Nonja Peters

AANPASSEN AND INVISIBILITY

Being Dutch in post-war Australia

Abstract — *Aanpassen* and invisibility: being Dutch in post-war Australia
*This article reflects on the mass influx of Dutch migrants into Australia after the Second World War from the vantage point of the now rapidly ageing Dutch. It compares their experience to that of their children who are also fast approaching retirement age. It locates Dutch Australians' adaptive strategies within the context of the historic, socio-economic and cultural expectations generated at the point of departure by both the relinquishing and receiving societies. It shows the strategies as further influenced by ethnicity, generation, gender, social class and religion. Its central thesis contends the compelling and sometimes dissimilar imperatives driving the Australian and Dutch governments post-war emigration/immigration programs coalesced to fashion '*aanpassen *and invisibility', the strategies now viewed as the 'hallmark' of Dutch resettlement in Australia.*

This article reflects on the resettlement experiences of first and second-generation Dutch migrants who came to Australia in the aftermath of the Second World War. It examines the selection and emigration policies of the governments of the countries of origin and destination to determine how these structured Dutch resettlement and fashioned their adaptive processes: *aanpassen* (to adjust to) and 'invisibility'.

The interpretation is based on fieldwork, collected from the Dutch around Australia during 2005/6, by the author and a research assistant, for 'Footsteps of the Dutch in Australia'.[1] This fieldwork, and earlier research with first and second generation Dutch Australians, produced a large body of interview, archival and life history data.[2] This is being analysed with reference to

1. The project for which the author was awarded a Curtin Senior Research Fellowship (2005-2010) to write a detailed monograph of Dutch history in Australia and conceptualise a template for the virtual preservation of Dutch Australians' cultural heritage.

2. 470 taped interviews; 20 taped focus group sessions; 520 completed questionnaires and 300 family histories; plus 1000 expressions of interest from NEI Dutch wanting to impart their wartime experiences. References to the interviewees' names are according to the preferences of the interviewees (first name, last name or both, or initials only). For more details approach the author.

grounded theory, historical and ethnographic methods and a post-modern narrative approach to facilitate the search for the system of meaning that actors use to make sense of their worlds.[3]

After locating Dutch Australians' adaptive strategies in historic, socio-cultural, psychological, economic and political context, it documents the additional impact on the immigration experience of religion, gender, ageing and generation. It also analyses the correlation between each generational cohorts' current concerns as they relate to these adaptive patterns against a backdrop of the host's changing immigration policies: assimilation, through integration, to multiculturalism.[4] It identifies healthcare as the most pressing concern of the first generation, whereas for the second generation it is their *Dutch origins,* identity and belonging. The article demonstrates that a far more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effect of migration on first and second generation Dutch Australians can be reached by viewing recruitment, socialisation, ethnicity and social class as empirically and analytically distinct influences on Dutch Australians' adaptive processes.

Dutch post-war emigration to Australia is a consequence of the socio-economic situation in the post-war Netherlands, and the Commonwealth Government of Australia's policy to actively recruit emigrants for security reasons, to reverse population stagnation, overcome crucial labour shortages, restore essential services to pre-war levels and maintain the war-boosted economy. Intending emigrants were enticed to Australia with images of booming industry, boundless opportunity, full employment, good-working conditions, a home of their own, whitegoods and a motor vehicle. It was a promised level of a materialism that was unheard of in the post-war Netherlands.[5] An additional inducement was passage assistance to which both governments contributed. All that was required of a prospective emigrant was to meet the White Australia policy-governed entry, security, age and health criteria and remain in the employment for which they were selected and assisted for two years.[6]

Kovacs and Cropley describe the *emotional* 'push for migration' as coming from feelings of alienation due to conditions of deprivation in the homeland.[7] Hofstede claims a state of anomie emerged in the Netherlands following the

3. E. Babbie, *The basics of social research Wadsworth/Thomson learning* (California 2002).

4. N. Peters, *Milk and honey but no gold: postwar migration to Western Australia 1945-1964* (Perth 2001); N. Peters, 'Expectations versus reality: postwar Dutch migration to Australia', in: L. Shaw (ed.), *400 Years of Dutch connections with Australia*. National Maritime Museum, Conference Proceedings (Sydney 2006).

5. R. Appleyard, 'The economics of recent emigration to Australia from Germany and the Netherlands', *International Migration* 1:1 (1963) 29-37.

6. Peters, *Milk and honey but no gold*; J. Jupp, *From white Australia to Woomera* (Melbourne 2002) 18.

7. M.L. Kovacs and A.J. Cropley, *Immigrants and society alienation and assimilation* (Sydney 1975).

severe social and economic dislocation that followed the Second World War. This state of affairs which pervaded Dutch society into the late 1940s was expressed in the loss of a sense of collective security and self-confidence, and the reappearance of overpopulation concerns among the polity. The Dutch government resorted to a combination of industrialisation and emigration to arrest the accompanying widespread structural unemployment and to help overcome the housing crisis.[8]

Table 1 *Number of Netherlands-born persons in Australia, 1891-1995*

Year	*Census: Total*	*Census: % of Overseas-born*	*Census: Residents*	*Intercensal Estimates: Resident Population*
1891	748	0.1		
1901	594	0.1		
1911	745	0.1		
1921	1 391	0.2		
1933	1 274	0.1		
1947	3 174	0.3		
1954	52 035	4.0		
1961	102 134	5.7		
1966	99 549	4.7		
1971	99 295	3.8		
1976	92 110	3.4		
1981	96 044	3.2	94 807	100 500
1986	95 099	2.9	94 338	100 400
1991	95 866	2.6	94 692	100 900
1992				100 000
1993				98 900
1994				98 200
1995				97 700

Source: C. Young, 'The Demography of the Dutch in Australia', in: N. Peters, *The Dutch down under 1606-2006* (Perth 2006) 276-299, 288.

Between 1949 and 1970, approximately 140,000 Dutch emigrants made their way to Australia (see table 1 and the introduction to this special issue by Schrover and Van Faassen). Many of these Dutch entered Australia under one of the various assisted passage schemes: Allied Ex-Servicemen's Scheme; Netherlands Australia Migration Agreement (NAMA); Netherlands Govern-

8. G. Beijer, N.H. Frijda, B.P. Hofstede and R. Wentholt, *Characteristics of overseas immigrants* (The Hague 1961); J.H. Elich, *Aan de ene kant aan de andere kant: de emigratie van de Nederlanders naar Australië 1946-1986* (Delft 1987) 112-113.

Ill. 1 Dutch migrants arriving in Australia in 1955. Source: private collection of the author.

ment Agency Scheme (N.G.A.S.). Others were full-fare paying.[9] However, and unlike southern European immigration agreements, Dutch passage assistance was means tested. Prospective emigrants were often forced to sell belongings to pay this contribution. Moreover, until 1954 Dutch emigrants were also restricted in the amount of cash they could take out of the country. The dramatic devaluation of the rupiah similarly reduced resettlement possibilities for Dutch Nationals from the Netherlands East Indies (NEI; see also the article by Coté in this issue).[10] As a consequence, the majority – of assisted and fare paying immigrants – arrived in Australia without financial resources, apart from the landing money the government gave them, which in 1950 was £10 for singles and £20 for a family.

Three quarters of Dutch arrivals eventually committed to permanent resettlement in Australia.[11] Between 1947 and 1973, 19 per cent of all 'settlers'

9. R. Appleyard, 'The economic absorption of Dutch and Italian immigrants into Western Australia 1947 to 1955', *R.E.M.P. Bulletin* 4:3 (Canberra 1956) 45-54; R. Appleyard, 'The economic absorption of Dutch and Italian immigrants into Western Australia 1947 to 1955', *R.E.M.P. Bulletin* 4:4 (Canberra 1956) 87-101.

10. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing Catalogue (Canberra 2006); Nonja Peters, Trading places: Greek, Italian, Dutch and Vietnamese enterprise in Western Australia, (Unpublished PhD thesis Department Anthropology University of Western Australia 2000).

11. Netherlands-born Historical Background, Community Information Summary, Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) (http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/source.htm) (21 June 2009).

who arrived in Australia had left. The greatest losses were among Germans with 30 per cent, among Dutch with 25 per cent and among British and Italians with 22 per cent. Refugees, for whom it was difficult or impossible to return home, showed the lowest rate of return.[12] At the 2006 Census nearly 300,000 Australians claimed Dutch heritage.

Recruitment

Driven mostly by the desire to improve their material position, Dutch migrant men embraced Australia's booming economy. War-boosted, the prolific job market gave them purchasing power beyond belief, compared to the Netherlands economy they left behind. Their resettlement was also greatly assisted by the immense value placed on their trades skills by Australian employers. These described their Dutch employees as ambitious, hard workers, keen to do overtime, to save enough money to buy or build a home, or to become self-employed.[13] Moreover, having been selected for their trade skills, which unlike some groups were acknowledged in Australia, although acceptance could include a trades test on arrival, Dutch tradesmen generally found the employment they wanted. This is illustrated by the heavy concentration of Dutch in building construction and manufacturing in every state at the 1954 Census.[14] They had been recruited specifically by Australian immigration authorities to help with the massive public building program that was underway.[15] The high rate of employment in trades occurred despite Australian Unions' behest that they sit Australian trades exams, which was difficult, as the majority had only a rudimentary knowledge of English. The first generation's concentration in the higher income brackets, as shown in Censuses from the mid 1950s to the late 1970s, validates their employment success.[16]

Employment satisfaction, a full employment economy and three decades of boom, kept most first generation Dutch employed, although many tradesmen also seesawed between subcontracting and employment. While downward mobility was not typical of the average trades emigrant, it occurred fairly frequently to the middle class professionals from the NEI whose quali-

12. Netherlands Community Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue No. 2001.0, Commonwealth of Australia (Canberra 2002).

13. C. Beltz, Dutch migration to Australia 1946-1961 (Unpublished PhD-Thesis Department of Demographics, Australia National University Canberra 1964) 183-184; Appleyard, 'The economics'; Beijer *et al.*, *Characteristics of overseas immigrants*; Elich, *'Aan de ene kant'*.

14. J. Zubrzycki, *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley: a sociological study of immigrants in the brown coal industry in Australia* (Canberra 1964) 87.

15. Beltz, Dutch migration.

16. Zubrzycki, *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley*, 74; Peters, Trading places, 382.

fications were not acknowledged in Australia.[17] A popular option, which also helped retrieve their lost social status, was to start up a small business. This was much easier in Australia than in the heavily regulated Netherlands.

The situation was different for Dutch women. The 1954 Census of Housing and Population records only 18.2 percent of Dutch women employed compared to 50 percent for Estonian women. Among the Dutch, there were in fact fewer women employed in permanent jobs than in any other ethnic group.[18] In 1961 even when Dutch women educated in Australia entered the work force, the proportion had only increased to 20.4 percent.[19] These were mainly clerk-typists, seamstresses, clothing factory workers, shop assistants or domestics. Less than five percent were, in order of prominence, nurses, teachers, musicians, chemists or draughtswomen.[20] This was due largely to the sway traditional beliefs about the working wife continued to hold in Australia, and a lack of family support networks.[21] Dutch wives were to ensure their family's successful migration and safeguard their husband's and children's spiritual welfare by creating a *gezellig* (convivial) home in Australia, wherever the family had to live — in reception centres, tents, garages, caravans, veranda's and houses. Dutch wives complied by staying at home. In fact, most did not even learn to drive a vehicle or pursue employment opportunities outside family businesses.[22] First generation Dutch women also found it difficult to establish themselves as independent identities in Dutch social clubs.[23] The clubs were established on the principles of the traditional Dutch family, which had an authoritarian, patriarchal man at its head, and although many women had matriarchal power this rarely extended beyond the confines of the home.

Religion

In Australia, the Dutch mobilised initially along the religious lines under which they had emigrated (they each had their own migration offices), thereby also recreating the familiar pillars (*zuilen*) – social and religious schisms –

17. Beltz, Dutch migration, 193.
18. J. Zubrzycki and N. Kuskie, *Immigrants in Australia: a demographic survey based upon the 1954 census* (Melbourne 1960); Zubrzycki, *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley,* 100.
19. Beltz, Dutch migration, 196.
20. Zubrzycki, *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley,* 99.
21. A. Jordens, *Redefining Australians: immigration, citizenship and national identity* (Sydney 1995) 17.
22. W. Walker-Birckhead, 'A Dutch home in Australia', in: N. Peters (ed.), *The Dutch down under 1606-2006* (Perth 2006) 242-253, 247.
23. N. Peters, 'Just a piece of paper', in: C. Lange (ed.), *Being Australian women: belonging, citizenship and identity. Studies in Western Australian History 21* (Perth 2000) 53-74, 65.

Ill. 2 Dutch congregation within the Presbyterian Church of Australia on a community outing on a beach in Newcastle (NSW), Australia (January 1956). The minister and his wife sit on the right, next to the accordionist. The Reformed Church advised emigrants to join the Presbyterian Church in Australia, which appointed some Dutch ministers and sometimes allowed the formation of Dutch congregations. Source: private collection Bregman.

of the Netherlands they had left behind.[24] Compared to other ethnic groups, Dutch migration was overwhelmingly family-oriented. Women generally accompanied their menfolk, not always out of choice but because it was considered their duty to go wherever their husbands chose to earn a living. Dutch Calvinists and Catholics – the two religions that rejected birth control – both encouraged emigration.[25] The emphasis on 'families' was also the result of policies in both the emigration and receiving country. Encouraging large families to emigrate meant more people were jettisoned per unit. Additionally, men with large families were more tied down and therefore less likely to return.[26]

24. H. Overberg, 'Dutch communal life in Victoria', in: Peters (ed.), *The Dutch down under,* 302-327, 306.
25. Walker-Birckhead, 'A Dutch home', 253.
26. Walker-Birckhead, 'A Dutch home', 242-253.

More Dutch Roman Catholics came to Australia than any other denomination (see the introduction to this special issue by Schrover and Van Faassen).[27] After an initial period of providing contact congregations for its emigrating parishioners, Dutch Reformed (*Hervormde*) church members were directed to join the Presbyterian Church. In contrast, the very close-knit Calvinist (*Gereformeerde*) Church congregations remained separate with their clergy, eventually providing their new Australian communities with their own churches and schools. Their adherence to traditional Calvinist principles ensured they would remain internally cohesive and, in contrast to the rest of the Dutch community in Australia, display a major tendency to endogamy (see Table 2). In this they resembled Dutch with a similar religious background, who settled in the USA and Canada (see the articles by Schoone-Jongen, Douma and Zwart in this special issue).

Table 2 *Rates of intermarriage in Australia of Netherlands-born brides and grooms*

Year	*Bridegrooms marrying brides born in:*			*Brides marrying bridegrooms born in:*		
	Netherlands	*Australia*	*Other*	*Netherlands*	*Australia*	*Other*
1947-60	42.3	44.5	13.2	61.7	20.2	18.1
1961-64	30.2	55.2	14.6	37.5	39.7	22.8
1965-68	20.0	62.2	17.8	24.4	51.5	24.1
1969-73	12.8	69.8	17.4	17.1	59.3	23.6
1974-78	8.5	72.6	18.9	12.6	63.0	24.4
1981-86	8.5	67.2	24.3	12.5	61.7	25.8
1990-92	8.6	62.4	29.0	12.1	63.2	24.7

Source: C. Young, 'The Demography of the Dutch in Australia', in: N. Peters, *The Dutch down under 1606-2006* (Perth 2006) 276-299, 288.

In contrast, Dutch Roman Catholics found themselves surrounded by an Irish Catholic clergy administering to a multicultural congregation, although the homeland did send some priests in the early years, the most well known being Pater Maas who sponsored many migrants and organised their initial accommodation.[28] The Catholics tended to establish or join secular Dutch clubs to remain connected to their Dutch roots and assist with resettlement issues.[29] Henk Overberg notes an increasing membership of these clubs among the Dutch aged.[30]

27. T. Schindlmayr, 'Community profiles 1996 census-Netherlands Born, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' (Belconnen 2000).
28. H. Overberg, 'Maas, Christianus Leonardus Maria (Leo) (1911-1973)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 15 (Melbourne 2000) 147.
29. Peters, Trading places, 228-277.
30. Overberg, 'Dutch communal life in Victoria', 312.

Aanpassen and invisibility: being Dutch in Australia

In the 1950s and 1960s, the peak years of Dutch arrivals, both the Dutch and the Australian government considered it the duty of the migrant to assimilate, to fit in by learning the host language, adopting its traditions and customs and discarding the old.[31] This conformity to the ninety percent Australian-born and English speaking society implicitly asserted the superiority of Australian culture over that of migrants and guaranteed Australia's essential *Britishness* would remain. Australians expected the 'New Australians' to be absorbed so completely, that it would be as if they had never come at all.[32]

Dutch emigrants, having been urged by the Dutch Government pre-migration to maintain the Netherlands good name overseas by assimilating (*aanpassen*), not only complied but also pushed their children to do so.[33] Their compliance is distinctive because, throughout the assimilation period, whether they considered it disagreeable or not, the majority of Dutch appeared willing to adhere to this assimilation imperative. The following adage illustrates how the belief promoted the behaviour:

> ... if people come out here to make this their new country, they should ... adapt themselves under all circumstances. When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. You must fit in. After all, if you expect to further yourself economically and this country is prepared to give you a chance, then you have no right to be different.[34]

Outward conformity to assimilationist mandates such as that contained in this quote became the hallmark of 'Dutch identity' in Australia.[35]

Boot, Brederode and Krancher, detected a similar resettlement process in the Netherlands among *Indische* Dutch from the NEI.[36] On arrival in the Netherlands, they received little support. The Dutch expected them to forget their wartime experiences in Japanese internment and Prisoner-of-War (POW) camps and the excessively bloody Bersiap Period that followed it, and

31. A.P. Riemer, *Inside outside: life between two worlds* (Pymble 1992).
32. J. Martin, *The migrant presence: Australian responses 1947-1977* (Sydney 1978).
33. H. Overberg, 'Dutch', in: J. Jupp (ed.), *The Australian people: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins* (Cambridge 2001) 256-272.
34. P.M., Interview by Nonja Peters, 2005.
35. H. Eidheim, 'When ethnic identity is a social stigma', in: F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture difference* (Oslo 1969) 41-42.
36. N. Boot, W. Brederode and J.A. Krancher, 'The rise of the new generation: Dutch-Indonesian cultural renaissance in the Netherlands' (2006), to be found at: www.coert.org/indonesia/TheRiseOfANewGeneration.htm (no page numbers) (21 July 2009).

assimilate.[37] Many first generation *Indos* had little choice but to comply with the Dutch homeland edict for rapid assimilation. They constantly reminded their children never to stand out in a crowd, to act inconspicuously.[38] Some elements of their culture were still practised at home, but in the outside world they mimicked Dutch behaviour to the maximum extent possible, representing a good example of successful integration and assimilation.[39] The comparison of their behaviour to that of the Dutch in Australia is truly remarkable.

Sociologist Pierre Van Den Berghe associates the tendency of an immigrant group to assimilate with the advantages in doing so. One of the conditions that he believes encourages assimilation is an environment in which ethnic groups are hierarchical.[40] Migrants were unaware that the invitation by the Commonwealth Government for migrants to settle in Australia had conditions attached in the form of in-built preferences.[41] Between 1947 and 1974, when 60 percent of the Dutch, Germans, Maltese, Yugoslavs and Eastern Europeans received passage assistance only 34 percent of Greeks and 20 percent of the Italians did, clearly a ranking prevailed.[42] Dutch assimilation in Australia can be viewed as the way the Dutch kept their privileged second place (after the British) on the preferential ladder, a strategy that also gained them better treatment in the Australian market place.[43]

This 'Dutch conformity' attracted commentary from Australian academics and the Australian press. Donald Horne notes in *The lucky country* how, 'if you saw a Dutch family in a suburban street, as self contained and accommodated to its surroundings as a molecule that passes from one body of matter to another, you might say that assimilation is complete'.[44] Researcher Ronald Taft declared: 'The Dutch have a high level of satisfaction with Australia, they are fairly well identified with Australia, know English well and have little difficulty in adapting'.[45] Many Dutch preferred, like the Dutchman quoted in *The*

37. N. Peters, *From tyranny to freedom: Dutch Children from the Netherlands East Indies to Fairbridge Farm School 1945-1946* (Perth 2008).
38. Boot *et al.*, 'Rise of the new generation'.
39. Boot *et al.*, 'Rise of the new generation'.
40. P. van den Berghe, *The ethnic phenomenon* (New York 1981) 259.
41. Van den Berghe, *The ethnic phenomenon*, 259.
42. N. Peters, 'Two generations of Dutch women in Australia', in: Peters (ed.), *The Dutch down under,* 224-241.
43. J. Wilton and R. Bosworth, *Old worlds and new Australia: post-war migrant experience* (Sydney 1984); H.K. van Leeuwen, A retrospective on Dutch migration to Australia in the 1950s – a media perspective – and the reflections on selected Dutch migrants in Victoria (Unpublished MA Thesis Victoria 1995).
44. D. Horne, *The lucky country: Australia in the sixties* (Ringwood 1964) 90.
45. R. Taft, *From stranger to citizen: a survey of studies of immigrant assimilation* (Perth 1965) 56.

Canberra Times on 13 May 1978, to believe that the Dutch were actually the best [of all migrants] at playing the 'assimilation game'.

Dutch also complied to avoid the treatment less wanted *ethnic* minorities attracted. Cor (one of the interviewees), stopped speaking Dutch at home, except when conversing with her husband, primarily because a knowledge of English would make her job in a sweat shop easier but also to help avoid her children feeling embarrassed or handicapped by being different. At work she did not want to attract the degrading treatment her Italian co-workers received from Australian bosses.[46] However, social class sometimes dictated different responses. Nell continued to actively transmit *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* (equivalent BBC English) to her children: 'I made a rule: at home they were allowed to speak English while playing but at the meal table, only Dutch was spoken'.[47] Many working class Dutch women like Cor complied with the assimilationist dictate because, as Nell explains: 'These women had been taught to look up to the teacher, and if the teacher told them to do something that was it, they would do it... because they believed the teacher would know best'.[48]

Dutch sociologist Van Heerikhuizen, who asks 'What is typically Dutch?', associates the Dutch adeptness at making themselves 'invisible' with Dutch socialisation. Dutch socialisation practices instil in the Dutch rank and file the Calvinist and Stoical values of discipline, sobriety, frugality, self-denial (for future gain), parsimony, industry, obedience, self possession, a sense of duty and responsibility, which pervade all of Dutch society regardless of their religious orientation; behaviours analogous with the Dutch norm of civility (*burgerschap*), many of which were associated by Max Weber with the rise of Western capitalism.[49]

Elich also notes how the tenets of Calvinism pervaded Dutch Australian society: 'There is a restlessness about the Dutch. The work ethic is not simply a Calvinist inheritance: indolence and waste are frowned upon as much by Catholic as by Protestant Dutch'.[50] Australian journalist John Gilmour makes a similar observation. In his 1990 *Australian Business* article about the fruit, vegetables and flower growing Dandenong Dutch he notes that their Australian neighbours associate their survival in tough times with their commitment to production not consumption and their capacity for thrift and endur-

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46. Corinne Berens, interview by Nonja Peters, 2000.
47. Corinne Berens, interview by Nonja Peters, 2000.
48. N. Ottenhof, Interview by Nonja Peters, 2000.
49. C. Bagley, *The Dutch plural society: comparative study in race relations* (London 1973); F.E. Huggett, *The modern Netherlands* (New York 1979); S. Schama, *The embarrassment of riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley 1988) 125.
50. J. Elich, *De omgekeerde wereld: Nederlanders als etnische groep in Australië* (Leiden 1985); J. Elich, 'Dutch and Australian goverments' perspectives on migration', in: Peters (ed.), *The Dutch down under*, 150-161, 150; Peters, Trading places, 269.

ance: 'You can't compete with the Dutchies ... No matter how tough it gets, they can reduce their expenditure. They can live on less than anyone. They take pride in surviving on less than you can. When conditions are hard they eat the wallpaper'.[51]

Many second generation informants in this study claim these behaviours were drawn out of them as children by the following attitudes. Rolf, a first generation manufacturer's statement is representative, 'I'm not a believer in protecting my children too much. They have got to make it by themselves. My dad never protected me'. Rolf expected his twelve year old son David to start contributing to the family income by performing the dirtiest jobs in the factory in return for pocket money. When David turned seventeen Rolf paid a one way trip for him to the Netherlands. Once there, it was expected that David would earn his own money over there and save enough to come home. David not only achieved this aim, but returned home ten months later with a sizeable saving. Herman's expectations of his son were similar:

> I have a business making gear wheels, I am the only one in Perth who makes them 'custom made'. He [son] is working every night but sometimes on a Saturday I have to have him and he wants to go out with his girlfriend. Then I say: 'No, that girl can wait, when you have finished the job then you can go, you have to help me when it suits me not when it suits you'.

Lack of parental recognition also kept Willy, a restaurant owner achieving and conforming.[52]

First generation Dutch migrants typically maintained their cultural integrity and protected their 'sense of Dutch self' by developing discrete public and private personae.[53] In public men would go out of their way to disguise any traits considered 'ethnic' by mainstream society, while on the home front, even if they opted to speak English, as requested by the host society, their wives, by maintaining the same foods, furnishing, values, traditions and beliefs, kept the household very Dutch.[54]

Elisabeth de Kruyf labels the 'assimilated Dutch' a gender-neutral stereotype because it ignores women's restricted position in the private sphere of the Dutch family. She illustrates this by noting that all Taft's respondents were men. Jerzy Zubrzycki decided to exclude Dutch women from his study because they 'need more general knowledge [...] as they are quite ignorant of

51. J. Gilmour, 'Welcome, wallpaper soup', *Australian Business*, 14 February 1990.
52. Peters, Trading places, 270.
53. Walker-Birckhead, 'A Dutch home in Australia', 252.
54. Walker-Birckhead, 'A Dutch home in Australia', 252.

world affairs, history or anything outside household tasks'.[55] Dutch migration, De Kruyf declares, while typically nominated 'family migration', was in actuality that of a Dutchman who brought along his wife and children. Moreover, within this framework everyone's roles were clearly defined: children were to become Australians and Dutch women the handmaidens of their families' assimilation into Australia.[56]

The extent to which the Dutch male stereotype entered the Australian collective consciousness is indicated by an article in *The Adelaide Advertise*r on 2 February 1978, in which the typical Dutchman to Australia is described as: 'an assimilated man, without and out of history. An individualistic [...] strong willed, fast thinking [man], often stubborn and possessed with a fanaticism to succeed [... whose] migration and assimilation...[are] natural expressions, of his character'.[57] Walker-Birckhead, observes how, with a cosy Dutch home and a Dutch wife inside to make it cosy, a man could easily be Australian outside and Dutch inside.[58]

In actual fact, *aanpassen* and invisibility would not have appeared so successful if Dutch women's lives in Australia had not stayed fundamentally the same as in the Netherlands. For, in contrast to Dutch men, whom migration gave more freedom to experiment with jobs or self-employment than they had in the Netherlands, it located Dutch women even more firmly in domestic life and the bearing of children. Creating a Dutch home in Australia is what the Dutch men expected of their wives. Moreover these women perceived their confinement to the domestic sphere as advantageous rather than oppressive, subservient or the outcome of male dominance.[59]

Ageing

Inevitably, however, the move from *Dutchness* to presenting as Australian was not as seamless as the label 'invisible Dutch' would indicate. The image of the Dutch immigrant, held by Dutch people as well as Australians, is an ideal image: it corresponds to what the Australian and Dutch governments expected of the immigrants. This stereotypical image is based on, firstly, the belief that a language shift from Dutch to English has occurred among all immigrants; secondly, the assumption that the Dutch immigrants have little interpersonal contact among themselves and live scattered all over the coun-

55. E. de Kruyf, '*Ouder worden in Australië*', in: B. Grüter and J. Stracke (eds.), *Dutch Australians taking stock* (Melbourne 1993) 233-238, 234; Zubrzycki, *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley*, 175.
56. De Kruyf, '*Ouder worden in Australië*', 233.
57. The *Adelaide Advertiser*, 2 February 1978.
58. Walker-Birckhead, 'A Dutch home in Australia', 253.
59. Interviews with N. Peters for 'Footsteps of the Dutch in Australia' (Sydney 2005-6).

try (certainly they do not live in enclaves and are inclined to settle on the fringes of cities);[60] and finally, the belief that they have adapted so well that they have become mainstream Australians.

It is true that in general they tried to behave as ideal immigrants and gained a fair to good command of the English language (and this was made easier by the languages' close linguistic ties); moreover, a lack of striking physical differences to other white Australians did not attract much attention in public. In this context Dutch migrants became avid peddlers of assimilation especially pushing their children to achieve that aim.[61] The effects on their children of having these expectations was exceptional language loss in the second generation, which severely damaged communication lines in old age.

Some fifty years later, ageing Dutch working class immigrants now pensioners, who were asked to comment on their relationship with Australians, claimed they liked talking to 'Aussies' and had workmates as friends but 'didn't really mix their friends'.[62] Having spent the largest part of their lives in Australia, they tended to describe themselves as 'Dutch Australians'. However, despite having adopted some Australian attitudes, in a great many other respects they claimed they adhered to their Dutch identity. The 'happy-go-lucky' attitude of many Australians was to them incompatible with their Dutch origins. Another common remark was that Australians were not '*gezellig*' (there is no English equivalent; the closest would be conviviality, a feeling of camaraderie, being comfortable and cosy and family oriented).

Despite the struggles and difficulties outlined above, most Dutch believe they made it in Australia. However, over the course of their lives, they also noticed that their contact with Australians changed. In part due to the change to immigration policy from assimilation to multiculturalism but also due to ageing. One man noted: 'I left my Australian friends at the office when I closed the door behind me'.[63] As pensioners they began to realise how very Dutch they still were, no matter how assimilated they had believed themselves to be. For years they had suppressed their Dutch identity while working and living among Anglo-Australians until retirement, when the ageing process started, and their priorities began to change.

The question that arises is: 'Is there anything else uniquely Dutch in the ageing process?'. As with most non-English speaking ethnic groups, the Dutch Clubs in states around Australia with significant Dutch populations have responded well to the needs of their ageing community. Most now offer centre based day activities plus personal care, home care, a home handyman

60. Peters, Trading places, 2000, 229-278, 231.
61. Peters, 'Just a piece of paper', 68.
62. N.O. Interview, Nonja Peters, Perth 2005.
63. N. Peters, *The Dutch in Western Australia, Museum of Western Australia* (Perth forthcoming 2010).

service, help transporting and assisting elderly clients with medical appointments, shopping and in-home respite. Some even offer a Dutch cuisine meals-on-wheels, but only the larger Dutch communities are in a position to offer their aged residential care.[64]

The fact is, however, many ethno-specific Dutch facilities are not always well utilised by the 'desperate to be mainstream Dutch', despite the difficulty many have with the dominant language. Ben Grüter labels these self-imposed barriers to community services, peculiarly first generation Dutch. A consequence, he believes, of their stalwart sense of independence and pride and of wanting to be considered mainstream: 'The whole concept of the Dutch and ethnicity remains for most an uneasy marriage'.[65] The Dutch in Australia worked very hard to avoid attracting the treatment meted out to less desired ethnic minorities by mainstream society.

Generally, migrants with fair to few English language skills, and they are usually women, experience the most difficulties in old age.[66] Especially migrant widows without the experience to negotiate the welfare system – their husbands used to take care of this – and frail and demented patients who are losing their second language capacity. A person's life narrative loses potency when neither their children nor the other residents of a nursing home or its staff can understand them. An additional burden on ageing are the unrealistic expectations of parents who have not experienced their own parents' ageing.

Significantly, the challenges of providing aged care services for the rapidly ageing Dutch population will, in principal, abate from about 2020.[67] By then today's older generation, who have the strongest identification with the language and culture of the homeland, will have been replaced by their ageing children, whose identities and life experiences have been shaped more extensively through schooling and living in Australia.[68] The experience of ageing of this cohort will therefore be as markedly different from their parents as was their migration, resettlement and growing up as this was in a foreign land.

Generations

Census statistics from the 1980s suggest that in contrast to the first generation the cohort with the highest ratio of self-employed were children of Dutch parents, educated in Australia. Although they had routinely been sent

64. B. Grüter, 'The needs of older Dutch Australians in Victoria', in: Grüter and Stracke (eds.), *Dutch Australians taking stock*, 107-118, 113.
65. Grüter, 'The needs of older Dutch Australians in Victoria', 114.
66. Personal communication P. Neeleman with Nonja Peters, 26 June 2009.
67. Personal communication P. Neeleman with Nonja Peters, 26 June 2009.
68. Rowland, 'Ageing and the future', 2006.

to work at 15 years to help out with family finances, many later attended night school to upgrade their education or to skill themselves for better positions.[69] The most prominent Dutch entrepreneurs among them are in shipbuilding, building and construction, cars or real estate sales, grocery store chains and investment.[70] Generally, however, second generation men were less well educated than trades-skilled fathers.[71] A few second-generation women opened hairdressing and beauty salons or other retail outlets. Some with higher educations established businesses in human resources. This generation can be found throughout the employment hierarchy. Many are bureaucrats in local, state and federal government offices, and some sit on local government councils. Generally, however, few have found their way into politics.[72]

Rowland notes how children who were born in the Netherlands during the 1940s and came to Australia as pre- and early primary school-aged and as a consequence were in their formative years, exposed more to local Australian rather than Dutch influences, struggled a good deal with constructing a solid sense of identity and belonging.[73] Migrant children's lives were to change dramatically upon arrival in Australia: having foreign names, speaking very little or no English, dressing and having different food preferences set the migrant children apart. Moreover, these consequences were not of their making as they had had no say in the family's migration decision.

The demand that they assimilate quickly and totally to some supposedly 'Australian' cultural norm, implicitly asserted the superiority of Australian culture over theirs. Hence, to gain acceptance, many Dutch migrants, especially teenagers, strove to emulate 'being Australian'. The expectation that migrant children's transition to becoming fully-fledged Australians, socially and linguistically, would be uneventful, also underpinned the Education Department's 'sink or swim' policy. James Jupp observes how this vision underpinned the department's policy for the first two decades after the war. Not only did it produce teachers ill-prepared for classes in which there were large numbers of migrant children, it meant the latter received no assistance with English language learning. Moreover, when problems arose they blamed the migrant child or immigrant home rather than the system.[74] Having their names Anglicised at school exacerbated their distress. For example,

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69. Peters, Trading places, 246.
70. Research data gathered around Australia for 'Footsteps of the Dutch in Australia' 2005-2006.
71. D. Cahill, 'Lift the low sky: are Dutch Australians assimilationist or accommodationists', in: Peters (ed.), *The Dutch down under*, 206-223.
72. Peters, Trading places, 249.
73. D. Rowland, 'Ageing and the future', in: Peters (ed.), *The Dutch down under*, 350-363.
74. Jupp (ed.), *The Australian people*, 773.

Joop Mutsaers became John Mutsaers and Sjannie Berens, Jenny, increasing these children's sense of 'otherness'.[75]

The ultimate outcome of the ideology of assimilation then was divided beliefs and values between the old country and the new country. Lacking a sense of pride in their own heritage and having to make vital decisions about their 'identity' while caught between conflicting power sources – home, Australian school and peers – deprived many migrant children of a strong sense of self and belonging at home and in the wider community. To confront and accommodate these obstacles and develop and maintain an independent identity required ingenuity and determination.[76] Each Dutch child had to find ways of dealing with being different.[77] Never told how this was to be achieved, some Dutch children strove to attain top grades, become the best at sport or changed the way they dressed or talked in the hope that this would gain them recognition or acceptance as a person. Others managed by not having any Australian friends at school, or by leaving school as soon as they could to find a job.

Many nominated the food they ate, clothes they wore and the 'Ocker accent' they had acquired as notable signifiers of the level of 'Aussie[ism]' they had achieved. Jan coerced her mother into buying Weeties (a breakfast cereal), Vegemite (a bread spread) and tomato sauce to help her appear more Australian. An alternative was Janny's response. She chose to emulate the 'top dogs' in the migrant hierarchy – the revered middle-class Brits – by picking up their better-spoken language.[78] Frances was more than happy to be able to trade her Dutch name for an English one when she married.[79] Since anything not Australian was labelled inferior, the ultimate symbol of social success was to be seen to be a part of the 'Australian crowd'. However, this was not always clear-cut, for some it manifested as 'cultural ambivalence'. Alet frequently mentions a sense of 'duality': 'Who I feel I am depends upon who I am with. When I am with an Australian I feel Australian. When I am with a Dutch person I feel Dutch'. Alet also tried very hard to be an Australian by 'demand[ing]' that everything at her wedding be a replica of the 'Australian way': 'I fought my parents to the last detail. Now I am sorry but our way [Dutch] was not acceptable then. I lived a dual life. In many ways the lives didn't mix'.[80]

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75. Joop Mutsaer, Personal communication P. Neeleman with Nonja Peters in Melbourne, 2007-9. Sjannie Crick nee Berens, interview with Nonja Peters, Perth 15 June 2005.
76. E. Vasta, 'The second generation Italo-Australian: identity, culture and community', Centre for Migration and Development Studies – UNESCO Workshop on Adaptation of Migrants, University of Western Australia, (Perth 1990).
77. R. Johnston, 'The immigrant child', in: R. Johnston, *Immigrants in Western Australia* (Perth 1979) 64.
78. J.P., interview with Nonja Peters, August 2006.
79. F.V., interview with Nonja Peters, July 2000.
80. H.M., interview with Nonja Peters, June 2005.

The first generation's lack of Dutch language maintenance intensified the difficulties for both generations. For as linguist Eva Hoffman has observed: 'language implies a cultural universe, whose contours remain invisible as long as they are shared but become unmistakable upon collision with another such world, another language'.[81] A great deal of migration literature deals with identity and belonging, but relatively little of it deals with how communication difficulties that often develop between the generations impact on migrant children. Eldest children were especially disadvantaged, since they were forced to negotiate a new society that their parents could not yet fully comprehend, without an adequate template or parental help. Younger children, watching the conflict between parents and elder children, unconsciously modified behaviour to comply with parents' wishes, at least on the home front, and in the public sphere to fit in with friends. This sometimes led to major divisions and even long-term estrangement from parents and between siblings.[82] In particular, it stopped children learning ways to express themselves adequately in their own language. Especially in the more intimate forms of communication, about emotions and feelings, because as Berger and Luckmann also note, language typifies experiences, allowing us to subsume them under broad categories in terms of which they have meaning not only to me but also to others.[83] Moreover, before long most children's English language learning was outstripping their Dutch, to the point that their desires, hopes and dreams began to crystallise within the English language semantic fields – a language many Dutch working class stay-at-home mothers never learned to negotiate proficiently. Elisabeth's experience is representative:

> ... now with my parents into their eighties and my mother in a nursing home ... she is switching back to her Dutch a lot and I am struggling to have a conversation with her. I am enjoying some of the Dutch idioms that come out and I have a giggle, but I can't actually conduct a conversation with my mother. Now when I get a phone call from relatives from Holland, [neither can I] have a conversation with them about medical things, about the bigger words and the bigger topics. So I have become friends with an old friend of my mothers, she is in Adelaide and is bilingual, she can speak Dutch and English very well.

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81. M. Besemeres, *Translating one's self: language and selfhood in cross-cultural autobiography* (Oxford 2002).
82. Peters, *Milk and honey*, 173-226 and as participant observation research with the community at various immigrant clubs and among diverse migrant cohorts since 1996.
83. P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (Harmondsworth 1966) 53.

> So I use her as my translator. The whole thing just completely compounds. It is very difficult.[84]

The lack of language maintenance also constrained relationships with visiting extended kin, often limiting interaction to a superficial engagement. The January 1961 Australia Dutch League (ADL) of Western Australia newsletter, in the article 'Out of the experiences of a migrant woman', relates the stories of grandparents who could hardly wait to return home after a visit to their children and grandchildren. On arrival one couple's son, who had married an Australian woman, gave them each a Dutch English dictionary with the words that only the English language was acceptable in their home. This couple felt that a wall had been erected between them and their son, who now seemed like a stranger to them. Another couple spent their four months in Australia looking after their three English-speaking grandchildren while their parents worked long hours in the business. Although not all grandparents had bad experiences, the two different cultures and languages frequently raised insurmountable barriers between grandparents and grandchildren that stood in the way of them getting to know one another intimately.

An additional impact on migrant family dynamics (because grandparents generally remained in the homeland) was that the majority of migrant children grew up in Australia without the benefits of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. This situation was ultimately also to influence their views on death and dying since most did not encounter death of a family member until their own parents passed away. In this context, many older migrant children lost their own childhood to looking after younger siblings.

Many of the second generation began to reclaim some of their 'Dutchness' when Australia switched to a multicultural resettlement policy in the mid 1970s. In recent times, at retirement age, these make 'pilgrimages' back to the homeland to explore their childhood memories. John Mutsaers, who left the Netherlands for Australia at age 10, describes this process:

> From London we flew to my birth place, *Eindhoven* and spend two weeks nearby in the picturesque village of *Oirschot*. ... in Eindhoven ... I felt deeply at peace ... and very much at home. My inherent sense of belonging was further emphasised when the man checking my passport at the airport looked up and said smiling, 'Welcome home *Johannus*'. The fact that he recognised me as a native to Eindhoven was an indescribable source of joy.
>
> Our trip to Holland was memorable. I spent a lot time walking around the streets and alleys of my old neighbourhood in *Gestel* and recovered lots of

84. Elisabeth Burrell, Focus group held by Nonja Peters and Kim Negenman at Neerlandia Clubhouse; Perth Western Australia 9 September 2003. Tape held by N. Peters.

> memories of my friends and the games I played there. My wife Mary and I attended Mass at *Saint Lambertus*, my old parish church, where I was baptised and where I sang in the choir. Sitting in that church near where we sat as a family...was curiously satisfying. Later that day we walked to my old school, which is now a flea market, and wandered through my old classrooms.[85]

Experiencing a place fully enables us to bond with a place, to develop connections, emotional attachments and meanings that are relevant in regard to developing our sense of belonging and identity. For as Vasiliki Nihas, Chair of the Cultural Council of the Australian Capital Territory notes: 'for the vast majority, the main inheritance we receive and we leave behind is memories, experiences, ideas, attitudes and values, which are ...both our experience and our expression of culture, individually and collectively. Because...[they] represent a metaphor for the human condition of growth and discovery, [and because] the stories [they] evoke are powerful and can create connections across cultural boundaries'.[86]

Conclusion

This article explored the experiences of immigration and resettlement of first and second generation Dutch Australians within the context of the immigration policies of the relinquishing and receiving societies. *Aanpassen* and *invisibility* were the two most distinctive resettlement strategies produced by Dutch settlers in response to both governments' 'assimilationist directive'. Combined with their various selectivity policies (age, gender, religion, skills) they fashioned Dutch settlement in Australia. Expressed in 'Dutch willingness to hide their ethnicity' it gave them greater economic and social benefits than most other ethnic groups.

Thus it can be seen how the two governments' recruitment practices and their views on ethnicity, class and gender came to determine Dutch migrants' options and life choices in the new environment. They directed the man to work outside the house and the woman to stay at home. However, should she wish or need to go into the workforce it was to be purely as helpmeet, to supplement the family income and not to build a career. Nor did these beliefs change dramatically for the second generation until many years later.

The Dutch also profited from both governments' targeted recruitment drives, and the Australian government's greater willingness to accept Dutch

85. John Mutsaers, Personal communication with Nonja Peters, June 2009.
86. Vasiliki Nihas, Migration heritage. Beyond the memory box, *MHC Forum* 1 (1999) http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/readingroom/reports/forum99/nihas.html (3 September 2009).

trades training compared to those of some of the other ethnic groups. This better outcome for the Dutch in Australia, finds confirmation in their placement in higher income brackets. The article also demonstrates that the Dutch chose these 'strategies' – to avoid attracting treatment similar to that often handed out to 'less valued' ethnic minorities.

It identified as the main difference in the generations' perceptions of the migration experience, that first generation migrants continued to derive their meaning about identity and belonging from the socio-economic conditions and relations of dominance in the cultural milieux they had left behind. In contrast, the second generation, who were children at the time of their arrival, were forced to develop an identity from the raw material of a dislocated home promoting Dutch socialisation practices, situated in the midst of an Australian cultural domain, all peddling 'assimilation'. Moreover, parents were unable to offer children much assistance since it would take many more years before they would begin to fully comprehend its meanings themselves.

About the author

Nonja Peters was born in the Netherlands at the end of the Second World War. She migrated to Australia with her parents in 1949. She is currently Senior Lecturer, Curtin Research Fellow, and Director at the Migration, Ethnicity, Refugees and Citizenship Research Unit, Curtin University Sustainability Policy (CUSP) Institute, Australia. In 2000 she gained a PhD on Immigrant enterprise. In 2002, *Milk and honey but no gold: postwar migration to Western Australia 1945-1964* was short-listed for three Australian Premiers' Literary Awards. In 2006 *The Dutch down under 1606-2006* was published for the 400 years Australia-Netherlands bilateral commemorations, followed in 2009 by *From tyranny to freedom: Dutch children from the Netherlands East Indies to Fairbridge Farm School 1945-1946*. Dutch Australians' maritime, military, migration and mercantile history and the preservation of their cultural heritage is her current research focus. She is curator of museum exhibitions on migration.

E-mail: N.Peters@curtin.edu.au.