. Acculturation strategies and the conditions in which they develop will be the next in line. The final section will be applied to identity theory and what it has to say on national identities and the possible influences of migration on it.

The second half of this thesis is used to articulate my research findings. Parallel to the theoretical framework the first chapter discusses Dutch migration to Buenos Aires. First the immigrants' background will be discussed followed up by their motivations to migrate to Argentina. Next attention is given to choosing to actually stay in Argentina long term, which is usually not something Dutch immigrants decide initially. A concluding section will then finish this chapter.

Chapter four is dedicated to acculturation, and will commence with a section discussing the Dutch society in Buenos Aires and the several organizations and activities that it contains. The intensity of the contact between Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires is relevant to a better knowledge of the acculturation strategies used within the group. In line with the theory the next section discusses the image the receiving society has of Dutch immigrants, and how this has influenced their acculturation in Buenos Aires. The following section discusses the various aspects of the actual acculturation of the Dutch immigrants. This chapter is ended by a concluding section.

The final chapter is devoted to the expression of national identity amongst the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires. Its first four sections discuss identity expression in eating and drinking, festivities, news media interests and language. A section in which my participants articulate their own feelings and ideas about their national identity concludes this chapter. This thesis ends with a conclusion in which a summary repeats the most important aspects of the theory and the research findings, and an answer to the main question is given.

2. Migration, Acculturation and Identity

It is important to study the grand concepts that lay at the foot of my research in Argentina: migration, acculturation and identity. In the case of contemporary first generation Dutch immigration to Argentina, we should see these concepts in the light of globalization, and that is where this chapter will start. The globalization process has diminished distances, both in space as in time. The result is that migration has become easier and less definite. Globalization has also influenced group identification processes in an ambiguous fashion: on the one hand international sameness is created, while on the other hand the urge for uniqueness has grown.

Even though migration is not a new phenomenon but has existed throughout human history, it has taken on spectacular forms in the past few decennia. As a result migration theory has grown in size and importance substantially. In the section on migration I will discuss three major trends in migration theory and their relevance for my research. Also the historical context of the Dutch immigration to Argentina will be considered. In the subsequent section ways in which immigrants adapt to their new social context will be discussed, and what factors influence their choice in acculturation strategies. In the last and most complex section the question of what identity really means, leading up to what national identity entails will come to the fore. Here we will start off with individual identity, and its connection to group identity. Following this, several examples of group identity will be examined, leading up to the complex concepts of ethnicity and nationality. Several different theoretical trends concerning ethnic identity will be elaborated on, as well as the difference and similarities between ethnic and national identity. To conclude, the issue of how these terms should be used in the case of Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires will be considered.

2.1 Migration, Acculturation and Identity in a Global Setting

In this section the three main theoretical concepts that concern my research will be discussed. There is however one aspect of the modern world in the light of which all of the above named concepts should be seen, and that is globalization. Because of globalization, large scale and more accessible migration has become possible. Because of immigrants living in other

societies, acculturation strategies are born. Finally, the effect that cultural change has on group identity takes place in a larger, more universal setting, because of globalization.

Since the Second World War, globalization has started to accelerate, with increasing world-wide interactions, interchanges and movements of people, images and commodities as both its stimulus and its result.⁸ Travelling abroad has become more accessible as well as less definite in comparison to the character that migration had in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. For example, while living in another country it is still possible to see your family on your webcam, or work for your old job using the internet. The modern capitalist system of the early 21st century (meaning global flows of commodities and finance) and the accompanying modern communications technology have relativised the spatial dimension of human life.⁹ One could state that with globalization, technological speed-up resulting into more and more time-space compression has occurred.¹⁰

The acceleration of worldwide migration is both a consequence as a cause of this ongoing globalization. This phenomenon has always existed in human history, but has accelerated and became more visible in the twentieth century. Intensive global connections have brought different people in contact with each other, and with this contact came more knowledge and understanding of each other. In fact, many local communities in the world seem to become increasingly integrated into the global system on a political, economical and cultural level, and are increasingly aware of it.¹¹ According to the globalization theorist Roland Robertson, globalization is an increase in global interdependence and also awareness of that interdependence.¹²

Globalization has an ambiguous effect on group or social identities in the world. Through this awareness of the global situation, on the one hand the world is becoming more of a single unity. We are more aware of different ways of living and thinking, and therefore are more familiar with them. Because of globalization, even though national identity is still very strong, it has lost some of its appeal.¹³ We can see this in the increase of internationalized economy and the growing importance of supranational organisations. One could say that this started the erosion of the autonomy of the nation-state. On the other hand, contrary to what postmodernist thought had predicted, this doesn't mean that we will all

⁸ Jonathan Friedman, 'Global system, globalization and the parameters of modernity' in: Featherstone, Lash and Robertson ed., *Global Modernities* (1995) 69.

⁹ Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2002) 163.

¹⁰ Friedman, 'Global system, globalization and the parameters of modernity' in: *Global Modernities* 70. + Anthony Giddens, *The consequences of modernity* (Cambridge 1991).

¹¹ Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* 164.

¹² R. Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London 1992) 8.

¹³ Jorge Larraín, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* (2000) 41.

become alike eventually, or that nation-states will disappear.¹⁴ Social research has shown that group identities tend to attain their greatest importance in situations of flux, change, resource competition and threats against boundaries.¹⁵ In other words, in times of growing modernisation group identities will become stronger. The stronger these universalizing tendencies are, the stronger group identities, ethnic or national, will seek reaffirmation of their uniqueness and attachment to locality.¹⁶ Because of this ambiguity, identity has, more than before, become a question of choice rather than a given fact.¹⁷

2.2 Migration Theory

With migration becoming more visible in the passing of time, the interest in this subject has grown as well. Theories about migration go back to the nineteenth century, when, because of industrial developments, migration from the countryside towards the cities started to grow quickly. In the second half of the nineteenth century the first studies concerning migration were published. The most important studies concerning migration of the time were those of the American statistician Adna F. Weber and the German geographer E.G. Ravenstein.¹⁸

Nowadays there are three main migration theories that are not only used in Anthropology but also in several other disciplines like history or economy that all study migration. The first is the modernization paradigm in which the push- and pull model is embedded.¹⁹ In the middle of the twentieth century the migration debate was revived by the 1941 publication of a study by Dorothy Thomas. She introduced the now so often used concepts of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors: the difference between conditions that cause the emission of people in the place of origin, and factors that attract people in the place of destination.²⁰ This theory on migration came forth out of research on migration from the country-side towards cities because of wages and/or the excitement of urban life.

¹⁴ Friedman, ‘Global system, globalization and the parameters of modernity’ in: *Global Modernities* 70.

¹⁵ Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*) 99.

¹⁶ Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* 41.

¹⁷ Patrick Manning, *Migration in world history*, (New York 2005)174- 176.

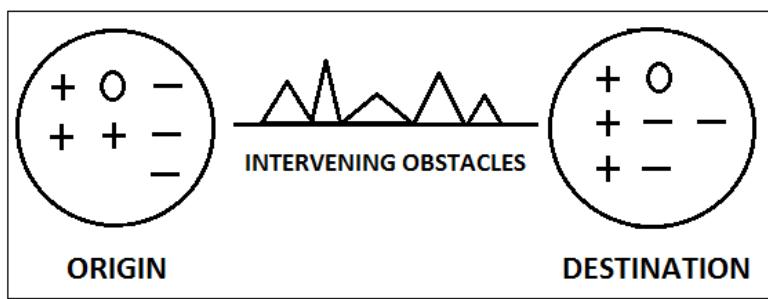
¹⁸ Pim Kooij, *Groningen 1870-1914: sociale veranderingen economische ontwikkeling in een regionaal spectrum* (Groningen 1987) 80, 81.

¹⁹ C.B. Brettell and J.F. Hollifield, *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines* (2000) 102.

²⁰ Kooij, *Groningen 1870-1914*, 82.

Nuances to this push-and pull model were made, for example by the demographer Everett Lee²¹. He underlined that there is always a strong subjective element to migration, because migration depends strongly on the

Figure 1: Intervening Obstacles , Everett Lee (1966)



individual's position. He showed that migrants should not be seen as the average of a society, but a specific group that react to specific factors, and where character, the life phase and personal conditions play an important role. 'Intervening obstacles' or conditions affecting the choice to migrate had to be taken into consideration as well, as shown in the model.²² Factors that push or pull the migrant are shown in the origin and destination balloons as plusses and minuses, with zeros standing for indifferent aspects. Between the two balloons the intervening obstacles are shown, representing the other conditions playing a role in the migration process. As the model illustrates, migration is more probable when the amount of factors that attract a migrant are more prominent than those that repel the migrant. This does not have to take place however, but depends on the gravity of the intervening obstacles.²³

The modernization theory had a positive starting-point on the issue because migration flows were seen as natural movements that would gradually solve itself while at the same time relieving both country-sides as urban areas of various problems. The movement from areas with abundant labour but little capital towards areas rich of capital but short of labour would gradually balance the two areas out, like some sort of development aid for rural areas. This has been proven wrong: rural areas don't develop more because of migration, and migration flows have only increased instead of slowing down.²⁴ The push- and pull elements of the theory however survived, as they are useful in discussions about the reasons why people migrate.

The shortcomings of the modernization theory made our next migration theory, the historical-structuralist theory, come to the fore, which is closely related to the world-system and centre-periphery paradigms. It draws heavily on Marxist thought and on dependency theorists like André Gunder Frank (1967) and world systems theorists like Immanuel

²¹ Everett S. Lee, 'A Theory of Migration', *Demography* 3 (1966) 47.

²² Model: Archives de Documentes de la FAO www.fao.org/docrep/x1372t/X1372t06.gif (23/01/2010).

²³ Kooij, *Groningen 1870-1914*, 83.

²⁴ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 103.

Wallerstein (1974).²⁵ Historical-structuralist theory is more macro-level and sees migration from the perspective of a global economy, in which core-periphery relations exist. Instead of migration being a natural solution to poverty, here migration is seen as a result of the development of underdevelopment. Developments in the centers of the world economy create inequality and awareness of the better life in these areas, and thus the relatively worse life in others, when compared. This encourages migration and ultimately causes more inequality, because these core regions in the world economy profit while the periphery does not. The global market, national and international policies and especially capitalist development have generated migration streams, not individual choice.²⁶

This theory also received a lot of critique, especially concerning the last mentioned issue. Dissatisfaction with the portrayal of migrants as passive reactors was the most pressing concern, causing a paradigm-switch towards looking at migrants as embedded social actors.²⁷ Anthropology moved away from localized analysis and studies to a more global and transnational way of thinking. According to transnational thought there are social fields that transgress geographic, political and cultural borders in which migrants operate.²⁸ Because of improved transportation and telecommunications the social distance between sending and receiving societies has been shortened. The outcome of these changes is that migrants can travel freely between different societies and are no longer uprooted. Their movements change communities: not only with economic remittances but also with social remittances. Transnational theory showed that national identities were not as easily defined as thought before, but blurred and also negotiated and constructed.²⁹

Together with transnational theory other closely related theories on migration became visible. Migration network theory is one of them, as is the concept of the ‘imagined community’ introduced by Anderson³⁰ and topics related to transition into a new society. Migration network theory shows that within the social fields that transgress more traditional borders migrants have made networks of friends and family, which facilitate migration by reducing the costs.³¹ These networks are self-perpetuating as every new migrant strengthens the network. As for the ‘imagined community’: old ideas about borders and communities

²⁵ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 103.

²⁶ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 103.

²⁷ Norman Long, ‘From paradigm lost to paradigm regained?: the case for an actor-oriented sociology of development’ *Revista europea de estudios latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 49 (1990) 4.

²⁸ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 104.

²⁹ N. G. Schiller and G. E. Fouron, ‘Terrains of blood and nation: Haitian transnational social fields’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (1999) 340-367.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (1983) 3.

³¹ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 107.

were let go and new thinking about space and place was born. Together with the idea of ‘global space’ the concept of the ‘imagined community’ came to life, which can be described as the “use of the memory of place to construct imaginatively their new lived world”.³² Also concerned with the process of ‘trying to fit in’ in a new society is the idea of transition. With migration to a new society a period of transition takes place, which is a process of moving from outsider to insider. The way this goes also depends on the way the larger community thinks about immigrants. So here the topic of reception and representation of the “immigrant other” comes to the fore, showing that the receiving society has its own influence on the transition of the immigrant.

Theories on transnationalism and social networks have shifted the focus from the individual migrant to the migrant household, showing that there are always others involved in the choice to migrate. These households or social networks are the link between the overly micro and macro visions on migration as seen in the first two named migration theories.³³ It provides more understanding of the migrant than the historical-structuralist theory does, while it also includes the migrant as a decision-maker in the process. It also combines social and cultural variables together with economic variables.

Dutch migration to Argentina

In the nineteenth century the European migration towards Latin America started to grow. The total amount of European migrants to have gone to Latin America is estimated on seven to nine million people.³⁴ Their main destinies were first of all Argentina, with around four million migrants. Brazil took on a good second place with two million European migrants, followed by Cuba, Uruguay and Chili. The European immigrants were welcomed with open arms by the Latin American governments. In fact, they tried to stimulate European immigration as it was believed that these people would help the Latin American countries to improve their culture and their race.³⁵ Europeans were believed to have a superior civilization, development and modernity that Latin American countries were eager to develop as well. This government policy has to be understood in its own time, as the nineteenth century was one of scientific racism and social Darwinism, and as the Latin American elite was strongly tied to the European culture these ideas were also part of Latin American policy. This

³² Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 105.

³³ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 107.

³⁴ Michiel Baud ao., *Ethniciteit als Strategie in Latijns-Amerika en de Cariben*, (Amsterdam 1994) 91.

³⁵ Baud , *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 92.

positive attitude towards European immigrants stands in stark contrast with the way Latin American immigrants were and are received in America and Europe from the twentieth century onwards, and other Latin American immigrants were received in Argentina as well. The nice welcome Europeans received and still receive has positively affected their chances of social ascent in their new society.

The Europeans that emigrated in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century were more economically motivated to migrate than nowadays. In the case of the Netherlands, Dutch migration to the United States, or any other destination for that matter, never attained very considerable proportions, at least not before the Second World War. In this period only in the catastrophic year of 1847/48 emigration peaked with 1.7 percent of the Dutch population leaving the country. In this year potato blight and political turmoil drove people to migrate, but otherwise emigration was modest. Between 1820 and 1920 only 380,000 Dutch men and women emigrated, what put the Netherlands on a comparable emigration level with countries like Denmark, Switzerland and Sweden.³⁶ The first Dutch migrants that went to Argentina and started a colony in Tres Arroyos belonged to this small amount of people leaving the Netherlands.

Nowadays there are still people emigrating from the Netherlands. In the passing of time the necessity to migrate away from the Netherlands because of the poor living conditions have faded, but still there are enough Dutch people who decide to leave. Since the 1960s the Netherlands has been an immigration land as a result of globalized labor migration and follow-up, but, against all expectations, since 2003 more people are leaving the Netherlands than settling there.³⁷ A part of this tendency can be explained by return migration of former immigrants, but the rise of the emigration of native Dutch people is not so easy to explain. According to Dalen and Henkens (2008) one of the most probable reasons behind this emigration is unhappiness about the contemporary Dutch society. The main shortcoming of the Netherlands that drives these people away is the lack of space, silence and nature and the high population pressure that causes pollution, criminality and an unfriendly mentality. So the causes of their migration have to be sought in the public domain, and not in their personal lives. People are even willing to trade some of their personal benefits, like salary, in return for an improvement in the public space.³⁸

³⁶ Michael Wintle, ‘Push-factors of Emigration: The Case of the Province of Zeeland in the Nineteenth Century’ *Population Studies* 46 (1992) 523.

³⁷ Dalen and Henkens, *Weg uit Nederland: emigratie aan het begin van de 21e eeuw* (2008).

³⁸ Dalen and Henkens, *Weg uit Nederland: emigratie aan het begin van de 21e eeuw* (2008).

This might indeed explain a lot of Dutch migration, and namely that to other European countries. Still, this explanation seems to be shortcoming in the case of Dutch migration to Buenos Aires, as this city does not have a more favorable public domain than the Netherlands does: lack of space, silence and nature, and high population pressure are possibly even worse than in the Netherlands. As I will demonstrate in chapter three, in the case of the contemporary first generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, their main motivations to migrate are usually of a more personal nature.

2.3 Acculturation

As has been said before, contacts between people have increased and societies have become more diverse because of it. A wide variety of cultural groups have to find a way to adapt to new cultural environments, something that is not always easy. Acculturation is the process of change in cultural characteristics that occur in one or more groups as a result of long lasting contacts between groups and individuals of various cultures.³⁹ There is a psychological level to acculturation; changes in behavior, norms, and values or identity of the individual can occur. When talking about acculturation, it is important to realise that a group is made up out of different individuals, and that the experiences of these individuals are unique from the group as a whole.

The psychologist J. W. Berry distinguished two issues that determine the acculturation attitudes of people; the degree in which they want to hold on to their own culture and the degree in which they want to be a part of the new society.⁴⁰ There are four different acculturation strategies to be distinguished coming forth from these two positions; integration, separation, assimilation and marginalization. People who use the integration strategy see both contact with the receiving society as a maintenance of the own culture as important. The separation strategy implies the active maintenance of the own culture and a rejection of contact with the host society. Assimilation indicates quite the opposite; these people are not interested in the preservation of the own culture and see contact with the new society as more

³⁹ Winny Bakker ao., ‘Personality and Dutch Emigrants’ Reactions to Acculturation Strategies’ *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 36 (2006) 2864.

⁴⁰ Bakker, ‘Acculturation Strategies’ 2865.

important. Finally, marginalization stands for a low need to engage both in contact with the host society as in the maintenance of the native culture.⁴¹

The integration strategy makes it possible to maintain the own culture while at the same time becoming full members of the receiving society. This strategy seems to be the most desirable, especially from the immigrant's point of view, because it does not involve giving something up that is a part of their identity.⁴² Not only is the integration acculturation strategy the most popular among immigrants, it also appears to be the most effective one and is positively related to health and well-being, self-esteem and social competence. This is probably because integration parallels dual identity, a concept that refers to identification with both a subgroup and the dominant group, and is said to result in more harmonious intergroup relationships.⁴³

The choices people make in acculturation strategies partly depend on environmental factors, but individual differences seem to influence these choices as well. Why does one individual choose to integrate, but the other to separate? As the following section on national identity will show, individual identity is an ambiguous concept. It is both created by the surroundings in which an individual lives, as well as his or her autonomous personality. These two aspects are very hard, if not impossible to separate. The individual identity that comes out of this process can have certain personality aspects that influence the acculturation of the individual. The research on the role of personality in acculturation has focused on the multicultural effectiveness of individuals. There are five different personality dimensions that can be recognized that stimulate this multicultural effectiveness; cultural empathy, open-mindedness, flexibility, social initiative, and emotional stability.⁴⁴ Their influence on adaptation strategies has not been studied, but it can be said that they can be tied to the more daring strategies of integration and assimilation. Even though I did not study the personality dimension in the affect that migration to Argentina has had on Dutch immigrants, it is important to note that difference between individuals is important and affects acculturation.

So it is clear that all kinds of different factors influence the way in which an immigrant or group of immigrants acculturate in a new society. According to Baud et al., there are three main factors that influence 'ethnic strategies'; the strategic choice of the acculturation of

⁴¹ Bakker, 'Acculturation Strategies' 2865.

⁴² Bakker, 'Acculturation Strategies' 2866.

⁴³ Bakker, 'Acculturation Strategies' 2867.

⁴⁴ Bakker, 'Acculturation Strategies' 2870.

immigrants.⁴⁵ These three factors are the character of migration (whether it is voluntary or involuntary), the image the receiving society has of the migrants and the opportunities of social ascent for the migrants in the receiving society. First of all the degree in which the choice to migrate is voluntary can differ and is a conditioned one, as it can be a free choice but still one made out of necessity. When people are forced to migrate it is to be expected that they will try to hold on to their original group identity and that they reject the culture of the receiving society, especially in the beginning⁴⁶. In other words, involuntary migration can easily lead to taking on the separation strategy. Time, however, can radically change the initial positions of migrants. For example, ideas about returning to the ‘roots’ have become a primary rhetorical idea in a lot of cases. On the other hand, voluntary migrants are expected to have a greater initial willingness to integrate into the new society.⁴⁷

The image the receiving society has of the immigrants is very important for the way they will be welcomed, which in its turn affects the choice in acculturation strategies. An initial positive attitude towards their new home country can for example diminish when immigrants feel they are treated with hostility. This image is of course not a static one, but dependant on different factors like size, social-economic position, political orientation, the status of the motherland and so forth.

The image of the European migrants that came to Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, like the Dutch immigrants in the Argentinean town Tres Arroyos, was a positive one. These people were seen as the bringers of modernization and were welcomed with open arms. They were characterized as hard working, perseverant, honest and having a long term view on things.⁴⁸ In general, the Dutch in Tres Arroyos did not use the defensive assimilation strategy because of this positive image and the relatively minor cultural differences. This positive image and their self-image of superiority, combined with the negative image the Dutch immigrants had of the local population, it is not hard to comprehend that preservation of the own culture was appreciated. This shows that a positive image often stimulates the choice for some form of integration strategy, allowing immigrants to hold on to their old group identities while at the same time giving them a feeling of being welcome.

This can be very different, as in the case of Latin American and Caribbean migrants that moved to the United States.⁴⁹ Ethnocentrism and a general feeling of superiority was

⁴⁵ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 92.

⁴⁶ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 94.

⁴⁷ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 95.

⁴⁸ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 95.

⁴⁹ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 96.

widely spread in the receiving society what gave a lot of immigrants the feeling that they were not welcome. As a result, a lot of immigrants tended to look for protection amongst their own people, which often means the choice for the separation strategy. A negative image can also have the opposite result: some immigrants choose to assimilate as quickly as possible, leaving their former identity behind. The choice between separation and assimilation has more to do with personal circumstances than a collective strategy.⁵⁰ Higher educated migrants more often choose assimilation, as their education has already made them more familiar with the western culture. Also former immigrants tend to accentuate their assimilation, as to distinguish themselves from newcomers.

As for the third factor; the possibilities that immigrants have depend strongly on the image the receiving society has of them, as this image often works as a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁵¹ Europeans have until now always had the advantage of this. A lot of European nineteenth-century migrants have ascended socially and economically relatively quickly, and received high positions in business, government, science and politics. You can clearly see this when looking at the large amount of political leaders in Latin America of European descent. These types of successes worked as examples for new European migrants, stimulating them to adapt to the new society even quicker. Not surprisingly, more upward possibilities make integration easier, while fewer upward possibilities lead to separation or marginalization.

This is why European migrants in Latin America mostly developed a two sided strategy⁵²; on the one side they maintained ethnic networks and kept on underscoring the supposed virtues of their background. Especially northern Europeans were able to profit from the prestige, respect and status their background provided for them and put them in a strategic advantage compared to the receiving population. On the other side it was necessary for their social ascent and membership of the local elite to learn the local language, culture and history and make family ties with the local elite families. This happened for example by strategic marriage, or giving their children Spanish or Portuguese names to show their new cultural identity and help their social integration. It is clear that this two sided strategy leads to Berry's integration strategy.

So the European migrants had to find a balance between stressing their 'otherness' and assimilating into the new society, a dilemma that in some way is still present nowadays.⁵³ European migrants still have a privileged position in Latin America because of the still

⁵⁰ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 96.

⁵¹ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 97.

⁵² Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 98.

⁵³ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 98.

present importance the local white elites attribute to the ‘purity’ of their *raza* and their appreciation of European culture. In general, holding on to this culture is seen as wise, and a lot of European migrants tend to send their children to European schools, even when their attachment to their origins is not that great anymore, just to show their connection with their European ‘roots’. To this end social clubs are often established as well as statues or parks in memory of the national history of the receiving society donated by European immigrants. In this way they show the local population that they are good and dependable citizens and compatriots.

In the Dutch colony of Tres Arroyos the conservation of the Dutch identity strengthened the group structure. As said before, there also was another reason for this preservation.⁵⁴ The positive image of the Dutch nationality within the receiving society was an important reason for the colony to stress their Dutch origins. The Dutch in Tres Arroyos have tried to optimize the balance between conservation of group identity and assimilation,⁵⁵ as the usage of ethnic networks does not exclude a degree of integration in the broader society. As Jonkind has shown in his research on Tres Arroyos, assimilation and maintenance of a (supposed) ethnic identity can very well go together, and can generate strategic advantage.⁵⁶ In other words, the Dutch in Tres Arroyos formed a relatively closed ethnic group in Argentina while integrating in the larger society at the same time. This example shows that the four acculturation strategies are not always mutually exclusive and that there can be various degrees in the intensity of the acculturation strategy chosen.

2.4 National Identity

To find out how migration to Argentina has affected the national identity of Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, it is important to know what national identity really is. While in first instance national identity seems obvious (I am from the Netherlands, so my national identity is Dutch) in reality it is a difficult concept to comprehend. Trying to explain ‘national identity’ means taking into consideration the notion of identity and everything it represents, but also trying to explain identification with a ‘nation’. To this end we will look at what identity really means both on the individual and on the group level. To clarify what we

⁵⁴ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 105.

⁵⁵ Baud, *Ethniciteit als Strategie* 105.

⁵⁶ Fred Jonkind, ‘Ethnic identity, societal integration and migrants’ alienation: state policy and academic research in the Netherlands’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15 (1992).

understand under ‘group identity’, we will look at some important examples. I will review the most important approaches to ethnic and national identity. Also the difference between ethnic and national identity will be looked into, as these concepts often cause confusion, and my choice to use the term national identity will come into question. Finally some theoretical ideas about the effect that migration can have on identification will be discussed.

Identification

The question of identity stems forth out of a very basic human question that people have been asking themselves throughout the ages: “Who am I?”. An answer to this question is not easily given, if not impossible to give. On the one hand identity stands for individual sameness: every being is identical with itself.⁵⁷ On the other hand identity has a qualitative side: the individual identity is made up out of different social roles and cultural categories.⁵⁸ A person can be a father, but also a son, a bank director, a Christian, and so forth at the same time. In this, there are two sides to the formation of the individual identity. On the one hand we have the role the environment of the subject plays in this process, and on the other hand there are the individual’s innate, genetically determined personal traits.⁵⁹ In other words, the individual identity is unique and personal, but never exists without influence from its social environment. Also, identities that are established earlier in life are stronger and less flexible than identities acquired later on in life. This is because of the so called ‘primary effect’, which implies that first experiences have greater weight on the individual than things that are later on experienced in life.⁶⁰

From this we can conclude that identity is not a given thing, but is a social process of construction. According to Larrain, this process can be divided into three elements: the cultural, the material and the “other”.⁶¹ The cultural is the collective, cultural determined context in which a person lives. Cultural customs and values can be incorporated into the individual identity. With the material element of the process of identity construction Larrain means that people tend to identify with their possessions, extracting a form of identity from them. Finally, in the construction of one’s own identity the existence of ‘others’ is inevitable. On the one hand we internalize the opinions that others have of us, while at the same time we

⁵⁷ Jorge Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* (2000) 24.

⁵⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (1991) 3.

⁵⁹ Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* 24.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 18.

⁶¹ Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* 24.

acquire differentness by comparing ourselves to others. The expectations that others have of us also become our own self- expectations, while in comparison to others we expect our personal selves to be consistent, and have relative autonomy of what others think of us.

Collective identities

Personal and collective identities are impossible to separate, as they are mutually necessary and interrelated; the one can't exist without the other. Collective identities are created by individuals, but these individuals also make this creation possible. For example, a church member and worshiper of the Catholic religion cannot exist without the collective Catholic identity and vice versa. The distinction between individual and collective identity is therefore only analytical.⁶²

Being part of a group reassures an individual of the integrity of his own personal identity and is a source of self-esteem.⁶³ Collective identities or group membership in its turn is all about in-group favoritism. People who identify as a group have bigger hopes and expectations of, and stronger feelings for each other. Similar to the individual identity, there is a separation between one's own group and people who don't belong to that group. An in-group automatically also creates an out-group or people with whom there is less identification. This leads to out-group homogeneity and stereotypes (we are all different, but you are all alike).⁶⁴

There are different kinds of collective forms of identity, which we can, according to Larrain, call 'cultural identities' and according to Smith call 'social identities'. While Larrain doesn't make a list of existing collective identities, Smith divides them into a few different categories: familial, territorial, class, religious, ethnic and gender.⁶⁵ He adds that these social or cultural identities are not static, but are subject to negotiation. Identifying with a collective or group can happen in all of the named social classifications and more. Sharing some of these culturally determined characteristics makes us part of groups.

While we can agree or disagree with Smith's list of social categories his ideas on the subject are illuminating to the concept of collective identity. First of all, he states that gender is a very pervasive and universal identity that stands at the origin of several other differences. The obvious example of collective identity that refers to gender is feminism. However,

⁶² Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* 30.

⁶³ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 19.

⁶⁴ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 26.

⁶⁵ Smith, *National Identity*, 4.

because gender is such a universal classification dividing humans all over the world into male and female groups, it is also more difficult to inspire collective consciousness and action.⁶⁶ Territory or space also generates collective identities on a widespread basis. Even though identification with territory seems more stable as a collective identity than gender, fragmentation and disintegration happen frequently, and are also difficult to define geographically.⁶⁷ The collective identity of class is the most important one of human kind in Marx's theory. History has shown us however that it is not that easy to unite people from all over the world just because they are workers. The reason for this is that economic self-interest is never a good and stable base for a collective identity.⁶⁸ Religion on the other hand works more effectively as a unification of people, because even though religions might often focus more on one specific social group their message is universal. Now we reach Smith's social category of ethnicity, under which he places national identity.

Ethnic and national identities

In the scholarly debates about the subject different lines of thought on what group identity really is have developed, namely essentialist, historical-structuralist and constructivist theories. While essentialist thought states that group identity is static and unchangeable, historical-structuralists believe that group identity is a connectivity born in history and carried forward through tradition. Constructivists go one step further; they state that group identity is a social construction that is partially invented in people's minds. A part of its existence and impact is there because we believe it exists; it is an imagined community.⁶⁹

Ethnicity is a relatively modern term used in the social sciences, and in the anthropology replaces what was once before seen as 'tribe' or 'race'. In those pre-World War II days, essentialism was the dominant theory on group identity. The social scientists of that time believed that ethnic identity had a fixed character which was not open to change.⁷⁰ The problem with essentialist thought was that it didn't allow for any change in cultural identity: some cultural features of a given group were recognized, while others were excluded. Cultural differences were exaggerated as well as fixed for ever. However, after World War II a switch occurred in the dominant anthropological thought away from the belief in static, isolated and

⁶⁶ Smith, *National Identity*, 4.

⁶⁷ Smith, *National Identity*, 4.

⁶⁸ Smith, *National Identity*, 5.

⁶⁹ Smith, *National Identity*, 7.

⁷⁰ Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* 37.

homogeneous societies and towards the belief in flux, process, ambiguity and complexity of social worlds.⁷¹ The term ‘ethnic group’ came into use, as it is a more dynamic term than ‘tribe’ and suggests contact and interrelationship with other ethnicities. It is also a less ethnocentric term as virtually everyone in the world belongs to an ethnic group or nation.

So ethnicity doesn’t mean the same anymore as ‘tribe’ used to mean. But what does ‘ethnicity’ encompass? Ethnicity seems to mean ‘a people’, but what is ‘a people’? It is difficult to give just one definition of ethnicity, as there is a lot of ambiguity involved when a group of people is designated. The boundaries of a group are problematic to describe as criteria like language, territory or culture are almost never exclusive.⁷² This difficulty has resulted into social scientists making a lot of different definitions of ethnicity and nation and nationality. These new lines of thought can be divided into historical-structuralist thinkers like Smith and Edwards, and constructivist social scientists like Anderson and Eriksen.

Historical-structuralist theory has been mentioned before concerning migration theory. The historical-structuralist concept of Larrain on what group identity is should however not be confused with the former meaning of the phrase. Time is seen as linear, in which group identity is carried on through different generations, changing, but with some form of origin in history. According to Larrain, this theory combines essentialist and constructivist thought. It unites the notion of group identity having its roots in history with the belief that cultural identity is not fixed and therefore open to change.⁷³ ‘Historical-constructivism’ could therefore be seen as a more accurate and less confusing term for this train of thought.

We can recognise historical-structuralist thinking in the definition of ethnic identity given by John Edwards, as he combines belief in construction of society with the belief in linear-time: “Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group- large or small, socially dominant or subordinate- with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for continuation, over generations, of the same socialization or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc.) or by more subjective contributions to a sense of ‘groupness’, or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remote, to an observably real past.”⁷⁴

Smith’s description of a nation even sounds more essentialist, even though he does recognize cultural change in his work: “[a nation is] a named human population sharing a

⁷¹ Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2002) 10.

⁷² Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11.

⁷³ Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* 38.

⁷⁴ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 161.

historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members".⁷⁵

The final group-identity theory mentioned here is constructivist thought, which was introduced by Benedict Anderson in 1983. According to him, a nation is an "imagined political community"⁷⁶. While the state is a political and territorial unit, the nation is a subjective or 'imagined' community. With imagined he does not mean invented, but a mental construction: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."⁷⁷ The idea of imagining a nation is easily applied to other forms of group identification as well, which brought into life constructivist thought.

Constructivists believe that ethnicity or nationality is not based in time, and it is not possible to find objective criteria to describe ethnicity or nationality. Group identity is not a given feature but a construction in the thoughts and practices of people. This doesn't mean that ethnic or national identities don't exist, but that they exist because we have constructed them. Eriksen's view on ethnicity, in which not the group itself but the contact of the group with others is seen as more important, is in this line of thought. Instead of describing features that ethnic groups usually describe as characteristic for their group, the psychological processes that create group differences are taken into account.⁷⁸ Eriksen states: "Ethnicity is an aspect of a social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction."⁷⁹

Having mentioned the dominant lines of thought concerning ethnic and national identity, it seems to be time to take a look at the differences and similarities between those two concepts. 'Ethnicity' and 'nationality' seem to have a lot in common with each other, so how can we keep the two apart? The one feature of a 'nation' and 'nationality' that is different from 'ethnicity' is its connection with a state. Yet historical-structuralists and constructivists have different thoughts on what the relation between a state and its citizens really means. On the one hand historical-structuralists find that the concept of the nation is essentially meant as the aspiration of a state and 'a people' coinciding, even when in practice this almost never occurs. In such a nation the communal ancestral history, language and culture are experienced

⁷⁵ Smith, *National Identity*, 14.

⁷⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (1983) 6.

⁷⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (1983) 7.

⁷⁸ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture difference* (1970) 6.

⁷⁹ Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12.

as binding factors which define the ‘people’ of the state. In this line of thought the greatest difference between an ethnic and a national group is the desire for political autonomy or ‘national self-government’.⁸⁰

Continuing this line of thought, some scholars believe that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, and that therefore it can be seen as coming forth out of pre-existing ethnicities. Looking at the issue in this light it might not be so strange that ethnicity and nationality are easily confusable: while nationalism has a more political meaning, ethnicity is its original cultural content.⁸¹ Just to show the subtlety in the difference between a national and an ethnic movement; when an ethnic group develops aspirations for political autonomy they automatically become a nationalist movement. This is why some scholars see nationality as a category of ethnicity, or as good as synonymous with an ethnicity.⁸²

Constructivist thinkers stress another aspect of nation and nationality, namely the civil and territorial part of nationality.⁸³ From this point of view the ‘people’ are not necessarily an ethnic group but only citizens of a certain state. In this line of thought nationality cannot be seen as a category of, or synonymous with ethnicity. While historical-structuralists exclaim that nationality means being member of an ethnic group which in its turn forms a state, constructivist believe nationality means being a citizen of a state, no matter what ethnicity you are. According to Eriksen, both visions are compatible with each other. Nationality can be seen as a construction with an ideological nature: wishing to forge a link between the cultural group and the state, and in doing so creating a different order of community.⁸⁴ The two different angles are not mutually exclusive but explain different aspects and trends of national identity.

We should not forget that, contrary to what postmodernists predicted, national identity has only grown in strength. Nationalisms are so strong because the concept of the nation can draw upon all sorts of social and cultural collective identities.⁸⁵ As a result national identity can easily merge with other types of identity, like class, religion or ethnic sentiment. This also explains why nationalism, the ideology, can be so easily combined with other ideologies like liberalism, fascism and communism. So, in essence national identity is multidimensional, and can therefore refer to many different things.⁸⁶ In these modern times family connections have

⁸⁰ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 163.

⁸¹ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 163.

⁸² Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* 98.

⁸³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (1983) 10.

⁸⁴ Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*) 99.

⁸⁵ Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities* (1999) 18.

⁸⁶ Smith, *National Identity*, 14.

diminished, the impersonal state has gained importance and the role of religion has weakened. As a result the nation has become a stronghold of identity in these times of international capitalism.⁸⁷ This is why, according to Smith, “national allegiances are still very strong, and of all the collective identities national identity is probably the most fundamental one.”⁸⁸

So what does a national or ethnic identity encompass in our case? What is ‘Dutchness’ and what makes someone ‘Dutch’? Characteristic for national and ethnic identities is that it is difficult to answer these questions, as they have unclear boundaries and ambiguous criteria.⁸⁹ National and ethnic ideologies try to tell us that there is an answer to these questions. However, the answers that they give about what makes a certain nationality so special are never a perfect fit with social reality. In society boundaries are not that fixed: someone can for example be ‘a bit Dutch’ or ‘not really foreign’, depending on what traits a person accumulates in his identity. National identities, like the Dutch national identity, don’t have strict criteria or boundaries; it only has vague and changing frontiers. That is why I believe that the Dutch princess Máxima correctly stated in 2007 that the Dutch national identity does not exist;⁹⁰ it is impossible to give a definition of ‘Dutchness’.

When talking about the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, this raises the question if they form an ethnic group in Argentinean society, and if my reference to their Dutch identity should be called ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’. I have chosen for ‘national’ because their identity refers to their background in the Netherlands, the nation-state, and calling this identity ‘ethnic’ would have made the subject to which it refers confusing. Still, one could argue that the Dutch immigrants that live in Argentina are no longer members of the Dutch nation-state, but form a minority group in Argentinean society and should therefore be called an ethnic group, with an ethnic instead of national identity. This raises the question whether or not the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires really do form an ethnic group in the first place. As will become clear later on in this thesis, I have not experienced these people to form a strong, connected group, but instead as highly individualistic. Even though there are connections between the Dutch immigrants, most of them don’t function like a group or share the feeling of forming a group together. Because these people are individual, first-generation, immigrants that have retained their Dutch citizenship and are, as I will show, still involved in Dutch

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 23.

⁸⁸ Smith, *National Identity*, 143.

⁸⁹ Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* 113.

⁹⁰ ‘Máxima: Nederlandse identiteit nog niet ontdekt’ *NRC handelsblad* (25-09-2007)

www.nrc.nl/binnenland/article1846825.ece/Maxima_Nederlandse_identiteit_nog_niet_ontdekt

transnational social and cultural practices and spaces,⁹¹ when referring to their Dutch nationality these people refer to their own history and continuing contacts with the Netherlands. There exists no real feeling of forming a minority group in Argentinean society. Therefore, having had to make a choice I decided to call their sense of identity ‘national’.

Finally what kind of effect migration has on national identity comes to question. Immigrants will have to face a major change of status after emigration; suddenly they are no longer members of a majority group, which can have important consequences. The social identity theory or SIT tells us that suddenly no longer being a member of the majority group can threaten an individual’s identity. SIT says that individuals want to see the group to which they feel they belong as better than others in order to achieve a positive social identity. When this social identity is threatened people will try to enhance it using identity-management strategies, like the before mentioned acculturation strategies.⁹² For example, the assimilation strategy can be seen as a way to improve the own social identity by leaving the lower status minority group. In order for this to occur the dominant group has to have porous boundaries and has to be willing to accept others as full members of their group. When immigrants perceive these boundaries to be impermeable they will easier adopt a separation strategy.

The self-categorization theory or SCT can be used to explain the changes that can occur with group memberships after a major change in context, like immigration. This theory states that people “...define themselves in terms of a shared social category membership by accentuating intra-group similarities and intergroup differences on relevant dimensions.”⁹³ For example, when a person shares a social category like nationality with others this individual will subconsciously see similarities between him or herself and others of the same nationality, while seeing differences between him or herself and individuals of a different nationality. Self-categorization can apply to a large range of social categories as we will later on see, and is a dynamic and context-dependent process. An individual can categorize him or herself as “Dutch” in a European context, but within a context that includes people of different continents this individual can categorize himself as “European”.⁹⁴ It is important to realize that Dutch migrants do not necessarily have to identify only with the national group, but at the same time may identify with a regional in-group or with a bigger, broader group.

As discussed in the previous section, acculturation strategies are very important when it comes to possible changes in national identity. The literature suggests that successful

⁹¹ Schiller and Fouron, ‘Haitian transnational social fields’ 366.

⁹² Bakker, ‘Acculturation Strategies’ 2866.

⁹³ Bakker, ‘Acculturation Strategies’ 2868.

⁹⁴ Bakker, ‘Acculturation Strategies’ 2868.

integration into a new society can cause an immigrant to gradually develop a ‘dual national identity’, which encompasses identification with both the subgroup and the dominant group in the new society.⁹⁵ The Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires do not form a subgroup in the same sense as this theory suggests. The possibility however remains that the contemporary first generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires do develop dual national identities that refer to both ‘nations’, when successfully integrated in Argentinean society.

⁹⁵ Bakker, ‘Acculturation Strategies’ 2867.

3. Dutch migration to Buenos Aires

Like most of the great cities on earth, Buenos Aires attracts a lot of immigrants. Even though compared to other immigration groups there are not that many Dutch immigrants in the city, those that are there have an interesting story to tell. Compared to others, their migration is very atypical. Three approaches to migration have been introduced in chapter two. These theories incorporate the assumption that migration goes from poor to rich, and that the motives of these people are usually economical in nature. This might be true for a lot of worldwide migration, but the case of the first generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires shows that it is not always so. Other motives must have driven them to move to Buenos Aires, and that is what we will be looking at in this chapter.

Modernization theory, which was based on migration from rural to urban areas, states that migration is a natural phenomenon that will eventually balance itself out.⁹⁶ Apart from the development in world migration proving this prediction to be wrong, this theory doesn't apply to the first generation Dutch migrants in Buenos Aires. Their motivation to move to Buenos Aires was not economical in nature in the sense that they moved to Buenos Aires to find a job because of having problems finding one at home. Also the choice to move to Buenos Aires instead of other urban centres closer to home is not explained by this theory. The push- and pull model however is applicable to our group of migrants when we replace the economic factors with the motives of our research group.

The historical-structuralist approach to migration doesn't fit the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires well either. This theory states that the global economy has created dependency between different regions of the world. Migration is created by this 'development of underdevelopment' and not so much by individual choice.⁹⁷ On the one hand globalization has opened the doors to migration for the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, as migration is now less definitive and easier to do because of cheaper travelling and the internet. On the other hand, this migration wasn't forced by the global market and politics at all, but very much caused by individual choice. Also, moving from the Netherlands to Argentina doesn't fit in the schematic of this theory, as the Netherlands is not an underdeveloped region but would rather be the receiving end of the migration streams.

⁹⁶ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 103.

⁹⁷ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 103.

Transnational and migration network theory tell us that there are social fields transgressing geographic, political and cultural borders. The shortening of social distances has enabled people to travel freely between different societies. Migration networks are often used to help fellow migrants to make the journey and settle down, lowering migration costs and risks and thereby stimulating further migration.⁹⁸ It is true that for Dutch migrants to Buenos Aires migration is less definitive and easier to do than it once was. They however don't come to Buenos Aires to work and save money to send to family or take home with them when returning to the Netherlands and neither do they have or depend on migration networks.

So existing migration theories help us to understand the concept of migration but do not explain the case of the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires. To find out the motivation behind this migration, we will start off by discussing the background of these Dutch immigrants. This will help us understand what kind of people they are and what possibilities they have in life, generally speaking of course. Next we will look at why they decided to move; what were their motivations and how voluntarily were they? In the third subchapter their motivation to actually decide to stay in Buenos Aires is discussed. In these modern times moving to Buenos Aires is not an irreversible decision like it used to be, presenting the choice of staying or returning to those who decided to come to the city. This chapter will be concluded by a summary.

3.1 Background

Education is one of the most important things that form a person: it gives an individual more chance in life and more freedom in what they want to do. From what I have seen, most of the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires have had an above average education in the Netherlands and sometimes partially in Argentina. All of them finished high-school and a subsequent education, and often had a university degree. In the Netherlands they were or would be the well educated middle- or even upper-class. Almost all of them traveled a lot before settling down in Argentina, and have seen a lot of the world. So it is safe to say that these are people with a lot of possibilities in Dutch society, as well as in many other countries. They have a lot of chances in life, which they exploited and continue to exploit. Their background has helped

⁹⁸ Brettell and Hollifield, *Migration Theory* 107.

them to be able to make certain life choices, like starting a new life in Argentina, which others might not have had the chance or the willingness to make.

Still, there are also a lot of differences between the backgrounds of the people I have spoken to. The life phase in which they moved to Argentina varies per person. This is important because, as discussed in section 2.3, of the ‘primary effect’: identities that are established earlier in life are stronger and less flexible than identities acquired later on in life.⁹⁹ Some informants barely finished their (University) studies before moving. In fact, some of my informants actually moved during their studies or were inspired to move to Argentina because of their studies. Femke for example is one of these people who got acquainted with Argentina as a consequence of her studies. She had decided to do her research for her final thesis in Buenos Aires, in the year 2001. She did return to the Netherlands to complete her studies, but a year later she gave up her job in the Netherlands and came back to Argentina, to live there together with her Argentinean boyfriend she had met during her stay in Argentina. Tim, a thirty year old businessman, also moved to Argentina at the age of twenty-four, right after finishing his studies in the Netherlands and Germany. Samantha hadn’t even finished her studies when she moved to Buenos Aires. Four years later she returned to the Netherlands to finish her classes, only to return to Argentina right afterward.

Other Dutch immigrants I have spoken with moved to Argentina when they were a lot older. Some already had a career in the Netherlands, like Bram, who moved to Argentina after retiring. This psychologist had already had a long career, and has already made enough money to live from and only works a bit for his old practice via the internet for his own enjoyment. Marieke moved to Argentina at the age of thirty-five, leaving behind her own successful tourist office in the Netherlands. As one can imagine, the differences in background between the people who have moved to Argentina at a younger or an older age is very big, and influences the way they acculturate to Argentinean society. Some of them had barely lived in the Netherlands, while others left behind a job, and sometimes also their children. Naturally the life phase in which the migrant leaves the Netherlands influences the way they acculturate, and the manner in which their migration affects their national identity.

⁹⁹ Edwards, *Language and Identity*, 18.

3.2 Motivation to move

Motivations to move to Argentina are different between people. Still, the fact that almost all of my participants moved to Argentina mostly because of their partners stands out. In fact, from all of my informants Sofie and her husband are the only Dutch couple I have met. So the majority of these Dutch immigrants moved to Argentina or decided to stay there for their partners. As much as they were interested in Argentina and as much as they loved to live in Buenos Aires, for most of these people the partner was their main motivation to actually decide to stay in Argentina. As in the case of Samantha:

“I met my boyfriend, an Argentinean, in Europe when he was traveling. I then went to visit him in Argentina and I enjoyed it so much here that I stuck around.”¹⁰⁰

I have been told by various people that Dutch immigrants without an Argentinean partner tend to return to the Netherlands in general. Also, when a Dutch-Argentinean relationship ends, some migrants decide to return as well. For example, when Femke broke up with her first Argentinean boyfriend she had decided to return to the Netherlands definitely. Her plans changed however when she met her current boyfriend.

Nowadays people with different nationalities come into contact with each other easily, and if a serious relationship follows, migration of one of the partners is a logical result. I have heard different reasons from my participants why they chose to live as a mixed couple in Argentina instead of the Netherlands. One often heard argument is that the Dutch government has made it very difficult for these mixed couples to live in the Netherlands. They have to comply with a long list of demands. I am not sure about the exact demands as my participants have told me different and conflicting stories about this, but that is the result of changing immigration laws in the Netherlands. I can only say that it is very difficult to fulfill all the demands, and that a lot of couples aren't able or don't want to go through all that. Thomas is one of these people who had difficulties with Dutch immigration laws:

“My wife then came over [to the Netherlands]. [...] but then the problems with the immigration rules in the Netherlands started. And I didn't suffice those conditions in advance as a self-employed earner. [...] The law states you have to live separated for six months, and that already seemed strange to me. [...] So then I thought: Amsterdam is full of illegal immigrants, she will fit in as well. That all went fine until she

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Samantha, 05-04-2010 (author's note: all names of participants have been replaced with pseudonyms out of respect for their privacy.)

became pregnant, and there was no possibility whatsoever to get her insured. There was nothing we could do, we had no choice. She obviously had to return, so I had to as well. [...] because of the Dutch law it came to be that I left the Netherlands.”¹⁰¹

Other reasons given for the choice of these mixed couples to live in Argentina are family related or work related. In Argentina family is considered more important than in the Netherlands, speaking generally. The pressure from the Argentinean partner and family to stay in Argentina can be great. Hendrik, a Dutch immigrant living in Buenos Aires since five years, told me indirectly in an interview that he only moved to Argentina because his wife persisted, and that he personally would rather live in the Netherlands.¹⁰² An example of a work related reason to settle down in Argentina is that of Mariska and her husband. Her husband studied law, a study that is very specific for the legal system of one country. This would mean that he wouldn’t be able to work as a lawyer in the Netherlands. Mariska didn’t follow such a country specific education, so it was just more logical for them to settle down in Argentina.¹⁰³

Apart from work related issues, modern technology has also increased migrational flexibility among people. I am not only speaking about modern travel, which has shortened the time and money necessary to go to Argentina and the Netherlands. I am also thinking of the internet: almost all of the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires use the internet to talk to their family and friends in the Netherlands on a daily basis. Some participants have told me that if this would not have been possible they probably would not have moved to Argentina in the first place. Bram for example uses the internet on a daily basis to speak, write, or text with his children in the Netherlands. He told me that this was very important for him, and that he would not have moved if this wouldn’t have been possible.¹⁰⁴ Jan, a 61 year old marketing consultant, told me exactly the same:

“The difficulty is, I have three children with my ex in the Netherlands, and that is the only thing that isn’t perfect in my life. I am far too far away from my children. [...] Luckily internet and skype exist. Where it not for those things, I don’t know if I would have been able to keep at it. It would have been very difficult for me, maybe too difficult.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Interview with Thomas, 11-03-2010

¹⁰² Interview with Hendrik, 30-04-2010

¹⁰³ Interview with Mariska, 03-05-2010

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Bram, 28-04-2010

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

The internet is also used by several people to continue to have work relations with the Netherlands. So, in some way the internet has motivated more people to actually migrate than otherwise probably would have.

For a lot of people the adventure of living in another country and experiencing and learning from another culture were also important pull-factors. This counts for people with and without Argentinean partners. For example, Sofie and her husband primarily moved to Buenos Aires for this reason. When I asked Sofie why she had left the Netherlands, she responded:

“I wanted to live in a foreign country for a long time already. After my studies I travelled through Asia for five months and I found it very interesting; I got to know a lot of different kinds of life, philosophies. To widen your perception. Thereafter the foreign has always attracted me. And I travelled a lot anyway, on vacation. And then I thought for a long time that I wanted to live in Paris, but at a certain point I didn’t want to anymore, to just start working in a bar at the off chance. [...] Then I met my partner and then his sister went to live in Surinam. Because of all those things it is kind of logical that the possibility exists to live in a foreign country. For me the most important thing was to get to know another culture and another way of life, to learn from and out of curiosity.”¹⁰⁶

Femke told me, when I asked her why, apart from her Argentinean boyfriend, she initially decided to come live in Argentina:

“Yes, I wanted to see more, not directly with the intention to go and live there, that not at all. [...] In the Netherlands in a way everything is more predictable obviously. And yes, also a bit for the adventure. Less of the predictable. Less the ‘agenda culture’.”¹⁰⁷

Another motivation to migrate to Argentina closely related to the need for adventure is dissatisfaction with Dutch society. Dutch society is described as boring, harsh and too individualist, capitalistic and too busy. They describe life in the Netherlands as, in their eyes, too planned out; people study, work, marry and have children. Some informants experienced this as a life lacking of adventure, and found moving to Argentina to be a fine escape. This is a criticism of Dutch society that is often repeated. Still, the importance that people give to the different push-and pull factors varies per person; for some the Argentinean partner is the most important reason, for others it is the adventure, for others both. When I asked Sofie why she wanted to leave the Netherlands, this is what she responded:

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

"It was more the adventure. I found the Netherlands too easy; in the Netherlands when you just try your best and apply for a job, than you will get that job. Well, everything isn't that black-and white, but most of the time you can find work and live a good life, and everything is arranged for you and you don't have to be afraid of anything. As long as you stick to the rules. And I found that a bit too easy. I thought, well, I can always still do that. [...] I think people are very busy with their work; I found it not very spontaneous. [...] I thought that it was a bit too organized, too structured. People are very individualistic and people reserve little time for family and friends, and they are mainly busy with chasing their career. And the beautiful house they have to have, or the iPhone or whatever. [...] ... there is little true interest in each other."¹⁰⁸

Tim was the only informant who had an even more critical vision about modern Dutch society, and explicitly told me that this, next to his partner, was his main motivation to leave the Netherlands:

"I wanted to be with my Argentinean girlfriend of that time. But the impulse to leave the Netherlands already existed a long time, because of other reasons that are still active. For example the fact that I don't see any future for young people in the Netherlands. [...] And what also put a lot of weight in the scale for me was the situation at the time with Pim Fortuyn. That I found that the Netherlands had become adrift. [...] I primarily thought that the entrepreneurial man wasn't rewarded or appreciated as such in the Dutch society. [...] I found all of those attributes of the Dutch society and the situation of the time to which I couldn't relate, and in which I didn't see any changes happening on short term. I thought: I am young and I am just going to try it abroad. If it doesn't work I can always still return. [...] Because of those reasons together with my girlfriend of that time I left. And I am still here!"¹⁰⁹

However, for most of my participants the choice to actually stay in Argentina was mostly based on their Argentinean partners. The choice to come to Argentina in the first place however isn't necessarily the partner. The country itself and Buenos Aires specifically have their own attraction. Buenos Aires historically has strong ties with Europe, and continues to do so. Also the common knowledge in Europe and especially the Netherlands about Argentina is also greater than of other Latin American countries. When I asked Thijs, who works at the Dutch-Argentinean chamber of commerce, why so many Dutch people decide to come live in Argentina, he responded:

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

“Argentina draws enormously, is enormously popular. [...] Because in Argentina Latin America and Europe are united. So you have regarding culture, knowledge level, economy, innovation, you name it, you have a very high level there. Especially in Buenos Aires and then specifically in certain districts. But it is still so that it is also a Latin American country; it is far less organized, far less ‘boring’ than the Netherlands and that has its advantages and disadvantages. So people who want more adventure and more variation. And furthermore Argentina also has a lot of attractiveness regarding landscape, tango, soccer. Furthermore Argentina also is a country with a very clear image. A lot clearer than for example a country like Paraguay or Ecuador. [...] Argentineans like to say that Buenos Aires is the Paris of Latin America. There are a lot of bookstores, a lot of theatre, a lot of concerts. The quality of life can be very good here.”¹¹⁰

When I asked Femke if there was a reason why Argentina appealed to her so much, she said:

“Yes, I think Buenos Aires is a very nice city. You do feel the European roots here to which everyone refers. Even though I also find it very Latin American. I really don’t think this is like Paris or Madrid. Argentineans are a lot more European Latin Americans than in other places that I have seen. Because of that I might have felt a bit more at home here than for example in Central America.”¹¹¹

3.3 Motivation to stay long term or to return

No one immediately decides to come live in Buenos Aires for the rest of their lives at once. Nowadays people always have the possibility to go back to the Netherlands if it doesn’t work out, so most of the Dutch migrants only plan to stay at first for a few years. In the passing of time this temporary migration turns permanent, or they return. Especially the immigrants that moved to Argentina in their early twenties didn’t actually have the intention to migrate: they just wanted to be with their partners of that time and enjoy themselves, without planning to build up their entire futures in Argentina. After a while the time to decide what to do with one’s life does present itself, turning these impulsive migrations into more permanent plans. Femke for example told me that at one point in her life she decided to really choose to live in Argentina and build up a future in this country. Meanwhile she had already been living in Buenos Aires for more or less five years.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010

¹¹¹ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

“So I had decided to go back to the Netherlands in 2006, but then I met my current boyfriend. In 2006 I then decided to start a course, the course that I am taking now, to be able to build up a better future here. [...] At that point I really decided to build up my future here, I had made the decision. It has been a whole process.”¹¹²

This example shows that going to live in Buenos Aires is something different from deciding to actually build up a future there, and deciding not to return to the Netherlands if the immigrant doesn't have to. There are a lot of Dutch immigrants living in Buenos Aires without having actually decided to stay. In fact most of my participants told me they were not sure about whether or not they would someday return to the Netherlands. Still, especially the older participants I have spoken with told me they would only return in case of emergency. After having lived and worked in a foreign country for so long they would have serious problems finding work in the Netherlands. The longer one stays abroad, the more difficult it becomes to return, and especially the more experienced immigrants realize that. Hans told me in his interview:

“But you also have to get a chance there [in the Netherlands] of course, because I have never worked there. [...] That is also something that withholds you to return. People always say: if you don't return after five years, than you can never return. Because then you have been away for too long to be completely up to date with how everything is. Well, this year I have been away for eleven years.”¹¹³

There are also those people who came to Buenos Aires just to live there for a few years, but don't see themselves building up their futures there. They are young people who want to have experienced living in another country and culture, but don't have enough reason to actually stay there. An example of this kind of migration is the couple of Sofie and her husband. They came to Buenos Aires for the experience, but are now thinking of returning to the Netherlands. This because of their financial situation and because they don't see themselves building up a secure future in Argentina.

Another reason that Dutch immigrants without an Argentinean partner decide to only stay in Buenos Aires for a few years is that not having an Argentinean partner makes it a lot more difficult to acculturate to Argentinean society. They don't have the help of an Argentinean family that aid them with the difficult and different ways things work in Argentina. Finding a place to stay for example is a question of connections, and most of the mixed couples I have met came to stay in the houses they live in through help from their

¹¹² Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

¹¹³ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

Argentinean family. The Dutch couple of Sofie and her husband had to find their recent apartment by themselves, and because of this they pay a lot more rent than local people, and have to sign new contracts every half year, as foreigners can usually only rent for periods of six months. This is just one concrete example of the difficulties that Dutch immigrants without an Argentinean partner experience in contrast to Dutch immigrants with an Argentinean partner.

Clearly the reasons for people to eventually decide to stay definitely depend largely on their partner and family. The situation is a lot different for Dutch immigrants that have an Argentinean partner than for those who have a Dutch partner or no partner. For a lot of the Dutch immigrants that live in Buenos Aires their Argentinean partner who they met during their travels was their motivation to move in the first place. Returning to the Netherlands means that their partners and possible children will have to migrate with them. This is not an easy thing to ask from your partner and possible children. They would have to miss their Argentinean families, and their children would have to continue their education in the Netherlands. Also, as mentioned before, Dutch immigration laws make it difficult for Dutch people with a foreign husband or wife to live together in the Netherlands. So for those people the motivation to stay in Argentina is greater than for Dutch immigrants with a Dutch partner or no partner.

3.4 Conclusion

We have seen that most of the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires are highly educated. These people would have had no difficulty in finding good paying jobs in Europe, or probably anywhere else in the world. This makes their motivation atypical in comparison with more economically based migration, on which most migration theory and research is focused. Their motivations to move come from elsewhere.

Probably the most important reason for most of my informants to move to Argentina is their Argentinean partner. The fact that it is more difficult for mixed couples to live in the Netherlands than in Argentina due to the strict immigration laws also plays a role in their choice to migrate to Argentina. Every Dutch-Argentinean couple has to decide together in which country they want to live, and naturally family and work related reasons play a major role in this. Which country could optimize their chances, and which family they want to live closest to, depends on individual situations and preferences. Also, the internet has facilitated

worldwide contact, making it easier for migrants to keep in touch with their loved ones in their home country, which has made migration easier to handle for some of my informants. Some would actually not have migrated if it wasn't for the internet. Others are also motivated by the attraction of the adventure of living in another country. This stands in close relation to the often expressed boredom with and criticism on the Dutch society. And of course, Buenos Aires has its own attractive qualities as a city, encouraging the choice to settle down in Argentina.

For the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, the decision to migrate isn't irreversible. In fact, most of them moved to Buenos Aires without long term plans. Deciding to actually stay is therefore something that gradually comes into the picture of people's lives. Dutch immigrants with an Argentinean partner often choose to stay, while Dutch immigrants without an Argentinean partner are often said to return after a few years. This because having a local partner helps the immigrant to integrate, and also gives the immigrant more reason to stay.

Of course someone's background is very important when looking at acculturation strategies, as we will do in the following chapter. A higher education and traveling experiences help people to understand other societies better, and also gives them more opportunity to make the most of it in a different setting. Having an Argentinean partner obviously stimulates immigrants even further to embrace the new society. As we have seen, the choice to migrate is motivated more by personal circumstances and choices than economical reasons. This makes this migration extremely voluntarily, something that also affects acculturation strategies.

4. Acculturation

Immigrants can use different acculturation strategies, like assimilation, integration, marginalization and separation, in order to cope with the new society in which they live. While looking at how migration affects national identity, the choice of acculturation strategy is very important. When someone has chosen the separation strategy one would assume that this person completely identifies with their home country, while the assimilation strategy would suggest a rejection of the old culture and thus more identification with the new society. So, understanding how these Dutch immigrants have acculturated in the Argentinean society will help us understand how their migration has affected their identification with certain nationalities.

In this chapter I will first take a look at Dutch immigration on group level: the Dutch community in Buenos Aires. This community forms the context for, and is also the result of the way individuals choose to acculturate. Following this, the acculturation of my informants will be discussed in two different sections. There are, broadly speaking, two parties involved in acculturation: the receiving society and the new immigrants. That is why the way the Argentinean society responds to these Dutch immigrants will be firstly discussed: the way the Dutch immigrants are welcomed, the chances they get and the difficulties that await them. Then how the Dutch immigrants respond to their new surroundings will come to question: what is easy, and what is hard for them to acculturate to? What don't they mind changing and what do they feel is important to preserve from their old way of life?

4.1 The Dutch community in Buenos Aires

The Dutch community in Buenos Aires consists, according to the Dutch embassy, of approximately 1500 people. There are a few different organizations tied to the Netherlands and the Dutch community: The Dutch Embassy and Consulate, the ‘-Cámara de Comercio Argentino-Holandesa-’/-Nederlands-Argentijnse Kamer van Koophandel-, the ‘Asociación Holandesa de Beneficencia’ (AHB), the Dutch school ‘de Knikkers’ and the Nederlandse Vereniging. Next to the official organisations there are also more spontaneous events connected to the Dutch identity in Buenos Aires. A recently opened bar called ‘Duduï’ is one

of them, as well as the Friday evening -‘borrel’- (drinks) that started this year spontaneously in the same bar, and the Dutch soccer team.

The Dutch Embassy

There is not a very strong social connection between the Dutch Embassy and the Dutch community in Buenos Aires. However, the Embassy does organize two Queen’s Day receptions on the 29th of April: one at midday for the Dutch people, one in the evening for the Argentinean people. These are black-tie events where the ambassador gives a speech. Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires can attend events organized by the Embassy only if they are registered as immigrants at the Embassy and invited to attend. Further contacts between immigrants and the embassy are restricted to more practical occasions, usually concerning their official nationality, like a stolen passport for example.

So Dutch immigrants usually have little connection to the Dutch Embassy. From my own experiences and from the stories Dutch immigrants have told me, the Dutch Embassy is reluctant in its approach of the Dutch living in Argentina. When asking the head of the Press and Culture desk of the Dutch Embassy about information about the Dutch community the response was surprisingly that they didn’t know anything on the subject. A possible reason given for this is that the Embassy is there primarily to represent the Netherlands in Argentina, not to aid Dutch immigrants. Jan said the following concerning the issue:

“It depends on the ambassador how involved the embassy is with the Dutch community. One finds it very important, the other thinks he is only here to represent the Netherlands and not for the Dutch people who are here.”¹¹⁴

This attitude is probably the result of policy decisions made in the Netherlands. Consequently immigrants don’t often turn for help or advice to the Embassy. In their struggle to acculturate to the new society they turn to their often Argentinean partners, or try to get some advice through informal channels within the Dutch society.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

Cámara de Comercio Argentino-Holandesa

“De Argentijns-Nederlandse Kamer van Koophandel is een onafhankelijke non profit organisatie opgericht in 1919. Onze hoofddoelstelling is de promotie van handelsbetrekkingen tussen Argentinië en Nederland.”¹¹⁵ This is how the chamber of commerce tries to explain its function to us on their site. To get more insight into what it actually means to promote the trade relations between the Netherlands and Argentina, and what role the chamber of commerce really plays in the Dutch society in Buenos Aires I had an interview with an employee of the chamber of commerce.

Thijs told me that the chamber of commerce functions as a network organization. There have a little more than a hundred memberships. Dutch businesses, Dutch capital, Argentineans who studied in the Netherlands, service providers for Dutch businesses, advocates, accountants; they are all members of the chamber of commerce. The chamber of commerce tries to bring people in contact with each other so they can do business. They organize informative events, for example about import and export, or politics, or tax laws, and more to that end. They also organize social events where businesspeople can get to know each other or take their clients to. All the members also receive a newsletter to keep them informed.

Thijs told me that they mainly focus on originally Dutch enterprises and on Dutch immigrants that come to Argentina to do business here. They also try to help Argentineans who want to go to the Netherlands, as there is no such thing as a Dutch-Argentinean chamber of commerce in the Netherlands, but their main focus is on Dutch activities in Argentina. The basis of existence of the chamber is the presence of Dutch businesses in Argentina, which pay their membership fee and thus keep the chamber running.

Since 1919, the birth year of the chamber of commerce, a lot changed. Initially the chamber was meant as a gentleman’s club of Dutch businessmen and expats living in Buenos Aires, to inform each other and help each other out when necessary. However, the chamber of commerce is something quite different nowadays:

“That factor of sentiment, what used to be a lot easier with Dutch CEO’s in businesses, that has diminished. But that’s logical; it’s a worldwide trend that there are less and less expats. Why would a whole family, which has to live in a beautiful house and want to go back to the Netherlands twice a year, whose children have to go to an international school and of course have to earn a big salary [have to come

¹¹⁵Nederlands-Argentijnse Kamer van Koophandel, http://ccah.org.ar/?page_id=209&lang=nl, 21-05-2010

over]. That gives an enterprise a lot of costs while they can just hire a really good Argentinean who will probably cost less. [...] In former times you were a member of the chamber because you, as a Dutchman, would register yourself at a Dutch chamber. The nationality was a sufficient link. Now it isn't as apparent anymore to be a member, now it's just a cost-benefit consideration.”¹¹⁶

As Thijs explained, membership of the Chamber of Commerce has become rationalized, and cut loose from ties of nationality. At least, this is the case with the big international Dutch enterprises like Philips and Unilever which are situated in Buenos Aires. There is also a relatively new target group for the chamber of commerce, namely those who they call the ‘Jonge Nederlandse Ondernemers’ (Young Dutch Entrepreneurs, JNO’s). Or, as Thijs also described this phenomenon:

“What we see is that a lot of Dutch people or a continuing stream of Dutch people do come to Argentina, give up their jobs. Those are people who have accomplished everything nicely in the Netherlands, the ordinary civilian life. They then quit their jobs, sell their house and come here with their savings to start a business.”¹¹⁷

This is indeed the motivational background of some of my informants, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The chamber tries to help these young Dutch entrepreneurs by informing them about doing business in Argentina. According to Thijs almost all of these people are members of the Chamber of Commerce. For these people membership of the Dutch-Argentinean chamber of commerce does come forth out of a shared nationality. Not only sentiment but also practical use of this membership must be a great motivation to join the chamber, as sharing the same background also means a greater understanding of each other’s problems with doing business in Argentina.

I asked Thijs if the coming of these ‘JNO’s’ is something recent. He wasn’t really sure, but this is what he had to say on the matter:

“I have seen it since the three years that I’ve been here. Before that time it was also happening. But I think that it is so since the millennium. It might have something to do with Máxima. Argentineans love to think that a lot of Dutch businesses come to Argentina because of Máxima. I don’t think that is true. [...] What is true is that because of Máxima there is more attention for Argentina in the media in the Netherlands. You can see the effects in the fact that a lot more Dutch tourists are coming to Argentina. And because of that a lot more little Dutch businesses have been started here, for example travel agencies.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

So you can see that there has been a certain impact, but it is impossible to say how much. The fact that Argentina has been in the media a lot more has awakened more curiosity in a lot of people.”¹¹⁸

Even though he didn't seem completely sure about the millennium as a turning point it consents with what other people have told me in casual conversations and interviews. Various people have said that there has been a new wave of Dutch immigrants since the millennium. Examples of this new generation of Dutch immigrants are Sofie and her husband, Tim and Martijn. Thijs's theory that Maxima increased Dutch interest in Argentina could be one explanation of these new migrations. It also might have something to do with the increasing migration from the Netherlands since the millennium. These are however all assumptions, and to prove or disprove them an entire new research would be needed.

Asociación Holandesa de Beneficencia

The ‘Asociación Holandesa de Beneficencia’ or AHB is an organization originally brought to life to help Dutch people in need in Argentina.¹¹⁹ Like Marieke, a new member of the board of the AHB, explained:

“Offering help to Dutch people who have gotten into trouble. Money is collected by organizing certain events. Those are Dutch people that didn't hold out here. Who for example have developed a drinking problem or psychiatric problems, you will then not get any support from the government here. Then, if the children can't help they call on the AHB for support. We have fifteen cases at the moment. In this way we protect each other.”¹²⁰

In practice it is an organization for the elderly Dutch immigrants. The members of this organization are mostly above the sixty years old, and have lived all or most of their lives in Argentina. Some have come here with their parents when they were young, others were born here but have Dutch parents. Most of them know how to speak Dutch, but Spanish comes more easily to them.

The AHB organizes a few events per year to collect money for the Dutch people in need, and where the elderly Dutch immigrants meet. For example, there is the ‘hutspot’ lunch in April which I have visited. In June there is an ‘ewrtensoep’ lunch, and in August they

¹¹⁸ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

¹¹⁹ AHB: Asociacion Holandesa de Beneficencia, www.ahbargentina.com 29-10-2010

¹²⁰ Interview with Marieke, 23-04-2010

organize a ‘rijsttafel’ lunch. In October they have a spring celebration, and in December they have a get-together for Sint Nikolaas. It is also possible to meet on a weekly basis for a cup of coffee, but this will only be organized if people are interested.

These events are appreciated a lot by these elderly Dutch immigrants, because for most of them these are the only times they get to see each other, speak Dutch, sing Dutch songs and have a traditional Dutch meal. The younger, first generation immigrants that I have as research subject don’t seem to have any interest in this organization. They have moved to Argentina for their partner and to get to know Argentina, and don’t feel any connection with the elderly Dutch immigrants. This ‘generation gap’ only shows how different recent Dutch immigrants feel about their Dutch identity compared to first and second generation immigrants who migrated in earlier days.

‘De Knikkers’

The Dutch primary school ‘de Knikkers’ gets subsidy from the Dutch government to stimulate Dutch education in foreign countries.¹²¹ It is a so-called NTC school (Nederlandse Taal- en Cultuur school) that is connected to the NOB (the foundation Nederlands Onderwijs Buitenland). They have school for two hours per week on Thursday, so it is not a fulltime school. A total of approximately 23 children between the ages 4 and 14 attend this school.

I have visited ‘de Knikkers’ to see how exactly the classes are taught. I attended the classes and spoke with the teachers. The children are divided into three classes; one for the toddlers, one middle class and one class for the oldest children. There are three teachers, one for each group. Two of them came to Buenos Aires especially for this job. They can’t stay long however as their salaries are not sufficient for a longer period of time than one or two years. The first hour I joined the toddler group, and the second hour I witnessed the lessons of the middle and higher classes, who have lessons in the same classroom.

The children are taught with methods used in the Netherlands and are advised by the NOB foundation. What I noticed during the lessons and what the teachers also told me is that there is a great difference in the level of knowledge of the Dutch language between the children. Most of the children that go to this school only have one parent that is Dutch, which means that for most of these children Dutch is their second language. Their level of knowledge of the Dutch language depends greatly on if and how frequently they speak it at

¹²¹ De Knikkers: NTC school in Buenos Aires <http://www.deknikkers.com.ar/site/pages/nederlands/home.php>
29-05-2010

home. The teachers told me that it makes a great difference also if the mother or the father is Dutch: in general the mothers tend to spend more time with their children, and thus the child speaks the language of the mother more often.

Even though the possibility is there, not all the Dutch immigrants bring their children to this school. Reasons given for this are that it is too far away and that it isn't that important to them that their Children learn the Dutch language. On the other hand there are parents that find their children learning Dutch very important:

"Well, my whole family still lives in the Netherlands. Otherwise there is just no communication: my parents don't speak Spanish and my brother a little bit, but not really. And also my roots are, I am just a Dutch woman. That is why I find it important that they learn the language. Dutch isn't an important language or anything, but you just never know. I do think the Netherlands is a lot safer than Argentina. I find this a really difficult and complicated country and I think it is really very nice to have a Dutch passport and also be able to speak the Dutch language. You will then always have something to fall back on, but also that when I go to the Netherlands, that they won't feel like stranger, that they will feel just as comfortable in the Netherlands as in Argentina. That has always been very important to me."¹²²

Whether or not their children should learn Dutch is a subject on which the opinions differ a lot. Some people would like their children to learn Dutch, but only if they choose to do so themselves. Other people find this more important and consistently speak Dutch to their children at home. My informants have often indicated that it is important to them that their children are or will be able to communicate with their Dutch family. Another reason often given why they want their children to speak Dutch is that they believe that knowledge of the Dutch language will help their children to understand their father/mother and his/her background better. Another obvious reason for parents to want their children to learn Dutch is that they might want to return to the Netherlands someday, and if so, want to prepare their children for this possibility. This could explain why some Dutch parents don't seem to value their children knowing the Dutch language as much as others; some consider the possibility of returning to the Netherlands, for others this is not an option.

¹²² Interview with Mariska, 03-05-2010.

The ‘Nederlandse Vereniging’

The ‘Nederlandse Vereniging’ is a leisure club intended to bring Dutch people in Argentina together. They organize monthly ‘borrels’ or get-togethers in café van Koning, as well as parties for the Dutch festivities like queen’s day. They also publish a magazine called ‘Blad Nederland’ (‘Magazine the Netherlands’) that comes out eight times a year, and a book auction of Dutch books once a year. When the Dutch national soccer team plays, the Nederlandse Vereniging organizes a get-together in Kafé van Koning to watch the game. The club and the magazine already exist since 1921. The Nederlandse Vereniging doesn’t have it’s own building but has an agreement with the bar van Koning to organize their events there. According to Tim, the bar van Koning is property of some Argentinean people who wanted to start a ‘bruin café’ or a pub in an old-fashioned Dutch style in Buenos Aires.

One of the tasks that is considered the most important of the ‘Nederlandse Vereniging’ is the making of the magazine. A lot of the members of the club are primarily member to receive the ‘Blad Nederland’. The magazine is special in Argentina because of all the other magazines of the different European communities in Buenos Aires it is the only one that is still released in the language of origin instead of Spanish. The magazine was established to inform Dutch immigrants in Argentina about major events in the Netherlands as well as events taking place in Argentina concerning them. Because of Nowadays it is primarily read by only a select group of Dutch immigrants, namely those who pay a membership fee to the Nederlandse Vereniging.

This brings us to the current situation of the Nederlandse Vereniging. The number of members of the Nederlandse Vereniging varies around the 150 each year.¹²³ I have been told by Hans, the head of the club, as well as many others, that most of the members are also members of the AHB, who are mostly seniors. This means that most of the first generation



Picture 2: Bar ‘van Koning’ Photo: Imktje M. Thiecke

¹²³ Interview with Hans, 09-04-2010

Dutch immigrants living in Argentina are no members of the club. Indeed only a few of all the first generation immigrants I have spoken with were members of the Nederlandse Vereniging. When asking why people didn't join the club various answers were given. Often said is that the modern immigrants came here especially for Argentina, and don't feel like hanging out with Dutch people all the time as this would be contrary to their wishes of getting to know a new culture. These people also view the Nederlandse Vereniging as 'oudbollig' or old-fashioned, and as a place where mostly expats or Dutch travelers meet. My experience was that the monthly get-together was visited very scarcely, and that the only regular visitors were the members of the board of the Nederlandse Vereniging. There was clearly little interest in meeting new Dutch people amongst the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires. As Jan, former chairman of the Nederlandse Vereniging, explained:

"After the crisis was over more young people came over. But for them everything was less definite, and they had little interest in the 'Nederlandse Vereniging'. [...] And you can't really depend on those youngsters. After five years I left, and Hans took over. I was hoping that he would attract some more young people. Nonetheless he has lost a lot of older people, but still, you lose those anyway. But with those youngsters, it is impossible to interest them. It's a difficult phase for the 'Nederlandse Vereniging'."¹²⁴

This lack of interest amongst Dutch immigrants affects the club negatively. Even though the members of the board of the Nederlandse Vereniging were very enthusiastic about the club when speaking to me, I got the impression that a lot of plans were made but little was realized. Of course the club is going through a rough time: with interests in Dutch social gatherings diminishing not only attendance but also the membership fees are shrinking. The fact that all the members of the management do their work voluntarily also plays a role as not a lot is expected from them. Logically their personal lives have priority above the club, which causes delays and even cancellations: in 2009 only four of the promised eight magazines were published and sent to the club members.¹²⁵

Still, even though in general the club isn't that lively, the club attracts a lot of attendance during certain festivities; mainly the Dutch Queen's Day and European or World Championships. During my field research time I had the luck that I was there in time to celebrate Queen's Day together with the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires. I was surprised however how many Dutch students who were only living in Argentina temporarily showed

¹²⁴ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

¹²⁵ Notes: Nederlandse Vereniging meeting 05-05-2010

up. In fact they made up more than half of the merry-makers. So even here, on one of the most important traditional Dutch holidays, a lot of first-generation Dutch immigrants stayed away.

Other activities

Café Dudui is a recently opened bar with a Dutch owner from Amsterdam. It is a very modern bar with some Dutch decorations on the wall and a few Dutch specialities in the menu. Even though it wasn't the intention of the owner the bar has obtained the name of a Dutch bar, where Dutch immigrants and expats often come. On the initiative of Tim there is now even a Friday-evening 'borrel' or get-together in café Dudui.

"We are with four to six or seven Dutch people. We then go to drink a nice beer on Friday evening. They are not all soccer players. [...] People that also do business in Argentina and often encounter the same difficulties as well, and just enjoy to now and again blow off some steam. [...] We enjoy drinking a beer after work and afterwards spend the evening with wife and child at home. And because Argentineans don't really have that you quickly end up with Dutch people. That aside it's also nice to hear how they experience life here; the work, doing business, etcetera. They are in general also Dutch people who are amongst Argentineans the whole week and then enjoy drinking some beers with other Dutch people once a week. That was the starting point for the Friday evening get-together."¹²⁶



Picture 3: Decorations in bar 'Dudui' Photo: Imkje M. Thiecke

In practice the bar seems to compete for the Dutch inhabitants of Buenos Aires with café van Koning. This is understandable, as Dudui is a much more refreshing and modern bar, where creativity is stimulated in the arts as well as in business. Also on the initiative of Tim a group of Dutch immigrants has formed that play in a soccer team together. They play against local Argentinean soccer teams in orange shirts, sponsored by Dudui. This is, like the Friday-evening 'borrel', a spontaneous initiative.

¹²⁶ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

"The soccer team came into being because there were a lot of Dutch people that wanted to play soccer, but because we were not good enough we were not taken in by Argentinean soccer teams. They play a soccer match really seriously and afterwards directly return home. Those Dutch people don't believe playing very well is really important, but they just enjoy paying some ball, and then drink a beer and waffle a bit. That is why I started this soccer team. [...] Those Argentineans, it's fantastic to see if they are not able to win, while they feel superior to us, and afterwards enjoy a nice beer."¹²⁷

As mentioned before, there are also a lot of Dutch immigrants that are not involved in any of these organizations because they do not feel welcome and/or because they do not feel the need to get so involved in the Dutch community. These different organizations mentioned don't communicate or work together a lot. Still, almost all of the Dutch immigrants I have spoken with have some Dutch connections and friends. People indicate that this is because they feel some kind of connectedness with other Dutch people in the same age group because they share the same background:

"So it is also nice to [...] talk to people that for example have experienced the same things or have the same background as you. And you also notice that there is a 'click' really easily amongst Dutch people, because you have I don't know lived there for thirty years. So you understand people more easily, you can place them more easily. And you share a history and a certain sense of humor. [...] Argentineans don't open up very easily; Dutch people talk a lot more easily about what they have experienced and especially what their opinion is. Opinions. Argentineans are often a lot more reserved in that aspect, they are more scared to offend. [...] Argentineans just enjoy being together without having to talk about anything in particular. A Dutch person, at least that is my interpretation, looks for a nice conversation more often. While an Argentinean looks for being together with a nice group of people. And you can then make tasteless jokes together for the whole evening and then you have had an enormously cool evening. A Dutch person needs some kind of substance."¹²⁸

For these kind of connections the social organizations are not needed that much, as most Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires already have their own Dutch connections. And most importantly, as most of the Dutch immigrants I have spoken with have Argentinean families they don't need the Dutch community that much to fall back on. In a way, the group activities reflect the individual choices in acculturation strategies.

¹²⁷ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

¹²⁸ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

4.2 Argentinean society and the Dutch immigrants

As described in chapter two the choice in acculturation strategies by immigrants is affected by three factors: the character of the migration, the image the receiving society has of the immigrants and the opportunities of social ascent that immigrants have in the receiving society. As has become clear in chapter three the character of migration is very voluntary in nature. Now we will look at how the Dutch immigrants have experienced their welcome in Argentinean society, and if this attitude towards them might have affected their acculturation. Next we will discuss the social and professional possibilities Dutch immigrants have in Argentinean society.

Acceptance of Dutch immigrants in the Argentinean society

The receiving society still has a very positive view on Europe and on the Netherlands in general. The Dutch immigrants have a name of being open-minded and interested in the receiving society. Also, the Netherlands has never had major international political conflicts with Argentina, like for example Great Britain. In general Argentineans have a very positive view on Europe. I have often heard Argentineans express amazement at the choice of Dutch people to immigrate to Argentina. Europe is often believed to be some sort of perfect place. Argentineans are usually also very proud of their European background, something that generates status in Argentinean society. Their positive attitude towards Europeans and everything European in general contrasts strongly with the more disapproving attitude towards immigrants from the Far East or other Latin American countries. All of my informants told me how interested Argentineans usually are when they hear they are from Europe, and that this positive attitude could have some advantages.

“In Argentina you are discriminated positively when you are blonder, have bluer eyes and a fairer skin. Argentineans are extremely racist; especially people from Buenos Aires are like that. It isn’t true that I get my way easier than other people because I am a Dutchman. But you do notice that people show more interest in you, and that, the moment you have connection with someone, they are more agreeable with you in general. They are not going to ask a Bolivian or a Korean: ‘where are you from?’ ‘That’s another one of those black ones, or another one of those Asians.’ A European gets a lot of positive feedback: ‘where are you from? What do you do here?’ The moment you have that connection with someone it isn’t

like they immediately favor you, but they are more agreeable, they are easier inclined to do things for you. Which is, in this country where connections are extremely important, truly very handy.”¹²⁹

Being of European descent doesn't have the same advantages as it had in the 19th century. Still, it does give some prestige. The first generation immigrants that I have spoken with however don't have to stress their European heritage so much for that reason, not because they don't want the prestige, but because they don't have to; it will usually be obvious for an Argentinean because of their accent and physical appearance.

“I can also tell you that it has its advantages while doing business. The moment I call someone and they hear my voice or they see my name, then they know I'm not Argentinean. People then trust you more easily, if it is either consciously or subconsciously, or with or without a good reason. Argentineans have the reputation of being defaulters or of people that just talk a lot and don't live up to their word. The European reputation is very different.”¹³⁰

For the same reason there are some Dutch immigrants that, especially in a business environment, try to stress their Dutch identity, for example by overdoing their accent:

“But isn't bad to [have an accent]; it is also a little bit of marketing. [...] You can sometimes profit from being a foreigner; it gives attention, for example when you are in a meeting. People then have a moment like: ‘Oh, are you from the Netherlands? How nice!’ So sometimes I exaggerate it a bit as well, it all depends a bit on what you need. You should be able to use it, once in a while.”¹³¹

Especially the women that I have spoken with have had experiences that they, looking back at it, see as examples of positive discrimination. For example, Samantha replied the following when asked if she ever experienced positive or negative discrimination:

“Yes, definitely, all the time. You are favored all the time as a Dutch woman, long and blond etcetera. When you are for example waiting in line at the immigration service and you just smile a bit at the guard, you can just go to the front of the line. [...] You profit because they have a very positive image of Europe. I never experience negative discrimination, really.”¹³²

The majority of the interviewed Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires state they are neither positively nor negatively discriminated, but also tell me they have experienced a very

¹²⁹ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

¹³⁰ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

¹³¹ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010.

¹³² Interview with Samantha, 05-04-2010.

welcome entry into Argentinean society. They are almost always treated well, and Argentineans usually express a lot of interest in their heritage as Dutch immigrants. I suspect that European immigrants are treated with more friendliness than other immigrants, as Argentinean society seems to be very focused on ancestry. I suspect that the Dutch immigrants often don't realize they are positively discriminated, especially in a social context.

Upward Social Mobility

Dutch immigrants have enough possibilities in Argentinean society, though not in the same sense as in the Netherlands. As mentioned before, Dutch diplomas are often invalid in Argentina, which stops highly educated people from performing their professions. They have to find a way around the system to perform their jobs, like working unofficially or finding a maze in the system. It could be that the Argentina tries to protect its labor market from foreign influences, but I have no real proof for this.

When reaching high levels of influence in businesses it is normal that authority can be challenged, and for Dutch immigrants this can sometimes mean that their being foreign is used against them. Niels, president of a former Dutch shipping company that is now Argentinean, told me that he had experienced being hindered on purpose at some meetings. Argentineans would speak very rapidly on purpose, probably as a method of exclusion, because he now had difficulty to understand them.¹³³

The social upward possibilities of Dutch immigrants also depend a lot on the family of their Argentinean partner. Connections are considered very important in Argentina, and when the family-in-law has these this will affect the chances of the Dutch immigrant. This is also one of the reasons why there is such a difference between the chances of success between Dutch immigrants with an Argentinean partner, and those without. The Argentinean partner aids and guides the Dutch immigrant in Argentinean society, which is very valuable help that Dutch immigrants without an Argentinean partner have to do without.

An Argentinean partner brings along friends and family as well, something that is harder to come by when the immigrant has to find friends by him or herself. Several informants have told me that getting in contact with people in Buenos Aires is easy, but befriending people for real is a lot harder. I have been told that people in Buenos Aires usually have tight groups of friends that go way back, and getting into such an inner circle is

¹³³Interview with Niels, 17-03-2010.

hard for an outsider. Having an Argentinean partner usually implies that the immigrant automatically becomes part of his or her partner's group of friends, as long as the relationship lasts. Hans, whose wife is Uruguayan, making them both immigrants in Argentina, tried to explain this difficulty to me:

"There are a lot of social circles and layers in Argentina that don't exist anymore in Europe. Here you are born in certain circles and then you already know to which school or university you will go, and so on. That exists in higher and lower social circles. [...] In our case, because we are in the a bit higher circles; you are invited, and you are a part of the group, but you don't really belong. Those people know each other from birth. All those people know each other from kindergarten and they are now lawyers or solicitors, but they all work together and for each other. And that is why there is such cronyism. You can't really become part of that from the outside out. [...] They do invite you for an *asado* but for the really important things they will go and stand somewhere else to talk amongst each other."¹³⁴

Working in Argentina

The economical possibilities that people have are of course important in the decision to stay or leave. There are not a lot of Dutch immigrants working for local or international companies earning a local salary. There are different reasons for this. First of all Dutch professionals that move to Argentina often have the problem of having to work under their level, as most Dutch degrees are not recognized in Argentina. This means that Dutch immigrants will have to do over a part of, or their entire education, or choose to do something else.

Another reason given to me why Dutch immigrants don't often work for international companies anymore nowadays is the following:

"And what a lot of Dutchmen don't realize [we] receive a lot of résumés and a lot of people that come to the chamber looking for work, everyone always wants to work at a big international company. [...] The well-known Dutch international companies. Those companies direct, in my opinion, towards hiring local talent from whom they know that they will stay for a long time, and who also always speak Spanish better. [...] So then an Argentinean candidate is just better. And also regarding knowledge of the local business culture Argentineans are just better, because they know how to handle the labor-unions or taxes. You have to understand a country to be able to do business there. Something else that Dutchmen often don't realize is that is that the first five of ten percent of the highly educated Argentineans are truly very highly educated. [...] There are no expats in the boards of those companies. [...] But that is logical; it is a

¹³⁴ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010.

worldwide trend that there are less and less expats. [...] That brings a lot of costs for a Dutch company while they can just hire a superb Argentinean here who probably costs less.”¹³⁵

Finding a well-paid job in Argentina isn't that easy for Dutch immigrants. A lot of Dutch immigrants have found a solution to this problem by starting their own businesses. Thijs told me that there are all sorts of different businesses started by the young Dutch entrepreneurs. Tourism is a popular sector, and there are also activities in import and export. Export of services like in ICT businesses where websites or other digital design are made are also seen regularly. These businesses set-up by Dutch immigrants are often focused on the Dutch, European or American market. When I asked Thijs why this was, he responded:

“Yes, Europe and Amerika. Why? Because the income is in Euro's and the costs of wages are in pesos. That is the primary reason to come to Argentina. That attractiveness has diminished a bit with the inflation, the reduction of the worth of the Euro. But it is still lucrative. [...] Here there are a lot of good engineers and a lot of good IT people that cost less than in Europe. [...] The sourcing of people, the Argentinean labor market is just a good place to find people.”¹³⁶

There are many internet businesses that for example make or maintain websites for European companies. Because they earn in relatively strong valuta and the costs are lower in Argentina a business is profitable more quickly than it would be in the Netherlands or another (West) European country. One example of these kinds of businesses is the business of Martijn. Before moving to Argentina, Martijn and his Argentinean wife lived in London for ten years, where he started his business in 2000. His business maintains internet websites for other companies. When he and his wife moved to Argentina he started a subsidiary business that also works for English businesses, but is situated in Buenos Aires.

“And since we are living in Argentina our incomes diminished, but because life is cheaper here we have relatively more to spend. Our purchasing power has increased a bit, relatively. Because in principal, in London we used up all our money, while here we can save some now and again. The interesting thing is that we are worse off in absolute numbers, but regarding what I can do with it we are bit better off.”¹³⁷

Under the first-generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires there are a lot working in tourism, whether it is organizing group travels for European tourists or taking care of the special needs of wealthy tourists. Working for Dutch traveling agencies as tour guides is also

¹³⁵ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

¹³⁶ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

¹³⁷ Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010.

often done. Examples of people who work in the tourist sector are Tim, Samantha, Femke and Sofie. Some work as tour guides for Dutch travel agencies like Samantha and Femke, some have started their own travel agencies in Argentina, focused on European and American tourists, like Tim. They are often suited well for the job as they can speak Dutch with the tourists or have enough contacts in Europe which make it possible to start a business focused on European tourists.

Import and export businesses under Dutch entrepreneurs are scarce, as customs in Argentina are very corrupt and also import and export taxes are high, so-called to protect the Argentinean market from foreign competition. When I asked Thijs about this problem, he responded the following:

“Customs here is notoriously corrupt. Your goods can just lay there in the harbor for ever, it is very infamous. [...] Working with products is very difficult. But it does happen, but not under young entrepreneurs. Customs is used to on the one hand supply the treasury; it is like that traditionally here in Argentina. The tax burden is fairly low here, so the most important taxes are collected with import and export. [...] Customs, just like with inflation, just like monetary and fiscal policy, is the place where cheating and swindle are rule.”¹³⁸

We can see that even though finding a good job might be difficult, Argentina offers a lot of possibilities for Dutch immigrants that want to work for themselves. One of the most alluring features of the Argentinean market is that costs are lower than they would be in the Netherlands. Employees are cheaper and well educated. Also, the costs of living are lower compared to the Netherlands, making it possible to live from a lower income than these people would possibly have had in the Netherlands. Still, deciding to join the business life of a different society can be problematic. The people I have spoken with faced a variety of different problems. When I asked Thijs of the Dutch-Argentinean chamber of commerce what kind of problems Dutch entrepreneurs could encounter, he said:

“It is just a completely different setting for doing business. It is far less organized and there is a far bigger informal circuit. That is something a lot of Dutchmen forget when they come here. [...] There are also a lot of deals that don’t go that well. And Argentina looks very modern and very first world from the outside, and in some areas and sectors that is true. But in a lot of sectors and in a lot of areas it is not. It is just very difficult doing business here and there are also a lot of entrepreneurs with whom it hasn’t gone that well. People that are trying to get their licenses in order for to start a factory for over a year now, with employees that don’t show up and then start a lawsuit. And labor lawsuits are always lost here. There are

¹³⁸ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

a lot of cases in which Dutch companies come in touch with the authorities. Public sectors like water treatment, environment, waterways, those are difficult sectors in which to operate.”¹³⁹

He explained that in some way these problems come forth from a misunderstanding of the Argentinean system:

“There are only a few Dutch people that have known Argentina for a long time. [...] But a lot of times they just don’t know where Argentina comes from, how it works socially and economically. [...] I see a lot of different kinds of entrepreneurs coming in here. There are people that really want to orientate and prepare themselves, read-in on the subject, and so forth. But there are also people that have a tendency towards the paternalistic, close to arrogance. That’s like: ‘I will just tell those people here how they have to work. Because they are all inefficient and they all don’t know how things work.’ And you can try that, but at a certain point you will hit a wall, because the country, the system, is stronger than one entrepreneur that wants to start his business here.”¹⁴⁰

4.3 Acculturation to social differences

How Dutch immigrants respond to their new environment tells us something about their choices in acculturation strategies. There are social differences between the Netherlands and Argentina but they are not very conflicting in general. There are some aspects of social interaction in Argentina that the Dutch immigrants indicate they prefer above the way things go in the Netherlands. The openness and spontaneous behavior of Argentineans are almost always mentioned. Some immigrants find other aspects, like gender roles, a little harder to acculturate to. Femke told me how she felt about and had to get used to the more traditional gender roles in Argentina:

“I did have to adjust pretty much in the beginning: there were things that I thought were very stupid, but I just had to learn to like those things. Like that men are a lot more courteous towards you. In the beginning I thought: ‘I am very capable of doing that myself, thanks’, but now I quite appreciate it when a man holds a door open for me. I have also learned that it can be good that men do certain things, like okay, those are their chores and I do mine. [...] But those gender roles; I could also really get annoyed by them in the beginning. I would for example go to an *asado* and the men always make the meat, and we women

¹³⁹ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

have to make the salads and the coffee, do the dishes and really everything else. And that is something that I still find annoying. But I have become more compliant towards those things.”¹⁴¹

Not only Dutch women but also Dutch men have problems with the gender roles in Argentina. Martijn for example told me the following:

“For example that at social gatherings the mommies talk with the mommies and the daddies with the daddies. The mommies talk about school while the fathers talk about soccer. And I really hate that: I don’t like soccer at all and secondly I also want to know what is going on at that school. Those are things in the society that are more difficult for me. It is seen as strange if I sit down with the mothers.”¹⁴²

Another social difference between the Argentinean and the Dutch society, which in some cases give Dutch immigrants some problems to adapt to, is trust. Various informants have told me that the level of trust between strangers or acquaintances is a lot higher in the Netherlands than in Argentina, and that they have learned through trial and error, that this is different in Argentina. This experience of lack of trust has been expressed by my informants in various ways. I have often heard that, even though Argentineans are often very friendly, Dutch immigrants find it hard to build up a relation of trust with them.

“The biggest problem of the Argentineans is that they don’t trust anybody. The biggest difference between a Dutchman and an Argentinean is that the Dutchman will trust everyone until he has proven the opposite. An Argentinean it is the other way around: he won’t trust anyone until the opposite is proven. And even then he has a lot of difficulty with trust, really a lot of difficulty. That counts for everyone. [...] If you come here with a lot of trust in others, even when they [new Dutch immigrants] are warned, then it still happens. [...] You can try to warn them but it is in the nature of a Dutchman to trust. That’s a really big pitfall. I have already seen it happen a lot of times.”¹⁴³

This seems to be the kind of problem that a lot of Dutch immigrants endure. Hans, who has been living in Buenos Aires for eleven years, told me the lack of trust in Argentinean society was still difficult for him:

“What I found and still find is the most difficult thing is the constant distrust and conspiracy thinking. People don’t trust anybody; they have become wise through history, they don’t trust anyone but are not always trustworthy themselves either. If they see an advantage somewhere they won’t hesitate [to take it]

¹⁴¹ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

¹⁴² Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010

¹⁴³ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010

no matter at whose expense. You really notice that in business and in private life. [...] For that matter Dutch people are a lot opener and more innocent maybe, a lot more trusting. Argentineans are not that trusting. You have to learn to deal with that. [...] That unhealthy distrust. You notice that in friendships. Men and women can't be friends here, especially not when you are in a relationship. In the Netherlands you can easily go out with some friends for a night. Here that's a lot harder because your Argentinean partner won't like it.”¹⁴⁴

Argentineans are often described by my informants as people who have a lot of difficulties with trusting others, but in retrospect are not always very trustworthy themselves. Dennis, for example, came into great financial difficulties after the people he had worked with for eight years decided to start a lawsuit against him personally, when his mother firm in the Netherlands decided to stop their project in Argentina that he was leading. Dennis was very surprised that his former colleagues who he thought he could trust would not hesitate to attack him personally.

“I am from Groningen myself, just like you. We believe that a man has to honor his word. And that has until now, I have never needed a lawyer until the age of forty-five, when I moved here. I had thirty drivers working for me but I had never had a lawyer. But here, without a lawyer you can't do anything. [...] If you want to do it the proper way you will have a bigger problem than when you do it the Argentinean way. Because an Argentinean knows that he will have problems and lawsuits. [...] Because that is the punch line: if you have property here you have to put it in the name of your mother or your daughter and so on. Nothing is in their name. So there is nothing to get. [...] Here I have a home in my name, just like I did in the Netherlands. So now I have problems with that. [...] ‘Sin verguenza’, without shame. Those are lowlifes without an education. It is only ‘I want money’. The mentality is here like, people live from day to day. People don't think ahead.”¹⁴⁵

4.4 Conclusion

In general we can state that most of the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires have chosen for the integration strategy. Still, there are a lot of differences between individuals in the way they acculturate. First of all having an Argentinean partner or not makes a lot of difference. People with an Argentinean partner often have a stronger bond with the receiving society than people who don't have one. This also depends on individual choices and preferences: some Dutch immigrants with an Argentinean partner mainly have Argentinean friends and don't see

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Dennis, 06-05-2010.

other Dutch immigrants that often, while others mainly have their friends in the Dutch immigrant society in Buenos Aires. Also, most of the Dutch immigrants value their Dutch background, but some more than others. For example, some people value their children learning the Dutch language more than others and invest more time in their children learning the language and learning about the Netherlands.

There is also a difference in the level of retaining Dutch traditions, as we will see in the next chapter. Some Dutch immigrants find the celebration of Queen's day or Saint Nickolas very important, while others don't even celebrate these festivities anymore. There is also a great difference in the level of involvement in the Dutch community itself. A few immigrants almost never seek out the company of other Dutch people, while others are and have been active within the Dutch community for many years. While some of my informants were very active in both the Argentinean as in the Dutch community, others seem to have little interest in being involved either way.

All the first generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires have chosen the integration strategy, though in different degradations of involvement and commitment. For example: all my informants attempted to learn how to speak Spanish, but it is clear that some have put more effort into this than others. Some people don't need to actively try to be involved in Argentinean society because their job doesn't make this necessary and/or because of their partner being Argentinean, making their involvement inevitable. Others have chosen to come to Buenos Aires especially for the experience of living in another country and deliberately try to get as much Argentinean friends as possible. While the level of integration might vary it is still clear that it is integration that defines all first generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires.

5. Identity expression

Until now we have discussed the reasons behind the migration of the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, as well as the acculturation strategies that they use to cope with their new environment. We have seen that this migration is mostly voluntary and has little to do with economical motives. The acculturation strategy that is normally used by these immigrants is the integration strategy, as they are willing to learn from their new surroundings but don't feel the need to give everything up concerning their Dutch nationality. In this chapter we will look at how this sense of national identity is actually expressed by these immigrants. To do so we will first take a look at how special dishes or delicacies and eating habits of the Dutch immigrants are influenced by their migration to Buenos Aires.

5.1. Eating and Drinking

Even though food might seem trivial while speaking about national identity, the contrary is true. Special dishes or delicacies, eating habits etcetera can be very culturally based. It is commonly accepted in the social sciences that food and drink can function as signifiers of group culture and identity. They can be interpreted as aspects of tradition and heritage of local, regional and national cultures. So, eating and drinking can be acts of different kinds of identification and especially of national identification.¹⁴⁶

In a diaspora eating and drinking can also be emotionally charged remembrances of the



Picture 4: Argentinean Maté and Dutch Verkade Chocolate, at a participant's house. Photo: Imktje M. Thiecke

¹⁴⁶ Thomas M. Wilson, 'Introduction: Food, Drink and Identity in Europe: consumption and the construction of local, national and cosmopolitan culture' in: *European Studies: an interdisciplinary series in European culture, history and politics* 22 (2006) 25, 26.

homeland. National food can be used as a strong offense, because it tells people themselves as well as others “who we are” and how we are different.¹⁴⁷ It is a clear projection of identity to those near and far. The matter in which new tastes and eating habits are taken up therefore hints to the level in which someone’s national identity has changed also. Giving up old eating habits might seem to make a person less ‘Dutch’, while taking up Argentinean eating habits might mean becoming more ‘Argentinean’. Also, the use of Dutch specialties in Buenos Aires can function as affirmation of the Dutch identity: showing oneself and others where you come from and who you are.

The culturally based eating habits in Argentina and the Netherlands differ a lot. While it is custom in the Netherlands to only eat one warm meal a day in the evening around six o’clock, in Argentina the main meal is consumed at midday and the evening meal is consumed around ten o’clock or even later. Not only the eating rhythm, but also the food preferences are different between the Netherlands and Argentina. Argentinean food is often described as good, but lacking variety. My informants often said Argentineans eat a lot more meat and less vegetable than is the custom in the Netherlands. Tim described the food differences between the Netherlands and Argentina as follows:

“The [Argentinean food] is a lot of meat and pasta, primarily. Here you will eat a bit more pasta than in the Netherlands. And you eat a lot more meat here. But I just like that. That’s a lot more expensive in the Netherlands, here you can eat that every day. The thing that I did need adjusting to in Argentina was the fact that there is little variation. You have a lot more choice in the Netherlands as a result of the colonial history, and also more fresh vegetables, all year long. Those are seasonal here and they come from far. Regarding eating rhythm, that doesn’t matter a lot to me. The only thing that needs accommodating to is that you eat a warm meal at midday and again in the evening around ten o’clock.”¹⁴⁸

In general the Dutch immigrants took over the Argentinean eating preferences, but not everyone did this entirely. The eating rhythm continues to be difficult for some immigrants, as well as the lack of variety in meals. Especially families with children plan the evening meal earlier than is usual in Argentina, because they want their children to get enough sleep. Most immigrants also prefer more variety in their diet, and try to eat more vegetables. How much a person has changed their eating habits is a personal matter, and as a result some immigrants

¹⁴⁷ F. Xavier Medina, ‘‘Social wine’: Ethnic Identity and Wine Consumption in the Basque Diaspora in Barcelona (Spain)’ in: *European Studies: an interdisciplinary series in European culture, history and politics* 22 (2006) 125.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

have a more Argentinean eating habit than others. Hendrik for example just couldn't get accustomed to eating a warm meal twice a day:

"Well, it is all about what you are used to since you were a child. Like they eat two warm meals a day? I will never get used to that! A plate of pasta for lunch and in the evening another warm meal. I have tried it for a while but I gained ten kilos in a few weeks! So I abolished that rather quickly."¹⁴⁹

Others have fewer problems with the new eating customs, like Sofie:

"I have taken over the habit of eating a warm meal at midday. I never eat a plowman's lunch, but I never really liked that in the Netherlands either, there I also tried to make something more creative out of it. And eating late, at the end of the day, I already did that in the Netherlands, but not as late as here but still I sometimes ate at half past eight. Sometimes earlier. [...] I never really liked potatoes so I already ate more pasta and rice in the Netherlands. I do eat meat a lot more often here. They teach you in the Netherlands that you have to eat three things: vegetables, meat and potatoes, pasta or rice. Here you often omit the vegetables or the potatoes."¹⁵⁰

Apart from the eating rhythm there are also special national delicacies that can be appreciated from the new society, as missed and valued from the old one. What stands out is that almost all of my informants appreciated Dutch specialties a lot, especial certain products that are hard to come by in foreign countries. Products that are often mentioned are Dutch cheeses, bread, peanut butter, chocolate, 'bitterballen' (a kind of croquette) and of course 'haring' (herring eaten raw). Indonesian dishes that are very popular in the Netherlands are also missed, partly because it is difficult to come by the necessary ingredients. Sometimes people only learn to appreciate these types of food when they have left the Netherlands:

"When I am in the Netherlands I eat a lot of 'kroketten', 'bitterballen' and 'haring'. [different kinds of croquettes and pickled herring] And also a sandwich with 'hagelslag' [chocolate sprinkles] or cheese, but I don't make a detour for it. I eat less meat than the Argentineans and more vegetables."¹⁵¹

"In the past I didn't like 'haring' but now I miss it, do you know what I mean? A lot of those kinds of things that you will start to miss while when you were there [in the Netherlands] they were available to you, and you never really paid it a lot of attention."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Hendrik, 30-04-2010.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Niels, 17-03-2010.

¹⁵² Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

Some people even make their own Dutch specialties, like Hendrik:

"I make my own 'kroketten' and 'huzarensalades' [type of Russian salad]. It is simply a part of yourself, it is a treat to just be able to kook your own food once in a while. Your imported 'rookworst' and 'zuurkool' [smoked sausage and sauerkraut]. If I had the resources I would make my own 'zuurkool', really. And 'snert' [type of pea soup], we don't have turnip-rooted celery here but it works fine with normal celery as well. No, I do sometimes make my own Dutch meals, especially in the winter. We don't really have Dutch specialties for in the summer, right. Consequently it's rich of calories for in the cold winter months. And it's cheap food. That is also a piece of my identity."¹⁵³

So, while the Dutch immigrants do adapt to the new eating habits of their new environment, the new habits are being mixed with their old ones. Concerning food, the Dutch immigrants also seem to choose the integration strategy, learning new trends and habits, but not giving up things from their Dutch culture that are seen as important or nice.

5.2. Festivities

Festivities, whether they are a day off or a big celebration, are usually a lot of fun. There are a lot of international holidays like Christmas or New Year's Eve that are celebrated in a lot of societies. Apart from those kinds of celebrations, festivities can also be country specific. For example, a lot of different countries celebrate their own independence day. These events are therefore also a way to express one's national identity, which is why I asked my participants about their opinions of certain Argentinean and Dutch national festivities.

First of all there are a lot of country-specific celebrations in the Netherlands, but not all of them are national festivities, like the celebration of 'Sint Maarten'. The Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires did not celebrate all the typical Dutch festivities, but there were two major celebrations that still got a lot of attention: Queen's day and Sinterklaas (Saint Nicolas). These Dutch festivities are very different in nature. Queen's day is a patriotic festivity during the summertime, in which the Dutch monarchy is celebrated. On this day young and old celebrate together in the streets, a party that is continued into the early hours. On the other hand there is Sinterklaas, which is a festivity for children in December, but it is also often celebrated by adults. This festivity is more of a traditional than of a patriotic nature as its origins lie in religion. Even so, it is thought to be a very typical Dutch tradition.

¹⁵³ Interview with Hendrik, 30-04-2010.

Argentina also has a long list of special national holidays, but the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires did not seem very concerned with those festivities. An often heard complaint about these national holidays under my informants is that there are not that many holidays that are actually celebrated and not just used to get a day off from work. The Dutch in Argentina often told me they found Argentineans lacking in a sense of belonging together and being part of a society. This is often given as an explanation for why they think Argentina lacks in real national festivities.

Even though it might be true that a lot of Argentineans use the national holidays as a day off, there are also a lot of people that do celebrate national holidays. The most important national festivity Argentina's national day on the 25th of May, on which the birth of the nation is celebrated. When I was in Argentina this happened to be exactly 200 years ago, and this was celebrated massively. Other national festivities are also mainly commemorations of historical events. Femke said the following on the subject:

"Regarding festivities there is the independence day. But that's not like Queens day [in the Netherlands]. This you rather celebrate with family. You will have a day off and make an *asado* with friends and family. Those kinds of festivities are here often something for the family. It is not like everyone goes into the streets to celebrate together. [...] They are not really festivities for everyone together; it's more like a memorial of the past or something that is thought of as important. For example the day of the 'Malvinas' [Falklands war]. Then there is not much to join in to but they do broadcast about it on the television. Most people will then do something with the family. And free days are really appreciated here because people have so little holidays. [...] But I do follow what is being remembered or celebrated."¹⁵⁴

In a sense the Dutch immigrants might be taking over the same attitude they think Argentineans have towards the national holidays. On the other hand this also seems to come forth out of a sense of not feeling like these festivities have anything to do with themselves. They are usually aware of, and also interested in Argentinean national holidays, but do not seem to feel part of these holidays themselves. This in my opinion is a clear sign that they do not identify that much with Argentina on a personal level. Like Mariska said when I asked her about her opinion on Argentinean national holidays:

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010.

"Well then we simply have a day off. And now with the Independence Day, the 25th of May, I don't join in to that, decorating everything with little flags and things like that. Then I don't walk around with an Argentinean flag or anything."¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires are also ambiguous about the Dutch festivities. The Nederlandse Vereniging organizes parties on certain national holidays, of which Queen's Day is the most important one. Last year they also organized a Sinterklaas party together with the Dutch school de Knikkers. There are also individually organized parties, which don't have any connection to the Nederlandse Vereniging. The matter in which these Dutch national holidays are valued differs per person.

"What we did do once, two years ago we held a fifth of May party here [at home]. We simply invited all the Dutch people we knew and liked. [...] We were here with around the thirty people. It was a lot of fun [...] because you celebrate something that is specific for the Netherlands, and also because you do sometimes miss certain things from the Netherlands."¹⁵⁶

My informants have often told me they are not very interested in the Dutch society in Buenos Aires, and do not feel the need to be around other Dutch people a lot. After all, they left the Netherlands to have a life in Argentina, and were not planning on being busy with Dutch traditions a lot in their new home country. Still, being among other Dutch people and celebrating traditional festivities seems to be appreciated a lot. After all, these Dutch festivities are a chance to express ones national identity together with people who feel alike. It seems to be this ambiguity that makes enjoying Dutch festivities hard to admit, but nice to do for some people, like in the following example:

"I like knowing Dutch people [...] but I don't really go looking for them, not really. But I do enjoy seeing all the other Dutch people at for example a Queen's day party. [...] But I don't really find it very important."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Mariska, 03-05-2010.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Mariska, 03-05-2010.

5.3. News media interests

My informants were mostly highly educated people, so it was not surprising to find out that they often read newspapers and watched the news. What was surprising however was that most of them, even after having lived in Argentina for a very long time, read the Dutch news on the internet on a regular and often daily basis. Reasons given for this were often that they preferred the Dutch news over the Argentinean news. According to my informants, the Dutch papers would be less sensational and more internationally focused. The Argentinean news however is often followed as well, but by some in a lesser degree than with the Dutch news. I asked Martijn, who has left the Netherlands fifteen years ago, but has lived ten of those years in London, if he kept up with Argentinean topicalities, he responded:

“No, not really. There is no direct reason to. It is not like I don’t want to know, I do get informed. [...] Yes, in that sense I don’t feel very involved with what is going on here. I was a lot more involved in England, there I kept up with politics, I knew about everything that was happening in English politics, which is not the case here. If something big happens I do get to know about it, only usually two days later. Or a bit later. [...] In that sense I am more interested in the international and economical news and the Dutch newspapers are simply a bit better at that”,¹⁵⁸

I asked Hendrik if he kept up with the Argentinean and the Dutch news:

“I do on the internet. ‘De Telegraaf’ sometimes, ‘AD’, ‘Dagblad van het Noorden’, NU.nl [Dutch newspapers and sites], and also some internet blogs. [...] I do that a bit in the morning. Scanning the front pages. [...] [I watch the Argentinean news] in the evening on TV. What stands out for me is that that news is only about Argentina, as if nothing else happens in the world. About what kind of trick the president is playing now, and all the misery here. The really important things that happen in the world sometimes do appear at the end of the broadcast, for example those recent riots in Greece. But it’s not like the NOS news in the Netherlands [Dutch broadcast network]. You actually have to read some international sites; otherwise you’ll be deprived of information.”¹⁵⁹

Hans said the following about his habit of reading the Dutch news on the internet:

“I read the Dutch newspapers every day. I am completely informed: out of interest and to maintain the connection.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Hendrik, 30-04-2010.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

Like Hans said, reading the Dutch newspapers also serves the purpose of keeping up to date with the happenings in the home country. This also has to do with the attachment these people still have with the Netherlands. They still have family living there, and visit when they can. Of course, knowing about the Dutch news also gives for a good conversation starter in the company of other Dutch immigrants. But reading this news can also be motivated by more emotional reasons like nostalgia or even homesickness.

The Argentinean news however gets a bit less attention under the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires in general. As they mostly have Argentinean partners and have a lot of contact with other Argentineans they do know what is going on, but there is mostly not enough interest in these issues to make them dive deeper into the daily news. Even though most Dutch immigrants do feel at home and accepted in Argentinean society, at a personal level, and this varies per person, they still seem to feel like outsiders on an identity level. As Sofie said:

“In some way I do worry about [Argentinean] politics and the way in which the country is governed, I do have an opinion about that, but in some way you remain, at least I, I feel impartial in those things, because it is not my country. It doesn’t move me like when something similar would happen in the Netherlands.”¹⁶¹

Because they don’t feel Argentinean, the Argentinean news therefore doesn’t trigger the same kind of interest the Dutch news does. I believe that, while the Argentinean news is useful to know in daily life, the Dutch news triggers their sense of national identity, which could be an explanation for their continuing interest in Dutch online newspapers.

5.4. Language

Language is of course a very important aspect of the national identity. Without speaking the language of a certain society, it is very difficult if not impossible to identify with it. Language is not only a communicational tool, but also contains cultural heritage of a certain society. So, learning another language also means learning a part of another culture.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

A language is more than a communication tool, and learning a language is more than just learning the words. Languages are important vehicles of culture and tradition and enable groups to maintain their own separate identity.¹⁶² It is true that language has a strong communicative function, but symbolic aspects are intertwined with it, like cultural and historic associations. This is what makes truly learning another language hard. Even when a person has learnt a second language fluently he or she can still have problems understanding the deeper levels of communication. When you understand what the other is saying it does not mean you have grasped what is actually meant. Examples of this are reading between the lines and finding the hidden meaning but also interpreting and using body language and intonation, which are very hard if almost impossible to learn completely. That is why only when a person grows up in that language community he or she will be able to fully participate in that language.¹⁶³

It is clear that there is a strong link between language and national or ethnic identity. When a person has one particular mother-language he or she belongs to that speech community. This implies that variations in identity and allegiances might occur when a person learns to speak more than one language. The question then rises up to which degree this person possesses that other language, and if this leads to some form of cognitive-linguistic duality.¹⁶⁴ First of all, having family ties in the second language group helps to stimulate identification with the new language group. In this case bilingualism can indeed stimulate identification with another group. The more a person gets involved in another community's language and culture, the greater the impact will be upon identity. The earlier this starts in one's life, the stronger this will be.¹⁶⁵

However, with bilinguals it will usually be the case that one camp will have psychological an emotional primacy above the other.¹⁶⁶ The way a person speaks a language can inherently show to which language group they identify the most. Features like accents, dialects, intonation patterns and formal or informal speech can quickly tell us something about the speaker.¹⁶⁷ That is because big or small linguistic differences like accent or dialect can, willingly or unwillingly, make group distinctions or status visible. This shows that even when one speaks an extra language they don't have to feel part of that linguistic society.

¹⁶² John Edwards, *Language and Identity; an Introduction* (Cambridge 2009) 55.

¹⁶³ Edwards, *Language and Identity* 55.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, *Language and Identity* 248.

¹⁶⁵ Edwards, *Language and Identity* 252.

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *Language and Identity* 252.

¹⁶⁷ Edwards, *Language and Identity* 21.

So what about the Dutch bilinguals in Buenos Aires? In general most of them speak Spanish pretty well, but there are different gradations between individuals. Some of my informants speak Spanish poorly and speak English at home with their partners. Others really try to learn the Argentinean Spanish very well and even try to learn the local *Porteño* tongue. Even though most of them speak Argentinean Spanish fluently, most of them do have a strong Dutch accent. Over all, there are a lot of different levels of knowledge of Argentinean Spanish and of Dutch accents. Also the willingness to improve varies per person. As having a Dutch accent isn't detrimental and can even be turned into an advantage at some point, as mentioned before, the immigrants are often not that bothered with it. Still, having an accent will always make it very clear that they are foreigners, and makes that they are treated as such. This accentuates their being different as immigrants:

"Yes, I feel at home, but I also feel like a foreigner. That you remain. It is really difficult to speak the *Porteño* language perfectly. [...] You are quickly aware of if someone is from around here or not. I feel very much at home, at ease. But at the same time I remain aware of me being a foreigner in another country: not in a strange country but in a different country."¹⁶⁸

Some people speak more Dutch in daily life than others. Nathascha Dolkens, for example, works as a tourist guide for Dutch tourists, so naturally she still speaks a lot of Dutch. Other people speak a lot of Dutch as well due to their work, like Bram, who was a therapist in the Netherlands, and still works as one with the help of Skype. A lot of people speak to their friends and family in the Netherlands using Skype on a regular basis as well. And of course Dutch is spoken within the Dutch society in Buenos Aires, and among personal friends. So even though these immigrants speak a lot of Spanish they usually also speak a lot of Dutch, generally speaking.

The identity aspect in the language expresses itself more profoundly while speaking about the (possible) children of the Dutch immigrants. As said before, language is not only a communicative tool but also a carrier of cultural heritage. For some it is really important that their children learn to speak Dutch well, while others don't see the point in teaching their children their own language. Marieke for example, who has two daughters, said the following on the subject:

"My children don't speak Dutch either. [...] I had those children when I was forty and I was already naturalized here. I thought: 'Why would I now still have to teach my children Dutch?' They then went to

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

an English and Spanish speaking school and those two languages already seemed very valuable to me. I thought: ‘If they ever go to Holland, then they will be able to manage everything in English as well’.”¹⁶⁹

When I asked Martijn why he brings his children to the Dutch school ‘de Knikkers’ every week, which takes up five hours of his Thursday due to travel distance, he responded:

“Because I quite enjoy passing on a bit of my Dutch identity to my children. Besides, when they were born I decided to talk Dutch to them, purely because it seemed a natural way of learning a language to me. And I think that bilingualism is something very positive; it gives you different approaches to life, to the world.”¹⁷⁰

Niels on the other hand decided not to teach his son the Dutch language:

“That has been a long conversation between my wife and I; I thought it would be sufficient for the children to know two languages. I never insisted on him learning Dutch. But he did learn it when he went to the Netherlands when he was eighteen years old. But he did that because he wanted to himself. [...] When we came here he was four years old. I have the feeling that you can get very far with Spanish and English.”¹⁷¹

To conclude we can say that the integration strategy is also implemented concerning language. Even though all of the Dutch immigrants learn how to speak Argentinean Spanish in various degrees, the Dutch language is also often spoken. While some don’t mind their children not knowing their language, others find it such an important part of themselves that they value their children learning the Dutch language a lot. For the first generation Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires, Argentinean Spanish will always be their second language, and Dutch will be their mother- language. Language is one of the most important pillars of group identity, but learning another language doesn’t inherently imply becoming part of that new group. The knowledge of Argentinean Spanish has brought the Dutch immigrants a lot closer to Argentinean society, but has not removed their ‘differentness’ as foreigners. So, also in the subject of language, the personal identification of the immigrants is still stronger with the Netherlands than it is with Argentina.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Marieke, 23-04-2010

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Niels, 17-03-2010.

5.5. Identification

We have seen that most of the Dutch first generation immigrants in Buenos Aires have integrated well into Argentinean society. This would suggest that gradually these immigrants would start to identify with Argentina as well as with the Netherlands¹⁷². However, their migration to Argentina seems to have had less effect on their national identification than I expected. In fact, in various degrees all my informants kept on seeing themselves as foreigners or outsiders in Argentinean society, which shows how much difficulty they had with identifying with Argentina. Even Femke, who moved to Argentina at a young age, said:

“I simply have my life here, so in that sense I do feel like I belong here. But I know very well that I will never adapt myself as far as that this will become my country. This is the country I live in, but I clearly feel that I am not from here. And when I am in the Netherlands I do clearly feel; ‘I am from here’. [...] People sometimes say: ‘You are more an Argentinean woman than a Dutch woman’, but I don’t think that’s true. I did adapt myself a lot but I also feel very different in certain situations.”¹⁷³

Of course the passing of time has its influence on national identification. While on the one hand the immigrant gets more and more familiar with the new society, on the other hand he or she gradually estranges from the changing Dutch society. Still, the length of time in Argentina seemed to be less influential on national identification than the life phase in which the immigrant migrated. People who were very much integrated and had lived in Argentina for more than thirty years still felt they were Dutch in stead of Argentinean. The continuing identification with the Netherlands seemed to be even more persistent with people that migrated at an older age than people that migrated at a younger age. Marieke, who lived in Argentina for twenty-six years and moved in her thirties, told me:

“No, I will never be a real Argentinean. Because I don’t agree with them about so many issues, I wouldn’t want to be an Argentinean woman. It is often very messy here, I don’t like that. I would rather remain a Dutch woman. [...] I do feel connected to Argentina, but not in a way that would make me fend for this country. That is something my children do.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Winny Bakker ao., ‘Personality and Dutch Emigrants’ Reactions to Acculturation Strategies’ *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 36 (2006).

¹⁷³ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Marieke, 23-04-2010

It seems that the younger the immigrant was when moving, the more this person will start to identify with Argentina. The informants that moved to Argentina in their twenties seemed to have a stronger bond with Argentina than people that moved in their thirties and upwards, and seemed to be more confused about their national identification. Samantha started living in Argentina in her early twenties:

"I sometimes feel like a Dutch woman and sometimes more Argentinean, but sometimes I feel a bit in between as well. Not really a certain nationality. I guide groups of Dutch people through Argentina for my work, [...] and in comparison to them I feel Argentinean. [...] But when I'm annoyed by the Argentineans, when they arrive three hours late for example, or when something takes forever or things don't work, in those cases I feel more like a Dutch woman. [...] But it does feel that way to me, because I have been partially formed here. I did spend my entire youth in the Netherlands, but I think that the period between the age of twenty and thirty is very important for our development as well."¹⁷⁵

The Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires are mostly very aware of the fact that Dutch society has changed since they left due to the intensive information flow between the two countries that the internet and easier traveling have made possible. As a result, most of them realize that they themselves have changed as well. Not having lived in the Netherlands for a long time creates a sense of alienation with present-day Dutch society, causing many people to respond that they feel Dutch in their roots, but don't identify as much with present-day Dutch society like they used to:

"I do feel a bit estranged [when I am in the Netherlands]. You walk around there, and you think: 'everyone here considers me a Dutchman as well, but I am not that. I am here now, but I have to return home in a while. And my home is not here in the Netherlands, my home is over there.' But you remain a Dutchman, it's a strange sensation."¹⁷⁶

Alienation from present-day Dutch society doesn't seem to have any consequences for identification with the Netherlands as a country:

"I do feel like a Dutchman, because of my roots. But I can't relate myself to the Dutch society, the people. You feel like a Dutchman because you were born there, and you have certain characteristics. [...] But that does change after my experiences in the world and having lived for already a third of my life in a foreign country. [...] When I come back to the Netherlands for example there are a lot of people that don't understand me, I have less 'feeling' with the people in the Netherlands than the people in

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Samantha, 05-04-2010.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

Argentina. [...] But you remain a Dutchman. Even if they would tear up my passport, you can't just take that away from someone. You remain a Dutchman, that's a feeling, it is a part of your being, you can't just get rid of that.”¹⁷⁷

Instead of resulting into a feeling of having a dual national identity migration to Argentina seems to have a more subtle consequence on national identification: the immigrants often seem to lose their sense of belonging to one specific society. ‘Dutchness’ is still an important part of their identity, but in the passing of time seems to become something personal which refers more to the immigrant’s past than to present-day Dutch society. As a result some form of disengagement from identification with any nation seems to develop gradually:

“I did change in the sense that I don’t feel completely Dutch anymore and neither Argentinean. I feel more like I am a world citizen that can live anywhere in the world, hypothetically. [...] I have influences in me from the Netherlands and Argentina, but I feel detached from both. [...] When talking about my origins I do feel clearly; I am Dutch. I’ve been taught a lot of things that make me Dutch. But still I feel more like some kind of world citizen than a Dutch or an Argentinean woman.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010.

6. Conclusion

This fragment of text taken from Paulien Cornelisse's book 'Taal is zeg maar echt mijn ding'¹⁷⁹ ('Language is like so my thing', 2009) illustrates a sentiment I have detected throughout my research on Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires. Amongst a lot of Dutch immigrants being typically Dutch seemed to be unfashionable. Being a person of the world with insights in other cultures and other ways of living on the other hand seemed to be more desirable. As Paulien Cornelisse's text suggests this attitude is also common in the Netherlands, making, in my opinion, these Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires look more Dutch than ever. But is this really the case? After all this research, what is my answer to my main question: how does migration affect the Dutch identity of Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires?

To answer this question we first discussed globalization, in which light migration, acculturation and identity should all be seen. Because of globalization, distances in space and time have diminished, or in other words, time-space compression has taken place. The result of this is that migration has become easier and less definite than it used to be. Globalization has affected identification in an ambiguous manner. On the one hand individual sameness is promoted world-wide, while on the other hand the urge for uniqueness has been stimulated. In general identity has become more a question of choice than a given factor in the lives of people.

Following up migration theory was discussed, in which three interdisciplinary paradigms have followed each other up. The first is modernization theory, which was based on research on migration from rural to urban areas. Here migration was seen as a positive and

Só Dutch

"Oh, I think that's sooo Dutch!" Binging along chocolate sprinkles in the caravan? 'Sooo Dutch.' Not being allowed to be above average? 'Sooo Dutch.' The globe-trotter shows that he knows how things work elsewhere and that he can truly look at his own country like an outsider. In a slightly denigrating manner, mind you. 'Oh well, cappuccino after dinner... really very Dutch.'

I myself find it a bit absurd, all those things that are 'sooo Dutch'. I also wonder if other countries have such a big problem with being themselves as well. Do French tourists also say 'that is sooo French' when they have brought along their own La Vache Qui Rit to the Spanish costa? I don't think so.

In my opinion it is especially very Dutch to shout at every occurring thing: 'That's sooo Dutch.'"

¹⁷⁹ Paulien Cornelisse *Taal is zeg maar echt mijn ding* (2009) 92.

natural human phenomenon, which would eventually create a balance between cities and the countryside. A paradigm-switch took place when it became clear that rural areas were not profiting from emigration and that migration flows were not slowing down but instead accelerating. Historical-structuralist thinking now took over, which saw migration as the result of the inequality of economic regions in the world. From this perspective only core regions in the world profited from migration, while the periphery suffered. Migration was thus forced by global powers and not by individual choice. The third and currently fashionable paradigm sees this differently. Migrants are now thought of as social actors with individual choice. In the same line of thought we find transnationalism and migration network theory. A new thinking about space and place was brought into life, stating that there are social fields transgressing the traditional borders.

Existing migration theories provide insight into the phenomenon of migration, but do little to help explain contemporary Dutch migration to Buenos Aires. This type of migration has proven to be very uncharacteristic in comparison to the migration flows on which these theories are based. Unlike those migration flows Dutch migration to Buenos Aires is not economical in nature or triggered by existing transnational fields, but motivated by personal circumstances and in addition very voluntary in nature.

The Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires that have cooperated with my research were mostly educated above average and had a lot of travelling experience. They are people with a lot of possibilities in the Dutch and in other societies in the world. The initial age of migration differed: some came to Argentina in their early twenties, while others had already had a lot of work experience in the Netherlands before moving. The motivations behind migrating to Argentina are diverse and vary per person. Having an Argentinean partner however is often a strong incentive. Mixed couples often choose to live in Argentina instead of the Netherlands because of the strict Dutch immigration laws and because of family or work related reasons. Modern technologies like travel and the internet have made migration easier and stimulate individuals to make the choice to migrate. Another often heard reason to move is the desire for adventure, combined with dissatisfaction or boredom with Dutch society. Argentina as a country has its own attraction as well, promising to combine European and Latin American culture. The different push and pull factors are given different levels of importance by individual participants.

Moving to Buenos Aires nowadays doesn't imply migrating to Argentina. The decision to actually build up a future in Argentina is usually not made instantly, but is often a gradual process. Life-phase plays an important role in this, as does the length of time that the

immigrant has already lived in Argentina. These factors influence the relative success of staying or returning to the Netherlands. As a result some immigrants only come to live in Argentina for a few years, while others gradually decide to remain. Partners and family are also very important in the choice to stay or return. While an Argentinean partner is not always the reason for coming to Argentina they are often the reason to stay.

Acculturation is the process of change in cultural characteristics that occur in one or more groups as a result of long lasting contacts between groups and individuals of various cultures. These changes in characteristics can have a psychological influence on immigrants, as it can affect an individual's identification. There are four acculturation strategies; integration, separation, assimilation and marginalization. Immigrants can use different strategies and different levels of strategy intensity, so a strict division into four sections is not always easy to make. In general integration is perceived to be the most successful and the most commonly applied strategy, and is associated with the development of dual national identification.

The choice in acculturation strategy is influenced by three factors: the character of the migration, the image the receiving society has of the immigrants and the opportunities of social ascent that the immigrants have in the receiving society. The character of the migration has proven to be of a voluntary nature. As for the image that the receiving society has of the immigrants, this is very positive, which has made the acculturation of the immigrants in Argentinean society a lot easier. The opportunities of social ascent are there but are also reliant on the connections that the immigrant has made in Argentinean society. In general the Dutch immigrants prefer to work for themselves as high paying jobs are not often available to them and salaries and work conditions are usually lower than they were used to in the Netherlands.

All of the Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires can be said to have followed the integration strategy. They are very much involved with Argentineans as they often have an Argentinean partner and through this partner a family and friends. Social differences are not a big problem for them, but some are easier accepted than others. The Dutch community in Buenos Aires is a reflection of the integration of the Dutch immigrants in Argentinean society: the organizations that exist are either not very focused on Dutch immigrants like the Dutch embassy and the chamber of commerce, or they are not very fashionable like the Nederlandse Vereniging, the Dutch school 'de Knikkers' and the AHB. This shows that even though most Dutch immigrants appreciate some contact with other Dutch immigrants, there is

no tight Dutch community in Buenos Aires as they are all very much integrated into Argentinean society.

As for identification, individual identities are made up out of different social roles and cultural categories. These come from within a person and are influenced externally as well, through environment and experience. The primary effect tells us that first influences have a greater impact on identity. Identities are not static but should be seen as processes of identity construction. Individual and collective identities are interrelated and mutually necessary, so making a distinction here is only analytical. There are various cultural or social identities, under which ethnic and national identity, to which we can identify on a group level. Essentialist, historical-structuralist and constructivist thought have been the most important paradigms in identity theory. Before the Second World War essentialist thought, which saw group identity as unchanging, was the dominant theory. After the war however a paradigm switch took place towards the belief in flux, process, ambiguity and complexity of social worlds. Historical-structuralist theory is in this line of thought: group identity is seen as something that is carried on through time, changing, but with some form of origin in history. Finally constructivist thought sees group identity as a construction through the thoughts and practices of people, in which an origin in history does not have to necessarily be there.

Group identities are hard to describe because they are ambiguous concepts, and group boundaries are problematic because criteria describing them are almost never exclusive and under constant change. Still this does not mean they are not important. Contrary to postmodernist predictions national identities are still very powerful. This is because of the multidimensional quality of nationality: it can refer to many other cultural or social identities like class, religion and ethnic sentiment. So, what the Dutch national identity encompasses we cannot say with total precision, but we can say that it is a powerful group identity.

We saw the influence of this national identity in the identity expression of the participants. The Dutch immigrants did get accustomed to Argentinean eating habits, but continued to appreciate Dutch eating customs when possible. In addition, they were less concerned with the Argentinean festivities than with traditional Dutch festivities. In general the Dutch media impelled more interest from the immigrants than the Argentinean media. The Dutch immigrants in Buenos Aires all spoke Spanish, but some had put more effort into learning the language well than others. And even with the biggest effort it is very difficult to start belonging to another speech community than that of the mother language. From all these topics it became clear that there usually was a stronger identification with the Netherlands than with Argentina.

The theory suggests that migration to a different society can influence national identity when the integration strategy is followed. The result would then be that immigrants gradually develop identification with both their old and with their new society. The time living in Argentina and the life phase in which the immigrants migrated have proven to be of influence on national identification as well. The passing of time also causes estrangement with contemporary Dutch society. However, despite good integration and time, most participants still seem to feel like foreigners in Argentinean society. Argentina has become their home but not their country. Changes in identity do occur as identification with the Netherlands gradually starts to refer to ‘roots’ and not the contemporary society. Dual national identities do not form, but a gradually growing disengagement with national identity can take place. The influence of migration on national identity that can be detected is only gradual and subtle. This shows that even in this day and age with modern technologies diminishing time and space distances, national identities truly are still very strong, even for these ‘world citizens’.

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8. Appendix: Citations in Dutch

3. Dutch migration to Buenos Aires

3.2 Motivation to move

“Ik heb mijn vriend, een Argentijn, in Europa leren kennen toen hij op reis was. Ik ben hem toen op gaan zoeken in Argentinië en toen vond ik het zo leuk hier dat ik ben blijven hangen hier.”¹⁸⁰

“Mijn vrouw is toen overgekomen [naar Nederland]. [...] maar toen begonnen de sores met de immigratieregels van Nederland. En ik als zelfstandige voldeed al bij voorbaat niet aan de voorwaarden. [...] Dus vanuit de wet moet je al zes maanden gescheiden leven, dat vond ik wel een beetje raar. [...] Dus toen dacht ik: Amsterdam zit vol met illegalen, zij kan er ook nog wel bij. Dat ging verder allemaal goed, totdat ze zwanger was, en ik kon haar met geen mogelijkheid op mijn verzekeringspolis krijgen. Er was niets aan te doen, en we hadden geen keus. Ze moest gewoon terug, dus ik moest toen gewoon mee. [...] door de Nederlandse wet eigenlijk is het toen zo ver gekomen dat ik Nederland heb verlaten.”¹⁸¹

“Het lastigste is, ik heb drie kinderen bij mijn ex in Nederland, en dat is het enige wat niet perfect is in mijn leven. Ik ben veel te ver bij mijn kinderen vandaan. [...] Gelukkig is er internet en skype. Ware het niet voor die twee dingen geweest, dan weet ik niet of ik het volgehouden had. Het zou voor mij heel zwaar geweest zijn, misschien wel te zwaar.”¹⁸²

“Ik wilde al heel lang een tijd in het buitenland wonen. Ik heb na mijn studie vijf maanden door Azië gereisd, en dat vond ik heel erg interessant; ik leerde heel veel andere manieren van leven kennen, filosofieën. Om je blik te verruimen. Sindsdien heeft het buitenland me altijd wel getrokken. En sowieso reisde ik veel, op vakanties. En toen heb ik een hele tijd gedacht dat ik wel een tijdsje in Parijs wou wonen, maar op een gegeven moment wou ik dat ook niet meer, om dan maar op de bonnefooi in een kroeg te werken. [...] Toen leerde ik mijn partner kennen en toen ging zijn zus net in Suriname wonen. Door al die dingen is het soort van logisch dat de mogelijkheid er is om in het buitenland te gaan wonen. Voor mij was het het belangrijkst om een andere cultuur te leren kennen en een andere manier van leven, om van te leren en uit nieuwsgierigheid.”¹⁸³

“Ja, ik wilde meer zien, niet direct met het idee om daar dan te gaan wonen, dat helemaal niet [...] In Nederland is alles natuurlijk wat voorspelbaarder in zekere zin. [...] En het, ja toch een beetje het avontuur aangaan. Toch het minder voorspelbare. Minder de agendacultuur.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Samantha, 05-04-2010

¹⁸¹ Interview with Thomas, 11-03-2010

¹⁸² Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

¹⁸³ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

“Het was meer het avontuur. Ik vond Nederland te makkelijk; in Nederland als je gewoon je best doet en solliciteert op een baan, dan krijg je die baan. Nou ja, alles is niet zo zwart-wit, maar meestal kun je werk vinden en kun je goed leven en is alles voor je geregend en hoeft je nergens bang voor te zijn. Als je je maar aan de regeltjes houdt. En dat vond ik een beetje te makkelijk. Ik dacht van ja, dat kan altijd nog.[...] Ik vind dat mensen heel erg bezig zijn met hun werk; ik vond het een beetje weinig spontaan.[...] Dat vond ik ook een beetje te georganiseerd, te gestructureerd. Mensen zijn erg individualistisch, en maken weinig tijd vrij voor familie en vrienden, en ze zijn vooral bezig met het najagen van hun carrière. En het mooie huis wat ze moeten hebben, of een iPhone of wat dan ook. [...] er is weinig werkelijke interesse in de ander.”¹⁸⁵

“Ik wilde bij mijn toenmalige Argentijnse vriendin zijn. Maar de drang om Nederland te verlaten bestond al veel langer, om andere redenen die nogsteeds actief zijn. Zoals het feit dat ik in Nederland geen toekomst meer zie voor jongere mensen. [...] En wat ook voor mij zwaar telde was de situatie toenertijd met Pim Fortuyn. Dat ik Nederland stuurloos geworden vond. [...] Ik vond vooral dat de ondernemende mens niet dusdanig werd beloond of gewaardeerd in de Nederlandse maatschappij. [...] Dat vond ik allemaal eigenschappen aan de Nederlandse cultuur en de situatie toenertijd waar ik me toen niet in kon vinden, en waar ik geen verandering in zag komen op korte termijn. Ik dacht: ik ben jong, en ik ga het gewoon proberen in het buitenland. Lukt het niet, dan kan ik altijd nog terug. [...] Om die redenen, samen met mijn toenmalige vriendin, ben ik toen vertrokken. En ik zit er nog steeds!”¹⁸⁶

“Argentinië trekt enorm, is enorm populair. [...] Omdat Argentinië Latijns Amerika en Europa in zich verenigt. Dus je hebt qua cultuur, kennisniveau, economie, innovatie, noem maar op, daar heb je een heel hoog niveau. Vooral in Buenos Aires en dan nog met name in bepaalde wijken. Maar het is wel zo dat het ook een Latijns Amerikaans land is; het is veel minder georganiseerd, veel minder ‘saai’ dan Nederland, en dat heeft zijn voor- en zijn nadelen. Dus mensen die meer avontuur en meer afwisseling willen. En Argentinië heeft verder ook veel aantrekkingsskracht qua landschap, tango, voetbal. Argentinië is verder ook een land met een heel duidelijk imago. Veel duidelijker dan bijvoorbeeld een land als Paraguay of Ecuador. [...] Argentijnen houden er van om te zeggen dat Buenos Aires het Parijs van Zuid Amerika is. Er zijn veel boekhandels, veel theater, veel concerten. De kwaliteit van leven kan hier heel goed zijn.”¹⁸⁷

‘Ja, Buenos Aires vind ik een hele fijne stad. Je voelt hier toch wel de Europese roots, waar iedereen naar verwijst. Hoewel ik het ook heel Latijns Amerikaans hier vind. Ik vind dit echt niet Parijs of Madrid. Argentijnen zijn wel meer Europese Latijns Amerikanen dan op andere plekken die ik heb gezien. Ik voelde me misschien daarom ook ietsje meer thuis hier, dan bijvoorbeeld in Midden Amerika.’¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

3.3 Motivation to stay long term or to return

“In 2006 had ik dus besloten om terug naar Nederland te gaan, maar toen kwam ik dus mijn huidige vriend tegen. In 2006 heb ik toen besloten een studie te gaan volgen, de studie die ik nu doe, om hier een betere toekomst op te kunnen bouwen. [...] Ik had toen echt besloten hier mijn toekomst op te bouwen, toen was de knoop doorgehakt. Het is een heel proces geweest.”¹⁸⁹

“Maar je moet daar [in Nederland] ook een kans krijgen natuurlijk, want ik heb daar ook nooit gewerkt. [...] Dat is ook iets wat je tegen houdt om terug te gaan. Ze zeggen altijd; als je na vijf jaar niet terug gaat, dan kan je niet meer terug. Want dan ben je te lang weggeweest om helemaal nog bij te zijn met hoe het allemaal is. Ik ben nu dit jaar elf jaar weg, dus ja.”¹⁹⁰

4 Acculturation

4.1 The Dutch community in Buenos Aires

The Dutch embassy

“Het verschilt per ambassadeur hoe betrokken de ambassade is bij de Nederlandse gemeenschap. De ene vindt het heel belangrijk, de andere vindt dat hij hier is om alleen Nederland te vertegenwoordigen, en niet voor de Nederlanders die hier zitten.”¹⁹¹

Cámara de Comercio Argentino-Holandesa

“De hele gevoelsfactor, wat vroeger veel gemakkelijker was met Nederlandse CEO’s in bedrijven, dat is minder geworden. Maar dat is logisch, het is ook een wereldwijde trend dat er steeds minder expats zijn. Waarom zou je een hele familie, die in een mooi huis moet wonen, die twee keer per jaar terug naar Nederland willen, waarvan de kinderen op de internationale school moeten, en natuurlijk een groot salaris betaald moet worden [over laten komen]. Dat brengt heel veel kosten voor een Nederlands bedrijf, terwijl ze hier gewoon een steengoede Argentijn kunnen aanstellen die waarschijnlijk minder kost. [...] Vroeger was je lid van de kamer omdat je als Nederlander je bij een Nederlandse kamer inschreef. De nationaliteit was al voldoende link. Maar ja, nu is iedereen, 90 á 80 procent van onze leden zijn nu Argentijnen die voor een Nederlands bedrijf werken. Nu is het niet meer zo vanzelfsprekend om lid te zijn, nu is het gewoon een cost-benefit afweging.”¹⁹²

“Wat we zien is dat er heel veel Nederlanders of een voortdurende stroom Nederlanders toch naar Argentinië komen, hun baan opzeggen. Dat zijn mensen die het allemaal goed voor elkaar hadden in Nederland, huisje

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

¹⁹¹ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

¹⁹² Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

boompje beestje. Ze zeggen hun baan op en verkopen hun huis en komen hier met hun spaargeld naartoe om een bedrijf op te zetten”¹⁹³

“Ik heb het gezien sinds de drie jaar dat ik hier zit. Daarvoor was het er ook al ja. Maar ik denk dat dat sinds het millennium is. Het heeft enigszins misschien met Máxima te maken. Argentijnen houden er erg van om te denken dat door Máxima heel veel Nederlandse bedrijven naar Argentinië komen. Ik denk niet dat dat waar is. [...] Wat wel zo is dat er dankzij Maxima in Nederland meer aandacht voor Argentinië is in de media. Dat zie je weer terug in dat er veel meer Nederlandse touristen naar Argentinië komen. En daaruit komt voort dat er veel meer kleine Nederlandse bedrijfjes zijn geopend zoals reisbureaus. Dus je ziet dat er wel een bepaalde impact is geweest, maar het is niet te zeggen hoe veel. Het feit dat Argentinië veel meer in de media is geweest heeft ook meer nieuwsierigheid opgewekt bij veel mensen.”¹⁹⁴

Asociación Holandesa de Beneficencia

“Hulp bieden voor Nederlaandse mensen die in de problemen zijn gekomen. Met bepaalde evenementen wordt geld ingezameld. Dat zijn Nederlanders die het niet gered hebben hier. Die bijvoorbeeld aan de drank zijn gegaan, of psychiatrische problemen hebben gekregen, van de regering hier krijg je dan geen enkele steun. Als de kinderen dan niet kunnen helpen komen ze bij de AHB aankloppen. Op het ogenblik zijn er vijftien gevallen. We beschermen elkaar zo.”¹⁹⁵

‘de Knikkers’

“Nou, mijn hele familie woont nog in Nederland. Anders is er gewoon geen communicatie: mijn ouders spreken geen Spaans en mijn broer een beetje, maar niet echt. En mijn roots zijn dus wel, ik ben gewoon Nederlandse. Ik vind het daarom belangrijk dat ze de taal leren. Nederlands is geen belangrijke taal of zo, maar je weet het gewoon nooit. Ik vind Nederland wel een veel veiliger land dan Argentinië. Ik vind dit wel een heel moeilijk en gecompliceerd land, en ik denk dat het wel heel fijn is als je een Nederlands paspoort hebt en ook de Nederlandse taal spreekt. Je hebt dan altijd iets om op terug te vallen, maar ook dat als ik naar Nederland ga, dat ze zich daar geen vreemden voelen, dat ze zich in Nederland net zo goed op hun gemak voelen als in Argentinië. Dat is altijd erg belangrijk voor mij geweest.”¹⁹⁶

The ‘Nederlandse Vereniging’

“Nadat de crisis over was kwamen meer jongelui. Maar voor hen was alles een beetje los-vastig, en zij hadden weinig belangstelling in de Nederlandse Vereniging. [...] En van die jongelui kon je weinig op aan. Na vijf jaar was ik weg en ging Hans het overnemen. Ik had de hoop dat hij wat meer jongelui zou werven. Toch heeft hij veel oudere lui verloren, maar ja, die verlies je toch. Maar met die jongelui, die zijn niet interesseerbaar. Het is een moeilijke fase voor de Nederlandse Vereniging.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Marieke, 23-04-2010

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Mariska, 03-05-2010.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

Other activities

“We zijn met vier tot zes, zeven Nederlanders. We gaan dan lekker een biertje drinken vrijdagavond. Niet allemaal zijn het de voetballers. [...] Mensen die ook zakendoen in Argentinië, en ook vaak tegen dezelfde dingen aan lopen, en het gewoon lekker vinden om af en toe dat even af te kunnen blussen. [...] Wij vinden het fijn om even na het werk een biertje te drinken en daarna de avond door te brengen met vrouw en kind thuis. En omdat Argentijnen dat niet zo hebben kom je dan al snel bij Nederlanders terecht. Daarnaast is het ook leuk om te horen hoe zij het hier ervaren, het werken, hier zaken te doen, etcetera. Over het algemeen zijn het ook Nederlanders die de hele week tussen de Argentijnen zitten, en die vinden het dan wel mooi om een keer in de week met Nederlanders bierjes te drinken. Dat was het uitgangspunt van de vrijdagmiddag borrel”¹⁹⁸

“Het voetbalteam kwam eigenlijk boven omdat we met een hoop Nederlanders waren die wel wilden voetballen, maar omdat we niet goed genoeg waren werden we niet opgenomen in Argentijnse voetbalteams. Zij spelen een potje voetbal heel serieus, en daarna gaan ze direct naar huis toe. Die Nederlanders vinden heel goed spelen niet zo belangrijk, maar die vinden het gewoon gezellig om een balletje te trappen, en daarna een biertje te drinken en te ouwehoeren. Daarom heb ik dit voetbalteam opgericht. [...] Die Argentijnen, dat is prachtig om te zien als ze niet kunnen winnen, terwijl ze zich superieur voelen aan ons, en daarna lekker een biertje te drinken.”¹⁹⁹

“Dus het is ook wel leuk om [...] mensen die bijvoorbeeld hetzelfde ding hebben meegeemaakt of dezelfde achtergrond als jij hebben bijvoorbeeld te spreken. En je merkt ook wel dat het onder Nederlanders heel makkelijk klikt, omdat je daar ik weet niet dertig jaar hebt gewoond. Dus je snapt mensen makkelijker, je kunt ze makkelijker plaatsen. En je deelt een geschiedenis en bepaalde humor. [...] Argentijnen geven zichzelf niet zo snel bloot; Nederlanders praten veel gemakkelijker over wat ze hebben meegeemaakt en vooral ook over wat ze vinden. Meningen. Argentijnen zijn daar vaak wat terughoudender in, ze zijn eerder bang dat ze je beledigen. [...] Argentijnen genieten gewoon van bij elkaar zijn, en dan hoeft het over helemaal niets te gaan. Een Nederlander, tenminste dat is mijn interpretatie, zoekt eerder een goed gesprek. Terwijl een Argentijn zoekt samen zijn met een leuke groep mensen. En dan kan je de hele avond flauwe grappen maken met elkaar en dan heb je een super toffe avond gehad. Een Nederlander moet een soort van inhoud hebben.”²⁰⁰

4.2 Argentinean society and the Dutch immigrants

Acceptance of Dutch immigrants in the Argentinean society

“In Argentinië wordt je positief gediscrimineerd wanneer je blonder bent, blauwtere ogen hebt, en een lichtere huidskleur hebt. Argentijnen zijn extreem racistisch, vooral mensen uit Buenos Aires zijn dat. Het is niet zo dat doordat ik Nederlander ben, ik meer dingen geregeld krijg dan andere mensen. Maar je merkt wel dat

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

mensen meer interesse in je tonen, en dat je op het moment dat je een connectie hebt met iemand, dan zijn ze over het algemeen wat welwillender ten opzichte van je. Aan een Boliviaan of een Koreaan gaan ze niet vragen; ‘waar kom je vandaan?’ ‘Dat is weer zo’n zwarte, of weer zo’n Aziaat’. Een Europeaan, die krijgt veel positievere feedback: ‘Waar kom je vandaan? Wat doe je hier?’ Zodra je die connectie hebt met iemand is het niet zo dat ze je meteen voortrekken, maar ze zijn wel welwillender, ze zullen sneller dingen voor je doen. Wat in dit land, waar connecties extreem belangrijk zijn, wel heel handig is.”²⁰¹

“Ik kan je ook wel zeggen dat dat bij het zakendoen ook wel zijn voordelen heeft. Op het moment dat ik iemand opbel en men hoort mijn stem of ziet mijn naam, dan weten ze dat ik geen Argentijn ben. Mensen hebben dan, bewust of onbewust, met of zonder goede reden, toch meer vertrouwen in je. Argentijnen staan toch wel erg te boek als wanbetalers, of mensen die gewoon alles aan elkaar lullen en hun woord niet nakomen. De Europese reputatie is wel anders.”²⁰²

“Maar het [hebben van een accent] is niet erg; het is ook een beetje marketing. [...] Je hebt er soms voordeel aan om buitenlander te zijn; het trekt wel een beetje de aandacht, als je in een meeting zit en zo. Toch hebben mensen dan even van; ‘Oh, kom je uit Nederland? Wat leuk joh!’ Dus soms overdrijf ik het ook wel een beetje, het hangt een beetje van af wat je nodig hebt. Je moet er af en toe gewoon een beetje gebruik van kunnen maken.”²⁰³

“Ja zeker, voortdurend. Je wordt voortdurend voorgetrokken als Nederlandse vrouw, lang en blond et cetera. Als je bijvoorbeeld bij de migratiедienst in de rij staat en een beetje lacht naar de bewaker, dat je voor mag gaan. [...] Omdat ze een heel positief beeld hebben bij Europa heb je daar voordeel aan. Negatieve discriminatie ervaar ik eigenlijk nooit.”²⁰⁴

Upward social mobility

“Hier in Argentinië heb je heel veel sociale kringen en lagen, wat je in Europa niet meer hebt. Je wordt hier in bepaalde kringen geboren, en dan weet je al naar welke school en universiteit je naartoe gaat, enzovoorts. Je hebt dat in de hogere en in de lagere kringen. [...] In ons geval, dat we wat in de hogere cirkels zitten; je wordt wel uitgenodigd, en je hoort er wel bij, maar je hoort er niet écht bij. Die mensen kennen elkaar al vanaf jongs af aan. Al die mensen kennen elkaar vanaf de kleuterschool, en die zijn nu advocaat en notaris, maar ze werken allemaal bij en voor elkaar. En daarom is het ook zo’n vriendjespolitiek. Van buitenaf kom je daar eigenlijk niet echt tussen. [...] Ze nodigen je ook wel uit voor de asado, maar voor de echt belangrijke dingen gaan ze even ergens anders staan en onderling praten.”²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

²⁰² Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

²⁰³ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Samantha, 05-04-2010.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010.

Working in Argentina

“En wat Nederlanders vaak niet beseffen, [we] krijgen heel veel CV’s en heel veel mensen die naar de kamer komen op zoek naar werk, iedereen wil altijd bij een groot internationaal bedrijf werken. [...] De bekende Nederlandse internationale bedrijven. Die bedrijven die sturen, naar mijn idee, meer aan op het aannemen van lokaal talent, waarvan ze weten dat ze lang zullen blijven, en waarvan het ook altijd zo is dat ze beter Spaans spreken. [...] Dus dan is een Argentijnse kandidaat gewoon beter. En ook qua kennis van lokale handelscultuur zijn Argentijnen gewoon beter, omdat ze weten hoe je met de vakbonden moet omgaan, of met belasting. Je moet een land begrijpen om er te kunnen ondernemen. En wat Nederlanders vaak ook niet beseffen is dat de top vijf á tien procent hoog opgeleide Argentijnen ook heel erg goed zijn opgeleid. [...] Er zitten geen expats meer in de board van die bedrijven. [...] Maar dat is logisch, het is ook een wereldwijde trend dat er steeds minder expats zijn. [...] Dat brengt heel veel kosten voor een Nederlands bedrijf, terwijl ze hier gewoon een steengoede Argentijn kunnen aanstellen die waarschijnlijk minder kost.”²⁰⁶

“Ja, Europa en Amerika. Waarom? Omdat de inkomsten in Euro’s zijn en de loonkosten hier in peso’s zijn. Dat is de voornaamste reden om naar Argentinië te komen. Met die inflatie, de daling van de waarde van de Euro, is die aantrekkingskracht nu iets minder geworden. Maar nog steeds is het wel rendabel. [...] Je hebt hier heel goede ingenieurs en heel goede IT mensen die minder kosten dan in Europa. [...] Het sourcen van mensen, de Argentijnse arbeidsmarkt is gewoon een goede poel om uit te vissen.”²⁰⁷

“En sinds we in Argentinië zijn zijn we er qua inkomsten op achteruit gegaan, maar omdat het hier goedkoper leven is hebben we het relatief wat ruimer. Onze koopkracht is relatief wat toegenomen. Want in principe, in Londen ging al het geld helemaal op, en hier houden we nog wel eens wat over. Het interessante is dat ik er qua absolute getallen op achteruit gegaan ben, maar qua wat ik er mee kan doen er een beetje op vooruit.”²⁰⁸

“De douane is notorisch [sic] corrupt. Je goederen kunnen gewoon eindeloos vast blijven liggen in de haven, dat is heel berucht. [...] Met producten werken is heel moeilijk. Maar het gebeurt wel, maar niet onder de jonge ondernemers. De douane wordt gebruikt om enerzijds de schatkist te spekken, dat is traditioneel zo hier in Argentinië. De belastingdruk is hier vrij laag dus de belangrijkste belasting wordt geheven bij het in- en uitgaan.[...] De douane, net als met inflatie, net als met monetair en fiscaal beleid, daar wordt aan alle kanten gesjoemeld.”²⁰⁹

“Het is gewoon een heel andere omgeving om zaken te doen. Het is veel minder georganiseerd, er is een veel groter informeel circuit. Dat vergeten heel veel Nederlanders die hier naartoe komen. [...] Er zijn ook heel veel deals die niet goed lopen. En Argentinië ziet er van buiten heel modern en heel eerste wereld uit, en in sommige delen is dat ook zo, en in sommige sectoren. Maar in heel veel sectoren en in heel veel delen ook

²⁰⁶ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

niet. Het is gewoon heel moeilijk ondernemen, er zijn ook heel veel ondernemers met wie het niet goed verloopt. Mensen die al een jaar bezig zijn om vergunningen rond te krijgen om een fabriek te draaien, met werkneemers die niet komen opdraven en dan een rechtszaak beginnen. En arbeidsrechtzaken zijn hier om te verliezen. Er zijn heel veel zaken waar Nederlandse bedrijven met de autoriteiten in aanraking komen. Publieke sectoren zoals waterzuivering, milieu, waterwegen, dat zijn heel moeilijke sectoren om te opereren.”²¹⁰

“Er zijn weinig Nederlanders die Argentinië echt al lang kennen.[...] Maar heel vaak weten ze gewoon niet waar Argentinië vandaan komt, hoe het sociaal-economisch in elkaar steekt.[...] Ik zie heel veel verschillende soorten ondernemers hier binnen komen. Je hebt mensen die zich echt willen oriënteren en zich goed willen voorbereiden, zich inlezen, noem maar op. Maar je hebt mensen waarvan de insteek neigt naar het paternalistische, tegen het arrogante aan. En dat is echt: ‘ik kom als Hollander hier even vertellen hoe ze het hier moeten doen. Want ze zijn allemaal inefficiënt, en ze weten allemaal niet hoe het in elkaar steekt’. En dat kan je doen, maar op een gegeven moment loop je dan tegen de muur, want het land, het systeem, is sterker dan een ondernemer die hier zijn zaken wil beginnen.”²¹¹

4.3 Acculturation to social differences

“Ik heb mij best wel aan moeten passen in het begin: er waren dingen die ik heel stom vond en die heb ik gewoon moeten leren leuk te vinden. Zoals dat mannen wat hoffelijker met je omgaan. In het begin vond ik; dat kan ik zelf wel, maar nu vind ik het wel leuk en waardeer ik het ook echt als een man de deur voor mij open houdt. Ik heb ook wel geleerd dat het ook wel goed is dat mannen bepaalde dingen doen, van oké, dat zijn dan hun taken en ik doe mijn taken. [...] Maar die rolpatronen, daar kon ik mij in het begin ook heel erg aan ergeren. Dan ging ik bijvoorbeeld naar een asado toe en die mannen die maken altijd het vlees, en wij vrouwen moeten de salades maken, en de koffie, de afwas, en eigenlijk al het andere. En dat vind ik nog steeds wel eens irritant. Maar ik heb mij er wel een beetje in geschikt.”²¹²

“Dat bijvoorbeeld bij sociale bijeenkomsten mammas met mammas praten, en pappas met pappas. De mammas hebben het over school, de vaders hebben het over voetbal. En dat vind ik vreselijk: ik houd helemaal niet van voetbal, en ten tweede wil ik ook wel weten wat er allemaal op die school gebeurt. Dat zijn dan dingen in de maatschappij die wat moeilijker voor mij zijn. Het wordt dan als vreemd gezien dat ik bij de moeders ga zitten.”²¹³

“Het grote probleem van de Argentijnen is dat ze niemand vertrouwen. Hét grootste verschil tussen een Nederlander en een Argentijn is dat de Nederlander iedereen vertrouwt totdat die bewezen heeft dat iemand niet te vertrouwen is. Bij een Argentijn is het net andersom: die wantrouwt iedereen, totdat het tegendeel bewezen is. En zelfs dan heeft hij moeite met vertrouwen, echt heel veel moeite mee. Dat geldt voor iedereen. [...] Als je met heel veel vertrouwen komt, en ook al worden ze [nieuwe Nederlandse immigranten]

²¹⁰ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

²¹¹ Interview with Thijs, 05-05-2010.

²¹² Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010

²¹³ Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010

gewaarschuwd, dan gebeurt het toch. [...] Je kunt ze wel waarschuwen, maar bij een Nederlander zit het in zijn natuur om te vertrouwen. Die valkuil is heel erg groot. Ik heb het al heel vaak gezien.”²¹⁴

“Het moeilijkste vond ik en vind ik nog steeds, is het constante wantrouwen en complotdenken. Mensen vertrouwen niemand, ze zijn door de geschiedenis wijs geworden, ze vertrouwen niemand maar ze zijn zelf ook niet altijd betrouwbaar. Als ze ergens een voordeeltje zien zullen ze dat niet nalaten [te nemen], ten koste van wie dan ook. Je merkt dat erg in het zakendoen én privé. [...] Nederlanders zijn wat dat betreft veel opener en onschuldiger misschien, veel meer goed van vertrouwen. Argentijnen zijn niet zo goed van vertrouwen. Daar moet je mee om leren gaan. [...] Dat ongezonde wantrouwen. Dat zie je terug in vriendschappen. Mannen en vrouwen kunnen hier geen vrienden zijn, vooral niet als je een relatie hebt. In Nederland kun je rustig een keer een avondje met vrienden op stap gaan. Hier is dat wat moeilijker, om dat je Argentijnse partner dat niet leuk vindt.”²¹⁵

“Ik kom zelf uit Groningen, nou jij ook. Wij zijn ‘een man een man, een woord een woord’. En dat is mij tot op heden, ik heb tot op mijn vijfenveertigste jaar, tot ik hier dus kwam wonen, nooit een advocaat nodig gehad. Ik had dertig chauffeurs voor mij werken, maar ik heb nooit een advocaat gehad. Maar hier, hier kun je zonder advocaat helemaal niets doen. [...] Als je het netjes wil doen dan heb je meer een probleem dan als je het op zijn Argentijns doet. Want een Argentijn weet gewoon dat er problemen en rechtszaken komen. [...] Want dat is hier de clou: als je hier bezittingen hebt zet je die op de naam van je moeder, je dochter, enzovoorts. Niks staat op hun naam. Dus er valt dan niks te halen. [...] Ik heb hier een huis op mijn eigen naam, zoals ik dat ook in Nederland deed. Daar heb ik nu dus een probleem mee. [...] ‘Sin verguenza’, zonder schaamte. Dat zijn smeerlappen zonder educatie. Het is gewoon van ‘Ik wil geld’. De mentaliteit is hier ook zo: men leeft hier van dag tot dag. Men kijkt niet vooruit.”²¹⁶

5 Identity expression

5.1 Eating and Drinking

“Dat [Argentijnse eten] is vlees en pasta voornamelijk. Hier eet je iets meer pasta dan in Nederland. Je eet wel veel meer vlees hier. Maar dat vind ik gewoon lekker. Dat is in Nederland veel duurder, hier kun je dat iedere dag eten. Het gene [sic] wat wel aanpassen was in Argentinië was het feit dat je heel weinig variatie hebt. In Nederland heb je een veel grotere keuze, als resultaat van de koloniale geschiedenis, en ook veel meer verse groente, het hele jaar door. Die zijn hier seizoensgebonden, en het komt van ver weg. Qua eetritme, dat maakt me niet veel uit. Het enige wat aanpassen is, is dat je 's middags warm eet, en 's avonds weer om een uurtje of tien.”²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010

²¹⁵ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

²¹⁶ Interview with Dennis, 06-05-2010.

²¹⁷ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

“Ja, het is helemaal wat je van kinds af aan gewend bent. Dat ze hier bijvoorbeeld twee keer per dag warm eten? Daar wen ik nooit aan! Een bord pasta als lunch en 's avonds weer normaal warm eten. Ik heb het een poosje gedaan, maar ik was binnen een paar weken tien kilo zwaarder! Dat heb ik snel weer afgeschaft.”²¹⁸

“Ik heb wel overgenomen om vaak 's middags warm te eten. Een broodmaaltijd eet ik nooit, maar dat vond ik in Nederland ook niet zo geweldig, daar probeerde ik er ook iets creatievers van te maken. En laat eten, s 'avonds, dat deed ik in Nederland ook al wel, niet zo laat als hier maar wel dat ik soms rond half negen pas at. Soms ook wel vroeger. [...] Ik heb nooit zo heel erg gehouden van aardappels, dus in Nederland at ik ook al vaker pasta en rijst. Vlees eet ik hier wel vaker. In Nederland krijg je mee dat je drie dingen moet eten: groente, vlees en aardappels, pasta of rijst. Hier laat je veel vaker de groente of de aardappels achterwege.”²¹⁹

“Als ik in Nederland ben eet ik veel kroketten, bitterballen en haring. En ook een boterham met hagelstag of kaas, maar ik maak er geen omweg voor. Ik eet minder vlees dan de Argentijnen en meer groente.”²²⁰

“Vroeger lustte ik geen haring, maar nu mis ik de haring weet je? Allemaal dat soort dingen die je gaat missen, terwijl je die daar [in Nederland] voorhanden had, en dan gaf je er eigenlijk niet zo veel aandacht aan.”²²¹

“Ik maak ook mijn eigen kroketten en huzarensalades. Het is gewoon een stukje van jezelf, het is een traktatie om gewoon je eigen pot af en toe te koken. Je geïmporteerde rookworst met zuurkool. Als ik de middelen had zou ik mijn eigen zuurkool maken hoor. En snert, we hebben hier geen knolselderij, maar met normale bleekselderij wil het ook prima. Nee, ik maak wel af en toe mijn eigen Hollandse pot, vooral in de winter. We hebben niet echt een zomerse Hollandse pot hè. Dat is toch wel calorierijk voor de koude wintermaanden. En ook wel goedkoop eten. Dat is ook wel een stukje van mijn identiteit.”²²²

5.2 Festivities

“Qua nationale feesten heb je de dag van de onafhankelijkheid. Maar dat is niet zo iets als Koninginnedag. Dat vier je eerder met familie toch. Dan heb je een dag vrij en dan ga je een asado maken met vrienden en familie. Vaak zijn dat soort feestdagen hier iets voor met de familie. Het is niet zo dat iedereen de straat op gaat om dat met elkaar te vieren. [...] het zijn niet echt gezamenlijke feesten, het is meer een herdenking aan het verleden of iets anders wat belangrijk gevonden wordt. Bijvoorbeeld de dag van de Malvinas (Falklandoorlog). Er is dan niet veel om aan mee te doen, maar er wordt wel over uitgezonden op televisie. De meeste mensen gaan dan iets met de familie doen. En vrije dagen worden hier heel erg gewaardeerd, omdat mensen zo weinig vakantie hebben. [...] Maar ik houd wel bij wat er allemaal herinnerd of gevierd wordt.”²²³

²¹⁸ Interview with Hendrik, 30-04-2010.

²¹⁹ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

²²⁰ Interview with Niels, 17-03-2010.

²²¹ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

²²² Interview with Hendrik, 30-04-2010.

²²³ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010.

“Nou dan hebben we gewoon een vrije dag extra. En nu met Onafhankelijkheidsdag, 25 mei, daar doe ik niet aan mee, dat iedereen vlaggetjes gaat opplakken en dat soort dingen. Dan ga ik niet met een Argentijns vlaggetje lopen of zo.”²²⁴

“Wat we bijvoorbeeld wel een keer hebben gedaan, twee jaar geleden hebben we hier [thuis] een vijf mei feest gegeven. Gewoon alle Nederlanders die we kenden en die we leuk vonden uitgenodigd.[...] Toen waren we hier met ongeveer dertig man of zo. Dat was heel leuk [...] omdat je dan iets viert wat specifiek is voor Nederland, en ik denk omdat je soms toch wel bepaalde dingen van Nederland mist.”²²⁵

“Ik vind het leuk om Nederlanders te kennen [...] maar dat ik echt Nederlanders ga opzoeken, dat niet. Maar ik vind het dan wel leuk op een Koninginnedagfeest bijvoorbeeld, dat ik dan alle Nederlanders weer zie. [...] Maar ik vind het niet echt heel belangrijk.”²²⁶

5.3 News media interests

“Nee, niet zo nee. Er is niet direct een reden voor. Het is niet zo dat ik het niet wil weten, ik pik wel dingen op. [...] Ja, in die zin voel ik me niet zo betrokken bij wat er hier speelt. In Engeland was ik veel meer betrokken, daar hield ik de politiek wel bij, ik wist van alles wat er in de Engelse politiek gebeurde, hier is dat niet zo het geval. Als er iets groots is hoor ik het wel hoor, maar dat is dan vaak twee dagen later. Of iets later. [...] In die zin ben ik meer geïnteresseerd in het internationale en economische nieuws, en daar zijn de Nederlandse kranten gewoon iets beter in.”²²⁷

“Op internet wel. De Telegraaf af en toe, AD, Dagblad van het Noorden, NU.nl, en internet blogs ook wel een beetje. [...] Elke morgen doe ik dat een beetje. De voorpagina's scannen. [...] [het Argentijnse nieuws kijk ik] `s avonds, op tv. Het valt me op dat het nieuws hier puur en alleen over Argentinië gaat, alsof er niets anders gebeurt in de wereld. Over wat de president nou weer uitspookt, en alle ellende hier. Aan het einde van de uitzending komen de echt belangrijke berichten uit de wereld dook nog wel eens langs, bijvoorbeeld die rel in Griekenland laatst. Maar het is niet zoals het NOS journaal in Nederland. Je moet eigenlijk wel wat internationale sites lezen, anders raak je verstoken van informatie.”²²⁸

“Ik lees iedere dag de Nederlandse kranten. Ik ben helemaal op de hoogte: uit interesse en om de band te behouden.”²²⁹

“Ik maak me op de een of andere manier wel druk over de [Argentijnse] politiek en de manier waarop het land wordt geregeerd, ik heb daar wel een mening over, maar je blijft daar toch op de een of de andere

²²⁴ Interview with Mariska, 03-05-2010.

²²⁵ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

²²⁶ Interview with Mariska, 03-05-2010.

²²⁷ Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010.

²²⁸ Interview with Hendrik, 30-04-2010.

²²⁹ Interview with Hans, 26-04-2010

manier, tenminste ik, ik voel me daar afzijdig in, want het is niet mijn land. Ik trek het me minder aan dan als zoets in Nederland zou gebeuren.”²³⁰

5.4 Language

“Ja, ik voel me thuis, maar ik voel me ook buitenlander. Dat blijf je. Het is heel moeilijk om taaltechnisch perfect Porteño te praten. [...] Je hebt snel in de gaten of iemand van hier is of niet. Ik voel me erg thuis, op mijn gemak. Maar ik blijf er tegelijkertijd bewust van dat ik een buitenlander ben in een ander land: niet in een vreemd land, maar in een ander land.”²³¹

“Mijn kinderen spreken ook niet Nederlands. [...] Toen ik veertig was heb ik die kinderen gekregen, en toen was ik zelf al ingeburgerd hier. Ik dacht, waarom moet ik mijn kinderen nou nog Nederlands leren? Toen gingen ze naar een Engels en Spaanstalige school, en die twee talen leken me al heel waardevol. Ik dacht, als ze ooit naar Holland gaan, dan kunnen ze zich daar ook wel in het Engels redden.”²³²

“Omdat ik het wel leuk vind om iets van mijn Nederlandse identiteit over te dragen aan mijn kinderen. Bovendien, ik heb bij hun geboorte besloten Nederlands tegen hen te praten, en dat puur vanwege het feit dat het voor mij een natuurlijke manier is om een taal te leren. En ik denk dat meertaligheid heel erg positief is; je krijgt meerdere invalshoeken op het leven mee, op de wereld.”²³³

“Dat is een lang gesprek geweest tussen mijn vrouw en mijzelf; ik dacht dat de kinderen aan twee talen genoeg hadden. Ik heb nooit aangedrongen dat hij Nederlands zou leren. Maar hij heeft het wel geleerd toen hij op zijn achttiende een jaar naar Nederland ging. Maar dat heeft hij gedaan omdat hij het zelf wilde. [...] Toen we hier kwamen was hij vier. Ik heb het gevoel dat je met Spaans en Engels heel ver komt.”²³⁴

5.5 Identification

“Ik heb hier gewoon mijn leven, dus in die zin voel ik mij hier wel op mijn plaats. Maar ik heb wel heel duidelijk voor mijzelf dat ik mij nooit zo ver zal aanpassen dat dit mijn land is. Dit is wel mijn woonland, maar ik voel wel duidelijk dat ik hier niet vandaan kom. En als ik dan in Nederland ben voel ik wel heel duidelijk: hier kom ik vandaan. [...] Ze zeggen wel eens: je bent meer Argentijnse dan Nederlandse, maar ik denk dat dat niet zo is. Ik heb me wel heel erg aangepast, maar ik voel me wel heel anders in bepaalde dingen.”²³⁵

“Nee, een echte Argentijn zal ik nooit zijn. Dat komt doordat ik het met zoveel dingen niet met ze eens ben, ik zou ook geen Argentijnse willen zijn. Het is zo rommelig vaak, daar houd ik niet van. Ik blijf liever

²³⁰ Interview with Sofie, 05-03-2010.

²³¹ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

²³² Interview with Marieke, 23-04-2010

²³³ Interview with Martijn, 06-03-2010.

²³⁴ Interview with Niels, 17-03-2010.

²³⁵ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010.

Nederlandse. [...] Ik voel me ook wel verbonden met Argentinië, maar niet zo dat ik me zou gaan inzetten voor het land. Dat doen mijn kinderen wel.”²³⁶

“Soms voel ik me wel een Nederlander, maar soms meer Argentijns, en soms er een beetje tussenin. Niet echt een vaste nationaliteit. Voor mijn werk leid ik groepen Nederlanders rond in Argentinië [...] en dan voel ik me Argentijn ten opzichte van die Nederlanders. [...] En wanneer ik me ergens aan erger aan de Argentijnen, dat ze bijvoorbeeld drie uur te laat komen, of dat iets niet opschiet of dingen niet werken, dan voel ik me meer Nederlandse. [...] Maar zo voel ik het wel, ook omdat ik hier voor een deel gevormd ben. Ik heb wel mijn hele jeugd in Nederland doorgebracht, maar van je twintigste tot je dertigste is ook een belangrijke periode in je vorming denk ik.”²³⁷

“Ik voel me wel ietsje vervreemd [als ik in Nederland ben]. Je loopt daar rond, en dan denk je: ‘Iedereen ziet me hier ook als een Nederlander, maar dat ben ik niet. Ik ben nu wel hier, maar ik moet straks naar huis. En mijn huis is niet hier in Nederland, mijn huis is dáár.’ Maar je bent wel een Nederlander, dat voelt gek.”²³⁸

“Nederlander voel ik me wel, vanwege de wortels. Mezelf kunnen vereenzelvigen met de Nederlandse samenleving, de mensen, dat niet. Je voelt je wel Nederlander want je bent er geboren, en je hebt karakteristieken. [...] Maar door mijn ervaringen in de wereld en ondertussen een derde van mijn leven in het buitenland te hebben doorgebracht verandert dat wel. [...] Wanneer ik terugkom in Nederland bijvoorbeeld zijn er heel veel mensen die mij niet begrijpen, ik heb dan veel minder ‘feeling’ met de mensen in Nederland dan mensen in Argentinië. [...] Maar Nederlander dat blijf je. Al zouden ze mijn paspoort doormidden scheuren, dat ontneem je iemand zomaar niet. Nederlander blijf je, dat is een gevoel, dat is een deel van je zijn, dat krijg je er niet zomaar uit.”²³⁹

“Ik ben veranderd in die zin dat ik me niet meer helemaal Nederlands voel en ook niet Argentijns. Meer een soort wereldburger die in principe ook ergens anders kan wonen. [...] Ik heb invloeden uit Nederland en Argentinië, maar ik voel me los van allebei. [...] Bij mijn afkomst heb ik wel: ik ben Nederlands. Ik heb heel veel dingen meegekregen waardoor ik Nederlandse ben. Maar ik voel me eigenlijk meer een soort wereldburger dan een Nederlandse of Argentijnse.”²⁴⁰

6. Conclusion

Paulien Cornelisse, *Taal is zeg maar echt mijn ding* (Amsterdam 2009).

Zó Nederlands

“Oh, dat vind ik zooo Nederlands! Zelf hagelstag meenemen in de caravan? ‘Zooo Nederlands.’ Je kop niet boven het maaiveld uit mogen steken? ‘Zooo Nederlands.’ De wereldreiziger laat merken dat hij weet hoe het

²³⁶ Interview with Marieke, 23-04-2010

²³⁷ Interview with Samantha, 05-04-2010.

²³⁸ Interview with Jan, 29-04-2010.

²³⁹ Interview with Tim, 10-03-2010.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Femke, 03-03-2010.

elders gaat, en dat hij echt als een buitenstaander naar zijn eigen land kan kijken. Op een licht denigrerende manier, let wel. ‘Oh nou, cappuchino ná het avondeten... echt heel erg Nederlands.’

Ikzelf vind het een beetje onzin, al die dingen die ‘zooo Nederlands’ zijn. Ik vraag me ook af of andere landen het ook zo erg vinden om zichzelf te zijn. Zeggen Franse toeristen ook ‘dat is zoooo Frans’ als ze hun eigen bakje La Vache qui rit hebben meegenomen naar de Spaanse costa? Ik denk het niet.

Volgens mij is het vooral heel erg Nederlands om bij alles te roepen: ‘Dat is zoooo Nederlands.’”