Exhibiting the war

The Future of World War II Museums in the Netherlands

Kees Ribbens and Esther Captain
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Introduction
It is now more than 65 years ago that the Second World War came to an end. More than once since 2010, this observation has elicited the reaction that “the war” – as the Second World War is usually referred to in the Netherlands – can now be retired. Implicitly, such a remark illuminates to what extent the memory of the war has continued to survive since 1945 and become a vivid part of historical culture: the way in which society deals with the past. At the same time, the retirement metaphor shows how the position that the memory of war occupies can be subject to change.

The memory of the Second World War is an erratic phenomenon. The perspective from which the war was observed and the multiple meanings attached to the war experiences have varied during the post-war decades. In the Netherlands, the emphasis shifted from respect for the resistance to compassion for the persecuted Jews, from heroism to victimhood. War experiences in the former Dutch East Indies were added to the memory culture focused on the Netherlands. Such dynamics of memory are the result of a complex process in which perspectives are adjusted, often with faltering steps, on the basis of discussions, cries from the heart, feelings of injustice, new insights, appealing interpretations, and a great deal more.

An unequivocal and invariable image of the war does not exist. It is precisely because after all these years the memory of the war is still active that it is impossible to declare an appropriate retirement age for that memory. The war is public property, a strongly rooted memory that many value deeply. That is why it is also a memory that cannot simply be pushed aside as if the expiration date had elapsed.

Thus, it is advisable to dwell on the memory of the Second World War. Not because of some retirement age, nor because of a possible expectation that the interest in the war might be on the wane; but because the distance in time is increasing and eyewitnesses are dying, because the historical and political importance ascribed to the war is still remarkably wide-ranging in the Netherlands, and because the ways in which the Second World War is presented are subject to change.

Introduction

War museums

The emphatic presence of the Second World War in Dutch society originates in the widely shared view that it is an extraordinary history, which continues to be important until today. It is a history deemed to be relevant to a vast audience, now and in the future.

One of the ways in which this history is displayed is through presentations in war museums. The Netherlands has many war museums and memorial centers, each of which contributes to the image of the Second World War. There is diversity within these establishments, with great differences in professionalism, means, and range. The presence of the heritage assembled here, by which museums impart the war story, underscores the importance that is attached to this historical period.
interest and expectations of a contemporary audience, for whom the significance of the war acquires a constantly renewed shape based upon current approaches and continuing insight.

This dynamics in historical culture assumes that museums reflect with some regularity on the manner in which they present their stories about the Second World War, something that is more evident to some institutions than to others. The great importance that, for a long time now, has been attached to the omnipresent memory of the Second World War could easily give the impression that this prominent position in the historical culture is something obvious. Thus the impression can also arise that the interest in the history of the war is permanent and that, consequently, there would be no reason for museums to adjust. However, that is a misconception.

The prominent importance of the war is the provisional outcome of the dynamic development of memories, in which perspectives have been gradually or abruptly readjusted. Such memories are translated through history.

At the same time, an awareness exists that remembering is not self-evident. It requires care and attention, in the way that this was made concrete between 2007 and 2010 in the program entitled Erfgoed van de Oorlog [Heritage of the War], for which the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport (VWS) made available 23.7 million euros to museums and other heritage institutions for the purpose of preserving, opening up, and presenting (im)material heritage. Both the impressive result of the program, consisting of more than 220 projects, and the fact that the government has reduced its involvement with this heritage to more modest proportions, elicits the question what future there is for the sizable war heritage from the Netherlands and the overseas territories.

It is with this as background that the present publication wishes to briefly delineate a panorama of the Dutch war museums. By portraying the historical growth of the museums, a few characteristics and contemporary frameworks within which the various museums are active, and future possibilities, the authors – who are historians involved with the public interest in the wartime past and relative outsiders where museums are concerned – will not only critically examine the developments but also offer the museums a helping hand towards a thorough reflection on future use of the heritage of the war.

**Dynamics**

Exhibiting the War was written within the framework of the research project “Diversity, Detachment, and Involvement. War heritage under development” at the NIOD, Institute for War-, Holocaust-, and Genocide Studies. As an initiative of the unit Oorlogsgetroffenen en Herinnering WO II [War Victims and Memory WW II] of the Ministry of VWS, this project is part of the research program Dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog [Dynamics of Memory. The Netherlands and the Second World War] within the program’s theme “Cultural Dynamics” of NWO Humanities.

This document provides an introduction to the divergent area of war museums to those who are interested and have an academic, museum, cultural, policy, or commemoration-oriented background. But it is intended even more as an incentive for new reflection on war museums and memorial centers and the way in which they depict and present the Second World War by means of heritage for roughly the next decade. The history of the war can only remain alive when its presentation links up with the interest and expectations of a contemporary audience, for whom the significance of the war acquires a constantly renewed shape based upon current approaches and continuing insight.

This dynamics in historical culture assumes that museums reflect with some regularity on the manner in which they present their stories about the Second World War, something that is more evident to some institutions than to others. The great importance that, for a long time now, has been attached to the omnipresent memory of the Second World War could easily give the impression that this prominent position in the historical culture is something obvious. Thus the impression can also arise that the interest in the history of the war is permanent and that, consequently, there would be no reason for museums to adjust. However, that is a misconception.

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lessons, family stories, feature films, TV documentaries, novels, comic books, and websites, among others. The war museum is but one of the players in the field where this past is visualized and concretized. As a rule, museums stand apart not only by the presence of three-dimensional historical objects – material heritage – within hand’s reach of the visitor. Such sensory contact with authentic traces, sometimes at the very location where historical events took place, feeds the appealing idea of history as being engrossing and seems to bring the past closer as something tangible. Moreover, museums rank as a knowledge authority with a public function. They use the exhibited historical objects to offer a wide audience a story about the past, based on facts. The ambition of professional museums – among which the formative war museums – is to deepen insight into that past. This motivation seems less succinct for many of the one-man museums we encountered during our research. They would much rather cling to an impressive past that is continuously and increasingly distancing itself from us.

In our opinion, the role that society ascribes to the museum is accompanied by the possibility and the responsibility of reflecting upon current and future interpretation of the presentations, so as to convey war experiences to contemporary audience groups in an engaging manner. After all, the image of the Second World War is not the outcome of a process that happens to the museums, but something that, up to a certain point, they themselves can direct within the bounds of their reach.

**Future**

This basic assumption makes a strong appeal to the expertise and manpower of the Dutch war museums, both of the relatively larger institutions and of the many fairly small-scale museums. To this end, collective discussions about the interpretation, and thus about the mission, of this crowded segment in the museum landscape is a condition. In the first place, a debate must take place between the war museums themselves, but subsequently also with other historical museums, with historians, with museum experts, with remembrance committees, policy makers, and financial backers. This publication is neither an historical monograph nor a policy report, but seeks above all to initiate a future-oriented analysis of the Dutch war museums and memorial centers as the point of departure for further exchange of ideas. The main consideration is that of offering a concise evaluation of the present state of affairs, combined with charting the possibilities of museum war heritage for the near future.

Following this introduction, chapter two discusses the heritage and chapter three will go briefly into the post-war museum war displays. In chapter four the attention focuses on the infrastructure and the utilization of war museums. Chapter five explores the possibilities of renewing substantive themes, including concrete suggestions. Before drawing final conclusions, chapter six offers a short tour of new forms in which to present the war. A list of recommendations and an overview of Dutch war museums, a bibliography, and a list of consulted experts complete this publication.
Chapter 2

Heritage
Heritage is a wide-ranging concept that includes both a material and an immaterial dimension. Material heritage refers to historical objects, immaterial heritage to stories and traditions. Both aspects can be found in museums that try to give a picture of the era of the Second World War. However, museums are not the only places where war heritage can be found. There are other locations, too, where heritage makes the memory of the war visible and public.

Among these are, in the first place, the more than 3300 memorials – often referred to as monuments in the Netherlands – that were erected for the most part after the liberation in order to reflect as a purposefully created heritage on the experiences of war, often in an atmosphere of solemn, somewhat congealed emotion. Secondly, there are an estimated several hundred lieux de mémoire: physical locations, with or without material remnants, where a variety of events occurred during wartime. Depending on the extent to which these locations are acknowledged to be historical and are marked that way, they function as a benchmark for memories of the war. By means of an information center, these lieux can grow into museums, as did the memorial centers at the former concentration camps of Amersfoort, Vught, and Westerbork. This doesn’t quite hold true for the Indisch Herinneringscentrum Bronbeek [East Indies Memorial Center Bronbeek]. The war in the Dutch East Indies took place at a great geographic distance from the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the Bronbeek estate in Arnhem where, in addition to the recently established East Indies Memorial Center, the Bronbeek Museum has been located since 1863, is considered to be a lieu de mémoire for Dutch with an East Indies background.

Furthermore, there are archival institutions, libraries, and documentation centers that focus entirely or in part on the Second World War, of which the NIOD is the best-known example. These institutions, which collaborate with the newly formed Netwerk Oorlogsbronnen [Network War Sources], are devoted primarily to the management of what are mostly documents and audiovisual sources for research purposes.
The war heritage that is present in the Netherlands is extremely diverse. This is true for the physical volume (from minimal to large, from NSB-badges – the NSB was the Dutch National Socialist Movement – to landscapes filled with defensive works), for the nature of the objects (from unique documents to everyday utensils), and for the theme (from military to cultural). The war heritage relates both to individuals and groups and extends from extremely durable, such as bunkers, to relatively perishable, such as the Anne Frank Tree. Impermanence can shrink the heritage but, on the other hand, with the aid of various media, testimonies are recorded that give birth to a new heritage. The demise of the last generation of eyewitnesses is seen as an urgent admonishment not to allow their stories to vanish. It is very difficult to accept that the loss of testimonies and other traces of the past are, to a large extent, an inevitable and continuous process.

**Appeal**

In and of themselves, objects from the Second World War are not a heritage. They acquire that designation under special circumstances. The fact that such a large quantity of objects from the Second World War, of all kinds and in all sizes, has been preserved highlights the enormous impression that the war has made both on the Dutch society of the time and on subsequent generations. It proves that this war constitutes an important and vivid part of the historical culture until this day. For the most part, its impact is greater here than in the surrounding countries where, in some way, the experience of the First World War made the next one less unique.

Museums and memorial centers form outstanding public display sites of war heritage. By focusing the attention on the heritage, these establishments illuminate the history of the war. They present the heritage, and the war stories connected to it, to bring together visually and textually the historical events that are its foundation. By transmitting historical stories, they use the heritage as an appealing way in which to render history real and pictographic. The concept of (visual) contact with authentic traces of the past, a combination of emotional and cognitive stimuli, promotes both an interest in history and identification with the past. Moreover, the authenticity of the displayed heritage ranks as an important aspect of the museum presentation and as an essential element of the value and appeal of these heritage institutions. At the same time, objects are exhibited – reconstructed barracks or replicas of documents – of which visitors don’t always realize that they are not originals. The fact that virtual reproductions in their contemporary electronic forms of presentation can also elicit a suggestion of authenticity in the experience of the heritage consumer puts into perspective the idea that museums are all about a worship service for the authentic object.

Not everyone agrees that objects should be elevated to heritage. Critics have put forward that not everything that is preserved must automatically be promoted to a collection, just as not every collection belongs in a museum. Because the appeal of the heritage is great and, in our expectation, will continue to exist for the next decade, it is important to reflect further on this phenomenon. Heritage can offer insight into the past, especially when it is visible and recognizable to a broad audience and placed in a broader, meaningful historical context.

One shouldn’t forget that heritage presentations offer only a limited representation of the past they aim to present. They are based on conscious and unconscious ways of selection in which people have appropriated the historical events under consideration in a story deemed to be more or less coherent and meaningful. No matter how well documented the Second World War may be – particularly in comparison to other decades of twentieth-century history – our image of that era is always founded on a selection of available sources, objects, and stories. Together these are used to reveal a specific picture of the past.
Significance
Heritage gains significance through the context in which it is placed by those who select (or ignore) it, present it, choose its framework, and make the shared connections. The heritage objects themselves don’t tell any stories; that is done by people – survivors, collectors, professional curators, as well as associations, establishments, and governments. These and other concerned parties thus interpret history and thereby handle the heritage as an appealing aid. Their endeavor to reconstruct the past is no artificial construction but an element of an incessant effort to present the past from a comprehensible contemporary position. That endeavor doesn’t have any definitive result. Not just because that history has been recorded and transmitted only in part, but also because the image of the past that we see is always dependent upon our own way of looking. Thus, history is a story based on facts, on previous renderings of historical experiences, of which additional views are possible depending on new insights, questions, and approaches.

Historical presentations are interpretations open to discussion. Therefore, the significance of the war heritage is not fixed for the future. Every generation seeks access to the past that will enable them to render it comprehensible and appropriate it. However, the interpretations aren’t always clear-cut. They have no uniform model, especially in a multiform society. Historical presentations must be open to new questions and approaches that originate in contemporary views of new generations. It is precisely an open and critical approach to the heritage that offers possibilities for varying interpretations, and confronting the interpretations contributes to the preservation of a lively and meaningful knowledge of history. The past can only hold fast to a contemporary relevance if the heritage doesn’t turn into something whose significance has become rigidly anchored down.

The various ways in which, at successive moments, diverse individuals and groups appropriate heritage and history with it, makes contact with the past – the way in which subsequent generations deal with what they (think they) inherit – into a dynamic activity. However, awareness of this changeability is often lacking in heritage consumers.

Thus, the now apparently obvious presence of themes such as the persecution of the Jews and the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies in the present-day consideration of the war history, makes it easy to forget to what extent the resistance, for instance, initially occupied a far more central place in the historical picture. From time to time, awareness of the dynamic appropriation of the heritage demands a thorough evaluation of the way these heritage presentations function in the process of assigning a meaning to the Second World War. Whether museums actually realize the role they aim to fill puts the question to these institutions – both separately and together – as to what degree heritage can always be dedicated productively to this purpose, and whether they can sufficiently overcome the limitations that characterize the heritage.
Chapter 3

Exhibiting the war in museums
In the Netherlands the overwhelming interest, almost seven decades later, in the Second World War can easily create the impression that this interest has always existed. Such a view is too static, however. It is precisely because it concerns the experiences of millions of people in the occupied Netherlands, in overseas territories, and elsewhere in the world as well, of groups in extremely divergent positions confronted by a vast range of consequences, that it goes without saying that the memories linked to all of the above are equally dissimilar.

This holds true also for the way in which memories are subsequently presented and appreciated. Recent research in the manner in which war monuments, commemoration, memorial centers, and war depictions are given shape in the media, confirms a dynamic genesis from which museums do not withdraw either. 3

Already during the war a need arose to document the events in occupied territory. In a broadcast of the London based Radio Oranje, the Dutch Minister in exile of Education, Bolkestein, called upon his fellow citizens to save any testimonies of their experiences. The founding immediately after the liberation of the Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie [National Institute for War Documentation], expressed a similar stance to chronicle this extraordinary period. Soon, other attempts were made as well to preserve and present objects that reflected the recent history. The war museum in Overloon opened its doors in 1946 to display the tank battle that had taken place there at the end of the war. Thus, lieu de mémoire and museum merged at an early stage. In those same years, Middelburg already had a Zeeuws war museum, Gelderland opened the Airborne Museum in 1949, and Delfzijl in Groningen had a museum collection of military war items, which indicates to what extent these early initiatives were strongly regional and military.

Demolition

Nevertheless, many objects that were reminders of the Second World War found themselves in a vulnerable position, particularly when they were available in large quantities, could be used for some other purpose, or were simply undesirable. Former concentration camps, used after the war for different purposes at first, were quite frequently threatened with demolition. The Anne Frank House, too, as well as countless bunkers and other immovable property with a war history, ran into this. To many people, looking ahead seemed more sensible, or in any case more practical, than dwelling on the recent, often bitter past. That past formed a memory that the government restricted in specific commemorative monuments and locations. In a sense, this reduced the war to a limited number of stories suggesting national unity and determination, considering the sacrifices of the resistance as heroic, and avoiding uncomfortable issues. Initially, there were relatively few war museums in the Netherlands and these seemed oriented primarily at displaying aspects of the military and the resistance.
What did take place were temporary exhibitions dealing with the occupation outside of the museums, which were still seen as lofty temples of culture at the time. Collecting war heritage was not a frequently occurring spearhead in museum circles, however.

In 1960, after its renovation, the war- and resistance museum in Overloon was reopened, having officially gained national status in the interim. According to the government, the needs of society were thereby largely met. In 1969, Prime Minister De Jong brushed aside some questions by Members of Parliament about the desirability of a Netherlands Resistance Museum, believed to be extremely significant for commemorative reasons as well as for educational purposes. He merely referred to the museum in Overloon. Still, the government deemed reflecting on the war to be meaningful for commemorating the sacrifices, promoting national unity, and legitimizing the post-war democratic constitutional state. But the government believed that commemorating the war ought to be done in moderation.

In the 1960’s, this somewhat narrow view saw a turning-point. The emergence of a new generation that had not consciously experienced the war years but did note multiple references to the period, went hand in hand with a more critical position. Moreover, the war had increasingly become the subject of history writing, both in the form of books and on television. The story of the war years turned out to be less heroic than had sometimes been assumed and the persecution of the Jews, in particular, only now received full attention. History was more nuanced and open to more than one interpretation.

Benchmark

Other developments occurred in a parallel line. Respect for authority became less self-evident and a diminishing loyalty to tradition and socio-political groups made room for new approaches to societal topics. The population’s educational and income levels rose while available leisure time increased. More and more people were able to afford traveling and the leisure segment grew in volume and diversity. Museums and public came closer together. Museums attracted more visitors and became more versatile, partly, for example, because of an ever more recognizable and accessible presentation of the history of everyday life.

This furthered the interest in the Second World War and with it the endeavor to preserve the heritage of war. Collectors of war objects had come together as early as 1963 in the Documentation Group ’40–’45, but elsewhere, too, initiatives emerged that attested to the great importance people attached to authentic objects from the occupation years.

Furthermore, the war turned out to be current again because various groups of persecution victims – among whom deported Jews, political prisoners, internees from the Japanese camps in Asia – called for compassion for, and acknowledgement of, their experiences. In addition, under the influence of the increased involvement in current political and societal developments elsewhere in the world, numerous comparisons were made with World War II situations whereby the importance of this historical and moral benchmark grew.

All these developments expanded the support for the preservation of war heritage. This was once again expressed in the eighties when emerging rightwing extremism focused the attention on National Socialism. It was against this background that the Verzetsmuseum Friesland (Resistance Museum Friesland) got its start in 1979, followed in the mid-eighties by the Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam (Resistance Museum Amsterdam) and the Verzetsmuseum Zuid-Holland (Resistance Museum South Holland) in Gouda. Besides these local and regional initiatives, the Nationaal Bevrijdingsmuseum 1944–1945 (National Liberation Museum 1944-1945) opened in Groesbeek in 1987. Despite the choice of a clearly thematic emphasis in the names – where the cherished element of the resistance, in particular, is made manifest – these museums developed into exhibition spaces where visitors encountered a more general story about the Netherlands, and subsequently about the colonies during wartime as well.
Interest in victims of persecution and their history resulted in the preservation and presentation of the heritage connected to them. In 1983, the Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork [Memorial Center Camp Westerbork] was put into use. The Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught was opened to the public in 1990, while the Hollandsche Schouwburg [the former Holland Theater in Amsterdam where Jews were rounded up before their eastbound deportation] grew into a museum from 1992 on. Attempts at turning the remnants of Camp Amersfoort into a visitors’ center that would function as a museum became a reality in 2004.

In the 1990’s, the Netherlands had almost a thousand museum institutions that illuminated a wide variety of objects, often with easily accessible presentations. Comparatively speaking, there were considerable differences between them in the level of professionalism, in the volume and nature of the public reached, and in presentation style. This was also true for the gradually increasing number of museums that focused entirely, or in part, on presenting heritage relating to the Second World War, where gaining knowledge was never completely separated from emotional experience and moral significance. In 1997, the guidebook Nederland Museumland included no fewer than 32 World War II museums. Their listing under the label “Military Science” clarifies to what extent the military interpretation, which traditionally characterized many war-related heritage institutions, continued in the conceptualization.

Appreciation

In addition to the memorial centers and resistance- and liberation museums mentioned above, which would grow into more formative institutions in the area of war heritage, the guide included several smaller museums as well. One example of such an institution, frequently set up as a one-man’s museum, was the Expositie 40–45 in Blitterswijck in the province of Limburg. This museum, which opened in 1984, can be seen as an example of a larger number of museums, often stemming from private collections of individuals fascinated with the war, whose fame is typically limited to the local region. Thus, several dozen small-scale museums were created in the past three decades that remained relatively invisible from a national perspective but, nevertheless, constitute an appreciable part of the Dutch war museums.

Their existence confirms the ever more prominent place that heritage has been occupying in recent years within the historical culture, in which Dutch society gives shape to the contact with and appreciation for the past. The enhanced interest in heritage, both in elementary and secondary education where it is welcomed as an appealing educational aid, as well as in the world of tourism, clearly demonstrates this. The attention that is thereby focused on the Second World War – both inside and outside the educational domain – reflects an expansion of interest, which expresses a more multifaceted perspective than had been seen in the earlier post-war decades. Victims play a significant role in this, shown notably in the focus on the persecution of the Jews, but also in the interest in prisoners and internees of the Japanese camps in Asia, and in civilian victims of bombings. The greater variety in the image of the war is reflected in exhibitions at museums and memorial centers – but even more strongly in the ever-growing number of commemorative monuments and the countless publications and other media manifestations, among others in digital monuments on the Internet.

New initiatives, too, prove that the field of war museums and memorial centers is in motion. Thus, there are plans in the province of Drenthe for a museum devoted to the Jewish labor camps, while preparations are being made in Margraten for a memorial center near the American military cemetery. Elsewhere in the Netherlands possibilities of expansion are being scrutinized. At the Memorial Center Camp Westerbork an intense search is ongoing for former camp barracks that acquired a different use elsewhere. Exhibiting the war in museums turns out to be a long-term process.
Infrastructure of war museums
In the year 2011, the Netherlands has a total of 67 museums that are entirely or in large measure devoted to the Second World War. In addition, three new war museums and memorial centers are in formation (appendix 1). The fear that, with the gradual disappearance of the generation of the war’s eyewitnesses, the interest in this era would decrease as well seems to be unfounded. Museum presentations of the Second World War have hardly suffered any institutional falling off since 2000. The war heritage is displayed in a variety of ways and under highly divergent circumstances.

This mission is achieved not only through formative museums and other heritage institutions, but also through private collectors with their own “one-man museums.” Experience proves that the owners of such museums tend to be men. Women are conspicuously absent in the field of private war collections that are open to the public, although they can be found in every position in the regular museum world – and thus in the formative war museums as well. Only twelve of the war museums we examined were recognized by the Netherlands Museum Register as being registered with them.

A significant number of the Dutch war museums has been established in their present form during the past three decades. Additionally, there are other museums that are partially involved in the area of war heritage. However, it is not known to what extent the war heritage in these collections forms part of the permanent display. With 67 institutions, the number of museums in the Netherlands that focus on the area of the Second World War is impressive. It concerns a reasonable, but not entirely even, distribution of war museums across the country. Flevoland, Utrecht, and Limburg have been somewhat shortchanged, as have the northern provinces. Zeeland and Gelderland appear to be particularly well-served. Many of the (especially smaller) museums have an unmistakably regional orientation. The majority of these war museums are represented on the Internet with their own websites.
Due partly to the relatively large number of museums that are active in the area of the Second World War, the war heritage preserved in the Netherlands is seriously split. There are museums devoted to specifically military operations and museums devoted to a specific region’s history during the Second World War. Then there are museums and memorial centers that focus above all on persecution, going underground, or on the liberation. The number of museums that highlight a specific individual is small. All in all, the Netherlands has five museums where the focus is on a single person, namely Anne Frank, Corrie ten Boom, General Maczek, Titus Brandsma, and Johannes Post. Moreover, the museum that is inspired by the latter is one of at least five institutions that in their nomenclature refer explicitly to the resistance.

**Diversity**

Together the totality of war museums and related institutions encompass the largest collection of war heritage in the Netherlands – although it is seldom seen as a unity. A comprehensive overview of objects is not available because the inventories of the museum collections are incomplete. On the other hand, during the period 2008-2009 and at the request of the Ministry of VWS, the Landelijk Contact van Museumconsulenten [National Contact of Museum Consultants] did a selective inventory of movable Second World War heritage – that is to say, with the exception of buildings and large-scale immovable units – relating to the Netherlands, the Dutch East Indies, Surinam, and the Netherlands Antilles. In June 2009, this resulted in the war’s Museum Inventarisatie Project (MusIP) The results of this project confirm the view that museums vary in, among other things, the level of professionalism and institutionalization, configuration volume, historical and museum expertise, volume of the collection and level of inventory, conditions of preservation, and accommodation. Notably, MusIP of the War has made inventories of lesser known collections. This resulted in case studies of 32 generally highly enthusiastic institutions and remarkably committed and devoted private collectors. In terms of organization as well as formation and accommodation these newly charted collections turned out not to be comparable to the institutions represented in the Netherlands Museum Register. The former needed a great deal more work in policy planning and collection registration. Furthermore, it concerned a total of 208 partial collections with a combined number of almost 180,000 objects. The collections vary from roughly one hundred to the more than 27,500 objects at the OorlogsVerzetsMuseum [War Resistance Museum] in Rotterdam. By Dutch standards these non-registered and lesser known institutions are relatively small museum collections.

**Willfulness**

The one-man museums, in particular, appear to be vulnerable in the Dutch museum landscape. In the first place, there is the management of the collection. The question is whether the preservation conditions are safeguarded in a small institution with limited funds, especially when it has a collection consisting of various kinds of materials, each with its own criteria of preservation. Secondly, it turns out that war heritage in these institutions is primarily unknown heritage. After all, only twelve percent of the objects (among which are weapons and ammunition) in these collections are fully registered. In the case of almost half of these objects there is no, or hardly any, question of their being registered. The condition of the objects is variable, especially of vulnerable but high frequency materials such as paper (including photographs), textile, and film. Good conditions of preservation are less common than in the remaining Dutch museums. Thirdly, it seems that cooperation with, and participation in, the projects of other parties, namely with government institutions, sometimes incite resistance and suspicion. The report of the museum consultants mentions distrust of inspection of their own collection, while invitations for collaboration were rejected due to doubts about their usefulness, criticism of the government, and the feeling of being slighted as a regional institution. In addition, other reasons mentioned for rejection were missing documentation and a lack of manpower.

The image that comes to the fore in our research is that the one-man museums consist of extremely dedicated, passionate, and obstinate collectors who appeal to a personal, local, or regional audience. As a phenomenon it documents the enthusiastic urge of individual collectors in a specific period. One-man museums are virtually autonomous in their work.
mode because the majority of them receive no structural financial government support and operate independently. That autonomy is both their strength and their weakness. Their strength lies in the presentation of the singularity in situ by means of objects found, at least in part, in their immediate surroundings. Their weakness lies in the fact that a rapport with other museums and professionalism are largely missing because time and manpower are in short supply. This is why the continuity of private collections is not protected. What will happen to the collection of a one-man museum when the initiator retreads or dies? At times, the matter of continuity has been discussed and the initiator has found a successor, or else has made arrangements for his collection to be moved to an existing professional institution. Frequently, however, such is not the case and possible top-class items could go lost or land in the commercial collectors’ market.

Cooperation

The large number of museums, varying from formative institutions to one-man museums, can do justice to the multiplicity of experiences during the Second World War and to the enormous attention this conflict still draws in the Netherlands today. The question whether, because of the large quantity of war heritage, with its therefore inevitable overlap and repetition, not too much of the same thing is being preserved and presented was picked up in the period 2007-2010 by the program of the Ministry of VWS, Erfgoed van de Oorlog [Heritage of the War]. The program intended to bring together war heritage in a physical and virtual manner as much as possible, by drawing up inventory, registration, and opening up of objects and collections. Registration of the often not yet inventoried heritage in small institutions makes it possible to obtain better insight into what heritage is available where. Not until this knowledge has been gathered and used for a thorough comparison can the importance of the objects be better determined. Then potential shortcomings will become clear and, in addition, it will be seen whether possibilities exist for completing certain presentation through loans. To this end, greater cooperation between museums is necessary. We visualize this on several levels: first of all between war museums (memorial centers included) among themselves, secondly between war museums and other museums, and thirdly between war museums and other heritage presentations.

The large number of museums can do justice to the multiplicity of experiences during the Second World War.

The formative war museums and memorial centers started the improvement in mutual cooperation roughly a decade ago. In the meantime, this group of museums includes a number of committees that meet on a regular basis: directors’ deliberations, educational deliberations, and collections’ deliberations – the names are self-explanatory. Here news is exchanged about associated institutions, such as new exhibitions and personal changes, and combined activities are coordinated as, for example, the annual action “Niet weggooien!” [“No discarding!”]. This quite successful action, launched in 2003, is supported by a website actienietweggooien.nl. Here people can offer their war heritage, of their own free will, to one of sixteen participating heritage institutions. The composition of the directors’, the educational, and the collections’ deliberations confirms the split between the formative institutions and the one-man museums.

Collective

The desire for performing more as a collective is not only an ambition of these war museums and memorial centers. Two important subsidizing agencies have also stipulated that it be a necessity for these organizations. The Nationaal Fonds voor Vrijheid en Veteranenzorg [National Fund for Freedom and Veterans’ Care] (shortened to V-fund) argued for greater cooperation and the joining of forces within the sector.10 The reorganization of the department Oorlogsgetroffenen en Herinnering WO II [War Victims and Memory WW II] of the Ministry of VWS in 2010, which handed over part of its duties to the Nationaal Comité 4 en 5 mei [National Committee 4 and 5 May] and the NIOD, provided a further impulse for seriously resuming this pursuit. Under the authority of the V-Fund, the Airborne Museum Hartenstein in Oosterbeek, the Nationaal Bevrijdingsmuseum 1940-1945 in Groesbeek and the Nationaal Oorlogs- en Verzetsmuseum in Overloon had their future stability examined. This investigation led to the conclusion that the museums of the future will have to cooperate in order to be able to continue offering a
high quality collection. In November 2010, together with the municipality of Nijmegen, the institutions presented their intention of realizing a WWII museum of national substance, all while maintaining the three existent locations with site-specific presentations. Thereupon the acquisition of funds for the realization of the WWII museum got started, with the intention to present the new “mother museum” to the public in 2014 at the seventieth commemoration of Operation Market Garden.

Also in 2010, nine war museums and memorial centers took the initiative of organizing themselves into a collective of Museums and Memorial Centers 40-45. In addition to the exchange of information and participation in cooperating on points of common interest, one of the collective’s primary goals is that of being an interlocutor for government and trusts, as well as that of promoting common initiatives and regulating financing. The resolution to organize into a collective is an important step in the process in which war museums and memorial centers will be able to rely more strongly on one another. Being fully aware of mutual competition (in and of itself not necessarily a bad thing, as it keeps everyone sharp), as a collective they can share, enlarge, strengthen, and expand the view on each other’s institution, specialties/main points, collection, activities, and knowledge/expertise, so that in the future they can operate and function forcefully. If they actually want to be a spokesperson for the sector, the administration of the collective would be wise to include wherever possible the peer-institutions, among which the one-man museums that have not (yet) joined the initiative.

Exchange

One form of intensive cooperation between museums that already exists is the implementation of exchanging exhibits. In the period between 2000 and 2010, ten war museums put together at least 32 traveling exhibitions. This includes both exhibits that were curated by one of these institutions and exhibits coming from elsewhere. The fact that there were at least an additional eleven exhibitions circulating outside of these ten institutions, provides further proof that exchange and orientation are not by definition limited to the specific heritage institutions. A fine example is the exhibition “Oorlog in de West. Suriname, de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba 1940–1945” [War in the West. Surinam, the Netherlands Antilles, and Aruba 1940-1945] curated by the Resistance Museum in Amsterdam. This traveling exhibit could be seen in the Netherlands in a mosque in South East Amsterdam, among other places, in the Public Library in Tilburg, but it also went to the Surinam Museum in Paramaribo and to Curaçao. Traveling temporary exhibitions are an excellent means for showing heritage to a larger and, in some cases a clearly different, audience; occasionally outside of a museum setting.

As mentioned before, it is equally important that working relationships are entered into and expanded between war museums and memorial centers and other relevant institutions. It goes without saying that historical museums as well as educational-, technical-, and art museums need to be considered for the same purpose. Such a collaborative link might pose the question, for instance, to what extent the Second World War should be viewed as an extraordinary period, or if it’s more exactly a matter of continuity from the viewpoint of art, for example. The yield coming from the program Erfgoed van de Oorlog [Heritage of the War] suggests projects in which innovative approaches can be found again. An interesting aspect of temporary exhibitions is the regular cooperation with external partners. This may concern diverse institutions in the domain of the Second World War, museum departments, media partners and, in the case of current themes, non-governmental organizations. Contact with foreign partners does exist but it is labor intensive and requires greater efforts on the part of the institutions. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that mutually exchanged exhibits can be realized, which may be completed on site with objects from the own collection and then be allowed to circulate both inside and outside of the Netherlands. The possibility also exists of attracting exchange exhibitions from elsewhere and present these outside of the regular war museums and memorial centers in order to reach a different group of visitors.

Expertise

Another form of cooperation and exchange is the NWO research program “Dynamiek van de herinnering” [Dynamics of memory], where heritage institutions, government agencies, cultural foundations, and academia (University of Amsterdam, the Free University, and NIOD) found each other as matching financiers. The intention is to attain further reflection and theory formulation in the area of both heritage- and museum studies and archival- and information sciences. To make the expertise and the war heritage collections visible to other museums, it is advisable that the collective of Museums and Memorial Centers 40–45, in addition to a greater group of war museums and memorial centers, come forward and draw attention to the sector, for example by organizing as a separate branch within the Netherlands Museum Association. A strong organization of this branch
is important not only for better insight into the functioning of the sector of war museums and memorial centers, but will also be better able to respond to museum developments in general, and to those of the war museums in particular, with reference to the specificity of a site location and the transmission of knowledge of eyewitnesses to younger generations, for example. Continuing professionalism, expressed among others in acquiring the status of a recognized museum, is part of this ambition.

Internationally, (a continuing) cooperation is desirable within the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Taskforce for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. In connection with ICOM, 31 international committees were established although a committee for war museums does not yet exist. On the other hand, the International Committee of Memorial Museums for the Remembrance of Victims of Public Crime (IC-MEMO) and the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Arms and Military History (ICOMAM) are active in the area of war museums and memorial centers. The Airborne Museum Hartenstein, Museum Bevrijdende Vleugels [Museum Liberating Wings] in Best, and the Museum Bronbeek in Arnhem are connected to ICOMAM.

**Visitors’ numbers**

The societal role and the reach of museums can be deduced, among other things, from visitors’ numbers. It was mentioned before that ever fewer Dutch people have personal war memories while increasing numbers of them know the war from history books, commemoration ceremonies, or a variety of media. The result is that the (intended) audience of war heritage has changed. Equally important is the fact that the numbers of visitors have increased due to a mounting interest in the Second World War. This development can be seen in the numbers of visitors to war museums and memorial centers.

The Resistance Museum Amsterdam processes data such as age, country of origin, postal codes (within Amsterdam), and the way in which the visitor found out about the museum, from triangular signs, bicycle rentals, to travel guides such as Lonely Planet and Michelin. Furthermore, the Resistance Museum Amsterdam keeps the category “remarkable” in its statistics, and thus visitors were noted from French Polynesia and Jordan, repeated visits from Turkey, and one visitor who was made aware of the museum through a podcast. Such specific data are the exception, however. Often deeper insight into the visitors’ motivations and expectations is lacking, as it is in the realized effects, simply because museum personnel has no time to do a thorough analysis of the visitors’ numbers.

Only a limited number of institutions have the number of visitors available for several years. Where various one-man museums have an estimated few thousand visitors a year, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam has approximately one million of them. In theme this institution certainly belongs to the sector of war museums but, because of Anne Frank’s status as an international icon, any further comparison with visitors’ numbers of other institutions makes little sense. What is clear, in any event, are the vast mutual differences. These are also expressed in the numbers of visitors, although to a lesser degree, of three more formative war museums and memorial centers in Table 1.
Table 1
Indication visitors’ numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Resistance Museum Amsterdam</th>
<th>Camp Westerbork</th>
<th>Camp Vught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>74.532</td>
<td>28.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>72.594</td>
<td>30.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>83.605</td>
<td>7.700 **</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.005</td>
<td>46.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.402</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>52.483</td>
<td>57.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>57.748</td>
<td>61.188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* no annual report available
** Camp Vught was closed for part of the year 2002 because of construction activities

More revealing than quantity is the kind of visitor. Experiences acquired by war museums abroad can be enlightening here. Statistics of the Imperial War Museum, with three locations in London and branches in Duxford and Manchester, indicate significant changes in the composition of their visitors. Traditionally, the Imperial War Museum was an institution where the typical visit consisted of a father and son, interested in soldiers and weaponry. In the year 2011, a visit to the Imperial War Museum, which in its entirety draws more than two million visitors to the five establishments, comes in the form of a family outing for fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. Further research is needed to discover whether a development from father/son to family outing will also present itself in the Netherlands, and to what extent war museums will (or may) be included.

School trips form a large part of the flow of visitors. In 2008, 33% of the visitors to the Anne Frank House were elementary school pupils and 30% were secondary school students. In the Resistance Museum Amsterdam, where students formed slightly more than 30% of the visitors in 2009, many more came from secondary schools than from the elementary level.

Another relevant theme concerns repeated visits. The Imperial War Museum has a high and increasing number of visitors returning to the museum: recently that consists of more than one third of the number of visitors. In the Netherlands it is virtually unknown which group of, and how many, visitors come to the same war museum repeatedly, but it seems that repeated visits are less frequent. However, former prisoners of war and/or survivors do reach a higher score in the Netherlands.

It is equally unclear if the potentially interested, inspired by a visit to one of the war museums, move on to another war museum, whether that be in the Netherlands or abroad. Since there is an insufficient amount of information about current groups of visitors to the war museums, it is recommended that an in-depth investigation of the audience be made. It is hoped that this would also answer the question which (potential) visitors do not, or hardly ever, come and what image of war museums the various groups may have.

Finances

The financial situation of war museums determines the possibilities for and restrictions on further renovation, professionalism, and continuity. Moreover, since it makes a statement about support, usage, and recognition, this paragraph will provide an idea of the financial situation. Relatively few institutions receive structural support from the government. In the Netherlands there are four of these: National Monument Camp Amersfoort, Memorial Center Camp Westerbork, National Monument Camp Vught, and the Dutch East Indies Memorial Center Bronbeek in Arnhem. The Memorial Center Camp Westerbork also receives incidental and (modest) structural support from the municipalities of Assen, Hoogeveen, and Midden-Drenthe, from the province of Drenthe, and from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sciences (OCW). Approximately 30% of the operating costs of the Memorial Center Camp Westerbork are covered by structural government subsidies. The remaining 70% are independently obtained, among others through gifts, donations from within the country and abroad, and from admission fees. With roughly 140,000 visitors annually and an entrance fee of €6.50, this is a substantial income. The National Monument Camp Vught applies for project subsidies and receives structural support from
the municipality of Vught and the province of Noord-Brabant, which decides upon the subsidy for each administrative period. Because there is an agreement with the provincial government that the camp area has to be open to the public free of charge, it isn’t possible for the National Monument Camp Vught to generate any income through admission fees, since the memorial center is located on the site of the original camp. Admission to the National Monument Camp Amerfoort and the Dutch East Indies Memorial Center Bronbeek is also free of charge.

Other war museums and memorial centers frequently have to make it without any structural government support. The Anne Frank House, with more than a million visitors a year, charges an entrance fee of € 8.50. The Resistance Museum Amsterdam earns income from project subsidies, gifts, financial backing, the city of Amsterdam, the province of North Holland, the Ministry of OCW, various commercial enterprises, the Telepuzzel of the newspaper De Telegraaf, the BankGiro lottery, and admission fees of € 7.50 per person. Although some of the formative war museums receive substantial financial support from the government, for instance for construction projects and renovation or through temporary arrangements such as the program Erfgoed van de Oorlog [Heritage of the War], a majority of them manage without any structural governmental subsidies. A lesser known institution such as the Polderhuis Westkapelle, also known by the name Dijk- en Oorlogs-museum [Dike- and War Museum], charges € 5.50 per admission and receives a subsidy from the municipality of Veere, the province of Zeeland, the Euregio Scheldemond, the Bouwfonds Nederlandse Gemeenten [Building Fund Netherlands Municipalities], Vitaal Platteland, [Vital Rural Region], the Rabobank Foundation, and various other funds, among which the V-Fund.

The sources of income of the smaller museums generally consist of entrance ticket sales, incidental subsidies from local administrations, donations and gifts from associations of friends and private individuals, the sale of publications and other items in the museum shop. It is precisely these museums that demonstrate great resourcefulness by using free or monetarily reduced services and recycling goods via individuals and agencies from their own local community.

Volunteers
As a rule the above-mentioned institutions, which are structurally or incidentally supported by the government, have a limited staff of professionals who are expected to perform all regular activities. They are often assisted by a wider circle of volunteers, who frequently work on a part-time basis. Staff and volunteers alike are usually perfectly aware that reflection and renovation are desirable, both in terms of the way the museum makes its presentations and of the substantive interpretation of new insights, but in many cases the time and means to put a serious effort into all this are lacking.

Time for such reflection is also limited for the dozens of generally smaller institutions (often without any legal body) that depend entirely or almost entirely on the devotion of enthusiastic volunteers. Volunteers are essential as guides, security guards, experts in the material, administrators, etc. In the smaller institutions, too, the core of the activities consists of managing the museum and keeping it accessible (during often limited opening hours). The continuing acquisition of objects, especially when the collector and initiator is the museum’s linchpin, is an important activity as well. This is not merely a matter of donations but also of the acquisition of objects. Without the commitment of public means, or with only limited use, dozens of war museums have thus been created through private initiatives. Again and again, it is the great dedication and involvement that come to light. It is difficult to indicate accurately how much dedicated manpower is being invested in this extraordinary historical episode. The estimate is that of more than a thousand individuals. The vast role of the volunteers makes an important statement about the large number of war museums to be found in the Netherlands.
Chapter 5

Themes, perspectives, and scope
The historical experiences of the Second World War can obviously not be altered but the memories, and the significance attributed to them, bear the influence of our constant association with this history in the post-war period. This process of accruing significance, characterized by contemporary questions and needs, contributes to the extremely lively character of the historical interest in the Second World War.

This lively character is possible only as long as the image of the war is not ossified, as long as the war is not perceived as a closed historical episode without any contemporary relevance. It demands that museums present the developments during the Second World War in a manner that is as well-organized and as accessible as possible.

Traditionally, the military aspect of the Second World War had a central place in many war museums. Generally, military themes are well represented in presentations of the myriad of military gear and equipment available, specifically of the Western Allies and German troops. In recent years, the military theme is receiving a new content due to the growing emphasis on the Atlantic Wall, particularly in bunker museums in Hoek van Holland, Noordwijk, Scheveningen, Umuiden, and on Schiermonnikoog and Walcheren, among other places. In the representation in war museums, the military perspective plays an important role up until today. Although this aspect is no longer quite as dominant as is sometimes assumed, it does prevent certain people from visiting such museums.

In addition to the military element, in many museums countless other aspects of the Second World War are now represented. The mission of the prominent Imperial War Museum, which states: "The Imperial War Museum is a war museum rather than a military museum. We concentrate on people’s experience of war and its impact on society," also holds true for the totality of the Dutch war museums, albeit implicitly so. This mission reflects a change of course in which war is more and more frequently seen as a broad phenomenon that, especially in the twenty-first century context of total warfare, influenced citizens and the military alike.

Next to the representation of the military aspect, the museums’ attention to ordinary life has unmistakably grown. Herein the Dutch museums seem to be connecting with the increased interest in that area. In the last few decades, the resistance, too – a recognizable concept in the name given to a number of war museums – has been able to count on continued interest on the part of the museums, although society’s interest in the resistance was less prominent on the whole than it had been in the earliest post-
war period. In looking back at the war, the persecution of the Jews is evermore emphasized, a development that can be observed in museums and memorial centers, not only in commemorative monuments and (not least in popular) history writing. Regardless of these spearheads, many war museums are attempting to provide a more general picture of the Netherlands – in some cases of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – during the Second World War.

**Vital**

These changes in emphasis demonstrate how presentations of war heritage have been adjusted and expanded in order to link up with new questions, lines of approach, and insights. Such a mechanism is of vital importance for having heritage play a permanent role when dealing with the Second World War. On the one hand, it requires that an eye be kept open for both the current state of affairs in historical science and for the way in which society looks back at the war and, on the other hand, that from time to time there be a willingness to put the approach to one's own museum and its presentations in the spotlight. To this end, it is necessary to maintain contact with the wider field of action of the museums and with the academic field by attending study sessions, offering internships to students, and keeping up with the literature.

The desirable revitalization, which can contribute to showing the complexity of the Second World War, is always asking for presentable museum proportions. Something of this sort is generally implemented in temporary exhibitions and thereafter can continue to work in the permanent location. In addition, the trick is to familiarize visitors with the divergent positions, nuances, complexity, and interrelationship of historical events in a manner that is both engaging and partly surprising as well. This can contribute in important ways to the allure of these institutions for new and old visitors, although it is not self-evident that every visitor will always greet every renovation enthusiastically.

Exhibiting the diversity of experiences and perspectives is the responsibility both of each separate war museum and of the museums as collective keepers of the war heritage, but each to its own extent. Since it is to the museums’ advantage to be distinct one from the other (and to make that difference clear to their target audiences) it makes no sense for every location to present the same variety. At the same time, each museum would do well to make its visitor aware of the existence of various selections and viewpoints, of the instructive value of comparing these, and that this is possible not in just that one museum but will become more obvious by visiting other museums as well. There is nothing against some overlap – which can’t be precluded, anyway – but a conscious personal interpretation sharpens the museum’s vision when answering the question what it wishes to exhibit. Furthermore, a lucid choice clarifies the image of the separate museums for the visitor, as well as the institution’s rationale.

The question remains whether the war museums in the Netherlands are sufficiently different from each other in terms of their presentation and collection. For (potential) interested parties this renders it difficult to get a good view of what can be expected from a given war museum and how one location sets itself apart from another in its contents. Moreover, the variable quality of the individual museums – varying from enthusiastic hobby to professional institution – isn’t always easy to determine. Greater clarity on this issue can lead to better assistance to the visitors and a changing visitors’ flow.

**Specialization**

Keeping the historical culture alive is not served by a situation in which war heritage locations to a large extent repeat each other. Not only is it inefficient but it may also contribute to ossifying the memories of the war. There is a demand both for museums that present the great story of the Second World War in a well-arranged manner and for institutions that explicitly target specific aspects. Such presentations can complement and refine each other in their diversity, but they can also chafe, irritate, and prompt
questions. Indirectly, such an approach reinforces mutual involvement and vitality of the heritage institutions in this domain.

In the choices that museums may make it is not exclusively a matter of content considerations. Specialization can also be a matter of the form of presentation (such as the use of reproductions or the introduction of techniques that can be individually used) and of the targeted audience (for example, presentations aimed specifically at children, as at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, the Museon in The Hague, and, according to expectations, at the Resistance Museum Amsterdam). However, such choices cannot be seen as separate from further content considerations.

The most obvious themes of content were mentioned above. The increased societal interest in the persecution of the Jews has already resulted in lieux de mémoire museums such as the Anne Frank House and the Memorial Center Camp Westerbork, but it has also found a place in many other war museums, albeit an isolated one at times. Interest in other war victims such as the Roma, Sinti, and Jehovah’s Witnesses, is often still limited. Slightly more attention exists for the position of children in times of war, namely in the form of temporary exhibits, a theme that can speak both to a young contemporary audience and to an older audience as it looks back upon personal experiences in the war years. A presentation on the situation of young adults seems a promising one.

In another area, that of recreation during wartime, attention has already been given to music, theater, and sports. Literature, film, and the visual arts require greater consideration, especially in the setting of war museums. More generally, cultural history is often illuminated from the viewpoint of the history of daily life and how it adjusted to the circumstances, as in the exhibition “Liefde in oorlogstijd” [Love in Wartime], but greater attention is to be desired. This holds equally true for an aspect such as gender that is obviously underexposed. One exception here is Aletta, Instituut voor Vrouwengeschiedenis [Aletta, Institute for Women’s History] with its projects on communist and NSB [collaborating] women during the war.

Regularly occurring elements in the permanent arrangement of most museums are, among others, National Socialism and military developments. The way in which these themes are offered in a number of cases shows little variation and development. A renewed rendering, with greater heed paid to the further life of adherents of National Socialism, of soldiers on both sides of the political boundary, could make some changes here, as can more attention directed at the military battles at sea and in the air. Another phenomenon that deserves more attention is forced labor, to which can be linked a broader range of aspects concerning the war economy.

Biographic exhibitions, focusing on one or several individuals, were in short supply until only recently, while in the Netherlands there are relatively few war museums built around a single person – the Anne Frank House being the most renowned exception. In view of the enormous (as well as exceptional) popularity of the latter institution, it seems obvious that more emphatic attention ought to be given to extraordinary life stories, for example, in the form of temporary exhibits.

**Perspective**

It is an impossible task to provide an exhaustive list here of topics that are to be examined more closely, but thinking about subjects that have recently been looked at in historical research and in the media gives a good indication of further possibilities.
In this regard it’s not always necessary to present entirely new topics; dealing with divergent or complementary perspectives by handling more than one storyline can also provide added value. An awareness of the now sometimes dominant attention to victims, for example, could lead to a new interest in the perspective of the perpetrators, while the perspective of the bystander – abundantly present in the museum presentations by implication – can also be newly illuminated. In the case of the perpetrator, it has less to do with introducing a new topic than with presenting a specific perspective. Seen from post-war identification with winners and victims – a phenomenon that links up with the tradition of considering heritage chiefly as something positive that one chooses to respect and inherit from preceding generations – the perpetrators have often been reduced to an influential, somewhat limited group that, furthermore and certainly in occupied territory, were depicted as socially isolated. The existing fascination with evil did not automatically lead to a better understanding of the political choices made. A perspective providing greater insight into this can use the so-called dark heritage & contested heritage, which frequently concerns objects with National Socialist significance. This scope can stimulate, and thus enlighten, the way of thinking about “good versus evil,” for instance, (or, in contrast, the image of the “gray” past).

Seen from that angle, over and above the Resistance Museum, there could be a Perpetrators Museum or a Collaborators Museum, or one might think about an exhibition about the everyday life of the black marketeer or about the Atlantic Wall from the viewpoint of Dutch bunker builders. Such exhibits do not imply that the choices made are justified, but they would force the museums to wonder to what degree moral opinions influence their presentations and what contributions they make to the understanding of the history of the war. The tension that may exist between interest and involvement, both of the exhibition curators and the visitors, should be seen above all as an incentive for making well thought-through choices in the planning of exhibitions.

An important point is the geographic framework used to present the war history. The Netherlands has relatively many war museums that present the local and regional history, in particular, if only by means of their name. That scale is helpful in rendering the war experiences imaginable, also for those visitors who do not by definition come from the same region. At the same time, what is often missing is a clarification of how exactly this small-scale history diverges from war experiences elsewhere. Nevertheless, the permanent exhibition regularly contains as much information about the Dutch experiences as about the smaller-scaled ones. Although the story presented crosses the country’s borders here and there – whereby it is usually the rise of National Socialism in Germany, the occupation of the Dutch East Indies, the final phase of the Holocaust, and the Liberation by the Allies that are depicted – it remains above all else a Dutch story.

For regional and local museums, too, the point of departure of making things more explicit holds true, while what needs to be increased is a conscious dealing with additional perspectives alongside each other. Is the local story seen primarily as a derivative supplement to the national history or does it, in contrast, lead the organization of heritage? Does every small-scale story stimulate the visitor’s identification with history or does that depend on his or her specific origin? Do visitors more readily join the national story, since the framework is familiar through education and commemorative ceremonies?

**Scope**

It continues to be remarkable to what extent a global historical phenomenon such as the Second World War, which had consequences for every society around the globe, after all, appears primarily as domestic history in many presentations. On the other hand, there is greater interest in the Dutch East Indies, followed secondarily by attention to the Dutch territories in the West Indies. Sometimes there are additions concerning the Moroccan share in the war but such exercises tend to be the exception. A more spacious geographic framework, which rises above one’s own region and country, is desirable for clarifying to what degree the German occupation of the Netherlands, as well as the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies, were part of the worldwide developments of the time.
Varying the scope – which is different from a complete exchange of the national frame of reference for a global framework – in which historical stories are presented (local, regional, national, European, global, etc.) contributes to a better awareness of the scale of the events and to the insight in the transnational and colonial aspects of the war. In addition, expanding the view beyond Dutch borders connects with the current practice where heritage consumers draw their knowledge and impressions concerning the Second World War from elsewhere, too. Just as foreigners know how to find the Anne Frank House, so the Dutch visit war museums in Belgium and France, memorial centers in Germany and Poland, and war cemeteries in Indonesia and Thailand, both in real and virtual ways.

Thus, not only is the global character of the Second World War concretely justified with an expanded approach, but a link can be found with the current upsurge in globalization. In this area, it will not only be shaped by the visits of Dutch tourists to war museums abroad, but also by involving immigrants in the Netherlands in the museum presentations of the Second World War in which Dutch society is not the only important frame of reference.

One might think for example of extremely divergent exhibitions, temporary ones or as part of a permanent exhibit, about Germany, Italy, and Japan in the Second World War (separately, or from an internationally comparative perspective), about the European colonies in the Second World War and their relationships with the respective motherlands, about the occupation of Belgium and Denmark, about the neutrality of some European states, about migrants during the Second World War, about the international communities in the German prison camps, about the Eastern Front and the Allied bombings of Germany, about the Kriegsvertriebene and other displaced persons who ended up in Germany, the home fronts in Great Britain and the United States, and so on and so forth.

**Crossing borders**

In the past decade, temporary exhibitions have paid attention to places abroad that have become known because of concentration camps, mass murder, or bombings. Germany was depicted relatively little here, although there are occasional exceptions such as the presentation of Germans as victims in the trans-border exhibition “Bommen op ons huis. De bombardementen op Arnhem, Nijmegen en de Niederrhein” [Bombs on our house. The bombings on Arnhem, Nijmegen, and the Niederrhein], at the National Liberation Museum. Until the present time, attention to non-European history – such as the innovative exhibition in the Resistance Museum Amsterdam “War in the West, Surinam, the Netherlands Antilles, and Aruba 1940-1945” has been limited for the most part to the war history in the overseas territories. Although in a number of museums this led to the inclusion of the Dutch East Indies as part of the permanent exhibit, further attention to Asia and North America, in particular, is to be recommended.
In the past few years, some temporary exhibits in Dutch war museums have already taken certain steps in that direction. Although exhibitions that systematically attempt to offer an overview of partial areas of the post-war history were rare, there are examples of exhibits that make connections between present and past. When dealing with more recent topics, it is geographically speaking easier to move farther away from home and thus one sees Darfur and Tibet appear, for instance, in the Memorial Center Camp Westerbork and the Resistance Museum Amsterdam from the perspective of freedom (or lack thereof), often without any explicit comparison to the Second World War. This could be handled more methodically.

Bringing museum initiatives to fruition in this area depends on the cooperation of foreign museums as well. Those institutions have at their disposal war heritage whose authenticity, as well as their evocative and visual possibilities, may well appeal to the Dutch audience. Linking up with, expanding, and deepening international contacts demand a long-term effort, designed to building a network that makes a mutual exchange of expertise and objects possible. It requires extra efforts on the part of the museums involved. Such initiatives could lead to temporary exhibitions to be seen in the Dutch war museums, but can also result in an exhibit where the Dutch perspective can be viewed in museums abroad.

**Timeframe**

Expanding the scope can also be done in a temporal perspective. Since our view of the Second World War cannot be seen as separate from the way in which the memory of this historic conflict has developed for more than 65 years, it is to be recommended that the post-war handling of this past be given an integral place in the permanent exhibits of war museums (politically, in terms of commemorations, the position of second generations, but also in the area of popular culture). Heritage may be seized more firmly in order to familiarize heritage visitors with the changeability of historical interpretations.

This way the spectrum will also be expanded by embedding the war experiences into the larger twentieth-century history. That development deserves reinforcement, in part to be able to compare the extraordinary character of the war years with other episodes of modern history, in part also because in Dutch museums other—both previous and subsequent—twentieth-century episodes continue to be remarkably underexposed in comparison to the war. Thereby the war risks breaking free from the historical context.

Museums that choose to let go of the strictly Dutch scope could, for example, present the history of the first half of the twentieth century around the impact of both world wars. That goes a step beyond the way in which the 1930’s are generally presented as the principal prehistory of the era of the German occupation—plus a reference to the Treaty of Versailles. Another possibility is to categorically connect the Second World War to the post-war history of the Cold War, the international relationships, and the process of decolonization (which can be limited to the first and second halves of the 1940’s or else be viewed more broadly up to 1989). Against such a background one might consider comparative exhibitions about the Netherlands respectively as an occupied nation and the Netherlands as an occupying power, about Dutch peace missions abroad, or about the twentieth-century Dutch position with reference to various war situations elsewhere. Related themes, such as genocides and other human rights violations and the reactions to these, belong to such an approach as well, as do themes like democracy, collective identity, and enemy images. Recent initiatives like the Humanity House and the House for Democracy and Constitutional State, both of them in The Hague, could be used as inspiration.

In the past few years, some temporary exhibits in Dutch war museums have already taken certain steps in that direction. Although exhibitions that systematically attempt to offer an overview of partial areas of the post-war history were rare, there are examples of exhibits that make connections between present and past. When dealing with more recent topics, it is geographically speaking easier to move farther away from home and thus one sees Darfur and Tibet appear, for instance, in the Memorial Center Camp Westerbork and the Resistance Museum Amsterdam from the perspective of freedom (or lack thereof), often without any explicit comparison to the Second World War. This could be handled more methodically.
Redefinition

Broadening the temporal scope does not by definition mean that each theme presented must necessarily be linked to current events. The potential desirability thereof can always be evaluated anew by the museums and will depend on the story to be highlighted, the audience targeted, and the possible discussion to be elicited. If current events are to be given a place, space can be made more forcefully than has been done until now for art and contemporary contemplation of present and past.

In addition, actualizing exhibitions that go beyond the temporal scope of the war years also calls for heritage that is not automatically part of the collections in Dutch war museums. In this respect, too, cooperation is possible with other heritage institutions both at home and abroad, often outside the sector of the war museums. Furthermore, a structural adjustment in the collection policy of at least part of the war museums and directing it to a wider whole of twentieth-century heritage objects should be taken into consideration. In addition, (digital and other) reproductions can play a role here. All of this requires a redefinition of what is seen as a core collection – as a logical consequence of which deaccession should not be excluded. However, it goes without saying that an adjustment of the collection policy is well-founded only after a complete and highly accessible inventory of the current collections has been made.

Reconsideration of the collection- and presentation activities is to take place openly and above board. What is the museum’s mission? What reach does the museum have? Does it distinguish itself sufficiently in both aspects from other war museums? Do the conditions in which the collection is presented and preserved meet the standards of professionalism and permanence? When the latter questions have to be answered negatively, the choice for a readjusted perspective can also result in a far-reaching cooperation with other museums. If the collection’s accessibility is sufficiently safeguarded, this does not necessarily have to lead to an impoverishment of the historical culture but can, in fact, contribute to a more sweeping historicization of the war memory by placing it in a broader perspective.

Whether, and for how long, the now self-evident interest in the Second World War will continue is uncertain. That uncertainty is significant for the dynamics of memory, which also clarifies that the frameworks from which the war is viewed are subject to change. An appropriate museum reaction to this is variety and flexibility, through a constant search for innovative ways by which to give form to this past.

The future interpretation of the war memory cannot be precisely outlined, nor can one predict whether the existing war museums can survive the coming decades in their present form. On the basis of a well-considered individual mission, they can each try to properly evaluate their own position and further development. This can lead to strengthening a more general or coordinating historical overview of the war years, or else to an uncompromising choice for a thematic or geographical specialization, to more broadly defined time periods, by dealing with a definite perspective, by specific ways of presentation – with distinctive emphases on emotion and knowledge –, or by focusing resolutely on specific target groups.
New forms of presenting the war
The Second World War has been evolving for a while now from a living past to recorded history. Thereby the interest in the war doesn’t automatically vanish, but under the altering circumstances museums must constantly give a new form to the wartime past. In this context, the importance of the authentic location, the lieu de mémoire, seems to have been rediscovered. What was still possible in the 1970’s – when the original barracks of Camp Westerbork were razed to make place for the construction of the observatory’s radio telescopes, were sold to farmers and put to new use as stables – seems unimaginable today.

For a number of war museums the location has a direct historical link with what is being presented. One example is the hiding place of the Frank family in the Anne Frank House, the synagogues of the Jewish Museum, Villa Hartenstein of the Airborne Museum that served as the Allied Headquarters during the Battle of Arnhem and, obviously, the Amersfoort, Vught, and Westerbork camps, now used as memorial centers. The authenticity of the location contains the memory of what took place there during the Second World War.

Usually, a lieu de mémoire is marked by one or more commemorative monuments in and around a war museum or memorial center where annual ceremonies are held. This presents possibilities as well as limitations where the use of the museum grounds is concerned. Generally, war museums consist of more than a single building where a museum presentation can be visited. Often visitors are able to view large materiel (vehicles and weaponry) on the museum grounds. Commemorations draw visitors to monuments within the museum itself or on the museum grounds, which can be favorable in terms of attracting visitors. Increasingly, the diminishing group of veterans and civilian war victims is accompanied by their children and grandchildren. The limitations lie in the fact that in designing the museum grounds and in programming the museum’s activities the
solemn nature of a commemorative ceremony must be taken into account. A restaurant establishment or a children’s playground side by side with a commemorative monument is hard to imagine.

**Experience**

The rediscovery of the lieux as authentic location feeds the idea of familiarity with the experience. The awareness of authenticity is an ingredient in the illusion that it is possible to personally experience what it must have been like. We don’t just want to know what happened during the war and why, but we want to live through (certain) war experiences ourselves. In addition to the use of depictions of the Second World War through, among other things, films, novels, history books, comic strips, games, and official commemorative ceremonies, in the past few decades more and more value is being attached to experience. This concept refers to an (almost) sensory experience. The desire to personally live through (albeit selective) war experiences explains why large numbers of interested people visit lieux de mémoire. In order to meet this need, the museums are also trying to address and stimulate the experience, as in the Airborne experience in the museum in Oosterbeek, the Blockbuster experience in Liberty Park in Overloon, the Blitz experience (WW II), the Trench experience (WW I) in the Imperial War Museum in London, and the museum presentation of the First World War in the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, Belgium.

More and more museums are participating in reenactment activities, in which the participants reenact specific battles as authentically as possible. They wear (original or reproductions of) uniforms and footwear of the period, use weapons and vehicles, and divide up into the warring parties of ally or enemy. Language use and even food and housing (because reenactment often takes up part of the day) are tailored to the historical situation. Thus, it is clear that reenactment aspires to temporarily submerge the players as well as the audience – which often attends in large numbers – in the atmosphere of the war years.

It is as yet difficult to judge what changes this produces in the opinions about dealing with heritage and about the role of heritage and the interpretation of objectivity and authenticity. A Holocaust exhibition elicits hardly any questions from anyone, while a Holocaust experience seems unthinkable. Certain experiences are intolerable by definition because the ultimate war experience is death. In view of its short-lived and intensive nature, a museum presentation such as the experience requires that museums give careful thought to the (im)possibilities and (un)desirability of this phenomenon and further examine the expectations and results among museum visitors. Stimulating and entertaining visitors can be an effective means by which to appeal to visitors and involve them in the story that museums and memorial centers wish to convey. However, it is inherent in the nature of a museum institution that offering sheer entertainment is not its purpose. There is a tension between the visitor’s freedom to envisage his museum visit as he sees fit and the museum’s responsibility to broaden the visitor’s insight into the past. However, that tension is not new.
Heritage tourism

Most museums not only strive to transmit knowledge but want to attract visitors on an emotional level as well. To that end, they appeal to the involvement of the heritage consumer. This involvement shapes the extent of the empathy that visitors experience. These emotions can be universal, separate from identity and identification. But there are specific ways, too, in which visitors identify with the war history, with the experiences of historical individuals, and with specific outlooks. That process builds on existing forms of identification with, among other things, one’s own town, region, the Netherlands, family, religious congregation, and ethnic or cultural community. The memory of the Second World War is quite often seen as a building stone for contemporary Dutch identity that reinforces both current mutual solidarity and the connection between past and present. The fact that to a large extent many heritage institutions present the Second World War from within a Dutch framework indicates there is still a long way to go before this war will actually be seen as a worldwide phenomenon. It is a historical fact that the Second World War was played out on five continents, but it seems to be difficult to accommodate this perspective in a museum setting.

The desire to visit lieux de mémoire resulted in the localization and marking of the authentic place. It led to heritage tourism both within the country and abroad. Embedding heritage in the industry of tourism is a fact. Tourism in the realm of war heritage can offer an excellent opportunity of attracting a wider audience to the institutions. There are hiking-, bicycle-, and automobile routes that run along or go to former battlefields and camp areas. For instance, think of those tourists in Drenthe who crisscross the grounds of Camp Westerbork on foot or bicycle, tourists who pass the Liberation Museum in Zeeland, third generation youths with a Dutch East Indies background who travel to Indonesia to visit wartime locations there, memorial journeys to Auschwitz and battlefield tours to Normandy. At the same time, a specific lieu can be displayed through virtual techniques as well, separate from its location. Notably for younger generations who are comfortable with these technologies, it can vastly expand the accessibility to and involvement with an authentic location, regardless of where the place and the heritage consumer happen to be, whether that be in Groningen, Limburg, the Ukraine, or in Surinam.

Digital

Using modern technological means to present stories relating to the (heritage of the) Second World War is on the way. For a long time now the Internet has been much more than an appendage of museums. Websites are able to offer a serious and equal exhibition place, such as the virtual exhibits “De eerste vijf dagen” [The first five days] and “De bevrijding” [The Liberation] at www.tweedewereldoorlog.nl. Digitalizing commemorative monuments offers fine possibilities for coupling these to the web presentation of relevant museums. Equally interesting is the application available for smartphones “Oorlogsmonumenten in beeld,” [War monuments in pictures], which virtually marks existing war monuments, placing them in an informative context, thereby offering new possibilities to museums and visitors alike.
The growing availability of digital information about the Second World War can become an important impulse for the further development of contemporary presentations of the war history. The yield of the VWS-program Erfgoed van de Oorlog [Heritage of the war], which produced an important impetus for this, consists to a large degree of heritage that is accessible to many people via the Internet. The diversity of the wide-ranging material facilitates dealing with new themes and approaches, the results of which can become part of museum presentations. Moreover, as a follow-up in cooperation with archives, for example, museums can offer possibilities to individual interested parties for deepening their insight by consulting the digital – preferably pre-sorted – information via their website. One example of this, with a commemorative function, is the Digitaal Monument Joodse Gemeenschap [Digital Monument Jewish Community] in the Netherlands, under the management of the Jewish Historical Museum. The corresponding Community Jewish Monument makes it possible for the visitor to place photos, information, and stories with the individuals included on the digital monument.

Although it was feared at first that making the collection accessible on-line and creating virtual exhibits would decrease the number of visitors to a physical museum, there is wide consensus today that the real and the virtual world can complement and reinforce each other. What is true, however, is that interest has become strongly individualized because of the technological options. Therefore, it is relevant to draw attention to the growing technological possibilities that offer the public individual itineraries geared to the visitor’s knowledge, interest, background, and needs.

Thereby heritage institutions end up in the area of interactive ways of presentation where the heritage consumer gradually becomes a more and more active, initiating person. Besides, interactive ways of presentation also offer the museum the possibility of being seen outside its own space. With the help of cell phone integration, GPS, and Internet services, museums can offer on site information.

New techniques for keeping the interest in the Second World War alive may push the physical heritage, which is the basis of the museum presentation, to the background a bit but heritage remains a point of reference and a source of inspiration. That is always the starting point from which museums tell trustworthy and engaging stories about history and whereby they set themselves apart from other providers. Museum application of augmented reality where a virtual historical layer is placed over contemporary reality, by aiming a smartphone at a specific point of a location, actually departs from the same beginnings as exhibiting engaging war objects in a glass case. It stirs the visitor’s fascination by offering “authentic” images of the past and provokes greater insight into history.

Social media

Obviously, new technological options are not only usable for museum presentations. Notably, in the museum strategies to reach visitors and a potentially interested audience, the commitment of social media has gained great importance. Digital newsletters and websites have already become more or less traditional means by which to attract the interested. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Hyves, Foursquare, Flickr, and You Tube are recent channels to be called upon. A number of war museums, such as the Anne Frank House, the Airborne Museum Hartenstein, the Jewish Historical Museum, and Liberty Park in Overloon, make use of these new possibilities. For the time being, practice indicates that the professional museums, in particular, have the expertise and manpower available in-house to take advantage of these technological options. Smaller institutions with a limited staff run a notably greater risk of lagging behind in this new development. In addition, sometimes there are particular reasons why a specific institution cannot go along with this. The website of Museum Bronbeek comes under the Ministry of Defense that limits the use of interactive services for security reasons. The use of modern technologies is perhaps not a must as such, but it does seem to be an inescapable phenomenon.
Increasingly, social media are important in maintaining contact – and thereby the sense of involvement – with visitors and supporters. To be really visible, a frequent flow of news on a variety of activities and topics is desirable. Involvement can be markedly expanded by creating interactive options, for instance reacting to illustrative material without available clarification, or by collectively describing elements of the collection. To react to this quickly and adequately and to moderate undesired reactions, sufficient manpower is necessary.

The public that is thus reached is by definition not limited to the circle of one’s own region or country from which the regular visitors often stem. Involving new and social media therefore draws the museums’ attention to a careful consideration of their public and, even more, of the question of how to best engage the different audience groups.

Although answering these questions may differ from one museum to the next, the virtual presence of museums is an almost self-evident given – simply because the audience expects it and because it is to the benefit of the war heritage visibility and accessibility. A museum without a website no longer counts, while the expectations of what visitors can find on a site are increasing. Partly because of the expense, a collective development of certain elements of virtual presentations is to be recommended, although their development and application are expected to become less costly.

It is, however, more than a mere matter of technology. The development of new forms of presentation goes hand in hand with a reflection about the contents of the story, the public, and the mutual cooperation between war museums. Technically, in terms of collections and presentations, war museums can already be connected with one another in all sorts of ways. It is the human factor that sometimes produces cold feet and is the cause that war museums are not yet successful in continued collaboration. That is exactly the reason to recommend that the possibilities of various new media, among which the aspect of interactivity, be researched.
Conclusion
The Netherlands has a large and varied number of war museums and memorial centers where war heritage is shown. The exploration of this field presented here makes it clear that the presence of these museums reflects the great value that contemporary society attaches to keeping the memory of the war years alive. On the whole, the exhibitions are quite accessible and show the war primarily from a Dutch perspective.

The sector of war museums can be roughly distinguished in, on the one hand, a limited number of institutions run by paid personnel and, on the other hand, a larger number of smaller museums where volunteers play a crucial role. The first category is formative and often has a national character. The second category tends to be locally and regionally known. The involvement with the war history is great in all of the museums and should be appreciated. The level of professionalism varies, primarily in accordance with the previously mentioned demarcation line.

In part because of a more favorable financial situation, the more professional institutions are better able to use contemporary techniques of presentation, offer greater variety in their presentations through temporary exhibitions, and more often – though not always – have a good record of the heritage of which they are the guardians. The expertise these museums and memorial centers have acquired, in the realm of education, too, can serve as an inspiration to many of the smaller museums.

Furthermore, the formative institutions stand out through their formal mutual cooperation. Because of the collective care of the war heritage – an awareness of collective responsibility that could be expressed more strongly – this cooperation between war museums and memorial centers deserves further expansion. In such a framework, reflecting upon the question of what links the various institutions respectively and what sets them apart, could produce greater clarity about their mission, both for the sector as a whole and for the separate institutions. After all, war museums are confronted with comparable issues – how to deal with the ever-growing temporal distance from the war, how to choose a position in the area of tension between transmission of knowledge and recreation, how to deal with the need for experience and the role of heritage in a digital environment – to which different reactions are possible. Diversity in presentations, ambitions, and reach is needed to prevent uniformity and ossification.

Broadening expertise will also gain from a more intensive cooperation with relevant institutions at the local, regional, and national level that in their activities are not exclusively preoccupied with war history, such as historical museums, archives, heritage sites, umbrella institutions, and institutes of higher education.
The heritage of the Second World War preserved in museums is voluminous. Reconsideration of the points of departure of war museums in the light of a sharper focus, further collaboration, and continuing digitalization, can provide space for a discussion on the necessity for selectivity and deaccession. Not everything that originates in the war is always collection-worthy heritage. However, that doesn’t in any way exclude future acquisitions in specific areas for the purpose of strengthening the diversity.

Every era and every society forms its own museums and thereby looks for frameworks in which to present the stories in a meaningful context. The discussion in this exploratory publication wishes to instigate further reflection in order to vigorously stimulate both its opinion formation and its exchange. It is on these grounds that we conclude with ten concrete recommendations in which the exhibition of the war memory here discussed is reflected. Then the museums will have the floor.

The appeal and authority of war museums can only be maintained through regular renewal with respect to content. Readjustment is a condition for keeping the memory of the Second World War lively and dynamic. As knowledge authorities, war museums – in addition to others – perform a true function here. In addition to adjusting viewpoints, this requires the incorporation of new insights and opinions from academic research, journalism, and society. Expansion of the scope in the temporal and geographic sense offers new possibilities of breaking through the accepted museum approaches to the war, and also of dealing with various frameworks side by side whereby a plurality of perspectives can be depicted.

War museums can enlarge their reach and visibility through their choice of themes, perspectives, and presentation. Possibilities to this end also lie in the development of divergent activities outside of the individual location, which is happening in a growing number of places, both during events and in the virtual world.

The variation in ways of presentation influences the kind of audience that is reached as well. Using new and social media not only offers possibilities of providing a greater diversity of perspectives, but it facilitates linking with depictions of the Second World War offered elsewhere, in the atmosphere of entertainment, commemoration, education, and research. In this multi-faceted offering, museums deserve to hold a recognizable and clearly visible position. A solid base of what is individual strength in comparison to other providers must be the foundation for this.
Chapter 8

Recommendations
I
A dynamic historical culture gains from a strengthening of (in)formal contacts within a regular deliberative body for all war museums, memorial centers, and museums with partial collections about the Second World War, if possible in a museum equivalent of the Network Oorlogsbronnen [Network War Sources]. It expands familiarity with the separate starting points, collections, and activities, and can contribute to a further rapport, exchange of knowledge, and increasing professionalism where needed. An annual day of study and networking should be considered, as should collective refresher courses and meetings for co-workers, as well as a newsletter.

II
Doing inventory of the museum collections, which is often lacking especially among the smaller institutions, is extremely important. Agreement on the use of a single standardized system for storing, opening up, and presenting war museums is desirable. A national databank for war heritage offers a better picture of the condition and uniqueness of objects and widens the view of potential lacunae. Thereby a more solid foundation is laid for looking critically at fragmentation, overlap, and the desirability of collaboration. Where needed, doing inventory can be an important step towards registration as a recognized museum.

III
A relatively large number of museums by private collectors demands consideration of the continuity of these collections and the accessibility to the heritage in these collections. Examining the possibilities of transferring collections to other war museums or to general history museums attests to a sense of reality in accepting that heritage is never complete and can become lost through the disposal of museum pieces.

IV
In order to embark on an exchange with experts outside of the sector of war museums, we suggest that museums and memorial centers build a think tank of changing composition, consisting of individuals who have an affinity with the history of the Second World War but do not originate in the world of the war museums. With their expertise, they can contribute freely to the war museums in content, presentation technique, or in any other way. In addition, job rotation within and beyond the sector of war museums can also contribute to the greater mobility of directors, curators, and educators, and stimulate exchange.

V
The global character of the Second World War promotes the need for farther-reaching international cooperation. Starting from a national deliberation of war museums, an exchange of ideas by individual and collective foreign partner institutions can be promoted concerning underexposed themes, contemporary forms of presentation, and new audience groups. Collective temporary exhibitions can concretize the exchange with museums domestically and abroad and contribute to dealing with the European and global framework perspective, in addition to the small-scale and national framework.

VI
The relative scarcity of Dutch museums on other twentieth-century periods offers room for exhibitions that can place the Second World War in a wider temporal framework, specifically of the Interbellum and Cold War eras.

VII
Within their means, war museums can provide more room for art expressions. Post-war visual and performing arts that refer to the Second World War contribute in their own way to the contemporary reflection on (the relationship to) this past.

VIII
To better familiarize the audience with the variety of war museums it is desirable that insight be conveniently offered into the respective profiles by way of a up-to-date website with portal function, a collective popular magazine, and common brochures. Extra attention can be generated via a one-time large-scale exhibition by the collective museums at a non-regular location, promoting traveling temporary exhibits as a common collaborative product, introducing an annual theme and organizing an annual public lecture.

IX
With a view on the expansion of visitors groups and increasing repeated visits, it is recommended that research into the audience be done in order to obtain a more precise picture of the current visitors groups: demographic characteristics, ways of obtaining information concerning the Second World War, as well as the motivations, expectations, and experiences of the visitors. Audience research among a limited cross section of the museums and memorial centers can provide greater clarity about potential, rarely reached visitors groups.

X
The growing importance of new and social media requires greater reflection concerning authenticity and experience. This is an argument for a closer exploration of the available options and the potential new interpretation of the museum as expert authority.
Appendix
### World War II museums in the Netherlands (April 2011)

*museum registered in the Netherlands Museum Register

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luchtoorlog- en Verzetsmuseum CRASH '40–'45</td>
<td>Aalsmeerderbrug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaltense Oorlogs- en Verzetscollectie 1940–1945 *</td>
<td>Aalten</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markt 12 Museum</td>
<td>Aalten</td>
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<tr>
<td>Militair Historisch Museum Achtklank</td>
<td>Achtmaal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Frank Huis *</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hollandsche Schouwburg</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam *</td>
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<td>Museum Wings to Victory</td>
<td>Arnhem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arnhems Oorlogsmuseum '40–'45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gdynia Museum Axel</td>
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<td>Collectie '40–'45</td>
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<td>Museum Bevrijdende Vleugels</td>
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<td>Expositie 40–45</td>
<td>Blitterswijck</td>
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<td>Titus Brandsma Museum *</td>
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<td>Museum De Bezinning 1940–45</td>
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<td>Generaal Maczek Museum</td>
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<td>Museum Oorlog en Vrede</td>
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<td>Museum 40–45</td>
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<td>Militair Historisch Museum De Veteraan 1935–1945</td>
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<td>Museum - Ergens in Nederland 1939–1945</td>
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<td>Verzetsmuseum Zuid-Holland</td>
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<td>Nationaal Bevrijdingsmuseum 1944–1945 *</td>
<td>Groesbeek</td>
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<td>Museum Canadian Allied Forces 1940–1945</td>
<td>Groningen</td>
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<td>Corrie ten Boom Huis</td>
<td>Haarlem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Museum '40–'45</td>
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<td>Luchtoorlogsmuseum Fort Veldhuis</td>
<td>Heemskerk</td>
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<td>Hengelo</td>
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<td>Betuws Oorlogsmuseum “The Island” 1944–1945</td>
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<td>Atlantikwall-Museum</td>
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<td>Museum “De bewogen jaren 1939–1950”</td>
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<td>Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork *</td>
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<td>Museum voor Oorlogshistorie 1940–45</td>
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<td>Nationaal museum voor Joodse Werkkampen (i.o.)</td>
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<td>Bevrijdingsmuseum Zeeland *</td>
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<td>Museum WO2 (i.o.)</td>
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<td>Memory International War Museum</td>
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<td>Museum Brigade en Garde Regiment Prinses Irene *</td>
<td>Oirschot</td>
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<td>Museum Switchback</td>
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<td>Atlantikwall Museum</td>
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<td>Bunkermuseum Schlei</td>
<td>Schiermonnikoog</td>
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<td>Luchtaart- en Oorlogsmuseum Texel</td>
<td>Texel (De Cocksdorp)</td>
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<td>Klein Museum Het Veerse Gat</td>
<td>Veere</td>
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<td>Twents Oorlogsmuseum 1940–1945</td>
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<td>Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught *</td>
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<td>Maas en Waal Museum 1939–1945</td>
<td>Winsen</td>
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<td>Expositie Glider Collection Wolfsheze</td>
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<td>Museum “Opdat wij niet vergeten 1939–1945”</td>
<td>Zelhem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bunkermuseum Zoutelande</td>
<td>Zoutelande</td>
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* Also includes the ‘Informatiecentrum Slag om Arnhem’ in Arnhem
Notes

1 The concept of lieu de mémoire rests on the work of the French historian Pierra Nora who thereby focuses the attention – in a metaphorical sense – on the living continuation of French history in countless locations. Subsequently, the concept was followed by historians in other countries as well. This text will not develop a discussion of the wider interpretation of the concept lieu, which also includes stories, commemorative ceremonies, and other not directly object-related things.

2 Riemer Knoop, Tussen ooggetuigen en erflaters. Denken over het erfgoed van de Tweede Wereldoorlog (Amsterdam 2006).

3 Frank van Vree and Rob van der Laarse (eds.), De dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context (Amsterdam 2009); Esther Captain and Guno Jones Oorlogserfgoed overzee. De herinnering aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Aruba, Curaçao, Indonesië en Suriname (Amsterdam 2010); Rob van Ginkel, Rondom de stilte. Herdenkingscultuur in Nederland (Amsterdam 2011); Dienke Hondius Oorlogslessen. Onderwijs over de oorlog sinds 1945 (Amsterdam 2010); Roel Hijink, Het gedenkteken, de plek en de herinnering. De monumentalisering van de Duitse kampen in Nederland (Amsterdam 2010).


6 Cf. www.4en5mei.nl/oorlogsmonumenten, www.joodsmonument.nl and www.erelijst.nl

7 Survey of total number of museums is based on personal research and www.oorlogsmusea.nl last checked on 21 March 2011. So-called military ‘tradition rooms’ and other museum institutions with limited focus on World War II have been left out, as has the Stichting Oorlogs- en Verzetscenrum Groningen [Foundation War- and Resistance Center Groningen] active through its virtual site www.scholenhuis.nl but without a physical museum. Under construction are the Margraten Memorial Center, the Nationaal Museum voor Joodse werkkampen in Nieuw-Balinge [National Museum for Jewish Labor Camps in Nieuw-Balinge], and the Museum WO2, Nijmegen (expected completion in 2014).

8 Ingrid Oud, Monique Brederoo, and Remy Weda, Operatie MusIP. Een inventarisatie van erfgoed uit de Tweede Wereldoorlog (Z.p. 2009). MusIP was a databank of museum collections already in existence.

9 Oud, Brederoo and Weda, Operatie MusIP p.8 and inventory of refusals to cooperate in this NIOD-project.

10 Interview with Marc Eysink Smeets, director V-Fonds, 10 December 2010.


14 Bas Bijl et al., Erfgoed van de Oorlog. De oogst van het programma (The Hague 2010).

15 The Imperial War Museum in London consists of the monumental main building on Lambeth Road, the Churchill War Rooms and HMS Belfast.

16 Interview with Phil Reed and Terry Charman, Imperial War Museum, London, 22 and 24 February 2011.

17 Annual Review 2008-2009 Imperial War Museum, p.11.

18 Marion van Dragt, Een onderzoek naar het publiek van erfgoed uit de Tweede Wereldoorlog, Master’s thesis Erasmus University Rotterdam 2009).


20 Cf. Several projects of Aletta, Institute for Women’s History: Bijl et al., Erfgoed van de oorlog [Heritage of the War] p.28, 30, 125, 169.
**Literature**


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Van Boxtel, C. *Geschiedenis, erfgoed en didactiek* (Rotterdam 2009).

Van der Laarse, R. *De Oorlog als beleving. Over de musealisering en ensenering van Holocaust-erfgoed* (Amsterdam 2010).


Van Vree, F. *En de van der Laarse (eds.). *De dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context* (Amsterdam 2009).


NB: For practical reasons annual reviews, policy plans and similar documents of WWII museums are not mentioned separately here.
## Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G. Abuys</td>
<td>Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork, Hooghalen</td>
<td>21 January 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Baruch</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Amsterdam</td>
<td>4 January 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Bijvanck</td>
<td>Nationaal Historisch Museum, Amsterdam</td>
<td>1 February 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. van Bockxmeer</td>
<td>NIOD, Amsterdam</td>
<td>13 December 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Bossenbroek</td>
<td>Universiteit Utrecht, Utrecht</td>
<td>23 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Cahen</td>
<td>Joods Historisch Museum / Hollandsche Schouwburg, Amsterdam</td>
<td>13 January 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Dijk</td>
<td>Stichting Margraten Memorial Center, Margraten</td>
<td>2 December 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. van Dorst</td>
<td>Nederlands Openlucht Museum, Arnhem</td>
<td>21 June 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Eggink</td>
<td>COGIS, Utrecht</td>
<td>18 February 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. van Emden</td>
<td>Verzetsmuseum Zuid-Holland, Gouda</td>
<td>30 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. van de Eijnde</td>
<td>Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught, Vught</td>
<td>25 January 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Eysink Smeets</td>
<td>Veteranenfonds, Den Bosch</td>
<td>10 December 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Flieringa</td>
<td>Oorlogsgravenstichting, Den Haag</td>
<td>1 February 2011</td>
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<td>S. Ghosh</td>
<td>Dutchland Digital, Hilversum</td>
<td>18 November 2010</td>
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<td>Y. van Genugten</td>
<td>Indisch Herinneringscentrum Bronbeek, Arnhem</td>
<td>13 January 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. Gijsbers</td>
<td>NIOD, Amsterdam</td>
<td>12 November 2010</td>
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<td>J. van Grooteheest</td>
<td>Museum, Den Haag</td>
<td>7 January 2010</td>
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<td>A. Gringold-Martinot</td>
<td>Hollandsche Schouwburg, Amsterdam</td>
<td>29 November 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Heus</td>
<td>Atlantikwall Museum Noordwijk, Noordwijk</td>
<td>13 December 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. van Hooff</td>
<td>Van Hooff Projects, Utrecht</td>
<td>18 November 2011</td>
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<td>L. van der Horst</td>
<td>Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam, Amsterdam</td>
<td>3 January 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Hovers</td>
<td>Airborne Museum ‘Hartenstein’, Oosterbeek</td>
<td>27 January 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. de Jager</td>
<td>Nationale Hogeschool voor Toerisme en Verkeer, Breda</td>
<td>6 December 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. de Jong</td>
<td>Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam</td>
<td>16 November 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Keller</td>
<td>Stichting Aletta, Amsterdam</td>
<td>12 January 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Knoop</td>
<td>Gordion Advies, Amsterdam</td>
<td>26 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Kok</td>
<td>Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, Amersfoort/Amsterdam</td>
<td>18 January 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization / Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. van Kooten</td>
<td>Nationaal Comité 4 en 5 mei, Amsterdam</td>
<td>7 December 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>R. van Krieken</td>
<td>Nationaal Comité 4 en 5 mei, Amsterdam</td>
<td>17 January 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. van der Laar</td>
<td>Museum Rotterdam / Erasmus Universiteit, Rotterdam</td>
<td>18 February 2011</td>
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<td>D. van Lochgem</td>
<td>Voormalig Verzet Azië, Leerdam</td>
<td>11 November 2010</td>
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<td>G.J. Mellink</td>
<td>Den Haag</td>
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<td>L. van Mensch</td>
<td>Reinwardt Academie, Amsterdam</td>
<td>22 November 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. van Mensch</td>
<td>Reinwardt Academie, Amsterdam</td>
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<td>G. Minkman</td>
<td>Stichting Margraten Memorial Center, Margraten</td>
<td>2 December 2010</td>
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<td>D. Mulder</td>
<td>Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork, Hooghalen</td>
<td>21 January 2011</td>
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<td>W. Munsters</td>
<td>Hogeschool Zuyd, Maastricht / Stichting Margraten Memorial Center</td>
<td>2 December 2010</td>
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<td>N. Nooter</td>
<td>Nationaal Comité 4 en 5 mei, Amsterdam</td>
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<td>L. van Prooije</td>
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<td>21 June 2010</td>
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<td>E. Rijsbosch</td>
<td>Stichting Aletta, Amsterdam</td>
<td>12 January 2011</td>
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<td>J. Rijssen</td>
<td>Stichting Podium Kwakoe, Amsterdam</td>
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<td>C. Ronteltap</td>
<td>Legermuseum, Delft</td>
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<td>T. da Silva</td>
<td>Anne Frankhuis, Amsterdam</td>
<td>6 January 2011</td>
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<td>H. Stevens</td>
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<td>4 January 2011</td>
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<td>J. Teeuwisse</td>
<td>Oorlogsgravenstichting, Den Haag</td>
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<td>S. Traas</td>
<td>Bevrijdingsmuseum Zeeland, Nieuwdorp</td>
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<td>R. van de Weijer</td>
<td>Nederlands Openlucht Museum, Arnhem</td>
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<td>P.J. Verhoeven</td>
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<td>R. Weda</td>
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<td>3 March 2011</td>
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<td>S. Wieringa</td>
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Interviewees

Regional meeting Leeuwarden 16 December 2010
H. Ates Museum Canadian Allied Forces, Groningen
H. Groeneweg Verzetsmuseum Friesland, Leeuwarden
B. Jongejan Stichting Oorlogs- en Verzetscentrum Groningen (OVCG) / Scholtenhuis, Groningen
O. Kuipers Tresoar, Fries Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum, Leeuwarden
H. Proper Kazemattenmuseum Kornwerderzand, Kornwerderzand
C. Scholtens Verzameling/Museum ‘40–’45, Harkstede
C. Soepboer Bunkermuseum Schlei, Schiermonnikoog
E. Somers NIOD/UvA i.s.m. Verzetsmuseum Friesland, Amsterdam

Regional meeting Middelburg 20 January 2011
I. van Beekhuizen Polderhuis Westkapelle Dijk- en Oorlogsmuseum, Westkapelle
A. van Hoof Polderhuis Westkapelle Dijk- en Oorlogsmuseum, Westkapelle
K. de Jonge Gdynia Museum, Axel
R. Maas Gdynia Museum, Axel
K. Traas Bevrijdingsmuseum Zeeland, Nieuwdorp
A. Walraven Stichting Wings to Victory, Arnemuiden

Regional meeting Arnhem 27 January 2011
T. Bruggeman Aaltense Musea / Markt 12 Museum, Aalten
J. Gordijn Museum Opdat wij niet vergeten ‘39–‘45, Zelhem
B. Gordijn Museum Opdat wij niet vergeten ‘39–‘45, Zelhem
J. Hovers Airborne Museum ‘Hartenstein’, Oosterbeek
A. van Hulst Maas en Waal Museum 1939–1945, Winssen
J. Kreunen Achterhoeks museum 1940–1945, Hengelo
W. Lenders Nationaal Bevrijdingsmuseum 1944–1945, Groesbeek
N. Naphausen Nationaal Bevrijdingsmuseum 1944–1945, Groesbeek
P. Tirion Airborne Museum ‘Hartenstein’, Oosterbeek
P.J. Verhoeven Museum Bronbeek, Arnhem

Appendix
**Interviewees**

Meeting steering committee Dynamiek van de Herinnering Amsterdam 25 februari 2011

B. Bijl  
Ministerie van VWS, Den Haag

J. Cahen  
Joods Historisch Museum / Hollandsche Schouwburg, Amsterdam

M.A. Delen  
Ministerie van VWS, Den Haag

J. van de Eijnde  
Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught, Vught

R. van der Laarse  
Universiteit van Amsterdam / Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

H. Ruijs  
Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, Amersfoort

**Foreign interviews**

**Belgium**

W. Adriaens  
Dossin Kazerne. Memoriaal Museum en Documentatiecentrum over Holocaust en Mensenrechten / Joods Museum van Deportatie en Verzet, Mechelen  
15 February 2011

P. Chielens  
In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres  
11 February 2011

C. Kesteloot  
CegeSoma, Brussels  
10 February 2011

D. Martin  
CegeSoma, Brussels  
10 February 2011

O. Van der Wilt  
Memoriaal Fort van Breendonk, Willebroek  
15 February 2011

**Germany**

W. Jung  
NS-Dokumentationszentrum Köln, Cologne  
24 February 2011

M. Knop  
Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen, Oranienburg  
21 February 2011

T. Lutz  
Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, Berlin  
22 February 2011

**United Kingdom**

S. Bardgett  
Imperial War Museum, London  
21 February 2011

T. Charman  
Imperial War Museum, London  
24 February 2011

A. McLean  
RAF Museum Cosford, Shifnal Shropshire  
18 February 2011

P. Reed  
Churchill War Rooms / HMS Belfast, London  
22 February 2011

S. Woolford  
Imperial War Museum Duxford, Cambridgeshire  
23 February 2011
Acknowledgements

The research for Exhibiting the War was conducted in 2010–2011 by Dr. Esther Captain and Dr. Kees Ribbens (project leader), with provisional assistance by Marijke Schuurmans MA and Jasmina Tepić MA. The views presented here are those of the researchers and are based on the investigation of literature, media reports, and other sources, as well as on the exchange of ideas with individuals and groups involved in the domain of war heritage in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

A sincere word of thanks goes to all those who were willing to share relevant knowledge and insights with us both within and outside of the Netherlands. The considerable commitment of these experts was an important incentive for our research. We wish to express our special gratitude to Prof. Dr. Rob van der Laarse and Prof. Dr. Frank van Vree, the initiators of the research program “Dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog” [Dynamics of memory. The Netherlands and the Second World War]. The members of the reading committee – Dr. Eveline Buchheim, Dr. Peter Keppy, Dr. Riemer Knoop and Prof. Dr. Rob van der Laarse – deserve our particular appreciation for their encouraging commentary. We owe special thanks to Prof. Dr. Peter Romijn and our other colleagues at the NIOD for their cooperation and support.

Marjolijn de Jager deserves our gratitude for translating our text from the Dutch. Last but not least, we wish to mention Mr. Bas Bijl, Dr. Marie-Ange Delen and Drs. Ellen van der Waerden of the Ministry of VWS and Dr. Elske Gerritsen and Dr. Lenny Vos of NWO, as well as the fellow researchers who helped to sharpen our views during the monthly meetings. 
IN EXHIBITING THE WAR THE WAR MUSEUMS AND MEMORIAL CENTERS IN THE NETHERLANDS OCCUPY A CENTRAL PLACE. IT IS AN EXPLORATION OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT DIVERGE A GREAT DEAL IN TERMS OF PROFESSIONALISM, AVAILABLE MEANS, AND RANGE. BOTH RENOWNED INSTITUTIONS AND LESS WELL-KNOWN ONE-MAN MUSEUMS INFLUENCE HOW THE SECOND WORLD WAR IS REPRESENTED. THE COLLECTIONS OF WORLD WAR II HERITAGE IN THESE MUSEUMS EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE THAT DUTCH SOCIETY ATTACHES TO THIS HISTORICAL PERIOD.

TAKING THE DYNAMIC SIGNIFICANCE AND PRESENTATION OF WAR HERITAGE AS THEIR POINT OF DEPARTURE, THE AUTHORS PROVIDE AN OUTLINE FOR HOW TO REFLECT ON WAR MUSEUMS AND THEIR COLLECTIONS IN THE COMING YEARS. THEY ARGUE FOR COLLECTIVE DISCUSSION AND CONTINUED COOPERATION BETWEEN WAR MUSEUMS, BUT ALSO WITH OTHER HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS, WITH RESEARCHERS, AND OTHER PARTIES CONCERNED. TEN CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS COMPLETE EXHIBITING THE WAR.
