MY HOME IS MY CASTLE

Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands

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Front image
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INTRODUCTION: MY HOME IS MY CASTLE

It is not that I like Castle beer more than Heineken, the taste, I mean. Actually Heineken tastes better than Castle. But when I can get my hands on a can of Castle and I open it, it is not the beer that counts. It are all those memories that come together with opening that can, it is a feeling that I do not have when I open a can of Heineken.

It is home.

(Excerpt from an interview held on 27 March)

Afrikaans speaking South African immigrants living in the Netherlands create a sense of home and belonging through a variety of products, activities and networks. They do this within the institutional framework, consisting of rules, regulations and constraints of the Netherlands. Like the respondent who smuggles in Grandpa powder, a headache powder used in South Africa, although EU regulations do not allow this. Blockages thus also exist after one has migrated, and are not only of influence during the process of migration from one place to another. Within the institutional framework of the Netherlands, Afrikaans speaking South Africans have found several ways to make use of products, activities and networks in their efforts to feel at ease.

Many South African immigrants, especially those who just arrived in the Netherlands, find themselves in times of uncertainty. It is in these times of uncertainty that a feeling of safety and comfort is of high importance to them. This does not mean that, by definition, South African immigrants will end up isolated from Dutch influences and people. Instead, it can give them the energy to undertake activities that foster their integration in a new society. In that process new things become familiar as well, as the respondents create new memories. Things and activities associated with South Africa gradually become less important, although they will most probably never lose their alluringness.

So, by looking at the social environment of people, the process of belonging becomes visible. A process that can be seen as a symbolic construction by which South Africans make a place with another place in mind (see also Englund 2002). Many South Africans who live in the Netherlands find themselves in between two countries and identities. They belong to the Netherlands, and at the same time they do
not. They have to go through a big pile of administrative burdens before they can do the simplest things like getting a car insurance, start with school, rent a house, etcetera. One is not suddenly part of a social environment, but gradually becomes part of it. The transition becomes tangible through products and activities. The sentence ‘My home is my Castle’ refers to this. It is not the can of Castle beer itself that is important, but the memories that come with it are important. Drinking a Castle or consuming another South African drink or snack is also a way to show your new environment where you come from and what you value, and because of this it is both an ‘identity marker’ and a tool for the making of new connections. ‘Things’ are symbolic for the transition people go through. The continuous process of defining oneself through the composition of one’s social environment makes life understandable, not just for the one who lives it, but also for other people playing a part in it. I would argue that we should rather talk about things and migration in stead of things in migration, because migration is often expressed in things. The actor has agency and uses different things to show his background and transition into a new society. Herein things can have different roles. To use the example of the Castle beer again, the beer can show the South African identity of the consumer, it is used as an ‘introduction into South Africa and its [the respondents’] people’ and thus as a tool for the making of new connections and it is used to bond with other South Africans in the Netherlands.

This study shows how home, a place of belonging, is created by Afrikaans speaking South Africans who are living in the Netherlands. In line with Foster, (2006) I state that we need critical fetishism, “a heightened appreciation for the active materiality of things in motion” (286) in order to understand how people create ‘a place to be’ in the world. Networks do not only consist of people but also of nonliving things like heirlooms and certain foods and drinks, which are given meaning to by people. The role of the nonhuman actor, a ‘thing’ with social importance, is the lengthening of networks as well as sustaining the connectivity, and with that the creation of ‘home’.

Value is created through actions that “define and make visible relations between persons and things” (Foster 2006: 286). We can speak of two types of value. Value based on labour (quantitative value) and value based on meaningful differences (qualitative value). In this study, emphasis is given to the latter, because the respondents especially use qualitative value in their creation of a home. ‘Inside
meanings’, as defined by Mintz (1986), refer to the various significances that users attribute to a commodity (167 – 171). This study shows that if Afrikaans speaking South Africans living in the Netherlands give the same, or a similar significance to a commodity, a connection is created between them. But most of all his study shows that the value of a thing changes as a result of the transition of persons. It is exactly this connection that is used in the processes of the creation of a home. Tsing (2000) explains the term ‘placemaking’ as follows:

A global framework allows one to consider the making and remaking of geographical and historical agents and the forms of their agency in relation to movement, interaction, and shifting, competing claims about community, culture, and scale. Places are made through their connections with each other, not their isolation (330).

To explicate the ways Afrikaans speaking South Africans create a home in the Netherlands, this study elaborates on the representation of the commodity, how it is consumed and what mechanisms regulate its distribution and use, also known as the ‘circuits of culture’ approach. An approach that “has emerged for studying how the movement of commodities often entails shifts in use value” (Foster 2006: 289). Consumption thus has to be seen as “neither a terminal, nor a passive activity, but [as a] source and site of value creation” (ibid.). Consumption matters in the process of placemaking, and thus homemaking. Consumption and the commodity itself are tools for the creation of qualitative value, a cultural identity (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 1), and a so-called ‘marker of identity’ of an individual or a group (see also Nazroo & Karlsen 2003).

In this chapter I will place my research in relevant theoretical debates. Furthermore, a historical context of the research is given and finally, I will provide an outline of the chapters.

Methodology
The research has taken place mainly from January 2012 to April 2012. After that period, I occasionally went to the Afrikaans church and I kept on visiting Afrikaans events, like a pub night and a show with Barry Hilton, a South African stand-up comedian. The research comprised semi-structured interviews, three focus groups, and participant observation. The latter include unstructured interviews.

I saw most of the respondents more than once and in different settings, like at
home, at the church, at a pub night or at another event. Most of the semi-structured interviews were held at the homes of my respondents, where I was welcomed warmly heartedly every time. Because the interviews took place in a safe environment, it was less likely to be disturbed during the interview and it made it easier for the respondents to talk about personal things. It also allowed me to see the homes and all kinds of ‘social things and belongings’ owned by my respondents, which make up an important part of my research. I have had some very nice tours through the houses of my respondents. In the interviews at home, I focused on people’s personal stories, their life history, views on their place in Dutch society and their thoughts on the future. I used the first interviews to explore what sort of things were mentioned by the South African immigrants when they talked about South Africa, sentiment, the past and the future. To do this, I asked as little as possible and allowed space for people’s life stories. However, when the respondents talked about ‘South African things,’ but did not specify them clearly, I did ask for a specification and an example.

After that, I organised three focus groups, the language of communication was Afrikaans, since my research population exists out of Afrikaans speaking South Africans. Two focus groups consisted out of six people and one out of eight people. One focus group consisted out of six friends (three men and three women), one out of six members of the Facebook page ‘South Africans in the Netherlands’ (five women, one man) and one out of eight visitors of the Afrikaans Musiekfees (five men, three women). The latter was a spontaneous action in response of a conversation I had there with the visitors. They recognized me from an earlier encounter and they asked me how my research went. It shows how interested most of the Afrikaans people I met are and how easy I could talk with them. A big plus was that I speak Afrikaans, that alone “n Hollander wat Afrikaans praat!” (A Hollander that speaks Afrikaans!) opened many doors.

The members of the focus groups responded to theses I formulated based on the information from the first interviews and they responded to each other. Examples are: ‘I need biltong at least once a month’, ‘I used something South African to get into contact with my neighbors’, and ‘My South African furniture helps me to feel at ease’. Besides posing the theses, I kept as quiet as possible. The focus groups helped me to find the discussions related to the ‘things’ referred to. This allowed me to better contextualize them. It also made clear that it was not so much the ‘thing’ itself that was important. It were the stories and sentiments attached to it that mattered. Because
of these connotations, a ‘thing’ became a social actor. Something that also caught my eye during the focus groups, was that the respondents became closer when they talked about South African products or heirlooms they brought with them or which they bought occasionally. They laughed together, sat closer to each other then they did in the beginning of a session and their stories became more personal. They understood each other through the things they talked about.

In the meantime, I kept on going to people’s houses for interviews and I visited the Afrikaans church and several South African events. I spent one Saturday at Die Spens, the only South African shop in the Netherlands, situated in Amersfoort. I was able to chat with the customers and to see who was buying what. Nearly all the customers bought *biltong* and/or *boerewors*. Beer and several snacks like chocolate and chips were very popular as well. That day 74 transactions took place, most customers spoke Afrikaans and many of them were known by the owners of Die Spens. In the morning, I observed more than I interacted with costumers to get an idea of what the popular products and topics of conversation were. Later on I spoke to people a bit more, which was quite easy. The owners had a table to sit at and they had made a chocolate cake that I could offer to the customers. Because of this the costumers sat down and took the time to talk to me. My participation in several South African events also started with ‘watch and learn’ and after that, I brought what I had learned into practice. This helped me to get in contact with the respondents easier and to get personal quicker.

An important source of information was the Facebook page ‘South Africans in the Netherlands!!’ Here, many South Africans (663 members on 1 January 2012, now, 1 June 2013, 1234 members) shared their thoughts and problems and many of the South Africans discussed them and tried to help each other. This would happen when, for instance, someone did not know how to apply for a Dutch passport or how to watch rugby in the Netherlands. The page also offers a space where South African products and events can be promoted. I read what was happening and I contacted many respondents via that page. I also used it to launch an online survey for those who could or would not speak to me in person, but were willing to help me with my research. The people I spoke to in person often gave me a phone number or an email address of other potential respondents. It is important to note that Facebook was an important source of information, but that the medium has its shortcomings as well. Some people I spoke to and with whom I got in touch via Facebook had much
stronger opinions on the Facebook page then they had when I spoke face to face with them. This shows that the information on Facebook cannot be used just like that, but that we have to look at it very critically, trying to contextualize and refine it. Their offline social role as a South African in the Netherlands are exaggerated and played out (see also Wilson and Peterson, 2002) on the Facebook page, so the information is, in a way, biased. However, by admitting that the Afrikaans speaking South Africans are active in more than one network and by seeing at least a part of them in different contexts, the information can be contextualised as well and becomes useful.

The field: South Africans on the move to the Netherlands

In order to understand the context of emigration of South Africans to the Netherlands, some knowledge of South African history, including the long relationships with the Netherlands, and the contemporary social, economical and political climate, is crucial. It is important to keep in mind that South Africa is a very diverse country, with lots of different people who speak different languages, have different backgrounds, and so forth. First, I will give a short overview of South African history. I will then mention important factors that play a role in the decision to leave South Africa.

In South Africa, people with very different backgrounds live together, which has been the cause for some black pages in the South African history. Apartheid being the blackest page. The three aspects at the root of the problems between whites and blacks were the ownership of land, the division of labour and political rights and leadership. ‘Solutions’, especially for the settlers, were sought along the lines of territorial segregation (or: separation, called ‘apartheid’ after 1948) and guardianship, pursued by Boer and Briton. The solutions were gradually embodied in legislation. This policy of segregation was justified by settlers by saying that the purpose of the policy was to give both blacks and whites their own places to live. The policy of segregation was partly based on fear with the whites that, if they would not rule over the blacks, they would disappear to the margins (Beinart 1994).

W.P. Schreiner, who was known as a so-called ‘friend of the natives’ said about segregationists legislation and the policy of segregation: “[The foundation of this reveals] the worst of human motives: apprehension, fear. Why were people acting in this manner? They know they were doing wrong… Why do they do it? Self-preservation” (in Giliomee 2003: 311). Schreiner was not the only one who saw that the newly introduced legislation was wrong. For a long time, apartheid was the
overriding push factor for migration. Especially after brutal suppression of protests and resistance against apartheid-legislation, like the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and the Soweto uprising of 1976, as well as a series of legislative changes reinforcing apartheid, were followed by waves of migration away from South Africa (Sveinsson & Gumuschian 2008). For the respondents of this research, apartheid was not a reason to migrate. Most of them left South Africa years after apartheid was abolished.

Since the end of apartheid, important factors in the decision to migrate have been: the rise of violence, poor economic conditions and prospects, discrimination, political uncertainty, the impact of the HIV epidemic, and the quality of national education and of health services (see also Sveinsson & Gumuschian 2008; Bornman s.a.). The government’s affirmative action policy gives us an example that helps explaining why, especially white, people leave South Africa. The Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programme is aimed at the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace and the reduction of racial inequalities by reserving 80% of the new jobs for black people. BEE makes it very difficult for white South Africans to get a job. Another important reason to migrate is political uncertainty. In chapter one, I will exemplify the above mentioned reasons to migrate, by focusing on several life stories and examples from the respondents.

South Africa still is a highly divided country. This division has a strong influence on the social life of all its inhabitants. Differences between the poor and rich are immense, which has caused people to build walls in order to protect their possessions and themselves, thereby reinforcing boundaries. To some extent, Issues of crime and insecurity seem to unsettle everyday life and are now a major reason for migrants not to go back to South Africa (Sveinsson & Gumuschian 2008).

There are even more different reasons to decide to go and live overseas. Some South Africans fell in love with a Dutch person, others were given a good job opportunity. If people left because of the current political situation, most of the respondents argued that South Africa was no longer the country where they wanted to raise kids. It is important to know where people come from and why they left the country, because the different reasons for migration have a big impact on the ways South Africans are living their lives in the Netherlands. For instance, people who left ‘for their children’, intend to stay for a longer period of time. They start with the creation of a home, a place where they and their children feel safe and welcome, early after their arrival. On the other hand there are South Africans who originally planned
to return to South Africa after one year, but who found themselves living in the Netherlands much longer than they first intended. One respondent who had the intention to work for one year in the Netherlands as an au-pair, has now been living here for over twelve years. She started much later with the creation of a home. At first she was trying out “crazy Dutch stuff” and exploring the Netherlands and the rest of Europe most of the time. “At first it was a holiday, later it became more serious. Only then I started to do more serious things, like finding a place to live for myself and apply for a visa” (excerpt from an interview held on 12 February 2012).

The reason for migration not only helps us to understand the different ways in which people construct their lives. It also helps us to understand whether they want to make the trip to Schiphol again to return to South Africa. It can help us understand why and under which circumstances they would want to go back. All the respondents I spoke to intend to go to South Africa again. This could be either for a visit (om te kuier), or to live there again (om te bly). “People feel they belong when they are able to biographically make sense of their decision to move to a particular place, and their sense of belonging is hence linked to this contingent tie between themselves and their surrounds” (Savage et. al. 2005: 207). In order to make sense of their lives after migration, my respondents were to some extent ‘planting roots’, thereby creating a surrounding that feels familiar. Their residential place, the Netherlands, becomes the key area where the Afrikaans speaking South Africans define their new social position.

Another very important element in the decision to live in the Netherlands lies in the possibility to do so. Many of my respondents had a Dutch or English passport, which gave them access to Europe. Money also plays a big role. Migration is expensive and so, not everyone is able to afford it. Some respondents were ‘relocated’ by a company; others had to pay for it themselves. When friends or family were already living in the Netherlands, it also became easier to take the big step and leave South Africa: People could (for a while) stay over at the houses of friends and family and were thus able to look for a job and a place to live in the meantime. Language can also be a determining factor; Afrikaans is a language that has a lot in common with Dutch, and therefore the step to live in the Netherlands becomes smaller. Afrikaans speaking South Africans have the feeling that they can learn Dutch quickly.

We should not forget that all the respondents have left people behind in South Africa, like family, friends, and colleagues. Views of the people who stayed behind.
influence the migrants’ views on their stay and future:

My brother thinks we betrayed South Africa. He says that we abandoned the country in times of need: why did we take our talents and went abroad?

- Brain drain...

Yes, but it is not as easy as it seems. The moment I needed South Africa, South Africa did not need me. There are many things that I had when I grew up that I want to give to my children as well. But that’s South Africa from 20, 30 years ago. It is not the contemporary South Africa, I cannot give it to them; Camp on the beach for two weeks. There is no way... Even when I was a kid the end was near, so we do what is within our reach. I would not say that we create our own piece of South Africa in the Netherlands, but like camping in Spain, that is the closest we can get to the outdoor experience I had when I was young, only then in safety (interview, 13 January 2012).

At the same time, South Africans in the Netherlands also changed their views on South Africa and South Africans. After a while many feel they are neither a South African, nor a Dutch person. In that way they find themselves in between countries and in between identities. The process of the creation of a home thus becomes a part of everyday life, because there no longer is such a thing as a ‘home’ anymore. They have to create one themselves, choosing persons, commodities and actions to fill their new home with and through which they feel comfortable and familiar. If we understand the continuous process of homemaking, we are able to understand the South African migrants and their actions and social positions much better.

So, the context of this research is a complicated one. The respondents carry with them a highly complicated history for which they are blamed, namely that of apartheid, while at the other hand they are welcomed to the Netherlands as ‘distant family’. They are seen as betrayers by some, and as heroes for taking care of their own future by others. They had the opportunity to leave, while at the same time some did not want to leave South Africa at all, but felt like they had no other choice. Finally, they do not feel South African, nor do they feel Dutch. In other words, the Afrikaans speaking South Africans who currently live in the Netherlands, often find themselves in a complicated reality. This is most probably an important reason to actively build a space in which they feel at ease: home.

So where did I fit in the complicated context of this research? Especially in the very beginning, people tried to show me what they found a good Afrikaner and a
good immigrant. After all, I am Dutch. But time passed by and I saw many of the respondents of this research regularly and as we got familiar the respondents loosened up. When I went to pub nights or other festive events, I tried to go with other South Africans, so that I could ‘disappear’ in the crowd a bit more. Mostly people found out that I am Dutch only after some time, so I was able to observe them without them knowing I am Dutch. The fact that I speak Afrikaans also helped, because now people could talk in their own language without explaining over and over again what they meant. But still I cannot deny I am Dutch, a Dutch researcher even. Sometimes it was hard to tell just enough of the research to keep the South Africans I met satisfied, but without giving too many clues. I have felt uncomfortable at some times. For instance when they made fun of the Dutch and Dutch words (see chapter three, ‘those crazy Dutch...’). But in general, the Afrikaans speaking South Africans welcomed me into their houses and gatherings and were willing to talk to me.

Theoretical Debates

Important debates for this research are debates on ‘home’, ‘globalization and migration’, ‘identification and belonging’ and the social life of ‘things’ (as formulated by Appadurai 1986). Some meanings of words are taken for granted. ‘Home’ for example, is thought of as a term that means the same to each and everyone. However, when one tries to define the term, it suddenly seems much more slippery than expected. The same goes for ‘globalisation’, or rather the ideology of it. For this research, the remarks on this process are very important. In this research, the terms ‘home’ and ‘globalisation’ are both seen as processes and thus as phenomena that are subject to change. Just as ‘migration’ and ‘belonging’ are processes, for there are always human actors involved who shape and live the terms. In order to prevent confusion, I will elaborate on four important theoretical debates on this subject.

Home

We can find several dominant and recurring ideas about home in scientific literature, but what is clear is that the notion of ‘home’ has to be produced and reproduced in society. It is important to anchor the term in time, space and class to understand the different meanings of the term (see also Löfgren 2009). It is hard to state whether a home is “(a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of state of being in the world” (Mallett 2004: 62). The boundaries of home are hard to define,
since places, and spaces, are made through their connections with each other and not
their isolation (see also Tsing 2000: 330). ‘Home’ is socially constructed:

Home is what is produced or not (we feel or do not feel at home in the spaces
we occupy and create); it is produced as the result of productive and
reproductive work by its members, and also by a whole range of other
activities, principally consumption activities, that have as their end product a
more or less powerful statement of identity, ownership and belonging
(Silverstone 1994: 45).

We can find examples in the banalities and less self-evident (consumption)
activities in the everyday life of the South Africans. Going to the Afrikaans church,
organising high tea’s for South African women, the monthly visit to South African
shop Die Spens, visiting South African pub-nights, Skype conversations with friends
and family in South Africa, creating the possibility to watch rugby with others via a
difficult and somewhat illegal way, et cetera.

One of the circumstances that shape people’s identities are their surroundings.
People turn undifferentiated surroundings “into a landscape of identifiable and
meaningful places, and the ways that these meanings reflect, reproduce and affect
social relations and cultural values” (Carrier & West 2009). From the house they live
to the activities they attend, many surroundings can be turned into identifiable and
meaningful places. We have to keep in mind that the respondents in this research are
all part of a diaspora and “[d]iasporas, almost by definition, conjure deterritorialised
areas, worlds of meaning and “home” feeling detached from original territorial
boundaries” (Tsing 2000: 343). Their surroundings have changed, so it is likely that
their identities have changed as well. They have shaped a new landscape of
identifiable and meaningful places, away from their original territorial boundaries and
with different people, activities and things. Nearly all the interviewees for this
research pointed out that they actively tried to do or eat something South African
every now and then. In some cases people even ate or drank more ‘South African’
snacks or beverages like koeksisters (a sort of syrup-coated doughnut in a twisted or
braided form) and Appletizer (carbonated apple juice) then they did in South Africa.
Others told that when they lived in South Africa they tend to avoid Afrikaners, but
now that they are in the Netherlands they look for them and find it pleasant to spend
time with Afrikaners. So meanings have changed and new landscapes are formed by
making use of these new meanings attached to things, activities and persons.
So how can we understand ‘home’? The above suggests that we can only understand home as a repository for people’s relations with other people, their surroundings, things and activities. Therefore, in this research, home is seen as a place, but at the same time as a space inhabited by relatives, other people, things and belongings. The home space is familiar and comfortable for the respondents and within it, relationships and activities are lived (see also Mallett 2004). These activities become familiar by using several commodities that are marked as ‘South African’. People thus make sense of their world by the use of commodities, be it for consumption or the sustaining and lengthening of relations. Thereby they create a home (see also Colloredo-Mansfeld 2005: 215).

Globalisation and migration
Globalisation assumes a connected and ever more transparent world in which people and goods circulate quite easily. Tsing (2000), however, argues against the ideology of globalisation given by the metaphor of blood circulation, which suggests not circulating money or goods is unhealthy. The term circulation assumes flows, but a so-called global world also blocks and arrests movement, imprisons persons and things, and alienates them from their processes of production and use. This study shows that commodities mean completely different things to different people. Therefore, if we want to fully understand the role of commodities in existing networks and in the process of homemaking, we have to take into account the social impact on and of these commodities in a context of globalization.

A global framework allows one to consider the making and remaking of geographical and historical agents and the forms of their agency in relation to movement, interaction, and shifting, competing claims about community, culture, and scale. Places are made through their connections with each other, not their isolation” (Tsing 2000: 330).

Claims are attached to commodities. The claim that Castle Beer feels like home, as was mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, is an example of this. Not only places like ‘home’ are made through the connection with other places. The commodities, together with their attached claims, can only exist in connection with and in relation to each other. Commodities have to be placed in a context in order to understand their meaning. Something that becomes clear during several activities, both within a family and during bigger events like the aforementioned pub night,
when people with similar backgrounds come together. This context exists out of histories or memories, other products in the same category (but without that specific meaning), the people using it, the representation of the commodity by the people using it and the place where it is used. It is much harder to get a Castle Beer than a Heineken in the Netherlands. The effort a person has to undertake before they can put a six-pack of Castle Beer in their refrigerator, shows the meaning and qualitative value of a Castle Beer, as it creates it at the same time.

Inda & Rosaldo (2008) see the ‘circulation’ mentioned by Foster (2006), Tsing (2000) and others as structured circulation of ‘mobility’ and ‘immobility’ (Inda & Rosaldo 2008: 35), showing an overlap with the ‘motility theory’ of Andrucki (2010), the diverse set of capacities that allowed the Afrikaans speaking South Africans to move from South Africa to the Netherlands and make a success of it (more on this theory in chapter 1, ‘access versus blockages of movement’). Inda and Rosaldo use snapshots to illustrate what is seen as globalization, as well as to highlight particular ‘mobilities’ and ‘cultural flows’. The various ‘flows’ are not entirely footloose and “the chains linking different parts of the world to each other [are] far from uniform” (Inda & Rosaldo 2008: 35). History and regulations play an important role in the direction of the different ‘flows’. For instance when the immigrants, at a first sight, are able to ‘flow’ from South Africa to the Netherlands easily because of the old relations between the Netherlands and South Africa, hurdles like the validation of South African diplomas block their flow into their full participation in Dutch society. So the “world of globalization” (ibid: 6) exists of complex ‘mobilities’ and uneven interconnections. The anthropological focuses on globalisation are, according to Inda & Rosaldo (2008), a focus on large-scale processes through which the world is increasingly interconnected and a focus on the different ways people respond to these processes. An important field of study for anthropologists should also be, as explained above, the actual degree of interconnection, or the actual possibilities people have because of that interconnections. Globalisation is a very complex process that operates in different realms like the cultural, political and the economic realm (ibid: 12), and people might not be able to take part in the processes of globalisation in all the realms. Many of the interviewees came to the Netherlands because they were offered a good job, making it possible for them to take part in higher segments of the Dutch society. The children of some of these families, however, could not go to a university in the
Netherlands, but they could go to a university in South Africa. Some of the children therefore went back to South Africa, leaving behind their parents and sometimes brother(s) and sister(s). So not all the family members were able to make use of the ‘interconnection’ that is thought of as a part of the globalisation process. This is important to note because South African immigrants are seen as ‘invisible migrants’: Migrants who are high educated, successful and do not encounter nor cause problems in their host society. Although they are able to move to the Netherlands relatively easily, they do encounter difficulties.

The term ‘culture’ can be turned into a bridge between placemaking, as mentioned by Tsing (2000), and the creation of value, as emphasized by Foster (2006). Indo and Rosaldo (2008) understand culture as:

> the order of life in which human beings construct meaning through practices of symbolic representation. (...) It is the sphere of existence in which people make their lives, individually and collectively, meaningful; and it encompasses both the practices through which meaning is generated and the material forms (...) in which it is embedded” (12).

Globalisation and migration have ‘access’ in common: globalisation is characterized by the increased access to other parts of the world (be it physical or ‘online’) and people can migrate if they have access to other parts of the world, be it another part their own country, or another country in the world. So, access is not only a matter of the possession of the right passport. Being able to move, and thus being able to make use of a connection, has to do with capital as well. Immigration is expensive, and hence it is not surprising that most respondents in this research are highly educated people and that have good jobs. Dutch companies recruited some of the immigrants. Especially just before the change of the millennium, Dutch companies actively recruited South African IT specialists. Apparently, South Africa has a good reputation when it comes to IT employees and many IT specialists were needed to make sure that computers would not crash at the beginning of the year 2000. When people were recruited, the company paid for their migration. If not, people paid for it themselves and they had to put money aside for several years. Besides money, people need other capital to be able to move, like social and cultural capital. Many immigrants visited the Netherlands for a couple of weeks for job interviews and other appointments to arrange all sorts of things, like a visa and a place to live. To do this, all three forms of capital are important or at least ‘handy’.
Economic capital is necessary, because without it one cannot afford a ticket, visa, house, et cetera. Cultural capital is needed because without it, it is much harder to know how to get things done, to get a job, et cetera. Finally, social capital is very helpful, because a network in both South Africa and the Netherlands can be used for support in the migration process.

**Identification and belonging: Imagined communities**

South Africans living in the Netherlands often find themselves in between two countries, not fully ‘fitting in’ in either the Netherlands or South Africa. For example, one respondent said: “I miss to belong III.” The moment one moves to another country and the profits of living there become visible and tangible, they start to compare the countries they have lived in. No country is perfect anymore. This shows us that “belonging is not a given but is itself unstable, positing both states (of unbelonging) from which one comes, and possible future states of belonging to which one may aspire” (Savage et. al. 2005: 12). Savage et. al. see the will to belong as a reason to go and live in another country, because moving would be a way to find what you are looking for. Inspired by Bourdieu, they state that: “People are comfortable when there is a correspondence between habitus and field, but otherwise people feel ill at ease and seek to move – socially and spatially – so that their discomfort is relieved” (ibid.: 9). Not all the respondents felt uncomfortable in South Africa, however most of them did feel uneasy sometimes. What this research does show is that, when they are in the Netherlands, the migrants move to places where habitus and field overlap. Especially at different South African events and in several South African places, this move becomes visible. The respondents create a temporary field with another place, where their habitus fits, in mind.

Bourdieu sees society as a field existing of overlapping fields, wherein a continuous power struggle is taking place over scarce resources in that field. Within each field, specific rules are applicable. People develop a certain habitus in each field, a sustainable way of perceiving, thinking and acting that helps people in that field. People who have been in a field for a long time, have an advantage over newcomers in that field, because they have fully internalised the habitus. The habitus is a cultural habitat which is internalised in the form of dispositions to act, think, and feel in certain ways. It is thus a set of social tools that helps people to fit in, acquired through experiences and activities in everyday life (See also Bourdieu 1977; Appelrouth &
Edles 2008: 684 - 719). So, to put it bluntly, when people’s behavior is in line with the field they are in, they are happy, or at ease. If this is not the case, they seek to move socially and spatially as we have seen above. Both processes can be seen among South African immigrants in the Netherlands. They chose to move from South Africa to the Netherlands and while being in the Netherlands they construct a social space where they feel comfortable and at home. They have moved both socially and spatially. However, a part of the respondents did not move because habitus and field were not corresponding, but because of other reasons, like the longing for adventure, or in order to be with the one they love.

It is clear that belonging must be looked at as a socially constructed and embedded process “in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their position in other fields” (Savage et. al. 2005: 12). Again: a field always exists in relation to other fields and the respondents are able to adapt to these different ‘worlds to be in’. So the South African migrants are able to adapt to different situations. They can do their shopping and bring their kids to school and act ‘Dutch’, but they can also adapt to a situation where South African migrants come together and act as a ‘South African in the Netherlands’. Acting ‘Dutch’ will become easier when the migrant has been living in the Netherlands for a while, because then he or she was able to learn what, in the Dutch society, is the normal way to act, feel or think in certain situations.

Bourdieu (1979) already showed that “[i]n the course of everyday life people constantly choose between what they find aesthetically pleasing and what they consider tacky, merely trendy, or ugly” (back of the book). People define themselves through the use of products, activities and networks, thereby creating social spaces and social borders, which are dynamic and which define the actor as well. When in a different field, other definitions of a person arise. The actor is continuously interacting with his or her environment, adapting to it as he or she modifies the social space and social borders at the same time. Our lives are shaped by our environment, just as our lives are shaped by products, activities and networks. At the same time we shape our environment, products, activities and networks. We can look at ones social identity as a mosaic; a composition of different elements, constantly worked on and endlessly expanding. Every time you look, you see different parts of it. In the continuous job of constructing a world to be in, respondents give much attention to some specific ‘building blocks’. These are: Furniture from South
Africa, South African foods and drinks, sports, Christianity, morals and values, family and friends, the Dutch as a common source of laughter, Facebook, and fellow South Africans in the Netherlands.

Silverstone shows that the concept of identity has a lot of overlap with the concept of belonging. Something we can understand when we look at the term ‘cultural intimacy’ as explained by Herzfeld (2009): “the zone of internal knowledge whereby members of a society recognize each other through their flaws and foibles rather than through their idealized typicality as heroic representatives of the nation” (133). South Africans in the Netherlands recognize each other, because they are able to distinguish certain modalities (see also Giddens 1984). Not the Springbok jersey, but the way an Afrikaans speaking South African says ja (yes), acts in public, et cetera.

Identity, however, is a highly problematic concept. First of all, authors on the subject do not seem to agree on how to approach the concept. First, there is the actors approach to the concept, wherein “[a]ctors are depicted as shaping identities and using them to further their interests” (Geschiere 2009: 31). But neglecting shifts and reorientations reduces impact of notions to conscious choices and strategies. Addressing these problems, Bayart shows that:

…people feel dominated by identity’s illusions or by processes of globalization but at the same time are deeply involved in shaping them. Changing techniques of the self, mostly centered on the body, are obvious entrance points for trying to understand how the subject is both shaped by and participates in evolving processes of subjectivation. Also important is Bayart’s emphasis, following Deleuze, that subjectivation is a never-ending process. This corresponds particularly well to the always unfinished nature of the autochtony discourse (like other discourses of belonging)” (in Geschiere 2009: 31).

I argue, however, that South Africans in the Netherlands do not seem that dominated by identity’s illusions, but that they emphasize agency themselves. A number of respondents took migration as an example when they told me that life is what you make of it. They had been unhappy, or simply longed for a change, and moved to the Netherlands, taking responsibility for their own lives and their own ‘identity’. I emphasize the actors approach to identity, exactly because it gives room for change and enables us to look at identity as a never-ending process. This is why I prefer the use of the term ‘identification’ instead of ‘identity’, identities are not static,
but dynamic and thus a process. For South Africans, place is a dimension of their new identity and their distinctiveness. The different ways wherein they encounter and perceive the Netherlands and how they invest this place with significance, has direct implications for their identity (See also Gray 2009) and presentation of self. I consider identity making, in line with Gray (2009) as “a cultural process through which, in creating places” in the Netherlands and forming attachments to the country, “people also implicate a historicized image of themselves” as people from South Africa in the Netherlands (224). The owners of Die Spens, the South African shop, can serve as a clear example. After they have lived and worked in the Netherlands for seven years, they established their shop for South African products. It both strengthened their attachment to the Netherlands (not in the last place because they now have their own business, friends and clientele) and it implicated a historicized image of themselves: we are proudly South African! The shop now serves as a place where South Africans meet each other and pursue South African products. It also serves as a place where the Dutch can meet South Africa. Within families, people tend to show new friends, like their neighbors, where they come from by inviting them for a braai, or they cook something South African when people visit them, even when they do not cook South African dishes often. A woman with whom I talked and who likes “the English more than those snobbish Afrikaners” loves to make dishes like bobotie when people come over. “I like to show where I come from by making South African food and I like it when people are interested in my background. It feels good to talk about South Africa during dinner.” She thus creates a place in which she, through serving South African food and telling about her history, makes new friends and with that forms attachments to the Netherlands.

“Ethnic identity offers the individual a sense of belonging and contributes to group cohesion, while ethnic organization serves the mundane interests of its members” (Eriksen 2005: 353, emphasis in original). Ethnicity is best understood as:

a loose, labile repertoire of signs by means of which relations are constructed and communicated; through which a collective consciousness of cultural likeness is rendered sensible; with reference to which shared sentiment is made substantial. Its visible content is always the product of specific historical conditions which, in variable measure, impinge themselves on human perception and, in so doing, frame the motivation, meaning and materiality of social practice” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 38, emphasis in original).
Identities always become visible through actions and in its lived manifestations. Just as ‘home’ can only be understood when we look at people’s social space, filled with people, activities and cherished products. “Location, material form, and meaningfulness contribute to the historical and existential definition of a place” (Englund 2002: 268), and of the self. The ‘world to be in’ is created by its inhabitants. The self, and thus identity, is linked to home and space. As Englund (2002) explains this: “Rather than being a place in which migrants come to be situated, the local appears as an achievement that they carve out of the cultural materials that the fact of their movement provides. Construction – a building metaphor of social life – enunciates the making of the local” (267). In the construction of the self and social life, a place and social space are made, which in their turn influence the self of the actor.

Consumption is one of the ways to set up a social life and build an identity, just as undertaking activities is. Therefore, economies of all sorts are expressions of a culture or group, just as economies create the opportunity for groups to be distinctive. “An economy’s base is the social and material space that a community or association of people make in the world. Comprising shared material interests, it connects members of a group to one another, and is part of all economies” (Gudeman 2005: 94). South African networks offer South African businesses connections and a relatively well defined market. Shared material interests are mostly celebrated with others during different kinds of activities, as will be shown in chapter two and three. Since South Africans are a minority in the Netherlands, shared material interests are especially relevant when different South Africans get together. Mostly, people have to make an effort to get access to the products or services they attach meaning to. They have to drive to Amersfoort (sometimes for more than two and a half hours) to buy certain foods and drinks, or to the Suiderkruisgemeente (the Afrikaans church) in Leusden to be able to pray in their own language. Meanings and values of certain products and activities connect South Africans, and in that connection ‘home’ is centered.

The social life of things
I use Appadurai’s title to emphasize that things (commodities, heirlooms, foods and drinks and new goods) get their value through social processes. It is hard, if not impossible, to divide ‘things’ into ‘commodities’ and ‘just goods’. Besides that,
things can turn from a commodity to a good and the other way around just like that. Appadurai asked:

*when* is any ‘thing’ a commodity, that is, in what situation or context is a thing’s exchangeability a socially relevant feature. A thing’s ‘commodity candidacy’ thus varies as it moves from situation to situation, each situation regulated by a different ‘regime of value’ or set of conventions and criteria governing exchange” (Foster 2006: 291, emphasis in original).

Whether or not a thing is socially relevant has to do with taste, trade and desire. The regulation of these three aspects is embedded in the question whether or not a thing is a commodity, and they are regulated by complex social and political mechanisms. Changing situations, and thus changing regimes of value, define whether or not a thing is wanted. Simmel already stated in 1907 that value never is an inherent property of objects, but a judgment made about them by people. Therewith, he recognized that things have social lives, just like persons. Meanings are given to things in the use of them, just as in their forms and trajectories (See also Appadurai 1986: 3 - 5). Things have a social life and thus can be called commodities when they have a certain social potential, like bringing people closer to each other. This also means that things can “move in and out of the commodity state (...). Though the biographical aspect of some things (such as heirlooms, (...) and antiques) may be more noticeable than that of some others (such as (...) salt or sugar), this component is never completely irrelevant (Appadurai 1986: 13). A thing is a commodity in a certain phase of life (ibid: 17).

Something simple like a dish cloth can turn into a commodity instantly. For instance at a Bible study the host made some chicken mayonnaise sandwiches for the participants and me. In many South African households, a dish cloth serves as a napkin for all. The moment the host put the dish cloth on the table, she asked to me whether or not I knew what to do with it. I did, and right after I gave the good answer, the other women started to talk about the things ‘they’ found normal. The fact that there was something like a good answer, to use as a napkin, and the fact that because of that simple dish cloth a conversation started about ‘we’ and ‘they’ shows that even a dish cloth can be a socially relevant feature in the definition of self and others. And with that in the organization of ones home space.

Foods, drinks and furniture, to name a few things, are important factors in the creation of a home. They have helped many of the respondents to feel safe and secure,
to feel as if they belong and that they are home. I did notice, however, that the longer people lived in the Netherlands, the less they saw things they brought with them from South Africa, like *beskuit* and furniture, as a commodity. They started to see these things more as a product. That certain phase of life, in which the transition from South Africa to the Netherlands was at the centre, was over and with that, the phase of the thing being a commodity ended as well. The regulation of taste, trade and desire was now regulated by other social and political mechanisms that fitted better in their new lives and their new environment. Although certain products, especially foods and drinks, had not yet lost their alluringness, they did not have the social potential they used to have. One respondent said to me: “I still think that *biltong* is one of the best foods on earth, but I only eat it when I am in South Africa, and that is OK. When I am here [in the Netherlands] I eat your sausage from Groningen, just like you, and I love it. I do not need to eat *biltong* every week or month” (interview, 19 March 2012). Heirlooms form the exception to this, they never seemed to have lost value and social importance for the respondents.

This chapter functioned as an introduction to the study, the field of study, the methods used and the theoretical debates in which the research is situated. The next chapter illustrates why the South African migrants decided to move to the Netherlands. It will also dig deeper into the question of access and blockages of movement that are raised in this introduction. The place of Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands will be discussed as well. Chapter two elaborates more on the value of things, for which a distinction is made between heirlooms, foods and drinks and new goods. Furthermore, the value of things in the Afrikaans speaking immigrants context is illustrated and explained, after which attention will be paid to the functions of things in a network and the act of shopping. In chapter three the multiple belongings and homes of the respondents are discussed, by looking at overlapping interests and characteristics and Afrikaans spaces and places, distinguishing between everyday life and collective events. I will conclude with a discussion, suggestions for further research and the conclusion and importance of this research.
CHAPTER 1: MANY DIFFERENT ROADS TO SCHIPHOL

Reasons for migration

Most of the time, respondents do not have one big reason to leave, but many small reasons that all together make them decide to go.

The reasons all seem insignificant on their own, but become one BIG reason when you added them up. Firstly, there were the South African situation to consider. Corrupt politicians, increasing poverty and unemployment and a skyrocketing crime rate. Then there were my personal circumstances. I had no dependant other than my two dogs, I had left a great job for one that wasn’t so great, financially I could afford it, and as we move towards a global world, I thought: “I can either complain about my circumstances, or at least try to change them” (Colleen, December 2011).

After apartheid, the South African government took measures in favor of the former disadvantaged. The main measure was Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), which was designed to resolve economic disparities between the different groups in South Africa. BEE includes measures such as employment preference, skills development, and socioeconomic development. Critics state that the measure is only beneficial to a small elite (ANC affiliated) group and that race should not be the most important factor in development and employment. Besides that, BEE is said to cause a brain drain (although there are no statistics that can support this claim), which, according to many people, is a big problem South Africa is coping with (see also Ellis, 2008). Highly educated South Africans leave the country in their search for a good job. Due to the employment preference of the formerly disadvantaged, it is in their opinion harder for them to find a good job then it was before the BEE. Again, whether or not this is true in terms of statistics is uncertain, simply because there are no sufficient statistics to rely on. What is important however, is that there are a lot of Afrikaans speaking South Africans who gave up BEE as a reason to leave and as a threat for South Africa.

Nadia, for instance, came to the Netherlands in 2001 because of a job opportunity. After she finished her studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, she had a hard time finding a proper job in South Africa:
After I finished my study at UNISA (The University of South Africa) I struggled to get a proper job. And all these begin level jobs... They do not have the concept of internships. And on the jobs that were available was written AA... Affirmative Action only... If you’re not black, don’t bother to apply... So then I was free of duties for a while and friends in the Netherlands invited me to come over for a *kuier*. And while I was there I could look around for a job. Within two weeks I have had two job offers. OK, well. Then it took me a year to get the work visa and my residence permit and for the rest to be arranged... Of course, in that year I have had the perfect job in South Africa. I made films for National Geographic and Discovery. Filming in the Kalahari... A real Africa job. But when the permits came through I thought: OK, its time for a new challenge (excerpt from interview held on 13 January 2012).

Although every respondent knew someone who was affected by BEE, they had a good job themselves when they left South Africa. It was above all fear for the future of their children that made them decide to leave. Since BEE is still part of South African society, it could possibly disadvantage their children in the future. Besides that, they had the opportunity to leave, and if there is an opportunity it will make people think: Why take the risk if we can do it in a different way?

I moved here with my parents and sister when I was just 16 (dad got a good job offer here, and my folks didn't think we had much of a future in SA) I'm glad we moved although I do miss SA from time to time (Facebook, 20 December 2012).

For Dave, his children were not the reason to leave South Africa, but they are the reason for not going back. Dave fell in love with a Dutch woman and he decided to leave South Africa and live with her in the Netherlands. After a long process of getting his visa, he set foot on Dutch soil in 2001. He got a job at the American Embassy. His whole family still lives in South Africa, which makes South Africa his home he says, but he does not believe that his two sons will have a good future in South Africa. If they do not go to university, they will not be able to get a job. In the Netherlands there are many more options. His children do not go to a regular primary school, but to an international school. Dave and his wife are divorced, and Dave is thinking of leaving the Netherlands to live in the United Kingdom (UK) or Australia. In both countries live many South Africans and besides that, he fell in love with a South African woman living in the UK. He says that he has more of a connection to Australians and other people who are used to live in warm countries than he has with
the Dutch. His group of friends is diverse, existing of South Africans, Zimbabweans, Brazilians, ‘Ozzies’ and other internationals. He does not have that many Dutch friends.

People from warmer countries are much friendlier and they are not so fond of making appointments as the Dutch are. My friends hop in whenever they like and I can do the same at their place. You just go and if they are not home you’ll come back later. If they are home we’ll have some tea and we talk, just talk about nothing really. But it is good to be able to talk with friends and drink tea without making an appointment first. It is a total different culture than the Dutch culture. It took me four years to get used to the Dutch winter, and I am sure that those winters would have been much worse if there weren’t that much South Africans here (Excerpt from interview held on 17 February 2012).

Another reason to leave South Africa is the increase of crime. On top of that, crimes become more and more violent. South Africa has the most unequal income distribution of the world measured by the Gini Index,\textsuperscript{vii} which contributes towards high crime rates. In 2011, out of 98 countries, South Africa had the eighth highest homicide rate in the world. Again, while most respondents were not attacked themselves, many of them did know someone who was.

After two robberies, and an attempted high-jacking that led to removing 5 bullet holes from our car, we had enough... Also have two son's future to think about (Facebook, 20 December 2012).

The messages of the increase of ever more violent crime led to fear among my respondents. Many respondents have felt unsafe in South Africa, while waiting for the traffic lights to turn green, walking in certain streets or being home alone in the evening a day after the murder of a couple living in the same gated community. “They killed them for a laptop. A laptop! I mean... I don’t want to be part of such a society” (Interview held on February 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2012). The Netherlands is safe, but Colleen has had a very negative experience that made her question her moving to the Netherlands. She was mugged when she had been living in the Netherlands for a couple of months:

An important part of my story so far, is an event that happened in July of this year. I was walking my dogs in the Beatrix Park in Almere, where I currently live, and decided to have a bit of a rest. A blond, blue-eyed boy approached me, and the next thing I knew he was pinning me down, in the middle of a public park, demanding money. I could not believe it. Here I am, streetwise
South African, being mugged in the Netherlands. It was a traumatic experience. Not only for all of the obvious reasons, but I suddenly questioned my moving here altogether! I was running away from crime and here I am being mugged! I couldn’t tell my friends or my parents – they would see the irony immediately.

When I did eventually tell people the reassurance came from a South African friend who said: “If it happened in SA, you would have been stabbed/raped or killed too.” That unfortunately is true. Crime is everywhere, but the violent nature of crime is the problem in South Africa (Colleen’s story sent to me by email, December 2011).

Political instability is also a regularly mentioned reason to leave South Africa. Again, the instability causes fear of what might happen. Julius Malema, former leader of the ANC Youth Liga, is a big source of unrest among my respondents. Especially his speeches wherein he asks black South Africans to stand up and take over the country make them feel stirred up. He has sung the violent song ‘Kill the Boer’ on several occasions, a song that was sung during the apartheid years as well.

That is not the way to unite South Africa. He still thinks he lives in pre-1994 South Africa, in time of the struggle. Malema keeps on dividing South Africa in black and white, I still have to fill in my race [white, black, Indian, coloured, Chinese] on all sorts of forms. We are all South Africans! We have learned that it is wrong to divide a society on the base of ones skin colour. Then why is he still doing this? It is 2012, apartheid is over for almost 20 years now. We cannot move on with him or other politicians that are not able to see South Africans instead of skin colours (interview held on 12 March, 2012).

It is not just Malema who is of concern to the South Africans I spoke to. Corruption and the consequences thereof also provide a big source of frustration. The money for all sorts of projects that simply ‘disappeared’, the wrong distribution of money in a way that especially benefits ANC members, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor and the loss of credibility of South Africa are all concerns mentioned by the respondents. All together, they made people decide to leave South Africa.

Without exceptions, the participants in this research regret apartheid. People referred to apartheid as something they caused and maintained. At the very same time, a sense of unfairness is given expression to. The sentence “I know it is wrong what we did” is often followed by sentences like “but... How long do we have to suffer? What about our future? We are South Africans as well. We also have rights. We have
built up this country, the infrastructure, commerce, trade, etcetera. Why not give us some credit?"

So, were my respondents affected by post-apartheid tendencies in South Africa? To a certain extent they were. Some of my respondents had lost their jobs, being replaced by a “BEE-guy”, as one of them put it. Others had a good life in South Africa. They did not want to leave the country per se, but they got a good job offer or had other reasons to “just do it”. It did not seem as if they were really affected by post-apartheid tendencies at all. The only effects the tendencies had to some of them were fear and anger. The fear of losing one’s job and home, of being beaten up or even killed for something like a laptop and, above all, the fear that there is no future in South Africa for their children. They were also angry about the lack of progress made and the, in their opinion, unfair and unjust political statements, measures and tensions. But still, almost all of my respondents told me that they were quite happy whilst they were living in South Africa. There were also quite a lot of them that said that they wanted to go back to South Africa someday.

Maryke loves going back to South Africa. She and her family try to visit South Africa once a year. Unfortunately, it does not always work out. The costs for a holiday together with the whole family are the biggest issue. On special occasions, one member of the family goes to South Africa. For instance, when Wynand’s mother turned 70 in 2011, Wynand went to South Africa alone. When Maryke’s father was sick, Maryke went to South Africa. She would love to live in South Africa again some day:

One day I will live in South Africa again. I think at the age of retirement. It seems much better to me to retire in the South African climate. Of course it is less safe over there, but I can handle that as long as it means that I can see my family again. I miss to belong. I am here, but I do not belong here. It is the difference in the way you interact with others (excerpt from interview held on 19 February 2012).viii

So after twelve years Maryke still does not feel like she belongs in the Netherlands, because she feels that she acts differently towards people than Dutch people do. To her it is like a puzzle piece that just does not fit in perfectly. Her piece does fit in the social environment of the Afrikaans church, where like-minded people come together, most of them with comparable experiences and difficulties. The establishment of the Afrikaans church was a way to create a social environment in
which she feels at ease. I will elaborate more on this in the following chapters.

For Nadia, going back to South Africa is not an option. Despite the difficulties she had trying to fit in and understand her new environment, Nadia does not want to live in South Africa again, nor does she enjoy the country when she goes back to visit family that still lives there. She does not like the way South Africans communicate with each other. According to Nadia, it is a way of communication wherein one person is the boss and the other the servant. This became very clear to her the first time her husband (he is from Israel) accompanied her to her country of birth. When she and her husband went to buy groceries, black people kept asking if they could guard or wash their car, or bring the trolley from the shop to the car. Nadia was used to react to these questions by firmly saying nee (no), so she did. Her husband was very angry with her for her harsh response. The confrontation made clear to Nadia that people easily fall back into old habits, habits that she does not like. Some people see white South Africans who leave the country as betrayers or cowards. Nadia does not agree and explains her vision on South Africa and its inhabitants, by by using the metaphor of a frog in a pot filled with water:

If you put a frog in a pot of cold water, he is obviously happy. If you put him in a pot of boiling water he is not stupid, he jumps out! But if you put the pot of cold water on a stove and bring it slowly to a boil, the frog will jump around and he won’t be happy, but he will never jump out until he’s boiled. And this is South Africa to me, that phase of life. Everything is in decay or is getting less. Just... everything, a lot of things. The people who stay there are frogs who are jumping around in hot water. They do not realize how much they accept as being normal. Things that are not supposed to be normal. Once you left South Africa the normality around you changes, what makes you think ‘no thank you, I do not want to live behind bars, I do not want to look over my shoulder all the time, afraid that something will happen, I do not want to be scared all the time’ (excerpt from interview held on 13 January 2012).

But there are some things that she misses about South Africa. Mostly things that South Africa gave her during her youth and that she wants to give to her two daughters as well. One of those things is die buite, the open space; nature. Nadia wants her daughters to see nature. She wants to give them the chance to hunt for insects and to cover themselves with dirt. She wants to show them that luxury is a luxury and not something anyone can get anywhere. To make this possible, she and her husband bought a piece of land in Spain. Six and a half hectare of grass, trees and bushes, two hours south from Barcelona and half an hour from the coast. The only
facility they have is an internet connection. Here, their children can experience what Nadia experienced in South Africa during her youth. Besides the nature Spain gives them, the country also reminds her of something else she loves from South Africa: the ‘warm-weather-culture’, as she calls it. It is a culture the Netherlands lacks and Nadia misses it. According to Nadia, a ‘warm-weather-culture’ is a culture wherein people are hospitable, really want to help you, care for each other and feed each other. A ‘warm-weather-culture’ is a culture wherein people are warmly received like family. Nadia’s distinction between warm- and cold-weather-cultures has a lot in common with Dave’s vision on the difference between people from countries with a warm and cold climate.

**Access versus blockages of movement**

We can define the South African immigrants who cooperated in this research, in general, as an elitist group. Most of them have a good job and a good socioeconomic position in the Netherlands, just as they had a good socioeconomic position in South Africa. Most of the respondents only suffered from post-apartheid tendencies indirectly. They also had ‘motility’, as Andrucki calls it, which means that they had a diverse set of capacities that allowed them to move from South Africa to the Netherlands and make a success of it. I will elaborate more on Andrucki’s theory in this paragraph.

The questions that remain unanswered are why these people left while others decided to stay and why they chose the Netherlands as their new country of residence. Part of the answer is: because they could. Andrucki (2010) refers to this possibility as ‘motility’. ‘Motility’, in this study, has to be understood as the immanent ability to spontaneously and independently move through transnational space. Andrucki (2010) argues that “[t]ransnational motility (...) is not merely an epiphenomenon of lingering white privilege in post-apartheid South Africa, but is embedded within the white South African body through its material origins, at a variety of temporal and spatial scales, in ancestral histories of migration” (368). ‘Motility’ is thus a set of capacities and it is unevenly distributed between black and white South Africans, not just between, but also within the groups. Ancestry plays an important role in the uneven distribution. Many South Africans are eligible for Dutch or UK passports and even more of them are eligible for ancestral visas. Furthermore, “motility, as a property, can move between bodies and change scales” (Andrucki 2010: 368). South Africans
in possession of a Dutch passport have the right to move to the Netherlands and other states of the European Union (EU). They can also share this right and pass it on to officially recognized family members. This is getting harder due to stricter immigration rules in the EU. One of the most interesting points Andrucki makes, is that by being in possession of a foreign passport, people feel differently about living in South Africa: they can flee when they feel threatened. So, people redefine themselves, because they have a direct connection to another place,. The passports that give them access to other places are valued in different ways. They are valued as a way to have more chances elsewhere (mostly: in the EU), as a ticket for a way out, et cetera. Colleen shows that her choice was both practical and somewhat out of principle not to do what most South Africans do:

I chose the Netherlands for three reasons. 1) It’s not England or Australia, where most South African are immigrating to. 2) The language. Every Afrikaans speaking South African has a strange affinity to Dutch and the Netherlands. We see the Netherlands as our big sister, I suppose. We tease her funny ways, clogs, windmills and funny words, but have a deep admiration for what she has contributed to our own development. 3) My dogs. As my only dependants, they were of course part of the plan from day one. I have two Labradors (Sammy and Alex). Dogs travelling from South Africa to the Netherlands only need ‘at home’ quarantine.

I do not have any relatives living in the Netherlands to fall back on so I had to do it the hard way: Find a company that is willing to ‘sponsor’ me, apply for a work permit and hope. And I got lucky (Colleen, December 2011).

Ansie and Thomas are a great example of people who moved because they had the opportunity, not because they did not feel comfortable in South Africa:

We decided to move here to travel and see the world (so much easier and cheaper from here). To broaden the mind through the experience of living in Europe and learning other cultures. Lastly...a shot to get a red passport to open even more doors of opportunity (Facebook, 17 December 2012).

They are both in their twenties and they moved from Johannesburg to Nieuwegein in September 2011. They had always wanted to live oversees and in 2011 the opportunity was there. Ansie got a job in the Netherlands and Thomas followed her. They brought as little of their belongings as possible, because they wanted to start all over again. I first met Thomas and Ansie at a pub night for South Africans in The Hague, where they were joking about funny Dutch words and customs. They told me
that they visit many concerts of famous bands, but that they also go to Chris Chameleon concerts, a South African singer-songwriter. It is one of the things they love in the Netherlands; famous acts come to play here. The evenings they would have spend with friends in South Africa, they are now spending together at a concert, or together with fellow South Africans at a pub night. At home they listen to South African artists, but also to many international bands. Right now they are living the adventure that they wanted to live, and they profit from the advantages that the Netherlands has to offer. They are somewhat creating a place for their own, but it is less important for them to create a home than it is for most of the other respondents I spoke with. For Ansie and Thomas, their stay still has the carelessness of a long holiday.

Migration is both expensive and complex, one will need social skills and knowledge to find their way in “the labyrinth of migration politics” (interview held on 12 March, 2012).

When I started the process (by e-mailing my CV to a potential employer) I honestly didn’t expect that it would be the first step in changing my life. I was hoping of course, but I realised that my chances were slim. Coming from South Africa, a non-EU country, my future employer had to prove to the Dutch government that, not only can they not find a person in the Netherlands to fill a vacancy, but they cannot find someone in the whole of the EU! Finding a company that is willing to do this (in my line of work - media research) isn’t easy.

In August 2008 I came to the Netherlands for my job interview and I was successful! From there on things moved fast! I had a lifetime of belongings to sell, admin... I needed to locate my birth certificate?! Plane tickets to organise for my dogs, the list goes on and on 3 November 2008 I arrived with my life condensed to 2 suitcases, 2 packets of cup-of-soup and 2 teabags. The soup and teabags were the courtesy of my worried mom... (Colleen, December 2008)

Sometimes South Africans who wanted to leave South Africa already had friends and/or family living in the Netherlands. If so, they could, to some extent, rely on an already existing network to find their way in this migration labyrinth. It made the choice for the Netherlands as their new country of residence a logical one; they knew people there. Those people knew their way around in a country where some of the migrants had never set foot before. Another reason to choose the Netherlands above other countries, is that Afrikaans has a lot in common with Dutch. People
figured that it would be easy to learn Dutch and that it therefore would be possible to
fit in quite easily. A thought that has been proven wrong according to many
immigrants. “You think that you express yourself quite perfectly, but after some time
you see a wrinkle appear. Those Dutch do not say that they do not understand a word
you’re saying, but the looks on their faces speak volumes” (Conversation during a
service, 22 January 2012). Colleen also states that the language is the difficult part:

From the start my colleagues spoke Dutch to me (Het lijkt op Zuid-Afrikaans,
noch!, it is familiar to Afrikaans, isn’t it?) but Afrikaans is a simplified form of
Dutch that evolved in its own way over the past 400 years.

Looking back, I probably only really understood around 60% of what was said
to me, although I thought it was more. There are plenty of words that not only
have different meanings, but sometimes actually have opposite meanings.
Maar het komt wel goed. Ik spreek nu een beetje Nederlands – alleen kort
zinnetjes – en heb steeds last van het verleden tijd. Zoals een vriendin van me
zei: Ik spreek geen Nederlands, ik verzijn het alleen (It will be fine. I do speak
Dutch now, only short sentences, and the past tense is hard for me. Like a
friend of mine said: ‘I don’t speak Dutch, I make it up’) (Colleen, December
2011).

The language issue is one of the issues (among many others) that proves that
Andrucki’s motility theory might be true to some extent, but that it does not tell the
whole story. Move around spontaneously and independently in the Netherlands is not
as obvious for the South Africans as the motility theory might assume. A passport is
not the only thing that is needed for access to another, in this case the Dutch society.
Migration does not stop after someone moved. The process of what we call adaptation
or integration is also a big part of migration and should be taken into account in
studies on migration and access in particular. The South African immigrants feel like
they are part of the Netherlands, but at the same time they do not. Yes, they do have a
good job, pay taxes, bring their kids to Dutch schools, but do they really belong?
Some are not allowed to get a paid job, many of the migrants are not allowed to vote
and there are many more examples. It is hard to move around spontaneously and
independently if you cannot speak Dutch (yet), if your South African diploma is not
recognised, if you are blamed for and questioned on apartheid regularly, and most
importantly if you handle things differently than the Dutch and have different views
on things than the Dutch have, et cetera. People find themselves in between countries
and identities, not really fitting in.
Dave also states that the hardest things to get used to are the language as well as the Dutch mentality. At his work, he works at the American embassy, he only speaks English, he barely has Dutch friends and his children speak English when they are at his place. Because he finds it hard to connect with Dutch people, he rarely gets exposed to Dutch. It is very likely that he will move away in the not-too-distant future. Because he has collected a group of people around him among whom he feels pleasant, for him it is not of great importance to get involved in the Dutch language and customs. He created a social environment that, for the time being, is sufficient to him.

Nadia, the women who came to the Netherlands in 2001 because of a job opportunity, gives another example. She sees herself as a well-travelled person. When she was young she traveled through southern Africa with her parents, camp six weeks in Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and so on. The family went skiing in Switzerland a couple of times and she had spent a year in Canada as an au pair. Besides that, since South Africa once was a Dutch colony, Nadia figured that the cultural differences could not be that big. Now she admits that she was wrong. Especially in the very beginning, she was having a hard time trying to understand the Dutch and their manners. It was hard to make friends and when she thought she had a chance to make a friend, it turned out to become an embarrassing moment.

In South Africa you arrange with your colleagues at whose house you will braai next Friday. In Holland you can know all about your colleagues sex life, but at 5PM you go home and everything stops. Eventually I was working until 7PM with a colleague and we were sitting and chatting. He said that he really had to go home as he has to drive for one hour to get home and then he has to start making dinner. So I said, I am staying close by, can I feed you? We were having a nice conversation, can we eat together? He starts to blush heavily and says no. I thought oh no, what did I say? At that time I had a South African friend, he explained to me that my colleague must have thought that I wanted to have sex with him and that he was to embarrassed. And I thought oh come on, can we just start being friends (excerpt from interview held on 13 January 2012)?

The stories above showed some of the (unexpected) difficulties that South Africans experienced when they moved to the Netherlands. I will come back to this in the following part about the reception of South African immigrants in the Netherlands and their place in Dutch society.
South African immigrants in the Netherlands: invisible migrants?

I will elaborate more on the place of Afrikaans speaking South African immigrants in the Dutch society. I want to emphasize that a “[s]ocial position (...) is not reducible to economic resources or status or education or even any clustered set of these variables” (Bourdieu 1984: 106). Rather “a person’s place in social space (...) emerges through the habitual set of differentiations – among goods, artistic works, physical activities, occupations – that the individual can produce” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2005: 215). So I will not only look at one’s economic position, but also at his or her social life. Furthermore, in a study on South African migrants in the UK Sveinsson & Gumuschian (2008) talk about the migrants as if they are ‘invisible migrants’. They are barely noticeable, because they have good jobs, a good command of English and they do not rely on state support, nor do they cause any other problems. Although this is all true for most Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands as well, I do not think that they are that invisible. First, I will explain their institutional invisibility because of the long relationship the Netherlands has with South Africa and the lack of a good administration of migration in South Africa. Thereafter I will elaborate more on the socioeconomic positions of Afrikaans speaking South Africans and their informal contacts.

Institutional invisibility

Probably the most important reason that Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) cannot provide accurate information on the number of South Africans living in the Netherlands, is that many South Africans have both a South African and a European passport (mostly a Dutch, but also a UK or German passport), which they use to enter the Netherlands. Second, Statistics Netherlands does not make a distinction between the different groups in South Africa, which makes it impossible to see how many of the immigrants that appear in the statistics are Afrikaans speaking South Africans. Due to these reasons, we do not know how many of the immigrants actually appear in the statistics. Third, the South African administration on the migration out of South Africa is quite poor. The latest document is from 2007. The statistics provided are highly doubtful because people who leave South Africa give up other reasons for their travel, like a holiday, to get around complex migration procedures. Besides that, the reasons that are given are poorly documented.
It is thus hard to find South Africans in the Netherlands by the use of official documents and statistics alone. Therefore we might say that they are, to some extent, invisible on an institutional level. However, sometimes they become visible because of several manifestations of the fascination for South Africa that is still present in Dutch society. In April 2012, the documentary ‘Afrikaner Blood’ showed an extremist right wing survival camp east of Johannesburg. In this camp, young Afrikaner boys were schooled in right wing ideology and were trained for “war” against South African blacks. The documentary caused a lot of uproar within many groups of South Africans in the Netherlands. The documentary was not objective and failed to contextualize this right wing behavior. Many respondents felt very bad about it, they felt unheard, not understood, and above all, they felt misrepresented. It became even harder for many South Africans when their colleagues and other people addressed them, asking to explain what was going on and whether they felt the same as the head of the survival camp:

That man is out of his mind. I do not know people who think like him! He is an extremist who depicts the Rainbow Nation. It is awful! I almost cried when the third colleague came to me to ask if I think just like him. We have worked so hard to get detached from that stigma and that idiot, who should in the first place never had a stage at all, destroys that. Now I am looked at as a racist at work (Conversation at Afri-One-Can).

Another example of sudden visibility of Afrikaans speaking South Africans took place in February 2012 when the PVV, a Dutch political ‘Freedom Party’ led by Geert Wilders, made the call to support Afrikaans because it is a language that is closely related to Dutch. Martin Bosma, member of the PVV, however, was not welcome at the Afrikaans Language Council, because of the attitude of his party towards Muslims. Many Muslims in South Africa speak Afrikaans and the Afrikaans Language Council finds it very important that Afrikaans gets associated with respect and not with racism of any kind.

Although the uproar never comes from South Africans that live in the Netherlands, they feature in the news from time to time and if so, it is usually not positive. Apartheid still is a sensitive subject that keeps “popping up” in different forms. The documentary and the ‘PVV issue’ are only two examples, but there are many more. Because of this negative representation through different media, it becomes especially harder for white, Afrikaans speaking South Africans to have good
contacts with Dutch. Many respondents struggle with the prejudice of being racist and, as I will explicate more in the part on informal contacts, racism and apartheid have caused uneasy conversations and situations for many respondents. So, while we can say that South Africans are less visible than, for instance, Moroccan or Polish migrants, we cannot say that they are completely invisible, for they also carry with them some negative connotations and prejudices.

**Socioeconomic positions**

As said before, many respondents have a good life in the Netherlands. Most of them have a good socioeconomic position. They have a (university) degree, a good job, a good social network, time and money to spend on hobbies and travels, and good social skills that help them to adapt to different situations. Some of them are recruited for high-skilled jobs, others were able to apply for high-skilled jobs before they definitely moved to the Netherlands. This is only possible when one already has a degree from a South African university and has the money to travel to the Netherlands for an interview in the first place. Furthermore, someone has to be able to find suitable vacancies, write a letter and get into contact with people from certain organisations. The same goes for other things, like housing, visa and insurances. However, there are some difficulties for the respondents concerning education (for their children and themselves), housing and finding a proper job. We cannot ascribe the latter only to the current economic crisis, but it also has to do with the certification of (university) degrees from South Africa in the Netherlands.

Maarten, a single man in his forties, for instance, completed his degree in communication at the University of Pretoria, after which he worked as a manager in the banking sector. In the Netherlands he is a window cleaner and he tries to make more money by selling *biltong* and *droëwors*. According to him, it is very difficult to get into contact with Dutch people and is the Dutch society very racist. “If your Dutch is not perfect, they won’t even bother talking to you”\(^\text{xi}\) (interview 15 March 2012). I ask him why he does not work as a communication specialist: “You know, you [the Dutch] think that South African degrees are bad. Well, they are not! I tried to get my degree certificated, but it did not work, so in the Netherlands my degree does not exist”\(^\text{xii}\) (interview 15 March 2012).

Tanja also has trouble trying to get the degrees of her children ‘translated’ to the Dutch system. *Matriek*, the final year of high school in South Africa, is valued in
between the Dutch HAVO (Higher General Secondary Education) and VWO (pre-university secondary education). Both her children are still at secondary school and the transition from the South African to the Dutch schools is not easy. The children had to take extra classes and that caused delays. After a couple of months, one of Tanja’s children decided to go back to South Africa to finish her high school there. In this case the Dutch bureaucracy thus was a reason for the break-up of a family. Their Dutch passports did not help them.

Some of the respondents had a difficult time finding a house. Not just because there are many waiting lists for rental homes, but also because you will need a *sofinummer* (social security number) before you can arrange anything from housing to a phone contract:

We knew that without that number, we were nothing. You cannot do a thing, you may not do a thing and you are nothing. Sir, we would like to have a Pay as you Go package from Vodafone... Please show me your social security number. We want to get insurance for our car. Please show your social security number. We want to rent a house, want to open a bank account, we want to do anything... Please show me your social security number (letter from Kobus).

During the time you have to wait for your social security number, you cannot do anything. Different respondents live or have lived in a temporary home where they did not feel at ease. They saw it as a step that had to be taken, but they did not feel as if their lives in the Netherlands had really begun. For most of them, it felt as if their lives were placed on hold, willing to take-off, but without permission to do so. Therefore, although South Africans can be seen as an elite group of migrants in the Netherlands that does not mean that they do not encounter any problems concerning their migration.

**Informal contacts**

As referred to earlier, the reception of Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands is complex. On the hand, they are welcomed as if they are family. They speak a language that is similar to Dutch and most Dutch people see Afrikaans as a ‘cute’ or ‘nice’ language (*leuk taaltje*). The latter is not something that most South Africans want to hear, for the description given by the Dutch does have a disparaging connotation. However, saying that you speak Afrikaans does often lead to a conversation with a new compatriot. Many South Africans I spoke with have had
what some call the ‘amperbroekie conversation’. They have never heard of the word amperbroekie, a word introduced to the Dutch by a food brand in their promotion for their bobotie. Funny Afrikaans words are made up for the commercial, again emphasizing that Afrikaans is a funny language. During the ‘amperbroekie conversation’ the South Africans try to show that Afrikaans actually is a beautiful language that should be taken seriously. Afrikaans is interesting for many Dutch people, so they often want to speak to South African immigrants. In that way, speaking Afrikaans is a way to open doors in the Netherlands. For instance when South Africans try to talk to their neighbors or classmates for the very first time. A young South African in his twenties told me that he uses his Afrikaans background as a trump card. Whenever he finds it hard to start a conversation, or whenever he really would like to talk to someone he is interested in, he casually mentions his Afrikaans background. “Most of the time they do not react immediately, but after some time they will come to me and ask if I really come from South Africa. In almost all cases the second question is whether or not I speak Afrikaans. Step three consists of me telling them that the word amperbroekie does not exist”.

Because of the idea that Afrikaans speaking people can learn to speak Dutch within a couple of weeks, the mother tongue of the immigrants can also be of help in finding a job. This idea is present by both the Dutch and the South Africans. At a first sight this prejudice can only turn out positive for the South Africans, but it turns out that it can also be a burden. It is a lot harder to learn to speak Dutch than it seems on first sight and employer and employee do not always understand each other. Maybe even more because the languages have a lot in common, but some words can mean something completely different while they look the same. Since both employer and employee assumed that hat problem would belong to the past very soon, the language issue becomes a burden for the South African. He or she has to meet the requirement. For some reason people do not indicate that they do not understand what is being said. ‘Understanding the Dutch’ is a reoccurring topic among South Africans, just as ‘being understood by the Dutch’ is a reoccurring topic. Different stories in the beginning of this chapter have shown the language issues Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands encounter.

Many Dutch have visited South Africa, have heard about South Africa and/or have seen South Africa on television channels like National Geographic or Discovery Channel. The Kruger National Park, Table Mountain and of course Nelson Mandela
are known by many and therefore are great topics of conversation. For the Dutch, the knowledge they have in common with the South Africans is another reason to talk to South Africans and thus for South Africans another way to participate and integrate into Dutch society. Besides contacts with the Dutch, many South Africans are familiar with at least one ‘South African place’, differing from Facebook to Die Spens (a South African shop in Amersfoort) and the Suiderkruisgemeente. (the Afrikaans church). New members describe their reception as a “warm bath” and refer to their peers as “new family” (Conversation after a service, 12 February 2012).

However, apartheid always lures. The topic often comes up and many respondents have felt as if their Dutch conversation partner blamed them personally. Unfortunately, many people think that an Afrikaner is racist per se and they are being asked race related questions on a regular basis. The respondents place “what do you think of blacks” and “what do you think of apartheid” on top of the list of uneasy questions.

The strange thing is that you cannot say anything grey; everything has to be black and especially not white. (Laughs) What happened was terrible, but we have to be critical to what is happening now, that is not good either. Some things were good during apartheid, my housekeeper for instance says that for her it was safer then as it is now. But if I say that to a Dutch person... (Shakes her head) I’m labeled racist immediately (interview 1 March 2012).

Nadia’s dichotomy of countries with a ‘warm-weather-culture’ and countries with a ‘cold-weather-culture’ earlier in this chapter, clearly shows what the difficulties are for her. Dave said more or less the same. There are more respondents who believe in the impact the weather in ones country of origin has on people. The Netherlands is qualified by Nadia, Dave and others as a country with a ‘cold-weather-culture’ and that shows that she does not feel warmly welcomed and that she did not become part of a family. The Afrikaners see relationships in the Netherlands as less personal and cold, as most of the Dutch people live by their agendas and are only available if an appointment is made, leaving little room for a spontaneous visit.

Many of the respondents also feel like this when it comes to their new environment. Maryke, for example, lived in Pretoria and is the wife of the vicar of the only Afrikaans church in the Netherlands. When they lived in South Africa her husband first worked as a vicar for the Reformed Church in Pretoria and later he worked as an IT-specialist. She and her family moved to the Netherlands in 2000.
Four years earlier, they had come to visit the Netherlands to see if they would want to live there. They decided not to go. Especially Maryke really did not want to move, because she was very attached to both her family and her country. However, in 2000 her husband got a second offer to work in the Netherlands as an IT-specialist and they decided to give it a try. Their lives underwent a very drastic change when they moved with their three children, who were 9, 6 and 4 years old at the time. The company relocated them, i.e. they paid for the migration on the condition that they would stay for at least three years. Because of the relocation program, the family was able to bring many of their belongings with them. However, Maryke still did not like leaving her family and country and separating her children from their friends. She still feels that South African people are more friendly and jovial than Dutch people.

The basic South African thing is to be friendly, to give. This is not a given in the Netherlands. I grew up in a Christian family, and I want my children to grow up in a Christian family. I want that our children grow up with God in their life and that they are familiar with the basic Christian norms and morals. The children never made any real friends. Boys drink and smoke, the children stay away from that. It is not pleasant for my daughter to go out for the night. All my children do the things they think are right. I am very proud about that (excerpt from interview held on 19 February 2012).

A way to deal with the more formal environment is the creation of a social space wherein spontaneous visits and warm receptions are possible. The church is one example, but one can also think of the Afrikaans shop Die Spens and temporary ‘Afrikaans’ spaces like pub nights. I will elaborate more on this in the chapters hereafter.

Especially when an employer relocated a family, the members of the family without a contract with that employer had a hard time trying to belong to Dutch society. Maryke, for instance, was not allowed to work when they had just moved. She was only able to do some voluntary work, which she did at her children’s school. She became a ‘reading mom’ (leesmoeder), reading stories to her own children and their classmates and helping them when they tried to read for themselves. This way she encountered other people and learned to speak Dutch.

It is easy to hide yourself, to not speak to people, because you Dutch people are always in a hurry. You know... And to tell your children they have to ask the employee of the grocery store where the flour is. I did that for a while but I got lonely and decided to get myself together and change that” (Excerpt from interview on 19 February 2012).
So, coming from South Africa to the Netherlands has its pro’s and con’s. It seems that South African immigrants do well in Dutch society. To some extent, we can speak of them as ‘invisible immigrants’ (see also Sveinsson & Gumuschian 2008), for we barely notice them. Especially if we compare them to other migrants like Polish or Turkish migrants who often suffer from a bad name in the public opinion. Most of the Afrikaners have a (good) job, know both Dutch and South African people and other internationals in the Netherlands and seem to move quite easily in their new surroundings. A benefit of the comparative ‘capital wealth’ of South Africans, is that they are able to maintain a connection with others who migrated, with their place of origin and with others located elsewhere (see also Qureshi 2006) and they are able to support these connections with different things like heirlooms and South African food. That will be discussed in the following chapters. Migration however is never easy, neither for South Africans and they encounter problems or blockages just as other migrants, even, or maybe especially after they moved to the Netherlands. What became clear over and over again during this study is that the migrants on the one hand belong to the Netherlands, but at the other hand they do not. That is a difficult position to be in.

Despite the difficulties they experience, they are able to move relatively easily in their new surroundings because of their social, economic and also symbolic capital. It is also because of this, that they are in a position to use South African commodities in their creation of a new home. In the next chapter, the value of commodities in networks and interaction will be explained. In chapter three, an elaboration on the use of commodities in homemaking will follow. I will discuss different ways to belong and different homes, as well as the temporal nature of both belongings and homes.
CHAPTER 2: THE VALUE OF THINGS

Commodities and heirlooms

Many respondents took with them at least some personal belongings. Especially when entire families moved, as much belongings as possible were shipped to the Netherlands. People who moved without children, sometimes even alone, mostly did not bring as many belongings with them, besides clothes and some small things that meant a lot to them. It seems a logic thing to bring personal belongings, because “with the ability to make artifacts, we can fix our experience (...) and in so doing employ the material items to recall, reconstitute, and communicate our experience” (Richardson 2009: 75). In other words, bringing along personal belongings to a new place of residence, is bringing along your life history, your roots. And without that it is much harder to define who you are and where you came from. Gert and Ingrid moved to the Netherlands about six months before the interview. They had shipped much of their belongings to the Netherlands and they were happy that they had done so. It gave them hope and strength, especially in the very beginning of their stay:

Many things in this house are personal. We have brought heirlooms in particular. This table is from my mother, she is dead, but here stands mother. The closet comes from Namibia. Those things give you the courage to get going. You see, that chair is from the 1800s, I can sit down in that chair and get the courage to move on. You’re not that out of place then. And the trailer tent... The morning that trailer arrived here... Wow! We feel privileged that we could take as many things as we could. Even more than privileged. The things we brought with us really helped us, especially in the beginning. I think it is much harder when you do not have your personal belongings around you. But we should not clamp on to the past, we buy Dutch things as well and that way you compose yourself again (excerpt from interview held on 22 March 2013). XV

The moment Gert said “here stands mother”, he gently held on to the table and after he had finished his sentence, he was quiet for a bit. Gert knows that that table is not his mother, but the table is a representation of his mother, of the women who had protected him and who had cared for him. The table is a “powerful relic that retains a physical, bodily connection” (Wright 2004: 76) to his mother. Who comforted him when he felt bad, who gave him advise in times of need and who supported him. In times of uncertainty, it is good to know that your mother is close by, watching you and taking care of you, giving you the courage to move on and to make the best of your situation and your life. It exemplifies that “people respond to objects on the basis
of what those objects mean and [that] (...) the meaning of those objects arises out of the negotiated experience of social interaction” (Richardson 2009: 75) in a beautiful way. The furniture thereby becomes a way to give meaning to a new home and it helps Afrikaners to root in the Netherlands as well.

Theo and Jolandi, two other respondents, had a different reason for bringing a big part of their furniture. They said they had brought their furniture especially for their children. That way, the transition from South Africa to the Netherlands would not have as big of an impact, as it would have had if the kids would have found themselves in a completely new environment, surrounded by completely new things.

The housing has caught us, just like the weather. We do not live in a very nice home right now, but we are still on the waiting list. We are happy that we have took our own things with us. It was, especially in the beginning, very important for the children to sleep in their own beds. We brought the couch as well, and the television, books, DVDs, the curtains, kitchen utensils... We were very happy when we could get them! Because we moved to the Netherlands together with my mother, we could share a container. My uncle has a transport company in the Netherlands, he has collected and stored the container. (...) In the beginning the personal belongings were very important. It makes you feel comfortable and it helps to adapt quicker. For the children it was very important to sleep in their own beds and to play with their own toys. We have put their things on the same places as in South Africa (excerpt from interview held on 14 March 2012).xvi

Gert wanted to bring the table with him, because it was his mother’s table. Theo and Jolandi brought the furniture especially because they wanted their kids to feel comfortable. They also say that it helps them to adapt quicker. Both stories tell us that familiar furniture created a safe haven, in which people could rest a bit and get new energy to go on with the process of belonging, of fitting in and creating a place of their own.

Comfort food and cans of magic

“Like all culturally defined material substances used in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, food [and drinks] serve both to solidify group membership and to set groups apart” (Mintz & Du Bois 2002: 109). Most of the people I spoke with denied to value South African products and activities more than they value other products and activities. At the same time they referred to specific types of food, like Castle beer and biltong, and specific sports, like golf, rugby and cricket, when I asked them what they miss most. However, there was usually a moment in the conversation
wherein the respondents were carried away by the memory of a beloved South African product or activity. Like this man who started to talk to me about Castle beer. He said:

It is not that I like Castle more than Heineken, the taste, I mean. Actually Heineken tastes better than Castle. But when I can get my hands on a can of Castle and I open it is not the beer that counts. It are all those memories that come together with opening that can, it is a feeling that I do not have when I open a can of Heineken. It is home (interview, 27 March).

He wonderfully expressed that a product like Castle beer is not just beer to him. It has become a carrier of cherished memories. A trigger for the warm feeling of home, security, and familiarity: a feeling of belonging.

[A]n ethnic cuisine is associated with a geographically and/or historically defined eating community (...). But ethnicity, like nationhood, is also imagined (...) – and associated cuisines may be imagined, too. Once imagined, such cuisines provide added concreteness to the idea of national or ethnic identity (Mintz & Du Bois 2002: 109).

The concreteness provides a feeling of safety, that what you know, that what you like, it is right there, in your hand. The anecdote above gives an answer to the question why products (and to some extent activities) from South Africa are, in some cases, valued higher by immigrants than ‘non-South African’ products and activities. It triggers the feeling of being home, far away from the actual place you consider(ed) home. ‘Home’ exists within interaction and memories and cannot be understood as a static thing or place. When the man talks to people who recognize his feeling, it suddenly also becomes a shared memory. Beer and shared memories... The perfect mix for a good sense of belonging!

What the anecdote of the man and his Castle beer also shows, is that South Africans create a belonging using familiar products. Castle beer and other South African products do not only trigger the feeling of comfort and home. They are also a tool to construct and share ones identity, or as Graeber (2005) puts it: “The distinctions between different sorts of consumer goods provide a map of different sorts of human identity, and what sort of person one is in consumer society is a function of what sort of goods one has” (447). As stated before, many Afrikaans speaking South Africans feel as if they are in between countries and identities, and that they belong to the Netherlands and the Dutch only to a certain extent. On the one
hand they do, on the other hand they do not belong. When they use things that are familiar to them or ‘national cuisines’ they do not only communicate the sort of person they are to the people in their surroundings, like Dutch friends or colleagues. The used things or national cuisines also function as points of reference for the South Africans themselves in defining who they are in their new context. So by using (national) specific products or cuisines, both a belonging to their new environment, the Netherlands, is made and to fellow South Africans. Things and cuisines thus are used both as a tool to get introduced in Dutch society and as an identity marker.

Products that are mentioned a lot when I ask my respondents what they miss are *biltong*, *boerewors*, *droewors*, different sorts of chips, (mint) chocolate from Cadbury, Ricoffy (instant coffee), *beskuit*, fruits, fruitjuice, Jellytots, *brandewyn*, *mieliemeel*, and Mrs. Balls Chutney. Some of the products are made by the respondents themselves, other products are purchased when possible. “We buy South African products if we can and I bake my own *karringmelkbeskuit*. You have to get used to de different ingredients. But we enjoy Dutch food as well” (excerpt from an interview held on 14 March 2012).xvii ‘*Die Spens*, a shop in Amersfoort ‘for all your South African products in the Netherlands’, is known by all of the respondents. People go there because they want to buy South African products, but also because the owners, Hannelie en Johan, are “Suid Afrikaners soos wat Suid Afrikaners nou maar is”:

You know, I enjoy these people so much! Hannelie and Johan. And they are the stereotype Afrikaners. They are easy going. And you really get the feeling that they want to provide a service for other South Africans. Last year, after we went to South Africa, I found a thousand South African Rand in my bag. And the next time I went to *Die Spens* I asked them if they know someone who wants to buy Rands. He bought it and he gave me more money for that thousand Rand as what I would have got at the bank! They want to make an effort, they really want to help. (...) When we lived in Amstelveen, Johan delivered all kinds of South African products for our wedding. He said that he worked nearby our house, and that we just had to say it if we have an order again. That attitude of... How can they help? I love to go there with my daughters, they will always get attention. I have had a couple of times that I came home and found out that they did not charge me for all the biltong I took with me. The next time I come there I say: OK, I owe you twenty euros. And then they say that I have to proof it, but I do not have the receipt anymore. I really like them. That is, for me, the best of South Africans, that attitude of helping and doing (excerpt from interview held on 13 January 2012).xviii
So, it is not just that Hannelie and Johan are successful and loved because they are the only physical shop in the Netherlands, where you can buy all sorts of South African foods and drinks. Die Spens also represents South Africa and its cherished hospitality and the will to help others. They offer both a South African shop and living room. Being able to sometimes use South African products gives respondents strength and helps them remember the ‘old days’. The South Africans also try to replace South African products with products that they can get in the Netherlands:

OK, Milo is a luxury for me. But for chutney, specifically the Mrs. Balls, I have not found a replacement yet. You see, you can get chutney in England, but it is not the same. Especially for real Afrikaans dishes, like bobotie and ehm... Chutney mayonaise chicken, half chutney, half mayonaise on the chicken, you know... You see, you can make it differently, I have many other chicken recipes, but sometimes you just want to eat that and then there is no other... (Excerpt from interview held on 13 January 2012).

Maarten, the window cleaner from The Hague, makes his own biltong and droewors. When he gives me a bag of biltong he says: “If you eat this biltong you are in South Africa, because I use South African spices, not those cheap spices.” He just started a business to make some extra money. He gives a bag to several other guests of the pub he visits often. It is an African bar/restaurant in The Hague, where a lot of diplomats come for a drink or for dinner. Many of the guests at the bar come there regularly. Maarten does not hand out his biltong just to get customers. It is also a form of reciprocity, an expressive statement in the management of meaning (see also Mauss 1954; Sherry 1983). It is also a way to show where he comes from. Colleen, the single women who chose the Netherlands because she could bring her dogs with her easily, uses the same technique: “A dinner here is South African. I like it when people are interested. But it is not that I only eat South African food!” (Excerpt from interview held on 13 January 2012) She uses dinners to show where she comes from and to distinct herself from the average person living in the Netherlands. Gert used food to change his environment:
I miss that children kuier at our house. Dutch children just do not do that, they barely dare to laugh. In South Africa children, well people in general actually, are more spontaneous. They will give you a hug and come in and chat. (...) What will make me rich here in the Netherlands are the reactions of people who I give different fruits, to make them laugh. At my work, we have always fruits that are not big enough or whatever, to sell, which I take with me. It still tastes delicious! I give some to the neighbours, some to the little kids who walk past us... This week I was fixing the headlight of my car, when an older lady walked by with her grandson. The boy asked me what I was doing. I talked to him and gave him some grapes. The next time he walked by he came to tell me that he enjoyed the grapes, he had this little lights in his eyes. That, I think, is so wonderful! Same with the kids of the neighbours. Often I stop at their house to give them some of the fruits I brought with me. The kids know exactly when I will come and usually they run out of the house to see what exactly is in my boot. And we can chat with our neighbours now! For me, handing out fruits is a way to get to know some Dutch people. It is hard to chat with Dutch people! **(Excerpt from an interview held on 22 March 2012).**

In Gert’s case, it is not that important that the fruits he shares with others are from South Africa. What is important for Maarten, Colleen and Gert is that through food, they make a connection that they value. So it is a tool to feel at ease, just as familiar furniture. In the meaning of both familiar furniture and drinks and foods and the connections they represent, South Africans can find a home. Especially when meanings and values are shared with people who share the same sentiments, the feeling to belong and to be in the right place gets triggered. I will illustrate this process in the next chapter.

**New things**

The respondents bought Dutch furniture and other Dutch things as well. This marked the transition from South Africa to the Netherlands. As they move on, supported by their heirlooms and their meaning, the Dutch things will gain meaning as well, formed through interaction, activities and memories. A process that started at the very beginning that Gert and his son fixed their new IKEA-beds. Both trying to build up their life again and to create their own place that they can call home. Products are of interest for social scientists for what they show us, not for what they are, and the IKEA-furniture shows us both the history and the adaptability of migrants. Gert told me that:
We feel privileged that we could take our heirlooms, furniture and other things with us. I really think it is much harder to feel comfortable in the beginning when you were not able to bring that with you. But we should not cling on to the past, we buy Dutch things as well and in doing so we compose ourselves anew.

New products are bought to replace South African products. With this, we see a clear mix of South African and Dutch influences. To make fudge for instance, many South Africans use *kondensmelk* (condensed milk). It is a product you can buy in every grocery store in South Africa, but only at a couple of grocery stores in the Netherlands. Friesche Vlag, a typical Dutch company, produces condensed milk, so now, a product of a Dutch company is used in a recipe for ‘South African style’ fudge. This is true for many products, but also for things that are not for consumption.

All the respondents bought things in the Netherlands. Only some brought along (almost) all their furniture. But things get old, and when a thing is not a heirloom, it gets replaced. The longer people reside in the Netherlands, the more likely it is that things have to be replaced. Because of this, ones interior is more likely to be ‘Dutch’ if someone has lived in the Netherlands for some time. For the people who brought many things from South Africa, the process of ‘Dutchalisation’ of their homes is more gradual than it is for people who bring (almost) nothing with them. Gert literally said that he and his family compose their selves anew and he was not the only one who said that. Many respondents talked about their new homes, new furniture, photos, dishes that they liked and things they undertook as part of their new lives. Through these new things, their new lives get tangible and real. When they talk to friends or family in South Africa, they can show what their new lives and their new homes look like and what they mean to them.

‘Old’ and new things are both an identity marker and a tool for naturalisation. Things are symbol for the background of people, but also for the transition that they go through. Things represent the live of the owner(s) en help people to bond. Because of this, people feel at ease and are capable of creating a new home within the institutional framework of the Netherlands.
Value in a social context and the functions of things in a network

Value, thus, is an outcome of interactions and a ranking that emerges out of those interactions. Simmel said about value that it “is never an inherent property of objects, but is a judgment made about them by subjects” (Appadurai1986: 3). Value thus has to do with desire, the will to own something. Then, value is different in different contexts, because in different cultural and historical contexts different regimes of value exist. “[M]eanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, [and] their trajectories” (ibid.: 5). The person that uses a commodity and represents a commodity in a certain way, thus, at the same time, creates value. When I talked to some people about an Afrikaans music festival, they told me that they would not have gone to see the singers if they had performed in South Africa, but because the festival took place in the Netherlands, they did go and they actually looked forward to it. “The music is not that good, but at least we will be able to langarm dans (a sort of ballroom dancing) again and meet other Saffies (South Africans)”xxiv. For some, the event thus has more value in the Netherlands than it has in South Africa.

The value and meaning of an object, however, does not only depend on different regimes of value, but it is much more dynamic than that. The value and meaning of objects also depends heavily on the transitions the owner goes through and how the owner wants to use the things. The owner is an agent in the creation of value and meaning of a specific thing. The Castle beer from the title of this thesis, to name an example, has different roles. First, it is an identity marker. It shows that you are not Dutch and fellow South Africans or people with some knowledge about South Africa will definitely suspect or ask if the consumer of that beer is South African. Second, the beer is a tool for integration for it offers the South Africans to make use of the curiosity of the Dutch to taste this unknown beer. Third, the beer can comfort South Africans in times of need, being a carrier of memories from South Africa and a symbol for the good times they had when they still lived there. During a South African pub night, for instance, visitors that were not South African were encouraged to try South African beers and snacks. And many South Africans use South African things and products, especially food and drinks, to introduce themselves to the neighbors or to the Dutch boyfriend of their daughter.

South African things and practices seem to have more value when something special happens. This seems to be the case, for instance, when people marry or when they get children. Nadia, someone who does not want to go back and live in South
Africa again and who is very critical about her motherland, did order all sorts of South African snacks when she got married. When Dalene got pregnant, some friends organised a baby shower for her, just as they did for other friends when they still lived in South Africa. They also gave Dalene South African presents, like baby clothing with a lion and a South African flag on it and children’s books in Afrikaans. Furthermore, all sorts of festivities are good reasons for a braai. And when people return from a **kuier** in South Africa, they bring things like biltong, candy, books and clothes of a certain brand with them for their family and friends who were not that fortunate to spend some time in South Africa.

When the respondents are at work, they attach less value to South African things than they do in their free time. “When I am at work other things are more important. Like football, did Ajax or Feyenoord win? You know, that sort of things. I can talk about the last Sharks-game, but that would not be fun, because nobody at work watches rugby”\(^\text{xxv}\). Willing to ‘fit in’ also suppresses the desire for Afrikaans things. “I do not want others to think that I do not want to fit in. It is a part of my new life, to give up a bit of your own things in order to make new friends”\(^\text{xxvi}\). The above shows that things have to connect to and fit in the situation, in order to be effective. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, “the set of unifying principles” (Bourdieu 1984: xix) that gives belongings and activities a certain “social logic which derives from, while also organizing and articulating, the position which a particular group occupies in social space” (ibid.), is highly applicable in this study. South Africans make use of unifying principles to get in a wanted position in different social spaces, for instance by talking about football instead of rugby. At the same time they provide an insight into their lives through products from South Africa. Some, for example, took biltong with them to work.

My colleagues were curious. They knew I am South African and we have talked once or twice about biltong. I don’t know why exactly we did that, but they wanted to try some. So when I came back from a visit to South Africa I brought some with me to work\(^\text{xxvii}\).

So South African things have different values when they are consumed or used in different contexts and by and together with different people. South African things are thus partly set in strategically both as an identity marker and as a naturalisation or integration tool. Mostly, when a new friendship has developed more
and thus became stronger, the new friend is exposed to South African things, for instance when they visit the birthday of a South African. Chapter three elaborates more on switching between different social spaces.

Foster states that we need “[c]ritical fetishism – a heightened appreciation for the active materiality of things in motion” (2006: 286). In his opinion, commodities are essential for global connections, because reified things act as connectors in networks of production, reproduction and survival. Networks do not only exist of people, but also of non-living things like artifacts, which people gave meaning to, as showed above. The role of the nonhuman actor is the lengthening of networks, as well as the sustaining of connectivity. The commodities lengthen networks, because they bring something that is at a distance close by, namely South Africa. In this sense we do not talk about the country itself, but South Africa as their former homes, as a space inhabited by relatives, other people, things and belongings.

Many respondents have belongings, food and drinks that mark their South African roots and they undertake activities wherein these belongings, drinks and food have a place. These activities are very important in value creation and have to be taken into account, if we want to understand the place of commodities in the lives of the respondents and in networks of South Africans in the Netherlands:

“Commodities in motion engage desires and stimulate the imagination in the construction of both personhood and place. (...) Economic analysis [is] (...) more a matter of tracing a network of dispersed and disparate value-creating activities and relationships. (...) Following commodities in motion thus also leads to a politics of consumption emerging around contests over control of the knowledge intrinsic to value creation” (Foster 2006: 287).

Consumption and activities and relations closely related to overlapping consumption patterns matter, because through it we can discover how qualitative value, “value produced within a system of differences” (Foster 2006: 290), is produced. Knowledge is an important factor, because qualitative value depends on segmented knowledge of people. Only people with certain knowledge, gained through experience, will ascribe a high qualitative value to a certain commodity, like the sign that says ‘Hier waakt onze poes’. So, when people with identical or at least strongly overlapping knowledge have to value, for instance, Castle beer, they will value it higher than someone who has never heard of it and thus has no experience with, or knowledge about Castle beer. Knowledge, in this sense, thus has to be understood as
memories attached to a certain commodity, as a memory that makes a commodity dear to one. Overlapping knowledge and consumption patterns are celebrated during several activities, like pub nights, services and other gatherings, but also on Facebook. I will elaborate more on this in chapter three.

In short, commodities have two important functions in networks and in the lives of the respondents. First of all, commodities help respondents to make sense of their world. Commodities support people’s identities, because they help to memorialise where people come from and because of that, memories and attached feelings of the ‘old’ home become part of the ‘new’ home. They help to plant roots in the Netherlands and provide security. Second, commodities help to sustain connectivity and to lengthen networks. In this way, the transition from South Africa to the Netherlands is a bit easier, because people can still, to some extent, rely on already existing networks in South Africa or elsewhere and they can enter other networks easier. For instance, by buying boerewors online and getting invited for a braai the week thereafter or by using the shared interest in certain commodities to start a conversation. Especially the search for some commodities and the difficulties involved in purchasing them forges bonds.

The act of shopping: consumption and representation
Consumerism is important because this term, understood not as reduced to the economy, but allowing social significance, political relevance, and individual variability (see also Dabringer 2009: 6), puts the focus on everyday behavior and forces researchers to search for its meaning. Not just the groceries are of importance, but also the news South African immigrants ‘consume’, the plays they visit, whether or not they save money for special purposes concerning South Africa and where they save it, how they furnished their house, et cetera. Through analyzing consumption and its meaning, we will be able to better understand how South Africans identify themselves in everyday life and how their consumption contributes to their creation of a new home.

As might be clear by now, people strive to create relationships with both people and things. These relationships include “material and social routines and patterns which give order, meaning and often moral adjudication to their lives” (Miller 2008: 296). Foster argues that commodities provide “material vehicles for narrating economic change, political power, and cultural identity” (2006: 285) and
that the meaning of these things “shifts as a function of use by human agents in different situations” (ibid.), in different regimes of value. Abstract value we can only know through some kind of material form (Foster 2006). So, with consumption, people can show their cultural (or national or ethnic) identity and at the same time give meaning to their lives. The value of things, however, also changes in reaction to the transitions a person goes through. Some things become symbols of the background and the transition of people and represent the life of the owner. Many South Africans who live in the Netherlands for some years, have replaced their South African furniture they brought with them for ‘Dutch’ furniture. At the same time, they help to bind people, what in turn helps people to feel at ease. Even something small as a car sticker can bind people. “Every now and then you see someone who has a South African flag on the back of his car. We always wave and smile at them and then, when we pass and they see our car sticker, they get just as enthusiastic and wave back” (service 18 March).

Shopping is very important for the migrants in their pursuit of being at ease. Mostly, ‘shopping’ means a drive (in some cases for a couple of hours) to Die Spens or to an event where they sell South African products and things, meet other South Africans, talk a bit, get the products and drive back. It is not just shopping, it is a day out and an undertaking in which the migrants bump into other South Africans living in the Netherlands. ‘Shopping’ thus becomes a very social endeavor. After that, the products are sometimes shared on Facebook by placing a picture of them, getting much attention from other members of the ‘South Africans in the Netherlands’ page, after which the pursued snacks and drinks are often shared with friends and family.

The feeling to belong is part of the process of making sense of one’s life and with that of the process of making a new home. South Africans who took some heirlooms and other things with them, viewed these things as a place to catch breath and feel safe. Someone who did not take as much things with her, told me she misses them sometimes: “Sometimes I wish I brought my favorite chair. Or even my teddy bear from when I was a kid. Sometimes I really want to just sit and feel comfortable” (Dalene). Shopping can replace a part of that feeling, because when shopping for South African things, people meet others who speak Afrikaans, and they can share experiences and thoughts. They then go home with some of their favorite foods and other things that remind them of South Africa and that provide some comfort as well. “I love it when there are some jelly tots somewhere in the house. That candy really
makes you believe you are in South Africa” (Dalene).xxix

The way people value and give meaning to things defines, for a large part, the way in which they, in their turn, are formed through specific things. On the one hand, people define standards that things have to meet in order to be selected. When something is selected, people are actively incorporating it in their daily lives, shaping and reinterpreting it, until it is familiar enough to fit in. This process starts when people shop for things. Typical South African products are chosen by the respondents because they meet the standards the respondents have defined for products, and new things can fit in their new lives because they get actively incorporated in it. So the transition people go through is visible in their purchases.

Miller (2008) looks at the different ways in which a thing is incorporated in daily life, how it becomes reinterpreted, shaped, and how it influences the people who are actively involved in the process of giving meaning and value to that specific thing. He also looks at what things say about people, how one can unravel one’s character and background by looking closely to things, like clothing and interior. Both clothing and interior were important ‘identity markers’ for many of the respondents. Especially jerseys of one’s favorite rugby team tell a lot about the respondents. It tells us, for instance, where they come from, but for fellow South Africans it tells a lot more, like what type of person the owner of the jersey is. The latter is based on prejudices that are not always taken seriously, but that nevertheless influences the way people look at and deal with each other. One respondent, for instance, wore his Sharks jersey to church the day after the Sharks had beaten the Blue Bulls. The vicar was a great fan of the Blue Bulls, so the entrance of the man in the Sharks jersey caused some humoristic uproar. Furthermore, when the rugby world cup took place, you could see jerseys of the Springboks, the South African national team, everywhere. The jerseys of the national team are recognized by some Dutch as well. The jerseys are, therefore, not just identity markers for ‘South Africans only’, but they also serve as a naturalisation tool. One might say that people and things interact with each other, constantly influencing the other while at the same time being influenced.

The migrants make considerations to what (not) to embrace. What is it that made them decide the way they did? What do the decisions made tell us about people? How are things incorporated? By looking to the consumer behavior of the respondents with these questions in mind, it became clear that South Africans use their consumption pattern as a unifying principle; Bourdieu’s habitus, Through
consumption, the immigrants occupied different places in society. A place as a immigrant who wants to belong, and a place as a South African in the Netherlands, for consumption patterns are used both as a tool for naturalisation and as identity markers. Especially while visiting South African spaces, the migrants turn into ‘typical South Africans.’ (Chapter three elaborates more on this topic.) It is in these spaces where they shop for their South African goods. Shopping in ‘Dutch spaces’ can support their efforts to get a place in Dutch society, incorporating different things into their lives and participate in everyday situations together with the Dutch. , using a ‘Dutch’ barbecue as a South African braai, not using coal but wood, not speeding up the process but taking their time, making braaibroodtjes (‘barbecue sandwiches’) on them, et cetera. Of course, Dutch things are welcomed as well, mostly because it makes life easier, or because the respondents liked what you can make with them.

Paying attention to the variety of forms by which people make sense of their lives and the roles for consumption within these processes, can give fruitful insights to what really matters to people, as well as to the place of people in society. Objects can become central to relationships with (groups of) people and therefore, it is important not to forget to look at what is cherished, or not cherished, and why. A place as Die Spens, the South African shop in Amersfoort, offers opportunities to South African immigrants for their South African shopping. However, there are also different web shops where they can buy South African products. Furthermore, people can buy things when they visit South Africa themselves, or they can order things when they know someone who is going to South Africa. South Africans also shop for giveaways in the Netherlands to bring to South Africa. In this way, they involve people in South Africa in their new lives in the Netherlands. If they go to shop for giveaways, they look for things that represent their lives in the Netherlands and therefore, they, at that very moment, construct a Dutch self to show to the people ‘back home’.

If I buy something for people in South Africa I usually buy things that one cannot buy in South Africa and that is very handy. You can get some cool gadgets here, like that umbrella that you can use during a storm, or a clotheshorse that you can put on the door. I’ll buy licorice and stroopwafels as well of course... xxx
In her ethnography of globalisation, Wilson (2004) shows the agency of people in the process of globalisation, as well as the different ways in which something is valued. She states that people define themselves through the wide range of commodities available in a mall in Bangkok. We have to keep in mind that the specific mall in Bangkok offers many more ways to define oneself than Die Spens, the web shops and other places where you can buy South African things in the Netherlands combined, but the idea stays the same. Through consumption and through the very act of shopping, people define themselves. The community of Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands is very small. When someone wants to go to a South African grocery shop, there is only one option, although there are some other shops where you can buy some South African products. The respondents thus have to make an effort to define themselves as South Africans and to include South Africanness in their new homes. Many of my respondents went to die Spens a couple of times a year. Some people went every week, others two times a year. In any case, people looked forward to go to Die Spens to speak Afrikaans and get their old time favorites.

In short, commodities, heirlooms, consumer goods and other things are tools that Afrikaans speaking immigrants actively use to get a place in Dutch society and as identity markers. Things thus have different roles. They are a symbol for the background of people and of the transition they go through, presenting the life of its owner. Things change as a result of transitions of the owner. They also bind people, both South Africans and Dutch, and because of this the South Africans feel at ease and are able to integrate into Dutch society. Both because they can make a link with the Dutch with the use of things, and because they are able to create a safe haven with familiar things like heirlooms and other furniture, consumer goods and keepsakes from or at least connected with South Africa. In the next chapter, I will elaborate more on the multiple belongings and multiple homes the respondents have.
The South African immigrants on the one hand belong to the Dutch society and on the other hand they do not. On the one hand they are an elite; on the other hand they are not. We can say that they are in between countries and identities. “Who I am depends, to an extent, to where I am” (Carbaugh in Goldschmidt 2003: 205). This also goes for my respondents. Their identity is fragmented and depends on the context and has an open-ended, fluid and constantly (re)constructed nature. We can explain that by using, again, Bourdieu’s habitus, because this study focuses on slow learning processes; quotidian customs and habits (more about this later in this chapter). South African and Dutch quotidian customs and habits can clash, causing many different things like agitation, jokes and unity among South Africans in the Netherlands.

Who one is does not only depend on where one is, but also on who one is with, because they also define where you are. The migrants are a part of the context and partly define it. For instance, when the South Africans are at an Irish pub on a South African pub night, they are no longer just at an Irish pub. They are at a South African pub night, organized through Facebook. On the other hand, when the South Africans are among Dutch people, the topics of conversation are different and the focus is more on ‘fitting in’ then on ‘being a South African in the Netherlands.’ I will elaborate more on this further in this chapter.

When the respondents undertook activities, they created a virtual, symbolic world, which has its own system of meaning and values. Virtual worlds are not only created through religious activities, but also through, for instance, sports. What we find important stems from symbolic capital (See also van Beek 2010). Activities of all sorts, but especially festive events, create commonality. One key aspect of this dynamic process is “boundary making performed during different social situations” (Salzbrunn & Sekine 2011: 71). This process is visible when South Africans talk about ‘those crazy Dutch people and their habits’. They then clearly draw a line between themselves and Dutch people, emphasising not only the Dutch oddities, but also their own and shared ‘normalities’, habits and views on the world and thus commonalities. Gudeman (2005) explains: “Communities are held together by shared interests that constitute their base; and networks of relationships, connecting people through the base, make up communities” (95). Networks and relationships become tangible during activities. One can actually see and touch others in his or her (South
African) network and he or she can, face to face, have conversations on shared interests and memories.

South Africans who live in the Netherlands learned their social skills in South Africa. During activities together with other South Africans, these skills are acknowledged and recognised by others and thus reveal their shared heritage. Shared ideas and practices are appreciated, for they are among the factors that trigger a sense of belonging. “Value is the way our actions take on meaning or importance by becoming incorporated into something larger than ourselves” (Graeber 2005: 451). In this case, actions become important and meaningful, because they become part of the process of belonging and homemaking. Activities undertaken are the visible efforts of South Africans trying to belong. Gudeman explains it as follows:

“Through making and using the base, people affect, influence and communicate with one another, because it is a product and constituent of persons. The shared heritage lies outside the person as material resources and tools, and within as ideas and practices that are transmitted through socialisation, formal and informal teaching, and learning by doing” (2005: 102 – 103).

In this chapter, I will discuss the places of Afrikaans speaking South African migrants in the Netherlands. Common characteristics and interests serve as a ‘social glue’, but the migrants also show their diversity. I will focus on the diversity of the group first. After that I will elaborate more on outings of a general image of South Africans in the Netherlands by focusing on different and disparate places that are seen as ‘South African’: the Afrikaans church the Suiderkruisgemeente, Die Spens, and Facebook.

“Unity in diversity” abroad

Although Afrikaans speaking South Africans are generally a successful group of migrants, we should not forget the heterogeneous character of the group. The Afrikaans speaking South Africans from this research came from different social classes and they take on different social positions in the Netherlands as well. One man is a window cleaner, someone else is a dentist, some people already had a residence permit, others had not, etc. (see also chapter one). But there are other ways in which the migrants differ from each other. The place of religion, in this case Christianity, is one of them.
"Om te gee" (to give): The Suiderkruisgemeente in Leusden

‘Giving’ is an important way to establish and maintain relationships. By making links to human beings and by being part of a network, things and money are acting on our behalf. Therefore, by looking at the money and other things that members of the Afrikaans church in Leusden have given to people in South Africa, we can better understand what is actually going on. The world is, or their worlds are, connected by the provided help in the form of money and other things. Providing help helps members of the Suiderkruisgemeente to stay involved in their country of birth. It is a way to remain part of South Africa, just as it is a way for the respondents to say that South Africa is still a part of them. However, noticing the sometimes negative reactions of family and friends of the respondents, I asked if a feeling of guilt is a reason to support South Africans who are still living in South Africa. Relationships within and between groups of people who stayed and groups of people who moved can be problematic, especially when meanings of history, traditions and identity are the topic of conversation (see also Winland 2002). Feelings of insecurity, invoked by mixed reactions of friends and family concerning their migration, sometimes play a role in the providing of support to their country of birth:

We were seen as traitors, even by some of my family members. We have tried to make the best out of it in South Africa, but I just do not believe that things will work out there. Especially not for my kids, if they do not want to go to a university, they just cannot get any work. And if they are old enough to go out at night, I do not want to sit up all night, wondering if they are still all right. South Africa no longer is a country where I feel comfortable and confident.

- Is that a reason to support South Africans by giving them money or something else, to do something with that feeling of guilt?

It is a bit, yes. But I really love South Africa, we are proudly South Africans and I wish the country nothing but a good future. We have chosen to leave... We have chosen for ourselves. But we do want to help the country to grow and to be better in the future. People who stay there do not understand that, but it is really true (Excerpt from a conversation held on 26 February, 2012) xxxi.

‘Giving’ however, is broader interpreted by the members of the church than depicted above. Most respondents see giving as a way of life and a state of mind. It is the idea that giving is good and a real Afrikaner gives that I hear often during the research. Giving can mean to offer help, to be open and to welcome people warm
heartedly, “om te gee” (to give) as Maryke, the wife of the vicar said, makes her happy. She sees it as a characteristic of Afrikaners, as their duty, which they take very seriously and which they enjoy. This ‘way of life’ has helped many respondents who already knew some Afrikaners living in the Netherlands when they moved. They were offered a place to stay, food, a network and sometimes even money. Some people look forward to help the next one who decides to live overseas. They are also looking for other ways to help people and to extend their help to not just South Africans, but to all people in need.

As Englund (2002) argues, people ‘emplace’ themselves, referring to a perspective “in which the subject is inextricably situated in a historically and existentially specific condition, defined, for brevity, as a “place”. (...) [Drawing attention] to experiential and lived praxis, in line with the basic phenomenological insight that the body is our general medium for having a world” (267). The belief in God, and, more specific, the services at the Suiderkruisgemeente in Leusden, not only function as a setting for the creation of a home by Christian South Africans, but also as a symbol of an (group) identity and as a way to keep connected to South Africa in different ways. The church as a place to get together can connect different locations through ritual performances and symbolic systems. Furthermore, Christianity has always been an important identity marker for Afrikaners, the religion has played an important role in the construction of Afrikanerdom, since the arrival of van Riebeeck in 1652 onwards.

The church donates money and clothes to different people and organisations in South Africa. In that way they share their wealth and at the same time they meet requirements of living their life according to the will of God and Jesus. Religious activities imply the performance of a ritual, which evokes a sense of belonging. However, it is not so that any religious experience is successful in evoking a sense of belonging:

[Religious experiences can evoke a feeling of “authentic belonging” in the midst of a world that seems to be fragmenting. However, the degree of success in evoking such authentic feelings depends on the aesthetics of the images – that is, on the degree to which their aesthetics is indeed able to bring about a shared sensorial perception (Geschiere 2009: 34).]
The Afrikaans church connects people, and therefore it also serves as a network for Christian South Africans in the Netherlands. Especially during tea and coffee after the sermon, the visitors exchange information and new relationships start. Among the exchanged information are the names and contact details of South African specialists of all sorts, like dentists, IT-specialists, South African shop-owners, car mechanics, general practitioners and others. Many South Africans prefer to go to a South African expert, not only because they trust them more (especially dentists, general practitioners and others working in healthcare), but also because they like to help each other to earn a living. Between members of the church, appointments are made to have a cup of coffee, to go camping, to join each other in a cell group and to engage in other social activities. Besides being a place where people are brought together, it also is a place were people arrange new activities with fellow South Africans. People elaborate on the past and on their fears and hopes for the future, and they find support with their fellow South Africans. “Narratives have shown dynamics of collective identities and memories, of what the community needs to remember and what to forget, thus shaping the identity with particular symbols and motivations at different times” (Arnone 2010: 79). While chatting, ties between persons and networks are established and maintained, and a shared history and hope for the future of South Africa gets created.

Via the church, people are able to connect to South Africa and other South Africans in different ways. First of all, the services are held in Afrikaans, they use Afrikaans Bibles and sing Afrikaans Psalms and Hymns. Second, members of the church support different people and groups in South Africa, by donating money or clothes. Third, during the ‘coffee and tea’ after the service, people chat with each other in Afrikaans about all sorts of things, including the problems they encounter concerning their migration and the solutions they have found for these problems. Fourth, members of the Suiderkruisgemeente use this network to find South African specialists, like a dentist or a seller of South African products. Finally, some of the members see each other as family and act as if they are family. According to many South Africans I spoke with, this means to take care of others as if they are part of your family.

Most of the respondents had more than one family. They had their own, biological family, but also they had a ‘new family’, consisting of South Africans, Dutch and sometimes friends of other nationalities who lived in the Netherlands. The
respondents fill their new homes with both families and with that they create their lives again. Things play an important role in these relationships, or networks, for they both lengthen networks and sustain connectivity. Nadia explained to me the value of family for her:

My daughters have a niece and a nephew who are almost as old as they are. It would have been great if they were able to play together, but they live in New Zealand and there is so much difference in time. They have not even met each other, so we try to arrange their first meeting in this year. But we do not know where to go to, to my mother in Brisbane, my brother in Perth or at the house of my mother in New Zealand... In that house there is a big kitchen, so that is probably the easiest. I think it is very hard for my mother to barely see her grandchildren. She sees them two to three weeks and then she does not know when she will see them again. And she lives in an environment where other grandmothers and grandfathers babysit their grandchildren, it makes it very hard. The family of my husband lives in the Netherlands, but it is a mission to get them all together! Her birthday [points at her daughter] is in a month, and I am already saying to them that it is on a Sunday and that they are invited for coffee and cake. Half of them cannot come... My family would love to come, but they cannot. So in the end my family is a lot more in contact than his family, maybe because we live far away from each other. It takes a lot of planning to see each other so when you do you make the best of it” (Interview 13 January 2012).xxxii

A bit later, she told me that her brother’s daughter, who stayed in South Africa, was having her birthday in a few weeks. For this occasion, Nadia was baking a South African cake and she was looking for someone who would want to take it with him to South Africa. Even though Nadia and her brother live about 10,000 kilometers apart, she still tried to honour the tradition of baking a family member a traditional, South African birthday cake. Nadia used the Facebook page for South Africans in the Netherlands to get someone to take the cake with them and most of the baking products needed, she has bought at Die Spens. Thereby she used different South African ‘places’ to honour a tradition; the Facebook page and Die Spens. South African networks or places thus make it possible to maintain relations, but they also lengthen them. Die Spens provided the things she needed and via the Facebook page ‘South Africans in the Netherlands’ she found a courier for her cake. Another way Nadia sustained her long-distance relationship with family and friends, with the help of things or products, was when she asked her family and friends to all send her a square rag. After receiving them, she patched all the rags together, making them into a blanket for her daughters. She had made a blanket consisting of rags from all over the
world and, even more important, they all came from the people she loved most.

Maarten also maintains relationships using South African things and products. His family consists of friends he met in a bar in The Hague, which is frequented by a lot of South Africans. “I feel at home here, I feel as if I am in a pub in Africa.” He told me that his new family helped him when his mother died in December 2011. Maarten called the bar when he heared the news, not to ask for help, but to tell his new family that he would not come that night. They persuaded him to come anyway and came to his house to talk to him and to pick him up. Out of respect, the music was turned off when he entered the bar. In the meantime, others started to collect money for a ticket so that he could attend the funeral (interview 15 March 2012). He makes his own biltong that he gives to his family at the bar and that he sells to others: “If you eat this biltong, you are in South Africa. I use South African spices, not those cheap ones.”xxxiii And when he is at the bar, he wears his cap from the South African rugbyteam and he drinks South African beer if they have it. Thereby he makes clear where he comes from and he sustains connections. He takes care of his new family as his new family takes care of him. He does not sell his biltong to his family, he does sell it to others. The biltong serves both as an identity marker and as a tool for integration, as a tool for the making and maintaining of new relations. The fact that he does not sell it to his family underlines the special bond he has with them. He places himself within a new family and that is part of the process of homemaking.

In a letter to his family and friends back in South Africa, Gert writes how much he appreciates the Afrikaans church in Leusden, which is the only Afrikaans church in the Netherlands:

Day 2. It is Sunday, the day that we go to church. We drive to Leusen, without a hymnbook, but our harts filled with the songs we know. The reception at the church is unbelievable. We were heartly welcomed by vicar Wynand. We were told that, since we do not have our family in the Netherlands, the members of the church are our new family. Where else do you meet such warm-hearted people? Christo got himself a place of honor in church, because he and the vicar support the Blue Bulls [the rugbyteam from Pretoria]. What was the message of this morning... God follows you like a man who stalks you. You cannot get away. The time you think that God is gone, he is looking for you. It is actually scary. God follows people, also when they move from South Africa to elsewhere. We think often that God is gone, but he is not. We will drive 85 kilometers to church, every Sunday. We try to drive as less as possible during the week, so that we can afford going there, to our new family.xxxiv
My visits to the church in Leusden have always been pleasant experiences. People welcome you and, if people have not seen you there before, they introduce themselves and chat with you for a bit. The sermons are always applicable to everyday life, with a strong emphasis on ‘being a South African living in the Netherlands’. On 8 January, for instance, the vicar spoke about happiness and he frequently referred to the choice of living in the Netherlands or in South Africa. His main argument was that happiness is a by-product of living your life according to the will of God and Jesus. So, it is not significant where you live, but it is significant how you live your life. The help that God can give to His believers was, of course, a reoccurring theme. Again, problems related to migration were emphasised by the vicar, which made his preaching very personal and intimate. This is something that is highly appreciated by the members of the church I spoke with. One time, one of the members was visiting his sick father in South Africa, when, unexpectedly, the member’s mother died. When he returned to the church in the Netherlands, his ‘new family’ prayed for him and his family during the service. During and after the service, the role of the family, of taking care of each other, was again emphasised. After the prayer, a Psalm was sung that suited the situation and, again, vicar Wynand’s preach was adapted to fit current events. The vicar’s message was that if you are aware of God’s plan, the grief will not simply go away, but it will become more bearable (service on 18 March).

So, every Sunday when a service takes place, a small South African home, a place of belonging, emerges in Leusden between 10 AM and 12.30 PM. The church is a starting point for new relationships and a way to maintain existing relationships. When the immigrants come together, they celebrate being Afrikaans by talking about South African topics in Afrikaans and singing and praying in Afrikaans. Sometimes they bring melktert or other South African snacks to church to share and they give meaning to South African things through interaction. They do this, for instance, by sharing their desire for Appletizer, a drink that is popular in South Africa and that only can be purchased at Die Spens and in some English mini markets. By emphasising both desire and scarcity, the qualitative value of a product becomes higher. The product has meaning to someone, for instance because it reminds her of the yearly holiday trip to the Kruger National Park. South African places are important in this process, because, among other South Africans, who know the commodity, people’s desire is understood and, in many cases, confirmed by the
The following conversation took place between two women who were visiting the service of 15 January:

A: I am really looking forward to an Appletizer. We should go to Die Spens shortly.

B: I also like Appletizers, they always make me think of our holidays at the Kruger National Park. I did not drink it that often, but I drank it always if we went to the Kruger Park.

A: Now I am looking forward to a holiday to the Kruger National Park. And to some sun, it is too cold here.

B: If you go to South Africa for your holiday you should bring me some cream soda. And some Hunters Dry. (Laughs)

A: Lovely! If we buy some bags of biltong as well it is going to be perfect!xxxv

The women ended the conversation a bit later, because they were getting hungry and homesick. During the next service, a week later, I heard one of the women say to the other that she went to Die Spens to buy her biltong and Appletizer. As a surprise, she gave the other woman two cans of cream soda and a six-pack Hunters Dry. The desire for the products increased during the relatively short conversation the women had. The products remembered them of their holidays in South Africa. Because of this, the products got an extra meaning: they stood for the good times the women had in South Africa. The South Africans who do not know of Die Spens will hear of the shop when they visit the church. A couple of times, I heard frequent visitors of the church ask new people whether or not they had heard from Die Spens. This question was usually followed by an enthusiastic conversation, in which people were informed of the delicious products that are sold at Die Spens. People refer to the products as treats and things South Africans need when they feel homesick. The church connects people, it has an important role in the ways things are represented and consumed and it ‘advertises’ Die Spens and other places where fellow South Africans can buy South African products or have another South African experience.
Those crazy Dutch people...

Another way the South African migrants emphasize their differences is by talking about habits and customs of the Dutch they find strange, funny, or disturbing. Sometimes, agitations rise because of the “unmannered Dutch”. The Netherlands is seen by many South Africans as a country where people have little respect for others. “The first day my son went to school, he waited for the girls to go inside first. They laughed at him and the teacher was angry at him for him being so slow!”

Peoples’ choices and actions are guided by their values, the “notions of what is good or worthy and what is bad or unworthy of human life, regarding the most fundamental questions of our existence” (Blim 2005: 306). Regarding respect and the way you treat others, there are some big gaps between South African and Dutch standards, at least in the opinion of many Afrikaans speaking South Africans. It are of course not just the kids they refer to, many respondents do not like to go to a grocery store, because it happens regularly that they are “treated like a pig”. Furthermore, nearly all respondents criticise the Dutch healthcare. They refer to the general practitioners, who tell you, “unless your are about to die”, to go home, take an aspirin and go to bed for a couple of days, the general practitioners who do not even want to take you in as a new patient, the health insurances that are way to expensive and that cover way to less... It is all part of the rude society in the Netherlands. While some try to change it by talking or giving the good example (like Gert who tried to start conversations with his neighbors by giving away fruit) most respondents try to get around the problem. In any case, they do not feel comfortable about it. When they talk to each other and recognise these situations, once again, they feel like they all belong to a group of South Africans, sharing unhappiness about the unmannered Dutch society.

But the South Africans can also laugh about many things ‘the crazy Dutch’ do. There is, for instance a difference between what South Africans call sports and what the Dutch claim to be sports:

That irritates me in the Netherlands, if someone says: I am going to sport a bit. Then I ask: What sort of sport do you do? And then they say: I am going to the gym... That is not a sport! A sport, to me, is something you get better at. You know, at first you do not know what side of the hockey stick to hold and later on you can play. I am sorry, but going to the gym to step on one of those bikes that stand there... That just is not sport (Nadia, 13 January 2012).
And this is not the only thing South Africans laugh about. Especially events like South African pub nights proved to be ideal moments to talk and laugh about the Dutch and their strange habits and ideas. Again, accompanied by a beer and South African snacks. Important is the ‘linking’, “social facts that do not remain passive in the way social relations and identities are shaped” (de Bruijn & van Dijk, 2012: 11).
The pub where the pub night took place turned into a little, temporary part of South Africa and, for a moment, the Dutch were the ‘strangers’. Laughing about them together strengthened the bond between the South Africans who were present and it emphasised their ‘being South African’.

During a pub night on 29 January, 2012 in The Hague, the immigrants had a good time when they talked about things relating to language. First of all, they laughed about the ways the Dutch pronounce some English words, like hamburger, abbreviated to burger. Furthermore, English names used by the Dutch like Carola (English: Carol, pronounced by the Dutch as Kha-row-la), John (pronounced as Shon) and Vivian (pronounced as Fee-Fee-An) made the attendants laugh out loud.

They laughed even harder when they started to talk about Dutch words that are very funny for Afrikaans speaking people, like ‘tompouce’xxxviii, reminding them of ‘poes’, the Afrikaans word for ‘cunt’ and the derogatory term for female genitalia. In Dutch ‘poes’ is also a term for vagina, but it also means ‘female cat’. Reactions to this word are in general not as fierce as the reactions of South Africans. The jokes about the different meanings of a word can go both ways. When a South African says “Ek gaan jou neuk” (The Dutch will interpret this, forgive me my language, as “I am going to fuck you”), he does not mean to say in a very rude manner that he is going to have sex with someone. What he means to say is: “I am going to beat you hard”. The sentence is often said in a humorous way. Mostly it is said from one friend to another when one has made a (practical) joke and the other was the victim of that joke. I felt very uncomfortable several times, but what actually happened was simply that the shared history of Dutch and Afrikaans was visible. Afrikaans is a daughter language of Dutch and the original meaning of ‘neuken’ is ‘to beat’ or ‘to seriously disadvantage someone’. Afrikaans and Dutch thus evolved in a different way, causing some uneasy but also funny moments for both South African migrants and the Dutch who interact with them.

During the pub nights, South African immigrants can talk about their frustrations and be understood by others who probably experienced something
similar. They then know that they are not the only ones who make mistakes in their interaction with the Dutch. Secondly, things that are funny to South Africans, as described above, can be shared and be laughed about, which is not possible with most of the Dutch, because then the joke would have to be explained, what makes it less fun.

*You’re South African! Me too!*  
In this part of the chapter, the Afrikaans church *die Suiderkruisgemeente*, Die Spens and finally Facebook get discussed. The study shows that these Afrikaans places and spaces have an important function in the ways things are represented and consumed and that they are used to advertise and sell South African products. In conversations, a sense of belonging gets triggered by referencing to South Africa as the place ‘where we come from’ or ‘where we belong’. Indeed, in these places the general similarities prevail. Frosh and Baraitser (2009) said about this that “[i]dentities are constructed through (...) processes of identification and recognition, and [that] emotional investment by subjects in these processes gives identities their significance” (158). The common identities, so to speak, are not unproblematic or passively incorporated.

During the service on Sunday, March 18, 2012, the attendees start a discussion when someone mentions that South Africans might cling on to “their own club” too much:

> It is peculiar that we do not look for other South Africans when we are in South Africa. It is more likely that we slightly avoid it. But if I do my groceries at the Albert Heijn [a Dutch supermarket] and I see a South African, we talk to each other as if we lost each other and now finally found each other again. And then I do not even know him!

People nod and then Wynand says: Maryke saw a man at Walibi World in a South African jersey and she went to him and gave him a hug and a kiss.

Maryke responds by saying: Yes, and then he started to talk in a strange language. He just wore that jersey, but he was not South African! (Disappointment and laughs.) Ach, it is just something you need. I get very excited when I see someone has a sticker of a South African flag on his car. I always wave and smile at them and then, when we pass and they see our car sticker, they get just as enthusiastic and wave back.

> So, people look for common interests and characteristics and on that base, they decide that they like each other, or at least that a person is interesting enough to start a talk. I will pay close attention to some of the common characteristics and
interests that were emphasised by the respondents in interviews and conversations that were more informal. I will start with the Afrikaans language and then move on to sports, Die Spens, and finally Facebook.

Afrikaans

One of the often-mentioned indicators of identification and belonging is language. The same goes for Afrikaans speaking South Africans, or Afrikaners. One's mother tongue is thought of as an important characteristic, because language in general is “the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is constructed” (Weedon in Goldschmidt 2003: 216). The importance is especially high for Afrikaners, says Crapanzano (1986), because “taal gives the Afrikaners their identity; it is a product of their historical fight for recognition” (30). I did not find any evidence for that reason to use Afrikaans in the Netherlands. Although some respondents said that they are worried about the survival of Afrikaans, they did not mention it when I asked them why they enjoy speaking Afrikaans. The survival of Afrikaans is linked to the current political situation in South Africa and not so much to the personal situation of the respondents. People wanted to talk Afrikaans because it is lekker (nice) to talk Afrikaans every now and then and to be able to “talk without thinking about the use of the right words and grammar. In this regard, the immigrants have more of a practical look on the taal issue and less of an ideological view.

To be able to speak Afrikaans among each other is highly valued by many respondents. Nearly all respondents try to read Afrikaans books and/or news and the ones who visit the Suiderkruisgemeente often mentioned as a reason for talking Afrikaans, that they can do many things in a language different from their own, but that they cannot pray in another language than Afrikaans. Besides talking, reading and praying in Afrikaans, Afrikaans music is listened to by many South Africans and concerts of South African singers and other performances by South African artists are well attended. In this way, people stay attached to their background and country of birth and it makes it easier to talk with relatives from South Africa, because you meet them at such gatherings.

On the other hand, Afrikaans links South Africans to the Netherlands and the Dutch as well.
Every Afrikaans speaking South African has a strange affinity to Dutch and the Netherlands. We see the Netherlands as our big sister, I suppose. We tease her funny ways, clogs, windmills and funny words, but have a deep admiration for what she has contributed to our own development. (I have to note here that the language is called “Afrikaans” not “Zuid-Afrikaans” but I understand that in Dutch it can be confused with “African.” (The language, of course is the difficult part. From the start my colleagues spoke Dutch to me (Het lijkt op Zuid-Afrikaans [sic], toch! (It sounds like South African [sic], doesn’t it!)) but Afrikaans is a simplified form of Dutch that evolved in its own way over the past 400 years.

Looking back, I probably only really understood around 60% of what was said to me, although I thought it was more. There are plenty of words that not only have different meanings, but sometimes actually have opposite meanings. Maar het komt wel goed. Ik spreek nu een beetje Nederlands – alleen kort zinnetjes – en heb steeds las van het verleden tijd. Zoals een vriendin van me zei: Ik spreek geen Nederlands, ik verzin het alleen (But I will be able to speak Dutch some time. I do speak some Dutch now, only short sentences, and the past time is hard for me. Like a friend of me said: I do not speak Dutch, I just make it up) (excerpt from Chantel’s letter wherein she explains why she came to the Netherlands and how she experienced her first months in the Netherlands).

Afrikaans thus connects people. It connects South African immigrants with other immigrants, with their country of birth and the people still living there and it connects them with the Dutch. Language is thus a very important source of belonging for the Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands.

**Sports**

The sports mostly missed by my respondents are rugby, cricket and golf. It is hard to catch the games on Dutch television, and it is even harder to speak with Dutch people about these sports, especially when it comes to rugby and cricket. Among South Africans, rugby, cricket and golf are beloved topics of conversation and jokes and are reasons to meet and watch or play together. Sports bring people together in different ways.

It is argued that sports have a lot in common with religious activities:

If sport can bring its advocates to an experience of the ultimate, and this (pursuit of) experience is expressed through a formal series of public and private rituals requiring a symbolic language and space deemed sacred by its worshippers, then it is both proper and necessary to call sport itself a religion. It is also reasonable to consider sport the newest and fastest growing religion, far outdistancing whatever is in second place (Prebisch 1993: 74).
Just as religious experiences, it is hard to understand sports if you are not a ‘believer’ and have not had the experiences yourself. Sport experiences are experiences that people have together and does not just exist out of the celebration of scored points, but also out of the experiences a fan goes through when he or she meets other fans, or fans of other clubs. The jokes that are made of the losing team (often by the winning team) are as much a part of the sport experience as the try that made the Sharks win against the Blue Bulls. Besides that, sports have a strong connection to the consumption of products like beer and biltong. “A good game, you watch with friends, Castle and biltong” and a game is often followed by a braai. Most Dutch are no ‘believers’ of rugby and cricket, as the matter of fact, most Dutch do not even know the rules.

It makes no sense to talk about rugby or cricket with my Dutch colleagues. What will happen then is that I try to explain where the games are about, I will have to defend cricket because the Dutch see it as a stupid and simplistic game. They think all you have to do is run back and forth. And they think about rugby that is is like American football, while rugby is much more pure and tactical. I don’t like that sort of conversation\textsuperscript{31} (Focus group, 12 February 2012).

Sports are also a way to meet other people. Many South Africans in the Netherlands look for a sportclub nearby. There are few South Africans who think that going to the gym gives one the right to say that he or she practices sports. This might be because, in South Africa, sports seems to be more interwoven with everyday life, beginning with the education of kids. In South Africa, sports are an important part of the educational system.

In South Africa you have school sports. From eight in the morning until two in the afternoon you have regular classes, and from half past two until half past three or so you are having school sports. For instance, on Mondays and Tuesdays its tennis, and Wednesday and Thursday its hocky. It depends on the season. Or athletics, swimming, or... And the schools organise tournaments in athletics, swimming and other sports. And your geography teacher is your tennis-instructor as well, and the hocky-instructor teaches you Afrikaans. Remember, cultural things like playing chess, is a part of schools. The chessclub meets every break in the class of that teacher. While here [in the Netherlands], yes you do have a gymclass and you are practicing different sports during the gymclass, but it is not as organised as in South Africa. If you want to let your child play hockey, you have to go to a club that is not attached to a school. This is one of the things of which I do not know if I can give to
my children what I have had in my youth (excerpt from interview held on 13 January, 2012).

Through sports, one can make new friends and maintain already existing relationships by playing together, watch sports together, or talk about sports together. During the rugby World Cup, people with South African jerseys got together and celebrated every single point of their ‘Bokke’, the national team, as a group, just as every loss was mourned together. During the World Cup, the Australian pub in Leiden, where I watched the games, was suddenly full of the green and golden jerseys. One could hear Afrikaans everywhere. Beer was ordered at 7AM (the world cup was played in New Zealand), because “without it, it is not rugby”. It is clear that sports connect people in different ways.

Die Spens
A shop like ‘Die Spens’ facilitates the access to South African products. At the same time, it is an environment that actually makes respondents feel like they are in South Africa, or in some sort of a South African living room. The room is full of South African products, the smell of biltong and droewors is omnipresent just as the Afrikaans music. Ghost Pop chips are offered as a snack and visitors hear Afrikaans conversations in the shop. ‘Die Spens’ provides a clear example of the respondents’ efforts to create small ‘South African spaces’ within the Dutch environment. Richardson (2009) states that:

If material culture is the physical expression of the world in which we are, then defining the situation means how people incorporate material culture into the situation they are creating so that they bring about unity between the situation and the material setting. When this is accomplished, one may say that the situation has been placed; it has achieved material existence (76).

Die Spens is the material existence of a miniature South Africa. At first, I spent one Saturday at Die Spens, after which I sometimes went back to buy some things and to see how things went. As I wrote in the introduction, on the first day I was there, 74 transactions took place. I do not know the exact average amount of money spent, but most of the customers bought enough things to last them a few weeks, as many of them had to drive pretty far. But some people are willing to make a
big effort for less. One group of young men drove almost 2.5 hours to get a crate of Black Label beer. They decided to take some chips with them as well. It shows how much products can mean to people and how much people are willing to undertake to get their hands on something simple like a crate of beer.

Most customers spoke Afrikaans and many of them were known by the owners of Die Spens. In the morning, to get an idea of what the popular products and topics of conversation were, I observed more than I interacted and participated. Later on I tried to engage in conversation a bit more, which was quite easy. The owners had a table with some chairs around it and they had made a chocolate cake. I offered the cake to customers, so that they would sit down and take some time to talk to me. Some of the customers came at Die Spens at least once a month, but most of them came less often.

When people enter the shop, many of them become very enthusiastic, saying things like: “Oh my! Ghost Pops! I have not eaten those for months!”, or: “Do you smell that biltong?” According to the owners, especially au-pairs cannot hide their excitement when they enter the shop. Most of the time, they come with a small group and they scream to each other about what they have found, how much they have missed it and what things they are going to buy. The owners are happy that they can offer a service to South Africans in the Netherlands. It is not just about the products people can buy, the owners say, but it is also about the memories that are triggered when people enter the shop. People often buy things because they miss South Africa, or because they want to celebrate something. South African products thus provide comfort and they “make a celebration even better”, as one of the customers said to me. Consuming South African products is a special occasion for many of the customers I spoke with. They see it as a treat and as a way to bring the family together. This way, the sense of home is triggered, especially because the consumption takes place, for instance, while watching a rugby game. The products thus become part of a South African experience that is cherished by the customers.

Facebook: ‘South Africans in the Netherlands!!’

Contemporary relationships are characterised by increased contact between migrants and their friends and family back in South Africa, but also by increased contact between migrants in the Netherlands and sometimes even between migrants in the Netherlands and in the rest of the world. They can and do participate in each other’s
lives in ways that were not possible some decades ago (see also Winland 2002). People do not only communicate through language, as with Skype, e-mail, and WhatsApp, but they also communicate through material things, as was shown in chapter two of this thesis. “[H]umans are connected or social beings who build and destroy relationships, and who communicate by language and material things. To be human means being a person socially constructed in mentality, communication and relationships with others” (Gudeman 2005: 94). In other words, through interaction, people become the persons they are. South African migrants do not maintain communication with everyone they knew back in South Africa. Some relationships grow stronger, while others become less intense or even stop to exist altogether.

The contacts I still have in South Africa I maintain via Facebook. Most of them are my friends of school. A friend of mine who stays in Australia at the moment... We were not very good friends at school but years later she was pregnant at the same time as I was and her baby was born three days before my oldest daughter was born. And another school friend’s daughter is born three days before my second daughter was born. You are getting back in contact again because you have children of the same age, not because we are both South Africans. You make new connections with old relations. (Nadia, 13 January 2012).

Sometimes migrants have difficult relationships with friends and family in South Africa. The migrants are sometimes seen as betrayers, as people who chose to turn their backs on South Africa and, maybe even more important, turn their backs on the minority of whites still living there. Among migrants, this is less of a problem, since they all moved from South Africa to elsewhere. For most of the respondents, it was a hard decision to leave South Africa. All of the respondents I spoke with do, at least to some extent, love South Africa and the life they have had there. For them, it is good to be connected to others who have been through the process of migration and who know how hard it is to start a new life in a foreign country. They find it pleasant to talk with them about life, difficulties, memorable moments and lovely places in South Africa, especially if people can talk in their mother tongue. All the migrants chose to leave, what serves as a commonality between people, and with that, their decision serves as a ‘social glue’.

Clearly, South Africans in the Netherlands share their place of residence, or actually places of residence: South Africa as the former, the Netherlands as the current place of residence. What many of the respondents share as well, are practices.
Many of these practices are arranged and communicated through the Facebook page ‘South Africans in the Netherlands!!’. Gudeman (2005) states that “[c]ommunity identity is made up of connections forged through shared practices and conceptions, such as kinship, friendship and residence” (103). I have shown that ‘relationships’ do not necessarily have to exist over a long period of time before they can help define a person’s identity and before they can help people to feel at home. Even if people do not know each other, it can help to define ones identity as ‘South African’, as long as they can find, or even suspect shared interests, or shared memories.

It became clear that the use of the Facebook page is not non-committal, rules do exist. Some people, for instance, thought that there were those who only wanted to take advantage of the page ‘South Africans in the Netherlands!!’. “Some people only want to make money out of this page, and do not participate in any other way” (post on Facebook-page on 12 April 2012). This was written by someone alluding to some people who tried to sell their (South African) products through the specific Facebook page. After this, the purpose of the group is officially established:

Once again we unite in a different country!!! It's not always easy... but we were raised in South Africa... so we can handle almost everything... if not everything, right?!?!:D

The purpose of this group is summarized as the following:

1. Informing each other about social events (e.g. camping weekends, pub nights and individual get-together hosted by fellow South Africans)
2. Advertising of South African products or services available in the Netherlands (without it becoming SPAM, please use your own judgement as guidance. Overabundance of repetitive posts will be deleted)
3. Company and business support - linking South Africans with Dutch businesses or visa versa.
4. To ask questions regarding life in the Netherlands the do’s and don'ts and to give relevant and educated advice and support when asked for.

Political and religious views will be deleted. There are enough groups out there on Facebook for those...

Some notes have to be made on an ethnography based on online activities. The most important remark is that we have learned from different specific case studies that “offline social roles and existing cultural ideologies are played out, and sometimes exaggerated, in online communication” (Wilson & Peterson 2002: 456). In this research I have encountered some exaggerated ideologies as well. Not surprisingly
seeing the summarized purpose of the group. Main purpose of the page is connecting South Africans by either informing each other about South African social events and by the advertisement of South African products. The focus on ‘being South African’ and ‘doing and purchasing South African things’ is sort of anchored in the purpose of the group. We have to acknowledge that “individuals within any community are simultaneously part of other interacting communities, societies or cultures” (Wilson & Peterson 2002: 455). The South Africans in the Netherlands thus can have multiple identities and negotiated roles, depending on the social context they are in. This does not say that we should separate a ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ or ‘virtual’ community, since “an anthropological approach is well suited to investigate the continuum of communities, identities and networks that exist” (ibid.: 456). Many informants, for instance, pointed out themselves that they only used ‘South Africans in the Netherlands!!’ for specific purposes like retrieving information on visa issues, to get to know where to buy a product like kondensmelk (condensed milk), or to get informed on the cricket game of the Proteas (the South African national team) in the Netherlands. Others told that they exaggerate on purpose, to trigger others to react. During my fieldwork, I could not talk to every single person that posted something on Facebook. I have, however, talked to some of them and besides that I have followed the page for over a year (from December 2011 until now, June 2013) and was thus able to see what people post and when. It has happened that someone who was always polite suddenly and unexpectedly posted something harsh. Later on she indeed reacted by saying that all she wanted was a serious discussion on the topic, and that her view on the topic was way more nuanced as she showed first. So although you are never 100 percent sure, you can get to know frequent users of the Facebook page through their ‘post history’.

I will give some examples to illustrate the functions of the Facebook page ‘South Africans in the Netherlands!!’. The first example is that of the page as a platform for discussion and with that, it is a platform where people can determine their position as a South African migrant in the Netherlands. In December 2012, a sometimes fierce discussion started, when someone stated that she chose to have only a Dutch passport and that she was willing to give up her South African passport:
Hey people, I have signed the documents and applied for a Dutch nationality. My parents also said that there is nothing left in South Africa for me to return, so I decided to give up my nationality and to become Dutch. Whoohoo! Paid €798, now all I have to do is wait for 3 – 9 months.

Some of the reactions:
That is probably the best decision you have made. Elsie did it as well. You do not lose the right to go live in South Africa again since you are an ex South African citizen.

This is a sensitive topic. I have both nationalities, but I am not Dutch. I am neither South African. I am human. We are all human. We do what is good for us and we have our own reasons to do what we do.

It is a pity you feel that you are neither Dutch nor South African! I am born in South Africa, I went to school there and I grew up there. My parents grew up in the Netherlands, so my family is Dutch, but if I am with them I definitely do not feel as if I am Dutch (although my Dutch is perfect). If the situation in South Africa was not so bad for me, I would have still lived there. The Immigration and Naturalisation Service thinks that I am no longer Dutch because I forgot to apply for a new Dutch passport on time when I still lived in South Africa. What do you think of that?? If my residence permit gets rejected I will be deported while I am actually Dutch, but the Netherlands does not accept me anymore. I feel betrayed!!

So are you Dutch or South African? In my humble opinion, one of the many differences between South Africans and Dutch people is being perfectly highlighted in this discussion: Dutch people like to debate and say what they feel while South Africans tend to be more easily offended by opposing views. Hans is well ‘ingeburgerd’ [naturalized], Willemien and some others less so.

Ken, I was born and raised in South Africa. I have 2 passports. My DNA is Dutch and South Africa. So what am I?? Am I South African or Dutch? Or am I just human, trying to make the best of my life. Taking the good from both cultures, learning from the bad and figuring out what works for me?

You know, it is not the case that I want to get rid of my South African citizenship as soon as possible. But I do have two children. Do you know the difference in school fees for autochthonous kids and immigrants? € 4000 to €5000. I am a single mom and I do not get any help from nobody. My kids also have better chances with a Dutch nationality. That is why I get so angry if people give their opinions while nobody asked for it.

I had to choose between my South African and a Dutch passport in 2000. There were no possibilities for two nationalities back then. I chose the Dutch passport just because it is easier. If I ever decide to go back I can get a permanent residence because both my parents are South African. So I do not have to proof on paper where I come from, they will hear it from my accent.
As you can see, many different views on the issue of nationality are given, both positive and negative. Furthermore we can see a difference in practical and moral views. Some South Africans emphasize the practical side of having a Dutch and/or South African passport and others emphasize the moral side of it. They connect ‘identity’ to a passport and state that it is good or bad to ‘give up’ or even ‘throw away’ ones South African identity. Others do talk about ‘identity’, but they say that ones “travel document has little to do with who [one is]”. The topic, however, gave rise to a discussion about belonging and loyalty to South Africa. The Facebook page is in this regard a platform where South Africans can discuss topics concerning their move from South Africa to the Netherlands.

The page also serves as a place for information exchange about many practical matters and also about other South Africans in the Netherlands. Again, the questions mostly have something to do with moving from South Africa to Netherlands, other travels and other South Africans who stay in the Netherlands. This South African woman wants to know more about moving furniture from South Africa to the Netherlands:

The original post:
Does anyone know of a trustworthy container that I can rent, from South Africa to the Netherlands? It can’t be too expensive. I still have some furniture in South Africa that I want to ship to the Netherlands. Or maybe there is someone who wants to share a container?

Someone responded by saying that it cost her R 8000 four years ago and asks why she does not buy new things in the Netherlands.

No, I want to ship some furniture and closets that I inherited from my grandmother. Sentimental value.

Visas are also reoccurring topics of conversation. Rules and regulations are often unclear, the complicated rules are a blockage in itself, holding back South Africans to travel because they do not know what they can and cannot do. Since (nearly) every member of the Facebook page has some experience with this complicated matter, the page is a sort of ‘expert board’ where people who are less experienced can ask their questions and overcome the blockage.
The original post:
Hey all! I'll be going out of the EU for the first time this coming holiday since I moved here to NL. When I come back into the EU though, do I just show my Dutch Residence card along with my ZA passport? The visas in my passport itself are of course no longer valid since I received the residence card. I don't want to be stuck outside on the boarders on the way back home :P

Some of the reactions:
Yes, just show your Dutch ID and passport.

Thanks, I also had that question, hoped those immigration people in RSA understand that!

Yup you're all good to go with ID and Passport. As a matter of interest I came in from India this morning with ID and Passport and no problems whatsoever.

How does one obtain a Dutch residence card?

Dutch Residence Card = verblijfsvergunning (pass)

Sometimes easier questions are asked as well. This woman is curious about the reasons of other South Africans to come to the Netherlands:

The original post:
We all moved here for different reasons, some of us permanently… What made you decide to move here? And remember, all reasons are valid, because it is your reason ;)

Some of the reactions:
A short South African girl with, at the time, red hair and a few freckles…

Ehmmmm, I had no choice really, really bad marriage set up and no-where else to go!

Love

Cheese, ........ and a bokkie [girlfriend]

Could not find a job in SA, came here on holiday, within 2 weeks had 3 job offers…

Career opportunity for hubby and myself

I love windmills!

The page is also used as a tool to promote all sorts of events, among them was this Afrikaans music party. The invite says: Afrikaans Music fest on 25 January in
Amsterdam. Make sure you are at the first Afrikaans Music fest on 25 January 2013:

The page shows the meaning of South African products for the South African immigrants. Many people post a picture or a status update about their visit to Die Spens. Just as in the church details are given (and asked) about the shop. The desire for products is shared in the comments as we can see in these reactions on a picture without text:

The posted picture:

Some of the reactions:
Awhhh yummy, I want that cream soda…!!

Me tooooooo!!!!!!!!!!!!

Can someone tell me the opening hours of Die Spens?

Friday 5pm to 8 pm. Saturday 10am to 4pm.

Thanks. I think I will order online and ask if they can deliver.

Does Die Spens do deliveries????

Yes they do.

I wanted to go yesterday, but the Euros disappear quickly… But still, what is
Christmas without a bit of soul food. I might go anyway…

Just take a look at diepens.eu, you can order there.

Also, inter-group trade relationships are maintained. People can order things like boerewors, fudge or biltong via Facebook.

An advert for a place where people can order boerewors.

An advert for a webshop for South African fudge. The seller says: For all my fans of fudge who cannot stop by my house for free fudge, this is the webshop where you can order.
And finally, above the advertisement where people can order boerewors, hamburgers, biltong and droëwors. The web shop at www.boerewors.nl is probably the best known webshop for ‘South African meat’ and the owner attends many events where he sells his meat as well. The advert says: ‘What started as a hobby is now a place where former South Africans, Namibians, Zimbabweans, English and also Dutch can order their boerewors, hamburgers, biltong, and droëwors.’ There are more initiatives where people can buy South African food and things, the above are the most posted advertisements. The page is an important market for South African entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs who sell South African products. At the moment the page has 1234 members (June 2013).

And of course, as on the most Facebook pages, everyday practices and funny pictures and movies are shared on the page. However, the emphasis on the ‘South Africans in the Netherlands!!’ page is on all sorts of South African culture and consumption, like this short movie by Leon Schuster, a South African comedian, and the ‘found’ Castle beer by a Dutch pub.
Reactions to the latter picture:
Oooohhh, Castle!

Yummymmmmmm...

Facebook and other social media have the ability to either break down or construct senses of place and distance. The specific medium allows space for discussion, questions and inter-group trade relationships. It serves as a trans-boundary communicative space “where information and meanings are exchanged, debated, played with and performed” (Qureshi 2006: 219). Because the South Africans exchange information, the networks and especially the Facebook page, enable South Africans to root in the Dutch context. People are able to ask questions and they are informed on events that are going to take place. This does not concern just the South African events, but also typical Dutch events like the Nieuwjaarsduik, which takes place on 1 January, at which many people run into the North sea after to celebrate the new year. The Facebook page informs South Africans on this event and enables them to go see it or even participate in it together. The Facebook page also provides room to question ones position in both South Africa and the Netherlands.

*The best of both worlds: ‘mixing cultures’*

Only through practices of people that use spaces can spaces become meaningful. Meanings attached to places are open and South African immigrants make a variety of places, to which they become attached to as part of their identity as a South African and as South African living in the Netherlands. This shows us that if the Afrikaans speaking South African migrants hold on to some of their sentiments it is not automatically true that they refuse to integrate into Dutch society. It shows us that they can attach different meanings to different places, to which their identity is attached. This way they can function in both a Dutch and a South African environment. As Gray (2009) puts it: “Space is a situational context constructed by
and for human action, and places are centres of human significance and emotional attachment” (228). As people are living somewhere, the place where they live gets gradually filled with “a history of events and ownership into the landscape. (...) [P]laces act as means of shaping conceptions and producing experiences of self and identity” (Gray 2009: 227). Respondents themselves were not able to say whether they were more attached to South Africa or the Netherlands:

Am I Dutch or South African? I don’t know. I still love going back to SA – as a tourist, I still criticise some Dutch ways (there are actually a few things that is dealt with better in SA than in the Netherlands), but I fill up my own petrol tank and pay my hondenbelasting. On Koninginnedag, I wear my orange t-shirt proudly, and I’m still hoping Sinterklaas will take me to Spain (excerpt from a letter written by a South African migrant).

Others do not want to say goodbye to South Africa (yet):

I still have some things in South Africa. An investment fund, a bank account, a cell phone... I am watching the exchange rate a bit... Actually I am not ready to cut all the bonds I have with South Africa (Interview 13 January 2012).

We have seen that, within a big and surrounding Dutch environment, Afrikaans speaking South Africans create their own home and within that process, they create small South African spaces with the help of South African things and other South Africans, based on different (imagined) shared interests and characteristics, or belongings. The meaning of things are, at the same time, defined and discussed within the different contexts, be it at home among friends and family or on the internet. The respondents thus live in multiple contexts, or realities, that all have their own regimes of value. Richardson (2009) describes it as follows:

[C]ultures are composed of multiple realities, counterposed against one another like semantic domains and, through this juxtaposition, defining each other. The pattern that results from these juxtapositions, the culture, would appear to be in no sense a fixed entity (...) but a pattern whose very existence shifts with each new arrangement among the social realities that compose it (88).
So without others, a South African, or maybe Afrikaner culture cannot exist in the Netherlands. The flexible entities that cultures are, are communicated by the use of things that represent them. By the use of things that are recognised by fellow South Africans, as well as by the use of recognised practices, the Afrikaans speaking South Africans define themselves over and over again, adapting to the social realities they find themselves in. Furthermore, by using South African things, they also introduce themselves into new social realities. The things and practices that are used are not uncontested, as we have seen in this thesis. The value of the products, or commodities, is contested by the South Africans themselves, not knowing who they are exactly. South African? Dutch? An Afrikaans migrant in the Netherlands? Value is also contested among South Africans in the Netherlands, between South Africans in the Netherlands and South Africans in South Africa and by the people in the new social reality of the South Africans; the Dutch. To whom do the migrants belong? Do they belong to one of the groups, to none of them or to all of them? And do they belong 100 percent? The different ‘belongings’, as well as the South African places that are discussed in this chapter, are important for the South Africans in the process of making a home. The belongings are the things that are contested and defined. The different South African places are the places where these things are contested. Things or commodities symbolize the background of the South Africans in the Netherlands and the transition they go through. The things or commodities represent the life of their owner(s) and help them to get root in Dutch society and to stay in contact with South Africa and other South Africans. Because of this, things or commodities are tools for the Afrikaners to feel at ease in the Netherlands, helping them to create a new home within the Dutch institutional framework. In this process the Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands create multiple belongings and multiple homes, depending on the social reality they are in.
CONCLUSION

In general we can say that Afrikaans speaking South Africans are a successful group of migrants. But this does not say that migration is easy for them or that we can speak of an homogenous group. The group consists of people out of different social classes and with different backgrounds and stories. Blockages exist for all the migrants during, but also after migration and for some there are more blockages than for others. Moving around spontaneously and independently in the Netherlands is not as obvious for the South Africans as Andrucki’s motility theory assumes. A passport is not the only thing the migrants need; there are many other things that can hinder their motility. The differences in access ‘on paper’ (according to laws and regulations) and ‘in practice’ contribute to the already existing feeling of being in between countries in identities. Having a home where they feel at ease and where they can catch a breath is then very important to the Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands.

Afrikaans speaking South Africans have found several ways to make use of things, activities and networks in their efforts to feel at ease. Networks are, above all, used for the communication of a South African or maybe Afrikaner culture in the Netherlands. The flexible entities that cultures are, are communicated by the use of things that represent them. Things symbolise the backgrounds of the immigrants, but also the changes they went through. The value of a thing or activity can change because of the transitions of its owner and represents (part of) the life of the owner. Furthermore, the value of things changes depending on the context. When the South Africans are at work, South African things are not as important as when they are among other South Africans. For instance at a South African pub night, at the Afrikaans church or at the Facebook page where the ‘South Africanness’ of the migrants is emphasised and sometimes even exaggerated.

The immigrants use things, activities and networks to maintain relations as well as to start new relations with Dutch, South Africans or other people in the Netherlands. South African things and the (consumption of) South African products, hereby play important roles. The South Africans create their new homes by using them as an ‘integration tool’; sharing products labelled as ‘South African’, like Castle beer, with people in their surroundings. The Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the Netherlands also use them as identity markers or as sources of solace and comfort. Because of the many roles things play, the South African migrants’ home is their Castle.
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In this part of the thesis, I will refer to whites, blacks and coloureds because these are the terms used most in the segregation-and apartheid-years and by historians and other scientists who published on this topic.

Soos my broer vind ons is verraaiers en ons het die land in die steek gelaat in sy uur van nood. Hoekom het ons nou ons talente gevat en buiteland toe gegaan.

- Brain drain.

Ja. Maar dis vir my so eenvoudig. Op die moment wat ek Suid Afrika nodig gehad het, het Suid Afrika my nie nodig gehad nie. Daar is baie dinge van hoe ek groot geword geword het en so aan, wat ek so graag vir my kinders ook wil gee. Maar dit is Suid Afrika van 20, 30 jaar gelede. Dis nie meer die Suid Afrika van nou nie. So jy kan dit nie nou vir hulle gee nie. Kamp op die strand. Ry op die strand op en gaan kamp op die eerste ry duine, twee weke lank. There is no way... Selfs toe ek kind was was die einde al in sig. So ons doen wat ons kan. Ek sal nie sê ons maak ons eie stuk Suid Afrika in Nederland nie, maar byvoorbeeld daai gekamp in Spanje is vir my so naby aan daai soort van buitelewe as wat ek vir hulle kan gee. Maar in veiligheid (excerpt from interview held on January 13th, 2012).

iii

Ek mis om te hoort.

iv

See also www.diespens.eu

Biltong is vir my nog altyd een van die beste etes op die wêreld, maar eindlik eet ik dit net as ek in Suid Afrika is. Hieros eet ek julle Groninger metworst, maak maar soos julle en dit is vir my baie lekker. Ek hoef nie elke week of maand biltong te hê nie.

vi

Toe ek klaar was en by UNISA had ek nog voltyds gewerk, toe ek klaar was toe sukkel ik nou om 'n proper job te kry. En al die begin level jobs... Hulle het mos nie die stage konsep nie, maar hulle het die trainee level jobs. Nou op al die jobs staan AA... Affirmative Action only... If you’re not black don’t bother apply... So toe het ek 'n tyd niks te doen gehad nie en pelle in Nederland het toen gesê dan kan ek maar kom kuier so’n bietjie. En terwyl jy hier is kyk ‘n bietjie rond. En binne twee weke het ek drie werksoortings gehad. OK, goed. Toe kos dit ‘n jaar vir die werksoortings en verblyfsoortings en alles om gereël te word... In die tyd het ek natuurlik die perfekte job in Suid Afrika gekry. Films gemaak vir National Geographic en Discovery. Film in die Kalahari... So’n Afrika job. Maar toen die permitte deurkwam toen dog ek: OK, tyd vir ‘n nuwe uitdaging.

vii

Source: Euromonitor International from national statistics. The Gini Index is the standard economic measure of income inequality varying between 0% (perfect equality) and 100% (perfect inequality).

viii

Ek mis om te hoort. Ek is hier, maar ek hoort hier nie. Dit is net ‘n verskil in hoe jy optree teen ander mense.

ix

As jy ‘n padda in ‘n pot koue water sit, dan is hy obviously happy. As jy hom in ‘n pot kookwater set dan is hy nie dom nie, hy spring uit! Maar sit daai pot koue water op die stoof en laat dit langsaa kook, hy spring rond, hy’s nie gelukkig nie, maar hy sal nooit uitspring tot hy gekook is. En dit is vir my Suid Afrika, die stadium in die lewe. Is, alles is besig om te verval, of agteruit te gaan. Gewoon alles, baie dinge. Die mense wat daar bly is paddatjies wat rondspring in warm water. Hulle besef nie hoeveel hulle aanvaar vir normaal wees daar nie. Dinge wat eindlik nie normaal hoor te wees nie. As eers jy weg is, het jy ander normaliteit om jou, wat je laat teruggaan in jou besef nee maar dankie ek wil nie agter tralies bly nie, ek wil nie bang oor my skouer kyk die heeltyd nie, ek wil nie die heeltyd bang wees nie.

x

The interview was held in Afrikaans, this is a translation of the following text: In Suid Afrika dan spreek je met jou kollegas af by wie se huis gaan ons Vrydag braai? In Holland kan jy jou kollega se sekselewe, alles weet, maar om vyf uur gaan jy huis toe en dan hou dit op. Eventually ‘n keer sit ek tot
sewe uur in die aand nog op kantoor met ‘n kollega en ons sit en chat eindelyk net en hy sê hy moet nou nog huis toe ry en hy bly ‘n uur se ry van die werk af en hy moet nog begin aandete maak... So toe sê ek, ek bly om die draai van die werk af, can I feed you? Ons praat nou lekker, kan ons gou... Kos gee. Hy bloos, bloedrooi en hy sê nee. Ek het gedink oh nee wat het ek nou gesê! Toe het ek ‘n Suid Afrikaner pel gehad, hy verduidelik nou vir my, nee daai ou het ek gedink ek het hom gevra vir seks en toe was hy te embarrased. En ek het so van ag kom op, ek wil net vriendskap hê, kom op, kan ons net ūrens begin?

As jou Hollands nie perfek is nie sal hulle nie met jou wil praat nie.

Die basiese Suid Afrikanse ding is vriendelijk wees, om te gee. Dit is nie valse nie. As jou Hollands nie perfek is nie sal hulle nie met jou wil praat nie.

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Baie goedjies in hierdie huis is persoonlik. Ons veral erfstukke saamgebring. Hierdie tafel is my ma s’n, sy’s dood, maar hier staan ma. Die kas is van Namibia. Die goedjies gee jou moed om an te gaan. Kyk die stoele, hulle is van die 1800’s, ek kan nou lekker in die stoel gaan sit en moed kry. Jy’s dan nie so vreemd nie. En die vouwva... Die oggend dat die trailer hier aangekom het... Wow! Ons voel bevoorreg dat ons dit saamgebring kon het. Meer as bevoorreg. Die goed het nogal is gehelp, veral in die begin. Ek dink dit baie moekker as jy dit nie het nie. Maar ons moet nie vasklamp aan die verlede nie, ons koop Nederlandse goed en so stel jy jouself maar weer saam.

Die huisvesting het ons geva... Die huisvesting het ons geva... Die huisvesting het ons geva... Die huisvesting het ons geva... Die huisvesting het ons geva...
skuld julle €20, ek weet dit. En dan sê hulle, nee, bewijs dit maar. Ek het dan al lang al nie meer die til slip nie. Ek kan baie goed met die mense oor die weg kom. Dit is vir my die beste van die Suid Afrikaners, daai attitude van help en moeite doen.

xix OK Milo is vir my luxe. Maar die chutney, en dan spesifiek die Mrs. Balls het ek nog nie iets gekry om dit te kan vervang nie. Kyk, 'n mens kan in Engeland ook chutney koop, maar dis nie vier my dieselfde. En seker vir rërige Afrikaanse geregte, soos bobotie en ehm... Chutney mayonaise hoener, helfte chutney, helfte mayonaise oor die hoender, jy weet kyk, jy kan die hoender anders maak, ek het baie ander hoenderresepse, maar so nou en dan is jy daar lus voor en dan is daar nie ander...

xx As jy hierdie biltong eet is jy in Suid Afrika, want ek gebruik Suid Afrikaanse kruij, nie die goedkopes nie.

xxi 'n Ete hier is Suid Afrikaans. Ek hou daarvan as mense geïnteresseer is. Maar dis nie dat ek net Suid Afrika se kos eet nie!

xxii Ek mis dat die kinders kom kuier by die huis. Nederlandse kinders doen dit net nie, hier is hulle amper te bang om te laag! Die huis het gelewe in Suid Afrika, daar is kinders, al die mense eindlik, baie spontaner. Hulle gee jou sometime 'n drukkie as hulle jou sien en hulle kom praat 'n bietjie. (...) Wat my ryk gaan maak hierso in Holland, is die reaksies van die mense wat ek fruit gee, om hulle te laat lag. Op my werk is daar altyd fruit wat nie groot genoeg of wat ook al is om te verkoop nie. Maar dis proe nog steeds baie lekker! Ek gee 'n bietjie van dit aan die bure, 'n bietjie aan die kinders wat verby loop... Hierdie week het ek die brights van my kar gefix en toe het 'n ou tannie met haar kleinkinders verby. Dit doet 'n mens pragtig! So ongewoon, so spontaan. Hulle gee jou sommers 'n drukkie as hulle jou sien en hulle kom praat 'n bietjie. En ons kan nou lekker met die bure gesels hoor! Vir my is die gee van fruit 'n manier om Hollandse mense te leer ken. Dis moeilik om met Hollanders te praat!

xxiii Ons voel bevoorreg dat ons dit saamgebring kon het. Meer as bevoorreg. Die goed het nogal goed gehelp, veral in die begin. Ek dink die kinders van die bure wil nou saamgebring werk toe. En ons kan nou lekker met die bure gesels hoor! Vir my is die gee van fruit 'n manier om Hollandse mense te leer ken. Dis moeilik om met Hollanders te praat!

xxiv Die musiek is nie goed nie, maar ons kan darem langarm dans en vir ander Saffies ontmoet.

xxv Op die werk is daar ander goed wat belangrik is. Soos die sokker, het Ajax of Feyenoord gewin? Weet jy, daai goed. Ek kan praat oor die laatste Sharks-game, maar dit gaan nie lekker wees nie want niemand van die werk kyk ooit rugby nie.

xxvi Ek wil nie dat ander mense dink ek weier om in te pas nie. Dis nou maar onderdeel van die nuwe lewe, jou eie goeters 'n bietjie opgee om ander pelle te maak.

xxvii My kollegas het nuuskierig geword. Hulle het geweet ek is van Suid Afrika en ons het 'n keer gepraat van biltong. Ek weet nie meer hoekom nie, maar hulle wou dit hê. So toe ek van Suid Afrika terug gekom het, het ek 'n bietjie saamgebring werk toe.

xxviii Soms wens ek ek het my gunsteling stoel saamgebring. Of net my teddybeer wat ek as kind gehad het. Soms wil ek net sit en gemaklik voel.

xxix Dis vir my baie lekker as daar jelly tots by die huis is, daai snoep laat 'n mens voel alsof jy in Suid Afrika is.

xxx As ek ietsie gaan koop vir ouens wat nog in Suid Afrika bly koop ek goeters wat 'n mens nie in Suid Afrika kan kry nie, maar wat regtig handig is. 'n Mens kan hier cool gadgets kry, soos die storm sambreel of 'n wasrekkie vir an die deur. Natuurlik koop ek ook drop en stroopwafels.
Ons word gesien as verraders, selfs deur ‘n paar mense uit ons families. Ons het geprobeer om dinge te laat werk in Suid Afrika, maar dit werk net nie. Vir seker nie vir ons kinders nie. As hulle besluit om nie universiteit toe te gaan nie, gaan hulle nie werk kry nie! En as hulle dalk ‘n dop gaan drink met pelle, wil ek nie heelyd wakker bly en wonder of hulle OK is nie... Suid Afrika is nie langer ‘n land waar ek my lekker en seker voel nie.

- Is dit ‘n rede om Suid-Afrikaners te help met geld of ander goed, om iets te doen wat daai skuldgevoel minder maak?

Ja, dit is dit so’n bietjie. Maar dis nie net die rede nie! Ons is rërig lief vir Suid Afrika, ons is proudly South African, en ek wens die land het ‘n baie mooi toekoms wat voorlê. Ons het die gesies om te trek...

Ons het gekies vir ons self. Maar ons wil die land rërig help om te groei en om beter te wees in die toekoms. Mense wat daar bly verstaan dit nie, maar dis waar.

Hulle het ‘n niggie en ‘n nefie wat so naby hulle ouderdom is en dit sou so lekkers wees as hulle saam kon speel. Maar in Nieuw Zeeland, daar is so baie tydverskil. Hulle het mekaar nog nie eers ontmoet nie en ons probeer nou reël vir hierdie jaar, maar gaan dit nou wees in Brisbane aan die Sydney kant waar my ma hulle bly of aan die Perth kant waar my broer bly of tog maar by my ma hulle se huis in Nieuw Zeeland, want daar het sy ‘n groot kombuis en dan hoef jy nie te sit in die klein kamp kombuisies nie en ons is nou net nog nie so ver vir dit nie. En ek dink dis vir my ma ook verskriklik moeilik om kleinkinders so ver weg te hê. Dan sien sy hulle twee, drie weke en dan weet sy nie wanneer sy hulle weer gaan sien nie. En dan sê sy in ‘n omgewing waar al die ander oumas om haar pas op die kleinkinders. Dit maak dit verskriklik moeilik. Maar ek dink ook as ek kyk naar my familie en my man se familie... Sy hele familie bly in Nederland, nie eers ver nie, maar dis ‘n missie om hulle by mekaar te kry! Haar verjaarsdag is oor ‘n maand. Nou se ek al, dis op ‘n Sondag, kom julle vir koffie en koek? Maar die helfte kan nie, dan het ek so iets van rot op man. Tervy! My familie, ons het baie meer kontak met mekaar miskien juus omdat ons so ver weg bly. En dan hou dit soveel meer beplanning om mekaar te kan sien en dan wanneer jy mekaar kan sien dan maak jy die beste daarvan (excerpt from interview held on January 13th, 2012).

"As jy hierdie biltong eet is jy in SA, want ek gebruik SA kruie, nie die goedkopes nie."

Dag 2. Dis Sondag en dis kerkdag. Ons ry Leusden toe, sonder ‘n liedboek, maar net met die lied in ons hart wat ons ken. Ongelooflik die ontvangs by die kerk. Ds. Manus het ons so laat welkom voel. Ons is sommer reguit gesê, julle het mos nou nie familie hier nie, ons is julle familie, en dis opreg gesê. Waar kry jy dit nog. Christo mag mos nou weer ‘n ereplek in die kerk kry want hy en die predikant is mos Blauw bulle ondersteuners. Wat was die boodskap van daardie oggend… God agtervolg jou soos ‘n ou wat jou “staak” Jy kom nie weg nie. Net soos wanneer jy dink God is weg, dan is hy soos ‘n peeping tom besig om vir jou te lê. Dis eintlik scary so erg is God. God volg mense uit Suid Afrika uit, en weet net dat ons baie dae dink God is weg. Ons ry elke Sondag 85 kilometer kerk toe, maar spaar elke week ons kilometers dat ons kan bekostig om daar uit te kom, by ons nuwe familie.

A: Ek sien so uit naar ‘n Appletizer. Ons moet gou weer Spens toe gaan.
B: Dis vir my ook altyd so lekker, laat my dink aan die vakansies naar die wildtuin. Ek het dit nie so baie gedrink nie, maar daarso is dit vir my altyd baie lekker.
A: Jislike! Ek is nou sommer lus vir ‘n vakansie in die wildtuin ook. En ‘n bietjie son. Dis maar koud hier.
B: As jy Suid Afrika toe gaan vir jou vakansie, sal jy dan vir my cream soda saam bring? En ‘n paar Hunters sommer ook. (Lag)
A: Sjoe, as ons dan net nog ‘n paar sakke biltong koop dan is dit perfek!

Toe my seun die eerste dag skool toegegaan het, het hy gewag vir die meisies om eerste binne toe te gaan. Hulle het vir hom gelag en die meester het met hom geraas en gesê hy moet nou vinnig binne toe gaan!

Daai soort van fisiek aktief wees, as normaal, dit irriteer my eindlik ‘n bietjie in Nederland, dan sê iemand: Ik ga even sporten. En dan vra ek so van he, wat se sport doen jy! Ik ga naar die sportschool... Ja dat is geen spoooroort. “n Sport is vir my iets waar jy in groei en beter word. Je weet, eers weet jy
niet wat se kant van die hokkiestick jy moet vashou nie en naderhand, jy weet, kan jy gaan speel. Maar jy weet, sorry maar om in die gym te gaan op die oefensetsen, is vir my net nie ‘n sport nie (excerpt from interview held on 13 January, 2012).

xxxvii A Dutch version of mille-feuille, having a thick layer of pastry cream sandwiched between two thin layers of puff pastry, with on top a layer of icing” (http://nl.glosbe.com/nl/en/tompoes)

xxxviii Dis vreemd ons soek nie ander Suid Afrikaners as ons in Suid Afrika is nie. Ons vermy dit eerder ‘n bietjie. Maar nou as ek in die Albert Heijn ‘n Suid Afrikaan opmerk, gesels ons met mekaar asof ons mekaar onderskei het. Ek ken hom nie eers nie!” Hier wordt in grote lijnen mee ingestemd. Manus begint over zijn vrouw die “‘n ou in Walibi ‘n drukkie en ‘n soen gee as sy sien hy dra ‘n SA jersey”. Lezanne reageert daarop en zegt: “Ja en toe het hy begin praat en dit was nou maar ‘n vreemde taal. Hy het maar net die jersey gedra, maar dit swas nie ‘n Suid Afrikaner nie!” (Teleurstelling. Gelach.) Tegenwerping is dat ‘n mens dit nou maar net nodig het. “Ek raak heeltemal opgewonde as ek sien iemand het ‘n SA vlaggetjie op sy kar.” Wanneer twee auto’s elkaar passeren met elk een SA vlaggetjie wordt er uitgebreid naar binnen gekeken en gezwaaid. Als de auto dan passeert zie je vaak dat “die ou ook ‘n vlaggetjie op sy kar het.” (Kerkdienst 18 maart)

x) Dit maak nie sin om met my kollegas oor rugby of krieket te praat nie. Wat gaan gebeur is, ek probeer hulle te verduidelik waar dit oor gaan. Ek sal krieket moet verdedig, want dit is vir hulle net ‘n stupid en simplistiese game. Hulle dink al wat jy moet doen is hardloop, van die een naar die ander kant. En hulle dink dat rugby iets soos american football is, maar rugby is die regte, puur sport en dis baie meer takties. Ek is nie lus vir hierdie konversasies nie.

xii Byvoorbeeld in Suid Afrika het jy skool sport. Jy het skool van 8 uur in die môre tot 2 uur in die middag, en dan vanaf half drie tot half vier ofso het jy skool sport. Sê nou maar maandag en dinsdag is dit tennis en woensdag en donderdag is dit hokkie, dit hang ook maar af van die seisoen. Of atletiek, of swem of... En daar die skole swem teën elkaar en hulle atletiek teën mekaar. En jou, jou, geografie onderwyser is ook jou tennis meester en jou hokkie juffrou is jou Afrikaanse juffrou. (...) Onthou, kulturele dinge soos skaak is maar deel van skool. Die skaak klub ontmoet elke pause in daai juffrou se klas, jy weet? Terwyl hier [in Nederland], ja jy het ‘n gymles is wat ek verstaan en jy doen verskillende sporte in die gymles, maar dis nie so georganiseer nie. As jy wil as ‘na jou kind moet hokkie speel dan moet jy naar ‘n klub toe, buite skool. En dit is vir my iets waarvan ek nog nie seker weet of ek dit wat ek wel gehad het vir my kinders sal kan gee.

xii www.diespens.eu

xiii Die meeste kontak wat ek eindlik nog het met Suid Afrika is met ou skool pelle deur Facebook. ‘n Vriendin van my wat in Australië bly ons was nie eers sukkel dik pelle op skool gewees nie maar toe sy nou in dieselfde tyd swanger was gewees as ek met Amber, haar babatjie was toe geboren drie dae voor Amber, en nou weer ‘n ander skoolvriendin van my se dogtertjie is gebore drie dae voor Aura. Hy het dan kontak met hulle, nie omdat jy Suid Afrikaners is nie, maar ons het nou kinders van dieselfde ouderdom. Nuwe konneksies met ouwe relasies (excerpt from interview held on January 13th, 2012).

xiv https://www.facebook.com/#/groups/8923836918/members/ Consulted on 1 June 2013

xv “Ek het nog goeters in Suid Afrika. Beleggingsgeld, ‘n betaalrekening, ‘n cellphone. Ek hou die exchange ‘n bietjie dop... Eindelijk is ek net nog nie klaar om die bande af te sny nie” (excerpt from interview held on 13 January, 2012).
SUMMARY

My Home is My Castle: Afrikaans Speaking South Africans in the Netherlands

Kim van Drie

This study shows how home, a place of belonging, is created by Afrikaans speaking South Africans who live in the Netherlands. It also challenges the views on multiculturalism and integration that we see in current debates. In general we can say that South Africans form a successful group of migrants. Most of them are highly educated and they can participate in the Dutch society relatively easy because of their language, reasons for migration and their background. They do not fit into the stereotypical image of an immigrant that is so prominent in the current public debate.

The fact that the South Africans are successful migrants, does not mean that migration is easy for them. Blockages exist for all the migrants during, but also after migration and for some there are more blockages than for others. They talk about the blockages they encounter (and about the possible solutions for them) within their social networks, mainly consisting of other South Africans who decided to live overseas. Networks are also used for the communication of a South African or maybe Afrikaner culture in the Netherlands. The flexible entities that cultures are, are expressed by the use of things that represent them. Things symbolise the backgrounds of the immigrants, but also the changes they went through in their lives. At first sight, the migrants who make use of ‘South African’ networks might look like a group unwilling to ‘integrate’ in Dutch society. But when you look a bit closer, you see that nothing could be further from the truth. Many respondents stated that they were better able to find their way in the Netherlands, because of the experiences, advice and other help shared by others who once were in the same boat.

Furthermore, the migrants use things, activities and their networks also to start new relations with the Dutch. That can be hard, because that is the time where they get confronted with stereotypes of South Africa or white South Africans, and with clashes of ideas. Especially South African things and the (consumption of) South African products play an important role in the process of introducing themselves to their new neighborhood; they are used as an ‘integration tool.’ By sharing products labelled as ‘South African’ like Castle beer, with for instance their new neighbours, the South Africans introduce themselves and their background at the same time, by doing something that in their opinion is typically Afrikaans: giving (om te gee). Because of the special role for South African products in the creation of a home by the migrants as part of their integration in Dutch society, their home is their Castle. A Castle that they love to share with others, including the Dutch.