

Commemorating a ‘Foreign’ War in a Neutral Country

The Political Insignificance of World War I Memory in the Netherlands

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The recent creation of a First World War museum exhibit at *Huis Doorn* reflects the increased Dutch attention paid to this war, accompanying the international Centenary efforts, although the neutral Netherlands had not been actively involved in the military events of WWI. This initiative, on a small estate where the former German emperor Wilhelm II lived after the defeat of Germany in 1918, was not a natural outcome of the dynamics of Dutch historical culture. This article raises the question of how WWI became increasingly emphasised in the early twenty-first century, and to what extent this reflects a profound change in the national historical culture, which previously displayed no strong connections to WWI. While familiarity with WWI has grown among the Dutch media and the wider public, governmental interest remained limited (very different from the case of WWII), making it rather difficult to actually speak of *politics of memory*.

Het herdenken van een ‘vreemde’ oorlog in een neutraal land. De politieke onbeduidendheid van de Eerste Wereldoorlog-herinneringen in Nederland

De recente totstandkoming van een WOI-tentoonstelling in Huis Doorn weerspiegelt de toegenomen belangstelling voor deze oorlog tegen de achtergrond van de internationale Centenary-activiteiten, ook al was het neutrale Nederland niet actief betrokken bij de militaire gebeurtenissen van WOI. Dit initiatief, op het bescheiden landgoed waar de voormalige Duitse keizer Wilhelm II na de Duitse nederlaag van 1918 woonde, was geen vanzelfsprekende uitkomst van de dynamiek van de Nederlandse historische cultuur. Dit artikel stelt de vraag waarom WOI in toenemende mate

aandacht kreeg in de vroege eenentwintigste eeuw, en in welke mate dit een ingrijpende wijziging betreft in de nationale historische cultuur die voorheen niet sterk gericht was op WO1. Terwijl de bekendheid met WO1 toenam in de media en bij het brede publiek, bleef de belangstelling van overheidswege – anders dan in het geval van WOII – beperkt, waardoor het moeilijk is om daadwerkelijk van *politics of memory* te spreken.

The quiet town of Doorn, in the geographical centre of the Netherlands, attracts a fluctuating number of Dutch and foreign tourists. Their interest in cultural history is centred on *Huis Doorn*, a small estate where the former German emperor, Wilhelm II, took refuge after his escape to the Netherlands, following the defeat of the German army in November 1918. Wilhelm lived in exile here until his death in June 1941. By then the country was under Nazi occupation – a period that created deep scars in the collective memory of the Netherlands. After the Second World War the Kaiser's belongings were considered enemy property and were transferred to the Dutch state. In the 1950s *Huis Doorn* became a museum reflecting, above all, the vanished German court life of the long nineteenth century. For decades the role played by events of the First World War, which had forced the defeated emperor to come to this small, non-belligerent country, was not a dominant one in either the presentation or public perception of the museum. Nowadays however, the museum houses a new exhibition pavilion – partially installed in Wilhelm's garage – highlighting the basic feature of Dutch history during WWI: its neutrality.

The creation of this WWI museum exhibit can be perceived as a Dutch reflection of recently-increased global attention to this war which accompanied the Centenary. However, as the Netherlands had not been actively involved in the military events that would forcefully shape the memories of this conflict, such an initiative was not a natural outcome of the dynamics of Dutch historical culture. This raises the question of how the First World War became increasingly emphasised in the early twenty-first century, and to what extent this reflects a profound change in the national historical culture, which previously displayed no strong connections to WWI.

A 'foreign' war

Although the Netherlands remained neutral during the conflict, WWI does play a role as a reference in collective historical awareness, but this role is rather modest. The Dutch are not familiar with WWI in the more intense way experienced in nearby countries such as Belgium (particularly Flanders), France, the United Kingdom (and its overseas dominions) and, to a lesser extent, Germany. Dutchmen might notice media coverage of some of the more prominent commemorative WWI Centenary activities abroad, but their participation is limited.

The general public in the Netherlands remains somewhat detached from the dramatic memories of WWI. The Dutch are aware of the main backgrounds and developments but, apart from some limited knowledge of Belgian refugees arriving in 1914, many are unfamiliar with the domestic impact of this foreign war raging across the border. The current image is based mainly on the military events at the Western Front and strongly influenced by post-war literary interpretations of its perceived meaninglessness. It is only to this extent that WWI is part of a common cultural and political frame of reference that the Netherlands shares with other Western nations.

Such references became apparent during the first year of the WWI Centenary, when articles appeared in Dutch media comparing the international political situation – in particular the turmoil in the Arabic world and Russia's expansion in Ukraine – to the tense situation in 1914 that led to the start of the first global conflict. But the (upcoming) Centenary events were not actually intrinsic to the appearance of references to the Great War in the news. In March 2013 *de Volkskrant*, a leading Dutch newspaper, had already run a photograph on the front page depicting a soldier killed in action in the trenches. The accompanying text stated, 'This is not Northern France in 1916, but Syria, now'¹, clearly referring to the trench fighting on the Western Front during WWI – vulnerable soldiers engaged in a seemingly endless battle. In this way the ongoing civil war in Syria, a foreign conflict which created frustrating feelings of political impotence in the Netherlands and elsewhere, was framed within the memory of WWI. This brought the events in the Middle East somewhat closer to a Western European audience, and yet it remained at a certain distance for Dutch readers.

When discussing Dutch memory of WWI, it is essential to understand that this war is not widely considered to be 'our' history.² It is not a fully integrated part of the Dutch national narrative of the collective past. From a Dutch perspective, WWI is no more than a memory in the shadow of the next World War that would take place between 1940 and 1945. There is no other event in history in the Netherlands that attracts as much public attention as the Second World War. Not only are WWII memories omnipresent in Dutch society, where they appeal to wide audiences, the interpretations of these wartime experiences still have political and moral relevance and significance. At the same time, WWI plays barely any role in national political discussions, and although its appeal sometimes seems to go beyond a relatively limited group of professional and amateur historians, culture lovers and tourists, it only rarely appears as an object of memory politics.

1 *De Volkskrant*, 15 March 2013.

2 The special edition of *Elsevier* in 2014 titled 'Onze Eerste Wereldoorlog' ('Our Great War') may be

considered to be an attempt to integrate WWI into national history, not a confirmation of an already-established position.

The impact of WWI on Dutch society has been generally underestimated, if not totally ignored, ever since the German occupation during WWII. The efforts of the Dutch government to stay neutral during the conflict, as well as the fear experienced by the entire population – mobilised males and foreign refugees included – of becoming involved in warfare have been largely forgotten. Initially the impact of WWI on the Netherlands was commemorated in the interwar years at a limited number of places.³ In the early 1920s Scheveningen for example, welcomed a memorial to honour the WWI efforts of the Dutch army and navy, plus a memorial for the local fishermen who had died at sea during the war. Despite such memorials, the war slipped easily into oblivion. Unlike their counterparts elsewhere in the Western world, the Dutch government gave no official support to regular commemorations. As a result, a national infrastructure to commemorate recent wartime experiences did not develop until after the Second World War when the Netherlands for the first time had been confronted with total warfare. This remembrance culture developed over the years to place less emphasis on military victories and resistance sacrifices in favour of growing attention for civilian victims. The memory of this war, increasingly centred on the Holocaust as the final outcome of the totalitarian Nazi ideology, became a dominant historical and moral benchmark.

Only after the next global conflict had ended, the Cold War in which the Netherlands was firmly integrated into the American sphere of influence, did Dutch interest in WWI gradually begin to build. In September 1997 historian Maarten Brands labelled WWI the blind spot in the poorly developed historical consciousness of the Netherlands, a serious shortcoming resulting in an incomplete image of the violent twentieth century. ‘It’s like a Greek tragedy where one only sees the second part’.⁴ As a consequence of its neutral position, the Netherlands had maintained its innocence and naiveté – at least until the Second World War – and, by underestimating the impact of radicalised warfare and strong discontinuity, lost the connection with subsequent political and social innovations in the surrounding world. Brands regretted the lack of Dutch historical writing about WWI, making a plea for a Europeanisation of the collective historical outlook for a better understanding of all twentieth century turnovers.⁵

3 Harmen Meek, ‘Mobilisatie- of wapenstilstandsherdenking. Publieke oorlogsherinneringen in het interbellum in Nederland’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 124:1 (2011) 48-63 DOI 10.5117/TVGESCH2011.1.MEEK.

4 M.C. Brands, ‘The Great War die aan ons voorbijging. De blinde vlek in het historische bewustzijn van Nederland’, in: M. Berman and

J.C.H. Blom (eds.), *Het belang van de Tweede Wereldoorlog. De bijdragen van het symposium op 22 september 1997 ter gelegenheid van de opening van de nieuwe behuizing van het Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* (The Hague 1997) 9-20, 9-10.

5 *Ibid.*, 16-17, 19. See Maarten Brands, ‘De “grote oorlog” die aan Nederland voorbijging’, *Ons Erfdeel* 57:1 (2014) 22-31.

Brands' observation that the war had not been internalised by the Dutch was correct, but the impression of total isolation from the outside world has been refuted in various publications responding to the perceived lack of historical research. In recent decades, studies of the political, social and military aspects of the Netherlands and WWI were written by Dutch and foreign scholars such as Paul Moeyes, Maartje Abbenhuis and Wim Klinkert. Other scholars, like Ewoud Kieft and Dick van Galen Last, focused on the political, cultural and military developments occurring elsewhere in Europe. Their work, combined with Dutch editions of British and German monographs, contributed to an increased awareness of WWI.

This has been further stimulated by the inclusion of WWI in the official canon of Dutch history, launched with government support in 2006 and now influential throughout schools and heritage institutions. Although WWI is represented by two of the fifty so-called canonical 'windows', the fact that its predecessor obtained a separate window indicates that a national canon nowadays cannot turn its back on wider European history. This 'authorised' inclusion in what remains above all a national canon supports the growing presence of this less familiar war in popular historical culture outside of academia. Dutchmen encounter traces of this conflict while on holiday in Belgium or France, using the often reprinted travel guide to the Western Front, Chrisje and Kees Brants' *Velden van weleer*.⁶ Or their interest is piqued reading Flemish novels like Stefan Hertmans' recent *Oorlog en terpentijn* (War and Turpentine)⁷ and translated novels such as the popular *Regeneration* trilogy by Pat Barker⁸, watching films like *A Very Long Engagement*⁹ or theatrical plays such as *War horse*.¹⁰ If they prefer to see WWI in a museum without having to cross borders, the best option is to visit *Huis Doorn*.

Huis Doorn

The recent history of *Huis Doorn*, the only state-sponsored Dutch museum explicitly focusing on WWI, is an interesting case for the illustration of the relatively modest role of WWI in Dutch memory politics. This story unfolded quite recently but can best be understood by starting the examination in

6 Originally published in 1993.

7 Stefan Hertmans, *Oorlog en terpentijn* (Amsterdam 2013) had sold 125,000 copies in the Netherlands and Flanders by late 2014 and won the prestigious Dutch AKO Literature Prize 2014.

8 Originally published between 1991-1995, the Dutch translations, *Weg der geesten*, appeared between 1993 and 1995.

9 The French film *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, was released in France in October 2004 and in the Netherlands in January 2005.

10 *War Horse*, originally, premiered in London in 2007 and was performed almost 300 times in Dutch theatres between June 2014, and May 2015.

2000. In that year the national Council for Culture (*Raad voor Cultuur*) labelled the collection of *Huis Doorn* ‘limited’ and ‘certainly not unique’, stating that the heritage shown here had ‘no direct ties with the Netherlands and with Dutch history’.¹¹ Taking into account the modest number of visitors, deputy minister for Culture Rick van der Ploeg (PvdA: Labour Party) intended to end the government subsidy for *Huis Doorn*. After some protest however, Van der Ploeg’s successor Cees van Leeuwen (LPF: Pim Fortuyn List) aborted this plan in November 2002. *Huis Doorn* wisely decided not to retain its focus solely on the last German emperor, as became apparent in 2003 with an exhibition of satirical picture postcards of WWI combatants.¹² However, the small museum’s course did not change drastically. The link to WWI was only briefly referred to as an additional argument to underline the cultural significance of *Huis Doorn*.

The vulnerability of the museum once again became apparent in late 2012. After the Arts Council indicated that *Huis Doorn* had no collection of national or international importance, nor any suitable planning for its activities, deputy minister Halbe Zijlstra (VVD: People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy) concluded that Doorn was not entitled to subsidies for its exploitation, only for the housing and maintenance of the collection. This time, a few years after the inclusion of WWI in the national canon, the museum explicitly stressed the importance of WWI: ‘The Netherlands was neutral in WWI and *Huis Doorn* is one of the few places in the Netherlands where something of that war is palpable’.¹³ Historian Thomas von der Dunk defended *Huis Doorn* by similarly pointing out that it embodied ‘an essential period in our recent past’ – a century of Dutch neutrality. According to him, the arrival of the Kaiser in the Netherlands, and the subsequent demand by the victorious Entente for his extradition, had dragged the country into twentieth century world politics. Von der Dunk considered the museum a symbol of this harsh confrontation of the Dutch with the modern age, although he indicated – somewhat inconsistently – that the real awakening from the country’s international hibernation had had to wait until 10 May 1940. Closing *Huis Doorn*, a European monument illustrating the Dutch inward orientation, would represent a reprise of such behaviour.¹⁴ WWII historian David Barnouw disagreed, emphasising that Doorn, the house of ‘a former war criminal’, had barely any significance from a Dutch point of view: it should be subsidised by the EU or Germany.¹⁵ The Dutch government chose a middle position when minister for Culture Jet Bussemaker (PvdA) stressed

11 *De Volkskrant*, 24 August 2000.

12 *De Volkskrant*, 17 December 2003.

13 Nieuwsbericht Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP, 11 December 2012, ‘Museum Huis Doorn vraagt hulp Tweede Kamer’.

14 Thomas von der Dunk, ‘Huis Doorn illustreert einde van een tijdperk’, *De Volkskrant*, 17 December 2012.

15 ‘Moeten we het huis van een oorlogsmisdadiger behouden?’, *Trouw*, 21 December 2012.

that the estate did not have to close, but should cooperate with other heritage institutions. With the upcoming Centenary in mind, she suggested that the museum focus more strongly on WWI.¹⁶ Nevertheless this did not stop the budget cuts, which were accepted by a majority in parliament.

Bussemaker's recommendation to focus on WWI was a new development. The Dutch government had been approached earlier by the *Stichting 100 jaar Nederland en de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (The 100 year Netherlands and WWI Foundation), chaired by military historian Wim Klinkert and initiated in 2011 by a small number of academics and two modest groups of dedicated amateur historians, *Stichting Studiecentrum Eerste Wereldoorlog* (The Study Centre WWI Foundation) and the Dutch chapter of the Western Front Association. Their attempts to mobilise governmental support for the aim of increasing public attention for WWI during the Centenary fell on deaf ears in the ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, nor could such an aim count on broad popular support. Board member Samuël Kruizinga blamed the official rejection on a vision that failed to consider the Netherlands as a part of European history.¹⁷

Towards the Centenary

Things changed during the last year leading up to the Centenary. Against this background, *Huis Doorn* presented itself in 2013 as 'one of the most evocative symbols' of this war in the Netherlands. By creating a permanent exhibition on the impact of WWI, the museum intended to reflect how the war had affected the Netherlands.¹⁸ Bussemaker showed her support for 'the Dutch *lieu de mémoire* of WWI' by attending an international WWI conference in Doorn in September 2013, joined by Flemish vice-prime minister Geert Bourgeois. On that occasion an advisory report on joint activities for the Centenary was presented in the framework of the (Committee for the) Cultural Treaty between Flanders and the Netherlands (CVN).¹⁹ The perception that the Dutch had little interest in WWI at home and abroad was labelled as inaccurate, yet the CVN considered it a challenge to attack the perceived

16 Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP, 17 December 2012, 'Minister: musea hoeven helemaal niet dicht'; *Het Parool*, 18 December 2012, 'Toch geld voor Rijks Twenthe', *De Volkskrant*, 18 December 2012.

17 'Nederland slaat straks een schertsfiguur bij herdenking', *Nederlands Dagblad*, 3 August 2012.

18 Meindert van der Kaaij, 'Huis Doorn kan open blijven', *Trouw*, 5 April 2013; 'Landgoed van laatste

Duitse keizer voorlopig gered', *De Volkskrant*, 17 May 2013.

19 Commissie Cultureel Verdrag Vlaanderen – Nederland, *Vorbij de mythen. De Grote Oorlog toen en nu. Beleidsadvies over 100 jaar Eerste Wereldoorlog in Vlaanderen en Nederland* (Brussels, 21 September 2013) 5 – the annotation here is based on the printed edition, which differs from the web edition.



Stoical looking, the bust of Kaiser Wilhelm II withstands all the commotion about the fate of *Huis Doorn* in recent decades.

Photographer: Flip Franssen.

Hollandse Hoogte.

Dutch ignorance regarding WWI.²⁰ CVN saw opportunities to bridge the gap in historical experiences between belligerent Flanders – the ‘historical fact that not Flanders, but Belgium as a state was involved in WWI’ was only referred to briefly²¹ – and the neutral Netherlands. Without much explanation, the committee claimed that there was sufficient reason for joint commemoration with a wide range of activities, especially via addressing current conflicts to an audience of youngsters, with the purpose of strengthening mutual understanding and future cooperation between the Netherlands and Flanders.²²

During 2013 Dutch newspapers, magazines and TV programmes increasingly reported on the preparations for the Centenary in various Western countries. This stimulated public awareness of, and interest in, the conflict while concomitantly creating a sense of urgency for Dutch initiatives. On the symbolic date of 11 November 2013, Member of Parliament Vera Bergkamp (D66: Democrats 66) asked minister Bussemaker to take the lead in organising a ‘cultural commemoration’ of WWI. Bergkamp not only advocated cooperation with Flanders but also a role for *Huis Doorn*.²³ Although her motion was accepted in the House of Representatives and Bussemaker responded positively²⁴, the willingness to commemorate WWI profoundly, and to do so together with the Flemish, should not be exaggerated. In December 2013, foreign minister Frans Timmermans (PvdA) showed hardly any enthusiasm for the CVN report, although he claimed the Netherlands would like to be involved in some international and regional commemoration activities with Belgium and the European Union. However, he stated, the starting point should be private initiatives from within Dutch society and heritage institutions. Funding would be available only for a digital platform. The Flemish government responded in March 2014, stating that a joint commemoration as proposed would have significant additional value: but as no concrete actions were mentioned, this also suggested a lack of enthusiasm.²⁵

In the meantime *Huis Doorn* had prepared a new exhibition about the Dutch history of the war years, ‘Between Two Fires’²⁶, opened on 4 September

20 *Ibid.*, 16; Significantly, the report started by quoting former Dutch politician Jan Terlouw describing the war as a pitch-black page in the history of mankind and as meaningless slaughter, yet he himself admitted that, like many people, had never really understood it.

21 *Voorbij de mythen*, 13.

22 *Voorbij de mythen*, 7, 9, 11; Activiteitenverslag van de Commissie Cultureel Verdrag Vlaanderen Nederland, 2013. Deel 1: het CVN-jaar 2013 in Vlaams-Nederlandse culturele context, 3,

<http://cvn.be/over-cvn/werkwijze/jaarverslag/jaarverslag-2013/>.

23 ‘D66 wil culturele herdenking WO I’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11 November 2013.

24 ‘Herdenking in Huis Doorn’, *AD/Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 22 November 2013.

25 Annual Report 2013 CVN, 4-5.

26 ‘Alles over Eerste Wereldoorlog straks te zien in Huis Doorn’, *Trouw*, 8 January 2014. The exhibition was called ‘Tusschen twee vuren. Het neutrale Nederland tijdens de Grote Oorlog’.

2014, by Princess Beatrix.²⁷ On behalf of the minister of Education, Culture and Science, director-general of Culture and Media, Marjan Hammersma commemorated the soldiers who had died for no reason near the Somme and Verdun. By connecting the legacy of this war to the rise of National Socialism, she made a subtle reference to the inevitable historical benchmark of Dutch society: WWII. Hammersma emphasised that the Netherlands did not escape the consequences of the war. The director-general did not pay much attention to the European framework in which the war could be interpreted, but underlined the present value of historical knowledge. By increasing our understanding of WWI, questions about our international relations and parallels between past and present wars could be answered.²⁸

NRC Handelsblad noted, quite rightly, that this new exhibition was the salvation of *Huis Doorn*.²⁹ It helped Doorn to become a central place for organising events to increase Dutch familiarity with this war. This position was strengthened by Doorn's participation in a joint initiative with the Dutch Open Air Museum in Arnhem and the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam. These parties initiated a national digital coordination platform 'Wereldoorlog1.nu' in the summer of 2014, funded by the Ministry of Education, providing information on WWI-related events to a wide audience of individuals and cultural institutions.³⁰ At the official launch of the platform on 1 October 2014, Hammersma emphasised that history improves our understanding of the present and could offer guidance. A historical conflict like WWI could show the Dutch how the current conflict in Eastern Ukraine – the crash of MH17 in July 2014 remained unmentioned – might develop if the different interests of the various parties involved were not consciously resolved.³¹

Conclusion

From the summer of 2014 onward, various activities and initiatives took place in the Netherlands, ranging from exhibitions and book presentations to

27 The Dutch royal family was absent at the international commemoration of the beginning of WWI in Liège on 4 August 2014. Among various European heads of state, the Netherlands were represented by Minister of State Hans van den Broek.

28 Speech DG Marjan Hammersma, Opening exhibition pavilion The Netherlands and World War I, Huis Doorn, 4 September 2014 (Notes made by the author).

29 'Een museum voor een neutraal landje in een Grote Oorlog', *NRC Handelsblad*, 28 March 2014.

30 'Drie ton voor platform WO1', *AD/Amersfoortse Courant*, 3 May 2014.

31 Speech DG Marjan Hammersma, Opening National History Month and launch Coordination platform WWI Huis Doorn, 1 October 2014 (Notes made by the author).

new websites and living-history events, all publicly exposing diverse Dutch encounters with WWI. To a significant degree, these fragmented initiatives originated in and targeted a local and regional audience, and were usually supported by heritage organisations and sometimes facilitated by local authorities.

At the same time, the national government expressed a certain restraint in its involvement and support. This does not appear to be the result of a conscious policy of avoiding political sensitivities – although a certain fear that the commemoration of WWI might be perceived as another project imposed by the EU is imaginable. Does that explain why international cooperation in commemorating this pan-European conflict could not count on effective support? Perhaps the concept of neutrality, so strongly associated with Dutch WWI history, is not considered useful to a society now rather firmly embedded in EU and NATO. However, overall, the lack of government enthusiasm stems from the persistent idea that WWI is hardly a Dutch affair. After all, competition with the firmly-established memory of WWII does not need to be feared, as WWI remains, from a Dutch perspective, a *quantité négligeable*.

Professional historians are undeniably involved in efforts to bring WWI to a higher position on the public agenda, but they only occasionally manage to infiltrate politics and public opinion. Their publications are often not closely connected to the chronology of the commemorative calendar, which seems to matter to Dutch media, for whom WWI nowadays is a somewhat more familiar but still no obvious phenomenon. Their plea for more attention to the ways in which the Netherlands was involved in WWI appears isolated, partly because there is no vibrant, broad-based discussion in the Netherlands among historians and others regarding the national and international significance of WWI.

While governmental interest remained limited – in a narrow sense one can barely speak of *politics of memory* – attention was certainly paid by the wider public. Familiarity with this often-ignored history appears to be increasing. Characteristic of this were several references made in 2015 and 2016 when Europe, the Netherlands included, was confronted with large numbers of mostly Syrian refugees. In an environment of rapidly increasing polarisation, parallels were drawn with the reception of Belgian refugees in 1914: but in as far as this WWI-past was so appropriated, there was no dominant interpretation. Where one regarded the Dutch reception of Belgian refugees as a plea for the generous reception of Syrians in the Netherlands, another interpreted this as an argument for housing those refugees in their own region.

Huis Doorn now also addresses such current events. A new exhibition 'On the run!', created in collaboration with UNHCR and various NGO's, highlights the experiences of Belgian refugees in WWI alongside contemporary refugees fleeing war. During the launch event in December

2015, local authorities reflected on the present situation and the challenges they faced. This deliberate linking of past and present is an appealing approach widely used nowadays in commemorating WWII. To some extent it might also be a successful approach to WWI, but the fact that the Netherlands still only barely considers itself a (non-combatant³²) participant in WWI – while the war remains both temporally and metaphorically in the shadow of WWII – makes the probability of structural long-term identification with this past³³ rather small, even within a transnational framework.

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32 See the recent book by Conny Kristel, *De oorlog van anderen. Nederland en oorlogsgeweld, 1914-1918* (Amsterdam 2016) for a thorough evaluation of contemporary experiences.

33 In its latest advice to Minister Bussemaker, the Council for Culture in May 2016 showed a somewhat ambivalent appreciation of Huis

Doorn and its WWI mission, stating that it is not self-evident that Dutch public interest in WWI will increase over the coming years: Raad voor Cultuur, *Advies Culturele Basisinfrastructuur 2017-2020 (BIS)* (The Hague 2016), <http://bis2017-2020.cultuur.nl/>.