

United Deportees and Individual Victims

Memories of Forced Labor in Nazi Germany in French and Dutch Associations
(1945 – 2017)



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Abstract

Studies that have been conducted on memories of forced labor in Nazi Germany often focused on individual memories or national memory cultures. They also placed an emphasis on the marginalization experienced by forced laborers in postwar societies. This Master's thesis steers away from purely individual or national perspectives, and from the focus on marginalization. Instead, it adopts a comparative perspective, studying collective memories of French and Dutch forced labor associations that have been active since 1945. Associations are particularly interesting because they operated and mediated between political and societal contexts, individual forced laborers, and public opinion. Because the history of forced labor is marginalized in society and politics, associations are, for example, initiators of remembrance practices. This study investigates the ways in which collective memories constructed by French and Dutch forced labor associations have been influenced by political, societal, and individual circumstances. The research is grounded in ideas of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, the cultural scholar Aleida Assmann, and the historians Bruno Benvindo and Evert Peeters.

The analysis of remembrance practices, individual memories, and collective memories disseminated to a broader audience, provides insights on interesting similarities and differences between the memory-cultures of forced labor in France and the Netherlands. Two main conclusions, which explain these differences and similarities, can be deduced from this research. The first concerns the finding that memories of French associations have been influenced more by political and even juridical contexts, whereas memories of Dutch associations have been influenced more by societal and individual contexts. Secondly, it becomes clear that the historical periods in which associations emerged and specific national postwar contexts have also greatly influenced collective memories of French and Dutch forced labor associations. In general, French memories are built upon the title and status of patriotic 'deported workers', whereas more recent Dutch memories find their origins in a culture of victimhood and attempts for a more nuanced war-history.

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Writing this thesis would not have been possible without the support I received from members of forced labor associations, my supervisors, friends, and family. The information that I obtained from the interesting conversations that I held with many engaged (former) members of French and Dutch associations, and people related to the organizations, was of great help. I would like to thank Wolfgang Asshoff, Michel Catala, Arend Disberg, Ap Gerritse, Nicole Godard, Robert Lassevaine, Jan de Louter, Theo Sonnemans, and Jeroen van Zijderveld in particular for this. Furthermore, I would like to thank my tutor and supervisor, prof. Wim van Meurs, for his helpful conversations and critical comments. I also thank dr. Joost Rosendaal for discussing possible research topics with me. In addition, I thank Thijs van Beusekom, Iris Dracht, Britt Elfrink, Renée van Haperen, Jorge L. Perez, Janne Pisters, and Rosalie Schipper for reading and commenting on parts of my thesis. Special thanks go to Aomi Mochida for reading and commenting on the entire work. The credits of the cover, at last, go to Judith Scherpenisse who also supported me, together with my father, by participating in a commemoration.

Abbreviations

AEL	Arbeitserziehungslager (Labor Camps for Reeducation and Punishment)
AMDTF	Association pour la Mémoire de la Déportation du Travail Forcé (Association for the Memory of the Deportation of Forced Labor)
DP	Displaced Person
EVZ	Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft (Memory, Responsibility, and Future)
FNDT	Fédération Nationale des Déportés du Travail (National Federation of Deported Laborers)
FNVRCNTF (ex-FNDT)	Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapes des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé (National Federation of Victims and Survivors of Nazi Forced Labor Camps)
IFLDP	International Forced Labourers' Documentation Project
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JOC	Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (Young Cristian Workers)
NVVG	Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerepatrieerden (Dutch Union of Repatriates)
PoW	Prisoner of War
SBO	Stichting Burgeroorlogsgetroffenen (Association of Civilian War Bereaved)
SDOL	Stichting Deportatie Oktober 1944 Noord- en Midden Limburg (Association of Deportation October 1944 North and Central Limburg)
SDA	Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn 1940-1945 (Association Forced Laborers Apeldoorn 1940-1945)
SOTO	Stichting Onderzoek Terugkeer en Opvang (Association for Research on Return and Care)
STO	Service du Travail Obligatoire (Compulsory Labor Service)
VDN	Vereniging ex-Dwangarbeiders Nederland (Union for former Forced Laborers)
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two

Introduction

Two National Forced Labor Monuments

In contrast to famous war memorials like Omaha Beach in Normandy and the National Monument on the Dam Square in Amsterdam, monuments for laborers who were forced to work in the Third Reich during World War Two (WWII) are not so well-known. The French *déportés du travail*, deported workers, are remembered on the Parisian cemetery *Père Lachaise*. In 1947, an unknown forced laborer was buried at this cemetery. In 1970, a national monument on top of the tomb was inaugurated. Dutch forced laborers, or *dwangarbeiders*, had to wait until 1996 for a national monument.¹ Both national monuments (picture 1 and 2) offer insights on the different ways of remembering forced labor in Nazi Germany. What can a comparison of those two monuments reveal?

Firstly, they demonstrate that ‘forced labor’ is a contested term. Whereas the Dutch monument refers to ‘forced labor’, the French monuments opt for the term ‘labor deportation’. Even though both terms refer to similar events in history, there is a slight difference in the meaning in the selection of words. This difference will be discussed in later sections. During the first two years of the German occupation, the occupiers launched a propaganda campaign aiming to attract voluntary workers to Germany. As a result of limited success and a need for more work forces, the Nazi politician Fritz Sauckel installed systematic measures which forced men, namely, to work in Germany from 1942 onwards. This policy was called the *Arbeitseinsatz* or, as referred in French, *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (STO, Compulsory Labor Service).

It thus seems that both monuments were not erected to commemorate voluntary workers, *per se*, but rather laborers who were forced to go to Germany. The definition of ‘forced labor’ that this study uses as a starting point stems from the International Labor Organization. In 1930, this institution defined ‘forced labor’ as “every form of work or service that was demanded from a person under the threat of punishment and who was not voluntary placed at disposal”.² This research also uses more neutral synonyms such as ‘(forced) worker’ and ‘labor conscript’³. As the Belgian historian Pieter Lagrou argued, voluntary departures were often less voluntary than assumed and the forced departures were

¹ Serge Barcellini and Annette Wiewiorka, *Passant, souviens-toi! Les lieux du souvenir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France* (Paris, 1995), 438-442; Rob van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte. Herdenkingscultuur in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 2011), 473.

² This definition is also used by the German historian Christoph Thonfeld. Christoph Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen? Individuelle Erfahrungsverarbeitungen und kollektive Repräsentationen von NS-Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Essen, 2014), 37-38.

³ The terms ‘workers’ and ‘labor conscripts’ are often used by for instance Pieter Lagrou.

often less forced than usually portrayed.⁴ Despite this definition, it appears to be difficult to make a clear distinction between ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’ labor.

Secondly, the plaque on the French monument mentions that approximately more than 600,000 civilian⁵ forced laborers were recruited between 1942 and 1945.⁶ The Dutch monument covers the period from 1940 to 1945 and the plaque in front of it remembers more than 500,000 forced laborers.⁷ Since the French population is considerably larger than the Dutch one, it seems surprising that these estimations come so close. However, it is important to keep in mind that this comparison is not based on equal grounds, regarding time periods and groups of people taken into account. This was especially so during the last months of 1944, when France was almost completely liberated, and round-ups were held in many Dutch cities. A closer look into the numbers thus tells something about the diverging nature of forced labor in France and the Netherlands. More importantly, however, the two monuments also attest for divergent ways of remembering the history of the *Arbeitseinsatz*. One of these differences concerns, for example, the sculptures of the monuments. The Dutch statues purely represent the forced laborers as captivated and hopeless victims. The French sculptures also depict victimhood, but in addition, they also represent the oppressing work and the workers who attempted to sabotage the wheel.⁸ It will be discussed later how these different representations can be explained by the initiators of these two monuments.

Both monuments have namely been placed as a result of associative initiatives. Because forced labor organizations had and still have an important influence on memories of forced labor, this research investigates how French and Dutch associations of forced laborers have remembered forced labor from 1945 to today. France and the Netherlands offer an interesting comparison because both countries have been occupied by the Germans and their memories of forced labor have been marginalized after the war.

⁴ Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe 1945-1965* (Cambridge, 2000), 140.

⁵ This number thus excludes the French prisoners of war who were forced to work in Germany.

⁶ See also François Berger, ‘Review of *Les STO. Histoire des Français requis en Allemagne nazie 1942-1945* by Patrice Arnaud’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 58:3 (2011), 214-216, here 214.

⁷ The total number of Dutch laborers that were forced to work in Germany between 1940 and 1945 has been estimated between 500,000 and 600,000. Marloes van Westrienen, *Dwangarbeiders: Nederlandse jongens tewerkgesteld in het Derde Rijk* (Amsterdam, Antwerpen, 2008), 31-32.

⁸ Barcellini and Wieviorka, *Passant, souviens-toi!*, 442.



Picture 1 – Monument for forced laborers in Paris
Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (April 2017).



Picture 2 – Monument for forced laborers in Overloon (NL)
Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (June 2017).

Chapter 1 Status Quaestionis

This research can be placed within international and national literature on memories of forced labor. First, the international perspective will be discussed. It will be explained why research on forced labor started in Germany and why the international historiography is still dominated by German oral history scholars. In the international historiography, the Belgian historian Pieter Lagrou stands as an exception because of his methodology (not based on oral history) and his comparison of Western European countries. Second, the French and Dutch national literature on forced labor and its memories will be discussed. The historiographical overview demonstrates a more profound academic interest in the topic in France than in the Netherlands.

1.1 From the 'Shadow' to Oral History Research on Memory of Forced Labor from an International German Perspective

In mid-August 1944, around twenty-six percent of the labor force in Germany consisted of foreigners. Among them were 7.6 million foreign civilian laborers and prisoners of war (PoWs). This number is based on statistics of the German historian Ulrich Herbert. However, laborers who had already left Germany or concentration camp laborers are not included in those 7.6 million civilians. Herbert also makes no explicit distinction between voluntary and forced laborers. In general, no study has ever given the exact statistics of all foreign laborers who were forced to work in the Third Reich. Estimations range from ten to fifteen million.⁹ The history of forced labor is about the lives of many, but no precise numbers or sharp categories of laborers exist in literature.

Despite those considerable numbers, the history of forced workers in Nazi Germany has been neglected by academia for a long time. Until the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, WWII scholars tended to focus on military and political history, and investigated themes such as resistance. They often neglected more contentious topics like Jewish persecutions, forced labor, and daily life of 'normal' citizens. Forced labor research has, in the words of the German historian Christoph Thonfeld, led a '*Schattendasein*' (an existence in the shadow).¹⁰ Some local or national studies existed, but the research on the *Arbeitseinsatz* started to intensify from the 1980s onwards.¹¹

Research on the topic started in Germany. This can be linked to societal and political changes from the 1960s onward causing academic changes in the 1970s and 1980s.

⁹ Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, 'Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany: Categories, Number, and Survivors', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33:2 (2002), 169-204, here, 171-172.

¹⁰ Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen?*, 37.

¹¹ Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter. Politik und Praxis des „Ausländer-Einsatzes“ in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin/Bonn 1985; reprint 1999), 19-20.

Immediately after the war, Germany repressed its Nazi history and tried to move forward. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, political changes and generational conflicts in West-Germany disproved a uniform national vision of the (ignored) repressed past. Slowly, more interest and research in Germany's dark past emerged. German historians investigated, for instance, the neglected topic of Jewish victims. This change should also be placed in the context of international attention for the Holocaust. The influential American television series on the Holocaust in 1978 are an example hereof. As a consequence, virulent political debates about how to deal with the past took place between conservative and progressive politicians in West-Germany during the 1980s. Despite this strong polarization, Germany still aimed at creating a more coherent national consciousness. That required historical research. As a result, German society and historians became more interested in the dark history of National Socialism as well as the *Alltaggeschichte* (everyday history). Monuments and memorials remembering crimes committed by national socialists were inaugurated as means of dealing with the difficult past. These memorials functioned as negative orientation points of moral and political discourses.¹² In this context of coming to terms with the past and researching daily life during the war, forced employment on German territory slowly became a topic of investigation, debate, and (local) remembrance. The most important research has been done by the German historian Ulrich Herbert. In 1985, he published a pioneering and important work on the politics of forced labor: *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des 'Ausländer-Einsatzes' in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches*.

The beginning of a more vast academic interest in the history of forced labor can thus be placed in the 1980s. This thesis, however, does not focus on forced labor during the war, but on ways in which forced labor has been remembered after the war. It connects to the field of memory studies which have become more popular since the 1980s. The French historian Pierre Nora linked the interest in memory studies to a time in which the 'fund of memory disappears'. He argued that 'the acceleration of history and events' caused a search for (national) historical consciousness, more historical study, and a consolidation of heritage.¹³ Especially around the first decade of the twenty-first century, many international publications about memories of WWII appeared. However, in contrast to memories of the Holocaust, memories of forced laborers do not have a prominent place in general

¹² Matthias Heyl, 'Duitse herinneringscultuur: gedachten en patronen', in: Frank van Vree and Rob van der Laarse, *De dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context* (Amsterdam, 2009), 221-244, here 228-229; Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler 'Memories of the Second World War and National Identity in Germany', in: Martin Evans and Ken Lunn, *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York, 1997), 239-254, here 239-248.

¹³ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations* 26. Special Issue: *Memory and Counter-Memory* (1989), 7-24, here 12.

publications on war memories.¹⁴ This might be explained by the fact that, despite the slowly growing attention since the 1980s, forced labor in Nazi Germany is still an under-researched academic subject.

The field of international research on memories of forced labor should rather be described as a specific, small, and relatively recent research area dominated by German initiatives.¹⁵ This German domination can be explained by two reasons. The first explanation might simply be a geographical one. Because the forced workers from different countries were all brought to German territory and worked together in the same factories or camps, it seemed reasonable for German scholars to take an international approach, or in other words: to take the history of forced labor(ers) in and from different countries into account.

The German compensation initiatives are the second explanation. From the 1980s in West-Germany till the beginning of the twenty-first century in a reunited Germany, several debates about financial compensation from the German government and industrial organizations to former forced laborers took place. For instance, the Two-plus-Four agreement of 1990, which paved the way for German unification, reopened the issue of reparations that had been postponed since 1953. In 1953, the London Debt Agreement organized the German debt, which included interwar debts and reparations. In order to avoid the crisis Germany went through after the First World War, some payments were postponed until reunification in 1990.¹⁶ Due to public, juridical, and international pressure, the German reunited government and a group of multinationals provided 2.5 billion Euros for compensation purposes for victims of the German forced labor system.¹⁷ The compensation and its subsequent debates required historical research and also revived memories of the long-forgotten victims of forced labor themselves.

As a consequence, historians not only became interested in the history of forced labor, but also in its often silenced or forgotten memory. In 2004, Germany launched the International Forced Labourers' Documentation Project (IFLDP) which was coordinated by

¹⁴ See for instance several contributions in Martin Evans and Ken Lunn, *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York, 1997) or Frank van Vree and Rob van der Laarse, *De dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context* (Amsterdam, 2009). They do not pay much attention to forced labor.

¹⁵ See for instance the most important studies: Alexander von Plato, Almut Leh, Christoph Thonfeld (eds.), *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Wien, Köln, Weimer, 2008); Regina Plaßwilm, *Grenzen des Erzählbaren: Erinnerungsdiskurse von NS-Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeitern in Ost- und Westeuropa* (Essen, 2011); Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta (eds.), *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin, 2013); Christoph Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen? Individuelle Erfahrungsverarbeitungen und kollektive Repräsentationen von NS-Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Essen, 2014).

¹⁶ Timothy W. Guinnane, *Financial Vergangenheitsbewältigung: the 1953 London Debt Agreement* (Yale University, 2015), 1. See also <http://www.econ.yale.edu/growth_pdf/cdp880.pdf> [consulted on 28 March 2017].

¹⁷ Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, 'The Compensation of Nazi Germany's Forced Labourers: Demographic Findings and Political Implications', *Population Studies* 56:1 (2002), 5-21, here 5.

the German oral history expert Alexander von Plato. The project aimed at remembering forced laborers. Almost six hundred life-course-interviews with former forced laborers (the last living eyewitnesses) of twenty-six countries were held.¹⁸ Logically, the project sparked several German publications which used these oral histories and highlighted the repressed memories of forced laborers.

The first findings were written down per nation in a publication edited by Alexander von Plato, Almut Leh, and Christoph Thonfeld.¹⁹ They concluded that in all postwar societies, memories of former forced laborers were subordinated or repressed in official and public memory discourses. The level of recognition differed per country, but all memories of forced laborers have been influenced by the discourse of a victim group. In addition, the authors concluded that experiences of forced labor are often presented from a national perspective. This stands in contrast to another victim group, the Jewish victims, as their experiences are often presented from an international perspective.²⁰

Other German publications appeared as well, such as the more compounding edited volume *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (2013).²¹ The volume discussed forced labor during the war as well as postwar memories. Especially in the epilogue, it becomes clear that the publication not only strived for more academic knowledge on forced labor and its memory, but also had a more political and societal objective in pursuing recognition for forced labor in all times as well as other forms of discrimination.²² This can be explained by the fact that the IFLDP was financed by the German association *Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft* (EVZ, Memory, Responsibility, and Future): a foundation financed by the German government and industry that strives for individual humanitarian compensation, takes care of forced laborers, and defends human rights and democracy.²³

What the two discussed volumes have in common is that they focused more on Eastern than Western European countries. This is certainly defensible as the majority of forced laborers came from Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, those publications therefore often ignored distinctions among Western European countries. Differences among some Western European countries become clearer in other, more (politically) independent, key publications

¹⁸ See also <http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/> and <https://ehri-project.eu/remembering-forced-labour> for further information.

¹⁹ Alexander von Plato, Almut Leh, Christoph Thonfeld (eds.), *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Wien, Köln, Weimar, 2008).

²⁰ Plato, Leh, Thonfeld, *Hitlers Sklaven*, 433-441.

²¹ Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta (eds.), *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin, 2013).

²² Pohl and Sebta, *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa*, 446-452.

²³ 'Über uns. Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft" <<http://www.stiftung-evz.de/stiftung.html>> [consulted on 31 May 2017].

on memories of forced labor by the German historians Regina Plaßwilm²⁴ and Christoph Thonfeld²⁵. They, however, do not especially dive into distinctions between memories in Western European countries that were occupied by Nazi Germany.

Thonfeld explored how individual accounts are connected to collective representations of forced laborers in six countries. He convincingly argued that individual memories have been influenced by societal or collective representations and showed interesting differences between nations.²⁶ Nonetheless, when it came to Western Europe, Thonfeld limited his comparison on France and England. Plaßwilm actually studied France and the Netherlands (and also Belarus and Russia). However, in contrast to Thonfeld, she emphasized that individual narratives of her interviewees have been primarily influenced by biographical experiences instead of collective or national memory frameworks.²⁷ In sum, a comparison of occupied Western European countries did not form the main focus of her research.

1.2 Postwar Social History of Occupied Western European Countries Research on Memory of Forced Labor by Pieter Lagrou as a Starting Point

The only historian who has completed a comparative study on forced labor in Western European occupied countries is the Belgian historian Pieter Lagrou.²⁸ Contrary to the German literature discussed above, Lagrou did not focus on individual memories and interviews. Instead, he investigated the postwar social history of resistance fighters, labor conscripts, and survivors of persecution in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.²⁹ Concerning the forced laborers, Lagrou concluded that being repatriated, all of them found themselves in a difficult and ambiguous position because, despite their diverse experiences, they were not specifically seen as either collaborators or heroes. More importantly, Lagrou also distinguished interesting national differences. He mentioned, for example, the fact that

²⁴ Regina Plaßwilm, *Grenzen des Erzählbaren: Erinnerungsdiskurse von NS-Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeitern in Ost- und Westeuropa* (Essen, 2011). Plaßwilm draws on her own interviews taken with forced laborers of the Belarus Republic, Russia, France and the Netherlands.

²⁵ Christoph Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen? Individuelle Erfahrungsverarbeitungen und kollektive Repräsentationen von NS-Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Essen, 2014).

Thonfeld based his research on the transcripts of eighty-six interviews of the IFLDP from France, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, England, Germany and Israel.

²⁶ See also an earlier article Christoph Thonfeld wrote about the same research: 'Memories of former World War Two forced labourers - an international comparison', *Oral History* 39:2 (2011), 33-48; and a review of Edith Raim of the book *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen? Individuelle Erfahrungsverarbeitungen und kollektive Repräsentationen von NS-Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Essen, 2014) by Christoph Thonfeld in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 301:1 (2016), 290-291.

²⁷ Plaßwilm, *Grenzen des Erzählbaren*, 355.

²⁸ Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe 1945-1965* (Cambridge, 2000). It is important to mention that Lagrou did not focus on national differences in particular, but on common experiences of the three groups he investigated. He nonetheless mentioned important national differences which are important for this research.

²⁹ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 3-6.

Dutch repatriated forced laborers did not get any political attention or set up long-lasting supportive associations, unlike their French and Belgian counterparts. Moreover, in France and Belgium, the ‘issue’ of conscript laborers became far more politicized than in the Netherlands.³⁰ One explanation for this difference in political attention forms WWI. Contrary to the Netherlands, France and Belgium had already experience with the return of forced laborers and the installation of a ministry.³¹

Lagrou’s findings also included an examination of postwar collective war-memories in which national resistance and heroism played a central role. He paradoxically concluded that “the better society as a whole succeeded in creating a consensual myth of patriotism, the worse off were the *milieux de mémoire*” (social memory groups).³² Because the Netherlands succeeded better than France or Belgium in creating a national myth around the resistance, there was no room left for the ambiguous group of labor conscripts.³³ According to Lagrou, the Dutch resistance myth had an anonymous character as it did not honor individuals. This was a strong contrast with France where De Gaulle was honored as a resistance fighter. Another difference with the French situation distinguished by Lagrou is that in postwar France a *bataille de mémoire* took place: due to the less successful creation of a national resistance myth immediately after the war, different groups degenerated into a patriotic bidding-up.³⁴ Almost ten years earlier, Lagrou had already come to the same conclusions comparing the Netherlands and Belgium from 1945 to 1955. He had stated that due to the fragmentation of Belgian war memories, the forced workers could at least form group memories and strive for recognition, although in the margins. Such a marginal recognition was not even possible for the Dutch labor conscripts.³⁵

To conclude the discussion about international research into forced labor memories, it becomes clear that the most important studies have been conducted from the end of the 1990s onward and that they are strongly influenced by (West) Germany that aimed at

³⁰ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 192-193; see also Pieter Lagrou, ‘De terugkeer van weggevoerde arbeiders in België en Nederland, 1944-1955: mythen en taboes rond de verplichte tewerkstelling’, *De Verplichte tewerkstelling in Duitsland, 1942-1945: acta van het symposium gehouden te Brussel op 6 en 7 oktober 1992 = Le travail obligatoire en Allemagne : actes du symposium tenu à Bruxelles les 6 et 7 Octobre 1992* (Brussels, 1993), 191-254, here 232-239.

³¹ See for instance Ellen de Visser, ‘De vergeten oorlog van de Duitslandganger’, *De Volkskrant* (11 May 1996) <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief/de-vergeten-oorlog-van-de-duitslandganger-dwangarbeiders-uit-heel-europa-ontmoeten-elkaar-op-berlijns-congres~a427018/>> [consulted on 31 May 2017].

³² Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 193-194.

³³ The French also developed an important national myth around the resistance. The French historian Henry Rousso called this myth, which was developed mostly by the Gaullists and communists ‘*le résistancialisme*’. However, especially the first years after the war, this ‘myth’ was not as unambiguous as in the Netherlands.

³⁴ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 194.

³⁵ Lagrou, ‘De terugkeer van weggevoerde arbeiders in België en Nederland, 1944-1955’, 240-241.

coming to terms with its Nazi past.³⁶ In a field dominated by German scholars who mostly use life-course interviews, and who (because of their broader international scope) do not often discuss differences between occupied Western European countries, Pieter Lagrou stands out as the exception that functions as the best starting point for this research. As Lagrou already showed in his research, memories of forced labor in Western European countries coincide, but they have also been influenced by diverging national contexts.³⁷ This research builds on these insights, but takes a longer period than Lagrou (1945-1965) into account as it investigates memories of forced labor associations from 1945 till today.

A final conclusion that can be retrieved from this overview is that none of the scholars involved in leading comparative history of forced labor is French or Dutch. The following overview of research on French and Dutch forced labor(ers) will demonstrate that studies on memories of forced labor in these countries have only been conducted from a national or even local perspective.

1.3 From National to Local and Fragmented Studies Research on Memories of French and Dutch Forced Labor(ers)

One could argue that the French and Dutch historiographies reflect the visibility of former forced laborers in each postwar societies. Although in both countries, the diverse group of forced workers has been excluded from ‘official’ war-memories for a long time³⁸, some French conscripts united themselves shortly after the war in a federation which defended the interests of former forced laborers. This made them more visible than Dutch labor conscripts. In the Netherlands, it was only in 1987 that a more influential association that represented the interests of former forced laborers was founded.³⁹ Academia reflects this distinction as there are more extensive and recent French studies dedicated to the history and memory of labor conscripts than Dutch ones.

In the international historiography, a distinction between literature discussing the history of forced labor and its postwar memory has been made. From the perspective of French and Dutch scholars, it is more difficult to make such a distinction because research on forced labor during WWII is still an under-researched topic. For the Netherlands, an

³⁶ It also happened in other controversial topics that German scholars took the lead in researching and discussing topics of their Nazi past. (See for instance, Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob (eds.), *Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to Terms with Traumatic Pasts in Democratic Societies* (Budapest, 2015), 61.

³⁷ It would have been very logical to include Belgium too in this comparison. However, because Belgian research on memories of forced labor is less elaborated than in France, the researcher has chosen, out of practical reasons and time available for the master thesis, not to include Belgium.

³⁸ It is important to note that French former forced laborers were included in national commemorations until 1947.

³⁹ Not taking the *Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerechtvaardigden* which only existed from 1945 till 1947 into account.

academic overview about the history of forced labor has been published, but memory of forced labor is only dealt with in broader WWII memory studies. As already mentioned, French scholars have discussed forced labor more intensively, but their recent publications always treated forced labor during the war and its postwar memory together. That is why this overview per nation discusses not only works about memories of forced labor but also about its history.

It is important to mention that the first publications about forced labor, in France as well as in the Netherlands, had no academic background. They are often written by forced laborers themselves. In France, an important national overview of forced labor during the war appeared in 1972: *La deportation des travailleurs français dans le IIIe Reich* by Jacques Evrard a professor who was a victim of the STO and affiliated to the national federation.⁴⁰ In the 1970s, the topic was not a popular academic subject.⁴¹ Perhaps even more than their international colleagues, French scholars focused on resistance or political, diplomatic, and military history.⁴² From the 1970s and 1980s onward, research on WWII became more pluralistic and international. French scholars also slowly started to look more critically to their own war history and especially the Vichy-regime.⁴³ During those decades, some regional studies on forced labor appeared.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, it was during the debates on restitution by the German government in the 1990s that a more vast academic interest for the subject in France arose. In addition to Germans studying French forced labor⁴⁵, French scholars such as Annette Wieviorka⁴⁶ also published about different groups of war victims including the experiences and immediate postwar legacy of forced laborers. In 2001, a colloquium about forced labor was held in Caen which reflected the increased interest in the topic. It is, nevertheless, important to mention that this colloquium was in the first place a political initiative of the French government most likely inspired by debates on the German compensations.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ The national federation was the *Fédération National des Déportés du Travail*. This will be explained more elaborately in chapter 3.

⁴¹ Outside academia, there was some attention for the STO. For instance, the journalist Jean-Pierre Vittori published *Eux les S.T.O.* in 1982.

⁴² Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1089.

⁴³ In France, a decisive moment for research into memories of WWII was the publication of *Le Syndrome the Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* by Henry Rousso in 1987. It includes some passages about forced laborers, but not very extensive.

⁴⁴ For instance by André Laurens and Jean-Pierre Harbulot (see Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1089-1090).

⁴⁵ For an overview of German scholars studying French forced laborers see for instance Patrice Arnaud, *Les STO. Histoire des requis en Allemagne nazie, 1942-1945* (Paris, 2010, reprint 2014), 9-11.

⁴⁶ Annette Wieviorka, *Déportation et génocide. Oubli et mémoire 1943-1948* (Paris, 1992).

⁴⁷ Helga Elisabeth Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup. Les Français requis du travail en Allemagne* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2010), 20-23; Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*,

It was thus around the turn of the century that (French) historians became more interested in memories of forced laborers from France and the most important overviews were published. In 1996 and 2010, the German historian Helga Elisabeth Bories-Sawala published an important overview in which she principally employed a micro history by focusing on (interviews with) French workers who were deported to Bremen.⁴⁸ In 2010, the French historian Patrice Arnaud was the first to publish a monograph on the subject.⁴⁹ In his chapter on memories of the STO, he examined political and social contexts and debates concerning former labor conscripts. Arnaud convincingly showed how these contexts and debates influenced different genres of personal memoirs.⁵⁰ In 2012, the French historian Raphaël Spina published an extensive doctoral thesis on the subject.⁵¹ These publications thus demonstrate a recent interest in the French STO. Contrary to some of the discussed German scholars, their interest does not especially derive from memory studies. Nevertheless, in their final chapters, all French historians discuss how the French society and forced laborers themselves, in a group or as individuals, remembered the history of forced labor in Nazi Germany.

In the Netherlands, no recent academic work exists that focuses from a national perspective on the experiences and memories of forced laborers. This might be explained by the lower visibility of Dutch forced laborers or the little interest of German scholars in forced laborers from the Netherlands. Anyhow, there is an important standard publication written by the Dutch historian Ben Sijes on the Dutch history of forced labor during WWII.⁵² It has been published in 1966 and reprinted in 1990 by the NIOD.⁵³ The early study of Sijes on forced labor fits in a Dutch academic tradition that, in contrast to France, already in the 1950s and 1960s researched ignored or contentious WWII topics such as the Jewish persecutions. However, these publications often did not have an immediate public impact.⁵⁴ The reprint in 1990 can be placed in the context of the early German compensation initiatives and the increasing societal attention for the history of forced labor. Furthermore,

⁴⁸ Helga Elisabeth Bories-Sawala, *Französer im 'Reichsinsatz'. Deportation, Zwangsarbeit, Alltag* (Frankfurt, 1996); Helga Elisabeth Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup. Les Français requis du travail en Allemagne* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2010).

⁴⁹ Patrice Arnaud, *Les STO. Histoire des requis en Allemagne nazie, 1942-1945* (Paris, 2010).

⁵⁰ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 551-590.

⁵¹ Raphaël Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire (1942-1945)* (Doctoral Thesis in History, Ecole normale supérieure de Cachan, 2012). In April 2017 an abridged version of his thesis, *Histoire du STO*, has been published.

⁵² B.A. Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet. De gedwongen arbeid van Nederlanders in Duitsland, 1940-1945* (Amsterdam, 1966, reprint 1999).

⁵³ The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation.

⁵⁴ See for instance Rob van der Laarse, *De oorlog als beleving: over de musealisering en inscenering van Holocaust-erfgoed* (Reinwardt memorial lecture; nr. 3, 2010), 10-11 (https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1296243/93516_RWA_oorlog_als_beleving_def_V3.pdf); Tismaneanu and Iacob, *Remembrance, History, and Justice*, 50.

in 1987, former Dutch forced laborers united themselves in an association.⁵⁵ Regarding the timing of the foundation, it is also important to take into account that many forced laborers were retired by then and thus had more time to reflect on their war experiences and to defend their interests as ignored war victims. More recent research on the topic of forced labor appeared since the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is important to note that most studies about forced labor are either local (focusing on laborers from a certain local region) and/or conducted outside academia.⁵⁶ If academic scholars already devoted attention to the history and memory of forced labor, they only discussed a specific (defined) subject or time-period.

Among academic research into memories of forced labor, most studies have been conducted by master students.⁵⁷ This proves the limited interest in the topic by more advanced researchers. Nevertheless, the research done by master students has provided interesting insights in the memories of forced laborers that can be used for this thesis as well. In 2012, Ilana Cukier wrote a master thesis about the national Dutch association for former forced laborers that existed from 1987 to 1999. Four years earlier, Marloes van Westrienen published *Dwangarbeiders: Nederlandse jongens tewerkgesteld in het Derde Rijk*. This publication was based on research she conducted during her studies in Cultural Anthropology in which she interviewed many forced laborers. Van Westrienen gave a representative image of the diversity and ambivalence of the *Arbeitseinsatz*.⁵⁸ However, she did not often explicitly relate individual memories to postwar political and societal developments. This has been done more structurally by other scholars.

It would namely be untrue to state that more advanced academic researchers have paid no attention to Dutch forced laborers at all. There are two fields of research in which remembrance practices and memories have been explored and discussed: first, in publications that focus on the return of displaced persons from Germany immediately after the war and second, in general studies on WWII-memories and remembrance practices. The earlier discussed publications of Lagrou belong to the first category. In 1998, the independent *Stichting Onderzoek Terugkeer en Opvang* (SOTO, Association for Research on

⁵⁵ The *Vereniging ex-Dwangarbeiders*. This union will be discussed more elaborately in chapter 3.

⁵⁶ See for instance Albert Oosthoek, *De Rotterdamse arbeidsinzet 1940-1945* (Rotterdam, 1994); Arend Disberg and André Horlings, *De Verzwegen Deportatie. Apeldoornse nachtmerrie in Rees* (Apeldoorn, 2005); Dr. A.P.M. Cammaert, *Dwangarbeid en verzoening* (Helden, 2001); Dr A.P.M. Cammaert, *Sporen die bleven* (Helden 1996, reprint 2005). The publications of dr. Cammaert are about deportations in Limburg in October 1944.

⁵⁷ See for instance Ilana Cukier, 'Een vergeten groep verenigt zich' Een geschiedenis van de 'Vereniging ex-Dwangarbeiders Nederland Tweede Wereldoorlog (VDN) en de invloed van de internationale context' (Master's Thesis University of Amsterdam, 2012); Marloes van Westrienen, *Dwangarbeiders: Nederlandse jongens tewerkgesteld in het Derde Rijk* (Amsterdam, Antwerpen; 2008); Jan Driever, 'Oorlogsgetroffene of oorlogsslachtoffer: wat maakt het verschil? : mogelijke determinanten voor slachtofferschap: een onderzoek onder ex-dwangarbeiders' (Master's Thesis Free University of Amsterdam (Nijmegen, 2003).

⁵⁸ Van Westrienen, *Dwangarbeiders*, 9-11, 40-42.

Return and Care), that had been founded during the first government of Wim Kok, resulted in two publications in which the return of forced laborers was explored: *De Meelstreek*⁵⁹ and *Mensenheugenis*⁶⁰. Similar to the Caen conference in France, the SOTO research has been conducted after a political initiative that was probably stimulated by the German compensation initiatives.

Dat nooit meer. De nasleep van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Nederland (2011), written by historian Chris van der Heijden⁶¹, is an example of the second category. He briefly discussed the memory of Dutch forced laborers and focused especially on the presentation of the Dutch union for forced laborers as war-victims.⁶² A more compounding study has been done by the sociologist and cultural anthropologist Rob van Ginkel. In *Rondom de stilte. Herdenkingscultuur in Nederland* (2011) he analyzed practices of memory from below, for instance the organization of rituals and commemorations, instead of the often-discussed memory-politics from above. Van Ginkel nuanced the initiative of the Dutch government and underlined the importance of private initiatives.⁶³ He understood the majority of forced laborers as a latent memory community: an existing community that was, however, not active in performing their memories and interests. Van Ginkel also described private initiatives for monuments for forced laborers from the end of the 1990s onward.⁶⁴ Most initiatives have a local character. This stands in contrast to France where the national association still exists.⁶⁵

To briefly summarize the international and national historiographies, memory of forced labor is a recent and still under-researched academic subject, especially in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the German restitutions and political initiatives influenced the emerging interest in the history of forced labor in Nazi Germany and its individual and collective memory. Although there is discussion to what extent their experiences have been a taboo in postwar societies, most researchers agree that memories of former labor conscripts have been marginalized. Scholars often relate this to postwar societal and political contexts

⁵⁹ Martin Bossenbroek, *De Meelstreek. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, 2001), 539-555.

⁶⁰ Thea van der Linden and Hinke Piersma, 'Terug in het gareel. De opvang van gedwongen tewerkgestelden en de angst voor onmaatschappelijkheid', in: Hinke Piersma (ed.), *Mensenheugenis. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Getuigenissen* (Amsterdam, 2001), 125-150.

⁶¹ Chris van der Heijden's publications caused a lot of controversy in the Netherlands. Regarding *Dat nooit meer*, criticism was addressed to his method, his use of sources and the lack of an interpretative framework. His research, however, also received more positive reactions. See for instance *BMGN, Low Countries Historical Review* 128:2 (2013).

⁶² Chris van der Heijden, *Dat nooit meer. De nasleep van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 2011), 627-633.

⁶³ Rob van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte. Herdenkingscultuur in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 2011), 20, 726-727.

⁶⁴ Van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte*, 463-485.

⁶⁵ See the website of the *Association pour la Mémoire de la Déportation du Travail Forcé* and the *Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapes des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé*, <<http://www.requis-deportes-sto.com/>> [consulted on 31 May 2017].

in which a hierarchy of victimhood and national resistance-myths arose.⁶⁶ This study focusing on France and the Netherlands will not only dive deeper into similarities, but also reveal under-researched differences in the memory cultures of both countries. Its approach is innovative to the extent that the German international comparative literature has often excluded the Netherlands, and French and Dutch academics have only researched the topic from a local or national perspective.

This research studies memories of forced labor in France and the Netherlands by investigating a number of forced labor associations. Precisely because memories of forced laborers have been ignored by official commemorations for a long time, such associations or interest groups of labor conscripts are an interesting source to study how forced work in Nazi Germany has been remembered. This study builds thus further on the findings of Van Ginkel who argued that many memory practices, and especially non-official commemorations, are often initiated by private initiatives of, for instance, associations.

In this thesis, associations are considered as organizations that operate and mediate between political and societal contexts, individual forced laborers, and public opinion. Associations deal with individual memories of former forced laborers, but also with collective memories in a political and societal context and public opinion. This leads to the main research question of this study: in which ways have collective memories of forced labor created in French and Dutch forced labor associations been influenced by political, societal, and individual circumstances?

This study starts from the hypothesis that an important difference between France and the Netherlands is that French organizations are more nationally orientated whereas Dutch organizations are more locally orientated. This contrast might be explained by different experiences of nations and forced laborers during the war and differences ways of postwar remembrance-cultures. The next chapter elaborates on the theoretical and methodological framework. It will be followed by a third chapter that gives a brief introduction on the history of forced labor in France and the Netherlands, the repatriation, European memory-cultures of forced labor, and the researched associations. Chapter four, five, and six present the actual research. Chapter four will look at associations of forced labor in their societal and political contexts and relations with the state in particular. For the greater part, this chapter builds upon existing literature and requires primary sources only occasionally. The fifth chapter switches to the role of individuals in certain foundations. It investigates not only how personal memories have been shaped by political and societal influences, but also how a couple of individuals active in associations have shaped collective memories of forced labor. Because the role of individuals as agencies in spreading memories

⁶⁶ See for instance Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 305; Arnaud, *Les STO*, 600; Plaßwilm, *Grenzen des Erzählbaren*, 349; Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen?*, 205-206.

on forced labor has often been ignored by most of the discussed scholars⁶⁷, this chapter is based upon primary source research. It also strongly relates to chapter six which investigates further how and which memories are being spread from, or with the support of, associative initiatives to the public and thus become collective and more coherent memories. This can be in the form of websites, exhibitions, documentaries, or educational material. In the conclusion, the most important findings regarding diverging and similar memories of forced labor, created by French and Dutch associations since 1945, will be presented.

⁶⁷ This tends to happen more often in memory studies related to WWII, see for instance the criticism pronounced in Bruno Benvindo and Evert Peeters, *Scherven van de oorlog: de strijd om de herinnering aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog, 1945-2010* (Antwerp, 2011), 17-18.

Chapter 2 Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

2.1 Theory: the Interaction between Collective and Individual Memory

Over the last three decades, memory studies have become an immense and popular, but also ‘over-theorized’ field. It is, nonetheless, very helpful for historians who are interested in memory to integrate influential theories. This study builds upon three ideas about collective and individual memory of Maurice Halbwachs, Aleida Assmann, and Bruno Benvindo and Evert Peeters. Some of the discussed historiography can also be integrated in this framework.

The most important theories about collective memories stem from the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.⁶⁸ Halbwachs considered memory as a selection and reconstruction of the past. He argued that all people exist in a social milieu (no one ever lives in total isolation) and that therefore, all memory is socially framed.⁶⁹ In addition, Halbwachs also recognized the role of individuals in disseminating memories: “While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember. While these remembrances are mutually supportive of each other and common to all, individual members still vary in the intensity with which they experience them.”⁷⁰ So, according to Halbwachs, individual memories can differ, but individual and collective memory are not two separate entities. They are closely related. The idea that collective memory is socially framed and that political/collective stories cannot be separated from and interweave with personal memories has been integrated in many studies about war memories.⁷¹ This idea about the relation between individual and collective memory will also form the starting point of this research.

Halbwachs’ ideas have been very influential, but scholars also criticized his vague term ‘collective memory’. Therefore, the German cultural scholar Aleida Assmann proposed to divide collective memory into four categories: individual, social, political, and cultural memory. Her fundamental idea here is that individual memories always interact with externalized representations. Furthermore, Assmann makes a distinction between individual and social memory on the one hand, and political and cultural memory on the other. This division will be explained more in detail, because it is important for this thesis. Assmann argued that individual and social memory are embodied. She explained the term ‘embodied’ by emphasizing that these forms of memory, individual and social memory, stem from

⁶⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris, 1925).

⁶⁹ Erika Apfelbaum, ‘Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory’, in: Susannah Radstone, Bill Schwarz, *Memories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham, 2010), 77-93, here 85; Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1999), 6-9.

⁷⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York, 1980), 48.

⁷¹ See for instance Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995. Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (New York; 2006) which is ‘tracing the overlap and interplay of individual memories and fifty years of Soviet mythmaking’.

bottom-up. According to Assmann, the embodied forms of memory encompass human interactions which are primarily intergenerational.⁷²

In contrast, Assmann defined political (institutionalized) and cultural memory as ‘mediated’. She stated that those memories have been created by a top-down structure and considered them as transgenerational.⁷³ As this study will demonstrate, forced labor associations are often organized within intergenerational, embodied structures, but they are involved in the formation of transgenerational and mediated memories as well. Regarding transgenerational memory, historians also make a distinction between political and cultural memory. Political memory concerns material, institutional, and political forms of memory such as monuments and official remembrances. These forms of memory will be discussed in chapter four. Cultural memory concerns more public or social-cultural forms of memory such as literature, film, television, and radio. Some of these forms will be discussed in chapter six.⁷⁴

Chapter five investigates individual memories. This study follows the criticism made by, among others, the Belgian historians Bruno Benvindo and Evert Peeters. They mentioned that in many memory studies, it has been suggested that war victims themselves hardly played an active role in the creation of memories. This is also the case in the historiography of forced labor studies. Scholars such as Thonfeld⁷⁵ and Arnaud⁷⁶ emphasized how collective/national memories influenced individual narratives. Researchers such as Plaßwilm⁷⁷ and Bories-Sawala⁷⁸ underlined how personal memories of forced labor rely in the first place on biographical life courses. In sum, none of them explicitly discussed how specific individuals influenced public memories. Benvindo and Peeters, however, argued that the agency of individual witnesses needs to be emphasized in the formation of war memories.⁷⁹ The agency of individual forced laborers will be discussed in chapter five.

⁷² Aleida Assmann, ‘Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past’, in: Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter (eds.), *Performing the past: Memory, History, and Identity in modern Europe* (Amsterdam, 2010), 35-50.

⁷³ Assmann, ‘Re-framing memory’, 35-50.

⁷⁴ See for instance, Antero Holmila, ‘Varieties of silence. Collective memory of the Holocaust in Finland’, in: Tiina Kunnunen, Ville Kivimäki, *Finland in World War II: history, memory, interpretations* (Zeist, 2012), 519-564, here 519-548; Nico Wouters and Koen Aerts, ‘Mondelinge geschiedenis en collectieve herinnering. Tussen representatie en receptie’, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire* 92:2 (2014), 503-511, here 508; or Kees Ribbens, Oration ‘Strijdtonelen De Tweede Wereldoorlog in populaire historische cultuur’ (Rotterdam, 25 October 2013), 3-26.

⁷⁵ See also a review of Edith Raim of the book *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen? Individuelle Erfahrungsverarbeitungen und kollektive Repräsentationen von NS-Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Essen, 2014) by Christoph Thonfeld in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, 301:1 (2016), 290-291 (although I do not agree with the reviewer that the individual memories become only ‘Versatzstücken und Stichwortgebern’)

⁷⁶ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 551-590.

⁷⁷ Plaßwilm, *Grenzen des Erzählbaren*, 355.

⁷⁸ Bories-Sawala, *Französen im ‘Reicheinsatz’*, 652; Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 33, 367.

⁷⁹ Benvindo and Peeters, *Scherven van de oorlog*, 17.

Combining the approaches of Halbwachs, Assmann, and Benvindo and Peeters, this study considers forced labor associations as platforms or social communities that give individual forced laborers a common identity and a sense of group-belonging. Associations support them in dealing with a difficult past and telling their stories. As a result, the associations also create and disseminate memories of forced labor. Therefore, it is important to study how these memories have been formed from above (e.g. by political, societal, and commemorative contexts) and from below (e.g. by individual members). This research relies in the first place on the approach of Thonfeld and Arnaud who underlined the influence of collective/national memories on individual memories. By exploring individual memories that have been influential within the organizations, it also recognizes the individuality of individual accounts which has been emphasized by Plaßwilm and Bories-Sawala. The international comparison and the combination of different theories and approaches will give new insights in memories of forced labor.

It is important to keep in mind that many forced laborers went through a horrible time in Germany. Especially in the field of oral history, scholars discuss the limits of people to narrate traumatic experiences. They create awareness for the fact that some stories of trauma just cannot be told by survivors or cannot be understood or interpreted by academics.⁸⁰ That some stories are not being told also demonstrates how memory, and associative memory in particular, is always a selection.

2.2 Associations, Sources, and Methods

This research investigates the most important forced labor associations in France and the Netherlands. In France, the largest and most important association exclusively for forced laborers was the *Fédération Nationale des Déportés du Travail* (FNDDT, National Federation of Deported Laborers), which was founded in 1945. Due to a juridical decision that will be discussed later, the organization had to change its name into *Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé* (FNVRCNTF, National Federation of Victims and Survivors of Nazi Forced Labor Camps) in 1979. In 2007, the federation created the national *Association pour la Mémoire de la Déportation du Travail Forcé* (AMDTF, Association for the Memory of the Deportation of Forced Labor). Today, the two organizations work in cooperation but eventually, when there are no active forced laborers alive anymore, the association will succeed the work of the federation. The federation and association together form the main focus for the French memories. The FNDDT has already been studied in its political, societal, and sometimes individual context by scholars such as

⁸⁰ See for instance Molly Andrews, 'Beyond narrative: The shape of traumatic testimony', in: M. Hyvärinen, L.C. Hydén, M. Saarenheimo, and M. Tamboukou (eds.), *Beyond narrative coherence* (Amsterdam, 2010), 147-166; Plaßwilm, *Grenzen des Erzählbaren*, 345.

Bories-Sawala, Patrice Arnaud, and Raphaël Spina. Therefore, this thesis is partly based on their findings and partly on new research investigating how the organizations incorporated individual memories and disseminated collective memories to a broader public. Due to time limitations, it is not possible to study all the departmental associations⁸¹ of the FNDDT, so the focus of this research will be on the national federation and the recent national association.

For reasons that will be explained in the following chapter, Dutch forced labor associations are more fragmented than in France. Therefore, the four most visible organizations will be researched: the early *Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerechtvaardigden* (NVVG, Dutch Union of Repatriates) which existed only from 1945 till 1947, the *Vereniging ex-Dwangarbeiders Nederland* (VDN, Union for former Forced Laborers) which existed from 1987 till 1999, the *Stichting Deportatie Oktober 1944 Noord en Midden Limburg* (SDOL, Association of Deportation October 1944 North and Central Limburg) which existed from 1994 till 2015, and the *Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn 1940-1945* (SDA, Association Forced Laborers Apeldoorn 1940-1945) which has existed since 2004. The Dutch cases thus consist of two nationally oriented and two regionally oriented associations. The main focus is, however, not on differences between the four Dutch organizations. Because this research has an international comparative approach, it rather searches for comparable ways of remembering and memories within the Dutch associations. Such an approach is necessary in order to compare Dutch and French memory cultures. It will, however, be discussed that memories of the NVVG often differ from memories of the other associations. All Dutch organizations have been briefly discussed in existing literature, but extensive source research has not been conducted.

In researching memories of forced labor, this study uses a variety of primary sources. To investigate associations in a political and societal context, it explores documents and correspondences published or archived by the organizations themselves. The NVVG stands as an exception because the only available archival material of this associations concerns reports of their public meetings recorded by the police. To research individual memories that have been influential within the associations, ego-documents, such as memoirs or later published books and interviews will be used.⁸² To study which memories have been spread to a broader audience, brochures and websites, monuments, television or radio programs, exhibitions, documentaries, and information about school-projects have been analyzed. The source material for chapter four and six partly overlaps. Chapter six will, however, discuss the collective memories as produced by associations more in detail. The sources written or produced by associations and individuals can be criticized because they are non-reliable.

⁸¹ In principle, all the ninety-seven French metropolitan departments have their own departmental association. How active the departmental associations are strongly differs.

⁸² Unfortunately, no sources concerning individual memories of NVVG members have been found that could be used for this research.

However, as this research does not search for reliability but for interpretations of the past by associations, the unreliability of the sources functions as an advantage. Only the sources used to study the NVVG are not produced by the association itself. They might be influenced by interpretations of police men who were investigating the NVVG. However, because the secret reports include many precise citations of what had been said during meetings, the sources also reveal some discourses of the association.

Furthermore, information is also gathered in conversations with presidents and members of (former) forced labor associations and during observations of current remembrance practices. The conversations and observations serve to complement gaps in the literature and published sources about the organization, structure, and memories of the associations. The gathered information cannot always be considered reliable or representative. The insights might be subjective because of the chosen interviewees, the researcher's personal interest or attention, and the fact that the commemorations have been selected by means of the time period available for research. To minimize this unreliability, the collected information has been verified with other sources in case they were available. In addition, the whole research does not strive for completeness, but it aims to discover and understand how French and Dutch associations have remembered forced labor. The results will give more insight in how memories of forced labor have been formed and developed in different contexts.

In order to find the memory narratives, two main methods have been used: 1) a political interpretative reading focused on actions and initiatives of organizations as well as individual forced laborers, and 2) a cultural representational reading focused on the presentation of a story to a broader audience.⁸³ The most important methodology of this research will therefore be a textual narrative analysis which aims to research the sources within their specific historical context. As is often the case in memory studies, this thesis searches for recurring themes in memories of forced labor organizations and their most important (meta) narratives and discourses. A narrative can be described as “one of the ways by which people make sense of experience and communicate it to others”⁸⁴. Discourses are specific messages within a narrative.⁸⁵ In this research, the experience concerns the departure to and the work in the Third Reich, as well as the return in France or the Netherlands. The experiences can be communicated by forced laborers themselves, but also by their family, other members of the associations or ‘outsiders’. Themes concern, for instance, daily life, difficult working circumstances, sabotage, contacts with other labor conscripts, trauma, or

⁸³ See Paul M.M. Klep, *Research Researched. Guidelines for identifying methods and techniques used in published research in the humanities* (Nijmegen, 2011; revision and English translation 2012 HLCS Research Master RU), 7-9.

⁸⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, (New York, 2010), 106.

⁸⁵ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 110.

patriotism. In addition to themes and narratives, the exploration of textual sources also focuses on, for instance, recurring key concepts, binary distinctions, the plot, and metaphors.⁸⁶

Some sources, for instance monuments or exhibitions, also require a visual analysis. In the analysis of those visual sources, the idea is similar to the analysis of textual sources: which themes do they represent and how? Images can, for instance, evoke certain themes, feelings or associations. Due to time limitations and a lack of enough comparable visual sources, this research focuses on content-analysis. Its focus is not on how the visual representations have been made and how they were received.⁸⁷ Some visual sources that reflect the themes, narratives, and discourses of the associations will be included to clarify the analysis.

Furthermore, special attention will be paid to the terms and definitions that organizations use to describe forced labor(ers). In general, scholars of forced labor categorize forced laborers in three main groups: prisoners of war, civilians, and Jews who were forced to work in or nearby concentration camps.⁸⁸ Precisely because this research focuses on memory, the analysis of different interpretations of terms as ‘forced laborer’ by associations is of great importance. The forced labor associations discussed in this research especially remember civilian forced laborers and thus often exclude PoWs and Jews. In addition, different associations also use different terms to describe the civilian forced laborers. As mentioned in the introduction, the French federation often refers to deportees whereas Dutch associations refer more often to forced workers or victims. The use of different terms can often be related to aims of the associations and political or societal debates. In France, for instance, the terms ‘deportee’ and ‘deportation’ became highly contested when, in 1979, the court of cassation prohibited the French forced laborers to use or describe themselves as deported persons so they would not have the same status as returnees of concentration camps and PoWs.⁸⁹ In France as well as the Netherlands, associations have discussed about definitions of voluntary and compulsory laborers.⁹⁰ Which terms and definitions associations use thus says something on how they remember, what is important in their memories, and who is included and excluded. Therefore, it forms a very important focal point of this research.

⁸⁶ See Benjamin Ziemann and Miriam Dobson (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources. The interpretation of texts from nineteenth- and twentieth-century history* (New York, 2009), 1-18.

⁸⁷ Sarah Barber and Corinna M. Peniston-Bird (eds.), *History Beyond the Text. A Student's guide to approaching alternative sources* (London, New York, 2009), 76, 128.

⁸⁸ Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen?*, 37-40.

⁸⁹ Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 319-324.

⁹⁰ See for instance Dieneke Hondius, ‘A Hierarchy of Recognition. Arrival And Categorization of Survivors in Amsterdam Central Station, June 1945’, in: Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (eds.), *Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution. Proceeding of the international conference, 29-31 January 2003* (2003), 116-122, here 117.

Chapter 3 Forced Labor in the Third Reich and Postwar Memory

It is impossible to understand memories of forced labor without knowing the history of forced labor. That is why this chapter firstly provides an introduction on what happened during the war and secondly on the period after the war. The history of forced labor during WWII can roughly be divided into two periods. The first period began after the German invasions and the second with the implementation of labor conscription by Sauckel in 1942. After a brief international overview that touches upon differences between Eastern and Western occupied territories, the particularities of forced labor in the Netherlands and France will be highlighted. The second part of this chapter gives an overview of the French and Dutch repatriation, the European postwar memory cultures of forced labor, and an introduction of the researched associations.

3.1 History of Forced Labor in Nazi Germany

The history of foreigners working in Germany during WWII started already before the occupation of France and the Netherlands in 1940. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, it had calculated that the mobilization of German soldiers would cause a labor shortage. Foreign laborers were the solution to this problem. As a result, by the summer of 1940, 700,000 Poles were employed in Germany. When Germany occupied Western European countries, its PoWs as well as volunteers were also employed in German industries. The problem seemed solved, but a German victory did not come easily and additional German soldiers were drafted between May 1941 and May 1942. Again, Germany faced a labor shortage. That is why in February 1942, the Nazi politician Fritz Sauckel⁹¹ became responsible for the recruitment of foreign workers, in the function of *Generallbevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz*. His policy started in Eastern occupied territories, but turned increasingly westward in the course of 1942.⁹²

There was a fundamental difference between labor recruitment in Eastern and Western Europe. In Eastern Europe, Germans organized the labor recruitment. In Western countries, national and local labor administrations themselves organized the German demands for workers, often in collaboration with the occupier. The demands followed no preconceived plan, but were developed during the war. They constituted of different forms. In 1941 and 1942, Germany installed forced labor on national territories. As a result of the great German military reverses in Soviet Russia since April 1942, factories were screened and workers were ordered to go to Germany and other territories of the German Reich such as Poland, Austria, and Norway. In the context of total war, draft-year actions were launched

⁹¹ Fritz Sauckel was *Gauleiter* of Thüringen.

⁹² Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 132-134; Van Westrienen, *Dwangarbeiders*, 33.

from May to September 1943. Now, men between eighteen and thirty-five years old were conscripted. After France and Belgium were liberated in the summer of 1944, the Netherlands faced a tragic and final form of labor deportation: massive round-ups.⁹³

Another difference between forced laborers from Eastern and Western Europe is that Eastern European workers, due to their Slavic race, usually faced more discriminatory regulations than Western workers. Despite relatively better salaries and treatment, Western European workers also faced poor housing conditions, insufficient food and sanitary services, exhausting working hours and severe (arbitrary) German regulations. All forced laborers especially suffered a lot from the Allied bombardments towards the end of the war, because the majority of them ended up in factories in industrial German areas. However, some of them were also employed in family enterprises such as farms and bakeries. They often enjoyed better conditions.⁹⁴ Of course, within these generalities, individual experiences could strongly differ. Furthermore, the history of forced labor in Western European occupied countries is not exactly similar. In order to understand the Dutch and French memory cultures of forced labor, it is important to know more about what happened during the first and second period of forced labor in WWII and which situations are particular for the countries researched in this study.

The first important difference between France and the Netherlands is that the Netherlands has a history of economic emigration whereas France has a tradition of economic immigration.⁹⁵ Connecting to the tradition of economic migration, the Dutch historian Sijes started his monograph on forced labor of Dutch people with a pre-history of economic depression and high unemployment in the 1930s. Sijes contrasted this situation with Germany. Since Hitler had taken over power in 1933, the unemployment in Germany had strongly declined. In 1936, the demand for skilled laborers was even higher than the supply, so German authorities began to requisition laborers from surrounding countries. The Dutch government, on the other hand, attempted to stimulate 'fitting' employment for Dutch laborers in Germany by negotiating contracts. As the German need for workers increased from 1937 onward, more and more unemployed Dutch workers were ordered to go to Germany with a certain compulsion, also from Dutch authorities.⁹⁶

The Dutch capitulation in May 1940 changed the German-Dutch arrangements. Until 1942, however, unemployed workers were first still encouraged and later more and more forced to work in Germany. In order to organize this labor migration, the German occupier set up a State Labor Bureau that began to function on 1 May 1941. Aiming to combat

⁹³Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet*, 667, 672; Van Westrienen, *Dwangarbeiders*, 13; Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 134-137.

⁹⁴Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 141-142

⁹⁵Ibid, 192.

⁹⁶Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet*, 37-41, 655-658.

unemployment, the high Dutch civil servant R.A. Verwey, who became leader of the ministry of social affairs in August 1940⁹⁷ also became responsible for the *Arbeidsinzet* organized by the national and provincial State Labor Bureaus. In addition, the German occupier launched a propaganda campaign for sending agricultural workers to Eastern Europe. Because many workers refused, a regulation came into existence that made it possible to arrest unwilling workers and send them to penal camps in the Netherlands. Until the summer of 1942, 227,000 unemployed workers left the Netherlands for Germany. In France, unemployment was lower so less unemployed workers went to Germany during this first phase before labor conscription was launched in 1942.⁹⁸

A second difference that characterizes France compared to the Netherlands in this first phase is the captivity of French PoWs. At the end of 1940, all Dutch and Norwegian PoWs were sent home, but the French had to remain in Germany to work.⁹⁹ Another, third, specific characteristic of the French situation, also outlined by the Belgian historian Lagrou, was the desire of Vichy France¹⁰⁰ "to sustain at least the appearance of holding initiative in German-French relations, to demonstrate that the *collaboration d'Etat* was a beneficial tradeoff, rather than a systematic bowing to German ukazes".¹⁰¹ In contrast to Verwey who cooperated with the German installation of labor offices "to prevent a complete nazification"¹⁰², Pierre Laval, the French prime minister of Vichy who was in contact with Sauckel, declared on 22 June 1942 that he wished for a German victory. In the same speech, Laval called for the *Relève*, or 'relief'. This was an appeal for voluntary workers. Theoretically, the idea behind the *Relève* was that for every three skilled workers who would leave to Germany, a PoW (needed in the French agricultural sector) would be liberated. In practice, the exchange rate was even worse and some factories even forced individual workers to go to Germany.¹⁰³

The second phase of the official labor conscription for employed workers commenced in the course of 1942. In the Netherlands, employed workers were forced to go to Germany from March 1942 onward. Dutch authorities were not informed of the preliminary discussions leading to conscription and the administration increasingly Nazified. Examples of this new phase are the 'combing-out' actions, a selective conscription based on

⁹⁷ This was decided by Arthur Seyss-Inquart, an Austrian Nazi politician who became *Reichskommissar* in the occupied Netherlands.

⁹⁸ Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet*, 132-140, 665-667; Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 133-138.

⁹⁹ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 133, 138.

¹⁰⁰ During WWII, France was divided into two zones: the southern, (till November 1942) unoccupied 'Free Zone' and the Northern occupied zone. Vichy France is the name of the French State which represents in particular the southern, unoccupied 'Free Zone'. Vichy France was headed by the Marshal Philippe Pétain.

¹⁰¹ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 138.

¹⁰² Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet*, 665.

¹⁰³ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 138-139; Arnaud, *Les STO*, 27.

the selection of workers from individual factories, and the mentioned age-group actions. These measures met increasing opposition from Dutch citizens. The Dutch resistance organization¹⁰⁴ specialized in helping labor conscripts to go into hiding. Consequently, from the second half of 1943 onward less and less workers were rounded up. This situation unsatisfied the Germans and Sauckel came up with new demands for more workers. The results of the invasion of Normandy in June 1944 created a new situation in which Hitler also ordered Dutch citizens to work in the Netherlands itself. After the battle of Arnhem in September 1944, half of the country was liberated. To meet their demands of labor, the Germans turned to large-scale raids in the still occupied areas. For example, on 10 and 11 November in Rotterdam, 50,000 male inhabitants were deported.¹⁰⁵

In France, the picture of this second phase is not exactly similar. As Paris was already liberated at the end of August 1944, France did not suffer such large-scale round-ups as the Netherlands. Historians consider the law of 4 September 1942, by which Vichy proclaimed obligatory labor service for men aged eighteen to fifty and single women aged twenty-one to thirty-five, as the start of the formal labor conscription in France.¹⁰⁶ This law is also called the 'forced relief'.¹⁰⁷ Due to this specific policy, PoWs and labor conscripts became transformed into interchangeable bodies. In February 1943, Vichy established the system of requisition to Germany based on age groups by another law called *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (STO). After demands of Sauckel, many more actions applying this law followed. The French resistance also aimed at helping workers to hide, but this only really functioned from April 1944 onward.¹⁰⁸ It is impossible to give the exact numbers of workers who were deported to Germany during the war, but the table of Lagrou (see figure 1) gives an impression of the impact of the age-actions in 1943 and the beginning of 1944. As stated in the introduction of this research, out of the ten to fifteen million foreign forced laborers in the German Reich, 600,000 to 650,000 were recruited French civilians (from 1942 to 1945) and 500,000 to 600,000 were Dutch civilians (from 1940 to 1945).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ The LO: Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers (National Organization for Aid of Persons in Hiding)

¹⁰⁵ Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet*, 665-674, 678, 687-691; Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 136-137.

¹⁰⁶ See for instance Patrice Arnaud, *Les STO. Histoire des Français requis en Allemagne nazie 1942-1945* (Paris, 2010) or Raphaël Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire (1942-1945)* (ESN Cachan, 2012) or Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 136.

¹⁰⁷ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 35-41; Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 136-140.

¹⁰⁹ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 6; Van Westrienen, *Dwargarbeiders*, 31-32.

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Figure 1 – ‘French, Belgian, and Dutch workers deported to Germany, 1943-1944’
Source: Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 141.

3.2 Difficult Return, Forgotten Memories, and the Post-War Associations

At the end of WWII, more than eleven million non-German Europeans were stuck in the territory of the former Third Reich. These so-called displaced persons (DPs) all had to be repatriated. This became a huge operation in which not only national governments, but also the Allied forces and the Red Cross played an important role. Among the DPs were Jewish persecuted persons, prisoners of war, and civilian laborers. Western European DPs in West Germany were relatively close to their homeland, but others found themselves far more to the East, for instance in Poland or Russia.¹¹⁰ Statistics differ per country, but as Lagrou demonstrated, the French government estimated in November 1945 that thirty-three percent of all the French repatriates were workers. The Dutch government reconstructed in 1946 that almost all of their repatriates were workers, namely ninety-two percent (see figure 2). As the repatriates had been away from their homeland for one, two, or even three years, they were also seen as opportunities for political recruitment.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 81

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 87-89, 91.

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Figure 2 – ‘Repatriation to the Netherlands, 1943 -1946
Source: Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 88-89.

Especially the French repatriation needs to be studied in this context of political recruitment and propaganda. As figure 2 demonstrates, preparations for repatriation already started in the spring of 1943. In short, preparing for liberation, political resistance movements in Algiers, in which for example François Mitterrand¹¹² and General De Gaulle¹¹³ played an important role, competed with Vichy France to protect the PoWs and civilian laborers. A crucial aspect of this political and ideological competition can be found in rhetoric. As Lagrou elaborately explained, the leader of Vichy France Marshal Philippe Pétain, spoke of those two groups as ‘exiles’, whereas De Gaulle attacked this term by exposing its euphemistic use. He did this by replacing it with the term ‘deportees’.¹¹⁴ This history is of vital importance in understanding the postwar memories of the forced labor associations. To arrange the future repatriation, De Gaulle appointed Henri Frénay¹¹⁵ as commissioner for repatriation. Frénay strongly supported the deportation-discourse of De Gaulle. As a result, all repatriates became interchangeable under the umbrella of deportation.¹¹⁶

Compared to France, the Dutch repatriation was ineffective and eventually failed. In October 1943, the technocrat and manager G.F. Ferweda became the head of a Dutch

¹¹² In 1940 and 1941, François Mitterrand was forced to work in Germany as a prisoner of war. He escaped and back in France, he started to work for the Vichy regime protecting PoWs. In 1943, Mitterrand stopped working for the Vichy regime, started a resistance movement, and came into contact with General De Gaulle.

¹¹³ In 1940, Charles de Gaulle was a general who became famous with his call of resistance ‘*A tous les français*’. From 1940 till 1944, De Gaulle was the leader of Free France, the government in exile. From 1944 till 1946, he became the head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic.

¹¹⁴ For a more detailed explanation of the history of Pétain’s exiles and De Gaulle’s deportees see Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, chapter 6:106-128.

¹¹⁵ During the war, Henri Frénay became active in the French resistance and he became a heavyweight chief. His first aim was not to combat Vichy France, but he shifted towards opposition of the Vichy regime during the course of the war.

¹¹⁶ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 92-93

Commission for Repatriation. However, the unforeseen halt of the Allied liberation cutting the Dutch territory into two, made it very difficult for Ferweda to operate from a distance and many conflicts arose. In addition, the hunger, scarcity, and round-ups that the occupied part of the Netherlands faced during the last months of occupation, further complicated the chaotic repatriation. The Dutch forced laborers themselves also experienced this difference as they were repatriated several weeks later than the French (and Belgian) DPs. The situation at the arrival stations also differed. Whereas the Great Hall of the Gare d'Orsay in Paris was transformed into a welcome center, a warm welcome in the Amsterdam Central station was very exceptional. Immediately after their arrival, the forced laborers who aimed to return to Amsterdam, were registered with a 'V' (for voluntary) or an 'O' (*onvrijwillig*, involuntary). This essential distinction was decided on the spot. Furthermore, it is important to mention that among the other war-victims of the last months of the war, the Dutch labor deportees were not so much seen as a different group and not 'used' for political recruitment, as was the case in France.¹¹⁷

Nonetheless, the differences between the French and Dutch repatriation of forced laborers should not be exaggerated. Individual experiences differ, but in general, former forced laborers were welcomed with great suspicion, not only in the Netherlands but also in France. There were big fears for the thousands of underfed and ill men from Germany. The fears were not only physically, but also morally. People doubted the loyalty and patriotism of the labor repatriates, and sometimes they were even accused of collaboration with the enemy. The idea that they had to be 're-socialized' was widespread.¹¹⁸

These unfavorable circumstances, personal shame, and the fact that nations had to be rebuilt after war-devastations resulted in the fact that many forced laborers did not speak about their experiences in the Third Reich. Their memories were silenced and repressed.¹¹⁹ Not only did the forced laborers themselves not speak about their experiences, they were also marginalized in commemorations of national governments. Historians like Bories-Sawala also spoke of a hierarchy of victims that arose. In postwar war memories, survivors of concentration camps were 'on top' of this hierarchy. First, this concerned political deportees such as resistance fighters, but since the 1970s, more and more attention has been given to

¹¹⁷ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 91-104, 127; Lagrou, 'De terugkeer van weggevoerde arbeiders in België en Nederland', 223, 232; Hondius, 'Arrival and categorization of survivors in Amsterdam', 117, 121.

¹¹⁸ Linden and Piersma, 'Terug in het gareel', 125-130; Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 287-293.

¹¹⁹ This was concluded in, for instance, the Dutch SOTO project and the German interview project IFLDP. See also the introductions about the two projects: Piersma, *Mensenheugenis*, 14; Von Plato, Leh, and Thonfeld, *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangarbeit im internationalen Vergleich*, 105, 109-112.

the Jewish victims. The next group in the hierarchy were PoWs, followed by, at the bottom, labor conscripts.¹²⁰

Seen from an international European perspective, the marginalization and (lack of) recognition of forced laborers in postwar societies has differed.¹²¹ Similar to many other countries, the national war memories in, for example, Norway focused on militaries and resistance fighters until the 1980s. Commemorations as well as historians ignored the history of forced labor. However, the history of forced labor was not completely forgotten. During the war, Norway was the only occupied country having labor camps for forced workers and PoWs from Russia and Poland. The history of those camps has certainly been remembered in postwar Norway, but only on a local level. Initiatives to remember forced labor grew after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.¹²² In some Eastern European countries, for instance Bulgaria, the communist party strongly influenced the memory of forced labor during the war. They aimed at representing former labor conscripts as heroes instead of victims, which was actually how forced laborers themselves wanted to be described.¹²³ For this research, a relevant general contrast between Eastern and Western Europe is that interest-groups for forced laborers did not emerge in postwar communist Eastern European societies.¹²⁴ Until the fall of communism, the forced laborers had to cope with their traumas on an individual level and could often not talk about their experiences.¹²⁵

The associations discussed in this research can thus be considered a specific Western European phenomena. However, it is of vital importance to see these associations as exceptional too: they offered a part of the forced laborers a platform to deal with their traumatic experiences in a historical and actual context in which many individuals as well as the public opinion have silenced their history. Due to this context, all organizations discussed in this research stress the importance of remembering forced labor and laborers so their history will not be forgotten by themselves nor by future generations.¹²⁶ For instance, “*nous n’oublierons jamais*” (we will never forget) forms a recurring phrase of the French

¹²⁰ Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 304-311.

¹²¹ Von Plato, Leh, and Thonfeld, *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich*, 435.

¹²² Robert Bohn, ‘Zwangsarbeiter und Zwangsarbeiterinnen im Reichskommissariat Norwegen. Fakten und Erinnerung’, in: Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta (eds.), *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin, 2013), 293-302, here 297-300.

¹²³ Petar Petrov and Ana Luleva, ‘Von Opfern und Helden. Zwangsarbeit in Bulgarien 1941-1944 und Erinnerungspolitik im Sozialismus und Postsozialismus’, in: Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta (eds.), *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin, 2013), 405-424, here 423-424.

¹²⁴ For instance in Poland, an organization for forced laborers was founded after the fall of communism.

¹²⁵ Pohl and Sebta, *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa*, 18.

¹²⁶ See for instance the Dutch monument in Overloon that mentions at the end: ‘*Vergeten doen we echter nooit*’ (we will never forget); The website of Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn, <<http://dwangarbeidersapeldoorn.nl/>> [consulted on 8 May 2017]; Streekmuseum ‘t Land van Peel & Maas, ‘Docentenhandleiding en lessen bij de tentoonstelling ‘Deportatie en bevrijding’ (exact date unknown, approximately 2015), 17.

federation.¹²⁷ Another important commonality of associations is that they aimed at helping former forced laborers and their families to deal with a difficult past. Reunions and trips to places of former forced labor camps in Germany support(ed) individuals in working through their traumatic experiences. These characteristics also explain the generational structures of forced labor associations. For most of the time, forced laborers themselves or their children lead and take part in forced labor associations.¹²⁸ In principle, the forced labor organizations claim to be apolitical and non-religious. However, in reality (political) connections and affiliations existed and played a role from time to time.¹²⁹

The origins of the French forced labor associations can also be found in political initiatives. During the repatriation in 1945, the French forced laborers were welcomed by the National Federation of Deported Workers and their Families. This federation was created in March 1945, after the fusion between a federation¹³⁰ that functioned within the National Movement of PoWs and Deportees of Mitterrand and a federation¹³¹ created at the instigation of Frénay. In November 1945, Georges Beauchamp¹³² became the president of the federation now officially called the *Fédération Nationale des Déportés du Travail* (FNDDT).¹³³ The federation became the only and powerful organization for forced laborers in France. It can thus be considered as the only social environment in which deported laborers could develop their memories. In its first years, the FNDDT claimed to have about 400,000 members. Due to its political origins, the federation has functioned as the covering organ of about eighty departmental associations. Its long lifespan is remarkable. Only the Belgian federation, which ceased to exist in 2003, existed for such a long time. The president of the FNDDT was the ‘pillar’ of the organization.¹³⁴ Especially the former forced worker Jean-Louis Forest, who was president between 1951 and 2001, had a considerable influence on the association.¹³⁵ In 2007, the federation created the *Association pour la Mémoire de la Déportation du Travail Forcé* (AMDTF). As the current president Nicole Godard¹³⁶ explained, this association is national and thus functions without departmental associations. For the moment, they operate parallel to federation (FNDDT or ex-FNDDT) but in the

¹²⁷ See for instance *Le D.T.* (9 June 1965); *Le D.T.* (9 April 1975); *Le D.T.* (7 November 1979).

¹²⁸ Friends of forced laborers or their children can be involved too.

¹²⁹ Cukier, ‘Een vergeten groep verenigt zich’, 52; Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1092.

¹³⁰ *La Fédération Nationale des Déportés du Travail*, directed by Georges Beauchamp.

¹³¹ *La Fédération Nationale des Centres d’Entraide pour les travailleurs déportés et leurs familles*,

¹³² George Beauchamp was a member of the *Mouvement National des Prisonniers de Guerre et Déportés*. During the war, he was a resistance fighter who sabotaged STO offices in Paris. Beauchamp also had close connections with François Mitterrand.

¹³³ Arnaud Schlippi, ‘La Fédération nationale des rescapés et victimes des camps nazis du travail force: histoire et combats’, in: B. Garnier and J. Quellien (eds.), *La main d’oeuvre française exploitée par le IIIe Reich* (Caen, 2003), 603-616.

¹³⁴ Schlippi, ‘La Fédération nationale des rescapés et victimes des camps nazis du travail force’, 605.

¹³⁵ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1092-1095.

¹³⁶ Nicole Godard is the child of a former deported laborer.

future they will continue the work of the federation to keep the memory of forced labor alive.¹³⁷

In its first years, the FNDD had brief contacts with a Dutch counterpart that was established on 7 September 1945: the *Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerechtvaardigden* (NVVG). In contrast to the FNDD, the NVVG was not founded out of political, but private initiatives. The organization brought up three main topics: the rejecting attitude of the Dutch population towards forced laborers, problems regarding ‘border-workers’ who had left to Germany before the war broke out, and the problems of not getting back the so-called ‘*grensgelden*’: salaries earned in Germany which laborers had to hand in when they repatriated, because German money was not allowed on Allied territories. Because the Dutch government did not recognize nor wanted to negotiate with the NVVG, it was dissolved already in the course of 1947.¹³⁸

After forty years of silence in which there was no social community for forced laborers, the *Vereniging ex-Dwangarbeiders* (VDN) was established in 1987. Interestingly, the initiatives for the foundation of this interest group did not come from the Netherlands itself. The idea was instigated during a German conference about forced labor in Bückeberg (Germany) in which Dutch forced laborers were invited to participate. The VDN strived for processing (‘*verwerking*’) of the war-experiences of forced laborers, compensations, and recognition of the government. The organization consisted of fourteen regional departments. Although its members grew quickly, from 250 in 1988 to 2500 in 1990, the majority of the labor conscripts were never affiliated to this association. From its foundation until 1997, the former forced laborer Aart Pontier was the president. He became the figurehead of the organization. Pontier was succeeded by Albert den Hartog until the VDN was dissolved and became part of the *Stichting Burgeroorlogsgetroffenen* (SBO, Association of Civilian War Bereaved) in 1999.¹³⁹

In the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, regional associations for forced laborers came into existence as well. The two most visible of them will be analyzed in this research. Fifty years after round-ups took place in Limburg, in 1994, the *Stichting Deportatie Oktober 1944 Noord- en Midden Limburg* (SDOL) was founded.¹⁴⁰ The association not only aimed at helping the deported laborers with their traumas and establishing memorials, but also took the initiative for academic historical research on the

¹³⁷ Conversation with Nicole Godard (3 April 2017).

¹³⁸ Cukier, ‘Een vergeten groep verenigt zich’, 17, 90; Linden and Piersma, ‘Terug in het gareel’, 140-143; Bossenbroek, *De Meelstreep*, 539-541.

¹³⁹ Cukier, ‘Een vergeten groep verenigt zich’, 6-7, 51-64, 73-75. On 1 January 2002, the SBO fused with the *Stichting 1940-1945* (Association 1940-1945), under the name of the latter.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Informatie over de Stichting’, <<http://kerkrazzia.nl/>> [consulted on 8 May 2017].

deportations and following experiences of forced labor.¹⁴¹ In 2015, the association was dissolved because there were fewer and fewer forced laborers still alive, and the board felt that the history was sufficiently ‘anchored’ by disclosing an archive and by placing a lot of – all similar- monuments in publicly owned land.¹⁴²

The only forced labor associations that is still active in the Netherlands is the *Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn 1940-1945* (SDA). The SDA was officially founded in 2004, but already at the end of the 1990s, its president Arend Disberg became engaged with the history of the round-ups in Apeldoorn in 1944 and the following deportation to the German labor camp Rees. His father was a forced laborer himself. When he became ill, his father started to talk about his horrible experiences in Rees. Thereafter, Disberg published a call in the local newspaper and listened for years to the silenced history of more than two hundred former forced laborers in Apeldoorn who coped with traumas and shame.¹⁴³ Compared to the other associations, the establishment of the SDA thus seems to have the most personal cause. These brief introductions on the associations form the starting point for the analysis of memories of forced labor that will be discussed in the following chapters of this research.

¹⁴¹ Cammaert, *Dwangarbeid en verzoening*, 5-18.

¹⁴² Conversation with Theo Sonnemans (20 March 2017).

¹⁴³ Conversation with Arend Disberg (24 March 2017).

Chapter 4

Memories and Associations in Political and Societal Contexts

The introductory chapter made clear that the repatriation of French forced laborers was strongly influenced by opportunities for political recruitment and especially by the ambitions of politicians who had been active in the resistance. The FNDR was a result of this policy as it was founded by French ministries. The Dutch repatriation was less politicized as the organization was led by the technocrat Verwey. Repatriated Dutch workers also got little attention from the government. In May 1946, for example, the council of ministers ignored an open letter of the NVVG. This characterizes the relation between the Dutch political authorities and the forced laborers in the immediate postwar period.¹⁴⁴ Since the 1970s, the societal and political attention for WWII increased. The changed context made it possible for the forced laborers to found the VDN.¹⁴⁵

This chapter firstly elaborates on the political and societal contexts in which forced labor associations came up. It explains how those contexts, and especially the relations with politics, have influenced the memories of forced labor associations. Secondly, this chapter compares the remembrance practices of the associations. These practices have many similarities, but they also reflect differences that can be explained by the different contexts in which they have operated.

4.1 Recognition and Compensation

4.1.1 The French Combat for 'Déporté du Travail': a Political and Juridical Memory

During the colloquium that was held in Caen in 2001, the director of the National Office of Old Combatants, Serge Barcellini, talked about the memories of the French STO. He distinguished three memory periods. The first period, which he called the 'times of certainty', ran from 1945 to 1950.¹⁴⁶ In May 1950, the Assembly voted unanimously for the statute of *Déporté du Travail* (Deported Laborer). However, already in July 1950, two amendments were accepted which deprived the labor conscripts of their title 'deported worker' and accompanying financial privileges.¹⁴⁷ These events announced the beginning of a political and later judicial combat for the title of *déporté du travail* which eventually closed bitterly in 1992, when the president of the court of cassation decided that the federation

¹⁴⁴ Bossenbroek, *De Meelstreep*, 392-393.

¹⁴⁵ Linden and Piersma, 'Terug in het gareel', 147.

¹⁴⁶ Serge Barcellini, 'Les requis du STO devant la (les) mémoire(s)', in: B. Garnier and J. Quellien (eds.), *La main d'oeuvre française exploitée par le IIIe Reich* (Caen, 2003), 583-601, here 583.

¹⁴⁷ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 556.

could not use the words ‘deportation’ and ‘deportee’ anymore. As a consequence, the federation had to change the name of its journal, *Le D.T (Déporté du Travail)*. The journal became *Le Proscrit* (the ‘outcast’).¹⁴⁸

By this time, the second memory period Barcellini distinguished, which he called ‘the times of disillusion’ (related to the need to combat for the title ‘deportee’) had already ended in 1981. This year can be related to the election of François Mitterrand as president of the French Republic. Because Mitterrand was an old PoW, minister of repatriates, and a ‘friend’ of the FNDT, the federation expected his support for their combat for the title of deported worker and political recognition. However, Mitterrand did not change the judicial charges against the forced laborers about using the terms ‘deportees’ and ‘deportation’. Therefore, in retrospect, Barcellini called the third period from 1981 onward a ‘time of bitterness’.¹⁴⁹ This brief overview demonstrated how the French history of forced labor became deeply interwoven with political and later even judicial debates. In order to understand why these debates took place and how they affected the memories of the FNDT, the three periods of Barcellini will be discussed more in depth.

The repatriation organized by Frénay united the three main groups of DPs, namely returnees from KZ-camps including political and racial prisoners, PoWs, and forced laborers. This unity perfectly reflected the immediate postwar objectives of the French government, namely to unite all French people in order to prevent a communist take-over. An important aspect of this ‘national reconstruction’ was to create an idea of collective resistance. The image of a collective resistance would stay in the French collective memory till the 1970s.¹⁵⁰ As a result of this unifying policy, the repatriates held diverse manifestations together in 1946 and 1947. However, complete equality was impossible. Especially in the press, political prisoners such as resistance fighters claimed to be the most patriotic and raised questions about the status of voluntary and forced laborers. Because some laborers departed voluntarily, resistance fighters did not find the term ‘deportation’ adequate.¹⁵¹ In commemorations as well, a hierarchy among the repatriates became visible. An explanation for this hierarchy is given by Bories-Sawala who stated that the different repatriates all aimed at distinguishing themselves because they felt ‘stragglers’¹⁵² after their return. Resistance fighters and PoWs were also favored by the government, for instance in November 1945 when De Gaulle ‘forgot’ to invite the forced laborers at a ceremony. The

¹⁴⁸ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 566.

¹⁴⁹ Barcellini, ‘Les requis du STO devant la (les) mémoire(s)’, 590-599.

¹⁵⁰ Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 298.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 298-302. The aspect of voluntary and involuntary/compulsory laborers will be discussed more elaborately in chapter 6.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 302. Bories-Sawala speaks of ‘*retardataires*’. Regarding this term, it is important to keep in mind that France had already been liberated for almost a year when the French repatriates returned.

commemoration at Compiègne in August 1946 was the last where all repatriates were united.¹⁵³

Despite the fact that the unity of the repatriates was very short, it would become a very important discourse in the memory of the FNDDT. The political context emphasizing unity and resistance, and the societal context in which repatriates felt ‘stragglers’ strongly influenced the first national congress of the FNDDT in October 1945. During this congress, the president of that time, Beauchamp, especially highlighted that the federation was about recruiting people and defending the honor of the deported workers. A poster published in 1945 called ‘*Ils sont unis. Ne les divisez pas!*’ (They are united. Do not divide them!, picture 3) became of great importance for the recruitment of members and future memory of the FNDDT because the image symbolized the common sorrows of PoWs, political deportees, and deported workers. During the conference in 1945, the forced laborers were also encouraged to send texts that proved actions of patriotism and resistance of themselves and their friends.¹⁵⁴



Picture 3 – The poster *Ils sont unis* (they are united), that was published by the three federations of repatriates in 1945, on the cover of *Le D.T.* (May 1985) and in a poster presented during the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps and the return of the forced laborers in 1985 (Private Archives of the ex-FNDDT).

The narratives of unity and patriotism thus became a part of the combat of the FNDDT to regain the title ‘deported workers’. Furthermore, the battle and calls for unity and patriotism also served to preserve the unity within the federation itself as it reconciled the communists and non-communists towards a common cause. As a result of the amendments

¹⁵³ Barcellini, ‘Les requis du STO devant la (les) mémoire(s)’, 588; Arnaud, *Les STO*, 554.

¹⁵⁴ Private Archives of the ex-FNDDT, Paris, Fédération Nationale des Déportés du Travail, Congrès National des 12, 13 et 14 octobre 1945.

of July 1950, the new president of the FNNT, Jean-Louis Forest, intensively attempted to regain the title through parliament. Despite his lobbying with deputies, senators, and other associations of deportees, the federation was only supported by certain individuals on the political left. According to the French historian Arnaud, the most unfaltering support came from the communists.¹⁵⁵ Strong opposition came, for instance, from a Gaullist deputy who was the widow of a deported man who died in Buchenwald and from deputies with connections to the resistance. The arrival of the fifth French Republic in 1958 ended the hopes of the FNNT to regain their title, but the FNNT nevertheless pursued its battle.¹⁵⁶

The memory of the federation was and would remain strongly influenced by this combat for the title of deportee. First of all, the memories of forced labor as produced by the FNNT have been built around historical, legal, and commemorative 'evidence' that proves that forced laborers were actually *deported* war victims. The FNNT has often recalled how, during the war, the resistance itself even spoke of a deportation. Another historical evidence is the '*bilan*' (final result or balance), or the numbers of people who were deported and died during the war. This forms a recurring element in the memory of the FNNT (picture 3a). The commemorative disc of 1965 not only illustrates references to the '*bilan*', but also that the FNNT often referred to acts of sabotage in defense of their honor and patriotism. Spina even spoke of a resistance memory.¹⁵⁷ The defensive nature of the combat explains the often militant tone of the associative memory. Especially due to the lack of political and societal support /attention for forced laborers, the federation has spoken in terms of falsification of history and the need for historical truth.¹⁵⁸ The legal evidence can be found in recurring references to the laws of September 1942 and February 1943. Furthermore, the Nuremberg trial in 1946, in which deportations and German violations were discussed and Sauckel was convicted of war crimes against humanity, became important as well. The second part of this chapter will discuss the commemorative evidence. Probably because the forced laborers did not regain the title of deportee, these discourses remained important and more or less unchanged for decades.¹⁵⁹

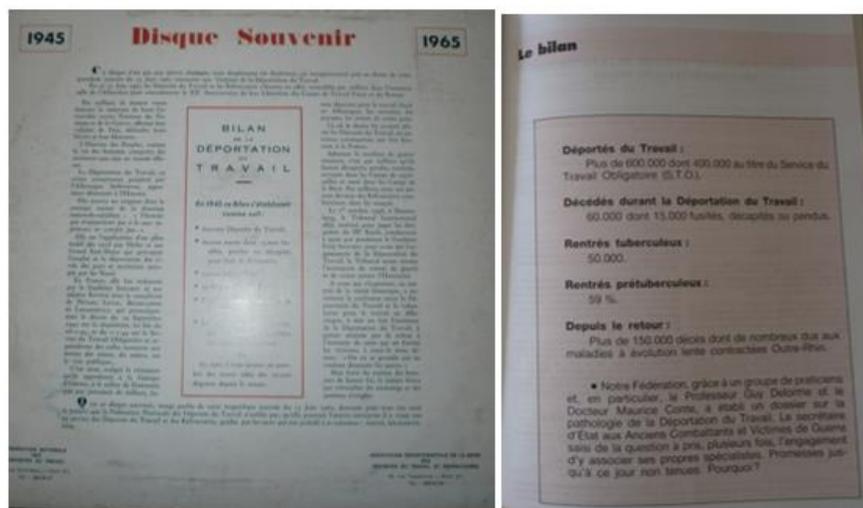
¹⁵⁵ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 558.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 558-559, 563.

¹⁵⁷ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 995.

¹⁵⁸ See for instance *Le D.T.* (18 March 1970), *Le D.T.* (September 1989); *Le D.T.* (March 1990).

¹⁵⁹ See for instance several numbers of the journals of the FNNT *Le D.T.* (11 October 1960, 9 June 1965, 21 April 1971, 7 November 1979, 19 November 1980, May 1985) and *Le Proscrit* (May 1993, third and fourth term of 2008, September 2015); l'Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi Nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail* (Paris, 1961); Private Archives of the ex-FNNT, Disque Souvenir de la Commémoration du XXe Anniversaire de la Libération des Camps de Travail Forcé et du Retour (13 Juin 1965) ; Private Archives of the ex-FNNT, Commémoration 1985, diverse private and circular letters (1984-1985); Private Archives of the ex-FNNT, Flyer 'Pour l'honneur de 600.000 français' (1985); La Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé (ex F.N.D.T.) (ed.), *Un livre blanc sur une période noire* (Paris, 1987); Archives Nationales de France (ANF), Paris, Collection ONAC, inventory 20050299/50: Dossiers individuels par associations (1993-1994), Dossier 702:



Picture 3a – Examples of how the ‘bilan’ became important in the memory of the FNDD. Left: the back of a remembrance disc of the commemoration on *Père Lachaise* on 13 June 1965. Right: *Un livre blanc sur une période noire* (1987), page 37. Photos: Private Archives of the ex-FNDD

The mentioned discourses will be explained more in detail in the following chapters, but the brochure *Pourquoi nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail* (why are we victims of the labor deportation) that was published in 1961 by the departmental association of Paris forms a perfect illustration of this narrative. In its preface and later on, the brochure highlighted that during the Nuremberg trial in 1946, Sauckel was accused of (war) crimes against humanity, and that he was sentenced to death. Afterwards, the brochure informed its readers about the origins and the organization of the labor deportation. It also aimed to clear up misconceptions about the life of deported workers in Germany. Contrary to what many people thought, labor conscripts had a very difficult life in the Third Reich. There was, for instance, too little food and no hygiene. Again, citations of Nuremberg were being brought up to prove that “those facts show that we did not have a *vie en rose*”.¹⁶⁰ Almost one fourth of the brochure was devoted to honor and patriotism. In this part, acts of sabotage, discipline camps, and postwar commemorations were recalled. It also contained a list of French deported workers who were sentenced to death because, according to the Germans, they ‘gave preference to the enemy’.¹⁶¹ Or in other words: they resisted against the German occupier.

Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé. 1994; Private Archives of the ex-FNDD, Brochure ‘1945 Memorial 1995 Les oubliés de l’Histoire’, edited by la Fédération Nationale and l’Association du Tarn des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé (Graulhet, 1995); FNVRCNTF, <<http://www.requis-deportes-sto.com/>> [consulted on 15 May 2017].

¹⁶⁰ l’Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi Nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail*, 21. Original citation : *Tous ces faits montrent que nous sommes loin de la vie en rose.*

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 27-30. Original citation : *condamné à mort pour favoritisation de l’ennemi.*

From the 1970s onward, the issues of the title became more complicated and disappointing. This was not only because of the lack of political support of Mitterrand, but also because of an increasing (international) attention for Jewish victimhood. As a consequence, French deportees were no longer associated with resistance fighters who died in concentration camps, but with (old) Jewish people and their children. The Jewish victimhood added a 'new' group of visible opponents to the FNNDT and their combat for the title of deportee.¹⁶² In 1974, five associations of deportees continued the battle in a juridical way. They aimed to deprive the forced laborers of their status as deportees and to prove that they were higher in the hierarchy of war victims. In 1979, the court decided that the FNNDT could not use '*déporté du travail*' in its name anymore. In 1982, the federation therefore became the *Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapes des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé* (FNVRCNTF, or ex-FNNDT).¹⁶³ However, the federation still continued its battle considering the new name as just a 'temporary title'.¹⁶⁴ Even after the court decided in 1992 that the ex-FNNDT had to change the title of its journal, the new journal *Le Proscrit* often used the forbidden expressions 'deportee(s)' and 'deportation'.¹⁶⁵

In addition to the periodization of Barcellini, a fourth period can be added that started in 2006 when Jean Chaize succeeded Forest as president of the federation. On the one hand, Chaize continued the old battle for the title, but on the other, he was more open towards political negotiation. He broke, for example, with previous presidents by admitting the inexactitude of the 'sacred number' of 60,000 deceased forced laborers.¹⁶⁶ As a result of Chaize's policy, the labor conscripts obtained the title '*victime du travail forcé en Allemagne nazie*' (victim of forced labor in Nazi Germany) in 2008. Although it was unsatisfying for the federation and its forced laborers, this event 'closed' the long-lasting combat.¹⁶⁷ As the term 'deportation' is also in the name of the AMDTF, some children of forced laborers and members of the new association still pursue the battle for recognition as deportees. For others, for example president Godard, the title is not that important anymore. It seems to have become more important for the association to obtain political and societal recognition for the inhuman experiences forced laborers faced and the related crimes committed by Vichy and Nazi Germany.¹⁶⁸ An article written by Chaize in *Le Proscrit* forms a good example of this changing goal. He wrote in 2012 that their 'last combat had started'.

¹⁶² Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1116.

¹⁶³ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 565.

¹⁶⁴ ANF, Collection ONAC, 20050299/50, Renseignements produits à l'appui de notre demande de subvention 1994.

¹⁶⁵ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 567.

¹⁶⁶ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1125. The AMDTF states nowadays that 40,000 forced laborers deceased during the war.

¹⁶⁷ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 569.

¹⁶⁸ Conversation with Nicole Godard (4 April 2017); Conversation with members of the AMDTF before the annual commemoration in Dortmund (14 April 2017).

Contrary to Mitterrand, Chaize recalled that Chirac and Hollande had recognized the crimes committed by the Vichy regime. However, the public powers as well as the media had ignored the seventieth anniversary of the law of 4 September 1942. So their next combat was for recognition of and attention for the seventieth anniversary of the law of February 1943 in 2013.¹⁶⁹

4.1.2 *The Dutch Combat for Recognition as War Victim: a Societal Memory*

Similar to the French associative memory culture, Dutch associations also strived for recognition and public attention. This started immediately after the repatriation. Several public meetings of the NVVG indicated that the forced laborers felt abandoned by the government and the Dutch population.¹⁷⁰ They were especially disappointed because during the repatriation, the Dutch forced laborers discovered that their Belgian and French counterparts got packages of the Red Cross and were received with enthusiasm.¹⁷¹ The Dutch government, on the contrary, had organized nothing except for the ingestion of the *grensgelden* (border money). The Dutch population in general was not enthusiastic at all about their return, blaming the labor conscripts for example to be ‘weaklings’ or ‘softies’. In order to prove that the labor conscripts had been ‘*goede Nederlanders*’ (good Dutch people), the NVVG emphasized how difficult it was to go into hiding before conscription and especially how much they sabotaged in Germany. For example, the following, probably a little exaggerated, expression of a NVVG-member caused a thunderous applause: “We are the people who made Germany stagger. The factories in Germany became a thrilling demonstration due to our sabotage. The Netherlands had its own underground. In Germany this underground certainly existed!”¹⁷²

Although the repatriation in France and the Netherlands differed, the immediate postwar memories of the FNDD and NVVG both narrated about acts of sabotage to prove patriotism. However, whereas the FNDD became highly politicized and its memories remained more or less unchanged, the NVVG was ignored by politics. As a result, the

¹⁶⁹ *Le Proscrit* (third term 2012), 1.

¹⁷⁰ See Nationaal Archief (NA), The Hague, 2.04.80 Archief van het Bureau voor Nationale Veiligheid, inventory 3658, Stukken betreffende doel en activiteiten van het Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerepatrieerden. 1946, reports of ten public meetings of the NVVG made by the Dutch police in 1946.

¹⁷¹ It is important to remember that this enthusiasm in Belgium and France as perceived by the Dutch forced laborers, should be put into perspective as well. See for instance Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 288-289.

¹⁷² NA, 2.04.80, 3658, Verslag van een openbare vergadering gehouden op Woensdag 30 Januari 1946 te Utrecht van het Landelijke Bestuur van het Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerepatrieerden. Original citation: ‘Wij toch zijn het, die Duitschland deden wankelen. De fabrieken in Duitschland zijn door onze sabotage geworden tot een dreunende demonstratie. Had Nederland in eigen boezem een ondergronsche! In Duitschland had het deze zeer zeker!’.

NVVG as well as its way of remembering forced labor ceased to exist in 1947.¹⁷³ It was only from the 1980s onward that new associations for forced laborers were founded. Dutch historians argued that the VDN became possible because of a social context since the 1970s in which the attention for the war in general and the recognition for victimhood increased.¹⁷⁴ As a consequence, more and more particularistic initiatives arose to recognize ‘forgotten’ war victims, in particular Jewish victims.¹⁷⁵

The German compensation initiatives during the 1990s and 2000s also played an important role in the establishment of new Dutch associations. In general, the restitutions caused a lot of bitterness and disappointment for individual forced laborers. The focus of the German compensation program was mostly on national governments, Jewish victims, and Eastern European forced laborers. Only since 1996, individual Western European forced laborers could apply for compensation. The EVZ made it possible for individual forced laborers from Western Europe to obtain compensation through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) whose headquarters were located in Geneva. Associations were often involved in the application processes. However, 77.58 percent of the French demands and 88.90 percent of the Dutch demands were declined.¹⁷⁶ Although nationalities of both countries experienced a high decline rate, the compensation has been a more important issue for Dutch associations than for the French. After all, the French priority during the 1990s was still to be recognized as victims of labor deportation which was a problem of honor. The FNDDT was not so much interested in the German compensations, because they were about money.¹⁷⁷ For the Dutch associations and its members, the recognition through German compensations was not only perceived as a material recognition, but even more as a symbolic recognition and an aspect of reconciliation.¹⁷⁸

The culture of victimhood and the disappointments caused by the German compensation initiatives have strongly influenced Dutch memories on forced labor as produced by the VDN, SDOL, and SDA. In contrast to the NVVG, the primary goal of the new Dutch associations was not to be recognized as patriotic citizens, but to be recognized as war victims. In addition, it was extremely painful that the IOM had often not recognized the

¹⁷³ Bossenbroek, *De Meelstreep*, 539-541.

¹⁷⁴ Linden and Piersma, ‘Terug in het gareel’, 147; Van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte*, 463, 471; Van der Heijden, *Dat nooit meer*, 627-633.

¹⁷⁵ Van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte*, 463-467.

¹⁷⁶ Cukier, ‘Een vergeten groep verenigt zich’, 40-44; Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 355.

¹⁷⁷ Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 356.

¹⁷⁸ *Achter het nieuws – wiedergutmachung Daimler Benz* (VARA, 3 July 1988); Conversation with Arend Disberg, Jan de Louter, and Ap Gerritse (4 March 2017), Conversation with Arend Disberg (24 March 2017); Conversation with Theo Sonnemans (20 March 2017); Gerard Sonnemans, *Over gestolen jeugd* (Breda, 2001), 13.

miserable circumstances that deported workers faced in the German camps.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, memories of forced labor during the war produced by the more recent Dutch associations have not focused on acts of sabotage, but on hard work, miserable circumstances, and humiliation faced by labor conscripts on the way to Germany, in camps, and after their return.¹⁸⁰ The inscriptions on the SDA monument in Apeldoorn and the VDN monument in The Hague illustrate this narrative as they respectively evoke the violation of human dignity and the fact that the forced laborers had to strive for recognition themselves, even though they were victims (picture 4 and 5).



Picture 4 (left) – The monument for forced laborers in camp Rees, placed on the initiative of the SDA, mentions in a circle on the bottom: “*Voor allen die uit Apeldoorn zijn afgevoerd. Hun menselijke waardigheid werd met voeten getreden*” (For everyone who was transported from Apeldoorn. Their human dignity was violated) – Arend Jan Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie* (Apeldoorn, 2005), 103.

Photo: Collection Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn.

Picture 5 (right) – The forced labor monument in The Hague placed at the initiative of Piet Kool, member of the VDN, mentions in the circle “*Want dat is het wrange: slachtoffer zijn, geschonden worden en zelf moeten strijden voor erkenning hiervan...*” (Because that is wry/ironic: being a victim, being damaged, and having to combat for recognition yourself...).

Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (4 May 2017).



In particular the VDN strived for understanding of the situation of forced laborers who were not deported as a result of round-ups.¹⁸¹ A good example of this narrative forms

¹⁷⁹ Conversation with Arend Disberg (24 March 2017); Conversation with Theo Sonnemans (20 March 2017).

¹⁸⁰ See for instance Van der Heijden, *Dat nooit meer*, 627-633; Cukier, ‘Een vergeten groep verenigt zich’, 6; Oudheidkundige Vereniging Gemeente Genderingen, *Het Arbeitslager Groin (Kamp Rees) en de slachtofferhulp* (1995); The website of Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn, <<http://dwangarbeidersapeldoorn.nl/>> [consulted on 8 May 2017]; A.P.M. Cammaert, *Sporen die bleven: razzia's en deportaties in de herfst van 1944 in Noord- en Midden Limburg* (Helden 1996, reprint 2005).

¹⁸¹ Institute of War-, Holocaust- and Genocidestudies (NIOD), Amsterdam, Collection 294 archief van de voormalige Vereniging Ex-Dwangarbeiders Nederland (VDN), inventory 77 Correspondentie met organisaties van dwangarbeiders in België en Frankrijk, 1989-1996, letter of Aart Pontier, 14 January 1995; NIOD, 294, 86 Correspondentie en documentatie betreffende tentoonstellingen, 1992-1995, information on the exhibition ‘Gedwongen werken in nazi-Duitsland 1940-1945. De Arbeitseinsatz –

the book *Het Slavenhuis. Hoe was het leven van een dwangarbeider in de Tweede Wereldoorlog?* (The Slave House. How was the life of a forced laborer during WWII?) published by the VDN in 1993. The author stated that forced laborers were ‘no one’ (*niemand*). In order to create understanding for the situation forced laborers were in, he answered questions such as ‘how did you become a forced laborer’, ‘why did people register themselves’, and ‘where did they end up’. The author acknowledged that sabotage happened, but emphasized that this was not possible on a large scale.¹⁸² Compared to the French memories of forced labor, the tone evoked by the title and the rest of the book was less defensive and militant.

Memories of Dutch forced labor association thus seem to be influenced more by a changing societal context and dissolutions of German compensation initiatives than political and juridical competition with other war-victims, as was the case in France. This does not mean, however, that the Dutch associations did not have contacts with national or regional political institutions. In order to strive for recognition, the associations turned to politics as well. Especially the VDN devoted a lot of time negotiating with the national government about the senile interest from Germany, rights concerning retirement, a permanent staff position of the VDN, and a monument.¹⁸³ The material results were mainly negative, but in 1992 the VDN obtained a permanent staff position in Apeldoorn and in 1996 a monument in Overloon.¹⁸⁴ Despite these political forms of recognition, Overloon in particular also pointed towards marginalization for many forced laborers because of the isolated location.¹⁸⁵ When the government did not agree with the demands of the VDN, the association reacted with indignation emphasizing the inhuman circumstances forced laborers had to go through in Germany.¹⁸⁶ It was only in 2001, when the VDN was already dissolved, that the Dutch government officially recognized the harm that was caused to forced laborers.¹⁸⁷

Logically, the SDOL and SDA focused more on the local governments. The experiences of contacts with local authorities strongly varied. Possibilities of cooperation with local authorities also depended on ‘luck’ and ‘willingness’ of the municipalities. For the SDOL project of monuments “*Sporen die bleven*” (traces that remained) in 2004,

Arbeidsplicht en slavenjacht’; ‘Informatie over de Stichting’, <<http://kerkrazzia.nl/>> [consulted on 8 May 2017].

¹⁸² Frans Penders, *Het Slavenhuis. Hoe was het leven van een dwangarbeider in de Tweede Wereldoorlog?* (Published by the VDN, The Hague, 1993), 5, 28-34.

¹⁸³ In contrast to France, the Netherlands does not have a ministry of old combatants and war victims, so the VDN mainly dealt with the ministries of Social and Financial affairs.

¹⁸⁴ Aart Pontier, ‘Vereniging ex-Dwangarbeiders Nederland Tweede Wereldoorlog (VDN)’ in: *ICODO*, 15:1/2 (Utrecht 1998), 112-118, here 112-115.

¹⁸⁵ Van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte*, 473.

¹⁸⁶ NIOD, 294, 30 Correspondentie met de overheid, dienstverlenende instellingen en bedrijven, ook betreffende facilitaire ondersteuning – 1990, letter of 8 February 1990, press release 23 November 1990.

¹⁸⁷ Driever, ‘Oorlogsgetroffene of oorlogsslachtoffer: wat maakt het verschil?’, 56.

cooperation with more than fifty local municipalities was needed. This and many other projects were welcomed by many willing mayors. In Apeldoorn, for example, the SDA encountered a mayor who was very committed towards the association and its memorial projects. In 2003, a different project for forced laborers in Gorcum demonstrated that municipalities could also refuse to establish a monument.¹⁸⁸

Despite the diverging reactions of Dutch politicians, what the VDN, SDOL, and SDA have in common is that they all needed to search for recognition on a political level. Due to the different or sometimes even indifferent political reactions, however, the history of forced labor remained for the greater part ‘non-political’. That explains why memories of associations of forced labor are more clearly influenced by a changing societal context in which there was more attention for war victims on a national level, as well as a financial context in which compensation for German war victims aroused on an international level. French forced labor associations also needed to search for political and societal recognition. However, their status as ‘deportees’ became highly politicized and heavily discussed. This political, and later even legal combat would determine their memories of forced labor more than the societal changes in the 1970s or the German compensation initiatives.

4.2 A Comparison of Remembrance Practices

In theories about memory, commemorations are often related with political, trans-generational memory. This second part compares French and Dutch remembrance practices. On the one hand, they reflect the differences between the French ‘political and juridical memory’ versus the Dutch ‘societal memory’ as discussed in the first part. On the other, this second part also points out similarities.

4.2.1 Reconciliations with Germany

The most important similarity between French and Dutch remembrance practices of forced labor organizations concerns the friendly relations with Germany on a local level. Feeling neglected by its own government, the FNDDT turned towards Germany already in 1958. A couple of years earlier, the German municipality of Dortmund had started a project to commemorate and identify the three hundred killings that were committed by the Gestapo in Bittermark between 7 March and 12 April 1945. The liberation of the area came only one day later. Among the victims were resistance fighters and forced laborers from different countries. Through a French ambassador and the French investigation services, the FNDDT became involved in the project. After a visit to Bittermark, the FNDDT became actively engaged with the commemorative preparations, and a friendship between the municipality of

¹⁸⁸ Van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte*, 472-477; Conversation with Arend Disberg (24 March 2017); Conversation with Theo Sonnemans (20 March 2017).

Dortmund and the FNNDT was born which lasts until today. In 1958, a crypt was inaugurated with the burying of an ‘unknown French forced laborer’. On 15 April 1960, the official monument was inaugurated (pictures 6 and 7). Since then, on every Good Friday, a French delegation of the FNNDT, and nowadays also the AMDTF, is invited to participate in the commemoration.¹⁸⁹ The commemorations in Dortmund became very important to the (ex-)FNNDT and the AMDTF. It will be discussed later that they also functioned as commemorative evidence in the combat for the title. In addition to Dortmund, the FNNDT was also involved in other German remembrance practices, not only in West Germany, but also in East Germany, for example in Großbeeren. In these French-German collaborations, reconciliations and friendship have played an important role.¹⁹⁰



Picture 6 – 20.000 members of the FNNDT are present at the official inauguration of the monument in Bittermark.

Le D.T. (21 June 1960).



Picture 7 – The monument in Bittermark. The entrance of the crypt (only open during the ceremony on Good Friday) is at the back of the monument. Photos: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (14 April 2017).

Reconciliation is also a very important motivation for the Dutch associations in their rapprochements towards German municipalities. For example, a short poem that is written

¹⁸⁹ Wolfgang Asshoff, *Die Dortmunder Bittermark und ihr Mahnmahl. Eine Dokumentation* (Dortmund, 1988), 5-45; Conversations with Nicole Godard and Wolfgang Asshoff before the commemoration on 14 April 2017.

¹⁹⁰ Private Archives of the ex-FNNDT, diverse folders about commemorations in Germany; Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1118-1123.

on the Dutch monument in Overloon ends with the words: ‘We shall have to forgive a lot. But we will never forget’.¹⁹¹ In addition to collective travels to places in Germany where forced laborers worked during the war, Dutch associations also participated in or initiated commemorations together with German municipalities. The president of the VDN, Aart Pontier, received for instance several invitations for the annual ceremony in Dortmund. Although the VDN did not become as intensively involved in this commemoration as the FNDDT, Pontier and probably other VDN members have attended the commemoration in Dortmund on Good Friday.¹⁹² The SDOL concluded that the joint visits and commemorations had a positive effect on the traumas of forced laborers.¹⁹³

Probably the best example of a Dutch-German friendship on a local level can be found in the cooperation between Apeldoorn, the municipality De Oude IJsselstreek, and Rees. After the president of the SDA had collected many stories of forced laborers who were deported to camp Rees after round-ups in 1944, he contacted the municipality of Rees (a municipality that borders the Netherlands). This resulted in a close and amicable cooperation between the municipalities of Apeldoorn and Rees.¹⁹⁴ In the context of the increasing attention for war victims since the 1970s and 1980s, Rees already established a monument for the Dutch forced laborers of camp Rees and their persecuted Jewish fellow-citizens in 1984 (picture 8).¹⁹⁵ Because many forced laborers who escaped Rees were helped by the citizens in and around Megchelen, which is situated near Rees on the Dutch side of the border, Disberg contacted the municipality of the Oude IJsselstreek as well. In 2010, the union of local history¹⁹⁶ and the SDA established, in cooperation with the municipality of the Oude IJsselstreek, a monument that symbolizes the support of the local population to the refugees and victims of camp Rees (picture 9). The mayors of the three municipalities have often participated together in commemorations: mayors of Rees and Apeldoorn annually remember in Rees in November and in Apeldoorn in December.¹⁹⁷ In March 2017, the three mayors also spoke at a remembrance march to memorize the forced laborers who escaped from Rees to Megchelen.¹⁹⁸ For the French and Dutch associations, and especially for the

¹⁹¹ Original citation: ‘We zullen veel moeten vergeven. Vergeten doen we echter nooit’.

¹⁹² NIOD, 294, 102 Oorlogsmonumenten, herdenkingen en onderzoeksprojecten in Duitsland; Conversation with Wolfgang Asshoff before the commemoration on 14 April 2017.

¹⁹³ Cammaert, *Dwangarbeid en verzoening*, 61.

¹⁹⁴ Conversation with Arend Disberg (24 March 2017).

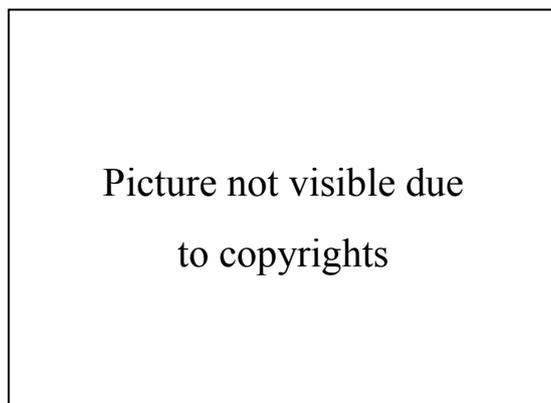
¹⁹⁵ Lukas Bergmann, ‘1944/1945: Das Zwangarbeiterlager in Rees. Zwischen Verdrängen und Erinnern – eine wenig bekannte niederrheinische Unrechtsstätte und die Geschichte ihrer Aufarbeitung in Deutschland und den Niederlanden’ (Bachelor’s Thesis at University of Duisburg-Essen, 2014), 25-26.

¹⁹⁶ OVG: Oudheidkundige Vereniging Gemeente Genderingen.

¹⁹⁷ When the most important Razzia took in Apeldoorn took place.

¹⁹⁸ Conversation with Arend Disberg (24 March 2017); Participation at the remembrance march on 12 March 2017.

forced laborers themselves, the participation of Germans in the commemorations evokes a deep gratefulness.¹⁹⁹



Picture 8 – The monument in Rees for Dutch forced laborers (1944-1945) and the persecuted Jewish fellow-citizens (1933-1945).
Photo: 'De dwangarbeiders van kamp Rees', <www.mijn gelderland.nl>.



Picture 9 – The monument of the forced laborers who escaped from Rees and their helpers in Megchelen.
Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (12 March 2017).

Regarding these amicable relations with German municipalities, it is interesting to see how forced laborers were in favor of and contributed to the European reconciliation. Spina concluded this in his research on French forced laborers.²⁰⁰ His conclusions also seem to apply to Dutch associations. For instance in 1999, when the VDN monument in The Hague was inaugurated, its initiator P. Kool referred positively to the European reconciliation.²⁰¹ In addition, an International Confederation for European forced laborers existed as well. Although the confederation did not achieve much, it did provide a platform of communication. Sometimes, representatives of the French, Belgian, and Dutch associations visited each other's commemorations.²⁰²

In addition to these specific German and European characteristics of reconciliation and cooperation, the memorials and commemorations initiated by the forced labor associations also contain similarities that can be related to Western European war commemorations in general. The focus on victimization, especially from the 1970s onward, forms an example of such a more general aspect in war remembrances. Another example is that, since the 1980s and 1990s, war commemorations broadened their scope with references to current topics and Western values such as human rights, democracy, freedom, respect, tolerance including references to peace, and the narrative that the commemorated events

¹⁹⁹ Speeches given during the remembrance March from Rees to Megchelen on 12 March 2017 and during the Commemoration in Dortmund on 14 April 2017.

²⁰⁰ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1122.

²⁰¹ NIOD, 294, 100 Onthulling Gedenkteken Dwangarbeid, 19-11-1999.

²⁰² A. Boerma, *Ex-dwangarbeiders in hun jaren daarna als VDN lid* (Apeldoorn, 2001); NIOD, 294, 100 Onthulling Gedenkteken Dwangarbeid, 19-11-1999; Private Archives of the ex-FNDT, different letters of the International Confederation of Deported Workers, 1959-1960.

should happen ‘never again’.²⁰³ These elements also recur in French and Dutch forced labor commemorations. Another similarity with general WWII commemorations is that younger generations became more important in the commemorations of forced labor associations during the twenty-first century.²⁰⁴

4.2.2 National Funerary Commemorations versus Regional Remembrances of Round-Ups

Of course, remembrance practices of French and Dutch associations are not similar in every aspect. The most important differences will be explained in the following paragraphs. Whereas the French commemorations are organized around the liberation of the German camps and the return of repatriates and have a more funerary and national character, the Dutch remembrance practices are characterized by an absence of such a national associative commemoration. The remembrances of the Dutch associations are more regionally oriented and often focus on the round-ups and deportations in 1944.

Because the deported workers were not officially recognized by the French government for a long time, the FNDD organized its own commemorations in France and also collaborated in German remembrances. On a departmental level, French associations participated earlier in annual war commemorations²⁰⁵, but remembrance on a national level came later. President Chirac deposited a wreath during the annual celebration of the liberation, 8 May in Paris, for the first time in 2015.²⁰⁶ The president of the AMDTF is currently in touch with ministries to subscribe the association on the list of official national commemorations such as 8 May or 14 July.²⁰⁷

However, the most important commemorations of the FNDD are not focused on the liberation of France in 1944, but on the liberation of the German camps and the return or funerals of forced laborers immediately after the war.²⁰⁸ Shortly after the return of the survived workers, in November 1945, the deceased forced laborers received from the government the notice ‘*Mort pour la France*’ (died for France). As a consequence, many communal monuments for deceased deported workers were erected citing this text.²⁰⁹ A

²⁰³ See for instance Annet Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking* (Amsterdam, 2006), 121-122, 137-142, 161; Van Vree and Van der Laarse, *Dynamiek van de herinnering*, 11, 35-38; Benvindo and Peeters, *Scherven van de oorlog*, 130-135, 223.

²⁰⁴ Many examples of these discourses were pronounced in the speeches given during the remembrance March from Rees to Megchelen on 12 March 2017 and during the Commemoration in Dortmund on 14 April 2017. They were also recurring elements in conversations I had with the president and two members of the SDA on 4 March 2017. See also different recent numbers of *Le Proscrit*, for example April 2015.

²⁰⁵ See ANF, Collection ONAC, 20050299/50, Dossier 702: Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé. 1994.

²⁰⁶ *Le Proscrit* (September 2015).

²⁰⁷ Conversation with Nicole Godard (4 April 2017).

²⁰⁸ Private Archives of the ex-FNDD, see commemorations of 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1990, 1995, and 2005.

²⁰⁹ Barcellini, ‘Les requis du STO devant la (les) mémoire(s)’, 585-588.

national ceremony took place on 21 June 1947, when an unknown forced laborer was buried on the Parisian cemetery *Père Lachaise* (picture 10). Politically, the inhumation of 1947 was a response of the minister of Old Combatants and War Victims (ACVG²¹⁰) to De Gaulle who ‘forgot’ to bury a deported worker during a general ceremony in 1945.²¹¹ In future commemorations of the FNDDT, the presence and speeches of French ministries such as the ACVG would remain a sensitive point in which the FNDDT often traced a confirmation of its marginalization.²¹² This sensibility reflected the combat for the title of deported worker.



Picture 10 – The inhumation of the ‘unknown forced laborer’ on 21 June 1947. The cortege on its way to the cemetery *Père Lachaise*. Photo: Private Archives of the ex-FNDDT, Paris.

Another example of how the French remembrance practices have been influenced by the combat for the title is the national monument in Paris. In 1970, when it was the 25th anniversary of the liberation of the camps, the FNDDT collected funds to erect a monument above the tomb on *Père Lachaise*. The monument was inaugurated on 21 June 1971 (picture 1 and 11) and the date of the annual commemoration that takes place ever since often refers to the liberation of the camps and the return of the forced laborers.²¹³ The monument symbolizes the oppressing work and sabotage as well as hope to persist.²¹⁴ Furthermore, the text explicitly mentions the word deportation and the total number of deported workers (600,000) and how many of them died (60,000).

²¹⁰ Ancien Combattants et Victimes de Guerre.

²¹¹ Barcellini, ‘Les requis du STO devant la (les) mémoire(s)’, 585-588.

²¹² See for instance *Le D.T.* (April/May 1958, September 1981).

²¹³ Correspondence with Michel Catala (May 2017).

²¹⁴ Barcellini and Wiewiorka, *Passant, souviens-toi!*, 442.



Picture 1 - Monument for forced laborers in Paris
Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (April 2017).



Picture 11 – Poster for the inauguration of the Monument for Deported Laborers on *Père Lachaise*, 21 June 1970.
Photo: Private Archives of the ex-FNDT.

The monument also has a connection to the memorial in Dortmund as an urn with ‘sacred ground’ from Bittermark is deposited on the monument.²¹⁵ The commemorations in Paris and Dortmund also became evidence in the battle for the title of deported worker. Therefore, they are an important aspect in the memory-culture of the French federation. The brochure *Pourquoi nous sommes des victimes de la Déportation du Travail* (1961) depicted, for instance, a picture of the monument in Bittermark on one of the first pages.²¹⁶ The cover of the FNDT-publication *Un livre blanc* (1987) is a picture of the monument in Paris. In the context of this commemorative evidence, the FNDT considered the presence of a great number of people during its ceremonies as highly important for its battle and the honor of the association. Therefore, people were always called to come with many (picture 11).²¹⁷

Although the majority of French deported workers survived the war, scholars as Spina and Barcellini remarked that the memory of the FNDT was and is above all funerary. The two most important commemorations in Dortmund and Paris illustrate that the majority of remembrances of the FNDT serves to remember the deceased forced laborers.²¹⁸ In addition to this funerary character, the French federation also differs from Dutch associations regarding its attempts to cooperate with other repatriates. Expressing this desire, the FNDT often recalled the unity with the PoWs and survivors of concentration camps in 1945 that

²¹⁵ Picture 1 (on the left of the statue); Conversation with Wolfgang Asshoff (14 April 2017).

²¹⁶ l’Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi Nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail*, 5.

²¹⁷ Private Archives of the ex-FNDT, Commemoration of 1970 and 1990; Private Archives of the ex-FNDT, Documentation about Gare de l’Est 1993, Picture 11: ‘Participez en masse’ (participate in large numbers) is written on a poster for the inauguration of the monument for deported laborers on 21 June 1970.

²¹⁸ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1104; Barcellini, ‘Les requis du STO devant la (les) mémoire(s)’, 590.

was illustrated by the poster *Ils sont unis*.²¹⁹ Although the combat for the title complicated the relation with other repatriates, the FNDT achieved to collaborate with other repatriates during commemorations in 1989 and 1993. In 1989, the repatriates installed a joint memorial in *Gare d'Orsay* (picture 12). In 1993, another joint commemorative plaque was inaugurated to remember the departure of the forced laborers and other war victims (picture 13). During the ceremony in 1993, the FNDT even ‘interrupted’ the battle for the title by covering the word ‘*déporté*’ on its flag.²²⁰



Picture 12 – The commemorative plaque of the French repatriates at the Gare d'Orsay (1989), the current Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Photos: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (April 2017).



Picture 13 – The commemorative plaque of the French forced laborers among the plagues of other war victims who were deported from the Gare de l'Est (1993). Photos: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (April 2017).

When the Dutch associations started to initiate remembrance practices in the 1990s, they did not have the desire to cooperate with other victim groups. What they desired was specific recognition for all forced laborers: the deceased and, perhaps more importantly, the survivors who had to cope with silenced traumas for more than forty years. Although the

²¹⁹ See for instance *Le D.T.* (15 May 1970).

²²⁰ *Le Proscrit* (May 1993).

VDN and its regional departments obtained participation in national commemorations such as 4 May, the most important monument that the VDN established was in Overloon (picture 2), a place that was chosen by the government out of practical and financial reasons.²²¹ Perhaps due to this remote location, the inauguration in 1996 was not followed by an annual commemoration. The commemoration that comes closest to the French national commemorations is the remembrance practice in The Hague. Since the VDN member Kool established the forced labor monument, a small remembrance in which the ex-VDN is represented has taken place every year on Commemoration Day (4 May, picture 5a). However, in contrast to the national FNDDT commemoration in Paris, the monument in The Hague is not only meant for Dutch forced laborers, but for all the (forgotten) European forced laborers.²²² The reason for this is not known, but it might be a result of personal interests of Kool or the European or human rights discourses.



Picture 2 – Monument for forced laborers in Overloon (NL)
Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (June 2017).



Picture 5a – The forced labor monument in The Hague.
Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (4 May 2017)

The site where the monument in The Hague is located forms another difference with the national French monument. Most French monuments are situated on or near cemeteries. The Provincial House in The Hague, however, is the place where men were gathered as a result of the round-up in November 1944. Places related to deportations that followed razzias in 1944 are also chosen as memorial and commemorative sites by the SDOL and SDA. The memorial plaques of the SDOL project *Sporen die Blevven* are often attached to churches (picture 14), because many men were at the church during the round-up on Sunday morning in October 1944.²²³ The monument of the SDA (picture 4) is also placed on the market square in Apeldoorn, the place where the men were gathered after the razzia on 2 December

²²¹ Cukier, 'Een vergeten groep verenigt zich', 52-53, 70.

²²² NIOD, 294, 100 Onthulling Gedenkteken Dwangarbeid, 19-11-1999; 'Een half miljoen Nederlanders werkte als dwangarbeider in Duitsland', <http://www.4en5mei.nl/herdenken-en-vieren/oorlogsmonumenten/sprekende_beelden/getuigenverhalen/12/een-half-miljoen-nederlanders-werkte-als-dwangarbeider-in-duitsland> [consulted on 16 May 2017]; Participation to the ceremony for forced laborers in The Hague on 4 May 2017.

²²³ '2004: zestig jaar geleden...', <<http://kerkrazzia.nl/>> [consulted on 16 May 2017].

1944.²²⁴ It can thus be concluded that the round-ups in the fall of 1944 have determined for a large part the Dutch memorials and commemorations practices of forced labor.



Picture 14 – A commemorative plaque of the SDOL project *Sporen die Bleven* in Helden.
Photos: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (29 March 2017)

Considering the political and societal contexts in which French and Dutch forced labor organization emerged, two periods can be distinguished. The first period more or less coincided with what Lagrou called the period of national recovery and patriotic memories (1945-1965).²²⁵ The second period started in the 1970s when war memories became more and more pluralistic and other victims groups, especially Jewish victims, were being recognized. These different timeframes and contexts strongly influenced the memories produced by the associations. Whereas the memory of the French associations and the NVVG has strongly been influenced by the first patriotic period and a battle for honor, the more recent Dutch associations emphasized victimhood in their memories. A comparison of remembrance practices can be related to this periodization. Strongly influenced by the repatriation and postwar attention for deceased forced workers, commemorations of the FNDDT have a national and funerary character and aim at cooperation with the other repatriates. Dutch remembrance practices, on the contrary, focus more on the victimization of survived forced laborers. Commemorations often have a more local character and are focused on the round-ups and deportations in 1944. In addition to these differences, it is also important to keep in mind that because of their experiences during the war and their postwar marginalization, the memories of French and Dutch forced labor associations also share some characteristics. The most important similarity is their amicable relationship with German municipalities which also helps the former forced laborers to reconcile with and work through their traumatic war experiences.

²²⁴ Arend Jan Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie: Apeldoornse nachtmerrie in Rees* (Apeldoorn, 2005), 17-20, 99-103.

²²⁵ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 15.

Chapter 5 Influential Individual Memories

The war experiences of individual forced laborers widely vary. Many forced laborers became traumatized, but some were also relatively well-treated. However, almost all forced laborers were ashamed to speak about their time in Germany, or they faced disbelief or incomprehension from fellow-citizens or family-members.²²⁶ This chapter does not investigate a representative number of all French and Dutch individual memories, but it specifically looks at a couple of individuals that have been influential in the researched associations. Following Halbwachs, associations function as social communities in which (silenced) memories could be formed. Within the associations, a selection of individual members had to be made. This selection was based on the availability of source material (books and memoirs present in libraries and archives²²⁷) and on the former forced laborers who are still alive.

On a methodological level, this chapter firstly follows the approach taken by the historians Thonfeld²²⁸ and Arnaud²²⁹, as it investigates to what extent themes present in individual memories have been influenced by societal and political contexts and memory cultures. Secondly, this chapter takes a different approach as suggested by the Belgian historians Benvindo and Peeters.²³⁰ It researches to what extent individuals have functioned as agencies in creating and disseminating collective memories of forced labor.

5.1 Influences of Political and Societal Contexts and Memory Cultures

As it is impossible to cover all the themes individual accounts of forced laborers discuss, three remarkable topics have been chosen. The first theme, justification, illustrates a similarity between French and Dutch memories. The second and third theme, memories of resistance and representations of Germans, go deeper into differences between the two researched countries.

²²⁶ Von Plato, Leh, and Thonfeld, *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangarbeit im internationalen Vergleich*, 105, 109-112; Piersma, *Mensenheugenis*, 14; Jean Pierre Vittori, *Eux les STO* (Paris, 1982); Conversation with Arend Disberg (24 March 2017); Conversation with Theo Sonnemans (20 March 2017); Penders, *Het Slavenhuis*, 102; Van Westrienen, *Dwargarbeiders*, 48.

²²⁷ For Dutch individual memories, the NIOD and the regional archives in Helden have been consulted. For French individual memories, the National Library in Paris (*Bibliothèque Nationale de France*) has been consulted. Due to time limitations, other libraries and archives have not been consulted.

²²⁸ Christoph Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen? Individuelle Erfahrungsverarbeitungen und kollektive Repräsentationen von NS-Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Essen, 2014).

²²⁹ Patrice Arnaud, *Les STO. Histoire des requis en Allemagne nazie, 1942-1945* (Paris, 2010).

²³⁰ Benvindo and Peeters, *Scherven van de oorlog*, 17-18.

5.1.1 Individual Memories as Justifications

The German historian Thonfeld concluded about French individual memories that they have been influenced by a societal pressure for justification. Because of a negative societal image and controversies surrounding forced laborers, the interviewed forced laborers felt the need to justify their lot and experiences.²³¹ Writing about the VDN, the Dutch historian Van der Heijden came to a similar conclusion. He stated that the association aimed to correct the unjust treatment of forced laborers after the war. That Dutch labor conscripts strongly presented themselves as victims also stimulated controversies among former forced laborers themselves and in society. As a consequence, individual VDN members justified their status as war victims even more specifically by recalling their difficult war experiences.²³² Also in the other associations, individuals have often remembered the excessively small portions of food and the poor hygiene circumstances. For instance, two SDA members who are often presented in public activities remembered the one liter of soup per day which only consisted of hand warm water and a cabbage-leaf as well as a hole outside of the camp that was used as a ‘toilet’.²³³ It can thus be concluded that due to societal marginalization and a hierarchy of victims discussed in the previous chapters, individual memories of forced laborers often emphasize the difficult circumstances of their work in the Third Reich that functions as justification for their status of war victims.

A narrative that forms a good example of this justification is what different historians called a process of ‘maturation’ or ‘emancipation’.²³⁴ It means that because of the experiences in Nazi Germany, many young men entered an accelerated process in which they all of a sudden became mentally adults. This narrative can be found in memories of influential individuals of all researched associations. The individual memoirs of the French writer and FNNT member Jean-Louis Quereillahc are an example. Quereillahc published the first edition of his memoirs in 1958. In 1990, 1998, and 2010, re-editions of his memoirs appeared in which the FNVRNTF (ex-FNNT) wrote a preface and Quereillahc added some extra chapters. His main account, however, remained unchanged.²³⁵ Quereillahc described how he left Paris as a student under the law of 7 February 1943 and how he ended up in different German and Austrian camps. Liberated by the Russians, Quereillahc returned to Paris via Ukraine in August 1945. After his return, he felt that, because of his experiences of

²³¹ Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen*, 83.

²³² Van der Heijden, *Dat nooit meer*, 627-633.

²³³ Conversations with Jan de Louter and Ap Gerritse (4 March 2017).

²³⁴ Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen*, 77; Van Westrienen, *Dwangarbeiders*, 40-41; Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 346-347.

²³⁵ Jean-Louis Quereillahc, *J'étais STO* (Paris, 1958); Jean-Louis Quereillahc, *Mémoires de la déportation du travail en Allemagne nazie – 1943-1945* (1990); Jean-Louis Quereillahc, *Mémoires de la déportation du travail en Allemagne nazie* (Biarritz, 1998); Jean-Louis Quereillahc, *Le STO pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2010).

misery and especially his days in a penal colony, he had nothing in common anymore with his former friends and youth.²³⁶ The loss of a youth is also an important narrative in the individual story of Arend Jan Disberg, the father of the SDA president. Disberg accounted in particular of a shooting that spoiled his life. This shooting took place when he was transported to camp Rees by train. Disberg then realized how much luck was needed to survive, and became a very hard person for himself and people around him. His story is called ‘*als zestienjarige in drie maanden volwassen*’ (a sixteen year old boy became an adult in three months).²³⁷ The novel *Gestolen Jeugd* (stolen youth), which is about Leo Steeghs who was deported after the round-ups in Limburg in October 1944 and later became a member of the SDOL, is another example of this narrative.²³⁸ Steeghs ended his own memoirs by saying that the Reich ‘gulped him down’²³⁹ as a child and ‘spitted him out’ eight years later as an adult who had found out all the gruesome facets of war.²⁴⁰ Mentioning the aspect of maturation, all authors also referred to their time in the Third Reich in terms of a ‘hell’. This thus forms another important narrative justifying a difficult time.²⁴¹

5.1.2 Sabotage, Resistance, and AEL

In addition to memories of labor camps as a hell, individual forced laborers also remember(ed) sabotage and resistance. As stated in the previous chapter, memories of sabotage and resistance have played an important role in the French memory culture because they prove honor and patriotism of French deported laborers. The French historian Arnaud also demonstrated that honor, patriotism, attempts to shirk, and sabotage are important themes in French published individual memories.²⁴² The memoirs of Eugène Texier, an active member of the FNDT²⁴³, illustrate this. In *De la Vendée à la Baltique* (1999), Texier often recalled how he sabotaged and worked as little as possible.²⁴⁴ However, not all influential forced laborers of the FNDT included elements of sabotage and resistance in their memoirs. Quereillahc forms the most striking example. His memoirs elaborated on the depressing circumstances, different people he met, and above all loneliness. A resistance

²³⁶ Quereillahc, *J'étais STO*, 11-21, 28-43, 255, 296-299.

²³⁷ Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 138-146.

²³⁸ Ton van Reen, *Gestolen Jeugd* (Breda, 2001).

²³⁹ Original citation: opslokken

²⁴⁰ Leo Steeghs, *Van inval tot bevrijding: 10 mei 1940 – 13 mei 1945* (Panningen, 1990), 66.

²⁴¹ See for instance Quereillahc, *J'étais STO*, 41, 299; Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 150; Steeghs, *Van inval tot bevrijding*, flipside; Jan Krist, *De Hel van Rees* (Groningen, 1946); Eugène Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique* (Venansault, 1999), 116.

²⁴² Arnaud, *Les STO*, 583-586.

²⁴³ Ibid, *Les STO*, 584.

²⁴⁴ Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique*, 7-8, 68, 73, 113, 134-138.

memory seems absent.²⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the honor of the STO forms a central element in Quereillahe's memoirs.²⁴⁶

The absence of sabotage could be explained by Quereillahe's (nonresistant) character. Another possibility is that he did not explicitly include acts of resistance in his memories because the collective memory of the FNNT already included much evidence of resistance. As explained in the previous chapter, individuals were encouraged to remember their acts of sabotage from 1945 onward. Another manner in which the FNNT gave evidence of resistance was by citing historical documents about French sabotage mentioned in official German camp reports.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, the FNNT and some departmental associations connected themselves to the French resistance by including *réfractaires*, labor conscripts who went into hiding to prevent deportation to Germany, in their organizations.²⁴⁸

Another aspect related to the resistance memory of French associations concerns references to the *Arbeitserziehungslager* (AEL), camps for reeducation and punishment. Memories about the AEL can be found in the individual memories of Quereillahe and Texier.²⁴⁹ As discipline was of greatest importance in such camps, the work conditions, punishments, and daily life circumstances were horrific. Most forced laborers were sent to discipline camps because of resistance to the German camp leaders or sabotage. It is thus likely that the references to the AEL in individual narratives have also been influenced by the fact that forced laborers had to defend their patriotism. In any case, in collective memories created by the (ex-)FNNT, AELs, as well as concentration camps, have been an important theme. The website of the federation contains a page about the AEL and the brochure '*Les oubliés de l'Histoire* (1995) of the FNVRCNTF stated in capital letters that forced laborers could also end up in concentration camps such as Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Dachau, and Auschwitz.²⁵⁰ The federation remembered and still remembers those camps primarily to create awareness for the maltreatment of the STO: people should not forget that forced laborers were not only sent to labor camps but also to concentration camps and AELs. The federation and association have often recalled that the circumstances in the AELs were

²⁴⁵ Jean-Louis Quereillahe, *J'étais STO* (Paris, 1958).

²⁴⁶ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 574.

²⁴⁷ Private Archives of the ex-FNNT, Paris, Fédération Nationale des Déportés du Travail, Congrès National des 12, 13 et 14 octobre 1945; l'Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi Nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail* (Paris, 1961); La Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé (ex F.N.D.T.) (ed.), *Un livre blanc sur une période noir* (Paris, 1987).

²⁴⁸ ANF, Collection ONAC, 20050299/50, Dépense d'action sociale des associations départementales de la FNVRCNTF, 1993; La Fédération Nationale and l'Association du Tarn des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé (eds.), brochure '1945 Memorial 1995 Les oubliés de l'Histoire' (Graulhet, 1995- The group of 'réfractaires' has not been included in Dutch associations.

²⁴⁹ Quereillahe, *J'étais STO*, 181-211, 299; Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique*, 105-116.

²⁵⁰ 'Les ArbeitsErziehungslager... A.E.L.', < <http://www.requis-deportes-sto.com/index.php/histoire/19431945/les-arbeits-erziehungslager> > [consulted on May 2017]; Brochure '1945 Memorial 1995 Les oubliés de l'Histoire' (1995).

comparable to concentration camps, or in other words: the camps where political prisoners and PoWs often ended up.²⁵¹

In individual and collective memories of Dutch associations, concentration camps seem to be forgotten.²⁵² In individual memoirs of Pontier of the VDN, Steeghs of the SDOL, and Disberg of the SDA, for example, concentration camps are not mentioned.²⁵³ The absence of concentration camps can also be illustrated by an exhibition about the round-ups in Limburg in October 1944 that is installed with the support of the SDOL in the regional museum 't Land van Peel & Maas in Helden. The exhibition has a 'deportation room' which contains a barrack from KZ Buchenwald. The information panel, however, only mentions that forced laborers often ended up in factories, and sometimes in farms. Concentration camps are not discussed at all. This absence in might be explained by the absence of a competition with prisoners of concentration camps as existed among the French deportees. However, in public meetings of the NVVG, it was sometimes recalled that laborers were imprisoned or died in concentration camps.²⁵⁴ This implies that the immediate postwar historical context, in which workers aimed to defend their patriotism, provides a more accurate explanation the presence of memories about concentration camps.

The AEL, on the contrary, are remembered by (individuals of) all Dutch associations. Leo Steeghs of the SDOL wrote about ill people who were imprisoned in penal camps.²⁵⁵ Although there was no official AEL in the neighborhood of camp Rees, many SDA members have remembered the severe punishments such as strokes with a stick.²⁵⁶ In contrast to the French federation, individual and collective memories of the AEL in the three recent Dutch associations are not connected to sabotage and resistance. Especially in the public discourse of the VDN, punishment camps did not serve to prove resistance, but to

²⁵¹ See for instance l'Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi Nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail*, 41; Private Archives of the ex-FNDT, 'Temoignage: l'enfer de Pierre Puerto', in: *Déportés du Travail Lézignan (Aude), Spécial 40e Anniversaire de la libération des camps de travail force et du retour 1945-1985* (1985) 25; *Un livre blanc* (1987), 28-29; Private Archives of the ex-FNDT, discourse of Forest during the commemoration of 1991; NIOD, 294, 77, L'histoire en Direct, *Radio France Culture*, 1993.

²⁵² However, Dutch forced laborers could end up in concentration camps as is researched by, for example, Jeroen van Zijderveld. He found out that forced laborers who were first imprisoned in Camp Amersfoort and other forced laborers ended up in the concentration camp of Buchenwald: Conversation with Jeroen van Zijderveld (21 March 2017).

²⁵³ Aart Pontier and Karel Braet (eds.), *Lager Kinzig. Twee jaar gedwongen arbeid in Nazi-Duitsland 1943-1945* (Winterswijk, 1991); Leo Steeghs, *Van inval tot bevrijding: 10 mei 1940 – 13 mei 1945* (Panningen, 1990); Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 138-146.

²⁵⁴ NA, 2.04.80, 3658, Openbare vergadering door het Nedl. Verbond van Gerepatrieerden, Leiden maandag 25 februari 1946; Geheim – Verslag van een op 20 juli 1946 te Oranjewoud gehouden vergadering van het Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerepatrieerden.

²⁵⁵ Steeghs, *Van inval tot bevrijding*, 44-45.

²⁵⁶ Conversations with Jan de Louter and Ap Gerritse (4 March 2017); Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 114-116, 151-152, 439.

justify that due to the severe penalties, it was too dangerous to sabotage.²⁵⁷ This discourse fits exactly in the societal context of the 1980s and 1990s in which the focus was on war victims instead of patriotism. With the exception of the memory of the NVVG which narrated about sabotage, the later Dutch associations have precisely emphasized how little resistance was possible in the Third Reich because of the harsh treatment of forced laborers.

Nevertheless, resistance has remained an important topic war-memories in general. As some Dutch forced laborers resisted during their time in Germany, some influential forced laborers remembered that as well. The VDN member Rinus van Galen, for instance, sabotaged several times in a factory where he worked in Berlin. He later even joined a resistance network. Van Galen recalled these events with a certain pride and surety.²⁵⁸ Ap Gerritse, who is an important member of the SDA, also mentioned several times that he ‘did not work too hard’.²⁵⁹ It is, however, important to mention that such acts of sabotage did not get a prominent place in the collective associative memories.²⁶⁰

5.1.3 Memories of Germans

Another interesting difference between French and Dutch influential individual memories is that the Dutch have often described ‘good’ and ‘bad’ acts of Germans whereas the French have focused on Nazi crimes in general.²⁶¹ This difference might also be explained by the different historical contexts in which French and Dutch associations emerged. Immediately after the war and during the Nuremberg trials, Germany was seen as the guilty nation of WWII. When the French associative memories were formed, the FNDD only remembered the guiltiest Germans of the *Arbeitseinsatz*: Sauckel and Speer.²⁶² In addition, the federation referred to the ‘*barbarie nazie*’ in general.²⁶³

²⁵⁷ See for instance NIOD, 294, 86 Correspondentie en documentatie betreffende tentoonstellingen, 1992-1995, Winterswijk 1992, information folder about the exhibition *Gedwongen werken in nazi-Duitsland 1940-1945. De Arbeitseinsatz – Arbeidsplicht en slavenjacht*; Rimco Spanjer, *Vergeten doen ze echter nooit. De Arbeitseinsatz van Nederlanders tijdens de tweede wereldoorlog* (Hilversum, 1996), 26-27.

²⁵⁸ See for instance Rinus van Galen in the documentary *Een koffer in Berlijn. Het verhaal van twee dwangarbeiders in woi.* (RVU, 1996); NIOD, 294, 87 Schoolproject.

²⁵⁹ Conversation with Ap Gerritse (4 March 2017).

²⁶⁰ An example can be found in a book published by the president of the SDA in which there is no prominent place for sabotage in contrast to ‘measures of punishment and mistreatments’. Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 3, 41-42.

²⁶¹ See for instance Steeghs, *Van inval tot bevrijding*, 39-41; Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 138-269; Aart Pontier and Karel Braet (eds.), *Lager Kinzig. Twee jaar gedwongen arbeid in Nazi-Duitsland 1943-1945* (Winterswijk, 1991); Quereilhac, *J'étais STO*, 9-10; Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique*, 46-185.

²⁶² During WWII, the German architect Albert Speer was Reich Minister of Armaments and War Production in Nazi Germany.

²⁶³ See for instance the inscription of the monument on *Père Lachaise*: ‘*Ici repose une inconnu déporté du travail victime de la trahison et de la barbarie nazie*’.

From the 1990s onward, when WWII memories had already become more pluralistic, the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*²⁶⁴ became widespread.²⁶⁵ As the previous chapter described, an aspect of this policy was that Germany sought for compensation, rapprochement, and reconciliation. As a result, forced labor associations developed close contacts with German municipalities and the local population. Especially within the SDOL and SDA, these contacts and travels to former labor camps resulted in a more nuanced image of Germans during the war. Jan de Louter explained this by mentioning that before he went to Germany with the SDA, he saw all Germans as ‘*moffen*’²⁶⁶. Afterwards, he got a more nuanced image and became even friends with some Germans who lived or live in Rees.²⁶⁷ In December 2016, De Louter and two other former forced laborers of the SDA received a medal of honor because of the amicable relations between Rees and Apeldoorn they established (picture 14a). It also stands out that many individual accounts related to the SDA contained an opposition between the ‘bad’ Nazi leaders in the camp versus the ‘good’ local German population to whom the forced laborers often simply refer as ‘farmers’. References to helpful Germans such as Eugen Hollaender and Mies Bauman also contributed to a more nuanced story of Germans.²⁶⁸ Also in individual memories of the SDOL, distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Germans have been made.²⁶⁹



Picture 14a – J. de Louter, J.H. van Essen, and A. Gerritse receive a medal of honor from the municipality of Apeldoorn (2 December 2016).
Photo: *Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn 1940-1945* (John Assink).

²⁶⁴ The *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* refers the German process of coming to terms with the past.

²⁶⁵ W. Melching, ‘Review of F. Wielenga, *Van vijand tot bondgenoot. Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* (2002), 117:1, 137–139.

²⁶⁶ An insulting Dutch term to describe a German person that was often used during WWII.

²⁶⁷ Conversation with Jan de Louter (4 March 2017).

²⁶⁸ Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 105-484; The described discourse is also visible in an episode of *Andere Tijden* called ‘*De Sinterklaasrazzia*’ (4 December 2011).

²⁶⁹ Steeghs, *Van inval tot bevrijding*, 39; Fragments with memories of Wiel Tulumans of Wuppertal in the documentary of Ulf Arlinghaus, *Het einde van de oorlog in Wuppertal – op zoek naar ‘het uur nul’* (date unknown).

Although not so present, the improving political and societal relations with Germany have influenced certain individual French memories as well. In 1999, Texier wrote that towards the end of the war, he lived with a German family for a couple of days. The family helped him and gave him food. Texier realized that ‘little Wilhelm [a son of the family] had never wanted a war’²⁷⁰ and when he went on, Texier forgot his vengeance.²⁷¹ The re-editions of Quereillahe’s memoirs, on the contrary, seem not to be influenced by this context of the 1990s as his individual memories remained ‘frozen’ and did not nuance the image of the German population during the war. This difference can be explained by the research of the historian Arnaud. He stated that the decision of the court in 1979 together with the retirement of many forced laborers caused a second ‘boom’ of individual memoirs (figure 3). Individual testimonies were often either motivated by a will to defend the honor of the STO, or a will to fill up historical ‘gaps’.²⁷² Whereas Quereillahe certainly belonged to this first category, Texier probably also belonged to the second. Texier’s memoirs are also less ‘dark’. They contained several passages in which he narrates about his leisure time, for example when he and his friends discovered the city and the sea nearby.²⁷³ Those pleasant moments, however, are not recalled by president Forest in the preface, or remembered collectively by the FNVRNTF. This could change in the future, because it seems that within the AMDTF, there is more room for nuanced and diverse individual stories.²⁷⁴

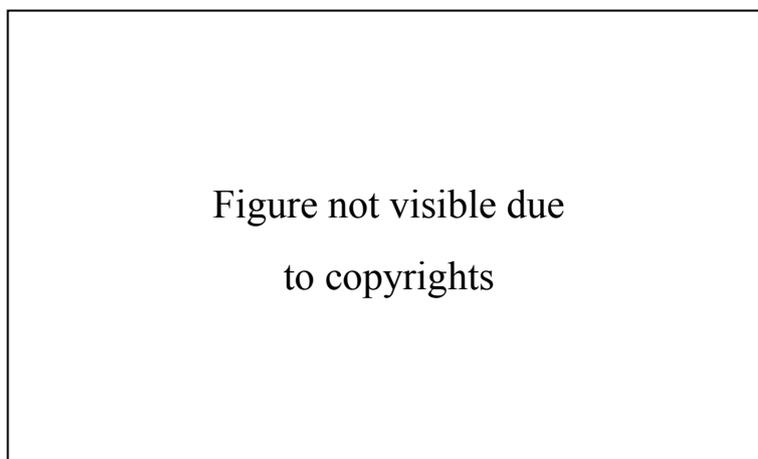


Figure 3 – The date of publication of accounts by French workers in Germany. The first ‘boom’ of individual memories Arnaud distinguishes is from 1944-1948. The second ‘boom’ started after 1979, when public attention for the forced laborers slowly increased because of the decision of the court. Source: Arnaud, *Les STO*, 576.

²⁷⁰ Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique*, 181. Original citation: ‘Le petit Wilhelm n’a jamais voulu la guerre’.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 178-186.

²⁷² Arnaud, *Les STO*, 575-576.

²⁷³ See for instance Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique*, 72-82, 163, 174.

²⁷⁴ During the conversations about individual memories that I had in Dortmund on 14 April 2017 with members of the AMDTF, I got the impression that nuanced and diverse individual stories are more important to them than to the ex-FNDT. This can also be confirmed by material about an exhibition of the Departmental Association of the Tarn (2015) that was given to me by the departmental president Robert Lassevaine.

Certain themes and discourses of influential forced laborers are thus interwoven with societal and political circumstances as well as with discourses of the associations. Individual memories within Dutch associations have been influenced by a context of victimhood and reconciliation with Germany. The historical context might have influenced French individual memories even more. Especially the memoirs of influential members of the (ex-)FNDDT often serve as examples, or perhaps even evidence, of the general discourse of the federation, which strongly relates to the combat for the title of deportee. Similar to the associations, the individual memories often defend the honor of the forced laborers in a patriotic way. Moreover, it seems that the discourse of the federation has also influenced individual memories. Quereillahc, for instance, even added the commemoration of forced laborers who sabotaged in Großbeeren in the re-edition of his memoirs.²⁷⁵

5.2 *Individuals as Agencies*

So far, contextual circumstances have formed the central perspective to study individual memories of associations. This part investigates individual memories from a different perspective, namely by studying to what extent individuals have functioned as agencies in creating and disseminating collective memories of forced labor associations. Researching the agency of individual memories, it is important to keep in mind that in France and Belgium, a memory community for forced laborers existed in the margins from 1945 onward. Dutch memories, on the contrary, were often silenced, forgotten, or 'lost' after the dissolution of the NVVG in 1947. As mentioned in chapter three, the associations that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s were a result of personal initiatives of former forced laborers or their children, not of politics. With the exception of a couple of individual memoirs and information in academic publications²⁷⁶, forced labor was not widely known. That explains why all the associations started to collect individual memories on a large scale in the 1980s and 1990s, also because it would not be long before the eyewitnesses would pass away. So in order to complete the academic information on forced labor and to obtain recognition, the Dutch forced labor associations intensively used collected individual memories. Publications such as *Werken in Duitsland 1940-1945* (1990), *Onder een stolp van kwaad* (1995), *Sporen die bleven* (1996), and *De verzwegen deportatie* (2005) are examples of such collections.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Quereillahc, *Mémoires de la déportation du travail en Allemagne nazie*, archives et mémoires.

²⁷⁶ The most important publication about forced labor during WWII was *De arbeidsinzet* by Ben Sijes. Furthermore, the Dutch historian Van Randwijk wrote about the forced laborers in the third part of *Onderdrukking en verzet. Nederland in Oorlogstijd* (1950) and the Dutch historian Lou de Jong in his publication *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Twee Wereldoorlog* (1969-1994).

²⁷⁷ Karel Volder, *Werken in Duitsland 1940-1945* (Bedum, 1990); Aafke Steenhuis, *Onder een stolp van kwaad* (VDN publication, Apeldoorn, 1995); A.P.M. Cammaert, *Sporen die bleven* (Helden 1996, reprint 2005); Arend Jan Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie: Apeldoornse nachtmerrie in Rees* (Apeldoorn, 2005)

As a consequence, the memories produced by associations also depended largely on those collected individual memories.

Anticipating on the next chapter, it seems that narratives of influential individuals of Dutch forced labor associations have become more important in public memories produced by associations than the discussed influential French individuals. Exhibitions form a perfect illustration of this difference. The exhibition of the French federation of 1985 contained prominent panels about the honor of the forced laborers, the *'bilan'*, and postwar commemorations. A departmental exhibition of the Tarn in 2015 focused relatively more on individual memories. There was, however, not one individual that stood out or functioned as the main theme or narrative of the exhibition.²⁷⁸ This formed a contrast with the role of individuals in Dutch exhibitions. A great part of the VDN exhibition of 1992 was devoted to the personal experiences of Aart Pontier. Also in the regional museum *'t land van Peel & Maas*, the story of Leo Steeghs functions as a guiding line and the SDA exhibition starts with the story of Arend Jan Disberg.²⁷⁹ The exhibitions support the hypothesis of this thesis that certain individuals in Dutch forced labor associations have been more influential in the creation of collective memories by forced labor associations than individuals in French associations.

This thesis can also be grounded by the example of individual memories of VDN president Aart Pontier. Pontier worked in *Lager Kinzig* from 1943 to 1945. His influential memories concerned the 'heaviness' and 'arbitrary way' in which forced laborers were treated.²⁸⁰ It is certainly plausible that this memory influenced the VDN's focus on German discipline and its emphasis that little resistance was possible. What is also interesting about the memories of Pontier is that they are very diverse. On the one hand, Pontier remembered the poor situation in the camp, the hard work, discipline, and bombardments. On the other hand, he also elaborated on his friendship with workers from other countries, pleasant moments they shared together, and the relatively good administrative job he got during his stay.²⁸¹ The next chapter will elaborate on how this discourse of diverse experiences also became part of VND memories in addition to the focus on victimhood. The individual memory of Jan de Louter of the SDA forms another example of Dutch influential individual memories. De Louter's memories of loneliness during the round-ups in Apeldoorn and in the

²⁷⁸ Material about the 2015 exhibition of the Departmental Association of the Tarn was given to me by the departmental president Robert Lassevaine.

²⁷⁹ Private Archives of the ex-FNDT, photos of the exhibition of 1985; NIOD, 294, 86
Correspondentie en documentatie betreffende tentoonstellingen, 1992-1995, Winterswijk 1992; Visit to the Regional Museum *'t land van Peel & Maas* on 29 March 2017; Visit to the exhibition of the SDA on the *Erevelde* in Loenen on 4 March 2017.

²⁸⁰ NIOD, 294, 86, a couple of newspaper articles, *Tubantia* (13 April 1992).

²⁸¹ Pontier and Braedts, *Lager Kinzig*, 50-160.

German camp as well as his memory of a line of trees which are the only original remains of the former camp have become part of the collective memory of the SDA.²⁸²

Specific individual French memories are less visible in associative memories than individual Dutch memories. This does not mean, however, that individuals have not functioned as agencies for narratives within French associations. An interesting example of how influential individuals of the federation (unconsciously) shaped the common image of forced labor victims has been described by French scholars. They stated that due to an overrepresentation of active FNMT members who belonged to the young middle class and went to Germany as students in 1943²⁸³, the student requisitioned in 1943 became the typical STO victim in the collective memory of the (ex-)FNMT. This selective narrative often excluded the working man who was requisitioned in 1942 from the collective memories on forced labor in Nazi Germany.²⁸⁴ An almost similar observation in collective memories produced by Dutch associations can be made. In the collective memories of the VDN, the typical victim of forced labor became a requisitioned student.²⁸⁵ In the SDOL and SDA, the typical victim became a (too) young boy arrested during the round-ups in 1944.²⁸⁶ Similar to the memories of the FNMT, unemployed forced laborers, older working class forced laborers, or women, are often ignored in the collective memories of Dutch associations.

The sum of individual memories within regional or departmental organizations have also functioned as agencies. Their individual memories might have resulted (unconsciously) in misrepresentations about the history of forced labor in general. The Dutch regional associations form an example hereof. Especially due to individual memories within the SDOL, and to a lesser extent due to memories of the SDA, a collective memory of forced labor might have been spread in which the history of forced labor is reduced to the round-ups in 1944. This selective memory excluded earlier elements of the *Arbeitseinsatz* such as the draft-year and factory actions.²⁸⁷ A similar 'regional agency' has probably occurred in French departmental associations. For example, the exhibition of the department of the Tarn,

²⁸² The narratives of loneliness and the line of trees became clear during a conversation with Jan de Louter on 4 March 2017. The same narratives also recurred in conversations I had with members of the SDA and the OVVG, and in OVVG, *Het Arbeitslager Groin (Kamp Rees) en de slachtofferhulp* (Megchelen, 1995), 65; Omroep Gelderland, *75 jaar vrijheid* (13 March 2017), <<http://www.omroep gelderland.nl/tv/programma/228190140/75-jaar-vrijheid/aflevering/919625573>> [consulted on 14 March 2017].

²⁸³ See also the discussed memoirs of Quereilhac and Texier.

²⁸⁴ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1107; Arnaud, *Les STO*, 602.

²⁸⁵ See for instance Frans Penders, *Het Slavenhuis. Hoe was het leven van een dwangarbeider in de Tweede Wereldoorlog?* (Published by the VDN, the Hague, 1993); Documentary *Een koffer in Berlijn. Het verhaal van twee dwangarbeiders in woi.* (RVU, 1996).

²⁸⁶ See for instance Ton van Reen, *Gestolen Jeugd* (Breda, 2001); Arend Jan Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie: Apeldoornse nachtmerrie in Rees* (Apeldoorn, 2005).

²⁸⁷ See for instance the information in and around the 'deportation room' in the regional museum 't Land van Peel & Maas in Helden or the exhibition of the SDA.

which incorporated many individual stories, might have given the unjust impression that almost all forced laborers departed with the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse*.²⁸⁸ This was, however, more often the case in Vichy France.²⁸⁹

The analysis of individual memories of influential members of forced labor associations demonstrated how they, on the one hand, have been influenced by the historical context in which the individual memories were formed and by discourses of associations. On the other hand, the personal narratives of individual members have also functioned as agencies for the memories produced by associations. Because of this interaction between individual and collective memories, it is difficult to reconstruct to what extent memories of associations have been influenced by individual experiences and societal and political contexts. A combination of both seems most plausible. However, the comparison of French and Dutch memories might yet give more insight in this question. This chapter showed how memories of French forced labor associations have been influenced more by societal and political circumstances and memories of Dutch association more by the collection of individual stories. The theory of Assmann about collective memory forms an effective tool to understand this difference.²⁹⁰ Within all associations of forced labor, memories were often transmitted within families from one generation to another and are thus inter-generational. French associative memories are, however, also created through a top-down structure of political and judicial debates. Assmann would probably describe them as ‘political/institutionalized memories’. Dutch associative memories, on the contrary, come closer to what Assmann describes as ‘social memories’ because they were more influenced by a bottom-up than a top-down process.

²⁸⁸ The *Chantiers de la Jeunesse* was a paramilitary organization that existed in France between 1940 and 1944. Because the occupation in 1940 turned down the obligatory military service, this ambiguous institution for the French youth was urged by the Vichy regime.

²⁸⁹ Material about the 2015 exhibition of the Departmental Association of the Tarn was given to me by the departmental president Robert Lassevaine.

²⁹⁰ See Assmann, ‘Re-framing memory’, 35-50.

Chapter 6 Cultural and Public Memories of Forced Labor

The previous chapters demonstrated how memories of forced labor have been influenced by political and societal circumstances as well as individual experiences. This chapter analyzes collective memories of forced labor associations more in detail as it investigates their cultural or public memories: memories that were communicated to a broader audience through brochures, newspapers, books, exhibitions, and educational projects. In France, public memories were produced from 1945 onward, but the private archives of the (ex-)FNDDT seem to suggest that the federation became more active in spreading its memories of forced labor to a broader public from the 1980s onward.²⁹¹ The traveling exhibition of 1985, forty years after the end of WWII, illustrates this development.²⁹² In general, the development towards the creation of public memories might also be explained by the increasing (inter)national attention for WWII since the 1970s. As the VDN, SDOL, and SDA were precisely founded in this context, they have always focused on public opinion.

This investigation of cultural memories joins the existing literature about international war-memories as it demonstrates how the diverging national post-war contexts of France and the Netherlands have resulted in different memory cultures.²⁹³ In addition, the comparative study of sources that have not been researched before complements the French and Dutch historiographies on the topic. For France, this concerns more insight in unique and singular aspects of collective memories as produced by the federation. For the Netherlands, new narratives and discourses will be revealed. These conclusions will be proven by the first and second part of this chapter. Firstly, general narratives, discourses, and terms will be compared. Secondly, three specific memories that have not been mentioned so far will be discussed. By means of putting the cultural memories as produced by associations into perspective, the third part briefly elaborates on the reception of associative memories in the media and how different media represent forced laborers.

6.1 General Narratives of Forced Labor and Laborers

How do forced labor associations present the history of forced labor and forced laborers to a wider public? Four main themes will be explored to compare the Dutch and French cultural memories: the question of voluntary workers, terminology, responsibility, and locations (places) of forced labor.

²⁹¹ Another possibility is that public memories before the 1980s have not been preserved. However, the increasing public attention for WWII since the 1970s makes it plausible that the federation became more focused on a larger audience from the 1980s onward.

²⁹² Private Archives of the ex-FNDDT, information on the exhibition of 1985.

²⁹³ See for instance, Van Vree and Van der Laarse, *Dynamiek van de herinnering*, 9-11.

6.1.1 Time Frame: Voluntary versus Compulsory

In French collective memory, a strict division exists between the voluntary phase and the compulsory phase. The voluntary phase started in October 1940 when the German occupier launched a propaganda campaign to attract laborers. It also includes the *Relève* of June 1942, when the Vichy regime ‘negotiated’ that French workers who would go voluntarily to Germany, could liberate PoWs (picture 15). The forced phase started with the law of 4 September 1942 when the draft-year actions were launched. This phase also includes the STO-law of February 1943 and law of February 1944, when enterprises were combed out. In the memory of the federation and the association, disseminated to the public by brochures, exhibitions, and memorials, the first phase serves as a prehistory that is necessary to understand the second phase or in other words: the actual labor deportation.²⁹⁴ It is consequently emphasized that the volunteers never had a place in the federation or association.²⁹⁵ With regard to the forced phase, the FNDDT and the AMDTF often rightly underlined that the resistance was not organized yet in 1942 and 1943 and that families were threatened if a conscript did not show up.²⁹⁶ The Belgian historian Lagrou explained that the distinction between voluntary and forced laborers was not made immediately after the war. The repatriation minister Frénay, for instance, actually protected the voluntary workers because he resisted all categorical discrimination among repatriates. However, the described hierarchy of victims and related patriotic context changed this situation of equality.²⁹⁷ Lagrou adequately phrased this change within the FNDDT by stating that: “the price of the entrance ticket into the patriotic club was an internal purge of all voluntary workers”.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ See for instance Private Archives of the ex-FNDDT, circular letter of 13 February 1985 on the traveling exhibition *Un livre blanc* (1987), 5-12; Monument on *Père Lachaise*, picture 1; A brochure about an exhibition of the Departmental Association of the Tarn (2015) by the departmental president Robert Lassevaine.

²⁹⁵ l’Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi Nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail*, 12; *Un livre blanc* (1987), 5; Conversations with Michel Catala and Nicole Godard (14 April 2017).

²⁹⁶ See for example Private Archives of the ex-FNDDT, information about the commemoration in 1990; Conversation with Nicole Godard (3 April 2017).

²⁹⁷ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 152, 160-163.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 184.



Picture 15 – A propaganda poster for the *Relève* in June 1942. Translation of the text: ‘You have the keys of the camps. French workers, you liberate the prisoners working in Germany’.
Source: *Un livre blanc sur une période noir* (1987), 5.

In the Netherlands, the division between a voluntary and forced phase was never so strictly emphasized. This can be illustrated by discussions that took place within the International Confederation of Deported Workers in 1989. The Belgian and the French association were only willing to accept the VDN if there were no volunteers in their union.²⁹⁹ This was accepted by the VDN, but in a letter to the Belgian president, the VDN explained that the situation in the Netherlands had been different because unemployed workers were already forced to go to Germany in 1940.³⁰⁰ In public memories, the VDN also emphasized that people were already forced to work in Germany in the 1930s and that the voluntary phase that existed before the *Arbeitseinsatz* was not as voluntary as often described.³⁰¹ Although the VDN gave most attention to compulsory labor, including the draft-year actions after 1942, the difficulty of going into hiding, and the round-ups in 1944, its official discourse contained a wider and more nuanced definition of compulsory labor than the French federation. In contrast to its French counterpart, the VDN also considered forced labor as an event that occurred during the entire war, from 1940 to 1945, instead of placing the beginning of forced labor from 1942 onwards like the FNDDT has done.³⁰²

This difference can be explained by the diverging war histories of the two countries, but an important part of the explanation also lies in (national) postwar contexts. The VDN was founded in a time in which war memories became more pluralistic, humanistic, and nuanced. The focus on victimhood explains why it was possible for the VDN to consider the more ‘voluntary’ workers also as victims.³⁰³ Moreover, the VDN narrative was also influenced by the historian Sijes and other Dutch academics who had written about the topic

²⁹⁹ NIOD, 294, 77, Report of a meeting in Brussels on 15 December 1989.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, Letter of 30 November 1989 to the president of the Belgian forced labor association.

³⁰¹ NIOD, 294, 86, information about the exhibition of 1992 ‘Slavenwerk in Duitsland 1940-1945’; Spanjer, *Vergeeten doen ze echter nooit*, 6-7.

³⁰² See for instance the exhibition of 1992 (NIOD, 294, 86), the monument in Overloon, or the name and monument of the SDA.

³⁰³ Van Vree and Van der Laarse, *De dynamiek van de herinnering*, 32-38.

in a nuanced and non-condemnatory way.³⁰⁴ Because it was much later when French historians became interested in the history of forced labor, they did not influence the French memories so much as Dutch historians did.

Similar to the FNDD after its purge of voluntary workers, the NVVG, whose discourse was also not influenced by historical research, also had little respect for the voluntary workers. However, the first Dutch association contained a more nuanced vision on the voluntary phase as it considered it impossible for bigger families to have avoided deportation.³⁰⁵ This more nuanced attitude might be explained by the fact that in the Dutch postwar society, there has been no competition between different deportees as was the case in France. The competition among French repatriates forms an important explanation of why the distinction of voluntary versus compulsory deportation became so important in French public memories. The unemployed workers who left before 1942 illustrate this difference. The unemployment in France was not as high as in the Netherlands. As a result, less French than Dutch workers left ‘voluntary’. However, in contrast to the NVVG, the (ex-)FNDD maintained the strict distinction and considered all unemployed workers who left as volunteers.³⁰⁶

For the two Dutch regional associations, the distinction between a voluntary or compulsory departure is less evident, because they mainly focused on the round-ups in 1944. As it was impossible to escape these razzias,³⁰⁷ the deportation of ‘their’ forced laborers is always presented as a compulsory labor requisitioning. In many public representations, such as exhibitions, the round-ups in 1944 became the main context in which forced labor is presented. As discussed in the previous chapter, the complete history of the *Arbeitseinsatz* is not always part of their memory.³⁰⁸ Because these public memories often ignore the history of volunteers, they could give public opinion the wrong impression that all workers were forced to go to Germany. Nonetheless, the memories produced by the SDOL and SDOL associations still correspond to the memories of the VDN as they all, in contrast to the French associations, have not emphasized a strict difference between the voluntary and obligatory phase of forced labor during WWII.

³⁰⁴ See for instance NIOD, 294, 77, Letter of 30 November 1989 to the president of the Belgian forced labor association.

³⁰⁵ NA, 2.04.80, 3658, Geheim – Verslag van openbare vergadering van arbeiders, die tijdens den oorlog in Duitsland hebben gewerkt, welke bijeenkomst door het Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerepatrieerden was georganiseerd, op vrijdag 13 september 1946 te Groningen; Verslag van een openbare vergadering op zaterdag 16 maart 1946 in de Schouwburg te Heereveen.

³⁰⁶ *Un livre blanc* (1987), 5.

³⁰⁷ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 140.

³⁰⁸ See for instance the exhibition of the SDOL in the regional museum ‘t Land van Peel & Maas; <<http://kerkrazzia.nl/>> [consulted on 8 May 2017]; ‘Stichting Dwangarbeiders Apeldoorn 1940-1945’, <<http://dwangarbeidersapeldoorn.nl/>> [consulted on 22 May 2017]. The exhibition of the SDA in Loenen (February/March 2017) forms an exception as its first panel briefly addresses the history of the *Arbeitseinsatz* before 1944.

6.1.2 Terminology and General Image of Forced Labor

Memories on voluntary and compulsory labor focus on the moment when workers departed. But which general images of forced labor in Nazi Germany have associations disseminated? In answering this question, terms used by associations serve as a good starting point. All public memories have described forced labor as ‘slavery’. This term was first used by the Allies in 1944.³⁰⁹ Postwar French and Dutch associations especially used the words ‘slavery’, ‘slave-market’, and ‘slavery work’ to state that the laborers were not free. The slave-terminology also described the arbitrary measures of Germans and the horrific circumstances in which they often had to work.³¹⁰

As chapter 3 and 4 demonstrated, the greatest difference between French and Dutch terminology in collective memory is that Dutch associations aimed at recognition for victims of forced labor whereas the French federation aimed at recognition for victims of labor deportation. For the French workers, the recognition of a deported victim (instead of a victim of forced labor³¹¹) would have meant a higher position in the hierarchy of victims. Correspondence between the VDN and the FNVRCNTF perfectly illustrated the diverging national interpretations of those terms. Pontier namely wrote in 1995: “In our correspondences, the Dutch government now uses the words ‘Forced Laborer’ which was impossible some years ago. We have not heard yet the word ‘Deportee’ from the side of the government, but we use it in our correspondences and it is never protested”.³¹² Pontier showed that a political or societal discussion about the term ‘deportee’ was absent in the Netherlands. In fact, the SDOL and SDA have also used the term ‘deportation’, but, in contrast to France, it also never caused debate. The terms ‘deportee’ or ‘forced laborer’ seem(ed) interchangeable for Dutch associations. In the twenty-first century, when the term ‘forced laborer’ had become more widely accepted, forced laborers are also often just called

³⁰⁹ Thonfeld, *Rehabilitierte Erinnerungen*, 40.

³¹⁰ See for instance Penders, *Het Slavenhuis* (1993); NIOD, 294, 86, information on the exhibition of 1992 ‘Slavenwerk in Duitsland 1940-1945’; Peter de Graaf, ‘Het was daar gewoon een slavenmarkt’, in: *Volkskrant* (8 October 2004), <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief/-het-was-daar-gewoon-een-slavenmarkt~a680772>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; ‘Lesbrief Project Herdenking Grote Kerkrazzia’s’, <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl/Lesbrief%20GK.pdf>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; Sonnemans, *Over gestolen jeugd*, 13; Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 157; *Le D.T.* (April/May 1958); l’Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail*, 16; Documentary *Avoir 20 ans sous l’occupation* (Jérôme Lambert and Philippe Picard, France 2, 2011); *Le Proscrit* (third trimester, 2012).

³¹¹ The title the French deported workers obtained in 2008, see chapter 4.

³¹² NIOD, 294, 77, A letter of Aart Pontier to the FNVRCNTF, 14 January 1995. Original citation : ‘Dans la correspondance, le gouvernement hollandais emploie maintenant aussi le mot ‘Travailleur Forcé’ ce qui était impossible quelques années auparavant. Nous n’avons pas encore entendu le mot ‘Déporté’ de la part du gouvernement mais nous l’employons dans notre correspondance et ce n’a jamais été contredit.’

‘victims’ (picture 16).³¹³ The French federation almost always used the word ‘deported laborers’ until the federation had to change its name in the 1980s. As explained in chapter 4, the federation and the recent associations nonetheless still used the officially forbidden words.³¹⁴ However, the terms ‘STO’ and ‘forced labor’ became more and more common since the 1980s.³¹⁵



Picture 16 – The text on the monument in Megchelen (2010) refers to forced laborers of Camp Rees with the term ‘victims’ (*slachtoffers* in Dutch and *Opfer* in German) in the first place
Photo: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (12 March 2017).

The terminology of associations can be related to the general image associations have disseminated on labor in the Third Reich. When the French federation combated for the title of deportee, the memories on forced labor that they spread focused on the history of a dark (and forgotten) period: laborers suffered in Germany due to hunger, illness, and, after the second half of 1944, to bombardments and isolation³¹⁶. The changed name of the journal *Le Proscrit* forms an example of this narrative as it referred to a state of banishment, deportation and a lot of pain, suffering, and isolation.³¹⁷ In addition, the publicly recalled memories on forced labor often contained a binary opposition: the discourse of suffering represented one side; the other concerned moments of hope, the refusal of giving up, resistance and patriotism, and solidarity with others in the camp. The exhibition of 1985 and

³¹³ See for instance the SDA text on the monument in Megchelen (picture 16); ‘GLD Vandaag’ (News emission Omroep Gelderland, 12 March 2017); ‘Herdenking 02-12-2016 te Apeldoorn’, <<http://dwangarbeidersapeldoorn.nl/2016/12/herdenking-02-12-2016-te-apeldoorn/>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; ‘Lesbrief Project Herdenking Grote Kerkrazzia’s’, <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl/Lesbrief%20GK.pdf>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; Sonnemans, *Over gestolen jeugd*, 6-9; ‘Achtergrondinformatie’, <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl>> [consulted on 23 May 2017].

³¹⁴ See for instance also the Private archives of the ex-FNDT, information about the exhibition of 1985. A circular letter of 13 February 1985 mentions that a part of the exhibition will concern the ‘Déportation du Travail’; or the information on the commemorations in 1987.

³¹⁵ See for instance *Le D.T.* (June 1983); *Le D.T.* (May 1985); The commemorative plaque at Gare d’Orsay 1989 (picture 12); *Le Proscrit* (May 1995); Brochure ‘1945 Memorial 1995 Les oubliés de l’Histoire’, edited by la Fédération Nationale and l’Association du Tarn des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé (Graulhet, 1995); *Le Proscrit* (first trimister 2005); *Le Proscrit* (September 2015); Private Archives of the ex-FNDT, information about Germany, commemorative plaque of 1997, commemorations in 1990, information about Gare de l’Est 1993 (see also picture 13).

³¹⁶ The French forced laborers felt isolated because in contrast to the PoWs, they were not protected by international laws or the Red Cross. Especially after the liberation of France in 1944, the feeling of isolation increased due to the lost contacts with home. See for instance the Documentary *Avoir 20 ans sous l’occupation* (2011).

³¹⁷ See *Le Proscrit* (October 2016).

more recently published posters are good examples of this opposition (picture 17 and 18).³¹⁸ Perhaps because of the fact that the second generation active in the AMDTF is slowly taking over the memory, memories on forced labor have recently become more diverse and nuanced covering ambiguous themes as adventure, *Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, and women (picture 18a).³¹⁹



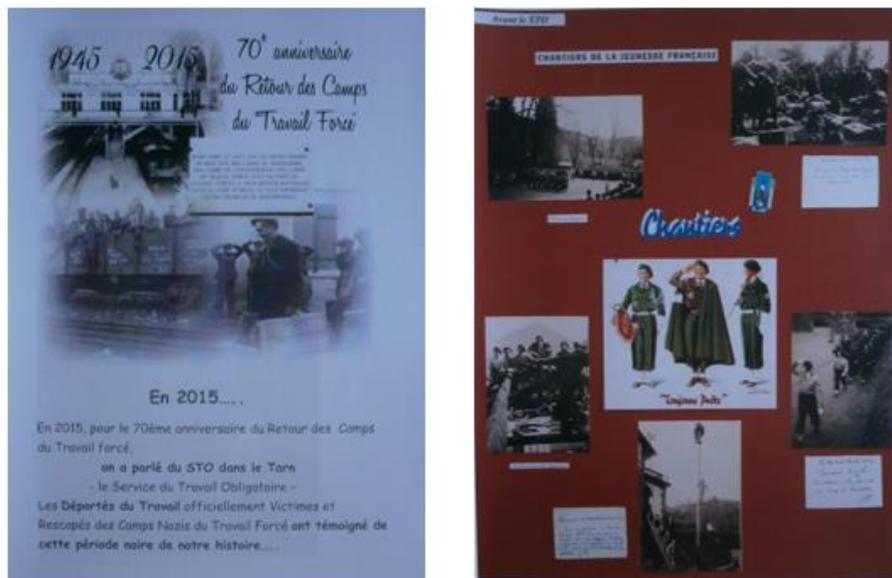
Picture 17 – An overview of the content of the exhibition of 1985 and the front side of a brochure that was given to visitors of the exhibition in Paris. The two photos confirm that the combat of the title of ‘deported worker’, solidarity, resistance, and the honor were still important public discourses in the 1980s. Photos: Private archives of the ex-FNDT.

³¹⁸ See also *Le D.T.* (18 March 1970) and the monument on Père Lachaise; La Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé (ex F.N.D.T.) (ed.), *Un livre blanc sur une période noire* (Paris, 1987); *le Proscrit* (12, 1995); Documentary *Avoir 20 ans sous l'occupation* (Jérôme Lambert and Philippe Picard, France 2, 2011); The brochure and additional information about the exhibition of the Departmental Association of the Tarn (2015).

³¹⁹ A brochure and additional information about an exhibition of the Departmental Association of the Tarn (2015); *Le Proscrit* (April 2016); *Le Proscrit* (March 2017).



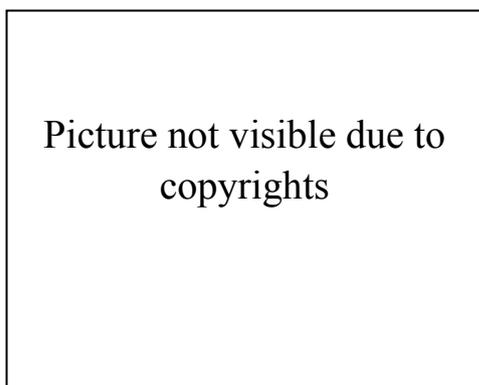
Picture 18 – A poster to promote the website of the French federation and a poster that was published in a brochure about the exhibition of the Departmental Association of the Tarn in 2015. In both publications, the discourse of suffering is disseminated. Photos: Copies of information received from Nicole Godard and Robert Lassevaine.



Picture 18a -The promotion poster for the exhibition that was held in the Department of the Tarn in 2015 and one panel about the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse* . Photos: Copies of information received from Robert Lassevaine in April 2017.

Dutch public memories have been more diverse for a longer time. This can be explained by the absence of a debate on the term ‘deportation’ that has occupied much interest of the French associations, as well as the historical context of victimhood and pluralistic war memories in which Dutch associations emerged, and the importance of individual memories. As discussed in chapter 4, Dutch associations often focused on hard work, humiliation, and the violation of human dignity. An image that the VDN disseminated

with their traveling exhibition in the 1990s visualized this narrative (picture 19).³²⁰ However, the analysis of public and cultural memories also revealed a ‘second memory layer’ with more nuanced and diverse memories of the history of forced labor. As the previous chapter explained, individuals such as Aart Pontier of the VDN, who not only wrote about harsh conditions but also about pleasant moments, might have influenced this narrative. The documentary *Een koffer in Berlijn* (A suitcase in Berlin, 1996) that was produced with the help of the VDN is another example of this diversity. The documentary told the stories of two forced laborers who worked in Berlin. One of them represented a ‘heroic’ memory of sabotage and punishment; the other represented a more tragic memory including his relation with a German women.³²¹ The current SDOL exhibition in Helden about the round-ups in Limburg illustrates the two memory layers. The panels in the hall recall many traumatic events on the deportation and the German industries. The deportation room itself also evokes feelings of isolation, nostalgia, and punishment. However, some photos and objects, for example a little scissors with which a couple of workers had ‘great fun’, recall more pleasant memories (picture 20).³²² It is plausible that, as the generation of forced laborers rapidly disappears, public memories of French and Dutch associations come closer to each other as they both disseminate more diverse and nuanced narratives on forced labor.



Picture 19 – A part of a brochure on forced labor that was produced by the VDN and given to visitors of their exhibition in the 1990s. The picture depicts hard work in industrial areas, German discipline, humiliation of being imprisoned in Germany, and Allied bombardments.

Photo: NIOD, 294, 86.

³²⁰ In addition to chapter 5, see also the school lecture of Kraaijvanger in NIOD, 294, 87 Schoolproject; Private Archives of the ex-SDOL, Helden, inventory 67, ‘Radio Emission ‘Balkon van Limburg’ (L1 Radio, 2 May 2003).

³²¹ Documentary *Een koffer in Berlijn. Het verhaal van twee dwangarbeiders in woi.* (RVU, 1996).

³²² Visit to the regional museum ‘t Land van Peel & Maas on 29 March 2017. Other examples of more nuanced and diverse memories: Gerard Sonnemans, *Over gestolen jeugd* (Breda, 2001); Penders, *Het Slavenhuis* (1993); NIOD, 294, 86, information about the exhibition 1992-1995; NIOD, 294, 87 Schoolproject; Pontier, ‘Vereniging ex-Dwangarbeiders, 116; Disberg, *De verzwegen deportatie*, 36; Exhibition of the SDA on the ‘Ereveld’ in Loenen (4 March 2017).



Picture 20 – Examples of diverse and more nuanced Dutch public memories on forced labor.
 -Up: Two pictures of the SDA exhibition in Loenen, February and March 2017. The hard and cruel work in the German anti-tank ditches and the help of the (German) Eugen Hollaender to the forced laborers in Camp Rees.
 Photos: Private Collection Jeroen van Zijderveld and Collection Susan Scherpenisse (4 March 2017)
 - Below: an impression of the small exhibition in the Regional Museum 't Land van Peel & Maas in Helden. The panels in the hall and the objects exhibited in the deportation room. Photos: Collection Susan Scherpenisse (29 March 2017).

6.1.2 Responsibility and Locations of Forced Labor

Two memories that will probably remain different in France and the Netherlands concern the question of national responsibility and references to forced labor locations. In France, the STO took place with the collaboration of the Vichy Regime. It is interesting that even though the collaboration of the Vichy Regime only slowly entered the collective French memory from the 1970s onward, and in particular with the publication of Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy* in 1987, the FNDT already pointed towards the co-responsibility of the Vichy Regime in the 1960s.³²³ However, the references to Vichy, Pétain, and Laval became more frequent from the 1990s onward, when Vichy became a part of French collective war memory. The French forced labor associations presented the history of forced labor as a crime of Nazi Germany and Vichy France. Nowadays, in for instance their newsletters and speeches, the

³²³ Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present* (Redwood City, 2012), 170-179; l'Association Départementale de la Seine des Déportés du Travail et Réfractaires, *Pourquoi Nous sommes des Victimes de la Déportation du Travail*, 9-11, 15.

AMDTF especially emphasizes and condemns the French particularity of the collaboration of Vichy compared to other European countries.³²⁴

Although Dutch Labor Offices did not collaborate with Nazi Germany on the same scale as Vichy France, the offices did have a certain responsibility in the forced labor requisition.³²⁵ However, in memories created and disseminated by the three recent Dutch associations, references to the responsibility of the Dutch Labor Offices have been very rare.³²⁶ Only immediately after the war, the NVVG narrated about the responsibility of Dutch Labor Offices. Encouraged by their frustration about the postwar repatriation and the fact that many officials of the Labor Offices had not been replaced, NVVG members often criticized the attitude of the *Arbeidsbureaus*.³²⁷ In the 1980s and 1990s, when the new associations were founded, those frustrations were subordinated to frustrations about not being recognized as victims. These different national contexts explain why the VDN, SDOL, and SDA do not often point towards culprits of the forced labor requisitioning (e.g. Sauckel or Dutch Labor Offices).

The second diverging memory between France and the Netherlands concerns places laborers were requisitioned. As most forced laborers ended up in factories, public memories disseminated by French and Dutch associations narrate in the first place about work in factories. However, by taking other places where laborers were sent to into account, a remarkable difference appears. As the previous chapter demonstrated, French associations have sometimes referred to concentration camps, whereas the Dutch counterparts have not. Memories of Dutch associations rather recalled farms. In their public narratives, the possibility of ending up at a farm has often served to illustrate the exceptional, lucky fate of a minority of forced laborers.³²⁸ This discourse fits better in the national context of more pluralistic and nuanced war memories that influenced Dutch associations.

³²⁴ See for instance *Le D.T.* (May 1985); Private archives of the FNDDT, information on the exhibition in 1985 and the commemoration of 1995; *Un livre blanc*, 47; *Le Proscrit* (May 1993); Discours of Forest in L'histoire en Direct, Radio *France Culture*, 1993; *Le Proscrit* (May 1995); Quereilhac, *Le STO pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 13; Documentary *Avoir 20 ans sous l'occupation* (2011); *Le Proscrit* (third trimester 2012); Conversations with members of the AMDTF before the commemoration in Dortmund (14 April 2017) and a conversation with Michel Catala (2 June 2017).

³²⁵ In contrast to other actions of labor requisitioning, the round-ups in 1944 were accomplished outside of the Dutch Labor Offices. Source: Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet*, 682.

³²⁶ The SDA exhibition in Loenen which refers explicitly to the co-responsibility of the Dutch *Arbeidsbureaus* forms an exception. This can be explained by the fact that the exhibition is not only set up by the SDA but in collaboration with the Oorlogsgravenstichting.

³²⁷ NA, 2.04.80, 3658, Verslag van een openbare vergadering, gehouden op Woensdag, 30 Januari 1946 te Utrecht; Geheim – Verslag van een openbare vergadering, gehouden op Woensdag 24 juli 1946 in Utrecht; Geheim – Verslag van openbare vergadering van arbeiders, die tijdens den oorlog in Duitsland hebben gewerkt, welke bijeenkomst door het Nederlandsch Verbond van Gerepatrieerden was georganiseerd. Vrijdag 13 september 1946 te Groningen.

³²⁸ See for instance the exhibition in the regional museum 't Land van Peel & Maas; Documentary *In het zicht van de bevrijding* of the SDOL; 'Achtergrondinformatie' and 'Docentenhandleiding voor tentoonstelling 'Deporatie en bevrijding'', <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; NIOD, 294, 86, information about the exhibition.

6.2 Specific National and Regional Memory Characteristics

Memories that have been discussed so far demonstrated similar and diverging ways of remembering in France and the Netherlands. This part aims to do justice to three particular and important memory-discourses that have not been discussed so far: 1) the French emphasis on friendship, brotherhood, and solidarity, 2) catholic discourses of the FNNDT, and 3) the attention for ‘stragglers’ within the SDOL.

6.2.1 Friendship, Brotherhood, Solidarity, and Lourdes

The journals *Le D.T.* and *Le Proscrit*, public and commemorative discourses, and many other publications of the French federation and the current association have been filled with references to friendship, brotherhood, and solidarity.³²⁹ President Jean-Louis Forest, for example, often started his speeches with the words “*Frère, je te salue*”.³³⁰ The term ‘brother’ probably referred to all French forced laborers: the ones who deceased in the Third Reich and the ones who survived. In Dutch associations, brotherhood and friendship have also played an important role. This can be illustrated by the amicable relations between members of the SDA and people in Rees.³³¹ There is, however, a difference discourses of friendship, brotherhood, and solidarity as pronounced by the (ex-)FNNDT and the VDN, SDOL, and SDA. Whereas all focus on valuable postwar relations, the French federation has also remembered moments of solidarity and friendship among forced laborers *during* the war. Recent Dutch memories, on the contrary, focus more on individuals and less on camaraderie during the war.³³² It is true that the individual memories of camp Rees include many valuable friendships. Those memories are, however, not often recalled in the public memories of the SDA.³³³

³²⁹ See for instance *Déporté du Travail du Loret* (January 1948); *Le D.T.* (September/October 1957); *Le D.T.* (April/May 1958); *Le D.T.* (11 May 1970); *Le Proscrit* (N12, 1995); Preface of Forest in Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique*, 7-8; *Le Proscrit* (third and fourth semester, 2008); Speech of Nicole Godard, given at the ceremony in Dortmund on 14 April 2017; Private Archives of the ex-FNNDT, Disque Souvenir de la Commémoration du XXe Anniversaire de la Libération des Camps de Travail Forcé et du Retour (13 Juin 1965), letters about the commemorations in 1985, information about pilgrimages to Lourdes (1946, 1989, 2005)

³³⁰ ‘Brother, I greet you’ (see for instance *Le D.T.* (28 August 1970).

³³¹ Observations during the remembrance March from Rees to Megchelen on 12 March 2017. For other examples of Dutch associations see the documentary *Salzgitter* (2014) of the SDOL or speeches of Pontier in the VDN archive, NIOD, 294.

³³² The individual memory of Pontier is one of the exceptions as (international) friendship constitutes an important part of his memory. See Aart Pontier and Karel Braet (eds.), *Lager Kinzig. Twee jaar gedwongen arbeid in Nazi-Duitsland 1943-1945* (Winterswijk, 1991).

³³³ See Disberg, *De verzwegene deportatie*, 138-269 for the individual memories of forced laborers in Rees from Apeldoorn. See the exhibition in Loenen (February and March 2017), ‘GLD Vandaag’ (News emission Omroep Gelderland, 12 March 2017) or ‘75 jaar Vrijheid’, (Omroep Gelderland, 13 March 2017), <<http://www.omroep gelderland.nl/tv/programma/228190140/75-jaar-vrijheid/aflevering/919625573>> [consulted on 24 May 2017] for examples of public memories where friendship does not play an important role.

Before they were deported to Germany, the majority of forced laborers did not know each other. So in a way, the war gave the diverse group of workers a common identity. Immediately after the war, the FNDD and the NVVG rallied forced laborers and their families and attempted to maintain this common identity to which they referred as ‘friendship that was born in slavery’.³³⁴ As a consequence, discourses of ‘brotherhood in misery’³³⁵ became very common. As discussed earlier, the public discourse of solidarity and friendship in the camps often served as a contrast to the miseries and suffering of forced laborers. The individual memories of Quereillahc and Texier also illustrate this discourse. Quereillahc dedicated the first edition of his memoirs (1958) to his “companions in times of misery”.³³⁶ In the memoirs of Texier (1999), friendship formed the central theme. Texier stated that he has never forgotten the brotherhood in Pomerania.³³⁷ He even wrote the majority of his memoirs in the ‘we-form’. It is very plausible that this discourse of friendship, brotherhood, and solidarity was not only born out of a common fate or individual experiences, but that it also served another goal, namely: maintaining the unity among the forced laborers which would strengthen their combat for the title.

The fact that the Dutch forced labor associations did not have a similar combat explains the absence of friendship in war-memories. However, the fact that the discourse of friendship was actually present in memories of the NVVG³³⁸, also points towards another or complementary explanation: the long absence of a social community for forced laborers. When the Dutch associations were founded, many forced laborers had lost contacts for more than forty or even fifty years. Although they found each other again and built up new friendships, their relations differ from the longer friendships of (ex-)FNDD members. Moreover, the importance of individual and personal memories as discussed in the previous chapter also explains the lack of memories of solidarity during the war. Thus, this specific Dutch postwar context, including many years in which forced laborers lived separately, explains why recent Dutch public memories do not mention brotherhood and solidarity during the war.

There is another important aspect of the French associative memory-culture that has been under-exposed so far, which also highlights the solidarity among French forced laborers during the war. This concerns a Catholic memory culture, and more specifically, pilgrimages to Lourdes. As the historian Arnaud concluded, Catholic memories are well-represented in

³³⁴ See NA, 2.04.80, 3658, ‘Verslag van een openbare vergadering, gehouden op Woensdag, 30 Januari 1946, te Utrecht, original complete citation: ‘Het doel is: de belangen van het gezin naar voren te brengen en de onderlinge, in de slavernij geboren, vriendschap in stand te houden’. See also Private Archives of the ex-FNDD, Congrès National 1945.

³³⁵ See for instance, *Le D.T.* (11 May 1970), original citation: ‘la fraternité de la misère’.

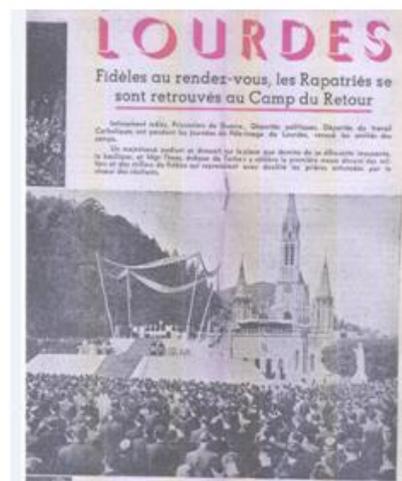
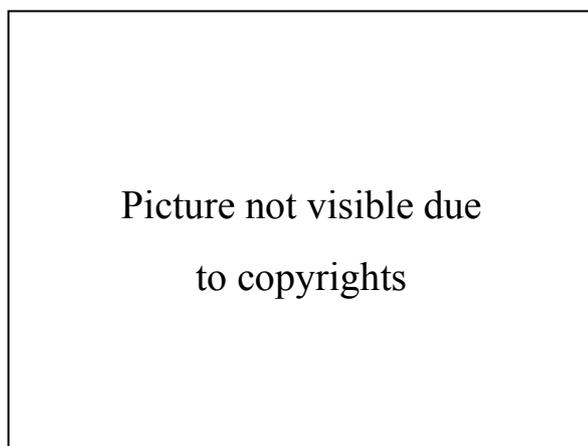
³³⁶ Quereillahc, *J'étais STO*, 8. Original citation: ‘compagnons du temps de misère’.

³³⁷ Texier, *De la Vendée à la Baltique*, 9.

³³⁸ NA, 2.04.80, 3658, ‘Verslag van een openbare vergadering, gehouden op Woensdag, 30 Januari 1946, te Utrecht.

French individual accounts (see figure 3, chapter 5).³³⁹ This is partly a result of the fact that many workers went to Germany with the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* (Young Christian Workers, JOC) or its mother-organization the Catholic Action. The Catholic Action and the JOC respectively originated from the end of the nineteenth century and the 1920s. Both aimed at strengthening the Catholic influence on society. Catholic members did not only go to Germany as a consequence of the measures taken by Sauckel and Vichy France (especially the JOC was hardly hit by the draft-year actions), but they also went on voluntary basis to evangelize the disoriented workers abroad. In order to defend their wartime decisions after the war, the Catholic Church stimulated historical and hagiographic publications which resulted in a Catholic resistance myth in which Catholic workers were often presented as martyrs.³⁴⁰

Although the FNDDT was officially non-religious, the Catholic workers left a mark on their memory-culture. Sometimes, the FNDDT referred to forced labor victims as ‘martyrs’.³⁴¹ Furthermore, the federation became active in Catholic pilgrimages to Lourdes. The initiative of the first pilgrimage, that took place in September 1946, probably goes back to a promise to go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes that was made among forced laborers during their time in the Third Reich (picture 21).³⁴² The first pilgrimage was a joint initiative of the French repatriates and friendships born in the camps formed an important theme (picture 22).³⁴³ However, because the repatriates grew apart, the joint initiative was not repeated.



Picture 21 (left) - A photo, originally taken by Jean A. Fortier, published in the book *Images des grandes vacances* (1946) about the first pilgrimage in September 1946.

Photo: l'Agence A.B.C. (rights reserved)

Picture 22 (right) – Abstract of *Le D.T.* (October 1946) about the first pilgrimage of all the repatriates to Lourdes in 1946.

³³⁹ Arnaud, *Les STO*, 573-577.

³⁴⁰ Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, 145-147; Arnaud, *Les STO*, 573-583.

³⁴¹ See for instance *Le D.T.* (9 June 1965); Quereilhac, *Le STO pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 322.

³⁴² See also Private Archives of the ex-FNDDT, information about Lourdes 1977.

³⁴³ *Le D.T.* (October 1946).

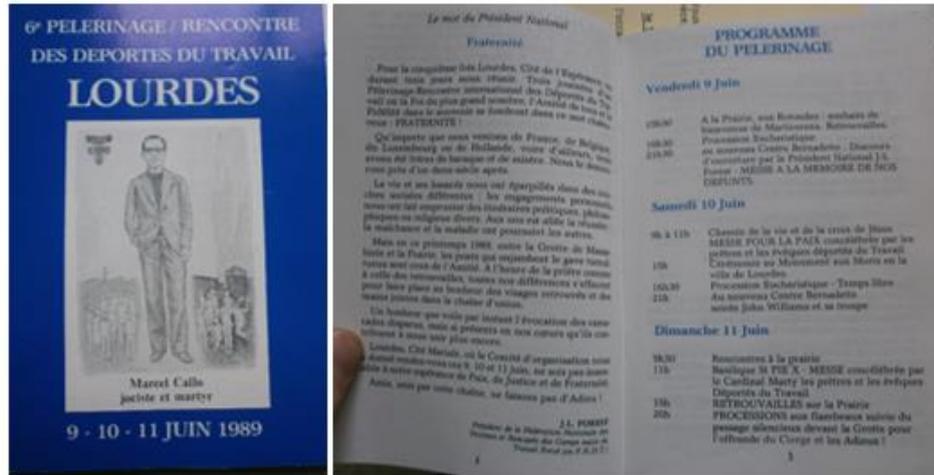
In 1977, the FNNDT decided to organize a similar pilgrimage to Lourdes, but this time without the other repatriates. It is not known why the pilgrimage was organized in that year, but the French historian Spina mentioned that the FNNDT presented the pilgrimage as a moment for all forced labor comrades to find each other again and to strengthen the power of the federation.³⁴⁴ The pilgrimage of 1977 was a great success, so the FNNDT decided to organize it every three years until 2000. During the sixtieth anniversary of the return of the deported laborers, in 2005, the last pilgrimage took place. The final pilgrimage also illustrates the slightly improved relations with other repatriates because the old French POWs joined again.³⁴⁵

The pilgrimages were primarily, but not only, organized for French forced laborers. (Catholic) forced laborers from other countries and other interested persons were also invited. The pilgrimages can thus be seen as a form of public memory. In addition to references to solidarity, brotherhood, and friendship during and after the war, the war-memories that were recalled during the pilgrimages also illustrate public memories of the French associations that have been mentioned before. The pilgrimage of 1989 combines some of them. The deported workers then celebrated the beatification of Marcel Callo of 4 October 1987. Callo was a member of the JOC. He went to Germany in 1943 as a missionary. On 19 March 1945, he died in the concentration camp Mauthausen. Callo was presented by the Catholic Church as a 'martyr'.³⁴⁶ This tragic and heroic discourse that included references to concentration camps fitted perfectly in the memories of the (ex-)FNNDT (picture 23). The (ex-)FNNDT and the Catholic Action thus seem to have found each other in defending their honor and as a result, their memories of forced labor in which resistance, martyrdom, and brotherhood play an important role, are comparable.

³⁴⁴ Spina, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire*, 1098.

³⁴⁵ Private Archives of the ex-FNNDT, information about Lourdes 2005.

³⁴⁶ Private Archives of the ex-FNNDT, information about Lourdes 1977, 1983, 1989, 1995, and 2005; *Le Proscrit* (second trimester, 2012).



Picture 23 – Marcel Callo on the cover of the program of the sixth pilgrimage to Lourdes of the ex-FNDT and an extract of the program in which Forest also pronounces his discourse of brotherhood. Photos: Private Archives of the ex-FNDT.

6.2.2 Memories of ‘Stragglers’: People Left Behind in France or the Netherlands

Memories of forced labor organizations concern memories of labor conscripts themselves in the first place. Family members or sometimes friends can also be involved in associations. However, war memories of family and friends who were left behind in France or the Netherlands during the war, have usually got little attention in the associations, except for the SDOL. In educational material, published books, and on the website, the SDOL has addressed the fears, uncertainties, and problems of the stragglers, or *achterblijvers*, in Limburg.³⁴⁷ It is possible that some French departmental associations have remembered the experiences of stragglers as well, but that has not been researched for this study.

Why did the SDOL, in contrast to the other associations, remember the fears of the people who were left behind? The regional focus of the association and the fact that the province of Limburg consists of solid communities could be an explanation. Another explanation may lie in one of the goals of the SDOL. More than the other researched associations, the SDOL aimed at involving school children in their work. In this way, they could pass on the story of the deportation and keep its history alive. In 2004, for instance, the SDOL sent information to schools in the region. In the period before the remembrance project *Sporen die Bleven*, a lot of schools worked on projects about the deportation in October 1944 and forced labor. Children were also encouraged to ask their family (e.g. their

³⁴⁷ ‘Lesbrief Project Herdenking Grote Kerkrazzia’s’, <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl/Lesbrief%20GK.pdf>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; ‘Achtergrondinformatie’ and ‘Docentenhandleiding voor tentoonstelling ‘Deportatie en bevrijding’, <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; Ton van Reen, *Gestolen Jeugd* (Breda, 2001). The SDOL-website informed its readers for instance that some who were left behind lived in great fear whereas others even followed the men on their way to Germany

own grandfathers) and neighbors about the deportation.³⁴⁸ Because many former forced laborers had already deceased at the time, the children were probably more often confronted with stories of family members or friends who stayed home.

The target group of children in itself could be a more general explanation for the attention for ‘stragglers’. The novel of Ton van Reen, for example, tells not only about the experiences of Leo Steeghs, but also about his sister Dora.³⁴⁹ Especially the experiences of sisters or (little) brothers who stayed at home might appeal and identify more to younger children. A similar approach is taken in a French novel for children *Service du Travail Obligatoire 1942-1945. De gré ou de force* (2007). It was written by journalist Jean-Pierre Vittori. He tells the story about two brothers, Robert and François. Robert eventually had to go to Germany because of the law of 4 September 1942 and his younger brother François stayed with their mother at home, having his own war experiences while desperately waiting for any news about his brother.³⁵⁰ Although most memories on forced labor concerned the experiences of workers themselves, it is important to realize that the memories of stragglers form an interesting way of making the youth familiar with the history of forced labor.

6.3. Reception and Representations in Media

The first two parts of this chapter focused on memories produced and disseminated by the associations themselves. Due to the available source material, it is impossible to research thoroughly how the collective memories as presented in exhibitions, brochures, educational projects, and websites have been received by the public. It is, however, imaginable that there was not always a great interest for the public events and projects of the forced labor associations as this particular war history remains relatively unknown and not the most ‘popular’. For example, when the VDN sent an information letter to different schools, one teacher reacted reluctantly with the comment that “there was no use in competing with the resistance”.³⁵¹ It is, therefore, plausible that memories of forced labor have been spread to a larger audience by other general media such as newspapers, journals, and documentaries.

The media have silenced the theme of forced labor for a long time and they are often still silencing it.³⁵² A brief analysis of news articles and items that report about the history of forced work and forced labor associations showed recurring and one-sided discourses. In the

³⁴⁸ Conversation with Theo Sonnemans (20 March 2017); ‘Deportatie en dwangarbeid, zoals onderzocht door de jeugd van 2004, <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; ‘Lesbrief Project Herdenking Grote Kerkrazzia’s’, <<http://www.kerkrazzia.nl/Lesbrief%20GK.pdf>> [consulted on 23 May 2017].

³⁴⁹ Ton van Reen, *Gestolen Jeugd* (Breda, 2001).

³⁵⁰ Jean-Pierre Vittori, *Service du Travail Obligatoire 1942-1945. De gré ou de force* (Paris, 2007; reprint 2009).

³⁵¹ NIOD, 294, 87, letter of 11 August 1995. Original citation: “Concurreren met het verzet heeft geen zin”.

³⁵² Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 358.

1980s and 1990s, the Dutch media portrayed the forced laborers mainly as a non-recognized group of war victims whose history had been forgotten.³⁵³ According to the German historian Bories-Sawala, the French public opinion remained rather silent about the FNMT and its combat for the title of deportee.³⁵⁴ After the turn of the century, the French and the Dutch media often emphasized the miserable circumstances and the desperate situations forced laborers faced before, during, and after their stay in the Third Reich.³⁵⁵ It is thus interesting to see that while the public discourses of the Dutch associations and later also some French associations have become more and more nuanced and diverse, the memories of forced labor as produced by news items and articles often presented forced laborers ‘only’ as maltreated victims.

Memories on forced labor as produced by the associations and the media are thus not exactly similar. However, equal to cultural and political memories produced by associations, the French and Dutch memories disseminated by the media are often also a result of diverging national postwar contexts. This can be illustrated by a comparison of two documentaries about forced labor that appeared with the support of associations. The already discussed Dutch documentary *Een koffer in Berlijn* (1996) focused mainly on the personal victimhood of two forced laborers in Berlin and did not talk about the responsibility of the Dutch Labor Offices.³⁵⁶ The French documentary *Avoir 20 ans sous l'occupation* (2011), on the contrary, started by mentioning the unique collaboration of the Vichy regime.³⁵⁷

At first sight, it seems that these diverging memories of national responsibility, and many other differences in cultural and public memories of French and Dutch forced labor associations, can be explained by the fact that the history of forced labor in both countries differed. Different war histories have indeed influenced the discussed postwar memories. However, this chapter showed that the different war experiences are not the most important explanation for diverging memories, because they do not explain the dynamic character of memories. The dynamics of memories can be illustrated by comparisons of memories of the

³⁵³ See for instance NIOD, 294, 128 recensies van boeken en documentaires (copies of news articles) in Cammaert, *Dwargarbeid en verzoening* (2001).

³⁵⁴ Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 358-363.

³⁵⁵ See for instance *Journal France 3 du Tarn* (26 March 2015); Interview with Robert Lassevaine for a local radio (2015), information given by Robert Lassevaine; Peter de Graaf, 'Het was daar gewoon een slavenmarkt', in: *Volkskrant* (8 October 2004), <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief/-het-was-daar-gewoon-een-slavenmarkt~a680772>> [consulted on 23 May 2017]; Karin Bakker, 'Deportatie met de bevrijding in zicht', <<http://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2034056-deportatie-met-de-bevrijding-in-zicht.html>> (5 May 2015) [consulted on 25 May 2017]; 'Razzia Apeldoorn: dwargarbeiders voor kamp Rees', <<http://www.omroep gelderland.nl/nieuws/2129524/Razzia-Apeldoorn-dwargarbeiders-voor-Kamp-Rees>> [consulted on 25 May 2017]; 'GLD Vandaag' (News emission *Omroep Gelderland*, 12 March 2017).

³⁵⁶ Documentary *Een koffer in Berlijn. Het verhaal van twee dwargarbeiders in woi*. (RVU, 1996).

³⁵⁷ Documentary *Avoir 20 ans sous l'occupation* (Jérôme Lambert and Philippe Picard, *France 2*, 2011).

NVVG against the VDN, SDOL, and SDA. Another example of dynamic memories concerns the terminology of French associations. Although the terms ‘deportee’ and ‘deportation’ have always been underlined by French associations, the current FNVRCNTF and the AMDTF increasingly mention the terms ‘STO’ and ‘forced labor(ers)’ as well. Connecting to the literature on WWII memories, this chapter demonstrated how the dynamics of collective memories can be explained by differences and similarities in the postwar national contexts of France and the Netherlands. The following conclusion will discuss how this investigation of cultural and public memories in particular has contributed to the French and Dutch historiographies.

Conclusion

Political Memories of United Deportees and Social Memories of Individual Victims

Halbwachs argued that all memory exists in a social framework. The forced labor associations that have been discussed in this research are examples of such a framework, in which memories of forced labor have been developed. Two main conclusions were deduced from the investigated question: *in which ways have collective memories of forced labor created in French and Dutch forced labor associations been influenced by political, societal, and individual circumstances*. The first concerned the finding that memories of French associations have been influenced more by political and even juridical contexts, whereas memories of Dutch associations have been influenced more by societal and individual contexts. The bitter combat of the French federation for the title ‘deported worker’ and the honor of forced laborers resulted in collective memories that have been formed in large part by a top-down process, which Assmann would call political or institutionalized memories. Dutch forced laborers also strived for political recognition, but they were ignored by politicians during and after their repatriation. Memories of Dutch forced labor associations since the 1980s have been relatively more influenced by societal changes from the 1970s onward and the agency of individuals who were influential within organizations. Assmann would describe these collective memories as social memories created by a bottom-up process.

The second conclusion stems from the investigation of narratives on forced labor as expressed and disseminated by associations. In this comparative study of French and Dutch forced labor associations, special attention has been paid to the diverging ways and narratives of remembering. The contrast between the Dutch forty years of ‘silence’, in which there was no social framework for forced laborers to express their memories, versus the continuity of the French federation and its memories appeared to be a crucial aspect to understanding different memories. It can, therefore, be concluded that, the historical periods as well as the specific national contexts in which associations emerged, have greatly influenced the represented narratives on forced labor by associations.

In the long-lasting existence of the French federation to the current association, many memories were maintained and transmitted from the first to the second generation. The French associative memories had and have a rather militant and patriotic character. This can be explained by the influence of the immediate postwar repatriation that united the French deportees, a historical context in which the resistance was important and the STO needed to defend their patriotism, and the political and later legal battle for the title of deported worker that took place since the 1950s. A quite similar militant and patriotic memory could also be found in the Dutch NVVG, which existed only from 1945 to 1947, but not in the Dutch associations established towards the end of the twentieth century. Although today, the

memories expressed by the French federation and associations seem less 'static' than before and they become open towards more diverse discourses; the earlier formed collective memories such as the focus on juridical texts, compulsory deportation, and concentration and punishment camps are still visible from time to time. Another example of persisting older memories is that the AMDTF still carries a patriotic flag during commemorations and emphasizes solidarity and friendship.

The differences between the NVVG on the one hand, and the VDN, SDOL, and SDA on the other, demonstrate that many collective memories of the first association came closer to the French narratives. Narratives of the more recent associations, on the contrary, are clearly influenced by the societal context of recognition of victimhood since the 1970s, the disappointments on the German compensations in the 1990s and 2000s, and the collection of individual memories to learn more about the history of forced labor. Instead of focusing on the historical truth or on juridical decisions, Dutch collective memories produced by associations focused, and often still focus, on recognition and understanding for the humiliation forced laborers went through, during and after the war, in order to prove that forced laborers were also war victims. Furthermore, Dutch narratives seemed to be more nuanced and pluralistic in comparison to French memories. The narratives on 'good' and 'bad' Germans form an example hereof. This difference can be explained by the fact that Dutch war-memories were primarily based on (the collection of) individual memories and already published works of Dutch academics, and that the memories were produced in a historical context in which attention for more pluralistic war memories arose. The use of different terms, patriotic or non-patriotic discourses, and different narratives about compulsory labor and national responsibility visible in public memories (e.g. exhibitions and documentaries) illustrated in particular the influence of specific national postwar contexts.

In addition to outstanding differences in national memory cultures, this research also demonstrated that memories of forced labor associations in France and the Netherlands share many similar characteristics. As a consequence of the agency of young middle class individuals in many associations, the archetype forced labor victim in France and the Netherlands became a young man or student. Other similar memories concerned, for example, the loss of a youth, the slavery-discourse, disrespect for volunteers, and an emphasis on suffering of illness, cold, hunger, and bombardments. The amicable relations with local German governments form another similarity. These similarities cannot only be explained by comparable traumatic experiences during the war, but also by the fact that, after the war, local German municipalities sought for reconciliation and forced laborers were often marginalized by national governments.

The marginalized position of forced laborers in postwar societies, in which a hierarchy of victims arose, is often stressed in the existing academic literature about

memories of forced labor in the Third Reich. It has been discussed that many publications about memories of forced labor with an international approach, focused on the immediate postwar period or on individual memories. Investigating collective memories of associations within a longer time frame, this research contributed to the existing literature by going beyond the aspect of marginalization as it stressed the importance of specific historical and national contexts for collective memories. It also demonstrated how the French and Dutch collective memories on forced labor have been influenced by political, societal, and individual circumstances in a different way. Perhaps, precisely because of the importance of national contexts, this thesis, and in particular its investigation of under-researched public memories like exhibitions and school programs, also contributed to the national historiographies on memories of forced labor.

In the Dutch context, scholars such as Van der Heijden and Van Ginkel or students such as Cukier always presented the associations only in the context of victimhood. The study of public sources and the comparison with the French memories actually exposed *how* associations attempted to convince public opinion of their victimhood, for example by using a slavery-discourse. Furthermore, this research also discovered a ‘second memory layer’ within all the forced labor associations in which there is more room for diverse and nuanced memories such as enjoyable moments and help from (local) Germans. These discourses have not only been ignored by the media, but also by the majority of Dutch scholars. With regard to the French historiography on forced labor, the comparison with the Netherlands gave interesting insights in unique elements of the French memories as produced by the associations that remained previously unnoticed. Lagrou already pointed towards the uniqueness of the competition and cooperation with other repatriates, especially with the PoWs. However, the investigation of a longer timeframe than Lagrou also revealed the singularity and durability of French memories of concentration camps, sabotage, friendship, brotherhood, solidarity, and especially the catholic pilgrimages to Lourdes.

It would be interesting to test the uniqueness and similarities of national memories of forced labor in a follow-up research that also takes other countries into account. A comparison with other Western European countries such as Italy, Norway or Belgium, or Eastern European countries such as Poland may be insightful. This study limited itself to collective memories of forced labor in Nazi Germany as produced by associations. To further research the influence of historical and national contexts on memories of forced labor, international comparative research could also be conducted on individual memories with no connection to associations.³⁵⁸ Another possibility would be to take forced labor in

³⁵⁸ As for instance Bories-Sawala pointed out, it is likely that individuals who are not connected to associations remember their experiences in Germany differently. Bories-Sawala, *Dans la gueule du loup*, 32-33, 367.

France and the Netherlands into account. However, even within the associations that were researched for this study, follow-up research could be done from a local, instead of national, perspective. Another limitation of this thesis namely concerned the sources that have been studied. As this study aimed for a general international comparison, not all the available sources produced by the associations have been studied. For instance regarding the French departmental associations, a more detailed study of regional memories could result in different findings.³⁵⁹

Exactly because this study focused on the most important and recurring national narratives, interesting parallels and contrasts have been revealed. The results seemed to confirm the hypothesis that French associations are more nationally oriented while Dutch associations are more regionally oriented. It appeared, however, to be more interesting to study the mechanisms behind this difference. Although this research showed that all memories have been influenced by political, societal, and individual circumstances, French collective memories can be characterized as political memories in which narratives of united deportees, honor, friendship and solidarity, and the responsibility of Vichy have been very important. Dutch collective memories appeared to be more social in character, with a special focus on individual histories, diversity, and victimhood.

How will future generations deal with the history of forced labor? Would French associations still refer to the united deportees? Would Dutch associations still emphasize on individual victims? And would the history of the forced laborers remain marginalized in comparison to other war victims? The two national monuments discussed in the introduction still symbolize this marginalization. The French monument is ‘overshadowed’ by the larger monument for the French deportees of Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen that stands next to it and is also not included on the current list of commemorative monuments in the touristic plan of the cemetery (picture 24).³⁶⁰ In contrast to other (resistance) statues in the museum park in Overloon, the Dutch VDN-monument is actually named an ‘artwork’ instead of a monument (picture 25). Although the monuments will probably remain the same, it is very plausible that future generations growing up in different political, societal, and national contexts will change narratives on the history of forced labor and also add new memories, for example about womanly or Jewish laborers. At least, it is hoped that they keep remembering so that forced laborers of WWII will not be forgotten again.

³⁵⁹ Bories-Sawala also pointed towards differences between regional and more national/Parisian memories in: Bories-Sawala, *Französer im ‘Reichsinsatz’*, 649.

³⁶⁰ Mairie de Paris, *Plan du cimetière du Père-Lachaise* (Paris, 2016). The monument for the French deportees of Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen is actually included in the list on the map of the cemetery.



Picture 24 – The monuments for deportees of Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen and forced laborers on *Père Lachaise*. Photo: Susan Scherpenisse (April 2017).



Picture 25 – The monument, or artwork (in Dutch 'kunstwerk') for forced laborers in and for the forced laborers in Overloon. Photo: Susan Scherpenisse (June 2017).

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