

10-31-2022

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Recommended Citation

van Beukering, Jorien (2022) "Transnational connections; Diasporic (re)turns to Indonesia," *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*: Vol. 23: No. 3, Article 5.

DOI: [10.17510/wacana.v23i3.1004](https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v23i3.1004)

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/wacana/vol23/iss3/5>

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Transnational connections

Diasporic (re)turns to Indonesia

JORIEN VAN BEUKERING

ABSTRACT

In the twentieth century, decolonization sparked mass migration movements across the globe as former settlers left newly independent colonies for the former imperial metropole or a new country altogether. In the following decades, postcolonial migrants made new homes and created communities in their hostlands. Eventually, some travelled back to their country of origin, the former colony. Indisch Dutch returns to Indonesia are not uncommon and, although some members of the first generation visited Indonesia as tourists, accounts of (re)turns by the second and third generation are rare. To form a clearer picture of the transnational connections between Indonesia and the Netherlands, it is important to engage with Indisch Dutch travels to Indonesia after independence. By examining life narratives of second and third generation Indisch Dutch, this article investigates the complex relationships between diaspora, memory, nostalgia, and identity, and their impact on transnational relations between the two countries. Specifically, the paper examines accounts by Adriaan van Dis and Lara Nuberg about their journeys of return to Indonesia in the 2000s.

KEYWORDS

Diaspora; (re)turn journeys; memory; nostalgia; identity; transnationalism.

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JORIEN VAN BEUKERING | DOI: 10.17510/wacana.v23i3.1004.

INTRODUCTION¹

Twentieth-century decolonization sparked mass global migration as former settlers left newly independent colonies for the former imperial metropole or a new country altogether. Some were forcibly exiled from their homeland, a fate which befell the Indisch Dutch, who left the Dutch East Indies when it sought independence as Indonesia after the Second World War.² In the decades following their migration, these postcolonial migrants created new homes and communities in the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, the United States, and beyond (Wim Willems 2001: 17). Some did eventually travel back to their land of origin, now an independent country. Although first generation Indisch Dutch return voyages to Indonesia are relatively common, less attention has been paid to journeys undertaken by the second and third generation.³ This article examines accounts of (re)turns to Indonesia by members of these subsequent generations to investigate how they navigate diaspora, memory, nostalgia, and identity, and how these impact transnational relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

After sketching a historical outline and theoretical background, this article examines two case studies of Indisch Dutch (re)turns to Indonesia. Author Adriaan van Dis (born 1946) is analysed as an example of second generation (re)turn accounts, while writer, researcher, and blogger Lara Nuberg (born 1990) forms a case study for third generation interactions with Indonesia. Although neither Van Dis nor Nuberg are entirely representative of their generations – Van Dis is a famous Dutch author and celebrity while Nuberg is a writer and blogger more empathetic to Indonesia than her peers in the third generation –, they have been selected for analysis because both Van Dis and Nuberg have shared their stories of connection with and (re)turn to Indonesia in the public sphere: Van Dis in his books and television work and Nuberg via social media, particularly on her blog *Gewoon een Indisch meisje* (Just an Indisch girl). By taking Adriaan van Dis and Lara Nuberg as case studies, this article focuses particularly on differing forms of nostalgia and postmemory across the second and third generations of Indisch Dutch.

BACKGROUND

Indonesian-Dutch relations began in the early 1600s when the United Dutch East Indies Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC) arrived in the

¹ Thanks to Amy Hubbell, Annie Pohlman, Fridus Steijlen, Andrew Bonnell, the Studies in Culture cluster at the University of Queensland, and the reviewer(s) for feedback on earlier versions of this article. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

² There is no agreed-upon English translation of the Dutch term *Indische Nederlanders*. I use “Indisch Dutch” as an umbrella term encompassing both *totok* (ethnic Dutch citizens without Indonesian heritage who were born in the Indies and/or resided there for an extended period) and Indo-Europeans (persons of mixed Indonesian and European (usually Dutch) ancestry). I follow Joost Coté’s (2010: 104 note 3) understanding of Indisch as “[indicating] an ethno-cultural identity”.

³ “Second generation” here refers to children of postcolonial migrants, born in the Indies, Indonesia, or the Netherlands. “Third generation” indicates children of the second generation.

Indonesian Archipelago; relations subsequently became those of colonizer and colonized (Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben 2008: 1-25). In 1942 the Japanese invasion of the Indies marked the end of Dutch colonialism. Rising Indonesian nationalism prompted nationalist leader and Indonesia's later first President Soekarno to declare Indonesian independence from the Netherlands two days after Japan's surrender to Allied forces in August 1945. This sparked the Indonesian Independence War (Revolusi 1945-1949), a brutal, protracted war which compounded the traumas of the Japanese Occupation (Bart Luttikhuis and Dirk Moses 2012). In December 1949, the Netherlands finally acknowledged Indonesian sovereignty.⁴

Post-war Indonesian-Dutch relations have been fraught. Indonesia in the nineteen-fifties was intensely anti-Dutch, resulting in the expulsion of Dutch citizens (approximately 400,000 people migrated from Indonesia to the Netherlands between 1946 and 1968) (Gijs Beets, Evert van Imhof, and Corina Huisman 2003: 58), bans on the use of Dutch language and the nationalization of Dutch businesses in Indonesia (J.Th. Lindblad 2008: 103). Dutch refusals to surrender New Guinea, not included in the 1949 transfer of sovereignty, to Indonesia exacerbated worsening ties. Consequently, diplomatic relations were severed by Soekarno in 1956 and only re-established twelve years later under Soeharto's New Order government (see Hans Meijer 1994). Despite relations being strained by events including the Moluccan train hijackings of the 1970s, reciprocal visits by representatives of both countries have occurred since 1970. Most recently, prior to the Covid pandemic the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, visited Indonesia, where he apologized for Dutch violence during the war of independence (Marchio Irfan Gorbiano 2020). These high-profile visits reflect travels to Indonesia by the Indisch Dutch diaspora.

Accounts of first generation returns are readily located as former settlers relive their memories of the former colony.⁵ First generation return narratives are set in the cadre of *tempo doeloe*, a longing for the lost past characteristic of Svetlana Boym's restorative nostalgia (Boym 2001: xviii).⁶ Malay for "the good old days", *tempo doeloe* expresses a longing for the colonial Indies pre-Second World War, imagining it as idyllic and peaceful; *tempo doeloe* remains popular today among first generation Indisch Dutch in the Netherlands (Sarah de Mul 2010: 414-415). Nostalgia is also present in journeys to Indonesia undertaken by second and third generation Indisch Dutch. For these individuals, however, nostalgia takes different forms as they have never been to or lived in the Indies and therefore have no original memories of it.

⁴ To date, the Netherlands does not recognize 17 August 1945 as Indonesia's *de jure* date of independence.

⁵ For example, Paul Ferdinand "Ferry" Abels' book *Mijn kleurrijk leven* (2010), and Tjalie Robinson's travelogues in the series *Poelang* (from the Indonesian *pulang*, 'go home') in *Tong Tong* magazine in the mid-1960s. See especially the travelogues published in the following editions of *Tong Tong*: (1965a, 1965b, 1965c, 1965d).

⁶ First generation returns hallmarked by rose-coloured nostalgia are not specific to the Indisch Dutch: the same feelings occur among Pied-Noirs exiled from French Algeria (Amy L. Hubbell 2011).

This article takes nostalgia as a starting point for understanding second and third generation (re)turn narratives and draws on theories of intergenerational transmission of memory. Although literature in this field tends to focus on the transfer of traumatic memory because of its roots in Holocaust research, intergenerational memory transmission can just as easily be accompanied by nostalgia and result in nostalgic postmemory (Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer 2002: 261). Hirsch defines postmemory as the memory “of the child of the survivor whose life is dominated by memories of what preceded his/her birth” (Hirsch 1992: 8). While second generation Indisch Dutch do not have direct memories of the Indies, they do possess a collective postmemory of the rupture formed by the Japanese Occupation, the Independence War, and migration from Indonesia. The rupture remains present in the third generation, despite the generational distance from these events.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF NOSTALGIA

Nostalgic postmemory for the Indies is particularly present among second generation Indisch Dutch, who grew up in the Netherlands hearing their parents’ stories of life in the colony before the Second World War. When told, these stories tended to cast a veil of silence over traumatic experiences and were often tinged by *tempo doeloe*, viewing the colonial past before the rupture through rose-tinted glasses (Marlene de Vries 2009: 49, 70, 82-83). In addition to family stories, *tempo doeloe* permeated first generation cultural productions with which the second generation grew up: novels like Hella Haasse’s *Oeroeg* (1948; translated as *The black lake* in 2013) and Maria Dermoût’s *De tienduizend dingen* (1955; translated as *The ten thousand things* in 1958), the photo albums *Op Java staat een huis* (There is a house in Java, 1960) and *Tempo doeloe* (1961) by Hein Buitengeweg and Rob Nieuwenhuys respectively, and the popular television series *De late late Lien show* all perpetuated romantic visions of an idyllic tropical colony.⁷ *De late late Lien show*, which combined comedy and music and was aired by Dutch television broadcaster VARA in the 1970s and 1980s, was particularly built around *tempo doeloe*. In each episode, structured to imitate a *koempoelan* or Indisch gathering, Wieteke van Dort played the show’s protagonist Tante (Aunt) Lien, who reminisced about the Indies by singing songs like *Geef mij maar nasi goreng* (I’d rather have fried rice) and *Nacht over Java* (Night over Java) against the backdrop of a set replete with cane furniture, tropical plants, and idyllic paintings of Indonesian landscapes (Figure 1). The *tempo doeloe* nostalgia produced by the show was authenticated by the highly nostalgic set, characters, and content, themselves based on Van Dort’s lived experience of Indies life. As Sarah de Mul observes of literary representations, cultural productions about the Indies possess “an illusory aura of authenticity” which is based on “experiential knowledge” (2010: 414). The show was an Indisch Dutch cultural production about nostalgia and evinces intergenerational

⁷ *Tempo doeloe* was written by Nieuwenhuys under the pseudonym E. Breton de Nijs.

transmission of nostalgia for the former colony: some members of the second generation who watched *De late late Lien show* associated feelings of *gezelligheid* – an untranslatable word whose meaning encompasses cosiness, pleasure, companionability, and cheerfulness – with the show (De Vries 2009: 398 note 4). As the first Indisch television show in the Netherlands, *De late late Lien show* was widely popular in the Indisch Dutch community and Wieteke van Dort continues to perform as Tante Lien today at Tong Tong Fairs and other Indisch events.⁸



Figure 1. Screenshot of Wieteke van Dort playing Tante Lien in *De late late Lien show* (Dutch television broadcaster VARA).

Nostalgia was also transmitted to third generation Indisch Dutch. In the 2010s, some members of this generation took up the values of the first when they formed the organization the Indisch Platform 2.0, which seeks financial compensation from the Dutch government in the *backpay-kwestie* (backpay matter): salaries and pensions not paid during the Second World War to those who had been civil servants in the Dutch East Indies government or soldiers in the colonial army imprisoned by the Japanese.⁹

⁸ Van Dort was criticized by parts of the Indisch community for her character's stereotyped accent and language (mis)use, which some believed portrayed the Indisch Dutch inaccurately and in a denigrating fashion. The show responded to this in a 1979 episode.

⁹ The backpay matter is a long-running issue. In the 1990s the organization the Indisch Platform was founded to represent the Indisch Dutch community in negotiations with the Dutch government. To date, the Indisch Dutch community believes the matter has been only partially resolved. In 2000 the government agreed to a collective payout of 350 million guilders (called *Het Gebaar*, 'The Gesture'), which organizations including Stichting Het Gebaar (The Gesture Foundation) and the Indisch Platform were to distribute among the community, both to

As Fridus Steijlen (2018: 158) has noted, stories told to the second generation by the first did not discuss the difficulties of obtaining these unpaid salaries and pensions, focusing instead on the discrimination migrants experienced after arriving in the Netherlands. This explains why second generation Indisch Dutch identified with other migrant groups and were less involved in the struggle for arrears in salaries. However, for the third and fourth generations the backpay matter has been a familiar issue as it had been the subject of public debate in the Indisch community and Dutch national politics since the 1990s. Younger generations taking up the backpay matter points to their concern about how the Indies and Indisch Dutch are remembered. By continuing to seek compensation from the Dutch government via the Indisch Platform 2.0, younger members of the diaspora revive memories of the first generation in colonial civil service and military positions and “remember” the colonial period. Hence, through nostalgic mnemonic discourse by the first generation about life in the Indies, occurring both in the familial space (family stories, Indisch cultural productions) and on community and national levels (political activism to obtain monetary restitution), first generation memory and values have been transferred to younger generations. For some Indisch Dutch these nostalgic (post)memories inform (re)turn visits to Indonesia.

In their article “Generations of nostalgia”, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (2002) engage with stories told to Hirsch by her parents (first generation diasporic Jews) and the dynamics of diasporic returns. The authors dissect the transfer of nostalgic memory by drawing on postmemory, arguing that for the first generation of a diaspora, returning to the place which was lost generates ambivalent nostalgia: nostalgic memories are raised because the migrants are home (although home has irrevocably changed) but are inevitably accompanied by their traumatic memories because the violence and suffering are again thrust to the fore (Hirsch and Spitzer 2002: 270-272). Hirsch and Spitzer suggest that for the second generation, the (re)turn – although they have been there in memory, it is the first time they are physically there – brings up the first generation’s ambivalent nostalgia but combined with a sense of “rootlessness”. For Hirsch and Spitzer, second generation migrants who “return home” often possess traumatic postmemories that contend with the nostalgic visions projected onto the landscape of “home”. Second generation diasporic (re)turns, then, are marked by the “need to soften overwhelmingly negative postmemories [...] by making a material connection with a ‘before’ – a time (and a place) in which

individuals and to relevant cultural and educational programmes and organizations addressing the community’s needs, such as projects focusing on the history of the Indisch Dutch (Meijer 2005: 13, 321-322). However, the matter was not resolved and in 2015 a second payout was agreed to by the Dutch government. Under this agreement, former civil servants and soldiers still living on 15 August 2015 would be eligible to receive a one-time € 25,000 payment each; approximately 1,100 persons were eligible (Inez Hollander 2017). Some younger Indisch Dutch believed this agreement to be unfair, as the widows of ex-civil servants and soldiers who had passed away prior to the cut-off date were excluded from receiving compensation. This led to these younger Indisch Dutch separating from the Indisch Platform and forming the Indisch Platform 2.0 (Peggy Stein n.d.).

their parents had not yet suffered the threat of annihilation" (Hirsch and Spitzer 2002: 262). Although the nostalgia Hirsch and Spitzer explore involves mourning a specific Jewish culture destroyed in the Holocaust and is therefore of a different order to nostalgia for the Indies, their concepts are nevertheless relevant to the Indisch Dutch context and are helpful in understanding diasporic (re)turns to Indonesia by the second generation. In the case studies which follow, I examine specific instances of nostalgic memory transfer and the role played by intergenerationally transmitted memory in informing (re)turn journeys to Indonesia, and the ways in which these shape transnational Dutch-Indonesian connections.

SECOND GENERATION: ADRIAAN VAN DIS

Prominent Dutch author and celebrity figure Adriaan van Dis was born in 1946 in the Netherlands after his parents and three half-sisters migrated from the Indies. Van Dis' father, Victor Justin Mulder, was his mother's second partner: her husband had been executed by the Japanese during the Second World War.¹⁰ As the family's only child born in the Netherlands, Adriaan van Dis has Indisch heritage but no original memories of the Indies: he is an outsider within his own family. This theme is central to Van Dis' autobiographical writing, which is coloured by longing for the place which featured so heavily in his parents' and half-sisters' lives. Van Dis' nostalgia is formed partly by the nostalgic postmemory received from his mother, father, and sisters, but is also informed by a need to understand his family and their lives in the Indies before and during the Second World War. It is important to understand that his nostalgia underlies a visit to Indonesia in 2012 before analysing his (re)turn narrative, told in a documentary film.

NOSTALGIA

Van Dis opens *Leugenland* (Land of lies, 2006), a short autobiographical story, with memories of the migration from Indonesia to the Netherlands in the mid-1940s. He remembers his father bowing to Dutch military police upon arrival in Amsterdam, remembers other migrants' laughter at this behaviour which three years as a prisoner-of-war (POW) in Japanese camps had made instinctive (Van Dis 2012b: 565). Except this is not a memory. It is a fabrication: Adriaan van Dis had not yet been born when his parents and half-sisters migrated to the Netherlands. "And yet, for me the Indies are a memory", he writes (Van Dis 2012b: 565).¹¹ A memory transmitted by his father in particular but also by his mother and half-sisters, the latter belonging to the 1.5 generation.¹² Like Marianne Hirsch,

¹⁰ Ironically, both Maria van Dis' husband and second partner shared the name Victor. In Adriaan van Dis' books they are sometimes referred to as Just I and Just II respectively.

¹¹ *Leugenland* was first published in Annemarie Cottaar (2006: 181-187). A similar false memory opens the novel *Indische duinen*, "remembering" the family's first glimpse of the Netherlands (Van Dis 1994: 5-15).

¹² The 1.5 generation are those who as children migrated with their parents and grew up in the hostland (Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters 2002: 12).

Adriaan van Dis experiences nostalgia for the Indies pre-rupture, a nostalgia transmitted to him as postmemory similar to the way Hirsch's parents passed their nostalgia to their daughter: through stories transmitted in the familial space. Van Dis' father, Victor Justin Mulder, made a point of walking down memory lane with his son by regularly perusing his photograph albums of the Indies. Van Dis describes this in his book *Familieziek* (2002, translated into English as *Repatriated* in 2008), in which the father character is named Mr Java. The images of tropical landscapes, horses, and beautiful women, accompanied by Mr Java's stories of pre-war adventures in the archipelago, instil a longing for this past in young Adriaan: "I want to go to the Indies, too" (Van Dis 2012a: 369). Listening to his father's stories, the young Van Dis

feels a leech on his leg when Mr Java tells how he had had to wade through mangroves, and he actually hears waves lapping at the underside of an outrigger canoe [...] And he sees those dignified, well-dressed people milling on docks and station platforms or visiting the governor [...] (Van Dis 2012a: 367).

But the boy's nostalgia is the father's: flipping through the photographs with his father in the hope of becoming closer to and understanding him inadvertently transfers the parent's longing for a place geographically and temporally distant to the child.

Like Marianne Hirsch, the nostalgic postmemory Van Dis receives is tempered by negative postmemories of his family's traumatic experiences of the Japanese Occupation. Van Dis' nostalgia for the pre-war Indies allows him to reconcile his parents' traumas by connecting "with a 'before'" in which his parents were happy (Hirsch and Spitzer 2002: 262). This is why he writes in *Leugenland*, "I wanted nothing more than to belong to the Indies. Not to the Indies of grief, but to the Indies of adventure" (Van Dis 2012b: 573). Connecting with the time of his father's adventures, a time in which his parents had not yet experienced the rupture of the Second World War, allows Van Dis to make peace with his father (who beat him as a child) and imagine his mother as a carefree woman unscarred by war. As Hirsch and Spitzer point out, in this way second generation migrants "construct a deeper and more nuanced understanding of history and of memory" (2002: 262).

In addition to Hirsch and Spitzer's rootless nostalgia, Neda Maghbouleh's theory of "inherited nostalgia" is also useful to understanding Adriaan van Dis' longing for the Indies. In a study of second generation Iranian-Americans, Maghbouleh defines inherited nostalgia as "[describing] the relational expressions of longing and belonging" among a diaspora's second generation (2010: 214). Central to this is the second generation child's longing to "'get to know' their parents and the [land] of their parents' youth" (Maghbouleh 2010: 209). In Maghbouleh's study, second generation Iranian-Americans listen to pre-Revolutionary Iranian pop music to learn about their parents and by so doing create for themselves a "fictive, nostalgic version of Iran" which reproduces their parents' nostalgia (2010: 200-201). Similarly, music plays a role in Adriaan van Dis' nostalgia. A recurring trope in his autobiographical work

is *kampliedjes*, camp songs from the Japanese Occupation. These silly, childish rhymes were sung by his mother and half-sisters during their internment in a camp at Bangkinang, Sumatra and, after Van Dis was born in the Netherlands, were sung while the family did the washing up. The songs make light of the Occupation (hereby exemplifying humour as a coping mechanism for trauma – see Esther Captain 2002: 142, 185) but reveal nostalgia through their expression of lived experience of the Indies. One camp song goes as follows:

*Heb je wel gehoord van de jap die is gesmoord,
In een pot met bruine bonen.
Hij liep als een gek met een lepel in zijn bek,
En de blubber liep langs z'n konen.
Jap jap, jap jap, je petje is te klein,
Je schoenen zijn te groot,
Je hebt verloren de zilvervloot! (Van Dis 1983: 49)*

This camp song is a satirical, nonsensical rhyme mocking Japanese soldiers to the tune of a Dutch children's song from 1844, *De zilvervloot* (The treasure fleet). The camp song borrows from and alters the original song lyrics to ridicule the Japanese, but does not make much sense even in Dutch. A rhyming English approximation of the camp song might be:

*Have you ever heard of the Jap stuck
In a jar of beans for weeks.
Around walked the Jap with a spoon in his flap,
Brown goo ran down his cheeks.
Jap Jap, Jap Jap, your cap is so small,
Your shoes are too big,
You walk around looking like a pig!¹³*

Camp songs like this, so familiar to Van Dis, are nevertheless not his: he does not possess the original memories of the camps which inform the songs. Although he did not always know the lyrics – the Indonesian words littered throughout the song *Kokkie* (The cook) made it difficult for him to learn –, by singing along Adriaan van Dis tried to belong to the Indies that his family shared with one another but was accessible to him only through their memories (Van Dis 1983: 49-51). In his writing, descriptions of the camp songs are drenched with longing: longing to experience the war as his sisters did, longing to understand his family better. For Van Dis, singing the songs of his family's war expresses longing for a connection to his family's past. When he joins in the singing, Van Dis "remembers" the Indies and "remembers" the camps. As Maghbouleh writes, "music has a utility in the real lives of [the second generation] that may begin at the auditory level yet resonates most clearly at the level of identity and nostalgia" (2010: 211). This is clearly visible in the case of Adriaan van Dis.

¹³ With thanks to Tineke Stegink for assisting with translating the camp song.

(RE)TURN TO INDONESIA

In 2012 Adriaan van Dis travelled to Indonesia, accompanied by a camera crew. Footage from this trip aired as the eight-part documentary *Van Dis in Indonesië* (Van Dis in Indonesia) on the Dutch television channel VPRO in March and April that year.¹⁴ Despite having engaged with the Indies since his debut novella *Nathan Sid* (1983), this documentary appears to be Van Dis' first journey to independent Indonesia. Why Van Dis only sought contact with Indonesia in the 2000s is unclear; journalist Seije Slager suggests that perhaps the death of Van Dis' mother, Maria van Dis, in 2010, enabled the author to feel able to go in search of Indonesia and his parents' past there (Seije Slager 2012).¹⁵ Directed by Hans Pool, the documentary resulting from this trip is an exploration of the lasting impact of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. It pays attention to current political and environmental situations unfolding in Indonesia in 2012, Van Dis' search for legacies of Dutch imperialism and provides insights into Van Dis' impressions of Indonesia and the connections he makes with the country by engaging with his own family's past. The layers within the documentary – present-day Indonesia, the Dutch colonial past, and Van Dis' family's past – illustrate that Indisch Dutch (re)turns to Indonesia occur in the present but are informed by the past.

In the first episode of *Van Dis in Indonesië*, Adriaan van Dis sails to Bitung, Sulawesi. He interacts with the ship's Indonesian crew and passengers, flashing photographs of his mother and her husband on a similar ship on their honeymoon. He tells the camera, "I'm travelling in the present as well as in the past" (Hans Pool 2012: Episode 1). The documentary follows in the tracks of Van Dis' family. In Surabaya, Van Dis visits a Dutch cemetery in search of graves of his father's ancestors (although the cemetery's decayed state precludes positive identification of graves) and locates the barracks where his father was trained as a soldier at the age of sixteen. On Ternate he visits the island's sultan, whom he shows a photograph of Maria van Dis dancing at the sultan's palace in the 1930s; Bali is the place where "my mother [was introduced] to that which would bind her to the Indies: local religious customs and beliefs. [...] Her penchant for the mystical originates here" (Pool 2012: Episodes 4 and 7). Maria van Dis' interest in diverse religious belief systems is often mentioned in her son's autobiographically inspired work; travelling to Bali, the place where her interest originated, is a way for Adriaan van Dis

¹⁴ A similar documentary was made in 2008 of a two-month visit by Van Dis to South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique (*Van Dis in Afrika*) (Pool 2008). In some ways the Indonesia documentary can be seen as a follow-up of this; however, the Indonesia documentary records Van Dis' first ever trip to Indonesia, whereas he had visited South Africa on multiple occasions prior to making the documentary on southern Africa. Additionally, in contrast to that film, *Van Dis in Indonesië* is underscored by familial connections to Indonesia as ex-colony.

¹⁵ This is supported by the fact that Van Dis was only really able to write about his mother after her death. Prior to the publication of *Ik kom terug* (I will return, 2014), mother figures generally appeared in the margins of, rather than as main characters in, Van Dis' literary work (his 1986 novella *De rat van Arras* is an exception). In contrast, characters based on Van Dis' father are central in *Nathan Sid* (1983), *Indische duinen* (1994), and *Familieziek* (2002).

to connect with his mother and attempt to understand her curiosity for these different customs and faiths.¹⁶ Armed with photographs of his parents and his mother's first husband, Van Dis travels around Indonesia to the places depicted in these photographs. He holds them up to the present-day sites and "sees" his parents in those locations, "remembering" their presence there and comparing the present to the past. Photos are integral elements in Van Dis' journey to Indonesia. As Marianne Hirsch has pointed out, "photographs connect [...] the past and the present, the story of the [parent] and the story of the son" (Hirsch 1992: 8). Travelling across the Indonesian archipelago, Van Dis looks for and finds elements of his parents' lives in the former colony prior to the rupture of the Japanese Occupation. In doing so, he tries to make connections across time to understand his mother and father. But he cannot understand his parents without engaging with the traumas they experienced during the Occupation. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that of all the places Van Dis visits throughout his (re)turn to Indonesia, it is Sumatra which affects him most.

Ostensibly searching for rare Sumatran tigers, Van Dis arrives in Sumatra to connect with his family history, as do many second generation visits "home" (Russel King and Anastasia Christou 2008: 10; Wei-Jue Huang, Gregory Ramshaw, and William Norman 2016: 62). He retraces his family's steps during the Second World War and locates the site of the Sumatra railway (Pekan Baru Railway) on which his father laboured as a POW.



Figure 2. Adriaan van Dis at the Sumatra railway, 2012. Screenshot of *Van Dis in Indonesië*, Episode 8 (Pool 2012; Documentary. The Netherlands, VPRO).

¹⁶ For example, the novella *De rat van Arras* (1986) explores Maria van Dis' belief in reincarnation and contrasts this with her son's scepticism.

In 2012, the area is overgrown; all that remains is a rusted locomotive. Visibly moved by the wreck, Van Dis leans against the blackened structure (Figure 2), monologuing heatedly to the camera about his father, who passed away when Van Dis was ten years old. There is little to see, yet the ruined engine is full of memory. Van Dis recounts fragments of his father's war experiences and even imitates him, adopting his father's Indisch pronunciation and intonation – the "echo" of his father's voice is trapped in the abandoned engine (Pool 2012: Episode 8). Although the train and the (post)memories it recalls upset Van Dis, he does not linger long. Onscreen, the train fades into a black-and-white photograph taken in the Netherlands of his father staring into the distance. The viewer is left conscious of Van Dis' yearning for a connection to the past but also for a way to understand his father's traumatic war experiences.

A second site of nostalgic memory in Sumatra is Bangkinang, now a small village but in the 1940s the camp in which Van Dis' mother and half-sisters were interned for most of the war. A plaque commemorates the camp and those who died there; the area is now a playground and children caper on a rusted swing set. Walking among the ruins, Van Dis compares bleached bricks jutting out of the ground to a map of the camp inherited from his mother. He recognizes the location of the washing area and, visibly agitated, describes how water was sourced from the nearby creek and recites the washing order: nuns, women, girls, fifteen-year-old boys. Although this information was told to him as a child by his half-sisters, Van Dis tells it to the camera as though recounting a memory of his own. When the cameraman poses a question, Van Dis becomes upset: "[...] the frustrating thing is that they are in a way false emotions, borrowed emotions, because I was never interned in a camp" (Pool 2012: Episode 8). He then sings some of the camp songs that are his only via postmemory and says bitterly, "Those songs, I sang them louder than anyone else, to belong to that blasted war" (Pool 2012: Episode 8). As Eveline Buchheim has pointed out in relation to Japanese-Indisch descendants, (re)turning to Indonesia allows children whose parents survived the Japanese Occupation to make sense of "the impact the war in the Pacific has had on [their] lives" (Buchheim 2015: 105). For Adriaan van Dis, visiting Bangkinang and the location of the former Sumatra railway is a way to understand his parents and how the legacies of the Japanese Occupation shaped their lives – and Van Dis' own life, particularly his childhood prior to his father's death – in the Netherlands after their forced migration.

This trip to Indonesia, following in his family's footsteps, demonstrates that the archipelago as a whole, but particularly Bangkinang and the Sumatra railway, are *lieux de mémoire* and "primordial sites of origin" for Adriaan van Dis (Hirsch and Spitzer 2002: 261). Van Dis' nostalgia is complex: as a second generation migrant his nostalgia is rootless – he possesses no original memories of the places he visits –, but Sumatra also raises painful memories of his parents' and half-sisters' traumas. His nostalgia is also shaped by a need to understand his family's past and the land they considered home. Contrasting with first generation nostalgia which can be understood as Boym's restorative nostalgia,

like other second generation diasporic migrants Adriaan van Dis' longing for the Indies is reflective, informed by the "irrevocability of the past": he tries to reconcile the postmemories transmitted by his family with the reality that the past is beyond reach (Boym 2001: 49, Hubbell and Van Beukering 2022).

By recording his (re)turn in a documentary aired on Dutch television, Van Dis publicly shares his connection to Indonesia. The camera also allows him to delve into his personal identity and his family's Indisch past in a way his explorations of this past in his literary oeuvre do not (Steijlen 2018: 122-123). As Beatriz Tadeo Fuica notes in the Uruguayan context, when second generation documentary films dwelling on questions of memory, identity, and trauma are released publicly, "the collective memories of [the] family [become] part of the broader public collective memories" (2015: 301). By broadcasting footage from his trip to Indonesia on Dutch national television, Adriaan van Dis therefore contributes to shaping the way the Indisch past is remembered in the Netherlands and how this past is framed. Furthermore, as a public figure Van Dis is able to reach a wider audience with his documentary than, for instance, videos of (re)turn journeys by less prominent second generation Indisch Dutch, such as videos of trips to Java jointly organized by Nusantara Productions, the Pelita Foundation, and actress Wieteke van Dort.¹⁷ Although his trip and the Nusantara Productions journeys share the aim of visiting the place from which the travellers' parents come, Van Dis' expedition to Indonesia contrasts with the Nusantara Productions trips in that the latter are organized tours for thirty people, while his is a journey for and by himself (albeit in the company of a camera crew). Similarly, while Van Dis wanders about the archipelago and interacts with locals in all locations while searching for his family's past, the organized tours have a full cultural programme which keeps them somewhat isolated from everyday Indonesians: the tours visit museums, cemeteries, Indonesian cultural productions, a tea factory, palaces, temples, a cigarette factory, notable landmarks, and thermal springs (Nusantara Productions 2020). The tours are also Java-focused – they do not visit other parts of Indonesia. However, while Van Dis' journey contrasts with these tours in his conversations with Indonesians and travels to different islands, Van Dis' visit does not constitute a long-term transnational connection with Indonesia: although he interacts with everyday Indonesians, he makes no lasting connections with them. Rather, his (re)turn is individual, aimed at understanding personal questions of identity, memory, and belonging (Huang, Ramshaw, and Norman 2016: 73). This contrasts with the second case study examined in this article, Lara Nuberg, part of the third generation of the Indisch Dutch diaspora.

THIRD GENERATION: LARA NUBERG

Writer, researcher, and blogger Lara Nuberg (born 1990) is third generation Indisch Dutch. Born in the Netherlands to parents of Indisch, Jewish, Polish-Russian, and Dutch descent, on her blog *Gewoon een Indisch meisje* (Just an

¹⁷ Videos recording parts of the 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 trips organized by these groups are available for viewing on the Nusantara Productions website.

Indisch girl) Nuberg describes herself as researching “the question of what the colonial past means for herself and the Indisch communities in the Netherlands, but also for the people in today’s Indonesia” (2017-current). This manifests itself on her blog in opinion pieces about debates and developments in the Indisch community (for example, Nuberg posted about the 2022 controversy surrounding the “*Revolusi! Indonesia Independent*” exhibition at Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum); posts discussing the ramifications of 350 years of Dutch colonial rule (including a piece reflecting on the Dutch invasion of the Banda Islands in 1621); and posts about modern Indonesia (such as a discussion of the exploitation and environmental destruction of Lake Toba in Sumatra). From the outset, this indicates a strong interest in and curiosity about Indonesia which extends beyond the 1940s to the broader colonial past and Indonesia’s present, an interest shared by other members of the third generation (Captain 2014: 58).

NOSTALGIA

Nostalgia takes different forms for the third generation of a diaspora than for preceding generations. In contrast to first and second generation Indisch Dutch, but like other members of the third generation, Lara Nuberg experiences not nostalgia for the colonial Indies but longing for present-day Indonesia, which she has visited on at least four occasions. Nuberg calls her longing homesickness, a yearning for contemporary Indonesia as opposed to nostalgia for an untouchable past (Nuberg 2017-current; Boym 2001: xiii).¹⁸ Her longing is complicated by her academic background: having completed a Master’s thesis on Dutch military violence in Sumatra during the Independence War, Nuberg is acutely aware of the complexities of the past and their continuing impact on the present.

On her blog, Nuberg expresses her opinions about Indonesia and Dutch engagement with the colonial past. She also relates personal stories, including her trips to Indonesia. Reflecting on her first impressions of Sumatra on her first trip in 2008, Nuberg writes that she recognized something within herself in the Batak people around her: “[I] noticed a striking resemblance between my skin colour and the people there. And that wasn’t all: their voices, their music, they resonated deep within my soul” (Nuberg 2017-current).¹⁹ Nuberg has Batak heritage via her great-great-grandmother. This first visit to Indonesia, during which Nuberg fell in love with Sumatra and its Lake Toba, is what Coles and Timothy term diaspora tourism (Tim Coles and Dallen Timothy 2004). In contrast, a later trip undertaken with her family could be considered heritage tourism: Nuberg and her parents deliberately visited sites important to their family heritage such as the post office in Pontianak,

¹⁸ Lara Nuberg, “Ik heb heimwee naar Indonesië en ik vind het vreselijk irritant en decadent”, *Gewoon een Indisch meisje*, 29 January 2021, available at: <https://www.gewooneenindischmeisje.nl/blog/2021/1/29/ik-heb-heimwee-naar-indonesi-en-ik-vind-het-vreselijk-irritant-en-decadent>.

¹⁹ Lara Nuberg, “A letter to my ancestor - een brief aan mijn voormoeder”, *Gewoon een Indisch meisje*, 10 September 2021, available at: <https://www.gewooneenindischmeisje.nl/blog/2021/9/10/a-letter-to-my-ancestor-eeen-brief-aan-mijn-voormoeder>.

Kalimantan, where Nuberg's great-grandfather worked in the 1930s (Yaniv Poria, Richard Butler, and David Airey 2003; Nuberg 2017-current).²⁰ During these trips she also creates her own memories of present-day Indonesia. Writing during the Covid-19 pandemic when international travel was limited, Nuberg shared the following about her longing for Indonesia:

I long to sit on a plastic chair on the side of a busy street, for a stall decked out with many different dishes from Padang, or for a street vendor with one wok; the best fried rice you'll ever eat. I long for the warmth you can never describe until you've felt it. The warmth that smells sweet, of clove cigarettes, durian and petrol. I long for hotel rooms in which your eyes constantly prickle from the smell of mothballs; iced tea with big chunks of ice that travel guides warn you not to drink. I long for friends in Jakarta, Medan, Yogyakarta and Ubud [...] I long for the green, the tropics that beat cement and cracked asphalt every time. I long for long train journeys across Java, the conversations with strangers who ask me where I come from. (Good question, where do I come from?). (Nuberg 2017-current).²¹

At first glance this reads like first generation *tempo doeloe* nostalgia, idealizing the past. Yet there are clear differences: Nuberg writes of Jakarta not Batavia, of hotel rooms in cosmopolitan cities and a quest for identity and belonging rooted in colonialism. These separate her longing from first generation nostalgia for a lost home. Instead, they indicate longing for a twenty-first-century country from which she is cut off, a place where she has made transnational connections with Indonesian friends and colleagues. Yet Nuberg is self-critical: "am I not romanticizing all this?" (2017-current).²² She asks herself whether her homesickness for Indonesia is akin to her grandmother's nostalgia for the Indies; she is also aware of her privileged position as a European-born woman with access to money and international flights (global pandemics aside). This critical self-reflection is characteristic of some third generation journeys into memory and identity: these members of the third generation regard *tempo doeloe* as repossessing something (the Indies) which did not belong to first generation Indisch Dutch to begin with – for them, *tempo doeloe* "represents a morally unacceptable longing for racial, cultural, and socio-economic superiority" (Ana Dragojlovic 2014: 482-483). Instead, they acknowledge that the archipelago belongs to Indonesians. Both this generational distance and her academic training as a historian allow Nuberg to reflect critically on first generation nostalgia and distinguish it from her own longing for Indonesia.

²⁰ Lara Nuberg, "Zestig dagen Indonesië, blog 3 – Soms is Indisch zijn verwarrend", *Gewoon een Indisch meisje*, 12 May 2018, available at: <https://www.gewooneenindischmeisje.nl/blog/2018/5/12/zestig-dagen-indonesi-blog-3-soms-is-indisch-zijn-verwarrend>.

²¹ Lara Nuberg, "Ik heb heimwee naar Indonesië en ik vind het vreselijk irritant en decadent", *Gewoon een Indisch meisje*, 29 January 2021, available at: <https://www.gewooneenindischmeisje.nl/blog/2021/1/29/ik-heb-heimwee-naar-indonesi-en-ik-vind-het-vreselijk-irritant-en-decadent>.

²² Lara Nuberg, "Ik heb heimwee naar Indonesië en ik vind het vreselijk irritant en decadent", *Gewoon een Indisch meisje*, 29 January 2021, available at: <https://www.gewooneenindischmeisje.nl/blog/2021/1/29/ik-heb-heimwee-naar-indonesi-en-ik-vind-het-vreselijk-irritant-en-decadent>.

Esther Captain suggests that the role of the third generation is to challenge previous generations (Captain 2003: 260). In the early 2000s, some third generation Indisch Dutch youth attended parties and events celebrating their Asian heritage; others, such as the group *Darah Ketiga* (Third Generation), followed their grandparents, the first generation, in rejecting “Indonesianness” as an identity – these groups have defined Indisch identity in terms more akin to *tempo doeloe* than the celebration of Asian roots embraced by the party scene (Steijlen 2018: 167-168). Lara Nuberg aligns more with the first group: she accepts the Asian aspect of Indisch identity and challenges *tempo doeloe* nostalgia. In 2018, Nuberg criticized journalist Kester Freriks’ pamphlet *Tempo doeloe, een omhelzing* (Tempo doeloe, an embrace), which asserted that discussion of the colonial period should not focus on negatives like slavery and Dutch violence but should incorporate positive memories of the Indies (Freriks 2018). Coinciding with the commencement of the government-funded cross-institutional research project *Independence, Decolonisation, Violence and War in Indonesia, 1945-1950*, Freriks’ pamphlet divided the Indisch community: first generation migrants felt it reflected their memories of “the good old days” while younger generations criticized Freriks’ rose-coloured view. For Nuberg, discussion of the colonial past should be inclusive and decolonial. Remembering only the positives, she argues, perpetuates colonial racism in the present-day Netherlands by continuing to suppress the voices of groups marginalized and disadvantaged in the colonial period, such as Indonesians, Moluccans, and Indisch Dutch (Nuberg 2017-current).²³ Concluding a seminar about colonial legacies in 2019, Nuberg stated:

The lack of understanding history through the perspective of the oppressed caused a lot of unnecessary hate and grief in my own family. But I don’t want to look down on Indonesia like my grandma did, and I don’t want to look down on the people whose blood is literally running through my veins. What I want is to understand history, and to find peace with it. And that understanding I can only find if I know [...] the truth, and the true colours of colonialism. (Nuberg 2019a).

This illustrates a key difference between third and first generation Indisch Dutch: the third generation is by default distanced from the traumatic past of the 1940s (De Vries 2009: 264-265). This generational, temporal, and geographical distance enables Lara Nuberg to examine first generation nostalgia critically to see the realities of colonialism: racism, not civilization; slavery, not employment; resistance, not terrorism. For her, *tempo doeloe* is a form of repossession of the colonial past that denies the truth (Nuberg 2019b). She observes, “If the Indies had really been so wonderful, without racism, without slavery, without war and without duress – then there would have been a good chance that the colony would still exist” (Nuberg 2019b).

²³ Lara Nuberg, “Waarom ik nogal misselijk word van Kester Freriks’ opiniestuk in het NRC”, *Gewoon een Indisch meisje*, 9 October 2018, available at: <https://www.gewooneenindischmeisje.nl/blog/2018/10/9/waarom-ik-nogal-misselijk-word-van-kester-freriks-opiniestuk-in-het-nrc>.

CONNECTIONS WITH INDONESIA

Marlene de Vries notes that for some third generation Indisch Dutch Indonesia signifies more than the colonial past: it has a meaning “that is tied more to the present” (De Vries 2009: 315). This is true for Lara Nuberg. When visiting Indonesia, she makes new connections and strengthens previously established ties with Indonesian friends and colleagues. An example is her involvement in the transnational initiative “My Story, Shared History (*Kisahku, Sejarah Bersama*)” funded by the organizations Indisch Herinneringscentrum, DutchCulture, and Komunitas Salihara. In July 2019 Nuberg travelled to Jakarta to join six Indonesian and five other Indisch Dutch writers and artists; in pairs, the twelve produced creative pieces addressing Indonesian-Dutch ties. These productions were presented in Jakarta at Komunitas Salihara’s Literature and Ideas Festival (LIFES) and at Amsterdam’s Indonesia Now: Jakarta Edition event in October and November 2019 respectively (Indisch Herinneringscentrum n.d.). Through this initiative Nuberg connected with Indonesian writer Lala Bohang.



Figure 3. Lala Bohang and Lara Nuberg with their art installation, Jakarta, 2019. (Source: Lara Nuberg via Twitter; Reproduced with permission).

Nuberg teamed up with Bohang to prepare an art exhibition for LIFES. Based on a writing project that grew into their book *The Journey of Belonging* (2020), the exhibition explored the continuing impact of Dutch colonialism on the pair’s own lives.²⁴ The installation featured text from the then-forthcoming book – letters Nuberg and Bohang exchanged with each other – printed on

²⁴ The book was awarded the Randal MacDonal Award in 2020.

banners that draped from the ceiling to pile up on the exhibition room floor. Superimposed onto the letters were photos from the writers' personal lives, visually illustrating the continuing connections between their countries (Figure 3). Nuberg shared details about the exhibition, book, and her trip on social media and her blog: her (re)turn narratives and accounts of transnational connections to Indonesia are, like Adriaan van Dis' filmed visit, public. As with Van Dis' documentary, by sharing her (re)turn narratives and opinions about Dutch-Indonesian relations on her blog and social media, Nuberg contributes to shaping collective memory of the Dutch colonial past. At the same time as she shares them publicly, her trips to Indonesia are personal. As for Van Dis, travelling to Indonesia is a way for Lara Nuberg to make sense of herself. (Re)turning to Indonesia is a confrontation with that part of her identity that she conceptualizes as having roots in Indonesia, but at times the (re)turns raise more questions than they resolve:

[When I'm] in Indonesia I feel just how much I carry this country within me, but still I don't find everything I'm looking for. A fresh glass of *cendol* in the tropics is lovely, but most of all I'd like to drink another cup of berry tea with my oma. With one of Wibi Soerjadi's CDs on in the background and the woodcut Javanese fishermen as witnesses. (Nuberg 2017-current).²⁵

This echoes De Vries' finding that third generation Indisch Dutch generally have "rather mixed feelings about their visit" to Indonesia (De Vries 2009: 312). Discussing Australian women writing about living in France, Juliana de Nooy's observation that "belonging [...] seems better achieved at a distance, rather than in proximity to the local [...] population", is also relevant here: Nuberg connects with Indonesia but also becomes more aware of her European identity when in Asia (De Nooy 2020: 32).

As this discussion demonstrates, each of Lara Nuberg's visits to Indonesia has had a different objective (travel, heritage, professional). This differs from other members of the third generation who travel to Indonesia primarily for tourism purposes, to see the land whence their grandparents came. While Nuberg travels to different parts of Indonesia each time she visits – Sumatra, Kalimantan, Java, Bali, the Banda Islands –, some of her peers in the third generation travel only to Bali or to Jakarta, where they experience only a tourist version of Indonesia or are disappointed by the dirty city; in these cases, they find neither identification with the country nor make lasting transnational connections with it or its people (De Vries 2009: 312). Nuberg seems to be somewhat uniquely placed in that she experiences a sense of belonging in Indonesia, as according to Marlene de Vries, the third generation of the Indisch Dutch diaspora generally does not feel fully at home in Indonesia (2009: 312). Nuberg's (re)turns to Indonesia also contrast with first- and second generation Indisch Dutch (re)turns – which focus on particular sites

²⁵ Lara Nuberg, "Zestig dagen Indonesië, blog 5: In Indonesië heb ik constant heimwee", *Gewoon een Indisch meisje*, 1-6-2018, available at: <https://www.gewooneenindischmeisje.nl/blog/2018/6/1/zestig-dagen-indonesi-blog-5-in-indonesi-heb-ik-constant-heimwee>.

of memory and postmemory – in terms of her goals: through her trips she aims to understand both the colonial past and contemporary Indonesia. Her interest in both the past and present allows Lara Nuberg to create long-term transnational connections with Indonesia, both professional and personal.

CONCLUSION

The case studies of Adriaan van Dis and Lara Nuberg examined in this article suggest that travelling to Indonesia can help second- and third generation Indisch Dutch explore questions of identity and memory, and thereby situate themselves within broader Dutch and Indonesian society and create transnational connections with Indonesia. The case studies also show that nostalgia is fundamental to diasporic (re)turns to Indonesia: in contrast to first generation returns earmarked by *tempo doeloe*, Adriaan van Dis visited Indonesia to reconcile questions of personal identity with memories and nostalgia transmitted by his family. For him, (re)turning is about understanding his family's past and where he comes from as an individual, and reconciling present-day Indonesia with postmemories of the Indies. However, Van Dis is too close to the traumas of the 1940s to create lasting connections with the ex-colony. In contrast, third generation visits to Indonesia are less informed by nostalgia than visits by the first or second generation. Rather, Lara Nuberg's travels to Indonesia are motivated by a desire to find roots and the historical past in Indonesia beyond the 1940s: she looks beyond her grandparents to see the broader past as well as the Indonesia of today. Because of the distance between her and the rupture of the 1940s, Nuberg is able to create new, long-term transnational connections with Indonesia and its people, and come to a deeper understanding of her Europeanness.

Through transnational (re)turn journeys like those of Van Dis and Nuberg, diasporic Indisch Dutch make sense of the past by connecting with Indonesia. Although the formats in which Adriaan van Dis and Lara Nuberg publicized their (re)turn trips differ – a documentary aired on national television versus social media posts and a co-authored book –, both journeys have been shared publicly and can therefore impact the way in which the Indisch past is remembered in the Netherlands. Both Van Dis and Nuberg are public figures in the Netherlands, although Van Dis is the better-known of the two. Similarly, their public status garners them a broad audience and allows their (re)turn narratives to shape remembrance of the Indisch past. Their stories are able to be consumed and internalized by more people than are (re)turn accounts by everyday Indisch Dutch. Van Dis and Nuberg's narratives are also consumed by different groups: Adriaan van Dis is a nationally known celebrity figure who attained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s as a successful television presenter, whereas Lara Nuberg is much younger and known primarily in Indisch Dutch and academic circles for her opinions on developments in the Indisch community. The generational gap between the two also means that Adriaan van Dis had spent decades writing about and researching his family's past prior to filming the documentary *Van Dis in Indonesië*, while

The Journey of Belonging marks the beginning of a professional working relationship between Lara Nuberg and Lala Bohang. These observations might suggest a tentative trend in relation to transnationalism between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Although this article is a small-scale study and is not representative of second- and third generation Indisch Dutch interactions with Indonesia, it could indicate that the greater the generational distance from the traumas of the 1940s, the greater the likelihood that Indisch Dutch descendants might create lasting transnational connections with Indonesia and Indonesians. At the same time, however, it is often the heritage connection to the Indies/Indonesia – sometimes genetic, as for individuals of mixed Indonesian-European descent; sometimes historical, through the familial link to the former colony; and sometimes both – which serves to pique interest in the country, and generational distance from this heritage and identity could equally lead to decreased interest in Indonesia among Indisch Dutch descendants in future generations. However, this remains to be seen and in the cases of Adriaan van Dis and Lara Nuberg, at least, interest in Indonesia and their personal connections to this country and its people remain strong. For these two writers, connections between Indonesia and the Netherlands endure because of their shared past.

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