

# Feelings as traces of colonialism

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*The online debate about compensation for the Indo-European community in the Netherlands analyzed through the sociology of emotions*

## **Master's thesis University of Humanistic Studies**

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## Synopsis

This thesis investigates the contemporary online debate about compensation for the Indo-European community in the Netherlands, using the sociology of emotions as a theoretical lens. The Indo-European community has been engaged in an ongoing struggle for recognition and compensation since the end of World War II. Such struggles have gained a different meaning over the past decades, in which it has become more common for states to pay compensation for immaterial damages.

The World Wide Web has provided people in the Indo-European community with a platform to discuss the themes of recognition and compensation amongst themselves. This thesis consists of a qualitative text analysis of posts and comments in the Indo-European blogosphere, respectively from *Blimbing*, *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post*. Readers' letters published in *Moesson* – a monthly magazine devoted to the Indo-European community – are used as an additional source. Together, these sources provide insight into the range of emotions that are voiced in the debate.

Anger is a prominent emotion in the Indo-European blogosphere. Differentiating the range of emotions revolving around compensation allows for the act of being angry to be seen as an act of emancipation in a postcolonial context, in which behaviour previously reserved to the former colonizer, is appropriated. The colonial period remains to be a strong influence on the debate about compensation, affecting expressions of pride and shame. The struggle of the Indo-European community appears to be not mainly a struggle against the Dutch government, but also a struggle within the community itself: between those engaged in the debate and the disinterest they perceive in the community at large.

However fulfilling the performance of anger may be on the individual level – as well as on the levels of his family and community – it complicates the possibilities for dialogue on a societal level by enforcing opposing identities of protestors versus government. This leads commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere to continue to regard the Dutch government with distance and distrust. It also causes the debate about compensation to rarely transcend its financial level, rather than be regarded as part of a wider process of recognition. In overcoming these difficulties lies the biggest challenge for protestors, the involved institutions, and Dutch society.

## Preface

This thesis has been written in partial fulfilment of my master's degree in Humanistic Studies at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht.

During my research internship at the *Narrated (In)Justice* project (September 2015–May 2016),<sup>1</sup> I first extensively acquainted myself with the history of the Indo-European community in the Netherlands. Although it is inextricably connected with Dutch history, it surprised me that such a vital part of history can remain out of sight unless you begin to look for it. I hope that my research has done justice to the Indo-European community – in particular the people whose posts and comments are at the heart of this project – and that it will contribute to an understanding of the Indo-European experience and the broader dialogue about Dutch (post)colonial history that is currently taking place in Dutch society.

I would like to thank Nicole Immler for her invaluable guidance during the past two years, when I first did an internship at her research project and then wrote this thesis. This trajectory has enabled me to thoroughly develop myself as a researcher and pick up with my thesis where I had left off at the end of my internship. Nicole has showed me that you shouldn't just pay attention to what is being said, but also to who's saying it and when and where it's being said. I hope I've managed to integrate this notion into my thesis.

I would also like to thank Wander van der Vaart for his comments in the early stages of my research, when I had to transform all my ideas into a workable master's thesis, and Caroline Suransky for her feedback in the early and last stages of my research.

The University of Humanistic Studies has been a highly inspiring environment for me during the past four years, allowing me to specialize as a researcher and, above all, grow as a person. I'm very grateful to everyone who's been a part of this process with me. Here I would like to thank in particular everyone who wrote their thesis around the same time as I did, for providing the necessary moral support and belief that I would be able to finish this project.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for being there for me during the writing of this thesis and the long and winding road that preceded it. New horizons await.

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<sup>1</sup> The project *Narrated (In)Justice. Compensation Policies and Trans-Generational Narratives of (In)Justice*, a cooperation between the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and the University of Humanistic Studies, led by Dr. Nicole Immler. See also: <http://niod.nl/nl/projecten/narrated-injustice-compensation-policies-and-trans-generational-narratives-injustice>

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Reasons for conducting research

“*Steeds beter komt aan het licht dat weer een gigantische maskerade wordt opgevoerd rond de Indische gemeenschap in Nederland,*” Huib Deetman wrote under his pseudonym Dalang Mabuk in the e-zine *Blimbing* (Deetman, 2000a). Deetman complained about a lack of transparency in the proceedings regarding *Het Gebaar*, a sum of 385 million guilders paid by the Dutch government to the Indo-European community in the Netherlands to compensate for insufficient rehabilitation after the end of World War II. This perceived lack of transparency has been a recurring theme in the debate about compensation for the Indo-European community, fuelling feelings of distrust and suspicion towards both the Dutch government and the *Indisch Platform* (IP), the community’s representative body. Distrust and suspicion are in turn part of a wider range of emotions that revolves around anger.

The existence of *Blimbing* (1998-2003) overlapped with the negotiations for *Het Gebaar* between the Dutch government and the *Indisch Platform*. Since then the debate about compensation has continued, with individual commenters taking to contemporary blogs *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post* to voice their opinion. Together, these three websites provide insight into the range of opinions and – more importantly – emotions that resonate throughout the contemporary debate. The sociology of emotions – in particular the work of James M. Jasper, who connects it to the study of protest movements (Jasper, 2014a) – provides a theoretical framework that allows for emotions to be the starting point for research and ultimately establish how emotions about compensation are related to the colonial past. This is an addition to the currently available studies on the Indo-European community, which have mainly been written from a historical point of view (see paragraph 1.2). This thesis differs from a historical study in that it not so much aims to establish the facts but rather to analyze the impact of the facts: the emotions that have surfaced in the debate about compensation and the ways in which they continue to influence the Indo-European community. It aims to contribute to the field of transitional justice by using the sociology of emotions as a theoretical framework to analyze the debate about compensation for the Indo-European community, as well as by opening up relatively new, online source material: posts and comments in the Indo-European blogosphere. This approach corresponds to the interdisciplinary character of Humanistic Studies.

## 1.2 Scholarly and societal relevance

The Indo-European community in the Netherlands has received extensive scholarly attention, particularly in the 2000s, when a research programme led to a series of books and articles covering Dutch (post)colonial history in Indonesia. The programme – entitled *Van Indië tot Indonesië. De herschikking van de Indonesische samenleving* – was hosted by the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and ran from 2002 through 2008. Its publications include a four-part series on the history of the Indo-European community, covering the period 1500-1920 (Bosma & Raben, 2003), the Indo-European community in the light of the twentieth century (Meijer, 2004) the Indo-European community's repatriation to and reintegration in the Netherlands after the end of World War II (Willems, 2001), and a fourth book integrating the findings of the aforementioned studies (Bosma, Raben, & Willems, 2006). Also, studies were published on the backpay affair (Meijer, 2005),<sup>2</sup> the matter of reparations in post-war Indonesia (Keppy, 2006), as well as an analysis from a broader postcolonial perspective (Bosma, 2009).<sup>3</sup> Interviews have also been conducted with members of the second and third generation about their Indo-European identity (De Vries, 2009). A well-known major study published earlier concerned the perception of the Indo-European community by Dutch society (Willems & Cottaar, 1984).

The debate about compensation for the Indo-European community hasn't yet been studied in its entirety. One of the few sources dealing with the reception of *Het Gebaar* in the Indo-European community is a book published by *Stichting Het Gebaar*, containing letters of recipients and contributions of people involved in the process (De Ridder, 2007). There has also been academic attention in the form of a chapter on the history and reception of *Het Gebaar* (Steijlen, 2010). A book on Indo-European organizations between 1980 and 2010 is a further addition in this respect (Steijlen, 2018).

The Indo-European community's struggle for recognition and compensation can be seen in the broader context of similar struggles worldwide. Compensation gained a different meaning after World War II, when states began to pay compensation for immaterial damages

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<sup>2</sup> The backpay affair, which I will introduce in chapter 4, revolved around the wages of KNIL soldiers interned by the Japanese during the war. Upon the war's end, the colonial administration lacked the financial means to pay overdue soldiers' wages. Several settlements did not prove to be satisfactory, causing the discussion about these wages to continue up until today. Meijer's 2005 study does therefore not cover recent developments.

<sup>3</sup> The full list can be retrieved from the NIOD website: <http://niod.nl/nl/publicaties-van-indië-tot-indonesië>

suffered by individuals and their descendants (Immler, 2012, p. 271).<sup>4</sup> Over the past decades the field of *transitional justice* has evolved, focusing on political transformation within states (De Greiff, 2008).<sup>5</sup> Compensation has been increasingly linked to a human rights discourse and is often part a broader process of recognition of a particular group in a society (Barkan, 2000). The study of compensation processes has come to encompass Holocaust victims as well as victims of Communism, slavery and colonialism. Brudholm (2008) and Mihai (2016) have connected the field of transitional justice to the study of emotions, more specifically resentment and indignation, and their implications for society at large.

This thesis will both add to existing historical studies and contribute to a better understanding of emotions by examining emotions from the bottom-up perspective of the Indo-European blogosphere. It aims to show that emotions have a specific function, and that, by differentiating these emotions, their functions can be differentiated, providing insight into the ramifications of the aftermath of World War II and the era of colonialism. It also aims to meet the calls voiced within the sociology of emotions that “we need to know far more about the many forms that anger can take, the many ways it can be displayed” and to pay “more attention to affect to understand justice issues” (Jasper, 2014b, p. 212; Hegtvedt & Parris, 2014, p. 103). In focusing on the longer-term aftermath of conflict, this thesis differs from other case studies in the field of transitional justice that examine justice processes in post-conflict societies shortly after the conflict in question has ended.

Studying the debate about compensation for the Indo-European community relates to the field of humanistic studies in that it explores the relationship between the individual and his social context, two themes that are closely intertwined.<sup>6</sup> By combining two approaches that are familiar at the University of Humanistic Studies – the sociology of emotions and the field of transitional justice – this thesis aims to establish how in the Indo-European case individual emotions and a collective identity mutually influence and reinforce each other, and to explore their significance in a postcolonial context.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Before World War II, states merely paid financial compensation when they had lost a war. A note on terminology: *compensation, restitution and reparations* are sometimes used interchangeably. Throughout this thesis the term compensation will be used to denote financial remuneration for immaterial damages.

<sup>5</sup> “Transitional justice refers to the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response.” See also <https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>

<sup>6</sup> See also <https://www.uvh.nl/university-of-humanistic-studies/about-our-university/about-humanistic-studies>

<sup>7</sup> At the University of Humanistic Studies, the sociology of emotions has thus far mainly been used by the chair group Citizenship and Humanization of the Public Sector in studying developments in the contemporary Dutch welfare state, and has not so much been applied to the study of protest movements. The *Narrated (In)Justice* project, situated in the chair group Globalization and Dialogue Studies, focuses on transitional justice processes.

### 1.3 Research questions

The main research question of this thesis is:

- *How have emotions that evolved around compensation payments from the Dutch government influenced the Indo-European community in the Netherlands?*

This thesis will analyze emotions, expressed by the Indo-European community through the Indo-European blogosphere.<sup>8</sup> Four subquestions have been developed in order to add more depth to the analysis.

- *Which emotions have evolved within the Indo-European blogosphere in regard to compensation payments?*
- *How are the various emotions about compensation payments in the Indo-European blogosphere related to each other?*
- *To which extent are authors and commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere a representative voice of the Indo-European community as a whole?*
- *Have references made to other groups helped authors and commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere to articulate their own concerns?*

With these subquestions this thesis respectively aims to 1) map the range of emotions that evolved within the Indo-European blogosphere in the debate about compensation, 2) explore how these emotions are interrelated and their significance in a postcolonial context, 3) discuss the representativeness of the Indo-European blogosphere in order to determine to which extent observations apply to the wider Indo-European community and 4) investigate if references to other groups made in the Indo-European blogosphere provide starting points for authors and commenters to better articulate their own concerns about compensation.

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<sup>8</sup> There are various opinions on Indo-European identity and who precisely constitute the Indo-European community. I follow the definition used by De Vries (2009). She specifically sees those of Dutch-Indonesian descent (who held the legal status of Europeans in the Dutch East Indies) as Indo-European. De Vries points out that in Dutch the term ‘Indo-Europeanen’ is no longer used and has been replaced by ‘Indische Nederlanders’. I will suffice with the English term ‘Indo-European’ throughout this thesis. The Moluccan community in the Netherlands is not included in my definition; although its history is intertwined with the history of the Dutch East Indies, from a historiographical point of view it tends to be regarded as separate from the Indo-European community (Laarman, 2013, p. 17).

## 1.4 Sources

With the emergence of the World Wide Web, people in the Indo-European community have taken to the Internet, establishing what could be termed an Indo-European blogosphere in the process. Compensation is one of the most frequently and fervently debated themes in the Indo-European blogosphere. As mentioned before, the primary sources of this thesis are *Blimbing*, *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post*. Additionally, *Moesson* magazine has published two collections of readers' letters that provide further insight in the debate.

### 1.4.1 *Blimbing*

*Blimbing* was the first e-zine for the Indo-European community in the Netherlands and existed from 1998 through 2003.<sup>9</sup> Having been described as the community's proverbial thorn in the side, it severely criticized the *Indisch Platform* for its role in the process of what would become *Het Gebaar*. It serves as a point of reference for the Indo-European community up until today. Huib Deetman (1934-2003) was *Blimbing's* main initiator. Other contributors included Peter Schumacher, who also contributes to the contemporary *Java Post*, and Emmy Verhoeff. Verhoeff has stated that “*de artikelen droegen wel een éénmanschriftuur, maar waren geen éénmangedachte*” (Verhoeff, 2007, p. 51). The e-zine had an accompanying bimonthly print edition. The project was stopped after Deetman's death in 2003. The website, which can be retrieved in its near-entirety from the Internet Archive, didn't feature the possibility for visitors to respond directly to articles. References do surface to a message board for The Hague residents, that had a subforum – *Indisch Prikbord* – designated for topics regarding Indonesia and the Indo-European community.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Blimbing* was formerly hosted on <http://www.blimbing.nl>. The larger share of its archive is directly accessible via the Internet Archive: <https://web.archive.org/web/20031205155340/http://www.blimbing.nl:80/archief/>

<sup>10</sup> This message board (previously hosted at <http://forum.denhaag.org>) is unfortunately not well accessible through the Internet Archive. Only snapshots from the website's early days can be retrieved, when the forum was not yet in full swing, let alone that discussion about *Het Gebaar* was taking place on the Indo-European subforum.

### 1.4.2 *Indisch4Ever*

On *Indisch4Ever* (<http://www.indisch4ever.nu>), started early 2005, a hundred posts a month are posted on average. Two administrators, Henk ‘Boeroeng’ Verbaarschot and Nelly de Vos, originally maintained the website, until the latter quit her activities in early 2015. Verbaarschot and De Vos received the Java Post’s *Gouden Buffel 2013*, a yearly award for the person(s) who has most distinguished himself in promoting Indo-European history. The blog’s “*brede content, een breed bereik en lange adem*” was cited, as well as its “*unieke positie (...) in de kennisoverdracht van de geschiedenis van Nederlands-Indië*” (Immerzeel, 2014). Posts on *Indisch4Ever* range from shorter to longer pieces that are sometimes taken from other news websites. It has the function of a message board for the Indo-European community and generally draws readers from the second generation, ranging in age from their early fifties to late seventies.<sup>11</sup> Extensive discussions take place in the comment section. The core group of commenters includes *Indisch4Ever*’s administrator, Boeroeng, who also frequently comments on *Java Post*.

### 1.4.3 *Java Post*

*Java Post* (<http://www.javapost.nl>) was started in 2010 and is administered by Bert Immerzeel. Like *Indisch4Ever*, *Java Post* is largely aimed at the second generation.<sup>12</sup> As both websites are aimed at the same audience, they share a base of frequent commenters. Posts on *Java Post* are generally extensive and bear a clear author’s signature. Immerzeel writes most posts himself, although he has a team of guest contributors that is listed on the website. In his editor’s statement, Immerzeel writes that “*de Java Post wil terugblikken op gebeurtenissen in de geschiedenis van de laatste decennia van Nederlands-Indië. Niet vanuit een nostalgische hang naar het oude tempoe doeloe, maar veel meer vanuit een kritische blik op het verleden*” (Immerzeel, n.d.). Most posts on *Java Post* therefore have a historical angle.

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<sup>11</sup> In regard to generations I also follow De Vries’s definition (De Vries, 2009). She includes in the second generation not only those born in the Netherlands, but also those who were born in the Dutch East Indies, provided they were no older than twelve years upon arriving in the Netherlands.

<sup>12</sup> Contrary to *Indisch 3.0*, a weblog discontinued in 2015 that clearly presented itself as a platform for the third generation. In my analysis I will elaborate on the perceived lack of involvement of the third generation.

#### 1.4.4 *Moesson*

*Moesson* is a monthly magazine for the Indo-European community founded in 1956 as *Onze Brug* by writer Tjalie Robinson and others. Its initial purpose was to inform the Indo-European community in the Netherlands about New Guinea, which was a Dutch colony until 1962. The magazine appears in print twelve times a year in a circulation of about 10,000 issues; the estimated total audience amounts to 40,000 readers a month. “*Wat alle lezers met elkaar gemeen hebben, is een sterk gevoel van onderlinge solidariteit en een sterk besef van de noodzaak om de eeuwenoude Indische geschiedenis, cultuur, tradities en normen en waarden vast te leggen en door te geven aan volgende generaties*” (G.O. Prins, personal communication, April 13, 2016). Subsidies obtained through *Het Gebaar* facilitated a digitalization of *Moesson*’s entire archive. *Moesson* published a selection of readers’ letters on the backpay on two occasions, in 2007 and 2016, after the government had respectively declined to pay out overdue wages and offered a final settlement. Although *Moesson* technically doesn’t belong to the blogosphere, its contributions to the debate are a valuable source given the magazine’s long-standing reputation in the community.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Qualitative text analysis

This thesis will entail a qualitative text analysis of the sources introduced in section 1.4, according to the guidelines described by Kuckartz (2014). Out of the three approaches Kuckartz describes, this research will focus on *thematic text analysis*. This type of qualitative text analysis revolves around the construction of categories and therefore best suits the purpose of analyzing different sorts of emotions. It allows for analysis to begin before all data is collected.<sup>13</sup> This is useful, since the depth of the overall analysis will improve by allowing the researcher to familiarize himself with parts of his data before having collected all of it. Doing a preliminary analysis of parts of the data set also means that the research process will not be strictly separated into the seven steps that Kuckartz distinguishes (see table 2.1.1 below).

1. **Initial work with the text.** Highlight important passages, compose memos.
2. **Develop main thematic categories.**
3. **First coding process.** Coding all of the data using the main categories.
4. **Compile all of the text passages that belong to the same main category.**
5. **Create subcategories inductively based on the data.**
6. **Second coding process.** Code all of the data using the elaborate category system.
7. **Category-based analysis and presentation of results.**

**Table 2.1.1.** Seven steps of qualitative thematic text analysis (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 74).

In regard to the seventh and final stage, Kuckartz distinguishes several types of analysis of which this thesis will combine three: it will analyze 1) the significance of main thematic categories as well as 2) the emotions belonging to those categories and 3) how those categories relate to each other (see table 2.1.2 for examples of categories and labels). Kuckartz advises to approach working with a text from a grounded-theory perspective and record anything that seems relevant at first, gaining a sense of possible categories along the way. He also advises the category system to be formulated with the report of results in mind, in order to give structure to the research report. The research process therefore serves as an exploration of how the results can best be presented.

<sup>13</sup> The same applies to the other two approaches Kuckartz describes, namely *evaluative analysis* and *type-building analysis*.

During the initial work with the texts a rough labelling system will be used, based on the typology of emotions of James M. Jasper (which will be introduced in the next chapter), which helps to gradually get a sense of recurring themes in the Indo-European blogosphere. The main thematic categories will then be established, which amount to six in total (see table 2.2.1), based on these themes. As a third step these categories will be connected back to the emotions Jasper lists in his typology. Using this more elaborate category system, the material will be extensively studied and compiled into these six categories. During analysis the material will be reread several times. The category system, in which all categories are basically equal, will then gradually develop into subchapters revolving around the most relevant emotions.

- 1) **Connecting within the community.**  
Remarks that draw members of the Indo-European community closer together, often by reminding them of their mutual identity and history.  
*Labels: solidarity, trust, respect, pride, shame.*
- 2) **Looking at the future.**  
Remarks that express an outlook on or expectation of future events, either optimistic or pessimistic.  
*Labels: joy, hope, cynicism, depression.*
- 3) **Taking action (or not).**  
Remarks that refer to the continuation of proceedings and mention concrete measures.  
*Labels: defiance, resignation.*
- 4) **Directing the blame.**  
Anger directed towards the Dutch government (and the *Indisch Platform*).  
*Labels: hostility, loathing, outrage, indignation.*
- 5) **Unveiling the whole story.**  
Attempts at fathoming the motives behind government actions.  
*Labels: suspicion, paranoia.*
- 6) **What the others got (or did not get).**  
References to other groups (most specifically the Jewish community and contemporary refugees).  
*Labels: envy, resentment, sympathy.*

**Table 2.1.2.** Main thematic categories combined with relevant labels based on Jasper's typology of emotions (Jasper, 2011).

## 2.2 The Internet as an object of research

The World Wide Web is still relatively young, with most people obtaining a Broadband connection in the early 2000s, but it has expanded rapidly over the past two decades.<sup>14</sup> Due to these rapid developments, scholarly literature on Internet research can quickly be outdated. Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner (2012) cite a variety of articles that have used Internet forums as a source for psychological research, but they still regard it as “an emerging field” (Holtz, Kronberger, & Wagner, 2012, p. 55).

One of the main issues in Internet research is the ethical question about what is public and private information on the Internet. McKee & Porter (2009) have defined a continuum with text-based and person-based research on either end. The text-based type of research views the Internet as a *space*, and its objects of study as *publications*, whereas the person-based type of research views the Internet as a *place* and its objects of study as *people* (see table 2.2.1). This research has generally regarded its data from the person-based point-of-view, analyzing the Indo-European blogosphere as a place where the community meets. McKee & Porter emphasize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to Internet research and that each researcher needs to make his own ethical considerations.<sup>15</sup>

<b>View of Internet</b>	space	place
How researchers talk about:	←————→	
<i>Location</i>	medium	community, culture, world
<i>Object of study</i>	publication	people
<i>Ethical rights</i>	author rights	person rights
<b>View of research</b>	text-based	person-based
<p><b>Table 2.2.1.</b> Views of Internet correlated with researcher vocabulary and views of research. Cited from McKee &amp; Porter (2009), <i>The Ethics of Internet Research</i>.</p>		

<sup>14</sup> <http://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web/>

<sup>15</sup> The researcher’s ethical decisions also depend on whether or not he himself engages with his objects of study. According to Kitchin (2007), people who post information on the Internet should know that it is public; she compares it to speaking on the radio or on television. She therefore argues that, in the case of ‘non-intrusive research’, informed consent of participants is not necessary. McKee & Porter disagree with this view, feeling that even non-intrusive research “might cause harm to individuals and the communities in which they interact” (McKee & Porter, 2009, p. 84). They cite Bromseth who states that “defining a space from the ‘outside’, based on access, and from ‘the inside’, based on participants’ experience of the social activity taking place, are, therefore, two different positions that do not necessarily correspond” (Bromseth, 2003, p. 72).

Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner (2012) point out that “a tendency toward more aggressiveness in the virtual realm may be a problem for certain research questions, but there is some empirical evidence that, most of the time, users of Internet forums are indeed giving their real opinions on certain topics, although at times with a relatively aggressive and offensive tone” (Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner, 2012, p. 56). They further cite *anonymity* (little socio-demographic information about the users), *deindividuation* (users’ tendency to make more extreme statements on the Internet than they would in face-to-face situations), *privacy* (the extent to which Internet forums are ethically considered a source) and *representativeness* (the extent to which it is possible to make claims about a certain population) as potential issues. The latter three – deindividuation, privacy and representativeness – are most relevant to this research and will be addressed throughout this thesis.

This thesis adheres to the guidelines of the Association of Internet Researchers (<http://www.aoir.org>). According to the AiOR, the greater the vulnerability of the (online) community that is researched, the greater the obligation of the researcher is to protect the community. In line with McKee & Porter, the AiOR believes that “that ethical decision-making is best approached through the application of practical judgement attentive to the specific context (...) The rights of subjects (as authors, as research participants, as people) should be balanced with the social benefits of research and researchers’ rights to conduct research” (Markham & Buchanan, 2012, p. 4). The AoIR also advises researchers to consult as many people and resources as possible in the process of ethical decision-making. In an appendix, the AoIR lists questions relevant to different fields of the Internet (see table 3.2.2), which has been taken into account in this research.

- Could analysis, publication, redistribution, or dissemination of content harm the subject in any way?
- If the content of a subject’s communication were to become known beyond the confines of the venue being studied would harm likely result?
- Does the author/participant consider personal network of connections sensitive information?
- Does author/participant consider the presentation of information or venue to be private or public?
- Do the terms of service conflict with ethical principles?
- Is the author/subject a minor?

**Table 2.2.2.** Questions pertaining to personal spaces/blogs, as mentioned in Markham & Buchanan (2012, p. 18).

Because the nature of each of the sources is different, different ethical considerations had to be applied to each of them. *Blimbing* was an openly accessible e-zine; its content is part of the public domain and can therefore be freely cited. The same applies to *Moesson*, whose readers have agreed to initial publication (and possible subsequent citation in the public domain) by submitting their letters. Comments on *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post* required more consideration. Although readers submitted their comments on an openly accessible website, they may not always have been aware of the possibility of their comments being cited somewhere else. Ultimately the choice was made to include relevant comments in this thesis, and not paraphrase the comments or anonymize the commenters. In order to do justice to commenters and their views, their contributions are cited as complete as possible. Also, in order to preserve the original essence of posts and comments, these will be cited in Dutch and not translated into English.

### 3. Theoretical framework

The sociology of emotions is the main theoretical lens for this thesis, the work of James M. Jasper in particular. Jasper has developed a typology of emotions based on their duration, and connects the sociology of emotions to the study of social movements and protest movements (Jasper, 1998, 2011, 2014a, 2014b). His work suits an analysis of the Indo-European community as it allows for emotions to be clearly mapped and to understand their dynamic in the societal context of a struggle for recognition and compensation. The sociology of emotions and Jasper's work in particular will be introduced below.

#### 3.1 The sociology of emotions

The sociology of emotions emerged as a field in the late 1970s and has since developed rapidly, branching off into various directions. At the heart of the sociology of emotions is the notion that “emotions – phenomena that have historically been viewed as inherently personal – are socially patterned”.<sup>16</sup> In other words, emotions are closely related to the social structure one is part of – one's family, workplace, or a movement or community in a broader sense – and they mutually influence and reinforce each other. The tradition to which James M. Jasper belongs is inspired by the work of Arlie Hochschild and views emotions as culturally and socially constructed (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2009, p. 12).<sup>17</sup> Hochschild has studied the ways in which people actively try to alter their emotions ('emotion work') and the rules that govern this behaviour ('feeling and framing rules') (Hochschild, 1975; Hochschild, 1979).

Jasper (2011) identifies three misconceptions that currently prevail in the study of emotions. *First*, that emotions and rationality are often still viewed as a duality, like body versus mind, while they actually are intertwined. *Secondly*, that the emotions Jasper terms 'reflex emotions' (like fear, anger, joy and surprise) are often mistakenly used as “the paradigm for all emotions, thereby exaggerating the intensity, suddenness, and disruptive capacity of emotions” (Jasper, 2011, p. 287). *Thirdly*, Jasper points out that the word 'emotion' itself covers many different meanings and that, therefore, statements about emotions in general may conflate different types of feeling.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0018.xml>

<sup>17</sup> As to the other traditions: the first is biologically oriented and supposes that we have developed our emotions throughout evolution in order to enhance our chances of survival. The second, which has a Freudian character, has centered emotions in the 'personality structure' of the individual. The third is more social-structural of nature and claims that “relations of power and status generate certain kinds of emotions depending on where one is in these hierarchies and to whom one is reacting” (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2009, p. 12).

In order to clear up these confusions in the study of emotions, Jasper has developed a typology of feelings based on “how long they typically last and how they are felt” (Jasper, 2011, p. 286). This typology (see table 2.1.1) has been an important guideline throughout my research and helps to understand that emotions are more layered and complex than they seem at first.

- **Urges.** *Urgent bodily needs that crowd out other feelings and attention until they are satisfied: lust, hunger, substance addictions, the need to urinate or defecate, exhaustion or pain.*
- **Reflex emotions.** *Fairly quick, automatic responses to events and information, often taken as the paradigm for all emotions, such as anger, fear, joy, surprise, shock, and disgust.*
- **Moods.** *Energizing or de-energizing feelings that persist across settings and do not normally take direct objects; they can be changed by reflex emotions, as during interactions.*
- **Affective commitments or loyalties.** *Relatively stable feelings, positive or negative, about others or about objects, such as love and hate, liking and disliking, trust or mistrust, respect or contempt.*
- **Moral emotions.** *Feelings of approval or disapproval (including of our own selves and actions) based on moral intuitions or principles, such as shame, guilt, pride, indignation, outrage, and compassion.*
- **Emotional energy.** *A mood of excitement and enthusiasm, generated in interaction rituals and successful strategic engagement, that encourages further action.*
- **Moral shock.** *The vertiginous feeling that results when an event or information shows that the world is not what one has expected, which can sometimes lead to articulation or rethinking of moral principles.*

**Table 3.1.1.** Jasper’s typology of feelings. Cited from the article *Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research* (Jasper, 2011).

Opposite moral emotions may function together as what Jasper terms a ‘moral battery’, and drive action forward. Jasper mentions the example of pride and shame, of which one needs the right balance in order to be able to act. “Because shame is de-energizing, small doses of pride must be aroused, sometimes through small political victories but more often through quiet identity work” (Jasper, 2011, p. 291). He gives the example of lesbian and gay rights movements, “in which activists explicitly try to move participants with the promise of replacing shame with pride” (Jasper, 2011, p. 291).

Moral shock is another key notion in Jasper’s work that he himself describes as “often the first step towards recruitment in social movements” (Jasper, 1998, p. 409). Some people might be paralyzed whereas others “channel their fear and anger into righteous indignation

and political activity” (Jasper, 1998, p. 41). Jasper emphasizes that the ability to focus blame is crucial to protest (Jasper, 2014a, p. 118). Certain emotions build upon other emotions here, for instance when distrust leads to indignation and the articulation of blame.

In regard to social movements, Jasper distinguishes *reciprocal* and *shared* emotions. Reciprocal emotions concern the feelings participants in a social movement have towards each other; shared emotions are held by a group but directed outward, for instance when outrage is nurtured over government policy. Reciprocal and shared emotions reinforce each other and thereby help to build a movement’s culture (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2009, p. 20). “Because you are fond of others, you trust those you agree with, and agree with those you trust. Reciprocal and shared emotions both foster solidarity within a protest group. They are key sources of identification within a movement” (Jasper, 2014a, p. 188).

The fact that emotions play a part in protest movements does not necessarily mean that protestors themselves readily acknowledge this. In fact, many are “reluctant to admit the power of emotions, following researchers and the broader society in denigrating emotions as the opposite of rationality. They insist that they are responding to objective conditions in the most logical fashion, drawing conclusions about what must be done” (Jasper, 2014a, p. 127). A consequence of this could be that protestors falsely assume that “they must transcend their emotions and arrive in the realm of cognition” (Jasper, 2014a, p. 127).

## 4. Historical background

### 4.1 The Dutch East Indies before and during World War II

Dutch presence in modern-day Indonesia goes back to the end of the sixteenth century, when the first Dutch merchant ships reached Java, followed by economic expansion throughout the seventeenth century. Upon the bankruptcy of the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), the Dutch Republic nationalized its possessions in 1800, but lost most of them to the British as a result of the Napoleonic wars. The territories were returned to newly proclaimed Dutch king William I in 1814 (De Jong, 1984, p. 35). The colonial hierarchy in the Dutch East Indies consisted of three categories: “first Europeans, second the so-called ‘Foreign Orientals’, and third ‘Inlanders’ (natives, meaning Indonesians)” (Captain, 2014, p. 55). Whereas the third category comprised the Indonesian population, and the second the Chinese and Arab minorities in the Dutch East Indies, those of Dutch and Dutch-Indonesian descent belonged to the first category. The group of Europeans consisted of approximately 300,000 people in 1942, accounting for 0,4 percent of the colony’s total population (Captain, 2014, p. 56). Indo-European people occupied a place between the Dutch and the native population both ethnically, socially, economically and culturally (Laarman, 2013, p. 33).

The colony initially remained unaffected by Japanese expansionism of the 1930s and the subsequent outbreak of World War II. Japan ultimately invaded the Dutch East Indies on 28 February 1942, mainly to gain a hold of its resources, oil in particular. The colonial government capitulated within two weeks. Superior Japanese equipment, an ill-prepared Dutch colonial army and a lack of Allied military support contributed to the Japanese military success (Nortier, Kuijt & Groen, 1994, pp. 247-258, as cited in Keppy, 2006, p. 28). The Japanese established a military government in the Dutch East Indies, detaining citizens of Dutch descent in internment camps that would later be infamously referred to as *jappenkampen*, confiscating their properties in the process. Those of partly Dutch and partly Indonesian descent were largely allowed to remain outside the camps. This created a distinction between *binnenkampers* and *buitenkampers* that would be cause for polarization long after the war had ended (Groen, 2001).

## 4.2 The end of a colony: power struggle and decolonization war

The end of World War II left the Dutch East Indies in a power vacuum. Two days after the Japanese surrender, Indonesian nationalist leaders Sukarno and Hatta seized the momentum to declare the independence of Indonesia on 17 August 1945 – a development tacitly approved of by the Japanese, but not by the Dutch, who refused to recognize the new republic (Keppy, 2006, p. 31). British forces landed in parts of Indonesia to serve as an intermediary between the Japanese military government and the Dutch colonial administration (McMillan, 2005). With large parts of the former colony controlled by the newly proclaimed republic, irregular bands of fighters – neither controlled by the independence movement nor the British forces – went about the country looting and killing at will. This period of turmoil is now known as *bersiap*, meaning ‘get ready’ in Malay (Keppy, 2006, p. 31). A precarious situation emerged, with several parties seeking to (re)gain control over Indonesia but none fully capable of doing so. Meanwhile, the Dutch colonial administration – which had established itself in Australia for the duration of the war – faced challenges of a financial nature. With the colony having been occupied for over three years, it had had virtually no income and had been struggling for a while with the question of how to pay overdue salaries of its civil servants and soldiers that had been interned during the war (Meijer, 2005).

In March 1946 the British allowed Dutch forces to take over control of Indonesia. In the following period the Dutch government ordered for two ‘police actions’ to take place, which were in fact two military offensives on the islands of Java and Sumatra.<sup>18</sup> Historian Rémy Limpach recently concluded that violence was structural during this period, contrary to the Dutch government’s official stance on the matter, based on the so-called *Excessennota*, a report commissioned by the Dutch government in the 1960s, partly written by Dutch historian Cees Fasseur. After conducting limited archival research it had been concluded that the violence had merely consisted of excesses (Limpach, 2016, pp. 29-33).<sup>19</sup>

Although Dutch forces managed to achieve their operational goals, this happened at a great cost. After severe international pressure the Dutch government saw itself forced to give

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<sup>18</sup> The first operation, *Operatie Product*, was carried out in the summer of 1947. The second operation, *Operatie Kraai*, took place in late 1948 and continued into the first days of 1949.

<sup>19</sup> One of the most infamous cases that have surfaced concerns the village of Rawagede, where in 1947 Dutch forces summarily executed most of the male villagers in pursuit of independence fighters. In 2011, some of the ‘widows of Rawagede’ successfully claimed for compensation with the Dutch state, aided by Dutch human rights lawyer Liesbeth Zegveld and the KUKB (*Komitee Utang Kehormatan Belanda*; Committee of Dutch Debts of Honour) headed by Jeffry Pondaag, which strives for recognition of the atrocities committed by the Dutch army in Indonesia (“Excuses en schadevergoeding Rawagede”, 2011).

up what remained of its colony and recognize the independence of Indonesia. The transfer of sovereignty took place in a ceremony in Amsterdam on 27 December 1949.<sup>20</sup> By then many families of Indo-European descent had been brought to the Netherlands by ship; their numbers amounted to nearly a hundred thousand by the end of 1948 (Willems, 2001, p. 49).

Settlement was difficult, especially because Indo-Europeans were initially supposed to return to the Dutch East Indies. In the political discourses of the 1950s they were construed as being incapable of assimilation in the Netherlands. Only after the political relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia further deteriorated as a result of the dispute over New Guinea – the last remaining part of the former Dutch East Indies – did the Dutch government abandon its discouragement policy, and did the focus shift to assimilation and integration (Captain, 2014, p. 57).

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<sup>20</sup> [https://www.parlement.com/id/vhm0102igvut/soevereiniteitsoverdracht\\_aan\\_indonesie](https://www.parlement.com/id/vhm0102igvut/soevereiniteitsoverdracht_aan_indonesie)

### 4.3 The struggle for memory, compensation and recognition

In the 1970s a shift in thinking about World War II, in which “*de harde mentaliteit van de naoorlogse wederopbouw [evolueerde] in een meer empathische gecombineerd met een groeiende belangstelling voor de slachtoffers van de Tweede Wereldoorlog*”, allowed for the Indo-European community to finally feel heard (Meijer, 2005, p. 336). Advocacy groups from within the Indo-European community increasingly succeeded in articulating their demands and found the Dutch government to be more open-minded about making a deal concerning overdue soldiers’ wages. At that time two advocacy groups from the Indo-European community strived for compensation, respectively the *Stichting Rechtsherstel KNIL* (SRK) and the *Stichting Nederlandse Ereschulden* (SNE). Whereas the SRK demanded the overdue soldiers’ wages in full, the SNE was more pragmatic, seeking only an allowance of 16,000 guilders. The government finally approved the *Uitkering Indische Geïnterneerden* (UIG) in 1981. The UIG entailed a tax-free allowance of 7,500 guilders to each breadwinner that had been interned by the Japanese during the war. It would prove to be typical of settlements intended to solve the backpay affair; Meijer describes it as “*halfslachtig en slechts de illusie [scheppend] dat alles naar behoren was afgehandeld*” (Meijer, 2005, p. 338).

In addition to the backpay another case developed, which sought to compensate the Indo-European community for immaterial damages. This case originated in the 1990s, when it was discovered that Swiss banks possessed assets worth millions of guilders that had belonged to Jewish Holocaust victims (“*Zwitsers geven inzage*”, 1997). This renewed surge of interest in World War II ultimately led to the Dutch government allocating 400 million guilders as restitution to the Jewish community. At the same time the government decided to compensate the Indo-European community, as well as two other groups of victims that had suffered in the war, namely homosexuals and the Roma and Sinti communities.<sup>21</sup> After extensive and at times heated negotiations, a final agreement was reached between the Dutch government and the *Indisch Platform*. The payment, dubbed *Het Gebaar*, consisted of 385 million guilders, of which 350 million was designated for individual allowances and 35 million for collective projects (Steijlen, 2010, p. 194). In order to allocate the money a foundation was established, *Stichting Het Gebaar*, which received over 100,000 individual applications. The foundation was disestablished in 2008 after its goals had been fulfilled.

*Het Gebaar* remains controversial within the Indo-European community, particularly the ways in which the money was allocated and how the *Indisch Platform* conducted the

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.oorlogsgetroffenen.nl/thema/rechtsherstel/08\\_De\\_afronding\\_van\\_het\\_naoorlogs\\_rechtsherstel](http://www.oorlogsgetroffenen.nl/thema/rechtsherstel/08_De_afronding_van_het_naoorlogs_rechtsherstel)

negotiations with the government (Steijlen, 2018, pp. 77-78). The so-called *binnenkampers*, who had spent the majority of the war years in Japanese internment camps, felt they were entitled to a larger sum of money than the *buitenkampers*, who hadn't been interned by the Japanese (Groen, 2001). *Het Gebaar* also didn't resolve the backpay affair, which flared up once more in 2007, when the Dutch government declined to pay any overdue salaries, referring to *Het Gebaar* as a final gesture, and in 2015, when the government decided after all to offer 25,000 Euros as a 'moral gesture' to the remaining claimants of the first generation. This offer was regarded unsatisfactory by many, with some of the claimants and their children considering pursuing their case at the European Court for Human Rights (EHCR).<sup>22</sup> The settlement also caused a rupture within the *Indisch Platform* – with board members contending that chairman Silfraire Delhaye did not consult them and negotiated the deal with the government on his own – while its actual implementation remains marred by organizational issues (Flohr, 2017).

Meanwhile, other initiatives continue to spring up from within the community, for instance a petition issued by the editor of *ICM Indische Internetkrant*, who claims that the 1966 Wassenaar agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands – which stipulated that Indonesia pay 600 million guilders of compensation to the Dutch state – is a ground for further compensation for the Indo-European community.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, other advocacy groups have been established, such as the *Taskforce Indisch Rechtsherstel* (TFIR), which strives for compensation for those who worked on the Burma railway during World War II.<sup>24</sup> This group revolves around Griselda Molemans, who has put forward a series of claims in her book *Opgevangen in andijvielucht* (Molemans, 2014).

The debate about compensation for the Indo-European community in the Netherlands continues up until today. The Internet is arguably the most prominent and dynamic platform for debate, allowing authors to post freely and commenters to reply directly to each other in the comment sections. Generally, commenters are dissatisfied with the way the Dutch government and the *Indisch Platform* have handled the matter of compensation so far, discussing if and how the struggle for compensation should be continued.

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<sup>22</sup> This was indicated in readers' letters sent to *Moesson*, published in January 2016, some of which I will cite in chapter 5.

<sup>23</sup> This petition has been filed online and is accessible via the following link:

<https://petities.nl/petitions/uitbetalen-op-basis-van-traktaat-van-wassenaar-1966?locale=nl>

<sup>24</sup> See also the TFIR website: <http://www.tfir.nl>

## 5. Key themes

Posts and comments in the Indo-European blogosphere generally have one thing in common: they are all an expression of solidarity with the Indo-European community in the Netherlands and abroad. The very act of writing implies that the author is somehow engaged with the Indo-European community and sympathetic to its concerns. Most commenters readily identify themselves as having an Indo-European background, often providing further details about their family's history. Many of them, in fact, reply using their full name. A relatively small online environment seems to create a certain level of trust, enabling people to speak freely and share their life story, with issues typical of Internet research – such as deindividuation and anonymity (Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner, 2012) – playing only a small part.

In hindsight, *Blimbing* was quite a pioneering project, dedicating itself to the Indo-European community in the early years of the World Wide Web. The Internet likely allowed for the authors to write more extensively – and arguably less stylized and edited – than they would have in a print magazine. Also, *Blimbing*'s website was rather static. This means that whenever it is the subject of analysis, it is seen through the lens of its authors, Huib Deetman in particular. With *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post* the focus largely shifts to its commenters, giving room to a wider variety of voices and opinions. *Moesson* technically doesn't belong to the Indo-European blogosphere, but its contributions to the debate are nevertheless a valuable source given the magazine's long-standing reputation within the Indo-European community.

This chapter is divided into five subchapters that evolved from the category system presented earlier. First, feelings of defiance and resignation will be addressed, pertaining to the question whether and how the struggle for compensation should be continued. Distrust and suspicion – related primarily to the Dutch government and secondarily to the *Indisch Platform* – form the second key theme. When blame is directed, distrust and suspicion evolve into outrage and indignation, emotions of an intrinsically moral nature that account for the third key theme. The fourth theme consists of notions of solidarity and self-blame, revealing differences both within and between generations, as well as between commenters and the Indo-European community at large. Envy and sympathy related to other groups – the Jewish community in the Netherlands and contemporary refugees in particular – account for the fifth and final theme, which entails possibilities for broadening the discourse. Each of these themes will be illustrated with citations from the Indo-European blogosphere, laying the groundwork for the analysis in chapter 6.

## 5.1 Continuing the struggle: defiance versus resignation

“Je kunt je natuurlijk afvragen wat de zin is van het wederom aanheffen van oude liedjes (...) ‘Pukul terus’ (blijven meppen) is de enige manier, want de kritische stemmen die we her en der horen, zitten nergens in de besluitvorming van de processen die gaande zijn.”

– Huib Deetman as ‘Dalang Mabuk’ in *Blimbing* (Deetman, 2001a)

Given the Indo-European community’s prolonged struggle with the Dutch government, it isn’t surprising that the primary theme in the Indo-European blogosphere revolves around the question whether – and how – this struggle should be continued. Both ends of this spectrum, defiance and resignation, are epitomized by Indonesian sayings regularly coined in posts and comments: a defiant stance is reflected by “*pukul terus*”, meaning ‘fight on’, whereas a resigned stance is summarized as “*sudah, laat maar*”. The importance of defiance and resignation is acknowledged by Jasper, who defines defiance as a “stance that encourages resistance” and, in regard to resignation, notes that “like cynicism, [it] can dampen perceived possibility for change” (Jasper, 1998, p. 406).

Overall, defiance prevails in the Indo-European blogosphere, although resignation is voiced at times. Most of the *Blimbing* pieces had a characteristically defiant tone, with Huib Deetman calling for action even when the circumstances were discouraging. Regardless of the chance at success, Deetman mentioned concrete steps to improve the situation – that is, the community’s negotiating position with the government. Deetman perceived the negotiations between the government and *Indisch Platform* as an insufficiently transparent process riddled with misjudgements, in which the Indo-European community didn’t really have a say.

Deetman asked his readers to respond on several occasions, for instance when he voiced the intention to organize an alternative to the *Indisch Platform*, which he didn’t consider to be representing the Indo-European community effectively (only few people replied to this call, as a later post indicated) (Deetman, 2001a; Deetman, 2001b).

As a form of protest Deetman also asked to write to the Ministry of Public Health's spokesperson after the PR agency hired to manage communication regarding *Het Gebaar* had been dismissed:

*“Tante Sari had ze [the PR agency called “Bureau voor Verander Communicatie ‘Ziel & Zaligheid’”] ingehuurd om de publiciteit en communicatie van het Oidipus gewrocht met doorboorde voetjes te verzorgen. Twee maanden later staan de verander communicatoren weer op straat, zonder zelfs een website achter te laten waar Tante Sari's toko bijzonderheden op kwijt kan. Nu mag de voorlichter van VWS de klus opknappen: Lineke Proost, schrijf haar!” [Proost's email address was embedded as a link]*  
— Deetman, 2002

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Reading *Blimbing*, one gets the impression that its texts had a biting, cynical undertone. This cynicism has seemed to be an undercurrent fuelling defiance rather than, as Jasper views it, a factor that discouraged protest. *Blimbing*'s overall tone wasn't particularly optimistic but the will to persist pervaded its articles. Huib Deetman seemed to embody Jasper's definition of defiance in a twofold way: he encouraged resistance by means of both a defiance tone *and* the suggestion of concrete action. “In contrast to emotions that grow out of existing moral frameworks (...) the emotions created within social movements are attempts, often explicit, to elaborate intuitive visions into explicit ideologies and proposals” (Jasper, 1998, p. 417). Deetman exemplified this by transforming his own discontent – as well as the discontent he sensed within the Indo-European community – into potential action.

Cynicism has a more ambiguous role in the comment sections of *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post*, where it characterizes both defiance and resignation. The observation that seventy years have gone by in the struggle with the government is utilized in different, sometimes opposing ways. Whereas some express resignation at this thought, others express a sense of urgency, noting like Saskia Rossi that there is little time left:

*“Nederland-Indië 70-0. Ik moet toegeven dat ze het slim gespeeld hebben, al 70 jaar lang... (...) Als het niet zo wrang was, zou ik er haast voor applaudisseren. (...) Als we nu niet wakker worden en de zaak voor het gerechtshof brengen, hebben we niet veel andere mogelijkheden. Het is nu of nooit mensen, time is running out!”*  
— Rossi, 2015

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Others are much more pessimistic, like Lucas, who wrote earlier:

*“Het onwrikbare geloof en de overtuiging dat er eindelijk een ‘finale afrekening’ zal komen van de Indische Kwestie lijkt mij ijdele hoop! De ‘finale afrekening’ is eigenlijk allang ingezet, betrokkenen gaan dood, de politieke interesse is nihil en Indo’s worden weggezet als ondankbare zeurkousen”*  
— Lucas, 2015

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Although they are apparent opposites, defiance and resignation aren’t always easily told apart. Resignation as epitomized by ‘*sudah, laat maar*’ entails a sense of tilting at windmills (G.O. Prins, personal communication, 29 September 2017), knowing it would be useless and exhausting to continue to protest against the government. This sometimes causes resignation to be expressed in a strongly defiant tone, for instance by Trudy Verstegen, who – after having summed up the history of the Indo-European case – stated:

*“Hoe lang willen wij nog trekken aan een dood paard? De neokoloniale benadering en afhandeling door deze politici is hiermede aangetoond en geboekstaafd. Wij zullen moeten leren leven met dit verraad!”*  
— Verstegen, 2015b

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Most remarks that express resignation, however, lack such a biting tone. In regard to the 2015 backpay settlement, Ellen wrote:

*“Alleen degenen die nog leven en hun nabestaanden zullen – mogelijk – moeten tekenen voor finale kwijting van het een en ander, willen zij het geld in ontvangst nemen/krijgen. De rest van de Indische gemeenschap heeft er niet voor getekend, En kan dus voortgaan met de strijd. Hoewel, het IP is ook al bingoeng, denk ik. Na 70 jaar gestreden te hebben. Misschien toch liever de zaak loslaten.”*  
— Ellen, 2015

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Ellen connected the discussion about the latest backpay settlement to the community’s struggle in its entirety, voicing it as a dilemma. This notion of a choice to be made is generally less obvious in the Indo-European blogosphere, but clearly present in the selection of readers’ letters *Moesson* published in January 2016 after the government had announced it would offer a final settlement to the remaining claimants in the backpay affair. In its December 2015 issue *Moesson* had already published an article featuring the headline “*take it or leave it?*”, asking readers to respond (Verhoeve, 2015). Taking this preceding article into account, it’s less surprising that *Moesson*’s readers clearly indicate that they are intent on either continuing or giving up the fight. One’s (late) father’s opinion is sometimes invoked to

support this intention (which was also the case in the readers' letters *Moesson* published in 2007). Rein Kwast described how he asked his father's opinion on the matter. His father answered:

*“Liever iets dan niets. Het is een kleine genoegdoening, maar ja, je mag een gegeven paard niet in de bek kijken.” Asked what to do next, Kwast's father said: “Laten wij er maar mee stoppen, het heeft toch geen zin. Dit gedoe heeft 70 jaar gekost, hoe lang moet het nu weer duren, straks zijn alle 1100 personen dood en wat dan?” Kwast himself added: “Mijn pa ziet het niet zitten dat ik en met mij alle leeftijdgenoten, de strijd voort zal zetten.”*

— Kwast, 2016

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Gijs Beets, on the contrary, remained intent on continuing the struggle, and is one of four out of fourteen readers who suggested taking the struggle to a European level (a suggestion that, to date, hasn't shaped up any further):

*“Mijn vader ligt pas rustig in zijn graf als hij én zijn nabestaanden zijn bevrijd van de schaamte rond de backpack. Daarom optie 2: we take it, maar strijden verder. Ik ondersteun een gang naar de Europese Commissie van de Rechten van de Mens.”*

— Beets, 2016

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## 5.2 Unveiling the ‘whole’ truth: distrust and suspicion

*“Steeds beter komt aan het licht dat weer een gigantische maskerade wordt opgevoerd rond de Indische gemeenschap in Nederland.”*

– Huib Deetman as ‘Dalang Mabuk’ in *Blimbing* (Deetman, 2000a)

The second key theme in the Indo-European blogosphere revolves around distrust and suspicion. These emotions generally concern the way in which the Dutch government and the *Indisch Platform* have handled the negotiations about compensation. Distrust and suspicion border on a third emotion, namely paranoia (Jasper, 2014a, p. 107). I would argue that these three emotions – distrust, suspicion and paranoia – are a higher degree of each other: distrust as a general mood in which no concrete accusations are made, and suspicion and paranoia as emotions from which concrete suspicions are voiced. The difference between the latter two is that accusations made out of suspicion tend to be based on something concrete, whereas accusations made out of paranoia seem far-fetched.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the Indo-European blogosphere, both the government and the IP are blamed for not being transparent about their actions and accused of having ulterior motives. This has sustained an overall sense of distrust amongst commenters and contributed to a lack of confidence in a satisfactory outcome. Distrust is exemplified by short, sometimes commonplace remarks like:

*“De politiek, voor mij blijven het boeven en corrupte dieven”*  
— *Geenen, 2015a*

*“Opnieuw is/werd het bewijs geleverd dat politieke partijen onbetrouwbaar waren en... blijven”*  
— *Beckman Lapré, 2017a*

Comments voicing distrust generally do not help the discussion to evolve. It causes criticism to remain passive and merely contain observations, such as that politicians cannot be trusted and that the IP isn’t making enough of an effort to connect with its constituency, the Indo-European community. Commenters voicing suspicion tend to be more active, since it requires an effort on their behalf to articulate a discrepancy between what happens and what they suspect to be actually happening. Such a discrepancy is absent in distrustful remarks. *Indisch4Ever* administrator Boeroeng, for instance, suspected former state secretary Van Rijn

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<sup>25</sup> Given the negative, pathological connotation of the word ‘paranoia’, I have chosen not to use it in my analysis, since it might work confusing and divert attention away from the key themes I present here.

– responsible for matters related to the Indo-European community, including the backpay affair – to be not as compassionate with the community as he seemed:

*“Mijn idee is dat deze staatssecretaris net als zijn voorgangers het Indisch Platform aan het lijntje houdt. Hij geeft de indruk allemaal zo begaan te zijn en dat hij hard bezig is achter de schermen. Ik geloof er niks van.”*

— Boeroeng, 2015b

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Elsewhere, Boeroeng voiced his suspicion of the government more explicitly:

*“Onder protest van het Indisch Platform zette de regering “het gebaar” door. De regering vond dat die uitkeringen de finale afkoopsom was voor alle claims, oa, backpay en materieel rechtsherstel. Het Indische Platform ging niet akkoord en wenste “het gebaar” te beschouwen als vergoeding voor de kille ontvangst. (...) De grote zwendel met “het gebaar” was niet die van de regering, maar die van de Stichting het Gebaar. Die ging tientallen spotjes over de radio uitstrooien met de boodschap dat “het gebaar” bedoeld was voor de kille ontvangst. Niks over backpay en materieel rechtsherstel en daarmee de suggestie openhoudend dat deze kwesties niet in dit gebaar zaten.. Maar dat was het wel! De politiek wist ervan, hoorde de spotjes en zwegen en zwegen... Zwendel, Dames en Heren van het Binnenhof!”*

— Boeroeng, 2011a

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Essentially, the above comment is a response to the perceived lack of transparency, which is an objection raised not only against the Dutch government but also the *Indisch Platform*, the community’s representative body. Huib Deetman already observed in *Blimbing*:

*“De gesprekken tussen de Indische groep en het Kabinet worden gevoerd door het z.g. Indisch Platform, een zootje ongeregeld van zestien organisaties met al-dan-niet een achterban van hoog slachtoffer gehalte. Over de gesprekken en procedures wordt stiekem gedaan, het is bijvoorbeeld niet goed mogelijk de namen van de zestien organisaties te weten te komen, laat staan wat hun betrokkenheid is en hoe het reilen en zeilen van het Indisch Platform naar de achterban wordt doorgespeeld”*

— Deetman, 2000b

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Late 2000, when analyzing the sum of 385 million guilders of *Het Gebaar*, Deetman also severely criticized the *Indisch Platform*:

*“We hoeven op deze plek niet nog eens terug te komen op de feiten dat het IP voltrekt is tekort geschoten in het geven van bruikbare informatie naar de achterban. (...) Nu dus een bedrag van 385 miljoen gulden op tafel gaat komen, is het erg belangrijk om te zien wie de zaak verder organiseert”*  
— Deetman, 2000c

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Through documents obtained at the *Kamer van Koophandel* Deetman then analyzed which people were listed as board members of organizations dedicated to the Indo-European community, concluding that there were too many cross-connections: some individuals were involved in multiple organizations and committees at the same time, creating networks impossible to oversee. Posts like these are typical of Deetman’s approach: his articulation of distrust and suspicion was a starting point for his own kind of investigative journalism. His role as editor thereby significantly differed from the administrators of *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post*, where respectively Boeroeng has taken on a more opinionating role and Bert Immerzeel has stated a different purpose – a historical one – for his blog altogether.

Distrust and suspicion tend to be perpetuated rather than disproven amongst commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere. Several commenters wrote for instance that the Dutch government has deliberately waited for seventy years to offer a settlement in the backpay affair, so that most of the claimants would have died in the meantime and the remaining amount of money to be paid would be relatively low. Cynically, some asked rhetorically why the government didn’t wait for just a little longer so that it didn’t ever have to deal with the backpay affair at all. It’s difficult to establish whether such remarks merely express cynicism or commenters really believe their suspicions to be true. Either way, their comments do cover the range of distrust and suspicion:

*“Wat prettig voor deze regering dat bijna iedereen al is overleden, dat scheelt weer in de onkosten! Het is te schandalig voor woorden...”*  
— Prommenschenkel-De Vries, 2015

*“Als je maar lang genoeg wacht, dan hoeft men niets meer te betalen. Stelletje ondermaatse politici”*  
— Reith, 2015

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*“Waarom wordt er nog zo gewacht? Zeker wederom zo’n vuile streek  
uithalen dat er nog meer Indo’s naar de Eeuwige Jachtvelden  
verhuizen. Heel lage gedachte; toen 70 jaar na dato en nu nog steeds”  
— Crawfurd, 2015*

*“De regeringen hebben net zo lang gewacht tot dat het merendeel  
overleden was”  
— Ketting-Jansen, 2017*

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Distrust and suspicion are closely related to the allocation of blame, which is acknowledged by Jasper, who writes that “suspicion and distrust, even a touch of paranoia, are sentiments that can help people work their discontent into protest by locating a villain. The creation of enemies allows the allocation of blame and encourages concrete demands for redressing grievances” (Jasper, 2014a, p. 107). This will be elaborated upon this in the next section.

### 5.3 Directing the blame: outrage and indignation

*“Met andere woorden: de brekebenen die Het Gebaar mallotig hebben verknoeid, gaan zich nu bezig houden met de uitvoering ervan!”*

– Huib Deetman as ‘Dalang Mabuk’ in *Blimbing* (Deetman, 2001c)

The third key theme in the Indo-European blogosphere evolves from the second one: distrust and suspicion lead to the identification of an adversary and the allocation of blame. Outrage and indignation are central emotions here. They are moral in that they revolve around a sense of disapproval (Jasper, 2011, p. 287). Moreover, they are *shared emotions* in that they are directed outward (Jasper, 2014a, p. 187). There are three targets at which, in different ways, blame is directed: the Dutch government, the *Indisch Platform*, and the Indo-European community itself. Criticism directed at these targets is closely related and can sometimes be found in the very same comment:

*“Ik geloof dat met deze brief van de staatssecretaris [‘Kamerbrief over voortgang Indische kwestie’] duidelijk is geworden hoe er finaal over de Indo’s wordt gedacht. Jullie hebben indertijd je aalmoes gehad dus ‘bek houden en stil zitten’. Bek houden en stil zitten hebben we altijd goed gekund we missen de goede organisaties die andere getroffen wel hebben. Het Indisch Platform heeft zich de afgelopen jaren in slaap laten sussen en aan het lijntje laten houden door de opvolgende kabinetten en deze gestuurde boodschapper van een staatssecretaris. Wij Indischen hebben dit blijkbaar over ons zelf afgeroepen door maar steeds te geloven dat het wel goed komt. Nee dus!”*

— Versteegen, 2015a

*“Dan mag de regering fout zijn, maar het IP kan ineffectiviteit worden verweten. Het heeft zich kennelijk aan het lijntje laten houden, niet alle registers opengetrokken om zijn doel te bereiken. En de Indische Gemeenschap? Die vond het kennelijk wel goed zo. Anders had zij massaal geberontak, zowel naar de regering toe als naar het IP. Protesten als nu op deze site zijn als druppeltjes op een gloeiende plaat.”*

— De la Croix, 2015a

There are similarities and differences in the ways in which the Dutch government and the *Indisch Platform* are held responsible by commenters. Jasper sees responsibility as divisible into *causal* and *remedial* forms, “and blame is more powerful when the same institutions are responsible in both ways” (Jasper, 2014a, p. 127). In other words, when an institution is held responsible both for causing a problem and being unable to resolve it, the allocation of blame tends to be more effective.

Within the Indo-European blogosphere, the Dutch government is being held responsible both causally and remedially, and is therefore the most obvious target for commenters to direct the blame to. In the backpay affair, for instance, the government is blamed for not paying overdue soldiers' wages in the first place (causal responsibility) and for failing to resolve this matter in a satisfactory way (remedial responsibility). One of Boeroeng's comments illustrates this twofold responsibility:

*... “de staat’ heeft zeker wel ‘zaken verdraaid’ [.] Ze wist het zo te draaien dat zij er zelf in geloofde dat de achterstallige salarissen van 42-45 niet haar schulden waren. En toen de Kamer eindelijk kwam tot een afkoopsom van 7.500 gulden noemde men het ‘een ereschuld voldoen’ [.] Maar het werkelijke schuldbedrag is nooit uitbetaald. Daar gaat die backpay over.”*

*— Boeroeng, 2015a*

*Het Gebaar*, in turn, can be seen as a remedial effort to make up for something else the government took causal responsibility for, namely the ‘insufficient rehabilitation’ of the Indo-European community after the end of World War II. Although both forms of the government's responsibility are discussed in the blogosphere, the remedial side tends to be debated more fervently, since this may still be subject to change: as of late 2017, the proceedings in the backpay settlement haven't been concluded and other claims are being prepared. The ‘seventy-years argument’, cited in regard to defiance and resignation, may be called to mind here as well – some commenters feel that it's late, though not too late, to take on the Dutch government once more and attempt to finally reach a satisfactory agreement.

The *Indisch Platform* is a secondary target and mainly blamed on the remedial side: being in a position to accomplish something, the IP is viewed by commenters as incapable, internally divided and not assertive enough in its negotiations with the government. Although the IP isn't held causally responsible like the government, they do share a ground for criticism in that they are both blamed for intransparency. The IP's lack of frequent communication, such as a regular newsletter, is severely criticized. From the Indo-European blogosphere an image arises of the IP acting more or less independently, without consulting its constituency – the Indo-European community – on matters of importance.

The perceived lack of transparency and communication leads to a questioning of the IP's mandate:

*“Het is buitengewoon onduidelijk of het IP ook maar een poging heeft gedaan te streven naar representativiteit. (...) In ieder geval is een onbekend aantal Indische mensen dat zich in het geheel niet herkent in het IP, al was het alleen maar door zijn zeer ondoorzichtige en weinig democratische structuur en groot gebrek aan openheid naar de veronderstelde Indische achterban.”*

— Deetman, 2000e

*“Het Indisch Platform is niet alleen te fatsoenlijk, het is ook een club die zich telkens weer door verschillende opeenvolgende kabinetten in de luren laat leggen met mooie woorden, die inhoudelijk niets voorstellen.”*

— Indorein, 2015b

Contrary to the *Indisch Platform*, the government is seen as an institution wholly separate from the Indo-European community itself. Criticism directed at the government therefore tends to remain passive, since commenters feel they cannot exert any direct influence. The IP has a complicated position: it claims to act on behalf of the community, but part of the community does not at all feel represented by the IP. Most commenters have an uneasy relationship with the IP and tend to distance themselves from it; others acknowledge its shortcomings but are glad that it at least is trying to do something. Still others feel entitled to make concrete suggestions about the IP's conduct. But the IP has never seemed truly receptive to such suggestions, even deliberately remaining silent during its negotiations with the government about the 2015 backpay settlement (Indisch4Ever, 2015).<sup>26</sup> Concerns voiced in the Indo-European blogosphere seem to remain unheard and even unwanted by the IP, which perpetuates those concerns being voiced. When considering further action commenters often think it better to bypass the IP entirely.

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<sup>26</sup> Several IP board members have severely criticized incumbent chairman Silfraire Delhaye for how he handled the 2015 backpay settlement, causing a rupture in the IP leadership. Stein, one of the (former) board members, has started a Facebook page and a website entitled 'Indische Kwestie', to which she refers to her foundation as *Stichting Het Indisch Platform 2.0*, making it unclear who currently speaks on behalf of the IP. See also <http://www.indischekwestie.nl>

#### 5.4 Making each other visible again: solidarity versus self-blame

*“Een alternatief IP (...) om uiteindelijk de regering duidelijk te maken dat het zo niet langer kan. Daar valt alles voor te zeggen. Alleen, wie wil meedoen? Zo simpel is de vraag.”*

– Huib Deetman as ‘Dalang Mabuk’ in *Blimbing* (Deetman, 2001a)

The fourth key theme concerns the ways in which authors and commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere identify themselves and the Indo-European community as a group, and attempt to move action forward together. Solidarity is a key mood here. It is fostered or hindered by expressions of defiance and resignation, and also by the allocation of blame – which, as was shown in the previous section, can be directed both outward and inward. Both solidarity and self-blame are *reciprocal emotions* in that they are directed inward and are feelings that participants in the debate have towards each other (Jasper, 2014a, p. 187).

In the Indo-European blogosphere a sense of solidarity stems from having a shared history in the former Dutch East Indies and belonging to the same generation. Commenters form a relatively small and coherent group; although only a few happen to mention their age, their comments indicate that all of them belong to the second generation, ranging in age from their early fifties to late seventies. The third generation is largely absent from the debate – it had its own platform (*Indisch 3.0*) for several years, but this project was discontinued and did not have a direct successor. Members of the third generation seem to have largely taken to Facebook and other social media to connect with each other, but rarely contribute to the debate about compensation.<sup>27</sup> Concerns about the absence of later generations in the debate were already voiced in *Blimbing* and continue to be voiced on *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post*:

*“Men heeft de pretentie de ‘Indische cultuur’ kansen te willen geven in de toekomst. Maar hoe kan dat als je levende draden met het bestaande gaat doorsnijden? Meninge over cultuur hebben immers de goede eigenschap dat ze plegen te veranderen, maar je moet wel eerst iets te veranderen hebben. En daar schort het precies. Het is immers opvallend hoe juist de tweede en derde generaties zich afzijdig hielden bij de hierboven geschetste toestanden [the discussion surrounding the Indisch Herinneringscentrum]. Oproepen, uitlokkingen, het helpt voor geen moer.”*

— Deetman, 2001c

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<sup>27</sup> Facebook pages focused on the Indo-European community include *Indische Kwestie*, established by Peggy Stein in the wake of the crisis within the IP leadership, and *Indo’s Be Like*, the latter serving to connect the community in a light-hearted manner.

*“De andere generaties Indische Nederlanders bemoeien zich er helemaal niet meer met politiek, laat staan met de claims van Griselda Molemans, dat is toch een ver-van-mijn-bed-show. Die generaties (2.0 en 3.0) gaan eensgezind en gezellig op rootsreis naar Indonesië en nemen er een extra satétje bij, de onverschilligheid ten top. Zo kan het Indisch element ook uitsterven.”*

— Van den Broek, 2015

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Even the second generation isn't entirely free from blame and subjected to criticism that is also levelled against the community at large. Such criticism is connected to cultural stereotypes in which Indo-European people are perceived as too polite and too submissive in regard to authority. These stereotypes can be traced back to the colonial period; this will be elaborated upon in the next chapter. Similar to how defiant remarks reinforce feelings of pride in one's Indo-European identity and in regard to the hardships the community withstood upon arriving in the Netherlands, criticism about submissiveness and disinterest draw from and thereby reinforce existing feelings of shame, like both sides of a 'moral battery' (Jasper, 2011, p. 298):

*“De eerlijkheid gebiedt mij te schrijven dat, als het IP zich door Lubbers, Borst, c.s. in de luren heeft laten leggen, ook zijn ‘achterban’ lekker moet hebben leggen tidoeren, c.q. het allemaal goed heeft gevonden en niet massaal in opstand is gekomen tegen de aangeboden ‘fooi’, met de mooie doopnaam ‘Gebaar’.”*

— De la Croix, 2015a

*“De indo is geen probleem voor de politici, ze zijn immers allemaal allang volledig opgegaan in de Nederlandse bevolking, niemand (h)erkent ze meer als slachtoffers, die lastig kunnen zijn voor de politiek: over de indo's zal geen enkel kabinet vallen, noch links noch rechts, noch midden, of waar dan ook in de 2e Kamer. Daar hebben wij indo's zelf ook deels schuld aan: we zijn veel te fatsoenlijk en geloven de ‘blanke man’ nog steeds onvoorwaardelijk op zijn woord.”*

— Indorein, 2015a

*“De Indische mensen zelf hebben te weinig interesse voor de backpay en de oorlogsschadevergoeding. Weinig mensen die actief willen zijn... buiten het Indisch Platform om. Een aantal mensen van IP zijn zeker wel actief bezig op hun manier, maar dan verdwijnen ze, er komen nieuwe mensen... de achterban laat het afweten. Grandioos... is die achterban altijd afwezig.”*

— Boeroeng, 2015c

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*“Hoeveel Indo’s zich vervreemd voelen van Nederland weet ik niet. Hoeveel Indo’s zichzelf als Indo zien weet ik niet. Veel hebben denk ik weinig vertrouwen in de organisatorisch[e] kracht van Indo’s. Een vuist met de kracht van zo’n twee miljoen mensen zal er niet snel komen. Het is voor de regering niet nodig om verzet te breken met een verdeel en heers tactiek, die passen we al op onszelf toe”*  
— Jeroen, 2015

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The above comments indicate as well that the struggle *against* the Dutch government is also a struggle *within* the Indo-European community itself. Those involved in the debate – and intent on continuing the struggle – not only face the Dutch government but also what they perceive to be a lack of interest in the community at large.

Although the core group of commenters perceives a divide between themselves, later generations, and the Indo-European community at large, the Indo-European blogosphere itself is a place where solidarity is fostered. Jasper describes solidarity alongside loyalty as “positive feelings towards others [that] can lead to action on behalf of that group or category” (Jasper, 1998, p. 406). Solidarity differs from sympathy in that it is focused on one’s own group, instead of the plight of another group or community. Within the solidary environment of the Indo-European blogosphere, the possibilities for action are regularly discussed, but generally not followed up on. When commenters express what action they would prefer to be taken, it’s more often an opinion than a concrete proposal.

Whenever concrete calls to action have been made, they generally met a lukewarm reception, like Huib Deetman’s proposal in *Blimbing* to establish an alternative to the *Indisch Platform*. In 2000 Deetman called for a boycott of the August 15 remembrance, but it’s difficult to establish to which extent this call was heeded (Deetman, 2000f). One of the most extensive discussions about taking action took place on *Indisch4Ever*, in the comment thread of a post about a letter state secretary Van Rijn sent to the Dutch parliament, stating that the backpay would put the cabinet before a “*onoverkomelijke budgettaire opgave*” were it to be paid in full (Indisch4Ever, 2015b). After a group of commenters agreed that it was time to take legal action, they discussed who would be the best lawyer to take on their case – Liesbeth Zegveld or Geert Jan Knoops – as well as how a lawyer could be paid (crowdfunding is suggested).

One commenter stated that they should bypass the IP, although another disagreed:

*“Maar als het IP zo lang aan het lijntje is gehouden en geen echte vuist kan maken tegen z’n broodheer, moeten we een andere weg bewandelen.”*  
— *PLemon, 2015*

*“Nu kunnen we natuurlijk eindeloos bezig zijn op deze mooie website, maar ik denk dat uiteindelijk het IP het initiatief moet nemen voor een juridische actie”*  
— *Plink, 2015*

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Only rarely, however, did commenters opt for the IP as a route for further action – which indicates once more commenters’ lack of trust in its effectiveness. The above comment thread – which trailed off in a discussion about political preferences in the Netherlands and the United States – is typical of how the intention to take action rarely goes beyond the discussion of possibilities. The Indo-European blogosphere is therefore best seen as a platform for debate rather than action.<sup>28</sup> As such, it has a vital function in providing people from within the Indo-European community with a place to discuss the theme of compensation amongst themselves, as well as other topics relevant to their shared cultural background. Jasper points out that “the routines of protest must offer satisfactions along the way, especially considering how remote many movement goals are. The pleasures of conversation, the excitement of interaction, the ability to articulate moral intuitions, a sense of making history, and others: these are satisfactions that keep participants going, regardless of the likelihood of obtaining stated goals. (...) Emotions are part of a flow of action and interaction, not simply the prior motivations to engage or the outcomes that follow” (Jasper, 2011, p. 297). Regardless of which direction the struggle for compensation is heading, the blogosphere fulfils a crucial role in keeping the debate going and keeping those engaged in the debate motivated.

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<sup>28</sup> Insofar commenters consider action, they should also be somewhat discouraged by how diffuse the field of action has become: as of 2017, there is a crisis in the IP leadership and Taskforce Indisch Rechtsherstel and Maluku4Maluku have made claims for compensation on their own behalf. The latter group, a Moluccan advocacy group, has made an attempt to claim retainer fees for former KNIL soldiers: <https://javapost.nl/2017/07/21/knil-soldaten-eisen-66-jaar-wachtgeld/>

Lastly, the case of a former KNIL soldier's daughter – who sued the Dutch state on her own in an attempt to receive the backpay settlement in place of her late father – exemplifies how action may be taken by an individual and then reported on in the Indo-European blogosphere:

*“Ik vond en vind het niet eerlijk dat mijn vader geen recht meer had op die backpay regeling i.v.m. die peildatum. (...) Uitspraak van de zitting was: ongegrond verklaard. Dit was te verwachten. Aangezien in de uitspraak nogal behoorlijk onjuiste dingen werden genoemd, ben ik in hoger beroep gegaan. Deze procedure is gaande. Voor mij is het een principe kwestie. (...) Al met al ben ik blij dat ik bovengenoemde stappen heb gezet. Ik ga ervan uit dat ik ook het hoger beroep zal verliezen maar voor mijn gevoel heb ik datgene gedaan waarvan ik denk dat mijn vader het alleen maar zou toejuichen”.*  
— Lisy, 2017

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Although Lisy has already taken action and isn't involved in the Indo-European blogosphere any further, other commenters applaud her for starting a court case. Her effort has helped to make the community 'visible again' and foster solidarity in the Indo-European community:

*“Doordat Liszy een rechtszaak heeft gevoerd – eigenlijk, zonder dat ze het misschien beseft, namens de Indische gemeenschap – heeft zij ons en onze kwestie als het ware weer “zichtbaar” gemaakt”.*  
— Ellen, 2017

*“Ben het met u [the above commenter] eens. Ieder zichzelf respecterende Indo atau [or] anderszins lid van de Indische gemeenschap zou mevrouw Liszy er dankbaar voor moeten zijn. Oppakken en verder uitbouwen, zou ik zeggen. Bij voorkeur gezamenlijk; als Indische Gemeenschap, zeg maar...”*  
— e.m., 2017

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Not only do these comments show how the first generation serves as an inspiration in the struggle for compensation – which readers' letters in *Moesson* already indicated – they also show how an apparently material issue has an immaterial dimension, namely fulfilling a duty towards one's parents and, in a broader sense, drawing attention to the Indo-European community. This social duty may prevail over one's individual preferences and desires.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> In a study of life-story accounts of victims of National Socialism, Immler (2013) describes a similar discrepancy between individual desire and social duty in a compensation case. The case of Ellis – described in the article – shows how someone is motivated to make a claim because a friend encouraged her to do so, rather than wanting to do it of her own volition.

## 5.5 What ‘the others’ got: envy versus sympathy

“... er zijn uiterlijke overeenkomsten tussen de symptomen van onvrede binnen de Joodse en de Indische gemeenschap, iets anders is of de oorzaken van eenzelfde karakter zijn.”

– Huib Deetman in *Blimbing* (Deetman, 2000d)

The fifth and final key theme consists of references and comparisons to other groups, particularly the Jewish community in the Netherlands and refugees who have come to the Netherlands as a result of the ongoing refugee crisis.<sup>30</sup> Both groups have in common with the Indo-European community that they too were entitled to a specific form of government funds: restitution of assets in the Jewish case and limited financial support in the case of contemporary refugees. In the Indo-European blogosphere both groups tend to be viewed with envy, though not exclusively, and the comparison drawn to each group is different.

In the 1990s reports surfaced about Jewish assets that had been confiscated during the war and left unclaimed ever since. It led to extensive investigations in several countries, including the Netherlands, which ultimately made a payment of 764 million guilders to the Jewish community, divided into collective and individual allowances (Ruppert, 2015, p. 51). The Jewish case was an impetus for a broader investigation that focused on the suffering of other groups as well, including the Indo-European community in the Netherlands. The Jewish community therefore is an obvious point of reference in the Indo-European blogosphere, as the Dutch government dealt almost simultaneously with the Jewish case and Indo-European case during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Jewish community already was a point of reference for the negotiators of the *Indisch Platform* during their talks with the government, leading them to decline a first offer of 250 million guilders (Boekholt, 2007, p. 38).

The main difference between references to the Jewish community and references to contemporary refugees is the sense of agency ascribed by commenters to the Jewish community. References to contemporary refugees are mainly related to the (financial) aid they received upon arriving in the Netherlands, in which the refugees themselves are merely regarded as passive recipients. On the contrary, commenters see the Jewish community as active and assertive, and they look at it both with envy and as a role model. The Jewish community’s negotiators are perceived as shrewder, in a good sense, whereas the *Indisch*

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<sup>30</sup> A third category of comments addresses government expenses that, according to its authors, could in its entirety have covered the backpay affair and the matter of compensation for the Indo-European community, such as the renovation of the Dutch parliament buildings and the purchase of two Rembrandt paintings. These comments do not refer specifically to another community and essentially voice indignation towards the Dutch government, which I’ve discussed in section 5.3.

*Platform* is generally seen as too humble and internally divided to exert any real influence at the negotiation table up until today. The following (excerpted) exchange illustrates the way in which the Jewish community serves as a role model:

*“... Als wij joden waren geweest dan had een ieder allang een levenslange uitkering gekregen.”*  
— Jasper, 2013a

*“... Ik wil me niet met de kwestie bemoeien maar zou het niet zo kunnen zijn dat ‘die Joden’ – wat de uitkeringen betrof – betere onderhandelaars waren dat de ‘indischen’ die al blij waren dat ze iets ontvingen maar achteraf, edoch te laat, tot de conclusie kwamen dat zij met een fooi werden afgescheept.”*  
— Vos, 2013

*“... Maar ik ben het totaal met u eens, maar dat wil niet zeggen dat je mensen die niet zo gretig zijn en van aard toch veel beschaafder zijn, misschien ook minder slim niet zomaar opzij mag schuiven. En dat hebben Nederlandse over de jaren regeringen wal graag gedaan. Dit op zich noem ik onbeschaafd.”*  
— Jasper, 2013b

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Cultural stereotypes resonate in the above comments: the Indo-European community is seen as “*van aard toch veel beschaafder*” and “*misschien ook minder slim*” compared to the directness of the Jewish community and its negotiators. Apart from reiterating stereotypes, comments as the above tend to remain limited to observations: the Jewish community apparently is a role model, but it is unclear how this can further the empowerment of the Indo-European community. These comments mainly have a retrospective function and cause blame and resentment to be voiced once more towards the Indo-European community itself, using the Jewish community as a point of reference.

Some commenters see contemporary refugees as having gone through similar difficulties as the Indo-European community after the end of World War II. They compare the limited financial support for refugees to financial settlements for the Indo-European community, but such references are received ambivalently:

*“Het [an early arrangement to compensate for lost furniture] gaat om vergoeding (in pecunia!) van verloren goed (eigendommen en geld) tegenover een veel te ruimhartig gebaar van ‘onze overheden’ naar die arme vluchtelingen uit het Midden-Oosten en Afrika. (...) Dat [municipal financial support of 12,500 Euros per refugee family to furnish their house] steekt schril af hoe ‘onze overheden’ indertijd ons Indo’s meende te moeten ‘tegemoetkomen’ (hahaha, het woord alleen al is een belediging voor iedere Indo toen): voorschotten, die alleen besteed mochten worden in winkels die onder een hoedje speelden met de betrokken ambtenaren. EN NATUURLIJK: TERUGBETALEN, ALLES, en op tijd, want wekelijks kwam de ambtenaar de centjes ophalen bij ons thuis. DAT STEEKT !!! En is geen discriminatie”  
— Indorein, 2016*

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*Indisch4Ever* administrator Boeroeng replied:

*“Het gaat hier om een salarisschuld uit 1942-1945 [the backpay, which was the post’s original topic]. Dat heeft niks te maken met asielzoekers uit 2016. Deze twee zaken koppelen is ageren tegen asielzoekers uit 2016 met de kennelijke bedoeling de [sic] onderstrepen dat zij ongewenst zijn (...) De backpay gaat niet over vergoeding van oorlogsschade. En die kwestie van niet gegeven oorlogsschade 1942-1945 heeft ook niks met de asielzoekers van 2016 te maken”  
— Boeroeng, 2016*

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Commenter Pierre de la Croix disagreed:

*“Waarom zij nu wel en wij toen niet’ lijkt mij een gerechtvaardigde vraag die niets met ‘discriminatie’ in de gebruikelijke zin van het woord te maken heeft. Gerechtvaardigd, omdat de omstandigheden die de Indische ‘repatrianten’ – bovendien niet zo maar vreemdelingen maar Nederlanders of tenminste Nederlands onderdaan in de verloren kolonie – noopten hun toevlucht te zoeken in Nederland en die van de huidige asielzoekers in hun land van herkomst, zijn grosso modo best vergelijkbaar (denk b.v. aan de Bersiapperiode en ‘Zwarte Sinterklaas’ 1958 en alle ellende daar tussen in). Nederland heeft toen simpelweg t.a.v. de Indische ‘repatrianten[’] een hele scheve schaats gereden. Dat mag best nog eens worden geconstateerd in het licht van het haloes-haloes beleid voor de huidige binnenkomers, een beleid dat op zich door ieder weldenkend (indisch) mens gewoon wordt aanvaard als ‘humaan’” (De la Croix, 2016).*

De la Croix’s comment indicates that the post-war plight of the Indo-European community serves as an additional point of reference when comparisons are drawn to contemporary refugees. He also seems to acknowledge that such a comparison has its limitations, and that it’s mainly useful to point out the inadequateness of the Dutch government’s treatment of the Indo-European community after the end of World War II. In turn, Boeroeng insisted that Indo-European people were themselves refugees and asylum seekers upon their arrival in the Netherlands. Regardless of whether they held the Dutch nationality, he argued, they went to the Netherlands to escape the insecurity of the post-war Dutch East Indies. Others rejected this analogy, claiming that Indo-European people returned to their own country and therefore were not refugees. Apart from a brief discussion about the definition and connotation of the term ‘asylum seeker’, this comment thread did not unfold any further, leaving it uncontested why a certain analogy is justified and another isn’t.

Elsewhere, other commenters compared the post-war plight of the Indo-European community to that of the Jewish community upon returning to the Netherlands, concluding that the Jewish community was in fact worse off:

*“Ik denk dat de joden slechter werden ontvangen. Je kwam net van een plek die er op gericht was een je op de een of andere manier om zeep te helpen om vervolgens ijsig te worden ontvangen door hen die mee hebben geholpen je naar die plek te sturen. Vervolgens merk je dat je huis is leeggeroofd en anderen er in wonen. Onze ouders kwamen hier berooid aan. Wij werden in een pension gestopt en na een halfjaar in een pas opgeleverde woning. Het was enigszins een schok voor mijn ouders, maar niet onoverkomelijk. (...) Ik zeg niet dat we in dankbaarheid moeten weg smelten telkens als de driekleur op de tonen van het Wilhelmus wordt gehesen, en er zijn zeker nog rekeningen te vereffenen met de overheid, maar je moet het een en ander wel in de juiste verhoudingen zien. Maar goed, naast de extreem gevoeligheid voor een vermeende aantasting van de persoon is een chronische rancune ook een kenmerk van de ‘Indische gemeenschap’” (durussedjustus, 2013).*

Comments as the above, containing a high degree of self-reflection, are rare. They do provide starting points for a wider discussion. Commenters seem to compare the post-war situation of the Indo-European community to that of the Jewish community, rather than the situation of contemporary refugees. However, a proper discussion doesn’t ensue about why the latter comparison precisely is problematic. This could be attributed to reluctance, because the topic really is controversial, or simply to a lack of time.

When comparisons are merely drawn on a financial level, remarks often remain resentful. Once a broader comparison is made – articulating the plight of both groups, be it the Jewish community or contemporary refugees – its discourses could potentially begin to amplify each other, allowing a deeper mutual understanding to be fostered. In that respect the question is whether references to other groups have helped the Indo-European community to better articulate its own concerns about compensation. Rothberg (2009; 2011) argues that two narratives of suffering that collide in a (public) debate actually amplify each other rather than drown each other out. He calls this amplification *multidirectional memory* as opposed to what he terms the ‘zero-sum game’ of competitive memory.

While analyzing data, starting points for multidirectionality were looked for, as well as the factors that seem to encourage and discourage it. The best example of multidirectionality in the Indo-European blogosphere is arguably a book review by Huib Deetman in *Blimbing*. The book in question – *U wordt door niemand verwacht* by Michal Citroen – deals with the

situation of Dutch Jews upon their return to the Netherlands after the end of World War II. In his review Deetman extensively compares the Jewish case to the Indo-European case. Citroen, in turn, had made a reference to the suffering of the Indo-European community in her book. After discussing the similarities and differences, Deetman wrote:

*“Is het leed daarom in categorieën van oplopende gradaties te brengen? Dat lijkt een retorische vraag, want 'ondervonden' leed bestaat alleen in de beleving van het slachtoffer, daar zijn geen criteria voor. 'Erg' heeft dan absolute waarde gekregen, erg subjectief, maar evenzeer geldig. (...) Kortom, er zijn uiterlijke overeenkomsten tussen de symptomen van onvrede binnen de Joodse en de Indische gemeenschap, iets anders is of de oorzaken van eenzelfde karakter zijn. Als dat niet zo is, valt de claim door het Indisch Platform i.v.m. de miljoenen van Het Gebaar niet te verdedigen. Ze zullen met wat anders moeten komen. Intussen, voor een betere plaatsbepaling zou ik het boek van Michal Citroen ter lezing bij het IP van harte willen aanbevelen; bij iedereen trouwens die beducht is voor indocentrisch denken.” (Deetman, 2000d).*

Acknowledging that there are similarities in the discontent of the Jewish community and the Indo-European community caused Deetman to readjust his views about *Het Gebaar* and the *Indisch Platform*. His recommending Citroen’s book “*bij iedereen trouwens die beducht is voor indocentrisch denken*” is particularly multidirectional: the Jewish case helps not so much to focus less on the Indo-European case, but to put it into perspective.

Overall, however, multidirectionality in *Blimbing* only occurred on a couple occasions. Deetman’s co-author Renée Soute wrote several pieces in which she was cynical about the Jewish case, stating that apparently the Jewish community had “*onvervreemdbare rechten*” and the Indo-European community “*vreemde voorrechten*” in regard to compensation (Soute, 2001). The piece in question discussed the TV documentary *Jaloers op de joden*,<sup>31</sup> of which Deetman also wrote a scathing review, claiming that more nuanced views were edited out of the final version and its title was unnecessarily provocative (Deetman, 2001d). The latter pieces show that comparisons to the Jewish case can also be considered tactless under certain circumstances. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

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<sup>31</sup> The documentary *Jaloers op de joden* was directed by Mirjam Bartelsman and aired as an episode of Dutch investigative documentary programme *Zembla* on January 18, 2001.

## 6. Analysis

In the previous chapter five key themes in the debate about compensation in the Indo-European blogosphere have been presented. Although considered separately, these themes are part of an overall dynamic and mutually influence and reinforce each other. Using Jasper's typology, they can be categorized as moods, moral emotions and affective commitments. Defiance and resignation can be described as *moods*: they are not directly related to a concrete object, but rather to a more abstract struggle that is either continued or given up. Outrage and indignation are intrinsically *moral emotions*, as they involve a strong sense of disapproval of the Dutch government and *Indisch Platform*. Distrust and suspicion – as well as solidarity, sympathy and envy – can be labelled as *affective commitments* in that they are directed at an institution or another group. *Reflex emotions* such as “anger, fear, joy, surprise, shock and disgust” (Jasper, 2011, p. 287) appear throughout the blogosphere and are expressed in regard to all key themes. Reflex emotions are often mistakenly seen as the paradigm for all emotions (Jasper, 2011, p. 287). Once this misconception is acknowledged, they – anger in particular – can instead be seen as the starting point for further analysis. Anger is the emotion most noticeable in the Indo-European blogosphere whenever compensation is discussed. It is a reflex emotion that “can have many sources, and can be channelled in many directions, including both rage and outrage” (Jasper, 1998, p. 406). Anger can indeed be found in the blogosphere as a reflex emotion, but also in its channelled forms, such as outrage, indignation, and – to a lesser extent – hostility.<sup>32</sup>

Examining anger through transitional justice and postcolonial historiography will further enable us to understand its significance, and analyze in depth the influence of the debate about compensation on the Indo-European community. The significance of anger will be explored in detail below by first establishing how it can be seen as an act of emancipation in a postcolonial context. It will then be connected to moral emotions: pride and shame and the ways in which outrage and indignation are directed at a target. Lastly, the function of envy and sympathy in references to other communities will be analyzed.

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<sup>32</sup> Hostility goes a step beyond outrage and indignation. Jasper lists hostility alongside loathing and hatred, describing them as a “powerful step in the creation of outrage and the fixing of blame. Can alter goals from practical results to punishment of opponents” (Jasper, 1998, p. 406). Whereas outrage and indignation usually seem justified to a certain extent, hostility is less proportional and more destructive. It is only implicitly present in the Indo-European blogosphere, for instance when commenters voice resignation in an angry tone, indicating they haven't given up the struggle but that their distrust and loathing of the Dutch government have only increased.

## 6.1 Forms of anger as an act of emancipation

It has been pointed out that certain emotions in the Indo-European blogosphere are tied to cultural stereotypes that date back to the colonial period. Expressions of anger can also be traced back to the colonial period – namely, the act of being angry might serve as an act of emancipation, of appropriating behaviour that was formerly reserved to the colonizer in a strict colonial hierarchy. In a guest contribution to *Java Post*, Herbert van Rheeden points out: *“In Indië was het openlijk boos worden eigenlijk kasar, of grof. Dat deden alleen de belanda’s. En de Indo, die wist niet wat hij moest: wilde hij per se wit lijken, dan zou hij zich kasar moeten opstellen, wat tegen het Javaanse inging. Zoiets leidt tot een aangeboren tweeslachtigheid, die, zacht uitgedrukt, natuurlijk niet bevorderlijk is voor een groot zelfvertrouwen”* (Van Rheeden, 2013).

Van Rheeden also describes how he, having internalized the former colonizer’s norms and values, exhausted himself by pursuing a career along these lines, both artistically and academically. He calls this *“het dubbelpresteren-syndroom van de Indo”* (Van Rheeden, 2013). This trying twice as hard ultimately leads one to remain trapped in former colonial hierarchies, including the emotional dynamic behind these hierarchies, making it more difficult to fully emancipate. The notion of relentlessly pursuing a career along Dutch standards relates to what De Vries writes about the second generation tending to distance itself from *“‘omhooggevallen’ Indo’s, die dan meestal het predicaat krijgen het ‘hoog in de bol’ te hebben, ‘vernederlandst’ te zijn en ‘de eigen afkomst te ontkennen’”*, noting that the very same people sometimes paradoxically believe that *“een te grote nadruk op omgang met Indo’s je in de hoek plaatst van maatschappelijke losers”* (De Vries, 2009, p. 187).

The function of anger in protest is ambivalent because aggressive emotions “are not always a winning approach”, embroiling protestors in the so-called Naughty-or-Nice dilemma (Jasper, 2011, p. 296). Protestors may think differently about whether an antagonizing or a more cooperative stance is most effective in protest. However, “protestors are certainly better off facing this dilemma than having their choices constrained because naughty emotional expressions are precluded from the start, making them more predictable to opponents” (Jasper, 2011, p. 296). This notion resonates in comments calling for the *Indisch Platform* and the Indo-European community in general to be less polite and patient, and cause a racket if necessary – in other words, to finally be properly angry for once. Even if it were to prove ineffective, some commenters would perceive a display of disobedience and discontent as more satisfactory than the current state of affairs, preferring visible anger to concrete results.

Anger is also present in the ‘too little, too late’ narrative as it was featured in *Moesson* and recurs in the blogosphere.<sup>33</sup> As shown in chapter 5, commenters utilize the fact that seventy years have gone by without a satisfactory resolution both as a motive for undertaking a final attempt at justice and as a reason to give up entirely. Immler – who analyzed the ‘too little, too late’ narrative in regard to compensation for Jewish World War II victims in Austria – argues that, although as a ‘narrative of anger’ it seems to boycott a dialogue, the ‘too little, too late’ narrative actually has an important performative and empowering function. Speaking in terms of ‘too little, too late’ enables one to express one’s anger and preserve one’s moral integrity. This indicates that the debate about compensation is also about recognition rather than solely money, and that the financial process of compensation needs “an intersubjective experience (a dialogue or encounter) in order to be experienced as recognition. The whole communication process itself is at least as important as the specific outcome of the proceedings” (Immler, 2012, p. 277-278).<sup>34</sup>

The performance of anger has an effect on three levels: for the individual himself by allowing him to preserve his moral integrity, within family memory by creating a sense of solidarity and identity, and in regard to state authority by providing empowerment and agency (Immler, 2012).<sup>35</sup> These levels also apply to the function the debate about compensation has for commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere. However, although the effects of the performance of anger are generally positive for the individual and his family context – for instance, by fulfilling a social duty towards one’s (late) parents – establishing a dialogue on a societal level is complicated when the performance of anger enforces opposite identities (Immler, 2012). The debate about compensation rarely transcends its financial level when the dichotomy of protestors from the Indo-European community versus the Dutch government remains intact; it remains narrow and the broader issue of recognition is not properly addressed. The complications on a societal level remain “an inherent dilemma of memory and reparation politics” (Immler, 2012, p. 278). Emancipating through anger is therefore not necessarily fruitful in all respects. This issue will be elaborated upon in the conclusion.

<sup>33</sup> The ‘too little, too late’ narrative in fact dates back to the years of *Het Gebaar*; letters sent to Stichting Het Gebaar in the wake of the allocation of the government funds already indicated that some recipients perceived the amount of money as relatively low and being given relatively late (Captain, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Immler (2012) points out that it’s helpful when applicants identify with the person responsible for, or engaged in the process of compensation. In the Indo-European case this happened with Wiete Mesman, chairman of *Stichting Het Gebaar*, to whom many letters of thanks were personally addressed (De Ridder, 2007). However, as Mesman has an Indo-European background himself, it’s unlikely that this particular identification brought the Dutch government and the Indo-European community closer together.

<sup>35</sup> It may be argued that through strengthening notions of solidarity and identity some of these effects extend beyond the individual and his family to the *community* to which the individual belongs.

## 6.2 Pride and shame in a postcolonial context

By studying anger in its different forms – both as a reflex emotion and, channelled into outrage and indignation, as a moral emotion – other moral emotions appear in view. Shame, for instance, is also tied to anger. In the Indo-European blogosphere it can be observed in the lack of assertiveness commenters perceive in Indo-European people. Both this stereotype and the shame associated with it are rooted in the colonial period. “*Wat het ingewikkelde, met schaamte omgeven gevoel is om het Indisch-zijn, komt voort uit de voormalige koloniale verhoudingen*” (Van Rheeden, 2013). While Van Rheeden argues that the Dutch language used to be superior to the Malay language – creating inequity out of this linguistic difference – shame also has more obvious origins, such as the perception of being coloured as inferior to being white (De Vries, 2009, p. 102). Traces of such beliefs, internalized in colonial times, reinforce existing stereotypes and impede processes of emancipation.

Moreover, shame is closely connected to pride. Both are intrinsically moral emotions as they revolve around feelings of self-approval or self-disapproval, “which entail a feeling of connection or disconnection from those around one” (Jasper, 2011, p. 289). They are also intertwined: expressions of pride affect feelings of shame, and vice versa. Jasper terms such a combination a *moral battery*, consisting of “a positive and a negative emotion, and the tension or contrast between them motivates action or demands attention. An emotion can be strengthened when we explicitly or implicitly compare it to its opposite” (Jasper, 2011, p. 291). The consequences of a moral battery depend on which emotion is experienced most strongly: shame usually leads to inaction, whereas the right amount of pride inspires new forms of protest. In the Indo-European blogosphere, pride and shame are respectively related to expressions of defiance and resignation.<sup>36</sup> They are *moral emotions* capable of influencing longer-term *moods*. Therefore, when someone’s notions of pride and shame are addressed, this is likely to influence his inclination to a defiant or resigned stance.

Pride and shame also indicate that the debate about compensation is related to questions of identity. Pride, however, wasn’t always self-evident for the Indo-European community. “*Ook kort na de migratie naar Nederland was Indisch-zijn niet iets waarmee men zich buiten de privésfeer afficheerde, en pas in de loop van de jaren ’70 en ’80 van de*

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<sup>36</sup> Out of the five key themes of chapter 5, defiance and resignation, as well as distrust and suspicion, do not feature in the analysis. Distrust and suspicion mainly build up to outrage and indignation and are therefore part of the performance of anger, which is discussed throughout. Defiance and resignation, in turn, are moods that are still very much near the surface. They were important to begin to explore the range of emotions in chapter 5 but will not be analyzed any further.

*vorige eeuw werd het iets wat men ook buiten de privékring zonder schaamte uitdroeg*” (De Vries, 2009, p. 34). Not taking pride in one’s Indo-European identity may have been a matter of integration; Oostindie posits that, even in the Dutch East Indies, it had initially been in the interest of Indo-European people “to stress how Dutch they had always been” (Oostindie, 2001, p. 106). In the post-war Netherlands this then became a “strategy for rapid integration into a society that had little regard for other cultures” (Oostindie, 2011, p. 106). Only when other groups of immigrants began to arrive, including Turkish and Moroccan migrant workers in the 1970s, “*werd een niet-Nederlandse afkomst interessant en in zekere zin lonend*” (De Vries, 2009, p. 192).<sup>37</sup> This changing societal context is cited as an important cause of the gradual shift to pride (De Vries, 2009, p. 192).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> In turn, according to Oostindie, “later migrants profited from the battle the Indisch pioneers had fought for multiculturalism, long before this word existed” (Oostindie, 2011, p. 114).

<sup>38</sup> The shift from *shame to pride* is one of three transitions De Vries identified amongst her interviewees of the second and third generation. She also observed a shift “*van of-of naar en-en*”, in which the idea of being Dutch and Indo-European at the same time became more plausible for people within the community, and a shift she terms “*van kaste naar kansen*”, the perception that an Indo-European identity was actually well compatible with moving up on the social ladder (De Vries, 2009).

### 6.3 Targets for blame and the experience of moral shock

When moral emotions are directed at a target, this sometimes implies taking the moral high ground: the other party is criticized for ‘low’ conduct and the one voicing criticism feels himself to be superior in a way. A government is an obvious target in this respect. “The frustration of not having an impact, or sometimes not being heard, shows why protestors often adopt as targets the governmental procedures that have failed to protect or aid them. Indignation at one’s own government can be especially moving, as it involves a sense of betrayal” (Jasper, 2011, p. 292). As shown in the previous chapter, strong words like ‘betrayal’ and ‘swindle’ were used in the Indo-European blogosphere when the responsibility of the Dutch government was discussed. There’s a strong sense amongst commenters that the Dutch government has let the Indo-European community down. As mentioned before, blame directed towards the Dutch government is particularly powerful since it involves a *causal* and a *remedial* side: the government is held responsible for both causing the problem and not (satisfactorily) resolving it up until today.

One could analyze the Indo-European community’s history with the Dutch government as entailing an experience of *moral shock*, “the vertiginous feeling that results when an event or information shows that the world is not what one had expected, which can sometimes lead to articulation or rethinking of moral principles” (Jasper, 2011, p. 289). A pivotal moment occurred in this respect when the Dutch government offered 250 million guilders as compensation to the Indo-European community in March 2000, much to the discontent of *Indisch Platform* representatives, who specifically criticized it for being poorly motivated, as well as for unjustly defining of who had been victimized by the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies (Boekholt, 2007). This specific moment also indicates how the debate about compensation is about identity, since Boekholt and his fellow negotiators strived for compensation for both *binnenkampers* and *buitenkampers* – a divide that, as Huib Deetman observed in the *Volkskrant* at the time, largely ran along racial lines, between *totoks* of fully Dutch descent and *Indo*’s of mixed Dutch-Indonesian descent (Groen, 2001). Negotiating the possibilities for compensation, therefore, also brought to the fore the question of who precisely constitute the Indo-European community and – depending on the answer – who was entitled to money.

Apart from such clear turning points in the struggle for compensation it may be argued that the backpay affair, which has dragged on for decades, has also contributed to an experience of moral shock, though more gradually, ultimately leading to an overall sense of

outrage and indignation over the government's actions amongst commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere. From their perspective, the Dutch government often did not do what the Indo-European community had expected it to do, namely to acknowledge its shortcomings more honestly and offer compensation more generously (respectively making up for both the causal and remedial side of its responsibility).

Multiple comments in the Indo-European blogosphere indicate that the struggle *against* the Dutch government is also a struggle *within* the Indo-European community itself. Sometimes it's hard to tell whether the government or the community at large is the bigger opponent for those engaged in the debate about compensation. Both are blamed for their indifference: the government for not taking enough of an interest in the Indo-European case and the community at large for its indifference about recognition and compensation.<sup>39</sup> The *Indisch Platform* occupies a place in between, as a representative body that is blamed for its perceived ineffectiveness, leaving commenters feeling frustrated and powerless. That the community doesn't collectively take an interest is regarded as something that decreases the chances at a satisfactory outcome. To take on the Dutch government successfully, it is implied, the Indo-European community must stand united. The debate about compensation therefore also entails notions of solidarity. Within the blogosphere, the performance of anger strengthens commenters' notions of solidarity, but at the same time they question solidarity in a broader sense by perceiving a divide between themselves and the community at large, and between themselves and later generations. The divide within the second generation is difficult to pinpoint, and cannot be fully explained by means of the sources examined in this research. Some may not take an interest in the struggle for compensation, whereas others may feel as engaged, but less inclined to actively take part in the (online) debate.

The generational gap may be explained by what De Vries terms the process of 'mental decolonization'. "*De grote lijn is dat de mentale dekolonisatie zich bij de derde generatie heeft voortgezet en bij haar min of meer is voltooid. Dit blijkt bijvoorbeeld uit het feit dat er bij derdegeneratieleden geen gevoelens van schaamte of minderwaardigheid over Indisch-zijn zijn waargenomen*" (De Vries, 2009, p. 318). Feelings that are experienced by the second generation – for instance, the social duty towards the first generation – are generally not felt as strongly by the third generation. "*De betrekkingen met beide groepen [Dutch people and other Indo-European people] zijn genormaliseerd. Dat wil zeggen dat ze niet of nauwelijks*

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<sup>39</sup> Moral emotions directed at the Dutch government may relate to the own community in an opposite way, for instance when shame about a lack of assertiveness is contrasted with indignation about the government allegedly exploiting this to its own advantage.

*meer worden bepaald door visies en attitudes die hun oorsprong vinden in de koloniale tijd en omstandigheden*” (De Vries, 2009, p. 318). This doesn’t mean that the third generation isn’t engaged in issues related to postcolonialism – on the contrary, members of the third generation tend to find new ways to approach such issues.<sup>40</sup>

Captain notes that within generations there has been a reversal in orientation on Dutch and Indonesian elements: *“Terwijl de eerste generatie zich in Nederland naar de buitenwereld doorgaans zoveel mogelijk als Nederlands afficheerde, beroept de derde generatie zich op de Indonesische elementen in haar identiteit”* (Captain, 2003, p. 259). The third generation has appropriated its Indo-European identity in a new way; rather than experience it as a burden, third-generation Indo-Europeans take pride in their (post)colonial heritage, appropriating it in a cultural rather than a political way. “The third generation (...) was not susceptible to the anxieties of their grandparents. They showed a genuine interest and pride in the Indonesian past of the first generation” (Captain, 2014, p. 58).

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<sup>40</sup> For instance, a group of young activists decided in 2016 to boycott the annual May 4 remembrance of war victims in the Netherlands, feeling that two minutes of silence were hypocritical in the face of contemporary religious intolerance and right-wing extremism: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/media/jonge-activisten-boycotten-4-mei-om-hypocrisie~a4293453/>

#### 6.4 Analogies and multidirectionality

Envy versus sympathy – the fifth key element in the previous chapter – stands somewhat apart from the other key elements in that it is mostly focused on other groups, namely contemporary refugees and the Jewish community in the Netherlands.<sup>41</sup> Sympathy is closely related to compassion, which “further show[s] the connection between emotions and morality, for it is a frequent spur to moral action” (Jasper, 2014a, p. 111). Jasper cites Lawrence Blum who defines compassion as “not a simple feeling-state but a complex emotional attitude toward another (...) a view of him as a fellow human being, and emotional responses of a certain degree of intensity” (Blum, 1980, p. 509 and p. 512, as cited in Jasper, 2014a, p. 111). Although the connection to concrete action is less clear, the Indo-European blogosphere does indeed contain expressions of compassion, which can be considered an undercurrent in the debate providing counterweight to mere envy. Some commenters are compassionate towards contemporary refugees and the Jewish community, for instance, because they perceive them as ‘fellow human beings’ who have undergone or are undergoing a similar experience.

Envy and sympathy can be seen as *affective commitments* because they tend to have a very clear object, that is, the other group that’s being referenced. Analyzing envy and sympathy as affective commitments helps to see them as part of the bigger constellation of emotions in which they, too, function against the background of moral emotions. Feelings of approval and disapproval also influence how it is determined which analogies are deemed permissible – often a matter of interplay between individual commenters. When *Indisch4Ever* administrator Boeroeng argued that Indo-European people themselves were refugees and asylum seekers upon arriving in the Netherlands after World War II, others rejected this analogy and preferred to point out the difference in how the Dutch government has compensated contemporary refugees and the Indo-European community, claiming that contemporary refugees are treated better.<sup>42</sup>

The above example also shows that analogies are drawn on different levels. On a financial level, remarks tend to remain resentful and envious (this also applies to references to

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<sup>41</sup> Envy has also been a relevant emotion within the Indo-European community itself, for instance when the divide between *totoks* and *Indo*’s was highlighted during the years leading up to *Het Gebaar*. This difference is occasionally referred to in the comment sections of *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post*, but not prominently so, and rarely cause for discussion. Envy will therefore not be further analyzed as such in this chapter.

<sup>42</sup> In fact, similar objections were raised against Turkish and Moroccan migrant workers in the 1970s; they were perceived as being treated better despite having come to the Netherlands of their own volition, rather than the forceful manner in which the Indo-European community had been ‘repatriated’ (De Vries, 2009). The arrival of migrant workers in the Netherlands did play a part in the emancipation of the Indo-European community in the Netherlands, however, as they became one of many ‘visible minorities’, making ethnicity less relevant.

the Jewish community: in the time of *Het Gebaar*, for instance, complaints were voiced about the Jewish community receiving more money per head than the Indo-European community). However, making an attempt to draw an analogy that goes beyond a mere financial comparison may prove to be challenging. Rothberg (2009; 2011) posits that when two discourses collide in public space, they amplify each other rather than drown each other out. This essentially implies that it would be good for commenters to refer to other groups, since such references allow for two discourses to put each other into perspective. When Huib Deetman recommends the book *U wordt door niemand verwacht* to anyone “*die beducht is voor indocentrisch denken*” he suggests that reading the book helps one to become ‘less Indocentric’ (Deetman, 2000d). This ‘multidirectional’ remark shows that multidirectionality, when looked at from a bottom-up perspective in the Indo-European blogosphere, first depends on the willingness and open-mindedness of individuals to make such a reference. They then need the open-mindedness of other commenters in order for their comments to evolve into a multidirectional discourse. This, in turn, depends on how inclined other commenters are to have a more sympathetic and compassionate – and, ultimately, multidirectional – perspective on other groups with whom they have a certain kind of experience in common.

Van Ooijen & Raaijmakers, who have analyzed the discourses of Dutch post-war and postcolonial memory through the lens of multidirectionality, concluded that “only a combination of competitive and multidirectional approaches can explain the functioning of cultural memory in the Netherlands” (Van Ooijen & Raaijmakers, 2012, p. 481).<sup>43</sup> The same combination seems to apply to the Indo-European blogosphere, where commenters take either a competitive or a multidirectional stance in the debate about compensation. In general, analogies help to put their own story into perspective by providing them with points of reference outside their own community. Most commenters, however, remain competitive in Rothberg’s terminology and use other references to other communities mainly as a means to better articulate their own concerns about the Indo-European case.

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<sup>43</sup> Van Ooijen en Raaijmakers (2012) describe how Dutch Indies veterans, who fought in the 1945–49 decolonization war, successfully latched onto the annual May 4 commemoration, in which the Dutch Indies at first didn’t really have a place. A commemoration can therefore be a starting point for multidirectionality, in which two discourses strengthen each other. The Indo-European community has always stood apart in this respect, since the national Indies commemoration is organized on August 15, the day of the Japanese surrender.

## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary of findings

The debate about compensation for the Indo-European community in the Netherlands has always had a strongly emotional character. The contemporary debate, as it takes place in the Indo-European blogosphere, is no exception to this rule. Commenters debating compensation form a significant group because they are the contemporary exponents of a debate that has been going on since the end of World War II. The Internet allows for them to respond to each other directly, creating a debate that – although scattered across many different comment threads – is continuously actualized.

The sociology of emotions provides a theoretical framework to put emotions at the heart of our research and avoid the pitfall of taking reflex emotions as the paradigm for all emotions. Although reflex emotions are salient in the debate, they are part of a bigger constellation of emotions, in which moral emotions hold the key to a more thorough analysis. This thesis has sought to differentiate the emotions that have surfaced in the Indo-European blogosphere in regard to compensation and establish how these have influenced the Indo-European community at large. Three findings are particularly relevant.

*First*, that key emotions regarding compensation find their origin in the colonial period. Shame, for instance, is related to the former colonial hierarchy, in which people of mixed Dutch-Indonesian descent occupied a strictly defined place and had to look up to the Dutch colonizer. Expressions of shame are voiced through the stereotype of the insufficiently assertive Indo-European person. Pride – the other end of this particular ‘moral battery’ – only became common for the Indo-European community in the 1970s, as Dutch society became more multicultural, and fosters a defiant stance amongst commenters. Pride and shame indicate not only the lasting influence of the colonial period but also how the debate about compensation is bound up with notions of identity. The debate enables the Indo-European community to affirm and challenge these notions, entailing the question what it means to have an Indo-European background in contemporary Dutch society.

*Secondly*, that the struggle against the Dutch government is also a struggle within the Indo-European community itself. While the performance of anger draws commenters closer together, they question solidarity in a broader sense when perceiving a lack of interest in the matter of compensation amongst both the second and third generation. In commenters’ eyes,

an apparent minority is engaged in a struggle that does not seem to concern others as much. Whereas the absence of the third generation in the debate may be ascribed to the process of ‘mental decolonization’ or a more positive, culturally-oriented mindset, the role of the second generation is more ambivalent. The divide within the second generation is difficult to pinpoint, and cannot be fully explained by means of the sources examined in this research.

*Thirdly*, that through facilitating the expression of anger – the most salient reflex emotion in the Indo-European blogosphere – the debate in itself has an emancipatory function for the Indo-European community. This can also be traced back to the colonial period: the very act of being angry is a way of appropriating behaviour that was formerly reserved to the colonizer. Expressing their anger enables commenters to preserve their moral integrity and fosters a sense of empowerment. Still, however fulfilling the performance of anger may be for them, it complicates the possibilities for dialogue on a societal level by enforcing opposing identities of protestors versus government. This leads commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere to continue to regard the Dutch government with distance and distrust – and the positive effects of the performance of anger to remain limited to the context of the individual, his family, and his community. Moreover, it causes the debate to rarely transcend its financial level and remain narrow, rather than allowing it to be seen as part of the wider process of recognition of the Indo-European community. In overcoming these difficulties lies the biggest challenge for protestors, the involved institutions and Dutch society at large.

## 7.2 Discussion

Although emotions – such as anger and forgiveness – have received attention in the field of transitional justice, “it often remains unclear how such different emotions are experienced in practice” (Van Roekel, 2013, p. 25). Examining emotions from the bottom-up perspective of the Indo-European blogosphere has shown how individual commenters voice their emotions and how their emotions affect different levels: the individual, his family and community, and society at large. That the performance of anger – and negative emotions in general – might have positive effects is a key notion amongst transitional justice scholars who have given attention to emotions. Immler (2012) argues that, amongst other effects, the performance of anger preserves the individual’s moral integrity and strengthens his sense of agency. This relates to what Brudholm writes about how, in the case of writer Jean Améry, resentment may have a positive function in being a “protest against forgetfulness and shallow conciliatoriness, a struggle to regain dignity” (Brudholm, 2008, p. 151). Mihai (2016), in turn, posits that negative emotions entail a challenge for democratic societies to deal with these emotions constructively.

As indicated before, extending the positive effects of anger to the *societal* level is complicated. This observation is particularly urgent if one acknowledges that rather than being a form of closure, compensation processes actually trigger dialogues on different levels (Immler, in press). This thesis has shown how in the Indo-European case compensation has indeed sparked a debate that, however, generally remains limited to the Indo-European community itself. Establishing a dialogue that both involves and transcends the Indo-European community is part of the broader process of its recognition in Dutch society. This entails notions of democracy and pluralism in that “engaging emotions constructively is an important normative and prudential concern for all democratic communities, at all times, and across persons. Paying attention to such responses can help decision makers rectify legitimacy deficits, prevent crises before they occur, and socialize citizens for a more inclusive idea of democracy” (Mihai, 2016, p. 169). Institutions bear a crucial part of the responsibility in this mission. This thesis has established how institutions – such as the *Indisch Platform* and the Dutch government – are involved in the range of emotions experienced by the Indo-European community, often as objects at which outrage and indignation are directed. This observation may be a starting point for further research into how institutions can actively engage themselves with the emotions directed at them, rather than remain an object around which

negative emotions evolve. This, in turn, would contribute to a better understanding of the necessity and requirements for a societal dialogue in compensation processes.

Two final notes about methodology and theory. The range of the sources used in this thesis is quite wide, and their differences have been discussed in the methodology chapter from an ethical point of view. In the dynamic of the comment sections of *Indisch4Ever* and *Java Post*, comments are often written in direct interaction with other commenters. They are also published within a shorter timespan than, for instance, a readers' letter to a magazine would require. These differences are significant but not problematic when one aims to discern the emotions explicitly or implicitly voiced in these texts. It may be argued that, in relatively unpolished blog comments, emotions are voiced more explicitly than another medium would allow for. Jasper's remark that protestors do not always readily acknowledge their emotions does not apply entirely to the Indo-European blogosphere. This may be attributed to the conversation being turned *inward* rather than *outward*, and commenters feeling they can speak freely amongst each other.

As for multidirectional memory, it was intended to use this concept more extensively. It ended up having a secondary role in investigating expressions of sympathy and envy. However, multidirectional memory has been valuable in the analysis of references to other communities and establishing to which extent they provided an opportunity for a wider discourse. The difficulty with multidirectional memory was that a fairly abstract concept had to be connected to the bottom-up perspective of commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere. If multidirectionality were to occur, it had to occur in a specific comment or series of comments. Observing that this was rarely the case did help to explain the nature of references to other communities in the Indo-European blogosphere, which – in Rothberg's terminology – generally remain competitive.

### 7.3 Recommendations for further research

In the course of writing this thesis several starting points for further research presented themselves, some of which – however interesting – had to be deliberately ignored in order to be able to finish the project at hand. There are possibilities for approaching the subject matter of this thesis both more in-depth and from a broader perspective. As to the former, an initial starting point may be the question how institutions can constructively engage the emotions directed at them (which has already been discussed above). This could include an analysis from the top-down perspective of institutions, which could then be juxtaposed to the bottom-up perspective of people in the Indo-European community. A study of institutions could include both a theoretical component, drawing from relevant scholarly works such as Mihai's, and an empirical one, consisting of interviews with officials and policy-makers.

The theme of *social duty* offers another starting point, in particular the question how commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere – or, more generally, people within the Indo-European community – experience social duty as a motive to engage in the struggle for compensation. It has been pointed out that people often feel a duty towards their (late) parents, but this duty may also be felt towards friends, relatives, and the community in its entirety, overruling individual preferences regarding compensation processes (Immler, 2013, p. 231).

It would also be worthwhile to investigate why people from the Indo-European community take to the Internet to voice their opinion. This would help to explain the apparent divide in the second generation. It seems doubtful that commenters in the Indo-European blogosphere simply feel a stronger urge to voice their opinion; it might well be that certain coincidental factors – such as a better-developed ability to browse the Internet – contribute to their activity. Oral history interviews are recommended for this approach.

As to a broader approach, the archives of Stichting *Het Gebaar* are a potentially useful source. Upon the association's disestablishment in 2009, the larger share of its archives were transferred to the Nationaal Archief in The Hague. The archives are subject to a twenty-year embargo and have therefore not yet been 'formally transferred', limiting researchers' access. They most likely contain letters sent by recipients, indicating how *Het Gebaar* was experienced as a form of (belated) recognition, as described in a brief study of the archives before they were transferred (Captain, 2007). These letters could in time be used as a data set for a more extensive qualitative text analysis.

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