How women formed, and were influenced by, the minescape in Limburg

Eveline de Boer
s1362968
Supervisor: Peter Pels

Abstract

In this thesis I am looking at how the mines in Dutch Limburg have impacted the lives of women in that region, and if this history is represented in the current mining heritage. Mining history has long been glossed over in the region, and for women's heritage connected to mining this has been doubly so. Therefore, I aim to answer the question in this thesis: How did the minescape influence the wives of miners and their families during and after the mines were active, and how is this past reflected in heritage?

To answer this I have looked at the concepts of gender relations and minescapes through the lens of heritage and collective memories, as this allows me to research the past. Because of this I have chosen to use interviews, observation, archival research and literary research as research methods.

I have tried to show how different stakeholders had conflicting opinions about what the region's heritage included. I found that the demolishment of the buildings happened during a time in which industrial heritage was a fairly new concept. I also found that to the mining companies, women were important facets in the process of producing coal. And they were willing to put a lot of effort and money into making sure women acted as useful as possible for this purpose. They did so by working together with the Catholic Church and the local and national government. The influence of the mining companies and their collaborators was felt in almost every aspect of women's lives. Therefore, while women's tasks were similar to those of women in other parts of the country, they performed them slightly differently because of the conditions mining provided. Also, although the institutions influenced what happened inside the home, behind closed doors people still had room to act upon their own accord.

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Introduction

I was on my way to visit a museum. Just when my map directed me to go left, I saw a statue right ahead of me. I became curious and walked towards it. As I came closer it became clear that it was the statue of a miner. I had not expected to find this statue, but at the same time it was not surprising. Throughout my fieldwork it had been a recurring pattern: pieces of mining heritage would seemingly appear out of the blue. A park I visited to get a better view of the surrounding area turned out to be a hill made from mining waste. I found parts of a mine's air shaft while my mother and I were taking a break from driving through the mining region. They stood on their own, little spots of mining heritage scattered throughout the landscape in an area that they once dominated.

There is a slight discrepancy in this introduction: why put the picture of a man on a thesis that focuses on women? The problem was that during my fieldwork, I did not find any statues of women that had to do with the mining history of the region. Finding images of men in connection to the mines was already more difficult than I expected, due to the impact the industry had on the region. Finding images of women turned out to be even more difficult. Women and their heritage can therefore be described as ‘doubly invisible’.

My interest in the topic of the Limburg mines started due to its historical nature, which is one of my interests. I came into contact with Milena Mulders and Eva Mos, who had done a project on migrants working in the Dutch mines (Mos 2018). This is, coincidentally or not, another type of hidden heritage. During a conversation with Milena and Eva, together with my supervisor, I found out that relatively little was written about the wives of miners. That is why I decided to write about women within the topic of mining. The mines have been closed for about fifty years now, so to connect to these women’s world I had to look through the lens of heritage and collective memory. The combination of these topics turned out to be both very interesting and challenging, due to the problem of ‘double invisibility’ I mentioned earlier.

Academic and social relevance:

Socially, the subject of mining and its legacy is still relevant in the old mining towns. The effects of it are still seen and felt in the old mining region (Pointer 2023). Social problems like low literacy rates, poverty and bad housing can still be linked to the closing of the mines (Menses 2022). The old mines have also led to an unstable soil, which has led to damaged houses and sinkholes (Peterse, Nicolai & van Dijk 2022).

On the topic of mining heritage there have also been recent changes. The generation that has worked in the mines and that have experienced it firsthand are disappearing. This has resulted in people rethinking how mining can be remembered. The emphasis is shifting to the children and grandchildren of miners (Nederlands Mijnmuseum 2021). A practical example of this is the new building of the Nederlands Mijnmuseum in Heerlen (ibid.). This change gives the possibility to uncover and display more of women's heritage in the region, more than it is at the moment.

Academically the topic is interesting because it goes against a trend in anthropological research in mining (Jacka 2018). In recent years this field has been focusing more and more on the environmental effects of mining (Jacka 2018). One of the results of this is that other aspects of mining, like labor and gender relations, have been overlooked (Rolston 2013).

Women have gradually become a more important topic in the research of mining, both in historical and anthropological research (Mercier & Gier 2006: 1). Recent anthropological research has focused mostly on women in the global south, while historical research has focused a little more on the global north (ibid.). My thesis follows the latter trend, even though it also looks at current events within the Limburg mining region. Therefore I am looking at the past by using the concepts of heritage and collective memory.

Theoretical framework

In this section of the introduction six concepts will be discussed, divided in two subsections. The sections follow the arrangements of my later chapters.

First I will discuss the concepts of heritage and collective memories, as these concepts provide a framework to look at the past that I will discuss in later chapters. Within the concept of heritage itself I am especially looking at heritage labels that have been neglected before the 21st century, and how heritage can be rethought to make it more inclusive to better include these types of heritage. It helps understand what elements of the past have previously been neglected or forgotten. I do this because the type of heritage I found in the Limburg mining towns has often been neglected. This inclusiveness also involves the concept of collective memories, as those include the memories of social groups rather than only the nation state (Smith 2006: 63). By using these concepts I am focussing on memory. This in turn makes me use the concept of affect, as this is a force that gives meaning to memory. Affect and emotion on the other hand contrast the official expertise in authoritative heritage discourse that has long ruled how heritage was dealt with (Smith 2006).

The second subsection is about the concepts of minescapes and gender relations. The concepts of minescapes and gender are useful to discuss the context in which women in the region lived. Gender relations within the mining communities were influenced by the minescape. To explain how this happened, and to which extent, requires looking at both masculinity and femininity within miner's families, and also requires to look at how men and women related to each other. Furthermore, these gender relations are another part of what is shaping mining heritage and collective memories, as they bring about the images we have of this period.

Heritage, Collective memories, and Affect

Heritage

Heritage is a concept with many definitions. Geismar's definition defines heritage in a way that is very inclusive and gives room to alternative forms of heritage, and therefore connects better to the diverse heritage found in the Limburg mining region (Geismar 2015: 72). This definition defines the concept as "the (often material) inheritance of a circumscribed group or polity" (ibid.). Often with this concept definitions can differ on national and international level, even on local level (Ahmad 2006: 296). Other scholars define the concept in ways that are against heritage altogether, or against heritage the way it is treated nowadays (Geismar 2015: 80). This variety makes it even more necessary to state the definition that is used in this thesis before writing anything else about the topic.

The idea of the existence of heritage itself is not a universal one. Some groups argue against the concept; this is called antiheritage (Geismar 2015: 80). Antiheritage argues against the normative characteristics of heritage regimes and against the way heritage has been managed, mostly in connection to native peoples (Geismar 2015: 81). These peoples often had to deal with their sacred objects being taken away in the name of heritage (ibid.).

Other groups argue that the way heritage is categorized and looked after nowadays should change, which is called counterheritage (Geismar 2015: 80). Rather than railing against the concept of heritage itself, counterheritage is about rethinking what people do with heritage (ibid.).

The different definitions that are used worldwide often have a long history of being discussed and changed (Ahmad 2006). A discussion of this history is needed to give an understanding of what was seen as heritage during a particular period in time. This in turn can help create an understanding of the decisions taken in dealing with mining heritage.

During the nineteenth century the idea of heritage started to come up (Geismar 2015: 74). This was a change in ideas about ownership (ibid.). Instead of individuals being the owners of objects with symbolic and material importance, the state became its keeper (ibid.). Heritage also emerged through forces of nationalism and modernism (Smith 2006: 22). National collections were compiled to highlight the nation's achievements (Smith 2006: 18).

As a reaction to the world wars ideas on heritage changed again to it being important to the whole of humankind, instead of single nation-states (Geismar 2015: 78). This led to the emergence of international heritage organizations like UNESCO (ibid.). In the 1960's and 1970's heritage practices became more and more bound to texts and procedures (Smith 2006: 26). The creation of the Venice charter in 1964 and the 1972 UNESCO convention cemented this move (Smith 2006: 26, 27).

Since the turn of the millennium heritage has started to become more and more about practices, and concepts like intangible heritage were being developed (Geismar 2015: 79, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 53). Therefore the definition of heritage was broadened to include intangible heritage (Geismar 2015: 79).

Contrary to tangible heritage, which is supposed to be unchangeable, both intangible heritage and natural heritage are about living heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 53). This means that they can and are allowed to change (ibid.).

The category of intangible heritage includes all kinds of heritage that for some reason did not fit within the other two categories of tangible heritage and natural heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 57). Therefore intangible heritage has a broad definition, one that includes everything that can be seen as folklore or tradition (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 54). It shows heritage as a living system that is dependent on how people reproduce it (ibid.). This reproduction is acknowledged in the UNESCO definition of intangible heritage, stating that it is "transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environments, their interactions with nature and their history" (UNESCO 2003 in Ahmad 2006: 298, 299). This creative reproduction makes it difficult to safeguard intangible heritage as heritage, as labeling it as 'heritage' would mean that it should not be changed (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 56). It changes the people performing these arts and rituals from agents, able to change the performance, into transmitters of heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 58). Intangible heritage is a concept that is useful to research the Limburg mining region, because it was not only the tangible heritage that disappeared but also intangible heritage. And while some intangible heritage still exists in the region, the closing of the mines has changed them drastically (Schlechtriem 2006).

The existence of intangible heritage as a subdivision within the concept of heritage is debated (Smith 2006: 3). Some scholars argue that all heritage can be understood as intangible heritage, as heritage itself is a process, a process that constructs meaning through the act of remembering (Smith 2006: 2, 66).

There are different actors that play a role in heritage. To follow the historical sequence the first actor that will be discussed is the state. Heritage is oftentimes linked to the entity of the nation state, and the creation of heritage itself is linked to the building of this nation state as it can represent its history (De Cesari 2010: 625, Geismar 2015: 75). Heritage helps to create a bond between the people of the nation, build an imagined

community and justify national borders (De Cesari 2010: 626, Geismar 2015: 74). This is the reason why states put in the bureaucratic effort to sustain this heritage (De Cesari 2010: 625). Geismar calls the combination of heritage and governance heritage regimes (2015: 72). The claiming of heritage by the state leads to conflicts and debates about ownership (Geismar 2015: 75). Some groups argue that heritage belongs to the nation in which it is found, even when this nation did not exist when the object itself was created (ibid.). Other groups argue that heritage belongs to humanity as a whole, and not to a specific community (ibid.). This debate is not only about the ownership of heritage, but also about who controls the meaning of heritage, and its value (Smith 2006: 52). The state is not the sole actor in this debate, others, like heritage organizations and experts, are involved as well (ibid.). As a result, heritage becomes a manner of governance (ibid.).

In the history of mining heritage in Limburg there has been an interesting tension between the heritage regimes of the national government and the heritage regimes of the city and provincial governments. The national government, or at least parts of it, accepted mining heritage into its heritage regime much earlier than lower forms of government did (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c).

The connection between state and heritage leaves little room for differing experiences within the state; these differing experiences are called counter memories (Smith 2006: 30, Geismar 2015: 75). Counter memories are the heritage of minorities, groups that have little place in the national storytelling of history (ibid.). In these cases NGOs can help preserve the heritage that the state is (purposefully) overlooking (De Cesari 2010: 626). Thereby performing tasks that would normally be seen as tasks belonging to the state (ibid.). By doing this NGOs become an actor in the creation and maintaining of heritage. This is also the case in Limburg. The mining museum in Heerlen is owned by an NGO called *Carboon*, whose goal is to preserve mining heritage in the region (Nederlands Mijnmuseum 2024).

Non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations are important actors in defining what heritage is and what it includes. For something to become heritage it first has to be claimed as such (Dormaels 2013: 108). By being claimed as heritage the object or ritual changes in the eye of the people outside of the group that has claimed it (De Cesari 2010: 625). But people in the outside group can only partly see and understand the meaning of the object, as they do not understand the full context in which the object resides (Dormaels 2013: 109).

Which items are being claimed are influenced by power struggles and power structures (Franquesa 2013: 358, Geismar 2015: 72). This means that the claiming of heritage is usually a hegemonic process where, as seen earlier, institutions play a large role (De Cesari 2010: 625). Smith criticizes this practice as she believes that these organizations and experts claim their authority based on tangible heritage alone (2006: 11). She also argues that when things are chosen to be heritage they not only represent the past, but also represent the authority of the heritage expert (ibid.). The views of these experts are not un-political, and should therefore be looked at with a critical eye (ibid.). The experts themselves have a need to maintain their powerful position as advisors on the topic of heritage, as it provides them with access to sites, objects and other resources (Smith 2006: 51).

Furthermore, not only the ideas of these experts on what is heritage have become powerful, their ideas on conservation have as well (Smith 2006: 12). Due to these experts European views on conservation have become hegemonic and have been imposed on other countries (Smith 2006: 21).

The relationship between heritage and the market has not been well-researched by anthropologists (Franquesa 2013: 346). Heritage is often seen as being in a separate sphere, away from the market, even though the market does play a role in how heritage is handled (Franquesa 2013: 348). Franquesa shows that what is identified by people as heritage can partly be influenced by economic interests (2013: 346). Heritage is a process, as Dormaels has already shown, and once something has become heritage it gains a cultural value, which in turn makes it economically interesting (Franquesa 2013: 350, 353). Economic actors are still looking for profit, even when handling heritage (Franquesa 2013: 351). Franquesa found out that they would prefer to destroy or change the parts of the heritage that would not bring them profit (ibid.). But even though economic actors tried to use heritage for profit, the labeling of objects as heritage meant that boundaries were drawn to limit this profit-making (Franquesa 2013: 352). The form of the objects could not be changed, for example could not be broken into two, because in doing so the object would lose its valuable label of being heritage (ibid.).This shows the forces that are at play when looking at how the market influences heritage. During my fieldwork I found that the descendants of miners like to collect objects that are connected to mining, like miner's lamps. These objects are gathered not only from inheritances, but also by buying them.

The connection between institutions and heritage hints at one of the key differences between heritage and one of my other concepts, collective memories. Objects or sites that are seen as heritage have usually been 'officialized' and given a marker of importance (Dormaels 2013: 108). Collective memories are about how the past is seen in the present day. In that way the concept is similar to the concept of heritage. As mentioned before, heritage can exclude certain aspects of collective memories (French 2012: 339). But like heritage, collective memory is important in the construction of national identity as it appropriates what is historically recorded (Roudometof 2003: 161).

Another group that engages with heritage are the visitors of these sites themselves. These visitors are not passive actors, as was previously believed, they actively engage with the heritage they are visiting (Smith 2006: 67).

Limburg has several heritage sites that are about mining, and understanding how visitors connect to what is shown is part of understanding their importance.

The research of both heritage and collective memories involve studying time. Munn states time is 'an inescapable dimension of all aspects of social experience and practice' (Munn 1992: 93). People are influenced by time, but influence time itself as well by their actions (Munn 1992: 94). Time is influenced by people in a sense that they can construct the way time is measured (Munn 1992: 102). With time measurement comes judgment, the development of a sense that there are right and wrong times to do certain tasks (Munn 1992: 105). With the possibility of time measurement it becomes possible to commodify time (Munn 1992: 109). Also it becomes easier to control people's time (ibid.) This control over time is a medium of governance as it controls people's daily activities (ibid.).

Collective memories

Collective memories are, like heritage, "representations of the past [...] mediated through concerns of the present" (French 2012: 340). Other names for the concept are cultural memory and social memory, but collective memory is used most often (Roudometof 2003: 161).

Like heritage, collective memories are a cultural process, a process of actively remembering the past (Smith 2006: 58). Collective memories are about how different historico-mythic pasts are placed into the world of today (Munn 1992: 112). The places, the

landscapes that people inhabit are filled with the different meanings of this past (Munn 1992: 114). By being placed in the contemporary the past also influences both the present and the future (Munn 1992: 115, French 2012: 340). This connection to the future is often forgotten by anthropologists (ibid.). D'Angelo and Pijpes also argue this in the context of minescapes (2018: 215). An example of this are the mounds in Limburg that consist of mining debris. Their existence is an ongoing reminder of the mining that took place in the past. But they have been changed over time, and due to these changes they have been given new uses and new meanings. For example, many of these mounds have been turned into parks. In the future they might have other uses, but they will have this connection to mining in people's minds.

Collective memories are not necessarily bound to nation states, they are part of social groups, as the previous example also shows (Smith 2006: 63). Additionally, they shape the way people look at each other and at different situations (Roudometof 2003: 163). These attitudes evolved through a combination of process, histories and groups forming an understanding of the past (ibid.). And show a complex connection of time, space, embodied memory and history (Jerman & Hautaniemi 2006: 2). Collective memories are constantly reinterpreted and performed, and carry new meanings for younger generations (Jerman & Hautaniemi 2006: 3, 5; French 2015: 340).

Collective memories can be remembered through sites of memory (French 2015: 340). These sites can be material but can also be symbolic (ibid.). Landscapes, language and monuments are examples of memory sites (ibid.).

Language is seen and used as a way to highlight continuity between the past and the present (French 2015: 341). Monuments are a way of creating an 'official' memory, one that is kept alive by the state (French 2015: 342). As time and conflicts change, so do the meaning of these monuments (ibid.).

Landscapes are a way of people negotiating their relationship with their environment, as it can attach historical meaning and memories to place (Steward & Strathern 2003: 1). It provides a context for notions of place and community (Steward & Strathern 2003: 3). Landscapes are not solely an image of a place, but also includes the feeling that being in a particular area creates (Steward & Strathern 2003: 4). The contexts that landscapes give are what connects memories to place (Steward & Strathern 2003: 3). This link results in the creation of a memory of a place to which they are connected, as happened to the mining debris hills in Limburg (Steward & Strathern 2003: 5). Even when the landscape changed drastically after the mines closed, and the dark hills with mining waste were turned into green parks and hills, this connection between landscape and memory was kept (Luyten 2015: 250).

Collective memories can also be remembered through bodily practices like ceremonies, and visiting and engaging with heritage sites or sites of memory (Smith 2006: 65, 66). Unfortunately, in the Limburg mining region only few of these ceremonies remain.

Lastly, collective memories can be connected to objects (Smith 2006: 61). This embodiment of collective memories can lead to them being labeled as heritage, which in turn can lead to them being treated as such (ibid.). Not all collective memories can be connected to the physical, though, and as a result can be seen as less authoritative (ibid.).

Not everything is remembered, and some people's memories are easier to be kept alive than others (French 2015: 343). Some groups have to put in a lot of effort to keep their memories alive (ibid.). On top of that, not every part of what happened in the past is remembered (French 2015: 345). Some parts of historical events have been selectively

erased (ibid.). This shows that memories are, like heritage, politicized and connected to positions of power (French 2015: 343).

The erasion and politicization of collective memories was also visible in the Limburg mining villages when the leftovers of the mining history were destroyed by the local government (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c). I will discuss this process in more detail in the next chapter.

Affect

Affect is a concept that I am using to understand the role of emotions in my research. While searching for interlocutors I found that mining is still a painful subject for people in the region. Often they were angry that someone wanted to research it again, certainly a person not originating from the region. Others reacted very differently, and were happy that someone spent time and effort on researching their history.

Affect is "the pre-discursive forces that condition the body, consciousness and the senses" (Blom Hansen 2010: 9). They consist of a very broad spectrum of sensory input: images, sound and the "physical essence of bodies" are only a few examples (ibid.). This input can later shape into emotion (ibid.).

Emotion is a concept that has long been seen in the field of heritage studies as problematic, as it was seen as subjective and unreliable, usually in connection to memory (Smith & Campbell 2015: 446, 448). This has especially been the case for the emotion of nostalgia, which researchers have historically associated with right-wing nationalism (Smith & Campbell 2017: 612). But recent studies have shown a change in opinion, both in the case of nostalgia and of emotion as a whole (Smith & Campbell 2015: 449, Smith & Campbell 2017: 612). Some scholars use the word emotion instead of affect, but I use the term affect, as most authors use the terms interchangeably.

I am discussing this concept as affect is an important part of heritage, because it shapes the way the public deals with it (Smith & Campbell 2015: 444). Heritage sites and museums are inherently places where visitors come to feel (Smith & Campbell 2015: 445). They are places where people come to seek out and engage with the affect and emotions that the heritage generates in them (ibid.). This response is contextual and depends, amongst others, on the person's social context, on the heritage site itself, and the person's connection to the site (ibid.).

Emotions can play a role in the process of politicizing memories, as they can both strengthen a narrative or destabilize it, depending on the type of emotion that is generated (Smith & Campbell 2015: 450). They can do so because both emotion and affect play a role in how people understand the world around them and give meaning to what they see (Smith & Campbell 2015: 453).

Affect is also important to memories as it shapes the way they are interpreted and given meaning (Smith & Campbell 2015: 452). Memories are given significance by affect (Smith & Campbell 2015: 453). Nostalgia, for example, can be useful to understand how the past is seen today and in turn influences future policy, and can also be used for the study of collective memories (Smith & Campbell 2017: 612). Even in cases of industrial heritage, like the one I studied, nostalgia can be felt, often accompanied with emotions of loss, pride and gratitude (Smith & Campbell 2017: 613). This diverse range of emotions stems from having both positive and negative memories or associations with the past (ibid.). This was also evident during my fieldwork. My interlocutors recounted both positive and negative memories from the time the mines were active, and had conflicting emotions about this time. In short.

on the one hand they were proud of the wealth it used to give the region, and happy with the employment it brought. On the other hand there was bitterness about the effects of the closings, and sadness about the effect mining had on workers' health. I will elaborate more on this in the next chapter. What I also found is that the people that have memories of the mining period are not the only people in which the topic of mining evokes strong emotions. In younger generations this is also the case, as I found while searching for interlocutors on Facebook. Keeping the concept of affect separate from the concepts of heritage and collective memories gives more room for a wider use of the concept.

Minescapes and Gender Relations

In this second subsection I will first discuss both concepts individually, after which I will discuss how they connect to each other and the other concepts of this chapter. The reasoning behind this is to give a better understanding of minescapes and gender relations before elaborating more by connecting them.

The concept of minescapes is a concept that provides the broader context in which women in the region lived in the past. The concept of minescapes connects the mine to the world around it, thereby placing it in a wider context (Ey & Sherval 2015: 177).

The concept “situates resource extraction as a dynamic, contested terrain with complex socio-cultural, material and discursive dimensions” (Ey & Sherval 2015: 177). It helps scholars to see how mining influences the connections and interactions between mining and the social, political and cultural realms (Ey & Sherval 2015: 179). And it shows how mining changes the context that it is situated in (ibid.).

Rolston states that the design of the mine and the subsequent materials miners use to work in the mines influence the relationship between mining companies and miners (2013: 582, 584). But this also influences the relation between miners and their families, as I will make clear in later chapters (ibid.).

While the mines in Limburg were active, mining dominated the landscape. An example of this was a chimney called the ‘Lange Jan’, which, with its 130 meter height, was a notable point in the region (Rijckheyt 2021). Nowadays, even though there is still mining heritage, it is not nearly as domineering in the landscape as it once was. To return to my example of the ‘Lange Jan’: it was blown up in 1976 (Rijckheyt 2021).

In my research I have been looking at how the minescape influences the relation between men and women. One example of this is how the work in the mine influenced how men behaved at home. The main focus in this section is gender relations between men and women, masculinities and femininities. Other genders and gender relations, like those on the queer spectrum, will not be discussed as they were not part of my main research findings. In my findings queer relations only came up sporadically, and usually in the context of masculinity.

I define gender relations as “the social relationships arising in and around the reproductive arena” (Connell & Pearse 2015: 73). This definition is quite vague, but I think that this helps me in showing the variety of what gender relations are.

Gender relations is a term which can be analyzed in several different ways, namely in terms of power, labor, emotional relations and symbolism (Connell & Pearse 2015). Power in gender relations is both enforced and contested (Connell & Pearse 2015: 76, 77). The dimension of labor primarily deals with the division of work both outside and inside the home (Connell & Pearse 2015: 79). It includes which labor is paid and which isn’t, and why that is the case (ibid.). The dimension of emotional relations focuses on emotional attachments in

areas like sexuality, romantic relationships, parent/child relationships and workplace relations (Connell & Pearse 2015: 81, 82). Families are part of an interconnected group of institutions that all take part in producing gender (Ferree 2010: 424). Gender norms are ever changing social constructions, influenced by power inequalities (ibid.). Lastly, the dimension of symbolism looks at the way gender is symbolically expressed, and how this has changed over time (Connell & Pearse 2015: 84).

In their definition Connell and Pearse use the term reproductive area (Connell & Pearse 2015: 73). With this term they mean the social world, the places where gender relations are made and remade on a daily basis (ibid). These are places like the home, the church or the workplace. In these places gender relations are changed or kept in place by the people using that space (Connell & Pearse 2015: 74). In and around the reproductive area genders relations are formed over time (Connell & Pearse 2015: 73, 74). Several theories exist about why and how gender relations were formed, the two most influential of which are explained by Rubin.

Marxism can best be used to understand the relationship between household labor and the reproduction of labor outside the home (Rubin 1975: 160). It is less successful in conceptualizing sex oppression (ibid.). During my fieldwork I found that this Marxist theory came very close to how the mining companies thought about the division of labor between men and women. Nevertheless, I found it lacking to explain why the division of labor changes over time, something which I saw happen in the mining towns.

In Marxist theory, household labor is part of the process of the recreation of labor power necessary for the working of capitalism (Rubin 1975: 162). Labor power is reproduced by commodities like food and clothing, but these commodities need to go through some steps before the laborer can consume them (ibid.). The first step is for the commodities to be bought and made fit for use by the laborer (ibid.). In the theory it is implied that women do the housework, and that housework is a type of labor that is only indirectly part of the capitalist system (ibid.). But this role is important enough for wives to be seen as a necessity for the worker, a role that has formed via historical and moral processes (Rubin 1975: 164).

Knotter argues in the case of the Limburg mines that the strict division of labor between men and women in these communities, where women did the housekeeping, made it possible that men could work hard and long days in the mines (2018: 12). This hard labor resulted in higher wages for the men, which made this breadwinner model viable (ibid.). Women's labor outside the home became seen as unnecessary, and married women started to leave the workforce (ibid.). Over the years demands about how housekeeping should be done became higher, which left little time for women to do other types of activities (ibid.). Another point is the lack of employment opportunities for women in the region (Knotter 2018: 14). The job market for men grew because of the mines, but not for women (ibid.).

The division of labor within the household is seen as both the result of an economic division of time, and as the result of gender (Ferree 2010: 421). This is what Brines shows in her research about why, when women start to work more outside the house, men's involvement with housework only slightly increases (1994: 653). This is exactly what I found happened in the mining communities after the mines closed. Brines found that women act more according to the theory that assumes an economic division of time (1993: 682). Men on the other hand act more in accordance with the idea of gender being the explanation for the division of labor (ibid.). Brines' explanation for this imbalance is that masculinity is more fragile than femininity, and therefore needs more outward 'proof' to be accepted as being masculine (ibid.). One of the ways to 'prove' this is by doing less household labor that is to be expected economically (ibid.). In practice this theory can help explain why miners had

difficulties adapting to a new division of labor after the mines were closed (Luyten 2015: 298).

This connection between the economics of the household brings me to another point about gender relations, which are its interwovenness with other social structures like economic class (Connell & Pearse 2015: 85). This interwovenness is called intersectionality (Yuval-Davis 2006). Intersectionality also covers other social structures like race, religion and disability (Connell & Pearse 2015: 85). The term shows how oppression is always constructed in combination with other social divisions, even though all these categories have their own ontological way of being analyzed (Yuval-Davis 2006: 195, Ferree 2010: 428). Class in this way is seen as being created in a historical process to which gender, race and sexuality all contribute (ibid.). Class therefore does not exist without a connection to the other social divisions (ibid.). For my research the intersectionality between gender and class is important, as the women I researched were working class women who were possibly formed by their husbands employment. Bear et al. study this type of intersection (2015).

Another use of the concept of intersectionality is in the study of families. Families themselves are a social institution, but each member has to manage their own intersectionality as each member can belong to different social markers of identity (Ferree 2010: 425). This means that because family members can belong to different genders, races and sexualities intersectionality is part of families (ibid.). This is important for my findings as it could be a way to explain how family members could have experienced mining and its effects differently. In Luyten's book there is the returning point of how different Sjaak was from his brother (2015). Even though they came from the same family, their experiences with mining were very different (ibid.). The book gives a broad explanation for this, but the crux is that while Sjaak's brother fit with the traditional image of a miner, Sjaak did not (ibid.).

As intersectionality consists of social divisions, social divisions influence, just like collective memories, how people see others and how they experience their day to day lives (Yuval-Davis 2006: 198). Specifically they form the way people experience inclusions and exclusion, something which does not have to be the case with collective memories (ibid.).

The amount of social divisions is endless and also depending on time and place (Yuval-Davis 2006: 202). Having this large number of divisions might not be practical for analytic reasons, but they are important for people to feel recognized (Yuval-Davis 2006: 203).

I found, while writing down my research results, that I could not look at women's lives and gender relations without discussing men's lives as well. Therefore I also had to adapt the theoretical aspects to this new situation.

The concept of masculinities encompasses men's roles, practices and power, which are all points that I will discuss in the later chapters of the thesis (Dvorak 2018: 1). It is a social practice, and is not forced to align with biological designations of maleness (Thangaraj 2022: 256). It is something that can be acquired and maintained (Dvorak 2018: 2). Masculinities are changeable; they are diverse; and they can contest other masculinities, even within one person (Dvorak 2018: 1, 3). Also, both men and women have an impact in the construction of masculinities (Dvorak 2018: 1). Women's identities often do so by acting as a (perceived) counterpoint to masculinities, although denying femininity is not an integral part of masculinities (Dvorak 2018: 3, Thangaraj 2022: 255).

Masculinities is a concept that highlights the diversity of maleness and male experiences, therefore the concept is called masculinities instead of masculinity (Dvorak 2018: 2,Thangaraj 2022: 254). To show this diversity is important, as masculinities can vary widely between social classes, locations and time (Dvorak 2018: 1). Even with the existence

of this diversity usually a society has a dominant type of masculinity, which is called a ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Dvorak 2018: 4). Hegemonic masculinity is portrayed as an ideal form of manliness, unchanging and more valid than other forms of masculinity (ibid.). On the one hand it is used to marginalize other forms of masculinities, while on the other hand being unattainable (ibid.).

As masculinities can differ greatly over different contexts I find it important to give room to discuss the concept in connection to the context of mining (Dvorak 2018: 1). In mining masculinities manifest themselves usually through the symbolism of the size of the enterprise, through its structure, and through the identities it creates (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 199).

Across the globe mining has long been perceived as a masculine and male dominated industry, both in its industrial and artisanal form (Cuvelier 2014: 6, Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 197, Mercier & Gier 2007: 997). The image of the male miner is a very persistent one, but not necessarily one that is true (ibid.). The association between masculinity and mining is stronger in mines that are more centralized and capitalized (Mercier & Gier 2007: 997). Industrial mines often have a strict gendered division of labor, while more rural and subsidiary mines mining involves the whole family (ibid.).

The relationship between mining companies and women has long been a complicated one, with employers interchangeably seeing them as liabilities or as resources (Mercier & Gier 2007: 998). And even though there are many examples in history of women working in this field, they have long been portrayed as people who did not belong in mining (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 194, 195). One example of mining women is women working in the Belgian mines between the years 1830 and 1914 (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 196). Another example, one that I will mention more in depth in a later chapter, is of women working at the French mines (Steenkool 1947: 122).

Women who worked at the mining companies often performed other tasks than men. They usually transported the ore, while men dug the ore (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 196). Women were often the first to lose their jobs because of new technologies (ibid.).

Due to increasing moralistic worries about women working with men below ground, from people outside the mining communities, laws were created to ban women from the mines (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 197). To build on this, in the modern history of mining in the Netherlands women have never worked in the mines (DSM Bedrijfsarchieven: FSI 1920-1959: 11). This is arguably the case because these mines opened after the aforementioned change in opinion about women working in mines (Wijers 1990: 46).

Women's role in mining communities started to become physically separated from the mines and became more situated within the home (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 198). Retrospectively, women started to be portrayed by historians as the miners wife, isolated and unproductive, while the so called ‘pit women’ were forgotten (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 197). This ignores the amount of work these women put into sustaining their families and their local communities (Mercier & Gier 2007: 998).

The nature of mining communities, with them being comparatively new and influenced by male-dominated institutions, complicates women’s position even more (Lahiri Dutt: 2012: 198). The institutions, which include the mining companies, the state and labor unions largely control men and women’s behavior in these communities (ibid.) This gives them the opportunity to push for a system in which there is a sole (male) breadwinner, without them having an understanding or a regard for local gender complexities (ibid.).

This is also what happened in Limburg. Before mining started in the region Limburg had a long history of agriculture, with a division of labor in which both men and women were

important in providing for the family income (Rutten 2012: 391). Mining changed this to a division of labor with one breadwinner (ibid.).

The minescape and the people within it created the heritage and collective memories that I am discussing in the next chapter. Remarkably, not much of the earlier mentioned role of women in this history is found within mining heritage itself.

One notable way in which the minescape affects memory and heritage is through how it affects the landscape (Steward and Strathern 2003: 1,3). Landscapes create identities, memories, relationships and governance structures (Ey & Sherval 2015: 179; D'Angelo & Pijpers 2018: 216). During my fieldwork I found that the changing of the landscape after the closings was for some people a painful memory. This changing of the landscape is an ongoing process, one that will go on well into the future (D'Angelo & Pijpers 2018: 216, 217). It is not a neutral process, as my chapter on heritage will show, it is ingrained with political and social interests (ibid.). These interests form how time and temporalities in mining are felt and manipulated by the different social actors involved (D'Angelo & Pijpers 2018: 215). These are actors that do not necessarily have to be human, natural and seasonal rhythms influence the working of the mine and its life cycle as well (D'Angelo & Pijpers 2018: 217).

Conclusion

The theoretical framework started with the concepts of heritage, collective memory and affect. Through these concepts it is possible to look at what happened in the past, and the lives of the miner's wives. It is a first step in discussing what they experienced.

Intangible heritage has long been ignored as a form of heritage (Geismar 2015: 79, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 53). This happened due to the power dynamics that are still surrounding the concept of heritage (Smith 2006: 52). Material heritage has often been connected to authority, first to the authority of the nation-state and later on to the authority of 'experts' (Geismar 2015: 74, 2006: 11). The dominance of these experts and the hegemonic heritage they reinforce makes it difficult for other types of heritage to be included (Smith 2006: 11). Contrastingly, inclusive heritage involves collective memories, as those include the memories of social groups rather than only the nation state (Smith 2006: 63).

The memories that are included in this heritage, and memories in general, are given meaning through affect (Smith & Campbell 2015: 452). It shapes the way the public deals with it, as heritage sites are intrinsically places where visitors come to feel emotions (Smith & Campbell 2015: 444). Affect is a concept that has been problematised in the field of heritage studies (Smith & Campbell 2015: 446, 448). The concept was seen as subjective and unreliable in connection to memory, but recent studies have shown a change in this opinion (Smith & Campbell 2015: 446, 448, 449).

After having discussed these three concepts of heritage, the next step is to proceed with the concepts of minescapes and gender relations. The concept of minescapes helps scholars to see how mining influences the connections and interactions between mining and the social, political and cultural realms (Ey & Sherval 2015: 179). Mining is a force that changes the context it is situated in; it changes personal relations, for example that between a miner and his family (Ey & Sherval 2015: 17, Rolston 2013: 582, 584).

In mining communities there was a strict division of labor between men and women, with women doing housekeeping and men working in the mines (Knotter 2018: 12). According to Marxist theory, household labor is part of the process of the recreation of labor power necessary for the working of capitalism (Rubin 1975: 162). Ferree argues that the division of labor within the household is both the result of an economic division of time, and

as the result of gender (2010: 421). It also shows how gender relations are intersectional, they are connected to other social structures, like economic class (Connell & Pearse 2015: 85).

To be able to discuss women's lives I found that I could not omit men's experiences. To discuss the latter I am using the concept of masculinities. This is a concept that encompasses men's roles, practices and power, while also highlighting the diversity of maleness and male experiences (Dvorak 2018: 1, 2; Thangaraj 2022: 254). In mining masculinities reveal themselves through symbolism, structure, and through the identities it creates (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 199). It has long been seen as a masculine industry, even though there are many examples in history of women working in the field (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 194, 195, 197; Mercier & Gier 2007: 997). Over time women started to be banned from mining, until they were increasingly situated within the home (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 197, 198). Additionally, historians have retrospectively portrayed women as miners' wives, not as miners (Lahiri-Dutt 2012: 197). This might lead to an explanation as to why women are rarely visible in mining heritage.

Research question and Operationalization

Research questions

In this thesis I will look at how women were impacted by the minescape; how they themselves formed their lives within this structure; and how this history is represented nowadays.

I want to prove that while women's lives were very much impacted and structured by the mining companies and their associates, women still found ways to express their agency and make their own decisions when possible. I also want to show, through discussing the history of mining heritage, that even though a lot of the mining heritage is destroyed, it does not mean that there is not any left.

Research questions

My main research question is: How did the minescape influence the wives of miners and their families during and after the mines were active, and how is this past reflected in heritage?

My sub-questions are:

1. What mining heritage and collective memories are still left, and what place do women have in this?
2. Were gender dynamics influenced by family members working in the mines?
3. Were gender dynamics influenced by the closing of the mines?

Communicative context

This part of the thesis I am using to give some background information on the topic and to better explain the context of my research. I have divided this subchapter into four sub-spaces: time, place, people and positionality. Time, because of the historical nature of the topic and due, but also because mining still influences people's lives today and will keep doing so in the future (Pointer 2022). Place, because the mining companies' influence was not confined to the mines themselves, but was felt beyond that. People, because I did not look at everyone dealing with the mines, but looked at a particular group. I want to define this group and give some information about their background. And lastly positionality, to explain how I as a researcher fit within this context.

Time

I will start by giving a brief overview of the history of mining in the Netherlands. Some of the events in the overview are discussed more thoroughly in the upcoming chapters. After the overview I will discuss the role time plays in my research.

While there had been mines in Kerkrade since the 19th century, the mining industry gathered steam from 1900 onwards (Knotter 2012: 56). Officially 1893 is seen as the start of modern mining in the region, as this is the year the first modern mine was built (Langeweg 2011b). In 1902 the Dutch government decided to exploit their own mines, and created the *Staatsmijnen* (ibid.). By 1928 the last of the new mines had started operating; no mines would open after this point in time (ibid.).

The opening of mines increased the population in the area, resulting in a lack of houses, infrastructure and social services in the region (Langeweg 2011b). As a reaction to this the Catholic Church started to become more involved in the lives of miners (ibid.). In 1910 Henri Poels was appointed *aalmoezenier van sociale werken*, or chaplain of social works (ibid.). He became an important figure in creating different services for miners (Luyten 2015: 186). By 1930 he had created a web of services that made sure that Catholic miners were looked after by Catholic organizations from the day they were born till the day they died (Langeweg 2011b).

In 1931, due to the 1929 economic crisis, the mining companies had to dismiss workers (Luyten 2015: 97). These were mostly foreign miners or miners that were seen as 'undesirable', like socialists (Luyten 2015: 97, Krutzen 2012). It was another step in the creation of a workforce that was mainly Catholic and that originated from the local area (Luyten 2015: 142).

After a decrease in production in the Second World War, the mines' production grew again in the years directly following the war (Luyten 2015: 146). Coal Mining was seen by the Dutch government as an important asset in rebuilding the country (ibid.).

1959 was the year that was the beginning of the end for the coal mining industry in the Netherlands (Luyten 2015: 201). Even though there were no talks about closing them yet, it was the year that showed that coal mining in this region was not economically viable in the long run (ibid.). In this year the gas field in Slochteren, in the North of the country was discovered (ibid.). Two years later, while production was at a record high, the cost of digging the coal overtook its revenue (Luyten 2015: 202). In 1965 the minister of economics, Joop den Uyl, announced that the government would start to close the mines over the next couple of years (Luyten 2015: 208). In 1967, the first mine closed, with the last closing in 1974 (Luyten 2015: 209, demijnen.nl 2024).

For this thesis I am mainly concerned with the period between 1950 and 2023, while supplementing this with background information from before that time. This restriction has to do with memory. My interlocutors remembered and talked about a period roughly ranging from the 1950's to today. Before that time they simply were not yet born or they were too young to remember.

(demijnen.nl 2024)

Place

I focused on a region that used to be called 'de mijnstreek', the area where the mines historically were located in Limburg province, in the south-east of the Netherlands. Nowadays it is called Parkstad Limburg. This is the region in which remains of the mines, the mining museums, and other commemorations are situated. It is also the area in which the absence of this heritage is most palpable. The region is located in the south-east part of the province, although there was also mining in the south-west part of the province in Geleen. During my visits I have focused on the eastern part of the mining region, because of the mining museum and reading a lot about the towns of Heerlen and Kerkrade. I mostly used literature to find information about the western part of the mining region.

Although I'm focussing on the Limburg mines, it is impossible to separate what happened in this area with what happened in other mines in western europe. Throughout their history the Limburg mines have always had a connection with other mining regions in the area (Wijers 1990: 46, van de Wijngaard 2009). To give some examples: miners from Limburg went to work in Germany and Belgium, and vice versa (Knotter 2023: 128, 131). This resulted in mining culture in Limburg being influenced by German mining culture (ibid.). Also, mining officials in Limburg researched mines in other western european countries before the mines in Limburg were built (Wijers 1990: 46). Additionally, I will compare the

mining heritage in Limburg with that of Great Britain, where more mining heritage seems to be left (Simmons 2021).

People

The third dimension of my communicative context is people. The people I am researching are not necessarily bound to the mining region. Due to the closing of the mines people moved to other parts of the Netherlands. My attempt to understand the traces of the mining past was conditioned by the connection that interlocutors have to the mines. This connection being that they have family members who have worked in the mines or because their job has gotten them involved with mining history.

Even though my focus is on women, and their children, I found that it was impossible to account for these women's lives without also looking at the male miners. For my research I chose to focus on the families of people working for the mining companies directly, mostly on those who had family working within the mining pits. I also have excluded families of officials. The mines had a strict hierarchical structure and the lives of mining officials differed greatly from the lives of ordinary miners (Luyten 2015: 60). Mining officials lived in different homes, in different areas and visited different social organizations (ibid.).

Another aspect I want to briefly mention is religion. Most miners in the Limburg mining region were Catholic, as I will show in the later chapters this was by design (Wijers 1990: 46). Miners that did not belong to this religion, like Protestants and socialists, were a minority and faced difficulties because of this Luyten 2015: 142). For example: protestant workers were not allowed to work as mining executives within the mining companies (Luyten 2015: 141). I will therefore look in this thesis at the role of religion and the Catholic Church within the mining communities.

Lastly, while migration was the main topic of Milena Mulders research and subsequent book and museum, it is not an important topic in this thesis. Although it might be mentioned. This is a conscious choice as not to broaden the subject of the thesis too much.

Positionality

Me being a woman has played a role in why I chose the topic, as I was quickly curious about the women when hearing about mining history.

As a person living a different time period I look at the situation of these women from the perspective of the present. I have not experienced the same time-period and lives as the people I research. And within that time a lot of things have changed. That means that I can and will have different opinions, for example about relations between men and women or about what a good household looks like. Even when looking back with my interlocutors at the mining times, time and different experiences play a role. All of my interlocutors have been older than me.

Also I do not come from the mining region itself, not even Limburg. This is something my interlocutors realized the moment they heard me speak. It often led to confusion as to why someone from outside the region would be interested in mining history. Strangely enough I found out during an interview that many of the scholars researching and writing about the topic grew up outside the region. But it does influence the way I look at the history and it might happen that I missed things that were logical to my interlocutors just because they live or have lived in the area.

Although religion is not the topic of my research it does play a role in the lives of the people that I research. Mosty this is focused on catholicism, as the catholic church played a big role in the workings of the mining region. I myself am not catholic, but I grew up in a

family with ex-catholics that did not talk nicely about the religion. As a way to compensate for this I might not be in a position to be critical about the dealings of the church in the mining region.

Sources of knowledge

Visible/material heritage

These sources include monuments, museums, neighborhoods, and landscapes. An example of the latter are debris hills. Not only the heritage itself was a source of knowledge, but also the difficulty to find them, and how they changed over time provided useful information. Because so little remained of the mining past I often found them accidentally, or by using the literature I read. I would travel from one place to the other and then pass monuments, houses or other leftovers without having intentionally pursued them.

People

I mostly spoke with the children of miners and people who work with mining heritage. Age also played a role as there are not many people left from that generation.

Because the mines have been closed for about fifty years I was mainly working with memories. This meant that my interlocutors' accounts of what had happened to them have been colored by events that occurred afterwards (French 2012: 340). One of the most important influencing factors in my research was how my interlocutors experienced the mine closings, and if problems connecting to these closings have been resolved.

Archives

I visited the cities of Maastricht and the Hague several times to make use of archives. These archives provided me with original documents from the mining companies, and they were also sources for books that were more difficult to attain. Some files from that time period were not open for the public to read. These were mostly files with personal information, like court files or medical files. Also files from the catholic church were most often closed. I have also gathered information by looking at what types of documents I could not find in the archives. I will elaborate further on this point later on in this chapter.

Methods

The methods that I used during my research were interviews, observation/participant observation and literature research. For this last method I also visited archives. Because the topic of my research is partly in the past I had to rely a lot on literature research and by interviewing family members of miners.

Observation/ Participant observation

I visited the old mining area three times during the research and once during my preparation of the research. Throughout these visits I traveled around the area looking for leftovers and I visited mining museums. During two visits I have actively walked through the area to look for traces of the mining history. Most of the miners' houses that I saw, I saw during bus rides. Monuments were often found by walking to museums. This was not completely unexpected as oftentimes museums would be located near old mining terrains.

During my first visit to the area in March 2021, I was searching for houses miner's used to live in. Even though I made a list of neighborhoods before visiting, for me as an outsider they were quite difficult to distinguish. During later visits it felt like it was easier for me to recognize the mining remains, probably due to having seen more old pictures of the area.

I often used google maps to locate monuments and old debris hills. I would randomly click on parks and other public spaces to see if they had a connection to the mines. The online descriptions of the areas would usually provide me with origins of the areas, mostly when this origin had to do with mining. I would also use google maps to locate and mark areas mentioned in the literature I read.

Other visits were more focused on museums and archives. But, as mentioned earlier, the division between these types of visits was not strict as I often found different remains of the mines while traveling to museums.

While doing my fieldwork I visited three museums about mining: the Nederlands Mijnmuseum, Steenkolenmijn Valkenburg and Mijnmuseum Brunssum. I visited them to understand more about mining heritage. I will discuss these museums at length in one of the following chapters, therefore I will only briefly and methodologically discuss the museums here. Because of Covid-19 measures and the historical aspects of the research museums were one of my only possibilities to do participant observation. When I visited these museums I followed the guided tours though the museums, as this was oftentimes the only way to be able to visit them. But they turned out to be very useful as these tours complemented the information that was given in the displays. The tours gave more room for the personal experiences of miners, and they gave room for questions. It was also a way to observe and experience parts of the work that miners performed. Some of the museums had an opportunity to feel or hear the tools that miners used.

Interviews

I did interviews both to understand the contemporary opinions about the mining times, and to learn how people look back on the period. I also wanted to learn how people's way of looking back at the period had changed.

In total I interviewed eight people. Five of these people were the children of miners, and three of them were people that dealt with mining history professionally. At the start of my research I hoped to be able to talk to the wives of miners. This did not turn out to be possible due to covid-19, either because of covid-19 measures or because of fear of the disease.This influences the information that I have gathered, as the stories are not from the miners' wives

themselves but of their children and the parts of their mothers lives that they experienced and remembered.

I found my interlocutors by posting messages on Facebook groups linked to villages in the old mining region. The advantage of this was that the range of the people that I could reach was bigger than it would be by meeting people face to face, certainly with the covid-19 measures in place. It also was helpful because I was not staying in the area.

The disadvantage was that by using this method I could not directly reach people that have no Facebook profile. On top of that it was more difficult for me to win people's trust, as they could only see my message and my profile picture.

I also found interlocutors via other interlocutors. Sometimes when I was talking to an interlocutor they would mention other people whom they believed I should talk to. Usually they would give me these people's contact information or introduce me to them. This was mostly how I have gotten in touch with people working in the field of mining history, like researchers, teachers and journalists. Although this method of finding has a risk of bias based on people's networks, the people that were recommended to me were usually people that I wanted to interview either way.

While I did try to find interlocutors via the mining museums in Heerlen and Brunssum, this was not successful. This was mainly because of the covid-19 measures and the age and vulnerability of these possible interlocutors.

The interviews that I did were semi-structured. I made a list with topics and questions beforehand, mostly because I wanted to go into the interview prepared and to minimize the risk of forgetting certain topics. Another reason, but only for the interviews I did with the children of miners, was to make it easier for me to compare their experiences.

I did not fully structure the interviews because I wanted to keep room for interlocutors to bring up their own topics. Semi-structured interviews seemed to be a good compromise.

For interviews with children of former miners I made a topic list. These had some basic questions like where they lived and in which mine their family members worked. The topics that I talked about were housekeeping, living environment, the closings and Limburg today. I chose these topics because I wanted to have a broad picture of the living environment of the children and their mothers. I also wanted to know how this changed over time.

For people that deal with the topic of mining on a professional level I wrote down topics and specific questions based on their occupation.

Due to covid-19 measures I did most of my interviews online or via telephone, although I did meet one interlocutor in person. The shortest interview took half an hour, the longest took 2 hours. I mostly followed the topics, but I asked if people could elaborate if they mentioned a topic that I had not thought about.

During the interviews I had a tendency to quite tightly hold onto my topic list. I found it difficult to let go of it and ask questions about different topics. I was also afraid of talking about sensitive topics. Both of these points are connected to the fact that I found it difficult to build up rapport with my interlocutors. I did a lot of my interviews via telephone and because of not being able to see their facial expressions I felt like I was less able to gouge their emotions and connect to them. With interviews face to face or online that was easier.

Literary search

For my research I used a broad range of literature. I used magazines, newspaper articles, academic books and articles, monographies and biographies. I used sources from different periods in time, ranging from 1948 to 2023.

The first book I read on the topic of mining was a book recommended to me by my thesis supervisor, Marcia Luytens *Het geluk van Limburg* (2015). In this book she describes the history of the Limburg mining region by means of the story of Sjaak (Jack) Vinders and his family (ibid.). She uses the experiences of the family as a way to humanize her story about what happened in the Dutch mining region (ibid.). Subsequently, I have used some of their stories in the thesis to do the same.

The stories I used are primarily about Tineke, the mother of Luyten's main character Sjaak (2015). She was the wife and daughter of men who worked for the mining companies and she lived in a miners' neighborhood. Therefore I believe her stories to be somewhat representative of the stories of other women in that region (ibid.). I say somewhat, as her son Sjaak's life is an example of someone who choses a different path from what is expected of him (ibid.). But this different path he chose only helps in showing what was conventional in mining communities.

When I first started looking for literature during my research, I started searching in the Leiden university library. At a later stage of the research, when I did use the right search terms, I found that the library had many books on the topic. I mostly found them by searching for specific titles. I also found literature via my local library and the website of Maastricht University. Also the website demijnen.nl held some reviews with books about mining. Facebook groups focussed on the old mining area helped me find newspaper articles about the topic.

Later on in the research I had some research participants that advised me to read certain books and articles. Some of these were hard to find. Eventually I found that I could access some of them at Atria, a research institute for women's history.

Two of the volumes of *Steenkool* magazine I was able to read in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague. *Steenkool* was a magazine published by the Limburg mines for their employees and their families (Op 't Veld 2012).

Other volumes I was able to read and take pictures of in the mining museum in Brunssum. They helped me look for other books about miner's households in their collection, but did not find any. Almost all of the literature in their collection was focussed on miners and the process of mining.

Archival research

I have visited the National Archive in The Hague once. And I have visited the archive of the *Sociaal Historisch Centrum Limburg*, *SHCL* for short, in Maastricht twice. During my first visit to the SHCL archive, I was told by the staff members that there was not much information in the archive about the wives of miners. They told me that the documents that did exist in the archive that talk about women are company documents, not personal stories. The question remains why this is the case. I think this could be due to previous generations of archival personnel not finding these documents important, or due to a policy of only collecting larger personal archives rather than loose documents. Another reason could be that personal documents are not offered to archives, as their owners do not believe them to be important enough to be kept in one. I believe this says something about how few documents are preserved, and how there is a barrier that has to be crossed for them to be preserved. It also shows how opinions of the past, about what is and what is not important

information, influences current research. These points could be connected to a point made by Smith, which I mentioned in the theoretical framework, about how experts and hegemonic ideas on heritage can steer preservation (Smith 2006: 63). But by looking at the files of organizations that dealt with the wives of miners it is at least possible to understand the structure in which the lives of women took place.

Interestingly, archives have the possibility of being a useful source for documents pertaining emotions, as the people that put together these archives might have overseen the emotions contained in the documents in their quest to gather documents (Stoler 2010: 32). As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, in heritage studies emotions have long been considered problematic and unreliable (Smith & Campbell 2015: 446, 448). This might have also been the case in archival studies. During my research I found out that finding documents possessing the expression of emotions is rare, but when found the results are very satisfactory. Earlier research, mostly stemming from the time right after the closing of the mines, seemed to be very useful in this aspect. When looked at carefully one can start to distinguish the emotions collected in these documents and the contexts they are created in (Stoler 2010: 33). Archives help broaden the context of emotions as they give a voice to the peoples the archive is focused on, not only the voice of the peoples that created the archives (Stoler 2010: 32). In Stolers book, for example, these are the voices and emotions of people under colonial rule (2010).

If I had had more time I would have visited some other archives, like the archive of Heemkundevereniging Landgraaf. Now I have only looked into some of the bigger archives.

Ethical problems and their solutions

How I got access to groups mostly depended on the type of group. To get access to Facebook groups I would ask permission from the administrator of the group. I would tell them that I was doing research and why I wanted to be part of the group. This way of gaining permission has one drawback, namely that not all members of the group can give permission that you as a researcher are a member of that group. Not having individual members permission means that I had to generalize this information, omitting personal information like age and location. This influences the thesis in a way that I am using the Facebook groups mostly to describe general feelings involved in the topic of mining history.

When participating in the museum tours I wanted to keep a balance between being honest about being there as a researcher and having the same experience as a normal tourist would have. Therefore my plan was to not email the museum up front but ask the tour guide before the tour for permission. This did not work out most of the time, because I underestimated group sizes and I was not able to get to the guide before the tour started. Instead I would tell the guide when the opportunity would arise. Luckily all were very happy with me doing research so that ended up not being a problem, otherwise it would have had implications.

An acquaintance studying psychology gave me the advice to make an information folder about my research, which I did end up doing. The advantage of this was that it gathered all necessary information for my participants in one place, one that they could easily go back to. In the folder I would also inform people of a more detailed version of the topic of my research. Also it included information about interviews: how long they usually take and examples of where they could take place. On top of that it stated that their information would be used anonymously and that they could drop out of the research at any time if they wanted. Before interviews I would repeat this, even though most interlocutors seemed not very interested in this information.

To anonymize my interlocutors I gave them all a letter and then changed these into pseudonyms. like Adrie instead of A. Though, I will not do this with people that work with the topic of mining history professionally. Firstly because they did not object to being named by their real name. Secondly, all of them are well known within the circle of people that work on the topic, so it would be difficult to anonymise them.

With taking photographs I made sure that I took photos at public spaces or that I asked permission to take pictures. My goal at first was to ask any person within the picture for permission or to take pictures without people in it, but this did not work out in public places. Most often there would be too many people in such an area to make it feasible. Therefore I have only used photographs if there are no people in the picture or with people that are too far away in the picture to be recognized.

During the fieldwork it became clear that there still are strong emotions involved with the topic of mining history. As I did not want to cause harm to my research participants this meant that I became even more careful with my participants (AAA 2012). During my fieldwork it also meant that I felt I had to be careful with my questions as I did not want to hurt my participants. My research participants did end up talking about difficult experiences out of their own initiative.

Structure of the rest of the thesis

As I am looking back at the topic of mining, through the lens of heritage and collective memory, the next chapter will be focussed on mining heritage. This chapter will look into what it is left of the mines and what role women play in mining heritage and collective memory.

The third and fourth chapters will look deeper into the past, and will discuss gender dynamics within the minescape. I divided this topic into two chapters, structure and agency. In the third chapter I will look into the structure built by the mining companies, the Catholic Church and the government. It will shed light on how and why they influenced women, and how this changed after the mines closed and the Catholic Church lost influence. The fourth chapter will discuss agency, and how women reacted to the structure built by the mining companies and their allies. What decisions could they still make and how they shaped their lives. It will also show what changed in their lives after the mines closed.

Chapter 2: Traces: What is still Physically and Mentally Left of the Mines

In this first chapter about my fieldwork I will look at what is left of the mines in Limburg in 2020. I will look at the physical remains like buildings, objects and landscapes that are still 'out there'. I will look at how these remains have been dealt with. I will also look at the immaterial or intangible remains, the memories people have about the mining times, how they feel about this and how the memories are handed over to younger generations. I will do this to show what place the mine and its memory had in later stages of women's lives. Lastly I will compare this to the situation in another area where mining took place, in England. This comparison will be used to explain the Limburg case in a broader context, and to better explain the peculiarities of this case.

Nothing left?

During my first search looking for information on the topic of coal mining in Limburg I found the two books I read stating that little of that time is left. As an outsider I questioned what they meant with the word 'little', as this word could have so many different meanings to different people. I imagined that if a person lived in an area full of all kinds of buildings having to do with mining 'little left' is something easily achieved, a word akin to or synonymous to that much has changed.

When I first visited the old mining towns I was quite happy with what I was able to find. I saw for example Schacht Nulland, a building that belonged to one of the mining companies in the area: the Domaniale Mijn. Only later I realized that what I saw were only the most eye-catching remains.

The more I learned about the region, the more this thought was confirmed. During readings and interviews the lack of remains was something that was consistently mentioned. Although the booklet from the local tourist center made me question it for a minute. That was until I went to some of the buildings the booklet mentioned and saw that they were quite isolated, with barely any other mining buildings situated next to them.

But the source that really made me understand the case was looking through the Facebook page *Steenkolen Winning in Nederland*. A lot of times when they posted a picture of material remains of the old days people reacted by stating how unfortunate it was that this building has been destroyed, or stating how much the surroundings of the building has changed. After reading these reactions time and time again I felt like I finally understood how much the old mining region has changed over the years. I also understood that a big part of that change was the disappearance of buildings belonging to the mines.

2.1 The history of mining heritage

1965 - 1990 Disappearing structures

It is clear from the aforementioned examples that a lot of structures have disappeared. The story as to how, and to a lesser extent why, this happened never became fully clear to me. My interlocutors often blamed the local government for the disappearance of the structures. Government officials who wanted to get rid of buildings that reminded people of a, both literally and figuratively, dark past. The only information that is mentioned in most literary sources is that right after the mines closed a project called *van Zwart naar Groen* ("from Black to Green"), was created to clean up the remnants of mining (Rijckheyt 2021).

A documentary by a local radio station recounts what happened with buildings and other heritage as a story connected to the history of the concept of industrial heritage (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c). Nic Tummers, interviewed in the documentary, explains that the interest for industrial heritage started in the 1960's (ibid.). Later in the documentary they interview a woman closely involved with the creation of mining heritage in the 1970's and 1980's (ibid.) She explains that at the time of the mine's closure the idea to accept industrial buildings as heritage was very new (ibid.). *Monumentenzorg*, one of the national organizations that deal with the care of buildings that were declared heritage, was at first disinterested in preserving mining buildings (ibid.). Mining heritage did not fit with the rural image they had about the province of Limburg, one consisting of farmland and hills (ibid.). By the time the mines closed, the organization had only just started to look outside of the borders of the Randstad region (ibid.). The employees of *Monumentenzorg* wanted to carefully make a list of heritage sites, starting in 1974 after the publishing of an article by Nic Tummers (1974). In this article he mentions how buildings created by the mines influenced mining towns (ibid.). Tummers already expresses a fear that all these buildings would disappear (ibid.).

By 1977, because of efforts undertaken by the inhabitants of mining towns, three buildings had been listed as monuments by the national government (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c). But by the time the list was finished that year a lot of buildings had been demolished (ibid.). The making of the list itself only took about four years, so for me this shows how quickly the buildings were demolished. Nic Tummers argues that after the closings people were disinterested to give the old mining buildings a new purpose (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c). After *Monumentenzorg* published the list in 1977 it did not keep the local government from demolishing some of the sites on the list (ibid.). Based on the list of *Monumentenzorg* the *Monumentenraad*, the organization that advises local governments about which sites should be kept as monuments, only advised for one site to be kept (ibid.). This site, the Van Iterson cooling tower belonging to the Emma mine in Hoensbroek, was illegally demolished afterwards, arguably because of a miscommunication (ibid.). It was a remarkable building as it was the most modern cooling tower in the world, the first of its type, when it was built in 1917 (Bruls 2014). Because of its importance the demolishing even led to questions as to how this could have happened being asked in the second chamber of the national government (ibid.). People were outraged that a national monument was demolished, but the secretary of culture argued that it was a simple accident (ibid.). This example shows that while local people and organizations started to see the mining buildings as heritage, politicians and government officials still had to be convinced. This is also shown by the documentary, as it repeats the story told by my interlocutors about the local government's haste to demolish the mining sites. But it also shows the inability of national heritage organizations to protect these buildings.

One of the most memorable sites demolished during this period was the 1976 demolition of the Lange Jan, a chimney of the Oranje Nassau mine number 1 in Heerlen (Rijckheyt 2021). Not only because it fell down the wrong way, but also because it was a well-known landmark in the Heerlen skyline (ibid.). Although no effort had been done to keep the chimney from being demolished, after the demolition a local group decided to organize a funeral procession and people collected stones from the debris (Rijckheyt 2021, Trouw 23-08-1976). I understand this procession as a form of counter-heritage, as it shows how the participants have different ideas about what is heritage than the people organizing the demolishing of the building (Geismar 2015: 75).

This, though, was one of the few protests that took place. Miners mostly ‘grieved’ for the loss of their jobs rather than the loss of the buildings (Knotter 2012: 601). Knotter argues that feelings of bitterness about how they lost their job kept them from taking action (2012: 602). Why they did not protest against losing their jobs is connected to the system created by the institutions, which I will discuss in the next chapter. For now I will point out the role of the unions in this (Langeweg 2011b). The main union, the *De Katholieke Mijnwerkersbond*, had been very powerful during the 1950’s, when the negotiations covering the closings of the mines took place (ibid.). The union was created for catholic miners, and was strongly influenced by the Catholic Church (ibid.). The power of the union resulted in them being invited in the negotiations and having a big say in what happened (ibid.). Its chairman Frans Dohmen agreed with the closings, as he believed that mining in Limburg was not economically viable anymore (ibid.). He agreed to slowly closing the mines, while at the same time looking for new employment for miners (ibid.) Unfortunately, because of an economic recession during the 1970’s, this did not go according to plan and many old miners were left unemployed (ibid.).

The lack of protests did not mean that the demolishing of the buildings did not hurt them as well (Knotter 2012: 602). Nijhof states that miners looked back at the mines with mixed feelings, this is also what I found during my fieldwork (2012: 383). Some people reacted bitterly and angry when they talked about the topic, mentioning how the mining companies used their family members to gain wealth, giving them little back in return. These negative emotions are only one part of the scope of emotions that people have when thinking back at that time. Men are proud of the mining they have done and felt that their work was useful (Kusters 2012: 57). These mixed feelings are common when dealing with industrial heritage as workers' memories are also varied in levels of positivity or negativity (Smith & Campbell 2017: 613).

1990-2019 Returning interest

Near the year 2000 the situation surrounding mining heritage started to change. According to one of my interlocutors this happened because the change in millenium made people rethink the future and what to do with the past. This reasoning seems to me like speculation. Another interlocutor mentioned that in Heerlen the new interest in mining history developed during a period in which new plans for the city were made.

The *Nederlands Mijnmuseum*, which I visited during my fieldwork, opened in 2005 (Zijlstra 2020: 9). In the same year the website demijnen.nl was created. Nico Zijlstra, one of the people that helped start up the website, told me during an interview that the website was a way to centralize information about mining history. 2015 was named ‘the year of the mines’ (Zijlstra 2020: 9). According to Zijlstra this new interest led to the writing of books, some of which I have read for this research, and the making of a tv series (ibid.).

Within these new initiatives local people had a big role in the organizing and creating of heritage. Two of the three museums that I visited are initiatives from miners or people from the mining region. The museum that was created by the mining company had guides who had been miners themselves. In fact, in all museums that I visited the guides were miners. During the tours these guides would share a lot of their own experiences. To me this is interesting, as it shows that these personal experiences have been given a place within the museum. And because the museum does this, it bridges the gap between collective or personal memory and heritage.

It is also interesting because it has influenced gender relations within museums. As a result of the division of labor within the mines and mining towns, which I will discuss in depth

in later chapters, only men worked as miners. As the museums mostly employed ex-miners as guides, the guides are all men. I think the choice of having ex-miners as guides both creates and enforces the focus in museums on the work happening below ground.

The use of ex-miners as volunteers has become a concern for museums in later years, I was told by an employee of one of the museums, as many of these guides became too old to do the job. It shows how in some parts of mining history collective memories, or at least personal memories, have been strongly linked to heritage.

Connecting mining heritage to national heritage

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned how it took the organization *Monumentenzorg* time to look at heritage outside of the Randstad region of the country. This is one example of the power imbalances at play on a national level. One could argue that because of these power imbalances mining history could, at least for a time, be considered "counter-memories": memories of minorities that have little place in national history. This resembles what has happened in the Limburg case (Geismar 2015: 75). Counter memories are often kept alive with help of NGOs, something which also took place in Limburg (De Cesari 2010: 626). In Limburg local inhabitants were often the driving force behind these organizations.

This situation is at the moment slightly changing. One of the clearest examples of this is the place of mining history in the *Canon van Nederland*, which is a list of major historical phenomena meant to teach children about Dutch history. In the first version of this list, published in 2006, mining history was absent (Zijlstra 2020: 7). In the renewed list of 2020 mining history was placed on the list, being part of a chapter on energy (ibid.).

This revision is a clear example of how current events shape how people view history, as the revisions happened because there has been a shift in how energy is seen (ibid.) Between 2006 and 2020 climate change has gotten more attention and earthquakes in Groningen showed that the extraction of gas from that region was not possible anymore (ibid.). In line with these events it seems like the creators of the Canon started looking at the longer history of energy sources in the Netherlands.

Another more recent way in which mining heritage has been shown is by a cycle route set up by the local tourist bureau (VVV), one that passes different buildings and monuments that they see as part of mining heritage (Visit Zuid-Limburg 2021). Interestingly not all mining towns were included. A visit to the Heerlen VVV showed that it was one of the only guides linked to the mining history, although the room did hold several books on the topic. It felt to me like a disappointment, for some reason I had expected more connections in tourism to the mining past. It is easy to say that it seems like the organization sees mining heritage as not the most effective way of attracting tourists.

2.2 Remains within the region

Landscapes

The hill that we climbed in this story is the Wilhelminaberg in Landgraaf. It was a waste hill from the mining companies, where they dumped waste stones that came up during the process. Nowadays it's used for recreational purposes, with people using it as a place for sports. Below the hill lies the terrain of Pinkpop, an annual festival.

Photograph of the Wilhelminaberg in Landgraaf (photo by author).

These hills are often the only thing that is left of the old mining landscape. And even then they are changed: covered in soil, the green of the trees and grass covering the black and gray that the hill used to look like when it was still in use.

Sometimes hills of waste are invisible until you walk up a hill and find a place where the top layer of soil has been eroded. One afternoon I decided to take a walk and see what kind of traces I could find. I walked along a long straight road towards a hill that online research taught me could have been one of the hills of mining debris. This hill would now have been covered with soil and made into a park. It was a steep hill, at least for someone not used to seeing them, and I was out of breath by the time I came to a flatter part. From there I had a good view of the village. Still it looked like a normal hill, until I walked a bit further and saw a part of the hill that looked a bit more eroded. The soil was dark, darker than the surrounding soil. Looking more closely it seemed like the mining debris that I had seen in pictures. While walking over the hill I found several other patches of soil similar to this. It looked like I had indeed found a leftover of the mine, even though I had not seen any plaques mentioning this. Walking back to the campsite I saw a drawing on a playground with a mining theme. Some reminders are clearer than others.

This is what happened to the old mining terrains, their purpose changed and often they became recreational areas (Zijlstra 2020: 9). Photographs and interlocutors told me that this was very different from what it was before: no more black hills and industrial smell.

Neighborhoods

If one looks at sheer numbers, most of the buildings that are still left are miner's houses. This has a practical reason: houses were still usable, even after the closing of the mines (Sijben & op de Coul 2002a & c). So houses were kept because of their utility, not because of their historical or heritage meaning. If the condition of the houses was not to the housing companies standard, or when the houses did not look 'beautiful' enough they were demolished (Sijben & op de Coul 2002a, Rutten 2012: 428). If the houses were kept they often changed over the years because they had to be fitted with bathrooms and toilets (van der Steen 2021).

The first neighborhood that has gotten the label of national heritage was the de Hopel neighborhood, in the north of Kerkrade (Sijben & op de Coul 2002a, demijnen.nl 2013). This happened in 1979, after being renovated (ibid.). This was the result of effort from the inhabitants (ibid.). Other neighborhoods were given a national protected status between 2007 and 2009, this means owners need a permit to be allowed to change the buildings (demijnen.nl 2013). Examples of these neighborhoods are Schaesberg, Lauradorp and Treebeek (ibid.). These are well known neighborhoods in the region, ones that have also been mentioned in literature frequently.

Still the keeping of the houses is an ongoing struggle, one that is ongoing today. Housing companies find it cheaper to build new houses than to restore the old ones, as is happening with the Slakhorst neighborhood right now (van der Steen 2021). Slakhorst is one of the neighborhoods that is not protected by law as a *Beschermd Gezicht*, or protected cityscape (demijnen.nl 2013).

The possible destruction of the neighborhood is protested by heritage organizations because of the historical value of the houses (van der Steen 2021). They argue that because a lot of buildings connected to the mines have been destroyed, the few buildings that are left should be strongly protected (ibid.). Slakhorst itself was one of the first neighborhoods built especially for miners (ibid.). The neighborhood resembles a small village and the houses have large gardens, aspects that are still valued by inhabitants today (ibid.). This, and the heritage value is why inhabitants of the neighborhood do not want the houses to disappear (ibid.).

Below ground

What is also still left are the mining shafts. Their entry points have been closed with concrete, barely visible. But they are noticeable in different ways. One of the guides in the Heerlen's mining museum told me about how the tunnels produce cracks in the houses and how the water filling the mine - which started rising since pumps were shut down after the last mines were closed in Germany and Belgium - pollutes the groundwater. Sinkholes are another problem created by the tunnels, with a notable case in 2011 which resulted in a shopping center being partly abandoned (Simmons 2021).

2.3: Modern visualizations of mining history

Museums

Photograph of the mining museum in Brunssum (photo by author).

“Walking along a street while trying to find the museum, I was looking at google maps while trying not to bump into anything. At one point I was seeing a school building, not a museum. Thinking it had to be here somewhere, I looked to see a group of men smoking. They ask me if I'm looking for the museum, and tell me that it's in the school building. One of them walks in front of me showing the room where the museum is, then goes away to find the guide. I walk into an old classroom which has walls which are from top to bottom covered in mine memorabilia and objects. On the left side of the room there are miniatures that cover the whole process of mining. Next to the door are two bookcases, while in the middle of the room are some tables. On the right side there is a row of cupboards filled with objects. It forms a sort of barrier between the tables and some bigger objects standing against the wall. Between the cupboards and the objects is a tight walkway, tight enough that two people cannot walk through it side by side. A group of elderly men is sitting at the tables, talking. They look up and I smile shyly. They ask me to come sit while I wait for the guide.”

This was a description of my visit to the mining museum in Brunssum. As I mentioned before, I visited three museums during my fieldwork. One of them was the *Nederlands Mijnmuseum* in Heerlen. During my visit the museum had little room for the homelife of miners or for their wives. But the museum had recently announced they were working on an annex to the museum. Based on the website and the folder the annex makes more room for the homelife of miners and for its connection to the present (Nederlands Mijnmuseum 2021). The annex, however, opened only at the end of 2021, so I did not have the opportunity to visit it during my fieldwork.

The other museum that I visited was the Steenkolenmijn Valkenburg. It was focused on the working process of mining, not on miners' home life. But this helped me understand more about the working conditions in the mine, mostly how loud it was. The drills that were shown made a deafening sound.

What makes this museum special is that it was the only museum that opened during the period in which the mines were operating. According to a plaque in the museum it was opened in 1917 by the mining company to accommodate requests of people wanting to visit the mines. The age of the museum meant that it probably was one of the only ways in which women could learn about the conditions in which their husbands worked. Some people that I interviewed seemed to look down on the museum. They mentioned the museum not being a 'real' mine, as the museum was created in an old lime quarry.

Knotter mentioned during the interview that the image that the museums show is mostly focused on the situation in the region during the 1950's. This is a time when there are few migrants working in the mines, a time when mining was supposedly very "Limburgs". During the 1960's, when many mines closed, the number of migrants working in the mines started to rise again as local miners started to look for work elsewhere. My visits to the museums showed me that at that point the focus of the museums was the process of mining and the work of miners. Homelife, and therefore women and children's lives, was a topic only briefly mentioned.

I do expect to see some changes in this because museums will be required to deal with the changing of generations. The generation of men that worked in the mines is dying out. The example of the Nederlands Mijnmuseum shows that museums in the region are aware of this and are trying to fit their displays to this narrative.

Monuments and reminders

While walking through the region material remains are not the only reminders of the mining past. Around the region several monuments can be found, the most well-known of which is D'r Joep in Kerkrade. The figurine of a miner has been situated at the *Markt*, the market square in the old city center, since 1957 (Nederlands Mijnmuseum 2021). It was placed here because Kerkrade was the first town in Limburg where coal mining took place (Gemeente Kerkrade 2022). The idea to create a monument for miners was first mentioned in 1939, after a mining accident, by a man who lost his father to a similar accident (ibid.). He wanted the monument to commemorate deceased miners (ibid.). The project was delayed due to the second world war (ibid.). After the war the monument itself was set up by high ranking members of the city government and local clergy (ibid.). These officials wanted the monument to show the power of miners, to commemorate the men who have died in the mines and to remember the people who first started mining in the area (ibid.). Nowadays the monument not only symbolizes the men who lost their lives in the mine, for the local inhabitants it symbolizes all men who have worked in the mines (ibid.). I find this change of meaning noteworthy as it shows the way people mold the monument to fit their narrative. This is most apparent in the manner in which officials wanted to use the monument, wanting it to symbolize not only the hurt associated with the profession of mining, but also the pride.

The creation of mining monuments was also influenced by the closing of the mines. A 1979 plan to create a national monument for miners was shut down due to negative reactions from miners themselves (Rijckheyt 2021). Miners and their families were angry because of how the national government dealt with silicosis, a deadly lung disease stemming from breathing in stone dust (ibid.) They felt that creating a national monument at that moment was not fitting the situation (ibid.).

Most examples of monuments that I saw during my visits were more modern. They were often located near the place where mining terrains were situated, like in Heerlen and Brunssum. Most of them are plaques describing the buildings that used to stand in its place.

This picture that I took during my fieldwork shows an example of such a plaque. It is about the Lange Jan, the demolishing of which I wrote about earlier in this chapter (Photo by author).

This picture shows a monument standing close to the plaque. Both pictures show reminders of the same building (Photo by author).

Other reminders were the murals in Heerlen. I had seen them during my first visit to the region, but had not realized their connection to mining history until some of my interlocutors mentioned it. The murals have small details that recall the history, like a bird in a cage connecting to the canaries miners used in the early days of mining to detect mine gas.

Memorial services that are held for miners that died during their work are still in place, as is shown in several local Facebook groups. These are ceremonies held in a building that functions as a place to remember the deceased miners even without ceremonies being held. Unfortunately I was not able to attend one of these during my fieldwork.

Looking at the memorials, and mostly at the ones marking the old mining terrains, I felt like their main role was to mark the buildings that had been demolished in the past. Most of the boards showed pictures of how the area looked in the past, almost regretting the demolition that took place.

Collecting mining objects

Over the years younger generations have become more interested in the topic of mining. During the tours in the museums, but also during my interviews it was mentioned by interlocutors that their children liked to collect mine lamps. Other objects, like tools and badges, were collected as well but mine lamps seemed to be the most popular. Why mine lamps? I did not get a clear answer to this during my research, but I expect that it has something to do with the size of the object and the large numbers that were produced. I have been told by a guide in the Brunssum mijnmuseum that it was one of the few objects that miners were allowed to take home when the mines closed.

A bigger object that was collected were mining wagons. At a campsite I stayed during the fieldwork stood a wagon that had been made into a grill. Unfortunately I do not have a picture of this.

These objects hold an emotional value to the collectors, and remind them both of the job itself as of family members that worked in the mines. The collectors themselves are most often the children or grandchildren of former miners. While the objects they collect are the same as the ones found in museums, the meaning connected to the objects is changed by this personal connection. And although this seems like a small example, to me it shows a regained appreciation for mining and its heritage.

Not every miner collected old mining objects, though. Ria, one of my interlocutors, told me that her father disliked the idea. While he liked working in the mines he also remembered the negative sides of the work quite clearly.

It is interesting to note that despite the ambivalence in emotions felt by old miners about mining and what happened afterwards, a lot of them still have collected items connected to the mines. My interpretation of this is that even though their experiences were ambivalent, the mine has been an important part of their lives and they wanted to have objects to help them remember it. I base this mostly on my interviews and the biographies that I read about miners' lives. Even interlocutors that worked in the mines for a short amount of years viewed it as a forming experience.

Representation of the mines in art and literature

Over the years mining has been diversely represented in various media. I want to mention the representations because, like buildings or landscapes, they can be a way for people to

remember the mining history. Because of the large number of representations I can't discuss them all. That's why I have decided to only discuss one of them in more detail.

The representation that I want to discuss in more detail is the TV-series *Dagboek van een herdershond.* Literally the title means "Diary of a Shepherds-dog", which refers to the task of the pastor to lead his flock. While a whole thesis could be written about the both of them I wanted to look at them briefly as they are a way that mining history can be easily shown outside of the province.

Dagboek van een herdershond is a 1970's TV-series focusing on the chaplain of a village in southern Limburg during the 1910's when mining was only just starting up (van Reijsen 1977). It is based on a book series from Jacques Schreurs, written in the 1940's (ibid.). What is interesting is the timing of the series: it was created just after the closing of the mines. This is barely mentioned in newspaper articles about the series, who focus more on its Catholic message. Director van Hemert did choose the book series in part because he found the connection to the closed mines tragic (van Reijsen 1977). Watching the series it looked like they tried to look neutrally at the topic of mining, both good and bad effects are shown. I believe that this shows a disconnect in the rest of the country to what happened in Limburg. In Limburg itself it would, at that time, have been a controversial topic to make a tv series about, as shown by my earlier statements about the myriad of feelings connected to the dismantling of the mining industry. Even more so one with such a neutral portrayal of the industry itself and its effects.

2.4 Comparison to the situation in an English mining area

That there is so little left of the mining buildings is one of the things that, in my opinion, makes the Limburg case unique. When looking at mining heritage in other countries, like Belgium, Germany or Great Britain, it is clear that in these countries a lot more structures were kept (Simmons 2021). My question is: why? I ask this question to better understand what happened in Limburg, to see what happened in these other countries that created the heritage's ongoing existence. As this is a topic that could fill a whole research by itself I will focus on one country, namely Great Britain, and on two cases in this country.

Power researches how local communities throughout Brittain interpret their coal mining heritage (2008: 160). What first struck me is how she sees a miners' sense of community as part of the intangible aspect of heritage (2008: 166). While the term intangible heritage is closely related to 'official' heritage, and is often used by heritage institutions like UNESCO, both the local community as heritage organizations agree that sense of community is part of mining heritage (Power 2008: 166, Ahmad 2006: 298, 299). This sense of community is one of the topics that kept being mentioned during my fieldwork. One of the first articles I read in preparation of the research mentioned the term *koempel mentaliteit* (Mos 2018). Simply put this word describes the mutual solidarity between miners below ground (ibid.). During my research I found that a lot of the old miners missed this after the mines closed and it was one of the main subjects that created nostalgia.

Power also found that negative experiences during the time the mines were active and during the closings negatively impacted people's wish to maintain mining heritage (2008: 168). This also happened in Limburg, as I mentioned while writing about the history of Limburg's mining heritage. Contrastingly Power mentions the strikes as being one of the main negative experiences, which did not happen in the Netherlands because labor unions agreed with the closing of the mines (2008: 168, Langeweg 2011b).

Although at first I believed that in Britain many mining buildings were kept, Power describes how pitheads were often demolished right after the mines closed (2008: 169). This demolishing happened against the wishes of the local community, which saw it as being dismissive of their work and struggles (ibid.). When buildings are preserved this is often done by volunteers (ibid.).

Other features that are included in British mining heritage, according to Powers' research, are the landscapes, monuments and objects that have connections to the mining past (2008: 169-171). Museums are, as part of their preservation efforts, often collecting mining artifacts like machinery, mine lamps and banners (ibid.). Monuments have a variety of forms; they can be plaques or old machinery, they can be memorials to remember mining disasters or to places to remember miners in general (Power 2008: 170). Interestingly, domestic aspects of miners' lives are actively considered heritage (Power 2008: 172). Examples of this heritage are types of baking and crafts (ibid.). Women's contribution to the heritage as homemakers and the creators of networks within mining towns is visible as well (Power 2008: 173). While in the Limburg case the miners' homelife is not as openly displayed as heritage, in chapter four I will discuss how women lived their lives in the context of the minescape.

The article shows a more nuanced story of mining heritage in Britain. Comparison with some literature on mining heritage in the UK show many similarities. One of which are the forms in which heritage is displayed, another similarity is the type of objects that are valued as heritage. The emotions that come through while dealing with the topic of mining are also quite similar.

Some clear differences between the two cases does exist. These differences mostly relate to how women and the homelife of miners is more explicitly included in the heritage by local people. Other differences relate to the context in which the mining took place. In Limburg a system was created in which the Catholic church, the mining companies and the local government worked together to control the labor force (Langeweg 2011b). I will explain this more extensively in the next chapter. The system also influenced the way the miners dealt with the closings, and explains the lack of protests when the mines eventually closed. In Great Britain such a system did not exist, and relations between miners and government were a lot more strained (Power 2008: 163).

In the end, Power shows that even though there are more objects and buildings left in Great Britain, the conservation of this heritage took a lot of effort from local people and organizations.

2.5 Conclusion

I started this chapter by looking at what is left of the mines. What I found was a slight difference in what I, as an outsider, and inhabitants of the region understood with the words 'nothing left'. This pointed me to a returning theme when looking at mining heritage, which is that mining features have been given a broad variety of meanings and interpretations over time. One of the main divides in interpretation, but not the only one, is the one between inhabitants of the region and people from outside the region. This becomes clear while looking at the history of mining heritage.

It took time before national heritage organizations, who were notably established in the west of the Netherlands, understood the minescape as a part of heritage (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c). It took even more time for politicians and government officials to do so (ibid.). This, I believe, led to mining buildings being demolished. In turn the demolishings led to dissonance between the local government and ex-miners, as they disagreed about the value of the buildings and if they should be kept. While the ex-miners had mixed feelings about mining and were unlikely to protest the destruction of the buildings, the destruction did hurt them (Knotter 2012: 602). One exception is the protest happening at the demolition of the *Lange Jan*, a well-known landmark (Trouw 23-08-1976). This protest was a clear example of the disagreement between ex-miners and the local government, and is also an example of counter-heritage.

Until the year 2000 there were barely any initiatives dealing with mining heritage in Limburg itself (Zijlstra 2020: 7). Unfortunately, I could not definitively find out why exactly at that time the new interest in mining history started. It took until 2020 before mining was mentioned in a national list with important historical events (Zijlstra 2020: 7). It was included because of a growing interest in energy sources (ibid.). I believe that it took this much time to be included because of power imbalance, one that was already visible when heritage organizations first started to see mining features as heritage.

Nowadays the mines are still visible via the landscape, houses, monuments, objects and museums. What is interesting about the monuments and objects is how the meaning of these has changed over time, how their narrative has changed. They moved from being a representation of industry to being more of representation of people (Gemeente Kerkrade 2022). They have become features that help to remember family members that worked in the mines (ibid.). As for the landscape and the houses, the struggle to protect them is an ongoing one. This is mostly the case for the old miners' houses, some of which are still in danger of being demolished by housing companies (van der Steen 2021). This shows that even though mining history is more valued nowadays, this appreciation does not always overrule economic interests.

Another way in which mining heritage is visible is via museums. Museums are also places where the earlier mentioned mixed feelings regarding the mines are visible. Guides, who are still mostly old-miners, link their personal stories to the 'official' story presented in the museums. As they are encouraged to do so by the management of the museums I do not believe that this is counter-heritage. Rather I see it as an effort by the museum to include a broader scope of memories into the 'official' heritage. On top of this, the museums are mostly local initiatives (Zijlstra 2020: 9).

Comparing the situation of mining heritage in Limburg with the situation in Great-Britain shows that the conservation of mining heritage is not exclusively a problem in Limburg. But it also shows that there are differences in what people view as mining heritage, with women's experiences being more included in Great-Britain (Power 2008: 172). In the

next chapter I will look more in depth into women's lives and how they were influenced by the different institutions that were involved with the mines.

Chapter 3: Structure: How institutions influenced women's lives

When I first read about the lives of women in mining villages one of the things that caught my eye was how much the Catholic church and the mining companies were involved in women's lives. Later readings showed that different levels of government were also connected to the activities of these two institutions (Bouwens 2015: 373). All three of them worked together, which created a system that is seen as a unique feature of the mining industry in Limburg (Wijers 1990: 44).

In this chapter I will argue that the influence of the institutions was extensive, and was felt within almost all aspects of women's lives. They structured how women lived their lives, but still left some room for women to have agency over their lives and the lives of their families.

To explain this argument I will firstly look at why the institutions started influencing not only miners but their families as well. Secondly I will describe the tools and tactics used by the institutions to influence women. Lastly I will place the behavior of the institutions and their members into a broader context by connecting it to a concept called patriarchal mining strategies. I will examine if this concept can be used to describe the behavior of the institutions.

Even though I talk about the institutions as if they are single entities, I know that in reality they are not. They consist of many individuals with their own motives, opinions and actions (Kubik 2018: 277). The institutions consist of personal connections and emotions rather than being a rational machine (Tate 2020: 87). Yet I made the decision to discuss the institutions as single entities because most of my sources do. When I have the information to do so I do want to highlight the actions of individuals and smaller groups within the organizations I write about.

3.1 Why were women influenced by the mining companies?

In this part of the chapter I will discuss three different reasons why mining companies influenced women.

The first reason for their involvement was precaution, precaution against socialism and other workers movements. Coal mining in the Netherlands, and therefore in the province of Limburg, generally started at a later time than in other countries like Belgium and Great Britain. The town of Kerkrade was the exception to this rule (Kusters 2012: 83). This late start meant that officials of the three institutions were able to view the effects that mining had in other countries (Wijers 1990: 46). They did not like what they found (van der Steen 2021). They observed what they saw as a decline in morality: bad housing, lack of hygiene, a rise of socialist and communist membership and a decline in church attendance (Wijers 1990:46). They also feared a decline in social stability (Knotter 2012: 69). Catholic clergy were the most vocal about their worries concerning these effects (van der Steen 2021). In the end, the effect that the members of the institutions feared the most was the rise of communism and socialism (van der Steen 2021). The members of the institutions feared that these political movements would disturb the local status quo (Wijers 1990: 46). On top of this they also wanted to discourage local people to go and work in Germany, again risking being influenced by socialism (Langeweg 2011: 98, 99). Therefore they looked for ways for coal mining to take place in Limburg without these perceived negative effects (Wijers 1990: 46).

A second reason for influencing women was production. The mining companies saw women and the home as part of the process of mining itself (Rutten 2012: 396). To be able to work harder, miners' homes had to be a place of rest (Rutten 2012: 394). Women provided this rest (ibid.). The mining companies view was, at least outwardly, that wives work at home was just as difficult and important as their husbands work in the mines (ibid.). Later on in this chapter I will elaborate more on how the mines changed the local division of labor to encourage this particular way of life.

A third reason for influencing women was that after the mines were opened in the Limburg region, mining companies encountered difficulties with attracting enough workers to their mines (Langeweg 2011: 85). This was mostly because of the hard working conditions below ground (Langeweg 2011: 262). To deal with the lack of workers a system was invented to create a 'clan' of miners, local families where sons would follow their fathers into the mines (Langeweg 2011: 262, Knotter 2012: 43). These workers would be more loyal to mining as a profession, as they started working in the mines from a young age and stayed there for their entire working life (Knotter 2012: 41). The system is also connected to the aforementioned fear of socialism, as the mining companies worked together with the Catholic clerics to attract mostly Catholic men to work in the mines (Langeweg 2011: 85). The clergy mainly helped find workers for the *Staatsmijnen*, the mines operated by the Dutch government, as they believed that these mines had the best working conditions (ibid.).

Attracting workers, though, was only one aspect of gaining enough employees for the mines. The other aspect was keeping them. Keeping employees was important because recruiting was expensive (Langeweg 2011: 261). A lot of the incentives to stay were connected to miners' families (Knotter 2012: 46). Examples of these are housing and social security (Langeweg 2011: 262).

In the next part of this chapter I will elaborate more on these incentives. Furthermore I will look into how the mining companies and the other institutions used them, and other measures to influence women.

3.2 How women were influenced

The institutions that I mentioned earlier had several different tactics and tools to influence women and their families. In this part of the chapter I will discuss the three institutions and their tactics separately to give a clearer image of what happened. I will look at which tactics the individual institutions used, how they worked and how much influence they had on women. Because I was able to actually read a lot of magazines, and because it kept being mentioned by my interlocutors, I wrote a separate section about *Steenkool* magazine. Lastly I will discuss how the system of influence in the end fell apart .

3.2.1 The mining companies

One of the first ways in which the mining companies influenced women was by changing the local division of labor (Rutten 2012: 391). Before the mines arrived in the region, families would often work on farms (ibid.). On these farms women were not bound to housekeeping but also worked on the farm by taking care of animals and crops (ibid.). This meant that together with their male family members they were responsible for the household income (ibid.). With the arrival of the mines women lost this responsibility while that of men increased (ibid.). This was not a unique situation, as it happened in other areas in the Netherlands as well because of industrialisation (Giebels 1982: 14). This change happened gradually, as at first mining was seen by most workers as a seasonal job (Knotter 2012: 39).

This new division of labor, with the husband working outside of the home and the wife doing the household labor, was financially feasible by the comparatively high wages of miners (Rutten 2012: 392). This division of labor was sought after by men, and was a source of pride for workers (Bouwens 2015: 380). To be able to, so to speak, ‘provide’ this division of labor was one of the reasons why men wanted to work in the mines (ibid.). In the end, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter, this particular division of labor was also advantageous for the mining companies.

A second way of influencing women happened via housing. With the help of Catholic housing associations the mining companies build houses for their employees (Kusters 2012: 111, 114). These houses were built as close as possible to the mines themselves, although this changed after the second world war (Langeweg 2011: 62). After 1945 transportation improved and mining companies started to attract workers from towns located farther away from the mines (Langeweg 2011: 63).

To ensure that the inhabitants of these houses made ‘good use’ of these houses according to the standards of both mining company and Catholic Church these organizations made use of house inspections (Krutzen 2012). House inspections were performed by inspectors working for the housing corporation (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 82). This occurred mostly before the second world war, starting in 1916, but they still occasionally took place afterwards (ibid.). The goal of these inspections was to encourage what housing corporations understood as ‘proper habitation’ (Krutzen 2012). The inspections were not only focussed on catholic miners but included the protestant ones as well (ibid.).

Inhabitants were not always notified about when the inspection would take place. During the inspections the inspectors made notes on hygiene, morality, political views and women's domestic skills (ibid.). At the end of the inspection they gave (unasked) advice on how to improve these skills (Krutzen 2012). This irritated many miners' wives (ibid.) The inspectors’ judgment about a household could seriously impact its members (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 82). Failing the inspections could lead to family members losing their jobs in the mines, and therefore to families losing their home (Krutzen 2012). This mostly happened during the 1930’s economical crisis, when the mining companies needed less employees and could easily fire them (ibid.). After 1945 the system changed, the women that used to do the inspections became social workers rather than inspectors (ibid.).

Krutzen argues that the inspectors were part of a system that controlled the miners and their families (ibid.). I find it easy to agree with this, seeing the direct effects the inspectors could have on people’s lives. Also I agree that they were just one of the many ways miners and their families were controlled. I find this mainly because not all miners lived in houses owned by housing corporations, and because these inspections did not happen all through the time the mines existed.

A third way of influencing women was by offering financial aid for their workers in times of illness, death and old age (Langeweg 2011: 262). This aid was given via a system of social insurance that the companies created (ibid.). The social insurance system also managed healthcare for miners and their families (Knotter 2012: 46, Rutten 2012: 482).

Notably, this system was set up in a time before the country's government enacted such policies in the 1950’s (Koops 2019). These measures made miners and their families even more dependent on the mining companies (Knotter 2012: 46).

A fourth tool used by the mining company to influence women was by giving money to social organizations. This was done via the *Fonds voor Sociale Instellingen* (*FSI’s*), meaning the Fund for Social Institutions. When I visited the RHCL archive in Maastricht for the first time I asked the archivist where I could find information about women in connection

to the mines. She advised me to look into the documents connected to the FSI's. I was told by the archivist that FSI's were set up by the mining companies to provide money for different types of social projects or activities.

In the index of the funds I found links to files about basic necessities like food and housing. But I also found links to cultural activities, like theaters and ateliers; links to nature projects like the maintenance of forests and parks; and links to schools and playgrounds. Unfortunately I did not have the time to read all these documents. But I think that the existence of these documents proves that the mining company was involved with these institutions and activities.

The mining companies were even involved in the mental health of miners' wives, as is proven by the existence of the dr. Poelsoord. The dr. Poelsoord was a sanatorium where women could rest and could heal from psychological problems (Arnold 1996: 34, 36). It was organized by miners labor unions (Arnold 1996: 6) They understood that miners wives were under a lot of pressure (Arnold 1996: 7). This often led to women having depression, anxiety or being overworked (Arnold 1996: 7). The unions argued that women, as keepers of the family, needed to stay mentally in good shape (Arnold 1996: 55). If they were not it would disorganize the entire family (ibid.). Critics of the sanatorium argued that the place was only a short term solution, one that did nothing to definitively end the pressures which caused the mental problems (Arnold 1996: 63). Pressures like bad housing, financial problems and having to look after many children and other family members (ibid.).

A last way of influencing women was via the media. In the next part of the chapter I will write about one of the ways they did this.

Steenkool *magazine*

The mining companies set up their own organizations to help them communicate their ideas about how women should act. One such organization was the *Huishoudelijke Voorlichting*, or "domestic instruction" (*Steenkool* 1950: 283). It was an organization created by the mining companies to educate women on household skills like cooking and sewing (ibid.). Discussion groups were also organized (*Steenkool* 1950: 443). Unfortunately I could not find any further information about the organization online, but if I had found out about it sooner I probably would have been able to find information about it in the archives. Another such communication medium was *Steenkool* magazine.

Steenkool was a magazine published by the Limburg mines for the miners from 1946 to 1955 (Op 't Veld 2012). It contained articles about the mining process and its history, but also articles about housekeeping and stories that children could read. The mining companies used the magazine to bind workers and their families more to the profession of mining (Op 't Veld 2012).

Nowadays the magazine can be read in bundles where all issues of one year are combined. I read a couple of these volumes, namely the ones from the years 1947, 1950, 1953, 1954 and 1955. While reading them I focused on the column 'Moeder de Vrouw', which was written especially for women. In the column itself it was stated that its goal was to interest women and provide them useful information (Steenkool 1955: 235). The column covered subjects like finances, cooking, cleaning, childcare, and behavior. It also covered Catholic topics, like what women needed to do if they had a child that did their holy communion (*Steenkool* 1953: 124). To me this indirectly shows the connection between the Catholic church and the mining companies, as I could not find any articles that mentioned other religions.

I had some difficulties in understanding the columns at first, as the morals and ideas presented in them were very different from my own. A turning point for me was discussing one of the contests in *Steenkool*'s womens' column with my mother and my neighbor. Until that point I thought that the reason for me not understanding or not knowing what was mentioned in the contest was me being illiterate in the field of housekeeping. That's what reading the columns on how to clean or do the laundry made me feel.

"I was sitting behind my laptop looking at my scans of *Steenkool* when I found a contest in the column *Moeder de Vrouw* (*Steenkool* 1950: 43). On the other side of the table my mother and neighbor were sewing, trying to fix a blanket. I tried to answer the questions of the contest, just out of curiosity. At some point I must have looked either very frustrated or confused as they questioned me as to what I was reading. I told them about the contest and how I did not know a single answer. That made them very curious, which resulted in me having to read the contest aloud. Out of the following discussion between them they ended up concluding that they only knew one of the answers, that one answer being that one should not pull a plug out of the outlet by pulling on the cord."

Coincidentally, my mother followed the *huishoudschool*, a school that taught women to do housekeeping. This was the same type of school some of the miners' wives had followed. In the end I needed the answers in a later publication of the magazine to understand what the questions were about. Luckily the included explanations were very extensive and made the answers sound quite obvious and logical.

This moment showed me how even an activity like doing household chores is situated within a certain context. Before this I did not believe that at its core it had not changed much over time, except the introductions of new appliances. It showed me that what is considered clear or good household practice is very changeable over space and time. For example a question about stowing away clothing. The writers of the questions wanted to make sure that all clothing wore down evenly (*Steenkool* 1950: 138). This is not something I see myself worrying about.

Arguably, the main message of the magazine to women was that if they would be a good housewife, their husbands could be better miners (Knotter 2012: 55). The articles I read in the magazine showed me that the writers of the column were strongly advocating their own particular understanding of what 'good housekeeping' would entail. I understand why women could have difficulties adapting to these new norms.

A returning factor in the initiatives funded by the mining companies was the involvement of the Catholic Church (Knotter 2012: 69). In the next part of the chapter I will elaborate on how the Church worked within the region and how this is connected to the mining companies.

3.2.2 The role of the Catholic Church

To explain the involvement from the Catholic Church with mining I want to highlight the actions of one member of the Catholic clergy specifically, namely Henri Poels. Poels helped organize and was involved with a lot of the first Catholic organizations who dealt with miners and their families (Langeweg 2011: 98). Organizations like *Ons Limburg*, which was the Catholic housing association for miners and the *Nederlandsche Katholieke Mijnwerkersbond*, the Catholic miners union (L1 2018). While he was not the only member of the clergy who was actively involved with miners' lives, Poels is an important figure because of his combination of Catholic rhetoric and social policy (ibid.). He arguably tried to improve the lives of miners to keep them away from socialism (ibid.).

The mining companies themselves regarded this involvement of the catholic church into their workers daily lives positively (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 73). Even more in regards to the Church's involvement in women's lives (ibid.). The Church's message that women should take care of the home and the family fit well with the mining companies interests (ibid.). It made it possible for the home to become a place of rest for the miners, something the mining companies needed because of the hard conditions within the mine (ibid.). This is one of the reasons why mining companies supported activities of the Catholic Church financially (ibid.).

The large size of the clergy meant that the church had the manpower to be hands-on involved in the everyday life of its parishioners (ibid.). A pastor had the assistance of several chaplains, who would help him and who had time to engage in local associations and clubs (Nissen 2011: 106). These chaplains would act as the religious advisors of these organizations (ibid.). This situation was not unique for the mining region, as it was a characteristic of the popularity of the Catholic faith in the entire province of Limburg (ibid.). This situation only changed during the 1950's due to a decrease in new clergy and conflicts within the Dutch Catholic church (Nissen 2011: 105).

I interviewed Chris Giebels about the influence of the Catholic Church on miners' wives, as he wrote about it in the feminist magazine *Opzij.* He mentioned several ways in which the Catholic Church influenced women. One way was via home visits by priests. During these visits the priest looked into what people voted and if the couple got pregnant quick enough. Women were also influenced through their childrens' education. Giebels describes the manner in which the clergy influenced families as a gradual process. They influenced women via her children, and influenced her husband via her. Women often felt guilty when they were not able to precisely follow the Churches rules (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 186).

On top of that, Giebels mentions in his article on the topic that the isolating effect of the mining communities helped as well (1982: 16). Women had little contact with people outside of the community and their family, they rarely left their neighborhoods (ibid.). Going to church was one of the few events during the week for which women left their homes (Gerlach 1982: 16).

If these influencing methods did not work the Catholic Church had some other strategies. Priests could threaten people with the possibility of going to hell (Giebels 1982: 14). In the worst cases priests could threaten with, or impose excommunication (Heidt 1968: 386). Excommunication was the most severe measurement that the Catholic Church could use to influence people, or rather to punish them (ibid). It was used to try to lead offending parishioners back to what the Church believed was the right path (ibid.). It impacted people both in performing their religion and in their place in their community, as they were avoided by the members of their religious community and could no longer take part in religious ceremonies (Heidt 1968: 387).

The Catholic Church used their influence on women to pressure women into having more children, and to enforce the idea of the importance of motherhood (Giebels 1982: 14). The church also used it to convince women to deter their husbands from striking (Giebels 1982: 16). In this manner the Catholic Church saw women as a tool in the fight against socialism (Giebels 1982: 14). This last point shows an interesting example of the connection between the mining companies and the clergy.

Lastly I want to note that, of course, not all families in the mining region were Catholic. Migration from other parts of the Netherlands meant that Protestants also started living in the area (Kusters 2012: 109). It was difficult for them to get housing, probably

because of the influence of the Catholic Church (Martin 2014). For socialists or communists it was even difficult to get a job in the mines in the first place (ibid.). In the 1930's, when because of the Great Depression the mines could easily find employees, socialism was a reason for dismissal (ibid.). This did not mean that there weren't any socialists or communists working in the mines. Those who did often lived near each other and formed tight knit communities in neighborhoods like Mezenbroek (Martin 2014).

One of the disagreements between the mining companies and the Catholic Church was based on the treatment of non-Catholic workers (Rutten 2012b: 463). As a compromise the mining companies accepted the influence of Catholicism on organizations funded by the mining company, as long as non-Catholics were allowed to make use of them (ibid.). This was important for these workers as, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter, these organizations included health care.

The mining companies did not only fund Catholic initiatives, but also Protestant ones (Rutten & Langeweg 2012: 496). Socialist or social democratic organizations were excluded from funding (ibid.). This shows again the inherent preference of the mining companies in favor of religious organizations.

3.2.3 Growing influence: the role of local and national government

The position of the government in the mining region is an interesting one. In the literature the role of the government is not a focus point, rather it is mentioned in relation to the other institutions. Often I had to make do with short sentences and paragraphs in texts. This pattern changed drastically once the literature started discussing the closings of the mines.

What makes the government's position peculiar is the government's multiple roles in the mining communities. Besides its governmental responsibilities in the region the national government owned part of the mining pits (Voncken & de Jong 2012: 6). These combined roles will probably have placed the government in a complex position as, as I have shown before, the different institutions sometimes had conflicting interests. As I do not have enough information about this, and this is not the main focus of this text I will not elaborate further on this. I just wanted to paint a picture of how deeply the national government was ingrained in mining.

Another role of the government in the region was that of financier. The government helped finance some of the mining companies' projects. For example it provided subsidies with which the mining companies were able to build housing for their employees (Langeweg 2011: 262).

Over time these roles gradually changed. From the 1930's onwards, the national government started to take a more active role in providing financial aid for workers and their families (Koops 2019). This started in 1930 with the *Ziektewet*, a law providing financial support for people who can't work because of illness (ibid.). In the 1940's and 1950's this was followed by laws providing child benefits, old age pensions and welfare benefits (ibid.). In doing so it started to take over tasks that were earlier appropriated by the mining companies and the Catholic Church (Langeweg 2011: 262).

The emergence of these new social policies by the Dutch government did not immediately lead to the abandonment of the social institutions organized by the mining companies and the Catholic Church (Wijers 1990: 56). Until the closing of the mines and the diminishing of power of the Catholic Church in the 1950's and 1960's these policies and institutions would exist side by side (Wijers 1990: 61). In the next part of the chapter I will elaborate more on this.

3.2.4 Breaking up the system: the Mines' Closing

After the second world war the system created by the institutions started to slowly fall apart. From the end of the 1950's onward the Catholic Church started to lose influence, partly due to problems with too rapid modernization in the Church which destabilized peoples beliefs (Wijers 1990: 60). Core Catholic rules and directions started to become less strictly implemented by local priests (ibid.). The Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 even made matters worse as it gave validation to these practices (Bouwens 2015: 385, 386). On top of these problems within the institution the Church had to deal with the growing influence of radio, television and cinemas (ibid.). These broadened people's view of the world and made them susceptible to new ideas outside of the Catholic sphere (Bouwens 2015: 385). All this resulted in people, especially the ones in the mining towns, feeling that they had been repressed by the Catholic church in the past (Bouwens 2015: 387). It also led to feelings of confusion and insecurity (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 189).

People's reaction to this feeling differed (Bouwens 2015: 386). Some people left the Church altogether; some only kept visiting the Church but held on to traditional beliefs; others kept their religious beliefs but stayed away from the Church because they were disenchanted by the institution (ibid.).

In 1965 the national government decided to close the mines due to mining in the country not being profitable, with the last mine closing in 1974 (Voncken & de Jong 2012: 53). After the closings of the mines the system of control and care created by the institutions collapsed (Wijers 1990: 61). Organizations which depended on the mining companies money were often forced to close (Bouwens 2015: 389). These changes impacted the entire social structure in the mining towns (Wijers 1990: 61). Mia Stollman, a social worker, describes this by stating that before the closure workers and their families could ask priests or mining officials for help if they had problems (Kurris 1969: 581). After the closing of the mines people were forced to make their own decisions, and look for solutions themselves (ibid.).This resulted in women feeling insecure and relying more on the people around them, like neighbors (Kurris 1969: 583, Bouwens 2015: 388). Oftentimes this new situation lead to people getting stuck in their problems and needing help from social workers or from local women's organizations (Kurris 1969: 580, 581).

3.3 Patriarchal mining strategies

During my fieldwork I interviewed Ad Knotter, the former director of the *Sociaal Historisch Centrum Limburg*, a documentation centre focussed on Limburg history (SHCL 2018). He has written a lot about the topic of the Limburg mines and kindly answered some of my more theoretical questions. He mentioned patriarchal mining strategies as a way to explain the behavior of the mining companies in the Limburg case. In this part of the chapter I want to look into this.

Knotter told me that patriarchal mining strategies are one of the strategies a mining company can choose from as a way to attract workers. Patriarchal mining strategies, also called industrial paternalism, in short are characterized by a company taking on a paternal attitude towards its workers (Sandstrom & Persson 2021: 2). This means that they take on a caring and patronizing role (ibid.). Companies do this by providing services and looking after employees' needs (ibid.). These strategies are seen as pre-modern inventions, which peaked in popularity in the late 19th and early 20th century (Sandstrom & Persson 2011: 184). Although Sandstrom and Persson argue that, in an adapted way, it is still popular with companies (2011: 199). It is probably not coincidental that the early 20th century is the

period in which mining in Limburg started and during which the first paternalistic measures were implemented in the region (Langeweg 2011: 262).

Usually patriarchal mining strategies are a way to secure enough employees, improve productivity or to avoid strikes (Reid 1985: 585, Sandstrom & Persson 2021: 2). In the case of the Limburg mines it is debated if these services did influence men in choosing to work in the mines (Langeweg 2011: 257). Lack of other employment opportunities can be seen as a more deciding factor (ibid.). In times of economic prosperity the mining companies had trouble finding enough workers (Langeweg 2011: 263). But at the time the mining companies expected their measures to work and provide them with a more stable workforce (Langeweg 2011: 262, Knotter 2012: 43).

Patriarchal mining strategies influence workers both inside and outside the workplace (Reid 1985: 582). It flourishes the most in areas where the state is less active; where there is a fear of the unions but the unions are not powerful; where they can have power over housing; and where they can organize community services (Sandstrom & Persson 2021: 3, 4, 5). Patriarchal mining companies act like a state but are still dependent on local or national government for monetary support or law enforcement (Reid 1985: 587). This is only partly true in the Limburg mining towns. Mining in Limburg started before the onset of the welfare state, so in that sense the government was less active in the region (Koops 2019). And while labor unions did exist in the region, they worked together with the Catholic Church and the mining companies (L1 2018). Only socialist and communist groups were really feared (Wijers 1990:46). Lastly the mining companies did get funding from the Dutch government and worked together with the Catholic Church for a different level of social control (Langeweg 2011: 262).

Industrial Paternalism can be used to describe a company town, but this does not have to be the case (Sandstrom & Persson 2021: 2). In company towns almost everything in a town, from housing to schools, would be owned by or have to comply with a single company (Sandstrom & Persson 2021: 1). In the Limburg mining region this was not entirely the case. While the mining companies influenced a lot in people's lives, this control was not as all encompassing as mentioned by Sandstrom and Persson (2021:1). Schooling, for example, was not organized by the mining company (van der Goes van Naters 1980: 80). Most miners' neighborhoods were not dominated by one single mine, Lauradorp in Landgraaf being one of the few exceptions (Bouwens 2015: 371). So the neighborhoods were not dominated by one single company. On the other hand it is argued that the system in Limburg, in which mining companies worked together with the Catholic Church and local government, created a mono-culture (Rijckheyt 2023). So while there were several companies, they worked together in one main industry.

In the end, I think that patriarchal mining strategies are a good way to theoretically describe the strategy enacted by the mining companies in Limburg. While the Limburg case did not fit its definition word for word, mostly due to the roles played by the Catholic Church and Dutch government, it does describe many of the measures taken by the mining companies. Patriarchal mining strategies mostly help to explain the reasoning why mining companies in Limburg enacted social policies. The term could also help in comparing the Limburg mining region to other mining regions in the world. Oftentimes it has only been compared to nearby mining regions. Placing the region in this theoretical framework broadens the scope of possible comparisons with other mining regions.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I looked at the role of the institutions in womens' lives. I looked at why they were influenced and how.

Mining companies, together with the Catholic Church and the Dutch government decided to influence women mainly to avoid the perceived social decline they saw in other mining regions (Wijers 1990: 46). Women were also influenced to improve production and to attract and keep workers by creating a stable 'clan' of miners (Rutten 2012: 394, 396, Langeweg 2011: 262, Knotter 2012: 43).

To achieve their goals the mining companies, but also the other institutions, had their own way of influencing women and their families. These were measures that reached all aspects of womens' lives, from housing to health care and to media intake (Arnold 1996: 34, 36; Kusters 2012: 111, 114; Op 't Veld 2012).

The collaboration between the different institutions meant that the influence of the Catholic church seeped into more areas of women's lives and the lives of their family members (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 67, Nissen 2011: 105). While the mining companies dictated women's daily schedule, the Catholic Church dictated how women gave meaning to their daily tasks (Wijers 1990: 44).

This all changed in the 1950's and 1960's, when the Catholic Church dealt with internal conflict and the mining companies started to close (Voncken & de Jong 2012: 53; Wijers 1990: 60). With the influence of two of the three institutions gone or diminished the social structure of the mining communities changed dramatically (Wijers 1990: 61). It took time for people to learn how to act within this new situation (Kurris 1969: 581).

This analysis of the role of institutions and their actions leaves little room to look at the agency of women themselves, and how women influenced and policed each other in how they cleaned and behaved (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 80). Therefore in the next chapter I will look at women's agency and how they acted within the structures set up by the institutions.

Chapter 4 Agency: How women gave direction to their lives

In some aspects women in the mining villages lived similar lives as women in other parts of the country. Most of them had to do household chores, like doing the laundry. Laundry was a time consuming process in every Dutch household (Kloek 2009: 202). But for the women in mining communities conditions were slightly different, because they had to deal with conditions formed by the mining companies and the other institutions. This changed the way they performed these tasks. In case of the laundry, mining dust was difficult to wash out of clothing (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 79). Because of coal dust coming from waste hills drying the wash could be a challenge, as wind coming from the wrong direction could stain it (Kusters 2012: 77). But women reacted to these conditions in their own way, they showed pride in the cleaning of miner's garments, or contempt (*Steenkool* 1950: 42, 332).

I am starting the chapter with this reflection to draw attention to the type of activity women in the mining communities had agency over. That the system of the three institutions and the system of gender inequality left few aspects of womens' life for the women themselves to control. And while these aspects, which were mostly household activities, were found all over the country, I want to show how mining impacted women's choices. It is a reflection that I will repeat throughout the chapter.

In this chapter I will look more closely at women themselves, and their experiences. In doing so I'm looking for the types of experiences that are part of mining history, but are not necessarily part of the mining history that is visible in museums and such. I will also look at how women moved within the structures set up by the mining company and the other institutions. In doing so I will show how their lives differed from the lives of women in other parts of the country. I will discuss both the period when the mines were active and at the period after the mines closed, to show what changed when the mines left their lives.

Although the influence of the institutions that I mentioned in the last chapter was far reaching, it did not reach every point in people's lives. Though the institutions influenced what happened inside the home, behind closed doors people still had room to rebel (Bouwens 2015: 373). Likewise people were still free to vote for their desired political party, even though being open about voting for left-wing parties could lead to negative reactions from both mining companies and clergy (ibid.). To enter the home one usually needs permission to enter it from its inhabitants (Bouwens 2015: 375). As straightforward as this sounds, it does help maintain the privacy of the home (ibid.).

I have organized this chapter firstly on aspects of women's life and secondly on time. First I will look at women's lives during the time that the mines were operational. I will discuss parts of their lives like employment and household tasks. These are aspects of which I found evidence that they were influenced by the mining companies and the clergy. Secondly I will look at if and how these aspects changed after the mining companies closed.

4.1 Matriarchy?

I want to use this first section of this chapter to create a bridge between this chapter and the one before, and to start this chapter by looking at local power dynamics and women's own influence.

A term that was repeatedly mentioned in the literature I found was 'matriarchy'. It was used to describe the family structures within the mining communities (Kurris 1969: 581, Cillekens 2012). One depiction of what this matriarchy looked like comes from Mia Stollman, who was the chairwomen of a womens' organization in Limburg (Kurris 1969: 582). She describes this matriarchy as a situation in which women decided what happened inside the

home (ibid.). Women supported the home's inhabitants to an extent that Stollman argues that this has led to husbands being passive, and led to children being patronized for most of their lives (ibid.). According to her it has also led to families being strongly connected to the region of Limburg, and to women being more progressive than their husbands (ibid.).

I have some critique on the use of the word matriarchy to describe the context of the mining communities.

First of all, anthropologically the word has its problems. The term ‘matriarchy’ describes a society where women have absolute power over both family and community (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2022). Anthropologically the word was in use in the 19th century (Sanday 2018: 2). It has later fallen into disuse because the idea of an evolutionary development in which matriarchal societies developed into patriarchal societies has been abandoned (ibid.). Another reason for the term to be disbanded was because of lack of evidence that matriarchal societies ever existed outside of myths (Sanday 2018: 2,3).

My second critique is that using the term 'matriarchy' gives a false sense of agency. While women in mining communities might have had some power inside the home, they lacked power in the outside world. An example of this is the lack of power of women’s organizations in the region (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 90). Organizations, like the *Katholieke Arbeiders Vrouwenbeweging* (KAV; “Catholic Workers Women's Movement”), were mainly used by men’s organizations as a way to support their own interests and activities (ibid.). Some people that use the word matriarchy to describe the mining communities do acknowledge this discrepancy, rather describing the situation as a matriarchal homelife (Rutten in Cillekens 2012). This is the point I want to make. One can only use the term matriarchy for this context if one ignores what happened outside the home, and how it had influence on what happened inside the home.

My third critique focuses on how this power dynamic at home, that is described by using the word matriarchy, is described as a characteristic of the region (Kurris 1969: 582). I found this not to be true. The idea of women being the center of the household has been particularly strong in the Netherlands as a whole, in comparison to other western-European countries (Kloek 2009: 10, 194). Rutten seems to explain the discrepancy by noting that in the mining region women had even more influence at home than in the rest of the country (Cillekens 2012).

In the end I do not believe that the word ‘matriarchy’ is useful to describe the situation of the women in mining communities. It takes away from the complexities of these women's lives. These are complexities that stem from living within the structure created by the three institutions, while still making use of their own agency. I will describe this struggle in the rest of the chapter.

4.2 Women's education

As I want to follow some chronological order in the way I describe women's lives, I will start this part of the chapter by writing about education. I could start earlier, with how they were raised before going to school, but that would overlap with the part later on in the chapter about child rearing. Also I think this would also be the first time in their lives that they would personally be able to make decisions about their lives. This makes it important to me in the context of looking at agency.

Women often enjoyed little education, and left school when they were about 13 or 14 years old to help at home or to work (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 93, Sijben & op de Coul 2002b). Girls often enjoyed school, but were pressured by their families to leave (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 180). Their help was needed at home and their families had no money

to pay for more education (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 181). Women often regretted having little education, also because when they were older they did not have enough time to take classes (ibid.).

The school the daughters of miners most often went to was called the *huishoudschool*, a type of school where they learned more about how to run a household (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b). Girls learned skills like sewing, cooking, cleaning, grammar and mathematics (ibid.). This type of education mainly became popular for working class girls after the second world war (Kloek 2009: 193).

Another option was the MULO or *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* ("further extended primary education"; ibid.). This is a school that was focused on more academic subjects than the *huishoudschool* (ibid.). But this was only an option if the girl's family had enough money (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 181).

Girls who left school early still had an option to follow education via night schools like the Mater Amabilis schools (Steenkool 1950: 394). This school was opened during the 1950's in the region to provide additional education for unmarried girls (Vossen 1990: 119, Steenkool 1950: 394). The school taught girls more household skills like child care, pedagogy, cooking and sewing (ibid.). It also tried to teach girls to be subservient and to obey to a 'proper sexual morale' (Vossen 1990: 119). This was only a school for unmarried girls, and they had to leave school when they married (ibid.).

For a long time education was dictated by social standing (Luyten 2015: 218). This was the case for both boys and girls (ibid.). This already started during primary school, as the children of workers were not expected to achieve high grades (ibid.). During secondary education children of miners attended schools like the *mulo,* the *huishoudschool, mijnwerkersschool*, or the *lts* (ibid.). These were types of schools that most often taught practical skills (ibid.). The children, usually the sons, of mining officials attended higher education, like the *gymnasium* or the *hbs* (ibid.). In most cases it did not matter what grades the children had (ibid.). Luyten tells the story of a boy who had the highest grades of his class but still had to attend the *mulo*, as his father was a miner and his teacher did not believe he had the maturity to do more than that (ibid.). His parents did not comment on it, as in their eyes the *mulo* was already a step up the social ladder (Luyten 2015: 219).

4.3 Women's employment

Compared to other regions the mining region had little opportunities for women to be employed, certainly for the daughters of miners (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 67). Most jobs in the region were created by the mining company (Knotter 2012: 15). Women did find employment and were at certain periods of their lives encouraged to do so.
I structured this part of the chapter in three parts: employment before marriage, employment during marriage and employment when women decided not to marry. These are not perfect categories as sometimes forms of employment overlapped. An example of this is that the profession of seamstress could be performed by all three groups of women.

Before marriage, working was encouraged by institutions like the *Steenkool* magazine as a way of learning useful household skills or to earn more money for their families. Ad Knotter told me that working was often not a possibility for the first daughter, who oftentimes had to help at home. Other, younger, daughters could work outside the home. Knotter told me this had to do with responsibility, but other sources argue that this had more to do with the amount of work at home (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 182). Girls were only allowed to have a job if they were not needed to do housekeeping (ibid.).

Girls not only worked to earn money for their parents, but also to save up money for when they got married (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b). It was possible for girls to only have a job for half the day, which meant that during the other half they could help their mother at home (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b).

At the mining companies there was no employment for women, therefore they had to find work elsewhere (Luyten 2015: 84). By using advertisements the Sphinx, a pottery manufacturer in Maastricht, got young employees from outside the city, for example from Heerlen or Schaesberg (ibid.). In the 1930's Tineke, the mother of Luyten's main character Sjaak, and her friends had to leave their beds early to travel to the factory (ibid.).

Other employment options for girls ranged from being a shopgirl, to cleaning, to working in a clothing factory (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b). Some jobs were favored over others, either by the outside world or the girls themselves. Some parents did not want their daughters to work in the factories (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b). *Steenkool* magazine notes that working in factories is not good for girls as it does not teach a household skill (1947: 218). Still these factories were the main source of employment in the area (Knotter 2012: 25).

Working as a maid or working in family care was seen by the writers of *Steenkool* as preferable as girls got to exercise skills that they would need after marriage (*Steenkool* 1953: 157). These types of jobs were not always popular with the girls themselves, as they did not pay very well and the girls had to work hard (*Steenkool* 1953: 252). Furthermore labor laws in the beginning of the twentieth century did not cover this type of work, as the household was not seen as a normal enterprise (Kloek 2009: 191). This meant that maids did not have the same protection by law as other forms of employment (ibid.).

Girls did work at the mining companies or in companies related to the mine as seamstresses, secretaries or cleaning ladies (DSM Bedrijfsarchieven: FSI 1920-1959: 11). No women did jobs in which they directly dealt with coal, at least in the Dutch mines (ibid.). In France girls worked more directly for the mines, sorting coals (Steenkool 1947: 122). Steenkool wrote about this, calling it 'unwomanly' and stating that they were happy girls in Limburg did not have to do this job (ibid.). In countries like Belgium and Great Britain women used to work below ground (Kools 2014). In Belgium this took place until 1892, when it was abolished (ibid.). In Great Britain it was officially abolished in 1842, but unofficially women worked in mines until the early twentieth century (Mercier & Gier 2007: 996). Women were excluded from mining after images emerged of women working while wearing pants, leading to shocked reactions from people outside the industry (Kools 2014).

After girls married they lost their jobs as was usual at that time, as generally neither society nor husbands preferred for women to work after marriage (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b; van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 67). It was seen as going against women's nature (ibid.). From the 1920's to the 1950's women were fired from their jobs after they married if they worked for the government or for companies (Kloek 2009: 196).

Sometimes, however, women needed to work, for example when the husband did not earn enough (Nijsten et al. 1979: 74). This happened more often with men that worked above ground at the mining company (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 155).

Women whose husbands worked below ground generally did not choose to work (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 155). They choose so even though it meant financial strain when dealing with unexpected expenses or when they had young children (ibid.). In those cases it was often decided that the husband would work more shifts at the mine (ibid.). The situation also meant that women did not usually have money to spend on themselves, for example for hobbies (ibid.).

Working outside the home was frowned upon, working inside the home was seen as preferable if one needed to work (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 81). In this case women often worked as seamstresses or cleaned in houses of wealthier people in the community (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b). Sometimes they worked in the canteen of the mining company (Steenkool 1947: 218). This was also a place where widowed women could find employment (ibid.).

Unfortunately I could not find much information about what would happen to women if their husbands died, even though looking at the number of accidents there had to be widows. The sources that do mention widows experienced a difficult financial situation (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 156).

A different group of women, the ones who decided not to marry, could make a career in different fields in the region. I found in the RHCL archive that there were women working for the mining companies or in companies related to the mine who expected to work there until they reached the retirement age. This was only the case for a small number of women, as less than 20 women fell into this category (DSM *Bedrijfsarchieven*: FSI 1920-1959: 11).

For women coming from the wealthier families, so not for the daughters of miners, it was possible to become a secretary or a social worker (Krutzen 2012, DSM *Bedrijfsarchieven*: FSI 1920-1959: 11). For these jobs women needed better and longer education (ibid.). It paid enough for the women to be able to choose not to marry (ibid.).

Finally there was the option of becoming a nun. Knotter mentioned in the interview that as in every Catholic community at the time this was a possibility, and one that was seen as an honor. He did tell me that this was especially the case before the second world war.

Women often decided to become a nun because of their love of God; because they could not have or did not want to have a family; or because they wanted to work as a nurse or a teacher, areas in which nuns at the time dominated (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 634, 635).

The option was mostly popular between 1850 and 1934 (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 623, 624) After 1934 numbers decreased steadily, and by 1953 only half the number of women entered a convent compared to 1934 (ibid.). Researchers mostly understood this as a result of societal changes which made it more socially accepted for women to have a career, and having the option to combine this with having a family (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 631). I understand from this that a lot of economic, and some social, incentives for joining a convent disappeared. It provides a clear example of how girls' options in life changed over time.

Knotter’s mentioning of the convents as an option for women made me want to find out how often daughters from miners' families became nuns. As I could not find information about this topic I decided to look into how viable of an option it was for working class women to enter a convent, to see if there were any financial or social reasons that might exclude these girls. Although I did find some reasons that could make it more difficult for them to join a convent, these reasons did not exclude these girls.

One such reason is that some congregations asked for women to bring a dowry (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 645). But a dowry was not a demand in all congregations (ibid.). Girls also had to bring a trousseau with them when joining a monastery, which contained linens and clothing (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 663). This, while not dissimilar to what a bride brought with her when she married, was again another expense for the girls and their families (ibid.).

Parents also oftentimes needed their daughters help with household chores or to supplement the family's income, if their daughter would join a convent they would miss this support (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 625). Socially, while until the 1950’s it was an honor for families to have a daughter becoming part of the clergy, it was still difficult for parents as nuns were allowed little contact with their families (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 625).

The monasteries themselves accepted the girls based on respectability, the girls had to come from what the Mother Superior of the convent understood as a ‘good Catholic family’ (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 647). Other important criteria were physical health, intelligence and adaptability (Van Heijst et al. 2010: 748).

4.4 Household tasks

For a lot of the women in the mining communities, their daily lives mainly took place in and around the home (Wijers 1990: 50). Their daily schedule was based around their husband’s shifts in the mines (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 167). The miners wives' lived with the tar the mines produced (Luyten 2015: 24, 25). The women settled the score with the aftermath of the dirty work below ground (ibid.).

The Catholic Church's teachings at the time stressed women's role as a housewife and mother (Wijers 1990: 52). If something went wrong in their household it was seen as the wife's fault (Wijers 1990: 53). Women who for some reason struggled with the division of labor and their role as housewives were seen as failures (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 67). Women internalized these ideas and tried to follow them (Wijers 1990: 53). In the end women’s work at home was seen as less important than their husband’s dangerous job in the mines (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 80).

The division of labor within miner’s families did not differ much from the division of labor in families in other areas of the Netherlands (Bouwens 2015: 379). Yet the content of women’s work at home did slightly differ from that of other housewives in the country, mostly due to their husbands' work in the mines (ibid.). Here I will discuss some of these differences.

Most families had many children due to the teachings of the Catholic Church encouraging this (Gerlach 1982: 14). In 1919 the average number of children in families was 5 (Engelen 1987: 171). This decreased to 4 children in 1938, but the number went up again after the second world war (Engelen 1987: 171, Wachelder 1957: 79). That is quite a high number, even though it is lower than the average number of children farmers in the region had during that same period (Engelen 1987: 172).

The Catholic Church discouraged the use of condoms or other contraceptives, and sex was only allowed for procreation (Gerlach 1982: 14, Wijers 1990: 52). Catholic politicians encouraged large families to gain more voters (Andere Tijden 2001). Women still tried to do family planning, but the methods they used were unreliable or difficult to obtain and sexual education was lacking or non-existent (Gerlach 1982: 15, Diederen & Wijers 1983: 84). While selling contraceptives was not forbidden nationally, it was sometimes locally forbidden, often in Catholic areas (Andere Tijden 2001). Women were not always happy with a new pregnancy, and some of them have mentioned that they would have preferred to have fewer children (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 172, 177).

Having large families again led to more work for the women (Gerlach 1982: 15). Raising children was the wife’s task (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 172). Because of the changing shifts it could happen that the men needed to sleep during the day (Wijers 1990: 48). To make this possible their wives needed to keep the children quiet (ibid.).

After 1945 families started to have fewer children, against the wishes of the Catholic Church (Bouwens 2015: 380). This was mainly because children were no longer required to generate extra family income (ibid.).

Not only did women look after their children, they could also be expected to look after their parents and parents-in-laws' household, if they lived nearby (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 168). Women also sometimes needed to take care of family members who had gotten

ill or injured in the mines (Kusters 2012: 92). This led to more work that needed to be done at home and the emotional distress of seeing a loved one suffer (ibid.).

Another household task affected by men working in the mines was cooking. Women had to adapt cooking and meal times to the time the miner's shift ended (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 79). It was possible that they needed to cook up to three hot meals a day to accommodate the different mealtimes in the family (Cillekens 2012).

As part of their salaries miners were given coal (Kusters 2012: 75). This was used to cook and warm their houses (ibid.). This resulted in coal dust covering floors and furniture, which had to be cleaned (ibid.). These places were not the only ones from which coal dust needed to be cleaned, as it stuck to clothing as well.

Laundry was a time-consuming task (Kloek 2009: 202). Therefore, generally women hated Mondays, as Monday was laundry day (Luyten 2015: 25). Laundry in miner's homes was an even bigger task because of the miners' work clothes (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 79). For most of the mines' history, women did not have washing machines to help them with this task (Wind 2008: 111). On top of that coal dust was difficult to wash out the clothing (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 79). The dirty work garments needed to soak in water from Saturday afternoon, after the children had washed themselves in the same water, to Monday if they were to get clean (ibid.).

Coal dust was also a problem while drying the laundry (Kusters 2012: 77). If the wind came from the wrong direction the laundry would be stained with the dust (ibid.).

Later on household work became easier due to mechanical solutions like the washing machine (Bouwens 2015: 390). Because of the comparatively high salaries of miners they were some of the first working class people to be able to afford these inventions (Bouwens 2015: 379, Kloek 2009: 200). But the coal dust in the miners' clothing was bad for the machines, so they would break down much faster (Fekkes 2008; TVLimburg 2008).

The topic of laundering work clothes often came up in the column 'Moeder de Vrouw' in *Steenkool* magazine. It published letters in which readers' opinions about the task was mentioned. These opinions varied from dislike to pride (*Steenkool* 1950: 42, 332). These emotions changed over time, also regarding housework in general.

Looking back on this time women often felt angry about the rules they had to abide by and tried to follow as much as possible (Wijers 1990: 63). In the literature women mentioned that, at the time, they did not think about all these tasks they had to perform as every woman performed them (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 167).

The hard work also led to physical problems, as they often led to migraine and back problems (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 168). The women themselves usually did not see the connection between the two (ibid.).

4.5 The role of men within the household

The division of labor in miners' households fit within the prevailing ideas at the time in the Netherlands: women did the household labor and men worked outside the home (Kloek 2009: 194). This division of labor was a possibility because of the miners' comparatively high wages (Bouwens 2015: 379). In the Netherlands the idea of the husband as the one who earned the family's money was very dominant, more so than in the surrounding countries (Kloek 2009: 194). Men usually agreed to this division of labor, and valued it (Bouwens 2015: 379). Often men started working in the mines to be able to afford this way of living, where they could be the breadwinner of the family (Bouwens 2015: 380).

As mentioned in the last chapter, in mining communities the Catholic Church was an important propagator of this division of labor (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 67). Other

institutions helped in doing so. For example, the writers in *Steenkool* magazine were quite dismissive of men's household skills, stating that they knew the basics but lacked the extensive knowledge of the housewife (1950: 43).

Something that has been repeated in the literature and interviews is that men's jobs in the mine were so heavy that by the time they came home they could only eat and fall asleep (Kusters 2012: 58). Gerard told me that when his father sat down in his chair after coming home from a shift, he would fall asleep within five minutes. Readings, interviews and visits to museums have made abundantly clear that the job was exhausting.

One of the experiences that highlighted this topic happened while visiting the mining museum in Brunssum. Until then I had visited a museum where I could look at the equipment that miners used, but I had not been able to touch them. In the mining museum in Brunssum I did get that opportunity. While walking past the exhibition and talking about the mine the guide handed me some of the equipment they worked with, like lamps and drills. Now I do not claim to be a strong person and I consider myself to be quite average, whatever that might mean. I barely managed to pick up some of the drills, and I did not manage to pick up any of the clamps. Even though I was able to hold the lamps for a couple of minutes, I could not imagine walking with one of them for hours. Up to that point I had only read about the heaviness of the job. But to actually feel the equipment, rather than read how much they weigh, really made it click.

The physicality of the job and the exhaustion it led to resulted in men being described as 'invisible' at home (Cillekens 2012). This could also lead to husbands and women spending little time together (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 168).

But while the previous paragraphs show a generalized version of men's tasks at home, it does not pose a complete picture of the situation. It does not take into account the differences in individual households and the changing attitudes over time. An example of this is the story of Ria, one of my interlocutors. She told me how her father would help raise her and do other things around the house. He would help bath her and cook. Another example is my interlocutor Aart, who told me that while his father generally did not help with raising the children, he was the one that punished the children if they did something wrong. This is also something that is mentioned by literature, if men were involved in childcare it was to give the punishments (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 172).

Mia Stollman, a social worker in the region, mentions how men were not involved with child care (Kurris 1969: 582). Big decisions about the children, like school type or profession were often made by others, like Catholic priests or headmasters, not the parents themselves (ibid.).

Talking about this with Ad Knotter he told me that men's involvement was rare before the 1960's, after which the idea that men should help raise children started to gain popularity (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 94).

Working in the garden was seen in some families as one of the husband's tasks. Having a garden was important, as it could provide food (Sijben & op de Coul 2002b). This was needed as especially the bigger families did not earn enough money to buy enough food (Nijsten et al. 1979: 23). My interlocutor Aart remembered that his mother never set foot in the garden. *Steenkool* magazine acknowledged this, but tried to encourage women to work in the garden as it would improve their health (1950: 235).

I also want to note that I found some articles where women complained about their husbands' lack of involvement in the home during their days off (*Steenkool* 1947: 90, *Steenkool* 1954: 318).

According to Knotter, sons were not expected to help at home. On the other hand they were not forbidden to do so. Aart told me how he would help his mother with the laundry because it was a heavy task, and Gerard told me that the older brothers and sisters would help look after the younger ones.

Luyten describes a boy who did help out at home (2015: 163, 164). He did so because he wanted to help his mother, as he saw that because of her mental illness she was not always able to clean herself (Luyten 2015: 30). Sjaakie did all the cleaning in the house that a child his size was able to do (Luyten 2015: 163, 164). For example, he cleaned the windows, the carpet and the floor (Luyten 2015: 30). Usually he cleaned on Sunday, when the other members of his family went to the soccer field and he was home alone (Luyten 2015: 163, 164). Sjaakie was one of the few people in his family who did not like soccer, and would rather spend his time at home than at the field (ibid.). This disinterest in soccer was another way in which he felt he was different from not only his family but also other boys his age (ibid.).

While he was cleaning Sjaakie would run back and forth between his home and his grandmother's house, to ask questions (Luyten 2015: 30). He would ask about the right soap to use for different surfaces and ask about which rags he was allowed to use (ibid.). The difference between boys and girls, according to Knotter, was that boys could choose if they wanted to help, and girls could not. This was also visible in Sjaakie's case. He chose to help his mother, but because he was a boy he was most likely never taught how to do housework. That's why he had to go to his grandmother for advice. His brother, on the other hand, chose not to do housework, rather deciding to play soccer (Luyten 2015: 163). This was what was expected of boys (ibid.).

4.6 The place of the mine within the home

During the research it was difficult to find out what exactly the families of miners knew about the danger of the work in the mines. In my sources I found conflicting information about what families knew and what they did not know. In this part of the chapter I want to discuss if mining was discussed within the home, and to which extent. I also want to discuss the emotional effects mining had on women.

In some interviews I listened to, women mentioned that they did not know exactly what risks their husbands had to deal with in the mines (TV Limburg 2008). One miner argued that if wives would have known exactly what happened to their husbands inside the mines, they would have forced the men to stay above ground (Nijsten et al. 1979: 56). One of my interlocutors, Ria, told me that her father did not like to talk about the mine at home, a feeling that became stronger after the mines closed.

Sometimes the decision not to know about what happened in the mines was made by women themselves. Another interlocutor, Aart, told me that when his father and uncles talked about the mine his mother would not listen to the stories. Kusters mentions in his book that the mine had no place in his home (2012: 13). His father would talk little about it, and when he did Kuster's mother would not listen to the stories as she feared the mine (ibid.). The same goes for Kusters' family, as his mother believed that to keep a sense of homeliness the mine should not be discussed at home (2012: 75). But not knowing much about what happened in the mines could lead to misunderstandings and conflicts at home (Nijsten et al. 1979: 76). Still there were other, more subtle ways to find out, like looking at

their husbands' behavior at home (Kurris 1969: 582; Nijsten et al. 1979: 39). Signs of exhaustion, grumpiness or relief are some examples of the subtle hints (ibid.).

Other sources about the mines seemed more forthcoming about what happened below ground, like the mining museum in Valkenburg. I found out during my visit that this museum already existed during the period in which the mines were running. Therefore, it could have been a source of information for women. But some miners argue that this museum only showed the nice side of mining (Nijsten et al. 1979: 56). Steenkool magazine was also a source, but one controlled by the mining companies.

In the end it did not matter if women decided to close themselves off from information about the mines, they still felt its emotional impact. Women often felt anxious because their family members risked injuries or death by working in the mines (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 79). These fears exacerbated at times, for example when husbands returned home late from work (Nijsten et al. 1979: 75).

These fears were well-founded, as accidents happened often, even though the Dutch mines were considered to be the safest mines in Europe (Nijsten et al. 1979: 23; Wind 2008: 96). I could not find any official numbers, but the main memorial in Terwinselen contains the names of 1455 miners who died during their work (Schlechtriem 2006). Kusters mentions an average of two injured miners per month (2012: 125). In his father's file he found that in his 25 year career as a miner he had been involved in 34 accidents (ibid.). Large accidents within the mine were communicated to the miner's neighborhoods by use of a siren or the police (Nijsten et al. 1979: 75).

These accidents had a large effect on the miners' families. Families often got into financial problems after the husband died in the mines, as the mining companies did not pay much money to the family afterwards (Nijsten et al. 1979: 74). A similar situation happened if the miner got injured (Wind 2008: 99).

Still women had to deal with the difficult choice of sending their sons into the mines because of the danger, but often the money the work brought in was needed for the family income (Wind 2008: 84). Some fathers made an effort to keep their sons away from the mines (Nijsten et al. 1979: 97). Sometimes these efforts were not successful, either because of financial pressures or their sons desire to follow in their father's footsteps (ibid.).

4.7 Spare time

The amount of work at home often meant that women did not have much spare time (Wind 2008: 125). Sometimes women were too busy with household tasks to socialize with other women (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 157). This all usually depended on the existence and age of the children, as more or younger children meant less spare time (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 160).

How easy it was to socialize with others also depended on the neighborhood (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 157, 159). In neighborhoods with many migrants connections were not as strong as in neighborhoods with families from Limburg (ibid.). Therefore women that had recently moved to the region often dealt with loneliness (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 157).

When women did have some time, women's social lives and hobbies were often, similar to those of men, related to the mining companies or the Catholic Church (Wind 2008: 119; van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 187). Most women were members of several organizations (Bouwens 2015: 377). Women's organizations were a way in which women could voice their opinions and meet other women (Wind 2008: 121, van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 157). In a time where women were not expected to do paid labor, volunteering with these organizations was a way for them to learn new skills and do valuable work (Bouwens

2015: 380). Still it was mostly seen as a task for women without children or women with adult children (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 69).

The *Katholieke Arbeiders Vrouwenbeweging* (KAV; “Catholic Workers Women's Movement”) was an example of an organization where women could volunteer (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 31, 91). The KAV was led by women from the mining communities (Wijers 1990: 57). Volunteering could be difficult because women had to balance their work for the organization with their tasks at home, and children and husbands were not always willing to help make this possible (ibid.).

4.8 After the closing of the mines

The mine closings resulted for some women in feelings of relief, as it brought more regularity to their lives (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 169). The fear connected to the dangerous job went away (ibid.). Nevertheless the new situation brought new difficulties, as is visible throughout this section (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 169).

As was to be expected, a lot changed in womens’ lives after the mines closed. Their daily schedule changed because of the mine's closing (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 184). Some women decided to seek employment (ibid.). This happened mostly because the change in profession or early retirement of the husband meant a decrease in income (ibid.). It also became easier for women to find employment, as companies became more willing to employ married women (Bouwens 2015: 390). But a lot of women worked as a cleaning lady, mostly because their lack of education hindered them in finding other work (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 184, 185).

They did this while they often also had to clean at home, as most families kept the traditional division of labor after the closings (Bouwens 2015: 391). One woman explains that her husband would at most get some groceries and do the dishes (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 169).

In some families the division of labor did change slightly, with the husband helping out more (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 174). Boys generally became more involved in household tasks (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 174).

This frequent absence of change has been explained by scholars by stating that men valued this division because to them it was a sign of manliness (Bouwens 2-15: 382, 383). For a lot of people it was also force of habit, they were raised with this division of labor and kept it (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 169). Also, some women did not agree with how their husbands did household work (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 170).

But after the closings this had negative financial effects, as the men’s new jobs did not pay as much as the work in the mines did (Bouwens 2015: 391). This led to worries and tensions within families (ibid.). Couples usually solved this by spending less money rather than by having the wife find employment (ibid.). This was a conscious choice, as there were employment options for married women in the region at the time, even more so than before (Bouwens 2015: 390). During this period more and more companies changed their policy and allowed married women to work for them (ibid.). But having a wife working outside the home was seen by most old-miners as a sign of personal failure (ibid.).

Miners who went on early retirement, or were declared unfit to work, resulting in them having to stay at home, did not immediately start to help their wives at home (Bouwens 2015: 392). It took some time for the men to adapt and overcome their ‘male pride’ and change their opinion about what they believed were male and female tasks (ibid.).

The closing of the mines not only took place roughly around the same time as the decline of the power of the Catholic church, it also coincided with the second feminist wave in the Netherlands (Kloek 2009: 205). In the Netherlands this wave started in 1967 (Kloek 2009: 205). The movement changed ideas about the division of labor in the house and influenced the relationship between men and women (ibid.). How big the impact of this movement was compared to other changes at the time is open to discussion. Kloek, for example, argues that the influx of new household apparatuses and the decline of the number of children had just as much effect on women, if not more (2009: 207).

The changed circumstances, and mostly women's changed tasks, resulted in women having more spare time (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 174). The closing of the mines also changed their social life, as some women lost friends because they moved away from the region (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 159). The activities of the women's organizations also changed, focusing more on providing courses (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 163). Unfortunately I could not find what these courses were about. Money became a problem for these organizations, as the mining companies cut the funding they granted them (ibid.).

Before the closings women often did not have time for politics (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 192). This also changed after the closings of the mines, after which women started to become more politically aware, this also was interwoven with the breaking of the political dominance in the region of the Catholic political party (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 193).

Lastly, education also changed during this period. One of my interlocutors, Gerard, told me that after mines closed education became more important. It not only became more important for men, but also for women (Bouwens 2015: 392). The change, Gerard told me, happened mostly because of the lack of employment in the region. This meant that the children of miners often left the region, if they had the possibility to do so (Bouwens 2015: 393). Interestingly this is the only information I could find about women's education after the closings. Based on the little information that I have, and the fact that there is so little written about the topic, I suspect that during this period women's education in Limburg started to follow the national trend. This trend was a shift towards more and higher education, especially for women (CBS 2020). What helped facilitate this shift were large changes in the Dutch educational system at the end of the 1960's (ibid.). These changes made better education accessible to more people (ibid.).

4.9 Conclusion

At the start of spring, women prepared themselves for the yearly big cleanup (Luyten 2015: 15). Tineke and Sjniedere Fieng first picked up the mattresses and woolen blankets from Sjniedere Fiengs house and brought them outside (ibid.). They beat them with a carpet beater and afterwards the home was cleaned from top to bottom (ibid.).

In this chapter I have intended to show women's personal reactions and choices in the context of the mining villages. Women still had agency, although this depended on the subject. Cleaning or doing laundry, as mentioned in the story above, were aspects that women had more agency over. It could even be a way for women to distinguish themselves from others (Luyten 2015: 160). For example, some women tried to show their skill in doing laundry by washing the white garments as white as possible (ibid.). Then the women would

examine each other's efforts by looking at the garments while they were drying outside (ibid.). This, however, to me is not evidence that women were content with the situation. I see it rather as them finding ways to deal with their situation. Interviews have shown that women had differing opinions about their situation and their tasks at the time (*Steenkool* 1950: 42, 332). Interviews that took place years later show that these opinions became more negative later on, probably due to the effects of the second feminist wave (Wijers 1990: 63, Kloek 2009: 205, van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 167).

Also even within the household there were aspects about which women had comparatively little agency. For example, while they often were the main caretaker of the children, they had little to say about their childrens' future (Luyten 2015: 218). Topics like the childrens' education were decided by their social station and by others, like the local priest (Kurris 1969: 582). In the end I believe that while the miners' wives were not as powerless as to call them victims, they were not powerful enough to be called matriarchs.

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, women in mining communities often performed the same tasks as their counterparts in other parts of the Netherlands. The story about the cleaning of the home in spring could have taken place in any other household in the country. Apart from maybe the names there is no indication that it takes place in a mining town. But what this anecdote avoids to mention is the coal dust that would have made the task more time consuming. Or the women having to plan this cleanup around the shifts of any miners in the household, as to not wake them up. These women lived and worked within a structure created by mining and the institutions surrounding it.

In the previous chapter I showed how the mining companies and the other institutions permeated many, if not most, aspects of women's lives. To me cleaning is one of the aspects that shows how difficult it was to escape the mines and forget about them, even at home. And while women never set foot in them, they still felt their impact.

As is to be expected, a lot changed after the mine closing's. The closings had negative financial effects, with the men's new jobs not paying as much as the work in the mines (Bouwens 2015: 391). How families solved this problem varied. In some families the wives sought employment, while in other families the decision was made to spend less money instead (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 184, Bouwens 2015: 391).

This variation is also visible in the division of household tasks after the mines closed. In some families the husband started to help out more, while in others the traditional division of labor was upheld (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 174, Bouwens 2015: 391). The latter has been explained in several ways: as a force of habit, men lacking household skills or by ideas about masculinity (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 169, 170, Bouwens 2-15: 382, 383). To elaborate a bit more on the latter point, these were men who were often raised with the ideal of the male breadwinner (Kloek 2009: 194). Because of the comparatively high wages of miners, they were some of the first working class men to be able to achieve this goal (Bouwens 2015: 379). When the circumstances changed and they lost this ability a lot of men felt hurt, and had difficulties adapting to the new circumstances (Bouwens 2-15: 382, 383, 392).

Conclusion

An die Bergmannsfrauen.

Tief unten in der Erden,
Mit Mühen und Beschwerden
Der arme Bergmann ringt.
Sein Los ist hart und trübe,
Doch Weib und Kind zu Liebe
Er stark die Keilhau schwingt.
Drum sollt ihr wack'ren Frauen
Auch mit am Werke bauen,
Das uns die Rettung schafft.

Und wenn die Männer zagen,
Sollt ihr es ihnen sagen:
Vertrauet eu'rer Kraft!
To the miner's wives.

Deep down in the earth,
With effort and discomfort
The poor miner struggles.
His fate is hard and sad,
But for the sake of his wife and child
He swings his pickaxe with strength.

That's why you brave women
Should also assist with the work
That will salvage us.

And if the men hesitate,
You should tell them:
Trust in your strength!
(Kämpchen 2013: 34).

When I first started on this thesis I was given a poem about miners by my grandparents, and I found it fitting to end this thesis with a poem as well. But as was the case with the picture at the frontpage of the thesis, I found it difficult to find a poem related to the women in mining communities. In the end I found one written by a German miner, published in 1904 (Kämpchen 2013: 163). I used the first two paragraphs of this poem, as it is quite long. Still, these paragraphs convey the message of the poem well, as it instructs the miner's wives to support their husbands as best they can. This is similar to how the mining companies saw women's role in mining, although I do not think that the socialist writer of the poem would have appreciated this comparison (Rutten 2012: 394, Kämpchen 2013: 150).

Here I have used the same approach as I have used in this thesis: to take a look at the past through the lens of heritage and collective memories. I started the thesis with the question: How did the minescape influence the wives of miners and their families during and after the mines were active, and how is this past reflected in heritage? I have done this by using three sub-questions:

1. What mining heritage and collective memories are still left, and what place do women have in this?
2. Were gender dynamics influenced by family members working in the mines?
3. Were gender dynamics influenced by the closing of the mines?

To answer the first sub-question, which questions what mining heritage is still left of and what role women play in this, I started by looking at what was still left of the region. This turned out to be more than I had initially expected. Nowadays the mines are still visible via the landscape, houses, monuments, objects and museums.

I found that a returning theme when looking at mining heritage, especially the mining heritage in Limburg, is that mining features have been given a broad variety of meanings and interpretations over time. These meanings have moved from the mining heritage being a representation of industry to being more of representation of people (Gemeente Kerkrade 2022). They have become features that help to remember family members that worked in the mines (ibid.).

Historically, mining heritage in the region has been a source of conflict (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c). One of the main divides, but not the only one, is the one between inhabitants of the region, the local government and the national government (ibid.). Until the 1960's industrial heritage, and therefore mining heritage, was not considered heritage internationally (ibid). It took time before national heritage organizations, who were notably established in the west of the Netherlands, adapted to the change in perception that mining could be considered heritage (ibid.). It took even more time for politicians and government officials to do so as well (ibid.). Also, the local government was very motivated to leave the mining past behind (ibid.). I believe this explains why so many mining buildings and landscapes in Limburg were demolished.

The demolishing led to dissonance between the local government and ex-miners, as they disagreed about the value of the buildings and whether they should be kept (Sijben & op de Coul 2002c). While the ex-miners had mixed feelings about mining and were unlikely

to protest the destruction of the buildings, the destruction did hurt them (Knotter 2012: 602). These feelings did only seldomly lead to protests to stop the demolition (Trouw 23-08-1976).

From the year 2000 onwards interest in mining heritage surged (Zijlstra 2020: 7). Before that time initiatives on mining heritage were few and far between (ibid.). Unfortunately, I could not definitively find out why exactly at that time the new interest in mining history started. It took until 2020 before mining was mentioned in a national list with important historical events (Zijlstra 2020: 7). It was included because of a growing interest in energy sources (ibid.).

The struggle to protect the mining landscape and houses is still ongoing. There is still debate whether the old miners' houses should be kept, mostly due to economic concerns (van der Steen 2021). These debates on mining heritage are not restricted to the Netherlands, but take place internationally (Power 2008: 172). In some countries, however, like Great Britain, women's experiences are more included in this debate (ibid.).

To answer the sub-question about gender dynamics in miner households I looked at both structure and agency. When looking at structure, I studied how the mining companies influenced women directly. I discuss them mainly as institutions, and only sparsely look at individual members within the organization.

I found that mining companies, together with the Catholic Church and the Dutch government worked together to influence women (Wijers 1990: 46). They did so mainly to avoid the perceived social decline they saw in other mining regions (ibid.). Other reasons for influencing them were to improve production, to attract and keep workers by creating a stable 'clan' of miners, and out of fear of socialism (Rutten 2012: 394, 396, Langeweg 2011: 262, Knotter 2012: 43, Wijers 1990: 46).

The mining companies and the other institutions all had their own specific ways of influencing women and their families to achieve these goals. These measures reached almost all aspects of womens' lives, from housing to health care and to media intake (Arnold 1996: 34, 36; Kusters 2012: 111, 114; Op 't Veld 2012).

For the Catholic Church the collaboration with the other two institutions meant even more consolidation of their influence in the region, and having an even deeper impact into different areas of women's lives (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 67, Nissen 2011: 105). In a way, the Church dictated how women gave meaning to their daily tasks, while the mining companies dictated their daily schedule (Wijers 1990: 44).

This meant that while generally women in the mining communities performed the same tasks as their counterparts in other Dutch regions, there were differences in how and when they performed these tasks (Bouwens 2015: 379). The coal dust that the mines produced made the task of doing the laundry more time consuming (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 79). The work-shifts of the miners dictated within the household when a woman could clean, so as to not wake them up, or to cook more often to fit these same shifts (van Diederen & Wijers 1983: 79).

Women found their own ways to have agency over their situation. Some would try to distinguish themselves from others by washing the white garments as white as possible, as laundry was an aspect that women could control (Luyten 2015: 160). Still, within the household there were some aspects about which women had comparatively little agency. While they often were the main caretaker of the children, they had little to say about their childrens' future as they were decided either by their social station or the local priest (Luyten 2015: 218, Kurris 1969: 582).

Interviews have shown the differing opinions that women expressed about their situation and their tasks at the time, ranging from dislike to pride (*Steenkool* 1950: 42, 332).

Over time these opinions changed, women who were interviewed years later voiced more negative opinions about their tasks (Wijers 1990: 63, Kloek 2009: 205, van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 167). This is probably due to the effects of the second feminist wave and the negative effects of the mines closing (ibid.).

I have followed the same strategy to answer the sub-question about gender dynamics after the mines were closed. The system created by the three institutions, which I mentioned earlier, collapsed in the 1950's and 1960's. This happened firstly due to the Catholic Church dealing with internal conflict, and later on because the mining companies started to close (Voncken & de Jong 2012: 53; Wijers 1990: 60).

With the influence of two of the three institutions diminished or gone, the social structure of the mining communities changed dramatically (Wijers 1990: 61). It took time for people to learn how to act within this new situation (Kurris 1969: 581). One change was that the mine closings had negative financial effects, as the men's new jobs did not pay as much as the work in the mines (Bouwens 2015: 391). Families solved this problem in varied ways. In some families the wives sought employment, while in other families the decision was made to spend less money instead (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 184, Bouwens 2015: 391).

In some cases the division of household tasks changed as well. In some families the husband started to help out more, but in others the traditional division of labor was upheld (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 174, Bouwens 2015: 391). The latter has been explained in several ways: as a force of habit, men lacking household skills or by ideas about masculinity (van de Besselaar et al. 1979: 169, 170, Bouwens 2-15: 382, 383). The old miners were often raised with the ideal of the male breadwinner, and because of the comparatively high wages of their profession, they were some of the first working class men to be able to achieve this goal (Kloek 2009: 194, Bouwens 2015: 379). When the circumstances changed and they lost this ability a lot of men felt hurt, and had difficulties adapting to the new circumstances (Bouwens 2-15: 382, 383, 392).

In recent years the generation that have worked in the mines, and have actively lived through the mining period as adults has been starting to disappear. I am curious how mining heritage and mining memory will change due to this development. Since I have done my fieldwork, there have been new developments in the field of Limburg mining heritage. The mining museum in Heerlen has opened a new building in which there is already more focus on the children of miners (Nederlands Mijnmuseum 2021a). In some way mining is still actively impacting people living in the region, both in environmental and social ways (Menses 2022; Peterse, Nicolai & van Dijk 2022). So I believe that mining will still be a topical issue in the coming years.

I started this thesis with the following research question: How did the minescape influence the wives of miners and their families during and after the mines were active, and how is this past reflected in heritage? The situation I described in the previous paragraph shows a change in how mining heritage is perceived in the region. The shifting focus on a younger generation of people, one that has experienced the mines being open but have not worked in the mines themselves, shows how the present has an impact on how the past is valued. It puts emphasis on how heritage is a process, occurring in the present, rather than a static past. The revaluation of the past could give opportunities for the 'hidden' heritage of groups that earlier had been forgotten in mining heritage, like women. Women who have structurally felt the influence of the mining companies, had to find ways to have agency over their lives.

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Appendix: List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition	English translation
DSM	*de Staatsmijnen*	Dutch State Mines

FSI	*Fonds voor Sociale Instellingen*	Fund for Social Institutions.
HBS	*Hogere Burgerschool*	Higher Civic School
KAV	*Katholieke Arbeiders Vrouwenbeweging*	Catholic Workers Women's Movement
LTS	*Lagere Technische School*	Lower Technical School
MULO	*Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs*	Further Extended Primary Education
RHCL	*Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg*	Regional Historic Centre Limburg
SHCL	*Sociaal Historisch Centrum Limburg*	Social Historical Centre Limburg