Imperialism, Colonialism and Genocide

The Dutch Case for an International History of the Holocaust

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During the past three decades, the historiography of the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands has been dominated by attempts to resolve 'the Dutch paradox': the contrast between the tolerant reputation of the Netherlands on the one hand, and the large numbers of Dutch Jews that perished on the other. Attempts to resolve this paradox often look for specifically Dutch characteristics, thereby neglecting factors of an international nature that had a particular impact in the Netherlands. Attention is devoted in these contribution to German imperialism, which had special ramifications for the persecution of Dutch Jews; to the implications for population policy of the colonial regime that arose in the Netherlands, and to the social compartmentalisation and propaganda that accompanied these genocidal policies. This international perspective leads to new questions for the Dutch case, while this case sheds new light on the international history of the persecution of the Jews.

The persecution and destruction of the Jews is a part of European history. Considering the territorial scale of the event, as well as the ambition of the Nazis to eradicate all the Jews in Europe, this may seem self-evident. Nevertheless, there is a tendency in Holocaust historiography to construct the history of the Holocaust strictly within a national context. Although the nationalization of Holocaust history has deepened our understanding of its genesis, development and outcome, it has also distracted our attention away from the international aspects of the genocide on the Jews of Europe. In this contribution, I will argue that the Dutch case demonstrates why we need to re-conceptualize Holocaust history from an international perspective. I suggest we explore the concepts of imperialism, colonialism and genocide in order to develop questions on which to base further research in this area.

Holocaust historiography in a national context

The international nature of the Holocaust has always been evident. All major works on the history of the Shoah, from *Brévaire de la haine* (1951) by Léon Poliakov, Gerard Reitlinger's *The Final Solution* (1953) and Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961) to recent general histories such as *The Holocaust: A History* (2003) by Deborah Dwork and Robert-Jan van Pelt and Saul Friedlander's *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume II The Years of Destruction* (2006), address the persecution from a European perspective. Yet most authors also pay attention to national aspects. Some devote separate chapters to the various countries in which the Holocaust took place. Others, like Friedlander, use a cinematographic technique, cutting from one scene to another, in order to demonstrate the simultaneity of events in different parts of Europe. The numerous encyclopedias of the Holocaust also have entries on the countries and nations that were involved in this episode in European history.[1]

In most of these cases, events described within a national context are presented as illustrations of a more general history. Even if the speed and scale of persecution is nationally specific, the sequence of definition, expropriation, concentration, deportation and destruction, and the interplay between perpetrators, victims and bystanders – to refer to the very influential concepts Raul Hilberg has suggested – are considered to be similar in each context. This is also the case in Dutch Holocaust historiography, which was dominated for a long time by the 'big three' made up of Abel Herzberg: *Kroniek van de Jodenvervolging* (1950), Jacques Presser: *Ondergang. De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse jodendom* (1965) and the various chapters on the Holocaust in *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (1969-1991) by Lou de Jong. Although none of the founding fathers of Dutch Holocaust historiography place their work explicitly within an international historiographical context, their interpretations are structured by a supposedly general pattern of motives and actions of the German perpetrators. While Herzberg explicitly states that his chronicle of the persecution is not a Dutch history, but rather part of a history of fatal German-Jewish interactions,

I would like to thank Dienke Hondius, Dan Michman as well as several anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

1 Israel Gutman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (4 volumes, New York 1990); Michael Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of the European Jews* (15 volumes, Westport, London 1989); Shmuel Spector and Robert Rozette (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York 2000); Walter Laqueur and Judith Tydor Baumel (eds.), *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven 2001); John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell-Meynard (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (3 volumes, Basingstoke 2001); see also United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, http://www.ushmm.org.

Presser and De Jong implicitly follow the pattern of identification, isolation and deportation identified by Hilberg as steps towards the destruction of the Jews of Europe.[2]

Another way of approaching national contexts of the Holocaust became more prominent after the 1960s. In this new approach, the national context is understood as a deviation from, instead of an illustration of, a more general pattern. Moreover, this national peculiarity is understood to explain the specific nature of the Holocaust in the country under review. An example of this approach is *Vichy France and the Jews* (1981), in which Michael Marrus and Robert O. Paxton argued that the persecution of the Jews in France had to be understood within the context of an indigenous anti-Semitic policy, rooted in pre-war French society and further developed by the Vichy regime. Their book contributed to the re-evaluation of recent French history, exemplified by the harsh verdict in the documentary *Le chagrin et le pitié* (1969) by Marcel Ophüls, and *L'idéologie française* (1981), in which Bernard-Henri Lévi denounced the 'fascisme à la française'.

In a similar vein, Jacques Presser suggested as early as 1965 (yet failed to corroborate) that the particular pattern of persecution in the Netherlands was related to the extensive collaboration by the Dutch authorities, and thus could only be understood in the context of attitudes and actions specific to the Netherlands. Like Marrus and Paxton in France, Presser contributed to a change in the Dutch perception of the Holocaust. While in the 1950s, the gruesome stories about the atrocities the Nazis had committed against the Jews were used to illustrate the barbarism of National-Socialism[3], after Presser's book attention shifted to the collaboration of Dutch Gentiles, who were now generally perceived as guilty bystanders. This perspective was also represented in the Netherlands in a documentary: *Vastberaden, maar soepel en met mate. Herinneringen aan Nederland 1938-1948* [Determined, but Flexibly and in Moderation. Memories of the Netherlands 1938-1948] (1978) by Henk Hofland, Hans Keller and Hans Verhagen, actually following the example of Ophüls. A more recent example of this line of reasoning is *Om erger te voorkomen* [To Prevent Worse], in which the author Nanda van der Zee accused the Dutch

2 See Conny Kristel, *Geschiedschrijving als opdracht. Abel Herzberg, Jacques Presser en Loe de Jong over de jodenvervolging* (Amsterdam 1998).

3 E.g. Joe J. Heydecker and Johannes Leeb, *Der Nürnberger Prozess. Bilanz der Tausend Jahre* (Cologne 1958; Dutch translation: *Opmars naar de galg* (Amsterdam 1959)).

Striking conductors and tram drivers on Sarphatistraat during the February Strike (25/2/1941). This general strike was called in solidarity with Jewish compatriots and in dismay at the German measures in the capital city. The strike call emanated from a number of members of the illegally operating Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN) and was spontaneously and massively observed. The strike spread to the Zaanstreek region, Haarlem, Weesp, Hilversum and Utrecht, and continued into the next day. The Germans were initially taken completely by surprise, then took severe action, opening fire on strikers, causing fatalities. Many strikers were arrested. By the end of the second day of strikes, resistance had been broken and order re-established. Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, Amsterdam (Image Bank WW2).

elite and in particular Queen Wilhelmina of criminal neglect in relation to the Holocaust, thereby enabling the Holocaust in the Netherlands to continue to its bitter end.[4]

Implicitly or explicitly, these nationalized interpretations of the Holocaust also involve a comparative perspective. Despite earlier calls for a 'histoire comparée', for instance by the Dutch historian A.E. Cohen in 1951, a systematic comparison of the persecution in different countries has only been developed since the late 1970s.[5] In addition to more descriptive contributions by Nora Levine and Yves Durand, more analytically rigorous articles were published by Leni Yahil and Asher Cohen.[6] Until recently, the most extensive comparative study was *Accounting for Genocide* (1979), in which Helen Fein aimed to explain the national variation in Jewish survival rates by reference to levels of integration and anti-Semitism, the measure of protest and the warning time between the Nazi's rise to power and the beginning of deportations. The weakness of Fein's analysis was demonstrated in particular by her chapter on the Netherlands. While the percentage of Jewish casualties was much higher in the Netherlands than in neighbouring Belgium or in France, Fein failed to notice that, in the Netherlands, integration was comparatively high and anti-Semitism was low; that the February 1941 strike was the only massive public protest by non-Jews against deportation in the entire history of the Holocaust; and that the deportations were started three years after the German invasion and nine years after Hitler's rise to power;

4 Nanda van der Zee, *Om erger te voorkomen. De voorbereiding en uitvoering van de vernietiging van het Nederlandse Jodendom tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam 1997) 141, 150: This view was extended to the postwar period in *Tegen beter weten in* [Against Better Judgment] by the self-proclaimed amateur historian Ies Vuysje, who accused the postwar historians, notably De Jong, of covering up the failure of the Dutch by denying that many people at the time knew what would happen to the Jews who were deported. Cf. Ies Vuijsje, *Tegen beter weten in. Zelfbedrog en ontkenning in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving over de Jodenvervolging* (Amsterdam 2006).

5 A.E. Cohen, *Problemen der geschiedschrijving van de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, in: Hans Blom et al., *A.E. Cohen als geschiedschrijver van zijn tijd* (Amsterdam 2005) 77-110; see for an overview of the historiography of comparative research, Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, 'Vergelijking van Jodenvervolging in Frankrijk, België en Nederland 1940-1945. Overeenkomsten, verschillen, oorzaken' (PhD dissertation University of Amsterdam 2008) 38-72.

6 Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of the European Jewry 1939-1945* (New York 1968): Leni Yahil, 'Methods of Persecution: A Comparison of the Final Solution in Holland and Denmark', in: Michael M. Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews* (Westport, London 1989 [1972]) volume 4, 169-190; Asher Cohen, 'Pétain, Horthy, Antonescu and the Jews 1942-1944: Toward a Comparative View', in: Marrus, *The Nazi Holocaust* [1987] volume 4, 63-98.

so that there was ample warning time. This left her with only one factor that might have contributed to the high number of casualties: the collaboration of the Jewish Council.[7]

The Dutch paradox[8]

Despite its flaws, Fein's book inaugurated an extensive debate on what came to be known as the Dutch paradox. The term itself was suggested by two socials scientists, Wout Ultee and Henk Flap, as the mirror image of the French paradox. This had been identified earlier by Maxime Steinberg, who opened his history of the Holocaust in Belgium, *L'étoile et le fusil* (3 volumes, 1983-1986), with a short comparison of France and the Netherlands, in which he noted that high levels of anti-Semitism and an indigenous anti-Jewish policy in France had resulted in a much lower percentage of deportees than in Belgium and the Netherlands.[9] Without using the phrase, Hans Blom had also analyzed the discrepancy between the apparently tolerant cultural climate and low level of anti-Semitism in the prewar Netherlands and the very high number of Dutch Jews who perished in the Holocaust, as compared with France and Belgium, in 1987 already.[10]

7 Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York 1979) chapter 3.

8 This section is partly based on Ido de Haan, 'The Paradoxes of Dutch History: Historiography of the Holocaust in the Netherlands', in: David Bankier and Dan Michman (eds.), *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements* (Jerusalem 2008) 355-376: see also Ido de Haan, 'Breuklijnen in de geschiedenis van de Jodenvervolging. Een overzicht van het recente Nederlandse debat', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden/The Low Countries Historical Review [BMGN/LCHR]* 123:1 (2008) 31-70.

9 Wout Ultee and Henk Flap, 'De Nederlandse paradox. Waarom overleefden zoveel Nederlandse joden de Tweede Wereldoorlog niet?', in: Harry Ganzeboom and Siegwart Lindenberg (eds.), *Verklarende sociologie. Opstellen voor Reinhard Wippler* (Amsterdam 1996) 185-197, 188; Maxime Steinberg, 'Le paradoxe xénophobe dans la solution finale en Belgique occupée', in: Etienne Dejonghe (ed.), *L'Occupation en France et en Belgique 1940-1944*, volume II (Revue du Nord No. 2 spécial hors-séries, 1988) 653-664; Maxime Steinberg, 'Le paradoxe français dans la Solution Finale à l'Ouest', *Annales: Économies, société, civilisations* 48 (1993) 583-594.

10 Hans Blom, 'De vervolging van de joden in internationaal vergelijkend perspectief', in: J.C.H. Blom, *Crisis, bezetting en herstel. Tien studies over Nederland 1930-1950* (The Hague 1989 [1987]) 134-150.

Confronted by the dilemma of a tolerant reputation and a dismal record of persecution, most scholars of the Holocaust in the Netherlands have readily accepted the first horn of the dilemma: the image of the Netherlands as a tolerant nation. Despite objections to the prevailing image of successful emancipation and smooth integration of Jews into Dutch society[11], it is clear there was no organized or state-supported anti-Semitism in the Netherlands. Even if one accepts the idea that Dutch tolerance was only a thin veneer under which a religiously inspired anti-Semitism was more deeply engrained, the climate – from a comparative perspective – was still more moderate than in France. Most scholars focused instead on the other horn of the dilemma, the numbers of victims and survivors. Local research from the war period indicated that local deportation and survival rates varied considerably. Especially when compared with local circumstances in Belgium, the Dutch figures turned out to be much less exceptional. While in some places in the Netherlands survival rates were much higher, the dismal national average was largely determined by the situation in Amsterdam, which was however similar to the number of casualties in Antwerp, with a much lower number for other Belgian communities.[12]

11 The dominant conciliatory historiography is presented by Ivo Schöffer, 'The Jews in the Netherlands: The Position of a Minority through Three Centuries', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981) 85-100; Hans Blom, Renate Fuks-Mansfeld and Ivo Schöffer (eds.), *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Oxford 2002); a critical perspective is developed by Jozeph Michman, 'Ideological Historiography', in: idem, *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others: Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Leiden 2001) 205-214; see also idem, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period 1787-1815: Gothic Turrets on a Corinthian Building* (Amsterdam 1995); Dan Michman, 'Changing Attitudes of the Dutch to the Jews on the Eve of the Holocaust', in: Jozeph Michman (ed.), *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry* (Jerusalem 1981) 247-262; Dan Michman, 'Ha-pelitim ha-yehudiyim mi-Germanyah be-Holand ba-šanim 1933-1940' [The Jewish Refugees from Germany in the Netherlands 1933-1940] (PhD dissertation Hebrew University Jerusalem 1978); Ido de Haan, 'The Netherlands and the Novemberpogrom,' *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 8 (1999) 155-176.

12 Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, 'Jodenvervolging in Nederland en België tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Een vergelijkende analyse', in: Gerard Aalders et al. (eds.), *Oorlogsdocumentatie '40-'45. Achtste Jaarboek van het Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* (Zutphen 1997) 10-63; see also Lieven Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een Wereldstad. Een geschiedenis van Antwerpen en zijn joodse bevolking (1880-1944)* (Tielt 2000); Dan Michman (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans* (Jerusalem 1998).

At Laan van Poot in The Hague, sports competitions are held between the 'Nationale Jeugdstorm', the 'Bund Deutscher Mädel' and the Hitler Youth. General Schumann presents the first prize as Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart (centre) looks on.
Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, Amsterdam (Image Bank WW2).

However, even with this caveat, the relatively high overall number of victims in the Netherlands still demanded an explanation. Three strands of explanation have emerged. The first focuses on the type of Nazi rule in the Netherlands.[13] Raul Hilberg had already noted that, in the Netherlands, there was a civil administration under direct rule from the Nazi leadership in Berlin, and manned by a clique of highly motivated Austrians around the Reichkommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart, whose 'Habsburg training had endowed them with special abilities in their treatment of subject people'.[14] This seemed to suggest that the German perpetrators were more efficient in the Netherlands than their colleagues in other European countries.

Following the suggestions of Hans Mommsen and Ian Kershaw, some Dutch scholars have questioned this assumption of a goal-oriented leadership. Echoing ideas about a chaotic polycracy under the leadership of a ' weak dictator', Bob Moore argued that with 'no direct guidance from Berlin, Seyss-Inquart and his subordinates were left to improvise policies and structures based on previous experiences and the general tenets of Nazi racial policies'.[15] In similar vein, Marnix Croes and Pieter Tammes have argued that the six *Aussenstelle* (branches), which after September 1940 were established to execute the policies determined at the headquarters of the SS [*Schutzstaffel*] and SD [*Sicherheitsdienst*] in The Hague, had considerable leeway to follow their own course, resulting in large variations in persecution strategies.[16]

The efficiency of the apparatus of persecution is reconfirmed by other research. For instance, Marjolein Schenkel pointed to the raids of 13 and 14 September 1941 in the east of the Netherlands as part of a larger plan to isolate and terrorize the Jewish population.[17] Confirmation of a long-term

13 Michael Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, 'The Nazis and the Jews in Occupied Western Europe, 1940-1944', in: François Furet (ed.), *Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews* (New York 1989) 172-198, 197.

14 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York 1985) 570.

15 Bob Moore, *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands 1941-1945* (London 1997) 78; idem, 'Nazi Masters and Accommodating Dutch Bureaucrats: Working towards the Führer in the Occupied Netherlands', in: Anthony McElligott and Tim Kirk (eds.), *Working towards the Führer: Essays in Honour of Sir Ian Kershaw* (Manchester 2004) 186-204, especially 188.

16 Marnix Croes and Pieter Tammes, *'Gif laten wij niet voortbestaan'. Een onderzoek naar de overlevingskansen van Joden in Nederlandse gemeenten, 1940-1945* (Amsterdam 2004) chapter 3; Guus Meershoek, 'Machtentfaltung und Scheitern. Sicherheitspolizei und SD in der Niederlanden', in: Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (eds.), *Die Gestapo in der Zweiten Weltkrieg. 'Heimatfront' und besetztes Europa* (Darmstadt 2002) 383-402; see also L.J.P. van der Meij, *The SS in the Netherlands, 1940-1945: The 'Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer Nordwest'* (Oxford 1996).

17 Marjolein Schenkel, *De Twentse paradox. De lotgevallen van de joodse bevolking van Hengelo en Enschede tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Zutphen 2003).

strategy was also presented by Dan Michman, who discussed a SD report from the spring of 1939 with a detailed overview of Dutch Jewry[18], and by Wouter Veraart, who points to the systematically planned and smoothly executed stripping of rights from Jews during the first period of the occupation.[19] Finally, Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller conclude that a thorough organization was not a general characteristic of the German persecution policies, however they observed a significant difference between the much more contested and less determinate policies in France and those in the Netherlands. The principal explanation for this was the much less strict SS control over anti-Jewish operations, and the highly contested authority of the *Judenreferat* in France, partly due to the desire to maintain a working relation with the Vichy regime. In the Netherlands, the *Judenreferat* could work much more independently, while the Dutch civil service was completely excluded from decisions regarding persecution policies.[20]

A second line of interpretation of the Dutch paradox hones in on the position of the Jewish community. In the earlier historiography, the focus was mainly on the question of Jewish resistance, and was aimed at dispelling the impression that Jews had been passive victims. This focus is still prevalent, for instance in the chapters devoted to the Holocaust in the exhaustive study of Jewish communities in the Netherlands, *Pinkas*, and in the studies on Friedrich Weinreb, presented by Presser as an example of Jewish heroism, but who has since been denounced as a traitor. The same controversy surrounds

18 Dan Michman, 'Preparing for Occupation?: A Nazi Sicherheitsdienst Document of Spring 1939 on the Jews of Holland', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 32:2 (1998) 173-189.

19 Gerard Aalders, *Nazi Looting. The Plunder of Dutch Jewry During the Second World War* (Oxford 2004); Gerard Aalders, 'The Robbery of Dutch Jews and Postwar Restitution', in: Avi Beker (ed.), *The Plunder of Jewish Property during the Holocaust: Confronting European History* (Basingstoke 2001) 282-296; Wouter Veraart, *Ontrechting en rechtsherstel in Nederland en Frankrijk in de jaren van bezetting en wederopbouw* (Rotterdam 2005) 29, n. 79; see also the contribution in Gerald Feldman and Wolfgang Seibel (eds.), *Networks of Nazi Persecution: Bureaucracy, Business and the Organization of the Holocaust* (New York 2005).

20 Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, 'Anti-joodse politiek en organisatie van deportaties in Frankrijk en Nederland 1940-1944', in: Henk Flap and Marnix Croes (eds.), *Wat toeval leek te zijn. De organisatie van de jodenvervolging in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2001) 15-38. For their final statement, see Griffioen and Zeller, 'Vergelijking van Jodenvervolging'. See also Wolfgang Seibel, 'The Strength of Perpetrators: The Holocaust in Western Europe, 1940-1944', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* 15:2 (2002) 211-240; Hans Blom, 'Geschiedenis, sociale wetenschappen, bezettingstijd en jodenvervolging', *BMGN* 120:4 (2005) 562-580.

the history of the Jewish Council and its leadership.[21] The debate on these issues has been tense and painful, especially after the accusations made by Raul Hilberg and, following his lead, by Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1964), that the leaders of the Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe had collaborated with the destruction of their communities.

In a series of contributions, Dan Michman has argued that the Jewish Council established in Amsterdam in February 1941 was different from the organization of the Jewish community in other Western European countries under Nazi occupation. In France and Belgium, the model of *Judenvereinigung* was implemented on a legal footing, with national coverage and a widely shared responsibility for the well-being of the community, and a less direct responsibility for carrying out German orders. The Dutch Jewish Council, on the other hand, was modeled after the Polish Jewish Councils, which were generally installed on the basis of a German order and at local level, and made responsible for carrying out German orders, including the concentration and deportation of the community.[22]

Also relevant for the evaluation of the position of the Jewish community is its position in the prewar period. In an attempt to explain its apparent passivity in response to German threats, Hans Blom has referred to the traditions within the Jewish community of obedience to authority and communal self-reliance as normal modes of operation within the pillarized structure of Dutch society.[23] We could also point to the tendency, evident in the 1930s, among Gentiles and the Dutch state, to impose a collective responsibility on the Jewish community for the fate of other (also foreign) Jews. The establishment of the refugee camp in Westerbork, paid for by the Dutch Jews, might be understood as an indication that the Jewish community had already been left to its own devices prior to the German invasion.

A final factor is the role of Dutch bystanders. The term bystander itself is questionable, for instance in relation to the direct collaboration in the persecution of Jews by Dutch volunteers of the Colonne Henneicke.[24]

21 Jozeph Michman et al., 'De Sjoa', in: *Pinkas. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland* (Ede 1992); Piet Schrijvers, *Rome, Athene, Jeruzalem. Leven en werk van dr. David Cohen* (Groningen 2000); R. Grüter, *Een fantast schrijft geschiedenis. De affaires rond Friedrich Weinreb* (Amsterdam 1997); R. Marres, *Frederik Weinreb. Verzetsman en groot schrijver* (Amsterdam 2005).

22 Dan Michman, 'The Uniqueness of the Joodsche Raad in the Western European Context', in: Jozeph Michman (ed.), *Dutch Jewish History: Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands, Jerusalem, November 25-28, 1991*, volume III (Assen 1993) 371-380.

23 J.C.H. Blom, 'De vervolging van de joden in internationaal vergelijkend perspectief', in: *Crisis, bezetting en herstel* [1987], 134-150.

24 Ad van Liempt, *Kopgeld. Nederlandse premiejagers op zoek naar joden, 1943* (Amsterdam 2002); English version: *Hitler's Bounty Hunters: The Betrayal of the Jews* (New York 2005).

However, less involved actors also seem to have contributed to the low chances of survival of Dutch Jews. Since the 1970s, research has confirmed Presser's point of view that Dutch policemen, railway personnel and civil servants contributed to the persecution. For instance, the sociologist Cor Lammers has argued that the fact that the Dutch civil service remained intact after the German invasion created the conditions for a 'collaboration d'État', comparable to that of Vichy France.[25] Guus Meershoek has demonstrated that there was generally a willingness among Dutch policemen to cooperate at the local level, as a result of the restructuring of the police force which had already taken place in the mid-1930s.[26] Other functionaries considered the shake-up of authority by the German invasion as a welcome opportunity to pursue their own agendas, as well as improve their personal position.[27] The negative consequences of collaboration are confirmed by Croes and Tammes, who have demonstrated that in communities where a National-Socialist mayor was installed, the survival rate plunged significantly.[28]

On the other hand, Peter Romijn has argued that the conservation of the indigenous state created an alternative circuit of legitimacy, which could bolster the population in its resistance against German policies.[29] This leads us to the wider issue of the role of bystanders in helping Jews. While for a long time the consensus had been that resistance to the Germans, as well as help for the Jews, came predominantly from the Protestant side, Croes and Tammes have recently argued that Jews living in areas with a high level of resistance activity fared significantly worse, probably due to the much harsher German intervention in these regions; but also, that Jews coming from a Catholic community had a better chance of survival.[30] As the study of the rescue of Jews by Bert Jan Flim indicates, part of the explanation for this might be the strength of the social network in which help was organized. More important than this, however, seems to be the fact that most people recognized the

25 Cor Lammers, *Vreemde overheersing. Bezetten en bezetting in sociologisch perspectief* (Amsterdam 2005).

26 Guus Meershoek, 'The Amsterdam Police and the Persecution of the Jews', in: Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (eds.), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined* (Bloomington 1998) 284-300; idem, *Dienaren van het gezag. De Amsterdamse politie tijdens de bezetting* (Amsterdam 1999); Cyrille Fijnaut et al., 'The Impact of the Occupation on the Dutch Police', in: Cyrille Fijnaut (ed.), *The Impact of World War II on Policing in North-West Europe* (Leuven 2004) 91-132.

27 Ido de Haan, 'Routines and Traditions: The Reactions of Non-Jews and Jews in the Netherlands to War and Persecution', in: David Bankier and Israel Gutman (eds.), *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem 2003) 437-454.

28 Croes and Tammes, *'Gif laten wij niet voortbestaan'*, 323-324.

29 Peter Romijn, *Burgemeesters in oorlogstijd. Besturen tijdens de Duitse bezetting* (Amsterdam 2006).

30 Marnix Croes, 'Gentiles and the Survival Chances of Jews in the Netherlands, 1940-1945: A Closer Look', in: Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych (eds.), *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin 2004) 41-72.

danger of the German policies only when it was too late, after most of the Jews had already been deported.[31] This points to a final issue, namely the extent to which people were aware of the Holocaust. The research on public opinion under German occupation is not very well developed, yet the results so far seem to indicate that most people knew something about what the Jews were suffering, yet tried to continue their lives on the old footing as far as possible.[32]

Unsurprisingly, the debate on the Dutch paradox has put the Netherlands at the center of the historiographical debate. Even when German policies are discussed, these are presented as a deviation from a more general pattern, emerging in response to specific circumstances in the Netherlands. The upshot of the debate has therefore been to create a Dutch exception, which has subsequently come to be related to a specifically Dutch moral failure. This was then translated into the widely accepted public image of 'Nederland Deportatieland', as the journalist Max Arian summarized the status of the debate.[33] This has made it hard to argue that the dismal record of persecution in the Netherlands has little to do with the peculiarity of the Dutch. For instance, as early as 1987, Hans Blom pointed out that the German decision to continue with the deportation of 34,000 Jews from the Netherlands to Sobibor from March to July 1943 – while deportations from the rest of Western Europe to Auschwitz were interrupted – would account for the difference in the percentage between Belgium and the Netherlands. And, as Michael Marrus argued in his comments on Fein, if Hitler had been able to continue his war against the Jews a little longer, there would have been no interesting variation in death toll in need of such explanation.[34]

Even if we were to acknowledge that not all of this variation can be explained by Nazi policies, however, it is not self-evident that local or national factors had to do all the work. Recent historiography on the nature of Nazi

31 Bert Jan Flim, 'De Holocaust in Nederland', in: Israel Gutman et al. (eds.), *Rechtvaardigen onder de Volkeren. Nederlanders met een Yad Vashem-onderscheiding voor hulp aan Joden* (Amsterdam 2005) 26-44, 42; Bert Jan Flim, *Omdat hun hart sprak. Geschiedenis van de georganiseerde hulp aan Joodse kinderen in Nederland, 1942-1945* (Kampen 1996); see also L. Baron, 'The Dutch Dimension of Jewish Rescue', in: Alice Eckardt (ed.), *Burning Memory: Times of Testing and Reckoning* (Oxford 1993) 153-165; Mordechai Paldiel, 'The Rescue of Jewish Children in Poland and the Netherlands', in: *ibidem*, 119-139.

32 Bart van der Boom, *'We leven nog'. De stemming in bezet Nederland* (Amsterdam 2003) 67; Anna Voolstra and Eefje Blankevoort (eds.), *Oorlogsdagboeken over de jodenvervolging* (Amsterdam 2001).

33 M. Arian, 'Nederland deportatieland', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 2 December 1992; see also Simon Kuper, *Ajax, the Dutch, the War: Football in Europe During the Second World War* (London 2003).

34 Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Toronto 1987) 58.

rule indicates there are other aspects, international in nature yet with locally diverse outcomes, which might account for variations in the sequence, speed and maybe even the nature of the Holocaust in various parts of Europe. A 'Dutch case' can be made for the argument that general factors other than the Nazi ambition to kill all the Jews are in play, and that these contribute to a better understanding of the Holocaust both at a European level and at a national level. In the remainder of this contribution, I will discuss three such concepts: imperialism, colonialism and genocide.

Imperialism

In his recently published *Hitler's Empire*, Mark Mazower presents Nazi rule in Europe as an instance of imperialism. He places Hitler's grasp for power in the context of plans to create a Greater Germany unifying all Germans in a single state, which had occupied the minds of German nationalists at least since 1848. Like the imperialism of other Western powers, Germany's imperialism was inspired by racism and social Darwinism, yet it differed from British, Dutch or French imperialism by its focus on Europe as the territory of expansion and therefore also by its antagonism to other nations and minorities on European soil.[35] As an heir to the nationalists of 1848, Hitler rejected the Habsburg multi-ethnic empire and the Bismarckian notion of a smaller Prussian Germany in return for political stability at home. The integration of Austria and the expansion of the German empire to the East were both essential to Hitler as an empire-builder. Yet also Scandinavia, Flanders and the Netherlands were considered to be part of the German empire, due to common historical roots of 'Germanic men of our blood and our character', as Heydrich declared in a speech in Prague in October 1941. In contrast to the lands to the East, which needed to be re-Germanized, the north-western part of Europe was already German in nature, and only needed to be administratively integrated into the Reich.[36]

Although initially the Nazis had little trouble finding supporters for their rule in the occupied territories among elites disenchanted with liberal democracy, the imperialist intentions of Nazi Germany soon made it an unreliable ally for the authoritarian leaders who sided with Hitler up until 1943, and in some cases even longer. Like Götz Aly before him, Mazower stresses the exploitative nature of the Nazi rule of Europe.[37] Those who hoped

35 Mazower is not the first to make this connection; see for instance Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, New York 1951, 1958) especially chapter 8, 'Continental Imperialism: The Pan-Movements'.

36 Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London [etc.] 2008) 207.

37 Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main 2005).

for a regeneration of Europe via National Socialism soon had to conclude that the Nazi regime put German interests first, and plundered the occupied territories in order to support the German population within the original borders of the Reich. The exploitative nature of the Nazi empire also forced a shift in the mode of rule. Initially, the most efficient model seemed to be the one developed by Werner Best in France, where the indigenous elites and administration continued to do most of the work, monitored by a limited group of German officials. Its resemblance to the British rule of India, so much admired by Hitler, added to its legitimacy.[38] Gradually, the reign of terror by which Reinhard Heydrich had subjected the Czech lands to full German control became the dominant mode, at the price of estranging local elites and provoking resistance – as Heydrich himself experienced when he was murdered by Czech resistance fighters.

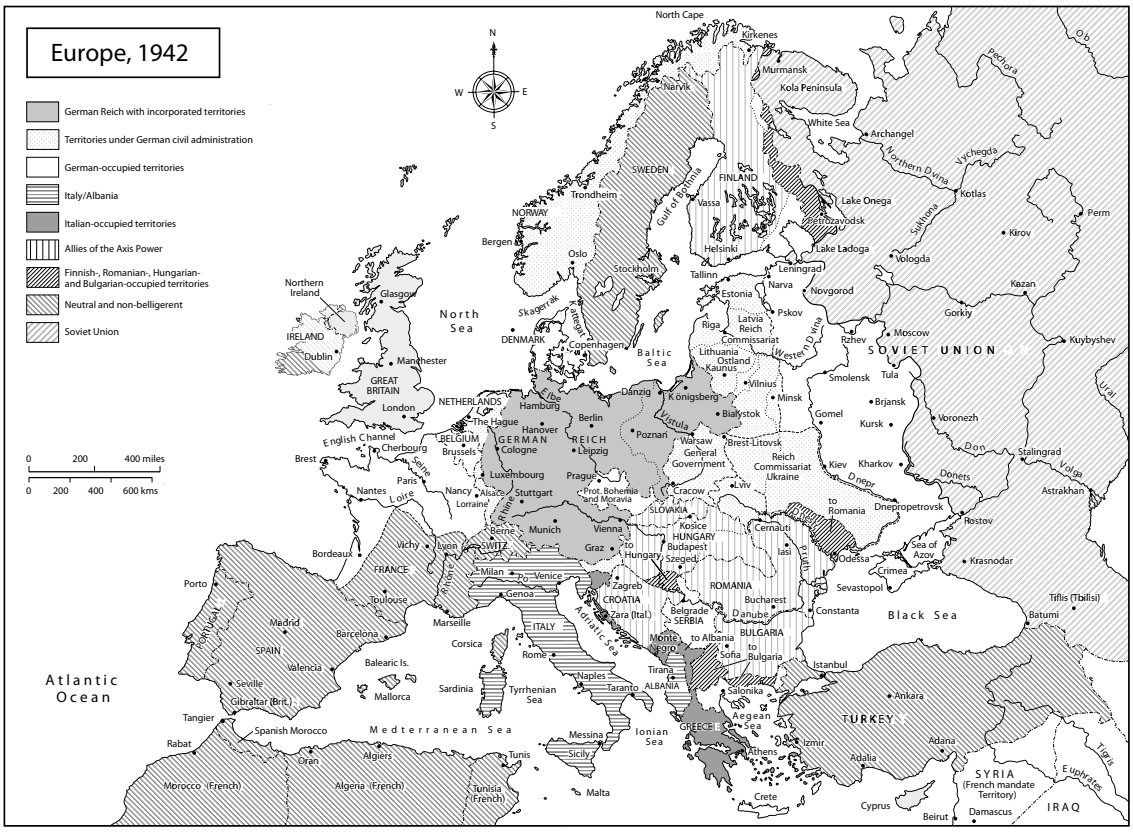
To understand the implications of this perspective for the history of the Holocaust, one only has to take a look at the map of Nazi Europe in 1942 (see p. 316). The occupied territories Germany brought under a civil administration – the Baltic states, the Ukraine, the General-Gouvernement and the Netherlands – are not only coterminous with the territory identified as the Germanic heartland, but also the area where the percentage of Jewish casualties was highest in all of Europe. [39] Now this is only a correlation, for which the causal connections are so far unexplored. But on the basis of these preliminary indications, it seems fruitful to reconsider the impact of the imperial factor, not only on the zeal with which the Final Solution was implemented, but also on the collaboration in the persecution of the Jews of officials and citizens in the Germanic territories.

Moreover, the imperial perspective draws attention to the layered sovereignty of the Nazi empire, in which intermediary figures in the Nazi hierarchy and local elites played a pivotal role in the implementation of Nazi policies. The disorganized nature of Nazi rule might be the result not only of 'institutional Darwinism' at the top of the Nazi hierarchy, whereby army and state elites had to contend with party leaders and security forces, but also a consequence of the layered nature of sovereignty within every empire, both modern and ancient. Seen from this angle, it becomes clear that, due to its cultural and political proximity to the Reich, the Netherlands was more directly connected to the centre of the empire than (Walloon) Belgium or France, which were never considered a potential part of the German state.

At the same time, the more controversial implication of Mazower's depiction of Nazi Germany as an imperial power is his contention that 'even the "war against the Jews" essentially grew out of the Führer's "war for

38 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 238.

39 The Danish and the Norwegian cases seem to contradict this correlation, yet the number of Jews in these countries was so low, that it seems hard to draw any conclusions about the nature of the persecution.



Map of Europe in 1942.

Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire. How the Nazis ruled Europe* (London 2008) p. XVIII-XIX.

the Germans"'.[40] Even if it is clear that, in its attack on 'Judeo-Bolshevist' egalitarianism, Nazi Germany aimed to annihilate first and foremost the Jews of Europe, its larger aim would then be to install a racial hierarchy, which victimized also Slavs and Russians (and in the end also 'unfit' Germans). Seen from this perspective, the Jews were only one group among many others standing in the way of the realization of a Greater Germany. In the end, the indeterminacy of its enemies might have undermined support for Nazi policies, as it could have resulted in the persecution of all kinds of other minorities who did not fit into the general plan of a Greater Germany, and whose fear of being the next in line for annihilation may then have inhibited their support for Nazi rule.

Colonialism

The debate about the imperial aspects of Nazism is closely related to that of colonialism, and the racism that goes with this. This aspect plays a pivotal role in recent debates on the origins and actual decision to implement the Final Solution. In a series of publications, Götz Aly has argued that the persecution and destruction of the Jews has to be viewed in the context of the exploration of Germany's demographic potential, which already started long before Hitler came to power. The 'Vordenker der Vernichtung', as Aly has called the German scholars who contributed to the scientific study of the problem of *Lebensraum*, argued that the survival of the German nation depended on the colonization of the East.[41] Based on Darwinist concept of *Lebensraum*, these scholars legitimized plans to expel 'inferior people' from the lands designated for colonization. The conquest of Eastern Europe should therefore be viewed as part of a quest for demographic superiority and economic survival, by way of the development of arable land.[42]

Like Mazower's, Aly's position also implies that the persecution of the Jews was secondary to a larger aim of colonization, and only part of a broader policy of *Völkerverschiebung*, or ethnic cleansing. Aly's position finds at least partial support in studies on the decision to implement the Final Solution by Philippe Burrin and Christopher Browning, who argue that the physical

40 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 12.

41 Götz Aly and Suzanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg 1991) see also Michael Burleigh, *Germany turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge 1988).

42 See also the contributions in Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz and Lora Wildenthal (eds.), *Germany's Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln, London 2005).

destruction of the Jews was not planned from the beginning. Instead, it was the outcome of increasingly radical solutions to the humanitarian disaster the Nazis created by displacing and concentrating large groups of people in the territories in the East.[43]

It is not directly clear what relevance these findings have from a Western European perspective. In fact, we could even argue that the circumstances in Eastern Europe that appear to have led to the decision (or non-decision) for the Final Solution do not at all apply to Western Europe. They fail to explain why the Jews in Western Europe were also targeted for destruction, and why the Nazis bothered to deport over 200,000 Jews from the West to the East, half of them from the Netherlands. It is clear that some kind of genocidal intention is a necessary condition to explain this.

However, there are two interconnected considerations which also make the colonial aspect relevant for the Western European history of the Holocaust. The first is that there was a counterpart of the *Ostforschung*, which accompanied the colonization of the East, in the development of a *Westforschung*. After the end of WWI, German historians, linguists and ethnographers began to criticize the territorial concessions of the Versailles treaty on the basis of the argument that there was a historical connection with the regions that were apportioned to France. In this context, it was argued that the Netherlands and Flanders were also considered to be part of

43 Götz Aly, *'Endlösung'. Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main 1995); Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Jerusalem 2004); Philippe Burrin, *Hitler et les Juifs, génèse d'un genocide* (Paris 1989); see also contributions to Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939-1945. Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen* (Frankfurt 1998).

44 B. Dietz, H. Gabel and U. Tiedau (eds.), *Griff nach dem Westen. Die "Westforschung" der völkisch-nationalen Wissenschaften zum nordwesteuropäischen Raum (1919-1960)* (2 volumes, Münster 2003); T. Dekker, P. Post and H. Roodenburg (eds.), *Antiquaren, liefhebbers en professoren. Momenten uit de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse volkskunde* (Special issue *Volkskundig Bulletin* 20 (1994)); T. Dekker, 'Ideologie en volkscultuur ontkoppeld. Een geschiedenis van de Nederlandse volkskunde', in: T. Dekker, H. Roodenburg and G. Rooijakkers (eds.), *De volkscultuur. Een inleiding in de Nederlandse etnologie* (Nijmegen 2000) 13-65; T. Dekker, *De Nederlandse volkskunde. De verwetenschappelijking van een emotionele belangstelling* (Amsterdam 2002); M. Eickhoff, B. Henkes and F. van Vree (eds.), *Volkseigen. Ras, cultuur en wetenschap in Nederland 1900-1950. Jaarboek NIOD* (Zutphen 2000); B. Henkes and H. Roodenburg (eds.), *Volkskunde, vaderlandsliefde en levensverhalen* (Special issue *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 29 (2003)) 2; B. Henkes and A. Knotter (eds.), *De Westforschung en Nederland* (Special issue *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 118 (2005)); Barbara Henkes, *Uit liefde voor het volk. Volkskundigen op zoek naar de Nederlandse identiteit 1918-1948* (Amsterdam 2005); H.W. von der Dunk, I. de Haan and J.Th.M. Houwink ten Cate, *Rapport van de Commissie van Drie. Bevindingen over P.J. Meertens op grond van literatuur en geraadpleegde bronnen* (Amsterdam 2006).

a German *Kulturraum*, characterized by shared linguistic, cultural and ethnic (or maybe even tribal) ties. These arguments were well received by Dutch scholars who developed an interest in the *Westforschung*, maybe less for its cultural and political implications than for its innovative methodological and theoretical promise of a 'histoire totale' based on a sociological and anthropological analysis of the population (or even the 'volk'). In this way, the considerations of the connection between land, people and character which stimulated the colonial project in the East, also began to inform the Dutch perspective on the relationship of the Netherlands to Germany.[44] It created an atmosphere in which the idea of Aryan brotherhood might have been less outrageous than was depicted after the defeat of Nazi Germany. Even if the German 'war for legitimacy' was ultimately a failure[45], it may be the case that the 'Nazification' of the Netherlands was less of a one-way affair than is often assumed. A hypothesis for further research would then be that this is part of the explanation as to why Dutch officials hardly protested against the abuses of the rights of Jewish citizens of the Netherlands, while even hardcore Vichyistes declined to cooperate in the deportation of French nationals of Jewish descent.

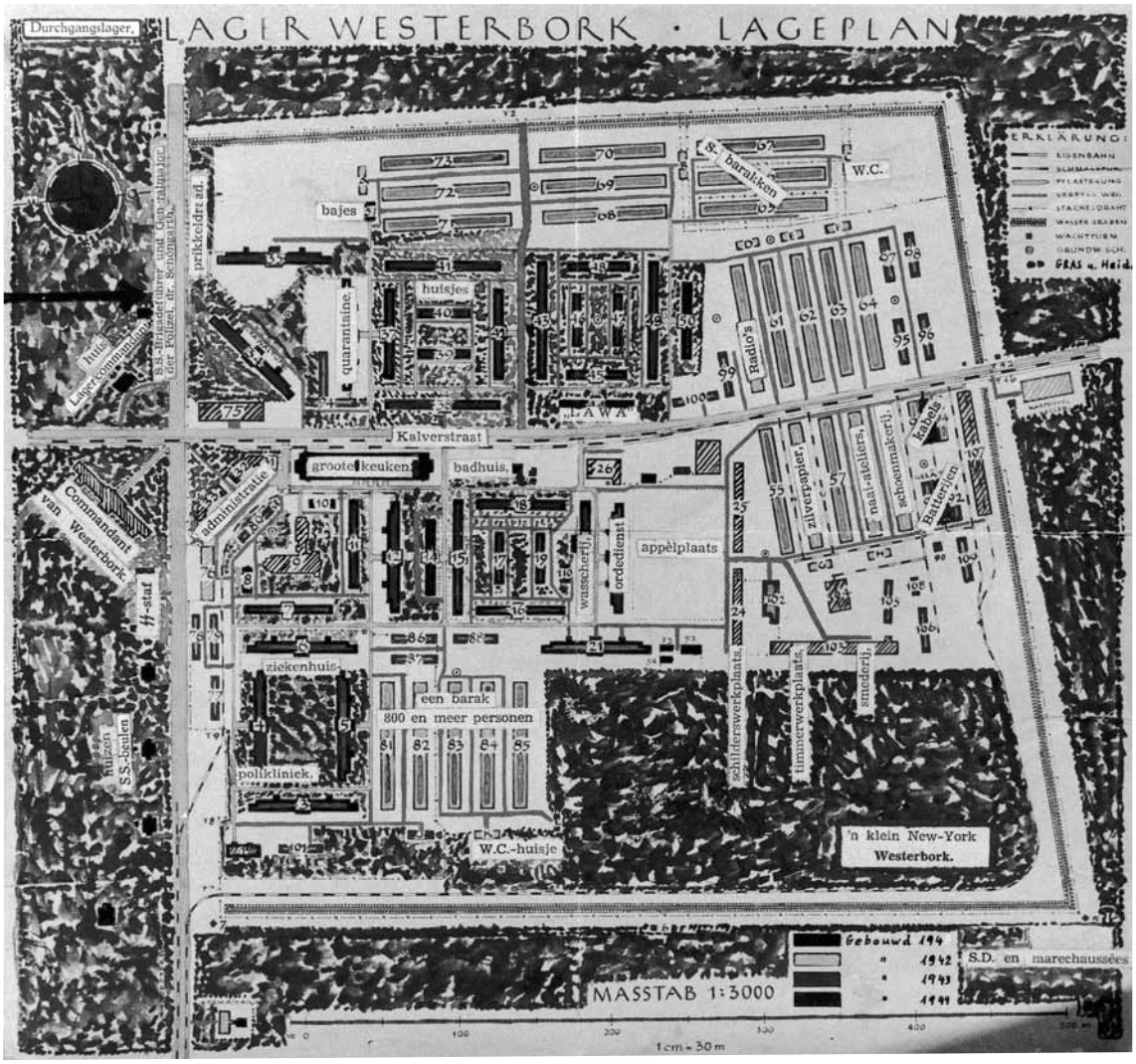
A second, related, consideration is articulated in a controversial study of the Dutch connection to the *Westforschung* by the independent scholar Hans Derks. He points to the connection between Dutch ethnologists and the committees involved in the exploitation of the reclaimed Zuiderzee-polders, which were much concerned with the selection of a resilient population and the creation of a healthy social environment for the new land.[46] This example of 'internal colonization' is very similar to other instances of land reclamation in East Prussia, promoted by the ultra-nationalist forerunner of Nazism, the Deutscher Ostmarkenverein, and the land reclamation of the Pontine Marshes in Italy.[47] According to historian of Italian fascism Ruth Ben-Ghiat, the movement for reclamation was essential to the fascist project of social renewal, yet the Dutch example demonstrates that the phenomenon is not limited to fascist regimes. Instead, there appears a more general European development in which a technocratic and bio-political view of the population was widely accepted.[48]

45 Conway and Romijn, *The War for Legitimacy*.

46 H. Derks, *Deutsche Westforschung. Ideologie und Praxis im 20. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig 2001); Marnix Beyen, 'Een gezond oorlogskind. Parlementaire discussies over de afsluiting en de drooglegging van de Zuiderzee, 1918', in: Tim Sintobin (ed.), *'Getemd maar rusteloos'. De Zuiderzee verbeeld. Een multidisciplinair onderzoek* (Hilversum 2008) 73-89.

47 Federico Caprotti, *Mussolini's Cities: Internal Colonialism in Italy, 1930-1939* (Amherst 2007).

48 Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkely etc. 2001) 4-5; Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke 2007) 225; see also Liesbeth van de Grift, 'Onderzoeksvoorstel "Interne Kolonisatie"' (Unpublished paper Utrecht University 2008).



Plan of *Durchgangslager* Westerbork.
Netherlands Institute for War Documentation,
Amsterdam (Image Bank WW2).

In the Dutch case, the prevalence of 'internal colonialism' might explain not only the general willingness to accept the 'demographic interventions' of selection and concentration of the Jewish population. This could also have contributed to a particular aspect of the Dutch moment in the Holocaust, namely the establishment of refugee camp Westerbork in 1939, which from July 1942 became the *Durchgangslager* for most Dutch Jews on their way to the extermination camps. Camp Westerbork was located in the poor and backward province of Drenthe. At the time the camp was established, more than eighty percent of the land was uncultivated. In 1925, the Stichting Opbouw Drenthe [Drenthe Advancement Foundation] was established to develop the land. Its chairman was Jaap Cramer, who belonged to a group of ambitious functionaries aiming at rapid modernization of the province by abolishing the habits of the past that stood in the way of progress.[49] Until May 1940, Cramer was also the chairman of the committee that supervised camp Westerbork.[50] Pointing to these interconnections is not to argue that Westerbork was established for colonial purposes – the main reason for its location was the fact that it was out of sight, after more visible locations were rejected. Nor is this an argument intended to accuse Cramer, who was a principled defender of the Jews, and who was forced to go into hiding in August 1942.[51] The crucial point is at the same time more limited and more far-reaching: the creation of Westerbork fits into a colonial frame of mind, in which this part of the Netherlands was perceived as a geographical and social tabula rasa. The Westerbork site was made available for a social form – the concentration camp – which was unprecedented in the political history of the Netherlands. In this case, Dutch history might be interpreted as an instance of a more general phenomenon, i.e. the context of internal colonization, within which the Holocaust took place.

Genocide

Finally, I propose to conceptualize the history of the Holocaust in terms of genocide. This hardly seems an original thought: a substantial part of the debate on the nature of the Holocaust is focused on the question as to what extent the Shoah can be interpreted as an instance of the more general phenomenon of genocide, or whether it should be treated as an event *sui*

49 H.A.C. Broekman, 'Sociale innovatie in Drenthe. De ontwikkeling van de Stichting Opbouw Drenthe (1924-1970)' (PhD dissertation University of Groningen 1987).

50 Ido de Haan, 'Vivre sur le seuil: Le camp de Westerbork dans l'histoire et la mémoire des Pays-Bas', *Génocides lieux (et non-lieux) de mémoire: Revue d'histoire de la Shoah. Le Monde Juif* 181 (juillet-décembre 2004) 37-59.

51 See the interview with Cramer from 1981, reprinted in Dick Houwaart, *Westerbork. Het begon in 1933* (Kampen 2000) 114-125.

generis.[52] I do not want to engage in this debate, but instead of addressing the uniqueness of the Holocaust in comparison to (other) forms of genocide, I would like to address the question of its specificity in relation to other forms of social interaction. The concept of genocide is a useful one to engage in this respect, since one of the central questions in the very wide-ranging debates on the concept of genocide is to what extent it is related to more general processes of state formation, violence and political mobilization.

To begin with, there is a debate if genocide should be related to the breakdown of the state's monopoly of violence, or alternatively, if it is a consequence of the use of well-established state power for genocidal ends. A connected issue is whether genocides occur in terms of emergency or crisis, or whether they follow incrementally from political and social processes of exclusion, which take a violent turn. In *The Dark Side of Democracy* (2005), sociologist Michael Mann connects both issues by proposing a 'normalized' conception of genocides. They are an inherent tendency of modern societies because of the tension in democratic (or democratizing) societies between two concepts of the people, namely 'demos' and 'ethnos': 'the institutions of citizenship, democracy, and welfare are tied to ethnic and national forms of exclusion'. Therefore, genocides emerge when states have the ability, and even more importantly, when they are necessitated to suppress, neutralize or eliminate those who formally belong to the 'demos', yet historically, linguistically or culturally are not part of the 'ethnos'. This is connected to another dimension of the 'normality' of genocide, which is that it is only the most radical and violent form of a much wider phenomenon of ethnic cleansing, which ranges from multicultural tolerance and consociational power sharing, via legal discrimination and physical segregation, to deportation, violence and murder.[53]

From the Dutch perspective on the Holocaust, its genocidal nature becomes visible only by emphasizing this 'normality' of genocide. One of the specific characteristics of the persecution of the Dutch Jews was its relatively non-violent nature. This is not to deny the threat, and often the actual use of force, nor the fatalities that occurred during *razzias*, in the transit camps and during deportations. Yet in comparison to the large-scale abuse and killing which took place in Eastern Europe, the level of violence in the Netherlands itself was rather low. This perception fits in with a more general characteristic of the Netherlands as a rather peaceful society.[54] This pacified picture of Dutch history can no longer be entertained when genocide is conceptualized

52 See for a thorough treatment of this issue for instance Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context* (2 volumes, New York, Oxford 1994, 2003); Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven 2001).

53 Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy* (Cambridge 2005).

54 See contributions to E. Gans et al. (eds.), *Met alle geweld. Botsingen en tegenstellingen in burgerlijk Nederland* (N.p. 2003).

as the extreme of a continuum of forms of ethnic cleansing. The genocidal tendencies of the Holocaust in the Netherlands then become manifest. Though less violent, the actions undertaken on Dutch soil were aimed at a process of ethnic cleansing, which was part and parcel of the social and political interactions within the ethnically defined Dutch democracy. The important issue to address then is not why the Dutch Gentiles didn't protest, or why they collaborated with the deportation of Jews, but how and when they passed from one level of ethnic cleansing to the next. It might very well be the case that this process of radicalization had already taken place before the Germans invaded the country.

Another aspect of the apparently non-violent nature of the Holocaust in the Netherlands is the compartmentalization of violent social processes, which according to sociologists such as Zygmunt Bauman and Abram de Swaan, is a precondition for the elimination of compassion with the suffering of others.[55] From Bauman's perspective, this aspect of genocide is related to the bureaucratic hyper-rationality of the process, which creates the banality of evil Hannah Arendt has already analyzed. Many scholars have protested against this position not only by emphasizing the radically evil ideology that motivated many perpetrators, but also by pointing out that, in most cases, the murder of the Jews was not a technical, bureaucratic process, but a process of gruesome, bloody and low-tech murder.[56] Even then, the keeping of violence out of sight of the majority of the bystanders, so clearly exemplified in the Dutch case, demonstrates an aspect of genocides which is in need of further exploration.

A last (but certainly not a final) consideration emerging from the conceptualization of genocide is related to political mobilization. Much of Holocaust research, also in the Netherlands, centers around the question 'how much did people know?' and, if they did know (or at least suspect) quite a lot, 'why didn't they do more to prevent it?' Both questions imply that knowing and acting are unproblematically and directly related to one another, but they fail to address how insight into the nature of the Holocaust is generated (or actively sabotaged), and how knowledge of morally unacceptable facts leads to action, or to rationalizations that motivate inaction. In this context, the literature on genocide suggests that the influence of propaganda is of central importance.

55 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca 1989); Abram de Swaan, *Moord en de staat. Over identificatie, desidentificatie en massale vernietiging* (Amsterdam 2003).

56 See Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York 1992); Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York 1997); Patrick Desbois, *Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* (Basingstoke, New York 2008).

Anti-Jewish propaganda.
'Dependency in terms of the food supply will mean the political enslavement of Europe. Jews and plutocrats have no heart'.
Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, Amsterdam (Image Bank WW2).

As Jeffrey Herf and Saul Friedlander recently demonstrated, the Nazi leadership put a lot of time and effort into propaganda legitimizing the Holocaust.[57] While it is clear that this was generally rather successful in relation to the German population, it is less clear to what extent the Nazis were able to win the hearts and minds of the people in the occupied countries for their genocidal policies. Despite a lack of research, there are signs that this was also rather successful. One is the widespread and rather virulent anti-Semitism seen following the defeat of the Germans. In the Polish case, analyzed by Jan Gross, this is perhaps less surprising, given the long tradition of Polish anti-Semitism and the tense Polish-Jewish interactions in modern history.[58] In the Dutch case, it is more remarkable, however, given the moderate level of anti-Semitism before the war.[59] So far, research is limited, but there may have been some kind of habituation to anti-Semitic stereotyping, which would explain the more widespread anti-Jewish attitude in 1945.

Another aspect of anti-Jewish propaganda, identified by Michael Wildt, centers around the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*.[60] According to Wildt, the genocidal attitude of the Germans was stimulated by the wide acceptance of the idea that the national community was endangered by the Jews, thus legitimizing violence against Jews. The same kind of ideological frame of mind may have emerged in the Netherlands, not just because of Nazi propaganda, but in the Dutch case also because, during the occupation, the 'volk' became a mythical force which resisted Nazism in defense of the honor of the Dutch state. As Martin Bossenbroek has argued in his study of the reception of Jews and other victims of war after the German defeat, the notion of 'volksgemeenschap' was invoked after 1945 to argue against any special attention to Jewish survivors, thereby legitimizing the aggression of those who were unpleasantly surprised by the return of Jews who were assumed to have perished.[61]

57 Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge MA, London 2006): Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews.*

58 Jan Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York 2007).

59 Dienke Hondius, *Terugkeer. Antisemitisme in Nederland rond de bevrijding. Met een verhaal van Marga Minco* (The Hague 1998); Evelien Gans, '"Vandaag hebben ze niets – maar morgen bezitten ze al weer tien gulden". Antisemitische stereotypen in bevrijd Nederland', in: Conny Kristel (ed.), *Polderschouw. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Regionale verschillen* (Amsterdam 2002) 313-353.

60 Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung. Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg 2007).

61 Martin Bossenbroek, *De Meelstreep. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam 2001).

Conclusion

What is the relevance of Dutch history to our understanding of the Holocaust? The answer in this paper is an ironic one: the Dutch case demonstrates the relevance of an international history. After almost two decades of debates on the Dutch paradox – a tolerant country is confronted with an extremely high number of victims of the Holocaust – it is clear that answers which stress Dutch exceptionalism fail to acknowledge the international dimension of many of the 'Dutch' responses.

From the perspective of Nazi rule as a form of imperialism, it turns out that the position of the Netherlands in the Nazi empire differed from that of Belgium and France, and corresponded more to the territories in the East, which were considered to be part of the Germanic lands. This may explain why Dutch Jews were confronted with more direct rule than the Jews of France and Belgium, where the antagonism between center and periphery, which is normal for imperial rule, always hampered a more 'efficient' persecution of the Jews.

The isolation and relative helplessness of the Dutch Jews in the face of persecution may be related to the specific nature of the Jewish community in the Netherlands, and the tradition of self-help that threw all pillars of Dutch society back on their own devices. Yet the colonial background of the Holocaust also suggests that there was a more widespread acceptance of demographic interventions, and also models of internal colonization, which were followed in handling the Jewish population of the Netherlands.

Finally, assuming we can treat the Holocaust as another example of genocide, we can apply some of the concepts developed within genocide studies – the normalcy of genocides, the effect of compartmentalization, the impact of propaganda on the need to defend the national community – to explain the specific role of bystanders in the Holocaust in the Netherlands.

Therefore, the Holocaust is an episode in European history, not just because it happened everywhere, or because the Nazis had Europe-wide ambitions, but also because the causes, nature and effects of the Holocaust were closely related to the general European phenomena of imperialism, colonialism and genocide. ◀

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Turkish guest workers celebrating Ramadan (Seker Bayrami) in the Anadolu camp in Waddinxveen, around 1966.
Migrants' Historical Image Archive, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing

Dutch Migration History and the Enforcement of Essentialist Ideas

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During the 1970s, the Netherlands introduced a set of multi-cultural policies which, through government subsidies, subsidised and promoted the otherness of migrants for several decades. Other countries also embraced multiculturalism. In the Netherlands, however, this policy represented a continuation of an older tradition of pillarization. Multiculturalism was not pillarization in new clothes, however, although there was a continuity of the underlying ideas, as this article will show. This led to a great deal of enthusiasm for multiculturalism, and subsequently to great disappointment, without it ever becoming clear what exactly the aim of the policy was and how its success or failure could be measured. The central thesis of this article is that the successive development of pillarization and multiculturalism in the Netherlands has led to a reinforcement of essentialist ideas concerning migrants and their descendants, as well as a freezing of ideas on 'the' Dutch culture. This double freezing then made adaptation difficult or impossible.

In general, people tend to think of society in simple categories, because simplification makes the social world understandable and manageable. It rationalises existing social arrangements, and creates the illusion of control.[1] Categorisations and essentialist beliefs form the basis for inclusion and exclusion, and make it possible to hold groups responsible for their (perceived) members.[2] Essentialist beliefs about groups are central to racism, but are also used for self-identification and can play a role in the process of group emancipation.[3] However, the history of Dutch integration policy shows that categorisation not only influences how people define themselves or are defined by others[4], but also – and more importantly – leads to fossilisation of ideas about the culture of immigrants, and that of society at large. Collective amnesia regarding change stimulates this process of fossilisation or cultural 'freezing'.[5] This explains the recent increase in Dutch intolerance towards