

The Dutch Slavery monument

The Dutch debate compared with other debates of historical injustice

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Introduction

Between 1600 and 1870 the Dutch transported hundreds of thousands of slaves from the African coast to the New World. They took men, women, and children from Africa to work as slaves in the Americas. This is one of the black pages in Dutch history.

A century later, many voices called for some kind of reparations for this wrongdoing. Finally, this led to a slavery monument in Amsterdam to commemorate the cruelties of slavery. But this did not end the debate in the Netherlands about how the Dutch should remember their past. For some, the monument is an excuse for something that the Dutch should not apologise for. In 2008, former Minister of Integration, Rita Verdonk, was against the placing of all kinds of monuments for compensating wrongs in her speech for her newly erected party. According to her, this shows a lack of confidence in the culture of the Dutch and the achievements of the Dutch in the past¹.

On the other hand, there are people who see the wrongdoings as something the Dutch should apologise for. As a country, the Netherlands has done some serious harm to people and they should accept that, not only for the sake of the people that they harmed, but also as a lesson in modesty. How can a country that has committed these historical wrongs point at the crimes of others, while not apologising for their own faults²?

The slave trade is not the only wrongdoing in the past which is being debated. Between 1946 and 1949, the Dutch undertook two so-called 'police actions' in Indonesia. In fact these expeditions were meant to suppress the war for independence that the Indonesians had started. During these expeditions, Dutch soldiers committed some horrible crimes. One of these was a slaughter committed in the village of Rawagede. In this village, at least 100 people were executed. In October 2008, a Dutch parliamentary delegation that went to Indonesia did not visit Rawagede because it was politically sensitive. The Dutch felt that the time was not right to apologise.

This changed in 2011. Several victims went to the court and the judge ruled that the Dutch should pay a compensation of 20,000 euro to the nine victims. The Dutch government also made formal apologies³.

This thesis will not attempt to explain the mistakes the Dutch have made throughout their history. It will explain how the Dutch handled the historical injustice they committed. All the aspects of the slave trade will be mentioned here: the history of slave trade will be discussed, a comparison with Britain,

¹ Reformatorisch Dagblad, www.refdag.nl/media/2008/20080404_Speech_Rita_Verdonk.pdf , 13-03-2012

² Take for example, S. Hagers, *Nederland moet schuld aan slavernij erkennen* http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief_gratis/article808787.ece/Nederland_moet_schuld_aan_slavernij_erkennen March 5, 2009 and T. Abdullah, *Excuses kunnen een einde maken aan de ironie van Nederland als zedenpreker*, http://www.nrc.nl/opinie/article2028604.ece/Excuses_kunnen_een_einde_maken_aan_de_ironie_van_Nederland_als_zedenpreker NRC Handelsblad, 19 March 2009 and Elske Schouten, *Moordenaar in de naam van de Koningin* <http://weblogs.nrc.nl/weblog/jakarta/2008/10/14/moordenaar-in-naam-der-koningin/> 05/04/2009

³ ANP, I. de Ruyter, *Excuses en compensatie bloedbad Rawagede*, 05-12-2012

another slave trading nation, will be made, and the debate in the Netherlands about the slave trade will be analysed. The aspects mentioned will be backed by theories about historical injustice.

The main question will be: Why did the Dutch government choose a slavery monument as the way to make excuses for their history of slavery? And how different is this in comparison with other cases of historical injustice, especially in comparison with Britain and its history of slavery?

In the existing literature about reparation politics, the Dutch case is only discussed in short. The Dutch case is mostly seen as one of the countries in this debate about the wrongness of slavery⁴. On the other hand, there is literature, primarily Dutch, about remembering the slave history in the Netherlands. In these books a comparison with other countries with a history of slave trade are made, but not a comparison with other cases of historical injustice⁵.

This analysis will add more information about one of the cases in the field of reparations politics. The field of cases of historical injustices will also be mapped with a new scheme. Hopefully this will also fuel the debate about the mapping of all historical cases. Next to the scheme of Torpey (see chapter two), there are no other schemes that attempt to map the discussions.

Thesis outline

The facts of what actually happened will be the first aspect looked at. In this chapter we will, for example, see the number of slaves involved, how the Dutch merchants acquired these slaves, and how the Dutch slave trade compares with other slave trading nations, such as France and Britain. The opinion in the Netherlands towards slavery and the slave trade will also be described.

In the second chapter, the historical injustice will be discussed with the help of theory on this subject. In this chapter an overview of the theories will be given and then the theories will be applied to the Dutch case.

Chapter three will see the Dutch debate analyzed using the theoretical aspects presented in chapter two with a theory which tries to explain why the Dutch government chose to raise a monument in the late 1990s and not earlier or later. And what was its motivation for raising the monument. Is it an excuse for the wrongs committed or just a gesture to the descendants of slaves in the Netherlands currently?

The Dutch reaction will be compared with the English case in chapter four. In the 18th century the English were the biggest slave trading nation on earth⁶. They were the first of the major powers to abolish the slave trade (1807) and slavery (1838). This could have an impact on how the English see

⁴For example, J. Thompson, *Taking Responsibility for the Past*, J. Torpey, *Politics and the Past*, E. Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*

⁵ P.C. Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel*,

⁶ J. Postma, *The Atlantic slave trade*, 36

their history. The Dutch abolished slavery much later (1863)⁷. Would the English as a vanguard of abolishing slavery be more reluctant to see themselves as wrongdoers?

This thesis will address this question.

The Netherlands and Britain are not the only countries that committed crimes in the past. Every country has done things that are at least wrong in hindsight. In chapter five, we will see some examples of other cases. The German Holocaust, the Americans and their history of slavery, and the Moluccans serve as an example. These three cases are chosen because the United States is also a country with a history of slavery. In opposite to Britain and the Netherlands, they did not ship the slaves themselves. They rather used them on the fields. The Moluccas case serves as a comparison of another black page in Dutch history. The German case is one in which the perpetrator, Germany, quite soon after the crime paid reparations. In the case of slavery, the Dutch waited 135 years before the monument was erected.

This chapter attempts to look, with these cases, at what the causes for making apologies for the past are. A variable could be time. The Germans committed their wrong only seventy years ago, the Dutch government integrated the Moluccan soldiers wrongly sixty years ago, while the United States abolished slavery 140 years ago. Does time have an influence on the willingness to repair historical injustices? Or is the political climate at the moment of the injustice leading? Hitler's gas chambers were seen as a horrific act by great numbers of people, even in Germany. The abolishment of slavery in the United States and the Netherlands happened at a time that the last powers in Europe abolished slavery. It was in the 1860s not morally unacceptable to have slaves. The segregation of slaves in the 100 years after Lincoln is probably even worse, just like the promise of 40 acres and a mule, because at that time it was generally accepted that blacks were equal human beings⁸. The Germans call this *Zeitgeist*. The question is if you can punish a country for hindsight wrongdoings. All these questions will be addressed in the second part of this chapter.

The conclusions are in the final chapter. It will compare the reaction of the Dutch to the slave trade with other cases of historical injustice. Not only the political debate and the stance of the government will be compared, but also the public debate. Finally, the different views in the debates will be compared with the theories mentioned in the literature.

⁷ Ibid. XXI and XXII

⁸ J. Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed: on Reparations Politics*, 107-133

Slavery

History of the slave trade

Slavery is an old practice in the history of humankind. Trading slaves was a common activity for many centuries. There was, for instance, slavery in the Byzantine and Ottoman empires⁹. This thesis will focus on the subject of the European slave trade with Sub-Saharan Africa. This is the only slave trade in which the Dutch had a noteworthy share. The slave trade before the Atlantic trade and the slave transports to the East will not be covered in this chapter.

Long before 1600, black slaves worked in Portugal. Traders in the North of Africa transported these slaves through the Sahara to Europe. By 1500, two or three per cent of the Portuguese population was black already¹⁰. In 1441, the Portuguese captured the first slaves and brought them to Lisbon¹¹. From the early sixteenth century onwards, the Portuguese and Spaniards started transporting slaves from Europe to America and from 1550 the first direct shipments from Africa to the colonies in Latin America took place. The Portuguese and Spaniards needed the African slaves to work the land, because the African slaves were more resistant to European diseases like measles and smallpox than the Native Americans. So they needed better men for this work¹².

Early in the 17th century, during the Eighty Years' War, the Dutch became powerful. This war for independence was fought against Spain. The Dutch West India Company (WIC) conquered a large part of Brazil. The most important export product in that area was sugar. Sugar cultivation is very labour-intensive and the Portuguese imported slaves from Africa to perform this hard work. The Dutch wanted to continue the sugar production because it was a profitable business. However, because all of the slave trade was in Spanish hands they could not import slaves. Therefore, the WIC conquered some important forts in Africa, such as Elmina in 1637. From these forts, the slaves could be bought and made ready for the transatlantic voyage. This was the beginning of the Dutch slave trade. Unfortunately for the Dutch, the trade was disadvantageous. The slaves were sold on credit to the planters, but the planters could not pay all the debts. After a revolt, the Dutch lost their colonies in Brazil. In 1654, Recife, the last Brazilian fortress was abandoned, but the slave trading posts in Africa still remained in the hands of the West India Company. The Dutch had to look for new markets to sell their slaves¹³.

⁹ J. Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 1-2

¹⁰ P.C. Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 30 H.S. Klein *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 11

¹¹ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* 5, D. Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 29, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 9

¹² Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* 8, Klein *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 21

¹³ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 44, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* 30, 77

The West India Company had the monopoly in the trade and colonisation in the West, defined as the Western part of Africa to the new world. This monopoly did not just encompass slaves but also all cargo shipped to the New World. The WIC consisted of traders who united themselves to avoid the risk of an individual adventure. After the loss of Brazil and the near bankruptcy of the company, the Dutch government broke up the monopoly in multiple areas. Other companies could now join the trade if they paid a small tax to the WIC¹⁴.

Around 1600, two new players came to the West: England and France. These nations conquered some of the islands in the Caribbean, like Barbados and Martinique, respectively. There, they also tried to export highly labour-intensive products. At the beginning, the planters could rely on labour force from Europe, but around 1640 the number of workers decreased heavily. To compensate for the loss of labour, the planters looked for another labour force¹⁵. The French and English made use of the same arrangements as the Dutch. The English and French counterparts of the WIC were called the English Royal African Company and the Compagnie des Indes Occidentales¹⁶.

A trade monopoly issued by the governments of these two nations against the Dutch helped these two companies along, because the English Royal African Company and the Compagnie des Indes Occidentales had no competition from the WIC or other slave trading companies on the parts that were controlled by their country. Fortunately for the Dutch, the Spaniards failed to get a strong slave trading fleet. The Dutch filled this gap¹⁷.

The Spanish had their colonies in the Caribbean. The authorities in Curaçao saw the demand for slaves in the region rise and immediately responded by turning Curaçao into a slave-trading hub. Until 1700, this was a profitable business. Spain not only needed slaves on the plantations, but also for the silver and gold mines in current-day Peru as well. Unfortunately for the Dutch, this slave trade decreased dramatically after the War of Spanish succession. In the final peace treaty, the English were granted the exclusive right to trade slaves with Spain. This ended most of the Dutch slave trade with other countries. In 1775, the last slave ship entered the harbour of Willemstad, capital of Curaçao¹⁸.

The Dutch colonies in the North of South America still needed some slaves. Therefore, the slave trade continued. Only these slaves did not enter the slave market of Curaçao, but instead went directly to the colonies. Still, many slaves were shipped but the numbers were less in comparison with the numbers of the 17th century¹⁹.

After the debacle in Brazil, the Dutch government limited the monopoly of the WIC. Anyone could engage in slave trade but they had to pay a fee to the WIC if a non-WIC ship was being used. The WIC fully lost its monopoly in 1730. The Dutch government tried to boost the slave trade by lifting the monopoly. Especially Zeeland thought that more companies would participate in the slave trade if

¹⁴ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 35, 63, Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 14

¹⁵ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 51, 52, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 31, 77

¹⁶ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 14, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 37, 63

¹⁷ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 56, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 80

¹⁸ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 59, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 39

¹⁹ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 42, 58, 64

there was no cartel. And they were right, primarily since more entrepreneurs from Zeeland participated²⁰.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, everything went wrong for the Dutch. In 1770, approximately 3,600 slaves came to the colonies, but in 1780 this number dropped to 1,400. The Anglo-Dutch war of 1780-1784 made it even more difficult to transport slaves. In these years, less than 600 slaves made it to Suriname. After the war there was a minor recovery, but the French invasion of 1795 put an end to the trade, because the French were at war with England²¹.

While the Dutch influence in the slave trade declined since the 17th century, other nations, especially England, flourished. But after the end of the Napoleonic wars, the English attitude towards slavery changed. The abolitionist forces in Britain won. England not only stopped transporting slaves, they also forbade other European countries to transport slaves from Africa to the colonies. The English did allow internal trade. So trading from one slave owner to the other was allowed. This was not an idealistic measure, but an economic one. If the English planters could not get the slaves that other European countries had, they could not compete with their European peers. The impact was enormous. In 1819, the English created a special fleet for capturing slave ships no matter from which country they were. The warships patrolled the oceans looking for any such ships²².

The problem for the English was that every nation had officially banned slave trade, but in practice nothing changed. Countries such as the United States, France, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands did not want to enforce the law. These countries did not support the English in their fight against (illegal) slave trade. Therefore, the English forced every country to live up to their laws. Britain was the superpower of the 19th century. That is why other countries had to accept the rulings of English judges in all cases of slave transport. In Suriname, for example, an Anglo-Dutch court ruled in every case of Dutch slave ships and ships that did not have the required papers.

The United States were the first to agree with the English. In 1820, they decided to treat the carrying of slaves equal to piracy. The French followed soon after. The other three countries heavily involved in slave trade, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal, did not give in as easily. They officially declared slave trade above the Equator illegal, but did not enforce it. Although the English tried to stop slave trade, from 1800 onward three million slaves were transported. The English only captured 160,000 of them²³.

The Dutch were not affected by these measures, because they did not have any slave ships left. Not one of the two million slaves that were transported after the Napoleonic wars set foot on a Dutch ship.

²⁰ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 63-65, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 79,80

²¹ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 65, 66

²² Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 70-71

²³ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 72, 73

Surprisingly, the English did catch some ‘Dutch’ ships. Some of these ships had illegal papers; others had bribed the Dutch governor of Saint Eustatius to give them Dutch papers²⁴.

The international developments forced the Dutch to end slavery. In 1863, the Dutch finally forbade slavery, but this was not the end of slavery. The Dutch instituted a ten year period in which they forbade the slaves to leave the plantations. The former slaves were forced to work on the fields for ten more years.

Meanwhile, the Dutch looked for labourers overseas. In their colonies in the East, the people were unfamiliar with labour migration, but the English had a lot of people from India who worked as contract labourers in the English empire. The Dutch made a deal with the English that allowed these workers to go to Suriname. As a part of this deal the Dutch gave the forts in Africa, including Elmina, to the English. Over the years the forts at the African ports lost their importance due to the decline of the slave trade. In the meantime, the English colonised large parts of Africa, so this seemed a profitable deal²⁵.

Throughout the centuries the Dutch carried approximately 501,400 slaves from Africa to the colonies. This is the number of slaves picked up from the African coast. With more than twelve million Africans shipped, the Dutch only had a 4.5% share in the total trade. Countries such as Britain (28.2%) and France (13.2%) traded many more slaves, but at the absolute top are Portugal and Brazil. The Portuguese, and later Brazilians, shipped more than five million (46%) slaves across the Atlantic²⁶. Early in the 17th century, the Dutch were among the main players, but at that time the trade was not as big as it would become in the 18th century.

Conditions of slaves during the travel and afterwards

In total, around twelve million slaves were shipped from Africa to the New World²⁷. Approximately 22% of the slaves on the ships did not survive the voyage to the other side of the ocean at the early days of the slave trade. Due to the improved treatment of the slaves, this figure dropped to 10% in the 18th century²⁸. What was the travel like for the slaves and what was the cause of the high mortality rate?

The Europeans bought the slaves from local African leaders. Sometimes the slave traders themselves captured the slaves, but most of the time they had already been enslaved. The African

²⁴ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 185-201

²⁵ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 206-214

²⁶ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 36, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. 168

²⁷ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 21

²⁸ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 44, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 138, 142, 156,

rulers sold them to the Europeans who had forts on the coast. It was not until the 19th century that the Europeans began colonising the continent²⁹.

The slaves were brought onto the ships and had to wait until the ship was fully loaded before departure. It was not in the interest of the traders to undernourish the slaves. Well-fed slaves made for better prices at the markets in the New World. On the other hand, ships were loaded fully. So the slaves had very little living space. The air was not refreshed and there was a lack of sunshine. Still, most deaths were caused by diseases like smallpox, malaria, scurvy, and yellow fever. Through the years, the Europeans learnt from their mistakes. As such they gave the slaves more time on the deck, refreshed the air in the ship, cleaned the sleeping places and put the sick apart³⁰.

Other major causes of death were part of the voyage: bad weather could cause serious delays, and supplies could run out, which would lead to malnutrition. There was also a chance of revolt. Most of the slaves had not seen the sea before, let alone sailed a ship. Fear of the weather conditions and the white men caused unrest. Rumours existed among the slaves that the Europeans were going to eat them. Some crews had to deal with major revolts, but nearly none succeeded³¹.

It cannot be said that the Europeans neglected the care of the slaves. They were 'valuable' cargo. This can also be seen in the figures of the European sailors on the ships. Their death rates were comparable to the slaves. They had better access to food and water, but they had to survive on two continents with foreign diseases. Besides, they were also exposed to the diseases the slaves carried. Being a sailor on a slave ship was one of the least wanted jobs³².

The situation improved upon arrival. Fresh water and food were brought on board. The sick were sold early in order to not devalue the price of the healthy slaves. If there was an epidemic of smallpox or another disease, the ship could be quarantined. In 1795, the Dutch vessel *Het Vergenoegen* was in quarantine for two months before reaching Paramaribo, until the ill had been cured and everybody could leave the ship. The authorities were extra cautious, because the year before there had been an epidemic of smallpox that caused many deaths³³.

The first year in the new country was the most dangerous time for the slaves. They had to survive all kinds of diseases; not only the ones of the New World, but also those from Africa, because the slaves on the plantations came from all parts of Africa. They also had to get used to the new life of hard labour and their harsh masters. Many tried to escape, but that only reduced their chances of survival³⁴.

²⁹ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* 20-22, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 191

³⁰ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 25-26, 43-45, Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 45,96,134,153

³¹ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 22, 29

³² *Ibid.* 47

³³ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 133-134

³⁴ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 30-31

Public debate in history

Slavery and the slave trade were socially accepted between the 16th and 18th century, but there have always been voices against slavery, even during these centuries. In the beginning, the slave trade was seen as a brutal practice that the Dutch rejected. William of Orange used the slave trade as a reason to refuse the authority of the Spanish king during the Dutch war of independence. When in 1596 a captured Portuguese slave ship harboured in Middelburg, the slaves were released³⁵. There was no slavery in Europe itself at that time. The Enlightenment put an end to slavery in Europe³⁶. Nevertheless, the WIC started to trade slaves when they needed them for the plantations. This led to an awkward situation in which slavery had been abolished in Europe, but it was still in practice in the colonies.

Through the centuries there have been reports of people who opposed slavery and the slave trade. However, these are cases of individuals, such as Willem Usselinx. He was a great supporter of the WIC, but he did not agree with the slave trade because he believed Christianised Indians and Europeans were better labourers. Still, he did not oppose slavery as an institution itself, because forced labour was also allowed in Europe. In 1730, Johannes Willem Kals, pastor in Suriname, argued that the slaves should at least be Christianised and treated better. He debated this with the planters, but they rejected his views. Several years later another pastor called slavery ‘a big thievery’³⁷.

But the majority of the intellectuals defended the slave trade. Hugo Grotius, for example, defended slavery by stating that nations that conquer other states may do what they like with the people, even sell them as slaves³⁸.

It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that the great abolitionist movement arose. Abolitionist advocates came from Britain, like Adam Smith, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau from France. The latter stated that: “The words “slave” and “right” contradict each other, and are mutually exclusive”³⁹. In Britain and America the Quakers condemned slavery. First, they asked their members to treat their slaves humanely. Later, they opposed slavery altogether⁴⁰.

In 1787 (England) and 1788 (France) the first abolitionist organisations were formed. They became successful very soon. In 1792, the English House of Commons passed a bill to abolish the slave trade, but the House of Lords did not pass the proposal. Due to the war with France, the bill was delayed for another fifteen years, after which the slave trade was officially abolished in Britain. One year later in

³⁵ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 34

³⁶ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 10, Eltis, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 82

³⁷ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, ‘grove diverije’, 37

³⁸ Ibid. 34-39

³⁹ Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 65

⁴⁰ Ibid., 66 Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 189

1808, the United States followed by banning the importation of slaves. This did not end slavery in the colonies, but it was the first step⁴¹.

The English abolished slavery in 1833 and the French followed in 1848, both much earlier than the Netherlands. The Netherlands, like the United States, waited until 1863⁴². It is interesting as to why the Dutch government did not end slavery sooner. As described above, throughout the history of the Dutch slave trade there had been major problems; the first one being the Brazilian adventure. After this setback, the Dutch had trouble finding suitable markets, especially after the English entered the stage at the end of the 17th century. They forbade foreign countries to trade with their colonies, like many other European countries. The Dutch colonies were Suriname and some Caribbean islands, which is a pretty small market in comparison with the other European powers. Because of that the profits they made were minimal⁴³.

Why were the Dutch among the last Europeans to abolish slavery? According to Piet Emmer it was because the Dutch did not reform as early as Britain and France. These countries industrialised and especially in Britain the abolitionist movement grew. The idea of a higher morale was not appealing in the Netherlands at that time. The whole abolishment movement that started in Britain in the beginning of 19th century, for instance, found no support in the Netherlands before 1840. And when it finally was formed, the movement had only several hundred supporters⁴⁴. Although this number rose in the 1850s, thanks to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, to several thousands. Still these are very few in comparison with Britain, where in the year of the abolition more than 1.3 million people signed against slavery. Even when slavery was finally abolished in the Netherlands, as one of the last European countries, the Dutch parliament was more concerned with compensating the planters than with the future of the former slaves⁴⁵.

Conclusion

This chapter offered an overview of historical events related to slavery. The demand for slaves appeared in the 16th and 17th centuries and soon thereafter the markets on which slaves were sold were formed. These flourished throughout the 18th century. Finally, the slave trade decreased in the 19th century due to the rise of the abolitionist movements.

The Dutch were important in the 17th century, but lost, due to the competition with other countries. Therefore, the Dutch played a minor role in the 18th and hardly any role in the 19th century.

⁴¹ Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 188

⁴² Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, xxi-xxii

⁴³ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 168-178

⁴⁴ Ibid., 202-204 and M. Janse. *De Afschaffers*, 91-93, 30

⁴⁵ Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, 205-206

Nevertheless, the English were the first to abolish slavery, the Dutch government, on the other hand, did so thirty years later.

According to modern moral standards, slave trade was very cruel. The slaves had to endure harsh treatments, not only in Africa and during the travel, but also on the plantations. However, these were different times when other moral values ruled. It is difficult to judge them according to current-day standards. Before doing that, the idea of wrongdoing has to be analysed. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Theoretical background

With the Dutch history of slavery we have a case that can be seen as a historical wrong. In the next chapters we will see the Dutch reaction to this part of their history, followed by a comparison with other cases and other countries. Before we can compare cases, however, the specifics of this case should be determined. Can we talk about wrongdoing in this case? And if this is wrong, how wrong is it? This last question will not be answered because there are multiple factors and also multiple views. Many people have tried to find a normative reasoning on the subject of reparations. These views will be discussed.

The views will be mapped and in the following chapters the similarities and differences between the stakeholders in the various cases and the theories stated in this chapter will be discussed. Some of the theories could lead to compensation for historical wrongs, while other lines of argumentation would not.

The following questions refer specifically to the Dutch case: Can we see the slave trade as wrongdoing? Can the Dutch state be held responsible for the crimes committed 300 years ago? And if the two questions could be answered affirmatively, what is then a good response to this historical injustice?

Wrongdoing?

Of what has been written on the subject, most is about how historical injustice should be repaid. This is a normative question which multiple scholars have tried to answer. Before considering any compensation for a historical injustice, it must be clear that the historical event is wrong. That is a question that cannot easily be set aside.

To show how difficult this is, let us first take an example in a case most of us will see as a punishable crime. If somebody commits a murder everybody agrees this is a serious crime. But if this person has had a bad childhood, with a lot of sexual abuse and he/she, therefore, cannot see the wrong of his/her actions, how responsible can you hold this man/woman for his/her actions⁴⁶?

In historical wrongdoings, this is not often mentioned. In case of slavery, for instance, the ones who abused slaves can be seen as the wrongdoers, but maybe the ones who legitimised slavery in philosophical pieces are even worse. You can argue that they influenced society in such a way that

⁴⁶ R. Strover, *Responsibility for the Cold War – A Case Study in Historical Responsibility*, 145-147

abusing slaves was not seen as a wrong act. It is difficult, in this case, to point at the wrongdoer, since multiple actors are involved.

To show who is wrong and why this actor is wrong, Karl Jaspers has an answer. Jaspers wrote his book *Die Schuldfrage* (the guilt question) about all kinds of guilt that a person can have. Jaspers was a German psychologist and philosopher. He wrote this shortly after the Second World War. In 1946, he asked himself how guilty the Germans were for the wrongs they committed during that horrible war. Not only the war crimes, but also about the holocaust. And he asked himself if the Germans can be blamed for the faults of the Nazi regime.

Jaspers distinguishes four forms of guilt. First of all is the “*verbrecherische Schuld*”. This is the ordinary crime. You commit a crime and you should be punished for it. The Nuremberg trials dealt with this form of guilt. Jaspers thinks that individuals should be made responsible. It is impossible to prosecute the German people as an entity⁴⁷. He supports this with multiple arguments. First of all, the whole population cannot be held responsible, only individuals from that group. It is not the whole of the German population that murdered the Jews, but rather the individuals from that group who did it. Secondly, it would involve making the same mistakes as the Germans did, namely marking an entire group or nation as hostile⁴⁸.

Although Jaspers initially argues there is no collective guilt, he later adds that the people of a country should bear the consequences of the acts of the state⁴⁹. This stems from a desire to be part of something more than just an individual. Other people cannot claim that a group of people is responsible, but people as a group can take the collective guilt⁵⁰.

The problem is that not everybody has that feeling of being part of a collective. Not every German citizen feels he or she is German. It is difficult for them to take a part of the collective guilt. This especially goes for people who rebelled against Hitler’s regime from the start. It seems as if Jaspers fails to recognise the pluriformity of the Germans as a group.

The convicted in the Nuremberg trials were convicted by laws postulated after the crimes were committed. Germany did not have specific laws on crimes against humanity, but according to Jaspers these crimes are universal. It is, therefore, not wrong that these Germans are prosecuted for wrongdoings, which were not wrong before the trial⁵¹.

The second guilt is “*politische Schuld*”, i.e. the wrong of the state. For Germany this is very clear. The German state started World War II and they committed all of the crimes against the Jewish people. The German people also have a common guilt in this, because without support the NSDAP would never have been able to take power. Especially in a democratic system it is impossible to seize power

⁴⁷ K. Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage*, 17-21

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 “(E)in Mittel des Hasses der Völker und Menschengruppen untereinander”.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 54 “Die gesamte Bevölkerung tatsächlich die Folgen aller Staatshandlungen trägt”.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 52-28

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 29-38

if not at least a large part of the population supports the regime. As an individual you can be wrong by supporting such a state. This is the third kind of guilt⁵².

“Moralische Schuld” is the moral guilt of an individual. For example, voting for the NSDAP or helping the police to arrest partisans. These are not crimes, because it is normally considered good to help government institutions. Still, knowing that these institutions did something wrong should give the person the idea to not support these. By supporting these institutions you commit a moral wrong.

Trying to stay ignorant is also a crime. Jaspers calls it a “false conscience”⁵³. Some people just do not want to know what is happening. They just ignore the signs and clues around them. People cannot tell themselves in such circumstances that they could not know, but should ask themselves why they did not know what was happening. Was it really too difficult to know what was going on? Or was there a blind spot in their brains? If it is the latter one, they should say: “Sorry we should have known”, otherwise they cannot be blamed. Jaspers does not accept not reading newspapers for lack of interest as an adequate defence. You must have to have conducted some fact finding, before you can claim you did not know.

In the documentary *Im toten Winkel*, one of Hitler's secretaries, Traudl Junge is interviewed. During the war she did not know what was exactly going on. In the first period after the war she thinks her young age during that period is an excuse for not knowing. But ever since she has seen a commemorative plaque to a German girl, Sophie Scholl, who was of her age and in the resistance she thinks she probably should have known what went on⁵⁴. Probably Jaspers looks at the German population in the same way. Everybody should have known.

In a less stringent way, this also applies to soldiers. *Befehl ist Befehl* (an order is an order) is a common German expression. But there are limits to what a soldier has to obey. As long as you think you as soldier do best by following the orders you should do it, but when you think this is not longer so, you have to disobey⁵⁵. This means even the soldiers should ask themselves if they could have known better.

“Metaphysische Schuld” is the last guilt. This guilt goes further than the moral guilt. In the moral guilt you should have known what was going on. Metaphysical guilt also states that you had to act against the crimes. The absolute solidarity with humankind as men and women⁵⁶ should force every (wo)man to protect other human beings from the injustices of the Nazi regime.

⁵² Ibid., 39-40

⁵³ Ibid., 42 “falsches gewissen”

⁵⁴ A. Heller and O. Schmiderer, *Im toten Winkel – Hitlers Sekretärin*

⁵⁵ Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage*, 43

⁵⁶ Ibid., 48 “der absoluten solidarität mit dem Menschen als Menschen.”

Jaspers admires the several thousand Germans who were part of the resistance. They are probably the only people in Germany who acted correctly during the war. Most people, afraid of dying, did nothing. They should have done something and are, therefore, guilty⁵⁷.

Interestingly, Jaspers himself has metaphysical guilt, because he knew, but hardly did anything. It seems he does that on purpose. He thinks no one should object to a German apology for the Holocaust. Nearly every German has a share in the guilt and, therefore, it is possible to blame Germany as a collective. That is probably the problem Jaspers had to deal with. He does not acknowledge the collective and sees people individually. On the other hand, Germany (as individual identity) was wrong. Jaspers shows that the collective guilt is a sum of all kind of individual wrongs. Jaspers made up the four forms of guilt to show that every individual citizen was wrong with the purpose of justifying the blame on Germany as a collective identity.

Jaspers does not address the question of later generations being made responsible for wrongs their ancestors committed. He wrote his book one year after World War II. In most other cases about historical injustice, the wrongs were committed a long time ago.

Elazar Barkan, associate professor of history and writer of *The guilt of nations*, points out this important aspect in the discussion about historical injustice. He focuses on the change of the moral values throughout the centuries. If the discussions are about the 20th century it is easy to condemn the wrongs. What is seen as wrong now, was wrong sixty years ago as well. Although morals change, they do not change that radically.

For injustices that took place hundreds of years ago it is a lot harder to judge what the values were and if they are like the ones we have now. For example, eating meat is considered normal in our society, but over 300 years this can change completely. It would then be awkward if those future generations will condemn us for something that we considered as pretty standard.

We have to avoid making the same mistake if we judge historical cases. Take for instance the slave trade. It can be argued that it was totally accepted to trade slaves during these centuries. In that case, it would be wrong to condemn our ancestors because it would have been very hard for them to know any better.

This is an argument that is heard in the debates about historical injustice and can severely influence the reaction of states. It is unreasonable to blame anyone for what turns out to be a wrongdoing in hindsight, but, according to Barkan, this happens often. People do not take into consideration the shifting morals when regarding events that happened a long time ago⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage*, 48-50

⁵⁸ E Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations; Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, XXX-XIV, 324

This is an important notion for the Dutch and their slave trade. If the Dutch did not know any better, then it seems unreasonable to make all kinds of excuses. Let us examine the Dutch case with the knowledge we have.

In the 17th century, when it all started, it was not seen as normal to have slaves. In Europe, formal slavery hardly existed. Even serfdom, close to slavery, was diminishing in Western Europe. So why not white slaves? As described in the former chapter Europeans already rejected the idea of slavery, but what was seen as wrong for Europeans, was completely normal to the Africans. Although in the beginning there were certainly multiple voices who objected to this trade.

A century later, the slave trade and slavery of Africans was nearly totally accepted in Europe. Hardly anyone objected to slavery. But this period lasted only until the second half of the 18th century. Then, the first abolitionist movements came and succeeded in abolishing slave trade and slavery in the beginning of the 19th century.

This short analysis shows that from 1800 onward there was a Dutch realization that slave trade and slavery were wrong. Still, it lasted until 1863 before slavery was abolished. This can certainly be seen as a wrong. Before 1800 it is much harder to condemn it. Especially during the period 1650-1750, slavery was not seen as morally wrong.

Still, the people at that time could know that something was wrong about the slave trade. Because why were only Africans enslaved, and not some Europeans as well? This discrepancy between valuing black and white people could be seen by those who lived during that age. The slaves were not also used for working in Europe. As early as the 17th century, people considered slavery as something that should not be in Europe. Slavery was accepted in those days but the contrast between that existed between the European and American society should have been obvious. It is difficult to say how obvious it was and if the slave holders and transporters should have known.

If we take Jaspers' account of metaphysical guilt, the Dutch are guilty, because if the people could have known they were wrong, they were wrong. Even if the communis opinio is that it was totally accepted. If there was a clue for knowing that it was wrong they are guilty. Only negligence is hardly seen as wrong, just like ignorance. If you do not know that you are ignorant, it is difficult to be blamed.

So, only for the period after 1800, there is a good case to show that the Dutch can be blamed for slavery. Before 1800, there is a debate that should be examined more closely before a final conclusion can be made.

Who is to blame?

Now we have a case of historical injustice we have to come to the next part and that is who is to blame for the faults the Dutch ancestors made. With Jaspers' forms of guilt we already have an idea of who was wrong several centuries ago, but we do not know who can be made responsible. Can you blame current-day people for the mistakes that were made 200 years ago?

Janna Thompson, associate professor of philosophy at La Trobe University, uses an inheritance argument to show that there is still a link between those who live now and those who committed the injustice. For most families it is possible to save money as inheritance for later generations. If I make a fortune it is reasonable for me that I leave a part as inheritance for my children and grandchildren. This way I know that there is a reasonable chance future generations will live in prosperity⁵⁹.

Slaves never had the opportunity to make a fortune, besides the fact that the children of slaves were sold to other places. Even if the slaves could have acquired some wealth, it was impossible to have their kin inherit the money. According to Thompson, this impossibility to get an inheritance is an injustice⁶⁰.

Rawls, on the other hand, states that guilt dissipates within two generations, because the emotional value decreases over time⁶¹. Thompson does not stop there. She thinks that some injustices committed by our forebears can leave us indebted. This means later generations continue to carry the burden of injustices from centuries ago.

But who are these later generations? After centuries finding persons who have only slave-holding ancestors or slave ancestors is impossible. Over generations people mix up. Therefore, Thompson says that equity, a redistribution of wealth, is the appropriate action to take. This redistribution must be performed by agents that existed at the time of injustice and still exist. States are entities that survived through the ages. Most companies ceased to exist and to hold a descendant responsible is very difficult. States instituted the rules wherein the injustices could arise.

The problem with Thompson's solution is that it is not clear how the nations that now exist are responsible for the faults of the same state in former times⁶². States change, not only in size and shape, but also in form of government. Descendants of slaves can now be inhabitants of a state that enslaved their forebears. If the same state now pays reparation, the victim of slavery indirectly pays his or her own reparation. Also descendants of people who opposed the injustice pay the reparations, but the descendants of the perpetrators pay less than they should.

⁵⁹ J. Thompson, *Taking Responsibility for the Past, Reparation and Historical Justice*, 113-120

⁶⁰ Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage*, 122

⁶¹ Thompson, *Taking Responsibility for the Past*, 126-127

⁶² *Ibid.* 146

Thompson gives an answer for this in her book *Intergenerational Justice*. As seen above, she argues that everyone wants to leave a valuable inheritance. For people with children this is an easy case, because for them their genes survive. For those without spouses this is also the line of argument, because they like to be remembered, have a funeral, etc.

There is only one way to ensure everyone is remembered. Although you never can be sure, if you treat your ancestors with the respect they want, then later generations will also commemorate your actions in life. It is a kind of reciprocity. If you would not show your good intentions, later generations do not see why they should remember you. Only if they see that every generation does commemorate their ancestors they will know future generations will do the same for them⁶³.

With this argument Thompson tries to find the missing link in her theory. She made her point regarding why we had to commemorate the wrongs of our ancestors. This will link us to these ancestors, but is this a real solution? If a new society comes into existence how is that explainable with this theory? You can imagine it is like the first society. It has to begin somewhere, but a new society sometimes means an end of an old society. If I am part of an old society then I know I will not be remembered. So if I know my society will end this generation, why would I keep to this deal between generations? Maybe you can argue that people never know when a society is coming to an end. And that the people, therefore, always keep this agreement between generations going.

Farid Abdel-Nour, Director of the Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies at the San Diego State University, gives another theory that can solve Thompson's problem. He calls it national responsibility. The individuals of a country are not only bound together by the borders of the state. Being a member of a particular state is more than living on the soil of that country. Language, culture and history can reinforce the idea of the connection between the people of a country. Every country talks about the great achievements in history, like the Golden Age in the Netherlands, the great philosophers of France or the United Kingdom with the empire where the sun never set. Abdel-Nour sees the history of a country as a part of the national identity. Individuals identify themselves by that history. But like celebrating the good things in history, the inhabitants of a country must also take responsibility for the wrongs of the state in former times⁶⁴. Or, as Abdel-Nour put it:

My conclusion is simple. Where there is national pride, there is national responsibility. The latter can only disappear in a world devoid of national identity. Until then, let the participants in national identity recognize that their fantasy opens the door to "the guilt of fathers"⁶⁵.

This solution also has a problem. For example, a socialist may not have any national pride. They will not identify themselves with the country, but rather with the proletarians of all countries. But if the nation pays reparations, this socialist takes also part in the reparations.

⁶³ J. Thompson, *Intergenerational Justice; Rights and Responsibilities in an Intergenerational Polity*, 55-72

⁶⁴ F. Abdel-Nour, *National Responsibility*, 696-703

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 713

Maybe the connection with the state begins with the nationality. If somebody is part of a country then they are automatically part of the responsibility the country has. In that case, a person can choose to be stateless and in that way he or she is not part of a national responsibility. Unfortunately, statelessness is not a real option in this world.

The same line of argument is used by the moral philosopher Annette Baier. She sees the problem of the individual. How can you make whole societies responsible, while we see the individual as the point of focus? While Abdel-Nour focuses on national identity, Baier sees the association of people as an entity that can be made responsible for their deeds. A nation is of course an association⁶⁶.

Concluding, we can state that with some lines of reasoning it is possible to connect the contemporary generations with their ancestors, but the link between these groups is far from strong. In the chapters that follow, we will see which of these arguments are used in the national debates about historical injustices. For now, we have to look at the last part of this chapter. If we know there is a historical wrong and if we can blame someone for that wrong, in what way should and could there be reparations?

Different dimensions of reparation

There are multiple camps in the repayment debate. John Torpey, associate professor of sociology and European studies, tries to map out the field of the claims in politics. He states that the reparation debate focuses on two dimensions. One is a monetary repayment versus a symbolic action. The other dimension is legal versus cultural⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ A.C. Baier, *How can Individualists Share Responsibility?* 42-43

⁶⁷ J. Torpey, *Politics and the past*, 11-14

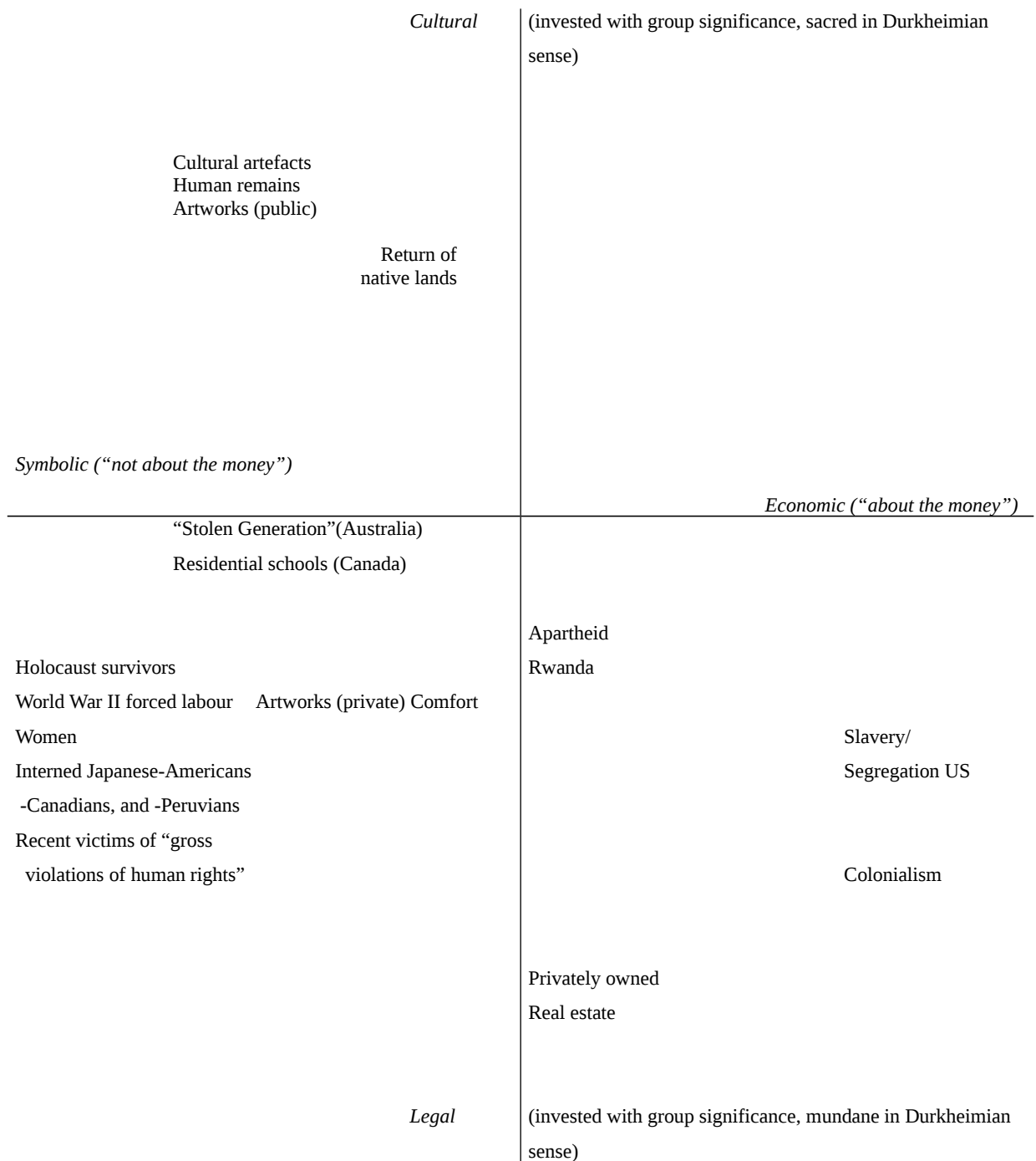


Figure 1. Mapping of the reparation debate by Torpey

The second dimension is the easiest part. On one side, you find reparations stemming from cultural violations and unjustified acquisition of cultural artefacts, while the other side you find the reparations of private estates. The distinction between both is the binding of the group with the artefacts, paintings or lands that are stolen. In the cases to the north the binding between the group and the stolen objects is strong. Therefore, Torpey uses the term 'sacred' as defined by Durkheim. The objects have a sacred meaning to the people who lost them. On the other hand, if a case is put to the

south it means that the emotional binding is hardly there. It is a legal claim that entities have on stolen goods⁶⁸.

The other dimension is more difficult, although it seems to be easier. It shows that the German *Wiedergutmachung* (compensation) is symbolic, while the repayment of the slaves and the slave trade is highly monetary. In other words, Torpey distinguishes between commemorative claims and monetary claims. The first ones are all about apologies, whereas the monetary claims are financial in nature.

From a victim's perspective, the mapping of Torpey is right. The African countries claim that their misfortune can be blamed on the colonising countries and that, therefore, the Europeans should pay. This is just like the African Americans, who also seek money as the way to settle the past, while the Jews do not seek repayment. They only want to see some old Nazis put to trial⁶⁹.

From the perpetrators' perspective the mapping is odd. Take for example the Germans. They have paid a lot of money as reparation for the Holocaust. On the other hand, the countries which participated in slavery have at most erected a monument. So in the case of the German state, it seems logical to put the Holocaust on the right part of the map. On the other hand, the reaction to slave history from the United States can be put on the left side. The United States does not intend to pay reparation money and keeps with symbolic actions.

The mapping of Torpey is also highly disputable for two other reasons. Firstly, a part of the table is not used, the right above section. That is logical, because it does not make sense to want religious objects back in combination with monetary reparation. The second is that the legal part also can be seen as monetary reparation. Since the attachment between the person or group and the lost properties is hardly there, any form of reparation is good.

There is probably a more interesting distinction that can replace the north-south dimension. That distinction is between individuals and groups. On the one hand, you have claims of large groups while, on the other hand, you have claims of individuals who lost property during a civil war or families who have lost their loved ones. In the latter cases it is clear that the claims are not made by a group, but rather by individuals or individual families.

If you put the new dimension in the figure and also split the position of the actors in the debate you will get this mapping:

⁶⁸ Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, 58

⁶⁹ Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, 56-58, Torpey, *Politics and the Past*, 11-13

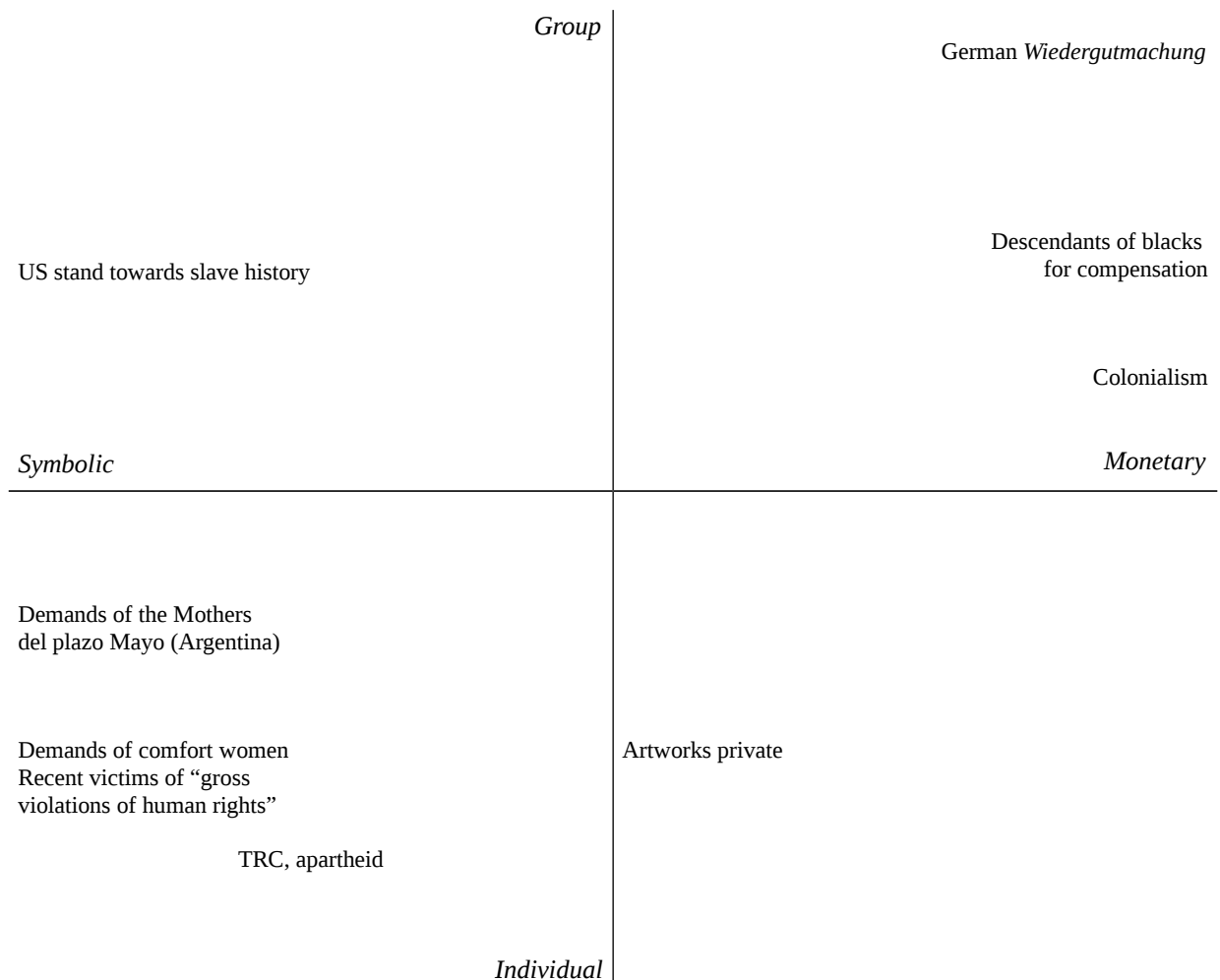


Figure 2. Mapping of the reparation claims adjusted

All the theories about reparations politics can be put in this map. Here, the most notorious will be discussed and put in the scheme. We start with Robert Nozick. He takes a radical individual repayment stance in the reparation debate. According to him, an alternative “what if” history has to be constructed from the point where the injustice took place. The situation that would then be reached has to be put in practice. If, for example, person A steals a hundred dollars from person B and after ten years the injustice is discovered, A must pay back the hundred dollars to B.

Nozick calls this the principle of rectification. It is one of the three ways of acquiring. The other two are transfer and justice. Nozick describes the principle of rectification:

'The principle of rectification presumably will make use of its best estimate of subjunctive information about what would have occurred (or a probability distribution over what might have occurred, using the expected value) if the injustice had not taken place'⁷⁰.

Nozick's theory does not take into account compensation for groups. Nevertheless, there are some other problems with Nozick's theory.

⁷⁰ L. Davis, *Comments on Nozick's Entitlement Theory*, 839

For example, let us say that B in the example is a brilliant investor. He may have turned that hundred dollars into a thousand dollars if he would have possessed that 100 dollars from the start. Who is going to fill that nine hundred dollar gap⁷¹?

This is not the only problem with this theory. What do we have to do with people who already are dead or items that are destroyed? In a 'what if' history these people and items do not come back⁷². This problem has to be solved.

Unfortunately, Nozick does not provide one. This makes this theory problematic to apply for historical injustices, because sometimes the world in the 'what if' history is impossible to create. Maybe we even do not want to create such a world, because such a world could be more unsatisfactory than the world we live in.

Lawrence Davis gives a good example of this problem. He takes an example of two sailors. Their ship has sunk and the two sailors survive and swim to the same coast. Sailor Turner has a machete that is stolen by sailor Jones. Jones now starts a shop in the nearest place and lives a happy life. Turner instead lives a life of a beggar and has become a drunkard. After twenty years the injustice is discovered. In the 'what if' history Jones would be a beggar and a drunkard and Turner would live happily with his shop. According to Nozick, Jones has to give everything to Turner. After twenty years Turner would not be able to run the shop and would fall back in the same situation as Jones. It seems unreasonable to change everything now⁷³.

Therefore, Jeremy Waldron, professor of law and philosophy at the New York University School of Law provides another theory based on emotional and economic binding to the stolen goods. He argues that the unjust actions must be repaired, but if the damaging act happened too long ago the claims of restitution expire⁷⁴.

He still argues that it would seem unreasonable to do nothing, because paying reparation costs is just. To prove this, take the following example. Person X is a man who became a beggar, because persons Y and Z have robbed him. Now person Y regrets his faults and gives X enough money every day to have something to eat. Person Z maybe also regrets the faults he made in the past, but does nothing to help the beggar.

Of course even the actions of Y are disputable. Why does he not give back what he has stolen or a part of it? Still it is less unjust than the behaviour of Z. Z has been unjust in the past and does nothing to compensate his own unjust behaviour. It would, therefore, be peculiar to state that after a certain amount of time both Z and Y do not have any obligation to X anymore. In this case, it seems that acting unjust is profitable.

Therefore, Waldron thinks recent injustices should be compensated monetarily whereas wrongs committed in a distant past should be compensated symbolically. His argumentation focuses on the

⁷¹ Ibid., 839-841

⁷² Ibid., 842

⁷³ Ibid., 843-844

⁷⁴ J. Waldron, *Superseding Historical Injustice*, 14-20

group while Nozick focuses more on individuals, since a group can have a bond with the stolen goods.

After Jaspers proved that Germany is wrong, he gives some views how this wrongdoing should be compensated. These are (1) *Wiedergutmachung*, a process that started from the beginning of the 1950s, (2) the trial of the Germans who committed injustices, (3) every German has to come to a better moral insight and (4) has to be made aware of being in this world, self-awareness⁷⁵.

Jaspers takes also a very monetary position, but he does not look at individuals. He sees the *Wiedergutmachung* as a group to group reparation for the wrong that his group committed during World War II.

In the next chapter we will see the Dutch response to their history of slavery. This chapter tried to give an overview of the theories and debates about if, and how historical justice should be compensated. Especially the debate about how much should be repaid is important. In the next chapters we will see views about how to repair the historical injustice. To give an idea of where the debate is, the discussions will be mapped. Torpey's map will be used for this. The only problem with that map is that there is not a place for people who oppose any form of restitution. This can be changed easily by extending the first dimension from no reparation to monetary reparation.

There is an assumption we make when we do this. And that is: symbolic reparation is a lesser form of reparation than monetary restitution. But this does not seem a bold assumption. Torpey does the same in his book. He sees the politics of reparation politics going from memorials (the least) to transitional justice (the most).

Now, we have a new figure and the theorists named above are put in:

⁷⁵ Waldron, *Superseding Historical Injustice*, 50

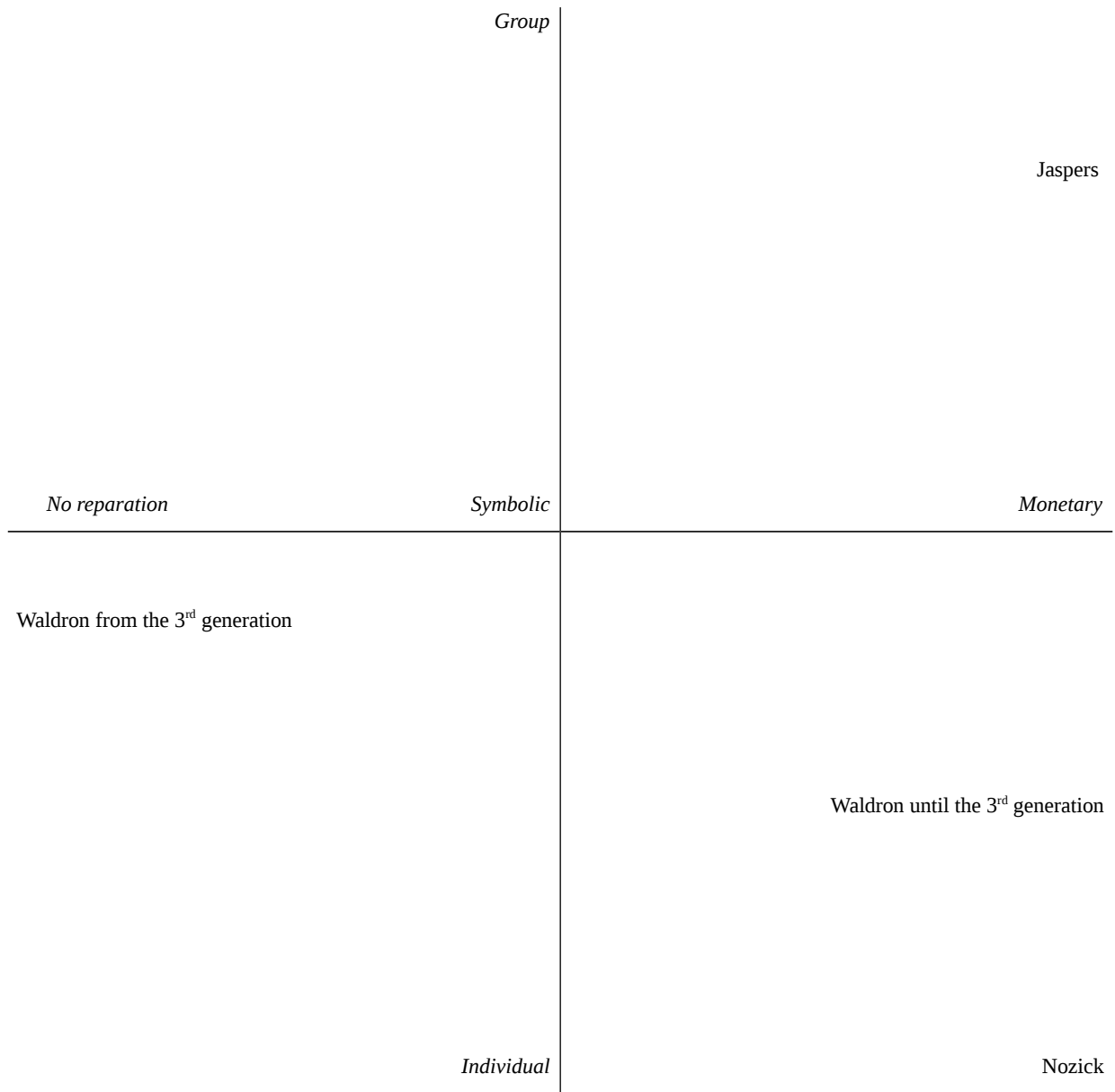


Figure 3. Mapping of the reparation claims

Research method

This thesis used opinion magazines, newspaper articles, scientific literature and parliamentary debates to illustrate how the debate is in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. All these pieces give a pretty good view of how the debate is in a country and which lines of arguments are used. This is a qualitative research. In the Dutch debate, a small research study is conducted to test a hypothesis about the rise of awareness of history.

A comparison between both cases is made after the research. In this comparison, the differences and similarities between the Dutch and English cases will be looked at. The arguments, how the

parliaments debate, and how the government reacts will also be looked at. There will also be an attempt to explain these.

In the last chapter, three other cases will be shown, the United States and their slavery, Germany and the Holocaust, and the Moluccas case. These three cases are purely scientific literature and will be used to look for commonalities in the cases about historical injustice. Here, an attempt will also be made to explain the similarities and differences between the cases.

In the final chapter, the findings and conclusions put forward in the previous chapters will be reiterated. After that, the debates will be put on the map as described hereinabove. The differences between the debates in the various cases of historical injustices will be mentioned and the possible underlying causes will be put forward.

The Dutch acceptance of the slavery burden

Introduction

On 1 July 2002, the monument to commemorate slavery was unveiled. The monument was the result of a process that started in 1998 with a petition from the *Afro-European Women's Movement Sophiedela*. This was a part of the conference "Women and footprints of Slavery"⁷⁶. In four years' time the monument was erected. That is pretty fast in comparison with the 135 years after the abolishment of slavery before this process was started. This chapter will try to answer why it took such a short time to erect such a monument. Although it also can be called slow, because it took 135 years. And was the monument enough for the Dutch? These are the questions this chapter will address, not only with the public discussion, but also the debate in parliament.



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Chapter outline

This chapter starts with describing how the Dutch viewed their slavery past and when the first advocates for commemorating the slave trade spoke up until the moment of the erection of the monument. If we believe Inglehart, we can assume that the interest in historical injustices will rise in the 1960s. As Inglehart puts forward in his book *The Silent Revolution*, in the 1960s, the interest shifts from purely material, to more immaterial interests such as democracy and the right of free speech. Inglehart calls this post-materialism, and shows that the younger generations value those immaterial

⁷⁶ NiNsee website <http://www.ninsee.nl/Nationaal-slavernijmonument> 20-09-2011

⁷⁷ From the NiNsee website <http://www.ninsee.nl/?pagina=96&parentID=0&level=1>

parts of life much more than older generations. This is due to the improvement of the economic wealth. The better people are off economically, the more they value post-materialistic principles⁷⁸.

Since critically looking at the past is post-materialistic, the expectation is that the awareness of the wrong in history rose in the 1960s. The Dutch became more aware of historical wrongs committed by their forebears and became more willing in compensating them.

Secondly, the debate in parliament will be shown. Which parties were in favour of a monument, what were the arguments and was there any opposition? Parliament is the institution that ultimately had to decide if a monument had to be built and if this was an appropriate response to the past.

Thirdly, reactions by the public, including pressure groups, will be discussed. Here, the public's response to the monument will be discussed as well as the question whether the government accurately represented its people's wishes.

Fourthly, other discussions related to the subject will be shown. Not only during the discussion about the monument, but also thereafter. Most important is the international demand, made during the 2001 Durban anti-racism conference, for reparations to be paid. These voices remained, even after the monument was erected and are still heard incidentally.

Lastly, the discussions about the historical wrongs of slavery will be put in the theoretical context. In the previous chapter, multiple views are postponed. Do the actors in the debate follow these views or do they follow an alternative line of argument?

Public debate up to the discussion of the monument in parliament

The *Leeuwarder Courant* and *Provinciale Courant Zeeland (PCZ)* have archives of all the articles written from the beginning of the newspaper. Both newspapers were erected more than 100 years ago. If the awareness rose in the 1960s as the theory of *Silent Revolution* predicts, articles about this subject should appear in the 1960s in the archives of the *Leeuwarder Courant* and the *PCZ*.

Therefore, it is easy to look with a small research study into the development of this debate. With the search terms *slavernij* (slavery), *slavernijmonument'* (slavery monument) and *historische schuld* (historical guilt)⁷⁹ the articles were found, after which the content was read. Other newspapers are used to see if the findings from these newspapers can be confirmed and that it is not by accident that the *Leeuwarder Courant* and the *PCZ* do not write about it. We start with the findings in the *Leeuwarder Courant*.

Slavery is seen as wrong throughout the twentieth century. Not in a single article is slavery or the slavery past defended, but, on the other hand, there is not a single article about commemorating this historical wrong. In 1977, there are two series about the history of slavery⁸⁰. One of them is called

⁷⁸ R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution; Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press: Princeton New Jersey 1977

⁷⁹ Slavery, slavery monument and historical injustice

⁸⁰ [http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19770903&id=LC-19770903-2002&words=+\(+Slavernij\)%20slavernij](http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19770903&id=LC-19770903-2002&words=+(+Slavernij)%20slavernij) 12/11/2009

'Roots' and is about a slave captured as a boy in Africa and brought to the United States. You see his life, that of his daughter and his grandson⁸¹. The name of the other documentary is unknown, but it is a BBC production telling the story of a slave.

The first article about guilt for the slave trade is in 1998. The migrant-churches asked all the 'white' churches to accept guilt in 2000⁸². This happened a few days after president Bill Clinton apologised for the slavery of the United States in Uganda⁸³. That same year, the first remembrance day was held⁸⁴ and the first voices for a monument can be heard⁸⁵.

The search on *slavernijmonument* (slavery monument) gives more articles about the subject. The first article found is about the parliamentary debate⁸⁶. There is hardly any discussion prior to the debate in parliament. In all other newspapers, we also have to wait until 1999 before the first article about the monument is found. The article mentioned above is the only article about this subject before 2000 in the *Leeuwarder Courant*. Nevertheless, the slavery monument was built in 2002, only four years after the first article about the subject

On *historische schuld* (historical guilt) there is not a single relevant article before the year 2000. This is the same for the *PCZ*, but on *slavernij* the *PCZ* has more articles. The *PCZ* is a newspaper from the province of Zeeland. Zeeland was together with the province of Holland the main actors in the slave trade in the republic. For example, already in 1953 the *PCZ* mentions that slavery has been abolished for 90 years⁸⁷.

Articles about Otto Sterman, who shows how life was during the period of slavery, are the only news items about slavery in the 1950s and 1960s⁸⁸. We have to wait until 1976 for the first time that this newspaper reports about the commemoration of the slavery past by the Suriname population⁸⁹. In 1963, there seems no commemoration in the Netherlands; only in Suriname when the 100th year after

⁸¹ The whole series is on youtube, like <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM4skxDvk-k&feature=related>

⁸² [http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980406&id=LC-19980406-13014&words=+\(+slavernij\)%20slavernij](http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980406&id=LC-19980406-13014&words=+(+slavernij)%20slavernij) 16/11/2009

⁸³ [http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980325&id=LC-19980325-5007&words=+\(+slavernij\)%20slavernij](http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980325&id=LC-19980325-5007&words=+(+slavernij)%20slavernij) 16/11/2009

⁸⁴ [http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980701&id=LC-19980701-1004&words=+\(+slavernij\)%20slavernij](http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980701&id=LC-19980701-1004&words=+(+slavernij)%20slavernij) 16/11/2009 and

⁸⁵ [http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980702&id=LC-19980702-1002&words=+\(+slavernij\)%20slavernij](http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19980702&id=LC-19980702-1002&words=+(+slavernij)%20slavernij) 16/11/2009

⁸⁶ <http://parlando.sdu.nl> 02/09/1998 no. 66, 6215-6276

⁸⁷ <http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=1&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=01-07-1953&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc&doc=0&p=1¶graaf=60&y=68> 09-01-2012

⁸⁸ For example <http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=13-01-1958&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 09/01/2012

⁸⁹ <http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=05-07-1976&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 09/01/2012

abolition was celebrated⁹⁰. Although in 1962 the newspaper mentions that 100 years ago the second term of Thorbecke started. It was during this administration that slavery was abolished.⁹¹

In the meantime, slavery is sometimes described as something that happened, without any value judgement. In these articles, slavery is named as something horrible, but there is no sign of apologising for the injustice. Interestingly, the articles seem to highlight the positive sides. For example, the ones who opposed slavery are mentioned and in a dissertation the cruelty is relativised. For example, by showing that the profit was not as high as people think⁹².

From the end of the 1970s, the slavery past is more often mentioned. Nearly every year the remembrance day, 1 July, is reported. And sometimes some related articles about *Roots*, but also an article about abolishing *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete). He is the silly assistant of the white *Sinterklaas*. This tradition stems from the time of slavery and still reminds people about this period⁹³.

Also in this newspaper we have to wait until the 1990s before the history of slavery is openly described as a black page. Nevertheless, in 1987 there is a first statement that 'the walls of the merchant houses in the capital of the province are tainted with blood'⁹⁴. Just like in the *Leeuwarder Courant* the first time people apologise for the past is in 1998. First, President Clinton's apologies and later the Council of Churches in the Netherlands took place⁹⁵. Nevertheless, there is not a single article about the slavery monument. A search on *slavernijmonument* does not give a single hit.

In both newspapers, the awareness primarily rises in the 1990s. This seems to be confirmed by other newspapers. In the archives of *Trouw* the first articles about slavery past appear in 1999, while the archives go back to 1992⁹⁶. So it is likely that the petition of *Sophiedela* had no precedent in The Netherlands. There is hardly any article before 1998 that describes the bad aspects of the Dutch slave

⁹⁰<http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=1&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=01-07-1963&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc¶graaf=35&doc=0&p=2¶graaf=41&y=68> 09-01-2012

⁹¹<http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=31-01-1962&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 09/01/2012

⁹²<http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=20-02-1962&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 09/01/2012

⁹³ <http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=Roots+slavernij&datering=1978&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 10/01/2012 and <http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=11-11-1981&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 10/01/2012

⁹⁴ (K)leeft bloed aan de muren van de koopmanshuizen in de provinciehoofdstad <http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=21-11-1987&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 10/01/2012

⁹⁵<http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=25-03-1998&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 10/01/2012 and <http://zoeken.krantenbankzeeland.nl/index.php?page=0&mod=krantresultaat&q=slavernij&datering=28-04-1998&krant=&qt=paragraaf&pagina=&sort=score+desc> 10/01/1998

⁹⁶ <http://www.trouw.nl/search/searcharchief/article1847823.ece?siteonderdeel=archive> 12/11/2009

trade. Also Gert Oostindie, professor of Caribbean history at Leiden University, states in his book *Het Verleden onder Ogen*:

The first time a monument for remembering the slave trade was discussed widely was in 1998, 135 years after the abolition of slavery. You do not have to think that the span of this debate – of which this book is a part – is very big. Up until now from the Dutch side only a few have been interested in the subject⁹⁷.

Kwame Nimako, associate of the Ninsee institute, and Stephen Small also point out that in the Netherlands the debate has become more public since the turn of 2000, not only demonstrated by the erection of the monument, but also by the 'apologies' of the Dutch. The first time a Dutch politician made some apologies was in 2001⁹⁸.

The theory that this awareness for the past came with the *Silent Revolution* of the 1960s could not be proved. But like the concern for the environment, some of the post-modern values appeared later. The exact relation between the Silent revolution and the rise of awareness for the past should be more explored, but that is not in the scope of this thesis.

But what then started this debate? In the United States the debate has already been going on for several decades. Maybe the cause should be found in the international arena. The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s were times of transition. For example, the Eastern European countries had to transform from a government that committed wrongs during their reign to a society that had to live with many people who had supported that system. The same happened in South America, where many dictators lost power following the end of the Cold War. They had the same transitional issues as in Eastern Europe.

But the change in South Africa is the most famous of all. Especially the Truth and Reconciliation commission under the supervision of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Before 1990, the white minority ruled the country with the Apartheid policy. The white rulers were not punished by court, but had to come before this commission to confess their wrongs⁹⁹.

Unfortunately, not a single newspaper gives a reason for why the debate took place at that time. Also in the scientific literature, the international dimension is hardly mentioned. It seems that the precedent of the Dutch discussion has to be found elsewhere.

⁹⁷ Translation of: 'Pas in 1998, honderdvijfendertig jaar na de afschaffing van de slavernij, is voor het eerst in bredere kring serieus gesproken over een monument ter herdenking van de slavernij. Van de reikwijdte van dit debat – waarvan deze bundel een element is – stelle men zich niet te veel voor'. G. Oostindie, *Het verleden onder ogen*, 11

⁹⁸K. Nimako and S. Small, *Collective Memory of Slavery in Great Britain and The Netherlands*, 9-11

⁹⁹R.L. Brooks in J. Torpey, *Politics and the Past*, 110-113

Nimako and Oostindie point at two other major causes. The first is the pressure of the Surinamese and Antillean population. From the start of the 1990s, people from these communities started to organise themselves in all kinds of pressure groups. According to Nimako and Oostindie, these groups are the instigators of the debate. Examples of these groups are the foundation *Eer en Herstel*, the committee *30 June/1 July* and the women's organisation *Sophiedela*¹⁰⁰.

The second cause is another international development. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, some other former slaveholding countries started looking at their history. Britain, as can be seen in the next chapter, and France, were earlier with their apologies and monuments¹⁰¹. Just a few years before that, in 1992, Pope John Paul II described slavery as a "horrible error"¹⁰². Furthermore, Suriname already had the first of July as the day to commemorate that the slave trade had been abolished¹⁰³.

These causes seem more plausible than the other international trends mentioned above, since none of the newspapers make a comparison between, for example, the Dutch case and the Truth and Reconciliation commission or see an analogy between the Dutch struggle with the past and the former communist countries in Eastern Europe that had to find a way to handle the past.

The parliamentary debate until the erection of the monument

In 1998, Ad Melkert, leader of the Dutch Labour party (PvdA) in parliament, asked the prime minister to look at the possibility of a museum or monument to not only commemorate the period of slavery, but also to show the consequences of slavery for those Dutch people whose ancestors were slaves. This was the first time a member of the Dutch parliament spoke about this subject.

This request from Melkert to the prime minister came after a petition that was delivered to parliament three months earlier by the foundation *Eer en Herstel Betalingen Slachtoffers van Slavernij in Suriname*¹⁰⁴. In this petition, the foundation not only requested a monument and making the history of slavery a part of the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, but for reparations as well. A 'Marshall plan' should be instated to rebuild Suriname, the study debts for the descendants of slaves should be cancelled and a symbolic payment of 135 guilders for every descendant was to be made. The amount of 135 guilders was chosen because slavery had been abolished 135 years ago¹⁰⁵.

This went much further than the monument and national remembrance that Ad Melkert proposed. Remarkably not one of the members of parliament mentions any form of reparation for the

¹⁰⁰Nimako and Small, *Collective Memory of Slavery in Great Britain and The Netherlands*, 5, G. Oostindie, *Het verleden onder ogen*, 11

¹⁰¹Nimako and Small, *Collective Memory of Slavery in Great Britain and The Netherlands*, 7-11, G. Oostindie, *Het verleden onder ogen*, 14

¹⁰² <http://www.archiefleewardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19920224&id=LC-19920224-6001&words=+Paus%20+slavernij%20paus%20slavernij> 17/11/2009

¹⁰³ [http://www.archiefleewardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19880702&id=LC-19880702-4007&words=+\(+slavernij%20+herdenken%20+Suriname\)%20slavernij%20herdenk%20Suriname](http://www.archiefleewardercourant.nl/site/article.do?code=LC&date=19880702&id=LC-19880702-4007&words=+(+slavernij%20+herdenken%20+Suriname)%20slavernij%20herdenk%20Suriname) 17/11/2009

¹⁰⁴ Translation: "Honour and reparation victims of slavery in Suriname"

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.stichtingeerherstel.nl/index.php?id=1216> 24/11/2009

descendants of the victims. Oedayraj Singh Varma of the GroenLinks (Greenleft) party only makes a statement about the fact that, in the Dutch history books, Dutch wrongs have been overlooked. If even a descendant of Suriname ancestors and member of one of the most leftist parties does not bring up an argument for reparation, it shows the Dutch parliament was absolutely not considering paying reparations¹⁰⁶.

On the other hand, it is surprising that not a single party objects to a form of admitting guilt for historical injustices. Some parties do not participate in the discussion about the subject, but not a single party objects to the building of the monument.

The only debate is about how to commemorate the historical wrong. The monument is the prime subject of debate. Many parties have an opinion about where the statue has to be erected and what it should look like. Besides that, there is a debate about the place slavery has in Dutch history. Members of parliament Francisca Ravestein (D66, left liberal) and Singh Varma (GroenLinks, see above) mention that in the Dutch history books the slave past is not described at all. They both ask the minister to give this historical wrong a place in national history¹⁰⁷. In 2010, slavery and the slave trade formally became a part of Dutch history when it was given a place in the Dutch history canon¹⁰⁸, in which the fifty most important historical events in Dutch history are summed up.

Another part of remembering the historical injustice is the foundation of an institute that has to commemorate the significance of the wrong and keeping this history alive. In the debates it is hardly mentioned. The only words pointing to this institute are some statements by Singh Varma and Saskia Noorman-Den Uyl (PvdA). Noorman-Den Uyl states:

I also have a question on the impact, because it is not just a monument. We think this is important, but I refer in particular to the aspect of history, the dialogue about the meaning of slavery and the history of many people of ethnic origin in our society. That is just a little more than a monument¹⁰⁹.

In this statement you could see that just a chapter in a history book is not good enough. The historical wrong should be actively remembered by an institution that has to actively endorse this. The NiNsee was founded just before the unveiling of the monument¹¹⁰ and has as its purpose to give a good

¹⁰⁶ <http://parlando.sdu.nl> 06/10/1998 no. 7 p. 264-284

¹⁰⁷ <http://parlando.sdu.nl> 22/12/1999 26200 VII no. 44 en 14/09/1999 26333 no.9

¹⁰⁸ <http://entoen.nu/slavernij/en> 16/04/2010

¹⁰⁹ Dan heb ik nog een vraag over de uitwerking, want het gaat niet alleen om een monument. Dat vinden wij ook belangrijk, maar ik wijs vooral op het aspect van de geschiedschrijving, de dialoog over de betekenis van slavernij en de geschiedenis van veel mensen van etnische herkomst in onze samenleving. Dat is net iets meer dan alleen een monument. Ik vraag de minister om dit wat uitgebreider op te pakken. <http://parlando.sdu.nl> 22-12-1998 26200 VII nr. 44

¹¹⁰ <http://parlando.sdu.nl> 10/07/2002 no. 89, 5240

and realistic view of the history of slavery, to elaborate the past, not only for this generation, but also for future generations¹¹¹.

The public debate about the monument

The reaction of the Dutch public to the monument is interesting. A major difference in the attitude towards the monument was noticeable between the native Dutch, on the one hand, and the Surinamese and Antillean minorities, on the other hand. In 2001, the newspaper *Trouw* conducted a very small poll in the park where the monument would be placed and nobody was enthusiastic about the monument. Some said that they did not mind, while others even objected to remembering something so long ago¹¹². On the other hand, you can see the reaction of the descendants of the slave trade. They welcomed the monument. During the revealing of the memorial there were several hundreds of them attending. This even led to problems during the day. There was a fence built between the ceremony and the spectators. This fence troubled the view of the ceremony, the public tried to pull down the barrier which led to disorder¹¹³.

The debate about the monument is flat. Most intellectuals, like Oostindie, Alex Van Stipriaan Luïscius, professor of Caribbean history at the Erasmus university, and Emmer, former professor European expansion and migration at Leiden university, agree with the erection of the monument. If a country celebrates the huge victories in history a country should also commemorate the wrongdoings and provide some kind of reparation. The intellectuals, therefore, embrace the highlighting of this part of Dutch history, but they point out that there is still a lot to learn about these black pages. Most important is that people will try to think about who is right and who is wrong. There should not be a 'black' truth and a 'white' truth¹¹⁴.

In 1999, opposing opinions were voiced. First, Gert Oostindie wrote an article in favour of the monument and of slavery being inducted into the history curriculum. Jeroen Trommelen, journalist of the *Volkscrant*, does not agree with Oostindie¹¹⁵. He thinks that you cannot judge wrongs that happened a long time ago. He points out: "Moral debts simply cannot be transported over three generations or more"¹¹⁶.

This opinionated article by Trommelen gets some responses, first of all by Van Stipriaan Luïscius. For him, moral guilt is not something that fades away after a certain amount of time. He also says the perpetrator is not the one to decide when there is no more guilt. For many descendants of the slaves,

¹¹¹ <http://www.ninsee.nl/?pagina=83&parentID=0&level=1&CatID=6> 16/04/2010

¹¹² www.trouw.nl A. Dwarkasing, R. van Haastrecht and E. Mulder, *Wij zijn hier, omdat jullie daar waren*, 19-02-2001

¹¹³ <http://parlando.sdu.nl> 10/07/2002 nr. 89, p. 5238-5240, www.telegraaf.nl H. Eetgering, *column Eetgerink: Bigi Spikri*, 03/07/2002

¹¹⁴ www.nrc.nl G. Oostindie, *Zwarte waarheid mag witte niet vervangen*, 29/06/2002 en www.trouw.nl P.C. Emmer, *Arme geschiedenisleraar*, 22/05/2004

¹¹⁵ www.nrc.nl G. Oostindie, *Monument slavernij zinvol gebaar*, 30/06/1999

¹¹⁶ Morele schulden behoren gewoon niet over drie of meer generaties getransporteerd te worden www.devolkscrant.nl J. Trommelen, *Slavernijmonument leeg en zinloos initiatief*, 13/07/1999

the history is still alive and for them such a monument means a great deal¹¹⁷. The second reaction is from a reader. He makes the same argument as Van Stipriaan Luïscius, only shorter. His last sentence makes it all clear, he states: “Certainly it can be argued that this [monument] is not about individual satisfaction, but about empathy that we have been deprived of for more than one hundred years”¹¹⁸.

According to Kwame Nikamo, adviser of NinSee, this is an example of how the debate has petered out. He argues that at the start of the debate the Dutch state called together some intellectuals to tackle the dilemma. And when these intellectuals come to a consensus it is hard to criticise this. The norm has already been set and defended by these various intellectuals. In the book of Oostindie, there is proof that this happened, since Oostindie himself got the task in 1999 to do a small research study on this subject. It seems like the whole debate was depoliticised from the start¹¹⁹.

The other voices who object to the monument are some Surinamese organisations. As already mentioned, the foundation *Eer en Herstel* (Honour and Repair), argued that there should also be a financial compensation for the crimes the Dutch committed. The 30 June/1 July committee also argues that just a monument will not suffice. Every year this organisation organises a protest at a different site in Amsterdam (Surinameplein) on 30 June. There, in 2003, they erected another monument that remembered not only the slavery, but also the history of the former and contemporary Dutch colonies in the West. This monument is called the 'Monument of Consciousness'¹²⁰.

The statue at Oosterpark is too universal in their eyes and at the wrong place. Not only the Surinamese and Antillean slavery is remembered, but also all other Dutch slave trade and the slavery that still exists. They want a monument specifically for the Surinamese and Antillean communities, because the wrongdoings of the Dutch in Suriname include not only slavery, but also the discrimination after 1863. For example: the efforts the Dutch made to develop Suriname are nothing compared to the effort they put in rebuilding the Netherlands after World War II¹²¹. Here, you see a minor debate between the ‘black’ groups and the ‘white’ intellectuals. Intellectuals point out the shared responsibility, whereas black groups pinpoint the white man's share.

¹¹⁷ www.devolkskrant.nl, A. van Stipriaan Luïscius, *Historisch trauma wettigt oprichting slavernijmonument*, 16/07/1999

¹¹⁸ Zeker kan worden gesteld dat het hier niet gaat om individuele genoegdoening, doch om een stuk empathie dat wij langer dan honderd jaar hebben moeten ontberen, www.devolkskrant.nl G. Louz, *Heikele punt van slavernij lijkt eindelijk bespreekbaar*, 17/07/1999

¹¹⁹ G. Oostindie, *Het verleden onder ogen*, 12

¹²⁰ Monument van Besef http://www.buitenbeeldinbeeld.nl/Amsterdam_W/Suriname.htm

¹²¹ www.trouw.nl *Er komt nog een tweede monument voor slaven* 03/07/2002 and <http://www.30juni-1juli.nl/> 19/01/2011

Other Debates

There has been little debate about the monument. In contrast, there is a lot more debate about a formal apology. The first time this debate became public was during the anti-racism conference in Durban 2001.

In April 2001, the Dutch government asked the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) for an opinion on how the Dutch should respond to the conference in Durban. At that conference, the African states demanded compensation for the slave trade. The AIV felt that the claim for compensation should not be honoured. For this they gave three reasons. First of all, it is questionable whether the backwardness of the African countries is a consequence of the slave trade. Secondly, the compensation should go to the ones who have suffered. That would be a problematic process, because it is difficult to find the ones who have suffered from slavery. The last problem is the expiration of crimes. Crimes against humanity are seen as crimes that never expire over time. The question is whether this can also be applied to civil claims that derive from these wrongdoings.

On the other hand, the council does not question the wrong the Dutch committed and agree with a form of apology. Also a monument and more awareness of the wrongs the Dutch committed are recommended¹²². A formal apology could have financial consequences in court. Therefore, the Dutch only 'deeply regretted' what they had done during the period of slave trade¹²³.

Interestingly, there is not a single word about the philosophical discussion on this subject. It is written from a historical and juridical perspective. And even then the arguments are short and not very strong. That is probably because the document had to be short and that it is not a scientific article, just an advice for a conference. Nevertheless, it was this line of argumentation that the Dutch delegation followed during the racism conference in September 2001.

Some intellectuals in the Netherlands disagreed with this point of view. J.A.A. Van Doorn states the position of the Dutch is 'weak'. If you plea for forgiveness you have to pay. Van Doorn, columnist and professor in the sociology, does not agree with huge reparations, because the former slaves and African countries also profited from the slavery and colonisation. Therefore, the debt is not 777 billion dollars, as the number that was called for by the African countries, but still there is a debt. Van Doorn opts for economic stimulus, like lifting the trade barriers, as a way to repair the past¹²⁴.

On the other hand, right wing politician Pim Fortuyn completely disagrees with reparations. He states in his book *De puinhopen van acht jaar Paars*:

Slavery is a chapter of the past, but the facts may speak nonetheless. The slave trade and slavery were conducted by the precursors of modernity, hence by our ancestors. ... The

¹²² <http://www.aiv-advies.nl/ContentSuite/upload/aiv/doc/nr22eng%281%29.pdf> F.H.J.J. Andriessen et al., *De wereldconferentie tegen racisme en de problematiek van rechtsherstel*, 18/04/2010

¹²³ www.trouw.nl *Geschiedenisles slavernij moet langer dan vijf regels*, 03/09/2001

¹²⁴ www.trouw.nl J.A.A. Van Doorn, *Krokodillentranen over het koloniale verleden*, 07/09/2010

intermediary trade, hence the Arabs, then brought (the slaves) to the coasts and from there we, the whites, the precursors of modernity, took over. In the eyes of the present, it is a cruel chapter of history, not just our history, but also of the Africans – perpetrators and victims – and that of the Arabs. We could not and would not do it like this again now... No reason, therefore, to feel guilty, especially not because, rightfully the daughter cannot be held accountable for her father's deeds, and even less a cause for financial compensation. Those who say to suffer even now from the past of their distant ancestors' enslavement should go to a psychiatrist and not be at the negotiating table about financial compensation¹²⁵.

This can be seen as an argument against the monument. The idea of feeling guilty is not right according to Fortuyn. Although a monument to show slavery was a wrong and that we will not do it ever again, seems tolerable. More interesting is that Fortuyn does not agree with guilt that can be passed on to later generations.

This discussion started again in 2008 when left-wing MP Harry van Bommel personally made apologies to the Surinamese and Antillean people for the wrongs his ancestors committed. In his opinion, Prime Minister Balkenende should also have apologised for the past on behalf of all the Dutch. Just like Van Doorn, he disagrees with the half-hearted apologies the Dutch made during the Durban conference.

According to Leo Balai, a former member of the committee for the fourth and fifth of May¹²⁶, such apologies should not be made lightly. If every form of debate is neglected, because we already made our apologies, the apologies will not have the right effect. He also points at other problems, such as who is the prime minister representing when he offers apologies and to whom are they made. Balai thinks the Dutch should commemorate the abolition of slavery with a minute of silence, like the Dutch do on 4 May for the people who died during World War II¹²⁷.

The right-wing press, such as the magazine *Elsevier*, also object to formal apologies and reparations. They point out that the wrongs of slavery cannot be blamed on the Dutch alone. That would be a falsification of history. They agree with the fact that the Dutch slave trade was a

¹²⁵ 'De slavenhandel en de slavernij zijn bedreven door de voorloper van de moderniteit, door onze voorvaderen dus. ... De tussenhandel, de Arabieren dus, brachten (de slaven) vervolgens naar de kusten en van daaruit namen wij, de blanken, de voorlopers van de moderniteit, het over. Het is in hedendaagse ogen een wreed hoofdstuk uit de geschiedenis, niet alleen uit onze geschiedenis, maar ook der Afrikanen – daders en slachtoffers – en die der Arabieren. We zouden het nu niet weer zo kunnen en niet zo doen. ... Geen enkele reden dus om ons schuldig te voelen, zeker niet indien terecht de dochter de daden van de vader niet mogen worden aangerekend, en al helemaal geen reden voor financiële compensatie. Zij die zeggen nog steeds last te hebben van het verleden van de slavernij van hun verre voorvaderen horen thuis bij de psychiater en niet aan de onderhandelingstafel over financiële compensatie' M. Balkenhol, *The Changing Aesthetics of Savagery*

¹²⁶ This committee organises on 4 May the remembrance of the fallen during WWII and on 5 May they organise the celebration of the liberation.

¹²⁷ www.trouw.nl L. Balai, *Geen excuses, sta even stil bij het slavernijverleden*, 14/05/2008

wrongdoing, but that the apologies that Minister Roger van Boxtel made in 2001 are the appropriate response to that crime¹²⁸.

The television programme *Een Vandaag* conducted an opinion poll where their viewers were asked if they agreed with formal excuses and if the Dutch state should pay reparations. On the first issue, 39 per cent of the people were in favour, while 48 per cent were against. Not surprisingly, on the second issue, more people were against. Only 5 per cent of the respondents agreed with a form of reparations¹²⁹.

At the end of 2011, a new controversy surfaced. This time the *Gouden Koets* (golden carriage) was the target. The *Gouden Koets* is the carriage the queen travels with during *Prinsjesdag* (prince day). On this day, she officially shows the plans of the government for the coming year. On the carriage, there is a painting of half naked black people presenting gifts to the queen. According to Members of Parliament Harry van Bommel and Mariko Peters (Greenleft), this part should be removed.



Picture of the part of the *Gouden Koets* that is disputed

This provoked the debate again. The university paper of Leiden University had an interview with professors Emmer, Oostindie and just graduated cultural anthropologist Lotte Pelckmans. These persons argued that, first of all, this painting does not directly link to slavery. In 1898, when this carriage was made, slavery was already banned. Secondly, apologies should be made, as this should not have happened, but compensation for the wrongs is definitely not the right reaction. Since slavery was normal business in those days and the descendants of slaves in the colonies have in general a better life than those who live in Africa¹³⁰.

This piece received a critical reaction from Rivke Jaffe, assistant professor cultural anthropology. She argues that the three people who were interviewed relativise the history. Especially by stating that slavery also had its good sides and that slaves had it better than some free people. Jaffe states that it is

¹²⁸ Elsevier, G. van Schoonhoven, *Wit voetje; Niemand is gebaat bij de multiculturele fopgeschiedenis die sommige politici willen*, 10-05-2008 and Elsevier, R. Stiphout, *Nuanceverboden; Moet 1 juli status 5 mei krijgen? Nederland krijgt over slavernij overdreven schuldgevoel aangepaard*, 28/06/2008

¹²⁹ http://opinie.eenvandaag.nl/uitslagen/33432/uitslag_enqu_te_excuus_aan_Suriname 15/02/2012

¹³⁰ <http://www.mareonline.nl/> V.Bongers, 'Er bestond geen Black Holocaust' 5/02/2012

inappropriate to tone down the slavery past. And the people on the *Gouden Koets* reminds of that period¹³¹.

At the same time, there was a television series about the history of the slave trade and slavery past, called *De Slavernij*¹³². In five episodes, a black man from Suriname descent is looking for his ancestors and finds out he originates from Africa. The other part tells the history of slavery. In the newspapers, this led to a number of announcements, but also a critical piece in *De Volkskrant*. The writers of the piece think the series relativise this part of history. In the episodes they mention that in the spirit of that age, slavery was commonly accepted. This argument is often heard in the debate about slavery, but in the debates about the Holocaust this is hardly mentioned. Therefore, you should not use this argument in either debate and look at the history of slavery from a modern perspective. Aspha Bijnaar, working at NiNsee, Oostindie and Van Stripriaan agree with this view, but they do not make the same analogy with the Holocaust¹³³.

Emmer, on the other hand, sees no problem is relativising history. For Emmer, this documentary shows clearly that emotions are left out. So you get a clean view about what happened without being constantly reminded how terrible it was. According to two researchers on this subject Emmer is just promoting this documentary because he was an advisor for the programme and that you see the view of Emmer in the documentary. And this view is questionable, because Emmer relativises the cruelty by focusing on the economic aspect, that slavery and slave trade were not important for the Dutch economy. According to the researchers you have to look at the spillovers of the whole institution before you can make a final judgement¹³⁴.

In the end, the communis opinio is that excuses are the appropriate response to the faults in the history of slave trade. It cannot be said that the reaction is a well debated answer in which all the arguments have been put forward. Maybe the Dutch just wanted an inexpensive apology. On the other hand, the apologies are sincere, like the Queen did in Ghana in 2008¹³⁵. With clear words, she offered apologies for the horrible trade. Some object to the fact that the Dutch government only thinks about apologies, but they are few and their opinions differ from each other. Some want formal apologies while others even want compensation.

Position of debate

The position of the Dutch government and of most opinion makers is a symbolic response to the faults their forebears made. This is definitely more than doing nothing, but, on the other hand, there is

¹³¹ www.mareonline.nl R. Jaffe, *Waarom niet gewoon toegeven?* 05/10/2011

¹³² <http://deslavernij.ntr.nl/over/> 15/02/2012

¹³³ www.devolskrant.nl S. Ramlal-Jagmohansingh, *'De slavernij: Ook toen was het niet normaal'* 26/10/2011 and A. Bijnaar, G. Oostindie & A. Van Stripriaan, *Serie slavernij te vaak relativerend*, 15/11/2011

¹³⁴ www.devolskrant.nl P.C. Emmer, *Eindelijk ontdoen we nationaal verleden van emotionele ballast*, 19-10-2011 and K.J. Fatah-Black & M. Van Rossum, *Milde kijk op slavernij is nieuwe religie*, 27/10/2011

¹³⁵ NRC Handelsblad, *Koningin: handel in mensen niet edel*, 22/10/2008

only a small minority that wants more than just a monument and a place in the national curriculum. These parties are formed by the party on the left (socialist party) and some Surinamese and Antillean pressure groups.

In the debate, a few arguments surfaced that also can be found in the theoretical discussion in the previous chapter. Trommelen agrees with Waldron that historical wrongs diminish in about three generations. But there is also someone like Fortuyn who opposes any transcending of guilt.

The people who disagree with Trommelen do not think that wrongdoing can disappear over time. They emphasise the argument of the black population, in that they still carry the weight of what happened to their ancestors. As if the pain done by slavery and the slave trade is still alive. If the black people still feel connected with their ancestors, Waldron is incorrect that guilt diminishes in 100 years. Since he argues that after three generations people do not feel connected anymore with those who were victims of the wrongdoing.

On the other hand, there are some who think that the Dutch should pay and do more than just erect a monument to compensate the past. Van Doorn and MP Van Bommel are the most famous voices in favour of this view. Van Doorn points out that the consequences can still be felt in Africa and that therefore the West should pay Africa. This is a line that is comparable with Nozick's argumentation. If history would have been otherwise, Africa would have been richer. That difference should be paid.

This line seems incorrect, because Africa made money out of this slave trade. The rulers in many African countries gained a lot by this trade and could thereby expand their power and wealth. It is therefore hard to state that slavery deprived Africa from income.

Interestingly enough Van Doorn, Van Bommel, and the others who are in favour of reparations, do not try to strengthen the link between the crime and the perpetrators or the victims. Van Doorn looks at the problem the way Nozick does. You can see the consequences of history and those should be repaired, but why the Dutch are accountable, or the contemporary Dutch for their ancestors, is unclear. There is and was no debate about the Dutch connection with their 17th and 18th century ancestors.

Britain and its history of slave trade

English slave trade

As mentioned in the first chapter, the English entered the slave trade later than the Dutch. However, very soon they surpassed the Dutch as the leading slave trading country. In total, they shipped over three million slaves between 1651 and 1825. Britain shipped most of their slaves to their colonies in the West. Unlike the Dutch, the English had acquired many territories. First of all mainland America, but also some islands such as Barbados, Jamaica, the British Leeward, Windward, and Trinidad. Therefore, the English had the advantage of more markets than the Dutch. After the Spanish War of succession (1701-1714) the English also acquired the *Asiento*. This gave them the right to transport slaves to the Spanish colonies. Initially the Royal African Company (RAC) had the monopoly, but from 1698 this monopoly was lifted¹³⁶.

The RAC worked from their hometown of London. After 1698, more ports became active in the slave trade. Bristol and later Liverpool became the two major ports. Bristol was leading the slave trade in the first part of the eighteenth century. They worked with the same triangular trade as the Dutch traders. The first ships went to Africa and bought slaves. Then, they shipped the slaves to America. There they sold the slaves to sugar planters, buying from them sugar to bring back to Bristol. This city had the factories that could process the raw sugar. Bristol was already relatively large at the beginning of the 18th century with 20,000 inhabitants. Liverpool had only 4,000 citizens, but in the mid-18th century, Liverpool surpassed Bristol in size and in importance. Liverpool had the advantage of a better network with the hinterland. At the end of the century, Liverpool had 83,000 citizens as opposed to Bristol's mere 64,000. Bristol's share in the slave trade declined from 42 per cent in the period from 1738-42 to 24 per cent in the 1750s and to 10 per cent in the 1770s¹³⁷.

As mentioned earlier, the profits for the Dutch economy were relatively small. It seems the English profited more than the Dutch. There remains some debate as to the height of the profits. The majority of the scholars agree on roughly 10 per cent profit per trader. However, some say the figure is higher; some claim profits could have been up to 50 per cent. This is due to the data being used. The higher rates come from a higher number of slaves sold by the ships and a better price than the traders actually got. According to Morgan, the figures are around 7 per cent in the 1770s and 1780s. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this percentage rose to 8 per cent¹³⁸.

The same can be said about the importance of the slave trade for the economy. The slave trade profits never got anywhere near 1 per cent of the national income. In that sense, it never was an

¹³⁶ K. Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800*, 9 and J. Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 36, 41

¹³⁷ *Ibid* 9-13 84-91

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 36-44

important part of the economy. On the other hand, the investments in the slave trade were considerable. This figure varied between 2.5 per cent and 9 per cent of the GDP. Seen from the perspective of the investments, the slave trade was reasonably important. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine exact impact of the slave trade for Britain¹³⁹.

At the end of the 18th century, the abolition movement started. The most important actor was William Wilberforce (1759-1833)¹⁴⁰. The movement first accomplished that the living conditions for slaves improved by new legislation. In 1807, the slave trade was even banned. This ended the period of slave trade in Britain.

The English monuments

The English were aware of the history of slavery earlier than the people in the Netherlands. The Dutch did not mention slave trade often in the 1980s and early 1990s. The English on the other hand already had some books and television series on the subject. Works of fiction, like *Cambridge* (Caryl Phillips, 1991), *Sacred Hunger* (Barry Unsworth, 1992) *Crossing the River* (Caryl Phillips 1993) *The Black Cook's Historian* (Graeme Rigby 1993) and *The Longest Memory* (Fred D'Aguiar, 1994) were all written during the first half of the 1990s, as were the BBC productions *A Respectable Trade* (1995) and *A Son of Africa*¹⁴¹. Britain has two main memorials for their history of slavery. These sites are located in Bristol and in Liverpool, two of the main ports involved in the slave trade.

In Bristol, a group called the Bristol Slave Trade Action Group were the first to make an appeal for acknowledging the role of the city in the slave trade. Around the same time, historian Madge Dresser and social activists Caletta Jordan and Doreen Taylor, who worked for the city of Bristol, published a pamphlet called *The Slave Trade Trail around the City of Bristol*. By means of this pamphlet the authors intended to highlight that the history of slave trade is an important aspect of the city's history.

The pamphlet also highlights the places in the city that remind everyone of this cruel trade from the docks to the centre of the city. The entire historical city can be regarded as a memorial. A commemorative bridge was built and it was named "Pero". Pero was a well-educated slave owned by John Pinney. While Pinney has always been considered part of Bristol's success, his slave had been forgotten. Thanks to this bridge the dark side of Bristol's success is out in the open for everyone to see.

The city acted upon the advice and in 1999 they organised an exhibition about the slave trade. This was followed by a section permanently dedicated to slavery in the Bristol Industrial Museum¹⁴².

Liverpool commemorated the past before Bristol did. In the 1970s, a book called *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition: Essays to Illustrate Current Knowledge and Research* edited by

¹³⁹ Ibid. 44-48

¹⁴⁰ Postma, 66-68

¹⁴¹ E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory*, pp 67 and 129-144

¹⁴² Ibid, 25-26 43-56

Roger Anstey and P.E.H. Hair had already been published. The follow-up came in the late 1980s when the Meyerside Maritime Museum decided to set up an exhibition dedicated to the slave trade. However, this exhibition lacked public support. A second attempt in 1994 was more successful. Since then, the museum has had a section dedicated to slavery. The Meyerside Maritime Museum has also set up a route through the streets of Liverpool which includes most of the places that reminiscent the slave trade¹⁴³.



Picture of Pero's bridge¹⁴⁴

Public discussion

This research used (all of the) articles from The Guardian and The Times related to the query 'slavery'. Just as the English had erected their monuments commemorating slavery before the Dutch had, they also wrote about the subject before the Dutch did.

The first major subject is the permanent section in the Meyerside Maritime Museum of the slave trade. Just like in the Netherlands, the writings are more of a historical overview and discussion about the erection of the monument. In 1992, the black minorities in Liverpool complained that they had not been involved in developing the plans for the gallery¹⁴⁵. Nevertheless, two years later the gallery opened¹⁴⁶.

In the mid-1990s, some other incidents fuelled the debate, first in 1996 when Thomas Clarkson was reburied. Clarkson was an important figure in the debate for the abolition of slavery. Secondly, when President Clinton apologised on behalf of the United States, the Guardian hosted a debate between commentator Darcus Howe and historian John Casey. Howe thinks apologies are not good enough. They should be supported by reparation politics, like affirmative action. Clarkson, on the other hand, first wants to be sure that the ones who apologise are the ones who can be blamed. As long as the Irish famine cannot be linked to a crime of the English government at that time, the contemporary government should not apologise. If you apologise for historical wrongs like these, should you not apologise for the so many other wrongs¹⁴⁷?

¹⁴³ Ibid 26-27, 30-31

¹⁴⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pero%27s_Bridge 22/08/2011

¹⁴⁵ The Guardian, *Blacks 'ignored' over Liverpool plan for gallery on slave trade*, J. Coles, 04/02/1992

¹⁴⁶ The Guardian, *Story of 133 murders in museum of slavery*, D. Ward, 20-10-1994 and The Guardian, *Slavery – the immoral trade in humans*, J. Harker, 25/10/1994

¹⁴⁷ The Guardian, *Head to head, It's hard to say sorry*, J. Clasey & D. Howe, 21/06/1997 and The Guardian, *Freedom for a captive history*, J. Ezard, 24/08/1996

The 1997 Steven Spielberg film *Amistad* sparked the first major public debate about the slave trade and the contemporary consequences. The film tells the tale of slaves on a slave ship who overpower the captain and his crew and try to escape, to no avail. The American navy captures the ship and brings them to New Haven. Two years later the Supreme Court set them free¹⁴⁸.

Ronald Segal stated his opinion in the Guardian. He considers the trans-Atlantic slave trade a major crime. The slaves were treated horribly, but blacks were treated inhumanely after the abolition of slavery too. The segregation and racism, the over-representation of blacks in the poorest segments can all lead back to the history of slavery. Segal states: “The West has yet to engage in its own form of South Africa’s ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ exercise”¹⁴⁹.

Segal’s article received some letters from readers in response. They are all short and only mention a small part of the article of Segal. One mentions that England supported slavery indirectly after the abolishment in Britain, like building ships for the slave trade. Another points out that slavery has to be remembered, not only the institution, but also those who opposed it¹⁵⁰.

One of the first opinionated articles against a form of reparation for the slave trade is from 1998. Melvyn Bragg argues that every form of reparation politics is nonsense. According to him, the white man has not committed a wrong, he states:

In his new book *The Slave Trade*, the historian Hugh Thomas points out, as has been pointed out before, that the begetters of the trade were not white Europeans, but black Africans. For hundreds of years before the Atlantic slave trade could possibly have been thought of, there was slavery in Africa. Muslim slave traders also carried out the practice before, during and after the white West Europeans plied the Atlantic with their iniquitous cargoes¹⁵¹.

This is an article that shows one of the major arguments of the opponents of reparation politics. Slavery had been a part of Western African culture for as long as anyone could remember. Slaves were also taken to the Middle East before the Atlantic slave trade.

The book that Bragg cites was published just a month before the *Amistad* movie.

According to Hugh Thomas the horrible nature of the trade is partly due to the West. He reckons the African people to be at fault themselves. In the article about this book it is described as follows:

¹⁴⁸ The Guardian, *The chains of shame*, R. Segal 21/06/1997 and The Times, *Maker of slave film sees double over new Spielberg epic – Cannes Film Festival*, D. Alberge, 12/05/1997

¹⁴⁹ The Guardian, *The chains of shame*, R. Segal 21/06/1997

¹⁵⁰ The Guardian, *Letter – The shame of slavery lives on*, R. Pal 20/12/1997, The Guardian, *Letter – The shame of slavery lives on*, A. Pring 20/12/1997, The Guardian, *Letter – The shame of slavery lives on*, M. Sherwood 20-12-1997,

¹⁵¹ The Times, *Slavery is no simple black and white issue*, M. Bragg, 12/01/1998

Voltaire says as much when he condemns the practice of slavery by Europeans but pours special derision on those who sell their own people. Thomas endorses this and adds ... that African unity is a myth, internecine warfare is rife, and there were few examples of non-participation on moral grounds in the selling of Africans by Africans¹⁵².

Interestingly, Segal made a point wholly ignored by Thomas; even though Muslims knew the slave trade they treated the slaves better than the Europeans.

After Amistad, we have to wait until 2001 before the debate returns. Just like in the Netherlands the Anti-racism conference in Durban sparked the debate again. The newspapers report on the conference and the proposition for an excuse for the slave trade by the European countries. Britain blocks a formal excuse by the European countries, because the financial consequences cannot be overseen¹⁵³.

This conference set the debate. From the four letters and opinionated articles only one agrees that apologising in combination with reparation is the right thing to do. Interestingly enough the writer of the article uses an argument of the American conservative Charles Krauthammer to defend his argument. Krauthammer says: "let's abolish affirmative action in return for a lump-sum payment – in the tens of thousands of dollars – to every African-American family". Krauthammer agrees that slavery was a historical crime that should be repaired¹⁵⁴.

The writers of the other three articles are opposed. One mentions again that not only the West is responsible. The African merchants should also in that case pay reparation money¹⁵⁵. Buck argues the same in his article. He argues slavery was omnipresent, so it is strange that just one form of slavery is good enough for an excuse. As Pearl Buck describes:

All of us probably have an ancestor who was a slave somewhere sometime, no matter what ethnicity and geography explains our antecedents; for slavery is a historical universal. We can therefore all demand apologies from one another for mankind's turpitudes¹⁵⁶.

The other article in The Times criticises payment for the historical injustice, though not from a historical perspective but rather from a view on the contemporary world. The writer sees reparation money as a way for the African countries to get money. It is not Europe that should give money that will be flushed away through bad government¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵² The Guardian, *Black man's burden*, F. D'Aguiar 27/11/1997

¹⁵³ The Guardian, *Africans angry at refusal to debate slavery reparations*, C. McGreal 01/09/2001, The Times, *The White man's new burden*, M. Gove, 03/09/2001, The Guardian, *Britain blocks EU apology for slave trade*, C. McGreal, 03-09-2001, The Times, *West resists call for apology over slave trade*, M. Dynes, 03/09/2001

¹⁵⁴ The Guardian, *Time to pay up for the sins of slavery*, 18/07/2001

¹⁵⁵ The Times, *Implications of slavery reparations – Letter*, C. Meakin, 05/09/2001

¹⁵⁶ The Guardian, *The last word on slavery*, P. S. Buck 08/09/2001

¹⁵⁷ The Times, *Implications of slavery reparations – Letter*, I.J. Hartill, 05/09/2001

In the Netherlands, a national monument to commemorate slavery was erected in 2002. This received a lot of publicity. The English, however, did not have a similar event and between the Durban conference and 2005 hardly anything related to the slave trade happened. Only a small discussion about Bristol's nomination to become the European capital of Culture was carried out. Tristram Hunt thinks Bristol should then do more to commemorate the slave past. The director of the British Empire & Commonwealth museum opposes this view. Another article is about the acquisition of 450 pieces related to slavery by the National Maritime Museum¹⁵⁸.

Starting in 2005, the attention for the slave trade started to grow again. In *The Times*, Mick Hume argues against the so-called 'White Man's Burden'. Europeans are not to blame for Africa's misery. People like Bono and Bob Geldof who aim to help Africa actually inspire resentment in some African countries where the people prefer to take care of their own matters and see involvement by whites as a form of neo-imperialism. A good example is Geldof telling the president of Uganda to go away¹⁵⁹.

The Guardian has published a very large article about the slavery memorial site in Liverpool and Fort Elmina, the oldest fortress in Africa. Here, you can see the dungeons for the slaves, the larger ones for the men and the smaller for the women, because men were worth more than women. Jonathan Jones thinks these historical sites are very good for the public awareness of the wrongs that took place hundreds of years ago. As he puts it himself:

The slave trade ended in the 19th century, and it would be impossible to prove it somehow caused the poverty of millions of Africans today. Polls suggest most of us don't even see later colonialism as a factor. History, memory, is so easy to obliterate. That's why these museums, in Ghana and Liverpool, matter. But the most telling thing is their contrasting surroundings. The road from Accra to Cape Coast, for all the natural beauty, is a dismal journey past scenes of medieval deprivation so universal it boggles the mind. Liverpool is nothing like Britain's most affluent city. But the walk from the Albert Dock takes you past all the banal luxuries we take for granted, just as the British once took it for granted that African lives were worth less than sugar¹⁶⁰.

In this article, the reader is appealed to in order to see slavery as a historical crime, something that has to be remembered. That the writer mentions the possibility that the poverty of Africa can be related to the colonialism and slavery shows that he considers compensation to be an option for this historical crime.

¹⁵⁸ The Guardian, *A museum of slavery*, T. Hunt, 25/02/2003, The Guardian, *Comment & Analysis – Letters – Time to come to terms with slavery*, G. Griffiths 01/03/2003, The Times, *Slavery's dark past reflected in its art*, A. Frean, 17-10-2002

¹⁵⁹ The Times, *Does Africa need these crusaders bearing the White Man's Burden?* M. Hume, 17/06/2005

¹⁶⁰ The Guardian, *Dungeon masters: Liverpool's slavery exhibit has some appalling sights; Ghana's barracks for the human cargo are worse. But it's their differences that tell the true story*, says Jonathan Jones, J. Jones, 30/06/2005

In August 2005, Richard Drayton made an argument in favour of reparations. He mentions that “experts estimated Britain's debt to Africans in the continent and diaspora to be in the trillions of pounds”. This debt stems not only from the slave trade, but also from the production of sugar, coffee, cotton and tobacco, as well as for furthering the infant manufacturing industry.

During the 20th century transformation, the English also helped Idi Amin in Uganda and generals in Nigeria to power in order to protect their interest in those countries. Drayton therefore refuses to blame the incompetent leaders in Africa as the main cause for the poverty in Africa. Britain should apologise for the wrongs they committed. As easy as they did it for the Irish potato famine, they should also apologise for slavery and colonialism¹⁶¹.

This article got one reaction. In this, the writer underwrites the whole article. Only the writer of the letter shows that in the 19th century companies continued to profit from goods that were shipped as trade for slaves, although the English ceased trading slaves themselves¹⁶².

2006 began with a formal excuse from the English Church. The Church benefited from the slave trade by owning slaves themselves. When slavery was abolished the Church received £500,000 in contemporary money. On top of that, instead of helping Wilberforce to convince the authorities to abolish slavery, the bishops in the House of Lords rejected all of the bills that would abolish slave trade¹⁶³.

In March 2006, Tristram Hunt points out that in 2007 not only the abolishment of the slave trade should be celebrated, but also the cruelty of the slave trade commemorated. He quoted James Alvin: “My worry about 2007 is that there will be such a euphoria of nationalistic pride that people forget what happened before, which was that the British had shipped extraordinary numbers of Africans across the Ocean”. Hunt himself thought there should be multiple commemorations, not only for the abuse of slaves but also for the “ideas, people, and cultures” that influenced Britain and its colonies in a positive way¹⁶⁴.

This article prompted four reactions. Three of them agreed with the point that Britain should look at all aspects of its past. One of these letters even argues for apologies. The fourth author thinks apologies are inappropriate. He argues that if Britain should make excuses, all nations with historical mistakes should apologise. He also points out that Saudi Arabia abolished slavery over 100 years later than Britain did¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶¹The Guardian, *The wealth of the West was built on Africa's exploitation: Britain has never faced up to the dark side of its imperial history*, R. Drayton, 20/08/2005

¹⁶²The Guardian, *Slavery and reparations*, 24/08/2005

¹⁶³ The Times, *Church apologises for role in slave trade*, R. Gledhill, 09/02/2006 and The Guardian, *Church apologises for benefiting from slave trade: Guilt must be admitted, archbishop tells synod: Pledge to fight against modern slavery*, S. Bates, 09/02/2006

¹⁶⁴ The Guardian, *Easy on the euphoria: Slavery underpinned the Georgian economy as oil does our: 2007 should give us a chance to learn*, T. Hunt, 25/03/2006

¹⁶⁵ The Guardian, *Shame over slavery*, G. Ullathorne 27/03/2006 and *Remembering Britain's slavery role*, A. Rice, R. McLean and P. Pool (three different letters), 01/04/2006

In June and September, several initiatives were taken for the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. In Gambia, Andrew Hawkins apologised there on behalf of his family during a festival in Gambia. One of his ancestors was among the first to trade in slaves. In the same month, the Church revealed some ideas of what they were planning to do in 2007 during the bicentenary. Besides commemorating how some influential Anglicans helped Wilberforce, the Church will also highlight that even now there is slavery. The apologies that the Church made in February were a start. Three months later the government announced they would look for a ‘strongly worded statement of regret’. Deputy minister John Prescott said that a formal excuse would not be made¹⁶⁶.

At the end of September, a critical article by Ben MacIntyre was placed in *The Times*. He argues against all forms of apology politics. Apologies are only serious if the persons who make the apologies really feel a wrong. If they do not feel wrong they are just meaningless words, and according to the author the excuses for slavery are without any real regret for what happened. In the case of the IRA apologising for the murders committed by its members it is genuine, because the same people who killed the people make the apologies. It is very likely that these people feel sincere guilt for what they have done. Blair, on the other hand, makes easy apologies about matters he was not involved in, while he does not apologise for the mistakes he made himself. In the conclusion, MacIntyre writes:

But it should not be another opportunity for a shallow British apology by those eager to extract political capital from history without feeling a flicker of personal guilt. Instead of blaming the past, politicians would be better offering a few heartfelt apologies for events in the present. But there is little sign of that sort of penitence, I am sorry to say.¹⁶⁷

Over the next two months, the government made their preparations for the 2007 bicentenary. First they announced they would make slave trade a compulsory part of the National Curriculum. Later, Blair made apologies that came as close as apologies can go without the threat of legal action¹⁶⁸.

The Guardian made an interview with some siblings of slave traders and some minor reactions of prominent black Britons. The reactions of the three interviewed people differ. George Earl and the Elvin family did not feel like they wronged anyone. They do not feel a connection with their ancestors. Therefore, Earl calls the apology “just something for the intelligentsia to play with. It’s just raking over coals”. Also The Society of Merchant Venturers in Bristol does not see their predecessors as people who did something wrong, because “it was the business of the city” and “it was lawful”.

¹⁶⁶ *The Times*, *Slaver’s descendant begs forgiveness*, A. Hamilton 22/06/2006, *Slavery was halted but many shackles remain*, N. Wyke, 24-06-2006 *Britain may say sorry over slaves*, P. Webster, 22/09/2006, *Britain may voice regret on slave trade*, P. Webster, 22/09/2006

¹⁶⁷ *The Times*, *Hardest word? Don’t be soft*, B. MacIntyre, 29/09/2006

¹⁶⁸ *The Times*, *Slavery lessons*, 17-10-2006, *Slavery lessons in all schools*, 17/10/2006 and *Blair to state his personal deep sorrow at slave trade*, G. Hurst, 27/11/2006

Just Andrew Hawkins opposes this view. He was the one who earlier that year had made apologies for his forebears. He even tries to get formal apologies from the government. According to Julia Elvin he is just a publicity seeker. She even says that the quality of life for an average labourer was worse than for a slave.

For most of the black Britons, apologies are important. Zephaniah, a poet, wants people to remember the black slave leaders like Paul Bogle and Toussaint L'Ouverture who led rebellions on Jamaica and Haiti, respectively. He states that: "We would still be slaves if black people didn't rise up and fight for their own freedom". Ekow Eshun, an artistic director, still sees the legacy of slavery. He states: "I, and all black people, are still its victims. If you don't believe that, just look at the state of modern Africa"¹⁶⁹.

While in some years there are only a few articles about the slave trade, in 2007 every month saw at least one article published and many more in most months. Many of them just describe what happened in the past¹⁷⁰. Various topics were discussed. For example, if Wilberforce was the sole leader of the abolitionist movement or that other men and women could be seen as its leaders as well¹⁷¹. Another question raised was if slavery was really abolished in 1833¹⁷².

In both The Times and the Guardian there was a lot of discussion at the end of March. On 23 March, Prescott gave an interview in the Guardian in which he compared slavery with the Holocaust as a historical black page for which the English should make excuses. Two days prior, the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, had already made apologies and asked Blair to do the same¹⁷³. The main reason for Livingstone is England's reputation. As he said himself:

It will be infinitely better for our country's reputation if that apology is made now justly, frankly and openly," he said, and added: "Delay demeans our country."

In The Times, the natures of the reactions are very diverse. One letter is opposed to apology because "Britain led the way in stopping slave trading and slavery and then, over the past 200 years, has taken practical steps to discourage and stop it. We actually have much to celebrate." Another points out that the children in the factories were worse off than the slaves in America. On two separate days, two people question the Archbishop of Canterbury's statement that the prosperity of Britain rested "in large part" on the profits of slavery. Bolin Bobb-Semple of the Inns School of Law points out that slavery

¹⁶⁹ The Guardian, *Heirs to the slavers*, A. Beckett, 2/12/2006

¹⁷⁰ The Times, *Legacies of the slave trade today*, L.Crawford, 27/02/2007, The Times, *Blood and Thunder*, B. Macintyre, 23/03/2006

¹⁷¹ The Guardian, *First among equals*, N. Wilmott, 24/02/2007, *Wilberforce's pivotal role in the abolition of slavery*, Melvyn Bragg, 27-02-2007 and *Women also fought to abolish slavery*, P. Simmons, 01/03/2007

¹⁷² The Guardian, *Response The 1833 Abolition of Slavery Act didn't end the vile trade*, J. Hanlan, 25/01/2007

¹⁷³ The Guardian, *Commemoration day to recall slave trade and make UK face up to the past*, P. Wintour, 23-03-2007 BBC news, *London mayor 'sorry' for slavery*, 21/03/2007

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/6474617.stm, 24/08/2010

was abolished in the West, but not in the East. Therefore, the English are not as morally superior as they think they are. Only one letter argues for a monument in the Whitehall, and is the only letter that can be seen as a straight argument for commemorating the cruelties of slavery¹⁷⁴. Whitehall is one of the major streets in London. On this street there is the memorial, called the Cenotaph, for remembering World War I.

In the Guardian, the letters are much more in favour of an apology and commemorating. Joseph Harker comments that Tony Blair should order a “full scale investigation” into the causes of the backward position of the black population in Britain. This would serve as compensation for the cruelty of slavery the black population has suffered¹⁷⁵.

In the comments that follow one agrees with Harker, another says that this is the moment that also the African leaders apologise for the faults their ancestors made¹⁷⁶. There are some other views. One is opposed to apologising because we do not take credit for past good things so by extension we cannot take the blame for the cruel things of the past. Another would like to see not only slavery remembered as a wrong, but also the abolition of slavery celebrated. The last one thinks that not just the Western leaders should condemn the past; African leaders should do the same since their ancestors sold the slaves to European merchants¹⁷⁷.

Meanwhile, the archbishop of York, John Sentamu, urged for an official apology for the slavery past. As he expressed it himself:

Britain is our community and this community was involved in a very, very terrible trade. Africa as a community was involved in a very terrible trade, and the Church as a community was involved in a terrible trade. It is really important that we own up to what was collectively done. This is the moment in which you say ‘By the way, I think our ancestors did a terrible, terrible thing’¹⁷⁸.

The next major event that received a lot of media attention was the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its abolition, on 23 August. A few days before this event, the museum in London dedicated to the slave trade was nominated for UNESCO world heritage site status. On 23 August The International Slavery Museum in Liverpool also opened to the public. According to the correspondent, the museum is not detailed enough about the exhibited parts. In a

¹⁷⁴ The Times, *Our role in slavery, and what can be learnt from it*, I.P.S. Proud, 27/03/2007, Ibid, B. Reuben, Ibid. J. Graham, *Facing up England’s part in the slave trade*, T. Capon, 29/03/2007, *Slave act limits*, C. Bobb-Semple, 30-03-2007, *The end of slavery in Britain*, T. Darlington, 31/03/2007

¹⁷⁵ The Guardian, *A shameful open sore*, Joseph Harker, 24/03/2007

¹⁷⁶ The Guardian, *Letters and emails: The legacy of slavery in the modern world*, Thomas L. Blair, Dorette McAuslan, 31/03/2007

¹⁷⁷ The Guardian, *Slavery, abolition and apologies: Letters and emails*, A. McQuade, V.C. Tomkinson, C. C. Chivers, P. Manning, J. Sutcliffe, 24/03/2007 and *The legacy of slavery in the modern world*, D. McAuslan, 31/03/2007

¹⁷⁸ The Guardian, *Archbishop of York urges PM to apologise for slavery*, D. Ward, 26/03/2007 and The Times, *Slave apology call*, 26/03/2007

letter, Gbenga Oduntan adds that the slavery museum only covers a small part of international slavery. Numerous groups have been enslaved throughout history, while the museum focuses on the black slaves¹⁷⁹.

Tristram Hunt hopes the museum shows not only the debate about reparations, but more importantly will show 'the meanings of history'. An example of this is showing the consequences of the slave trade¹⁸⁰.

The bicentenary was the last year that there was serious interest in the English slave trade. After this event, there have only been a few articles about slave music, a new gallery, a novel, the English heritage that lists the graves of some important abolitionists and slaves, and a book about the Preventive Squadron¹⁸¹. This book is about the British fleet that tried to enforce the ban on slave trade.

Analysis and comparison with the Dutch

The commemoration of the past started a few years earlier in Britain than in the Netherlands, but the debate started in both countries around the same time. Nevertheless, the debate is little in general. It needs events on the issue, as in the Durban anti-racism conference, to spark. In the Netherlands the erection of the monument was such an event, and in Britain the bicentenary in 2007. It was exactly 200 years earlier that the slave trade was abolished.

The political reaction is also comparable between the two countries. Both parliaments do not want to make formal apologies for the mistakes of the past. The ones who made formal apologies are the former mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and the English church in England and MP Harry van Bommel in the Netherlands. Livingstone's apologies were on behalf of the city of London. Here there is a difference. Van Bommel is a MP of a minor left wing party whereas Livingstone is a well known politician of a, at that time, ruling party. Also the church in the Netherlands did not make apologies and the English public appealed more to make formal excuses.

Where you can find a small difference between the parliamentary debates, the governments react the same. Both countries erect monuments, the Dutch in Amsterdam, the English in Liverpool and Bristol. They both deeply regret what happened in the past, but both do not apologise for the historical injustice. Since both countries are afraid that a formal excuse will have financial consequences. Aside

¹⁷⁹The Times, *Making sense of slavery*, R. Campbell-Johnston 22/08/2007 and *Diversity of slavery*, G. Oduntan, 24/08/2007

¹⁸⁰The Guardian, *A bold step away from the dead end of guilt and apology*, T. Hunt, 23/08/2007

¹⁸¹The Guardian, *Sounds of Slavery*, W. Hodgkinson, 13/10/2007, The Times, *Slavery days*, R. Morrison, 10-11-2007, *English Heritage slavery list*, B. Twiston Davies, 22/12/2007, *The slave trade's terrible truth*, Ruth Scurr, 17/01/2009, *Slavery on the rocks*, S. Taylor, 31/01/2009

from the informal apologies and the monument, the English and Dutch government make the history of slavery a part of the curriculum, and create a national holiday.

The articles in *The Times* tend to not make apologies at all or only do so in the lightest form. Their points of view range from historical, like pointing out England was the first to abolish slave trade, to philosophical, by stating that it is useless to apologise for wrongs committed long ago, because, for example, it is not logical if Egypt makes excuses for the wrongs of the Egyptians 3,000 years ago.

The Guardian is more in favour of reparations. There are people who see the contemporary state in which Africa is as the reason why slavery has to be repaid. Some argue that the English government should make their formal apologies. However, these voices are not numerous. The most heard opinion is that history should be remembered and that what happened in the past was wrong, but that should be it.

The arguments used in the discussion are broadly the same in both countries. The main line of the opponents of reparations is that you cannot hold current-day people responsible for faults that are made by their ancestors. They also pinpoint the role of the Africans in the slave trade. The opponents point out the consequences and cruelties of slavery.

In Britain, the scope of the range of the debate is wider. Opponents argue that apologies can only be made if you sincerely regret the actions. It is impossible to feel this kind of regret for something that happened more than 100 years ago. On the other hand, a proponent points out that the historical guilt does not stop with slavery. After the slave trade, the English colonised large parts of Africa.

So the debate in Britain seemed to be more sparkling than in the Netherlands. Not only because in Britain it encompassed more aspects of slavery, but also because the debate had more public response, judging by the number of letters to the editor in the two newspapers examined. These newspapers seem to have more articles on the history of slavery than all the Dutch newspapers combined.

This is quite surprising. You would expect that England as the forerunners in abolishing slave trade and slavery should feel less guilt. The Dutch, on the other hand, were one of the last to abolish slavery. Nevertheless, there is more debate in Britain. There are several factors that maybe can explain this. The first one is that Britain has a bigger share of the slave trade. Even if you take into account the size of the population, the English traded more slaves. A second factor is that in a former colony of England, the United States, the debate is fierce. England ruled the United States until 1783 and transported most of the slaves. Therefore, the American debate is also about Britain.

There are other factors you can think about, like a greater black intellectual society in Britain, a larger proportion of people from former colonies or that the newspapers have a broader reach. For all those three factors there is not an easy answer if this is true. Figures show just 2,600 academic people

out of more than 140,000, are black in Britain (that is less than two per cent)¹⁸². Although the numbers are unknown in the Netherlands, it is hard to confirm the statement that there are few black academics.

Also the demographics are pretty similar in both countries. In Britain, 2.9 per cent of the population is black, of whom 40 percent are from the Caribbean¹⁸³. In the Netherlands, if you take the population from the two former colonies (Suriname and the Antilles) together you also have 2.9 per cent¹⁸⁴. In this number, the people from Africa are not included. On the other hand, from Suriname also many non-black people came to the Netherlands. In short, it is hard to say that the black population is bigger in Britain.

The newspapers discussed above have more daily circulation than the Dutch newspapers. The Times and The Guardian have 457,000 and 279,000 circulations per day¹⁸⁵. Nevertheless, Britain has more than three times as the inhabitants. If you divide the circulation numbers by three, the Guardian and The Times will be minor Dutch newspapers¹⁸⁶. Still they have more people who read those newspapers. Nevertheless, it is hard to draw any conclusion about a correlation between the size of the newspapers and the number of times they report about the former slavery.

¹⁸²Higher Education Statistics Agency http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1898&Itemid=239 31/01/2012

¹⁸³Office for National Statistics.

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do;jsessionid=R3jvPnSM2L6fpQBQlncN1V7RHHL2XHsWbqLJzDJH1nkwXJ1bOgf8!1666003360!1328009964767?a=3&b=276743&c=london&d=13&e=13&g=325264&i=1001x1003x1004&o=322&m=0&r=1&s=1328009964767&enc=1&dsFamilyId=1809&nsjs=false&nsck=false&nssvg=false> 31/01/2011

¹⁸⁴Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Dutch statistics agency) <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLEN&PA=37325eng&D1=0&D2=0&D3=0&D4=0&D5=0-1.84,102,139,145,210,225&D6=a&LA=EN&HDR=G2.G3.G4.T&STB=G1.G5&VW=T> 31/01/2011

¹⁸⁵O. Luft, ABC: I debuts with daily circulation of 133,472 in January, <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=46681&c=1> 31/01/2011

¹⁸⁶Cebuco http://www.cebucio.nl/dagbladen/artikel/oplagecijfers_1ste_kwartaal_2011/ 31/01/2011

The American, German, and Moluccan cases

To examine the Dutch case further, the Dutch reaction to their historical injustice will be compared with three other cases of historical injustice. The first case is the United States, which has not paid a single penny to the black community, while they first used them as slaves and later segregated them from society until the 1960s. The German reparation for the Holocaust is the second case. They paid the Jews (gypsies and homosexuals) and their ancestors as *Wiedergutmachung* for the wrongs Germany committed against them during World War II. These two countries had a different approach to the historical wrong. Both approaches differ from the Dutch one. The Dutch government did not make formal excuses, as the Germans did, but nevertheless erected a monument. That is something that the United States has not done.

You could argue that since those historical wrongs are different from the Dutch (and English) case, we should not try to compare them. On the other hand, it is interesting to find the causes for the different approaches. Is the amount of time that has gone by important? Or the amount of victims' siblings who live in the country? If they are important, in what sense? Is the debate fiercer? Or is the amount of reparations higher?

The last comparison is with another black page in Dutch history, which is the history of the Moluccas. This is one of the island groups in Indonesia. The people of these islands supported the Dutch during the 'Police Actions' in the 1940s. When Indonesia gained independence many of them moved to the Netherlands with the hope that they would return when the Moluccas would gain independence. These people were dishonourably discharged and put in former Nazi camps in Vught.

This is another case in which the Dutch committed a historical wrong. In comparison with the slave trade most of the victims reside in the Netherlands and the crime was committed pretty recently. Therefore, this case can be helpful for the questions put above. In this case, the country is the same, so a different culture cannot be the cause for a different approach.

Every part will start with a short introduction of the case, followed by a description of the debate. In the end, the debates will be analysed and the findings presented.

The USA

In the United States, the discussion about the reparations for the slavery and other abuses against the black minority stem from 1865. In that year, General Sherman promised that the former slaves would each get 40 acres and a mule. In short, this would give the former slaves a chance to build up their own life in the post-slavery era. A few years later, this plan was abandoned by President Andrew

Johnson. Instead, racial discrimination started with attacks on black communities. Most notorious is the *Ku Klux Klan*. Another example is the so-called 'whitecapping'. These were raids between 1900 and 1930 on black property in the night, trying to confiscate their land. Also, black people were murdered by mobs. Rosewood is one of the cruellest examples. After a black man was accused of having assaulted a woman, a white mob went to Rosewood, killed many, chased away the rest and burned down the town. After the 1930s, segregation policies existed until the 1960s when Martin Luther King and others helped put an end to these practices¹⁸⁷.

Since the end of the segregation politics, blacks have united themselves to get reparations. These reparations are always demanded in monetary form. Where in Britain and The Netherlands, the organisations appealed for a monument, the American organisations are primarily looking for monetary compensation. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) and the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'CoBRA) are the two most important organisations. They tried it as groups and individually, but without much success. The only reparations that really succeeded are the ones for the victims of Rosewood and other slaughters. Many of those victims were already in their seventies when they received the compensation for the pains they suffered in their childhood¹⁸⁸.

The arguments for reparations in America are much fiercer than in Europe. In the United States people blame slavery as the cause of the contemporary wealth difference between white and black families, even in the same income class. The white population got the chance to earn money in the past and then they pass this wealth through to later generations. The former slaves did not have the chance to leave any wealth to later generations. This argument resembles the argument Janna Thompson makes¹⁸⁹.

Other authors just mention that the slaves should be compensated for their unremunerated labour. The people who gained from the unpaid work should carry the compensation costs. But the biggest problem arises when you compare this case with other cases of historical wrong in the United States. The Japanese who lost their property in World War II were compensated, the Native Americans got some of their land back, but the blacks still have not been repaid for the wrongs committed against them¹⁹⁰.

But there are also arguments against reparations. Armstrong Williams for example points out that seeing yourself as a victim is not the right way to see yourself as an African American. If for example you can study at Harvard you are not a victim of oppression. He concludes in his chapter that:

¹⁸⁷J. Torpey, *Making Whole that has been smashed* 109-116, E. Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, 284, 296-299

¹⁸⁸J. Torpey, *Making Whole that has been smashed*, 113-114, 119, 123 E. Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, 291

¹⁸⁹R. Westley in R. A. Winbush, *Should America pay?* 112-113 and D. Conley in J. Torpey, *Politics and the past*, 121

¹⁹⁰J. Torpey, *The Guilt of Nations*, 289

As we haul ourselves through a new millennium, surely there are some American blacks who do not view themselves as inferior, right? I vote NO to victim status, and YES to activism and growth. The alternative is to embrace an inferior status, by creating a culture of victimization that never moves beyond the initial steps of the 1960s' civil rights legislation¹⁹¹.

The reaction of the United States is twofold. On the one hand, the US only gives reparations to the people who are alive today. Compensating descendants of slaves is problematic, because it is unclear who the descendants are. There are now people who not only have slave ancestors, but also slave owners as ancestors. Because it is hard to determine who the ancestors are, the United States does not grant any money. However, they did try the policy of affirmative action in the 1980s. These policies tried to get more coloured people in higher positions to balance the white/black ratio in many companies. In the last decades, these policies diminished under the name of colour blindness. People should not be judged on the colour of their skin no matter the situation they are in¹⁹².

To conclude, the debate in favour of and against slavery reparation is fiercer in the United States than it is in the Netherlands and England. In the US, the backward position of the black population is blamed on the slavery and the segregation policies. In Britain and the Netherlands, this is not the case. In these countries it is a real historical problem and there is only a need for recognition that it was wrong. This difference can also be found in the claims of those who have been wronged. In the United States it is primarily money that is requested, while in Europe recognition is the leading motive. It is not as black and white as mentioned above. In the Netherlands, for example, there are some organisations that think that reparations should be paid, but these voices are not loud. And in the United States there are voices from black intellectuals who oppose reparations.

In the mapping of the reparations, one can place the organisations in Europe far more to the left than the ones in America. The US government, on the other hand, takes a stance that is similar to the European states, namely apologies are not a problem, but paying is. In Europe the voices for the recognition of the past and the states found each other easily. And this depoliticised the issue, while in the US the gap is much wider and, therefore, a more controversial issue.

Germany

During World War II the Nazi regime killed over 6 million Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals. The Holocaust is one of the greatest crimes against humanity in world history. Not just the fact that many people were killed makes this crime horrible, but also the fact that it was premeditated and that it was done systematically. Never has the world seen so much brute evil against people.

¹⁹¹A. Williams in R.A. Winbush, *Should America Pay?* 171

¹⁹²E. Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, 293-299

After World War II, many Jewish organisations tried to get reparations from the German states for the crimes Nazi-Germany committed. In the first few years the claims were diverse, but in 1950 they united and were formally authorised by the state of Israel to negotiate with the German state. Some groups opposed the reparation claims. These people saw it as blood money. Money would never repair the damage done by the Holocaust¹⁹³.

Germany was not directly willing to pay for its crimes. First of all Germany was split and East-Germany, under Russian influence, did not give any compensation for the pain Germany inflicted in World War II. West-Germany, on the other hand, controlled by Western countries, was allowed to choose whether to repair the past or not. West-Germany hesitated to pay. After World War I Germany paid so much reparation money to the Western countries that when the economies collapsed in 1929 the country was destabilised. Many saw in this as the cause of the rise of National-Socialism. Germany should not again make the same mistake.

Nevertheless, Germany wanted to pay, according to Barkan rather with the purpose of getting internationally accepted than out of real regret for their actions in the past. Barkan states that this is not that remarkable, because the hatred against the Jews was not instantly wiped out after World War II. Also a lot of civil servants who worked under the Nazi regime were still in charge after World War II. It was too expensive for the new government to change the whole system.

Only a small part of the Germans felt they had to repay for the wrongs. This group grew in the beginning of the 1950s with for example the group *The Friends of Israel*. Nevertheless, to get an internationally positive view was probably more important for the *Wiedergutmachung* than a sincere action of regret. Barkan puts it like this:

For him (Adenauer), the credibility of the German government depended upon its ability to achieve reconciliation. Thus, once restitution was agreed upon, German credibility was achieved in a sense instantaneously. For the supporting cast, restitution symbolized a “moral achievement”, a moral restoration of an honourable and decent view of Jews, and a reclaiming of the Jews' position in German history¹⁹⁴.

The Israeli government was content with the billion dollars they received after the negotiations. The Israelites needed the money for their newborn state and, therefore, accepted the reparations easily, although groups in Israel saw it as a wrong way to compensate for the past. These groups were fierce in their statements and so was the debate in Israel¹⁹⁵.

This view on the negotiations between Germany and Israel is confirmed by Friso Wielenga. He wrote a book about the two dark era's of German history, the Nazi and DDR era, and how the country in aftermath coped with what happened in those dark periods. Wielenga shows that just 11% of the

¹⁹³Ibid. 3-10

¹⁹⁴E. Barkan, *The guilt of nations; restitution and negotiating historical injustices*, 26,27

¹⁹⁵Ibid. 25

German public fully agreed with the reparations, while 44% opposed it¹⁹⁶ and that a less negative image was certainly one of the motives for Adenauer, the chancellor at that time. Nevertheless, for Adenauer the idea of settling right for the wrongdoing was also a motive. It was a combination of 'realpolitik' and the idea of a moral debt that has to be compensated. Wielenga shows that this is '*Politischen Schuld*' as mentioned in chapter two¹⁹⁷.

But if Barkan is right, and the whole discussion is primarily about money and the moral part is less important, then John Torpey puts the Holocaust survivors at the wrong side in his figure shown in chapter three. An argument in Torpey's favour is that he has in mind lost artwork and not the money for the survivors of the holocaust¹⁹⁸. Torpey stated, as seen in chapter two, that the restitution of artwork is purely symbolic. The question is if Torpey's statement is right. The returning of the artwork in the *Goudstikker* case for example is not purely symbolic. After the beneficiary got the art she sold a large part of the collection¹⁹⁹. Although this is an interesting question, it is not in the scope of this thesis to elaborate on it.

This whole discussion makes it difficult to put the perpetrator, Germany, and the victims, Jews, in the figure of chapter two. If it is about the money it should be very much to the right, but if it is about the symbolism of repairing the past, it should be in the middle of the figure. Still, you can put this discussion far more to the right than the discussion of the slave trade. The latter is mostly about recognition for the wrongs. On the other hand, it is not as far to the right as the demands of the black population in the United States. For them, money is the primary target. That is certainly not the case here.

The German example is the only one in which a state paid heavily for a historical wrong. Only the United States with their compensation for the Japanese internees have compensated for a crime, but this group is smaller than the groups who have suffered from the holocaust. Most countries refuse to pay for their misdeeds. But none of those countries had such a bad reputation as Germany.

Moluccan case

This is one of the other black pages in the history of the Dutch. The Moluccas are an island group in the middle north of Indonesia. In the 16th century, the Portuguese built a fortress on the island Ambon. The Dutch conquered this fortress and the surrounding Moluccan islands. This led to great resentment of the Dutch among the population on the islands. But after 150 years the attitude changed. Many

¹⁹⁶F. Wielenga, *Schatten deutscher Geschichte*, 45

¹⁹⁷Ibid, 43-47

¹⁹⁸J. Torpey, *Making whole what had been smashed*, 59

¹⁹⁹De Volkskrant, *Christie's veilt 100 werken Goudstikker*, M. Rengers & J. Schoorl

Moluccans went into the KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger) and became the most trusted allies of the Dutch in Indonesia²⁰⁰.

Even during World War II and afterwards, the Moluccans fought for the Dutch against the Indonesian nationalists. As one of the few Christian populations in Indonesia, the Moluccans had good relationships with the Dutch allies. More important was their privileged position in the Dutch administration that would diminish if the nationalists came to power. This happened in 1949²⁰¹. Some Moluccans tried to declare an independent Moluccan state. This rebellion was crushed by the Indonesians in 1950. The Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS), founders of the Moluccan state, went into exile in The Netherlands. Also the KNIL soldiers moved to the Netherlands, officially waiting for the moment the Moluccan independent state would be erected. The Dutch put the Moluccans in the former Nazi-Germany camps of Vught and Westerbork as a temporary solution. All the soldiers were dishonourably discharged with a sheet of paper. There was not a single sign of recognition for the years those men served for the Dutch state²⁰². Dieter Bartels writes: “the Moluccans felt sold out, treated like worthless trash”²⁰³.

This led to great resentment in the Moluccan community and multiple terrorist actions in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1966, around the execution of Soumokil, a Moluccan leader in Indonesia, Moluccan youth burned the Indonesian embassy. In the 1970s, they hijacked two trains, seized the Indonesian consulate and took hostages from an elementary school. These terrorist actions are to this day the most serious that The Netherlands have ever known. But since the beginning of the 1980s there have not been any major incidents. This is probably the result of a more willing attitude of the Dutch government to repair the mistakes they made in the past. Although it could also be that since there were no terrorist attacks anymore, the Dutch were open to compensate for the historical wrong²⁰⁴.

Also in this case, the Dutch did not make a full apology to the Moluccan people. They gave the former KNIL soldiers a medal of honour for their services and 2,000 guilders as compensation for the late acknowledgement. If the soldier had already died, their spouses received the money. Besides this restitution, they erected the Moluccan museum. Last, the unemployed and homeless Moluccans received extra support from the government²⁰⁵.

Surprisingly, the Dutch handled the Moluccan case like they handled the issue of slave history. Firstly, in both cases there were no formal apologies, only the acknowledgement that things had gone wrong in the past. Secondly, the Dutch government made places to remember the wrongs. In the case of slavery that is a monument and the Ninsee organisation. In the situation of the Moluccas it is a museum in which history is remembered.

²⁰⁰D. Bartels, *Moluccans in Exile*, 6-10

²⁰¹Ibid. 10-12

²⁰²Ibid. 12-14

²⁰³Ibid. 14

²⁰⁴Ibid. 14-18

²⁰⁵Ibid. 19

The difference is that the government paid money to the victims of the injustice. Although 2,000 guilders is not a huge amount of money, it is still some compensation for the pains the Moluccans suffered. This repayment is much less than what the United States paid. The compensation the Japanese Americans got for their internment during World War II was 20,000 dollars²⁰⁶. That is 20 times more than what the Moluccans received.

This probably has to do with the underlying motivation of the group. The Moluccan community just wanted recognition for the way they were treated in Indonesia and back in the Netherlands around the 1950s. They wanted recognition for the work they delivered for the KNIL and an apology for the humiliation. Money was not the issue. However, they were given compensation for housing problems and unemployment.

The case of the Moluccas is therefore at the symbolic side of the spectrum. The Dutch government, on the other hand, switched from no excuses at all to the symbolic side in the 1980s. This is the same position in the debate about reparations as the Dutch government has in the case of slavery. It is remarkable that although these issues played an important part before the 1990s, these reparations did not cause a demand for acknowledging other historical crimes, like the slavery past. Unlike other cases, the Moluccan victims lived in the country that had committed the wrongdoings and made their demands for several decades. The slave trade movement started to become public only in the 1990s. It seems, therefore, that the victims who are still alive in the Netherlands are the first to be compensated, then the victims of historical wrongs that happened long time ago follow, and finally, wrongs committed in other countries in the last 60 years. If this rationale is right, the injustices committed in Indonesia will be acknowledged in twenty years, when all the former KNIL soldiers have passed away.

Other comparisons

The Germans are much quicker in repairing their past, while the Americans still have to admit their wrongs. You can see here the different approaches in the reparation debate. But it is hard to find a logical explanation for the different approaches, if you take for example the winners of history argument. This argument says history is made by those who have won. But if that is true, why have the Americans compensated the Japanese Americans and the Native Americans? Another explanation could be that victims living in the country that committed the crimes against them are more likely to be compensated. This explains the policy of the Dutch, but does not apply to the former slaves in the United States.

But there is an important difference between the Dutch slavery case and all the other cases that should be noticed. In the other cases mentioned here, the wrong is done by the country, while in the

²⁰⁶Torpey, 90-95

Dutch case private entrepreneurs transported the slaves. Although this seems like a big difference, it is not. First of all, the country permitted this trade. The Dutch government did nothing to prevent that this trade could happen. Secondly, hardly any enterprise that participated in this trade does still exist. Therefore, it is not possible to look for another entity to take responsibility.

There is one rule that can be applied. In all cases there is a chance of compensation only for victims of crimes committed in the near past, or their children. As for the third, fourth, or later generations, the chances for compensation are close to zero.

Conclusions

Every case is reviewed threefold: regarding the debate itself, the government's stance and the position of the various actors in the debate. Here, those three are split and compared with each other. First, each debate is analysed in turn, followed by the position of the governments and finally the lines of argument that the proponents and opponents of reparations use.

The debate

In the Netherlands there has been hardly any debate about constructing a monument or giving reparation in recognition of the country's history of slavery. The debate for reparations took off in the mid-1990s, although it never became a major issue. There was a little discussion during the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, about whether the Dutch response is the appropriate way to repair the past. This debate, however, largely ended when the conference ended and is generally only revisited around the time of the national remembrance day for slavery, when a few articles on this subject are frequently published.

The debate in the national assembly followed a similar pattern. Nearly all parties supported the idea of erecting a monument from the beginning. In the reports there was not a single voice that objected to this monument or to the idea that the Dutch could make some sort of apology. It was, however, the parties on the left side of the political spectrum who were more vocal in their support of such a monument than the parties on the right.

In Britain, the process was similar. The English had some documentaries and exhibitions about slavery before the Dutch did, although these did not start a significant discussion about the subject. The debate in Britain really started around the same time as the Dutch debate - in the mid-1990s and was likewise fuelled by Durban. After the conference, the English debate experienced another boost in publicity around this topic in 2007, because this marked the 200th anniversary of the English abolition of slave trade throughout their empire. In the two years before the bicentenary the English discussed the matter through the media, publishing newspaper articles, interviewing descendants of perpetrators and opening various memorial sites and museum exhibitions.

A key difference between the Dutch and English debates is that in the English debate more different points of view are shared. Almost everyone involved in the Dutch debate believes that building a monument in commemoration of slavery is appropriate but there should not be any reparations. In England, the debate is more diverse: some voices call for apologies, and others object to any and all admittance of guilt. Nevertheless, the Dutch view seems to be mainstream in Britain.

The debate in the United States is a lot fiercer because the black community is larger and has a great deal more influence. For example in the Netherlands and Britain the number of black professors is

small, while in the United States there are many more. These factors make it very easy to explain the difference in debate between the countries.

The debate in Germany has been very different. In Germany, the main force pushing for compensation was the government, wanting to compensate for wrongs done but also, and maybe more importantly, to regain international status. After World War II, the international reputation of Germany was shattered. Germany had a Nazi regime and allowed the genocide of minorities in Germany and throughout Europe. Additionally, Germany can be seen as aggressors leading up to the two World Wars. Within Germany there was not much debate, but some people, like Karl Jaspers, argued that the Germans had to acknowledge their mistakes.

Jaspers has shown that all Germans were wrong in a certain way. Some committed crimes, like being directly involved in the Nazi-regime, but others did not act against the regime where they should have. Ignorance is not an excuse for people not to rise against the government. According to Jaspers, everyone should have known what happened and should have acted against it; otherwise, these people are guilty according to the “metaphysische Schuld”. The wrong of the state is simply the “politische Schuld”. For the wrongs the state committed, the state has to compensate.

The line of the government

The reaction of the Dutch towards their history is comparable with the reaction of the English. Both countries take the line of making amends but not issuing formal apologies because they fear making formal excuses will cost them money. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the mistakes that their countries have made in the past and have erected monuments, museums, and other memorial sites to remember the historical injustices they have perpetrated.

With this line, they do more to repair the past than the US government. The US government has undertaken some minor actions to repair the wrongs slavery caused. An example of this is their affirmative action programme, which aims to help more black people enter higher paid and higher ranking jobs. The United States has also made some individual apologies, although no official apology has been issued. Still, the whole issue of reparation is debated in the United States. Formal excuses are not to be expected within the next few decades. This is surprising if you compare this case with the Dutch and English cases.

There appears to be a greater tendency towards apology in Britain and the Netherlands than in America, although these countries have less guilt, historically. The United States continued with a policy of segregation after slavery was abolished, while the Dutch and English did not put such a policy into practice. This said, they did not have a significant opportunity to do so because in these countries the black population was very small, even nearly non-existent. This said, even looking only at slavery (which occurred in all three countries), the English acted a lot earlier in erasing this policy than the Americans or the Dutch and, in spite of this, invested more in apologising.

The reasons behind this trend can probably be found in the influence that the historical fact has for the country. In Britain and the Netherlands, the descendants of slaves form a small minority and, therefore, the matter is significantly less politically sensitive than in the US. The United States has, as mentioned above, a black community that forms a significant part of the population and has many black intellectuals. In contrast to their lack of apology, let alone reparations, to those harmed by slavery in the United States, Americans paid reparations to the Japanese civilians held in custody during World War II.

This makes the American case highly interesting because normally the victors of a conflict decide who has to pay or has to make apologies. In this case, the Americans gave both money and apologies to Japanese prisoners in spite of the fact that they were the victors while, in the case of slavery, the Northern states did not allow the Southern states to pay for the wrongs they committed towards the blacks. The second surprising fact is that, although the blacks are Americans and the Japanese foreigners, the case for the Japanese was far sooner solved. In most other cases, if the victims live in the country that committed the crime, the state tends to be more willing to provide compensation than if the victims live in another country. Many descendants of slaves and victims of segregation laws still live in the United States today.

In a more typical example, the Dutch have already paid for the mistreatment of the Moluccan people during the 1950s and 1960s. The Moluccans even committed some terrorist attacks, but these actions did not stop the Dutch government from attempting to provide reparation to the Moluccan people.

Germany is a case where the wrongdoing was quickly repaired and not just for the victims who were German citizens, but reparations were also paid to a state that did not exist before World War II. Are there any commonalities between all these cases?

There are some. One of them is that individuals only receive settlement if they or their children are still alive. The United States paid the Japanese and the victims of some racial cruelties in the beginning of the 20th century. This is very similar to the Dutch and German responses in their respective cases. The victims or their relatives who were compensated lived during the Second World War. On the other hand, the slavery past is multiple generations ago at least. In these cases, hardly any compensation is being paid.

A second similarity is that in all these cases there is at least a form of apology or reparation. Even with the former slaves in the United States there were affirmative action policies to compensate for the lost chances of the former generations. In England and the Netherlands monuments have been erected to commemorate the slave trade and Germany compensated the victims of the Holocaust. The Moluccans also received reparations.

A third commonality is that victims who live in the country of the perpetrator are sooner compensated than those who live in another country. The Japanese in the United States and the Moluccans in the Netherlands are compensated, while the Indonesians still have to wait for excuses.

There is not a case where the victims who live in another country are compensated, while victims (of another injustice) in the country itself are not compensated.

In short, there are three similarities: the perpetrators acknowledge a form of historical mistake, they pay who are still alive, and cases where the victims live in the country are generally dealt with sooner than those where victims live somewhere else. The differences can be found in the form and magnitude of reparations.

The opinion of the theorists

There are many different views regarding how historical injustice should be compensated. That makes it all the more interesting to see which stance most countries take, even though they may not be aware that they are acting in line with a certain point of view.

Most states seem to look at Waldron when they seek a policy for compensation for the past. Waldron argues that as time passes, people no longer feel obliged to make the wrong better. The black population in the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands cannot be seen as the former slaves because it happened too long ago. The same can be said about the perpetrators. They are so many generations removed from those who committed the crime that it is hard for them to feel guilt for what happened.

There are also other opinions by the theorists. There are people and organisations that seek reparation or think other people have the right to be compensated. For them there has to be a link between the perpetrators and the people who live here and now, because without that link either nobody is obliged to compensate or has a right to be compensated. There are theorists like Thompson who offer ideas about what such a link should look like. They point to the intergenerational binding. Thompson, for example, uses inheritance to show the link in the slavery debate. The perpetrators were able to leave a greater inheritance to their children than would have been possible if slavery had not existed, while the victims, on the other hand, could not give anything.

Torpey tried to capture all the opinions in one figure, showing every opinion, ranging from refusing to accept a wrongdoing to compensating for all losses. Here is the diagram with the lines of some governments and the requests of the ones who seek rehabilitation or compensation:

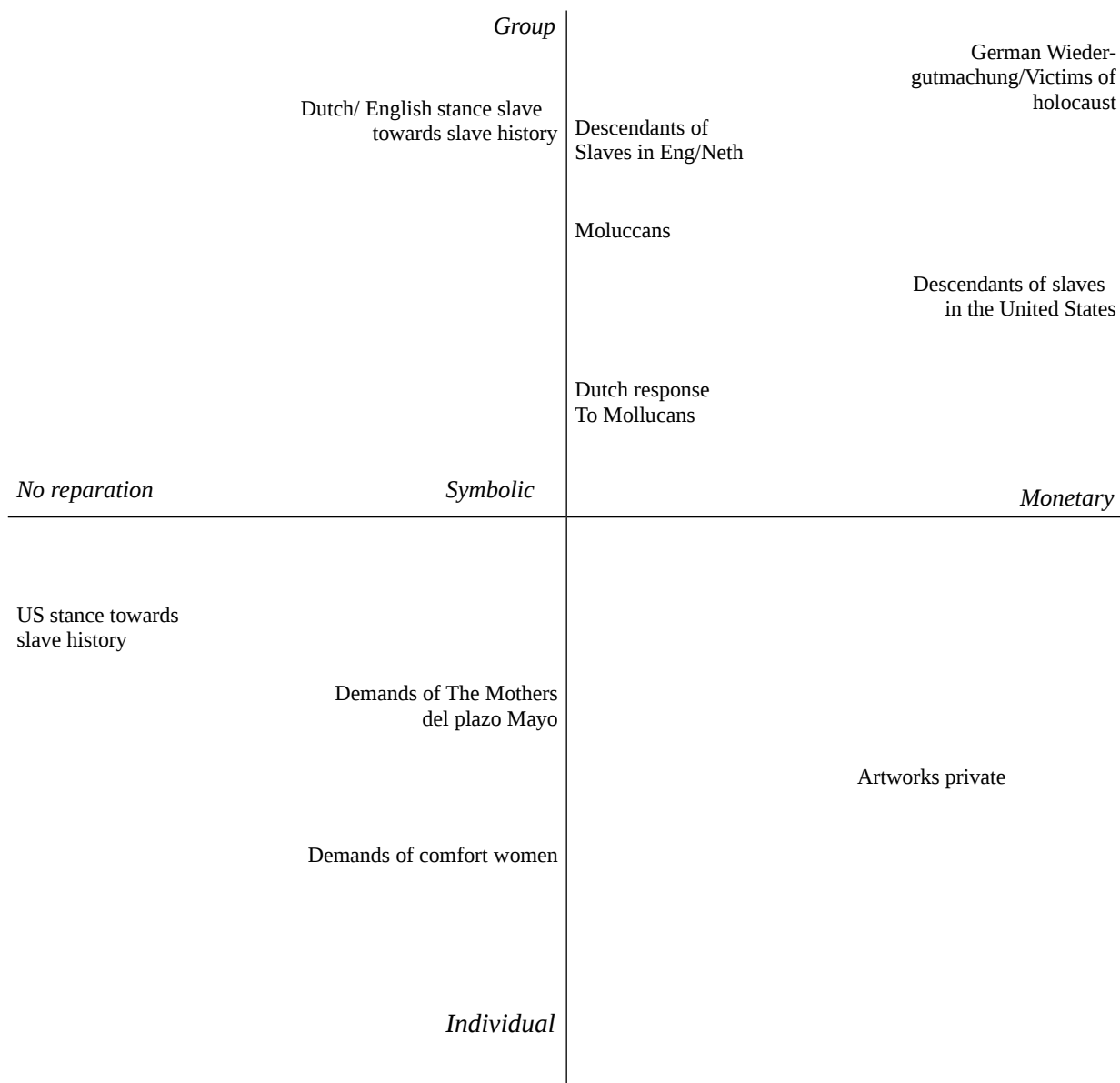


Figure 4: Final mapping of all debates

The position of some of the cases is debatable, although the governments' stances are easy to determine. The United States gave very little in the way of reparations, but since they gave some individuals compensation for losses they are put in the individual part. The Dutch and British, on the other hand, made symbolic apologies to the all descendants of slaves as a collective, placing them clearly in the “group based” category.

The demands of the various groups of victims and their descendants and representatives generally consist of an acknowledgement of the wrongdoing that occurred and, frequently, some form of compensation, usually financial. In the Moluccas case, such compensation was sought. While it was given to every individual of the group, each member of the group received equal compensation, showing that this was definitely group-based rather than individual-based. The demands of descendants of slaves in various countries are based on the same principle. They seek compensation

for their whole group, rather than as individuals, although in the United States they tend to look harder for financial compensation than in the European countries.

The German government is the only case in which the state paid compensation and, therefore this case is shown at the right of the diagram. The repayments were given to individual families of the group, but money was also given to the state of Israel. Since a state does represent a group, the German case is in the top. The demands of the survivors of the Holocaust are about the same.

This is not the case for the families who are still trying to get lost artwork back. This is definitely on the individual level. As I have discussed in the second chapter, it is hard to pinpoint if this is just symbolic or it is about the money. This case has, therefore, been put in the middle.

In all cases, the line of the government is more to the left in the figure than the position of the victims. This means that the governments do not want to pay the reparations the victims want. Only in the case of the Germans and the victims of the Holocaust were the demands of the victims fulfilled. There is, however, another observation that may be even more interesting.

You can say that the line governments adopt is a sliding scale that changes with time. In the first seventy years after a crime, most perpetrators are willing to compensate the victims, like the Moluccans and the Jews were compensated. After three or more generations, governments turn towards apologies and memorial sites to rectify the wrongs. This is the time from eighty up to three hundred years, like the slavery cases. After more time has passed no apologies are made. Spain, for example, does not make excuses for their inquisition and persecution of Protestants 500 years ago.

This shows that postponing reparations is less expensive than attempting to repair a historical wrong shortly after the crime. If Germany had waited long enough to compensate the victims of the Nazi regime, maybe they could have paid for their crimes with a symbolic sum of money, although this would be far ethically worse than immediate moves towards reparation, which is what Germany actually did. The United States, however, did delay in this way: after abolishing slavery they instituted a policy of segregation. Is doing something morally wrong a way to save money? It certainly can work, but this is a question that needs further elaboration before a final answer can be given.

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