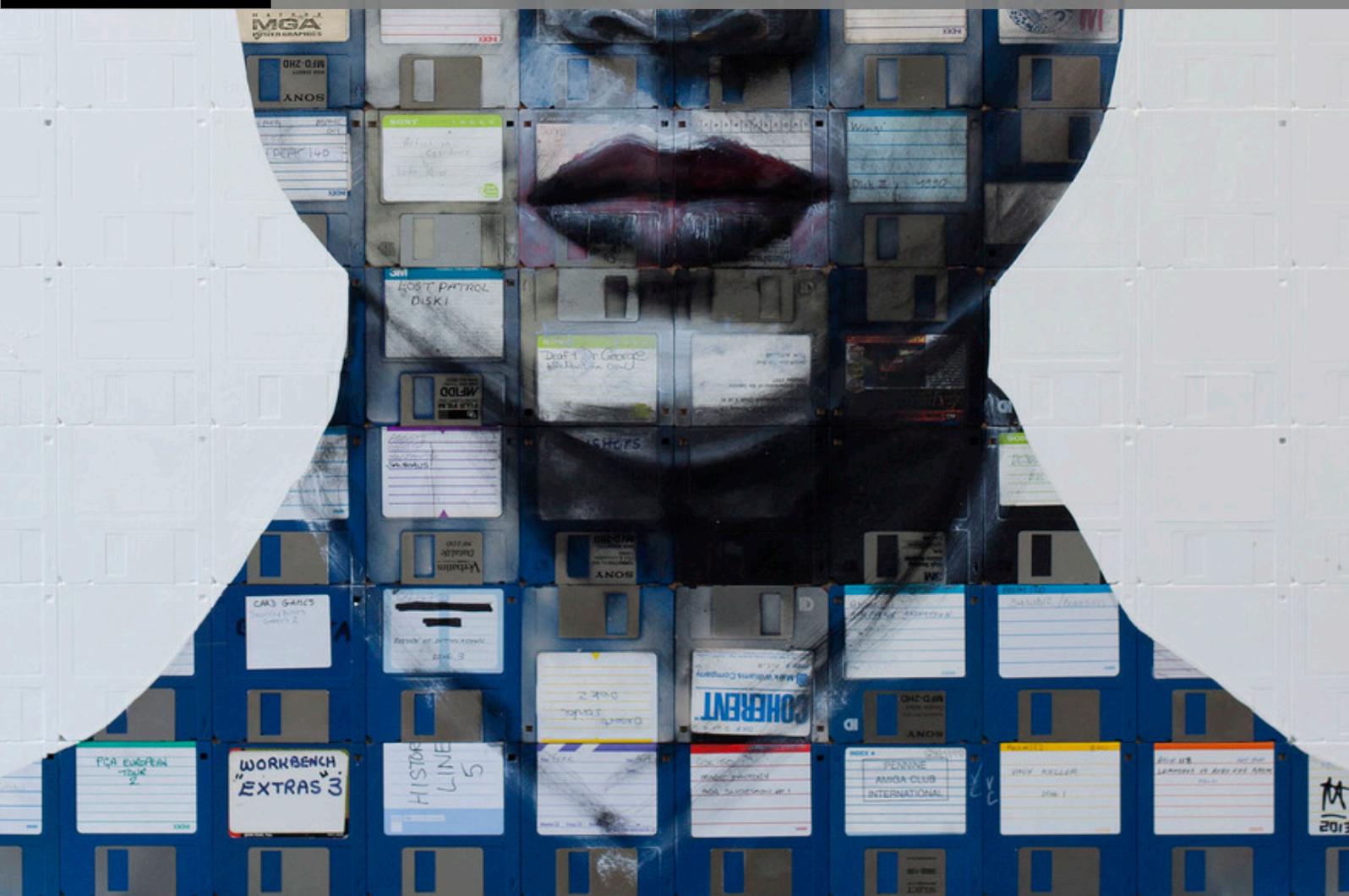




JEROEN ARTS

# MUSEUM SPACE AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF CONFLICT





## **MUSEUM SPACE AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF CONFLICT**

*How the mnemonics of twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (1945-1950)*

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*'Equally, we require a collective past, hence the endless reinterpretations of history, frequently to suit the perceptions of the present.'*

*- Dame Penelope Margaret Lively (1933) -*

*'Seeking to forget makes exile all the longer. The secret of redemption lies in remembrance.'*

*- Richard Karl Freiherr von Weizsäcker (1920) -*



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## 0. SUMMARY

In this study the Tropenmuseum, Museum Bronbeek, the Rijksmuseum and the Verzetsmuseum are all studied with the question in mind: How do the mnemonics of twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (1945-1950)?

The first thing that is surprising to observe is that all museums do not pay attention to the violence and atrocities committed during the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. Furthermore, in the Tropenmuseum and the Rijksmuseum the decolonization is only mentioned once and there is no space (no object, no images and only on one line of text) dedicated to the decolonisation. The other two museums do address the decolonization but in the case of Bronbeek in a strictly neutral way and in the case of the Verzetsmuseum there is also not much room for the decolonization (although more than in the bigger Tropenmuseum and Rijksmuseum). The attitude towards the decolonization differs from silence (Rijksmuseum and Tropenmuseum) to neutrality (Bronbeek) to engagement (Verzetsmuseum). But each of these museums have pockets of silence, make people invisible and most of them promote a Dutch orientated view on the past. An integrated and balanced picture of the colonial society during the decolonization is missing or is coloured by the influence of the Dutch identity or the pressure from specific Dutch mnemonic communities (veterans or *Indische Nederlanders*).

At the same time all these museums pay considerable, if not all their, attention to Dutch colonialism and its consequences. In general these exhibitions are very well balanced and try to show the so called 'good and bad'. Slavery, opium trade, violence, racism, et cetera, are in different degrees visible. At the same time the success of the museums differ. The Tropenmuseum and Verzetsmuseum do quite well and try to decolonize their exhibitions. Bronbeek also seems to pay attention to questions of diversity and power relations. And even the Rijksmuseum finds some space to address slavery and opium trade. At the same time the degree in which diversity, difference and power relations (between colonizer and colonised) differ and most museums in some way or another exclude people or promote a cliché or partial image of the Dutch colonial past. The Indonesians themselves have no voice in most exhibitions (with the small exception of the Verzetsmuseum) or are made into silent bodies (silent spaces) that do not engage the visitor in the same way Dutch bodies do.

By putting the mnemonic of landscape central this spatial elements of the processes of memory, history and collective memory came to the fore. Especially interesting to see was how this space could represent a certain past but at the same time space and reshape how this past is perceived and how fits into a larger collective memory. The museum landscape itself can change but the influence of the landscape on the visitor is stronger than the other way around. After all the landscape can influence the visitor in several ways: it can evoke emotions, can guide bodies, can make visible or invisible, can include or exclude, engage the visitor, or can only show the visitor beautiful object and images and just bypass any critical point, et cetera. The museum landscape can of course be guided by the curators but a lot is not noticed by these museum professionals.

This is visible in the many blind spots (pockets of silence) that can be found in the four exhibitions. It seems difficult to evade clichéd images of the Dutch colonial past mostly because other perspectives than the Dutch are overlooked, ignored or not taken into account. It is the concept of aphasia that best captures this reality because there in the Dutch context just doesn't seem to be a paradigm, context or language to express the problematic Dutch colonial past and the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. Violence, atrocities and war crimes are ignored. Furthermore, the Dutch identity shapes the Dutch collective memory in such a way that it supports the idea of the Dutch as peaceful, consensus orientated

and protectors of (international) law. The reality although is far more problematic and diverse. The Dutch homogeneous identity, as Gouda and Legêne have argued, is no reality. And it is thus problematic that this homogeneous image still seems to have a great influence on how the mnemonic landscapes of museums are created and perceived.

The combination of the influence of the contemporary Dutch identity with the aphasic situation in Dutch society creates museum landscapes which do not pay attention to the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago in truthful way and thus as a consequence promote a neutralised Dutch collective memory in which the dark pages of history are not addressed in a critical and constructive way. Mnemonic disagreements in this regard are not fought out in the so called mnemonic battles. They are not even present in the public space of the museum. Conflict is avoided and consensus seeking is promoted. Instead then of providing different sides, it seems that the neutrality of history or simple silence are preferred to deal with this so called unmastered past. This is in part the result of the problematic nature of the museum. People see it as a place of recreation or/and as a place to learn, to get the truth. They often are passive tourists, even when it considers their own past. People want to consume the museum and not many museums have made the step from consumption to providing an experience. A notable exception in this regard is the Verzetsmuseum that activity tries to engage their visitors. Most museum because of this reality seem to father a troublesome proposition: the only way forward is to forget. In essence societies must of course also forget to be able to move on. At the same time this has to happen in a natural way, over time and not as the consequence of an inability to deal with the past. This kind of forgetting after all excludes stories, memories and even people of the Dutch collective. It is a denial certain identities and a biased, in the colonial culture grounded, way of knowing and producing knowledge of the other. Inequality, exclusion and unequal power relations are in this way reproduced.

This is especially troublesome in the Dutch society that is so close its decolonial unmastered past that many people remember it from their own experience and many others know it because people dear to them were affected quite dramatically by it. Many people (especially immigrants, foreigners and the people that were traumatised by the decolonization, which is especially true for many of the soldiers sent there by the Dutch government) after all are then pushed in a subordinate position by the hegemonic Dutch power relations, paradigms and ways of knowing the past. This process is not noticed because the disillusioned Dutch self-image that promotes the idea of the Dutch as being naturally peaceful, neutral and consensus orientated prevents many people from seeing a different reality. The disillusioned is fostered by the ignoring of in this case decolonization and violence connected to it. The Dutch after all can be just as violent as other nations. In this regard a more inclusive self-image is needed.

At the same time there are positive signs that need to be acknowledged. There is a will to change. The Rijksmuseum has asked the critics of their policies to advise them on how they could include the decolonization in their exhibitions. The Tropenmuseum promotes the decolonization of their own collections. The Verzetsmuseum quite explicitly included the decolonization in its exhibitions and ask visitors to contemplate on the different perspective, sides and people involved in it. Even Bronbeek, which has the problematic situation of needing to cater to Dutch veterans that will not hear of any disproportional violence or war crimes, seems to be willing to move from nostalgia towards neutrality. Furthermore, new perspective are being developed which might be capable of providing the next step forward. Central in this perspective is the need for more attention for diversity. People need to dethrone themselves (a skill less and less cultivated in our contemporary societies) and need to be engaged with the others. In this way they are challenged to think critically, to put themselves in the place of other people and to appreciate the context.

# 1. PROLOGUE

## 1.1 The project

‘There are a whole lot of historical factors that have played a part in our being where we are today, and I think that to even to begin to understand our contemporary issues and contemporary problems, you have to understand a little bit about that history.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Just as the psycho-analyst helps us to face the world by showing us how to face the truth about our own motives and our own personal past, so the contemporary historian helps us to face the present and the future by enabling us to understand the forces, however shocking, which have made our world and society what it is.’<sup>2</sup>

This study is the result and last part of my master *Conflicts, Territories and Identities*. I started contemplating on the subject of this thesis in the fall of 2012. After a change of subject from the European Union as an empire to the Dutch collective memory of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago I started with orientation on the subject.

The change of subject was the result of my difficulty with the highly theoretical nature of the debates on the enlargement of the European Union and my renewed, and perhaps never absent, interest in (Dutch) colonialism and imperialism. It especially were the field of postcolonial studies and the idea that colonialism (and the colonial culture) still can be present in or have consequences for contemporary societies (the so called colonial present) that caught my interest.

I was particularly concerned with how this idea would be relevant for the Dutch case. The Dutch after all have problems with dealing with their colonial past. Especially the collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesians archipelago seems to be troublesome for the Dutch. Here my interest in history/memory, (the why of) violence and colonialism coincided and provided me with an fascinating topic for study. The only trouble in this process was finding a source or object that would allow me to study the chosen subject from a historical and spatial (geographical) perspective at the same time. It were the museums that in the end proved to be satisfactory objects for this study.

In this study questions are asked about these museums. There is tried to relate the result of the so called exhibitions analyses of these museums to the theoretical and historiographical debates in the fields of memory studies, postcolonial studies and museum studies. A novel approach which proved very challenging. I perceive this study then also first and foremost as a reconnaissance which points toward some interesting conclusions and phenomenon regarding the contested subject of the Dutch colonial past.

There is besides general interest a second and most important motivation behind this study. The responsibility of the historian to address the more complicates aspects past, to let people understand them and to help society to deal with them is a motivation for me to take on the challenging subject of the Dutch remembrance of the decolonization of the Indonesians archipelago. Ignoring these violent pages of the past after all creates a situation in which nostalgia becomes possible. Furthermore, denying the less favorable stories of the past denies some people their story, their past and thus their identity. This is a very colonial way of dealing with a the past and/or the people connected to it, and a situation that cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is made by Wilma Mankiller (1945-2010). It is unknown when Wilma Mankiller recited this passage or when it was published. [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/wilma\\_mankiller.html](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/wilma_mankiller.html) (accessed on 22 July 2012).

<sup>2</sup> James Joll, *Europe since 1870. An international history* (London 1976) xii.

allowed to continue. In this light this study tries to address these issues and looks from the past to the future. Connecting different strands of research, different memories and hopefully in the end shows how the past still connects people in every changing and diverse ways.

During the process of writing this study I discovered that it is impossible to grasp the past, the historical experience and the spatial reality in lists of sources. Fieldwork, in the form of experiencing the museums, proved essential. Also, no matter how much work I spend on including all relevant articles, books and sources, there are books, articles, sources, authors and ideas that are going to be left out, forgotten or overlooked. To overcome this issue I have looked at what I found to be important, and thus, as Edward Said once put it: ‘(...) conceding in advance that selectivity and conscious choice have had to rule what I have done.’<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Acknowledgement

This research and study could not have been finished without the cooperation that I have encountered during the entire process. It then is appropriate here to thank several people for their suggestions, support and kind words.

First of all I would like to thank Oliver Kramsch for our pleasant cooperation, our sessions in which we exchanged ideas and brainstormed, his words of motivation, his feedback and his belief in this study. Without all this the research would have stranded somewhere in the middle.

Second I would like to thank my colleagues at the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) in Leiden where I followed an internship. They provided me with new insights, help and support when I needed it. It was a pleasure working at the KITLV. In particular I would like to thank Ireen Hoogenboom, Tom van den Berge, Nathan Stoltz en Joes de Natris for the support and pleasant cooperation.

Thirdly I would like to thank the Radboud University Postcolonial Reading Group. The texts we read and especially the discussions we had were inspiring and really got me entrenched in the study of colonialism and its aftermath. Thank for this great experience.

Finally, I want to turn to my friends and family. Thank you very much for the patience, reassuring words, listening, support and suggestions that you have offered. It helped me through some of the more difficult hurdles that I had to take to finish this study.

## 1.3 Preface

I have worked on this project with much dedication and pleasure. My hope is that this study into how twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (1945-1950) will further, facilitate and encourage the research on this fascinating subject. Courageously forward.

Jeroen Arts, MA  
29 June 2014

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (ninth print, Alfred A. Knopf, inc.; New York/Toronto 1994) xxii.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

There aren't many Dutch histories of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. When there is written about this war, mostly in the context of other subjects like migration history, history of the rebuilding of the Netherlands or parliamentary history, the writings are characterised by a detached and almost neutral approach. This scholarship never is placed in the actuality of the contemporary times and no attention is paid to how the so called Indonesian National Revolution or Indonesian War of Independence is part of the creation of the Dutch history and identity after the Second World War. It became, after the Dutch defeat and its giant challenges to rebuild the Dutch nation itself, a non-topic and taboo. This doesn't mean that people don't recognise the terrible things that happened in the Indonesian archipelago during the decolonization war. People just don't want to discuss or remember it because of divers personal reasons. In the years after the decolonization war there was no time or room and thereafter it just became a point of uneasiness.

It then also is time to address this issue in a concrete and critical way by examining the position the decolonization has in the wider scope of Dutch collective memory. It after all is quite surprising that the war against Germany is omnipresent in current Dutch society but that people at the same time forget or just don't know that the Netherlands have been at war from 1940 until 1953 (first against Germany, then Japan, then Indonesia and the last three year in Korea). Still public attention seems to focus almost entirely upon the Second World War, the rebuilding of the Netherlands and the massive flood of 1953 (as a look through the in the last five years produced Dutch movies and television series seems to confirm). In this the Dutch are presented as victims, recovering from trauma, but also as people of a tolerant, non-violent, law-abiding, peaceful and homogeneous nation. This is a troubling reality add odds with the actuality of the past and which some uneasy consequences.

To examine this point there is decided to look at how the Dutch remember their past and how their collective memory materialises. The proposal is to do this by examining the exhibitions in the most important (national) historical museums, that regard the 1940's as their field of expertise and interest, on how they address the Indonesian War of Independence and in wider perspective the decolonization of Indonesian archipelago.<sup>4</sup> The question central to this study is then as follows:

How do twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (1945-1950)?

Museums are chosen as the subject for this study because it are in these places that people try to construct a Dutch collective memory of the Dutch past. It are vaults of memories and landscapes of remembrance. This triggers question about what kind of remembrance (which discourses) this represents, how these are constructed and what this says about Dutch collective memory and identity? It is high time these questions are critically examined.

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<sup>4</sup> In the rest of this study this war of decolonization will be termed as follows: the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. There is acknowledged that the true decolonization took a longer time and is in some regards still ongoing. Still this new terminology evades the political correctness or incorrectness of the other terminologies invented to describe this period (like the Police Actions - it was a true war - or National Revolt - when it is difficult to already speak of one nationality -).



### 3. PRIOR RESEARCH AND DEBATES

This study focuses on the Dutch remembrance, as embodied in museums, of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. This is not a one sided subject. It touches upon a diverse range of topics, debates and subthemes. The main themes that will be discussed below are (Dutch) collective memory, (post)colonialism and museum (studies). The goal is to map the ways in which museums shape the remembrance of, in this case the very violent, process of decolonization. This will help to understand how people deal with past conflicts and the, most often contradictory, memories related to these conflicts. This study thus aims at illuminating the process of how museums shape collective memory, how conflicts are remembered, what this means for how people process the past events and this will lead to some notes on how museums can disrupt or help in defusing tensions cast by (past) conflicts (that in when not probably addressed can lead to resentment, apathy or new conflicts).

To give insight in the state of affairs regarding (Dutch) collective memory, (post)colonialism and museum studies, the relevant authors, debates and research strands will be discussed below. Firstly there will be attention for the scientific debates surrounding the topic of collective memory. This will be followed by a reconnaissance of the state of research surrounding the topic of Dutch colonialism. Then there will be some notes on museums and the study of museums. This (criticism of the) historiography will end with a reflection on what all these theories contribute to this study and how they fit together.

#### 3.1 Understanding remembrance and collective memory

The systematic study of memory is a product of the twentieth century. It is the work of prominent scholars like Maurice Halbwachs, Francis Yates, Benedict Anderson, Eviator Zerubavel and Pierre Nora that pushed the study of memory to the forefront of different academic disciplines. Nevertheless, as much as this study is based on their ideas and insight, they had their forbearers. Below there will be given an oversight of the, for this study, important scholars of memory. The aim is to understand the debates about memory, especially collective memory, and to build the groundwork on which in the second chapter a, for this study relevant, conceptual framework and methodology can be build.

##### 3.1.1 The forbearers

Memory is a much debated subject that can be traced back in time for more than two thousand years. The early ideas on memory shaped the way in which societies perceived their past and have inspired many scholars and authors in later years. In this way these early theories thus helped to construct the dominant discourse on memory.<sup>5</sup>

It all started with the scholars of ancient Rome and Greece. They talked and wrote extensively about memory. Still both cultures have a different perspective on memory. For example: ‘(...) to ancient Greek philosophers, remembering and reasoning were interconnected activities, while for the Roman rhetoricians of the first century BC and AD, a good memory was “the treasure house of eloquence”.’<sup>6</sup> Also the Greek philosopher, ‘(...) Plato (428-347 BC) argued that rhetorical training diminishes our capacity to remember, while the Roman rhetoricians, in contrast, developed the art that was to inform the medieval and Renaissance *Memoria* [on which there will be elaborated below].’<sup>7</sup> Still two emphases are

<sup>5</sup> Anne Whitehead, *Memory* (Routledge: Abingdon/New York 2009) 15.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Richards, ‘Introduction’, in: Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 20-24, there 20.

<sup>7</sup> Richards, ‘Introduction’, 20.

shared between these two traditions: ‘(...) first, the idea that “memory” is an active process which is defined by the two activities of collection and recollection, or sorting and retrieval; second, that these activities constitute the basis of knowing and understanding.’<sup>8</sup>

In general the Greek tradition can best be described as dialectical (or philosophical) and the Roman tradition as rhetorical. ‘The source for dialectical memory is the Greek moral philosophy, in particular Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus* and Aristotle’s<sup>9</sup> (384-322 BC) short treatise *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* (*On Memory and Recollection*), an appendix to *De Anima* (*On the soul*). In both texts recollection is understood as a way of thinking, an art of reasoning.’<sup>10</sup> ‘The source of rhetorical memory is the Roman handbooks on oratory of the first century BC and AD.’<sup>11</sup> Fine examples of this are *De oratore* (*On the ideal orator*) (55 BC) of the Roman philosopher, politician, lawyer, orator, and consul Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) and the anonymously written *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (*Rhetoric to Herennius*) (c. 100 BC). Rhetoric or oratory is by the Romans understood as an art of persuasion: ‘(...) its practitioners rely on a good memory to recall the points of a case in the correct order, the arguments made by an antagonist in court so they can respond to them fully, and also their own speeches so that they appear extempore when delivered. In this tradition memory is very clearly an art or craft, a series of learned techniques that can enhance natural ability.’<sup>12</sup> For the Romans memory is thus a tool that consists of different mnemonic technique. Memory is an active process and not a passive ability.

It was on the Roman tradition or perception of memory that the Medieval and Early Modern ideas about memory were based, called *Memoria*.<sup>13</sup> This tradition can be divided into two periods: an early period called *Memoria verborum* and a later period called *Memoria rerum*. The early *Memoria verborum* ‘(...) constitutes both an ‘art’ and a way of being in the world, a way of organizing the ‘self’ and of managing the relationship between ‘self’ and others.’<sup>14</sup> For this they used a way reading called ‘tropological’; ‘(...) this is reading which turns “the text onto and into one’s self”.’<sup>15</sup> This is not, as we would see it, a form of plagiarism but was conceived as an ethical dialogue between memories, the sharing and preservation of communal wisdom.<sup>16</sup> The late *Memoria rerum* saw a return to more classical rhetorical memory in which there was more room for humor and creativity. Other differences are: ‘(...) the laicization and popularization of memory schemes, as well as a new conception of their practical use.’<sup>17</sup>

‘Following its final flourish in Renaissance Hermeticism, the traditional ‘art of memory’, which had functioned from the classical to the early-modern period, fell into disuse.’<sup>18</sup> Changes in social organization and the information economy of Europe supported the emergence of new ways of regarding memory.<sup>19</sup> These were influenced by many new ways of thinking and the emergence of new scientific traditions. In the early modern time it are the scholars of enlightenment and romanticism that continued the research into memory. Different developments regarding the thinking about memory find their roots in this period which at the same time were a continuity of classical, medieval and renaissance thinking.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 20-21.

<sup>9</sup> A Greek philosopher and student of Plato.

<sup>10</sup> Richards, ‘Introduction’, 20-21.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 21-22.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

The English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) occupies a pivotal position in these developments.<sup>20</sup> He connected memory explicitly to intelligent beings (humanity), stated that it is a necessary part of the self conscious, and argued that memory is as much a place of memory as an ability which makes it possible for human beings to perceive their own progress and development (in contrast with their past).<sup>21</sup> Most importantly he identified ‘(...) the importance of memory for anchoring a sense of individual continuity over time.’<sup>22</sup>

Also the Scottish philosopher, historian, economist, and essayist David Hume (1711-1776) contributed to the discussion on memory with his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740) in which he ‘(...) seeks to distinguish between the properties of [memory and imagination], (...) [seeks] to draw attention to what, to him, is their perilous proximity (noted by Aristotle who asserted that memory belongs to the same part of the soul as imagination (...),’<sup>23</sup> and ‘(...) points to a willingness to admit an essential discontinuity in human experience which the imagination in collaboration with memory seeks to overcome. In these ways, Hume’s ideas about memory look forward to the discussions on the difficulty of ‘knowing’ the past, of articulating the grounds of its impact upon the present, registered in such autobiographical works as Wordsworth’s *Prelude* and in poststructuralist and psychoanalytical treatments of memory.’<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, it is the work of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), which is inspired by the work of Aristotle in which memory and recollection were also separated, that has been quite influential. He was ‘(...) doing ontology and seeking to understand what the basic activities of the mind are.’<sup>25</sup> For this he developed his own set of concepts to describe the process of memory and recollection. It is not relevant here to explain this massive theory, apart from stating that it influenced later thinkers ‘(...) within ‘poststructuralism’ (Derrida, Krell), literary theory (de Man), and psychoanalysis (Mills).’<sup>26</sup>

These enlightened and romantic thinkers introduced the self into the discussions about memory. It are authors like the Genevan philosopher and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), with his autobiography, and the English Romantic poet and writer William Wordsworth (1770-1850), with his novels and poems, that developed this attention for the connection between the self en memory further. These texts ‘(...) both consolidated and questioned emergent/dominant definitions of identity.’<sup>27</sup> This attention for the individual is very much present in the nineteenth and twentieth century. ‘Particular importance came to be attached to the activity of narrating the self, most famously in the forms of Freud’s ‘talking cure’ and Proust’s monumental autobiographical novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* (...).’<sup>28</sup>

Late modern scholarship in regard to memory is the breeding ground for a wide range of innovative ideas about memory. The important of these are in the light of this study those that regard the role of history and memory within a society and a person’s life. The German philosopher, economist, sociologist, historian, journalist, and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx (1818-1883), in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), bluntly states that de past has no meaning for his ideal of a social revolution. For him it is the future that

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Rossington, ‘Introduction’, in: Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 70-74, there 70-71.

<sup>22</sup> Frances Ferguson, ‘Romantic Memory’, *Studies in Romanticism* 35, ? (1996) 509-533, there 509.

<sup>23</sup> Rossington, ‘Introduction’, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 73.

<sup>27</sup> Whitehead, *Memory* 64.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem 82.

provides the inspiration for a better world.<sup>29</sup> The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) in his ‘On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’ expresses a more nuanced view. ‘(...) the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people, and of a culture (...)’<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche thus acknowledges the importance of history and memory for the health of a society. At the same time he argues that this relationship between the unhistorical and historical is a violent struggle in which ‘[i]f he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past (...) [in] an attempt to give oneself as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate.’<sup>31</sup> It is argued by different scholars that this idea anticipated ‘(...) the libertarian reappropriation of ‘tiger’s leap into the past’ [as] advocated in Walter Benjamin’s ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’.’<sup>32</sup>

The ideas of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) as expressed in *Matter and Memory* further complicated the ideas about memory because he argued that ‘(...) the term ‘memory’ is not singular, but rather combines two different kind of memories. The first is ‘habit memory’, which consists in obtaining certain automatic behavior by means of repetition and which coincided with the acquisition of sensory-motor mechanisms. The second ‘pure memory’, which refers to the survival of personal memories in the unconscious.’<sup>33</sup> Bergson states that most forms of memory combine the two forms. These ideas influenced the French novelist, critic, and essayist Marcel Proust (1871-1922) to which Bergson was a cousin by marriage. Especially in his writing on voluntary and involuntary memory there seems to be some similarity on certain points with respectively Bergson’s habit and pure memory. ‘For Proust, voluntary memory can only yield to us superficial appearances, and (...) [i]nvoluntary memory (...) grasps the past in its entirety, reviving not only a memory image but related sensations and emotions.’<sup>34</sup> Still most striking in the work of Proust is a point that does not correlate with the work of Bergson. ‘Proust (...) suggest[s] that the body can play a crucial role in resurrecting the past’,<sup>35</sup> and ‘(...) asserts the centrality of the physical to the activity of recollection, and invests it with a weight and significance that seem far removed from Bergson’s writing (...)’.<sup>36</sup> It is important to note that both authors draw on Plato’s idea of *anamnesis* as the prototype of memory.<sup>37</sup>

It is the Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) who in his ‘A Note upon the “Mystic Writing-Pad”’ illuminates upon the process of memory. ‘In [his article] Freud seeks to elaborate his notion of the unconscious by returning to and rewriting classical [especially Plato’s] accounts of memory which deploys the metaphor of inscription. (...) Freud turns for a solution to the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’, for it provides a model in which there are two separate but interrelated layers or levels: the celluloid covering sheet from which the writing vanishes once it is lifted, and the wax slab beneath which retains the permanent trace of what was written in inscription which is legible in certain

<sup>29</sup> Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead, ‘Introduction’, in: Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 92-96, there 93.

<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘On the uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’, in: Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 102-108, there 104.

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Mediations* (trans. R.J. Hollingdale, eds. Daniel Breazeale, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1997) 75-76.

<sup>32</sup> Rossington and Whitehead, ‘Introduction’, 93.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 104.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 106.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, 107.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 101.

lights. For Freud, these two layers correspond with the conscious mind, which forms no permanent traces, and the unconscious, which stores a more permanent record that appears or is visible to us at certain times.<sup>38</sup> It is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) that later takes these ideas and further expands their value.

The work of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) tries to form a dialogue with Freud, Proust, Bergson, Nietzsche and Marx. In his many works, like 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', 'A Berlin Chronicle', and 'On the Image of Proust', Benjamin develops an nuanced understanding of the mutuality of recollection and forgetting. Also, memory is in his work advanced as integral to textuality. 'Writing is found to be underpinned by "memory's strict regulation for weaving" in which "[o]nly the *actus purus* of recollection itself, not the author or the plot, constitutes the unity of the text.'<sup>39</sup> 'Benjamin's metaphors of how '(...) language retrieves the past may thus be seen to be notably physical, almost organic in character, and in this respect echo preoccupations with materiality in the [work] of Marx, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Freud.'<sup>40</sup>

Still it is the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), a talented student of Walter Benjamin, that stands at the beginning of the renewed interest in memory in the second half of the twentieth century. Herein the attention is shifted from the individual to the collective, a novel idea.<sup>41</sup> The work of Halbwachs is for many current students, authors and scholars still a source of inspiration. So it is important to attribute some more attention to the influential and fascinating ideas of this scholar.

### 3.1.2 Halbwachs and his critics: defining collective memory

As seen above, Maurice Halbwachs stands in a long scholarly tradition that focuses on memory. A tradition he rejuvenated by emphasizing collective memory over individual memory and by describing the social process of memory in its cultural, spatial and historical context. In this way he, most importantly, puts the focus in the study on memory on '(...) the *milieux* in which remembering takes place (...)'.<sup>42</sup> Also, the research and ideas of Halbwachs are important because his work forms the context for recent thinking in and research on memory, history and commemoration.

Still, in many ways Halbwachs was a true scholar of his time and not as revolutionary as many authors now suggest by pointing at their own unique interpretations of the work of Halbwachs. In essence Halbwachs ideas were formed by three different research traditions. The first is the teachings (in philosophy) of his first mentors: Henry Bergson and Walter Benjamin. After his return from his travels and study in Germany Halbwachs made '(...) a disciplinary shift from the cognitive preoccupations of philosophy and psychology to the cultural concerns of sociology and anthropology.'<sup>43</sup> This shift was undertaken under the guidance of two new mentors: the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), and the French sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950).<sup>44</sup> The third research tradition that had a significant influence on the work of Halbwachs is the *École des Annales*<sup>45</sup>, a research tradition that emerged out of the scholars that were united in the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*. Halbwachs got acquainted with the most important *Annales* researchers through his involvement in the editorial office of *Annales*. It were especially the

<sup>38</sup> Rossington and Whitehead, 'Introduction', 94.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, 95.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Rossington, 'Introduction', Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 134-138, there 135.

<sup>43</sup> Rossington, 'Introduction', 134-135.

<sup>44</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 127-128.

<sup>45</sup> In English know as the Annales school or Annales-school.

significant and renowned French Annales scholars and historians Marc Bloch (1886-1944) and Lucien Febvre (1878-1956), colleagues of Halbwachs at the University of Strasbourg and founders of *Annales*, that influenced his thinking.<sup>46</sup>

It is thus not surprising that Halbwachs in his works makes use of a very interdisciplinary way of doing research. After all, in his studies and travels he acquired a rich conceptual and methodological toolbox. Still, this rich and diverse toolbox is primarily used to unravel the workings of memory. And then first and foremost to try to understand '(...) the problem of the dynamics of memory (...)'.<sup>47</sup> This attention for memory is for Halbwachs an attention to collective memory. After all, in the perspective of Halbwachs the individual memory is of less importance because the collective memory shapes and reshapes the individual memory. Or to put it in his own words: 'The individual calls recollection to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory.'<sup>48</sup>

The core of this idea is very eloquently summarized by the American historian Patrick Hutton: '(...) [for Halbwachs] the key to decoding the workings of collective memory turns on the problem of localization. In remembering, we locate, or localize, images of the past in specific places. In and of themselves, whole of coherent meaning until we project them into concrete settings. Such settings provide us with our places of memory. Remembering, therefore, might be characterized as a process of imaginative reconstruction, in which we integrate specific images formulated in the present into particular context identified with the past. The images recollected are not evocations of a real past but only representation of it. In that sense, they give expression to a present-minded imagination of what the past was like. The contexts, in turn, contribute to the shaping of these representations by highlighting the habits of mind of the social groups with which they are associated. As the essential reference points for any consideration of memory's workings, they reveal its essentially social [and spatial] nature. Collective memory is an elaborate network of social mores, values, and ideals that marks out the dimensions of our imaginations according to the attitudes of the social groups to which we relate. It is through the interconnections among these shared images that the social frameworks (*cadres sociaux*) of our collective memory are formed, and it is within such settings that individual memories must be situated if they are to survive.'<sup>49</sup>

The places of recollection or '(...) memory are not repositories of individual images waiting to be retrieved but points of convergence where individual reminiscences are reconstructed by virtue of their relationship to a framework of social memory that sustains them. Recollection is always an act of reconstruction, and that way in which we recall an individual memory depends on the social context to which we appeal.'<sup>50</sup> So Halbwachs thus conceptualizes memory as a social process by which individual experiences and images are understood and re-envisioned within the realities of a collective and social framework of space, time and context. Remembering thus becomes a process of construction or put in other words: remembering becomes '(...) an activity of reconstruction in the present rather than the resurrection of the past.'<sup>51</sup>

So, the process of memory and its results depend on the spatial, social and cultural context in which a person lives and remembers. For Halbwachs it are the groups with which a person associates that determine the social and cultural context in which a person remembers. These different groups are in competition with another for the allegiance of a person. After

<sup>46</sup> Patrick H. Hutton. *History as an Art of Memory* (University Press of New England: Hanover/London 1993) 75.

<sup>47</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 74.

<sup>48</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (eds. and trans. Lewis A. Coser, University of Chicago Press: Chicago/London 1992) 182.

<sup>49</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 88.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, 78-79.

<sup>51</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 126.

all, in Halbwachs thinking one of the central points is that: '[w]hat we remember depends on the contexts in which we find ourselves and the groups to which we happen to relate. The depth and shape of our collective memory reflect this configuration of social forces that vie for our attention.'<sup>52</sup>

At the core of this social process of remembrance, imagination and/or image-making Halbwachs places two moments or kinds of memory: our habits of mind and our recollections. 'Habits of mind are the myriad images to which we have such frequent recourse that they elide to form the composite images of our collective memory.'<sup>53</sup> They are intuitively repeated. Thus the process of habit brings forward memories unreflectively as commonplaces. 'Recollections concern more distinctive experiences. They are images that we continue to identify with particular persons or events.'<sup>54</sup> These then also need to be consciously reconstructed. So the process of recollection is retrospective and localizes specific images in relationship to standard or customary places of memory.

The relationship between habit memory and recollections is ongoing, is dynamic and is in constant flux. For Halbwachs it are places of memory, in his ideas about collective memory this are real physical places, that fuel the process of collective memory. It is in these places that habits of mind and particular recollections interact with one another, which leads to the shaping and reshaping of collective memory and memories.<sup>55</sup> If this interaction occurs often enough then it '(...) is reduced to an ideal type and as such finds an habitual place within the structures of our collective imagination. For this reason, collective memory distorts the past in that with the passage of time a few personalities and events stand out in our recollections, and the rest are forgotten.'<sup>56</sup> By this process the 'distant frameworks' get parted and distinguished from 'nearby *milieux*'. Or in other words: '[C]ollective memory factors the past into structured patterns by mapping its most memorable features. That is why it appears to form its imagery around spatial reference points that emerge prominently from the surrounding *milieux* of perception.'<sup>57</sup>

Halbwachs thus understands memory, collective memory as an active social process that is constantly changing the recollection of the past. This for him also means that memory is in principle a collective activity and not an individual one. By this statement he moves away from, and in a way even criticizes, the work of his first mentors Bergson and Benjamin. This is perhaps most visible in his rejection of the connection between dreams and memory. He states that: 'The fact is that we are incapable of reliving our past while we dream.'<sup>58</sup>

Only in his last work, *La Mémoire Collective* (1950), which was published posthumously did Halbwachs pay attention to the relationship between history and memory.<sup>59</sup> It was especially 'the problem of memory from an historical perspective' that captivated the imagination of Halbwachs.<sup>60</sup> Still, '[b]ecause he believed that history begins where living memory ends, Halbwachs never reflected sufficiently on their interconnections.'<sup>61</sup> Here there is made clear distinction between history and memory. History stands in the work of Halbwachs for the long periods of the past that was gone, and (collective) memory stands for

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<sup>52</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 78-79.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, 79.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>58</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 41.

<sup>59</sup> Halbwachs (a socialist) was in 1944, when protesting against the arrest of his Jewish father-in-law, arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. Here he died of dysentery in 1945.

<sup>60</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 74.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, 77.

the short periods of commemoration and lived memory.<sup>62</sup> So history, which Halbwachs understood as a positivistic science concerned only with the facts and the right order of these facts, was in the view of Halbwachs not capable of attending the many dynamics of collective memory, as he saw it. ‘To put it another way, he never looked at history as a kind of official memory, a representation of the past happens to enjoy the sanction of scholarly authors.’<sup>63</sup>

Halbwachs thus characterized memory and history as two completely different phenomenon: ‘History can be represented as the universal memory of the human species. But there is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.’<sup>64</sup> Still, it were his colleagues at *Annales* that introduced ‘(...) the new history of mentality, inspired by *Annales* historiography and reconceived to encompass the analysis of collective memories, considers human hopes and dreams, that realm of the human imagination that deals in possibilities as well.’ Although Halbwachs did not recognize this himself, his work laid the groundwork for these first and later historical studies into memory, collective memory en commemoration. Especially his work on tradition was influential in this sense.

Halbwachs saw tradition as the process by which individual recollections are integrated into the structures of collective memory. So tradition should be understood as a way of preserving and modifying the frameworks of memory. This process is very slow and can only be exposed and described by historians that are researching a particular subject or tradition over a long time. The people within a tradition most often resist any change and try to strengthen their social framework of memory by acts of commemoration. These acts of commemorations are self-conscious acts to stop, resist or disguise the processes by which tradition changes, and are most often linked to specific places. These commemorative places of memory after all ‘reinforce our habits of mind’ by promoting specific recollections of the past.<sup>65</sup> It also means that commemoration is politically significant process or act by which influence and even power can be projected. It after all ‘(...) seeks to strengthen places of memory, enabling fading habits of mind to be reaffirmed a specific images to be retrieved more easily.’<sup>66</sup>

With ‘(...) his interest in the changing patterns of the imagery of collective memory over time, [Halbwachs] invented a new way of looking at historical evidence.’<sup>67</sup> Or to put it in other words ‘(...) [C]ommemoration [became] a reworking of memory, or as it has more recently been characterized, an act of bricolage in that old places were adorned with new images.’<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, his statement that ‘Each group immobilizes time in its own way’, opened the way to research into how certain groups understand time and chronology.<sup>69</sup> The work of Halbwachs in the end thus inspired many different authors in many different disciplines to turn to the study of (collective) memory.

It is then not an exaggeration to say that the work of Halbwachs has been very influential. Still, this does not mean that there are no critical points to be made about this work. A first point of criticism focuses on the difference that Halbwachs saw between history and memory. It is the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann (1938) that points out that Halbwachs doesn’t take into account those memories that expand further back than seventy-

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<sup>62</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 131.

<sup>63</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 77.

<sup>64</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, ‘The Collective Memory’, in: Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 139-143, there 143.

<sup>65</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 79-80.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, 80.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, 88.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, 83.

<sup>69</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Les Presses universitaires de France: Paris 1971) 126, and: Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle* (Free Press: New York 1985).

five or a hundred years, a life time so to say. After this time Halbwachs assumes that *mémoire* was rapidly transforms into *histoire*. To nuance this statement Assmann introduces the concept of cultural memory. This concerns the more distant past. This kind of memory goes beyond living memory and is retained in cultural creations (like monuments and texts), traditions or institutional commemoration (like rites and practices).<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, scholars like the Israeli philosopher Noa Gedi, the Israeli historian Yigal Elam and the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) point out that Halbwachs in his work dogmatically ignores the individual side of memory. For Halbwachs memory is something that can only be done in a social context; no one ever remembers alone. There are two reactions to the lack of attention in the work of Halbwachs to individual acts of memory. The first is exemplified by Ricoeur. He suggests that the work of Halbwachs '(...) can be read against his own intention. In this sense, Halbwachs' belief that the collective memory is inflected by the individual's relationship with different groups opens up the very possibility for individual agency, because it presupposes that the individual consciousness had "the power to place itself within the viewpoint of the group and, in addition, to move from one group to another".<sup>71</sup> A second reaction is characterized by the search for a more nuanced terminology by which the relationship between individuals and collectives is redefined. The aim of this is to emphasize the role of human agency in the construction of collective and individual memories. Examples of these reconceptualizations can be found in the work of the German historian Wulf Kansteiner (collective memory vs. collected memories) and the Israeli historian Avishai Margalit (shared memory vs. common memory).<sup>72</sup>

Halbwachs has, as already mentioned above, influenced many scholars and inspired a range of studies on memory, collective memory, history, commemoration, et cetera. One of the most important and interesting that has to be named here is *The Invention of Tradition* by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) and the African historian Terence Ranger (1929), '(...) which emphasizes the contrived and often factitious commemorative representations and rituals staged by politicians of the late nineteenth century in order to enhance the power of the modern state.'<sup>73</sup> This development shows that modern historians, sociologists and social geographers made a step beyond Halbwachs. There has been a shift in scholarly interest in recent years away from the representation of power to the power of representation.<sup>74</sup>

Still, there are other important scholars that find inspiration in Halbwachs that have to be named in the context of this research. One of the more important is the French historian Pierre Nora (1931) with his *Les lieux des mémoire*, but also his German colleagues that wrote the volume *Mental Maps - Raum - Erinnerung* in which they elaborate on their concept of mental maps are clearly influenced by Halbwachs.<sup>75</sup> Both strands of thinking expand the ideas about collective memory as formulated by Halbwachs and his critics to a national scale. A perspective that Halbwachs did not see as very important because it did not correlate with what he saw has collective memory.<sup>76</sup> Other authors that are important in this study and that

<sup>70</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 132.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Ricour, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, University of Chicago Press: Chicago/London 2004) 123.

<sup>72</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 129-130; Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Memory Studies', *History and Theory* 41, ? (2002) 179-197; and: Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge/London 2002).

<sup>73</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 88.

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>75</sup> Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (7 volumes, Gallimard: Paris 1984-1992); and: Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Angelika Hartman and Béatrice Hendrich (red.), *Mental Maps - Raum - Erinnerung: Kulturwissenschaftliche Zugänge zum Verhältnis von Raum und Erinnerung* (LIT Verslag Münster: Münster 2005).

<sup>76</sup> Whithead, *Memory*, 138.

are indebted to the ideas of Halbwachs (and also to his predecessors and successors named above) are the Irish political and historical scientist Benedict Anderson (1936) and the Israeli sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (1948). The ideas and research of these authors is vast and will because of its importance be discussed in length below.

### 3.1.3 Yates: rediscovering mnemonics

Still, first there shortly needs to be some attention for the ideas and research of the British historian of the renaissance Francis Yates (1899-1981). She brought the perspective and study of mnemonics and mnemonic techniques back on the scholarly map, and in a way saved it from oblivion. She called these processes by which a society deals with memory ‘the art of memory’. Attention for these practices of memory and the systems by which there can be remembered were by Yates traced back millennia.

The Ancient Greeks and also the Ancient Romans were masters in the so called art of memory. They perfected this skill of remembering through different mnemonic techniques. For them memory was the core of all thought and intellect, it was (literally) the mother of the muses.<sup>77</sup> During the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance these mnemonic techniques of remembering were at the core of the educational system, religious thought and scientific discoveries.<sup>78</sup> Yates shows that in the age of the printing press the mnemonic techniques and systems kept circulating because people, first and foremost the Renaissance scholars, believed that these paradigms were ways by which one could discover new ideas and unravel the mysteries of the universe. Furthermore, Yates also suggests that the influence of these mnemonic techniques, the art of memory, were at the basis or at least influenced the emergence of the scientific revolution of modern times.<sup>79</sup>

On the basis of her research Yates stressed the importance of the mental imaging of physical places that was taking place in people’s minds when they encountered certain people, experiences or place. Rituals associated with these encounters were intended to embody the encountered information and improve this mental inscription. Yates designated both the mnemonic rituals and their mental inscription as major vehicles in the art of shaping and transmitting memory for future generations. It was Yates who in this context coined the term *loci memoriae* which inspired Nora to call his idea *les lieux de mémoire*.<sup>80</sup>

Yates her research is not all inclusive and shows some gaps when it concerns questions regarding lived and collective memory. This firstly is the consequence of the almost exclusive attention given to how the elites, high culture and the educated classes see and deal with memory. This is of course the result of the focus on mnemonic techniques. Secondly this is the consequence of the scope of Yates her study. It goes back almost two thousand years, but at the same time does not connect with the more recent centuries.<sup>81</sup> Although, there are some hints that can be interpreted as pointing at the idea that there are cases in which the influence of the old mnemonic traditions leaves traces in our current society. The classical visions on memory after all became imbedded in our culture, religion, science, et cetera.<sup>82</sup>

Still, it are contemporary authors that, on the basis of the work, insights and concepts of Yates, research the modern day art of memory and connect this with commemoration and collective memory. They ‘(...) argue that the highly visible, geographical landscapes of memory identified with nineteenth-century commutative practice corresponded closely to the

<sup>77</sup> The nine muses are the daughters of the gods Zeus and Mnemosyne, the personification of memory.

<sup>78</sup> Richards, ‘Introduction’, 23.

<sup>79</sup> For the entire paragraph see: Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London/Henley 1972); Whitehead, *Memory*, 27-38; and: Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 10-12.

<sup>80</sup> Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 12-35; Whitehead, *Memory*, 11; and: Lauren Lauret, ‘Mapping places of memory’, [article not published] (2012) 1-5.

<sup>81</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 387-389.

imaginary schemes of the classical mnemonics. (...) Modern commemoration only turned mnemonic technique to more obvious political ends. (...) [wherein] commemorative monuments and museums play the role of the mnemonists' memory palaces in highlighting the conceptual design of the remembered past.'<sup>83</sup>

The classical art of memory, the mnemonic techniques of the past, became obsolete.<sup>84</sup> At the same time a new art of memory developed. One that was no longer an internal process geared towards remembering giant amounts of informative by the use of image-making and the placement of information in or on that image/structure, but one that was an external process in which monuments and museums are the spatial images by which certain events, people or ideas are remembered. There can thus be argued that the art of memory went through a process of inversion in which the mnemonic processes and techniques were redefined to cater a new time in which not the remembering of information was key, after all there were books now (and in recent time the internet), but in which they became a way to connect with the past, and to bring order and meaning to the events of the past.<sup>85</sup> This is then also where collective memory and mnemonic techniques meet.<sup>86</sup> A connection that is further developed in the work of Nora and Zerubavel. But before we can attend to these two key scholars we shortly need to discuss Anderson his work.

### 3.1.4 Anderson: on memory and imagined communities

In his famous book *Imagined Communities* the Irish political and historical scientist Benedict Anderson (1936) discusses the concept of imagined communities.<sup>87</sup> This concept is at first used to describe '(...) the process by which communities 'nationalised' themselves and how this imagined idea of the nations was globalised.'<sup>88</sup> Anderson thus tries to understand the process of nation building from the perspective of community building, and gives specific attention to how people perceive themselves as being part of a nation. The concept imagined communities started as a way of describing national groups, but now it is used to describe many groups and forms of group formations. In this process memory and collective memory plays an important role. Especially when one recognises that collective memory is an essential part of the construction, or perhaps better but in this context as the imagination, of groups.<sup>89</sup>

Still, it is interesting to observe that in the first publication of the book in 1983 no specific mention was made of memory and collective memory. This changed in the new version published in 1991. Anderson added a chapter on collective memory and the nation called 'Memory and Forgetting'. In this chapter he argues that there are two ways in which imagined communities legitimise their existence. The first is to refer to history, to continuity and to tradition as legitimisation of the formation of a nation or community. The second is to break with the past, blast open 'the continuum of history', and to stress the novelty and difference of the new nation or imagined community from the one it developed from.<sup>90</sup>

The choice of a national community regarding the way they want to relate to the past does not stop when their aims of the creation of a nation-state is fulfilled. This is not only a process that plays a part in the creation of a nation, but it is very much at play after the creation of the nation-state, the home the national community. These group or groups '(...)

<sup>83</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 10.

<sup>84</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 38.

<sup>85</sup> Here will be further elaborated on in paragraph 3.3.5.

<sup>86</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso: London/New York 2006).

<sup>88</sup> Pablo Mukherjee, 'Introduction', in: Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 127-241, there 238.

<sup>89</sup> Mukherjee, 'Introduction', 138-240.

<sup>90</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 192-199.

thus began the process of reading nationalism *genealogically* - as the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity.<sup>91</sup> A process that was very visible in the European, African and Asian nationalist movements. At the core of this process lay in the beginning, especially in the nineteenth-century, only the need to remember, to speak for those who died and to uphold the 'memory of independence'.<sup>92</sup> Only later did the processes of forgetting become of more importance.

It is the interplay between remembering and forgetting that, as Anderson suggest, creates very interesting commemorations of the past of the nation-state. With examples from French and American history he shows that the many historical concepts and past events that a society learns its participants via the pedagogical systems are at the same time acts of remembering as well as forgetting. A good example is given by Anderson when he quotes and discusses parts of the work of French philosopher and writer Ernest Renan (1823-1892). He says: 'One notices for example, that Renan sees no reason to explain for his readers what either 'la Saint-Barthélemy' or 'les massacres du Midi au XIIIe siècle' meant. Yet who but 'Frenchmen,' as it were, would have at once understood that 'la Saint-Barthélemy' referred to the ferocious anti-Huguenot pogrom launched on 24 August 1572 by the Valois dynast Charles IX and his Florentine mother; or that 'les massacres du Midi' alluded to the extermination of the Albigensians across the broad zone between the Pyrenees and the Southern Alps, instigated by Innocent III, one of the guiltier in a long line of guilty popes? Nor did Renan find anything queer about assuming 'memories' in his readers' minds even though the events themselves occurred 300 and 600 years previously.'<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore, he explains that these concepts ignore, or simply are forgetting, that the reality is far more complicated than is suggested. 'We may start by observing that the singular *French* noun 'la Saint-Barthélemy' occludes killers and killed - i.e. those Catholics and Protestants who played one local part in the vast unholy Holy War that raged across central and northern Europe in the sixteenth century, and who certainly did not think of themselves cosily together as 'Frenchmen.' Similarly, 'thirteenth-century massacres of the Midi' blurs unnamed victims and assassins behind the pure Frenchness of 'Midi.' No need to remind his readers that most of the murdered Albigensians spoke Provençal or Catalan, and that their murderers came from many parts of Western Europe.'<sup>94</sup>

This then shows that the formation of (imagined) communities in itself is a process in which processes of collective memory are important, if not essential. It is after all the 'systematic historiographical campaign, deployed by the state mainly through the state's school system' that shapes the collective memory of a nation.<sup>95</sup> At the same time this statement can also be applied to the memory politics of many different groups (religious, gender, ethnic, political, social, sexual, generational, et cetera).

It is here that there can be made a connection between the thinking of Halbwachs and Anderson. Anderson uses the conceptual couple forgotten/remembered to describe a process that is essential in the formation of imagined communities and a national memory (in which there is attention for mnemonics), while Halbwachs tries to understand how people remember and which processes are behind it.<sup>96</sup> To put in other words, Anderson as an historian focuses on the formations and uses of collective memory (and in this way pulls memory into the realm of history) while Halbwachs as a sociologist tries to understand the 'nature', workings and systematics of collective memory.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibidem, 195.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, 197-199.

<sup>93</sup> Ibidem, 200.

<sup>94</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>95</sup> Ibidem, 201.

<sup>96</sup> Thus a difference between what and how do people remember (and the reasons for the answers on both).

### 3.1.5 Zerubavel: collective memory as a social practice

In recent years sociologists again turned to the study of memory and collective memory.<sup>97</sup> These sociologists, of which the Israeli professor of sociology Eviatar Zerubavel (1948) is one of prime contributors and essential for this study, ‘(...) have begun to use [Halbwachs] as a foundation for their own studies of the uses of commemorative practice.’<sup>98</sup> By this they give a new intensive to the conceptualization of collective memory and to the testing of these (new) sociological paradigms against the continuity, discontinuity, and peculiarities of ordinary life and history.

The premise of the work of Zerubavel is quite clear. He states ‘(...) that we remember not as individuals but as members of local and national communities.’<sup>99</sup> In this one can see the influence of Halbwachs, but also of Anderson and perhaps even also some connections with the work of Pierre Nora (on which will be illuminated below). Still, Zerubavel might also be very much indebted to Yates and her study of mnemonics, because the terminology and sociologies that Zerubavel uses draws on the practices of memory that are described by Yates. In a way there needs to be recognised that in a sense Zerubavel combines and operationalizes the ideas as put forward by Halbwachs, Yates and Anderson. He in essence pours the old ideas in a new encompassing and comprehensive sociological model or framework of collective memory.<sup>100</sup> A model he further expands to be able to explain the workings of commemoration and collective memory in more details and debt.

For in his conceptualisation of the who, how and why of memory he makes a distinction between several mnemonic processes and concepts. At the core of the sociological model of Zerubavel is the mnemonic community. The memories Zerubavel examines ‘(...) are unmistakably collective ones shared by families, ethnic groups, nations, and other *mnemonic communities*. Rather than a mere aggregate of the personal recollections of its various member’s a community’s collective memory includes only those shared by its members as a groups. As such, it invokes a common past that they all seem to recall.’<sup>101</sup>

The mnemonic communities ‘(...) maintain “mnemonic traditions,” teach new generations what to remember and forget through “mnemonic socialization,” the monitoring of “mnemonic others,” (...)’<sup>102</sup> the implementation of “mnemonic synchronization” by means of holidays, education and heritage,<sup>103</sup> ‘(...) and the fighting of “mnemonic battles.” Thus remembering comes into view as a control system.’<sup>104</sup> Or as Zerubavel put it: ‘Far from being a strictly spontaneous act, remembering is (...) governed by unmistakably social *norms of remembrance* that tell us what we should remember and what we should essentially forget.’<sup>105</sup> This is the so called mnemonic socialization. So, ‘[o]n one level, what we remember of our own past is determined by what parents and elders tell us about it. On another, deeper, level, we identify ourselves with the enduring memories of our communities. As communal boundaries become coextensive with shared memories, we feel pride or shame in past events that happened even before we were born.’<sup>106</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Barry Schwartz, ‘Introduction: The Expanding Past’, *Qualitative Sociology* 19, 3 (1996) 275-282.

<sup>98</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 74.

<sup>99</sup> Schwartz, ‘Introduction: The Expanding Past’, 278.

<sup>100</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, ‘Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past’, *Qualitative Sociology* 19, 3 (1996) 283-299, there 283.

<sup>101</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago/London 2004) 4.

<sup>102</sup> Schwartz, ‘Introduction: The Expanding Past’, 278.

<sup>103</sup> Zerubavel, ‘Social Memories’, 283.

<sup>104</sup> Schwartz, ‘Introduction: The Expanding Past’, 278.

<sup>105</sup> Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, 5.

<sup>106</sup> Schwartz, ‘Introduction: The Expanding Past’, 278.

Zerubavel thus sees collective memory as a pure social practice in which the communities to which one belongs determine how one remembers. The most interesting in this approach is that it from the outset gives room to the possibility that a person can participate in several collective memories because he/she belongs to several groups and that these memories are regulated by the groups one participates in. 'Yet (...)', Zerubavel argues, '(...) collective memory is more than just an aggregate of individuals' personal memories, and such inevitably personal relief maps cannot possibly capture what an entire nation, for example, *collectively* considers historically eventful or uneventful. To observe the social "marking" of the past, we therefore need to examine *social time lines* construed by entire mnemonic communities.'<sup>107</sup> These lines are not static but embody how ideas about the past of and by a certain mnemonic community change over time.

Still, these ideas on collective memory as put forward by Zerubavel are in essence very abstract. They describe processes of time, of memory and of groups dynamics. Although Zerubavel makes, in the lines following the citations given above, a connection with the physical world by stating that: 'For [this examination of social time lines constructed by entire mnemonic communities] we must turn to unmistakably social sites of memory.'<sup>108</sup> He still understands these sites in very (even too) broad terms. He includes museums and monuments, but also talks about traditions, commemorations, calendars, holidays, schoolbooks, et cetera.

Most surprising he does talk about mnemonic landscapes but this he does in a pure metaphorical way to illuminate upon a point he makes or an idea he has. He thus does not look at the mnemonic landscapes as a tool in his sociology of collective memory.<sup>109</sup> This has as a consequence that he does not go deeper in how space in general and museums in particular are part of these mnemonics of collective memory. That is not very surprising because as a sociologist that is not really his field of research. For a more physical, and as a consequence a less theorised, approach we need to turn to the researchers, most often historians, that focus on *Lieux de Mémoire* and Mental Maps.

### 3.1.6 Nora and his critics: from lieux de mémoire to mental maps

The work of the French historian Pierre Nora (1931) is clearly a continuation of the work of Halbwachs in the sense that Nora in his 'Between Memory and History', an theoretical introduction to a multi-volume project on the national memory of France called *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, tries to extend and refine the argument made by Halbwachs that there is a distinction between memory and history.<sup>110</sup> Nora thus, in specific accordance with Halbwachs, dwells on the collective nature and culture of memory. 'Memory wells up from groups that is welds together, which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs observed, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual. By contrast, history belongs to everyone and to no one and therefore has a universal vocation.'<sup>111</sup>

The idea of Nora is that if one looks at a nation its collective memories, in his case to the French national memory, one has to conclude that with the assent of modern times and the industrialisation history started an acceleration and memory, or better put the quintessential 'repositories of memory' slowly collapsed.<sup>112</sup> Because of this process, Nora argues, societies

<sup>107</sup> Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, 28.

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>109</sup> Mauro Spicci, 'Museums, Memory and the Shaping of Identity: A Conversation with Professor Eviatar Zerubavel (Rutgers University)', *Altre Modernità* 5, 3 (2011) 115- 118, there 116.

<sup>110</sup> Rossington, 'Introduction', 135.

<sup>111</sup> Pierre Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', in: Pierre Nora (eds.), *Realms of Memory* (Columbia University Press: New York/Chichester 1996-1998) 1-20, there 3.

<sup>112</sup> Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', 1.

and groups have more need for the so called *lieux de mémoire* (a term derived from Yates her work in which she talks about *loci memoriae*).<sup>113</sup> This are places of remembrance where memory resides in a continued fashion, outside the acceleration of society and history. ‘Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn - but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persist. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites or memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory.’<sup>114</sup>

For Nora this process exemplifies the difference between history and memory. ‘Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.’<sup>115</sup> Nora thus emphasises a difference between the culture of memory and history. In this memory is seen as a phenomenon of the present, of emotion and of magic. It only takes account of those facts that suit it and thrives in vagueness and generalizations. History on the other hand is seen as a reconstruction of the past. It is a precise, detailed, scholarly and never ending process. This leads Nora to a very interesting observation. ‘Memory is rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image, and object. History [on the other hand] dwells exclusively on temporal continuities, on changes in things and in relations among things.’<sup>116</sup> This leads to the realisation that memory thus is absolute and spatial, while history is relative and temporal.<sup>117</sup>

A statement that in current society, especially in the academic world, seems curious, to say the least, but when perceived from the individual perspective on the relationship between people/groups and history/memory seems to indicate the importance that memory holds. A role or space that history tries to take over by means of scientific guarantees of truth and correctness, but still can’t entirely because it misses the personal, collective, emotional, logical and subjective imbedding in peoples’ lives. History has become the scientific study of the past. So memory is the only vehicle left to people for the elucidation and signification of their lives, pasts and experiences in accordance within their own context and paradigm.<sup>118</sup> For Nora this explains our need of *lieux de mémoire*.

These ideas of Nora are not uncontested. Many authors have problems with his ideas and argumentations. A first strand of criticism focuses on the process, and especially its outcome, by which Nora selected the memories and sites that would form the backbone of the French national memory. It is the British historian Perry Anderson (1938) that first argued that Nora is in a sense biased in his choices when it regards the French national memory.<sup>119</sup> Nora only choose so called positive *lieux de mémoire*. There is almost no room for more problematic memories and places. A good example is the absence of France its colonialism and imperialism. These are not really found in the volumes of *Les Lieux de Mémoire*. Also, no attention is paid to the rich protestant history of France. This prompted Benedict Anderson to

<sup>113</sup> Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 12-35; and: Whitehead, *Memory*, 11.

<sup>114</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘From Between Memory and History: *les Lieux de Mémoire*’, in: Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds.), *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh 2007) 144-149, there 144.

<sup>115</sup> Nora, ‘From Between Memory and History’, 145-146.

<sup>116</sup> Nora, ‘General Introduction: Between Memory and History’, 3.

<sup>117</sup> Nora, ‘From Between Memory and History’, 146.

<sup>118</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 151-152.

<sup>119</sup> Perry Anderson, ‘La Dégringolade’, *London Review of Books* 26, 17 (2004); and: Perry Anderson, ‘L’Union Sacrée’, *London Review of Books* 27, 18 (2004).

state that Nora did not create a catalogue of *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, but of *lieux d'oubli*, sites of forgetting. Furthermore, as the British historian Tony Judt (1948-2010) observed, '(...) the experience and memory of war in the twentieth century has played a crucial role in France's fractured heritage.'<sup>120</sup> He continues by stating that the memory of war '(...) deserves more attention than it receives in *Realms of Memory*.'<sup>121</sup>

This brings us to a second strand of criticism, which comes from the scholars that study the collective memory of conflicts. Most prominent is this regard and exemplary of the criticism voiced by the scholars of conflict is the American historian Jay Winter (1945). He '(...) justifiably noted the decisive contribution of war to the scholarship and debates in this area. Not only has the twentieth century been punctuated by warfare (...), but technological changes have ensured that war "has moved out of the battlefield and into every corner of civilian life".'<sup>122</sup> The memories of the witnesses of war, soldiers and civilians, have become part of the history of these wars and conflicts. And they have shaped the way in which wars and conflicts are collectively remembered. Furthermore, attention for conflict and its casualties is one of the larger driving force behind the study of collective memory. Most often attention is then given to how commemorations and public (and sometimes even private) remembrance of conflict are caught between the state (or nation) and other groups.<sup>123</sup>

Winter in his work takes a stand against the emphasise on the state as the primary facilitator of collective remembrance and memory. By doing this Winter contests Nora's work, that emphasises '(...) the nation as the primary vehicle for collective remembering.'<sup>124</sup> For Winter it are the smaller social groups that organise the remembrance. He continues by explaining that sites of memory are '(...) created not just by nations but primarily by small groups of men and women who do the work of remembrance.'<sup>125</sup> The narrowing view of Winter, in line with Halbwachs, brings to the fore the transience of collective memory, so that collective memory changes when groups dissolve when people '(...) lose interest, or time (...) when they move away, or die.'<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, this also emphasizes '(...) the agency and activism involved in memory work, which is initiated by a defined groups of people in a specific place and for a particular reason.'<sup>127</sup>

A third strand of criticism is formed by a group of memory scholars active outside France, most notably the German colleagues of Nora. They find the concept of *lieux de mémoires* to be problematic. 'Problematisch jedoch ist die Begründung, mit der Nora die Existenz von Gedächtnisräumen begründet: Sie sind ein Zeichen des kulturellen und nationalen Verfalls Frankreichs, Gedächtnisräume haben die Stelle von Gedächtnisumwelten eingenommen (...). Der Kritik, Nora sie von Kulturpessimismus umgetrieben und eifere (als letzter Vertreter dieses Genres) der Nationalgeschichtsschreibung des 19. Jahrhunderts nach, muss im vorliegenden Zusammenhang hinzugefügt werden, das Nora eine statische Qualität des Gedächtnisses vertritt, dieses Gedächtnis mit lieux genannten Strukturen in Beziehung setzt und die Erinnerungspotenziale von Räumen völlig außer Acht lässt. Erinnerung in Räumen und durch Räume existiert nicht erst seit dem Verfall der Grande Nation, sondern ohne historische Fixierung als anthropologischer Konstante.'<sup>128</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem, 146.

<sup>121</sup> Tony Judt, 'A La Recherche du Temps Perdu', *New York Review of Books* 3, 12 (1998) 51-58, there 57.

<sup>122</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 147; and: Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between History and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Yale University Press: New Haven/CT/London 2006) 6.

<sup>123</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 147.

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>125</sup> Winter, *Remembering War*, 136.

<sup>126</sup> Ibidem, 4.

<sup>127</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 148.

<sup>128</sup> Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf and Béatrice Hendrich, 'Orientierungsleistungen räumlicher Strukturen und Erinnerung. Heuristische Potenziale einer Verknüpfung der Konzepte Raum, Mental Maps und Erinnerung', in:

So the German scholars state that in the end the work of Nora has several problems. An example is the already mentioned misleadingly singular selection of sites of memory. Furthermore, the German researchers stress that memory its relationship to space is more significant and multifaceted than suggested by Nora. Especially because the actors in the process of memory play a far larger and active part than suggested by Nora.<sup>129</sup> Also, Nora's wide definition of space underestimates the potential of the actual spaces to hold and transmit memories and memory. A physical site after all holds the possibility of storing memory in a timeless and static fashion so that it can last (in the minds and mental maps of) several generations. This means that memory is able to construct and reconstruct places and sites in its own right.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, memories nested in an individual person have also become a place in people's minds where the past can survive, can be retrieved and can be relived.<sup>131</sup>

As an answer to the criticism on Nora and the realization of the potential of sites to shape memory the German scholars developed a new framework. In this they were inspired by the work of Yates. She conceptualized memory as a open and even mental surface in which a person can wander in periods of mindfulness.<sup>132</sup> German scholars emphasize the attention Yates paid to the mental and figurative aspects in relation to memory. In this way human agency becomes again part of the construction of collective memory.

The result of the revision is the development of the concept of the 'mental map', which combines methodologies from psychology, neurology, media studies and communication studies. These methodologies help to determine how collective memory is constructed by and transferred through different generations. In this way mental maps can be seen as a German refining of Nora his sites of memory. Still, instead of being isolated sites of memory the new conceptualization by the critics of Nora understands the sites of memory as part of a memory landscape containing a wide variety of material places of memory.<sup>133</sup>

The idea is that the building of a mental map is a way for people to navigate the landscape of memory and it is in that sense also a way to feel attached with a certain representation of the past. It then is possible that different sites of memory are part of a person his/her mental map. After all every individual experiences memory, memories and the memory landscape differently and assigns a unique meaning to a site of memory. Still it is the existence of these mental map that people construct in their mind to navigate the memory landscape that makes people connected to a collective memory. After all, describing a site, place, building or idea as a site of memory only becomes meaningful if another person is able to perceive a place as such.<sup>134</sup>

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Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Angelika Hartman and Béatrice Hendrich (red.), *Mental Maps - Raum - Erinnerung: Kulturwissenschaftliche Zugänge zum Verhältnis von Raum und Erinnerung* (LIT Verlag Münster: Münster 2005) 25-48, there 36-37.

<sup>129</sup> Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and John R. Eidson, *Memory, Politics and Religion: the Past meets the Present in Europe* (LIT Verlag Münster: Münster 2004) 1; and: Jürgen Reulecke, 'Zur Eröffnung der Tagung "mental maps, Raum und Erinnerung" am 30.1.2004', in: Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Angelika Hartman and Béatrice Hendrich (red.), *Mental Maps - Raum - Erinnerung: Kulturwissenschaftliche Zugänge zum Verhältnis von Raum und Erinnerung* (LIT Verlag Münster: Münster 2005) xi-xiii, there xiii.

<sup>130</sup> Damir-Geildorf and Hendrich, 'Orientierungsleistungen räumlicher Strukturen und Erinnerung', 34-37.

<sup>131</sup> Lauret, 'Mapping places of memory', 3.

<sup>132</sup> Yates, *The Art of Memory*; and: Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, *Contested Pasts: the Politics of Memory* (Routledge: London 2003) 11.

<sup>133</sup> Damir-Geilsdorf, Hartman and Hendrich, *Mental Maps - Raum - Erinnerung*; and: E. François and H. Schulze, *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Beck: München 2001) 23.

<sup>134</sup> A. Hartmann, 'Konzepte und Transformationen der Trias 'Mental Maps, Raum und Erinnerung'. Einführende Gedanken zum Kolloquium', in: Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Angelika Hartman and Béatrice Hendrich (red.), *Mental Maps - Raum - Erinnerung: Kulturwissenschaftliche Zugänge zum Verhältnis von Raum und Erinnerung* (LIT Verlag Münster: Münster 2005) 3-21, there 4-5; and: Lauret, 'Mapping places of memory'.

This framework of mental maps is a new step in the conceptualisation of collective memory and goes beyond the work of Nora. Still, in the end it is mostly concerned with a wide range of topics and places, and how these connect. The study is interested in the mental maps that people construct and how this process envelopes. In this way the specific influence of one single space or landscape on the construction of collective memory is bypassed. This is a pity because this study regards just this subject. It is the concept of mnemonic landscapes that provided a way forward from this lack.

### 3.1.7 Space & Mnemonics: introducing mnemonic landscapes

The attention for the influence that a landscape can have in the construction of collective memory is not new. Especially human geographers have paid attention to this topic of study. In many ways there are similarities with the study of mental maps. This is not surprising because the idea of mental maps is for a large part inspired by the field of (human) geography.<sup>135</sup> Still, geographers focus far more on the mental maps that people have and especially how they are constructed, the so called mnemonics of space, or better put, mnemonic landscapes. For them the transference of these mental maps, which is the essence of the ability of collective memories to thrive, is of less importance. It is the construction of collective memories and the influence of space upon them that is at the core of the research.

This focus is also very visible if we return to the central subject of this study: the place of (museum) space in the mnemonics of collective memory. Above we have seen that the prominent scholars of collective memory touch upon mnemonics, space, museums, group dynamics and recollections. Still, they leave the influence of (especially museum) space on the processes of collective memory under-theorised, vague, and/or exemplary. This is a misfortune and perhaps even a problem because the influence of space (rooms, buildings, images, artefacts) on how people remember can be, and is most often, as Proust already argued, very influential. To address this issue in a constructive way the proposition is to bring in a new concept, and thus a new way of looking, into the study of collective memory: the mnemonic landscape (sometimes referred to as mnemonic topography).<sup>136</sup>

There is not much work and research done on the concept and paradigm of mnemonic landscapes. A number of studies mention or use the concept, but there is no standard work that examines the different sides, meanings and understandings of mnemonic landscapes. Still, a synthesis of the research shows that the concept is used by a verity of disciplines: literary studies, anthropology, fashion studies, identity studies, (human/social) geography, gender studies, and history. The topics discussed include among others subjects: ancient bathhouses, geography of modern cities, Medieval literature, the study of native and regional cultures, South-American cultural politics, Jewish culture, the Shoah, political identities, heritage policies, et cetera.<sup>137</sup>

What is missing in this collection of studies that use the concept of mnemonic spaces is a mentioning of the study that introduced the concept of mnemonic landscapes or a study that gave the best (general accepted) definition of it. In the end it seems that there is just no debate about the concept and its uses. In most studies the concept is just cited, sometimes by referring to the general debate about collective memory, as a given and unproblematic paradigm. A prime example of this is found in the work of the before mentioned Zerubavel.

<sup>135</sup> Damir-Geildorf and Hendrich, 'Orientierungsleistungen räumlicher Strukturen und Erinnerung', 38-40.

<sup>136</sup> Marc Silberman, 'After-words: Lessons in Memory and Politics', in: Marc Silberman and Florence Vatan, *Memory and Postwar Memorials: Confronting the Violence of the Past* (Palgrave MacMillan: New York 2013) 223.

<sup>137</sup> [http://scholar.google.nl/scholar?q=%22mnemonic+landscape%22&btnG=&hl=nl&as\\_sdt=0%2C5](http://scholar.google.nl/scholar?q=%22mnemonic+landscape%22&btnG=&hl=nl&as_sdt=0%2C5) (accessed 02 April 2014).

He uses the concept but this is only in an explanatory metaphorical word combination.<sup>138</sup> This is quite surprising because he after all is the researcher that put the workings of mnemonics into a comprehensive sociological framework. Another insightful example can be found in the work of the British scholar Lynda Dyson. In her research on museums in New Zealand she states that '(...) [v]isitors [of the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum] are offered artefacts of 'Kiwina' as 'spectacle', described in the programme as exemplifying the 'spirit of New Zealand'. The objects are animated in order to 'reach out' to the audience – performing pieces in a mnemonic landscape.'<sup>139</sup> Although she talks about object in mnemonic landscapes (as mentioned in the title of her work) she does not explain what is understood by a mnemonic landscape and how it works. The term is quite unproblematic used.

So what is needed, especially in regard to this study, is a comprehensive and inclusive definition. Fortunately a combination of definitions of and ideas about mnemonic landscapes as can be found in recent studies will provide a practical and operational definition.

'Recurrent throughout this literature [on mnemonic landscapes] is the emphasis on the role of the environment as an *aide-mémoire*. Whether from Freud's musings on the mnemonic landscape of Rome, Proust's flashback-inducing madeleines, Benjamin's memory scenes and the spaces of shock experiences (...), the materiality of the environment seeps into, and provokes, memories. This is explored in [the American geographer Gareth] Hoskins's considerations (...) of the agency of the material environment, the physical immediacy of nonhumans, and the site-based performance of heritage sites.'<sup>140</sup> We deal here of course with an understanding of mnemonic landscapes that sees people as subject or passive and landscapes as agents or active. This is in line with the work of Nora and the nature and culture of his *lieux de mémoire*. Work for which he is critiqued but now still seems to be part of the connection between landscape and collective memory. Only now as just one of the many aspects and processes associated with it.

Although, we need to remember that when we look at a landscape, a site or a building, we use what the Canadian geographer Edward Relph (1944) has called 'selective vision'.<sup>141</sup> We unconsciously obey what the Estonian philosopher Kati Lindström has called 'landscape socialization'. At the core of this concept lies the idea that '(...) we assess every element of the landscape as 'good' or 'bad', 'valuable' or 'corrupt' and register only those parts of the landscape which culture has taught us to notice, ignoring others.'<sup>142</sup>

This brings us by a second theme that is also recurrent in the body of literature on mnemonic landscapes: the emphasis on the role of human agency in the construction of these sites of memory. 'Each [mnemonic] landscape [after all] raises questions about the political aesthetics and organizational forms deployed in their construction, and about the inclusions and exclusions – of social groups and modes of memory – which each permits.'<sup>143</sup> Landscape thus '(...) serves as a mnemonic device for perpetuating a particular historical memory – a way of remembering (...) by which people are reminded of a (...) particular reading of their

<sup>138</sup> Spicci, 'Museums, Memory and the Shaping of Identity', 116.

<sup>139</sup> Lynda Dyson, 'Collecting practices and autobiography: the role of objects in the mnemonic landscape of nation', in: Jan Campbell and Janet Harbord, *Temporalities, autobiography and everyday life* (Manchester University Press: New York 2002) 128-140, there 134.

<sup>140</sup> Stephen Legg, 'Reviewing geographies of memory/forgetting', *Environment and Planning A* 39, ? (2007) 456-466, there 458. See also: Gareth Hoskins, 'Materialising memory at Angel Island Immigration Station, San Francisco', *Environment and Planning A* 39, ? (2007) 437-455.

<sup>141</sup> Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (Pion: London 1976) 123.

<sup>142</sup> Kati Linström, 'Landscape Image as a Mnemonic Tool in Cultural Change: The case of Two Phantom Sceneries', in: V. Sarapik (eds.), *Koht ja paik = Place and location: Studies in environmental aesthetics and semiotics* (Estonian Academy of Arts: Tallinn 2008) 227-238, there 228.

<sup>143</sup> Miles Ogborn, 'History, memory and the politics of landscape and space: work in historical geography from autumn 1994 to autumn 1995', *Progress in Human Geography* 20, 2 (1996) 222-229, there 224.

history.’<sup>144</sup> Here mnemonic landscapes are seen and described as mnemonic techniques that are used, by people and groups, to preserve knowledge, and to promote a certain reading of theory by devising certain ways of remembering it.<sup>145</sup>

These changes in remembering and the processes attached to it are especially visible in the urban sphere. The ever changing and dynamic landscape of the city combined with the denseness of population confronts people with many mnemonic sites and object from the past. Still, it would be a mistake to presume that mnemonic landscapes and the processes connected to it are solely urban, or modern.<sup>146</sup> It after all were the ancient Greeks and Romans that developed very impressive mnemonic tools that used spaces (real as well as imagined) to achieve the memorialization of facts, events, texts, et cetera. Also, the Greek historian of the Greek prehistory Yannis Galanakis shows us by means of his research on Greek thumbs from the prehistory (in rural areas) that ‘(...) [m]nemonic landscapes can appropriate past monuments and structures or artfully “forget” their existence. They construct, and potentially control, memories. They can unite but can also divide by demarcating spatial relationships and renegotiating the ways in which the surrounding environment is approached, envisaged and used.’<sup>147</sup> Which shows that mnemonic landscapes are around from the beginning of mankind because it is in relationship to humanity and its mnemonics and (collective) memory that they shape and are shaped.<sup>148</sup>

This brings us to a last important point in the discussion about mnemonic landscapes: the question of the relationship between history, geography and memory.<sup>149</sup> Although mnemonic landscapes in their nature, culture and development have a history. They are in their workings part of what a society wants to remember and what not. Museums, seen as mnemonic landscapes, are thus in the realm of collective memory, not so much as history. History after all is the science of what happened in the past, and is not the choice people make, and the processes behind these choices, what to remember or not.<sup>150</sup> At the same time there must be admitted that mnemonic landscapes can be the subject of historical and/or geographical studies. In this light the diametrical opposition between history and memory collapses and the interaction between them becomes visible.

All the examples given above show different sides of the term mnemonic landscape which when combined show the bilateral, and perhaps even Janus-faced, nature of mnemonic landscapes. On the one side it are spaces that help remember, construct and store memories. They are in a sense a vault on which collective memory relies and by which it is shaped and reshaped. At the same time these mnemonic landscapes are themselves subject to change because collective memories and specific mnemonic communities also try to change the landscapes to comply with current idea and demands (what to remember and what not to remember). This relationship blunts the difference between object and subject because both sides have agency and can interchangeable be the actor that changes the other.

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<sup>144</sup> Maria Gropas, ‘The Repatriotization of Revolutionary Ideology and Mnemonic Landscape in Present-Day Havana’, *Current Anthropology* 48, 4 (2007) 531-549, there 531.

<sup>145</sup> Gropas, ‘The Repatriotization of Revolutionary Ideology’, 537.

<sup>146</sup> Legg, ‘Reviewing geographies of memory/forgetting’, 462.

<sup>147</sup> Yannis Galanakis, ‘Mnemonic landscapes and monuments of the past: Tumuli, Tholos tombs and landscape associations in late middle bronze age and early late bronze age Messenia (Greece)’, in: E. Borgna and S. Müller-Celka (eds.), *Ancestral Landscapes: Burial mounds in the Copper and Bronze Ages (Central and Eastern Europe – Balkans – Adriatic – Aegean, 4th-2nd millennium BC)* (Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée TMO: Lyon 2011) 219-229, there 222.

<sup>148</sup> Ogborn, ‘History, memory and the politics of landscape and space’, 224-225.

<sup>149</sup> Ibidem, 225.

<sup>150</sup> John Tosh, *The pursuit of history: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (fifth edition, Longman: London/New York/e.a. 2010).

This paradox makes it interesting to observe what in reality happens within mnemonic landscapes and how that can be related to collective memories, mnemonic battles, mnemonic synchronisation, mnemonic communities, et cetera. In this study museums are mostly understood as mnemonic landscapes. The question is among others raised what a museum space tells us, and what kind of mnemonic battles are fought in it.

Unfortunately, the study of what has been said about mnemonic landscapes as provided above is not enough to build a thorough understanding of mnemonic landscapes (especially museums), and is certainly not enough to build a satisfactory conceptual and methodological framework. Fortunately, many well established authors, as mentioned above, have paid attention to the relationship between collective memory and space, and have produced many insightful frameworks and conceptualisations to research the wider topic of the mnemonics of collective memory. This framework is taken as a basis and is expanded with the concept of mnemonic landscapes. In this way space is brought into the research on collective memory. Not in the way most authors tread space: as a factor that influences memory or that is a totem that can bring certain memories to the forefront. No, the perspective of mnemonic landscapes tries to go deeper, as we have seen. It tries to determine how space can shape and reshape memory, but also how (the needs of collective) memory can shape and reshape space.

The studies of Yates, Anderson, Zerubavel, Nora and mental maps are insightful in this regard because they provide most of the tools to build a conceptual and methodological research framework by which one can further explore the relationship between space (landscapes/museums) and collective memory. Still, before we can turn to this operationalization of the theoretical framework as sketched above by means of a consistent research conceptual framework and methodology we need to consider first the research done on the violent (Dutch) colonial history and memory, and on (Dutch) colonialism and memory in museums.

### **3.2 Colonialism as part of Dutch history and memory**

Collective memories about conflicts are in a sense a specific kind of collective memory because there is a lot of strife over them. People are almost never able to agree upon the specific nature, culture and order of events that are connected to conflict. The very violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago is no exception to this. So, if we want to understand how the Dutch collective memory of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago is shaped and reshaped by the mnemonic landscape of museums we must first look at the new insights in the study of colonialism, post-colonialism, conflict studies and the, strife over the, history and memory of the violent Dutch decolonisation of Indonesian archipelago in the Netherlands. This means that some attention needs to be given to theories and writing regarding (Dutch) (post-)colonialism.

#### *3.2.1 Said & Gregory: colonialism, postcolonialism and orientalism*

A lot of authors have written about colonialism and post-colonialism. For this research it is necessary to focus on two of them: the American literary theorist Edward Said (1935-2003) and the British geographer Derek Gregory (1951). Both focus on, among other topics, the histories and geographies of colonialism. They try to understand how Western attitudes to and ideas about the East influenced and influence the way writers, philosophers, researchers, policy makers, politicians, et cetera, deal with and react to this world of 'otherness'.

At the core of the research of Said is an interest in how Europeans, especially writers, researchers and politicians, produce and reproduce knowledge about the 'other', in his case

the people living in the what he calls the Orient.<sup>151</sup> He calls this knowledge system Orientalism and argues that this Western system of knowing, of producing knowledge, is based on the (cultural) hegemony of the West, in the first place Europe and later also the other Western parts of the world. Said states about this that '(...) indeed it can be argued that the major component of in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in an outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures.'<sup>152</sup> He complicates this view by '(...) suggesting how the general liberal consensus that 'true' knowledge is fundamentally nonpolitical (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not 'true' knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced.'<sup>153</sup> This label of true knowledge can then be used to guide research into certain directions. Also by silencing counter narratives and critical ideas. Furthermore, to summarize, Said formulates the idea that '(...) European and then American interest in the Orient was political according to some of the obvious historical accounts of it that [he has given], but that it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically along with the brute political, economic and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that is obviously was in the field [of] Orientalism.'<sup>154</sup>

The culture and background of this system of producing knowledge is augmented by trying to define what Orientalism in its core is and does. About this Said writes that Orientalism is '(...) a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a bias geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand in some cases to control manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world, it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in raw, but rather it is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kind of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any to the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power of moral (as with ideas about that 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do).'<sup>155</sup> In essence the real argument made by Said is '(...) that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such had less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world.'<sup>156</sup>

In the arguments made in *Orientalism* are thus twofold. On the one hand, as the American historian James Clifford (1945) put it: '(...) the key theoretical issue raised by Orientalism (...) concerns the status of all forms of thought and representation for dealing with the alien.'<sup>157</sup> Orientalism is in essence a study of how the West constructed, and in some

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<sup>151</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Classics: London/New York/e.a. 2003); and: Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (ninth print, Alfred A. Knopf, inc.; New York/Toronto 1994).

<sup>152</sup> Edward Said, 'From Orientalism', in: Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Columbia University Press: New York 1994) 132-149, there 134.

<sup>153</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 10.

<sup>154</sup> Said, 'From Orientalism', 137.

<sup>155</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 12.

<sup>156</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>157</sup> Anna Green and Kathleen Troup (red.), *Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-century History and Theory* (Manchester University Press: Manchester 1999) 280.

ways still constructs, their 'other'.<sup>158</sup> However, this insight prompted Said to make a second important remark. This is that the construction of the dichotomy between the West and the Other – the occident and the orient – is at the same time also a construction of the West – the occident – itself. By looking at and defining what the Other is, the West could without acknowledging this process, and thus by denying that any active reflection was needed, construct an image of itself. This was mostly constructed as a positive opposite to the defined other. So in this sense the West needed the Orient or the Other to create an image of itself.<sup>159</sup> This by means of '(...) a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans (...)'<sup>160</sup> This cultural process has a dynamic and very complex relationship with colonialism and imperialism.

This relationship is mentioned in *Orientalism*. Still, the nature and culture of the relationship between the West and its colonies – and thus also the relationship between (Western) culture and imperialism – is only discussed swiftly in *Orientalism*. A state of affairs of which Said was aware and which prompted him to dedicate a book to this complex topic, called *Culture and Imperialism*.<sup>161</sup> In this book he gathers '(...) together some ideas about the general relationship between culture and empire (...)', and discusses the '(...) general worldwide pattern of imperial culture, and [the] historical experience of resistance against empire (...)'.<sup>162</sup> At the core of his research Said places the literature and novels. He shows in his study of these literary works how Western culture influenced colonialism and imperialism, but at the same time how de-colonization again influenced the production of literature. The ideas and concepts that flow out of this research are not only important for the field of literary studies but are useful and have implication for the study of colonialism and post-colonialism.

To understand the points that Said makes one first must acknowledge that the authors of the nineteenth en twentieth-century produced their works within an imperial (or orientalist) framework. One thus must accept the idea that culture and imperialism are not separate operating entities. This is not a popular view because the literature works of arts as studied by Said, these praised beacons of culture and history, are mostly conceived as outside politics. 'Culture conceived in this way can become a protective enclosure: check your politics at the door before you enter it.'<sup>163</sup> Culture should thus not be seen as '(...) antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations – but as an extraordinary varied field of endeavor.'<sup>164</sup> Understanding the connection between imperialism and culture, with its many expressions – of which literature is just one –, calls for the implementation of a more include and systematic framework or paradigm.<sup>165</sup> Rather than ignoring or condemning the connections or relationships between them, mostly the outcome of the realities of the societies people lived and live in, Said suggests '(...) that what we learn about this hitherto ignored aspect actually and truly enhances our reading and understanding (...)'.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, '(...) the history of imperialism and its culture can [and should] now be studied as neither monolithic nor reductively compartmentalized, separate, distinct.

This study shows several sides to the culture of imperialism. On the one hand one discover the view '(...) that the source of the world's significant action and life is in the west,

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<sup>158</sup> On this there will be illuminated below when the work of Derek Gregory is discussed.

<sup>159</sup> Anju M. Paul, 'The 'other' looks back': racial distancing and racial alignment in migrant domestic workers' stereotypes about white and Chinese employers', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, 6 (2011) 1068-1087, there 1068-1070.

<sup>160</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

<sup>161</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibidem*, xi-xii.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*, xiv.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem*, 13.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*, xiv.

whose representatives seem at liberty to visit their fantasies and philanthropies upon a mind-deadened Third World. In this view, the outlying regions of the world have no life, history or culture to speak of, no independence or integrity worth representing without the West.’<sup>167</sup> Still, there also needs to be noticed that the world has changed (...) in ways that have surprised, and often alarmed, metropolitan Europeans and Americans, who now confront large non-white immigrant populations in their midst, and face an impressive roster of newly empowered voices asking for their narratives to be heard. The point (...) is that such populations and voices have been there for some time, thanks to the globalized process set in motion in modern imperialism; to ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientalists, the interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world in the past century.’<sup>168</sup>

This argument is extended to the present and complicated by the statement the even though the so called age of empire ended after the period of (territorial) decolonization, imperialism itself, and thus Orientalism, continues to influence and shape our contemporary societies. Or as said put it: ‘In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.’<sup>169</sup> This point connects with the ideas that ‘(...) scarcely any attention has been paid to (...) the privileged role of culture in the modern imperial experience, and little notice taken of the fact that the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadow over our own times.’<sup>170</sup>

Still, Said acknowledge that ‘the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise’ are gone.<sup>171</sup> Because of this development the in many cases dominant and constructed European narratives and histories, which were used to further and sustain the European hegemony, and in which colonialism was placed within a global framework of capitalist development, were rejected and replaced by a narrative of history in which local stories and realities, the fragmented image of many different peoples, were placed at the center.<sup>172</sup> In this current of change Said at the same time sees a disturbing continuity. The ‘(...) idea that has scarcely varied is that there is an “us” and a “them,” each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident.’<sup>173</sup> So although things are changing, the culture of imperialism is still very much at large, although in ever changing ways. This point becomes even more clear when we look at what Said, and in his footsteps Gregory, writes about space, memory and geography.

One of the first things Said surveys in connecting with the above mentioned is the culture of the connection between past and present. For him past and present are very much connected and intertwined because ‘(...) how we formulate or represent the past shapes our understanding and views of the present.’<sup>174</sup> The role of empire and the culture of empire, an ongoing process, is for him apparent in this reality, but ‘(...) [i]t is difficult (...) to show the involvement of culture with expanding empires, to make observations about art that preserve its unique endowments and at the same time map its affiliations.’<sup>175</sup> Still, Said advocates that ‘(...) we must attempt this, and set the art in the global, earthly context. Territory and

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<sup>167</sup> Ibidem, xix.

<sup>168</sup> Ibidem, xx.

<sup>169</sup> Ibidem, 9.

<sup>170</sup> Ibidem, 5.

<sup>171</sup> Ibidem, xxiv.

<sup>172</sup> Green and Troup, *Houses of History*, 278-285.

<sup>173</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxv.

<sup>174</sup> Ibidem, 4.

<sup>175</sup> Ibidem, 7.

possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, which has meant that we must think about habitation, but it has also meant that people have planned to *have* more territory and therefore must do something about its indigenous residents. At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others.’<sup>176</sup> In this way past, present, culture, imperialism and territory are all very much intertwined. Not in the least because of the role of imagination, construction and representation in the understanding and appropriation of and over these issues.

It then is also not surprising that for Said Orientalism must be seen as a profound spatial process. ‘What we must reckon with is a long and slow process of appropriation by which Europe, or the European awareness of the Orient, transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into begin administrative, economic and even military. The fundamental change was a spatial and geographical one, or rather it was change in the quality of geographical and spatial apprehension so far as the Orient was concerned. The centuries-old designation of geographical space to the east of Europe as ‘Oriental’ was partly political, partly doctrinal and partly imaginative; it implied no necessary connection between actual experience of the Orient and knowledge of what is Oriental (...). In the classical and often temporally remote form in which it was reconstructed by the Orientalist, in the precisely actual form in which the modern Orient was lived in, studied or imagined, the geographical space of the Orient was penetrated, worked over, taken hold off.’<sup>177</sup> A process or practice that did not end when after the process of decolonization but lives on in many cultural forms, among which are the practice of science, the arts, economics, and politics.

It is Gregory that takes the ideas of Said and uses them to study the contemporary conflicts in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq. In his study Gregory pays a lot of attention to the construction of the ‘other’ by means of what he calls imaginative geographies. For him these imaginative geographies, that he takes from Said his work on Orientalism, ‘(...) are constructions that fold distance into difference through a series of specializations. They work (...) by multiplying partitions and enclosures that serve to demarcate “the same” from “the other,” at once constructing and calibrating a gap between the two by “designating in one mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’.’<sup>178</sup> In this process new things are represented as new forms of things that are already familiar. ‘This Protean power of Orientalism is extremely important (...) because the stationary structure that is authorized by these accretions is also in some substantial sense *performative*. In other words, *it produces the effects that it names*.’<sup>179</sup>

This process is illuminated upon by Gregory when he studies three cases: Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq. The interesting point in these studies is how a deconstruction of the narrative surrounding these conflicts show how Orientalism, in the form of imaginative geographies, is still at large and shapes how the West looks at its other or others. Furthermore, Gregory shows that these imaginative geographies are used to legitimacy and frame the ensuing conflicts in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq. These examples in addition show ‘(...) how performances of space articulated through imaginative geographies can fold difference into distance, simultaneously conjuring up and holding at bay the strange, the unnatural, the monstrous.’<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>177</sup> Said, ‘From Orientalism’, 147-148.

<sup>178</sup> Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Blackwell Publishing: Malden/Oxford/Victoria 2004) 17.

<sup>179</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 17.

<sup>180</sup> Ibidem, 249.

Gregory ends his arguments with a statement on the importance of this research in imaginative geography and what this research can bring. He states that if ‘(...) we can understand the multiple ways in which difference is folded into distance, and the complex figurations through which time and space are threaded into these tense constellations, we might perhaps see that (...) “distend strangers” are not so distant after all – and not so strange either. For this possibility to be realized – for us to cease turning on the treadmill of the colonial present – it will be necessary to explore other specializations and other topologies, and to turn our imaginative geographies into geographical imaginations that enlarge and enhance our sense of the world and enable us to situate ourselves within it with care, concern, and humility.’<sup>181</sup>

It is surprising to observe that the ideas as postulated by Said are not much taken up, utilized or expended. Most authors choose to create responses in the construction of: ‘yes, but...’.<sup>182</sup> A good example of this is the commentary by Dennis Porter in his article ‘Orientalism and its problems’. He argues, in line with most commentators, that Orientalism is presented by Said as to monolithic.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore he points out some contradictions in the work of Said, which he describes to the use of both insight from Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937).<sup>184</sup> Secondly there must be acknowledged that there also is a second school of critics. This school rejects the work Said altogether. The best example of this is the Indian Marxist Critic Aijaz Ahmad, who in his article ‘Orientalism and after’ argues that the work of Said must be placed in its own context, and that it is the outcome of this context. In this sense Ahmad does to Said what Said to (post)colonial texts.<sup>185</sup> Also, the article is in some regards a personal attack on Said.<sup>186</sup>

Although the debates surrounding Orientalism are diverse and by times fierce, they have not produced a consensus. At the same time, as the work of Gregory shows, the ideas of Said are still used and in some cases can be very insightful. As is the case for this study in which the work of Said is important for the context and for giving some basic insights in how museums’ imbeddedness in culture may shape and reshape the Dutch colonial past.

### 3.2.2 Remembering contested pasts

Above there is already paid some attention to the connection between (collective) memory and war, violence and trauma. The aim here is to go deeper into some interesting theoretical developments that happened over the last years, especially those in connection with the memory of the wars of decolonisation.

It is useful to continue here with the work by Gregory because he theorises and contemplates upon how one might ‘(...) understand the cultural practices that are inscribed within our contemporary “tradings of memory?”’<sup>187</sup> Postcolonialism is for Gregory the tool to look at this memory of the colonial past: ‘(...) to retrieve its shapes, like the chalk outlines at a crime scene, and to recall the living bodies they so imperfectly summon to presence (...) to examine it, disavow them, and dispel them.’<sup>188</sup> In this sense memory is an integral part and in

<sup>181</sup> Ibidem, 262.

<sup>182</sup> Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, ‘Part Two: Theorizing the West: Introduction’, in: Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Columbia University Press: New York 1994) 125-131, there 128.

<sup>183</sup> Williams and Chrisman, ‘Part Two’, 128-129.

<sup>184</sup> Dennis Porter, ‘Orientalism and its problems’, in: Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Columbia University Press: New York 1994) 150-161.

<sup>185</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, ‘Orientalism and after’, in: Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Columbia University Press: New York 1994) 162-171.

<sup>186</sup> Williams and Chrisman, ‘Part Two’, 129.

<sup>187</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 9.

<sup>188</sup> Ibidem.

some regards even a goal of postcolonialism. It should and even must ‘(...) counter *amnesiac* histories of colonialism but also stage “a return to the repressed” to resist the seductions of *nostalgic* histories of colonialism.’<sup>189</sup> For Gregory these so called ‘terrible twins’ (‘the inability to remember and the incapacity to do anything else’<sup>190</sup>) are at the core of his study and his research on memory and geography. He makes the study of the collective memory, the art of memory, the focal point in tracing the production of the colonial present.

Herein amnesia is understood as the process by which people, especially those imbedded in metropolitan cultures, forget the troublesome sides of colonialism. These troublesome sides are plentiful, but include the construction of colonial cultures into others, the violence of colonialism (and decolonization), the practices which deprived the colonial cultures of the right to make their own histories, and ‘(...) the exactions, suppressions, and complicities that colonialism forced upon the peoples it subjugated (...)’<sup>191</sup> These processes of forgetting or suppressing, of erasure, are not only delusions but can be dangerous. ‘We forget that it is often ordinary people who do such awful, extraordinary things, and so foreclose the possibility that in similar circumstances most of us would, in all likelihood, have done much the same. To acknowledge this is not to protect our predecessors from criticism: it is to recall the part we are called to play – an continue to play – in the performance of the colonial present.’<sup>192</sup>

The so called nostalgia is understood as the longing for the colonial past that has disappeared. People idolise a picture of a frozen and static colonial past. They mourn the passing of (romanticised) cultures that they perceive as traditional, unspoiled, authentic, familiar, beautiful, exotic, etc. This is not a harmless process because it works as a cultural cryonics, which radiuses ‘the other culture’ to a series of fetishisms that can be brought back to life through metropolitan circuits of consumption, of memory and of commemoration (in for example museums).<sup>193</sup> This nostalgia is not only felt in relation to these images of past cultures but also to the power and privileges that the colonials had in these colonial societies. A troublesome reality and an indication that colonialism is far from over.<sup>194</sup>

Gregory makes some interesting points in his writing on amnesia and nostalgia. Still, it is the anthropologist and historian Ann Laura Stoler (1949) that complicates this dichotomy by introducing the concept of aphasia. This is an interesting concept because it forces us to ask the question what the role of human agency is in the processes of amnesia and nostalgia. In that sense it brakes open our, to psychology indebted, definitions of amnesia and nostalgia. For Stoler at issue is not simple ignorance nor unexpected knowledge. Her thinking ‘(...) reflects on the conceptual processes, academic conventions, and affective practices that both elicit and elude recognition of how colonial histories matter and how colonial pasts become muffled or manifest in contemporary [society].’<sup>195</sup> She looks into ‘(...) the peculiar conditions that have rendered (...) colonial history alternately irretrievable and accessible, at once selectively available and out of reach.’<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>190</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Cracy John and the Bishop and Other Essays* (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame 1999).

<sup>191</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 10.

<sup>192</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>193</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>194</sup> Barbara Hooper and Olivier Kramsch, ‘Post-colonising Europe: The geopolitics of globalization, empire, and borders: here and there, now and then’, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 98, 4 (2007) 526-534.

<sup>195</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France’, *Public Culture* 23, 1 (2011) 121-156, there 122.

<sup>196</sup> Stoler, ‘Colonial Aphasia’, 122

To comprehend how Stoler understands this process of remembering and forgetting we must look at the definition she gives of the term she coins for it: aphasia. She begins by stating that forgetting and amnesia are misleading terms (because of their connotations with psychology and mental faculties) and that aphasia is a more apt term because it ‘(...) captures not only the nature of that blockage but also the feature of loss. Calling this phenomenon “colonial aphasia” is of course not an appeal to organic cognitive deficit (...). Rather, it is to emphasize both loss of access and active dissociation. In aphasia, an occlusion of knowledge it the issue. It is not a matter of ignorance or absence. Aphasia is a dismembering, a difficulty speaking, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things. Aphasia in its many forms describes a difficulty retrieving both conceptual and lexical vocabularies and, most important, a difficulty comprehending what is spoken.’<sup>197</sup> In this definition traces can be found of the statement made by the French psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon (1925-1961): ‘The European knows and does not know.’<sup>198</sup> And the idea of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) that people can know and do not know at the same time.<sup>199</sup> In this light there must be recognised that ‘(...) aphasia highlights – far more than does “forgetting” – important features of the relationship among (...) historical production, the “immigrant question,” and the absence/presence of colonial relations. At issue is the irretrievability of a vocabulary, a limited access to it, a simultaneous presence of a thing and its absence, a presence and the misrecognitions of it.’<sup>200</sup>

Still, as ‘(...) a metaphoric concept, aphasia only does so much work’ Stoler notes.<sup>201</sup> She therefore argues that we ‘(...) need a better understanding of how occlusions of knowledge are achieved and more insight about the political, scholarly, and cognitive domains in which knowing is disabled, attention is redirected, things are renamed, and disregard is revived and sustained.’<sup>202</sup> This she explicitly connects to imperialism. For ‘[i]mperial formations are infamous for fostering these fragmenting processes and for creating fractured space. (...) an enduring “privilege of empires” is “to make their histories appear as History ... predicated on dissociations that separate relational histories.” (...) A confronting of the imperial privilege to render some histories as History demands not historical shortcuts to show that everything has a colonial origin. Rather, it demand specific and located histories of the present that retain the complexities and ambiguities of colonial entanglements as well as attentiveness to when they no longer matter at all. History in an active voice is only partly about the past.’<sup>203</sup>

In line of this study it is interesting to note that Stoler explicitly examines Nora and his *les lieux de mémoire*. She takes up the criticism that Nora does not pay attention to French colonialism and imperialism. Only, she goes further by explaining this absence by means of the concept and processes of aphasia. The argument she then makes is that the idea of Nora that there are no colonial *lieux de mémoire* is the consequence of his background, education and upbringing. ‘(...) Nora was “committed to understanding the milieu in which he lived, one that required a will to sympathy without excluding the liberty to judgment and, when necessary, severity. And judgmental it was. Nora’s nationalistic disdain and class contempt for those who made up (...)’ the French colonial settler population figures widely in his

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<sup>197</sup> Ibidem, 125.

<sup>198</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil 1952) 108; and: Robert Bernasconi, ‘The European knows and does not know: Fanon’s response to Sartre’, in: Max Silverman (eds.), *Frantz Fanon’s ‘Black Skin, White Masks’* (Manchester University Press: Manchester/New York 2006) 100-111, there 100.

<sup>199</sup> Stoler, ‘Colonial Aphasia’, 141.

<sup>200</sup> Ibidem, 145.

<sup>201</sup> Ibidem, 153.

<sup>202</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>203</sup> Ibidem, 155

work.<sup>204</sup> ‘Given this narrative, the absence of colonial memory sites in *Les lieux de mémoire* (...) was not due to either oversight or blindness. (...) nothing was forgotten. As Freud wrote, those afflicted with aphasia have severed, “interrupted” links in “pathways” and “systems of association.” For Nora, these “pathways” were blocked by the categories in which he operated and thus by how the associated words with people and thing. Dissociations served his radicalized accounting of a failed colonial project.’<sup>205</sup>

These insights, given by Gregory and Stoler, hold in them the decree to examine further what and especially how Western societies, the former colonisers or the metropolitan Western cultures, remember their colonial pasts, and how (and also why) these processes or paradigms connect past and present. These perspectives are new because they go beyond the normal questions of what is remembered and why there is remembrance. They flow from an interest in how people deal with colonialism, a phenomenon widely seen as undesirable and shameful, and then especially the purely negative sides like violence, repression, racism, et cetera. The feeling that people have with and how they relate to those black pages of history are very fascinating. Collective guilt over these black pages, for example, ‘(...) is not an automatic consequence of remembering (ore being reminded of) the in group’s past misdeeds. On the contrary, it is a rather rare phenomenon, because it involves incorporating negative element into the group’s social identity. So group member often try to “forget”, minimize, or negate events that could trigger this negative emotion.’<sup>206</sup>

Many studies have addressed this issue by examining ‘the antecedents of collective guilt’, ‘the consequences of collective guilt’, ‘the role played by (...) group-based emotions’, et cetera.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore attention to the memory of colonialism and decolonization is given in studies on contested pasts, the politics of memory, national colonial histories, contested histories, and more.<sup>208</sup> These studies are insightful and in most cases of a very recent date. At the same time they evade or do not find the question interesting by which mechanisms collective memory and colonial or decolonization violence are connected. By addressing the collective memory of a violent decolonization as seen in museums (with then special attention for the relationship between this collective memory and construction aspects of space for the formation of this collective memory) the hope is to be able to connect the different fields of studies as mentioned above. Still, first some attention has to be given to how there has been written about the Dutch memory of the Dutch decolonisation of the Indonesian archipelago. This after all is the subject or central theme of this study.

### 3.2.3 Debating the Dutch memory of the decolonisation of Indonesia

Dutch identity and Dutch collective memory are very much linked. They are in constant dialogue and in this relationship there can be no Dutch identity whiteout Dutch collective memory because it is this memory that provides the building blocks by which

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<sup>204</sup> Ibidem, 147.

<sup>205</sup> Ibidem, 148.

<sup>206</sup> Chiara Volpato and Laurent Licata, ‘Introduction: Collective Memoires of Colonial Violence’, *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 4, 1 (2010) 4-10, there 7.

<sup>207</sup> Volpato and Licata, ‘Introduction’, 7.

<sup>208</sup> Some examples are: Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer (eds.), *Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race, and Nation* (Duke University Press: Durham/London 2009); Aleida Assman and Linda Short (eds.), *Memory and Political Change* (Palgrave MacMillan: Hampshire/New York 2012); Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, *Contested Past: The politics of memory* (Routledge: London/New York 2003); Martin Thomas (eds.), *The French Colonial Mind: Volume 2: Violence, Military Encounters, and Colonialism* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln/London 2011); Timothy G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (eds.), *Commemorating War: the politics of memory* (Transaction Publishers: News Brunswick/London 2004); and: Denis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory* (Routledge: New York/London 2011).

Dutch identity can be formed.<sup>209</sup> In the case of the Netherlands and its inhabitants one can recognise a very peculiar self-image or national identity. The Dutch historian Willem Frijhoff (1942) formulated it as follows: ‘The Dutch are used to imagine their society and its history as peaceful, well-balanced, consensual and convivial, non-violent, equal, democratic and tolerant: in brief, a society without history in the heroic or cruel sense of the word.’<sup>210</sup> Frijhoff tries to explain this self-image by suggesting that the Dutch ‘(...) have always managed rather effectively to organize their society so as to collectively avoid major disasters, or to contain excessive violence by an advanced process of – to paraphrase Norbert Elias – civilisation’<sup>211</sup>

This is a peculiar statement and even more so a peculiar self-image because it totally overlooks, ignores and sometimes even denies the dark pages of Dutch history and disclaims the more oppressive, racist and violent aspects of Dutch culture and identity. A good example of this, and a true eye-opener in this regard, is the book *Nederland als bezettende mogendheid 1648-2011 (The Netherlands as an occupying nation 1648-2011)* written by the Dutch sociologist C.J. Lammers (1928-2009).<sup>212</sup> He argues convincingly that the Dutch were in many ways violent, repressive, oppressive, imperial and as such occupiers of other peoples, their land and their cultures. Lammers recognises that this reality is not part of the Dutch collective memory and self-image.<sup>213</sup> In that sense, he would agree with Frijhoff when this author states: ‘Unwelcome groups or dimensions in history have been removed or evacuated to the margins of orderly Dutch burgher society.’<sup>214</sup> This in spite ‘(...) of the massive presence of historically shaped landscapes and cityscapes, (...)’ because for the Dutch people their identity is a affair of the present. They represent their identity mostly through ritual and not in symbolic narratives about its history or in frozen memories.<sup>215</sup>

This paradox or better put discrepancy between the on the outside smooth collective memory and the more complicated reality, geography and history, has in recent years become the subject of study and debate. In reality the picture is far more patchy than as it is perceived by ordinary citizens and researchers alike. Or as the Dutch historian Gert Oostindie (1955) put it: ‘The fragmentation of memory is one of the many legacies of Dutch colonialism in Asia, Africa, the Americas and ultimately in the Netherlands itself. (...) Perhaps only the memory of the episode of decolonization arouses strong feelings in [and only in] Indonesia – the rest seems forgotten by all but a few specialists.’<sup>216</sup> Interesting at the same time is that these memories of colonialism and decolonization have in some ways moved quietly from the margins into Dutch society, especially with the ascent of post-colonial migration. ‘[C]olonialism has literally come home to the metropolis.’<sup>217</sup>

At the same time the literary scientist and historian Paul Bijl argues convincingly that the Dutch colonial and decolonization past are very present in Dutch society. Traces of it can

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<sup>209</sup> Pemala Pattynama, ‘Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations’, in: Ulbe Bosma (eds.), *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2012) 175-192, there 178.

<sup>210</sup> Willem Frijhoff, ‘The Relevance of Dutch History, or: Much in Little? Reflections on the Practice of History in the Netherlands’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden – Low Countries Historical Review* 125, 2-3 (2010) 7-44, there 19.

<sup>211</sup> Frijhoff, ‘The Relevance of Dutch History’, 19

<sup>212</sup> C.J. Lammers, *Nederland als bezettende mogendheid 1648-2011* (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen : Amsterdam 2003).

<sup>213</sup> Lammers, *Nederland als bezettende mogendheid*, 7-8.

<sup>214</sup> Frijhoff, ‘The Relevance of Dutch History’, 21.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibidem*, 31.

<sup>216</sup> Gert Oostindie, ‘Migration and its legacies in the Dutch colonial world’, in: Gert Oostindie (eds.), *Dutch colonialism, migration and cultural heritage* (KITLV Press: Leiden 2008) 1-22, there 1 and 19.

<sup>217</sup> Oostindie, ‘Migration and its legacies’, 19.

be found everywhere, not least thus in the presence of post colonial immigrants.<sup>218</sup> At the same time these traces are not recognised or articulated. There is a discourse that stipulates that the Dutch are forgetting this past. This paradox between presence and forgetting Bijl explains by combining the concept of aphasia from the work of Ann Laura Stoler (1949) with the concept of memorability derived from the work of Judith Butler (1956). In this way he shows ‘(...) that, far from being made absent through cover-ups and conspiracies, Dutch colonialism and its violence sometimes appear as forgotten in the Netherlands because the victims of colonialism are not memorable within a national context and there is no language available to discuss them as a part of Dutch history. There is absence of word to describe ones wounds. This condition of cultural aphasia is not due to lack of traces of colonial violence in the Netherlands, where for instance photographs and other documents of colonial atrocity have always been present in the public sphere, but to a way of framing these traces which makes them appear to be outside national history and collective Dutch concerns. Briefly put: national history and colonial history are mostly kept apart.’<sup>219</sup> In his arguments Bijl furthermore makes a connection with the work of Halbwachs because with ‘(...) a focus on memorability (...) the question no longer is *if* there is memory, but *how* there is memory, even if we call it ‘forgetting’.’<sup>220</sup>

Bijl thus gives specific and broad attention to the *how* of the Dutch (collective) memory of the violent decolonization of Indonesia. And he is because of this part of the first school of research into the Dutch remembrance of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. There are some other authors that also touch upon this exact same issue.

The Dutch professor of Southeast Asian Studies Vincent Houben (1957) studied the debates over the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago and the attempt to come to term with this troublesome past as part of the Dutch collective memory.<sup>221</sup> His conclusion is that ‘opinion leaders and historians have (...) not been able to solve the issue, so that the way in which the Netherlands lost their Southeast-Asian colony continues to trouble the Dutch self-image.’<sup>222</sup> He furthermore makes a distinction between the Dutch self-image and the memory of decolonization, and argues that these are two realms that the average Dutch burgher keeps separated. Silence is preferred over debate and this troublesome past is left to the ‘wise man’ (only sometimes women) that are experts on the subject.<sup>223</sup> To explain this situation (the how questions) he points to the culture of Dutch society, the need for consensus and the influence of the protestant ethic and morality.

The historian Elsbeth Locher-Scholten (1944) also examines the way debates about the colonial past and especially the decolonization have emerged and disappeared in Dutch society. In this regard she gives special attention to Dutch politics and how they handled the official writing of the history of the decolonization.<sup>224</sup> At the same time she frames these debates in a more psychological discourse and in this way tries to look for a new way forward, a different way of approaching an examining the handling of this troublesome past. The need for this she explains by paraphrasing the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1972-1945): ‘geschiedenis van het kolonialisme is de vorm waarin de Nederlandse cultuur zich

<sup>218</sup> Paul Bijl, ‘Colonial memory and forgetting in the Netherlands and Indonesia’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, 3-4 (2012) 441-461, there 446.

<sup>219</sup> Bijl, ‘Colonial memory and forgetting’, 458.

<sup>220</sup> Ibidem, 444.

<sup>221</sup> Houben works mostly in Germany: Humboldt Universität Berlin and Universität Passau.

<sup>222</sup> Vincent J.H. Houben, ‘The unmastered past: decolonization and Dutch collective memory’, *European Review*, 8, 1 (2000) 77-85, there 77.

<sup>223</sup> Vincent J.H. Houwen, ‘A Torn Soul: The Dutch Public Discussion on the Colonial Past in 1995’, *Indonesia* 63, ? (1997) 47-66.

<sup>224</sup> Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, ‘Een bronnenpublikatie als een signaal van koloniaal trauma? Ontstaan en ontvangst van de Offiële bescheiden’, *BMGN - LCHR* 111, 4 (1996) 473-492.

rekenschap geeft van haar koloniaal verleden.’<sup>225</sup> She then continues by putting this remark in a more personal framework: ‘Persoonlijke zingeving van traumatische ervaringen dient getoetst te worden aan meer algemene noties over de realiteit; anders bouwt het individu een nieuwe schijnwereld op.’<sup>226</sup> For her the language of psychology in combination with historic explanations provide a way out of the stale mate in the remembrance and non-remembrance of the Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>227</sup>

The work of the Dutch historian Frances Gouda (1950) has many similarities with the work of Locher-Scholten because Gouda also put forward the need to keep examining the Dutch colonial past and memory.<sup>228</sup> Only the work of Gouda touches on Dutch colonialism in the Indonesia archipelago in more general terms and has less specific attention for the war of decolonization. This broad perspective has the advantage that Gouda can show how different views on or memories of Dutch colonialism developed, and how these over the years interacted and changed. In this way she clearly shows that the Dutch collective memory regarding colonialism is in constant flux which is influenced by many different agents.<sup>229</sup>

Other recent scholarship in this regard is the product of the Dutch historian Stef Scagliola (1958). She on the other hand narrows the field of inquiry by only looking at how the Dutch society tried to come to terms with the Dutch war crimes committed during the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>230</sup> Special attention is paid to how Dutch war veterans, the media, historians and politicians have shaped the slow process of coming to terms with the controversial aspects of the decolonization war in Indonesia.<sup>231</sup> She explains this reality by pointing at: ‘the problematic remembrance of a lost guerrilla-war’, ‘the priorities of post-war Dutch-Indonesian relationships [prioritizing economic cooperation]’, ‘Dutch dominant political culture of consensus-seeking’, ‘the lack of familiarity with a culture of violence in the motherland (as opposed to the colony)’, ‘a self-image of the Netherlands as a moral beacon’, and ‘[t]he fact that the struggle generated widely divergent individual experiences’.<sup>232</sup> In this way she takes together, and provides as oversight of, the current views on and explanations for the reality of the difficulty of Dutch society to come to terms with its colonial past.

Besides these few scholars that directly focus on the subject of the Dutch remembrance of the violent Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago there luckily is, mostly sideways, attention for this subject in different strands of research on Dutch colonialism. Most of these authors are Dutch but there are some other nationalities present and some of the Dutch authors work(ed) abroad, have non-Dutch ancestors or grew up aboard (some in (former) Dutch colonies). There regrettably has to be observed that most authors do not make a clear distinction between history and memory or make the explicit choice to stay within the field of history. Furthermore, the debates as presented below overlap in most cases and the division given below thus is more a construction in hindsight useful to understand the scientific debates and interest than that it is a true historic reality. Below there will be

<sup>225</sup> Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, ‘Verwerking en koloniaal trauma: balans van begrippen’, *Bzzlletin* 24, 228 (1995) 3-9, there 8.

<sup>226</sup> Locher-Scholten, ‘Verwerking en koloniaal trauma’, 8-9.

<sup>227</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>228</sup> Frances Gouda, ‘The Unbearable Lightness of Memory: Fragmentations of Cultural Memory and Recycling the Dutch Colonial Past’, *Groniek* 40, ? (2007) 9-27, there 22 and 27.

<sup>229</sup> Gouda, ‘The Unbearable Lightness of Memory’.

<sup>230</sup> Stef Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog: de Nederlandse oorlogsmisdaden in Indonesië en hun verwerking* (Balans: Amsterdam 2002).

<sup>231</sup> Stef Scagliola, ‘Cleo’s ‘unfinished business’: coming to terms with Dutch war crimes in Indonesia’s war of independence’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, 3-4 (2012) 419-439.

<sup>232</sup> Scagliola, ‘Cleo’s ‘unfinished business’’, 420-421 and 434.

illuminated on these different sides of, or different debates within, the study of the history and memory of Dutch colonialism.<sup>233</sup>

A first school of research, best described as political, in this regard focuses primarily on the governmental and military side of the decolonization war. There are generally speaking two ways in which scholars in this school do research. The first way focuses on official documentation. The prime examples of this are the *Excessenota* (a government report about possible war crimes committed by Dutch troops during the Indonesian war of independence), the assignment of the Dutch government to the historian M. Boon to gather data, and *the Officiële Bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische Betrekkingen 1945-1950* (a publication of sources) by the historian S.L. van der Wal (1910-1978).<sup>234</sup> The second way can be characterized by the will to interpret and to explain. Dutch sociologists like J.A.A. van Doorn (1925-2008) and W.J. Hendrix (1926), but also historians like L. de Jong (1914-2005), try to explain what happened and why it happened.<sup>235</sup>

The second school of research, best described as document orientated, focuses on the personal narratives and the personal documents of politicians, veterans, and other stakeholders. Interesting to observe is that in this research the veterans and Indische Netherlanders (and sometimes politicians) are quite active in the production of histories and the publication of personal documents like diaries and memoirs, but that academic research on these basis of these documents still has to be done.<sup>236</sup> Although the research institutes Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (NIMH), NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies (NIOD), and Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) jointly proposed such a research project on the basis of these document but this project could not count on government funding (Dutch as well as Indonesian) or on an interest of the Dutch and/or Indonesian societies.<sup>237</sup>

A third relevant school of research that can be constructed is best described by the work of the Dutch historians Martijn Eijckhoff (1967) and Marieke Bloembergen (1967).<sup>238</sup> They focus primarily on Dutch colonial history and heritage. This is thus not a specific focus on memory but there are some connection with it (which mostly focus on the period before 1942 and the use, meaning and handling of this heritage in current society). Central in this school of research is the way in which heritage is used to shape and reshape collective memories and how processes of change and meaning are present in it. However, what is remarkable to observe in this school of scientific inquiry is that there seems to be a silence on the heritage of violence, of war and of decolonization. Heritage is a buzzword in

<sup>233</sup> In this Historiography there is no room for a thorough reconstruction of the colonization and decolonization of the Indonesian archipel. When needed explanations or histories are given throughout this study. For a more complete history see for example: J.J.P. de Jong, *De waaier van het fortuin. De Nederlanders in Azië en de Indonesische archipel 1995-1950* (SDU Uitgevers: Den Haag 1998); Frans van Baardewijk, *Geschiedenis van Indonesië* (Walburg Pers: Zutphen 1998); Haryati Soebadio (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Indonesië: land, volk en cultuur* (Uniepers: Abcoude 1998); Scagliola, *Last van oorlog*; Frans Glissenaar, *Indië verloren, rampspoed geboren* (Verloren: Hilversum 2003) and: Steven Michael Drakeley, *The history of Indonesia* (Greenwood Press: Westport 2005).

<sup>234</sup> Locher-Scholten, 'Een bronnenpublikatie als signaal', 473-492; S.L. van der Wal, *Officiële bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische betrekkingen, 1945-1950* (Nijhoff: 's-Gravenhage 1971-1996).

<sup>235</sup> J.A.A. van Doorn and W.J. Hendrix, *Ontsporing van geweld: over het Nederlands/Indisch/Indonesisch conflict* (Universitaire Pers Rotterdam: Rotterdam 1970); and: L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog: Deel 11c: Nederlands-Indië III* (Martinus Nijhoff: Leiden 1986).

<sup>236</sup> Scagliola, *Last van oorlog*; and: Jeroen A.P. Arts, *Projectgids Inventarisatie Egodocumenten Indië-veteranen* (Leiden 2013).

<sup>237</sup> <http://www.indonesie45-50.nl/1/welkom> (Acced on 15 May 2014).

<sup>238</sup> Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, 'Conserving the past, mobilizing the Indonesian future: Archaeological sites, regime change and heritage politics in Indonesia in the 1950s', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 167, 4 (2011) 405-436.

contemporary society but is not used when the violent Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago is discussed. Apparently we deal with something here that is not deemed important enough to be conserved for future generations by the general Dutch population, or has Bloembergen put it: 'Wie politiek correct wil zijn, negeert uiteindelijk het verleden.'<sup>239</sup>

A fourth school or research is best represented by the Dutch historian Gert Oostindie (1955) and can be described as the study of the fragmented memory of Dutch colonialism.<sup>240</sup> At the centre of this research are the (collective) memories of the many groups connected by Dutch colonialism.<sup>241</sup> Research is thus not restricted to the Netherlands, and the groups of migrants from former colonies living there, but specifically goes back to the colonies and takes in their memories and views. In general this kind of study look at identity and politics of identity. Especially the consequences of colonialism for the formation of identity are of interest.<sup>242</sup> There furthermore is then also a very visible connecting made with question of migration and integration. Also, some remarks and connections are made with post-colonialism. Although, this field of study has not taken off in the Netherlands but more on that below.<sup>243</sup>

A fifth strand of research in regard to the memory of Dutch colonial history focuses on violence. This field of study can be divided in two. On the one hand you have the more descriptive scholarship of which the historians and sociologist as mentioned in the first two schools of scholarship above are prime examples. They describe, discuss or search for what happened, where it happened, at what time, et cetera. On the other hand you now see the emerging of a more structural and analytical kind of scholarship on the violence of the war of decolonization in the Indonesian archipelago. This is the consequence of the agenda setting by the Dutch historian Henk Schulte Nordholt firstly in his inaugural speech *Een staat van geweld (A state of violence)*.<sup>244</sup> In his further scholarship he illuminates on this by explaining that in his view the Indonesian 'patterns of violence' show a great continuity over time. Furthermore, he describes the Dutch colonial regime as 'a state of violence' (which is only marginally recognised in the Dutch history books) which established a '(...) regime of fear [that] continued to resonate in the memories of the people until the end of the colonial period'.<sup>245</sup> It are researchers like the Dutch historian Remco Raben (1962) and the American historian William H. Frederick (1941) that have taken these remarks serious and look into why violence happened.<sup>246</sup> They ask questions about the nature and culture of violence, and promote a more nuanced and differentiated view than can be found in the work of Schulte

<sup>239</sup> Marieke Bloembergen, 'Amsterdam: het Van Heutszmonument', in: H.W. van den Doel (eds.), *Nederland in de twintigste eeuw* (Bakker: Amsterdam 2005) 72-87, there 87.

<sup>240</sup> Gert Oostindie, 'Fragmentierte, Vergangenheitsbewältigung': Kolonialismus in der niederländischen Erinnerungskultur', in: Helma Lutz and Kathrin Gawarecki (eds.), *Kolonialismus und Erinnerungskultur: Die Kolonialvergangenheit im kollektiven Gedächtnis der deutschen und niederländischen Einwanderungsgesellschaft* (Waxman: Münster/New York/München/Berlin 2005) 41-52.

<sup>241</sup> Andrew Gross, 'From Tong-Tong to Tempo Doeloe: Eurasian Memory Work and the Bracketing of Dutch Colonial History, 1957-1961', *Indonesia* 70, ? (2000) 9-36.

<sup>242</sup> Gert Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands: Sixty-five years of forgetting, commemorating, silencing* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2010); Gert Oostindie, *History brought home: postcolonial migrations and the Dutch rediscovery of slavery* (Association of Caribbean Historians: Paramaribo 2008); and: Gert Oostindie, *Dutch colonialism, migration and cultural heritage* (KITLV Press: Leiden 2008).

<sup>243</sup> Gert Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands: Sixty-five years of forgetting, commemorating, silencing* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2010) 234-237.

<sup>244</sup> Henk Schulte Nordholt, *Een staat van geweld* (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam: Rotterdam 2000).

<sup>245</sup> Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'A genealogy of violence', in: Fredericus Colombijn and Jan Thomas Lindblad, *Roots of violence in Indonesia: contemporary violence in historical perspective* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore 2002) 33-41, there 34, 37 and 40.

<sup>246</sup> Remco Raben, 'On genocide and mass violence in colonial Indonesia', *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, 3-4 (2012) 485-502; and: William H. Frederick, 'The killing of Dutch and Eurasians in Indonesia's national revolution (1945-49) a 'brief genocide'', *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, 3-4 (2012) 359-380.

Northolt.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore they discuss the usefulness of the concept of genocide when one looks at the conflict and killing during the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. Although the concept seems promising the overall concluding seems to be that the conflict is not '(...) truly genocidal in systematic, intent and quantification, nor clear in its ethnic or class labelling of victims and perpetrators, it refuses to be pinned down on one type of violence of another.'<sup>248</sup>

A sixth direction of research is best explained by the often heard remark among scholars that study the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago that the remembrance of this violent war is overshadowed by the Dutch remembrance of the second world war. An interesting situation, especially when one takes into consideration that the suffering in the Indonesian archipelago was proportionally higher, included many groups (Dutch, Eurasian, Chinese, Indonesian, et cetera) and continued over a longer period of time because of the succession of wars over the period 1942-1950.<sup>249</sup> The central position of the Netherlands in the remembrance of the Second World War or conflict in general was facilitated by the effect that colony and metropolis were separated when remembrance or historical inquiry took place. Colonialism was regarded as the past and as not relevant for contemporary Dutch society. A picture that is reinforced when one looks at the writing about the remembrance of the Second World War. There is disproportional less space and attention for the war in the Pacific and the ensuing war of decolonization that followed.<sup>250</sup> Still, this does not mean, as the Dutch historians Iris van Ooijen and Ilse Raaijmakers show, that the hegemonic place of the Second World War in the Dutch collective memory makes the appearance of other memories of that period and its aftermath impossible.<sup>251</sup> On the contrary, the rituals of remembered surrounding the Second World War can provide a way to also remember the aspects of the Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. One example of this is the incorporation of the remembrance of the Dutch war veterans that fought in Indonesia during the period 1945-1950 in the national day of remembrance of the fourth of may. Another is the including in the exhibition at Camp Vught (Konzentrationslager Herzogenbusch) the memory of the at the Mollukan memory of their stay after their arrival in the Netherlands in the 1950 in this for them renamed Woonoord Lunetten (living area or dwelling Lunetten). The authors conclude on the basis of their research the remembrance of the Second World War can this be a platform for remembering the Indonesian war of Independence by means of so called multidirectional memory. Still, it is interesting to observe that in most cases, not to say all, it is the memory of the Second World War that is leading and that in some way Indonesia is glued on it. It seems to be a consensus seeking by which the collective practices of mainstream Dutch burgher society are augmented to cater also to other interest groups.

As last school of research that has to be mentioned here is the Dutch equivalent of Nora his *Les lieux de mémoire*, called *Plaatsen van Herinnering*.<sup>252</sup> In this multivolume project, that is less impressive and only containing actual physical places, there is space for

<sup>247</sup> Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses, 'Mass violence and the end of the Dutch colonial empire in Indonesia', *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, 3-4 (2012) 257-276, there 263.

<sup>248</sup> Raben, 'On genocide and mass violence', 492.

<sup>249</sup> Ulbe Bosma, 'Why is there no post-colonial debat in the Netherlands', in: Ulbe Bosma (eds.), *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2012) 193-211, there 203.

<sup>250</sup> See for example: Frank van Vree and Rob van der Laarse (eds.), *De dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context* (Uitgeverij Bert Bakker: Amsterdam 2009); and: Madelon de Keizer (eds.), *Een open zenuw: hoe wij ons de Tweede Wereldoorlog herinneren* (Uitgeverij Bert Bakker: Amsterdam 2010).

<sup>251</sup> Iris van Ooijen and Ilse Raaijmakers, 'Competitive or multidirectional memory? The interaction between postwar and postcolonial memory in the Netherlands', *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, 2-3 (2012) 463-483.

<sup>252</sup> Wim den Doel (eds.), *Plaatsen van herinnering* (Bert Bakker: Amsterdam 2005-2007); and: H.L. Wesseling, *Plaatsen van herinnering: een historisch succesverhaal* (Uitgever Bert Bakker: Amsterdam 2005).

the colonial past of the Netherlands. Still, it is interesting to observe that just as in the case of the work by Nora there is not much room for the (migrant or colonial) ‘other’ and the Netherlands is mostly discussed as a homogenous entity. Furthermore colonialism, imperialism and violence are mostly in the background. Still, one cannot deny that they did a slightly better job than Nora because they do discuss colonialism. So, on the one end the Dutch scholars did better work than Nora, on the other they make their own mistakes most notably by the reduction of the scope of the research and by writing mostly history instead of focussing on the different sides of, views upon or memories contained in a certain place.

We have seen that in the growing body of studies, books and articles on the Dutch history and memory of the decolonisation of Indonesia there are often made remarks or comments on the remembrance of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>253</sup> In these studies the line between Dutch culture, Dutch identity, Dutch history and Dutch memory is quite thin. It are subjects of continues debate. It is furthermore interesting to observe that much ‘(...) research has been undertaken into these issues, yet a truly comparative synthesis is left wanting.’<sup>254</sup> To this there must be added that a true comprehensive study of the tangible cultural and colonial heritage and memory, which is ‘(...) preserved in collective, conscious and unconscious memories and customs (...)’ and most often ‘(...) hidden away in archives, museums, libraries and other collections (...)’, is missing.<sup>255</sup>

This does not mean that no attention is given to the how the remembrance of the decolonization is (or is not) part of the Dutch colonial memory, as we have seen above. At the same time, as Bijl, Houben, Locher-Scholten, Scagliola, and other shows, there does not seem to be room for a realistic or comprehensive understanding of this decolonization within Dutch collective memory. There are a lot of processes at work, including but not limited to ignorance, denial, trauma, missing of language, missing of context, covering up, rediscovering, et cetera. So there is a debate on, or there have been several debates on and moments of public attention for, the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago and the role (and responsibility) of the Dutch people in it. These debates are mostly short lived and focus on fact-finding and above trying to come to a final and moral conclusion about past events.<sup>256</sup> Mostly with the aim of concluding the chapter, closing it and then moving on, there in the end is no true postcolonial debate and this does not seem to change in the short run.<sup>257</sup> In the end the result again and again seems to be the recurrence of silence over decolonization (and many other aspects of colonialism). This leads to a situation in which, according to the Dutch Historian J.J.P. de Jong, there arose two contrasting images: ‘(...) enerzijds dat an een ‘zwarte bladzijde in de geschiedenis’, anderzijds dat van een geromantiseerd ‘Tempo Doeloe.’<sup>258</sup> A consequence of this situation is that the Dutch people were cut off from the colonial past of their country. Furthermore there seems to be a fundamental lack of factual knowledge and a tendency ‘(...) tot hetzij selectie en idealisering, hetzij moralisering en ‘politieke correctheid’, die ook de geschiedschrijving soms zwart-wit dreigt in te kleuren.’<sup>259</sup>

These points as mentioned above thus suggest that a debate on the place of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago in the Dutch collective memory has become unavoidable and signifies that it is long overdue. Still, there needs to be recognised that there seems to be no, or at least as little as possible, true acknowledgment of these memories of

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<sup>253</sup> There unfortunately has to be observed that these studies do not wonder far outside the tower of scientific research and that there thus is a large discrepancy in interest, knowledge and understanding of the decolonization of the Dutch East Indies between ordinary citizens and the specialist or interested parties.

<sup>254</sup> Oostindie, ‘Migration and its legacies’, 21.

<sup>255</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>256</sup> Bijl, ‘Colonial memory and forgetting’, 449; and: Houben, ‘The unmastered past’, 77-84.

<sup>257</sup> Bosma, ‘Why is there no post-colonial debate’, 193-194.

<sup>258</sup> De Jong, *De waaier van het fortuin*, 8.

<sup>259</sup> Ibidem, 8-9.

decolonisation, how they are still part of Dutch society and how they influence the Dutch collective and shared memory. Furthermore there is no attention to how colonial mindsets and policies can (and certainly are) still part of Dutch policies, politics, economics, culture and the Dutch society as a whole.<sup>260</sup>

The hope is that this study on how the mnemonics of Dutch museum space shape and reshape the Dutch remembrance of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago will also be able to illuminate on this point. And will in this way be a starting point of critical reflection on the presence of colonialism in the Netherlands and will be part of a growing Dutch body of literature in the field of postcolonial studies. This seems to be necessary to restore a realistic remembrance of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago and to give it (back) its rightful place within Dutch collective memory and identity. After all: 'Das Vergessenwollen verlängert das Exil, und das Geheimnis der Erlösung heißt Erinnerung.'<sup>261</sup>

To study this phenomenon in the case of the Netherlands there will be looked at how museum space shapes and reshapes the Dutch collective memory of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. We already looked at the relevant texts that are written about memory, colonialism and decolonization (in general and in the specific case of the Netherlands). This leaves as a last point to be examined of this historiography the subject of museum space and the study of museums.

### 3.3 Museums as vaults of memories

This study focuses in its research on Dutch museums and how they relate to and visualise, if they do at all, the violent Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. Although it will be the paradigm of collective memory, in connection with ideas of the fields of orientalist and postcolonialism, there needs to be some attention for the field of museum studies. Firstly to define how this study relates to this field of enquiry. But secondly and most important to look at what kind of research has already been done that can be very helpful in the context of this study.

#### 3.3.1 Old, new and post-new museology

The museum is a very old phenomenon, some people even trace it back to ancient Alexandria.<sup>262</sup> Still, most museums as we know them today find their roots in the museums of the eighteenth-century. Although the modern museum is quite different from its more eclectic and elite driven counterparts of the eighteenth-century. Changes have occurred, sometimes on a massive scale. Not only in the museums themselves but also in ways these museums are studied. This was until some decades ago mostly limited to inquiries about museum methods, aesthetics, and 'professional collection, documentation and interpretation of objects'.<sup>263</sup> With the ascent of the so called new museology during the seventies, eighties and ninetieths of the twentieth century the focus shifted towards a more community focussed approach in which

<sup>260</sup> Frances Gouda, 'Gender and etniciteit, gisteren en vandaag', *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* 27, 1 (2007) 7-31, there 13.

<sup>261</sup> Richard von Weizsäcker, 'Rede von Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker bei der Gedenkveranstaltung im Plenarsaal des Deutschen Bundestages zum 40. Jahrestag des Endes des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Europa', (Bonn 8 Mai 1985). Via: [http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1985/05/19850508\\_Rede.html](http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1985/05/19850508_Rede.html) (Accessed on 28 April 2014).

<sup>262</sup> Peter Vergo, 'Introduction', in: Peter Vergo (eds.), *The New Museology* (Reaktion Books: London 1989)1-5, there 1.

<sup>263</sup> Sheila Watson, 'Museums and their Communities', in: Sheila Watson (eds.), *Museums and their Communities* (Routledge: New York 2007) 1-24, there 13.

the needs and demands of the public and/or community became central stage. This new museology is mostly defined as opposed to, and as the result of widespread dissatisfaction of people from inside and outside of the museum profession with, the old museology.<sup>264</sup>

According to the Dutch scientist in the field of museology and a professor of Cultural Heritage Peter van Mensch (1947) '(...) new museology specifically questions traditional museum approaches to issues of value, meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity.'<sup>265</sup> Furthermore, as the British art historian and museologist Peter Vergo put it in his by now classical work *The New Museology*: 'Whether we like it or not, every acquisition (and indeed disposal), every juxtaposition or arrangement of an object or work of art, together with other objects or works of art, within the context of a temporary exhibition or museum display means placing a certain construction upon history, be it the history of the distant or more recent past, of our own culture or someone else's, or mankind in general or a particular aspect of human endeavour. (...) Such considerations (...) are the subject of the new museology.'<sup>266</sup> New museology is in this sense the assent of a more critical and more diverse debate on the culture and nature of museums. In this there is room for many new perspectives, questions and objects of study.

Although the distinction between old en new seems quite clear cut it also hides a new reality. As the diversity of disciplines associated with the new museology and the questions raised within it show, there is not one new museology.<sup>267</sup> No, there are many new museologies that are difficult to differentiate from one another.<sup>268</sup> Just as old museology is a concept that hides a huge diversity in interests in study and approaches, so does new museology. An example of this are the differences between the so called British (or Anglo-Saxon) new museology and the Latin new museology.<sup>269</sup> Another example is the emergence of a new field of study under the name of sociomuseology. It '(...) is a way of understanding museums and heritage and a way of acting upon the world. One could say it bears the philosophy of new museology and brings it into a broader context.'<sup>270</sup> Still more strands of research could be distinguish, all based on their own methods of points of origin (Dutch, Polish, Asian, African, Arabic, Feminist, Postcolonial, et cetera).

Furthermore Van Mensch and Léontine Meijer-van Mensch in their book called *New trends in museology* further complicate this view by stating that we are now entering, or have entered, a new museology paradigm. After the old and the new we now have a twentieth first century version which focuses on communities, identities and above all participation of its publics.<sup>271</sup> In that sense new museology is becoming an old lady. Still, it is very relevant also because the paradigm is for a large part incorporated in the ideas, theories and practices of the so called new museology.<sup>272</sup> This might explain why no new term for the current state of affairs in museology has been coined.

<sup>264</sup> Vergo, 'Introduction', 3.

<sup>265</sup> Watson, 'Museums and their Communities', 13. (Quated from Davis 1999 page 55, where he quotes Van Mensch.)

<sup>266</sup> Vergo, 'Introduction', 2-3.

<sup>267</sup> Peter J.A. van Mensch and Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, *New trends in museology* (Msueum of Recent History: Celje 2011).

<sup>268</sup> Vergo, 'Introduction', 3; Watson, 'Museums and their Communities', 13; and: Marjorie M. Halpin, 'Play It again, Sam': Reflections on a New Museology', *Museum International* 49, 2 (1997) 52-56.

<sup>269</sup> Paula Assunção dos Santos, 'Introduction: To understand New Museology in the 21st Century', in: Paula Assunção dos Santos and Judite Prima (eds.), *To understand New Museology in the XXI Century: Sociomuseology 3* (ULHT – Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias: Lisbon 2010) 5-12, there 7.

<sup>270</sup> Assunção dos Santos, 'Introduction', 8.

<sup>271</sup> <http://www.menschmuseology.com/projects/portfolio/new-trends-in-museology/> (accessed 19 May 2014).

<sup>272</sup> Paula Assunção dos Santos and Judite Prima (eds.), *To understand New Museology in the XXI Century: Sociomuseology 3* (ULHT – Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias: Lisbon 2010).

As can be deduced from the remarks made above, it is very difficult to see clear which debates or schools of scholarship crystallize within the field of new museology. It after all consist of a great multitude of debates, disciplines and paradigms. For this study an oversight of this diversity is not necessary and even supercilious. After all we are concerned with only three areas of study that fall within the field of museum studies: museums & memory, museums & (post)colonialism, and museums & Dutch colonials past. On these there will be (very shortly) illuminated below.

### 3.3.2 *On memory and museums*

The relationship between memory and museums is a complicated one. This has to do with how one understands museums and memory, and in what kind of research tradition one stands. A further difficulty is that museums can be a space for memory and can shape memory, but at the same time memory can shape museums. The central question that then needs to be asked is what is the relationship between museums and the past. The scholar of memory Barry Schwartz (1946) suggests that museums can never preserve the past. They can freeze time but do so in a selective and per formative way which alters or frames the past that is represented. Museums are also no true history because they do not uphold the codes and aims of the this specific discipline. In that sense memory remains as the central subject to which museums relate. But then again museums also do not fit comfortably within the field of memory and heritage.<sup>273</sup> After all, museums are not just places of memory, they are constructed places of memory, heritage and history. In this sense museums are not in the field of true memory but they represent a space in which memory can unfolded and represented. Perhaps museums can be called the theatres of collective memory in which many memory companies perform or try to promote their views of the true collective memory by spatial, textual, visual and narrative acts.

In regard to this point there must be recognized that there is not much direct research done on the connection between collective memory and museums. In most cases it is memory itself, and in particular the practices of incorporating memories (oral history) of people in the collections, that gets the bulk of the attention. Furthermore, when the relationship between memory and museums is addressed attention is given to the individual remembering that people do when they are in a museum and how they relate their memories to the collections and objects presented in a museum.<sup>274</sup> The best example of this is the memory boom in the museum community during the ninetieths of the twentieth century in which it where the personal memories of victims of the war that needed to be matched with and incorporated in the collections of the relevant museums.<sup>275</sup>

This does not mean that the connection between collective memory and museums is not researched. After all, the new attention for the memories of world war two brought to the forefront less desirable and more problematic memories. In this way dominant collective memories where challenged. Still, the basic point here is that the connection between collective memory and museums is mostly indirectly addressed and is only in a few cases at the center of the research agenda. This sideways attention does not mean that the museum has no connection to collective memory, on the contrary. There is widely recognised that through their '(...) collections, museums sanctify some forms of remembering, yet also endorse

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<sup>273</sup> Schwartz, 'Introduction: The Expanding Past', 280.

<sup>274</sup> Gaunor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum* (Leicester University Press: London/New York 2000) 1-8.

<sup>275</sup> Suan A. Crane, 'The Conundrum of Ephemerality: Time, Memory, and Museums', in: Sharon MacDonald (eds.), *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd: Malden/Oxford 2006) 98-109, there 99.

forgetting.<sup>276</sup> This is in the basics done through the processes of selection, contextualization and interpretation.<sup>277</sup>

It is the American historian Susan A. Crane that takes these basic ideas a step further. In this she primarily focuses on the dichotomous function of the museums (of remembering and forgetting) and she is thus one of the few scholars that in her work makes a connection between processes of collective memory and the museum.<sup>278</sup> She even places the museum at a central point within these processes. For, as she argues, the museum is a place in which past choices for a specific collection or selection of materials may affect the public's perception of the past for decades or more. She shows that discussions made by policy- and opinion makers to display only part of the past can create a misguided collective memory through which it becomes impossible to apprehend (to place or to articulate) the troublesome sides of a community's past.<sup>279</sup> Museums in this way thus foster one collective memory over others and mostly conform to the norm of the already existing mostly unproblematic sides or views upon a collective memory. Crane in this way points at how the politics of the museum and the politics of collective memory cross and come together to, and that they in this process shape the collective memory of a certain group (in most cases this group is closely related to the demographics of visitors the museum receives and the nation it belongs to) in very profound ways.<sup>280</sup>

In this process Crane takes an interesting stance on how remembering and forgetting are part of processes surrounding collective memory. She begins with the observation that museums collect, select and they interpret. In this very function of the museums they are perceived to remember but at the same time they in this process exclude and support processes of forgetting. In this way Crane points at how there is created, as also Stoler argues in her article on aphasia, a context and language that is not able to recognize and to articulate more troublesome historical episodes or memories. This Crane does not see as always a bad or negative thing. 'Silencing and forgetting go hand in hand when speech is prevented, but (...) silence also shelters memory. For survivors of trauma, what forgetting they are able to achieve against all odds, may count as grace. Though there may be political or moral reasons why we condemn silence or generate narratives of recovery, forgetting is not necessarily anathema.<sup>281</sup> Here we can see a resemblance with the work of Nietzsche. Who argued for the need of forgetting to create a healthy society. Although does not go as far as Nietzsche. She just recognizes that it happens and she seems to suggest that in every new case a debate needs to be conducted on the question if and how other memories should be part of a collective memory. The processes of forgetting needs thus to be recognized but not simply accepted.

This is an interesting point because most memories that are forgotten constitute negative memories, so memories of conflict, atrocities, violence, discrimination, et cetera. These can and should not be excluded from collective memories because these negative memories and especially '(...) wartime atrocities are remembered within museums as ways of articulating not only terrible past events so they are not repeated but also as ways of articulating community identity through suffering and oppression.'<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces*, 173.

<sup>277</sup> Diane Barthel, 'Getting in Touch With History: The Role of Historic Preservation in Shaping Collective Memories', *Qualitative Sociology* 19, 3 (1996) 345-364, there 345.

<sup>278</sup> Susan A. Crane, *Museums and memory* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2000).

<sup>279</sup> Crane, 'The Conundrum of Ephemerality', 102-107.

<sup>280</sup> See also: Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, 'The making of memory: the politics of archives, libraries and museums in the construction of national consciousness', *History of the human sciences* 11, 4 (1998) 17-32.

<sup>281</sup> Crane, 'The Conundrum of Ephemerality', 107.

<sup>282</sup> Tiffany Jenkins, 'Victims Remembered', in: Sheila Watson (eds.), *Museums and their Communities* (Routledge: New York 2007) 448-451.

If one takes this point further not remembering certain events can than also be a way of articulating community identity. National identity is created though the process of forgetting. Only in this case it are the mostly the people that committed the atrocities that do not want to remember. Or the memories are so painful for the victims that the only way forward is to ignore the past. And of course many more arguments are possible. To focus on this forgetting side can show a different side to a collective memory of identity. It will exemplify why a certain national or collective identity is fostered above others. It signifies what a people conceived as theirs and as shared.<sup>283</sup>

Museums are central is these memory and identity politics. Not only Crane has observed this. Many scholars ascribe to the views that '[c]ommunities are defined by shared historical or cultural experiences', and that such '(...) shared historical or cultural experiences depend on memory and the ordering of the act of remembrance. It is here that museums play a key role in not only preserving memories but also in re-ordering them and making sense of them for later generations.'<sup>284</sup> Or in the words of the American political scientist Timothy W. Luke: '(...) [museums] posses a power to shape collective values and social understandings in a decisively important fashion.'<sup>285</sup>

In this process of shaping and reshaping the collective memory of a certain group the museum itself has agency but we must recognize that these processes of construction (of agency) are in essence human made. This points to the idea that human agency plays an important part in the way in which the museum and the collective memory interact. Vergo illuminates on this point by stated that: 'Beyond the captions, the information panels, the accompanying catalogue, the press handout, there is a subtext comprising innumerable diverse often contradictory strands, woven from the wishes and ambitions, the intellectual or political or social or educational aspirations and preconceptions of the museum director, the curator, the scholar, the designer, the sponsor - to say nothing of the society, the political or social or educational system which nurtured all these people and in so doing left its stamp upon them.'<sup>286</sup> This shows the complicated interactions that work upon the dynamics of collective memory and the museum.

### 3.3.3 On colonialism and museums

The connection between colonialism and museums, especially the visualization and presence of colonialism in museums, is studied mostly by scholars active in the fields of museum studies, history and postcolonialism. The international literature on the subject is not vast and is mostly part on the bigger debates about memory in museums of question surrounding diversity in museums. The literature that does exist focuses on a limited number of subjects.

A first subject in scholarship, best described as an historical approach, focuses primarily on the historical dimensions and development of museums. Questions are asked regarding the genesis of colonial museum, the ways they work and the ways they changed over time. In this there are made connections between national identities, imperialism, governments and politics, the state, peoples and colonialism.<sup>287</sup> A prime example of this, that also goes beyond a descriptive historical approach, is the work by the Australian sociologist

<sup>283</sup> Crane, 'The Conundrum of Ephemerality', 103-106

<sup>284</sup> Watson, 'Museums and their Communities', 4.

<sup>285</sup> Timothy W. Luke, *Museum politics: power plays at the exhibition* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 2002) xiii.

<sup>286</sup> Vergo, 'Introduction', 3.

<sup>287</sup> Dominic Thomas, 'Museums in postcolonial Europa: and introduction', in: Dominic Thomas (eds.), *Museums in Postcolonial Europa* (Routledge: London/New York 2010) 1-11, there 4-5; and: Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, 'Introduction', in: Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (eds.), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (Routledge: London/New York 1998) 1-10, there 5.

Tony Bennett. He focuses on how, by which knowledge practices, museums processes and the exhibiting of the colonies shaped the image of the other and what it did to create a certain imperial and ‘(...) colonial contexts where, cast in the role of primitive, indigenous populations were axiomatically denied the historical depth required for an archaeological layering of the self and were, therefore, just as axiomatically placed entirely outside the liberal reform strategies of evolutionary museums.’<sup>288</sup> It is in this light that Bennett approaches ‘(...) the relations between the historical sciences and museums, paying particular attention to the technical forms – different system of classifications and exhibitions arrangements, for example – through which the forms of knowledge and expertise associated with those sciences became practically effective in (...) museums.’<sup>289</sup>

A second subject concerns itself with the question, as put forward by the Australian historian Robert Aldrich: ‘whether (...) museums should be, can be, “decolonized”?’<sup>290</sup> Scholars active in these debates focus on the how museums and colonialism are intertwined. In the past, as part of Westerns policies of subjugation and Orientalism, and in the present, as part of the ongoing systems and paradigms behind and in museums. Questions are then raised about acquisitions and ownership of objects, about who is present in the exhibits and how, about who is looking at the exhibits, about who builds the exhibits, about who is excluded from all this, et cetera. These authors are thus very much concerned with the culture and especially the legacies of colonialism.

A third subject most authors in these debates raise regards questions about change. In general there is a quest to find a better postcolonial colonial museums and how this should be achieved. In this regard reforms are discussed, reforms are proposed and the overall situation is evaluated. It thus are the preconditions used in, frameworks around and the practices of colonial museums that are at the centre of the discussion.<sup>291</sup> This discussion is on the one hand idealistic in the sense that there is a quest for what is needed. The question that is raised is what there has to change and how this change should be achieved. On the other hand scholars also need, and also do, take into account that curators and other stakeholders ‘(...) face many considerations, in addition to problems of space, funding and the limitation of collections. They need to satisfy a varied and demanding public ranging from scholars to casual visitors, those with vested interests in the objects on display and other museum-goers. They must obey their political master, who have always seen museums as a medium for advancing national causes and particular interests.’<sup>292</sup>

In the overall discussion on how to deal with the legacy of colonialism in (colonial) museums there seems to be two positions. The first one takes a positive view on the status quo in the museum world. A proponent of this view is the Australian literature scholar Bernice Murphy. She argues that ‘(...) the museum as a singular institutional form and totalized mode of discourse had mutated in to a planarization of museums employing a range of discursive practices. It is noticeable that many concepts formerly idealized or reified when they first appeared with volatile force in theory – identity, culture, nation, memory, time, history, the past – have become more richly textured as unstable, mobile and ‘processual’ in the way they figure the work of museums and their preoccupations with heritage. Underpinning these changes has been an implacable imperative within the world of museums to meet the difficult dilemmas of ideological investment that have come as cargo with their

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<sup>288</sup> Tony Bennett, *Past Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museum, Colonialism* (Routledge: London/New York 2004) 5.

<sup>289</sup> Bennett, *Past Beyond Memory*, 6.

<sup>290</sup> Thomas, ‘Museums in postcolonial Europe’, 5.

<sup>291</sup> Ibidem, 5-6.

<sup>292</sup> Robert Aldrich, ‘Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe’, in: Dominic Thomas (eds.), *Museums in Postcolonial Europa* (Routledge: London/New York 2010) 12-31, there 28.

own heritage.’<sup>293</sup> The second view is far more critical. A good example of this is the British museum scholar Max Ross who sees that ‘(...) on the one hand, there are pressures for museums to become more accessible and representative of multicultural society. ON the other hand, there are forces or resistance for the dismantling of established cultural boundaries poses threat to professional and social identities, and to the values of what Bordieu calls ‘cultural capital’.’<sup>294</sup> Some go even further and stipulate there uneasiness of dissatisfaction with the current status quo. A good example of this is the American museum scholar Lynne Munson who bluntly states: ‘The compromised version of art and history cultivated in our universities and practiced in our museums shortchanges the present by misrepresenting the past. A serious debate needs to take place – of the sort that emerged in academia over political correctness – over the state of museums. Even though the polite environment of museums encourages silence, the public deserves to hear people speak clearly and honestly about the impact revisionism has had on the presentation of art.’<sup>295</sup>

This divergence of meaning shows that the last word in this debate is not said and that more indebt scholarship is needed. A call that is almost not answered when we look at the situation in the Netherlands. There are only few people that have addressed the state of the colonial museums and the museums that exhibit colonialism in Dutch museums.

### 3.3.4 Writing on the Dutch colonial past in museums

As we have read above postcolonialism has not yet made a clear mark upon Dutch scholarship. Some authors pay attention to it but this attention stays in most cease marginal because most Dutch authors do not share the enthusiasm of their Anglo-Saxon colleagues when it comes to postcolonial studies. This reality has its consequences for the study of colonialism (and postcolonialism) in Dutch museums. Most notably the absence of scholarship on the subject of the presence (and non-presence) of the violent Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago in the Dutch mnemonic landscapes. This, it needs to be said, does not mean that there is no attention for this troublesome past. Many historians study the topic and scholars like Gert Oostindie, Ulco Bosma, Susan Legêne have written on this topic.<sup>296</sup> But a reflection upon the wider implications of the Dutch colonial past and the continuants of colonial and imperial patterns (a critical studies or postcolonial studies perspective) is missing.<sup>297</sup> The view is mostly upheld that the colonial past is over and has only diminishing consequences for the present functioning of Dutch society.<sup>298</sup> Still, some interesting research in regard to the question of the how and why of the Dutch colonial past in museums has been done.

A more critical perspective in this regard comes mostly from abroad. It is Aldrich that examines the colonial museums of postcolonial Europe. In this he addresses the Tropenmuseum (thé Dutch colonial museum). He founding of and the subsequent changes in the Tropenmuseum. In this he shows that it was launched as a flagship of Dutch colonialism, after de decolonization erased colonialism from its exhibitions and in recent year has reevaluated its position and brought colonialism back in its exhibitions. For Aldrich the ‘(...)

<sup>293</sup> Bernice Murhpy, ‘Memory, History and Museum’, *Museum International* 57, 3 (2005) 70-78, there 77.

<sup>294</sup> Max Ross, ‘Interpreting the new museology’, *Museum and society* 2, 2 (2004) 84-103, there 85.

<sup>295</sup> Lynne Munson, ‘The new museology’, *The public interest* ?, 127 (1997) 60-80, there 70.

<sup>296</sup> Bosma, *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity*; Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands*; and: Susan Legêne, ‘Dwinegeri: multiculturalism and the colonial past (or: the cultural borders of begin Dutch)’, in: Benjamin Jacob Kaplan, Marybeth Carlson and Laura Cruz (eds.), *Boundaries and their meanings in the history of the Netherlands* (Brill: Leiden 2009).

<sup>297</sup> Susan Legêne, ‘De mythe van een etnisch homogene nationale identiteit: kanttekeningen bij de verwerking van het koloniale verleden in de Nederlandse geschiedenis’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 116, 4 (2003) 553-560, there 559-560.

<sup>298</sup> Bosma, *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity*; and: Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands*.

Tropenmuseum's exhibits are impressive, striking a balance between art and history, personalized with biographies of individuals, and considerable reflection on the practice of colonial collecting. (...) the Tropenmuseum's 'Oostwärts!' galleries provide the most thorough and thoughtful displays on colonialism that the present writer has seen in any museum.'<sup>299</sup> This means that some Dutch museums are looked at through a critical and/or postcolonial paradigm. Although this view comes often from abroad, and when this is not the case the scholarship diverts to questions about exhibition creation or collecting practices instead of questions about colonialism, decolonization, imperialism, identity and memory.<sup>300</sup>

Besides this kind of research, that is mostly done by a few independent scholars, there are people employed within the Dutch museum industry that take upon themselves the task to look critically to their own institutions. Again the best example of this in the context of the Netherlands is the Tropenmuseum, which might explain the praise of Aldrich. By means of publications and conferences the Tropenmuseum tries to find a balance between its many roles (museum, education, research, conservation, et cetera), the many sides to its collections and its own complicated history. In this quest they do not ignore the negative aspects of the collections and their own history.<sup>301</sup> By acknowledging this they try to reinvent themselves into a better version of a colonial museum.

Unfortunately this critical approach is not shared by that many other relevant museum, most notably Het Rijksmuseum.<sup>302</sup> It are the historians Bloembergen, Eickhoff and Schulte Nordholt that argue that Het Rijksmuseum '(...) biedt een naar binnen gericht, jubelend beeld van Nederland en zijn koloniaal verleden. Dat kan anders (...)'.<sup>303</sup> In a recent article Bloembergen and Eickhoff further examine this reality and plea '(...) om oude en nieuwe collectiestukken van het museum in een ruimer historisch kader te plaatsen – dat het mogelijk maakt om meerdere perspectieven te tonen op Nederland, zijn koloniale geschiedenis, en de relatie met de wereld 'daarbuiten'. (...) laat zien hoe de verzamelgeschiedenis tot op heden de verhaallijnen van de collectie stuurt, zoals elders ook al met succes beproefd is, en prikkel de verbeelding van bezoekers door daarnaast 'andere' verhalen te tonen.'<sup>304</sup> This is especially necessary when one regard the twentieth century and the decolonization because reflection on this is missing and no visual representations are present while this part of the exhibition was extremely suitable to show the other side of colonialism.<sup>305</sup>

So, there has to be acknowledged that if one looks closely relevant scholarship can be found but it is not much. This is seen by different authors and they then also state that a lot of work still has to be done and more critical study is needed to better understand the legacies of Dutch colonialism and the influence of ongoing Dutch imperialism upon its society.<sup>306</sup> Or to

<sup>299</sup> Robert Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe', in: Dominic Thomas, *Museums in Postcolonial Europe* (Routledge: London/New York 2010) 12-31, there 25.

<sup>300</sup> Pieter ter Keurs (eds.), *Colonial Collections Revisited* (CNWS Publications: Leiden 2007); Susan Legêne, *Spiegelreflex: culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Bert Bakker: Amsterdam 2010); and: Francine Brinkgreve, David J. Stuart-Fox and Wahyu Ernawati, 'Collections after Colonial Conflict: Badung and Tabanan 1906-2006', in: Pieter ter Keurs (eds.), *Colonial Collections Revisited* (CNWS Publications: Leiden 2007) 145-485.

<sup>301</sup> Suan Legêne and Janneke van Dijk (eds.), *The Netherlands East Indies at the Tropenmuseum: A colonial history* (Kit Publishers: Amsterdam 2011).

<sup>302</sup> Marieke Bloembergen, Henk Schulte Nordholt and Martijn Eickhoff, 'Koloniale nostalgie in Rijksmuseum', *NRC* (15-06-2013). See also: <http://www.niod.nl/nl/nieuws/opinie-koloniale-nostalgie-rijksmuseum> (accessed on 21 May 2014).

<sup>303</sup> Bloembergen, Schulte Nordholt en Eickhoff, 'Koloniale nostalgie in Rijksmuseum'.

<sup>304</sup> Marieken Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, 'Een klein land dat de wereld bestormt. Het nieuwe Rijksmuseum en het Nederlandse koloniale verleden', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 129, 1 (2014) 156-169, there 167-168.

<sup>305</sup> Bloembergen and Eickhoff, 'Een klein land dat de wereld bestormt', 165.

<sup>306</sup> Legêne, 'De mythe van een etnisch homogene nationale identiteit', 559-560.

put in another more contemporary paradigm: 'Consensus on the European colonial experience has not been reached and measures taken to address the circumstances of postcoloniality have proved inadequate. In an ever-expanding European Union in which there have been alarming instances of cultural and socio-political intolerance, the cohabitation and coexistence of populations which diverse backgrounds will require vigilant monitoring.'<sup>307</sup>

### *3.3.5 And then, where do we go from here?*

As we have seen above there are a lot of relevant debates, books and articles in regard to the question how the mnemonics of Dutch museum space shape and reshape the Dutch remembrance of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. Herein one can find a true richness of perspectives, ideas, paradigms, concepts and scholarship. At the same time one can drown in this richness. It is a puzzle without an end, just as good scholarship often is, but in this regard it looks like the combination of many puzzles into one big never ending puzzle. This presents dangers because it can lead to unclarity, vagueness and endless explanations.

Also, all the above mentioned shows that the central theme of this study (how the mnemonics of Dutch museum space shape and reshape the Dutch remembrance of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago) has not yet been researched. Especially the connection between the Dutch collective memory of the violent Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago and the mnemonics of Dutch museums is new. Both have separately been studied, not extensively though, but have never been combined. A further novel feature presented in this study will be the specific attention to museums as spaces and how these spaces itself (thus not just the object, but the museum landscape as a whole) is part of the mnemonic processes that shape and reshape collective memory.

The next step in this study is in these regards a clear one. The relevant debates, books and article have to be deduced to a workable conceptual framework and methodology which will make it possible to inspect, by means of fieldwork, how museums (specific mnemonic landscapes) shape and reshape collective memories on conflicts, violence and trauma. In this case by focussing on the case study of the violent Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. For this attention will be given to several museums: Het Rijksmuseum, Het Tropenmuseum, Het Verzetsmuseum and Museum Bronbeek.

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<sup>307</sup> Thomas, 'Museums in postcolonial Europe', 9



## **4. CONCEPTS, SOURCES AND METHODS**

In this chapter the methodology behind this study will be explained. A thorough accountability of the operationalization of the theoretical and conceptual framework as sketched above by means of a consistent research methodology is after all indispensable. For this purpose there below will be illuminated upon the central research question of, the societal relevance of, the conceptual framework used in, the sources used in and the research methods used in this study. In general this means that the research that is done, as summarised above, and some proven and some new research methods are considered and combined in such a way that it makes possible to make a next step in the research on the relationship between museum space and the remembrance of conflict.

### **4.1 Research question explained**

At the heart of this study are several themes and subject. On the first hand it regards collective memory, Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago and museum spaces. But these subjects are interrelated in several ways and touch in this regard also on several other subject like remembrance, museum exhibitions, Dutch identity, Orientalism, postcolonialism, mnemonics, and more could be named. To address those subjects in an adequate way a thorough conceptual framework and methodology needs to be development. With all this in mind, I arrived at the following research question:

How do the mnemonics of twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (1945-1950)?

This multifold question aims to facilitate attention for how mnemonics within mnemonic landscapes are at play in connection to collective memory while at the same time leaving room for reflexions on identity and the persistence of colonial and imperial patterns. This is, as one can imagine, quite a challenge.

This challenge it met by analysing the museum spaces on the basis of a critical and cultural theory approach (deconstructive, discourse and exhibition analyses). The idea is to combine insights from the cultural turn, spatial turn and linguistic turn as were seen in the last decades in the human and social sciences (on this there be illuminated below). This approach will provide also a way of evaluating how this reality compares to the theoretical ideas, paradigms and frameworks as found in the literature (as described above).

Underlying questions, complementary to the central research question as described above, in this approach are: do museum, and in ways, pay attention to the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago? Who's views are represented in these museums and who's are not? Why those specific groups? What role does space play in the construction of these images and narratives? How does these images compare to the reality of the decolonization? Why is there an overlap or contradiction? What ways of knowing are behind these images? How do these museum practices compare to Orientalist ways of knowing?

More of these question of course can be asked and will be asked. Still, these depend on what in every museum can be seen, not seen and experienced. They are furthermore very much related to the methodology and the needs of this methodology. This means that a standardised question based methodology will be develop, but more on this below.

## 4.2 Societal relevance

Societal relevance is always a tricky question. Especially because of the many critical points that can be made about it. One can for example ask if all scientific research necessarily has to have a societal relevance? After all, is science not just the will to know regardless contemporary preconditions and paradigms? Could the question of societal relevance then not be seen as a limiting factor in the will to understand the universe and everything, really everything, in it? Also, doesn't it seem to suggest a hierarchy in which things are more important to know or research, apparently, than others? And then again, who is making this hierarchy, to who's agenda are we conforming? All are valid question but are not central in this study because I believe research in its essence is almost always relevant. Still, I do believe scientists need to communicate this relevance and its context so that people can relate to it. In regard to this study this means that there are several ideas, contexts and strands of relevance that need to be considered and explained.

One of the more interesting arguments in this regard is the idea of the British historian Jay Winter that remembering is a basic human right. For him the '(...) Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a memory document, a set of principles framed because of a historical catastrophe which preceded it.'<sup>308</sup> For this reason '[m]emory work is built into most rights claims, which arise from indignation over evident and persistent violations of the dignity of men and women which we see around us.'<sup>309</sup> His main point therefore is to link human rights and remembrance. He wants to explore the '(...) choices we now face. For there are different strategies of transition, some entailing moving away from dwelling on the past, others reconfiguring stories about the past so that they can stand as sentinels, as reminders of what we must never do again.'<sup>310</sup> This study puts itself deliberately in this critical stance towards how collective memory (the remembering and forgetting of specific mnemonic groups, in this case the Dutch nation) is shaped and reshaped. The aim is to question why and how we forget or remember, and if this happens in occurrence with equality and respect of difference.

Also important is to acknowledge the importance of collective memory for the formations of identity. There is no identity without memory.<sup>311</sup> The denial of some memories and histories in this regard is a denial of identities. A very shocking realisation with far-reaching consequences. It points at the reality of how memory politics and identity politics are linked, and how a certain shaping of collective memory can include or exclude people from a society. This is a pressing matter in our current societies that are obsessed with immigration and seem to construct memories in which there is no place for immigrants, as Oostindie en Legêne show.<sup>312</sup> They then also argue for the inclusion of the colonial past in the Dutch collective memory in order to provide '(...) 'nieuwkomers' (...) met bijpassende informatieve over hun eigen verleden. Het gaat om het uitdiepen (...) van het koloniale in de Nederlandse geschiedenis (...) en het verder openbreken van de mythe dat de Nederlandse bevolking zich tot voor kort kenmerkte door een etnisch homogene nationale identiteit. Deze mythe klinkt nog steeds door in het actuele debat over autochtoon Nederland en de problematische integratie van zogeheten allochtonen. Het is een debat dat in wezen het Nederlandse kolonialisme negeert en daarmee een belangrijk fundament vormt voor het

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<sup>308</sup> Jay Winter, 'Foreword: Remembrance as a Human Right', Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, *Memory and Political Change* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke/New York 2012) vii-xii, there vii.

<sup>309</sup> Winter, 'Foreword: Remembrance as a Human Right', viii.

<sup>310</sup> Ibidem, x.

<sup>311</sup> Pemala Pattinama, 'Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations', in: Ulbe Bosma (eds.), *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2012) 175-192, there 178.

<sup>312</sup> Oostindie, *Dutch colonialism, migration and cultural heritage*; and: Legêne, 'De mythe van een etnisch homogene nationale identiteit'.

Neerlandocentrisme (...).<sup>313</sup> This primary focus on being Dutch, and the norm that is created as a consequence, can be perceived as an obstacle in the integration of difference and the identities associated with it in Dutch society.

This study furthermore regards the question of how societies deal with their violent pasts, their traumas and their guilt. Decolonization represents these three issues. Still, Dutch society does not seem to deal with them and is regarded as a nation with an unmastered past.<sup>314</sup> Which has, as we have seen and shall see, consequences for the integration of immigrant groups, the persistence of an unrealistic self-image and the conflict between several mnemonic communities. Questions about the processing of trauma and a violent past thus help in moving on. Museums can play an important role in this, in the same way truth and reconciliation commissions do.<sup>315</sup> Still this perspective is new and needs to consider how museums work in regard to traumatic memory in the first place. More study in the connection between violence, collective memory and museums is needed. Not only to help and better understand Dutch society, but also to discover best practices that can help in preventing violence to erupt or to bring people to cope with their violence past in post conflict areas.

This immediately points to another important point. Inquiry in how the mnemonics of twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago will illuminate how Dutch collective memory perceives and construction of 'the other'.<sup>316</sup> This construction is never neutral but has consequences. By reflecting on them in a more critical, and in the end more inclusive, way a more comprehensive approach to the creation of museum exhibitions can be developed. Furthermore by looking at how a society understands the other power structures, and how these are produced, reproduces and changed, come to the fore.

Societal relevance mostly is about what others want, need or should. Only we forget in this way the responsibility science and scientists have to society. They need to examine the production of knowledge and the memories it creates. Or as Gouda put it: 'Just as doctors have a mandate to intervene because a patient requires attention, regardless of the inadequate medical knowledge or technical equipment at their disposal, so should historians [and other humanity and social scientists], despite their subjective and fractured visions, act under a moral obligation to keep alive 'a nation's memory, or that of humankind'.<sup>317</sup>

In many of these issues as mentioned above new insights are desperately needed. Furthermore, an integrated approach toward these questions of power relations, inequality, diversity, human rights, et cetera is missing. This study does not aim to provide this integrated approach, it merely hopes to question contemporary assumptions and ideas regarding to the Dutch collective memory, the Dutch identity, and the role of museums in it. Many authors after all state that such a critical approach is needed but do not provide it.

This point directly relates this study to fundamental questions of identity, diversity and the quality of life within societies. Like many studies in the field of the humanities and social sciences this study deals directly with quality of life and a better understanding of society to foster an improvement in the human condition. Knowledge after all is the only way forward in this regard. The question now is only if society wants to bother itself with such aims or that relevance measured in numbers (money, lives saved, economic growth obtained, innovations done) is the most important. This after all is a very limited definition of societal relevance.

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<sup>313</sup> Legêne, 'De mythe van een etnisch homogene nationale identiteit', 560.

<sup>314</sup> Houben, 'The unmastered past'.

<sup>315</sup> Murphy, 'Memory, History and Museums', 76.

<sup>316</sup> Gouda, 'The Unbearable Lightness of Memory'.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibidem*, 27.

### 4.3 Conceptual framework

In the construction of a theoretical and conceptual framework for this study the problem arose that the field of memory/conflict studies has not developed a unified terminology.<sup>318</sup> This diversity had as a consequence that several debates had to be brought together to create a more unified conceptual framework that would be applicable within this study. Below the result of this creative process is described. The choice has been made not to describe every concept one at the time but to create a more flowing text in which the important concepts are highlighted in bold letters.

At the centre of this study lies the concept **collective memory**. This concept has been widely debated and many authors suggest new terms to replace it, like collected memories or cultural memory. Still this is not a way forward because it makes the images and understanding of collective memory more blurry. We do not need more new terms but a better understanding of the old one. It is best to return to Halbwachs, who was the first to systematically address the nature and culture of collective memory. He conceptualised collective memory as the outlining structure of remembrance. It is the social fabric that determines how and what people remember. This framework is not of a given unchanging character but is in constant flux. Is ever changing, shifting and fluctuating.<sup>319</sup> These changes occur under pressure of the certain community connected to a collective memory. So in the vision of Halbwachs there is room for several collective memories. The labels ascribed to them (like Dutch collective memory, GLBT collective memory, Amsterdam collective memory, family collective memory, etc.) signifies the borders and the extant of these collective memories. Still collective memory should not be understood as a canon. It is not a static set of rules or histories. It is a **social construction** or structure that shapes and reshapes memories, or to put it in different words: '(...) collective memory is not only, or even primarily, concerned with preserving the past but rather with maintaining **social cohesion** and **identity** [bold applied by author].'<sup>320</sup> So collective memory on de one hand is societal and connected to the group, but it at the same time is personal and intimate.<sup>321</sup>

This study thus begins with the premises as put forward by Halbwachs that focus on the social process of memory in relation to its cultural, spatial and historical context. Or as Nora put it: collective memory '(...) remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulations and appropriation, susceptible to begin long dormant and periodically revived.'<sup>322</sup> In this there needs to be acknowledged that there is a difference between **memory** and **history** (as both authors stress). In essence history is the science of the past based on primary sources and subject to methodology and the standards of good scientific practice with the aim of discovering the true past, fostering progress in understanding (and science) and preserve this for humankind. While memory on the other hand is a living entity, supported by memory (or mnemonic) communities and inspired by their needs and reality.<sup>323</sup> In modern society these two are often mixed and/or confused for one another.

This study of collective memory is recently been refashioned into the study of mnemonics.<sup>324</sup> Attention is shifting from the nature and culture of collective memory to the

<sup>318</sup> Damir-Geilsdorf, Hartmann, and Hendrich (eds.), *Metal maps – Ruam – Erinnerung*, 33.

<sup>319</sup> Whitehead, *Memory*, 151-152.

<sup>320</sup> Ibidem, 152.

<sup>321</sup> Gouda, 'The Unbearable Lightness of Memory', 20; and: Locher-Scholten, 'Verwerking en koloniaal trauma', 7.

<sup>322</sup> Nora, 'From Between Memory and History', 146.

<sup>323</sup> Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', 3.

<sup>324</sup> J. K Olick and J. Robbins, 'Social memory studies: From "collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, ? (1998) 105-140.

way in which collective memory is shaped and reshaped, the so called mnemonics. This shift is inspired by the idea that there '(...) are links between the methods of the modern politics of commemoration and those of the ancient art of memory.'<sup>325</sup> Especially sociologists are active in this field of study. Zerubavel developed the most comprehensive account (or sociology) of the mnemonics of (collective) memory. In this are the communities that do the remembering, the **mnemonic communities**, that occupy the central place. These communities, and also individuals or parts of these communities, are engaged in what Zerubavel calls **mnemonic battles**. These battles regard questions about what should be remembered and how it should be remembered.<sup>326</sup> The two points of what and how there should be remembered are constantly debated and change just as collective memories changes (because they form the collective memory). Still communities form what is called **mnemonic traditions**. This traditions is not static but is a basic set of things to remember and how to remember. Members of a community are made familiar with the collective memory of a community through the **mnemonic socialization** (of these mnemonic traditions). In this process of socialization there are two important tools. The first is the **mnemonic synchronization** which takes place when people commemorate (this commemoration can be inscribed in holidays, festivals, rituals, etc.). The second tool is the construction of or opposition to the so called **mnemonic other**. By stating what a community is not and does not remember they create their own identity. If we now summarize: Zerubavel made as sociological map or scheme which describes the ways in which collective memory is constructed and in this there can be found tools to study collective memory. The problem for the modern geographer or student of museums is that the above mentioned insights to not clearly regard space and landscapes.

Interesting though is that Zerubavel describes space as relics of the past but does not further discuss the dimensions of space in his mnemonics.<sup>327</sup> And Nora talks about spaces of remembrance, something that correlates with mnemonic landscapes, but he does not look at how these places work to shape memory. He only states collective memory in opposition to history and that memory now needs those places, memory is in those places.<sup>328</sup> Still, it is time to look deeper into how these places than work in the social processes of collective memory. To bring the aspect of space and landscapes clearly in the mnemonic of collective memory a new concept needs to be introduced: **mnemonic landscapes**. This concept must be understood as signifying a space in which the processes and politics surrounding remembering and forgetting are played out. It thus signifies the spatial aspects of collective memory but in such a way that one needs to look at the mnemonics of the landscapes (how the landscapes helps remember, influences, constructs, shapes, and reshapes collective memory) and to the way in which different mnemonic communities and mnemonic processes are influencing that space. In this sense there could be argued that in mnemonic landscapes time and space seem to overlap and collapse because the constructivist nature of both is emphasised. This perspective emphasises the connectedness of time and space, and grounds the mnemonics in space. This creates room for studying collective memory as an experience, as an act, as a performance, as a presence, and above all as a **discourse** ('a totality of utterances, actions and events which constitute a given field or topic'<sup>329</sup>). This discourse is learned by the process of **landscape socialization** (learning to interpret the landscapes, to see the memory signs from the perspective of the own community). Inspiration for this point can

<sup>325</sup> Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 10.

<sup>326</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscales: And Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge/London 1999) 98-99.

<sup>327</sup> Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, 43.

<sup>328</sup> Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', 1-5.

<sup>329</sup> John W. Wylie, 'Poststructuralist theories, critical methods and experimentation', in: Stuart Aitken and Gill Valentine (eds.), *Approaches to Human Geography* (Sage: LA/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC 2006) 298-310, there 303.

be found in the concept of **mental maps** which looks at how collective memory is constructed by and transferred through different generations. Although mental maps is mostly about how several mnemonic landscapes are connected, a mnemonic topography, it stipulates that it is the existence of the mental map that people construct in their mind to navigate the memory landscape that makes people connected to a collective memory.

A further set of concepts important here deal with the processes of remembering and forgetting that are the primary vehicles of collective memory. The question here is not so much by which societal and sociological processes collective memory is shaped and reshaped. Central is how one should understand this forgetting and remembering or how we should categorise it. A central concept in this understanding is **memorability** which can simply be understood as the determining of what is memorable. With this term a connection can be made with the work of Halbwachs because with '(...) a focus on memorability (...) the question no longer is *if* there is memory, but *how* there is memory, even if we call it 'forgetting'.<sup>330</sup>

In general there is two ways in which this how of memory is categorised. The first is **amnesia** which must be understood as the process by which people, especially those imbedded in metropolitan cultures, so nor remember the troublesome sides of their history (for example colonialism). The second is **nostalgia** which must be understood as the longing for a past that has disappeared. In this people idolise a picture of a frozen and static past.<sup>331</sup>

Still these two are problematic concepts. They describe a static situation but do not address the why of the situation There is no attention for the role of human agency in the processes of amnesia and nostalgia. That is why Stoler introduced a new concept: **aphasia**. Which is interesting because it brakes open our, to psychology indebted, definitions of amnesia and nostalgia. This new concept must be understood as a process of '(...) both loss of access and active dissociation. In aphasia, an occlusion of knowledge it the issue. It is not a matter of ignorance or absence. Aphasia is a dismembering, a difficulty speaking, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things. Aphasia in its many forms describes a difficulty retrieving both conceptual and lexical vocabularies and, most important, a difficulty comprehending what is spoken.'<sup>332</sup>

Attention for aphasia brings us to a last term that is used for describing how people and societies deal with their past: **unmastered past**. This concept refers to how people relate to, specific aspects, of their past. Only in this case there mostly is discrepancy between the past en the collective memory. A good example is the Dutch their violent past. The Dutch see themselves as promoters of peace, justice and trade, and thus not as aggressors.<sup>333</sup> Still the Dutch have a violent past, fought in many wars and had a violent colonial regime. But this is not part of the Dutch collective memory, it a so-called unmastered past: a past that is present but not incorporated in the collective memory.<sup>334</sup>

Discussions on the colonial past en present, as part of postcolonial studies, are often inspired by the work of Said. His concept of **Orientalism**, best understood as a enveloping Western tradition, both scientific and artistic, of biased, discriminatory and subjected interpretations and depictions of the East, shaped by the attitudes of European imperialism, gives in interesting insight in how the **production of knowledge** of the other by Western by

<sup>330</sup> Bijl, 'Colonial memory and forgetting', 444.

<sup>331</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 10.

<sup>332</sup> Ibidem, 125.

<sup>333</sup> Lammers, *Nederland als bezettende mogendheid*.

<sup>334</sup> Houben, 'The unmastered past'.

means a specific scientific and **power structures** is shaped and reshaped. Which at the same time produced a (very positive) self-image of the West (in opposition to the Oriental other).<sup>335</sup>

This system of knowledge production and the uneven power structures associated with it did not disappear with the end of colonialism in the second half of the twentieth century. There is argued convincingly that the so called postcolonial period is not very decolonised if we look at the production of knowledge and power structures. Many authors than also speak of a **colonial present**. A good example of this is the work of Gregory. He shows that the wars Israel, Palestine en Iraq are depicted in a very Oriental fashion. The construction of these others still follows the paters of **imagined geographies**, the constructing of the other space and the people inhabiting it in a biased and oriental way - the folding of space into difference, as described by Said and other postcolonial thinkers.

Following these arguments there can be stated that **classical colonialism**, mostly understood as '(...) the establishment and maintenance, for an extended time, of rule over an alien people that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power (...)'<sup>336</sup>, may in these times be gone but the paradigms, power structures and ways of producing knowledge connected to it are not (the so called colonial present). There are new ways in which these mindset survive, as Gregory has shown. Furthermore, that most empires were dismantled during the second half of the twentieth century does not mean that **imperialism** disappeared. On the contrary, it spread even further and found new forms and new objectives.<sup>337</sup> So that we live in a postcolonial world does not mean that imperialism, and to some degree colonialism, are gone. They just found new forms, they changed or just lost some of the most obvious characteristics (like the occupation of territory).

Within in the structure of collective memory, mnemonics, the colonial past, remembering and forgetting it are **museums**, understood as institution that conserves and exhibits a collection of artefacts and objects considered to be of importance, that occupy an import place. Many of them after all developed from the will to communicate a specific history, memory, ideas or image by ways of collection and exhibition artefacts of a diverse nature. The colonial and ethnographic museums, like The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (UK), The Quai Branly Museum (France), The Royal Museum for Central Africa (Belgium), and The Tropenmuseum (Netherlands), are prime examples of this.<sup>338</sup>

Museums are themed as important part of the politics of memory and some even called them *lieux the memoires*. In this study museums will be understood as mnemonic landscapes in which collective memory is performed and simultaneously created. There are battles between different memories (mnemonic communities) and choices are made, but the landscape itself also has its consequences for what happens in processes of remembering and forgetting. After all, people that come there interpreted what they see and experience, and this may not be in accordance with the **museum narrative** that curators, authors, actors, communities and other stakeholders present in the exhibitions. The museum experience will thus be understood as an acts of interpretation and as a **bodily experience** in which space, emotions and context play an important, not to say most important, role. It are the insights form **museology** (and its emphasis on agency, the visitor, the group the context and

<sup>335</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Classics: London/New York/e.a. 2003); and: Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (ninth print, Alfred A. Knopf, inc.; New York/Toronto 1994).

<sup>336</sup> Lammers, *Nederland als bezettende mogendheid*, 40. See also: Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Markus Wiener Publishers & Ian Randle Publishers: Princeton/Kingston 2002) 10. On this page the author states that a '(...) colony is a new political organization created by invasion (...) but built on pre-colonial conditions. Its alien rulers are in sustained dependence on a geographically remote "mother country" (...), which claims exclusive rights of "possession" of the colony.'

<sup>337</sup> Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory* (Columbia University Press: New York 1994) 1-2.

<sup>338</sup> Thomas, 'Museums in postcolonial Europe', 3.

experience) and the so called **exhibition analysis** that will help to focus on these important aspects, but more on this below. First there shortly needs to be attention on what kind of primary source the museum is and what the consequences of this is are for the so called fieldwork. Only then can there be returned to the methodology that will be used and the concepts and ideas connected to that.

#### 4.4 Reflection on the sources

In this study the museum is the source and it will be viewed, approached and researched as a (mnemonic) landscape, in which many actors participate. These participants can view a museum in their own way which is shaped by the social structures and paradigms in which they participate. Interpretation here is thus key. Curators can have a magnificent plan but the visitor may see totally different things just because they do not know what the curator knows, but also because they are from a different gender, ethnicity or age. The approach is then also taken here, modeled on the work of the French literary critic Roland Barthes (1915-1980) on the author, that the curator is dead.<sup>339</sup> This does not mean that the curator has no agency. He or she can influence, explain and change things. But by viewing a museum in this way there can be stepped into the eye of the beholder, the visitor and the masses. How do they perceive a museum and how does what they experience create, shape and reshape a collective memory (of in this case the Dutch colonial past). This stance will grant the ability of approaching the museum as a primary source, in a way even as a text, and look at what is produced.

This perspective thus gives us a source ready for interpretation. Only now it is a spatial source in which experience and visual interpretation are more important than the text, textuality and intertextuality. Especially because there is no immediate attention for all the documents behind the scenes, what newspapers write, or what curators say. Central is what can be seen, what can be experienced and what kind of interpretation effect can be deduced from it. This does not mean that language is of no importance. Humans after all are beings of language and we cannot escape it. So we must consider that: ‘In most instances, language accompanies and mediates the impact of visual images.’<sup>340</sup>

The challenge here now is to try to see how people could experience a museum, what they see, what they miss and how this constructs a specific Dutch collective memory about Dutch colonialism and then with special attention to the decolonization. Problems of interpretation and of what Dutch historians call *standplaatsgebondenheid* (that the scientist is limited by its own context, past and history) will be mediated by means of a consistent methodology.

It are the Tropenmuseum, the Rijksmuseum, Museum Bronbeek and the Verzetmuseum that will be studied here. Further biographical and historical data about these institutions will be given in each research chapter dedicated to a specific museum. More important here is to explain why these museums have been chosen. The Tropenmuseum and Museum Bronbeek were essential. They had to be included because these two are part of Dutch colonialism and its legacies. The Tropenmuseum was first established as the Colonial Museum in 1864 in Haarlem with the aim of collecting and exhibiting objects from the colonies. Bronbeek was established in 1860 as a hospital for the soldiers of the Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger (KNIL – Royal Dutch Indisch Army) and later became to include an museum. This connection with colonialism and the decolonization made them must haves in regard to this study.

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<sup>339</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, *Aspen*, 5-6, ? (1967). See also: <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes> (accessed on 09 June 2014).

<sup>340</sup> Gouda, ‘The unbearable lightness of memory’, 10.

The other two museums were chosen for different reasons. The Rijksmuseum is one of the most acclaimed Dutch museums of art and history, and is visited by many people each year. They come there to see something of the Dutch past, Dutch identity and Dutch accomplishments. Because of this influence, and its large colonial collection, it was decided to include it. The Verzetsmuseum was a more difficult choice because it has a small collection and only focuses on a very short period. Still, the way in which they approach the Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago is quite interesting, especially because it is so visible and present.

#### 4.5 Methodological framework

The methodology as used in this study is inspired by work done in the fields of critical theory, postmodernism and postcolonialism. These after all have in common what the German philosopher and sociologist Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) in his essay 'Traditional and Critical Theory' described as the aim of '(...) the emancipation of human beings from the circumstances that enslave them.'<sup>341</sup> Also important to recognise here is that Horkheimer argued, and these ideas filtered down into critical studies, poststructuralism, cultural studies, postmodernism and postcolonialism, that '(...) knowledge produced in the social sciences is subject to the theories (or ideologies) that produce them; thus, it is necessary to be aware of the historical context in which research takes place. Also, critical theory should not be tied to fixed premises and (...) be open, flexible, self-critical and interdisciplinary.'<sup>342</sup> This attitude can be found in the three sources of inspiration that informed the methodology below.

The first of these three sources of inspiration is the work by the philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984). His work is extensive and covers subjects as diverse as sexuality, prisons, madness, power and science. In this study Foucault is relevant because of his introduction of the so-called discourse analyses. For Foucault a discourse is a '(...) group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined.'<sup>343</sup> Or to put in clearer terms: 'Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth: of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.'<sup>344</sup> To understand the above mentioned one needs to understand what Foucault means by discursive practices. He states that '(...) it is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operations of the enunciative function.'<sup>345</sup> Furthermore, in his view a discourse analysis then focuses on how discourses construct, reproduce and transform symbolic orderings or structures and states the social reality as a meaningful science.<sup>346</sup> Still, many scientists have developed alternative

<sup>341</sup> Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* (Seabury Press: New York 1982) 244.

<sup>342</sup> David Walton, *Doing Cultural Theory* (Sage Publications Ltd: New York/London 2012) 8.

<sup>343</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Routledge Classics: London/New York 2002) 131.

<sup>344</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Vintage: New York 1980) 131.

<sup>345</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 131.

<sup>346</sup> Reiner Keller and Willy Viehöver, 'Diskursanalyse', in: Joachim Behnke, Thomas Gschwend, Delia Schindler and Kai-Uwe Schnapp (eds.), *Methoden der Politikwissenschaft. Neuere qualitative und quantitative Analyseverfahren* (Nomos: Baden-Baden 2006) 103-105.

discourse analyses. There is decided here to stick to the original definitions as given by Foucault. Especially because these can be used, as is done before, to develop a consistent framework for analyses or museums.<sup>347</sup> But more on that after the next three paragraphs.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), a onetime teacher of Foucault, is the second source of inspiration for this methodology. Firstly because the idea of discursive formations, as described by Foucault, has its origins in the work and teaching of Derrida. Secondly, and most important, the work of Derrida is interesting because he introduced the term deconstruction. What Derrida means by this is difficult to explain and some authors have even deemed it impossible. One interesting definition is given by the American philosopher John D. Caputo (1940): 'Whenever deconstruction finds a nutshell - a secure axiom or a pithy maxim - the very idea is to crack it open and disturb this tranquility. Indeed, that is a good rule of thumb in deconstruction. *That* is what deconstruction is all about, it's very meaning and mission, if it has any. One might even say that cracking nutshells is what deconstruction *is*. In a nutshell. (...) Have we not run up against a paradox and an aporia [something contradictory] the paralysis and impossibility of an aporia is just what impels deconstruction, what rouses it out of bed in the morning.'<sup>348</sup>

This still does not make clear what is done in a deconstructive approach. In general deconstruction sets out from the premise that language is a system of differences in which words and things acquire meaning by being in relationship to others. In this the '(...) presence of a thing, its existence, identity, validity, etc., is constituted by what is absent from it, or what is excluded from it.'<sup>349</sup> Language in this sense is based upon binaries or oppositions. Like male/female, mind/body, east/west, etc. 'What deconstructive analysis reveals is not that such binaries are unreal, but that they are never pure of coherent: the two sides of the coin are not produced in isolation from each other but are rather always inextricably intertwined.'<sup>350</sup> In this relationship one of the two binary terms is always valued higher than or seen as superior to the other. Deconstruction is a critical method because it can be applied to make this reality clear and to counteract the processes that as a consequence of the binary try to presence, centre, purify, divide, classify and exclude.<sup>351</sup> An interesting approach in regard of this study.

Ideas and concepts from both these authors are in general, as do they state themselves, not true methodologies because they are critical in nature and in essence try to critically examine large bodies of knowledge producing practices.<sup>352</sup> In that sense they try to elude large bodies of standardised practices because it undermines the critical potential of their ideas. Still, this does not mean that their ideas cannot be used and combined in a systematic way. Many examples can after all be given of research on the basis of discourse, discursive or deconstructive analyses. In the context of this study the best example is the work of Said and most notably his *Orientalism*.

Especially in combination with the so-called exhibition analyses, a consistent methodology developed for doing research on museums which then also is widely used in the field of museum studies, can the above mentioned ideas be grounded in a consistent methodology. The exhibitions analysis is in outline quite simple. It consist, in the case of this study, of nine different groups of questions. Each group of questions addresses as specific aspect of how the museum, its exhibition and everything in it are experienced.<sup>353</sup> The

<sup>347</sup> Ian Sean Brouwer, *Onvergankelijke verleden. De visualisering van het beladen oorlogsverleden in Duitse landelijke en regionale historische musea anno 2010* (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam: Rotterdam 2010) 13.

<sup>348</sup> John D. Caputo (eds.), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (Fordham University Press: London 1997) 32.

<sup>349</sup> Wylie, 'Poststructuralist theories, critical methods and experimentation', 300.

<sup>350</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>351</sup> Ibidem, 300-301.

<sup>352</sup> Ibidem, 298-310.

<sup>353</sup> See for the entire structure 'Attachment I' at the end of this study.

inspiration for these groups and the questions that are part of them is taken from the several debates as motioned above. The main structure though is taken from the work of the Dutch historians J.P. Sigmond, F. Sint Nicolaas and I.S Brouwer, and there has also been some inspiration from the work done at the institute for Cultureel Erfgoed Noord-Holland and the Hogeschool Gent.<sup>354</sup>

The nine subjects addressed in the exhibition analyses as it is created for this study each address a different topic or theme which are formulated as follows. Firstly there will be shortly be attention for the history, background and context of the museum and its exhibitions. This is quite a general approach to give a context for what is going to follow. Secondly there will be attention for the first impressions of the building, its entrance and the relevant exhibition(-s). In this way the influence of the architecture, personal impressions and introduction toward the relevant exhibitions (on the Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago – and when relevant the general or whole Dutch colonial past –) will be taken into account. Thirdly the question will be asked what the content (subject, message, narrative) of the exhibition is. Fourthly there is asked what the structure (beginning, walking route, divisions, ending) of the exhibition (or museum) is and what the consequences of this are for the content and narrative about Dutch colonialism. The fifth questions a question about the influence of design. Question will be asked about interior, exhibition, lighting, font and image design. Especially the consequences (do these choices support, distract from or distort the chosen subject, message and narrative) of these choices are examined. Sixthly it are the objects, images, videos and texts that will be addressed. There will be looked at which ones are chosen, which ones are missing, how they are grouped, what the feeling of the objects is, et cetera. The seventh point of inquiry regards the so called embodied visitor. What kind of visitor is expected, how is he/she placed in the exhibit, what happens with emotions, et cetera. In this way there is attention for how the space interacts with the visitor. Eighthly there is attention for how the museum practices socialize the gaze of the visitor. Questions are asked about who is in the museum space, visibility/invisibility, included/excluded and what kind of hierarchy can be found in this. This is done by looking how violence, death, ethnicity, race, gender, class, religion, power, inequality, history and memory are present in the mnemonic landscape. Lastly there will be given an oversight or conclusion about how the museum landscape represents, shapes and reshapes Dutch collective memory and identity. In this there will be attention for which discursive formation(s) and discourse(s) are clearly visible in the exhibition? Furthermore, the puzzle, as we have deconstructed with the questions above, will be put back together, and the question will be asked what kind of Dutch collective memory and identity there then does emerge? Special attention will in this be given to the how (to the role) of the mnemonic landscape in the representing, shaping and reshaping of Dutch collective memory and identity.

In conclusion it is important to stress here that in the exhibition analysis the meaning of discursive and discourse should not be restricted to a pure textual domain but to, as Foucault would insist, see it as a whole of texts, actions and beliefs. In this sense text and landscape do not differ much because both can be read, both are formed by a discourse and both are subject to acts of interpretation (and thus also to deconstruction). This has as a consequence that strategies of seeing and reading need to overlap to find the museum narrative, or better put museum discourse, and to look at what a deconstructive view might tell us about the discursively created museum landscape or discourse. After all, how a

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<sup>354</sup> Brouwer, *Onvergankelijke verleden*, 13-14 and 86; J. P. Sigmond and E. Sint Nicolaas, *Kijken naar geschiedenis. Onderzoeken en tentoonstellen van historische voorwerpen* (Waanders Uitgevers: Zwolle 2005); <http://www.erfgoedwijs.nl/clientdata/downloads/Tentoonstellingsanalyse%20Formulier%20CENH.pdf> (accessed 11 June 2014); and: <http://researchportal.be/projects.pdf?page=155&ordering=startdate&descending=false&itemsPerPage=10> (accessed 11 June 2014).

collection is formed, divided and staged can say a lot about what is thought by a people and/or about a people. This brings us back to the influence of a museum landscape on the staging, shaping and reshaping of collective memory and identity.

## 5. RESEARCH CHAPTERS

In the paragraphs below the research methodology and its results in regard to each selected museum will be described. In this way one can read the following as four case studies. The comparison between the four museum will only follow in the conclusion because it is there that larger lines can be drawn and more inclusive connections can be made.

### 5.1 Tropenmuseum

The Tropenmuseum is the oldest museum that collects and exhibits object, texts and images with as subject or origin the former Dutch colonies. It even started as a pure colonial museum. For this reason it is indispensable as an object of research in this study.

#### 5.1.1 Short history, background and context

The Tropenmuseum (English: Tropical Museum) was established in 1864 in Haarlem by the entrepreneur and botanist Frederick van Eeden (1829-1901) under the name Koloniaal Museum (English: Colonial Museum). The museum was opened for the public in 1871. The main aim of the museum was to show to the Dutch public what their country possessed in terms of colonies and where the Dutch were present in the world. For this purpose it exhibited a wide range of objects and pictures from many corners of the world (although most of the artwork came from Asia and then especially Indonesia). From 1871 onward the museum also undertook research projects of which the main aim was to increase the profits that could be made in the colonies. This included attempting to develop improved means of producing coffee beans, rotan and paraffin. Later on the museum was influenced by the science of ethnology which meant an increased interest in research on the economy, history, customs, languages, inhabitants, etc., of the colonies. In 1910 the Koloniaal Museum was combined with the Koloniaal Instituut (English: Colonial Institute) to form the Vereeniging Koloniaal Institute (English: Society Colonial Institute).

This organization moved in 1926 to a new building in Amsterdam (designed by J.J. van Nieukerken and M.A. van Nieukerken) which housed the research institute, a library and the museum's collection of 30.000 objects and many photographs. The building was richly decorated for the time (with artwork specific for the first half on the twentieth century), and took 11 years to build due to the First World War and various strikes (in 2003 it was listed as a national monument).



Image 1: Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam

Following the independence of Indonesia the Institute and Museum changed their scope to include more than just the Dutch (former) possessions. This change was made clear by the name change in 1950 to the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (English: Royal Institute for the Tropics) of which the museum would be part under the new name: Tropenmuseum. At the same time the research institute now focused more on poverty, hunger and disease than on the former ethnographic and economic interests. The Tropenmuseum in recent years has remodeled its permanent exhibition, now called 'Oostwärts!', in an effort to decolonize its collection. The staff is very much aware of its history and the darker sides of it. Furthermore, it started to use semi-permanent exhibits that focus on a multitude of issues, histories and cultures (both domestic and foreign), and thus is highlighted by many people as one of the best examples of a way to try to decolonize a museum.

The museum now houses 175,000 objects (which include 5,500 musical instruments, 21,000 textile artifacts - mainly from Indonesia - and the collection of the former Ethnographic Museum Artis), 155,000 photographs (which consists mainly of historical photographs of the former Dutch Colonies from 1855–1940) and 10,000 drawings, paintings, and documents of various kinds. These collections contain object from areas as diverse as Asia, the Middle-East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. There are also some collections that fall outside the tropical scope because they are made up from objects from China, Japan, Korea, and Europe.

In 2014 the research institute and the Tropenmuseum were disconnected as the consequence of budget cuts and the downsizing of subsidies. The Tropenmuseum, in a strategy to survive and obtain new funds, discarded its library (which contained some 900,000 books, maps, and other items and was staffed by 33 people) and merged with het Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde (English: National Museum of Ethnology) in Leiden and the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal to form the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (English: the National Museum of World Cultures).<sup>355</sup>

### 5.1.2 First impressions of the building, its entrance and the relevant exhibition(-s)

The Tropenmuseum is housed in the building as shown in Image 1. It is located at Linnaeusstraat 2 in Amsterdam. The building was finished in 1926 and is build in a style very common for that period. As a consequence it is richly decorated, has large windows, high ceilings and seems to be designed to highlight the importance of its contents. So even today the building still exhales a feeling of stature and grandeur. The visitor then also, when approaching the building, seems to be guided toward a certain reverence for what he or she is going to see. A trait commonly associated with or evoked by old buildings.

During the last renovation the entrance was moved to the lower floors, the visitor enters the museum through what formally was called the basement and steps into a reception hall with low ceilings, which feels smaller than it is and which looks quite ordinary (so there are no big receptions halls and stairs or other strategies to impress the visitor). This strategy is often used to normalize the museum visit and to counteract the grandeur and overwhelming impressions of the often old and impressively designed buildings.<sup>356</sup> The choice to move the entrance (and exit) to the lower floors balances the first impression of the museum as evoked by the exterior architecture of the building.

From the reception hall the visitor needs to go up in an elevator to reach the floor where one can find the exhibition on Indonesia and thus

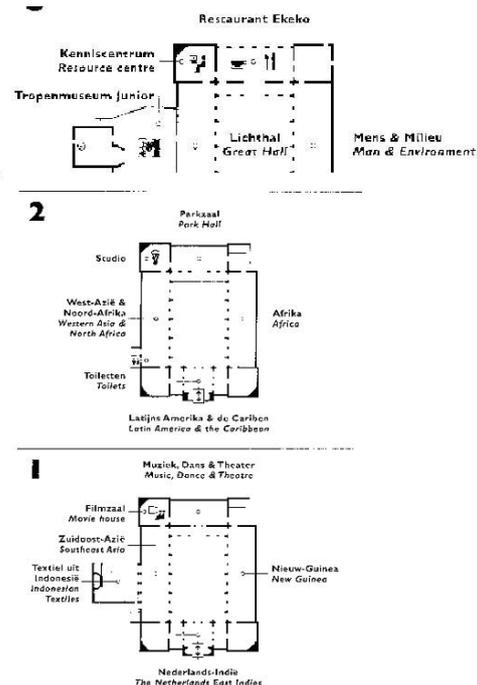


Image 2: Map of the Tropenmuseum - Indonesia is on the front side of the first floor

<sup>355</sup> For the entire section above see: Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe'; Legêne and Van Dijk, *The Netherlands East Indies*; <http://tropenmuseum.nl/> (accessed 19 June 2014); <http://www.kit.nl/> (accessed 19 June 2014); <http://www.amsterdam.info/museums/tropenmuseum/history/> (accessed 19 June 2014); <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tropenmuseum> (accessed 19 June 2014); and: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tropenmuseum> (accessed 19 June 2014).

<sup>356</sup> Munson, 'The new museology', 62-64.

the Dutch colonial past with the subsequent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. The ride with the elevator is an experience on its own because the old elevators are still in place. This gives the feeling that one is stepping back into time. Arriving on the first floor the visitor steps into the middle of the exhibition and looks upon the mannequins that depict seven figures of the Dutch colonial past (administrator, soldier, western colonial women, etc.). The rest of the exhibition is a rich combination of artifacts, objects, paintings, pictures and even a short video between which one can wander and search for the most interested parts.

Interesting to observe is that there is only one mentioning of the violent decolonization. Which of course is problematic in regard to this study. There then also is decided to also look at what happens in regard to the more distant colonial past.

### 5.1.3 Content of the relevant exhibition(-s)

The Tropenmuseum has exhibitions (general as well as temporary) on many different regions of the world of which most can be described as tropical (Africa and Asia). One of the more prominent of these is the exhibition on Indonesia. In this exhibition it is the history before 1945 that gets the most attention. This point is further highlighted by the naming of the room of the exhibition: *Nederlands-Indië* (English: Dutch East Indies). This seems to exclude modern day Indonesia, which is remarkable because all the other rooms and exhibitions try to make a clearer connection to the present (as can for example clearly be seen in the inclusion of contemporary stories and objects in the exhibition on India). In the case of Indonesia there generally is attention for prehistory, the first Indonesian states and the development of Dutch colonialism. The subjects attended are wide ranging and include economies, crafts, arts, religion, politics, violence, gender, et cetera, but seem to be brought together under the label of the Dutch East Indies and the magnificent works of art the Dutch could collect in this colony (although later additions were acquired by more correct power structures). The common factor seems to be the geography, the Indonesian archipelago, from which Papua New Guinea is excluded for this part of the Far East gets its own exhibition.

After the introduction of a new exhibition in 2003 called 'Oostwärts' (English: 'Eastward Bound! Art, Culture and Colonialism') the image that the Tropenmuseum emits in regard to the Dutch colonial past changed considerably. The former attitudes towards the Indonesian archipelago of firstly national pride, then silence and then objectivity were replaced with a balanced and nuanced story in which there was room for achievements as well as atrocities and faults. The past in this regard is staged to view not in a passive way but to be critically examined and to promote awareness by the people that come to view it. Or as a curator at the time of the opening of the museum put it: 'It is a profile that places art and culture from South-East Asia and Oceania in a critical historical context for the public.'<sup>357</sup> In this the museum and its staff try to forego the voyeur approach. Not just look but engage seems to me the message. This is one of the reasons that the mannequins as mentioned before have a glass body part, to prevent the Madame Tussauds effect.

Because of the critical perspective and the freedom the visitor gets to roam the exhibition the narrative is difficult to pin down. In general this narrative steps away from older stories of nationalism, pride, 'the white men's burden', progress and the exotic. Instead it seems to be the master narrative is broken down and replaced by smaller stories. Still, a real narrative or story is difficult to find in the exhibition. This seems to be a deliberate choice in line with the newly adopted critical approach to the Dutch colonial past.

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<sup>357</sup> Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe', 24.

#### 5.1.4 *Entrance, structure and exit of the exhibition*

In essence the exhibition on Indonesia has a clear entrance because it follows a more or less chronological order. Still, this entrance is not really perceived as an entrance. It is perceived as one of the starting points because the visitor can start on many places. The visitor can make the choice and is not really forced to follow a prearranged path. A prime example of this is of course the elevator experience. The elevator delivers the visitor to the middle of the exhibition in the room with the mannequins. From there one can choose to go left, back in time, or right, into the twentieth century and Papua New Guinea. If one used the stairs and started on the ground floor with the other exhibitions one could have entered the exhibition on two different locations (beginning and end). This approach can greatly influence how the visitor perceives the exhibition because it gives a different context. Approaching from the South-East Asia exhibition gives a feeling of continuity and chronology because one begins at the chronological start. At the same time this entrance influences how the visitor will view the Indonesian history and culture. They are used to the South-East Asian context and will interpret, in the beginning at least, Indonesia from that perspective. While if one enters from the side of Papua New Guinea, the end of the exhibit, the visitor gets a totally different feeling in which there is more room for Dutch influences, colonialism and also the parallels with the exhibition on Africa that one can see one floor above. The different possibilities in approaching the exhibit on Indonesia thus makes for different experiences. The body comes out of a different experience and thus walks through the exhibit in a different way.

This feeling of wondering or exploring is also present in the Indonesian exhibit itself. There is no true compulsory walking route. The only structure that is provided is more or less chronological. The First room focuses on the traditional cultures and the presence of the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC - Dutch East India Company) in the Indonesian archipelago. The second room shows the nineteenth en twentieth century which is characterized by the takeover of the colony by the Dutch state, a drive towards more control and more profit, and the introduction of the so called ethical politics (with the aim of elevate the people of the Dutch possessions in the Indonesian archipelago). In this room one can find the mannequins of seven figures from the Dutch colonial past: an Indonesian civil servant, a governor-general, a Dutch colonial housewife, a soldier from the Dutch colonial army, an artist, a planter and a female missionary/teacher (the scene reminisces a photo of a 1938 exhibition in which an empty throne of Queen Wilhelmina figures around which groups of people that represent the different peoples in the Dutch Kingdom are placed). The third room takes us closer to the realities of colonialism by focusing on the colonial culture. This includes attention for the economy, religion, health, education, transport, et cetera.

The overall structure of the exhibition is thus fragmented. Several subjects are addressed but there is no overall narrative or structure to bring a unified message. This is in line with the intention of showing diversity and make a critical examination of the past possible. At the same time it is surprising to observe that there is no connection with the present and that the very violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago is only present in the form of a short video displayed in a corner on a very small TV-screen. The beginning of the Dutch presence is very much present in the exhibit with the many references to the VOC, trade and military violence. The end is not really present which keeps the visitor wondering about this part of Dutch/Indonesian history. Although this does not seem to be a variant of an open-ending but more the feeling a spatial void.

#### 5.1.5 *Design*

Design has become a buzzword in our contemporary society. Many people are now schooled or are being schooled as designers (interior, industrial, product, etc.). Designing has become an art on its own and it is thus not surprising that also museum now day have to

consider many choices regarding to design. The Tropenmuseum has made specific choices in regard to interior, exhibition, lighting, font, image, and architectural design.

A first point that is striking to observe is how the architecture of the building and the exhibition are matched together. In the architecture is silenced as much as possible by downplaying original features and painting everything in white. Still this cannot disguise the high ceilings, large windows, monumental stairways and the grand central ballroom that spans all floors, which gives the building a feeling of dignity and importance. The grand structure of the building is a given and especially when the large central room is empty there is feeling of missing, blankness or purposelessness. Which at the same time, especially when one needs to cross it to get to another exhibition, seems to communicate the importance and grandness of the object in the exhibitions and the history of the museum itself.

This reality can give the visitor a feeling of the exhibition and museum of disconnectedness, ignorance or disassociation. This feeling is countered by the design of the exhibition in which there is made use of the height of the building. There are designed large walls and cases in pleasant colors (green, blue, brown) on or in which objects are displayed sometimes several meters above the ground. Also, the placement of wall, cases and objects is done in such a way that the space feels adequately filled a new form of intimacy is created. In this the design not much present. It are history and object that are central. With the exception of some text that are displayed on some walls to give context. Of this the prime example is the text at the beginning of the exhibition that states the history of the museum and the awareness of the staff of this reality and the consequences of this for the museum and its collections.

Lighting, image and font design are not the most important parts of the exhibitions and seem to be subordinate to the objects and their contextualization. They then also are kept quite plain and pragmatic. They are there to inform and to highlight the special parts of collections or exhibitions. A method used in most museums.

The overall influences of the design on the message, subject and narrative of the exhibition on Indonesia are subtle and in essence supportive. Design is a quite influence that helps in displaying the objects, luring the visitor to certain parts of the exhibition (like the mannequins which are placed in such a way that one is drawn to them and then can wonder between them) and to give most attention to the contents of the exhibitions and not tot the building or one highlighted object.

### *5.1.6 Objects, images, videos and texts*

As mentioned before the exhibition on Indonesia has a more or less chronological structure. In this structure objects, texts, images and videos are grouped and displayed in a thematic fashion. One corner, for example, focuses on missionary work in the nineteenth en twentieth century and shows attributes and picture associated with it. While at another corner the violence of colonialism is featured by means of displaying the weapons of the colonizers besides the weapons of those who resisted them. These objects are connected to each other in three different ways. One is by theme, as explained above. A second way of connecting is done by providing a text in which the objects are placed in a context and are related to each other. A third one is by putting a certain object central and grouping the rest around it. Which in most cases visualizes an hierarchy. The most beautiful example of this is how the mannequins are surrounded by authentic objects, that only get a meaning in relationship to the he person that the mannequins is supposed to represent.

It is important here to stress that almost all these objects are historic in nature and belong to the period before the nineteen-forties. The decolonization is not visualized except in one video. This video is shown on a small screen in the left corner in the main exhibition room (the same room where one can look upon the mannequins) and does not stand out, on the contrary. It is designed in such a way that only one person can watch it (there is one chair

in front of the small screen) and the entire movie may take up to fifteen minutes to watch. The consequences of this are quite clear. People will only encounter the decolonization when they look for it and will not find it easily. Also because the decolonization is embedded in the political story about Indonesian nationalism. Then, when they do find it, the content and information is not presented in a very approachable and understandable way. This will curb any discussion and inclusion of this aspect of Dutch colonialism in the larger picture the museum tries to sketch about the Dutch colonial past in the Indonesian archipelago.

This image has to be weight against the rest of the exhibition in which objects, texts and images are used in critical and postcolonial ways. Gender, which in this case means the contribution on women (although mostly Dutch) to the colonial society, for example is featured prominently. Just as the violence committed against the Indonesian population but also the resistance of these people. This is beautifully done by showing the Dutch and Indonesians weapons side by side.

Of course there can be discusses about every object, text or image if it should have been included or that a different choice would have been better. This is an always ongoing discussion in museums, especially those regarding colonialism, violence or war. Most important to stretch here is that the exhibition on Indonesia as it is now shown at the Tropenmuseum has no blatant failures regarding the choices for the objects, texts and images. For the period that seems to be central in the exhibition (seventeenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century) there is created a balanced picture in which many prominent pieces are shown within a contextualized exhibition.

Most prominent in this exhibition are the seven mannequins as mentioned before (an Indonesian civil servant, a governor-general, a Dutch colonial housewife, a soldier from the Dutch colonial army, an artist, a planter and a female missionary/teacher). These mannequins try to embody the colonial past and to perform it for the visitors. In this the so called Madame Tussauds effect is circumvented by making some body parts from glass. Which are meant to let the visitor reflect on what they see. By the use of authentic clothes and attributes but also the glass limbs the mannequins become representatives of a lost society and the multitude of people inhabiting it. At the same time the mannequins emit a feeling of selectiveness, unrealness and invention. They are cliché's, and perhaps even more disturbing, they are almost all, except the high placed Indonesian civil servant, of Dutch origin. So what do we see? We see a Dutch colonial society, we see the elite, we see the people with power and this is represented as natural and representative for a whole society. This is puzzling because it is the opposite of the main postcolonial aims as sheared at the opening of the exhibition on Indonesia. At the same time it keeps people wondering about the ordinary people, other ethnicities, other religions and in general the so called 'other'. Who after all made all those highly valued pieces of art that can be found in the entire exhibition? Not the Dutch but the Indonesians, Arabians and Chinese. Perhaps it would have been correct to also show mannequins of them. This surely would have been a possibility because the Tropenmuseum after all has a large collection of textiles, clothing and objects to represent these others.

The above shows that objects are central in the exhibition. This is not strange for a museum with a colonial legacy, a large collection and the aim of showing these objects to the public but then in a modern and critical framework. In this texts and images take on a supportive role. They contextualize or help the visitor image the colonial world that has disappeared. In the use of these objects, images and texts the exhibition is geared toward a complementary picture. With this is meant that some of the objects, texts and images can be described as personnel, others as pragmatic and others as pieces of art. This makes a mix possible in which the visitor on the one hand can identify with the exhibition but at the same time can be informed. Not surprising though is that the main focus seems to lie on the ethnographic and artistic value of the objects. A perspective that comes natural to a museum

that started with the aim of showing to the world the cultures and peoples of the Dutch colonial sphere of influence.

The overall impression of the exhibition on Indonesia seems to be a double one. On the one side the exhibition stays true to its critical aims and can, and often is, designated as one of the best examples of a postcolonial colonial museum.<sup>358</sup> On the other hand colonialism, or better put the colonial present or colonial way of looking to the world, still seeps in. A fine example of this is the almost entire exclusion of the violent decolonization of the exhibition and the entire exclusion of references to contemporary society. After all, the colonial society the exhibition shows did not end with the, in this case thus not visualized, decolonization. Another example are the mannequins that promote a biased viewing of the colonial reality.

### 5.1.7 *The embodied visitor*

During and after the opening of the new permanent exhibition about Indonesia in 2003 it was stated that the exhibition was meant for everyone, from school children to the people that experienced colonialism themselves.<sup>359</sup> This broad orientation is visible in the general orientation of the exhibition. It does not seem to cater to a specific group but shows a diverse selection of objects, texts and images which can be placed and read in different contexts. For those who do not know anything about the Dutch colonial past in the Indonesian archipelago there is a lot of information (also catering to children), for those who experienced it there is the possibility of recognition (of experiencing the familiar), and for those that know a lot about the subject there are the exquisite pieces of art, authentic artifacts and the possibility for further inquiry and deepening of understanding.

This is achieved by means of text and audio information besides the visual information provided by the museum landscape. There are interesting objects for every person and one can of course make their own selection of the most interesting parts of objects. The museum landscape also invites visitors to do this. They can wander, wonder and walk their own route through the exhibitions. The body of the visitor is thus left quite autonomous and is not pushed in one direction or the other. This can provoke the feeling that one is left to their own devices and gets lost. At the same time this can be a specific choice to let a person wander the museum landscape and find its own logic in it. By not providing a compulsory walking route and creating an open museum landscape the exhibition is experienced in a far more independent, and even more postmodern, way.

Interesting to observe is that in this case distance in time and space is not folded in difference but in similarity. Especially the mannequins make the past and the faraway into something familiar by showing a lot of Dutch colonial culture and the Dutch colonials. This one-sided image is countered by the attention for the mutual cultural interaction between colonizer and colonized. The museum landscape thus becomes a familiar space in which there also are hints of the unfamiliar. The visitor is shown a collective memory it can recognize but is at the same time invited to expand this vision.

Furthermore, visitors are encouraged to critically examine what they see. This is mostly done by providing contextual information and encouraging people to form their own opinions about the objects and their history (although there has to be remarked here that there is not much attention for the acquisition history of the collection of the Tropenmuseum, some room might and should be made for the ethics of the colonial museums acquisition policy, past and present). In this some people might have emotional reactions but it seems clear for the outset that informing and especially entertaining the visitor are more important. There are now real efforts made to place the visitor in the position of 'the others' which they are

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<sup>358</sup> Legêne and Van Dijk, *The Netherlands East Indies*; and: Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe'.

<sup>359</sup> Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe', 24-25.

viewing. Also, there are no efforts made to let people imagine past circumstances (like war, hunger or inequality) or let them feel compassion or even disgust. Then again the exhibition also tries to circumvent emotions of national pride, nostalgia and amnesia. An attitude that, as we shall see, is not shared by most museums. This situation in the Tropenmuseum creates in general quite a pleasant atmosphere which encourages curiosity and gives room for a more critical attitude.

#### *5.1.8 Socializing the gaze of the visitor*

The gaze of the visitor is very much a something that is socialized. People have to be learned what they see and how to interpret it. It is thus important to address how questions about visibility/invisibility, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy to determine what kind of image of the past an museum landscape promotes of decolonization. The problem here is, as stated before, that the decolonization is not present in the museum landscape of the Tropenmuseum, except in one virtual reference. This makes it almost impossible to deconstruct the image created of the decolonization. Except to state that it is made invisible, is excluded and in the hierarchy of things thus is provided with a low place. But even this is speculation because there is not much to base this on. The only reference made to the decolonization is imbedded in stories about nationalism, is presented in quite a plain neutral way, and does not address issues about violence, death, ethnicity, race, gender, class, religion, et cetera. Politics is quite visible in this mention of course but only in such a way as to create the opposition between Nationalists and the Dutch colonizers. In this there is some differentiation on the basis of religion but that is about it. For the sake of clarity and neutrality a lot is made invisible, which of course excludes a lot of people and makes it more difficult for the people of the multicultural Netherlands to identify with this past. At the same time these issues of inclusion/exclusion, visibility/invisibility and hierarchy are addressed in a far better way in the rest of the exhibition on Indonesia.

Violence and death are a regular part the museum landscape. There has been made a special effort to incorporate the several ways in which the Indonesian society could be considered a violent one. There are, for example, weapons from the Dutch army, the Indonesian nationalist, religious and ritual weapons, et cetera, on display. Although the gruesome details, barbarous tactics, and the reality of colonial warfare (and neocolonial warfare) are not mentioned. Probably because of the unsuitability of it for younger visitors.

The same is true of gender, which in this case should be understood as the inclusion of women in the museum landscape. For women are a considerable part of the exhibition as can be seen in the explicit inclusion of female mannequins. But also here there we miss a lot of women. We see the white Dutch women but the indigenous women are in many cases invisible. Also, there are no notes on how gender, understood as masculinity and femininity, are part of the colonial society. How there were differences between the local culture and the culture of the Dutch colonizers, in which the local man where understood as more feminine by the settlers (and the persistence of this bias over time until recent times). In this understanding of gender there after all are power relations at play.

The same is true of ethnicity, race and class where very much used to divide the colonial society. People where labeled and every label had its own privileges or disadvantages. Although this inequality and these processes in- and exclusion is mentioned in the exhibition it remains elusive for how this effected the reality of everyday life. It stays a bit abstract because just those people that where most affected by these policies are not visualized in the mannequins that are at the hard of the exhibition.

Religion is difficult marker to pin down. It is present everywhere in the exhibition because in the Indonesian society religion and society are very much intertwined. A lot of the objects then also have a religious connotation. Furthermore there is special attention for the

missionary work that was execution in the Indonesian archipelago. So religion is everywhere. At the same time we do not see local religious teachers, while they were very important in the education of the Indonesian population and the construction of their society, and do not see references to the thousands of mosques that Indonesia had and has as a consequence of it being predominately an Islamic country. The religious diversity of the archipelago is thus not fully addressed while it is present in almost every item present is a vital part of the context of Dutch colonialism.

There has to be acknowledged that the object orientated approach of the Tropenmuseum makes it far more difficult to approach these issues of inclusion/exclusion, visibility/invisibility and hierarchy in a comprehensive way. Power and inequality are in many cases made explicit and history is hoped to be presented in a nuanced way with the possibility for identification for many different people. The problem only is that memory is not much taken into account. Attention for collective memory would bring the many mnemonic communities in view that participate in the memory of Dutch colonialism and the decolonization. It will show the mnemonic battles fought over this memory and would force a more inclusive, with more attention for the processes of inclusion/exclusion, visibility/invisibility and hierarchy, approach towards this past because now there has to done justice to the many sides to the same story, the many memories associated with it and the social structure in which they developed.

#### *5.1.9 Representing, shaping and reshaping Dutch collective memory and identity*

The Tropenmuseum has navigated the difficult memory and museum landscape of the Dutch colonial past with care. Discourses of national pride, moral superiority (or inferior), feeling of guilt, amnesiac tendencies or nostalgic worldviews have been evaded. The museum landscape associated with the Dutch colonial past has an open character, lends itself for many forms of identification and also for a critical reading of the past. It is nuanced and at the same time tries to be personal. This is great step towards the postcolonial perspective.

At the same time there can be found several islands of silence. Of which the most prominent is the exclusion of the decolonization from the museum landscape. The most surprising to perceive is that this almost seems national when one walks, wanders and wonders through the exhibition. There are no clues or moment from which one can step to the wars of the nineteen-forties. The exhibition exhales a sphere of nuance and correctness, in accordance with what one could call the Dutch identity and tendency to compromise, in which no one should be offended. This attitude deprives the museum landscape of the tools to voice the more problematic parts of the Dutch colonial past, like the decolonization war and the race politics of the colonial state, and perhaps there here is thus a specific kind of aphasia at play. There are no context, no words and no means to voice these complicated issues in a satisfactory way.

There is in this sense an interesting paradox at play: the other (mostly understood as the colonial subjects but which can include many different groups in Indonesian - Chinese, Eurasians, etc. - as well as Dutch, Moluccans, veterans, etc. - society) is shown, but this happens in such a way that the other is not grounded in the museum landscape. The others are present in the space but not in a very sustainable way. They are attached to everything that is present but are not really evoked and are not really visualized. They are behind everything but we look through them. The visitor sees the objects but not the people it represents, the people that made it and the people that handled it. The most they see are the people that were the elite in the colonial society and that most often bought those objects to the Netherlands.

Perhaps the others in this case can best be theorized as ghosts that should be acknowledges before they leave the Dutch continues at peace. Now it seems that the Dutch try to denominate their faults, they try to make it better and make clear ethical statements in

consequence. But in this process the ghosts are often not present, their stories are not heart and can in many cases not even be perceived. The museum landscape in this sense hides parts of the colonial past by showing a more complicated colonial past. The open structure of the museum landscape does not provide people with the context and words to deal with these still complicated, and recent, parts of the Dutch collective memory and identity.

## 5.2 Museum Bronbeek

The Netherlands has a second, not much known, colonial museum located at the estate called Bronbeek. The museum is the result of the combination of the collections of objects of the soldiers that lived and live in the adjacent nursing home for soldiers that fought in Indonesia. This, and the influence of the state on the development of the estate, makes it a very unique museum with a distinct perspective on the Dutch colonial past. For this reason it may not be absent from this study.

### 5.2.1 Short history, background and context

The history of the estate of Bronbeek begins with the construction of a mansion in 1820 by Hermen Stijferwald. His widow sold it in 1930, and in 1954 it was bought by King William III (1817-1890). He donated the property in 1859 to the Dutch state which had the intention to transform the estate into a ‘Koloniaal Militair Invalidenhuis’ (English: Colonial Military Nursing home). The first invalids arrived in 1863 and this amount would swell to no more than two hundred men at the same time.

Over the years the Ministry for the Colonies, the royal family, and individuals donated artwork, objects and items from the Indonesian archipelago for the decoration of the nursing home. The hallways, walls and staircases in this way transformed into a museum. Over the years the amount of objects reached such a amount that a proper museum became possible. During the second half of the twentieth century the estate had to transform and adapt to the new century. This had a couple of consequences. The first was a more professional nursing home with a maximum of fifty patients. A second was the construction of an Indisch and Indonesian congress and memory centre. A last was the installation of a proper museum.

The museum changes its exhibition in recent years to provide a more inclusive image of the Dutch colonial past, called *Het Verhaal van Indië* (English: The story of the Netherlands Indies). The new story conveyed by this exhibition is described as follows: ‘Het verhaal van Indië’ begint eind 16e eeuw. Het eindigt in de postkoloniale periode, waarin honderdduizenden naar Nederland migreerden. Verslagen van ooggetuigen, authentieke uniformen en wapens en historische filmbeelden geven een beeld van deze geschiedenis.’<sup>360</sup> The aim is to show the Dutch, their opponents and the local cultures.

These changes of course also meant that a renovation had to be performed. The building was built in a neoclassical style and already renovated in earlier years by H.F.G.N. Camp and W.N. Rose. They created a building what was characterized by neoclassicism and eclectic. In 1854 this was restored and some new buildings were built to house the new organizations like the memory centre. Over the centuries the estate also got adorned with various statues and other memorials.



Image 3: Museum Bronbeek in Arnhem

<sup>360</sup> <http://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/bronbeek/inhoud/museum/vaste-expositie> (accessed 23 June 2014).

So the estate has several impressive buildings and memorials that add to its grandeur.

The museum houses 55,000 objects which include but are not limited to canons, Indonesian weapons, uniforms, medals, ethnographic objects, stuffed animals, a large library and a beautiful collection of painting. These object are part of the permanent exhibition, are used in the non-permanent exhibitions, are used for scientific research are part of the educational functions of the museum (geared towards primary and secondary schools).<sup>361</sup>

### 5.2.2 First impressions of the building, its entrance and the relevant exhibition(-s)

Approaching the building that houses Museum Bronbeek one needs to cross a park and follow a grand driveway up to the main building. In the meantime one passes great and old tress, a large field of grass, several memorials and a neoclassical building with several wings. The building that houses the museum is two stories high, is build in neoclassical style (see Image 2) and has a large façade which is characterized by large windows. This of course impresses the visitor a provokes a feeling of aw for the history that is embodied in the building. This of course already sanctifies the objects, texts and images that one is going to see inside the building.

The museum is entered through the main doors, which are heavy big wood carved doors, which is followed by the confrontation by a big and old gun that is placed in the first entrance hallway (which is quite small and has a low ceiling). After this is gets confusing for the visitor because the museum not a commercial as most others. There is no clear ticket office, no signs and no guidelines. It seems that the doorman is at the same time the ticket officer. After obtaining a ticket the visitor continues through the long reception hall into the main hallway. In this hallway one finds the big chairs, a introduction to the exhibition and one can chose to go four different ways. On the first floor, the right and left, one finds temporary exhibitions and the history of the museum and nursing home. The permanent exhibitions *Het Verhaal van Indië* is located on the first floor. The visitor needs to clime one of the two large staircases (or take the elevator) to reach the exhibition. This is quite a clime and one is in the meanwhile bombarded by images from the past of the Dutch colonial army and the Dutch colonial history. This instills the visitor with anticipation and owe for what is to come.

The exhibition in Bronbeek on the Dutch colonial makes a very descent first impression. It covers 1595 until present and tries to give insight in several subjects and cultures. This is done by means of a rich and diverse selection of texts, objects, images and video. The exhibition consists of six different rooms: *De onderneming 1595-1817*, *Het*

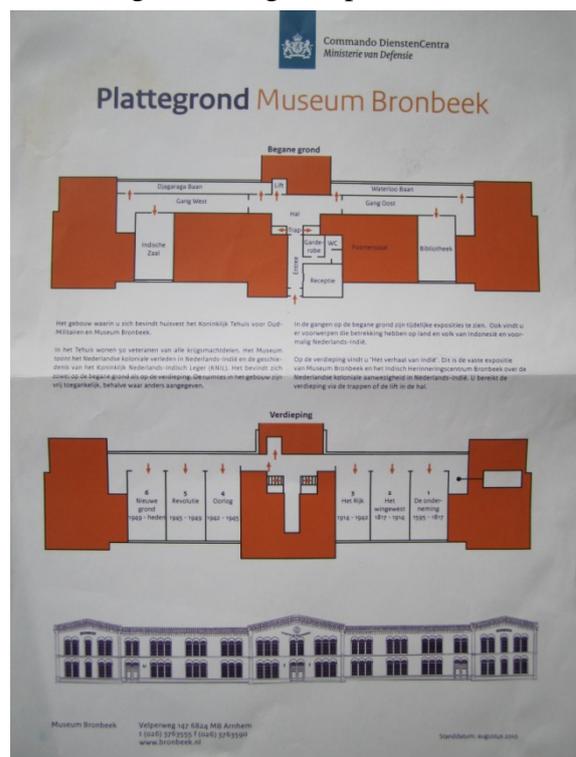


Image 4: Map of Museum Bronbeek - Permanent exposition on the first floor

<sup>361</sup> For the above mentioned see: <http://www.kumpulan.nl/kumpulan/bronbeek.html> (accessed 23 June 2014); <http://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/bronbeek/inhoud/museum/geschiedenis> (accessed 23 June 2014); <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronbeek> (accessed 23 June 2014); <http://www.hetverhaalvanindie.com/tentoonstelling>; (accessed 23 June 2014); and: [http://www.ihchostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie\\_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=2&node-id=1&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1](http://www.ihchostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=2&node-id=1&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1); (accessed 23 June 2014).

wingewest 1817-1914, Het Rijk 1914-1942, Oorlog 1942-1945, Revolutie 1945-1949, and Nieuwe grond 1949-heden (English: The enterprise 1595-1817, The money making province 1817-1914, The empire 1914-1942, War 1942-1945, Revolution 1945-1949, and New soil 1949-heden). Still there has to be stressed that the exhibitions already starts in the hallways leading towards the six rooms. Most striking is the video shown on the wall opposite from the stairways. This is the declaration of independence as spoken by Sukarno on 17 august 1945 outside his home. This from the start shows that the exhibition does not oversees the decolonization. On the contrary, the staff from Bronbeek have made the capitulation of the Japanese on 15 august 1945 and the Indonesian declaration of independence 17 august 1945 the core around which exhibition revolves.<sup>362</sup>

### 5.2.3 Content of the relevant exhibition(-s)

The subject of the permanent exhibition at Museum Bronbeek, called *Het Verhaal van Indië*, is quite clear. It is the story of Dutch colonialism and the decolonization that is told. Or as the museum itself puts it: ‘De overzichtstentoonstelling vertelt het Verhaal van Indië in het Nederlands en Engels. In het trappenhuis en de hal van het hoofdgebouw staan 15 en 17 augustus 1945 centraal: de capitulatie van Japan en het uitroepen van de onafhankelijkheid van Indonesië. (...) Foto's en filmprojecties introduceren dit cruciale keerpunt in de koloniale geschiedenis als vertrekpunt. In zes zalen op de eerste verdieping wordt aansluitend het Verhaal van Indië verteld.’<sup>363</sup> This is a clear demarcated subject, although, as we will see, what happens in the demarcation may be something more of a puzzle.

The message connected to the exhibitions of Museum Bronbeek stays elusive. It is not very clear what is being communicated and what is seen as most important. The museum gives a lot of information, provides context and has several educational programs. But the main message is not clearly visible. In the end it seems that providing information about the Dutch colonial history, in which at the same time the collections of Bronbeek are shown, seems to be the main aim. In this there is talk of speaking to several groups and not to conform to one vision. But it is not clear how this translates into a clear message, besides the informing of the Dutch public.

The exhibitions *Het Verhaal van Indië* has a very strong narrative. It follows a strict chronological structure that consists of six chapters, as mentioned above. In this narrative one follows the history of the Dutch in the Indonesian archipelago from 1595 until the present. In this narrative there is attention for the background and context of colonialism. Economics, trade, culture, policy and the connections between the Netherlands and the colony are discussed. Still it is not surprising to observe that most of the attention is paid to the military, war, weapons and everything associated with it. This is of course the consequence of the history of the Museum. It started after all as a military hospital for the soldiers of the Dutch East Indies Army. Also, because of the main focus on the Second World War, the Indonesian Revolution and their consequences there is a lot of attention for war, trauma and the memories still present in Dutch society about this period. An interesting starting point for an exhibition.

<sup>362</sup> See for more information and the digital exhibition (this is quite novel, because one can see and navigate the museum from the inside from behind the computer): <http://www.hetverhaalvanindie.com/tentoonstelling> (accessed on 23 June 2014); <http://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/bronbeek/inhoud/museum/vaste-expositie> (accessed on 23 June 2014); and: [http://www.ihchostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie\\_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=1&node-id=37&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1](http://www.ihchostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=1&node-id=37&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1) (accessed on 23 June 2014).

<sup>363</sup> <http://www.hetverhaalvanindie.com/tentoonstelling> (accessed on 23 June 2014).

#### 5.2.4 Entrance, structure and exit of the exhibition

The entrance of the exhibition is the same time fixed as it is a choice. The exhibition in essence is buildup in a pure chronological way. Following the rooms from the right to left will thus take you through the story in a chronological way. But the first room is not so much an entrance because the confrontation with the exhibition begins when one walks up the stairs. These are after all adorned with images and videos and at the end of the stairs there is a green wall in a motif of the jungle on which one can see photo's of the wars in Indonesia in the nineteen-forties. Even more prominently present is the video on which one can see how Sukarno reads out the Indonesian declaration of independence. The visitor is thus even before entering the exhibition at the starting point confronted with the subject of the exhibition. Still the entrance itself, which is strangely put at the end of one of the corridors is an archway through which one needs to pass to enter the exhibition. The visitor is thus taken in the history, and gets the feeling of approaching something important of wonderful.

From the beginning one can wonder through the exhibition in a chronological way. This is promoted by the passage ways between the first three and the last three chapters (these themselves are divided by the staircases, which means that the entire exhibition is split in two between pre- and post-1942 part). Besides this chronological order there is no real compulsory walking route. Visitors can choose how to walk in each chapter, how to approach it and what attracts them in it.

These chapters, as we have seen above, are clearly demarcated. Each of them pays attention to a specific era of the Dutch colonial history. It is the structure of the building that for a large part demanded such an approach. At the same time it does not seem satisfactory because the connections between the six rooms are not expletory made and because of the chapters it seems like there are no long processes of dependencies between these six different era's of Dutch colonialism.

The ending of the exhibition is made quite clear. The last chapter in the exhibition is dedicated to the after match of Dutch colonialism in the Indonesian archipelago. In this there is attention for migration and other continuities with the period before 1950. This rounds up the story and points towards the future. Furthermore this chapter asks the visitor to contemplate what one has seen, what kind of impression it made and gives the possibility to live thoughts, opinions and messages in a digital environment.

The choices made in structure are the consequences of the history and the architecture of the building, and have as a consequence that the history of Dutch colonialism in the Indonesian archipelago is visualized as fragmented. This makes the drawing or sketching of longer lines and process more difficult. On the other hand it gives people the change to contemplate each room and what they just have seen. People are not forced ahead from one thing to the next. At the same time the attention for decolonization in the stairways and the main hallway, that lay between the two sides of the exhibition, makes it clear that one cannot just skip this problematic Dutch past. An interesting approach for a museum that is so much imbedded in this problematic side. The choices thus have advantages and disadvantages.

#### 5.2.5 Design

Every room in the exhibition of Museum Bronbeek is specially designed, with a theme in mind and with the aim of moving or influencing the visitor. Many choices have thus been made in regard to colors, exhibition cases, walls, et cetera. The result differs from room to room. The first room feels like a classic museum with a playful walking route due to the placement of walls in a creative way which invites the visitor to search, be curious about what is around the corner or in the small rooms. The second room has the sphere of classical colonialism, perhaps a colonial mansion. The military is very present in this exhibit because of the showcasing of weapons, uniforms, medals, pictures of military men, et cetera. This

creates a strange mix of coziness and violence. The third room is designed as a jungle, as visible in the darkness of the room and the nature prints, with in the middle a bed. The fourth room is an open exhibit of light wood which can be climbed to reach the higher parts of the exhibit in which a Japanese flag is shown. Interesting about this exhibit is that one does not see much on first sight but that one needs to open drawers and doors to the exhibit objects and tests. The visitor is thus activated to engage with the exhibition. Also surprising is the lightness of the room which seems to counteract the grim message it tries to convey. The third room is divided in two by two L-shaped walls. There is the outer part of the exhibition, the walls, on which one can read personal stories, memories and pieces of diaries about the decolonization and the violence associated with it. Also, there are some military uniforms and equipment of the Dutch army that fought in the Indonesian archipelago on display. On the inside the visitor finds a history with images and a strange collage of pictures in black, white and red. The entire exhibition exhales a certain uneasiness. The last room is divided in two. The first half depicts the aftermath of the decolonization war and the migrations associated with it. The second half tries to make a connection with the present, invites visitors to reflect on what they have seen and to leave a message when desired. For this reason this part of the exhibition feels modern and open.<sup>364</sup>

In the entire exhibition lighting is used quite deliberately to highlight important pieces, to attract attention and to manipulate the atmosphere of a specific room. The exhibition on 1945-1950 for example is quite dark, with lights on the texts with personal stories and histories. This guides the visitor to these stories but at the same time conveys a feeling of importance and distress. Another example is how the paintings in the first room are very brightly lighted so that attention does not go to the walls, little rooms and creative exhibition design but to the paintings and the stories they represent. This same pattern is true for the design of font and images. These are kept plain and in accordance with the story. Font and image should not stand on their own and should not distract but complement.

The Bronbeek building as a very specific architecture. The building consists of several wings. This reality had its consequences for the possibilities of creating an exhibition. The choice is in the end made to preserve a lot of the original interior and to build the exhibition in that interior. White is the predominant color in the building and it looks quite Spartan in nature, as one would expect from a former military hospital. The maintaining of the original structure, as we have seen above, guided the exhibition in the direction of six different rooms connected by the two plain hallways and one prominent staircase and hallway combination. These rooms and the main staircase/hallway are high, have large windows and are white. On this blank canvas the curators posted their exhibition.

In these ways as described above there is tried to combine design and subject in such a way that they support each other while at the same time not affecting the historic value of the building itself. In general this the curators succeed in achieving this aim. The design is a major part of conveying the subject, message and narrative. Although sometimes the visuals can be distracting the reality of the story that is conveyed. Also, it is a very styled and designed exhibition. Which leaves little room for people to draw their own conclusions.

### 5.2.6 *Objects, images, videos and texts*

As we have seen above, the entire exhibition is orientated on a chronological story, on the core historical information and on a narrative. It is the history that is at the core of the exhibition. The images, objects and texts are subordinate to it. They are grouped around it, are used to visualize the history and to make it more attractive. It is then also not surprising to observe that objects and images are connected with one another through the history and to the

<sup>364</sup> See for pictures of the exhibit <http://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/bronbeek/inhoud/museum/vaste-expositie> (accessed 13 June 2014); and: Attachment II

story that is told. Especially interesting is this regard is the exhibition on the decolonization because in this room there are almost no objects. Only some military outfits and objects used by the Dutch soldiers that fought in the Indonesian archipelago in the period 1945-1950 are displayed. It are the images and texts that need to convey what happened during the decolonization war. This disconnects the reality of the war from the textual reality because the spatial dimension and the reality conveyed by the objects related to the period is missing.

In the other parts of the exhibition this is different because more objects are at display. In the first room one can see some exquisite paintings of the period until 1817, the second room shows some ethnographic object and a lot of prominently featured military objects, the third room has some outfits but most attention goes to the so called marriage bed in the middle of the room, the fourth room thus shows objects which are diverse and include weapons, ration stamps, personal books, et cetera, for which the visitor has to look, and the sixth room resembles an office in which there can be seen object that are related to the process of immigration.

All the rooms of the exhibitions make use of maps and images. They support the historical story, show sides of for which the museum has to relevant objects in store and bring to light the many different aspects of the colonial society. The images are mostly used in combination with a text or object as means of the context, or are part of a large collage.

Video and digital means of exhibiting history are used plentiful. In this way stories of veterans can be presented and pictures for which there was no room in the exhibition (because not all pictures can be exhibited) can still be shown. A prime example is the use of small screens in the third room on which one can see different thematic parts of the Dutch colonial history from the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In this sense video and technology makes it possible to show more information in a limited space. The museum landscape in that sense is expanded, in a digital way.

The makers of the Bronbeek exposition make an interesting mix of objects, texts, videos and images. The availability of resources and objects limited the choices that could be made about what to show. Furthermore, the history of the museum made it clear that a lot of attention needed to be paid to the Dutch military in the Indonesian archipelago. Military objects, images and texts then also figure prominently. This distracts from the main historical story the curators try to tell. Although not in such a degree that the exhibition is worthless. It creates, to put it more nuanced, an exhibition that perhaps could have been more balanced but which does not have any objects that do not belong in the exhibition or stand out too much. At the same time the choice to place personal documents, diaries, pictures from family albums and so on besides the detached military objects creates an interesting confrontation that tries to bring the wider colonial society in to view.

A point of interest is the abundant presence of military uniforms and other pieces of clothing but the large absence of people or mannequins. While these pieces of clothing are presented standing in such a way as they would have been perceived when worn by a mannequin. This creates the feeling of people that are not there. Also, all these pieces of clothing are of western origin or were worn by Dutch colonial people. There is not much attention for the world of the colonized in this sense. Still, there has been acknowledged that the use of pictures and images balances this reality. An exhibition reality that tries to be balanced and neutral. A position that is reinforced by means of the images, texts, videos and objects. At the same time this creates a situation in which there one can feel detached from the exhibition and that feels a bit surreal, but more on this below.

### 5.2.7 *The embodied visitor*

In general the exhibition at Bronbeek is meant for a wide range of people with no real exceptions. In reality the curators had concerns from three different groups in their expositions and this has consequences for its contents.

The first group consists of the Dutch veterans (which were mostly young men, conscripts, from all over the Netherlands) that fought in the Indonesian archipelago during the period 1945-1950. This group did manifest itself clearly from the nineteenth eighties onward (because they went with retirement in that period and had time to organize). Each individual in this group has their own memories of their period in the Indonesian archipelago. Some see it as a good time, some as a bad, some feel guilt others feel pride, and others have had traumatic experiences. Still the organizations that represent the veterans resist most, if not all, acquisitions of wrongdoing on their part. Because of the presence of some of these veterans in the nursing home that is housed in the same building as the museum the creators of the exhibition had to keep those people in mind more than other museums have to. Not only because these people will see it, but also because their families visit the museum, they are seen as one of the main visitor groups. This of course influenced the exhibition especially the room committed to the Indonesian war of independence which has in accordance with this idea was named Revolution. There are no mentions in this room of the reality of battle, the committed war crimes, the normality of violence, the horrible scenes of destruction, famine, torture and the racism, hierarchies and power relations associated with it. The terminology evades these difficult questions and this part of the exhibition feels a bit detached and too objective. The personal stories as can be seen on the outer part of the L-shaped walls seem forced and do not really show the reality of a war of decolonization. This can also be the case because it are mainly the Dutch that are talking, writing and are shown on the images. The Indonesians, although being one half of the conflict, do not get the same space. Especially because the history on the inside of the L-shaped wall is told from a Dutch perspective. It is the collage of images in black, white and red put on the inside walls opposite to the historical story that tries to balance this story and evokes a feeling of uneasiness, and seems to show how conflict affects all. Still these images are not contextualized. The texts that are prominent everywhere are silent here.

The second group is called Indies Dutchmen and women and their children. These are people from Dutch or mixed ethnicity (Indo-Europeans) that have lived, where born or grew up in the Indonesian archipelago. Some of these people lived in Indonesia for generations. After the decolonization war they did not stay in the Indonesian archipelago but moved to the Netherlands in large groups, over 300.000 people in total. Bronbeek is also for these people a special place. For one because many of the people that returned served or knew people in the KNIL of which some ended up in the nursing home at Bronbeek. Furthermore the opening of the Indies remembrance centre made Bronbeek as meeting point. This centre has had as coauthor a large say in the design of the exhibition on the Dutch colonial past. Especially because they represent one of the main audiences. This has had some interesting consequences for which choices were made in regard to in this case the room dedicated to the Second World War. Attention is mainly focused on this group and their suffering they have endured. It are the atrocities committed by the Japanese and the captivity in the camps that gets the central place. It is very understandable that this part of history gets a lot of attention. Still, it keeps the visitor wondering about the rest of the Indonesian archipelago and the people in it. What happened with them? These people only come in sight again when we enter the room on the decolonization.

A third and last important group are schoolchildren from all over the Netherlands. Bronbeek has a clear goal of education the young people about the Dutch colonial past. For this reason the staff of Bronbeek developed besides the exhibition also several education

programs. Still it is a challenge to active and interest these young people for the Dutch colonial past and at the same time keep what they will see appropriate for their age. Texts are thus kept clear, simple and neutral. Also most of the objects shown are interesting for a young audience because they show something exotic of military.

How does the body of this visitor get placed in the museum and the exhibition, in which directions is it pushed and what are the consequences of this for the exhibition experience?

The exhibition tries to appeal to the visitor's emotion but not so much by providing moving personal stories or by putting the visitor in the place of different people that lived in the Indonesian archipelago over the centuries. It is the sphere of the exhibition that changes from room to room that moves the visitor. From cosiness to darkness the sphere of each room changes. In this way there is tried to muster certain feelings and to guide the interpretation of the texts and object one can see in a certain room. The most beautiful example of this is the room on decolonization. This room is quite dark and grey. This gives an feeling of uneasiness and seems to suggest that something is out of place. At the same time it is not clear what this is. Especially because of the contrast with previous room on the Second World War. This is also a conflict but this room feels light and empty. A strange paradox that is not easily explained except by the influence on both rooms by two totally different groups which each brings different people to the fore or tries to protect certain groups.

The visitor is guided through the exhibition and can follow a path from beginning to end. This of course limits the movement of the body of the visitor. They are encapsulated by the exhibition. Still within each chapter in the exhibition the visitor is left loose. They need to figure out how all the different objects, images, videos and texts fit together. This makes the visitor more a moving participant than a passive observer. Also interesting is that the visitor can step out of the exhibition by going back the plain hallway that connects three chapters. In this way one can create a distance, take some time to think about what one has seen and also observe everything from a distance. This makes it easier to see the bigger picture and supplies the visitor by a certain freedom.

At the same time this freedom is also curtailed by the museum space. The best example of this is the exhibition of the decolonization. The design of the exhibit creates two worlds in the same exhibition room. An outer and fragmented world of personal stories which one can circle and an inner world or the chronological history. There is a clear separation at work here in which the visitor, his/her body, is distanced from one or the other. They cannot be seen at the same time. In this way a false feeling of difference is created and the integrated and multifold dimensions of the conflict seem to be disconnected.

A same diversified image emerges in regard to the imagined geographies of the colonial other. In essence the Indonesian archipelago is presented as a very relevant part of the Dutch history. Although there is no real integration, which is almost never achieved within Dutch history and society. In the exhibition figure many people that all are represented as familiar. Distance is not folded into change. At the same time the image of the Indonesian archipelago is selective, as we will also see in the next paragraph. The Indonesians are mostly represented as victims of perpetrators. They are not much present in objects and only figure in the images. It seems like the presence of more Indonesian influences would complicate the museum landscape too much.

This shows that the museum landscape can influence the impressions and experiences of the visitor in several ways. It divides or unites, makes visible or makes invisible, and gives a feeling of inclusion or exclusion. The visitor (its body and identity), the history (its bodies and cultures) and the museum landscape are in a dialogue with each other. The question is what the most important aim is: informing, entertaining or confronting. There are now real efforts made to place the visitor in the position of 'the others' which they are viewing. Also, there are no efforts made to let people imagine past circumstances (like war, hunger or

inequality) or let them feel compassion or even disgust. Then again the exhibition also tries to circumvent emotions of national pride, nostalgia and amnesia. Although this means in general that a neutral picture, but look out this is not the same as a nuanced picture, is preferred.

### 5.2.8 *Socializing the gaze of the visitor*

Exhibitions always perform themselves in a certain context and the visitor is, within this paradigm, guided in certain directions. The museum space is after all a socialized space. People learn to read it and to see and not see certain aspects in it. The question is no how within this discourse questions about visibility/invisibility, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy are handled. In the case of Bronbeek there is a large exhibition, about one sixth of the entire museum exhibition, on the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. In accordance of the subject of this study the main aim will be on this exhibition but some remarks can be made to the other parts of the exhibition to.

Violence and death features prominent in the entire exhibition at Bronbeek. Weapons, uniforms and talk about casualties can be found in almost every chapter. Surprising though to observe the neutrality in which these stories of violence and death are told. The Java War (1825-1830) for example is described and the 200.000 casualties are mentioned. An immense number, but this does not diminish the status that the army has in this chapter of the exhibition or invites the visitor to contemplate on this reality. The same is true when one moves to the chapter on decolonization. The war is described, casualties are reported and violence is named. Surprising though is to observe that it are the Dutch that suffer, have casualties, fight, flee and defend. The Indonesian side of the story is not mentioned, 'the other' or in this case the enemy is invisible. A dissatisfactory situation worsened by the words used to describe the history of the period 1945-1950. When the exhibition for example recalls the murder, retaliations and atrocities committed in South Sulawesi in December 1946 until February 1947 by the Depot Speciale Troepen under the command of Raymond Westerling (1919-1987) the terms *standrechtelijk geëxecuteerd* (English: summarily executed) and *Methode Westerling* (English: Method Westerling, which describes a certain way of singling out random people for execution to force villagers to cooperative and provide information about rebels, revolutionaries and other people that committed resistance) are used. For the untrained eye this seems to suggest a normal way of warfare, while this in fact can be termed a war crime of which many more exist. Still this is not something the veterans and larger parts of Dutch society want to hear. By the use of these passive terms the issue and debate on this issue are evaded.

Above there is already mentioned that the native population of the Indonesian archipelago is not often present in the exhibition at Bronbeek and when they are present it are rich rulers of the some images of servant. It are the Dutch, their perspective, and their military that is at the core of the exhibition. Besides that this creates a biased, unnuanced and incomplete image of the Dutch colonial past, it also prevents an identification with these people. This reality is aggravated by how



Image 5: Decolonization in images

the differences in and between ethnicities are visualized. A prime example is the collage of images that can be found on the inner walls of the exhibition on the decolonization, see Image 5. One sees some friendly Dutch soldiers marching, chatting in smoking pipe. While the Indonesians look angry, suspicious or need help. The Indonesian is thus reduced to the role of enemy or a subject in need of protection. This impression is not countered by information or texts that might explain what one sees and that gives the perspective of the Indonesian side. There thus seems to be a difference in the depiction of Dutch and Indonesians people (and other ethnicities like the Papua's, Chinese and Arabians are not even mentioned or depicted) which is not in line with the neutrality that is present in the rest of exhibition.

The military is world of men. It is then also not surprising that in the exhibition of Bronbeek women are scarcely visible. They are depicted as victims in need of protection (during the Second World War of the decolonization war), as wives (there is nice example in the third room of a garment worn by Dutch colonial women) and that seems to be about it. This is quite surprising when one regards the living arrangements between Dutch men and native women. Or the policies of the Dutch state during the nineteenth en twentieth-century to attract more Dutch or European women to the Indonesian archipelago. Furthermore the Dutch women where the bears of Western civilization and occupied a key position in the implementation of the so called *Ethische Politiek* (a program to uplift the peoples of the Indonesian archipelago, a Dutch version of the white man's burden). And of course many more examples can be given. They just do not seem to matter that much in regard to this exhibition. The same is true for issues surrounding class and religion. There is no diversity visible and no thorough information is given about the differences between peoples (not only the colonizer versus the colonized, but also in these groups themselves).

This situation creates a dilemma in regard to how visitors understand the realities in regard to visibility/invisibility, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy. It at the Dutch in the exhibition that hold power and are on top of the hierarchy, this of course is in accordance with the reality of the time although some nuance could be applied, but the exhibition does not give many attention to the inequality that was consequence of this colonial system and this colonial culture (of indeed violence, of which there are traces in the entire exhibition but which are not explicitly connected to these issues of power only to issues of casualties). There is no attention for what this organization of a society meant for the people living in them. The visitor is not asked to look critically at it and what this means for our own times. The visitor is thus not challenged to look inward or to feel sympathy or compassion. They are not asked to reflect or to take a critical stance, as is the case in for example the Tropenmuseum.

#### 5.2.9 Representing, shaping and reshaping Dutch collective memory and identity

The museum Bronbeek makes a fragmented impression. Several mnemonic communities seem to battle over the image of the Dutch colonial past as should be represented in the exhibition. To navigate this difficult memory terrain there seems to have been decided that a more distanced and neutral exhibition was the best way forward. Especially when one takes in mind the elderly people that fought in the wars that are discussed in the last chapters and now live only a very short distance from the exhibition. This has consequences for the discourse that is promoted. There seem to be several at play, mostly in different chapters which are in many respects disconnected from each other. Larger lines and processes are very difficult to perceive in the museum landscape. It is good to observe that discourses like national pride, moral superiority (or inferior), feeling of guilt, amnesiac tendencies or nostalgic worldviews have been evaded.

At the same time a more critical approach, that ask questions about guilt or responsibility, is also missing. The discourse of victimhood is for example quite present, in this it are the veterans or the survivors of the camps that are the victims, but not the

Indonesians. There is also a lot of silence and above neutrality present in the exhibition discourse. A conformity with the Dutch collective memory and identity seems to be preferred. This is in accordance with what one could call a Dutch tendency to compromise, in which no one should be offended, everyone gets something, and no one in the end is happy with the result. This attitude deprives the museum landscape of the tools to voice the more problematic parts of the Dutch colonial past, like the extraordinary violence perpetrated during the decolonization war and politics of inequality. In this regard there can be argued that there is a certain kind of aphasia at play. There are no context, no words and no means to voice the complicated issues and memories in a satisfactory way for all Dutch people. The result is a neutral picture in which people are not confronted with for example the war crimes and which provides the visitor with the means to look away from or even through the more complicated parts of Dutch colonial history.

This has profound consequences for the Dutch collective memory because the traditional views are not challenged and a certain disassociation and disinterest continues. The past is washed neutral, not clean, but neutral. The idea seems to be that we all did something wrong, that it was a horrible past and that we now have to honor our elderly by not provoking too much. The museum space in this regard is filled with a multitude of information attuned to different groups and split between six different chapters. This creates a feeling of unreality, it feels assembled. The space does not engage it feels very clean and white. It's soul is almost just as white as the walls of Bronbeek. Both in ethnic terms as in terms of the subjects addressed. The introduction of some new perspectives, viewpoints and discourse would in this regard benefit the exhibition.

And let's be clear here. Indeed some 'the others' (the Indonesians and Japanese, but no women or Chinese) are present in the museum landscape (as was an aim of the curators), but it is surprising to note that they do not occupy any real space and seem to have no voice in the exhibition. It is true that the others can be gazed upon in the exhibition. But they only seem to become important, nuanced and representing a diversity in the last chapter of the museum landscape. Because here they become Dutch. They move to the motherland and as a consequence get a voice.

### 5.3 Rijksmuseum

The Rijksmuseum is originally a museum of art and culture. It has no real historic aims and mainly wants 'to show great works of art with a specific attention to what can be regarded as Dutch masterpieces. Then again the curators the Rijksmuseum aimed in the last decades to integrate history and art because it is impossible to understand the images, objects and paintings without grasping the context in which they were created.<sup>365</sup> This creates an interesting case that should be included in this study because it calls to mind several questions regarding the handling of Dutch colonial memory and history.

#### 5.3.1 Short history, background and context

The Rijksmuseum can trace its origins back to the Batavian Republic. It was the government of this republic under the guidance of Isaac Gogel (1775-1821) that decided in 1798 to establish a national museum. On 31 May 1800 the Nationale Kunstgalerij (National Art Gallery) opened its doors for the public. In the first years the collections were small and consisted mostly of state property. Over the years it slowly grew because of the active acquisition policy of the first director, C.S. Roos, gifts, and the combination of several

<sup>365</sup> Bloembergen, Schulte Nordholt and Eickhoff, 'Koloniale nostalgie in Rijksmuseum'. See also: <http://www.niod.nl/nl/nieuws/opinie-koloniale-nostalgie-rijksmuseum> (accessed on 21 May 2014).

collections other museum. IN 1808 the museum for example moved to Amsterdam to the Paleis op de Dam (Royal Palace) and was joined there by the most important works of art of the city. Five years later it was renamed into *Rijks Museum* (English: Imperial museum) moved again, now to the Trippenhuis (a seventeenth century merchant city palace) and was joined there by parts of the national print collection from The Hague. Not many other works were acquired during this period.

The Trippenhuis was not suitable to be a museum. So there was decided to build a new museum. After a lot of debating they only started in 1876 with the building process. There was decided on a design for the building made by the famous architect Pierre Cuypers (1827-1921). He designed a building in a combination of Gothic and Renaissance styles. Although not every



Image 6: Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam

liked this combination, it was judged as not Dutch enough, the doors of the new building opened in 1885. But it soon proved to be too small again. Because of the constant acquisition of artwork and new insights in museum design there was the need for more room.

This led to a series of changes to the building in which more was created or in which the interiors were drastically changed to support new ideas and aims. New galleries were built, the interior was remodeled several times and the collections grew (to almost half a million objects and images) and were divided along several themes and chronologies in the past centuries. The last decades the Rijksmuseum was thoroughly renovated with the aim of preparing it for the twenty-first century. In this process the original design of Cuypers was brought back and the collection was remodeled. Painting, crafts and history are no longer divided over several parts of the building but together show a chronological story about the Dutch art and history.<sup>366</sup>

### 5.3.2 First impressions of the building, its entrance and the relevant exhibition(-s)

The Rijksmuseum as a national monument and a prime example of the work of the famous architect Cuypers. It is then also not surprising that approaching the building is quite an experience. The large building, with the towers, high windows, red brick and many artistic details exhales a feeling of high culture and excellence. Anticipation is evoked by the sight of the building which is heightened by the excellent reputation of the Rijksmuseum. Approaching the entrance of the museum through the main gates brings you into the belly of the building which in its turn leads to the doors that bring the visitor into the new, big, high and white reception hall.

This reception hall is a recent addition. It impresses the visitor even more. The entrance, the stairs that lead toward the several exhibitions and the big crowds give even more the feeling of grandness. The visitor is thus from the beginning given the impression that he or she is going to see something amazing and of high quality. This is in some sense of course been done deliberately. The Rijksmuseum wants to be one of the best worldwide museums of art and history. To achieve this the museum has to invest in appearance, quality and reputation.

After the visitor has bought a ticket at the large ticket station and has given his coat and bag to be stored in the even larger wardrobe, he or she needs to head to the entrance of the museum. It turns out that the entrance consists of two giant archways which give you the

<sup>366</sup> Erik Spaans, *Rijksmuseumgids* (Rijksmuseum: Amsterdam 2013); <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/> (accessed 25 June 2014); <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/organisatie/geschiedenis> (accessed 25 June 2014); and: [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rijksmuseum\\_Amsterdam](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rijksmuseum_Amsterdam) (accessed 25 June 2014).

feeling that you enter indeed a new and different world. A worlds, as it turns out, filled with beautiful artwork but then also with a lot of it. The visitor can walk, wander and wonder for hours in the beautiful building in between the beautiful pieces of art.

In regard to this study the problem begins here. Where are the pieces that are important in regard to the Dutch colonial past? This turned out to be quite a search because they are divided over the museum and are not plentiful. Also, I turned out that the exhibition on the twentieth century (the era of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago) was quite difficult to find. One needs to find the right stairs to reach the attic where this exhibition is located. It turns out to be quite a hike to see the Rijksmuseum properly.

It is important to state here that the attention for the Dutch colonial past is not that big, especially in relation to the space available to the Rijksmuseum. There is some attention for Dutch colonialism in which the curators also try to give attention to the darker pages of it (like violence, subjugation and the opium trade).<sup>367</sup> But the decolonization, the main subject in this study, is not addressed.

### 5.3.3 Content of the relevant exhibition(-s)

Because of the large collection of the Rijksmuseum and the large rooms that they have to create exhibitions there is not one subject or exhibition. The artwork shown ranges from centuries before the common era until present. To narrow this field of inquiry in sight of this study there is looked at the subject of colonialism in the Rijksmuseum. there in the end seem to be three relevant exhibitions: Third floor collection 1900-1950, First floor the room Nederland oversee in the collection 1700-1800, and First floor room on Javaanse Hof-functionarissen in the collection 1800-1900. In this selection the Asian pavilion is ignored because the art, although mostly obtained during the time of Dutch colonialism, does not stem from the colonial period and colonialism is not brought into this exhibition. It is not present, it not mentioned and seems to be detached from the objects shown. Which thus is strange because without colonialism most of the objects would not have ended up in the Rijksmuseum.

The message of the Rijksmuseum is difficult to deduce from the exhibitions. They show a lot of art but in this collection there is not a true message. In their communication the Rijksmuseum present a far more clearer image. They talk about a vision and a mission which consist of the following: 'Visie: Het Rijksmuseum verbindt mensen, kunst en geschiedenis. (...) Missie: In het Rijksmuseum krijgen kunst en geschiedenis betekenis voor een breed samengesteld, hedendaags (inter)nationaal publiek. Als nationaal instituut biedt het Rijksmuseum een representatief overzicht van de Nederlandse kunst en geschiedenis vanaf de Middeleeuwen en belangrijke aspecten van Europese en Aziatische kunst. Het Rijksmuseum bewaart, beheert, conserveert, restaureert, onderzoekt, bewerkt, verzamelt, publiceert en presenteert voorwerpen van kunst en geschiedenis, in en buiten het eigen gebouw.'<sup>368</sup> This is not really an exhibition message but the task of that the museum has given itself. Still, there is not much more to go on then this and furthermore the vision and mission are fundamental in shaping the collections and exhibitions.

Because of the largeness of the collection of the Rijksmuseum and the available space to show them there is no true narrative. There are not many connections or lines that run through the entire museum. The narrative needs to be found in each individual exhibitions or rooms. The connection of these several objects, rooms and narratives will show, as we will see below, what kind of larger discourses or discursive formations are behind the showcasing of the objects, images and texts.

<sup>367</sup> Bloembergen and Eickhoff, 'Een klein land dat de wereld bestormt', 165.

<sup>368</sup> <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/organisatie/visie-en-missie> (accessed 25 June 2014).

### 5.3.4 Entrance, structure and exit of the exhibition

As we have seen above the Rijksmuseum, this means the entire museum has a clear entrance from where one enters the exhibitions. This are the large archways in the reception hall which lead to the grand stairs that take the visitor towards the exhibitions. But this starting point is the only thing provided. The arranging of the several part of the exhibitions has no true logic. It is true that there is a division in eight parts: special collections, 1100-1600, 1600-1650, 1650-1700, 1700-1800, 1800-1900, 1900-1950, and 1950-2000. And within these period there is made a subdivision along thematic lines. Still, the eight parts are not logically arranged and do not follow each other in chronological order. Also, the subdivision along themes does not seem to represent a logic of succession.

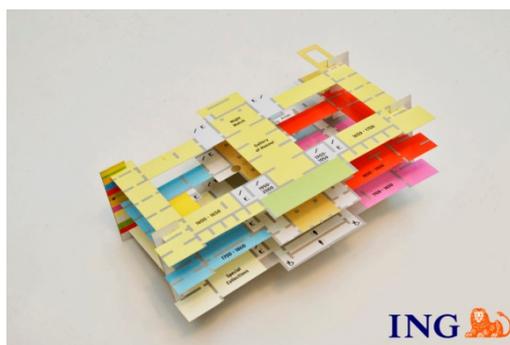


Image 7: Map of the Rijksmuseum

This has clear consequences for the walking routes. There do not seem to be planned walking routes for the visitors to follow. They may or even have to walk, wander and wonder as they like. Especially because walking for example a chronological walking route will take too much time taking stairs, walking back and searching the right beginnings and ends of the exhibitions. Because within each division the subdivisions of themes seems to be roughly aligned with the chronology of how these themes succeeded historically.

This fragmented construction of the museum landscape of the Rijksmuseum, which contains a lot of chapters, makes a flowing narrative or story unite impossible to impalement. Furthermore it complicates the creation of ending. Yes, there are exits but these are placed in the same room as the entrance. They thus do not conclude the exhibition but only offer a way out of the exhibition that visitors can wonder until they are tired of the museum closes. Visitors can also not and in the present because the exhibition that comes closest to our contemporary time is located in the attic and to return from there to the exit means going back to the same exhibition and then cross several floor with exhibitions on earlier periods.

Structure can guide visitors, highlight certain objects and support the message and museum tries to convey. In case of the Rijksmuseum the unstructured way of presenting several themes or current in art and history gives all attention to the objects. There is no distractions from other intentions or influences. The art is placed at the centre.

### 5.3.5 Design

The interior of the Rijksmuseum is just as the exterior quite impressive, especially now after the renovation. The original details and features of the building have been restored. The walls and ceiling in the main halls are once again adorned with the allegories of past times and the beautiful plasterwork is restored. Besides the restoration of these original features not much elaborate is done. There is chosen for exhibition halls that are white, plain and light so that there is no distraction from the artworks and to gave the many visitors that walk around in the museum a feeling of spaciousness. The exhibition design is quite plain. The wall and displays are painted in light and plain colors. There are no elaborate casings of strategies of presenting the art. No, the artworks are presented plain, direct and as the center of the exhibition. They are lighted in such a way that attention is pulled towards them. So there is no impressive lighting plan with special effects. The same is true when one looks at the fond design. This is kept simple, non distractive and is created to carry information without distracting from the story it tells or the objects surrounding it. The choices thus seem deliberately made to focus on the artwork and the original building (which is a piece of art in itself). Distractions are kept at bay and the visitor is guided towards the objects and images.

### 5.3.6 *Objects, images, videos and texts*

Artwork is deliberately and as a consequence of the history of the Rijksmuseum placed in the center of the exhibitions. Message, mission and narrative of the museum are subordinate to it. It then is also not surprising that there is taken great care in placing the objects, images, and text in the many exhibitions halls (there is no use of video or other modern exhibition techniques). They are lighted in a subtle fashion and hang on non distractive walls. Besides the historic and contextual notes provided at the entrance and exit of every exhibition (on the walls) and the small signs that give the data and background of each piece in the collection there is no use of text. This of course is in line with the main aims of the Rijksmuseum which is the presenting of their large collection for a broad audience.

Connections between all the pieces of art is not made by an overarching message, narrative or text. No, objects are only related to one another because they fall in a certain theme or subject, or are painted by the same artist. Even then the connections between the different artworks is kept minimal. They are not meant to be looked at in groups in connection to one another. They are meant to be looked at one at the time, to appreciate the genius of them and to value them as masterpieces. There are then also no true groupings of objects and images. Except for those objects that belong together or are from the same origin like china, guns or sets of furniture and posters.

In general there is not made a distinction between the importance of the artworks. Still there is one big room that has the title *Eregalerij* (Gallery of Honor) in which the visitor will find the greats of Dutch art history (like Rembrandt, Vermeer, Steen and Hals) and of course the *Nachtwacht* can be found at the best and central spot in this exhibition. Notwithstanding the quality of these pieces, this chosen structure seems to subordinate the other pieces of art to a lower hierarchical position. Which is surprising because every person appreciates art differently and the Rijksmuseum has also master pieces from later years (Think for example of the pieces in the Impressionist exhibitions or the Rietveld chairs the posses, to name only two prime examples).

As Bloembergen and Eickhoff stated in a recent article this use of the artwork creates another more pressing problem. It seems to promote Dutch nationalism, national pride and the promotion of national clarities. In regard to colonialism they further argue that '(...) – in the selection and presentation of objects – the history of the Museum's collections and recent historiography on colonialism have been subordinated to art-historical connoisseurship, and to the idea that objects can evoke an understanding of the past in themselves. Thus the colonial sections follow predominantly the frameworks and storylines from the nineteenth century. This, while the same collection could have shown how the Netherlands – today, and in colonial times – is part of a complex world that might generate the need for univocal 'national' clarities, but that in the end only gains from a combination of curiosity, self-reflection and space for others.'<sup>369</sup>

So the problem in this case it not that pieces of artwork do not fit in the collection but that there seems to be a disbalance in what is shown because the focus lies primarily on the Dutch achievements and seems to paint a glorified image of the Dutch past. The historical and complicated connections of the Netherland with the rest of the world are because of this difficult to see. Also because the idea that the object, without context or explanation, will be able to adequately represent, evoke and explain the past there is no attention for this self serving connotation. A prime example of this is how there is ignored that restoring the Rijksmuseum to the original design of Cuypers also brings back his ideas of nationalism which included colonial pride. A message not befitting a modern museum like the Rijksmuseum with its aims of becoming one of the world's best.

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<sup>369</sup> Bloembergen and Eickhoff, 'Een klein land dat de wereld bestormt'.

Also, the showing of the objects as happens now creates a distance between the object and the visitor. They are shown as great pieces of art, which they of course are, but this creates an halo effect. The consequence of this that visitors only gaze at the art and appreciate it but do not engage with it. They do not see it as relevant to their own world and history. Detachment is a general feeling of the artwork. It still brings joy and entertains but it is not critical or presents events in new ways.

### 5.3.7 *The embodied visitor*

The Rijksmuseum does not cater to one group. They try to attract people from all over the world and as a consequence try to provide a diverse pallet of art to cater to the expectations of these diverse people. Leading in this endeavor is the so called art-historical connoisseurship. People need to come, or are perceived as especially coming, to the Rijksmuseum for their excellent collection. So the experience of the visitor to the museum is reduced to the viewing of excellent work of art and as a one sided consumption. Still, as we have seen above, this ignorance for the message that the exhibitions thus exhale creates a situation in which Dutch national pride seems to be promoted and in which less desirable trades from the past, like colonial pride and nostalgia, seem to reemerge.

At the same time this focus on the pieces of art seems to make the visitor disappear. Yes, the visitor is supposed to gaze, to wander, to wonder and to appreciate the art and their history (to passively consume the greatness of Dutch culture). But the visitor is not engaged. One gets the feeling that the idea is that it is a privilege to see the artworks and so the visitors should count themselves lucky. There then also is not made a real connection with the visitors. It does not seem that they, and their diversity, are kept in mind when the exhibitions were designed. There is for example no attention for ethnic diversity in the Netherlands and thus the collection of the Rijksmuseum. The same is true for gender, religion, class, et cetera, but more on this below. This is a missed opportunity.

Detachment seems to be the main feeling in the exhibitions of the Rijksmuseum. The visitor is not engaged, not provoked, not questioned and not moved. The museum mostly informs the visitor, it amuses and it shows the exotics of past times. One can, reading this, not only but then wonder if the artists that made all those wonderful pieces of art would have agreed with this kind a presentation of their work. Which for them most often embodied emotions, feelings and a personal story. Trades that are supposed to come from the visitors when they see the art but which are not promoted by the detached and neutral presentation of the pieces of art.

The situation as described above seems to be confirmed if the body of the visitor is taken into mind. No pushing or guiding of the visitor, except in the experience of the museum in which there are so many people that one often gets shoved (which constantly shocks the visitor out of the experience), is practiced. The visitor has to make his or hers own path. At the same time the body of the visitor seems to be placed at a distance from the artworks. Many people want to look at the master pieces but those pieces are not made to look back and the visitor is not encouraged to put themselves in the position of what they see (somehow it is - naively - perceived that art does that on its own). On the contrary, the visitor is made subordinated to the artwork (they are after all with many and the artworks are view). It is the artwork that counts not the background of the visitor, not their ideas or their experiences. The body of the visitor is in this process made anonymous, it is made blank and it is made part of the masses. The visitors are equalized and diversity is ignored. This can give a feeling of wandering the exhibition and being lost.

The museum landscape seems to promote this feeling. The large open spaces, the many visitors, the art that surrounds the visitor at every corner, the large windows, the high ceilings and the restored original details create a feeling of detachment and awe. The visitor

furthermore has to be careful so it seems. He or she has entered a temple of art and culture. The similarities with a classical Roman Catholic church cannot be ignored (mainly the consequence of the artistic choices made by Cuypers). Only this temple is not dedicated to God but to art. This of course creates an interesting experience, as most churches do, but at the same time suppresses the critical attitudes of the visitors (as most churches do).

### 5.3.8 Socializing the gaze of the visitor

The above mentioned is true for most of the collections of the Rijksmuseum. Only it is time now to zoom in on the specifics of visibility/invisibility, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy, and of how the museum deals with these in regard to the Dutch colonial past. The first thing that is striking in this regard is the reduction of the Dutch colonial past (a legacy of more than four centuries) to two exhibitions and a few scattered objects. It is especially surprising that the decolonization is absent from the entire museum, except from a short sentence in the historic introduction to the exhibition 1900-1950 (which states: ‘Onder buitenlands druk deed Nederland in 1949 afstand van zijn kolonie Indonesië (...).’). This is surprising for a museum with the aim of connecting people, arts and history. Still the Dutch colonial past is present in the Rijksmuseum, also in the collection of the twentieth century, and this is a start. Although it is surprising to observe how this past is shown.

First off there has to be acknowledged that the Rijksmuseum tries to also bring the darker sides of Dutch colonialism to the fore. In the room dedicated to the colonial in the 1800-1900 exhibitions the visitor can observe weapons, see paintings of slaves, read about stolen goods by the Dutch state and in the 1600-1700 exhibition one can observe even more weapons and paintings about the opium trade. So representations of the darker sides are presented but this does not communicate the reality of the colonial society and the short histories given by each room or exhibition does only glance at this point. An interesting of this for example is the statue called *Mens & Machine* by M. J. Hack (1971-1939). This is presented as the accompanying text exclaims the Dutch commercial activities in the Indonesian archipelago and the Dutch aims of bringing the people of the archipelago progress to lift them up from their humble existence. Furthermore the statue is admired for its style that combines elements from Asian and European traditions. This might be true but overlooks the impression the image makes. We see a subordinate and naked (so vulnerable) Javanese in some kind of worship for the new technology (a diesel engine) brought by the Dutch. This creates and even symbolizes the inequality (in power relations) in the Dutch colonial society and seems to rob the Indonesians of the agency they might have had.



Image 8: *Mens & Machine* by M.J. Hack

This other side of a certain object is not stretched or made visible in the Rijksmuseum. The same as is done with *Mens & Machine* can for example be done with the *Gezichtsmasker van bewoner van Nias* (English: Facial casts of Nias islanders) which is presented as part of the Dutch scientific research into ethnicity and race (in this case in Papua New Guinea). This overlooks the implications of this research for how the populations of the Indonesian archipelago were perceived and they were used to present them as lesser to Europeans. The connection between research into race and racism is not made. Just as women, religious diversity and class differences are absent from the colonial collections a pity because other perspectives would be possible.



Image 9: *Gezichtsmasker van bewoner van Nias*

It is necessary to stress here that subjects like violence, death, ethnicity, race, gender, class and religion are present in the collection of the Rijksmuseum. There is an effort to show them. The point made here is that this is the only thing they do. The Rijksmuseum shows, not always enough or convincing and mostly isolated, these subjects that are connected to issues of inequality. What is missing is the connections made between these objects, the darker sides of them and the engaging with them. The visitor seems to look at the past from a Dutch perspective and is not pointed at thus for example the Javanese perspective, or that of a slave or soldier, or colonial civil servant, et cetera. These people are present in the objects and paintings but do not get a voice. They seem to be the bastard children of the Dutch history.

The problem in regard to the evocation of issues surrounding power relation and inequality is that a general visitor does not simply see those issues embodied in the objects shown. To understand these historical realities here has to be context, extra information and an understanding of past societies and cultures. The objects were part of this past but do not tell the stories of exclusion, racism, violence and inequality. They only show this history to those that have a previous and deep knowledge of what is shown to them. The misplaced idea that objects can evoke an understanding of the past in themselves thus creates a biased and overly positive image of the Dutch colonial past, especially in connection with the nationalistic nature of the Rijksmuseum building and the *Eregalerij*. A nice point in this regard is the restored image of an allegory on which we see a white virgin feeding two children, one white and one colored. These two might be equal but it is clear where the civilization comes from.

This shows the problems of the reduction of history and context to a bare minimum and that memory does not seem to play a part in the construction of the exhibitions of the Rijksmuseum. Bloembergen and Eickhoff then also ask rightly how a visitor that wants to learn something about history should know that some objects represent darker sides of the Dutch colonial past and that some objects (or indeed the before mentioned allegory) thus should be viewed ironically. The meaning of collections, exhibitions or buildings indeed never speaks for itself - let alone that this is motivated by an inherent unambiguous meaning of the relevant objects, arrangements or buildings.<sup>370</sup>

### 5.3.9 Representing, shaping and reshaping Dutch collective memory and identity

The largeness of the Rijksmuseum and its collections combined with the primary attention for the object makes it difficult, especially in regard to the Dutch colonial past, to see in which discourse and discursive formations the Rijksmuseum operates. In general there are three discourses that are, sometimes unintentional, are promoted: national pride, exaltation of the objects, and silence. These three are in many ways combined and often strengthen the negative sides of them.

The national pride is visible in the way in which the masterpieces are uncritically represented which is reinforced by the unconditional emphasis on the objects. By which means the black pages of Dutch history get blurred, ignored or silenced. Furthermore the choice for an *Eregalerij* with only the great Dutch masters and the impressions made by the grandness of the building give the visitor a feeling of entering a sacred space in which one needs to be respectful and not offend the (Dutch) host. The museum landscape in this sense traps the visitors and gives them the feeling that they have to conform. Although this does not happen intentionally it in the end promotes a nostalgic and national view of the Dutch past.

Silence is observed mostly when one regards the Dutch colonial past. A past that is very present in the museum, its architecture, and (the financing of many of) its objects but is not contextualized and explained. This past is not forgotten, there is no amnesia, that is for sure. At the same time there does not seem to be a language to express the problems of the

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<sup>370</sup> Ibidem, 158.

colonial past, especially the decolonization seems to be troublesome. Instead of trying to find new ways of engaging with this past there is chosen for silence. There is no room made available for it in the entire museum landscape at the disposal of the Rijksmuseum and is only mentioned once, and not in clear terms and only in one short sentence, in one of the historical and context providing introductions. Perhaps also here there can be detected an aphasic attitude. The objects to give a more comprehensive picture of the Dutch colonial past are present but are not used in such a way and are just not perceived by the Rijksmuseum in such a way.

The result of the choices made by the Rijksmuseum is quite an uncritical and cliché image of the Dutch identity and collective memory. The Dutch are presented as gentle, consensus seeking and above all highly cultured. There is tendency for colonial nostalgia. Furthermore the museum landscape does not seem to engage with the visitor. The history of the pieces of art comes first. This ignores one of the prime aims of art and this is to show the spectator something new, to let them think or to think critical about what they see. This in aim not supported, and even counteracted, by the contemporary use of the artworks in the Rijksmuseum in which indeed to art-historical connoisseurship seems to be the prime motivation behind the choices in which what, and how this, would be exhibited. Perhaps some room should, and it certainly could, be made in the exhibition for a more compassionate perspective in which identification and diversity come to the fore. A challenge to make people think critically about what they see and to let the art look back. This points is already made by Schule Nordholt, Bloembergen and Eickhoff, but there many more people that point towards this option.

## 5.4 Verzetsmuseum

The Verzetsmuseum is surprising choice in regard of this study. The prime goal of the museum after all is to tell the story of the Dutch population (in the Netherlands and in Indonesia) during the Second World War. The interesting thing though is, although they could have stopped there, they recognized that the decolonization was very much intertwined with this history and decided to include it in the exhibition on Indonesia. Furthermore they did this in a very interesting and new way but more on that below.

### 5.4.1 Short history, background and context

The talks which in the end resulted in the establishment of the Verzetsmuseum started on 24 April 1984. The swift process and will to cooperate between the Dutch state, the initiators, and several community organizations resulted in the opening of the museum on 19 November 1985. It was located the Synagogue located at the *Lekstraat* which the Jewish community did not want use anymore. The exhibition show there was created by the historian Karel Magry and the designers Pieter Hildering and Marten Rozenbeek. There was a lot of attention for the museum with good attendance ratings. Still, the building had its deficiencies and hampered further grow of the exhibition and visitor numbers.

During the nineteen-nineties the history of the Second World War got a lot of attention in the Netherlands. Even so because of the fees that the victims in these years received from the Dutch state. Part of these fees needed to spent on public and cultural causes. The Verzetsmuseum turned out to be one of them. Because of this reality the possibility of acquiring a new building (with more room for offices, exhibition, storage, et cetera)



Image 10: Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam

became an option. On 27 March 1997 the Verzetsmuseum bought the first and second floors of the neoclassical Gebouw Planeius in the Plantagebuurt (a neighborhood in Amsterdam) which were thoroughly rebuilt to fit the wishes for the renewed museum. The building was built in 1875-1876 to house the Jewish Singing Society. In 1913 the building became a taxi garage. Until the nineteen-nineties the building was in use to store or repair cars. After several years of vacancy the Verzetsmuseum gave the building a new destination.

Besides the modification made to the building there was the need to update and renew the exhibition of the Verzetsmuseum. This was done by the permanent staff and the design agency *Ars Longa* who finished it in 1999 (and extended in 2005 to include the Japanese occupation of the Indonesian archipelago and the decolonization period). The new exhibition asks the visitor the question what he or she would do when he or she would have lived during the Second World War and its aftermath. Would they have resisted, cooperated or just lived on and kept out of the way. The entire exhibition presents part of the resistance but also of cooperation and presents people with dilemmas people faced during those difficult times. There is no judgment in the exhibition. The visitors themselves have to decide, be critical and weigh the different sides and arguments. This vision is extended toward the period of decolonization which results in an approach to and image of the in the Netherlands as problematically perceived decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>371</sup>

#### *5.4.2 First impressions of the building, its entrance and the relevant exhibition(-s)*

The Verzetsmuseum is housed in a neoclassical building. This gives it a feeling of grandeur and quality. At the same time the building does not stand out in the street. It is connected to the neighboring buildings which are built in similar styles. Also, because of the café housed nearby, that has a terrace in front of a part of the Verzetsmuseum, the building blends in with the rest of the street. Only the sign on the outside of the building denotes that there is a museum inside the building. So when approaching the museum it can even be something of a search to find the right entrance. In this way the visitor can be not really influenced when approaching the building.

Although the building has high ceilings and windows the reception halls are quite humble and look or feel industrial. There is chosen for plain colors and ordinary furniture to make no big impressions. It is a long gray hallway that leads towards the exhibition. Except that this provides the visitor with a feeling that something is out of place because that is not how one would perceive a museum to be it does not convey a message of grandness. The visitor thus is guided quite neutral toward the exhibition.

The exhibitions on the other hand is an explosion of images, information, objects and video. Of course the visitor is first and foremost confronted by the history of how the Dutch people in the Netherlands experienced the occupation during the Second World War. After following the walking route to the end there is an exhibition in the exhibition that gives explicit attention to the situation in the Indonesian archipelago. In this exhibition there is even made room, although not much, for the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. These histories are illuminated by a multitude of images, sound bites, texts, videos and objects. All with a different background. Furthermore, the visitor is asked to engage with the exhibition by opening small doors or drawers, by choosing between videos on information screens and to construct their own image or history by combining the different images, sound bites, texts, videos and objects in their own way.

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<sup>371</sup>See for the text above: Liesbeth van der Horst, e.o., *Het Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam* (Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam: Amsterdam 2007) 179-187; <http://www.verzetsmuseum.org/museum/nl/organisatie/geschiedenis> (accessed 26 June 2014); and: [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verzetsmuseum\\_Amsterdam](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verzetsmuseum_Amsterdam) (accessed 26 June 2014).

### 5.4.3 Content of the relevant exhibition(-s)

The subject of the Verzetsmuseum seems quite clear: resistance against the German occupation. After further observation the picture seems to be more complicated. It is not so much resistance that is at the core of the exhibitions but the question what the visitor would do when faced with the same situation as the Netherlands and Indonesia where in during and after the Second World War. The visitor is actively engaged through the suggestion that during the occupation people cooperated, resisted and stayed neutral followed by the question what the visitors themselves would do. Besides evoking this critical stance in their visitors the Verzetsmuseum shows the many sides of the occupation and how people dealt with it. This is done by providing information about, personal documents of and perspectives from different people regarding the same topic (which include but are not limited to printing a resistance paper, helping Jews, strikes, et cetera.). Also, the geographical area also includes the Indonesian archipelago and many references are made to other countries. This creates a very different situation from what one would expect when reading the name Dutch Resistance Museum but also a more enlightened, engaging and stimulating exhibition that expected.

The Verzetsmuseum makes a clear message in the way it designed its exhibition. The aim is not to glorify the resistance heroes of the past. It is the development of the Dutch resistance and the events and processes present in Dutch society at the time that are at the center of the exhibition. In this the most important thing seems to let people understand what happened in the past, to let them contemplated on why people made certain choices and to make the visitor look critically at what they would have done themselves. It are the dilemma's connected to war and occupation that are at the core of the entire, also the parts on the Indonesian archipelago, exhibition.

The choices as described above influence the narrative of the exhibition. Not so much in the chronology that is followed (from 1930 until 1950) but in the way the narrative is represented. There are a lot of questions marks, open discussions and points of reflection. In this sense there is a situation created in which the visitors can form their own narratives within the exhibition, with the help of the texts, images and objects.

### 5.4.4 Entrance, structure and exit of the exhibition

The exhibition at the Verzetsmuseum has a clear beginning and end. It follows a previous determined pattern which consists of several chapters that follow each other in a chronological order. These chapters are the following: 1930s, may 1940 - February 1941, March 1941 - April 1943, May 1943 - May 1944, June 1944 - May 1945, Liberation, After the War, and last the Indonesian exhibition (which includes the period of the Japanese occupation and a small corridor on the decolonization).

This structure should not understood as forcing people to follow exactly that pattern that the curators had in mind. Within in the chronology the visitor can wander and walk free. They can decide in each period which thematic exhibition (the exhibition is constructed in a chronological way but consists of many smaller thematic exhibitions) they will see first of spent the most attention on. These thematic exhibition rooms have names like Adapt?, Boycott?, Strike?, Forging Papers, The Illegal Press, et cetera. Furthermore the exhibition is spacious and the entrance and exit do not feel like true beginnings or endings. They are open and wide. The visitors just wander in and out. This gives a feeling of continuants which is

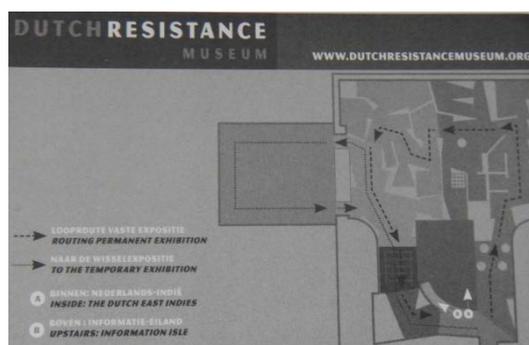


Image 11: Map of the Verzetsmuseum

helped by the flowing nature of the exhibition in which the several chapters and thematic rooms connect and in this way are forged into a bigger story.

The overall result of this kind of exhibition, which is made from scratch, is that the visitor is invited to emphasis and place itself in the position of the others of the past. At the same time the chronology makes that the visitor go's trough the same process as the people that lived through the occupation. Commendable is that there are chapters added on the Dutch war against the Japanese, the situation in the Indonesian archipelago and the decolonization. At the same time these chapters are isolated within a specific area in the exhibition, shielded from the Dutch oriented story. Because of this de the Netherlands and Indonesia are literally separated which makes it especially difficult to understand the connections between then, which are important in understanding the violent decolonization process.

#### *5.4.5 Design*

The inside of the Verzetsmuseum, let's call it the interior architecture, is very plain. The building itself is not notable. There are no real neoclassical details, no high windows, no giant staircases or grand archways or doors. There is thus no interference from the original architecture of the building within the exhibition. Or to put it differently, the past (which include as we have seen physical reminisces of colonialism, the so called colonial present) does not seep though and thus does not have to be mediated. For the staff of the Verzetsmuseum this meant that they had a white (or in this case grey) canvas to paint their vision of the perfect exhibition on.

This image is created with great attention for design and detail. Several strategies are applied to convey the divers message of the Verzetsmuseum in clear terms. Colors are deliberately used to convey lightness or darkness. The part of the exhibition that for example pay attention to violence or death use the color black while the liberation part of the exhibition is white and blue. Lighting seems to be used is a similar fashion. The black pages of history are darker and white ones are lighted much more.

Cases, walls and other ways of staging and showing the texts, images, objects and videos are diverse. They use several colors, heights, see trough constructions, incorporation of real objects (like doors, furniture and other bigger items) and are placed in such a way that the visitor never has a clear oversight of the exhibition. The visitor is asked to, enticed to and made curious to turn a corner, open a door, look into a drawer, watch a short movie, look behind an object and study the texts with attention. For this aim the font and image design can differ from big too small to dramatic or plain. In this way it is the message that needs be conveyed, and the reactions this needs to provoke in the visitor, that is placed central stage. The result seems to be an interactive, polished and modern exhibition in which form and function support each other.

#### *5.4.6 Objects, images, videos and texts*

In this museum we deal with a message and text orientated exhibition in which the objects, images, videos and texts are show in an chronological order per geographical entities (Netherlands and the Indonesian archipelago). Within this chronology the objects, texts and images are grouped according to the thematic exhibits (which are the smaller part that put together form the entire exhibition). Because of the importance of the texts and the grouping of the objects, texts and images there are no real items that stand out. It is the combination of the different sources, from different background and thus grounded in different background or paradigms that provides a nuanced picture in which there is room for most sources and in which items do not really stand out. On the contrary the grouping of the images per theme or time makes them fit better into the context. It is the connection to the context and the larger story that gives them more meaning and which connects them.

Mostly surprising to observe is that there seems to be made a deliberate choice to include very personal and mostly authentic objects, images and texts. In the exhibition on the decolonization the visitor can for example see objects used in the war (like maps, bullets, mattress, rations, et cetera), read parts of the original diaries of soldiers and citizens (both Dutch and Indonesian) and look at interviews conducted with people from both sides. Especially this last point is interesting because the use of video brings the people of the past to life and in most cases they still are alive. This shows the visitors that the past there are gazing at in the exhibition is no mere construction but is based on something real. A realness that is still part of current society and which can talk back at the visitor.

The combination of objects, texts, video and images in sense creates a rich pallet of impressions which tries to convey one distinct paradigm but to show how different people made different choices. The exhibition shows, makes visible, different sides and tries to convey the sphere connected to these past events. It is up to the visitor how to interpret the differences between the sources he or she sees.

#### 5.4.7 *The embodied visitor*

The exhibition is made with a clear public in mind: foreign tourists, 'nieuwe' *Nederlanders* (New Dutch People - immigrants), the general museum audience and youths.<sup>372</sup> This is quite a diverse group. Interesting is that the Dutch resistance fighters and their families are absent from this document while they started the museum. This shows a professional focus in line with the aim of education a wide audience. After all the museum tries to learn people to see the society and people of the Second World War in a different and critical way in a way to foster understanding.

The choices for the groups are quite visible in the exhibitions. There is chosen to include the colonies in the exhibition to create a bridge with and provide possibilities of identification for the so called New Dutch Citizens. The accessibility of the exhibition (easy language, many maps, images, et cetera), the engaging nature (with the opening of doors and the use of video) and the availability of special education methods for schools makes the exhibition very suitable for children (of many ages). The exhibition is created in two languages (Dutch and English) to cater to an international or non Dutch speaking audience.

Most of these choices are thus geared towards making the exhibition accessible for a wide public. At the same time this aim mainly excluding some other possible intentions or messages that the exhibition could convey. One is the engaging of the debates in the Netherlands on war, remembrance and identity. The Dutch have a tendency to moralize the past, seek out good and bad, and demand a verdict. It is good that this tendency is bypassed but at the same time this tendency is not literally addressed. A missed opportunity to put Dutch collective memory (and the role of the Dutch people in the second world war and especially its aftermath) in a critical context. How people remember after all says a lot about how people perceive their past. A second point is that the large attention for children seems to have led to the censoring the past. Violence, rape and the other gruesome practices that can be part of warfare are mostly left out of downplayed while in the right context and with the right word also this reality could be made clear in a less neutral and more real way.

A perspective that for most other subjects in the exhibition is promoted. The entire exhibition seems geared toward engaging the visitor. Their bodies are guided, that is true, but they are seen as autonomous and capable of making their own decisions. What the museum space in this regard only does is to provide context, show different stories, new images and create a sphere that helps foster an engaging attitude. This means that by keeping the body of the visitor close to the exhibits there is created a sphere of intimacy, the past is up close, it

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<sup>372</sup> Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam and Reekx, *Informatieplan Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam. Digitaliseren met Beleid* (Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam: Amsterdam/Groningen/Almere 2007) 4.

becomes more real, the visitor has to deal with it and cannot really escape it by taking a distance. This is not only a process which impacts, or uses, the body of the visitor but also engages the visitor in an emotional way.

In the entire experience the emotion of the visitor is called upon (especially surprise, shock, wondering, compassion and empathy) and is also manipulated by the use of lighting, colors and the spaciousness of the exhibits. Dark small rooms (mostly dedicated to such subjects as the Shoah or executions) for example can give a negative feeling like vulnerability or fear, while bright colorful wide corridors can convey joy or peacefulness. In this way space and the use of space is a powerful tool in engaging people, let them experience and to let them critically think and relate to the past. Their collective memories are in this sense actively confronted, questioned and perhaps also adjusted.

A good example of the points made above is the exhibition on the Indonesian archipelago. Distance is not folded into difference, there is no colonial other as they are present in the other museums. Here they are people with names, a history and personal stories that the visitor is compelled to read before making a judgment. Furthermore by the pictures, images, bamboo plants and the jungle patterns on the walls of the narrowly built exhibit the visitor does not gaze from a European perspective (through glass exhibit cases) on the colony but are they compelled to feel like they are wondering through the colony. This works especially good in regard to the decolonization because the small corridor dedicated to this subject tries to convey a little the sphere of the guerilla forward. In this way the visitor gets some extra context to place what he or she reads and sees in. The museum landscape in this regard thus tries to bridge the gap and overcome difference. By this way space creates a new context in which a more complicated Dutch collective memory of the decolonization becomes possible.



Image 12: Corridor on the decolonization

#### 5.4.8 Socializing the gaze of the visitor

Visitors need to learn how to perceive space, exhibitions and their contexts. It are their upbringing and background that are quite influential in this regard. At the same time a museum also works from a certain perspective which promotes certain ways of looking and knowing above the self and the others. These choices create certain patterns of visibility/invisibility, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy. The Verzetsmuseum is an interesting case in regard to this point because they do not state but question. There are a lot of question marks in the entire exhibition and the different sides to the many themes of the museum are provided without making a choice for one specific perspective.

This is quite interesting in regard to the decolonization because this is a very troublesome part of the Dutch collective memory about which many people have an opinion and expect others to take the same side. The Verzetsmuseum does not take a side but shows the views on the decolonization of Dutch soldiers, Indonesian Soldiers, civilians, et cetera.<sup>373</sup> In this way violence of both sides is hinted at. Although the true reality of the violence is not conveyed to the visitor. They get a sense of the suffering but do not get the numbers (which they do get in the exhibitions on the Netherlands) and no hints on the atrocities committed can be found. This can be explained by the orientation on the personal documents (which do not touch on that subject) and the need to make the exhibitions appropriate for children. Still, this does not mean that the situation as it is now could not be different.

<sup>373</sup> See for the diary extracts: Van der Horst, *Het Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam*, 162-170.

A better picture is painted in regard to question about ethnicity and race. The visitor sees a diversity of people and read texts written by a multitude of ethnicities. There are images and texts of Dutch, Eurasians and Indonesians. The same is true for the interviews that can be watched on a screen in the exhibition. At the same time there are objects related to the history but which are not presented in an ethnographic way and there is no moral judgment of who was right or wrong in the fighting. Because of the emphasis on the personal stories this question is not relevant and equality is emphasized. Interesting at the same time is that the racist prejudices and attitudes, which underpinned the violence and the will to fight, are not mentioned. Diversity is made visible but the reality of the time is ignored. People do not see the racist attitudes of the Dutch soldiers. Of which many examples in text could be given. The same as that there many examples then again could be given of how these same soldiers over time change their mind and become more tolerant because of their encounters with the Indonesian. Or at the same time that people become more racist because of the horrible war experiences. The exhibition is perhaps too small to show this point but it is still worth mentioning.

The topics of gender, class and gender not really addressed in the exhibition on the Indonesian Archipelago and the decolonization. There is some attention for women and their roles during Japanese occupation (the visitor then mostly sees Dutch women and children and their lives in the camps) but that is about it. For the other two there seems to be no real attention. In the framework of resistance they apparently become invisible. Violence and oppression, and the different sides to it and people connected to it, are interesting. The larger sociocultural framework, the so called colonial culture, is not mentioned in this. That is not strange if one takes in mind that the emphasis lies on the personal stories.

Interesting is that this approach creates an understanding and a certain form of equability between the people represented is created. Attention for the individual shows how people have or do not have agency. This bypasses the rigid understanding of the colonizer being more powerful than the colonized. Also, it shows that people ended up in the decolonization war because of their own circumstances and their own choices. People, on all sides, acted in accordance with their beliefs and possibilities. The visitor is not given an answer on what is the better choice, they are asked to contemplate on what they have seen, and make their own decision.

This is an interesting stance. Especially from the perspective of history and memory. It are the memories that are presented. These are placed in a context and this becomes something of a history. But it's the personal, the remembrance and the collective memory that are important. The history side is left alone. There is no detached history writing, no judgment and no great publications. Classic patterns of visibility/invisibility, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy are not reproduced. There is tried to give a new paradigm in which the contemporary museum visitor can grasp and remember the Dutch colonial past.

#### *5.4.9 Representing, shaping and reshaping Dutch collective memory and identity*

The exhibitions of the Verzetsmuseum on the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago is limited in the space it occupies and as a consequence is silent on a lot of issues. At the same time it is good to see that there it adopts a critical discourse in approaching the subject of decolonization and violence. With certain skill the discourses of national pride, victimhood, progress, loss and neutrality are evaded. Instead there is literally created room (space) for different opinions, stories and memories. The several relevant mnemonic communities are present side by side. This diversity and fragmentation is highlighted by the use of texts, images and objects from several sources, Dutch as well as Indonesian. This situation is the consequence of the choice in the main exhibition, on the Dutch resistance and society during the Second World War, to let people see the different choices that people

made. The visitors are presented with the dilemma's of the time and asked to think about which choices they would have made. Such a perspective is novel, especially in regard the contested subject of the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. At the same time the attention for those mostly personal dilemma's blurs the attention for the atrocities committed during this war and the question about what the consequences of this are for the present. The specific connection between the decolonization past and the present is not made.

This presents us with a puzzling situation. The decolonization is part of a fragmented and multi-interpretable Dutch collective memory as shown in the Verzetsmuseum. At the same time this collective memory does not reflect on what this past means for the present. Furthermore the horrible realities of the war, which haunt the memories of many Dutch and Indonesian people that were involved (of which the soldiers and veterans are the prime example), which can be called traumatic are not addressed. This can be the consequence of the limited space available to this period. Although it cannot be denied that there also seems to be no language to voice these problems. Mostly because it would create a situation in which the Dutch were violent and oppressive, and this puts the Dutch in line with the Japanese and Germans. It would contradict the Dutch self-image of being peaceful and perhaps this Dutch self-image in a way prevents most people of perceiving these dark sides of the Dutch past. At the same time it is difficult to find the right personal documents to show this violent past. Most people involved in it did not (or could not, because of illiteracy or because they were victims) write on it. Furthermore the people that wrote on it in memoirs did it in such a way that they could live with it or only used euphemisms. Dutch society as well as personal considerations thus limited the options of voicing the atrocities and violence of the decolonization. This can be termed as a certain form of aphasia that as we have seen here can even influences the more critical initiatives to provide a nuanced account of the decolonization.

Even so the Verzetsmuseum did a marvelous job in paying attention to the decolonization. Despite of the limited space, as seen above, they have used to address the subject they succeed in create a situation that seems to be a step beyond the more tradition approaches. Mostly because of the engaging character of the entire exhibition. They ask the visitor, by the citation of a poem at the beginning of the exhibition, the following: 'asking yourself a question, that's how resistance begins'. But they also point at the personal responsibility and the possibility for dialogue by adding to this poem at the end of the exhibition: 'and then ask that very question, of someone else'. The exhibition in this does not guide but creates the possibility to see and understand different views. The exhibition on the decolonization is too small to see real results in this regard but at the same time it navigates quite well the problematic nature is this past and the memories associates to it. Not by being neutral of by making is invisible by showing a diversity, and interesting stance.

### **5.5 Proposing a step forward**

In most studies this would not be the place to present new insights or new literature. Still, there is chosen here to do just that. Not to confuse the reader but to make one point clear: there are alternatives to the current situation in the museum world. The Verzetsmuseum is a prime example of this but they are an exception. The only things needed to get different results with the museum landscape and to make a more critical connection between the museum landscape and the collective achieve possible are a new critical insight in the current situation, the courage to change, the aim to do it better and the will to be creative. This sounds too abstract and idealistic, and to some extent it is, but without taking this stance nothing will change and no one cares. And that, that is a situation no one wants.

Then, to make it somewhat more concrete, two quite different insights from different strands of research which are not often used when museums are designed but which can be very helpful will be presented here. A first is the argument made by the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1947) that the contemporary democratic societies need to rethink how their educational systems are designed and what the consequences of this are. For, as she argues, ‘(...) sinds we economische groei boven alles plaatsen, is het onderwijs erop gericht economische bruikbare leerlingen af te leveren. Deze kortzichtige focus heeft ons vermogen om ons kritisch te verhouden tot autoriteit aangetast, onze sympathie voor mensen die anders zijn gereduceerd en ons vermogen om complexe mondiale vraagstukken te beoordelen beschadigd. Het verlies van deze vaardigheden vormt een ernstige bedreiging voor de democratie.’<sup>374</sup> She argues as part of the solution argues for the reevaluation of the humanities and the arts because these learn people to be creative, critical and compassionate. For her this also means the introduction of the Socratic method of teaching, which encompasses questioning and stimulation people to think themselves, in the education system. This argument can be expanded or better put, also concerns the museum landscape because this is the place where art and education coincide. The question then needs to be asked how museum landscapes and museums as institutions contribute to the critical education of the population. Or have they, as many fear, become places of amusements that are motivated more and more by issues of money and less by societal issues. Which creates less room for critical perspectives, reorientation and a critical stance because this can hurt the image of a museum and thus its ability to attract visitors. Is a reevaluation needed? That is difficult to ascertain. What is clear, from the above, is that there is room for improvement and more attention might be given to the argument made by Nussbaum which at the same time needs to be expanded.

This extension relates to the aim of promoting creativity, a critical worldview and compassion by means of education and the museum. Socrates might be adequate in regard to the critical worldview and creativity can be stimulated in many ways of which the confrontation with art is one of the most important. Compassion though seems to stay a large and difficult to pin down concept. While this, as the historian Karen Armstrong (1944) argues, is the most important and most needed (a global imparities she would say) of the three. She understands compassion, in its core, as the what she calls the golden rule: ‘Do not treat others as you would not like them to treat you.’<sup>375</sup> This is an imperative just as interesting for real life as for the creation of a museum exhibition in which inclusion of diversity is often a difficult challenge as we have seen above. But as Armstrong also writes it is difficult to bring this compassion into practice. To make this easier she introduces twelve steps: Learn About Compassion, Look at Your Own World, Compassion for Yourself, Empathy, Mindfulness, Action, How Little We Know, How Should We Speak to One Another?, Concern For Everybody, Knowledge, Recognition, and Love Your Enemies. What is so interesting in these steps in regard to museum studies and this research is that empathy, acknowledging one’s own faults, and the recognition of one’s own pain and the pain of others are central themes in the road to achieving compassion. It are just these steps that are often missing in museums which are preoccupied with the Netherlands, the Dutch self(-image) and in this process bypass more difficult realities of the Dutch collective memory and identity. The imagined community called the Netherlands has thus a very specific invention of tradition that is excludes and makes invisible those people or events from the collective memory that disturb the Dutch identity. Acknowledging the wrongdoings and pain of the past is a crucial step, as most literature on truth and reconciliation commissions would agree, on the road to

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<sup>374</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Niet voor de winst. Waarom de democratie de geesteswetenschappen nodig heeft* (Ambo|Anthos Uitgevers: Amsterdam 2011).

<sup>375</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* (Anchor Books: New York 2011) 4

processing that past, being able to live with it and the consequent creation of more compassionate and realistic (Dutch) self-image.

The several museums above are active in this field of Dutch collective memory and identity. They are the spaces and landscapes in which the collective is presented, brought together and evaluated. At the same time the critical and compassionate view is missing in most exhibitions. Past wrongdoings are mostly glanced over, the others are not often present or cliché images (a colonial frame of mind) persist. It is the political correctness and the dominant discourse of Dutch identity that seems to guide the exhibitions towards nationalism and nostalgic at worst, and unintended neglect and incomplete inclusion at best. The perspectives of both authors mentioned above in combination with the steps taken by the Tropenmuseum to decolonize the collection and the Verzetsmuseum to critically engage the visitor might provide a new step forward. The result of this process is at this point unclear but is worth mentioning, that is the whole reason for this last paragraph. New thinking is after all developing and might benefit future reflections on the Dutch colonial past and the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. New times are coming and the important question is how we decide to face them.



## 6. CONCLUSION

Above we have seen how four different mnemonic landscapes shape and reshape the Dutch remembrance of conflict, violence and trauma, in this case the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago, and what the consequences of this are. Mnemonics after all not only shape and reshape collective memory, they create the systems in which we remember, what we remember and thus what (and who) we do not remember. On the basis of the above research some steps forward were proposed. These regard the issue of how museums and other mnemonic landscapes can be (better) used to foster constructive collective memories about a conflict (with the aim of reducing antagonism, enmity, hostility, resentment, lack of sympathy, tensions, et cetera, such as truth and reconciliation commissions also aim to do, and to promote creativity, a critical view and compassion). The conclusion as given below will take those five chapters together with the aim of painting the larger context, of looking at what the meaning of the research exactly is and pointing at possibilities for further research.

### 6.1 Conclusions

All the four museums had a different subject, message and narrative. Furthermore, they all approached these in their own, different, and unique ways. This creates a rich pallet of research results which differ between the four museums. At the same time there are also many similarities to be found between these four. It is interesting to take a look at how these relate to each other and what kind a picture can be created of it.

The first thing that is surprising to observe is that all museums do not pay attention to the violence and atrocities committed during the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. Furthermore, in the Tropenmuseum and the Rijksmuseum the decolonization is only mentioned once and there is no space (no object, no images and only on one line of text) dedicated to the decolonisation. The other two museums do address the decolonization but in the case of Bronbeek in a strictly neutral way and in the case of the Verzetsmuseum there is also not much room for the decolonization (although more than in the bigger Tropenmuseum and Rijksmuseum). The attitude towards the decolonization differs from silence (Rijksmuseum and Tropenmuseum) to neutrality (Bronbeek) to engagement (Verzetsmuseum). But each of these museums have pockets of silence, make people invisible and most of them promote a Dutch orientated view on the past. An integrated and balanced picture of the colonial society during the decolonization is missing or is coloured by the influence of the Dutch identity or the pressure from specific Dutch mnemonic communities (veterans or *Indische Nederlanders*).

At the same time all these museums pay considerable, if not all their, attention to Dutch colonialism and its consequences. In general these exhibitions are very well balanced and try to show the so called 'good and bad'. Slavery, opium trade, violence, racism, et cetera, are in different degrees visible. At the same time the success of the museums differ. The Tropenmuseum and Verzetsmuseum do quite well and try to decolonize their exhibitions. Bronbeek also seems to pay attention to questions of diversity and power relations. And even the Rijksmuseum finds some space to address slavery and opium trade. At the same time the degree in which diversity, difference and power relations (between colonizer and colonised) differ and most museums in some way or another exclude people or promote a cliché or partial image of the Dutch colonial past. The Indonesians themselves have no voice in most exhibitions (with the small exception of the Verzetsmuseum) or are made into silent bodies (silent spaces) that do not engage the visitor in the same way Dutch bodies do.

By putting the mnemonic of landscape central this spatial elements of the processes of memory, history and collective memory came to the fore. Especially interesting to see was how this space could represent a certain past but at the same time space and reshape how this past is perceived and how fits into a larger collective memory. The museum landscape itself can change but the influence of the landscape on the visitor is stronger than the other way around. After all the landscape can influence the visitor in several ways: it can evoke emotions, can guide bodies, can make visible or invisible, can include or exclude, engage the visitor, or can only show the visitor beautiful object and images and just bypass any critical point, et cetera. The museum landscape can of course be guided by the curators but a lot is not noticed by these museum professionals.

This is visible in the many blind spots (pockets of silence) that can be found in the four exhibitions. It seems difficult to evade clichéd images of the Dutch colonial past mostly because other perspectives than the Dutch are overlooked, ignored or not taken into account. It is the concept of aphasia that best captures this reality because there in the Dutch context just doesn't seem to be a paradigm, context or language to express the problematic Dutch colonial past and the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago. Violence, atrocities and war crimes are ignored.

Furthermore, the Dutch identity shapes the Dutch collective memory in such a way that it supports the idea of the Dutch as peaceful, consensus orientated and protectors of (international) law. The reality although is far more problematic and diverse. The Dutch homogeneous identity, as Gouda and Legêne have argued, is no reality. And it is thus problematic that this homogeneous image still seems to have a great influence on how the mnemonic landscapes of museums are created and perceived.

The combination of the influence of the contemporary Dutch identity with the aphasic situation in Dutch society creates museum landscapes which do not pay attention to the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago in a truthful way and thus as a consequence promote a neutralised Dutch collective memory in which the dark pages of history are not addressed in a critical and constructive way. Mnemonic disagreements in this regard are not fought out in the so called mnemonic battles. They are not even present in the public space of the museum. Conflict is avoided and consensus seeking is promoted. Instead then of providing different sides, it seems that the neutrality of history or simple silence are preferred to deal with this so called unmastered past. This is in part the result of the problematic nature of the museum. People see it as a place of recreation or/and as a place to learn, to get the truth. They often are passive tourists, even when it considers their own past. People want to consume the museum and not many museums have made the step from consumption to providing an experience. A notable exception in this regard is the Verzetmuseum that activity tries to engage their visitors.

Most museum because of this reality seem to further a troublesome proposition: the only way forward is to forget. In essence societies must of course also forget to be able to move on. At the same time this has to happen in a natural way, over time and not as the consequence of an inability to deal with the past. This kind of forgetting after all excludes stories, memories and even people from the Dutch collective. It is a denial of certain identities and a biased, in the colonial culture grounded, way of knowing and producing knowledge of the other. Inequality, exclusion and unequal power relations are in this way reproduced.

This is especially troublesome in the Dutch society that is so close to its decolonial unmastered past that many people remember it from their own experience and many others know it because people dear to them were affected quite dramatically by it. Many people (especially immigrants, foreigners and the people that were traumatised by the decolonization, which is especially true for many of the soldiers sent there by the Dutch government) after all are then pushed in a subordinate position by the hegemonic Dutch power relations, paradigms

and ways of knowing the past. This process is not noticed because the disillusioned Dutch self-image that promotes the idea of the Dutch as being naturally peaceful, neutral and consensus orientated prevents many people from seeing a different reality. The disillusioned is fostered by the ignoring of in this case decolonization and violence connected to it. The Dutch after all can be just as violent as other nations. In this regard a more inclusive self-image is needed. A critical and compassionate attitude may be tools to achieve such a reorientation of the different mnemonic landscapes.

At the same time there are positive signs that need to be acknowledged. There is a will to change. The Rijksmuseum has asked the critics of their policies Bloembergen and Eickhoff to advise them on how they could include the decolonization in their exhibitions. The Tropenmuseum promotes the decolonization of their own collections. The Verzetsmuseum quite explicitly included the decolonization in its exhibitions and ask visitors to contemplate on the different perspective, sides and people involved in it. Even Bronbeek, which has the problematic situation of needing to cater to Dutch veterans that will not hear of any disproportional violence or war crimes, seems to be willing to move from nostalgia towards neutrality. Furthermore, above we have seen that new perspective are being developed which might be capable of providing the next step forward. Central is this perspective is the need for more attention for diversity. People need to dethrone themselves (a skill less and less cultivated in our contemporary societies) and need to be engaged with the others. In this way they are challenged to think critically, to put themselves in the place of other people and to appreciate the context (the past with its diversity in cultures, people and values).

## **6.2 State of research**

The research as presented above is mostly a recognisance of the possibilities for research, the results it may provide and the new steps they for this have to be taken. This study after all does something quite novel and combines field of study that not have been combined in such a way before. At the same time there are some interesting results to report which brought the state of the research regarding how the mnemonics of twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (1945-1950) to a new level.

The research shows us first and foremost that the scholars that state that there the Netherlands still have an unmastered past, that decolonization seems to be a taboo subjects, and that the reality of the decolonization is not engaged seem to be right. Patters can be seen that promote the idea that colonialism (and the colonial culture) keep influencing how Western societies see their former colonies, their pasts and immigrants. Furthermore, the critical remarks made on the delusional sides of the Dutch identity are not as farfetched as many would perceive them to be.

At the same time the positive image of our museum practices are tempered. These institution may hold beautiful collections of great value but in the practices of exhibiting them there is room for improvement. This does not counter the research done on the several institutions (which is not much as can be seen above) but shows that more research is necessary if we want to understand the realities of how museums work and how they influence their visitors and the larger Dutch society.

The novel aspects of this study can be found in the new conceptualisation of collective memory which point to the spatial aspects of the mnemonic processes that shape and reshape collective memory. Space and landscapes need to be included in the study of memory. Furthermore, this study shows that the colonial past and the colonial patters and culture still haunt Dutch society. Also new in this regard is the suggestion of incorporating research on

education and compassion to provide a new mythology to decolonise the Dutch museums. This work builds upon the work done in the Tropenmuseum and the Verzetsmuseum. Still these are all only first results. There the possibility for more research.

### **6.3 Recommendations for further research**

First and foremost further research should try to appreciate the critical attitude of postcolonial studies and look at the potential that it still can have in the Dutch context. Especially when we regard Dutch collective memory, Dutch identity and the Dutch museums there is much critical work that has to be done. By engaging this subject the historians and scholars of the humanities leave in a way their scientific neutrality and engages with society.

If we look at the reality of the research as presented above we see several possibilities for further research. The true nature of museum space as an actor in the creation of collective memories is something that needs a better conceptualization. More subjects and museums have to be included to really understand the connection between mnemonic landscapes and the shaping and reshaping of collective memory. Also the consequences of the influence of the mnemonic landscape have to be better addressed.

Still, the most important subject in study stays the decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago and then especially the violence associated with it. This subject seems to stay a taboo subject in Dutch society. People see it as a bother if they have to deal with it. This complacency and the inability to voice this past (the aphasic condition) creates an unsatisfactory situation, in which an unmastered past persists, and which seems to promote colonial (read exclusive and inconsiderate) readings of this past. This brings us by the following question for further research: Why doesn't the Dutch society ask itself if they truly is decolonized, if it really has a realistic collective memory and if the Dutch identity is really so tolerant, peaceful and law-abiding as the Dutch want to believe? So, enough food for thought. That is for sure.

## **7. EPILOGUE**

With this study there is made a beginning with the research on how the mnemonics of twenty-first century Dutch museum landscapes represent, shape and reshape the contemporary Dutch collective memory of the violent decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (1945-1950). This is a fascination field of research because it relates to issues of memory, trauma, war, violence, colonialism, decolonization, the colonial present and identity. This mix of subjects makes it at the same time also a difficult area of research. Still, the hope is that this beginning will give rise to further research. It after all is very much needed if the Dutch collective memory, identity and society will be able to deal with the problems, issues and challenges of the twenty-first century.



## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Consult chapter 12. Archives and Museums.

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### 11.3 Websites

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- <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronbeek>
- [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rijksmuseum\\_Amsterdam](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rijksmuseum_Amsterdam)

- <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tropenmuseum>
- [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verzetsmuseum\\_Amsterdam](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verzetsmuseum_Amsterdam)  
<http://researchportal.be/projects.pdf?page=155&ordering=startdate&descending=false&itemsPerPage=10>
- [http://scholar.google.nl/scholar?q=%22mnemonic+landscape%22&btnG=&hl=nl&as\\_sdt=0%2C5](http://scholar.google.nl/scholar?q=%22mnemonic+landscape%22&btnG=&hl=nl&as_sdt=0%2C5)
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- [http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1985/05/19850508\\_Rede.html](http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1985/05/19850508_Rede.html)
- <http://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/bronbeek/inhoud/museum/geschiedenis>
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- <http://www.hetverhaalvanindie.com/tentoonstelling>
- [http://www.ihhostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie\\_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=2&node-id=1&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1](http://www.ihhostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=2&node-id=1&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1)
- <http://www.indonesie45-50.nl/1/welkom>
- <http://www.kit.nl/>
- <http://www.kumpulan.nl/kumpulan/bronbeek.html>
- <http://www.menschmuseology.com/projects/portfolio/new-trends-in-museology/>
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- <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/organisatie/geschiedenis>
- <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/organisatie/visie-en-missie>



## 9. ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS

Research on the Dutch colonial past en present is at times difficult. Especially the search for the right sources, information of methodology can be a challenge. In the time that I did research on the Dutch colonial past and present the following institutions, archives and other organizations were a tremendous help or interest and should thus be mentioned.

### **Cultuurcompagnie Noord-Holland (Voorheen: Cultureel Erfgoed Noord-Holland)**

Bergerweg 1  
1815 AC Alkmaar  
P. Postbus 3043, 1801 GA Alkmaar  
T. +31 72 8502800  
F.  
E. [info@cultuurcompagnie.nl](mailto:info@cultuurcompagnie.nl)

### **Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS)**

Anna van Saksenlaan 10  
2593 HT Den Haag  
P. Postbus 93067, 2509 AB Den Haag  
T. + 31 70 3446484  
F.  
E. [info@dans.knaw.nl](mailto:info@dans.knaw.nl)

### **Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG)**

Cruquiusweg 31  
1019 AT Amsterdam  
P. Postbus 2169, 1000 CD Amsterdam  
T. + 31 20 6685866  
F. + 31 20 6654181  
E. [info@iisg.nl](mailto:info@iisg.nl) & [vraag@iisg.nl](mailto:vraag@iisg.nl)

### **Katholiek Documentatie Centrum (KDC)**

Erasmuslaan 36  
6525 GG Nijmegen  
P. Postbus 9100, 6500 HA Nijmegen  
T. + 31 24 3612457  
F. + 31 24 3612403  
E. [info@kdc.ru.nl](mailto:info@kdc.ru.nl) & [secretariaat@kdc.ru.nl](mailto:secretariaat@kdc.ru.nl)

### **Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT)**

Mauritskade 63  
1092 AD Amsterdam  
P. Postbus 95001, 1090 HA Amsterdam  
T. + 31 20 5688711  
F. + 31 20 6684579  
E. [tropenmuseum@kit.nl](mailto:tropenmuseum@kit.nl)

**Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde (KITLV) / Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies**

Reuvenplaats 2  
2311 BE Leiden  
P. Postbus 9515, 2300 RA Leiden  
T. + 31 71 5272295  
F. + 31 71 5272638  
E. [kitlv@kitlv.nl](mailto:kitlv@kitlv.nl) & [collections@kitlv.nl](mailto:collections@kitlv.nl) & [archives@kitlv.nl](mailto:archives@kitlv.nl)

**Museum Bronbeek**

Velperweg 147  
6824 MB Arnhem  
P.  
T. +31 26 3763555  
F. +31 26 3763590  
E. [loket.ktomm.bronbeek@mindef.nl](mailto:loket.ktomm.bronbeek@mindef.nl)

**NIOD – Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust-, en Genocidestudies (NIOD)**

Herengracht 380  
1016 CJ Amsterdam  
P.  
T. + 31 20 5233800  
F. + 31 20 5233888  
E. [info@niod.knaw.nl](mailto:info@niod.knaw.nl)

**Regionaal Archief Nijmegen (RAN)**

Mariënborg 27  
6500 HG Nijmegen  
P. Postbus 9105, 6500 HG Nijmegen  
T. Algemeen telefoonnummer gemeente Nijmegen: 14024  
F.  
E. [hetarchief@nijmegen.nl](mailto:hetarchief@nijmegen.nl)

**Rijksmuseum**

Museumstraat 1  
1071 XX Amsterdam  
P. Postbus 74888, 1070 DN Amsterdam  
T. +31 20 6747000  
F.  
E. [info@rijksmuseum.nl](mailto:info@rijksmuseum.nl)

**Stichting Indisch Familie Archief (SIFA)**

Spui 70  
2511 BT Den Haag  
P. Postbus 10300, 2501 HH Den Haag  
T. +31 70 7525836  
F.  
E. [info@indischfamiliearchief.nl](mailto:info@indischfamiliearchief.nl)

**Tropenmuseum**

Linnaeusstraat 2

1092 CK Amsterdam

P. Postbus 95001, 1090 HA Amsterdam

T. +31 20 5688200

F.

E. [info@tropenmuseum.nl](mailto:info@tropenmuseum.nl)

**Verzetsmuseum**

Plantage Kerklaan 61A

1018 CX Amsterdam

P.

T. +31 20 6202535

F. +31 20 6202960

E. [info@verzetsmuseum.org](mailto:info@verzetsmuseum.org)



## 10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT USED IMAGES

Image front page: <http://www.nickgentry.com/#/midnight-angel/> (accessed 31 October 2013).

Image 1: Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b1/Ingang\\_Tropenmuseum.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b1/Ingang_Tropenmuseum.jpg) (accessed 19 June 2014).

Image 2: Image 2: Map of the Tropenmuseum - Indonesia is on the front side of the first floor: <http://leerling.tcc-lyceumstraat.nl/grassroots/tropenmuseum/CH/ak%20project%20plattegrond%20.JPG> (accessed 23 June 2014)

Image 3: Museum Bronbeek in Arnhem: [http://www.strikolith.com/images/thumbs/website/slimbox/ProjectenLithBuiten/Bronbeek\\_Arnhem01.jpg](http://www.strikolith.com/images/thumbs/website/slimbox/ProjectenLithBuiten/Bronbeek_Arnhem01.jpg) (accessed 23 June 2014).

Image 4: Map of Museum Bronbeek - Permanent exposition on the first floor: photograph made by the author from the paper map on 23 June 2014.

Image 5: Decolonization in images: photograph made by the author on 29 August 2013.

Image 6: Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam: [http://newsroom.cisco.com/image/image\\_gallery?uuid=cae9b688-b32c-40a9-8241-241a3efdfd7e&groupId=10157](http://newsroom.cisco.com/image/image_gallery?uuid=cae9b688-b32c-40a9-8241-241a3efdfd7e&groupId=10157) (accessed 25 June 2014).

Image 7: Map of the Rijksmuseum: <https://plus.google.com/+INGnl/posts/esNGj3Dweiv> (accessed on 25 June 2014).

Image 8: Mens & Machine by M.J. Hack: [https://lh4.ggpht.com/4a9DjUEfQIhul-msAxBb2i0wEjJaoDit\\_SJ2DOH8NxrPp4zk49m210OVpS-DqQx2rSKJqehajQiLA1ciMdeURDu00SM=s1920](https://lh4.ggpht.com/4a9DjUEfQIhul-msAxBb2i0wEjJaoDit_SJ2DOH8NxrPp4zk49m210OVpS-DqQx2rSKJqehajQiLA1ciMdeURDu00SM=s1920) (accessed 26 June 2014).

Image 9: Gezichtsmaskers van bewoners van Nias: <http://www.schutter.eu/RIJKSMUSEUM7/content/images/large/DSC4894.jpg> (accessed 26 June 2014).

Image 10: Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam: [http://www.refdag.nl/polopoly\\_fs/verzetmuseum\\_1\\_683726!image/718337427.jpg](http://www.refdag.nl/polopoly_fs/verzetmuseum_1_683726!image/718337427.jpg) (accessed 26 June 2014).

Image 11: Map of the Verzetsmuseum: photograph made by the author of the paper map on 27 June 2014.

Image 12: Corridor on the decolonization: photograph made by the author on 30 August 2013.



## 11. ATTACHMENTS

It the appendices information is included for which there was no room in the text above but which are important in regard to this study.

### 11.1 Attachment I: Exhibition Analysis

This analysis structure is specially developed for this study and is inspired by many sources.<sup>376</sup>

1. Short history, background and context of the museum and its exhibitions
2. First impressions of the building, its entrance and the relevant exhibition(-s)
  - How does the building looks like from the outside and what kind of impressions does that make on the visitors?
  - How does one enter the museum and what is the consequence of that (and what kind of impressions does that make on the visitors)?
  - What is the first impression of the exhibition(-s) dedicated to the Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (and when relevant the general or whole Dutch colonial past)? What can be seen, heard and be done in the exhibition?
3. Content of the relevant exhibition(-s)
  - What is the subject of the exhibition?
  - What is the message of the exhibition?
  - What is the narrative of the exhibition?
4. Entrance, structure and exit of the exhibition
  - Has or hasn't the exhibition a clear beginning and how does this look?
  - Is there one compulsory walking route or are there more and how does the walking route or routes go?
  - Is there one flowing story or are there several chapters and how would this/these be best characterized?
  - Has or hasn't the exhibition a clear end and how does this look?
  - What are the consequences of, what is highlighted or ignored by, these choices in structure?
5. Design
  - What is done with interior and exhibition design?
  - What is done with the lighting design?
  - What is done with the font and image design?
  - What is done with the interior architecture of the building?
  - What are the consequences of these choices: do these choices support, distract from or distort the chosen subject, message and narrative?

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<sup>376</sup> Brouwer, *Onvergankelijke verleden*, 13-14 and 86; J. P. Sigmund and E. Sint Nicolaas, *Kijken naar geschiedenis. Onderzoeken en tentoonstellen van historische voorwerpen* (Waanders Uitgevers: Zwolle 2005); <http://www.erfgoedwijs.nl/clientdata/downloads/Tentoonstellingsanalyse%20Formulier%20CENH.pdf> (accessed 11 June 2014); and <http://researchportal.be/projects.pdf?page=155&ordering=startdate&descending=false&itemsPerPage=10> (accessed 11 juni 2014).

6. Objects, images, videos and texts
  - Are the objects, texts and images exhibited in a chronologic or thematic fashion?
  - How are the connections made between objects, texts and images in the exhibition?
  - What are the most important (which stand out) objects, texts or images?
  - Does every object, text or image belong in the exhibition?
  - Are in the exhibition the texts (or story), the images or the objects to most important and/or prominent?
  - Are the objects, texts and images presented on their own or are they grouped, in which fashion and what are the consequences of this?
  - What kind of objects, texts and images are used (detached, personal, business, dry, roman style, art, historic, etc.)?
  - Does the exhibition use video, and what are the consequences of this?
  - Are the choices made in regard to the images, texts, videos and object in line with the subject, message and narrative of the exhibition?
  
7. The embodied visitor
  - For which kind of visitor is the exhibition made, to whom does it appeal (one specific group, several groups, everyone of no one – there is no attention for, or this attention is not visible, a specific audience –)?
  - What are the characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, class, religion, etc.) of the imagined audience and visitor?
  - By which means does the exhibition connect with the indented group or groups; and what are the consequences of the chose for a specific audience for the way the exhibition exists and changes (in regard to for example the choices in objects, texts, videos and images)?
  - How does the body of this visitor gets placed in the museum and the exhibition, in which directions is it pushed and what are the consequences of this for the exhibition experience?
  - Does the exhibition appeal to the visitor's emotions?
  - What is the relationship between the visitor, the museum landscape and the imagined geographies of the colonial other?
  - What are the consequences of the above for the sphere of the exhibition?
  
8. Socializing the gaze of the visitor: questions about who's in the space, visibility/invisibility, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy
  - How are violence and death addressed?
  - How are ethnicity and race addressed?
  - How is gender addressed?
  - How is class addressed?
  - How is religion addressed?
  - How are power and inequality addressed?
  - How are history and memory addressed?
  
9. Representing, shaping and reshaping Dutch collective memory and identity
  - Which discursive formation(s) and discourse(s) is (are) clearly visible in the exhibition? (Histories and memories of – national or professional – pride, of victimhood, of progress, of neutrality, of silence, etc., or perhaps a combination?)
  - How can this be seen, how is this spatially represented en what is the reasoning behind it?

- What is the relationship (or relationships) between the exhibitions that touch upon the Dutch decolonization of the Indonesian archipelago (and when relevant the general or whole Dutch colonial past) and the rest of the museum?
- If we now put the puzzle, as we have deconstructed with the questions above, back together, what kind of Dutch collective memory and identity does there emerge?
- What is the role of the mnemonic landscape in the representing, shaping and reshaping of Dutch collective memory and identity?

## 11.2 Attachment II: Bronbeek Rooms

These images show the six different exhibition halls.<sup>377</sup>

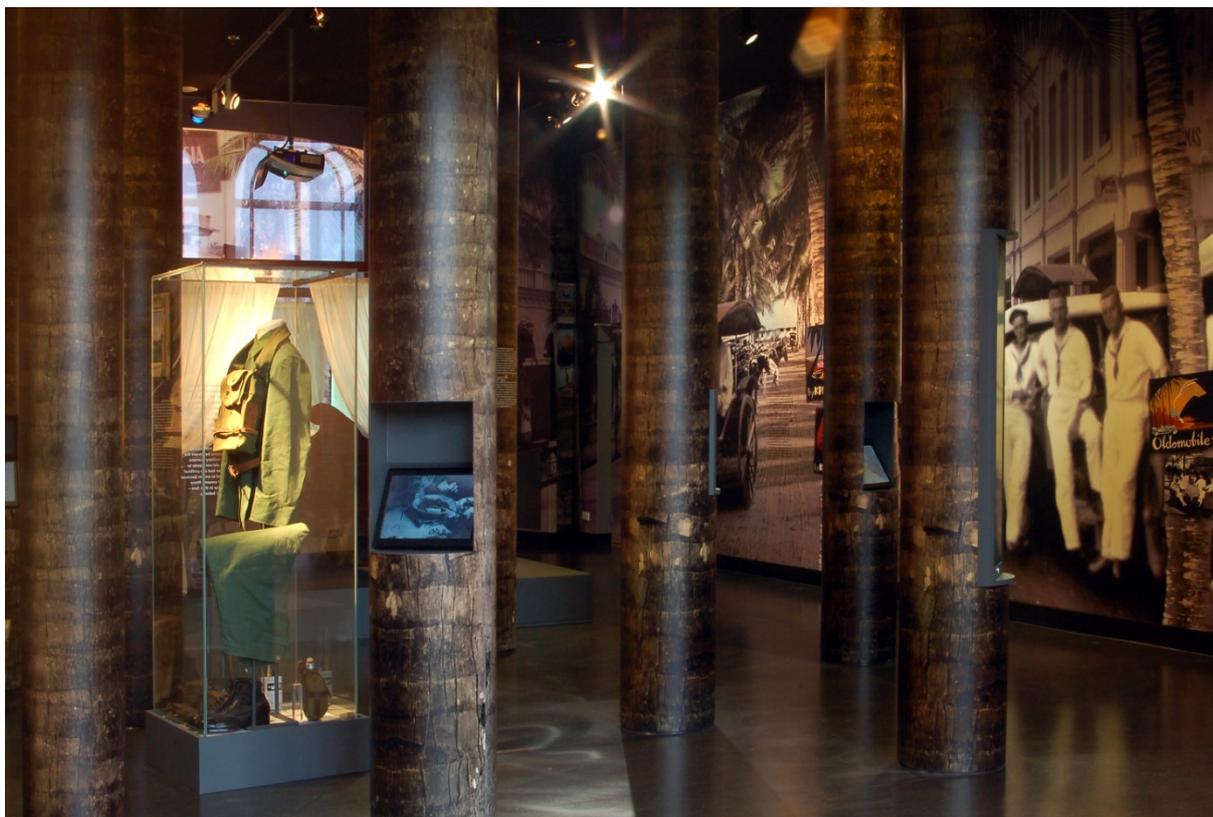


De onderneming 1595-1817,

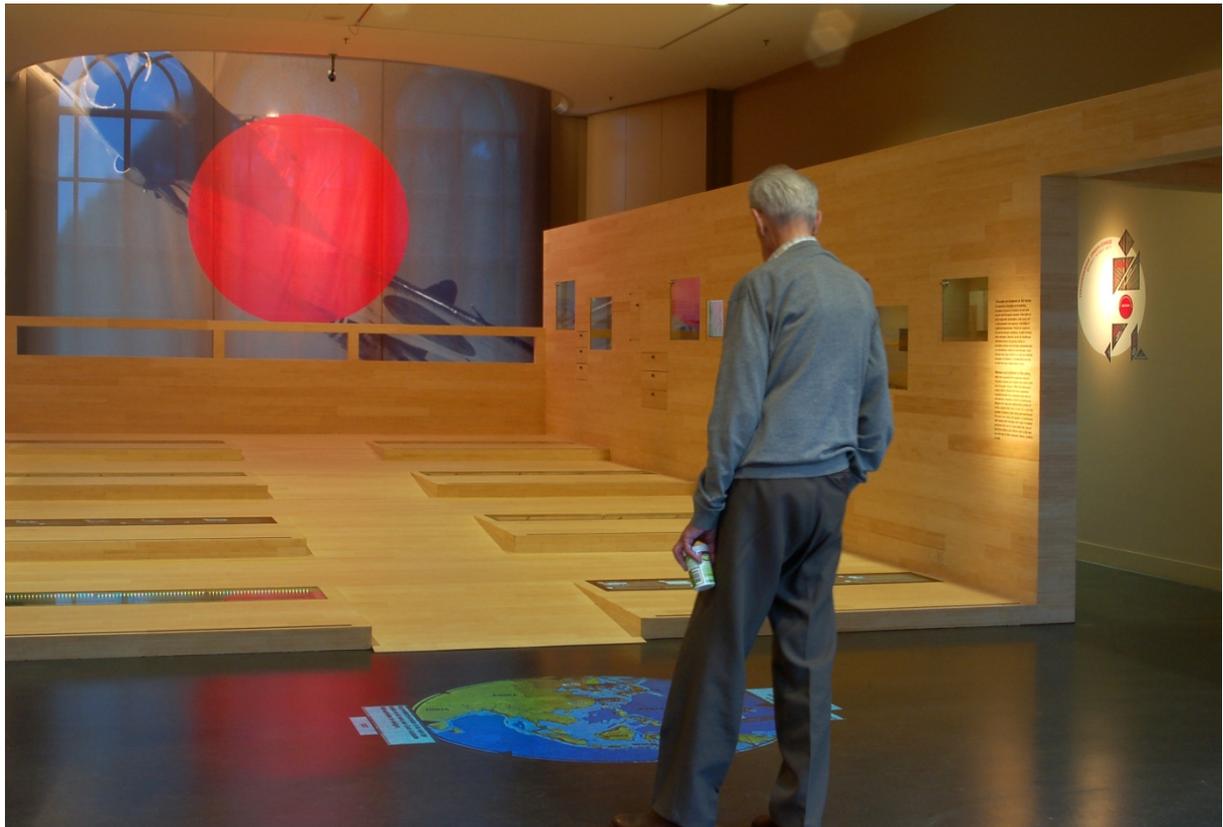
<sup>377</sup> These images can be found on the following address: <http://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/bronbeek/inhoud/museum/vaste-expositie> (accessed on 23 June 2014). See also: [http://www.ihchostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie\\_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=1&node-id=8&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1](http://www.ihchostingserver.nl/digitaletour/hetverhaalvanindie_def/#/?tour-id=BCBD10AB-BF42-412A-924368DB93935421&node-type=1&node-id=8&info-object-id=-1&media-page-id=-1) (accessed on 23 June 2014). On this last page one can navigate the entire exhibition and look at it from different directions. This program works something like Google Streetview.



Het wingewest 1817-1914,



Het Rijk 1914-1942,



Oorlog 1942-1945,



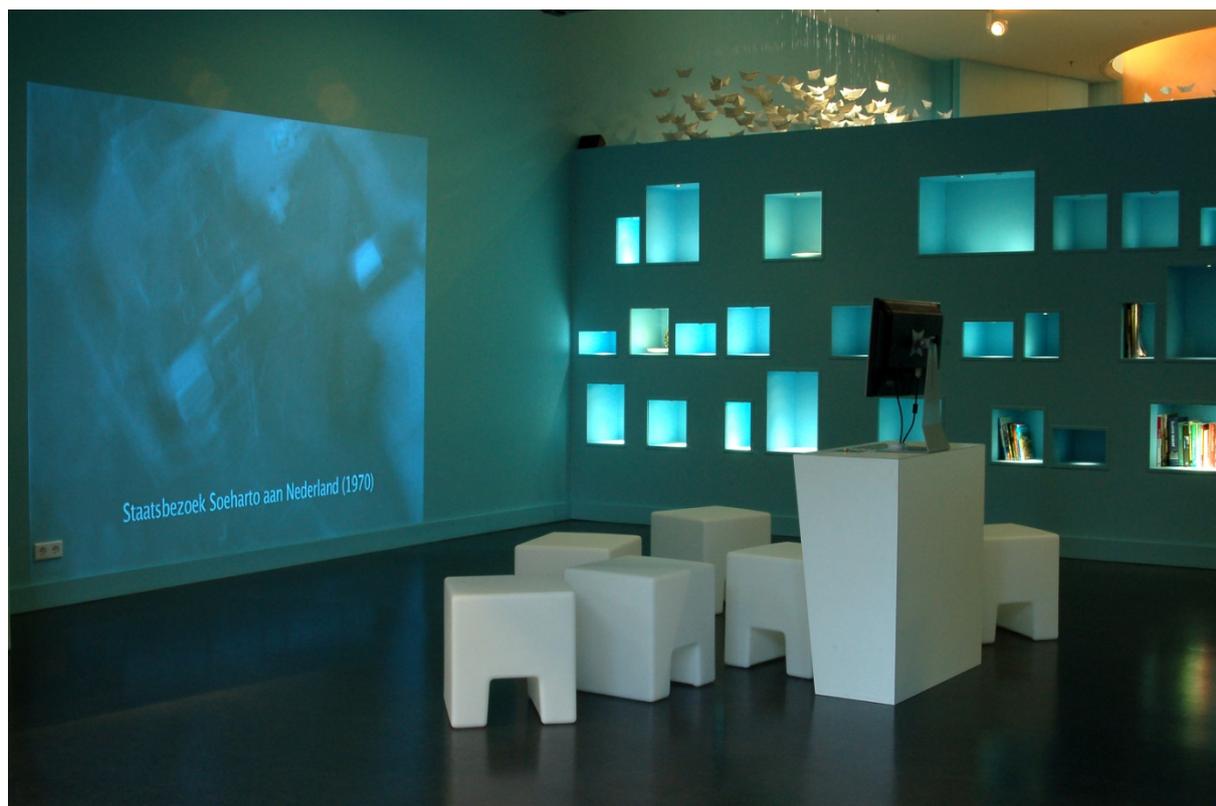
&



Revolutie 1945-1949,



&



and Nieuwe grond 1949-heden