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INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES:

Latin American populations in The Netherlands

Exploratory study

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Abstract

This document gathers the main results of an exploratory study about the obstacles and possibilities of articulating the population of Latin American origin residing in The Netherlands to the receiving society. Two specific issues on the matter are presented: an overview of the types of organizations working with or for said populations; and information on the living conditions, potential and needs of the individuals.

A review of the available statistical data from various government institutions is exposed and analysed and, on the basis of the results from a survey as well as several interviews, the situation of the target population is analyzed. The document contains a special section about the conditions of 'populations in special situations' and, when required, pertinent recommendations on their needs and the possibilities to improve their conditions are made.

The study demonstrates that the increases in number of Latin American migrants as well as the changes in the causes for migration and the profile of those who arrive to The Netherlands are issues which deserve attention both at a theoretical level as well as in the practical and policy formulation aspects.

Keywords

Integration, Latin American Populations, Migration, Civil Society, Organizations

INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES: Latin American populations in The Netherlands American populations in The Netherlands: Exploratory study

1 Introduction

Until recently Latin America and the Caribbean were the main destination for European immigrants; currently, the immigration flow has reversed and the number of Latin Americans arriving in Europe has been increasing over the past decades. This change in the migration flow is the result of economic and demographic changes in Europe, such as the end of the colonies and the scarcity of labour allowing migrant worker programs to be established, thus changing the policy of closed doors that had been in place until that moment. Later on, the social and political processes as well as the conditions of violence in Central and South America in the '70s and '80s caused the exile and the migration of many people. Today the political, social and economic crises of the continent, combined with the new control policies of visas of the United States after September 11, make Europe an attractive destination. The trend in the increase of immigrants to different countries of the European Union is highly noticeable and one of its prominent characteristics is its strong feminisation.

In the context of development cooperation, it has become necessary to further understand the mechanisms and networks through which the European development cooperation organizations can work jointly with the Latin American governments and the immigrants in order to create an appropriate atmosphere for the promotion of their contributions to development. This leads to the need to better understand the diasporas and to strengthen them so they may be valid interlocutors in search of shared objectives in favour of the efficient development of their regions of origin.

The process generated by Cordaid has been framed within this context; to have a better understanding of the situation of the Latin American population resident in The Netherlands, and with the possibility of the creation of a Platform consisting of Latin American organizations in The Netherlands. This is a summary of the report of the study summoned by Cordaid to investigate these two subjects.

As a conceptual frame of the study, it was decided to approach the thematic from the perspective of the role the migrants play as social actors in The Netherlands and their possibilities of being or becoming development actors in their countries of origin. From this double perspective the results of this study would allow Cordaid and the organizations of the platform to develop more effective programs and projects in the support of the diaspora and development in Latin America. Understanding the situation of Latin American migrants in The Netherlands and their practices of migration may contribute to constructive dialogue on policy, supporting networks and rights.

As a general objective of the investigation, an exploratory approach was proposed in order to determine both the obstacles as well as the possibilities of

articulating the population of Latin American origin residing in The Netherlands to the receiving society. More specifically, two subjects that derived from this were worked on: on the one hand, an overview of the types of organizations, their basic structure and their policies and service portfolios; and on the other hand, the search for information and knowledge of the living conditions, potential and needs of Latin Americans residing in The Netherlands.

The investigation team consisted of Cristina Barajas Sandoval, main investigator (Institute Associate ISS), and an advisory group formed by Thanh Dam Truong (ISS), Kees Biekart, (ISS) and Annelies Zoomers (CEDLA, and University of Nijmegen).¹

Initially, work was carried out with data obtained from the 15 organizations belonging to the incipient Platform² supported by Cordaid as well as a search through internet of other organizations, thus obtaining a database with a total of 85 organizations. This general information was used to contact each of these organizations by telephone in order to verify their existence and to confirm and obtain further knowledge on some of their characteristics. Those who could not be contacted by telephone were contacted through e-mail. 37 organizations responded this survey, including those of the platform. It was further established that some no longer exist and that some even in greater number, despite having a web site, are not active.³ Additionally, in the interviews with different practitioners details of other organizations were obtained.

As regards the second subject, namely that of the situation of the Latin Americans in The Netherlands, first the data available with different governmental institutions were obtained and a demographical recount of these data was done (see list at end of report). Then through a survey of people of Latin American origin⁴, applied mainly throughout the organizations of the Platform, the findings were further investigated in the institutional statistical data and a more detailed exploration of what the statistics did not reveal about the real situation of the target population was carried out. The survey was responded by 164 people; some directly during meetings with the main investigator in meetings with the different organizations and others through e-mail.

In order to complete the picture from the results of this survey, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with both Latin Americans (16) and Dutch citizens (16) familiar with Latin American societies. The perspective of the Dutch was the main source of information in order to understand how Latin Americans are viewed by the receiving society, to what extent this group

¹ I am especially thankful for the collaboration of Lucia Goldfarb (ISS) and David van Moppes (Cedla).

² Information based on the minutes of Cordaid until December 2006.

³ Others that did not have a web site, student unions and organizations of a commercial or informing character were not taken into account because they are not private aid organizations as defined in this study. Therefore we emphasize that there exist many more.

⁴ The survey was tested on the focal group with professionals in order to refine the instrument.

is accepted by the Dutch natives and what social distance may exist between the two groups. The conditions of certain population groups in particular were elaborated upon, so 12 focal groups were formed with people having specific conditions in common, in the sense of being extraordinary, that is to say circumstances which do not affect all Latin Americans, but which are of a particular character. Contact with these groups was made throughout different organizations with the participation of a total of 90 people. With some of the special populations it was impossible to form the focal group (sex workers, for example) so people who work with them and know their conditions were interviewed instead.

The report is organised as follows: first the statistical data from the different governmental institutions are explained and analysed, in the second chapter the situation of the target population is elaborated with the results of the survey and the results of the interviews. The third part examines the conditions of the groups we have called 'populations in special conditions' and, when required, pertinent comments are made to stimulate actions to improve their conditions. In the following section, the general classification and description of the organizations from which data could be obtained is made and finally, a general conclusion is offered.

Finally, some words of gratitude are due to all the people who contributed to this investigation. We hope that this report will be useful for all parties involved and that it will be to the benefit of the Latin American diaspora in The Netherlands and their desire to contribute to the improvement of the conditions of their localities and countries of origin.

2 Demographic characteristics of the Latin American population resident in The Netherlands⁵

The statistics of this chapter come from different Dutch entities⁶ and thus refer to officially registered citizens. A strong difficulty for its collection and analysis was the fact that the majority of the data cannot be found per nationality and often comprised countries (Surinam, Antilles, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Caribbean) that were not our objective, data for different years, or data indistinctly referring to the entire American continent. Moreover, some of the specific subjects (employment/ unemployment, illegality, criminality, education, integration, political participation, access to services) have not been researched nor analysed for Latin Americans, only for the larger groups of foreigners, or they presented data only for years previous to 2006. These facts are an additional indication of the little visibility Latin Americans have in the current Dutch context (see also Barajas, 2006).

The Dutch state classifies its foreign population into western citizens (1'427.565 people) and non-western citizens; included in the list of 'Niet-Westerse allochtonen' are the Latin Americans, some Asians and Africans; within these, the four largest groups are the Turkish (364.333), the Surinamese

⁵ Co-authored with David van Moppes in the original version.

⁶ See notes.

(331.890), the Moroccans (323.239) and Antilleans/ Arubans (129.683). (CBS, January 2006).

In the light of this study, the following nationalities were taken into account: Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.

Additional classifications used by Dutch institutions comprise 1) first generation: citizens born outside The Netherlands of whom at least one parent was also born outside The Netherlands and 2) second generation: men and women born in the Netherlands, of whom at least one parent was born outside the Netherlands.

The total population in December 2006 consisted of 62.055 people, as can be seen in table 1.

TABLE 1
Total population of Latin Americans per nationality (CBS, 2006)

Country	#	Country	#
Brazil	13.091	Uruguay	1.011
Colombia	10.335	Bolivia	769
Dominican Republic	10.115	Costa Rica	648
Chile	4.777	Guatemala	496
Argentina	4.195	El Salvador	469
Venezuela	4.216	Honduras	424
Peru	3.899	Nicaragua	431
Mexico	3.067	Panama	370
Ecuador	2.015	Paraguay	265
Cuba	1.462	Total	62.055

The three major nationalities are therefore: Brazilians, Colombians⁷ and Dominicans. This composition is also changing in recent years, according to the visa applications: although the Brazilian nationality remains the largest group, the affluence of Ecuadoreans and Mexicans is increasing (IND, 2006).

We can distinguish three important causes which have determined the migration from Latin American to The Netherlands: 1) in the '70s the dictatorial regimes in Chile, Argentina and Paraguay produced the migration of political refugees 2) '80s - 2000: poor socio-economic conditions which were caused by, among other things, neo-liberalism and globalisation, and 3) the events of September 11, 2001 made more difficult the migration to the United States of America, the traditional destination for Latin Americans, and intensified the migration to Europe (Costa, 2006). In fact, since 2001 there has been an increase in the Latin American population in The Netherlands of 47 percent, compared to previous years.

⁷ At least half of this population corresponds to adopted children.

As a consequence, the purpose of entry has changed: during the first period the purpose was that of seeking political refuge, currently only a few Colombians and Cubans have entered under this mode whereas spontaneous labour migration has increased, attracting people who come in search of jobs and who have different levels of education and include especially mothers. Additionally, entrance to The Netherlands to carry out studies or exchange programs has also increased, at least in the visa applications (IND, 2006). Family reunification and family formation, which until 2006 remained the most frequent motives, will no doubt decrease in the light of the new legislation (*wet inburgering buitenland*), which has very strong demands for non-European citizens (see mixed couples).

The Latin American population is mainly female; the difference in proportion of Latin American men to women in the Dutch context is large: 2 women to 1 man for Brazilians and Colombians and 5 women to 2 men for Dominicans, which is only surpassed by the Filipinos: 3 women to 1 man. The large majority (75 percent) of culturally mixed couples consist of a Latin American woman and a Dutch man; in addition, the labour market attracts women in the sectors of care giving, house cleaning and sex work.

It is a young population: 40 percent are less than 18 years old, the first generation ranges on an average from 30-39 years of age and the majority of the second generation have a range of 0-9 years of age. The composition and size of these populations will change according to the predictions made by CBS (2006) as it is expected that the number of Latin Americans who enter will keep increasing with an average of 4,000 a year until it will have reached approximately 200,000 people by the year 2050.

The distribution per city shows Amsterdam and Rotterdam are cities of preference.

TABLE 2
Distribution of Latin Americans per city

City	Inhabitants
Amsterdam	9.496
Rotterdam	5.537
Almere	1.746
Utrecht	1.601
The Hague*	1164
Groningen	1.034
Enschede	711
Tilburg	700
Maastricht	528

*year 2002

Moreover, there are several concentrations of nationalities in certain cities, according to the data provided by the municipalities: Dominicans in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Tilburg and Groningen, Peruvians and Venezuelans in Utrecht; in Maastricht, Mexicans; in Almere, Salvadorians; in Enschede,

Brazilians. However, concentrations in neighbourhoods have been reported neither in these nor in other cities.

3 Living conditions and participation of the Latin Americans in Dutch society

The objective of this part of the investigation was to have a direct approach to: 1) the real living conditions of citizens of Latin American origin currently living in The Netherlands and 2) their level of integration in Dutch society. These data complete the picture of what the statistics do not tell us.

The concept of integration used was that of the European Commission⁸:

Integration should be understood as a two way process based on mutual rights and corresponding obligations of legally resident third country nationals and the host society which provides for full participation of the immigrant. This implies on the one hand that it is the responsibility of the host society to ensure that the formal rights of immigrants are in place in such a way that the individual has the possibility of participating in economic, social, cultural and civil life and on the other, that immigrants respect the fundamental norms and values of the host society and participate actively in the integration process, without having to relinquish their own identity.

Participation as well as integration does not necessarily have to take place at all levels, it may be partial and allow the person to interact in the receiving society in an appropriate manner; to a great extent this will depend on his/her individual cultural orientation. This orientation is framed by two extremes: segregation and assimilation. Segregation refers to the interaction of the individual: relating and identifying only with the individual's own community or country of origin. Assimilation refers to the loss of the individual's original characteristics and adopts the cultural traits of the receiving society.

Given the multidimensional nature of integration and the different social elements involved in it, it was necessary to group them at least in three dimensions.⁹

- The economic, social and civil political participation of the immigrants in the host society, attending aspects such as income, housing, education, occupation and civil and political activity.
- Cultural aspects necessary to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding in the receiving society: interaction with native citizens, language used, social contact, acceptance of habits and values, orientation towards their society of origin and, sense of belonging or identification.

⁸ Commission of the European communities: 'Communication from the Commission to the council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee on immigration, integration and employment', Brussels, June 2003.

⁹ The indicators used are a modification based on: Entzinger H., Biezeveld, R 2003 'Benchmarking in Immigrant Integration' and, Louk Hagendoorn, Justus Veenman and Wilma Vollebergh, eds 2003, Integrating Immigrants in the Netherlands. Cultural versus socio-economic integration.

- Since integration is not a one-sided process in which only migrants play a role, the perception and social distance and acceptance / discrimination of the receiving society towards Latin Americans is analysed.

Not all these elements are easy to measure. They are actually strongly interconnected and at times even difficult to separate. This is a modest contribution to understand the situation of the objective population.

3.1 Generalities of the sample

Given the exploratory character of this study and the time and resource limit, it was impossible to encompass the entire Latin American population in The Netherlands (62,000) and come to definite conclusions or evidence regarding their level of integration. Therefore, a first approach to the subject of integration was made by means of 164 surveys¹⁰ of which some were realised directly in different events and others through e-mail. The aim was to have the most representative sample possible and to include men and women of both first and second generation of different ages, different activities, documented and undocumented, with or without naturalisation and of various time periods of residence in The Netherlands. The main characteristics of the sample were:

- 71% were women
- Average age of 38 years; 52 % are between 20 and 39 years old
- 46 % have a relationship (married 37 %, living together 9 %)
- 71 % with a partner of Dutch nationality
- 45 % have children
- 36% entered The Netherlands because of family formation
- 22% entered because of family reunification
- 23% entered in order to study
- 3% were asylum seekers and political refugees most of them who currently come from Cuba and Colombia
- 63% with a time period of residence in The Netherlands between 6 and 15 years
- 90% belong to the first generation¹¹
- 15% undocumented people
- 45% of the three most frequent countries of provenance in The Netherlands: Brazil, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic.

¹⁰ Representativity with probability = 0.90 and sampling error 0.06.

¹¹ This characteristic of the sample that deviates from the statistical data of the first part (60 percent of the first generation), can be explained by the fact that the second generation (10 percent of the sample) is still very young: 40 percent under the age of 18, the majority of which oscillate between 0 and 9 years of age, and therefore could not respond to the inquiry.

3.2 Economic, social and civil political participation of the Latin American immigrants

The socio-economic aspects taken into account herein include participation in the education system as the main source of socialisation, and because the level of education offers greater or less possibilities to enter the labour market (Entzinger H., Biezeveld, R. 2003). Income level is an indicator that is fairly closely related to labour market participation. It would be possible to take into account another aspect of a successful integration in the economic field, namely that of the presence of companies run by Latin American immigrants, but according to the interview with the manager of the NLABC (Latin American Business Council) - they are scarce and have a low impact, despite the existence of at least 2 institutions offering facilities to develop such activities: the CBI (Centre for the promotion of imports from developing countries), which offers various services for entrepreneurs who want to export to The Netherlands from Central and South America, and the PSOM (Programme for Cooperation with Emerging Markets) of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which is a special program designed to foster Dutch private investment and commercial relations in emerging markets from developing countries; it is governed by bilateral treaties. There are some informal Latin American networks, yet there is nothing we could call 'ethnic business' as there is for other groups of foreigners; this seems to stem from the fact that some of the products consumed by Latin Americans are purchased at shops selling tropical products (tokos) run by foreigners of other nationalities. This is an aspect which deserves to be explored thoroughly.

3.2.1 Income and poverty

The income an immigrant or domestic group may have affects their possibilities of social participation in the way that it facilitates the access to goods and services in the receiving society. A reasonable income offers possibilities of access to cultural forms and habits of the new social context and hence has an influence on a population's ability to integrate.

The income of the domestic groups of the sample is very heterogeneous (a range of 550 - 1750 euros net per month), which is relatively low in the Dutch context (CBS, Armoedemonitor 2005, p. 18) and implies a condition of poverty of between 30 - 44 percent of the studied population.

According to studies of the CBS¹², it is expected that upon arrival to the country, conditions of poverty amongst immigrants will exist while they achieve access and adapt to the new labour niche. It is expected that the foreign population runs a greater risk of poverty than the native population; poverty affects approximately 30 percent of the Moroccans, Antilleans and the Turkish) and almost twice as many (52 - 58 percent) of the Somali and the Afghani populations, therefore the situation of the Latin Americans would be within what is expected. Despite this high incidence of poverty there seems to

¹² Armoedemonitor 2006:
<http://www.scp.nl/publicaties/persberichten/9037702066.shtml>

be very little use of the social security services. These two aspects require a specific study as particularities and differences may vary per municipality.

3.2.2 Housing

Another interesting economic indicator is that of access to housing and its concentration in groups, to the extent that concentrations of immigrants of the same origin on a spatial level may indicate a minor possibility of interaction with natives and a certain level of segregation or exclusion. The sample does not reveal this type of phenomenon:

- 57% live in a predominantly Dutch neighbourhood
- 10% in neighbourhoods mixed with other foreigners
- 32% own their housing facilities, 58% have rented housing

3.2.3 Education

Theoretically (Hagendoorn et al p.6), it is expected that a high level of education and participation in economic life stimulates cultural orientation towards the receiving society, the adaptation of its values and lifestyle. However, the evidence shows that this is not always true: on the one hand, spontaneous immigrants frequently occupy low positions in the occupational hierarchy of post-industrial societies. They find themselves in conditions of underemployment or unemployment and live on the fringes of society, which undermines their motivation to change and to adapt.

The level of higher education of the sample is high (47 percent), some of the respondents have more than one higher education degree and 27 percent have followed postgraduate studies. The majority of them were already well-qualified when they entered the country. However, it would be necessary to further research whether these characteristics of high education are in line with and/or representative of the rest of the Latin American population in The Netherlands, and in this respect requires a more profound exploration as there may be important contributions of Latin America to Dutch society.

On the other hand, access of the so-called 'non-western' foreigners to higher levels of secondary education have proven difficult within the Dutch system, according to results of recent studies on a national level. Among Latin Americans:

- 9 % went to VWO (Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs), the highest level possible which allows access to university
- 34 % went to HAVO (Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs) or intermediary level which allows access to tertiary education (bachelor Hogeschool)
- 57 % went to VMBO (Voorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs), level of miscellaneous professions.

Having difficulties accessing the two highest levels of secondary education is one form of discrimination experienced by respondents according to the questionnaire. This was further evidenced in direct testimonies, as is described in other parts of this report.

3.2.4 Occupation and participation in the labour market

- 84 % of the population is active in the labour market
- 61 % permanent position
- 56 % underemployment
- 39 % work with Dutch companies/institutions
- 26 % in own companies

If we compare these figures with the situation of other foreign groups, Turkish and Moroccan of whom the unemployment has been as high as 1/3 of the population in the previous years¹³, this figure would be acceptable for the Dutch context. The importance of this aspect deserves major attention and an in-depth study, which would include the type of professions held and under what conditions, for there are testimonies of severe problems of underemployment, particularly among those who have arrived during the last years.

Voluntary work is very common and important in The Netherlands; according to the CBS, 60 percent of the Dutch adults are involved in some form of voluntary work (no compensation). When looking at the sample of this study, 37.6 percent do voluntary work and within this group the majority work for or on behalf of the Latin American population. This is an interesting fact because it indicates the availability of voluntary participation in development projects for the continent.

3.2.5 Political and civil participation

In The Netherlands, naturalised immigrants who have legally lived in the country for at least 5 years have the right to vote on a national level.

48 percent of the Latin Americans are naturalised and 62 percent of them use this right; this is a high percentage when compared to data from studies about the voting behaviour of other foreign groups in The Netherlands, Turkish 53 percent, Moroccans 40 percent, Surinamese 45 percent and Antilleans 44 percent. (Lampert, M, Ait Moha, A. 2006). Nevertheless, within the Latin American population, there is no participation in public functions (for example, parliamentary functions) nor are there any representative political leaders or groups for this community.

3.3 Cultural orientation

According to integration studies (Hagendoorn et al., p.3) immigrants are more culturally integrated if they steer their social interactions towards the receiving society and less integrated if they steer towards the community of immigrants or towards their group of origin. The final balance will be reflected in the categorisation they make of themselves as members of a specific group and in the feeling of emotional belonging to or identification with that group, or with

¹³ Integratie Monitor, CBS 2002.

their country of origin and the cultural practices, standards and values this implies.

3.3.1 Interaction with the Dutch population

As noted before, 71 percent of the respondents have a Dutch partner, live in Dutch neighbourhoods (57 percent) and many of them work for Dutch companies (39 percent), all conditions that ensure them a high frequency of interaction with natives and as a result the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the receiving culture. In order to achieve this interaction one factor that has continuously gained more importance and has even become a cornerstone of the recent migratory policy is that of language.

3.3.2 Language used

Knowledge of the main languages spoken in the recipient society is increasingly seen in the European Union as conditional for a successful integration. A low educational status and insufficient language skills of migrants may account for low levels of labour market participation. However, this may equally be an effect of discriminatory rules and practices. (Entzinger et al., 2003, p.30). Also low language skills could make more difficult for individuals to obtain a job or for the incidence of segregation at schools and at neighbourhoods.

- 63% speak Dutch
- 42% speak Dutch with his/her partner
- 39% use Dutch at home
- 32% speak Dutch with their children
- 24% are bilingual homes
- 19% use an additional language (other than Dutch, Spanish or Portuguese) to speak with their children

As to the interaction with the children, Spanish is used frequently because the home situation offers the only opportunity to practise it. The low frequency of the Portuguese language in the three environments described above is striking, despite the fact that the Brazilian population is the largest Latin American population in The Netherlands and the sample represented 19 percent.

Only nine percent find themselves satisfied with their fluency in Dutch, which indicates a large insufficiency despite the high frequency and the inclination to use it.

3.3.3 Social contact

Being a member of a club or an association is a common means of socialisation in The Netherlands; Religion and sports are two aspects that most stimulate Latin Americans to belong to or associate themselves to clubs.

3.3.4 Some habits, standards and values

As for the acceptance and/or adoption of habits like that of punctuality or compliance, which are considered characteristic of Dutch society, there is also ample integration: 64 percent of the respondents use an agenda to allot time and 75 percent claims to be very punctual for appointments and agreements. The habit of eating just a 'broodje' (sandwich) at lunchtime is less adopted, which is done by 55 percent of the sample. The acceptance of the Dutch sense of humour is lower, only appreciated by 34 percent of the respondents.

Despite the fact that they were asked about standards and values, a lot of people mentioned characteristics or character traits of some Dutch individuals, (introvert, curt, boring) or characteristics of Dutch institutions; for example, something mentioned very often was the poor quality of the medical system (also mentioned in the personal interviews and in the focal groups), or bureaucracy, the high costs of taxes. The following table reflects the other data:

TABLE 3
Latin American perception of Dutch standards and values*

Positive values/ standards/ habits	Mentioned (No.)	Negative values/ standards/ habits	Mentioned (No.)
Punctuality	20	Discrimination	17
Organization	13	Coldness	13
Respect	10	Inflexibility	11
Honesty	9	Very distant intra- familial relationships	11
Freedom	8	Individualism	9
Sincerity	6	Racism	6
Social security	6	Use of drugs	5
Order	4	Prostitution	3
Quality of life	2	Licentiousness	4
Responsibility	4	Utilitarianism	3
Recycling /environmental care	1	Stinginess	3
Public spirit	1	Education of youngsters	3
Security	1	Homosexuality	2
Holidays	1	Consumption of alcohol	2
Use of bicycles	1	Food	2
Flexibility of the job	1		

* Answers to two open questions in the questionnaire: 'What standards and/or values of the Dutch society have had a positive impact on you? And a negative impact?'

As can be seen in this table, many aspects of the functioning of Dutch society are valued positively by the Latin Americans and within the negative aspects the majority refer to the differences in cultural perspectives.

3.3.5 Interaction with the country of origin

The interaction of the immigrants with their countries of origin becomes easier due to development, efficiency and ease of the current communication channels (internet, telephony, transport).

For example, there is much telephone interaction and there are people who even make phone calls more than once a day (transnational mothers) as this is the best way to maintain the bonds with their children and family. As for the frequency of travels to the country of origin, this is usually done once a year although there are people who travel 4 times a year.

As for sending money, the ones who most often contribute remittances and realise exchanges of any kind with their localities of origin are the immigrants who have come spontaneously in order to seek better working conditions and conditions of life¹⁴ and not those who have already established better working conditions; the first group sends money on a regular base whereas the second group only does so occasionally. Additionally there are exchanges and transfers of knowledge and cultural ways which cannot be quantified in a study like this, but which are nonetheless of great importance.

3.3.6 Sense of belonging or identification

As it is not possible to speak of a Latin American identity, or of a Latin American culture, given the heterogeneity of the countries of origin and the migrants, this part refers to the sense of belonging or identification, in other words, with what and to whom one identifies with: with the Dutch and their social ways or with their fellow countrymen and the values of their country of provenance.¹⁵

- Half of the respondents feel at home in The Netherlands
- 55% feel more Latin American than Dutch (majority of second generation people)
- 15% feel more Dutch than Latin American
- 9% feel Dutch as much as Latin American

The other aspect of sense of belonging researched was the existence of pride of their country of origin: 88 percent.

3.4 The other face of integration: acceptance/ discrimination on the part of Dutch society

91 percent of the respondents have felt discriminated against in different places, mainly at work or in the street. However, they interpreted this as

¹⁴ The same phenomenon has presented itself in studies about certain groups of Latin Americans in Germany and Belgium.

¹⁵ The most common manner of identification among Latin Americans is by their country of origin; in this respect there is a fundamental difference from the immigrants of Latin American origin in the USA, where a very particular 'Latin' identification was constructed.

‘discrimination against foreigners, -allochtonen-’ and not specifically against Latin Americans.

Despite the high degree of reported discrimination, when asked if they feel accepted by Dutch society 62 percent said yes, 25 percent responded negatively. This is a high level of feeling of acceptance, which is confirmed by the image the Latin Americans think the Dutch have of them: there were many more positive interpretations than negative ones, which shows a wide degree of acceptance and it is therefore a reaction which naturally allows a larger possibility of integration.

Table 4
Image Latin Americans perceive the Dutch have of them

Positive characteristics	Mentioned (No.)	Negative characteristics	Mentioned (No.)
Cheerful	13	Inferior	3
Solidary	4	Superficial	1
Extrovert	4	Underdeveloped	3
Hard working	3	Intrusive	4
Exotic	4	Disorganised	1
Spontaneous	3	Slack	3

When Dutch people were asked about the image they have of the Latin Americans, the positive answers were the same as shown by the table, and additionally they emphasized their way of handling time and different evaluation of time, this without necessarily being a negative aspect, in other words, in general they have a very positive image.

Studies of Louk Hagendoorn and José Pepels (2003) show that the majority of Dutch society has an implicit ethnic hierarchy in their mind. According to their studies the Dutch evaluate and react to each immigrant group on the base of the characteristics they perceive of those groups such as their culture, level of education, and time period of residence in Dutch society, so that some immigrants are more or less considered equal, others definitely different or even as being inferior. According to these authors determinant factors of this acceptance are:

- 1) Cultural resemblance between the immigrant group and the receiving society
- 2) Economic, political, and language competitiveness; and
- 3) Level of threat that this competitiveness may cause for the two groups.

Cultural resemblances and differences between the Latin Americans and the Dutch.¹⁶

¹⁶ The paragraphs placed between quotation marks are textual declarations from the interviewees.

Latin Americans are western, regardless of their educational level. Apart from the indigenous people, they have a western religion, western laws, western languages, values (freedom of speech, democracy, importance of women's emancipation), they are much more like the Europeans than other foreign groups, therefore it is very easy for them to integrate in a society such as the Dutch.

This affirmation subscribes to the perspective of the majority of the interviewees.

The heterogeneity of the Latin Americans, as a reflection of their continent is also a common point which is prominent in the perception of knowledgeable Dutch. This characteristic makes it difficult to speak of one single culture, yet there are some common factors according to the interviewees which can be mentioned as contrasting between the two groups. These factors are summarized in table 5.

TABLE 5
Differences between the Latin Americans and the Dutch

Latin Americans	Dutch
Little planning, different management of time	Planning, agenda
Less independent	Independent
Flexibility, spontaneity	Structured and ordered life
Family and friends are a priority	Work is a priority
Solidarity	Individualists
They adapt very easily	

The cultural differences from Dutch culture are not very big when compared to those of the other immigrant groups in The Netherlands, and in fact

these differences are often appreciated by the Dutch

As for the economic or political competitiveness between the two groups, this practically does not exist to the extent that none of those activities are prominent among the Latin Americans, according to the perception of some of the interviewees, therefore, they do not represent a threat. As for the Spanish or Portuguese language, they are rather appreciated by the Dutch instead of being considered a threat; this is explained by the fact that this society can be considered multilingual and in the same manner, the social pressure on foreigners –not only institutionally- to learn Dutch is felt constantly. Nevertheless those who know the continent justify the fact:

for Latin Americans it is difficult to learn other languages since they come from a continent in which they cross borders and speak always Spanish or Portuguese.

The possibility of competition at the work level is neither relevant nor comparable to that of other migrant groups as Latin Americans occupy

different labour niches, they do not concentrate in one specific sector as other foreigners do¹⁷, and often do work that natives do not want to carry out.

3.4.1 General perception of Latin Americans

When speaking of the position of Latin Americans in Dutch society and the visibility they may have, the majority of the Dutch citizens surveyed emphasized:

they are so immersed in it, that they are not noticed, they are inconspicuous to the ordinary Dutch citizen

Nevertheless, the biggest obstacle to perform better in this society seems to be the low level of command of the Dutch language of many of them. Moreover, they are overshadowed by the presence of the majority immigrant groups from Turkey or Morocco.

Another interesting feature is that of the fragmentation and dispersion, the lack of unity among the different Latin Americans:

it is a very fragmented population, they do not gather amongst themselves, those from the north do not get together with those from the south; it is a reflection of what happens in their countries, Latin America has never been united

One person even mentioned how hard it was for some migrants from the same nationality to organise and meet.

3.5 The Latin American Woman in the Dutch context

As we stated before, the survey was answered by a high percentage of women, therefore reflecting to a large extent their situation in Dutch society; however, it is interesting to underline some of the contrasts with the men.

In comparison to men, women:

- Are slightly more inclined to consider themselves more Latin American than Dutch, 58.6% versus 45.8%.
- Are more likely to feel proud to be Latin American: 93.1% versus 77.1%.
- Tend to feel more accepted by Dutch society 65.5% versus 56.2%.
- Feel more at ease when speaking Dutch (54.3% versus 45.8%).

Consistent with the description above, women seem to be more capable to establish bonds with the Dutch: the percentage of women without any Dutch friends is 34.5 compared to 43.8 percent of the men. Likewise, 47.4 percent of the women have between one and ten Dutch friends while the rate of the men is 39.6 percent.

¹⁷ Polish in the construction and agricultural sector, for example.

In general, women are slightly less inclined to consider the job they have inadequate when taking into account their level of education (31 percent versus 37.5 percent).

In accordance with what has been said about the labour market fit for Latin American women in The Netherlands, they run a significantly smaller risk of being unemployed than the men (48.3 percent of the women have been unemployed at some time versus 58.3 percent of the men).

Noting the abovementioned, it seems that the women are more and better integrated into society, their flexibility and capacity to adapt are enhanced by the fact that they have Dutch partners, providing them with access to social and family networks.

To speak Dutch and get to know this society, the one who helped me is my mother-in-law, she only speaks Dutch, whereas my husband speaks Spanish and prefers to improve his level of Spanish with me, so he does not speak Dutch with me, he says that's why I go to school ...

Another way of participation and acquaintance with Dutch culture is the contact with school through the children and their friends and parent meetings.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the fact that these women legally depend on their partners makes them very vulnerable and that many of the women who have arrived spontaneously in search of a job seem to be in conditions of poverty (see next chapter).

4 LATIN AMERICANS IN SPECIAL CONDITIONS

What is presented here is but a first general approximation to the conditions in which this group of people are in. It deals with life experiences and personal perspectives of the participants in the focal groups and the people interviewed. The objective of this study was not to verify nor go deeper into the causes, which would be the object of another type of study. For each population group some generalities are given, the conditions exposed by the people who took part in the focal groups are described briefly, and some comments are made. At the beginning of some topics there is a textual expression, captured during the focal group sessions, which illustrates the situation of these people.

4.1 First, second, third generation¹⁸

The first generation of Latin Americans who entered The Netherlands as refugees is now over the age of 50. Their children were either born here or arrived when they were very young and were brought up here; some already have children of their own, a third generation who, although born and raised here, has Latin American ancestors. First the characteristics of the first

¹⁸ Information obtained from different interviews and the focal group carried out with people older than 50 years of age, with the participation of several refugees (first migration wave) and some from the second generation.

generation of refugees are being analysed and then the other two will be exposed.

I am not from here, nor am I from there...

As mentioned before, following the coup d'état against Allende in 1973, The Netherlands accepted Chilean citizens as political refugees. Approximately 1300 people entered the country; others arrived spontaneously and later, Argentines and Uruguayans came over as well.

Dutch political conditions of that moment allowed their arrival to be vastly different from that of other migrant groups, such as the current group of migrant workers. As refugees they received psychological help, housing and Dutch lessons. In addition, being classified as a group of 'refugees' and one of the so-called 'ethnic minorities', they had access to, among other things, state support by means of a special education law allowing children from 4 to 12 years old to take Spanish classes as well as lessons on Latin American culture in the Latin American School which operated between 1985 and 2004.

Many went back to their countries when democracies were re-established, others stayed in The Netherlands, and many of them have dual citizenship.

Some of the current conditions of this population:

- Being an ageing population, they rely on an adequate infrastructure and services that is in a cultural context that differs from that of their origins. This, for some may cause difficulties.
- Those who do not speak the language or do not speak it well are more isolated.
- Many live with the indecision of returning to their countries or staying in The Netherlands, thus causing them uneasiness
- The conditions of political asylum (not being able to go to their country) impeded maintaining bonds with their countries, thus losing the strong relationship with family and friends; now that they are older, returning is an option which presents difficulties.
- The disputed dual citizenship in The Netherlands, (first semester 2007) may affect them because if public officials are prohibited to have dual citizenship, neither they nor their children will be able to apply for a government post.
- Some of them report that prohibiting dual citizenship may imply a decrease of their rights.

4.1.1 The second generation

we do not find our own place, we are alienated

They were born and raised in Dutch society, but are classified as foreigners because only one of their parents is Dutch, or both their parents are of Latin American origin (children of refugees, for example). They have sufficient contact with Dutch society by means of school and family.

Conditions:

- Sufficient contact with Dutch society (school/ extensive family)
- Ambiguity of identity caused by the provenance of their parents
- They are considered foreigners, even if they do not feel that way.
- Language problems: in spite of growing up in Dutch society and receiving education in Dutch, the educational institutions often exclude them from opportunities on the pretext of little command of the language.
- Difficulties of access to some levels of education¹⁹
- Some try to get to know their roots

4.1.2 The third generation

The grandchildren of the first immigrants can be considered a third generation of Latin Americans in The Netherlands, although this term is not used by the Dutch institutions. They appear to be in better conditions than their parents of foreign origin; they are curious about the past of their parents, and can travel freely to Latin America, whereas the former two generations (political refugees and their children) did not have this possibility for a long time.

General comments:

There is a large richness of experiences of adaptation, integration and participation amongst the three generations, especially among those who came as refugees; for example:

The manners of adaptation and strategies of cultural survival they developed, the manners of solidarity, the generational changes occurring during the exile, changes within the domestic groups and its implications, new ways of organising the return to their countries of origin.

These processes have neither been collected nor documented and are of great value in order to understand the possibilities of integration and compare them, for example, to other immigrant groups; it is urgently necessary to do so before they are lost.

4.2 Culturally mixed couples²⁰

Here we refer to couples in which one person is Latin American and the other one Dutch. This is a well-known phenomenon in The Netherlands, and as noted in the previous chapters it is one of the major motives of women entering The Netherlands. Currently there are specific legal conditions that affect them negatively:

...it is only possible to have a partner within the European Union or if you have a lot of money...

¹⁹ In the section of population of school age there is data that also covers this population regarding access to education.

²⁰ Information obtained from two special focal groups with mixed couples, one of them Brazilians, and of other focal groups and interviews with women in different conditions.

The total costs to have a partner enter may add up to 12.000 euros.²¹

The foreign person must take an adaptation course (inburgering) in his/her country of origin and take a Dutch exam there.

The Dutch partner must have a fixed-term contract of minimum one year at the moment of requesting legalisation: 1500 euros net/month, i.e. a minimum gross wage of 2300 euros

A long wait: an average of a year and a half; which means a situation of insecurity and anxiety for the couple.

While these demands are not complied with, the couple cannot live together in The Netherlands; sometimes it takes years to acquire them, which means they are forced to be separated from each other for a long time. When possible, some of them may come only as a tourist for short periods of time. The emotional, economic and relational effects on the families are vast and affect both the foreign partner as well as the native and their children.

Additionally:

During the first 3 years of residence, the foreigner legally depends on his/her Dutch partner. He/She does not know the environment, does not master the language and very often does not have a job, all of which are conditions of insecurity.

If during this period the relationship ends, the foreigner may be deported even if he/she has children who were born in The Netherlands and have a Dutch Passport. The child's nationality does not give the mother the possibility to have Dutch nationality. This circumstance translates into the fact that the child must leave the country as well despite having a Dutch passport.

There are also circumstances of a cultural order (agenda, food) typical of any bicultural relationship; something relevant among a lot of couples with children is cultural differences regarding their upbringing:

Here children do not respect their parents; this is difficult to deal with because we come from societies where there is still respect

- Differences in the parents' acceptance of their children's sexual freedom.
- Legal consumption of particular kinds of drugs.
- Children permanently leaving their homes to live on their own at the age of 18

In my country I felt more emancipated, I could work and go out, there was always someone who would look after my child, my mom, my sister, someone would help me; here months go by without being able to go out; first, it is very expensive and second, I have nobody to look after my child...

- The distance and coldness regarding intra-familial relationships in The Netherlands contrasts greatly with the relationships of solidarity amongst Latin American families. For some Dutch it is difficult to understand and

²¹ The economic data were mentioned in the focal group and verified with Stichting Buitelandsepartners. Some of the costs may vary per country.

accept the support (moral, economic) given to the partner's relatives which is perfectly normal in Latin America.

- When there are children it is very difficult for a woman to go to work, because she cannot count on the solidarity of the extended family to look after the children, which is usual in Latin America.
- Latin Americans find it difficult to understand and to accept the isolation and loneliness of the elderly and aged in The Netherlands, since for them the bonds of affection and solidarity extend over different generations.
- The difficulty of finding domestic help often forces women to work much more at home than what they had in their countries of origin.
- Day care centres are scarce and expensive, the woman has to stay at home and take care of the children.
- The children's school time table absorbs much of the mothers' time and this impedes them to develop other productive activities.

4.3 Sex workers²²

Since the 70s and especially in the 80s Latin American sex workers arrived in The Netherlands.

The current immigration law states that sex work is only legal for EU citizens; other nationalities that exercise the profession do so illegally. There are a lot of sex workers of Latin American origin which have European nationality, but the ones who do not, therefore, remain illegal.

Some conditions under the current immigration law:

- There are no resources to support Latin American women/men who work in this industry
- Business owners ensure they do not employ undocumented people to avoid fines, there has therefore been an increase in other more insecure services: the streets, internet offers, in residences, at camp sites and parking lots, etc.
- Increase in mobility in order not to be discovered; this makes the possibility of supporting them difficult
- Increased insecurity and vulnerability: they are exposed to blackmail; do not have rights or guarantees of any kind –housing, health, or medical care-
- Deportation

²² I would like to thank Marie Louise Janssen, specialist on the subject, who, during the interview, gave me previews of her book 'reizende sekswerkers levenverhalen van Latijns-Amerikaanse vrouwen in Europa' which was in the process of publication.

Other general conditions:

- The GGD (medical care in some municipalities) pays visits to control venereal diseases, yet other illnesses have to be taken care of in their countries of origin which implies high costs and a longer time.
- With the closing of the 'tippelzones' (zones of tolerance) there has been an increase in other forms of services provided in which there is less security: escort services, highways, camp sites, internet, parking lots.
- There are new nationalities in this profession: Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, countries in which women are more exposed because they are not familiar with the traffic mechanisms.
- Many live isolated from the wider social context in The Netherlands

Additionally

- Some who arrived in the 70s and 80s and who are older and without education, live in conditions of poverty and even sleep in the windows.
- With the closing of businesses caused by money laundering the workers are left abandoned.
- There are still cases of human trafficking and abuse.

Comments:

Until now immigrant prostitutes have never been a priority in Dutch politics, although they are the majority.

Within the syndicate there should be space for Latin Americans as a special group, in order to allow them to organise themselves.

It is necessary to give them tools to get acquainted with the Dutch legal context, their rights and elements that allow them to make decisions.

4.4 The Otavaleños²³

The indigenous Ecuadorian Otavaleños, textile merchants and musicians by tradition, arrived in Europe in the 80s; Amsterdam was an important base from which to travel to other countries. It is said that during that time, between 500 and 700 Otavaleños lived in Amsterdam.

In October 1992, when a plane crashed in the Bijlmer neighbourhood in Amsterdam, some of their houses were destroyed; despite none of them being killed, the Dutch government offered them a residence visa as a way of compensation for the losses, and 14 of them, all men, accepted this offer. Currently there are about 20 families, united still by their traditions and by sports.

...We do not have the freedom of movement we did before...

- The family reunification process was very long (an average of 11 years) and difficult.

²³ Focal group realised with Otavaleños (Bijlmeer)

- They had to work in new activities in the formal sector to prove a stable income and to make enough money to bring their families.
- They have had some changes in their life style: less mobility, they were forced to distance themselves from their extensive families in Ecuador because they could no longer travel like they did before.
- They do not have enough people or time to form musical groups
- Job activities impede them from getting together as often as before
- They have had to change their way of dressing because of the climate
- Their language (Quichua) is losing ground among the youngest: they speak Dutch and Spanish.
- Difficulties with the Dutch health system.

Comments:

They do not show interest in being part of an organization and their job schedule impedes them from forming their own organization. It is important that they maintain their native language, especially the young, in order to maintain their traditional contacts with the extensive families in their country and when they return.

4.5 Undocumented population²⁴

...If you do not have papers you live anonymously, doing anonymous things in an anonymous world

- The provenance of undocumented people is diverse:
- Some seek job opportunities they did not have in their country of origin.
- Asylum seekers who were refused the status and for security reasons, do not return to their country.
- Women with children who have been abandoned or whose relationship with a Dutch partner has ended before getting the legal documents.
- Relatives of other migrants who enter because they do not want to be alone in the country of origin.
- People who had a job contract or arrived here to study and who stay in The Netherlands after finishing their activity in search of other opportunities.
- Women who fell victim to human trafficking and who ended up without documents once they get out of the circuit.
- People waiting for the residence process to be completed.

As in The Netherlands a legal permit of stay is needed for many services, the undocumented are in a condition of high vulnerability:

- They do not have access to housing.

²⁴ Focal group with undocumented people and individual interviews.

- They do not have access to health services or social security services.
- They may fall victim to abuse at their places of work: low salaries, excessive schedules, conditions of job insecurity.
- They move in illegal circuits or black markets where Dutch laws do not count, this means they can fall victims of price abuse and regarding the quality of services.
- Emotionally they are in conditions of anxiety caused by the possibility of being discovered by the police and/or deported.
- Due to the difficulty of their day-to-day-life and the isolation, they have problems of adaptation and may present character disorders and depressive syndromes.

Comments:

It is necessary to give them access to more information regarding their real possibilities in Dutch context.

This population is increasing and there are few organizations that pay attention to it.

4.6 Imprisoned population²⁵

A considerable group is imprisoned because of problems caused by illegal drug trafficking; they have come to The Netherlands in transit or for a very short time, without any knowledge of the language nor of the standards of this country. This population presents specific concerns additional to the isolation which is so typical of their condition:

- They do not have any family here, nor do they have any social networks who could visit and/or support them.
- Communication problems since many of them do not speak English or Dutch and the institutions do not always have translators at their disposal.
- Unfamiliarity with their rights under the Dutch law.
- Unfamiliarity with the standards of the prison institution.
- Translators are not always present in trial courts and when there are, they often do not know the Latin American social-cultural contexts; their translation may put the imprisoned at a disadvantage.
- The duty solicitors dealing with the cases are Dutch who do not speak Spanish or Portuguese.
- There are increasingly more restrictions placed on the objects allowed into the prisons (clothes, readings or something to eat) which inhibits the accompaniment of volunteers.
- The imprisoned only have access to better conditions (TV, better food, communication) if they work in the prison; many of these Latin

²⁵ Focal group with volunteers from Rotterdam and interviews with people who have worked with inmates.

Americans cannot work so that they cannot pay for better physical conditions.

- Some are deported, but the ones who are not, do not receive any information about what to do or where to go after being released and leaving prison.
- Rehabilitation programs are only accessible to EU citizens, they do not include Latin Americans.

Comments:

There are volunteers from different churches who attend to them, but they cannot cover all the needs of this group. There is a lack of specific organizations to tend to this population.

It would be necessary to provide them with:

- Information in Spanish/Portuguese about their rights and duties inside prison.
- Professional psychological services or emotional support in Spanish/Portuguese.
- Assistance in contacting or communicating with families in the country of origin.
- Services of appropriate translation (knowledge of Latin American contexts).
- Orientation and information when they leave prison.
- These citizens need more support of the consulates.
- Rehabilitation programs and/or some kind of training or education during their period of imprisonment.

Another group which, however small, also suffers difficult conditions, is that of Latin American families (women and children living in The Netherlands) who were imprisoned in Latin America.

4.7 Seropositive population²⁶

I have to deny my condition otherwise I will loose my job

Population included in this group: sex workers, homosexuals, bisexuals, heterosexuals, transsexuals, families and partners of infected persons.

There are many stigmas and self-stigmas towards this population based on prejudices and a lack of information (cultural perception of the handling of sexuality, taboos and access to different social, religious and educational contexts). Statistics involving the prevalence of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) in The Netherlands are very uncertain, the HIV Vereniging²⁷ esteems that the group of infected immigrants is increasing²⁸ on a

²⁶ Focal group with seropositive population and interviews.

²⁷ Hiv Vereniging (2006): Naar een netwerk-organisatie de Hiv Vereniging tussen 2007 en 2010 publieks-versie meerjaren-beleidsplan. De raddraaier, Amsterdam.

national level and believes that of the 11,000 infected people in 2004, six percent of homosexuals and nine percent of heterosexuals were from Latin America.

Special conditions:

- Regulations for receiving care depend on the country of origin.²⁹
- There are more possibilities of aid for large groups in The Netherlands and Latin Americans are not included.
- An ample population has been tested, but it is not possible to 'act' with those who tested 'positive'.
- Both the bureaucracy of hospitals and the low quality of medical services of some of these hospitals in some cases increase the vulnerability that is typical of the infection.
- There are no homogeneous rules in medical care; these vary depending on the hospital and the municipality.
- A place is needed where people can be taken care of immediately after receiving treatment.

4.7.1 Infected and undocumented persons

...if our situation is bad, that of the infected and undocumented people is even worse

- They only receive help during the first 6 months, after that they are abandoned.
- They have to pay for the treatments preceding and following the treatment, for the medical care, the check-ups, otherwise they are not given the medicine.
- Despite their health condition they have to work in order to survive.
- They do not have a general practitioner.
- Many hospitals refuse them.
- The Spanish and Portuguese languages are not taken into account to attend people in the institutions; with this type of infection, it is necessary to understand the cultural differences and the problems of each individual. The cultural baggage each person varies a lot. Each case may have its specific characteristics.

Comments:

There is only one specialised organization in this group; it merits more support and strengthening in view of the needs of its target population.

²⁸ There are no figures to confirm this affirmation.

²⁹ People from countries such as Chile and Brazil do not have the right to receive support in The Netherlands.

Needs:

- Advocate for a more inclusive regulation for all Latin American nationalities.
- Use of capable translators in medical institutions.
- Prevention linked to community care.
- Enhance the spreading of information and education for the population in general.
- Extra aid groups for emergencies and support concerning the every-day-life of the infected.
- The person in treatment should be guaranteed minimal conditions to survive.
- It is urgent to have a support centre for those who have received treatment.

4.8 Refugees and asylum seekers³⁰

The Netherlands we arrived in was a different Netherlands ...

As mentioned in the case of the first generation of political refugees, the conditions of refugees in the 70s were very different from the current ones. This part particularly refers to the ones who have arrived over the past 5 years, mainly Colombians and Cubans.

4.8.1 *Asylum seekers (asielzoekers)*

...in prison I endured difficulties I would not wish for anyone, it is very hard there, nobody spoke Spanish, they did not provide me with a translator, I had a hard time, locked in a room of 2 by 1 filled with artificial air, it was very bad. I was there 4 months...

- The institutions in charge do not take into account the possibility of communicating with them in Spanish/Portuguese; often they do not speak English and obviously they do not speak Dutch either.
- Some of them are imprisoned until their situation is clear.
- The conditions of isolation are worsened by the lack of knowledge of the language and of the legal norms that may concern them.
- The conditions in the asylum seekers' centres are very precarious; there is an atmosphere of insecurity.
- The time it takes to analyse their situation varies a lot and may be very long.
- As they do not have a work permit they live in precarious conditions.
- When some of them finally define their situation, they do not have access to information about what to do in this society and they have nowhere to go.

³⁰ Focal group with refugees and interviews with asylum seekers.

4.8.2 Refugees

One day life just put you down here and you have to start learning how to walk again.

The ones who already arrive with the status of refugee, which offers better conditions and less vulnerability, despite being invited, also have some difficult conditions:

- They have little or no information about the procedure they should follow to get access to the institutions
- Translation services are needed for many formal processes and these are not available
- They are dispersed over different refugee centres.
- As long as they cannot work they economically depend on subsidies, this forces them to live in limited conditions (without possibilities of recreation, for example).

Comments:

It is necessary to lobby the Dutch institutions to achieve greater support for this population, and achieve, among other things, ideal translators, information in Spanish or Portuguese for those arriving. Apart from the parishes, it seems that there is no Brazilian or Spanish-speaking organizations that offer support to this population.

4.9 Conclusion

Although the difficulties of these populations are very particular and depend on their nature, the low level of command of the Dutch language, the absence of capable translators in some institutions and the difficult access to information are prominent for the majority of these specific populations. Additionally, there are difficulties of a legal order which are increasing the vulnerability that is already characteristic of the migrants' situation and which strongly affect their integration process. Since the Latin American population in The Netherlands is mostly female, these difficulties affect them and their children to a larger extent.

5 ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN THE NETHERLANDS BY AND FOR THE LATIN AMERICAN POPULATION

This chapter provides a general description of the organizations operating in The Netherlands by and for Latin Americans³¹.

5.1 A brief background

Between 1920 and the 60s, social work in some catholic parishes tried to tend to the needs of the Spanish arriving in The Netherlands as guest workers by means of religious services and information. Later on they extended their coverage to the Latin American or Spanish-speaking population in general when their presence in The Netherlands became more noticeable, in particular when political refugees arrived in the 70s. Around this same period and as Latin American revolutionary movements were a source of inspiration for many Dutch youngsters; there was an aperture to their cultural and political manifestations. In this environment, the refugees themselves served as a bridge between The Netherlands and their countries of origin, offering Dutch society the opportunity to get to know their realities and cultures. Some organizations contributed valuable elements of the protest culture of that period in Latin America, with manifestations of poetry, music, art and literary cafés.

As for the political organizations, a special case was that of the refugee support committees. Through a Dutch government initiative, committees for the reception of political refugees were set up initially; some of these later turned into committees of solidarity that accompanied both the adaptation process of these migrants to the Dutch environment and the political nexus with their communities and bases in the countries of origin³². Some of these solidarity organizations had Latin Americans in their ranks. As time went by, with the changes in the international and Dutch political context, especially when democracies were finally established in the countries formerly ruled by dictatorial regimes, the committees of solidarity disappeared. Some of the people active in those committees left to take part in NGO or in more formal institutions. This disappearance coincided with the decrease in attention paid to Latin America in the Dutch political and mediatic context. Like one of the interviewees said, 'the problems the EU represents with their new countries and neo-liberalism are already enough elements to cause Dutch passivity regarding Latin America'.

³¹ The final report of the research carried out has an annex providing a complete database of the organizations that were taken into account in the study.

³² The country with the largest national coverage was Chile; there were also committees of solidarity in Argentina, el Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia and Nicaragua and a support group for the 'Sin Tierra' (Landless) of Brazil.

5.2 Classification

There is a large range of private aid organizations that are not part of governmental institutions and that attend to Latin American citizens both in The Netherlands and in their countries of origin. In this study we refer to those organizations as private aid organizations to distinguish them from the Development co-operation agencies that are of a larger scale and that have a very different structure and budget because they comply with the official criteria of aid or assistance for development³³.

The private aid organizations are characterized as being institutions working on a non-profit basis that often function with the support of volunteers and mainly rely on donations.

For this study the objectives of the organizations were taken into account as a first criterion for their classification. Under this perspective, the following classification has been made:

5.2.1 Assistance organizations

The assistance organizations focus on direct support and improvement of the well-being of Latin Americans in conditions of social and economic disadvantage within Dutch society. Some are associated with religious services or churches and serve as intermediaries or as speakers of the immigrants in Dutch institutions.

5.2.2 Information organizations

The goal of the second group is to spread information to Latin Americans and/or Dutch in The Netherlands. By means of cultural or educational activities and events they reinforce elements of identity among Latin Americans, offer support in their integration process and play an important role in the sensitization of Dutch society because they contribute with the understanding of different facets of the region, thus making evident the cultural and political diversity of the continent.

5.2.3 Operational organizations

The operational organizations have as their goal to raise funds for the improvement of conditions of different groupings in Latin America. The actions of many of these organizations are in reality forms of assistance in Latin America as they offer specific support to determined groups, often on a highly reduced scale (construction of a school, or ensuring lunch for a number of elderly during a short period of time); therefore they can be categorized as organizations oriented towards support. In this group there are some organizations that are oriented towards development which mobilize resources in a more formal manner with the support of development agencies.

³³ <http://docs.lib.duke.edu/igo/guides/ngo/define.htm>

5.2.4 Mixed organizations

Organizations often combine two goals: provide information and raise funds. Therefore we could say that they are of a mixed character. That is to say, their goal is to provide information in The Netherlands and to support specific projects in Latin America.

Despite the broad classification chosen for in this study, in some cases it was difficult to determine the nature of the organizations due to the amplex and the imprecision of their objectives; many claim to render a large range of services but when setting forth the concrete activities they can carry out, they are not accordance with their claims.

Parishes play an invaluable role in the support of Latin American migrants; for many of them, especially those who are in the most vulnerable conditions, churches and their care centres are often the only possibility of interaction with the Dutch authorities³⁴.

Within the group of the operational organizations which constitute 30 percent of those mentioned in the study, their size and potential for mobilising resources varies largely just as the issues and countries in which they operate. These organizations carry out their activities mainly in Latin America even though they are located in The Netherlands.

TABLE 7
Target populations

Population*	Organizations with activities in Latin America	Organizations with activities in The Netherlands	Total
Children	11	2	13
Youth	10	5	15
Women	10	11	21
Indigenous People	2	0	2
Special populations	3	4	7
Dutch population	1	4	5
Undocumented	0	5	5
Poor	6	1	7
Elderly	2	2	4
Latin Americans	11	14	25
Others	5	2	7

* Criteria given by the organizations.

It is interesting to observe that there is a strong emphasis on work with women both in The Netherlands and in Latin America. In The Netherlands this is

³⁴ There are only four Spanish-speaking parishes in The Netherlands: Amsterdam, (also attends to religious services in Almere, Utrecht, Enschede, Nord of The Netherlands, but does not provide social services in these cities) Rotterdam, The Hague and Eindhoven (attend to religious services in s'Hertogenbosch).

probably related to the previously mentioned feminisation of migration, and in Latin America due to the conditions of high vulnerability and socio-economic disadvantages which a great deal of the female population are in in many countries. The youth and children follow in importance. It is surprising that populations such as the indigenous people and the elderly, being vulnerable populations in Latin American countries, have only been taken into account by a very small number of organizations. Likewise, in The Netherlands, the Latin American population living in poverty is only tended to by voluntary groups that generally depend on religious assistance centres.

The special populations in the case of The Netherlands are seropositive people (with AIDS), sex workers, disabled and imprisoned population, all of which are tended to by assistance organizations. In the case of Latin America, special populations are sex workers and disabled.

In the category ‘others’; syndicates, ‘barriales’ (local community organizations), scientific institutions, adopted people, alcoholics, and illiterate population can be found in the case of Latin America, whereas for The Netherlands, the other target populations tended to by these organizations are the Spanish-speaking people in general or citizens of a specific nationality in particular.

TABLE 8
Issues worked on by the organizations

Issue	In Latin America	In The Netherlands	Total
Education	11	12	23
Culture	1	15	16
Health	12	3	15
Politics	4	5	9
Infrastructure	7	0	7
Commerce	4	1	4
Human rights	4	4	8
Environment	2	1	3
Others	6	3	9

For Latin America, the category ‘others’ include: self-management, asylum, identity, legalisation, monetary aid. For The Netherlands, the category includes: entertainment and personal development.

There is a noticeable interest in educational issues in both groups and a preponderance of cultural issues in The Netherlands. This tendency is even stronger if we consider that many of the organizations from which not all data could be obtained or which are not in the database, dedicate their efforts to the dissemination of Latin American cultural forms in The Netherlands. Political issues occupy the third position in importance. In Latin America the priority issue seems to be health, followed by education and infrastructure.

Heterogeneity is the main characteristic of the organizations. The level of formality varies extensively, as well as their composition, as the majority of the organizations rely on Dutch members, be it in their staff or as volunteers. Some organizations either have little clarity regarding their goals or an excessive amount of goals which makes them seem too ambitious and lacking a well-defined profile, and therefore seem to encompass theoretically very different fronts. Many others have just reached their initial state, with few members, are inactive or lacking resources.

They work in a very isolated way, there are very few (especially the assistance organizations) that establish alliances with other organizations.

Within the group of the operational organizations, their size and potential of mobilizing resources varies a great deal, as well as the issues and countries in which they operate. The majority give assistance or offer specific support to determined groups in Latin America; however, some mobilize considerable resources and have established important alliances with institutions or with development agencies to the same extent as the mixed organizations. Despite not obtaining all the data from the majority of these, due to the quantity and the coverage of the target populations and the issues they deal with, the potential of this diaspora to work with development projects in Latin America is great. Furthermore, those who currently do not deal with this type of projects expressed their interest in doing so, although they are not clear on how to or on what fronts.

6 Conclusions

The Latin American population resident in The Netherlands is not very big nor is it as visible as other foreign populations, yet it is rapidly increasing and it is expected that from the 62,000 people at the end of 2006, the population will increase to about 200,000 in the next 45 years, according to CBS estimates. Even more important are the changes in the purpose and profile of those who enter The Netherlands: whereas in the last decades the main motives for immigration were that of political refuge, family formation and sex work, spontaneous labour migration is presently increasing as well as the entrance of students.

Currently it is a predominantly female population, young, (40 percent under 18) the first generation with an average age of between 30 and 39 years, the majority of the second generation between 0 and 9 years of age. A change in nationalities is registered; although the three major nationalities are Brazilians (13,091), Colombians (10,335) and Dominicans (10,155), followed by Chileans, Argentines and Venezuelans (close to 4,000 each), Peruvians (3,899) and Mexicans (3,067) at present the majority of visa requests following the Brazilian nationality are those of the latter two.

The largest concentration of Latin Americans is found in the Randstad area, especially in Amsterdam (16 percent). Although there are certain concentrations in some cities –Dominicans in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Tilburg and Groningen, Peruvians and Venezuelans in Utrecht and Mexicans in Maastricht or Colombians and Salvadorians in Almere- there are no

concentrations of nationalities per neighbourhood, which is a good thing, bearing in mind the multicultural Dutch environment.

On the working level, participation is very high, 84 percent and mainly in Dutch companies or institutions (39 percent), however the monthly income of the Latin American population is inferior to that of the average Dutch population, demonstrating a poverty index of 40 percent. In spite of the large range of jobs carried out by Latin Americans, they are on the lowest step of the wage ladder as cheap labour, especially during the past few years. The explanation of this phenomenon can be found in two circumstances: the motive of migration and the access to education within the Dutch system: migrants who are currently arriving come in search of a job, fleeing from the economic and political crises of their countries and only find labour niches that the Dutch do not want to fill (cleaning and care sectors). On the other hand, as proven in other studies, the Dutch educational system excludes foreigners from the highest levels of secondary education, mainly permitting them access to the levels of VMBO, a phenomenon which affects 57 percent of Latin Americans and, as a consequence, the youth can only position themselves on the lowest working levels. Additionally, the ones who arrive from their country of origin with a high educational level- academic and even postgraduate- rarely perform activities in accordance to their level, therefore the percentage of underemployment is quite high, 56 percent. How could it be possible to contribute more to the Dutch society if there is exclusion from appropriate levels of education or if the education acquired in the countries of origin is not acknowledged, and therefore a limited access to good labour options? This exclusion in labour and education among the youth may lead to expressions of social discontent.

In the more general economic environment, the presence of Latin American companies is reduced and of low impact and it rather seems that there are informal commercial networks. The role of providing tropical products is in the hands of other migrants who are better positioned in business in The Netherlands. It is all the same a collective that contributes to the economic system and that presents a low dependence on the social security system.

On the political level, voting participation is high (62 percent), but by contrast there is a notable absence of political groupings or leaders of Latin American origin in the Dutch context, which is reflected in the fact that there is no Latin American participation in the national discussion even as 'foreigners', and less so at the level of region or nationality. The existing groupings do not have a political profile nor are they representative of what is "Latin American" and they do not try to be; there are difficulties in promoting the union of individuals and groups, sometimes within the same nationality. It can be said that if someone distinguishes themselves for their participation in the Dutch context, it is done at a personal level, not as a part of a Latin American collective.

Participation as well as integration does not necessarily have to take place at all levels, it may be partial and allow the person to interact in the receiving society in an appropriate manner; to a great extent this will depend on his/her individual cultural orientation. This orientation is framed by two extremes:

segregation and assimilation. Segregation refers to the interaction of the individual: relating and identifying only with the individual's own community or country of origin. Assimilation refers to the loss of the individual's original characteristics and adopts the cultural traits of the receiving society. The majority of Latin Americans in The Netherlands find themselves in the middle of this continuum, therefore maintaining traits from both societies. In this sense, Latin American migrants are quite flexible. We could say they behave as 'amphibians' as they are able to manage, understand and take advantage of elements from both cultural environments. The individual participates, interacts, evolves in the Dutch environment and maintains the mother tongue (Portuguese or Spanish) as well as the nexus with the country of origin, therefore allowing development within their original environment as well. Obviously language is not the only element by means of which to achieve this duality that is so close to integration (not to assimilation), nevertheless, the fact that 24 percent of the culturally mixed households are bilingual and 32 percent speak Spanish helps as it allows to maintain some of their own cultural traits and relations with their original network of family and friends which facilitates a eventual permanent return to the country of origin.

Contact with their places of origin is strong among Latin Americans, either through very frequent communication, travels and certainly through the sending of remittances. The ones who most often contribute remittances and carry out exchanges of diverse nature with their places of origin are the immigrants who have come spontaneously in search of better work and life conditions -often mothers, and not necessarily those who are already well-established and in better economic conditions. The first group send money on a regular basis, the second group does so only occasionally.

A different type of interaction with the place of origin is that of mobilization of resources -often via organizations- from those migrants with stable economic conditions, for specific projects for groups of disadvantaged people in their countries. In that sense, it can be concluded that there are some Latin Americans who are willing to participate in development cooperation activities, and there is a wide range of initiatives and high heterogeneity of organizational characteristics. However, these organizations do not usually associate work establishing alliances; the majority remain isolated.

As it is not possible to speak of the existence of a Latin American culture nor of a 'Latin or Latin American identity', due to the heterogeneity of the region and of the characteristics of the individuals in terms of their social, historical or educational backgrounds, it is more pertinent to speak of the feeling of belonging or identification. In this sense the belonging to a country is the most important trait of identity and 55 percent feel that they belong more to their country of origin than to the Dutch society; 88 percent feel proud to come from the Latin American region.

Naturally, integration has two sides, that of the immigrants and that of the receiving society. As integration studies have shown (Hagendoorn and Pepels, 2003), the largest part of Dutch society has an implicit ethnic hierarchy in their mind; they evaluate and react to any immigrant group according to the characteristics they perceive from them such as their culture, level of education and period of residence in Dutch society. Therefore, some immigrants are

more or less considered equal and others are definitely considered different or even inferior. When speaking of the position Latin Americans occupy within Dutch society, the majority of the inquired Dutch citizens emphasized: "they are so immersed in it, that they are not noticed; they are inconspicuous to the ordinary Dutch citizen". This is due to the fact that the cultural differences are relatively reduced; they are only nuances if compared to the cultural differences of other immigrant groups in The Netherlands, like Muslim communities, for instance. Furthermore, they are overshadowed by the presence of the majority immigrant groups from Turkey or Morocco, among others. Additional proof of this is the lack of studies and statistical data about Latin Americans in comparison with those of foreigners of other nationalities.

The majority of Latin Americans feel accepted by the Dutch population but nonetheless have been victims of discrimination incidents because they were considered foreigners (*allochtonen*) and/or because of their skin colour, not necessarily because for being Latin Americans.

In spite of having many western cultural traits, more legal obstacles are increasing as they are classified as 'niet-westerse allochtonen' and do not belong to the European Union. For example, the lack of support in providing translators in some institutions, or the hardening of requirements to enter The Netherlands which are so drastic and expensive that they even affect the Dutch partners. Additionally, those who establish an emotional relationship with Dutch natives (mainly women) once here, depend on their partner during the first three years, therefore increasing their vulnerability even more.

Finally, Latin Americans present themselves as strongly immersed in Dutch society and they are receptive to participating and contributing in the processes of intercultural cohabitation in the Dutch context, due to the cultural similarities and their open disposition to accept the changes living in The Netherlands imply. However, in spite of the majority of the population's living conditions are relatively good, there are difficulties in the lives of other groups of people who have entered The Netherlands during the past few years, escaping from the social, political or economic deterioration of their countries of origin: asylum seekers, sex workers, imprisoned people (particularly because of illegal drug trafficking), spontaneous labour immigrants. For those groups there are definitely more obstacles and less opportunities of integration, as is noted in section 3 of this report.

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NOTES

Institutional Sources

28 Institutions were consulted to obtain statistic information about the population of Latin American origin in The Netherlands; information or feedback was only obtained from the following:

- CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek)
- O&S (Onderzoek en Statistiek) Amsterdam
- COS (Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek) Rotterdam
- Gemeente Den Haag
- Gemeente Maastricht
- Gemeente Tilburg
- Gemeente Utrecht
- Gemeente Groningen
- Gemeente Almere
- Gemeente Enschede
- IND (Immigratie en Naturalisatie Dienst)
- IMES (Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies); Universiteit van Amsterdam (UvA)
- Stichting Meldpunt Discriminatie Amsterdam
- MoneyGram