National identity in a changing international context[1]

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Changing times for national identity: ties and traditions

The 300th anniversary of the city of St Petersburg in 2003 was considered by the Dutch government to be a good occasion to celebrate the historical ties between the Netherlands and Russia.[2] Ten years later, initiated by the Russians, the two countries celebrated 400 years of diplomatic ties.[3] In both cases, the program consisted of economic missions, visits of the heads of state, and numerous cultural exchanges (e.g. exhibitions and performing arts) took place. There was however one major difference. The festivities in 2003 were a success (although there was not much media coverage), in 2013 demonstrations were held during the visit of Vladimir Putin to Amsterdam, and most of the media coverage on the celebrations was on numerous incidents – for example the arrest of a Russian diplomat on allegations of abusing his children and the beating of an openly gay Dutch diplomat in his apartment in Russia. As a result, some Dutch politicians publicly questioned whether it was appropriate to celebrate historical and cultural ties in a time where diplomatic relations were under pressure.[4] Since then, the relation with Russia has been chilled, with the crash of flight MH-17 from Schiphol Airport to Malaysia in the Ukraine as an absolute low. Although a formal investigation is still underway, the role of Russia and its connection to the separatist rebels in the Ukraine has been widely discussed in both the public and the political debate.

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[1] This paper is based on chapters of my forthcoming dissertation on the role of national identity in the Dutch international cultural policy discourse

[2] http://www.koninklijkhuis.nl/nieuws/nieuwsberichten/2003/september/prins-van-oranje-en-prinses-maxima-bezoeken-stpetersburg/, last visited July 8th, 2015

[3] In 1613 Michael Romanov was elected the first czar of Russia; with his election the

[4] https://d66.nl/stop-met-viering-nederland-rusland-jaar/, last visited July 8th, 2015

It seems to be a recurring pattern: controversies surrounding the celebration of historic ties with a special year of celebrations. Such events became part of the Dutch International Cultural Policy (ICP) at the turn of the century as an instrument to propagate the cultural profile of the Netherlands abroad. They were seen as a good way to illuminate the role of culture in international ties, and at the same time emphasize the role of history and traditions in the nations´ own national identity. But pretty much every celebration has fallen subject of debate. Celebrations of diplomatic ties with Japan (2000), Morocco (2009) and Turkey (2012) also led to fierce debates on the nature of these historic relations in recent times. The celebrations around Japan – in 2009 400 years of economic ties were celebrated – led to requests from survivors of WWII for formal excuses from Japan for their wrongdoings. In 2009, the Netherlands and Morocco celebrated the fact that 40 years earlier the two countries had signed an agreement on the recruitment of workers in Morocco. The Dutch politician Geert Wilders publicly opposed this celebration, in line with his critical remarks on the presence of Moroccan immigrants and their Islamic background. The celebration of the 400 years of diplomatic ties with Turkey in 2012 was again seized by Wilders to express his dissatisfaction over the Turkish[5] government and its alleged Islamic agenda. Although the celebrations still took place, the media attention Wilders generated had a negative effect on the public opinion on these events. The controversies also raise the question whether celebrating historic ties is suitable as an instrument for ICP.

In this article I want to look at the way this changing role of the international context for national cultural identity is addressed in the Dutch ICP. This incident is an example of a more fundamental question, namely the increased influence of the international context on the perception of historic ties and traditions, both of which play an important role in the construction of a national identity. The example shows that seemingly stable elements of national cultural identity can become controversial in just a few years´ time. The first step is an exploration of the theoretical discourse on national identity and policy as discourse, as well as the relationship between culture and national identity. Then I take a closer look at the way Dutch international cultural policy has dealt with the changing relationship between culture and nation in the period 1970-2010. Finally, I want to look at the proceeds from this analysis for both the policy discourse and the theoretical discourse on national and cultural identity.

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[5] http://www.volkskrant.nl/dossier-pvv/wilders-geen-viering-van-400-jaar-turkije-president-gul-niet-welkom~a3041549/ , last visited July 8th 2015

National identity

For my definition of national identity I turn to the Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak and her research on Austrian national identity as presented in *The discursive construction of national identity* (Wodak 1999). In the introduction of this study Wodak elaborates on the relationship between the concepts 'identity', 'national identity' and 'culture identity'. She defines identity as "the relationship between two or more related entities in a manner that asserts the sameness or equality" (Wodak, 1999: 11). This definition clearly indicates that identity is only meaningful in connection to 'the other'; the definition emphasizes similarity and communality as characteristics of identity. This is a clear choice: identity can also be considered as defining in which one differs from the other.

Wodak frequently refers to the work of the British sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall, who labels identity as "a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990: 222). According to Hall the identity is not represented, but the representation itself is the identity. He therefore prefers to use the term 'identification', a term which emphasizes the process of submission to a discursive practice (Hall 1996: 16). Wodak follows this path when she looks for explicit and implicit representations of national identity, of which traditions are just one of the many examples.

Another theoretical choice of Wodak is her preference to use the notion of a narrative identity, a concept she borrows from the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. In her opinion this approach to identity does more justice to its dynamic character: "Narrative identity allows various, different, partially contradictory circumstances to be integrated into a coherent temporal structure, thus making it possible to sketch a person's identity against the background of a dynamic constancy model-which does justice to the coherence of a human life. Thus the concept of narrative identity can go beyond the one-sided model of an invariant, self-identical thing. It can take into account the idea that the self can never be grasped without the other, without change "(Wodak, 1999: 14). Not only does this approach make clear that the identity of an individual is always related to something or someone else, the approach also allows to take the changing circumstances into account that form identity. This last notion is very relevant for this article.

Lastly, Wodak considers the identity of individuals and of groups to be layered: "Individuals as well as collective groups such as nations are in many respects hybrids or identity, and thus the idea of a homogeneous 'pure' identity on the individual or collective level is a deceptive and fiction Illusion "(Wodak, 1999: 16). The term hybrid implies that the layers have influence on each other. Multiple or layered identity therefore also can have a corrective effect: exclusion by one layer does not necessarily mean the exclusion by all other layers (Wodak, 1999: 17). As a consequence a conflict can exist within the identity of the individual. For example, someone's sexual orientation can be in conflict with

one's religious belief. The same goes for national identity; individuals can share a national identity, but at the same time differ greatly in other identity layers such as religion or political affiliation. The other way around, people can be connected through ethnicity, and therefore feel more connected with people in other countries than with the people with whom they share a national identity. The advantage of looking at identity as layered is that it allows for a more relative approach to national identity. It is one of the layers that an individual might feel connected to, but it does not determine one's complete identity.

Policy as discourse

A next step in my theoretical exploration is a closer look at the concept of policy. The Dutch policy scientist Andrew Hoogerwerf defines policy as goals to be achieved in a given period of time with the use of policy instruments (Hoogerwerf 2003: 20). Thus, policy research is aimed at uncovering the policy theory, in the words of Hoogerwerf all assumptions which underpin policy (Hoogerwerf 2003: 22). The American policy scientist Frank Fischer uses a different approach to policy: he considers it to be "a political agreement on a course of action (or inaction) designed to mitigate or resolve a problem on the political agenda. They involvement a specification of ends (goals) and means (or instruments)" (Fischer 1995: 2). Interesting in the definition of Fischer is the use of the term 'agreement'. Fischer stresses that policy is the outcome of a political process. Both definitions use the notions of means and ends, and both emphasize that policy research should be aimed at the policy process.

In his book *Rethinking cultural policy* (McGuigan 2004) and in his contribution to the reader *Critical Cultural Policy Studies* (Miller and Lewis 2003) the British sociologist Jim McGuigan explores the possibilities of a cultural studies approach to the study to cultural policy. In his opinion, the rise of globalization makes it interesting to examine the changing relationship between government, culture and nation state (McGuigan 2004: ix). I agree with him: the increased tension around the nation state as a cultural unity does indeed provide interesting possibilities for research on the consequences for cultural policy. An useful approach is the so-called 'policy-as-discourse', which is for example used by the Australian historian and political scientist Carol Bacchi in her article "Policy as discourse: what does it mean? where does it get us?" (Bacchi 2000). She looks at authorities as institutions which respond to issues of life in society: Thus, "'problems' are' created 'or have a given shape' in the very policy proposals that are offered as responses"(Bacchi 2000: 48) . Policy is in this case not a response to a problem that occurs in the community, but a process in society where importance is attached to events using terms such as 'problem' and 'solution'. The concepts used in policy texts are not fixed but are starting points for further action (Bacchi 2000: 45). The advantage of this approach to policy is that the focus is not so much on the possible results or effectiveness of policy – in short

the notion of legitimizing policy –, but on the contribution of policy to the more general discourse on the issues addressed in those policy texts. In my particular case, it is interesting to see how the policy discourse is influenced by the changing relationship between nation, culture and globalization. The advantage is also that research is not so much looking for evidence whether policy has responded correctly to the changes in society, but focuses on the changes in discourse and tries to explain those changes in terms of e.g. dominance of political ideologies in within the policy discourse.

Culture and national identity

During the formation of nation states a common history and an underlying common culture and culture were often used to promote national unity, but successive migration waves have disturbed this cultural unity and common historical background (e.g. Ben-Amos 1999). Particularly the notion of a shared cultural identity is under pressure. Before taking a closer look at the way Dutch ICP has responded to the changing cultural relations between nation states, I want to look into the theoretical debate on this phenomenon of the growing tensions between the collective nature of national identity and the high degree of cultural diversity of its citizens.

The American anthropologist and political scientist Benedict Anderson defines the nation as an imagined community (Anderson 2006 [1983]). The term 'imaginary' refers to the inability of the community members to personally know all the other members of the community. Although in recent debates on national identity the territorial borders of the nation state are considered by some to be the natural and indisputable borders of the national community, the relationship between the concepts of 'nation' and 'state' is more complex. As the British philosopher, sociologist and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner stated: "The state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation. Some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state. It is more debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose the prior existence of the state" (Gellner 1983: 6). With the rise of the nation state as a regime of the late 18th century, the population of those states often consisted of a community that was connected by a shared culture. Gellner argues that the members of this community were joined by "a common culture, understandings, meanings etc.; and the acknowledgement that the other is a fellow national and the recognition of mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of shared membership in it" (Gellner 1983: 7). Hall also points to this connection between nationhood and cultural identity, and to the emerging awareness in the 19th century that the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but was formed in its relation to "significant others, who mediated to the subject the values, meanings, and symbols - the culture - of the worlds he / she inhabited "(Hall 1996: 597). When speaking about the individual it was therefore necessary to use concepts that could

serve as a bridge between "the 'inside' and the 'outside' - between the personal and the public worlds" (Hall 1996: 597-598). Identity was introduced as such a concept, and Hall states about cultural identity that "the fact that we project 'ourselves' into these cultural identities, at the same time internalizing their meanings and values, making them 'part of us', helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world" (Hall 1996: 597-598). Thus, cultural identity ensured stability for both the individual and its environment.

According to Hall, the construction of a unified national culture and the stability it caused contributed significantly to the fact that the nation-state has played a major role in the world history of the 19th and 20th century: "The formation of a national culture helped to create standards of universal literacy, generalized a single vernacular language as the dominant medium of communication throughout the nation, created a homogeneous culture and maintained national cultural institutions, such as a national education system. In these and other ways, national culture became a key feature of industrialization and an engine of modernity. […] National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify, they are contained in the stories which are told about it, – memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it" (Hall 1996: 612-613). According to Hall national identity only exists in its representations: "It follows that a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings - a system of cultural representation. People are not only legal citizens of a nation; They participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture" (Hall 1996: 612). Earlier in this article I already mentioned the importance of the concept of representation in Hall´s work. Culture played an important role in representing the nation state, and culture itself was represented in e.g. traditions and the arts.

Hall distinguishes a number of strategies in the discursive construction of the nation. An important concept for him is the narrative: the nation gets meaning in "national histories, literatures, the media, and popular culture. These provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols, and rituals which stand for, or represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation" (Hall 1996: 613). Characteristic of a narrative is that it is repeatedly told, and that the nation is thus only created by the telling of its narrative. There must be a clear moment that marks the beginning of the nation; at the same time the nation also tries to prevent to be seen as something which may be finite (Hall, 1996: 614). A shared history is another characteristic of the nations' narrative. National identity is also about collectiveness; Hall refers to the British historian Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1983) and his concept of the invented traditions, traditions that have been devised to create a feeling of togetherness, of belonging. These traditions can be accomplished by a shared history, "Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin

and sometimes invented […] Invented tradition [means] a set of practices,… of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition which automatically implies continuity with a suitable historical past" (Hall 1996: 614). A tradition has a starting point, but it is not always desirable to start talks on this, because seeing a tradition as a historical phenomenon makes it possible to eliminate or change the tradition as well. Where citizens have a different cultural identity, traditions can be in conflict with the objective unity of national identity. A final important strategy in connecting the national community is the common language, a feature of national culture which is frequently mentioned in policy debates and that as a result of migration and globalization increasingly is under pressure as a shared characteristic of the citizens of the nation state.

This list of strategies is not so much a simple checklist for the construction of a national identity. It helps to clarify the complicated nature of national identity as a collective identity. The idea of a shared history becomes more complicated when different readings of historic events are presented. An interesting example of his is the German history, in which different stories of the Cold War exist. Also the idea of shared traditions can change over time, and as the Dutch debate on Sinterklaas in the Netherlands has shown the increase in cultural diversity can provide tensions around the nature of some of these traditions. [6] Furthermore, the idea of a shared language is an issue of debate in many countries. In short, the concepts that helped to create unity in the construction of national identity might not be useful to maintain that unity. But still national culture plays an important role in maintaining the nation state as a strong actor in world politics.

A changing context…

Hall also didn't consider the unity of national and cultural identity to be variable: "To put it crudely, however different its members may be in terms of class, gender, or race, a national culture seeks to unify them into one cultural identity, to represent them all as belonging to the same great national family. But is national identity a unifying identity of this kind which cancels or subsumes cultural difference? […] Most modern nations consist of disparate cultures which were only unified by a lengthy process of violent conquest – that is, by the forcible suppression of cultural difference" (Hall 1996: 616-17). Although the use of the concept of national cultural identity implies that there is cultural unity, this unity is regularly enforced and exist within the national group numerous other cultural contradictions that undermine unity.

The Polish-British sociologist Zygmunt Bauman elaborates on these changes in his book *Culture in a liquid modern world* (Bauman 2011), in which he discusses the concept

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[6] I will elaborate on this debate at the end of this article. The main controversy was on the role of the black-faced assistant of Sinterklaas, Zwarte Piet

of culture in relation to globalization. In the course of the 20th century as a result of globalization, the cultural unity of the nation-states has been increasingly undermined. The formation of nation-states and the associated role of national culture as a unifying factor for the citizens had ensured stability for many years, but according to Bauman three waves of migration led to a gradual degradation of this stability (Bauman 2011: 34). The first migration wave consisted of two elements: 1) an increase in emigration to the new continents and 2) colonization. This occurred mainly in the 19th century. The second wave went the opposite direction: immigration (or re-migration) from the former colonies: "They settled in cities where they were to be fitted into the only worldview and strategic model available to date, the model of assimilation, created in the early phase of nation-building as a way of dealing with ethnic minorities, linguistic or cultural. For the sake of their assimilation, intended to unify the nation being shaped under the aegis of a modern state, the newcomers were turned into 'minorities' (though admittedly with ever diminishing conviction, eagerness or chances of success), into the subjects of cultural crusades, Kulturkampf and proselytizing missions" (Bauman 2011: 34-35). Bauman uses the term 'diaspora' for the third wave of migration, which according to him shakes up the previously unbreakable bond between identity and nationality, the individual and his residence, the physical neighbourhood and cultural identity (Bauman 2011: 36). Every country sees both emigration and immigration of cultural groups, thus diminishing the role of culture as an obvious collective layer of national identity. Hall also talks about this fading stability, which according to him ensures that the concept of 'identity' is back in motion: " The very process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more open-ended, variable, and problematic" (Hall 1996: 596). The resistance that is felt because of this change is a clear signal that national identity had become an important element in the individual identity, and is by many considered a natural part of their identity (Hall, 1996: 611-612).

… changing policy?

In brief, the concept of culture has played an important role in shaping national identity during the creation of nation states in the 19th century. As a result cultural and national identity have long been considered synonymous. In the second half of the 20th century the increasing globalization led to a debate on the derogation of national autonomy, and at the same time migration flows caused an increasing cultural diversity within the territorial limits of the nation state. The question is how this change is reflected in the place of culture in external relations and on the place of cultural diversity in cultural policy. When looking at the Netherlands, the policy area in which this issue is mostly addressed is the interdepartmental policy field of foreign cultural affairs (1970-1996) and international cultural policy (1997-) (Minnaert 2009, 2012, 2013).

Phase one: bilateral treaties

On May 16, 1946 the Dutch Foreign Minister Herman van Roijen and the Belgian Ambassador to the Netherlands Leon Nemry signed a treaty between the Netherlands and Belgium concerning cultural and intellectual relations. The treaty marked a major change in the Dutch approach to cultural relations with foreign countries. Until then private initiative was leading and the Dutch government had been reluctant to play an active role. But World War II had severely affected the strength of individuals and a more active role of the government in the eyes of the government is necessary and desirable. The Convention focused on the exchange and cooperation in the fields of culture and education. Interestingly, the treaty allowed for the creation of a cultural institute in the other country and the intention was expressed to preserve and expand the shared cultural interests abroad. This addition made clear that the two government assumed there was a shared common cultural interest abroad. This is partially understandable because of the shared history of the two countries; but the both countries have many cultural differences. Incidentally, it would take until 1980, when the establishment of the Language Union marked a clear common language policy. After the treaty with Belgium more countries followed.

Between 1946 and 1970, the Netherlands signed a total of 22 bilateral cultural agreements, but an overarching policy framework in which the choice of the contracting parties or the content of the treaties was further explored, was never formulated. After the treaty with it culturally most neighbouring country Belgium followed treaties with Western European (neighbouring) countries: France (1946), the United Kingdom (1948), Luxembourg (1949), Italy (1951), Greece (1953) , Norway (1955) and Germany (1961). Interestingly, in the same period in the Council of Europe also talked about cultural exchanges between the Member States. This resulted in 1954 in a European Cultural Convention. This convention was reflected in a passage in the treaty between the Netherlands and Germany in 1961 that referred to the pursuit of the common cause of European culture.

After signing cultural treaties with neighbouring countries, the focus shifted eastward: treaties were signed with Yugoslavia (1966), Poland (1967), Romania (1967), the Soviet Union (1967) and Hungary (1968). Formal treaties were considered a suitable instrument to stay in contact with countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain. These treaties - in contrast to the European Cultural Convention and the treaties with the Western European countries, caused considerably more uproar in parliament. Especially the ratification of the treaty with the Soviet Union led to emotional debates, and the invasion of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia in 1968 even led to a temporary suspension of the ratification procedures. A year after the abrupt end of the Prague Spring, the restarting of

negotiations was debated in parliament. The main argument of the proponents was that culture could help to decrease tensions between East and West. MP Piet Dankert – who two decades later as Secretary of State would be responsible for some major policy changes – stated that a cultural agreement between the Netherlands and the Soviet Union would only be worth ratifying if used as a means to bring East and West closer together (TK 1968/1969: 3809). MP Piet de Jong diametrically opposed this position, and refused to close any kind of pact with tyrants (TK 1968/1969: 3809). Although other MPs did agree with de Jong's critical attitude towards the Soviet regime, the majority of the MPs decided the treaty was a useful tool for detente. The treaty was ratified the same year.

Around the same time the Netherlands also closed treaties with several countries outside of Europe: South Africa (1951), Iran (1959), Egypt (1960), Turkey (1960), Mexico (1964), Tunisia (1964), Brazil (1966), Colombia (1966) and Indonesia (1968). On closer inspection - at first glance, the list seems pretty eclectic - all these treaties can be explained by the desire to (literally) have access to and commemorate Dutch history. Although the former ties with South Africa and Indonesia dated back to the colonial period, in the treaties there was no direct reference to this nature of the relationship. The treaty with Indonesia contained a passage on the desire to strengthen the existing relations between the two countries, and the treaty with South Africa mentioned the friendly contacts between the nations. These treaties also led to debates in parliament. The most fierce debate took place on the treaty with South Africa, which was suspended in the seventies because of the apartheid regime in that country. With the other non-European signatory countries extended trade relations had existed in the past, which were revived with the cultural treaty. With Turkey diplomatic ties existed since 1612, and in Iran (formally Persia) plenty of VOC posts were still present. Mexico, Brazil and Colombia used to be major trading partners in the South American region.

There are several ways to connect the cultural treaties to the discourse on national identity. The cultural treaties were a tool to position the nation in the post WWII-world. Relations with other nations were still considered bilateral, and culture was a good way to get to know the other nation(s). At the same time culture was a tool for détente in the Cold War, and a means to position the nation within the global balance of power. Although cultural treaties were used as a tool for foreign policy, its main objective was to facilitate and promote cultural exchange. The treaties contained formally stated intentions to intensify cultural and intellectual exchange between the countries. Cultural heritage was also part of these agreements, and the treaties thus offered access to the tangible traces of the Netherlands as a global player. The Netherlands was a nation with a rich history, and particularly during our Golden Age (17th century) the Netherlands was an important player

in the world. The cultural treaties acknowledged this role and articulated this element of national identity.

Phase 2: a shift in focus
In 1987 the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) published a report on the cultural foreign relations in 1987 in which they recommended a shift of focus to cultural policy of the joint policy on foreign cultural relations (WRR 1987, Minnaert 2012). They deemed it desirable that the department of culture developed a more distinct vision on the changing role of culture in a globalizing world. This resulted in increased attention for internationalization in consecutive policy papers, and in a decrease in the role of the department of foreign affairs (Minnaert 2009, 2015). The lack of funds however delayed measurable changes for quite a few years, causing frustration in parliament that the proposed changes only remained words. But when extra funds did become available in 1997 (the so-called HGIS-Culture Funds), an increase in the presence of the Dutch cultural institutes was clearly noticeable.

The WRR-report of 1987 was a clear response to the lack of progress in the policy on foreign cultural relations and the increased economic approach of culture in those relations. In a speech at the ambassadors' conference in February 1985, the minister of Culture Elco Brinkman had called culture the lubricant for economic ties, a comment that was widely criticized in both parliament and the cultural field. His remark was an unmistakable signal that the arts were considered a useful way to distinguish the nation, and that because of tough economic times the economic gain of foreign relations was considered more important than the intrinsic value of cultural exchange. The 1985 policy paper on foreign cultural relations (TK 1984/1985b) was heavily criticized in parliament; some MPs even stated that in their opinion they could repeat the comments they made on previous policy documents of 1976 (TK 1976/1977b) and 1970 (TK 1970/1971b). Their main critique was a lack of coherence in the activities that were supported by the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Culture and Education, but also the dominant position of the arts exchange in the interpretation of cultural affairs.

Consecutive ministers and state secretaries followed the WRR-advice. In 1992 minister of culture Hedy d'Ancona published her policy paper *Investeren in cultuur [Investing in culture]* (WVC 1992), in which she discussed the concepts of cultural diversity and internationalization. She stated that the increased cultural diversity within the nation state needed to be addressed in cultural policy, but that at the same time national culture was an important good that needed protection. This ambivalent position towards national identity and cultural diversity (protecting and change) evoked much criticism in parliament, especially because she also proposed a budget cut for the cultural field. In her opinion, internationalization in culture also meant that the discourse on artistic quality was no

longer strictly national. The risk however was that the international discourse became leading; she considered it the task of the Council for Culture to find a balance between the two. This also caused much criticism, because no extra funds became available to support these international ambitions.

In 1996 secretary of culture Aad Nuis addressed in his policy paper *Pantser of Ruggegraat [armour or spine]* (OCW 1996) the more theoretical question of roles that culture can play in society. In his argumentation he used the two terms in the title of his paper as a metaphor. National culture could be seen as the armour against influences from outside, a perspective he did not support. On the other hand, culture could be considered the spine of a nation. He did not mean that all the citizens needed to have the same cultural background or needed to adjust to a model of Dutch national cultural identity. Exemplary for the Dutch cultural identity was, in the eyes of Nuis, its ability to adjust and to host the different cultures. He considered the Netherlands to be a '*Vrijhaven*' ['free haven'], a place where the international community could meet. This concept of Vrijhaven also was a key element of his international cultural policy, which resulted in extra funds for festivals to invite interesting foreign acts. With his approach he moved away from the idea that national cultural identity needed protection: the international context was a fait accompli and the Netherlands might as well be the place where the global community took place.

The economic crisis in the 1980s made clear that the world could no longer be considered only in terms of autonomous nations. The nation was an actor on the world stage, in which all nation states were interconnected. This changed the perspective from bilateral relations with other nations to multilateral relations with the rest of the world. As a consequence, in foreign cultural relations focus on the cultural identity as part of a bilateral relation was replaced with the desire to describe the Netherlands as a nation in the world community with a clear cultural profile: culture as a tool.

This chance in perspective did not immediately lead to changes in policy. Because the policy on foreign cultural relations originated in cultural treaties, the policy focus was still very much bilateral. Its main result was an extensive exchange in the fields of culture and science. The role of the government in this international cultural meeting was limited, because of limited funds available. But the role was also clear: supporting exchange, not participation on a much wider scale. As a result of the changes the distinction between national and international cultural policy faded during this period, and the terminology used in these national cultural policy papers became leading for the discourse on international cultural policy. This also meant that ICP became more involved in the current cultural practice.

The concept of history has an interesting place in the policy discourse in this period. In the notion of Holland Promotion there was room for the nations´ history, but more the

favourable part of history. The image of the Netherlands as a successful nation with a rich trading history was desirable; the country needed to be an attractive partner to work with. With the shift to cultural policy, the focus of policy was on participating in the international arena and not so much on presenting the nation. Heritage did get attention in a different way: with the extra funds also some projects on researching Dutch heritage abroad were supported. For example projects in South Africa and Indonesia, where traces of the East Indies Company were explored. This shows that in this fin-de-siècle the interest in the nations' history increased, and that the sensitivities surrounding the colonial past seemed to recede into the background.

Phase 3: denationalized arts and a national debate on identity
The change in policy and the subsequent extra funds the international exchange caused a boom in the international presence of Dutch artists in different disciplines. But as described this exchange no took place in bilateral terms; rather, a global platform developed independently of national interests. As the Dutch sociologist Ton Bevers states (Bevers 2012), artists were 'denying their nationality´: they did not consider themselves to be representatives of a national culture, but autonomous actors in a global network. The arts were thus on the one hand not part of the representation of national identity, even though they helped to give the country a face in the world. At the same time, the fact that the Dutch artists did deny their nationality was by some seen as typical for the Dutch. A classic description of the Dutch is the salesman and the priest: always able to adapt to the desires of the buyer.

At the same time the growing cultural diversity described earlier in this article led to questions regarding the idea of a uniting national culture. Successive ministers had paid special attention to cultural diversity as a theme in their national cultural policy agenda, but this had only led to plans for the professional cultural field. Halfway through the first decade of the 21st century the sentiment in the Netherlands changed drastically with de assassinations of the politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and the cineaste Theo van Gogh in 2004. The first assassination led to increased tensions between the political left and right; the assassin declared that he saw Fortuyn as a threat to all the weak people in society. The assassination of Van Gogh was religiously motivated. His assassin declared that Van Gogh had offended the Islam with his short film *Submission*. This incident increased the tensions between the different cultural groups within Dutch society, bringing to the surface the tensions that publicist Paul Scheffer had labelled the multicultural drama in his much-debated article in the NRC in 2000 (Scheffer 2000).

The increased attention for national identity led to a national debate on the relation between history and national identity. In 2006 the commission Van Oostrom published the official historical canon (Oostrom 2006), in which they presented 50 windows that could

be used in schools to teach the Dutch history. A shared history is an important element of a nations' identity (e.g. Hall 1996). But with the increase of cultural diversity, also different readings of history were present within the territorial borders and the national identity discourse. One of the main critiques on that canon was that it was very nationally focused. The critics would have liked to have seen some more connection to the world history. The canon was implemented in schools, but the contemplated Museum of national history was never established. It was a first step in what I would call the nationalization of the debate on national identity.

A second step was taken in 2007, when the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy published a report on national identity titled *Identification with the Netherlands* (WRR 2007). With the report, the WRR tried to evoke a more nuanced debate on national identity and on the role of the government in that debate. One of the claims they made was that there was too much emotional identification with Dutch identity, whereas the functional and normative identification with Dutch identity were needed to bring balance in the debate. But despite the call from the WRR not to place the identity debate in the integration debate, since then national identity seems to have disappeared from the cultural policy discourse (Minnaert 2015). Cultural diversity was no longer a clear topic in national cultural policy, and ICP shifted to cultural and economic diplomacy.

The first few years this denationalization of the arts was accepted, most likely because the success of the arts reflected on the nation as a whole. But when the debate on national identity erupted in the 21st century, it almost seemed as if cultural policy no longer was connected to the discourse on identity. With the national canon the academic world attempted to open up the identity debate by stating that there is no such thing as **the** history of the Netherlands. But despite their attempts to use the canon as a stepping stone to a broader debate, the canon was implemented in secondary education and has since barely been debated. The second attempt to a nuanced debate on national identity was taken in the WRR-report of 2007; but again, the debate stalled and the suggestion to speak of identification instead of identity was not accepted. National identity was considered by the policy makers as a topic in the immigration discourse, and cultural policy was reduced to the maintenance of a national cultural infrastructure.

Again, history plays an interesting role in this period. The developments in ICP seem to stand apart from the erupting debate on national identity. The only debate seems to be on bringing more focus and coherence in the supported activities, but there is no fundamental debate on Dutch identity. With the decreasing national support for the arts the possibilities for international exchange decrease. They seem to be replaced by the aforementioned celebrations of cultural and diplomatic ties. There is still money for international cultural exchange, but the clock seems to have turned back to the 1980s.

The extra funds for international cultural exchange are no longer freely available. Half of those funds were transferred to the national cultural funds as part of their regular internationalization funds; the other half was used for strategic choices. The first period extra funds became available for design, fashion and architecture, three fields with economic potential. Diplomacy has become leading in the policy texts again, and the related term economic diplomacy makes it very clear that economic interests again weight heavier than cultural ties (Minnaert 2012).

Concluding remarks

What I have tried to show with this article, is that the approach of policy as discourse offers interesting insights in the interpretation of policy changes. Policy is not treated as a solution to a problem, but as a part of a wider discourse on specific issues, in this case the changing connection between culture and nation. I looked at how this change is reflected in Dutch ICP, with specific interest in the role of history and other elements that can be considered representations of national culture.

In the early days of ICP the cultural treaty was the key instrument used in the international cultural exchange. The first policy texts literally referred to the need for a more general policy framework for the activities that were generated by those treaties. The use of cultural agreements showed that there was a growing awareness of the solidarity with other countries, and that culture was regarded as the characteristic of a country. You can learn from other people by getting acquainted with his culture. The struggle to formulate a comprehensive policy in the 1980s is illustrative for the shift from a bilateral to a multilateral approach to that relationship. In the eighties, the foreign cultural relations are explicitly used as a tool to manifest Netherlands as attractive or interesting partner. The relations between countries is changing as well. No longer the goal is to get to know the other countries. The world becomes a context in which the Netherlands must try to gain a foothold. Culture can serve as a means to highlight the Netherlands and provide an identity in the world.

In the nineties, policy starts to focus on supporting the international ambitions of the cultural sector. When the ICP switched to a focus on cultural policy, the specific role of culture in bilateral relations was replaced by the participation of the Dutch cultural field in the international arena. The shift from presentation to participation also marks the release of the arts as representation for national culture. On a national level, this leads to a debate on the consequences of globalization and migration and the increased cultural diversity within the borders of nation states for cultural policy. It becomes clear that culture is no longer suitable to describe what characterizes countries. This allows for historical ties with foreign nations as a way to shape the profile of the Netherlands. Ironically, the arts turn out to be the most important participants in those celebrations. But in the mid-noughties

the introduction of more economic and diplomatic goals in the more recent ICB shows that, partly as a result of the global economic crisis, the focus of foreign policy has shifted to maintaining good economic relations. Culture can serve as a tool to shape the nations' brand, but cultural differences should however not hinder the diplomatic relations.

It appears that as a response to the increased attention on cultural tensions within the national borders, the identity debate has become a national debate. ICP nor national cultural policy play any significant role in this debate. This is strange, because in the years leading up to this situation the tensions between cultural diversity had played a significant role in cultural policy, and national identity and historic ties had played a role in ICP. Apparently, the changing international context of national identity has led to an inward turn of the identity discourse.

But even that debate cannot hide itself from the international context, as the recent controversy around the Dutch tradition of Sinterklaas shows. In June 2014 a special United Nations-committee lead by Mireille Fanon-Mendes-France visited the Netherlands. The committee investigated a wide range of issues concerning the human rights of people of African descent in the country.[7] One of the issues that got a lot of media attention was their inquiry into the alleged racist nature of one of the main figures in the Dutch tradition of *Sinterklaas*, '*Zwarte Piet'* (black Piet). This black-faced figure, generally described as the assistant of Sinterklaas, had in the past often been depicted as dumb and submissive. Although his appearance and role had changed over times, in recent years members of the black community considered his role in this tradition offensive and called for changes in the tradition. As a part of this national debate on the black nature of *Zwarte Piet*, different stories on the origin of the tradition and *Zwarte Piet* were contributed by all kinds of scholars and experts. The Jamaican social historian Verene Shepherd, who was a member of that special UN-commission, had publicly criticized the tradition in 2013, directly connecting the figure of Zwarte Piet to the Dutch history of slavery. She expressed her surprise about the ignorance of the Dutch population to these dark pages in the countries' history and called for a change in this tradition. In return, pro-Sinterklaas activists have tried to get the tradition on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage.

Although the tradition itself had little to do with active cultural policy, over the years Sinterklaas has been part of the cultural profile of the Netherlands that has been presented abroad. Diplomats abroad have had to explain the tradition on several occasions, and of course the questionable nature of Zwarte Piet had been an issue of debate. The formal involvement of the UN however was a very clear signal that a more official response to these comments was necessary. The involvement of the UN also increased the tensions in the national debate. Advocates of the tradition proclaimed that the rest of the world had

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[7]http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14764&LangID=E, last visited july 8th 2015

nothing to do with national affairs. They stated it was never intended to be offensive and that it was a children's party that adults were destroying. But at the same time those opposed to the tradition felt that they were supported by the international community. The debate made clear that even traditions that appear to be at the core of a national culture could no longer be seen in a strictly national context. This might call for a reconsideration of the disappearance of the national identity debate in both national and international cultural policy.

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