

Private archives on migration in the Netherlands

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Introduction

In this article we will present an inventory of private archives on migration in the Netherlands. Our aim is not to provide a complete and in-depth outline, but to give a comprehensive representation of private archives on migration in the Netherlands. First we will problematise the concept of private archives and present our definition. After that we will distinguish different types of private collections. Subsequently, we will give a brief presentation of the different immigrant groups in the Netherlands since the 19th century and the different locations (sites) of private archives. This section will conclude with various examples of initiatives designed for the preservation of cultural heritage. Finally, the last section of this article will contain concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

Definition and types of collections

The concept of private archives is not very clear. On the one hand (private) information on immigrants can be found in Dutch public archives and institutions, for example the Immigration and Naturalization Department (IND). On the other hand, public archives and institutions give shelter to private collections of immigrants and immigrant organizations. In what follows we will look at these examples in more detail. In this article we focus on immigrant's private collections *and* private information on immigrants in public institutions such as archives, museums, universities, libraries, etc. Consequently, we (broadly) define private archives on migration as private collections of and private information on immigrants and immigrant organizations stored in public institutions.

Different types of private collections can be distinguished: written sources (documents and magazines), audiovisual material (photos, videos), oral history sources (life histories), digital sources (internet) and cultural objects (clothing, utensils). Partly, this heritage can be found in archives, but is mostly not recognized as such. However, most of this heritage is possessed by migrants themselves or migrant organizations. The Centre for Migration History (CGM) in Amsterdam aims to contribute to the tracing and accessibility of sources concerning the history of immigration in the Netherlands. The International Institute for Social History (IISG), one of the partners of CGM, succeeded in obtaining collections with material on labour migrants and refugees. For example, the archives of the Committee Moroccan Workers in the Netherlands (KMAN), the Foundation Foreigners Peregrinus (Stichting Buitenlanders Peregrinus), Amnesty International and asylum seeker's files of a law office.

Immigrant groups in the Netherlands since the 19th century

The Netherlands are not unaccustomed to the phenomenon of immigration. As early as the late sixteenth century groups of immigrants have found their way to the Netherlands, in particular religious refugees, like Jews from Spain and Portugal and the French Huguenots. It goes too far to discuss all the different groups that entered the Netherlands, so we will focus on the immigrant groups since the 19th century. Moreover, we will focus primarily on immigrants that came to the Netherlands in large numbers.

During World War I almost 900.000 Belgian refugees fled Belgium to find a safe haven in the neutral Netherlands. However, before the War ended most refugees went back to their homes. Another category of immigrants were the interned soldiers that crossed Dutch borders. In 1918 the Netherlands were still sheltering between 50.000 to 100.000 Belgian refugees and 35.000 interned soldiers of diverse nationalities. Almost all of these immigrants left the Netherlands right after the hostilities stopped.

The 1920's brought another group of refugees to the Netherlands, mostly Jews from Eastern Europe. This was a group that numbered about 10.000 persons. In 1931 another group of Jewish refugees entered the Netherlands, fleeing from Nazi-prosecution. Along with them also came a number of Germans and Austrians who fled Nazi-territory because of political reasons. However, of all refugees that fled Nazi-

Germany about 5.000 survived the subsequent invasion and occupation from 1940 until 1945.

The subsequent group of immigrants is closely linked to the de-colonisation of the former Dutch colonies. Between 1945 and 1965 more than 300.000 persons have left the Dutch East Indies and what is now known as Indonesia to settle in the Netherlands. In particular, we would like to highlight the Moluccans. Most of the Moluccans served in the Royal Dutch Indies Army (KNIL) and were recruited from the Christian Moluccas. After sovereignty was handed over to the Indonesian Republic, these soldiers found themselves in a difficult position. They were offered to serve in the new Indonesian Armed Forces but most of them refused to serve with their former enemies. In addition, they were not allowed to return to the Molucas because the young Indonesian Republic feared their military skills. At last, a total of 12.500 Moluccans were shipped off to the Netherlands. The Moluccans believed that their stay in the Netherlands was temporary and that they would eventually return to a sovereign Moluccan Republic. With 40.000 Moluccans officially resident in the Netherlands, the Moluccan community is still actively present in the Netherlands.

‘Guest worker’ migration to the Netherlands started in the beginning of the 1960’s, due to rapid post-war economic growth and an increasing shortage of semi- and unskilled labourers. At first, migrant workers were actively recruited from southern European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia and Greece. From the mid-1960s, most migrant workers came from the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, notably Morocco and Turkey. A few years later, the Dutch government formalized the recruitment practices by bilateral agreements with the sending countries.

The Dutch and the sending societies and the migrants themselves expected this migration to be temporary. In fact, most labourers from southern Europe (Italy, Spain and Greece) returned to their home countries after a couple years of work in the Dutch industry. However, during the 1970s Moroccan and Turkish migration shifted into more permanent settlement of these ‘guest workers’ and their families. Although the Dutch authorities called for a recruitment stop, immigration from Morocco and Turkey continued in the 1970s in the form of family reunification and later in the 1980s onwards in the form of family formation. As a result of large scale family reunification more female migrants entered the Netherlands and as a consequence the sex ratio became gradually more balanced.

Another wave of immigration originates from Surinam, another Dutch former colony. The independence of Surinam in 1975 initiated large scale immigration to the Netherlands. The migration from Surinam continues in the form of marriage migration (family formation). With 350.000 Surinamese officially resident in the Netherlands, the Surinamese community is the largest immigrant group.

The last decade, the Netherlands became an attractive haven for refugees from conflict areas, for instance Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Iraq, Sudan and Afghanistan. The influx of refugees increased gradually until new legislation, from 2002 onwards made it difficult to enter the Netherlands. Migration issues and refugees have become increasingly important in scholarly literature and continue to inspire public debate.

More recently the Netherlands and other western European countries witness labour migration from Eastern Europe, notably from Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia. Since immigration from these countries is still developing, little can be said about the settlement process and little material can be collected on these immigrant groups. However, we expect that migration scholars will pay more attention to these immigrant groups in the future.

Private archives on migration: locations

Museums

Several historic museums collect material that is linked to migration history in the Netherlands. Some of these museums have a specific aim by collecting this particular material, for instance the Moluccan Historic Museum. This museum is very active in collecting material from the Moluccan community in the Netherlands to save and preserve the collective heritage. Another special museum we would like to put emphasis on is the Foundation “Bronbeek”, a well-known retirement centre for former military personnel. It also houses one of the largest collections of ex-KNIL soldiers. This very rich material constitutes ethnographic archives on the soldiers. Also, a large quantity of material heritage such as clothing, utensils and household goods can be found in the collection of the museum (<http://www.cdc.nl:30280/ktomm/>).

Police archives

The former Foreigners Police (Vreemdelingenpolitie) was the mandated organisation where immigrants had to register when entering and leaving the country. The archives of this Foreigners Police have mostly been incorporated in the existing police archives of the various police corps. Several police corps have a collection of old files on foreigners (vreemdelingendossiers) who entered the Netherlands. The General Police Magazine (Algemeen Politieblad) can also be used as a source for research. This magazine collects the names and other information about immigrants (legal and illegal) that have left the Netherlands since 1850.

Employer's organisations

Some branches of industry or services have made extensive use of immigrants during the last two hundreds years. Some of the companies in these branches still have their old archives with lists of employees or have donated these to other institutions for save keeping or further research. Some immigrant groups had specific jobs. For instance, researchers who are interested in German house servants or maids in the Netherlands during 1860 and 1940 will have to use servant records (dienstboderegisters). These servant records are located at different cities and contain a collection of names and qualifications of servants in general. Since many of these maids came from Germany, this is a prime source on this particular immigrant group.

Other interesting sources are address books or phone books with reverences to immigrants who have their own businesses such as restaurants or ice-cream shops. This particular business sector is dominated by Italian immigrants. Another good example is the website that was launched about Spanish immigrants in Eindhoven, a city located in the southern part of the Netherlands. This website contains publications, pictures and ego documents about Spanish immigrants who worked at Philips in Eindhoven from 1963 till 2003.

Refugee organisations and NGO's

Refugee organisations and NGO's possess rich information on refugees in the Netherlands. Often one can find information about refugees through support committees which were linked to several organisations and NGO's. These support committees collect material (letters, photos, labour contracts, etc.) on refugees to help them with their individual cases. There is also a lot of material on refugees available through municipal

and provincial archives. For example, sources on Belgian refugees during World War I can be found in different municipal archives, in particular in the cities where these refugees were put in camps. These archives contain very rich material on the daily lives of Belgian refugees in these camps, personal information and photos. More recent material on refugees can be found at the Inter-Church Collective (IKV). This NGO works with refugees and illegal immigrants in the Netherlands and tries to help them to obtain status that enables them to stay in the Netherlands.

Religious organisations

Churches and other religious organizations have a number of archives. These archives can be very interesting for researchers who are looking at immigrant's membership, (inter-ethnic) marriages, births, baptizing, burials and other religious events. Some synagogues and mosques have their own records, containing all sorts of information about their religious communities. These records from mosques can be particularly useful for research on Moroccans, Turks and other immigrant groups with an Islamic background. A good example is the Turkish organisation Milli Görüs. This transnational organisation is a network of associated mosques and kept excellent track of their archive since 1997 with reports, correspondence with partner organizations in Europe, notably Germany, and Turkey, brochures, videotaping of various activities and celebrations and photos.

Migrant organizations

Many of the immigrants that came to the Netherlands after World War II have organized themselves in migrant organizations. Some are cultural organisations and some have a more political background. These organisations have also collected material in various forms, notably audiovisual material and written sources, such as documents, annual reports, meeting reports and minutes.

Other examples are migrant media organizations that have collections of radio and television interviews with immigrants. Researchers who are interested in organizations initiated by second generation immigrants can turn to several youth organizations. For instance, Towards a New Start (TANS), an organization for young Moroccans or Cosmicus, an organization for young Turks. These 'second generation' organizations also have member records, which contain additional information about background, interests and educational level.

Political organizations

Several political parties have their own archives with information on members, including member of immigrant decent. There are also organizations which are active in the field of politics in immigrant's countries of origin. For example, Committee Indonesia (Komitee Indonesië), who's main objective is an independent Eastern Timor and International Society Kurdistan. These organizations have information on persons and organizations that are active in the field of political activism among these migrants groups. Another type of organization that we will include in this section is unions. Several unions promoted the interests of immigrant workers. Information on these immigrant workers can be found in their archives. Moreover, many unions tried to recruit immigrant members. These efforts can also be found in their archives.

Initiatives for the preservation of immigrant's cultural heritage

The Centre for Migration History (CGM) initiated several projects for the preservation of migrant's cultural heritage. We will highlight three initiatives. The digital Historic Migrant's Photo Archive (Historisch Beeldarchief Migranten, HBM) collects photos from private collections of migrants who entered the Netherlands in the past century. These photo albums provide a unique image of settlement and adaptation processes, identity formation and migrant's entrepreneurship. This project which started in 2003 aims to collect 5000 photos coming from migrants from former Dutch colonies (Surinam, Indonesia), Turkey, Morocco and other small immigrant groups from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and the former Yugoslavia.

The second initiative, which took off in 2004, is the 'Cultural Tracker's' project (Culturele Spoorzoekers). The Centre for Migration History (CGM) organizes in collaboration with migrant organizations traineeships, in which youngsters (from immigrant background) are trained to become cultural collectors (trackers). The collected photos will be archived in the digital Historic Migrant's Photo Archive (<http://www.iisg.nl/hbm>). The first course with South-European migrants was completed recently. The project is still running with Moroccan and Chinese migrants. The collected

stories and photos of Moroccan migrants are scheduled to be completed and published in 2009. In that year Morocco and the Netherlands will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the official labour recruitment agreement signed in 1969.

The ‘Cultural Tracker’s’ project was preceded by a book on Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands that was published in order of the International Institute for Social History (IISH). The book consists of original photos and letters of Turkish immigrants in the period 1964 – 1975. Sources from this period are very hard to find. This book is a great success in filling the still existing lacunae’s in migration history to the Netherlands in general and post-war labour migration in particular. However, this type of material is largely absent in public archives and can only be found in immigrant’s homes.

The third initiative is a website on migration history. Because the internet is often used for the gathering of information, the Centre for Migration History chose a digital solution. A website on migration can combine all books, photos, life histories and documents *of* and *on* migrants in one site. Moreover, with this website the Centre for Migration and History aims to collaborate with archives, museums and migrant organizations and encourage the digitalization of migrant’s cultural heritage.

A second aim is to provide a widespread channel on migration history in the Netherlands. Not until recently more research has been published on the history of migrants and immigration in the Netherlands. However, the results of these studies generally reach a small group of people. There is a growing interest for migration history within migrant organizations and cultural heritage institutions. There have been several initiatives to preserve migrant’s cultural heritage. Although these initiatives have been successful, the results are limited to isolated publications and temporary expositions. Children and grand-children of post-war labour migrants in search of their parent’s past have difficulty finding traces of their parent’s history in Dutch archives and museums. The need for these public sites is very much needed, not only by immigrants and their descendants, but also by students, the press and social workers. With the growing immigrant population in the Netherlands, this need will increase in the coming years.

Conclusions and recommendations for future research

The cultural heritage of immigrants has been subject of several studies. Existing inventories of immigrant's heritage in public archives and institutions do not provide much information. First, these inventories focused primarily on the post World War II period, ignoring migration streams in previous periods. Secondly, these studies put most emphasis on the used definitions and recommendations for further research, instead of presenting a state of the art on existing material on immigrants.

However, these studies did show that most migrant organizations possess written sources and audiovisual material and that these organizations are willing to donate their archives to institutions and public archives that focus on the preservation of immigrant's cultural heritage. A good example in this respect is the archive of the Committee Moroccan Workers in the Netherlands (KMAN) that has been moved to the International Institute for Social History (IISH).

The most striking result of the inventories of immigrant's cultural heritage in public archives is that 40% of all institutions state that they don't possess any material on immigrants or migration. Most likely these institutions only looked for specific organizations and archives and not at material in states archives, employer's archives or other more general archives. For instance, municipal archives dealing with housing, education, etc. offer sometimes insight in immigrant groups. Other examples can be found in police archives, which have records of all immigrants who applied for a resident permit. Moreover, large companies or factories often have records of their immigrant workers.

Overlooking all initiatives on behalf of the preservation of immigrant's cultural heritage, the most remarkable feature is that the internet and digital sources are becoming increasingly important. We already mentioned the 'Cultural Tracker's' project, the Historic Migrant's Photo Archive and the Migration website (which is still in construction). Another great example that highlights the increasing importance of collecting and promoting immigrant's cultural heritage through the internet is the virtual Calendar Project, initiated by the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV).

The website www.haargeschiedenis.nl was launched in February 2007. This virtual calendar aims to make the cultural heritage of migrant women (and their

daughters) more visible and accessible. Along with the website a book was published, in which parts of the women's life histories are included. For the website the IIAV collaborated with Moroccan, Suriname and Dutch-Indische (Indonesia) women's organizations in tracing and collecting cultural heritage of Moroccan, Surinamese and Dutch-Indische women, both in the countries of origin and the country of settlement.

Most information was found in the very rich archives of the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement and the archives of the women's organizations mentioned above. Additional important sources were the oral history interviews conducted with immigrant women from the respective communities. Their life histories were taped and collected in the archives of the IIAV and fragments of these interviews are included both in the book and online. In the future the IIAV aims to continue this project with other immigrant women. The virtual calendar is very unique because of its interactive character. The virtual calendar offers 'virtual visitors' the possibility to add their experiences and memories to the calendar.

Although there are new initiatives to collect immigrants' cultural heritage, many public archives and institutions, due to lack of manpower, often don't know exactly if and what material on immigrants and migration they possess. In our opinion, public archives and institutions should therefore systematically make an inventory of these 'hidden' sources related to immigration in their archives. Secondly, we notice that the preservation of immigrant's cultural heritage is predominantly directed to post-war immigrant groups. For a more balanced picture of the migration landscape in the Netherlands, we believe that more attention should be paid to earlier migration streams.

On the other hand, generally and periodically there is still very little private material on immigrants available in public archives. The major challenge for future research is to collect material from immigrants and immigrant organizations that are still active in Dutch society. The internet can be a very useful site to post this material on immigrants and at the same time a broad audience and potential material can be reached.

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