

PARTING WAYS



A research on the effects of Brexit on British nationals in the Netherlands

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Preface

Proudly I present to you my bachelor thesis on which I have been working for the last months. This research aims to give an insight into the changes in the daily lives of British citizens living in the Netherlands after Brexit, backed up by several theoretical concepts. A handful of the 44.000 Britons living on the other side of the North Sea have been interviewed. As a student of Geography, spatial planning and environment at Radboud University in Nijmegen, I have always been intrigued by international relations and the EU in particular. My favourite member state of the EU, besides my own country, is the UK. Until the 31st of January 2020, I then had to find another favourite EU member state. However, my weakness for the UK has not decreased much ever since Brexit, although I will never understand why they decided to part ways with 'us'.

In March 2014 I visited the UK for the first time, I spent a weekend in London. One and a half months later, I enjoyed a school trip to Cambridge, the first time I ever went on a trip without my parents. Later, I visited the country in 2015, 2017 and 2019 (time to go this year then sequence-wise), and all these five times I have felt welcome in the UK and explored new parts of the country. And although I have changed my theoretical concepts used in the research multiple times, that is why it was clear from the very start that my bachelor thesis topic would be related to the UK, our big maritime neighbour.

I want to thank my mother for believing in me and supporting me, my father for getting me in contact with the respondents through his business network, my sisters for not getting in the way too often when I was a little stressed, my grandparents and other family members for asking how the writing process progressed and my friends and other fellow students for sharing their experiences with me while writing their theses. I personally want to thank every single respondent, without their information, doing this research would have become extremely difficult. I have found that they all were really happy to help me. And of course I want to thank my two supervisors, Kolar Aparna and Dawit Tesfay Haile. I want to thank Kolar for making a start with me on this research, and most importantly, recognizing the problem of procrastination and motivational issues after more than a year of online education, which I encountered especially in the two months after submitting the research proposal. She made me realise that it is common, also with professors, and made me go through with it. I want to thank Dawit for taking over the supervision smoothly and being cooperative and involved directly. Furthermore I appreciate your clear video call instructions and that you have provided me with tools and authors to further work on and to help finalise this research.

I hope you appreciate the final report.

Stijn Willemsen
10 August 2021

Summary

On the 23th of June 2016, the citizens of the United Kingdom had to vote for remaining in or leaving the European Union. As a result of that night, the UK would become the first country to leave the European Union as a slight majority voted to leave. Despite multiple negotiations and countless postponements, Brexit 'finally' came into effect on the 31st of January 2020.

This research aims to approach Brexit differently than previous research that has been conducted, by shining a light on it from the perspectives of British nationals living in of the EU member states, the Netherlands. The main question of this research is therefore as follows, **“How have the perceptions of statuses of British citizens living in the Netherlands changed after Brexit?”** Furthermore, this research consists of a literature review on the theoretical concepts of diaspora, transnationalism, border studies and postcolonialism. The objective of the literature review is to find overarching links between the concepts and to contribute to the existing literature.

Seven respondents have been interviewed for this research. They were invited to share their personal experiences through a set of questions regarding among other things their personal background and their encounters with Brexit and other British nationals. This research has shown that the British nationals that were interviewed feel welcome in Dutch society, and were guided well by the Dutch government through Brexit. It also has shown that there were a few problems they had encountered after Brexit, such as uncertainties about the future, impeded freedom of travel throughout Europe and more difficulties and frustrations when importing goods from the UK. However, none of the respondents claimed they were planning on returning to the UK. As a result of Brexit, an obstacle was created between the UK and the British respondents, referred to in this research as the emotional border. Respondents have mentioned that they do not recognize their country anymore or feel that the UK is their home. The Netherlands is now their home. This resulted in an increase of status in the Netherlands, because their 'Britishness' had decreased.

This research has yielded similar results as comparable reports on British citizens in other European countries. However, there remain points for future research, for instance on the reverse migration from the Netherlands to the UK.

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List of abbreviations

Brexit	Portmanteau, 'British exit', referring to leaving the European Union
BRP	Basisregistratie Personen, <i>Personal Records Database</i>
CBS	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, <i>Central Bureau for Statistics</i>
EEC	European Economic Community
EMA	European Medicines Agency
EU	European Union
IND	Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst, <i>Immigration and Naturalisation Office</i>
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
Ireland	Republic of Ireland (to avoid confusion with the island of Ireland, including Northern Ireland)
RvIG	Rijksdienst voor Identiteitsgegevens, <i>National Office of Identity Data</i>
TNC	Transnational corporation
UK	United Kingdom

1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

During one of my last holidays pre-covid, in the summer of 2019, I went on a three week holiday to the United Kingdom and Ireland. It was my fifth time in the UK, but this time the stay was the longest. Furthermore, I had only been to England before the trip, but I now visited the other constituent countries, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales as well. And after five visits, I have developed a special feeling for the UK. In the first place, because I think the Dutch and British people have more in common than they might think. Of course there are (cultural) differences, but the humour and passion for sports, for instance, is similar. Also the British influence in modern Dutch culture and entertainment, such as music and tv shows, is not to be underestimated and I myself watch British shows regularly.

During my holiday, I also got to visit Belfast, a city with a troubled history in a scarred country. I took a bus tour through the city and the guide was presenting his city vividly. However, as soon as we crossed the so-called *peace lines* that divide the city in a Catholic and a Protestant half, the tour guide became less enthusiastic and more sincere and the atmosphere changed instantly. It made a huge impact on me. There is peace in the city now, especially compared to the situation during The Troubles, but that peace seemed so fragile to me. And then, at that time, Brexit still had to happen so I feared the worst for the future. As soon as the tour finished, I wanted to dig into history and try to learn more about this subject. I also had it in mind immediately for a bachelor's thesis topic. I then thought it would be nice to do fieldwork in Belfast for this potential thesis topic. However, we landed in a pandemic and I had to let that idea go. I had the feeling I would not get enough out of it without actual fieldwork.

I was still interested in writing something about the UK and Brexit, but I had to look for something a little closer to home. I did not want Brexit to be the only topic discussed in the research, as that had been overexposed in the past few years. I had to think of a topic that could make a link between the Netherlands and Brexit. Migration between these countries is then what received my attention, and for a research that would be specific enough to contribute something to the existing literature, I went on to study the perception of statuses of British citizens in the Netherlands. This is how and when the eventual topic was decided, as it fulfilled the criteria for available execution in my home country, the Netherlands.

1.2 Project framework and relevance

On the 31st of January 2020 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in short the United Kingdom (UK) stepped out of the European Union (EU), after a slight majority voted to leave in a 2016 referendum (NOS, 2016). It has divided the country ever since (Hobolt, 2016). The process of the UK leaving the EU led to the portmanteau 'Brexit', British exit. Right after the 2016 referendum, the UK had an eventual three and a half years to negotiate with the European Union for proper agreements on border control, trade, etc., also because the date of leaving was postponed multiple times (Trouw, 2019).

The topic of Brexit has dominated the content of newspapers and television broadcasts in the last years pre-covid. Today, it still is very topical and relevant to investigate further the consequences of Brexit, especially since this research aims to elaborate the changing circumstances for British citizens living in the Netherlands, which does belong to the EU, whose statuses now have changed, as the UK no longer is a EU member state. In the first year after Brexit, February 2020 until February 2021, the Netherlands received over 36.000 applications for residence permits from British nationals (IND, 2021a). This research focuses primarily on British citizens in the Netherlands.

This research will furthermore make an effort to contribute to the literature on diaspora, transnationalism, border studies, and postcolonialism, and to put that into context with the current events after Brexit.

1.3 Objective

British citizens living in the Netherlands, generally speaking, have three options after Brexit. Returning to the UK, stay in the Netherlands on a (permanent) residence permit (Rijksoverheid, 2020), or stay in the Netherlands and obtain a passport of this country (Brexitloket, 2019). This research is split up into two parts, a theoretical part containing a literature review on the theoretical concepts of border studies, postcolonialism, transnationalism and diaspora, and the qualitative part of this research, in which among other things the perception of status of British citizens living in the Netherlands and the above named three options after Brexit are investigated through interviews. The objective of the literature review is to make a contribution to the existing literature, and most importantly, to make a connection between the concepts. Together with the qualitative part, the literature review aims to contribute to the understanding of the theoretical background and create insights into how it influences the lives of British citizens living in the Netherlands. The objective of the qualitative research is to find whether Brexit has a positive influence on the growth of residence permit and citizenship applications in the Netherlands by British citizens and how different British citizens perceive their status. The important overarching objective is to connect the main elements of this research.

1.4 Research model

As demonstrated by Verschuren & Doorewaard (2015), the research models combines theory and literature review, which results in a conceptual model. This conceptual model is necessary for the methodology chapter. When implementing the different methods, results can be analysed and conclusions can be drawn from and the main and sub questions can be answered by those results. The research model looks as follows:

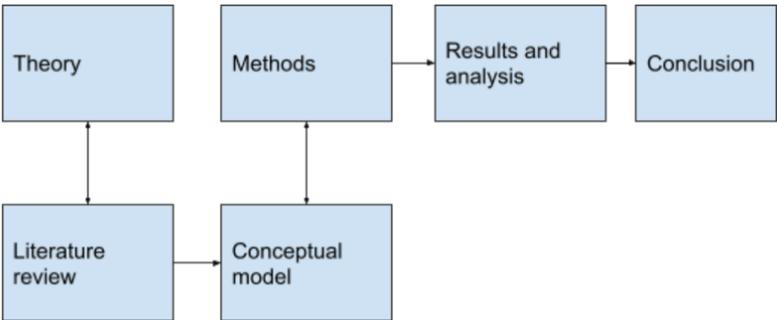


Figure 1 – Research model

1.5 Questioning

This research can be considered as twofold. Firstly, there is the theoretical part which will discuss the processes that have taken place that have shaped the borders of present-day United Kingdom. It is a literature review on borders, diaspora, transnationalism, postcolonialism and on Brexit. Secondly, there is a qualitative approach to the research in which UK nationals living within the Netherlands will be interviewed about their experiences and situation after Brexit. The main challenge of this thesis will be to intertwine the two and make a logical link between the two main concepts of this research. The main question had been as follows:

“How have the perceptions of statuses of British citizens living in the Netherlands changed after Brexit?”

To answer this main question, several sub questions are taken into account as well. The answers to some sub questions will have a theoretical basis mainly and some will be reflected upon through the interviews.

- How have Britain’s borders changed after Brexit?

The border between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland on the island of Ireland has always been a soft border (De Mars & Murray, 2020). After Brexit, this border became an outer border of the European Union. This question helps to take a closer look at the different types of borders that the UK has.

- How strong is the British diaspora and what role do transnational communities play in the Netherlands?

Diaspora and transnationalism will be examined for this question, as they are closely linked to each other. Diaspora is the scattering of a people in different areas than their origin and transnationalism is the movement of people, goods and services cross-border. The theoretical concepts will be introduced in the theoretical framework, and will be further elaborated on and will be investigated on particularly looking at the Netherlands, in the analysis. The results of the interviews on diaspora will be investigated on the basis of a number of criteria that characterise diaspora, as listed by Judith Shuval (2000) and Gabriel Sheffer (1986), Jewish sociologists at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

- Will Brexit, through trade, lead to post- and neo-colonial behaviour in the Commonwealth?

This question covers the theoretical concepts of post- and neo-colonialism and discusses Britain’s role with these concepts. It will not rely on the respondents and have no link with the Netherlands. Instead it will discuss theory to give an extra dimension to consequences of Brexit as a process for the EU and the Commonwealth realm.

- What are the main changes to the daily lives of British citizens in the Netherlands after Brexit?

For this question, the results and analysis of the interviews are examined to create an insight into struggles British nationals abroad face after Brexit.

- How did Brexit influence the application for Dutch residence permits or passports (or permits or passports of other EU countries) by British nationals living outside the UK?

The interviews will also account for the largest part for answering this question. The empirical information is supplemented with statistical data from Dutch governmental organisations such as the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS), National Office of Identity Data (RvIG) and the Immigration and Naturalisation Office (IND).

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter the following theoretical concepts are introduced: **border studies, transnationalism, diaspora and postcolonialism**. This chapter contains a theoretical introduction to the different concepts and elaborates on the relevance of these theoretical concepts. They will be linked to each other and to the interviews and further elaborated on in chapter 4.

2.1 Border studies

Borders are a very important concept in the relation between different countries. Borders are bridges for cultural exchange (Donnan & Wilson, 1999), that includes cross-border movement such as transnationalism and diaspora. Borders are subject to constant change and have changed throughout centuries (Agnew, 2008). The borders of the UK are no exception to that. In fact, the ending of the British imperialist hegemony led to “the first great marker of border change in Europe”, according to Anderson & O’Dowd (1999).

Every border is different. DeBardeleben (2005) makes a division between hard and soft borders.

2.1.1 Hard border

One way to characterise borders is through the soft and hard border divide. A hard border is a geographical border that clearly demarks the end of a country’s territory and the beginning of a new country. A hard border is characterised by for instance passport controls and visa regulations (DeBardeleben, 2005).

The concept of hard borders received attention in the European Union, whereas on the one hand previous hard borders between countries that were now member states of the same confederation were softened through the Schengen Agreement. On the other hand, the outer borders of the EU remained hard borders (De Ridder, 2008). The concept of hard borders in the EU is undeniably connected to the refugee crisis. The recent expansions of the EU, led to an indirect expansion of the UK border as well. The growing resistance to this phenomenon led to the referendum and eventually to Brexit (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017).

In the context of Brexit, the definition of a hard border on the island of Ireland is “any physical infrastructure, from remote cameras to guard posts, that might be put in place along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to monitor and process the movement of people and goods” (ukandeu, 2020).

2.1.2 Soft border

The other type of border in the twofold division is the soft border. A soft border is described by Eder (2006) as a border made in people’s minds that are “boundaries that we draw between people” (p.255). In the context of Brexit, Gormley-Heenan & Aughey (2017) argue that a soft border is an open border without custom checks, that we see throughout the EU and the Schengen area.

The only physical land border of the UK, with the Republic of Ireland (see table 1) has been categorised pre-Brexit as a soft border, thanks to the Common Travel Area (De Mars & Murray, 2020). What the border has transformed into after Brexit is discussed in paragraph 5.1.

2.1.3 Physical borders of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom only has one land border, an almost 500 kilometre border with the Republic of Ireland (The World Factbook, 2021). Furthermore, the country has several marine borders (The

World Factbook, 2021), alphabetically listed in table 1. This excludes overseas territories and Crown dependencies. The full list of borders including overseas territories and Crown dependencies is listed in the appendix. Table 1 only deals with physical borders, other types of borders are elaborated on in paragraph 5.1.

Land border	Republic of Ireland
Marine border	Belgium
	Denmark (incl. Faroe Islands)
	France
	Germany
	Netherlands
	Norway

Table 1 – Land and marine borders of the United Kingdom (The World Factbook, 2021)

2.2 Transnationalism

Transnationalism is a broad concept. Evans Brazier & Mannur (2003) describe it as “the flow of people, ideas, goods, and capital across national territories”. Another definition is given by Vertovec (1999), describing transnationalism as “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states”. The words “ideas, goods and capital” (Evans Brazier & Mannur, 2003) and “institutions” (Vertovec, 1999) indicate that transnationalism is not only about people. Albrow (1998) underlines this by stating that the term ‘transnational’ derives from the study of international organisations. That is also where we find the term ‘transnational’ nowadays mostly, as ‘transnational company’, ‘transnational corporation’ or ‘transnational organisation’. These companies are in a way contributing to the dispersion and relocation of a working population who form groups in a new country, known as transnational communities (Bruneau, 2004). A working population in a second country is considered transnational, as they work for a transnational company and in that way maintain ties to the homeland. This is perfectly summarised by Vertovec (2000), “all transnational communities comprise diasporas, but not all diasporas develop transnationalism”. Therefore the term transnationalism is closely related to diaspora and both are socially constituted formations (Bauböck & Faist, 2010). These concepts are further elaborated on in this research, as transnationalism influences the everyday lives of expats and other migrants (Van Houtum, 2013).

2.2.1 Transnationalism and the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has a rich history with transnational corporations. Important UK-based TNCs include GlaxoSmithKline, Tesco and a pharmaceutical company producing covid-19 vaccines, AstraZeneca. Thanks to these corporations, the UK has often been on the receiving end of labour migration and transnational communities have formed in the country (Van Houtum, 2013). Brexit has caused TNCs to relocate throughout Europe, for instance Unilever moved from the Netherlands to the UK (Dekker, 2020) and the European Medicine Agency (EMA) went the opposite way (Boersema, 2020).

2.3 Diaspora

Diaspora is a large-scale, scattered distribution of a people or population in regions that differ from their origins. The ancient Greek word diaspora in itself translates to “scattering” (Liddell & Scott, 1940). Diaspora is also characterised by the fact that the scattered people still feel a strong connection to their homeland. The first mention of diaspora was associated with the dispersion of Jews (Safrai & Stern, 1974). Paul Gilroy (1994) adds that in diaspora, the dispersion is forced and urgent and is caused by push factors. Diaspora differs from transnationalism, as diaspora specifically studies movement of people only.

Chaliand and Rageau (1991) came up with several criteria for identifying a diaspora: forced dispersion, retention of a collective historical and cultural memory of the dispersion, the will to transmit a heritage, and the ability of the group to survive over time. Cohen (2008) divided the term diaspora into several groups, including victim, trade, imperial, labour and cultural diasporas to “provide a more nuanced understanding of the often positive relationships between migrants’ homelands and their places of work and settlement” and categorised British diasporas as imperial diasporas.

Later, around the 1970’s, the term diaspora was broadened (Sheffer, 1986) and became to include populations from different ethnicities and religions as well, furthermore, the movements were not always forced or unwilling anymore, but could have taken place voluntarily. The strong connection with the homeland however, remains. McLoughlin (2005) described this newer form of diaspora as “transnational communities”. Gilroy describes diaspora as “a concept which contributes something valuable to the analysis of inter-cultural and trans-cultural processes and forms.” It is researched upon to understand changes in societies, both sending and receiving societies, therefore Gilroy describes it as an “outer-national term”.

Another important term that Gilroy (1994) names is the diaspora-consciousness, which describes how a member of a diaspora perceives their own status and position in the new society. The identity of a migrant is based on memories (Shuval, 2000). This means there is a historical gap between the place of residence and the place of origin, with which one feels connected (Gilroy, 1994). The perception of status of seven British citizens in the Netherlands is investigated in this research.

2.3.1 British diaspora

Although diaspora is as stated above an outer-national term, and the United Kingdom is a huge receiver of different diaspora, for example Indian, Polish, etc. (Office for National Statistics, 2018), solely the British diaspora outside the United Kingdom is investigated for this research.

Due to its colonial history, the modern-day English-speaking countries in the West account for the top 4 sovereign countries with the highest percentage of inhabitants that are of British descent: New Zealand (59% British ancestry; Statistics New Zealand, 2007), Australia (45%; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), Canada (31%; Statistics Canada, 2016) and the United States (11%; United States Census Bureau, 2017). Australia, however, is the country with the largest absolute number of British residents within its boundaries according to a 2006 report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). 1.3 million Brits live in Australia. Spain (761.000) and the United States (678.000) complete the top three (BBC, 2006).

According to the same report, 44.000 British citizens live in the Netherlands. Of these, 7.811 are pensioners and the male-female ratio is 55:45. 42.8% of the 44.000 belong to the age group 25-44 and another 35.7% are between ages 45 and 64. The rest, 21.5%, are either younger than 24 or older than 64 (BBC, 2006). This number of 44.000 is the last official count, and as stated earlier, the number of British citizens in the Netherlands is expected to have grown since the report’s publication in 2006 and to keep growing until today, mainly thanks to Brexit (Boersema, 2020). According to statistical data from CBS, this number had risen to 47.930 in 2020.

2.4 Neo- and postcolonialism

Neo-colonialism describes “all forms of control of the ex-colonies” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000, p. 163) in order to “protect their interests and maintain control over economic and political resources” (Talton, 2010). Neo-colonialism is exercising power on former colonies. Postcolonialism aims to investigate how neo-colonialism emerges and is executed. In short, neo-colonial behaviour can be a

result of post-colonial thinking. The word postcolonialism ('after colonialism') in itself insinuates that the period of colonization is over and the former empires have been decolonized. Neo-colonialism ('new colonialism') is then a logical term for the modern colonialism that is still happening today.

The United Kingdom still is a neo-colonial power, but so are all western countries and other large economies in the world. The main difference is that in current times, the government does not directly exercise the power anymore, but the transnational corporations do. They do this by extracting raw materials and natural resources from ex-colonies in the third world. They might invest in, for instance, the local infrastructure, but the average citizen of that country will not benefit much from these investments and trade deals. It is summarised perfectly by John Ruskin, "the first English game is making money" (Jahaurabad, 2016). The link between the theoretical concepts of neo- and postcolonialism and transnationalism is evident and vital for this research.

2.4.1 Postcolonialism and Brexit

Gurminder Bhambra, professor of Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies at the University of Sussex, in a 2017 speech argued that Britain entering the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the EU, in 1973 disguised the fact that it had lost its power and status on the world stage. Bhambra asserts that large-scale decolonisation after the Second World War was a cause for this loss of status, resulting in the UK becoming "a small island". Working together with other EEC (later EU) countries and forming a strong initial western European bloc made up for losing their former colonies (Bhambra, 2017). Now that Brexit has come into effect, the United Kingdom has lost its status on the world stage. The British Commonwealth nowadays is not as strong as the British Empire that existed in the past and covered one-fourth of the world's surface and one-fifth of the world population at its height. Britain's boundaries had expanded through imperialism and colonisation in the 18th, 19th and 20th century (Canny, 2001). Imperialism is "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" (Said, 1993).

Decolonization did not only happen in the British Empire, other European countries were former colonial powers and subsequently decolonized as well (Grosfoguel, 2006). In fact, decolonization was an important historical period on its own (Talton, 2010). However, other former colonial powers such as Spain, Portugal, France and the Netherlands are still part of the EU and continue to perform together on the world stage.

Furthermore, Bhambra (2017) sees Brexit and its referendum as a part of a greater narrative throughout the UK and its history, namely "the question of the legitimacy of belonging of those who look different". In other words, Brexit fits in well in the timeline of Britain's history. She argues that migration only became a "problem" in Britain when darker people from their colonies – India, the Caribbean, Pakistan, etc. – came to the UK, not when the Brits went to those countries in the first place. Even though those darker immigrants carried British passports, obtained through the 1948 British Nationality Act, it caused a "moral panic" in Britain (Bhambra, 2017). According to Bhambra, this became so "intense" that the UK government passed three Commonwealth Immigration Acts, in 1962, 1968 and 1971, which discriminated against darker British citizens from former colonies and took their rights away. What Bhambra calls "paler immigrants" (from Ireland or Eastern Europe, etc.) could continue to come to the UK. Bhambra refers to this as "racialization of citizenship" (2017). She concludes, "Britain has constructed its sense of itself on the basis of a series of exclusions by turning some citizens into migrants. It did this in the 1960s with the Commonwealth Immigration Acts, and it's doing it in the present with non-UK EU citizens."

3 Methodology

In this chapter the approach to the process of research is described. It contains the research strategy and the methods used to conduct this research.

3.1 Research strategy

This research will go in depth on the aspects of the qualitative part through interviews. Through these interviews, respondents are invited and motivated to provide as much information as they want and thereby giving lots of insights into the current procedures they have to go through after Brexit, their opinions and their stance on their own status and everyday life. The literature review, the theoretical part, will keynote the theoretical concepts chosen for this research and will link them to each other and to the qualitative topic.

As already mentioned, the research aims to have a qualitative approach to the empirical information. 7 respondents have accounted for the vital information for this segment of the research. This means that the empirical information will come from the 'field', which under covid measures means from behind the screen. The interviews will be held through live arrangements with the respondents or by emailing them. The theoretical part of this research will rely on the available online literature.

3.2 Research material

The interviewees were approached through online websites, forums, and LinkedIn. The latter is an online platform that is very useful for getting in contact with people in a specific field. There are a lot of forums and blog websites, such as expat.com, and britishexpats.com, that have hundreds of thousands of users, which was sufficient for finding some of the respondents. The first set of interview questions were general questions regarding personal data such as name, age, background, hometown and province, how long have they been outside the UK, passport/nationality etc. The outcomes of (most of) these questions are categorised under quantitative research and are presented separately from the in-depth questions in the result analysis chapter.

The in-depth questions have also been directed at the person themselves. With these questions, all parts of this research are attempted to have been approached. For instance, the interview question about the bureaucratic difficulty relates to one of the sub questions, and the questions in the theme of diaspora to that theoretical concept. The in-depth questions are in line with the theoretical concepts, to make the necessary mutual link. These questions relate more to qualitative research and can be found in the chapter dealing with the analysis of the results.

The thematic guide divides the interview questions into four themes: personal background, diaspora, Brexit and the perception of status. The order of the questions asked is mixed, which means the questions have not been grouped together by theme. This was done to prevent the interviewees from answering the same after every question within the same theme. Question number 13 is divided over two themes. See the theme guide in the appendix. Transcriptions have been made of each interview and added as an attachment to this final version of the thesis.

As surveys were hard to conduct for the subject of this research, and only interviews have been done, methodological triangulation was difficult to achieve. By using both 'quantitative' (age/country, etc.) and 'qualitative' questions in the interviews, the highest possible validity was aimed for. Theoretical triangulation is achieved through using different journals, reports and literature and looking at it from different perspectives, e.g. historical perspective (postcolonialism, diaspora) both from sources from within and outside the UK, present-day perspective, and the personal perspective as a result of the interviews.

4 Result analysis

This chapter aims to give an insight into the results of the interviews by presenting these results in several different tables.

For this research, 8 respondents were interviewed, of which one live, and the other seven over email. The particular reason for this is the unfortunate impossibility to arrange live interviews due to the rules concerning unnecessary travel under the covid circumstances. One of the emailed respondents turned out to only work in the Netherlands (and thus did not live in the country) and so was later omitted.

Some of the respondents have indicated that they preferred to stay anonymous, however, their data was free to use. Therefore for this research it has been decided that all of the respondents are represented by numbers (Respondent 1, Respondent 2, etc.), in the order of first to last interviewed, and will be addressed by 'they' and 'them'.

4.1 Background of the respondents

Male	6
Female	1
Total	7

Table 2 – Male-female distribution of the respondents

Respondent 1	60
Respondent 2	60
Respondent 3	35
Respondent 4	54
Respondent 5	44
Respondent 6	63
Respondent 7	44
Mean age	51,4

Table 3 – Ages of the respondents in years

The youngest of the respondents is 35 years old, whereas the oldest is 63 years old. Therefore the range is 28 years. This demonstrates that answers were collected from multiple different age groups and perspectives.

All 7 respondents had British citizenship, which was an exigency for participating in the research, however, not all had Dutch citizenship. See table 4.

British citizenship		
Yes	7	
No	0	
Dutch citizenship		Respondent
Yes	3	1, 2, 3
No	4	4, 5, 6, 7

Table 4 – (Dual-)nationality of respondents

Respondent 1	38
Respondent 2	33
Respondent 3	3
Respondent 4	16
Respondent 5	9
Respondent 6	27

Respondent 7	0,583	(7 months)
Mean years	18,1	

Table 5 – Length of stay in the Netherlands in years

The length of stay of the respondents in the Netherlands varies from 7 months to 38 years, which is a well-spread range (37,416) to guarantee different perspectives on the questionnaire from the respondents.

Respondent 1	Helden, Limburg
Respondent 2	Helmond, North Brabant
Respondent 3	Breda, North Brabant
Respondent 4	Amsterdam, North Holland
Respondent 5	Venlo, Limburg
Respondent 6	Vinkeveen, Utrecht
Respondent 7	Kessel, Limburg

Table 6 – Home town and province of respondents

The seven respondents are geographically scattered, as they live in four different provinces and in both rural and urban areas. These factors, and the ratios for age and length of stay help to acquire methodological triangulation and the highest possible validity.

4.2 Qualitative results

Coding was used to put the words out of the interviews in numbers. The main word or theme of a respondent's answer to a question was considered a code.

Question 6: What are your reasons for moving to the Netherlands?

Code/Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Tally
Marriage	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7
Moving jobs			x	x				2
Brexit							x	1

Table 7 – Reasons for moving to the Netherlands

Every respondent has a Dutch partner and moved to the Netherlands because their partners lived there as well. Respondents 3 and 4 mentioned they moved jobs as well (and then chose to move jobs to the country of residence of their partner), whereas others who transferred here for marriage only later moved jobs, but this was not their main reason for moving to the Netherlands. Respondent 7 specifically said Brexit was a reason for moving to the Netherlands.

Question 7: Do you feel you belong to a minority group in your country of residence? And why (not)?

Respondent	Yes/No	Summarised explanation
Respondent 1	No	"I am not a type of person who would experience that"
Respondent 2	No	"I took Dutch lessons"
Respondent 3	No	–
Respondent 4	Yes	"non-EU"
Respondent 5	No	"Dutch culture is very open and welcoming"
Respondent 6	No	"I feel totally part of everything that happens here"
Respondent 7	No	"[I] feel more associated with others [Dutch people] here"
No-yes ratio	6-1	

Table 8 – Feeling of belonging to a minority group

6 out of 7 respondents did not feel they belong to a minority group in the Netherlands. Respondent 1 argues that her physical appearance and skin colour (white) ensure her of a feeling that she will not experience belonging to a minority group in the Netherlands, because she thinks her appearance matches that of the majority of Dutch inhabitants. Respondent 2 said that at the point of arrival in the Netherlands, everybody was friendly and so immediately felt at home, however, started to encounter some annoyance by not speaking the language on a longer term, so started to learn the language and now feels welcome again in the Netherlands. Respondent 4, the only to answer ‘Yes’, says he feels that having a nationality of a non-EU country is “daft” and therefore a sign of minority. Respondents 5 and 6 speak of full integration and cultures that are alike so the shift was not that big of a deal. Respondent 7 adds that a “minority group” as phrased in the question implies that others also belong, and he does not know any other British nationals living in the Netherlands. This way, there is no minority group to belong to according to this respondent and they feel associated with Dutch people.

Question 8: Do you get in touch often with other British nationals in your country of residence? And how/Why not?

Respondent	Yes/No
Respondent 1	No
Respondent 2	No
Respondent 3	No
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	Yes
Respondent 7	No
No-yes ratio	5-2

Table 9 – Engagement with other British nationals

Respondents 4 and 6 know fellow British citizens in the Netherlands through work for international organisations, and claim to maintain social ties to them and speak to them regularly through social media. Other respondents mention they meet British people at work, however they do not interact with them on a regular basis. The respondents who answered ‘no’ are not particularly searching for interaction with fellow British nationals and happen to interact with Dutch people more.

Question 9: Are there any events organised especially for British people in your country of residence? (e.g. private Facebook groups, British-only community gatherings, etc.)

Respondent	Answer	Interaction
Respondent 1	I assume yes	No
Respondent 2	I would not know	–
Respondent 3	I assume yes	No
Respondent 4	Yes	–
Respondent 5	Not exclusively British	No
Respondent 6	–	No
Respondent 7	I assume yes	No

Table 10 – Existence of and interaction with British-only events

The column ‘Interaction’ on the right lists whether the given respondent claims to interact with certain British-only groups or attends British-only events in the Netherlands. None of them do. Respondents 1, 3 and 7 all expect there to be events organised especially for British people, however, they did not feel the need to actively search for them, so like respondent 2, they would not know if such British-

only groups actually exist. Respondent 5 says there are a lot of expat websites, but not exclusively British. Respondent 4 claims that there are British social and sport clubs in the Netherlands.

Question 10: Do you feel you blend in the society of your current country of residence? And what gives you that impression?

Respondent	Yes/no	Code(s)
Respondent 1	Yes	Location, language, marriage, friends, community life
Respondent 2	Yes	Language
Respondent 3	Yes	Language, marriage, friends
Respondent 4	Yes	Fellowship
Respondent 5	Yes	Work, language, familiarity, community life
Respondent 6	Yes	Friends
Respondent 7	No	Language

Table 11 – Feeling of blending in in Dutch society

Most of the respondents feel they blend in in Dutch society. Only respondent 7, who is living in the Netherlands for the shortest period of time, does not feel integrated in Dutch society, because he does not speak the language. However, for respondents 1, 2 and 3 speaking the Dutch language is a sign of blending in. Also being married to a Dutch national, having Dutch friends, working in the Netherlands, and taking part in Dutch community life (e.g. through sport clubs) are reasons named by the respondents. Respondent 1 adds that her location, in a rural area in Limburg, attributed to her feeling of integration, because of more intensive contact with a smaller group of (Dutch) people as compared to living in an urban area. Respondent 4 feels he blends in because of an opposite reason, he knows a lot of fellow British people. Respondent 5 adds that the culture in the Netherlands is comparable to the British culture and thus feels familiar.

Question 11: What are the biggest problems you’ve faced after Brexit (as a British citizen living outside the UK)?

Code/Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Tally
None		x				x		2
Extra paperwork	x						x	2
Uncertainties/stress					x			1
Importing goods	x		x	x				3
Loss of UK bank account				x	x			2
Freedom of travel				x				1
Emotional reasons					x			1

Table 12 – Problems encountered after Brexit

Several different answers were given to this question, as displayed in table 12. Respondent 5 says he did not come across a lot of troubles after Brexit, however said that the largest issue was concern over the uncertainty over a long period for what the future situation was going to be, and adds that this is stressful. The emotional reasons were given by respondent 5 as follows, “not agreeing with (...) my home country. I used to believe (...) that the UK valued collaboration, integration, and shared history – but Brexit feels more like isolationism, anti-immigration, and entitlement. I feel embarrassed to try to explain the stupidity of Brexit whenever anyone asks”.

Question 12: In terms of practical issues and bureaucracy, have you faced any problems after Brexit? (e.g. residence permit, driver’s licence or passport renewal, etc.) If not, have you heard of any struggles other British citizens living outside the UK had?

Yes/No	Tally
Yes	0
No	7

Table 13 – Tally of respondents with bureaucratic problems

Every respondent indicated that they did not encounter any practical or bureaucratic issues after Brexit, apart from the other problems mentioned in question 11. Respondent 1 and 7 both said ‘No’ to this question, but mentioned ‘Extra paperwork’ as a problem in question 11. Respondent 1 mentioned bureaucracy, but this was limited to parcels and packaging services when importing goods from the UK, so they did not encounter problems with driver’s licence or such. Respondent 7 explains that he does encounter problems regarding extra paperwork, however, the Dutch system seems well set-up to them. Thanks to needing only one BSN number and the functionality of DigID, an online system to verify someone’s identity, in the Netherlands, they answered ‘No’.

The follow-up question asked to identify problems other British nationals faced, but six out of seven respondents indicated that they did not know any. Respondent 2 mentioned that they know British people on short contracts throughout the EU who now have trouble applying for visas. This is especially a problem for British people without a permanent country of residence after Brexit, whereas before Brexit, none of this would be necessary or would happen quicker and more easily.

Question 13: Have you ever considered moving back to the United Kingdom? Has Brexit influenced your decision-making?

Respondent	Answer
Respondent 1	Considered in the past, now no
Respondent 2	No
Respondent 3	Return is possible
Respondent 4	No
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	Return is possible
Respondent 7	No

Table 14 – Considered moving back to the UK

Respondents 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7 say they do not consider moving back to the UK, because they have established themselves in the Netherlands, and have family and jobs here. Respondents 1 (although for personal reasons considered to move back in the past) and 4 give Brexit as a reason for definitely not returning to the UK. For the others, Brexit has had no influence. Respondents 3 and 6 do not rule out the possibility of returning to the UK, although they claim to not have any reason for moving back at this point.

Question 14: Have you considered obtaining a passport of the country of residence? And why (not)? or depending on their answer on question 5:

What were your main grounds for obtaining citizenship of your country of residence?

As is displayed in table 4, three of the seven respondents have the Dutch citizenship (Respondents 1-3) and four do not have it (Respondents 4-7), therefore this question is split up into two parts.

For the respondents with Dutch citizenship, “What were your main grounds for obtaining citizenship of your country of residence?”

Respondent 1	Marriage, no <i>inburgering</i>
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Respondent 2	Marriage, secure position in Netherlands, freedom of movement in the EU
Respondent 3	Marriage and moving jobs

Table 15 – Main grounds for obtaining Dutch citizenship

As this question is closely related to question 6 (reasons for moving to the Netherlands), the answers do not differ that much. Respondent 1, 2 and 3 among other things all gave marriage as the main reason. Respondent 1 added that *inburgering*, the Dutch word for the process of integration in society, was very easy at that time and only a few years after their arrival the rules were strengthened. Respondent 2 said that they wanted to secure their position in the Netherlands, in other words wanted to make sure they would not be made to leave the Netherlands, by obtaining a residence permit. However, a residency did not guarantee them the freedom to travel, so they obtained a Dutch passport.

For the respondents without Dutch citizenship, “Have you considered obtaining a passport of the country of residence? And why (not)?”

Respondent 4	Yes	Freedom of travel in the EU
Respondent 5	Yes	Option
Respondent 6	No	No need for it
Respondent 7	Yes	–
No-yes ratio	1-3	

Table 16 – Considered obtaining Dutch passport

Respondent 4 says freedom of travel in the EU with a Dutch passport is a reason to consider obtaining a Dutch passport. Respondent 5 will likely apply for a Dutch passport through option, because of marriage to a Dutch national. Respondent 6 claims there is no current reason to apply for a Dutch passport.

Question 15: Do you feel like you’re a migrant?

Yes/No	Tally
Yes	0
No	7

Table 17 – Tally of respondents feeling like migrants

None of the respondents indicate that they feel like a migrant in the Netherlands, though the confidence in the answers differ. Some of them answered ‘absolutely not’, while others said ‘not really’.

5 Analysis

This chapter aims to formulate answers to the sub questions using data from the respondents, supplemented with theories and concepts from literature. The sub questions give an introduction to the main question of the research, which is answered in the second to last paragraph. This chapter is summarised and closed by the conceptual model.

5.1 Soft or hard border?

The soft and hard border division as mentioned in the theoretical framework raises the question whether the land border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland will become a hard border again. In pre-Brexit times, this border had been a soft border without any custom checks or other control measures, thanks to the Common Travel Area agreement (not Schengen).

Fear of violence in Northern Ireland against potential soldiers or guard posts is a reason for the UK government to make sure the border does not become a hard one (Garry, McNicholl, O’Leary and Pow, 2018). However, the border cannot be categorised as a soft border, because it is now monitored through cameras (ukandeu, 2020).

Although border control has thus increased through monitoring, there is currently no desire and no need for custom checks on the British-Irish border, because of the Withdrawal Agreement (EU, 2020) that the UK and the EU signed. The EU of course also has a say in this, because the Republic of Ireland remains an EU member state. The answer to the question whether this border will be hard or soft after Brexit is simple. Neither. The border can henceforth be categorised as a third type of border, the “smart border”. This makes the British-Irish border (and the EU-non-EU border) still as easy to cross as before, despite the fact that the United Kingdom has left the European Union.

So to get back to the first sub question of this research, how have Britain’s borders changed after Brexit? Britain’s only land border has transformed from a soft border into a smart one, however, the most important ‘border’ for this research is the emotional border between the United Kingdom and its citizens living abroad. That one seems to have dented.

Before Brexit, when the UK was still a member state of the EU, British nationals living in the Netherlands and other EU countries could travel freely between their home country and their current country of residence, which is a fundamental freedom of the EU (Collins & O’Reilly, 2018). Brexit has not put a halt to this – British people can still visit their home country without restrictions when showing their British passports – however, having a British passport will now impede travel throughout the rest of the EU, as the UK were never in the Schengen area and have now left the EU. This is further elaborated on in paragraph 5.2.

Now this is a border that still a lot of people take for granted. It has by far not become impossible to travel when you are a British citizen, it only has become a little more difficult or frustrating (Collins & O’Reilly, 2018). What really has formed a new border is the ‘mental’ or ‘emotional border’ between Brits and Britain after Brexit. All of the participants in this research claim they do not support Brexit. The British respondents mention that, now the UK is out of the EU, they do not recognize their own country anymore. They do not associate with anything that is British now, and rather not talk about or try to explain it (to non-Brits). Respondent 4 said that the UK “doesn’t feel like home anymore”. Dr Michaela Benson in 2017 did a comparable research with British citizens in the French department of Lot and came to similar conclusions. One of the points in her report’s summary was that Brexit “has also raised questions about where they feel they belong and at home. Brexit was a transformative moment in the way they thought about their relationship to Britain.”

Another comparable research was carried out by Collins & O'Reilly in 2018. Their report stated that the biggest loss for their respondents was the loss of freedom of movement in the EU. This is also something that has come forward in this research. Their report goes even a step further, by stating that British citizens abroad "have not only lost a right but a sense of who they are, and who they can be".

5.2 Challenges for Brits in the Netherlands after Brexit

Brexit has also caused changing circumstances and statuses for British citizens living in EU countries, like the Netherlands. This paragraph aims to give an insight into what the changes are to the daily lives of British citizens in the Netherlands after Brexit. The data from the interviews have been analysed for this and have accounted for formulating an answer to this question.

As presented in table 12, the thing that strikes most British citizens living in the Netherlands is that importing goods has become more difficult. For individuals, this means they have to fill in more customs forms and pay more or higher taxes or, when the amount is high enough, pay import duties. There seems no way to bypass this, except moving back to the UK. Having a British passport, or not having a Dutch one, does not change this. There is no exception for British citizens, the country of residence is the only factor in this.

British citizens have to apply again for a residence permit, as they are no longer an EU citizen. For this, they have to go through quite a few steps. For instance, register in the Personal Records Database (BRP) in person at their municipality's town hall, get a DigID and open a Dutch bank account. For people carrying Dutch passports, none of this is necessary. British citizens have quite a long period of time to fix this. Brexit came into effect on 31 January 2020 and the period to arrange this is open until 1 October 2021, so more than one and a half years. Every British citizen was sent a letter to inform them of their changing status and provide tools on what to do next. This demonstrates that the Dutch government is anticipating the changing circumstances. This is also derived from the interview results, as none of the respondents encountered bureaucratic difficulties.

Travelling through the countries of the European Union has also become a little different for British nationals. Before Brexit, British citizens could travel visa free through the EU for a maximum period of 90 days and this did not change, it still is 90 days of visa free travel (gov.uk, 2021). However, when British citizens have the intention to work in the EU, they need to apply for a visa, or even residence permits or passports when they want to stay longer. Respondent 2 claims that working on a short contract throughout Europe has become nearly impossible, as visa applications for working in the EU now take 12 weeks to complete, whereas first this was done in 1-2 weeks.

5.3 Passport and permit applications in the Netherlands

How did Brexit influence the application for Dutch residence permits or passports (or permits or passports of other EU countries) by British nationals living outside the UK?

Dutch reporter Wendelmoet Boersema of newspaper Trouw reported in 2020 that the applications of Dutch passports by British nationals increased every year. Furthermore, they do not expect a lot of British nationals to return to the UK, in fact they expect more British people to migrate to the Netherlands (Boersema, 2020). One reason for this is that British citizens come to the Netherlands by having their job replaced, for instance the move of the EMA from London to Amsterdam (Boersema, 2020). There is however a clear distinction to be made between obtaining a residence permit or applying for a Dutch passport. The large discrepancy between the approximately 36.000 applications for residence permits (IND, 2021a) and around 500 applications for Dutch passports from British

nationals (Boersema, 2020) can be explained by the fact that a residence permit gives British nationals nearly the same rights as a native Dutch person, without having to obtain a passport (Boersema, 2020). The only differences are the right to vote, which people with a residence permit do not have (Boersema, 2020). A reason for applying for a Dutch passport could be marriage to a Dutch national, however, not every British national migrating to the Netherlands has a relationship with a Dutch national. Another reason could be not wanting to go through the bureaucratic practice of renewing the residence permit every few years (Brexitleket, 2019). However, this would require the procedure of *inburgering*, which is an exam on the ability of speaking, writing and reading the Dutch language and knowledge of Dutch society (inburgeren.nl, 2021).

The result analysis shows that three out of four respondents without Dutch passports consider obtaining a Dutch passport based on the reason given above, marriage. One of them argued there was no need for this, having a British passport and a Dutch residence permit is sufficient for them, which confirms the statements by Boersema (2020).

The Netherlands and the United Kingdom both generally do not accept having two passports. The Dutch government reasons that it is not always clear what rights and duties a person has when they have multiple nationalities, so therefore they attempt to limit dual nationalities (IND, 2021b). British citizens who qualify for obtaining a Dutch passport because of marriage to a Dutch national are exempted from this policy. This means renouncing a British passport is not necessary when obtaining the Dutch nationality. The interviews show that the three respondents who obtained a Dutch passport all qualified by being married to a Dutch national and they did not have to give up their British passports.

5.4 Diaspora and transnational communities

Shuval (2000) summarises the characteristics of traditional diaspora as follows, “a history of dispersal, memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity defined by the above relationship.” This raises the question how strong the British diaspora is and what role transnational communities play in the Netherlands.

The first characteristic, a history of dispersal, is somewhat true for the British diaspora. Their historical empire and migration of British merchants and sailors is well-known, though that was a few centuries ago. In current times British dispersal still happens. In 2005, two thousand British citizens emigrated weekly (BBC, 2006). According to the same BBC report, “an estimated 5.5m British people live permanently abroad – almost one in 10 of the UK population. The emigration of British people has happened in cycles over 200 years.”

The second characteristic is having memories of the homeland. Although this is difficult to assay, the interview results demonstrate five out of the seven respondents reside in the Netherlands for at least more than 9 years. Memories from the homeland have faded and by far the most memories have been made in the Netherlands. Some of the respondents have indicated that they still have family living in the UK and visit them regularly. This means that they still have ties to their homeland, and might create new memories.

The third characteristic is alienation in the host country and that most certainly does not seem to be the case for British citizens in the Netherlands, according to the results of the interviews. The respondents have married Dutch partners, made Dutch friends and met Dutch neighbours and colleagues. They belong to a transnational community, and have played their role in Dutch society. Most importantly, neither of them, according to the last question of the questionnaire, felt like migrants in the Netherlands.

The desire for eventual return is the fourth characteristic by Shuval (2000). Five out of seven respondents are not considering moving back to the UK, for various reasons (see table 14). Two out of those five explicitly gave Brexit as a reason for definitely not returning to the UK. The other two did not rule out the possibility of returning, but had no reasons to return immediately. Boersema (2020) claims that, based on projections, not many British citizens in the Netherlands are expected to return to the UK.

The fifth characteristic is ongoing support of the homeland. The UK government does not actively support British people in the Netherlands, or any other country in general. That is uncommon for any government to do, however, people are free to migrate if they wish to do so. Potential people moving out of the UK are not opposed. The government of the UK in February 2021 has published a useful guide on how the government may support its citizens abroad in all imaginable circumstances (UK Government, 2021). However, a 2017 report by Dr Michaela Benson states that British people in France feel “neglected and overlooked” by the UK government, because they feel anxious about how Brexit will shape their future and are left without any information. In the Netherlands, based on the data provided by the respondents, this seems to be less of a problem because the Dutch government was quick to respond to the changing circumstances and clear to the British people in the country that their position would not be at risk. British nationals might be supported by family members, but if Brexit has proven one thing about the British people in the UK, it is not supporting Brits living abroad.

The last characteristic mentioned by Shuval is a collective identity defined by ‘the above relationship’. The above relationship refers to an earlier passage in the text by Shuval (2000) by which she means the strong ties to the homeland. So in a complete sentence, a collective identity defined by strong ties to the homeland. The data from the interviews have demonstrated that there is no question of a collective identity nor of strong ties to the homeland, as table 9 contradicts the idea of a collective identity, as five out of seven respondents say they do not know any other British nationals in the Netherlands and table 10 demonstrates that the respondents have no interaction with British people in the Netherlands and do not feel the need to. Table 8 shows that the respondents do not feel they belong to a minority group in the Netherlands, so there is no need for strong ties to the homeland. So, they are in fact part of a diaspora and of a transnational community, but they do not act like it.

To sum up what has been stated so far in this paragraph, the British diaspora in the Netherlands does not tick all the boxes that Shuval (2000) drafted. Checking these criteria for Brits in other countries might yield different results however. It is to be noted that these criteria are considered for traditional diaspora, as we see still today and is more common for Jewish, Greek and Armenian diaspora for example (Shuval, 2000).

Sheffer (1986) gives a definition for modern diasporas in the period after 1970, and claims they “are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands.” As for this definition, that appears to be true for the first few years of migrating to a new country, however, the strong sentimental links start to fade the longer the stay in the country is. Respondent 5 summarises this as follows, “In the first year or so here, I do remember a feeling of wanting to re-connect (...), and would watch BBC, drink tea, find UK food – and try to pop back to the UK every few months. Over time, I am much more fond of Dutch culture.”

5.5 Post- and neo-colonialism

In 2017, before Brexit, the UK’s biggest trading partner was the EU (Office for National Statistics, 2020). However, Brexit later came into effect and the UK lost its biggest trading partner. New EU-UK trade

deals are still on the drawing board. Afterwards, the proportion of goods imported from non-EU countries has increased ever since Brexit, especially from China and the United States. In the months April to June 2020, 47.3% of goods were imported from non-EU countries, whereas in the same months in 2019 that share was still 45.6%. This shows that the focus of the UK in trading has shifted from the EU, with which trading was supported by being a member until Brexit, to the United States. China is a big industry and is not to be neglected in trading. Dhingra (2016) suggests that the UK intensifies its trade with the United States and Canada and other countries in the British Commonwealth, or even become a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The British Commonwealth of course exists of former British colonies, so trading more with countries from these ex-colonies could result in neo-colonial behaviour. As stated earlier in the theoretical framework of this research, transnational corporations account for the neo-colonial behaviour by offshoring their businesses but without letting the average citizen in the ex-colonies benefit much from it. However, realistically, the United Kingdom will not benefit much from trading with Commonwealth countries like Barbados or the Solomon Islands. There are only three serious trade partners in the Commonwealth, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Due to the geographical distance and the associated high transport costs, trade with Australia and New Zealand is not as high as trade with Canada (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

5.6 Answering the research question

In the paragraphs above, the several sub questions have been approached, whereas this paragraph tries to formulate an answer to the main question. The main question was as follows, **how have the perceptions of statuses of British citizens living in the Netherlands changed after Brexit?**

This question demands a definition of the term 'status' (social status) and an introduction into the perceptions of status of British citizens living in the Netherlands before Brexit, before it can be approached properly. Social status is described by Sauder, Lynn & Podolny (2012) as "the level of social value a person is considered to hold" and this definition is used for this research. It describes how a person positions themselves in a society. Status is also measured by the feeling of superiority and inferiority. For British citizens in the Netherlands specifically, this definition provides space to interpret that they feel inferior because they are not born in the Netherlands. According to the data from the six respondents that entered the Netherlands before Brexit, they mention that they do not feel that they are migrants or inferior, they feel welcomed in Dutch society. Some listed reasons for that are not experiencing any language problems nor any bureaucratic problems, and Dutch and British people having similar humour. British and Dutch culture are similar enough for British people in the Netherlands to experience the process of standardization, in which cultural practices that are not universal, so UK-specific, are lost when they move to a different country (McLoughlin, 2005). British citizens are likely to be unaware that they have adapted to Dutch society in this way over time.

Taking the results of the analysis into account, it could be argued that after Brexit, the statuses of British citizens in the Netherlands have only increased. As stated earlier, the respondents did not agree with Brexit and they do not recognize their country anymore. As a result of this, their own feeling of being British ('Britishness') has decreased and they have embraced Dutch culture more. They already felt to be a full part of Dutch culture, every respondent for their own reasons, but Brexit has boosted this. Brexit has taken away the feeling of inferiority in Dutch society. Dr Michaela Benson (2017) found similar results in her research on Brits in Lot, France.

5.7 Conceptual model

The following conceptual model has been created for this research. The model links the theoretical part of this research with the results from the interviews and the analysis.

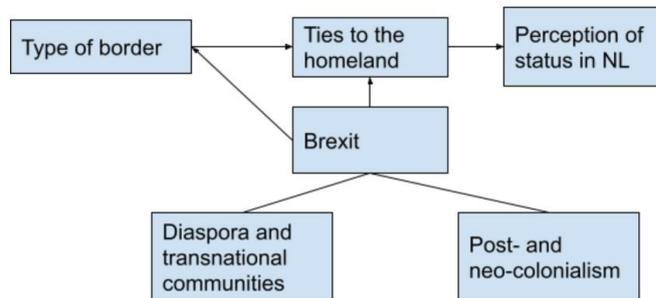


Figure 2 – Conceptual model

A line in the model represents coherence, an arrow represents causality. The model describes that the theoretical concepts of diaspora and transnationalism (put together in one box because they are so closely connected) and post- and neo-colonialism have a coherence with Brexit, as elaborated on in the theory chapter. Those concepts function as explanatory factors. And the other way around, Brexit has a huge influence of the present-day diaspora and transnational communities. Brexit influences the type of border. That is both the physical border that is present on the outer border of the EU on the island of Ireland, as well as the emotional border described in paragraph 5.1. Brexit and the type of border furthermore influence the ties to the homeland, as we have seen as well in that paragraph. Finally, the presence, or the lack of ties to the homeland has the largest impact on the perception of status of British citizens in the Netherlands as is discussed in paragraph 5.6.

6 Conclusion

This research was conducted to look for explanations and causes of **how the perceptions of statuses of British citizens living in the Netherlands have changed after Brexit?** Several sub questions were taken into account as well, to give a reliable answer to the main question. For this, both a literature review was performed and interviews were conducted.

British citizens in the Netherlands are part of a diaspora. When they have multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states they form transnational communities. The respondents in this research did not remain closely tied to the United Kingdom other than family and so cannot be truly considered as belonging to a transnational community. This confirms Vertovec (2000), "all transnational communities comprise diasporas, but not all diasporas develop transnationalism".

The review of the theoretical concepts and the results of the interviews have demonstrated that, though they have a history of dispersal and memories, British citizens in the Netherlands are not alienated and can participate easily in society which limits the desire for eventual return to the UK. Brexit has decreased support for and support of the homeland. That way, British citizens abroad feel their future is uncertain, however, Dutch government was anticipating and clear that British citizens would not have to return home. This made sure the British citizens did not experience their status to be like a second class citizen in the Netherlands. British citizens in the Netherlands rarely interact with other British nationals and blend in Dutch society, which shows that the classical characteristics of a diaspora do not apply for the British citizens in the Netherlands in 2021.

The only physical border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland has not changed much after Brexit. It was categorised as a soft border before, thanks to the Common Travel Agreement, but after the border became monitored after Brexit, it is now a so-called 'smart border'. Another border that has been created after Brexit is the emotional border between the homeland and citizens living abroad. "I did not move back to the UK because of Brexit" (Respondent 1), "Brexit put the kibosh on any interest in moving back" (Respondent 4).

Importing goods with higher taxes, more paperwork, lesser freedom of movement in the EU, near impossibility of working on a short contract throughout Europe and loss of a UK bank account are among the problems Brits now face in the Netherlands after Brexit.

Furthermore, this research has shown that the amount of British nationals applying for residence permits and passports in the Netherlands increases every year. A Dutch residence permit gives foreigners almost the same rights as a passport, except the right to vote. Most British citizens that apply for a Dutch passport do so because they are married to a Dutch national.

The EU, China and the United States are the biggest trade partners of the UK. The EU being a large trade partner for the UK will not change after Brexit for various reasons. The EU is too large in itself to totally ignore trade with, for the UK. The UK is too dependent on the EU (and, to a lesser extent, also vice versa) and Commonwealth Countries like Canada, Australia and New Zealand could not make up for that loss. Furthermore, the current structure of the economy in Britain is too focused on trade with the EU and the US. Although it is pleasant to have the Commonwealth as a safety net after Brexit, the actual chance of direct neo-colonial behaviour by the UK government through trading in the Commonwealth is negligible, because the economies of those countries are not suiting, as they are either too large (Canada, Australia, New Zealand) or too small (Caribbean and Pacific islands). See the appendix for a full list of Commonwealth countries.

This research has shown that the perceptions of statuses of British citizens in the Netherlands have improved, because of a weaker tie to the homeland and not particularly because the Netherlands started to feel like a better place. Prior to Brexit, the respondents already were positive about their stay in the Netherlands and Brexit itself has not really improved that part, they still feel just as welcome in the Netherlands. However, it has resulted in a meltdown of their 'Britishness'.

6.1 Discussion and recommendations

Comparable research to this, like Benson (2017) and Collins & O'Reilly (2018) have shown similar outcomes to this research. All three reports have interviewed British panellists living outside the UK, but in EU countries, and generally came to the conclusion that among other things Britain does not feel like home anymore and the freedom of travel is impeded.

One of other striking things that were found during the analysis of the interviews was that the respondents did not always know what the conditions were for obtaining a passport. Having to speak fluent Dutch or living in the country for at least 5 years while married were the most common conditions they thought falsely they had to fulfil. Future research can be conducted on this phenomenon to tackle other misconceptions.

For this research, solely British citizens living in the Netherlands were interviewed. This research does not take the experiences of British citizens into account who have in the past lived in the Netherlands, but moved to other EU-countries or back to the United Kingdom, in which case the questionnaire might have yielded different results. This is an important issue for future research.

This research preserves room for sidenotes. Firstly, this research does not in any way try to put the United Kingdom or its inhabitants in a bad light. Not so ethical practices like neo-colonialism happen in all western countries or countries with large economies. Secondly, the covid pandemic has to be taken into consideration. The extent to which travel is impeded because of Brexit is difficult to perceive, as the pandemic has caused the entire travel industry to have come to a halt. Lastly, Brexit is still young, only one and a half years, the respondents were interviewed with some future regulations still uncertain. The results of the interviews – and the opinions of the respondents – are due to future change. This is to be taken into account for future research as well.

6.2 Reflection

At the very start of this entire thesis process, I had to make a list of preferred topics for the thesis. I was very enthusiastic about my first choice, which was more focused on spatial planning, as I wanted to do my master's programme in Nijmegen in spatial planning. Ideas were spinning through my head every now and then and in the end there was a plethora of potential thesis topics. Unfortunately, I received my second pick, and that was initially a blow to the head. I find it difficult to motivate myself for something which I find difficult or I like maybe a little less. Therefore, it took some time before I had turned this knob in my head. It became very important to choose a thesis topic within this larger topic on which I would like to write and work on for multiple months. Eventually I found a suitable topic and I was ready for it. Later I had a few other setbacks, for instance in gathering respondents or grasping the most important concepts in the literature, and I had to postpone my planning multiple times. In the end, I managed to finalise the report just in time. I could and should have managed my time better.

Although there are 44.000 Brits in the Netherlands, finding them was not always easy. A website that I found earlier turned out to have become inactive when I tried to search for it again. It had stirred up quite some frustration when just one person turned out to react to my call on other expat websites. It was also difficult, because those websites were not exclusively for British people, so most of the people that saw the call were not even eligible for this research. It was very difficult to really get to people when all you have is a username, no email address or whatsoever. The pinnacle was when I got banned from a website for approaching too many British users in direct messages. Next time, I want to make sure to do more research on a potential group of respondents. I then had to look for other ways to approach British citizens in the Netherlands and for that I had to register on LinkedIn and use my father's business network. That way, I found 6 other participants that were willing to participate, so this was more successful, although the eventual 7 respondents were still not the 8 to 15 respondents I aimed for initially. In hindsight, I could have asked more questions to generate lengthier information when it was clear I was not going to get the desired 8 to 15 respondents. It was a shame that the covid pandemic hampered the possibility for live interviews, because I like to do live interviews and it generates more information. Another disadvantage of emailing was that my emails ended in the spam box of some of the respondents, so it took longer for them to react. Besides that, an eighth respondent I initially found only works in the Netherlands so I could not use their data. I learned to be more specific and careful in the future to prevent these things.

With regards to the theory, I find myself to have taken a lot of information from only one or a few good sources, instead of multiple ones. These sources are often full of useful information, but only shine a light on it from one or few perspectives. This puts the triangulation and validity at risk. I am aware of that now and have tried to use multiple sources and different perspectives.

I have learned a lot about my thesis subject and myself while conducting this research. I know better what to expect and what to improve for future research and what to appreciate already about my style of writing and researching.

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Appendix

Full alphabetical list of countries bordering the UK including overseas territories and Crown dependencies. Most of them are marine borders, land borders are represented by **(L)**.

Antigua and Barbuda	Egypt	Morocco
Argentina	France (incl. French Polynesia and Saint Martin)	Netherlands
Bahamas		Norway
Belgium	Germany	Republic of Ireland (L)
Colombia	Haiti	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Cuba	Honduras	Spain (L)
Cyprus (L)	Jamaica	United States (Puerto Rico)
Denmark (incl. Faroe Islands)	Lebanon	Venezuela
Dominican Republic	Maldives	

Table 18 (Appendix) – UK borders incl. overseas territories and Crown dependencies

Full alphabetical list of Commonwealth countries, known as the Commonwealth realm.

Commonwealth country	Continent, sea
Antigua and Barbuda	North America, Caribbean Sea
Australia	Oceania
The Bahamas	North America, Caribbean Sea
Barbados	North America, Caribbean Sea
Belize	North America (Central)
Canada	North America
Grenada	North America, Caribbean Sea
Jamaica	North America, Caribbean Sea
New Zealand	Oceania
Papua New Guinea	Oceania
Saint Kitts and Nevis	North America, Caribbean Sea
Saint Lucia	North America, Caribbean Sea
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	North America, Caribbean Sea
Solomon Islands	Oceania, Pacific
Tuvalu	Oceania, Pacific
United Kingdom	Europe

Table 19 (Appendix) – Commonwealth realm

Interview questions
Thematic guide

Theme	#	Interview question
Background information	1	What is your full name?
	2	What is your age?
	3	Do you have British citizenship?
	4	In which country are you residing now and how long have you lived there?
	5	Do you have citizenship of your country of residence?
	6	What were your main reasons for moving to your current country of residence?
Diaspora	7	Do you feel you belong to a minority group in your country of residence? And why (not)?
	8	Do you get in touch often with other British nationals in your country of residence? And how/Why not?
	9	Are there any events organised especially for British people in your country of residence? (e.g. private Facebook groups, British-only community gatherings, etc.)
Perception of status	10	Do you feel you blend in the society of your current country of residence? And what gives you that impression?
	13.1	Have you ever considered moving back to the United Kingdom? (see 13.2)
	14	If 'no' on question 5: Have you considered obtaining a passport of the country of residence? And why (not)? If 'yes': What were your main grounds for obtaining citizenship of your country of residence?
	15	Do you feel like you're a migrant?
Brexit	11	What are the biggest problems you've faced after Brexit (as a British citizen living outside the UK)?
	12	In terms of practical issues and bureaucracy, have you faced any problems after Brexit? (e.g. residence permit, driver's licence or passport renewal, etc.) If not, have you heard of any struggles other British citizens living outside the UK had?
	13.2	Has Brexit influenced your decision-making? (see first part of question 13)

Table 20 (Appendix) – Interview guide