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## Storytelling, Identity, and Digitising Heritage

But you want a proper story, huh.

Then I must tell you something about my people and my land.

*Then* you can see the story, and know it.

Storyteller *Ten Canoes*: David Gulpilil Ridjiminiraril Dalaithngu

### Introduction

At the beginning of the film *Ten Canoes*, over background images of his land, a lush green tropical swamp with low vegetation, the voice of storyteller David Gulpilil says that he is going to tell us his story. David Gulpilil was a Yolŋu actor from Northern Territory Australia and the story is about his people and their way of living. He does not only tell the story; he initiated the film and asked Rolf de Heer, the white Australian film director of European descent, to direct it. The film fits into the efforts of the past decades to make it clear that the story of a country consists of a multitude of stories of people with different ethnic backgrounds (see e.g. CLARK/CAHIR 2013, V–VII; MCKEMMISH 2017, 126).

The idea is that if you want to know people, you should let them tell you their story. The idea of storytelling lies behind many ideas in cultural heritage institutions, such as archives or museums, that are aiming to diversify the image of the past they propagate. This is a consequence of the growing awareness, both in the archival science and in cultural memory studies, that there has been a shift in the public cultivation of shared memory. For a long time the key to collective memory was in static repositories – in the archiving of information such as documents, photographs, or other cultural heritage objects as a product. Nowadays, we are more focused on the act of remembrance as an ongoing and dynamic process. In the words of literary scholar Ann Rigney (2016, 68), we now focus on “the capacity of a particular story to stimulate its own reproduction in a new form: to pro-create”.

A similar shift from ‘product’ to ‘process’ is seen in archival science, where Frank Upward and the Record Continuum Group, based at Monash University, Australia, in particular elaborate on the dynamics of archival records. In their view, documents or records are not created, used, filed, and finally stored or destroyed in neat consecutive management phases, but continuously reshaped and even recreated in space and time (VAN FAASSEN/OPREL 2020, 257). Upward relates this continuum of records to the value they can have as authoritative resources in terms of evidence or collective memory. In their latest book, the Records Continuum Group even tries to bridge the gap caused by the tendency of archivists to separate their

recordkeeping role from their cultural heritage role by presenting a Cultural Heritage Continuum Model (UPWARD et al. 2018, 201–203). In this continuum, the storytelling and narrative axis stands out as an important feature that has to be considered in any community ‘informatics’ project. Both Rigney and Upward point out that the narrative is a ‘model’ of storytelling applied, or even warranted, by the group in order to turn events into meaningful structures (RIGNEY 2016, 70; UPWARD et al. 2018, 202).

With the rise of digital environments, digitising heritage objects and digital storytelling have become new additions to the options of telling stories with heritage (IVACS 2016, 206; DE SOUZA et al. 2016). In theory, digital platforms are much less confined in terms of space than physical exposition rooms, which should make it possible to involve a much larger variety of cultural heritage objects, documents, and stories than was ever possible before. However, this also raises the issue of choice. There may be fewer limits to what can be shown and connected, but before stories can be told with heritage objects, those objects have to be available, not only physically but also in digitised form. Heritage institutions usually start to think about digitisation from their own, most popular collections, and funding organisations currently seem to follow this collection-oriented approach to financing digitisation, thus reflecting institutional priorities – usually on a national level. Both tendencies carry the risk of using a shallow base for narratives with a large impact and leaving other stories unheard, or as disconnected parts of the whole. Therefore, the question should not only be what to digitise but also how to *contextualise* it.

In this chapter, we explore the ways in which Dutch Australian stories are told. In general, Dutch migrants to Australia have a Western background and are not considered as a traditional minority in the sense of being an underprivileged group. They even view themselves as ‘perfect migrants’ who assimilated so well into white Australian society that they have become invisible (PETERS 2010). This in itself is a powerful narrative, provoked by the propaganda of both governments, which dominates the collective story of Dutch Australian migrants – but under the surface there are many more perspectives and untold stories.<sup>1</sup> We argue that digitising heritage should support a myriad of perspectives because only by making many different voices heard can we begin to understand the past. The stories of different migrant groups may vary, but there are also many shared experiences.<sup>2</sup> The Dutch Australian migrants share with all migrants the condition that their cultural heritage is dispersed over at least two different countries along with their heritage

1 See for instance COTE (2010), who explains such ‘invisibility’ from the perspective of the Indisch Dutch, as the mixed-origin people from the former Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) are called. See also RIGNEY 2016, 69 and UPWARD et. al, 2018, 202 on dominant or ‘forgotten’ narratives.

2 For the narration of migrant stories in digital media, see Victoria HERCHE: *Mediating Traumatic Memory*, pp. 139–153 in this volume.

institutions and different collective historical consciousnesses and (his)stories (VAN FAASSEN 2014; ARTHUR et al. 2018).

Currently, the Dutch authorities are aware that worldwide, the Netherlands has left many cultural traces throughout history and taken influences both tangible and intangible back to the Netherlands. In the government's view, preserving this "shared cultural heritage" and making it accessible is in all cases a matter of international cooperation between governments and national archives on a bilateral basis. The general aim of this policy is for cooperation to take place on the basis of equality and reciprocity, and with respect for ownership, in order to stimulate sustainable preservation (in the case of archival collections often via digitisation) and thus facilitate civil participation and the (re)destination of heritage.<sup>3</sup> However, in the case of migrant heritage, which consists of not only policy and personal files of both governments, but also private collections and other material traces and objects in at least two countries, this heritage is utterly scattered, and the government and even archival officials often lack academic 'domain expertise' on the collection provenance, content and methodological issues concerned with linking or contextualising it. For this reason, they sometimes seek collaboration with scholars, as is the case with our project *Migrant: Mobilities and Connection*.

Below, we first elaborate the idea of the 'archival multiverse', a concept highly influenced by records continuum thinking. It provides a tool to analyse where stories that seem to be completely different can meet. We then explain the aim of our project *Migrant* by describing its core archival collection, which consists of a migrant index card system. We argue that a methodology based on a connecting resource (in our case the migrant registration cards) can relate apparently unconnected heritage items, collections, and stories. Following this, we explore the variations in migrant or migrant-related stories by introducing two Australian women with Dutch roots and widely divergent backgrounds as case studies to operationalise the archival multiverse concept. Finally, we propose ways of broadening this multiverse to include the digital realm in such a way that it connects the heritage of many different groups.

## Minorities and the Multiverse

Anthropologists and other scholars have started to ask migrants for their stories worldwide, often with the idea that if people lose their stories, they lose their histories and their identities (DE FINA/TSENG 2017; APAYDIN 2017). Even though the Yolŋu are not migrants, a comparable motivation is behind the film by De Heer and Gulpilil, and in the 'making-of' documentary, it becomes clear that the old ways of

3 Policy document Rijksoverheid Nederland: Progress of the International Culture Policy 2019 (Voortgang Internationaal Cultuur Beleid 2019).

the Yolŋu had to be ‘tentatively brought back alive’. No one still knew how to construct the traditional bark canoes, and the first recreated one had to be based on old research photos taken by anthropologist Donald Thompson (1901–1970).<sup>4</sup>

In a similar vein, digital heritage institutions want a multitude of people from different backgrounds to tell their stories by means of the heritage objects in their collections, such as documents, paintings, photos, and artefacts, to give new meaning to this heritage and stimulate the act of remembrance. Minority groups who are underrepresented in heritage institutions have objected that they cannot tell their stories because the institutions do not contain such objects of memory. Heritage institutions have tried to remedy this situation by reaching out to these groups and by co-creating heritage, mindful of the African proverb that when an old person dies, a library burns (cited by FAULKHEAD/THORPE 2017, 2; FAULKHEAD 2017, 479–516).

Speaking from an archival background, Faulkhead and Thorpe conceptualise a new way of archiving – what they call ‘an archival multiverse’. This is messier than the previous “archival universe, dominated by one cultural paradigm” because it brings together different knowledge systems. In the Australian context, it asks for yarning – people from different cultures co-creating heritage and learning and knowing in a mutual process. *Ten Canoes* is a perfect illustration of this yarning. The companion making-of documentary *The Balanda and the Bark Canoes* tells of the cultural differences and physical difficulties the cast and crew had to overcome while shooting. With a lot of talking and yarning, they learned to understand each other, which enabled them to engage together in the storytelling in the film.

All museums and other cultural heritage institutions like archives and libraries do their best to reach out to their audiences by telling stories with the objects in their collections, aiming for a more emotional experience than the objects could achieve without a story context (HENRICH, 2013; DETLOR/HUPFER/SMITH 2018). Storytelling appeals to and draws upon the historical consciousness of the people involved. While most researchers agree that telling stories in one way or another is central to the human condition (DE FINA/TSENG 2017), GREVER/ADRIAANSEN 2019 have argued that historical consciousness has a collective as well as a personal meaning. Collective historical consciousness is often coloured by Western and national conceptions of history, while personal historical consciousness is also rooted in personal experiences.<sup>5</sup> It is obvious that the collective historical consciousness has a varying but usually pervasive influence on the personal consciousness, as we will demonstrate below (cf. BROWN et al. 2016, 439).

The aim of our project *Migrant: Mobilities and Connection* is to address these different types of historical consciousness and to enable storytelling by connecting

4 Documentary: *The Balanda and the Bark Canoes: The Making of the Ten Canoes*.

5 DELLIOS 2012, 2015 demonstrates this perfectly in her analysis of ‘contested’ heritage, such as the migration centre Bonegilla Australia, where stately perceptions ‘struggle’ with those of the grass roots groups (i.e. the migrants themselves).

dispersed migrant cultural heritage that is digitally available in more than one country. Our point of departure is a registration card system for Dutch emigrants to Australia that was created and maintained by Dutch migration officials in both countries, as the card was the access point for each migrant's selection and application file and was sent with the file to Australia after acceptance for migration. In 2006, the cards were deposited in the National Archives in The Hague (VAN FAASSEN/OPREL 2020; ARTHUR et al. 2018). They refer to more than fifty thousand migrant units, corresponding to 150,000–180,000 individuals who migrated from the Netherlands to Australia between 1950 and 1992. In terms of content, they form the linchpin between the official migration policies as formulated in The Hague and implemented by the Dutch Emigration Service in Australia and the migrants' personal experiences. They contain formal migration data like birth dates, occupations, marital status, religion, family composition, migration date, and means of transport, and informal data such as assistance with employment, housing, and a host of other social issues from the Dutch emigration service abroad (accommodated by the consulates) that took care of the migrants after they migrated to Australia, at times for more than thirty years after migration.

As the cards contain data about most Dutch Australian migrants, the idea is that they can be linked to most of the other heritage items (documents, objects, archive items, and files) in institutional and private custody that together constitute the cultural heritage of these migrants. As is the case with all migrants, this heritage is dispersed over many archives and museums in the Netherlands and Australia, as well as in those of international organisations such as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), today known as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Linking this dispersed information is only possible using digital methods. There is no established methodology available; we thus use the database of the registration cards as a virtual data backbone to reconstruct both individual and collective lives via the data on the cards and any information available in the dispersed cultural heritage (ARTHUR et al. 2018, Fig. 3).

In our discussion with other researchers and members of migrant communities, many have mentioned the power of cultural memory items as means of remembrance, not only of the past but also of family members living and dead.<sup>6</sup> For individuals, the heritage items that concern relatives and personal lives are all-important, even if a collection of personal files or indistinct photos are not usually very interesting for either outsiders or heritage institutions. Similarly, individual stories are significant for those concerned and their social circles, but less so for researchers, who cannot digest thousands of different stories and for whom distinct group characteristics are in many ways more telling than individual stories

6 We had these discussions at our international 2016 NIAS-Lorentz workshop <https://www.lorentzcenter.nl/migrant-re-collections.html> (accessed 29/10/2020); cf. GILA/MORALES 2016, 11.

which are in most respects very much alike. On the other hand, while policy files may seem impersonal and abstract for many members of the migrant community, they can explain questions about who migrated and why much better than individual stories can. Finally, for most migrants, there is not much data available, as they left few administrative records other than a few official data. Data, stories, and heritage items from the people who shared parts of their experiences, for instance on the migration ships, in the migration camps, or in employment or housing, can help their children or grandchildren fill in at least parts of their stories. This makes connecting and linking all sorts of different heritage items worthwhile. For these reasons, and also for reasons of varying perceptions, migrant stories are very different. Below we explore some of these variations and their dynamics caused by external factors and the lapse of time.

## Identity and Belonging

Currently, some 300,000 Australians claim to have a Dutch background. The criteria for having a Dutch background is what people indicated in the Australian census, not a carefully registered fact. This does not make the Dutch background doubtful, but it does raise the question of which people consider themselves to belong to this group. To begin with, let us return to Rolf de Heer, the filmmaker who co-created *Ten Canoes* with David Gulpilil and the Yolŋu actors. He himself is not part of this Aboriginal nation, but of another minority, as his own background is Dutch; he was born in 1951 in the Netherlands and migrated to Australia with his parents in 1959, when he was eight years old.<sup>7</sup> Below we tell the story of two people of Dutch descent, Adriana Zevenbergen and Kathy Kickett. As their backgrounds are entirely different, their stories illustrate two completely opposite accounts of the Dutch in Australia.

Adriana (Adri) Zevenbergen (nee Wageveld) was something of a celebrity. In 1958, she was the hundred thousandth Dutch migrant to Australia. Her story was amply documented, with pictures in the official Dutch and Australian propaganda, 114 of which remain in both Dutch and Australian photo archives. These propaganda pictures told an idealised story and followed her together with “a ship full of photographers and journalists”.<sup>8</sup> Though ‘originally from Rotterdam’, she lived in the village of Abbebroek in the Netherlands, which according to the official

7 <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=1424110> (accessed 29/10/2020).

8 Documentary Max, [https://www.maxvandaag.nl/programmas/tv/vaarwel-nederland/australie/POW\\_03876992/](https://www.maxvandaag.nl/programmas/tv/vaarwel-nederland/australie/POW_03876992/), 25:43, photo of the Australian journalists waiting to meet her before going from board in Melbourne <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7649080>; images NED-fotoarchief, 0833 + 0834 (accessed 29/10/2020).

captions of the photo had a sixteenth-century church, where women “still wore clogs”.<sup>9</sup> Her parents had a grocery shop in Rotterdam where Adriana helped out, while her husband was a “former ship’s engineer and skilled fitter” at Pernis refineries.<sup>10</sup> As stated on his immigration file, her husband had previously worked for Shell as an apprentice on the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao in 1950–52 and had undergone a careful selection procedure for skilled labour migration to Australia in the Netherlands in 1956, where he was admitted under the Netherlands–Australian Migration Agreement that paid for his shipping fare. The family, who made an “excellent” impression on the migration officers, was carefully selected, focusing on Adriana as the hundred thousandth migrant. The aim was to persuade Dutch “housewives”, who were considered to be “reluctant” because of homesickness, to emigrate as well.<sup>11</sup> The reportage follows her through her migration voyage aboard the *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt* with a large case inscribed *100,000 migrant* to her brand new home in Australia in Geelong, an “attractive seaport of 90,000 people”, near Melbourne.<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting they skipped the migration camps such as Bonegilla where most other Dutch migrants were first sent for accommodation and that Adriana’s husband Kees Zevenbergen went on to work at the Shell refineries in Geelong, something that (equally uncharacteristically) must have been arranged in the Netherlands where he did a similar job. Adri Zevenbergen’s story is told as an example, but it is not very characteristic for Dutch emigrants. In other words, it was narrated with a propagandistic aim.

Kathy Kickett was portrayed in and interviewed for the exhibition and the book *Vêrlander* by anthropologist and historian Nonja Peters (SNOEIJER/PETERS 2016). Like Rolf de Heer, Nonja Peters is of Dutch descent and has a keen eye for the plurality of storytelling, and for giving voice to often unheard stories. The book is about descendants of Indigenous groups and Dutch sailors from the time of the VOC – the Dutch East India Company – which was active from 1602 to 1800. Kathy has a mostly Aboriginal background, but inherited much of the Dutch look. She may seem far removed from the Yolŋu people filmed by Rolf de Heer in *Ten Canoes*, but still emphatically considers herself Aboriginal, saying “I don’t have to be a full blood to be an Aboriginal”, like the other people who were interviewed for *Vêrlander*. However,

- 9 National Archives of Australia (NAA): A12111, 1/1958/4/39 barcode 7529953 <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7529953> (accessed 29/10/2020).
- 10 NAA: A12111, 1/1958/4/70 barcode 7529984 <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7529984> (accessed 29/10/2020); NAA: A12111, 1/1958/4/45, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7529959> (accessed 29/10/2020).
- 11 Migration file of Cornelis (Kees) Zevenbergen at NAA, A2478, Zevenbergen C, barcode 1420972, p.33 available at <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=1420972> (accessed 29/10/2020).
- 12 NAA: A12111, 1/1959/13/22.



Media 1: Video of *Vêrlander*. Exhibition at the Westfries Museum, featuring portraits created by Geert Snoeijer and Nonja Peters (2017), <https://vimeo.com/202206059>.

she and they all still find it important to know they also have a partial Dutch background (Media 1).

Kathy's portrait is *pars pro toto* for many more individuals of mixed descent. Many of them may not be aware of or interested in their roots from colonial times; they may even be ashamed of and frustrated by them, because having a mixed ancestry usually means being excluded by two dominant groups (ROSEN JACOBSON 2018). In their collective story, the Dutch part is usually left out.

The subject of assimilation is crucial in the subject of identity and belonging – both the official and the subjective side of it. Until the mid-1960s, Australia had an assimilation policy in which migrants were supposed to convert into Australians instead of staying attached to their cultural backgrounds; until 1958 this was coupled with a 'White Australia' policy that discouraged people of colour from migrating to Australia (EVANS 2001; HAWKINS 1989). Only from 1966, at the end of the Menzies administration, did both the White Australia Policy and the forced assimilation policy change into a more multicultural approach, in which minorities were encouraged to maintain and even reinforce their cultural identities. Naturally, these official policies and their changes affected migrants, including Dutch migrants, but just as naturally, these effects were not equally felt by the migrant population.

First, there was a generational effect. First-generation migrants have lived part of their lives in their countries of origin, and it is hard for them to detach completely from it. The generational differences are not very particular for Dutch Australian migrants but do exist in many ethnic groups. We already emphasised part of the 'generation divide' in *Ten Canoes*; in *The Balanda and the Bark Canoes*, this manifests in the part where the elder boss Mingululu walked off the filmset for several



days. It appeared the other actors feared the film was in danger because Mingululu was very traditional, and thought his character's wives could only be played by women who actually were or at least could be his wives according to the complicated kinship rules of the Yolŋu people.<sup>13</sup>

Second-generation (Dutch) migrants in particular often distance themselves from their background. Nonja Peters (2010) called them the in-between generation, and the in-between feeling is common for migrants over the world. Peters writes: "second generation Dutch-Australian migrants' most often expressed response is: 'we're never given a say in the matter'. We were sent into the Australian community with the imperative – *aanpassen*. Assimilation policy reigned supreme at that time, and Dutch parents expected their children's resettlement to be seamless. It was often not so – but most parents were unaware of the challenges that faced their children as their heritage was firmly rooted in the homeland culture – ours was not".<sup>14</sup> Most second-generation migrants do not speak Dutch or consciously keep Dutch traditions alive. Historian Anne Brehler quotes second-generation Dutch Australian migrant Martien: "I think I'm an Ozzie, yeah, I think I'm an Ozzie. I'm also Dutch, but I'm an Ozzie. I'm both. Fifty years I didn't speak a word of Dutch, fifty years I didn't read Dutch, if anyone asked me I was Dutch, I said 'no'. I even got my master's degree under my half name. [...] I didn't want to be known as Dutch" (BREHLER 2018, 62).

The image of the Dutch as one of the most favoured Northwest European ethnic groups after British migrants, which resulted first in the adjustment idea and later in confusion, stems from the forced assimilation period. After the forced assimilation policy changed, minority groups started to manifest their cultural identities, but the Dutch perceived themselves as 'invisible migrants', who learned to speak English much better than migrants from other countries. The view of Dutch Australians as an invisible group of migrants was an expression of mixed sentiments of pride and frustration – pride in the sense that the Dutch were the second best Australians after the British, and frustration in the sense that there was no such Dutch identity for Dutch Australians as existed for other groups (PETERS 2010; HORNE 2011, 15–17).

There may not have been whole Dutch neighbourhoods, but in practice, there was a lot of Dutch bonding and cultural activity in Australia. Looking back on his youth, Adri's son Addo Zevenbergen states that his parents' social life from 1958 was mainly with other Dutch.<sup>15</sup> Anne Brehler counted 270 Dutch associations in Australia. There were schools, newspapers, radio stations (some of which are still

13 For a very balanced analysis of the way Yolŋu people constantly negotiate their (dynamic and multiple) identities and communicate their social structures in a performative way by employing melody, see TONER 2003, esp. pp. 82–83; 86–87; 92.

14 <http://projectmigrant.blogspot.com/2017/11/second-generationmigrants-by-nonja.html> (accessed 29/10/2020); PETERS 2010; a similar effect in the Moroccan migrant community in the Netherlands in BOURAS 2012.

15 Documentary Max 25:43.

operational) and cultural associations, but most were local social clubs for general socialising and sometimes especially for women, and choirs, soccer clubs, and card-playing societies. In percentages, 29 % were general or cultural, 31 % for leisure and 6 % (entirely) religious (BREHLER 2015).<sup>16</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, the churches themselves also played a significant role in migrant societies. In the Australian Catholic Church, although the Church itself did not have separate ‘Dutch’ parishes, Father Maas played an important role for Dutch migrants (OVERBERG 1998). This was different in the case of the Protestant societies, as they sent over Dutch ministers to tend the souls of the migrants.

One such minister was Reverend Cornelis (Cees) Bregman who was a minister at the Dutch Reformed Church. In Australia he was employed by the Presbyterian Church Australia, first in Toronto (NSW) at the Lake Macquarie Charge from 1954 to 1959 and then at the Dutch Charge of Ultimo Sydney (NSW), from 1959 to 1963.<sup>17</sup> He had an active role in keeping the parish together and providing social assistance to his parishioners. The church building of Ultimo was “historic and unique”, Rev. Bregman wrote in 1960, but the area of Ultimo was run down and full of slums where old and sickly people lived, and the parish could not survive as the church had fallen into disrepair. Apart from a weekly service the parish provided social and food services for the poor and needy in the neighbourhood. The Dutch Charge of the Presbyterian Church had taken over the care of the church building in 1960 and had spent a considerable sum of money on repairing it, but the work that still needed to be done exceeded the parish’s financial possibilities, and he asked for financial help. R. H. Hill, an official of the assimilation section of the Australian Department of Immigration, had been invited to the inauguration, which with 250–300 visitors was attended by a large part of both the English-speaking and Dutch-speaking congregations. Hill was interested in social work and made sure to meet the Dutch social worker Klaas van Huffelen, whose name he misspelled. He told Hill he reached “3,000 adherents”, some of them in outlying areas, thus reaching thousands of Dutch migrants arriving in NSW and providing assistance with “assimilation, or personal needs” (Fig. 1).<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the church remained the centre of the congregation and also figured in the farewell party for Rev. Bregman in 1963, which consisted of a church service and an informal entertainment with a cabaret in the Dutch tradition. The cabaret

16 Due to the Dutch religious segmentation (called pillarisation), cultural and leisure groups most of the time had a religious signature as well.

17 <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/emigratie/gids/persoon/2744926202>; <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/emigratie/gids/instelling/3363421001>; <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/emigratie/gids/instelling/2904596808>; <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/emigratie/gids/instelling/1139188587>; <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/emigratie/gids/instelling/2904596808> (accessed 29/10/2020). Further background: PRINSEN 2005.

18 Letters of Ds Bregman and Mr Hill, Immigration Council in NAA, CA 957 C3939, N1960 (Sydney Reading Room).

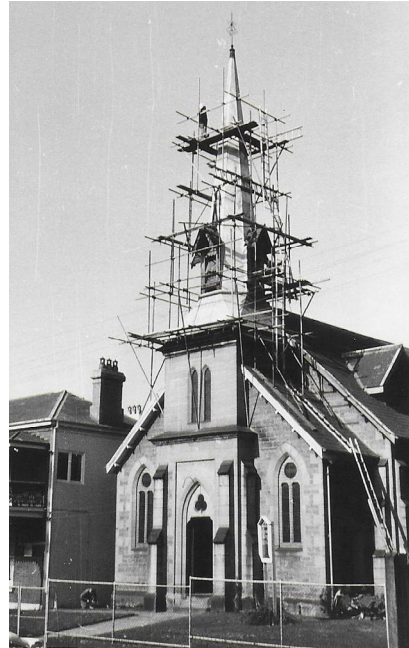


Fig. 1: The Dutch Church in Ultimo.

was performed by Theo and Eef ten Brummelaar, friends of the Bregman family who were prominent in the Dutch migrant community in Sydney, and who had started their Dutch Cabaret a few years earlier in Toronto. The cabaret featuring a song called *'in Sydney staat een kerk'* (in Sydney there's a church) to the tune of the nursery rhyme of *'in Holland staat een huis'* (in Holland there's a house), which would have been known to all Dutch parishioners from their youth, mainly because it featured in the popular 1950s Dutch radio show *'De Familie Doorsnee'* (Media 2).<sup>19</sup>

Adri Zevenbergen would most likely have felt at home with the Bregman cabaret – like most other migrants who had recently arrived – but for Kathy Kickett and most of the third and even second generation of Dutch Australians, it would have been incomprehensible and seemed very exotic. Most current Dutch would still recognise the song and some of the other Dutch songs in the show, but definitely not the presumably Australian songs also performed in it. In this sense, the Dutch Australians migrants in the Sydney Dutch Charge parish already had created a mixed cultural position. It would be next to impossible to explain the whole cabaret show for a wider audience, as many of the cultural references have been forgotten or become obsolete, or do not have the same appeal as they did at the time. And while it definitely is cultural heritage, digitising it without such an explanation does not make much sense, as it only appeals to a very small group. This brings us to the issue of what cultural heritage should be digitised and contextualised.

19 <https://www.hoorspelen.eu/producties/hsp-i/in-holland-staat-een-huis.html> for example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QQVo8FINB4> (accessed 29/10/2020).



are of the nostalgic type for an elderly Dutch migrant, but would never be included in an exposition of a heritage institution or be considered for digitisation in a formal heritage digitisation program, as they contain many non-original items that are available in other collections in which some have already been digitised. Still, they constitute the heritage with which Woldring wants to tell his story, and his story is just as vital to him as the *Ten Canoes* story was to David Gulpilil.

The seventeenth-century maps that are dear to Woldring<sup>23</sup> are also relevant to the story of Kathy Kickett, as they were made by the VOC. In her story, however, because of their colonial connotations they carry a radically different meaning than they do for Woldring. The same applies to the story of Adri Zevenbergens's voyage on board the *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*. What the public story doesn't tell, but what can be found in the same file as her selection as the ten thousandth migrant to Australia, is that on the same voyage the Dutch government compulsorily returned 37 *Indisch* Dutch who had entered the Netherlands without proper documentation.<sup>24</sup> A picture taken of them on board of the *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*, kept in the Moluks Historisch Museum, tells an entirely different story to that of Adri Zevenbergens (VAN EIJL 2012, 42). It is clear from these examples that personal and public stories are intertwined.

According to Benedict Anderson, the imagined communities of nations were forged by a narrative that included both shared memories and forgetfulness, in which the shared and canonical is essential to the community's sense of identity (ANDERSON 2006). Anthropologist Anthony Cohen has argued that while shared symbolism (including memories) is indeed crucial to the construction of community and identity, the symbols a community uses in its construction do not have a fixed meaning. While people belong to a community and refer to the shared memories and symbols that make up its narrative, their individual stories coincide only in parts. Rather, the symbols are "the vehicles of interpretation", as "different people oriented to the same phenomenon are likely to differ from each other in certain respects in their interpretations of it". Anderson writes: "because symbols are malleable in this way, they can be made to 'fit' the circumstances of the individual. They can thus provide media through which individuals can experience and express their attachment to a society without compromising their individuality" (COHEN 1985, 20). Cultural heritage items of any form, be they archive items, documents, photos, films, buildings or places, and even the idea of invisibility, can all be symbols that together construct identity and community, and the feeling of belonging to community. But the expression of this idea of belonging can be very different depending on personal experience and preference. We have demonstrated some of this kaleidoscope of stories above.

Our main point has always been that these stories can be complementary and even contradictory, but that only together do they aggregate to tell the whole experience of

23 DACC Facebook 26 August, 2021.

24 NL-HaNa, 2.16.68, inv.nr. 1400.

Dutch migrants.<sup>25</sup> Digital collections have made this easier than it has ever been, because they make it possible to transcend the borders of collections held by single institutions and connect them with those in other institutions and other countries, and even with collections contributed by individuals. The current practice of storytelling with cultural heritage often does not do that. Either stories are told based on a single collection and migrants are interviewed for their experiences, or people tell their stories based on a few, often nostalgic items from their youths or those of their (grand) parents. While it is important that these stories are told, because they are part of the migrant experience, they do not and cannot add up to tell the story of migrants in general, as this consists of the total of individual and general stories. They also have another consequence, because many people do not have these memorabilia and because there is a need for traditions Dutch Australians can identify with.

This need has been filled by drawing on some of the symbols from the cultural reservoir of collective memory. From a distance, these traditions look a bit strange and often dated. Upon closer inspection, however, they appear to be heavily informed by the official advertising of Holland promotion. Not surprisingly, food is a central part of these traditions. A preliminary study of the advertisements in the Dutch Australian Weekly, a Dutch-language journal appearing from 1951 to 1993, showed that many of them contained food items such as croquettes, stroopwafels (from the Dutch Shop), liquor such as genever (Dutch gin) from the renowned Dutch distillery Bols, and to a lesser degree Dutch-language books and diaries. It also showed that English-language advertisements grew from 2 % in 1970 to 30 % in 1991 (GUO 2019).<sup>26</sup> In the collective traditions of the Dutch Australian migrant community, items like clogs, tulips, and windmills play an important part. In Michael Douma's book on the rituals and invented traditions that helped the Dutch in Michigan in the USA 'stay Dutch', these same items also play an important role (DOUMA 2014). For example, even in the 1950s and 1960s, when most Dutch emigrants left the Netherlands, clogs were not worn in the Netherlands very much any more, but as we already outlined above, one of the Australian captions to the Adri Zevenbergen pictures emphasised that a woman from her Dutch village "still wears clogs" (Fig. 2).

And in those times, in addition to clogs, both windmills and tulips were featured in Holland promotion. In another photo, for example, Adri Zevenbergen is shown at her arrival party in Australia offering a small silver windmill to the wife of Australian migration minister Downer and receiving a bouquet of tulips.<sup>27</sup> This shows

25 "We propose rather than thinking of community as an *integrating* mechanism, it should be regarded instead as an *aggregating* device". COHEN 1985 p. 20.

26 The Dutch Australian Weekly is in Trove: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/title/1044> (accessed 29/10/2020).

27 <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7649087> for the silver windmill and <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7649085> shows the bouquet of 'tulips from a Dutch newspaper in Australia' (accessed 29/10/2020).



Fig. 2: Mrs de Man “still wears clogs”.

the influence of a more general story on the collective memory of the Dutch, which is clearly important for the assertion of identity and for ‘staying Dutch’ but which does not really consist of proper memories, cultural heritage items, or either the collective or personal historical consciousness that Grever and Adriaansen discern.

Members of the migrant community will often tell how moving finding any cultural heritage item like a passport or a migration file from a parent or ancestor in a cultural heritage collection may be. In many cases, however, there are no memorabilia, and while the migrant registration cards contain a wealth of information about some migrants, for many others they include no more than the official data: information was limited on about 80 % of the cards. If the cards were to be consulted in isolation, this would mean the end of the journey to the past. But if the migrant cards are digitally connected to items and information from other collections, it can lead to new perspectives.<sup>28</sup> These include the migrant files at the National Archives Australia (as the cards gave access to the application files, as said above), the Dutch and Australian photo collections, and numerous other collections

28 For a schematic database design, see ARTHUR et al. 2018, Fig. 3, and Media 5. A more comprehensive data model to link the collections / heritage items has been developed by Rik Hoekstra, Huygens Institute as a template for the Dutch and Australian National Archives. It is tested on the parts of the relevant collections digitised by the archives. One of the more difficult issues to solve are the differences of privacy regimes in Europe and Australia.

N. <i>Naald</i>		A553/83136 1 m120947		Wacol migration hostel
Gearr.: 8-2-1970				Ship: Ellinis
Der: <i>10/2, Ellinis 5/1-7/2</i>		HOOJVLLET 3200		
Beroep: <i>filles</i>		Datum:		
Kantoor: <i>NAMA - 10.</i>				Migration Scheme: NAMA Netherlands Australian Migration Agreement (1952)
		<i>E 10: 100 14: 100</i>		Financial support Dutch government

Fig. 3: Illustration of contextualisation of a migration registration card with a limited number of official data.

in institutions in both Australia and the Netherlands, some of which feature in the examples above.

A last example can illustrate this (see Fig. 3 and Media 2). Most of the migrant cards contain information about which migrant scheme the migrant travelled under – that is, whether migration was subsidised under a migration arrangement between the Dutch and Australian governments. The most important of these was NAMA: the Netherlands–Australian Migration Agreement (1952). Of the migrants we have seen above, both Zevenbergen and De Heer travelled under NAMA, just like more than half (54 %) of the migrants from the migrant cards.<sup>29</sup> In an analysis of the information on the migrant cards, it appeared that the migration scheme was influential on the policy of the Dutch consulates in Australia, which played an important part in assisting the migrants. Two of the main issues for migrants in the 1950s and 1960s were housing and employment, and feedback from the consulates to the authorities in the Netherlands informed their assistance policies. Linking policy documents from the Dutch National Archives to an analysis of the migrant cards shows the traces this left in the assistance the consulates provided. Even for migrants with little information on their cards, these policy files thus provide background about their past.

Another example would be the passenger lists of the ships migrants travelled on. There we can find information about the other people who were aboard those ships, and from there either retrieve information in the migration cards, or learn about the conditions on the ships on which the migrants travelled that are ‘hidden’ in still other collections.<sup>30</sup>

29 NAA: A2478, DE HEER A, Barcode: 1424110 <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=1424110> (accessed 29/10/2020); NAA, A2478, Zevenbergen C, p. 1; numbers on basis on a 1 % sample we drew from the cards.

30 A summary of the analysis in python notebooks with links to more detailed analysis in [https://github.com/HoekR/MIGRANT/blob/master/results/exploring\\_data\\_integration/](https://github.com/HoekR/MIGRANT/blob/master/results/exploring_data_integration/)



## Conclusion

Heritage materials are very well suited for storytelling about and by migrants. Some of these have been told, while many will never be, but together they make up a kaleidoscope of stories that complement and repeat and contradict. An inclusive story of the migrant experience, however, consists of an aggregate of migrant stories. The full aggregate will never be told, but the raw material of these stories consists of memories and interpretations of heritage materials. As with stories, this should not be confined to the heritage items of a single collection or those in the collections of a single institution. Migrant heritage is dispersed across many collections in more than one country. The recent development of digital infrastructure and tools has made it possible to connect these on a scale that was never before imaginable.

In this chapter, we have elaborated the case of the Dutch Australian migrants and their stories, and tried to illustrate the diversity of stories and their traces in different collections. These stories are seldom just individual memories, but are shaped by many different influences including propaganda and official policies. Dispersed heritage items are often only properly understood if they are contextualised by heritage objects from collections elsewhere. Using a methodology based on a connecting resource (in our case, migrant registration cards), it becomes possible to relate seemingly different heritage items, collections and stories. And policy consists of stories, too, and often displays connections and tensions that do not show in the stories of individual migrants unless they (especially in migrant cases) have to do with official or implicit inclusion and exclusion. Using context and connections ‘beneath the surface’ makes it possible to tell parts of the stories of migrants who have not left any distinct traces in the heritage collections.

Our example of Dutch Australian migrants does not stand on its own, as similar collections and connections exist for many migrant communities worldwide. Migrant heritage is by definition dispersed over at least two countries and their institutions, varied as they may be. A step towards restoring the migrant experience is to connect these collections so that they can give each other context. Often, parts of these collections are registration systems that recorded who migrated, which may serve as connecting devices (VAN FAASSEN/OPREL 2020). In this way, a connected digital resource can be created that enables migrants to connect to their complete heritage and aggregate their stories to the kaleidoscope. Only then they can, like David Gulpilil, “tell you something about my people and my land. Then you can see the story, and know it”.

[notebooks/Profiles.ipynb](#); information about the events on the cards: [https://github.com/HoekR/MIGRANT/blob/master/results/exploring\\_data\\_integration/notebooks/events.ipynb](https://github.com/HoekR/MIGRANT/blob/master/results/exploring_data_integration/notebooks/events.ipynb) (accessed 29/10/2020).

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**Fig. 1** Private Collection Bregman.

**Fig. 2** Private Collection Bregman.

**Fig. 3** Source: NL-HaNA, 2.05.159\_1\_0003 ([https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00335?activeTab=nt&sortering=prs\\_achternaam&volgorde=asc](https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00335?activeTab=nt&sortering=prs_achternaam&volgorde=asc), accessed 29/10/2020); Editing: the authors.

**Media 1** Westfries Museum, Hoorn, Netherlands, hosted at <https://vimeo.com/202206059>.

**Media 2** National Archives of Australia photo collection (NAA: A12111, 1/1958/4/39; item ID 7529953), <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7529953> (accessed 29/10/2020).