

Perception of Dutch society towards statues of colonial past

A discourse analysis of news articles

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Abstract

Various acts against statues of historical figures have created a discussion about how Dutch society should deal with heritage and works of art which carry a story that glorifies dark pages of a nation's colonial history. Moreover, since the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020, the tensions between different groups in society have been increasing. The urgency to find a solution regarding controversial statues is therefore also increasing. As there are various stakeholders with different ideas on how to conserve (or not conserve) controversial statues, this research aims to get a grasp of the various positions in the debate by answering the following research question: How are statues which are connected to national colonial histories looked upon by various stakeholders and how should these be preserved by Dutch society, according to the current dominant discourses in news articles? The research question will be answered properly through a discourse analysis on a set of news articles published by Dutch news outlets between 25 May 2020 – the day George Floyd died – and 1 March 2021. News articles are used as these are seen as the building blocks of public debates. First, it is found that academics, politicians and passers-by are heard most often in the articles reviewed. On the contrary, protestors are barely asked to shed their light on the events occurring. In addition, if protestors are heard, their ideas are reported as the secondary definition. Moreover, from the articles analysed, eight different repertoires are distinguished: (1) the nationalists; (2) the trivialists; (3) the relativist; (4) the pragmatic contextualist; (5) the idealistic contextualist; (6) the artistic defacers; (7) the museologists and (8) the radical anti-colonialist. The earlier three repertoires are a part of the colonial discourse, while the latter five are embedded in the post-colonial discourse. From the colonial discourse, it is argued that no changes should be made towards the statues, for different reasons represented by the three repertoires. However, from the post-colonial discourse, it is advocated that the public sphere should change, reasoned from more or less radical repertoires on how this should be done. This post-colonial discourse is the dominant position in the public debate. However, from this discourse, the modest repertoires are most widely represented.

KEYWORDS: *national identity, difficult heritage, discourse analysis, postcolonialism, multiculturalism*

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Introduction

The "iconoclasm" that took place in Rotterdam in the Summer of 2020, in which sculptures of Pim Fortuyn and Piet Hein, as well as the front of the Center of Contemporary Art in the Witte de Withstraat, were begrimed with red paint, was a call for action from the action group 'Helden van nooit', a Dutch art collective that stands up against the glorification of colonialism ('Heroes of Never', RTL Nieuws, 2020). These acts have created a discussion about how Dutch society should deal with heritage and works of art which carry a story that glorifies dark pages of a nation's colonial history. Although this conversation is not new – already from the 1960s collective memory, heritage and history in general have been criticized by civil movements, scientists and political parties (Buis, 2020) – this time there seems to be a wind of change. The increasing support for the removal of statues from the public sphere is largely caused by the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in the Netherlands.

Black Lives Matter is a political and social decentralized movement against police viciousness and racially motivated violence against black people. The movement started with the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter by three activist women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi. They used the hashtag in July 2013 on social media after the discharge of police officer George Zimmerman for the assassination of Trayvon Martin (Edwards, 2016; Mir & Zanoni, 2020). The movement since gained national recognition with its street demonstration following the deaths of two African-Americans in Ferguson and New York City. In the summer of 2020, the movement has reached international attention when global protests arose in response to the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The movement gained strength these days, while at the time there was an economic, health and political crisis that affected the black community harder than others (NOS, 2020). Under the influence of these forces and social media, Black Lives Matter turned from a movement in the United States into a global movement, highlighting the interconnected global history of colonialism and slavery (Mir & Zanoni, 2020).

The Black Lives Matter movement also found its way to Dutch anti-racism activists. While the first Black Lives Matter protest in the Netherlands was already held in July 2016 at the Dam, it was only a relatively small sit-in against police violence in the United States. After the death of George Floyd, however, the movement organized a new protest on the Dam on June 1st. This protest was not only directed against police violence in the United States, but also against police violence and institutional racism in Europe. The protest was visited by

about 5000 people and was the start sign for other protests that were organized in other cities in the Netherlands.¹

In addition to the global protests, there was also an international call for the removal of colonial statues in the public sphere. Activists from all over the world started a new iconoclasm, pulled down monuments and begrimed statues in their own country, mainly of historical persons such as slave traders. In the United States and the United Kingdom, the call for removal has caused a new wave of iconoclasm in which statues were literally pulled down by an angry public (Atuire, 2020; Siemsen, 2020). As fixed self-images of a community at a specific point in time, statues and monuments are symbolic representations of the interpretation of a nation's collective history (Atuire, 2020). While monuments are merely a place for remembrance, statues usually carry the idea of honour and celebration. Most statues of historical figures in the public sphere are celebrations of the triumphs of the person sculptured and their contribution to society. In turn, stories about complex and troubling histories such as slavery are often getting simplified and ignored. Heritage always represents someone's heritage, which means others are excluded. Heritage is hence dissonant: it is a social process of managing the past and also contestations over the cultural, social and economic values attached to the past that defines heritage (MacDonald, 2009). In the process of dealing with the past, interpretations thus always need to be taken into account. Especially when difficult stories of the past are recreated and consumed, it might happen that some legendary narratives will be added to the story told due to painful emotions (van Ommeren, 2011). The danger is, however, that the story as a whole becomes a legend.

Within the Netherlands, the majority of the population seems to have a hard time acknowledging that the aberrations of the past should not have an honourable place in current Dutch society. Key figures of the nation's history, such as 'sea heroes' Piet Hein and J.P. Coen, are still celebrated with a statue, even though they would currently be charged guilty with many unlawful actions, such as mass killings and slavery trade. At the same time, it is sometimes reasoned that these 'heroes' have built the Dutch nation. From this nationalist perspective, it is often argued that Dutch society should be thankful for these people. Moreover, it is said that history should not be erased and Dutch people have to remember these key figures somehow. Though, the heritage and museum sector did change towards a more inclusive representation over time. Examples are Amsterdam Museum (2019) which stopped using the term Golden Age in September 2019, the Mauritshuis (2019) presented an

¹ The protest at the Dam was also heavily debated afterwards due to social norms regarding COVID-19 at the time. The media questioned whether this issue was more important than the endangered public health.

exhibiting devoted to shifting perceptions on Johan Maurits of Nassau - Siegen in 2019 and Rijksmuseum (n.d.) just opened an exhibition to broaden the perspectives on the history of slavery in The Netherlands. Nonetheless, the idea of iconoclasm in the public sphere has also reached Dutch protestors. Although the situation is not fully comparable to the one in the United States or the United Kingdom, in the Netherlands there were several cases in which statues were daubed (Jensen in Siemsen, 2020).² A few statues, in particular, were criticized heavily, like Pim Fortuyn and Piet Hein as mentioned before. But also the statue of J.P. Coen in Hoorn and monument Indië-Nederland (previously called Van Heutsz memorial) in Amsterdam were not spared. Since the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020, the tensions between different groups in society have been increasing. The urgency to find a solution regarding controversial statues is therefore also increasing. As there are various stakeholders with different ideas on how to conserve (or not conserve) controversial statues, this research aims to get a grasp of the various positions in the debate by answering the following research question: *How are statues which are connected to national colonial histories looked upon by various stakeholders and how should these be preserved by Dutch society, according to the current dominant discourses in news articles?*

To answer this research question properly, I have established a theoretical framework that explores the field of heritage studies. In more detail, the literature provides a framework regarding identity formation in multicultural societies and considers the field of post-colonial studies too. From the theoretical framework in chapter 2, it is argued that that heritage is a building block of national identities. However, as explained in the paragraph on multiculturalism, in multicultural societies, multiple identities co-exist. Nonetheless, in an idealistic multicultural society, the individual would have their own cultural identity and a shared identity with fellow citizens of the nation-state they live in. These shared identities are relatively unrestricted and are found in a broad agreement on the content of this identity. However, these shared identities can only be formed if all cultural groups are perceived as equal and hence cannot be established when a dominant cultural hegemony exists. Hegemonies are mostly already established in colonial periods and are still influenced by colonial ideologies. In response to break these patterns, postcolonial theorists examine these influences. From this paragraph on postcolonial studies, it can be concluded that contemporary societies tend to focus on the historical achievements of the nation. As a consequence of this cognitive dissonance, the heritage representations of these nations are

² Jensen talks about a critical look at the statues in the public sphere rather than iconoclasm which is, in her opinion, common in society as history is never finished and the spirit of the age is changing (Siemsen, 2020).

very Eurocentric and therefore do not stimulate the process of creating a shared identity. These Eurocentric heritage representations, which are especially statues, can become so-called difficult heritage and are now widely discussed in terms of how to preserve them. At the end of the theoretical framework, the literature is put in the context of the Netherlands. This reveals that the Netherlands did not succeed to form a successful multicultural society yet, due to the pillarized fundament of the society, the self-image of Dutch people and ineffective integration policies. However, the times are changing as the heritage sector and journalists are raising awareness for cultural diversity and multiculturalism. As further explained in the methodological section of chapter 3, journalists set the agenda of the public and are simultaneously looking for the dominant stance in society. Therefore, newspapers can be perceived as a foundation of the public debate. Newspapers articles are proper research data in this research, as it aims to find the dominant discourse in the public debate regarding controversial statues. The results of the analysis are outlined in chapter 4. The results show that there are 8 repertoires from which arguments on preservation (or not) are made: (1) the nationalists; (2) the trivialists; (3) the relativist; (4) the pragmatic contextualist; (5) the idealistic contextualist; (6) the artistic defacers; (7) the museologists and (8) the radical anti-colonialist. These repertoires are accommodated in two discourses: the colonial and postcolonial discourse. In the last chapter, it is concluded that the postcolonial discourse is the most dominant. However, the more modest repertoires are represented most within this discourse.

Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework was established in order to answer the research question properly. Within this chapter, various concepts regarding heritage studies and national identity are explored. Heritage is regarded as an important aspect in creating national identities, in literature. Heritage is seen as a discursive practice, through which groups can be formed. However, as a consequence of globalization, conflicting identities and groups can become part of the same nation-state. Therefore it is also explored how multicultural societies would idealistically create a shared identity, in this chapter. From this paragraph on multicultural societies, it is learned that a shared identity can only be created if there is no dominant hegemonic group. However, while these groups do exist in contemporary societies, it is explored how these influence contemporary societies through the paragraph on postcolonial studies. Eventually, there is given a practical meaning and context to this theoretical framework through, examining these theories in the Dutch context.

Heritage studies and national identity

Through heritage research, scholars have recognized that heritage, in all different forms, is an influential force on society. An illustration of the force heritage has on society can be perceived in the strong links between identity formation and heritage (Sørensen & Carman, 2009, p. 3). Due to these influences, heritage has become an increasing area of research since the 1980s and the term heritage had been widely used in not only academic but also other practices (Sørensen & Carman, 2009, p. 11). Due to the diverse definitions, roles and meaning of heritage in society, heritage studies is an interdisciplinary field (Sørensen & Carman, 2009, p. 3). Heritage research is not per se focussed on the past, but rather on the influence heritage has in the present and hence studies current societies.

''Heritage, and the formally staged experience of encountering the physical traces of the past in the present, has become an all-pervasive aspect of contemporary life, a series of components that act as building blocks for the design of contemporary urban and suburban spaces (Harrison, 2012, p. 1).''

The quote above by Harrison (2012, p. 3) shows the omnipresence of heritage in contemporary societies. As Harrison (2012, p. 14) mentions, the term heritage is used to describe various things from buildings to personal belongings and everything in between.

Heritage is not a thing but rather refers to the values of a specific time, place and culture which are frozen and preserved. Hence, preserving heritage is an active process of gathering objects, activities and practices that society chooses to hold up as a mirror for the present, related with a set of values that society wish to take with them in the future. Thus, heritage is more about the meaning placed on the objects rather than the objects themselves (Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 2). According to Graham and Howard (2008, p. 2), the meanings placed on heritage are marked out by identity and are produced and exchanged through social interaction and consumption. Hence society makes things mean and consequently, these meanings will change over time as society changes (Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 2).

Seen from a constructionist perspective, the selection of heritage might be used as a resource for cultural, political and economic purposes. Heritage is thus used as a socially constructed collective memory, formed by demands of the present. Therefore, heritage is no direct engagement with the study of the past, but rather an interpretation of resources selected according to the concerns of the present and hence a legacy to the future (Graham & Howard, 2008; Harrison, 2012). Nonetheless, the selection and interpretation of the past do not have to be in line with the values of the future due to changing times and perspectives (Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 5). Heritage assets can therefore later become difficult, as societies become more heterogenetic and culturally diverse. This thus means that cultural, political and economic values – hence the selected heritage that was once selected to present these values – are no longer the same and conflicts may arise.

Heritage is increasingly looked at as a discursive practice, that has the power to form groups. From this perspective, heritage and shared meanings of the past are used to construct narratives of in- and exclusion – us versus the other – and therewith define communities. Within the ideal, essentialist situation, people in these communities have the same economic, political and cultural values represented through heritage and hence create the same identity (Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 2). Consequently, looking from this ideal situation, the preservation of heritage is dynamic and shaped on the basis of contemporary political, social and cultural perceptions. In this dynamic process, various stakeholders load heritage with the meaning of their own interest to fulfil a particular need and rhetorical functions in the present (Sierp & Wüstenberg, 2015, p. 322). From this stance, it is further claimed that individual remembrances do not exist while meanings behind memories reside within institutions and physical memory forms like books and statues (Maurantonio, 2014, p. 3). Heritage thus contains meaning that has the power to form groups: a narrative of national identity.

National identity is both the identity of an individual as a member of a political community as well as the identity of a political community that separates one nation from the other (Parkeh, 2008, p. 56). Membership of a political community is often regarded as an important part of the individual identity while their history and individual memories are bound up with it. Individuals grow up with the national identities and are educated with the values of the identity (Parkeh, 2008, p. 56). In addition, symbols, myths, memories, national celebrations and rituals give the national identity an emotional depth (Parkeh, 2008, p. 57). So, individuals are educated with the national values already from a young age and create an emotional bond with these national values through various heritage forms. Thus, according to Parkeh (2008, p. 56 - 57), individuals are deeply connected with their national identities and therefore with others with whom they share this identity. Moreover, also Huddy and Del Ponte (2019) argue that a strong connection with the national identity causes that individuals feel solidarity towards fellow citizens easier conform to social norms and are more likely to be influenced by political leaders. Thus, the national identity creates a feeling of togetherness between all citizens in the nation (Parkeh, 2008; UNESCO, 2017; Huddy & Del Ponte, 2019). National identity can hence theoretically be regarded as a source of social cohesion and accordingly makes nation-states governable. Heritage representations are seen as a source of national identity in this theory. In the same line of thought, Smith (2006, p. 4) states that heritage is about the promotion of a consensus version of history through government authorized institutions to create a national identity and synchronize cultural and social differences in the present. According to this theory, the selection of heritage is a, rather top-down, political and governmental process that unifies different people through a story shared history (Parkeh, 2008; Smith, 2006; Huddy & Del Ponte, 2019). The group of people that can recognize themselves in the selection of values represented through heritage – 'us' – belong to a different group than the people who cannot relate to this selection – 'the other'. Moreover, while the government determines which heritage will be represented within the public sphere, they indirectly determine which groups feel a sense of belonging to society at large. Though, simultaneously, heritage can also be used as a means to challenge and redefine conventional values and identities by subordinate groups through a bottom-up approach, as also done through the Black Lives Matter protests.

This bottom-up approach is visible today as societies become increasingly heterogeneous due to globalization (Hopper, 2007, p. 39). Consequently, nations are increasingly existing out of different cultures. Moreover, due to immigration, a growing share of individuals in society did not grow up with the national identity of the nation they live in.

Hence, there is a swelling share of citizens who cannot recognize themselves in the selection of national values represented through heritage, which were selected at a time when society was more homogeneous in culture. According to the arguments of Parkeh (2008, p. 56 - 57) and Huddy & Del Ponte (2019) made before, the fewer people feel represented in the selected values, thus national identity, the less they feel involved with the nation. Hence, arguing from the top-down approach of heritage, it would be preferable if the government would select a set of values in which the entire multicultural society can recognize themselves. Therewith create a broad national identity, establish a large feeling of involvement in the nation and social cohesion. Or using the influential term of Benedict Anderson: create an imagined community, in which individual citizens feel part of the nation-state while at the same time regard themselves as a part of a separate group (Smith, 2006; Oostindie, 2011). These communities are defined as such by Anderson, while he argues that members of the nation will never meet, hear or know most of the other members of the nation. Yet, there exists an image of a communion life in each of their minds.

In conclusion, heritage studies found a strong connection between national identity and heritage while national values are showcased through national heritage. National identities create a strong sense of belonging and solidarity between citizens in the nation, hence the nation is better governable. Therefore, it is reasoned that it would be ideal if all citizens are part of the imagined community, can identify with the national identity and the heritage that represents this identity. In order to further gain knowledge about how to create one national identity in a contemporary globalized society, cultural differences, multiculturalism and hegemonies are researched further in the next paragraph.

Multiculturalism

Heritage representations form the basis of national identities. However, due to globalization, an increasing amount of different identities are accommodated within nation-states. This implies that diverse – sometimes conflicting – heritage representations are also housed within society. In this section, it is therefore explored how multicultural societies evolve, how these societies can form an imagined community and create a shared identity. Besides, it is also discussed how cultural differences can lead to conflicts between various cultural groups and underrepresentation of minority groups.

Cultural differences within nations are thus increasing due to globalization. However, although national identities are continuously changing, there are many debates revolving around the issue of what and how much changes are tolerable (Oostindie, 2011, p. 103).

Moreover, it is discussed who has the final say about these changes. Nonetheless, while the nation-state does not have the only voice as such, they do have the concluding word informal sense. Because, the government has the power to establish and monitor national traditions, symbols and canons. In addition, governments can define the space for the cultural differences within the nation (Oostindie, 2011, p. 103). However, in literature, two forms of culturally different societies are described. First, the model of assimilation is used to form a society in which minorities adopt the traits of the dominant culture and gradually leave their culture behind. This form of society is also called a melting pot society by sociologists according to Macionis & Plummer (2012, p. 339). Nevertheless, others state that melting pot societies are different from societies that use the model of assimilation, while they argue that melting pot societies form one new culture rather than conform to the dominant culture (Ashworth, Graham & Turnbridge, 2007, p. 117). Secondly, there is the model of pluralism in which minority cultures are distinct but have equal social rights as the dominant culture. According to Macionis & Plummer (2012, p. 338), pluralism is the goal of multicultural societies. The term multiculturalism is used to describe government policies that manage the co-existence of diverse cultures within one nation and became popular in the 1970s (Harrison, 2012, p. 143). Canada was the first nation to apply multiculturalism to formally recognise Canadian society as bilingual and bicultural. The policies were adopted to promote diversity. Multiculturalism is established with the idea to celebrate a variety of cultures rather than assimilate them. However, in some countries, there is a great amount of critique on the implemented multiculturalism policies, from the whole political spectrum, especially since the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Harrison, 2012, p. 143). Since these attacks and other terrorist activities, right-wing politicians have promoted the limiting of immigration and fear towards Muslims. While on the other end of the spectrum, left-wing parties have advocated that multicultural policies distract from real social, economic and political imbalances. Harrison (2012) also states that multiculturalism can be used to ignore epistemic racism in situations where racism and social inequality could be called a cultural difference and thus should be celebrated under the pretence of multiculturalism (Harrison, 2012, p. 143). However, according to Oostindie (2011), the debate about multiculturalism revolves around how much freedom can be given to various perspectives and traditions, especially migrant communities. Additionally, it is discussed whether the characteristics of the migrants can adequately fit in into the national identity and subsequently if it would be valuable to do so (Oostindie, 2011, p. 103).

To create a successful multicultural society, both the identities of the original heritage group as the national identity should be celebrated (Berry, 2013, p. 672). According to several

studies in Canada, reviewed by Berry (2013, p. 673), there is no general relationship between individuals having two separate identities – their own cultural identity and the national identity of the nation-state in which they live – and social cohesion within the nation. This means that having dual identities does not have to lead to conflict per se. According to Berry (2013, p. 673), the relationship between dual identities and social cohesion rather depends on the way a given society accommodate cultural differences. When multiculturalism is promoted, society gives room to various cultural heritages and both of the dual identities protected, social cohesion will rather grow than be weakened (Berry, 2013, p. 672). In addition, the Dutch Commission of UNESCO doubted if something like collective memory even exists and states that it is not always possible to formulate one story in which every part of a society fully recognizes itself. According to the commission, it would be good to accept various perspectives on the story (van den Broek & van Houwelingen, 2019, p. 18). Hence, in this perspective, more stories should be represented in the public sphere. Within the same line of thought, Parkeh (2002, p. 221) states that a shared identity can grow from interactions between the various cultural groups in a multicultural society. In shared identities there would be a broadly, but not universally, agreement on the content of these shared identities which would be under constant negotiation. Furthermore, such identities are relatively unrestricted, multistranded and are open to various perspectives (Parkeh, 2002, p. 221). Hence it can occur that not all members of the identity agree with all aspects of the identity equally, yet, they agree with enough aspects to own it as their identity. Different members of the community will embrace the shared identity with different levels of commitment. Private and public realms need to encourage interaction between various cultures in a nation, to establish a multiculturally formed identity (Parkeh, 2002, p. 222). Thus, for example, private businesses, restaurants and sports clubs should provide opportunities for different cultural communities to meet and evolve common interests according to Parkeh (2002). In addition, governments should empower all cultural groups to participate in common dialogue, through various institutions as schools, public museums and public media. Moreover, creating multicultural heritage as exhibitions, festivals and music will build up shared sources of pleasure and hence promote a multicultural attitude in society at large (Parkeh, 2002, p. 223). However, this shared identity can only be formed when the various heritage groups perceive each other as equal, have equal access to public space; opportunities for self-expression; the chance to question each other and have equal power (Parkeh, 2002, p. 221). When groups, however, do not perceive each other as equals, there is mostly one dominant group, the hegemony, who can mobilize biased agendas (Maurantonio, 2014, p. 5).

Cultural hegemony belongs to the dominant group which has the power over other groups in society, as Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist thinker, describes. Within these societies, the cultural group with the hegemony hence do not perceive other cultural groups as their equals. Cultural hegemony can be defined as:

''the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (Jackson Lears, 1985, p. 568).''

The hegemonies have an overweight over the minorities as a consequence of historical power relations and can form the cultural norms, values, perceptions and the national identity of society (Jackson Lears, 1985). This group hence decide which heritage representations are valuable and represented in the public sphere. The idea about cultural hegemony is a way of seeing the world through the eyes of the dominant group. Nonetheless, there is a need to develop a world view that appeals to more groups in society as the group with hegemony should be able to claim that they have an interest in society at large to remain their domination without any force (Jackson Lears, 1985, p. 569). Otherwise, groups will demonstrate against the power structures and debate heavily the public sphere (Sierp & Wüstenberg, 2015, p. 322). However, the world view of the hegemony is presented through various systems in the private and public realm, for example in management positions and the educational system. But, also, through media like news outlets.

The presentation of power structures through the news and the way news outlets have the opportunity to circulate ideas through society is especially important in this research, as the data set is existing out of articles published by newspapers. Within news outlets, journalists have a critical function in contemporary societies: they are charged with the task to ensure that all members of these societies can understand the world around them (Stuart, 1999, p. 49). Journalists thus should make a presentation of reality, so that everyone in society can understand complex events happening. Journalists are expected to do this while drawing upon diverse ideas, opinions and sources. However, these sources and ideas are mostly dominated by the hegemonic group while this group is seen as the 'standard' and hence their ideas are perceived as universal for society at large. Journalists bring three types of information: news, which is the actual information; knowledge, about how people behave;

and opinions about the events happening. Therefore, rather than saying that media are informative, Hall (1981, p. 270) would say that news media are shaping general societal knowledge. News media facilitate the public with forming ideas about the world. Hence, through the choices they make concerning what to report and who to interview, journalists have the power to set the agenda of the public (Hall, 1981, p. 269).

Although journalists thus v much power and intel in the process of producing news, news media are often perceived as factual and objective by the public. While there are several constraints and requirements that journalists have to follow to prevent them from influencing the decisions of both the public and governments, they still have to select, decide and communicate what they think the facts are (Hall, 1981, p. 272 - 273). Furthermore, the power to make the news selection is only the privilege of a small group usually white males (Stuart, 1999, p. 51). This might cause, that this perspective – which can also be called alternative while only a little share of citizens is a white male – becomes the ruling perspective so that it develops the powerful hegemonic perspective and therefore frequently heard. While, on the other hand, the viewpoints of the minority groups are rarely shared with the public by journalists. Another powerful aspect that influences how the reader perceives the social world around him is the structure of the article. Established individuals often have the first opportunity to describe the situation discussed and define what is relevant. Hence these powerful voices become the primary definers of the conflict (Hall, 1981, p. 281). The less powerful will be asked for their view on the situation only later so that they have to respond to the situation described by the primary definers. These responses therefore will rather be a counterargument to the existing reference points than an alternative definition of the situation. Nonetheless, the primary definition carries the most credibility and authority, thus, is hard to change. In addition, due to the complexity of the contemporary world and the efficient mentality of news media lead to increasingly superficial reports of the news. This, too, causes that the ruling, hegemonic ideas are reproduced over and over again, brought to society as being the only way possible to interpret the events happening (Stuart, 1999, p. 51). Looking at different news brands on a certain day would consequently display that the same stories are covered in the same order with each of these brands.

Nonetheless, when the public opinion shifts towards the idea represented by minorities, media outlets will also report on this. Simultaneously, the news will change towards a more inclusive representation of events. This would ideally mean that various cultural groups will be in negotiation, become more equal in the public debate and have the opportunity to create a shared identity as Parkeh (2002) describes. Nonetheless, creating a

shared identity in a society that was dominated by a hegemonic group before, means that this group will lose its power. However, conflicts may arise as the majority feels like they are losing their hegemony due to the increasing power of other minority identities. This phenomenon is described as predatory identity by Appadurai et al. (2006, p. 51). Predatory identities are those identities whose construction depend on the disappearance of the other proximate identity. The predatory identity is always the identity of the majority that longs for an exclusive connection with the nation and turns out predatory if it feels threatened by the minorities. This phenomenon is an outcome of the idea that a national folk should be descended from a cultural singularity (Appadurai et al., 2006, p. 57). Thus, the people in the position of the predatory identity create hostile feelings towards the minority groups, while they have the idea that their majority position and hegemonic power will be taken over by the minority.

In short, multicultural societies should accommodate the dual identities of individuals, so that cultural differences would be celebrated and social cohesion will grow. This means that every group has an equal opportunity to practice its traditions and have its own heritage forms. Besides, culturally diverse groups should establish a second shared identity through a common dialogue which is facilitated by private and public realms. This shared identity would be a broad agreement on the content, is open-ended and in constant flux. In such ideal societies, hegemonic power structures and predatory identities do not exist, as all groups are equal. Moreover, the news would represent an inclusive voice that provides the public with various perspectives on the events reported. However, this multicultural perspective on society is quite ideologically built, it is rather an idealist situation. However, contemporary societies are still largely influenced by the colonial era and ideologies from that time. Therefore, colonial influences on contemporary society, identities and power relations will be further researched in the next paragraph through the notion of postcolonial studies.

Postcolonial heritage studies

Multicultural societies do not always succeed in establishing a shared identity, due to hegemonic powers and predatory identities. These power structures are a consequence of colonialism, according to post-colonial studies. Postcolonial studies, therefore, study how national identities and heritage are formed in postcolonial societies. Also, this paragraph further explores how colonial influences are still visible in contemporary societies regarding identity and heritage stories.

Modern ideas about nationalism and culture were created in the process of colonialism. The colonial theatre demanded knowledge of culture in order to control and regulate societies. It could be hence questioned if culture would have been so lucratively controlled and regulated in a top-down approach by the state without colonialism (Harrison & Hughes, 2009, p. 234). Since the end of the 20th century, postcolonial theorists have criticized the linear historical time concepts (Lorenz, 2017, p. 118). The former narratives of heroes bringing civilization and light to the dark African and Asian continents were questioned by scholars, which changed the perspective regarding the ideas behind colonization (Grindel, 2017, p. 260). Hence, postcolonial studies is the field focussing on the power relations between the former colonial rulers and the colonized people. Postcolonial scholars address how deeply the political, social, cultural and economic hegemony is rooted in the European ideas of cultural domination and hence show structures of thought. Through examining the structures of colonial worldviews, postcolonial theorists are trying to explain why these worldviews at least partially persisted after political independence (Grindel, 2017, p. 261). Moreover, according to postcolonial theorists, European historical perspectives were imposed on the former colonies too, by a Eurocentric view on history (Lorenz, 2017, p. 121). Postcolonial theorists are thus focussed on unveiling, contesting and changing the way in which colonialism and its related ideologies structured societies (Harrison & Hughes, 2009, p. 237). Postcolonial literature is very much concerned with the formation of both an individual and collective identity in post-colonial societies, likewise as multiculturalism. In postcolonial studies, too, questions about identity overlap with heritage studies as heritage can help people identify both their individual and collective identities (Harrison & Hughes, 2009, p. 238).

The critical stances of postcolonial scholars towards colonialism also question the represented heritage and the formed Eurocentric collective memory in regards to colonial history. However, due to self-affirmative intentions, cognitive dissonance and the need to sustain the hegemonic power, there is a particular focus on achievements and triumphs rather than struggles and stories about being the oppressor (Macdonald, 2009, p. 2). People prefer to have a positive way of thinking about themselves and therewith avoid feelings of discomfort. When people face two perceptions, or cognitions, of reality that are not the same they will experience aversion, which is called cognitive dissonance. People will try to eliminate the aversion by trying to alter the most dissonant one of the cognitions (Bem, 1967, p. 183). In affirmative national stories, people tend to refer to the society back then as 'we' or 'our victories'. On the contrary, people distance themselves from negative or shameful stories, arguing that they have nothing in common with the society that lived hundreds of years ago

(Wekker, 2016). Thus, logically, policymakers and users of heritage are often not evenly interested in failures or crimes of their own group. In addition, authorities will benefit from retelling glorious histories, developing traditions and representing heritage, because, retelling the self-affirming story about glorious pasts sustains the hegemonic group and gives its members a shared identity (UNESCO, 2017, p. 7). For example, when historical narratives that were celebrated before, like colonial histories, should be considered as failures of the nation within a more inclusive history, that will cause damage to the national identity and create a feeling of predatory identity. As a consequence, these contested historical narratives are silenced and ignored. Hence heritage embodying the contested historical narratives are not selected in the representation of heritage to form the national identities.

Nonetheless, the heritage that was once seen as a symbol of national pride and victory thus is a representation of the national identity, may later be seen as a reason for regret and shame (Macdonald, 2009, p. 2). Heritage that is considered meaningful in the present but, at the same time, is uncomfortable, as it does not match with a self-affirming and positive idea about the identity of the majority culture is called difficult heritage by professionals in the field (Macdonald, 2009, p. 1). Difficult heritage can also be problematic as it might open up social divisions. Moreover, studying difficult heritage highlights cultural assumptions about the connection between identity, heritage and memory as well as connections between past, present and future (Macdonald, 2009, p.1). Besides buildings and landscapes, statues are sometimes also considered as difficult heritage. However, contrary to buildings, memorials and landscapes, statues are almost always celebratory in function. The statues are mostly built to immortalize an interpretation of festive events and the lives of people, seen as important to the nation. In addition, they are mostly erected to capture the ideas of a community regarding its past (Atuire, 2020, p. 453). Hence, statues are representations of the interpretation of history, which is partially or fully ideological, in a particular time. The shared ideological ideas and interpretation of history, again, causes a feeling of togetherness and therefore statues were central in creating national identities. In case of difficult heritage, ignoring and silencing the narratives of failure and crime of a nation may not always be an option as the awkward past is to be brought up anyways (Macdonald, 2009, p. 3). The reasons that the silenced narratives of difficult heritage come up can vary from events like demonstrations taking place to a morally driven commemoration in order to prevent history to repeat itself. In addition, difficult heritage is also increasingly seen as a driving force that can start conversations about these painful histories. Hence, there is a shift in heritage preservation from protecting the ‘great and beautiful’ systems of the past to showing the destructive side of

history (Logan & Reeves, 2008, p. 1). Heritage professionals are increasingly listening to the affected communities view on the significance of the site. In addition, the statues can now also be used to create a feeling of togetherness between various cultures in the nation rather than establishing a singular identity. By listening to affected communities, difficult heritage sites can facilitate the dialogue between culturally different groups in order to create a shared identity, as proposed by Parkeh (200) and discussed earlier.

However, although, the loaded meaning of heritage sites sometimes gradually changes through dialogue, it is now argued occasionally to actively change the narrative of monuments, heritage sites and statues. This shift in heritage practices opened up a new discussion on how to preserve difficult heritage. First, there are voices that advocate the preservation of difficult heritage because, as they argue, the heritage contains stories of the past that shall not be forgotten and hence should be told through the heritage (Macdonald, 2009, p. 53), thus change nothing. However, to respond to the negative attention around the heritage, the municipality can then always decide to change the context of the statue according to UNESCO (2017, p. 9 - 10). For example, a so-called 'counter-statue' can be placed within the neighbourhood of the original statue to shed light on other perspectives. Second, there are people saying that difficult heritage should be removed completely, as the physical presence of heritage is not needed in order to remember history (Macdonald, 2009, p. 52). The removal of statues can eliminate the conflict if there is almost no support for the preservation in the public sphere (UNESCO, 2017, p. 8). Third, in relation to the second, there are people who like to see the heritage in public but only if this heritage is defaced, as that would remove the discursive power and therefore give testimony to the suffering (Macdonald, 2009, p. 52). With this solution, the heritage piece is thus modified. Moreover, it is preserved for the groups that feel connected with the heritage, while at the same time it will be changed for the groups that feel offended by its being. This form of preservation is always a compromise between the two groups.

In conclusion, postcolonial studies examine the influences of colonial ideologies in contemporary culturally diverse societies. Identity and heritage are therefore very important in this field of study. Contemporary societies tend to focus on the historical achievements of the nation. As a consequence of this cognitive dissonance, the heritage representations of these nations are very Eurocentric. These particular heritage representations may become difficult heritage when the stories they represent are seen as stories of regret rather than pride in the present. Especially statues are regarded as difficult heritage more often than other heritage forms, while statues are always celebratory in function. However, due to a shift in heritage

practices and a shift of society towards a multicultural society, it is now widely discussed how these statues should be preserved. There are three largely proposed options: change nothing regarding the piece, however, add a critical note to the description; remove the statue completely and deface the statue so that it will lose its celebratory function in the public sphere.

Dutch context

So far, the theoretical framework had given insight on building national identities, the role of heritage in creating identities, and also identities in multicultural and postcolonial societies. However, as this research is especially focused on the preservation of Dutch heritage and thus revolves around Dutch society, this paragraph will further explore these domains in the Netherlands. At first, a short history of the Netherlands as a country and a description of its society is given. After, the Netherlands as a multicultural society will be critically reviewed, together with the Dutch self-image. At last, shifts in Dutch heritage practices will be explored.

Like other countries, the Netherlands has struggled with the formation of a multicultural society in the postcolonial era. There have been periods in which the Dutch people were satisfied with their achievements on the world stage and times in which they were frustrated about their losses. Nonetheless, these two feelings would often occur at the same time (Oostindie, 2011, p. 7). The Dutch were an embarrassment of riches when they were at the peak of power and richness in the Golden Age. However, the wealth and power gained through the colonial system created that the Netherlands was a significant player on the world stage. Before 1945, the Dutch population was almost entirely white. After the Second World War and decolonization, the Netherlands increasingly became a country of immigration and sustained its economic growth (Oostindie, 2011, p. 8). At the same time, the Dutch society became pillarized. This means that Catholics, Protestants, socialists and liberals unite themselves in separate pillars. Each of the pillars had its own media, unions, political parties and schools. This pillarized system offered possibilities to reach compromises with other groups, especially after the war (Oostindie, 2011, p. 8). However, the system also stood in the way of forming a strong national identity as the Dutch subcultures did not have a dialogue with each other about culture and hence did not have the opportunity to create a shared identity (Parkeh, 2002). The system of pillarization, moreover, also caused an underestimation of the importance for newcomers to express their culture and religion publicly. So, while Dutch people celebrated their own subcultures and religions with their

own groups, newcomers were used to expressing themselves in public. In addition, due to globalization, the discussion on immigration opened up. Opponents of immigration argued that migrants were overrepresented in statistics regarding crime and school-drop out and hence argued immigration would cost more than it should. However, the core of the discussion was the assumed unwillingness of migrants, especially Muslims, to practice their religion in private and identify themselves with Dutch culture (Oostindie, 2011, p. 9).

In the Netherlands, the term multicultural society is often heard. Particularly estimated in 2011, while more recent data is not publicly available, the number of Dutch people descendant from the former colonies was around one million (Oostindie, 2011, p. 8). However, if the country has succeeded to function as one, is questionable. The essay ‘‘The multicultural drama’’ was already written in 2000 by Paul Scheffer in *NCR*. This essay received a lot of attention and is seen as the piece that stirred up the political discussion about immigration and integration. In the piece, Scheffer (2000) describes how he sees the world around him changing and claims that the Dutch had been too liberal as they did not insist immigrants on learning the Dutch language, culture and history (Vasta, 2007, p. 714). In line with this argument, the Dutch had ignored liberal democratic values encouraging cultural diversity and social cohesion. According to Scheffer, the solution to poor immigration was to require immigrants to adjust to the ideologies of liberal democracy. However, this is also criticized as Scheffer, therewith, ignores the dynamic nature of cultures and diversity amongst migrants (Vasta, 2007). In a later conversation for *NRC* in 2020, Scheffer describes the piece as a call for change as he saw that the Netherlands became more and more segregated. Scheffer states that the image that Dutch people had of themselves as being tolerant, did not go hand in hand with reality. The multicultural drama was hence an early critical engagement towards the Dutch elite and on various new cultural traditions which, as Scheffer (2000; 2020) thought, would not fit within the open society of the Netherlands. Regarding this self-image, Wekker (2016, p. 2) also describes that Dutch people like to think of themselves as a very tolerant and highly moral nation that is colour-blind. Racism and the work of race are seen as something happening overseas, mainly in the United States, and hence the Dutch society does not have to question itself nor its working structures. Though this self-image is in direct conflict with the history of the Netherlands and their share in colonialism and slavery.

However, since the multicultural drama was published in 2000 society has changed a lot. Also, the term multicultural society itself received a lot of negative attention over time and many politicians distance themselves from the term as de Waal (2019) explains. Multiculturalism lost terrain in both the political and media landscape, where the concept is

described as a failing system that is 'a censured project from left' and an ideology that tears down 'our' fundamental values and culture (de Waal, 2019). However, the heavy public debate comes up around multicultural policies for other minority groups, like migrants (de Waal, 2019). Due to a lack of commitment to accommodate diversity from the political side, multiculturalism never really succeeded (Vasta, 2007, p. 718). It became the responsibility of migrants themselves to create a sense of belonging. Consequently, migrants did not succeed to integrate, were not recognized as equals to their fellow citizens, did not have the opportunity to create a shared identity and ended up separating themselves. As a response, the Dutch elite used this isolation of migrants to rationalize assimilationism (Vasta, 2007, p. 735). In this line of self-separation, Oostindie (2011, p. 223) also describes various postcolonial migrant groups that did not show any engagement towards each other and argues that there is no social cohesion between these migrant groups. Nonetheless, according to Oostindie (2011, p. 223), migrant groups do complain that 'the Dutch' – meaning white Dutch people – do not show interest in their cultures and traditions. "However, anyone attending any postcolonial commemorative events will immediately notice that the people who are present, alongside the members of the community involved, are primarily white Dutch (Oostindie, 2011, p. 223)." Thus, migrant groups primarily celebrate their culture within their own group, complemented with a few white Dutch people who became involved due to personal or official relationships (Oostindie, 2011, p. 223). Simultaneously, while a multicultural society was tried to be reached, systems of institutional racism also still existed. Migrants spoke up about them not being equal to others, which created an extra tense relationship with the Dutch elite (Vasta, 2007, p. 736). White Dutch people often feel offended when migrant groups spoke up and it can be argued that they became a predatory identity. As it is earlier explained, a true idealistic multicultural society cannot be reached when the hegemonic group turns predatory if it feels threatened by minorities.

In the documentary *Wit is ook een kleur* (*White is a colour as well*, 2016), Sunny Bergman explores why a lot of Dutch people feel offended in conversations about white privilege and racism. The documentary shows that white Dutch people have the idea that their experiences are universal for all people. Hence, they make assumptions for all Dutch people, which results in gaps in understanding the experiences of non-white Dutch people. The white Dutch thus perceive themselves (unconsciously) as the hegemonic group. This causes hostile feelings between the two parties, as they cannot reach mutual understandings. In the film, Sunny also visits the Mauritshuis in which Michiel de Ruyter is portrayed as a hero only, thus without acknowledging that he had a share in slavery trade. Responding to the questions

asked by Sunny and a heritage expert, the director of the museum agrees that the accompanying text could provide a deeper understanding of the man portrayed, however she also mentions that De Ruyter is hanging there in a different context, namely as a conqueror of the English fleet. However, since the documentary, the heritage and museum sector have changed quite a bit. The sector is aiming to become more inclusive and representative for all Dutch people and tourists. Examples are Amsterdam Museum (2019) which stopped using the term Golden Age in September 2019, the Mauritshuis (2019) presented an exhibiting devoted to shifting perceptions on Johan Maurits of Nassau- Siegen in 2019 and Rijksmuseum (n.d.) just opened an exhibition to broaden the perspectives on the history of slavery in The Netherlands. Moreover, a collective of four museums (Tropenmuseum et al., 2018) has created a research publication about words that might be sensitive in the museum sector. The guide is meant for museums as a support to create inclusive expositions and hence attract a more diverse public. Sensitive words are explained and provided with a replacing, less sensitive, suggestion if needed. Words as *allochtoon*, *blanke* and *roots* are examples from the wordlist (Tropenmuseum et al., 2018). While the guide is specially made for museums in The Netherlands, some words are also often replaced outside museums in daily life. The terms *allochtoon* and *autochtoon* were already removed from the official governmental vocabulary in 2016 by The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) and the Statistics Netherlands (CBS). The decision was made while the words were no longer accurate enough and in addition had a stigmatizing effect for some groups in society, according to the report of the WRR (NU.nl, 2016). In 2018, NOS also decided to prefer the term *wit* instead of *blank*, while the term *blank* has associations with being pure and clean (NOS, 2018). Corollary, *Trouw* and *De Volkskrant* also stated that they prefer the term *wit* for the same reasons as NOS. However, the terminology was not a point of discussion at other news outlets like *RTL Nieuws*, *AD* and *NRC*, at the time. Nonetheless, these did state that language evolves over time and hence changes together with society (NOS, 2018). In all, this indicates a change of stances in the debate regarding more inclusive heritage and news representations in Dutch society.

In conclusion, the Netherlands did not succeed to implement a multicultural society in its idealistic form as described earlier in literature yet. This is partially due to the original pillarization of the Dutch society, an unrealistic self-image of Dutch people and a lack of political commitment towards integration of newcomers and accommodation of cultural diversity. Nevertheless, recently, according to changes in the heritage and journalistic sectors, it seems that there is a raise in awareness regarding multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

However, to further examine how Dutch society is looking upon multiculturalism, their identities and cultural diversity in the public sphere, this research will examine how controversial statues should be preserved according to dominant discourses in newspapers. While journalists set the agenda of the public and simultaneously journalists are looking for the dominant stance in society, newspapers can be perceived as a cornerstone of the public debate. Therefore, newspapers are proper research data in this research, as it is important that the solution found for the controversial statues receives broad support from society and thus is broad agreement between culturally diverse groups.

Methods

This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of what various members of Dutch society think of statues that are connected to colonial history. In this research, discourse analysis may reveal how Dutch society makes meaning of statues and buildings, how these meanings are related and how these meanings are constructed in the social world. As such, this research is conducted qualitatively. Qualitative research is more concerned with meaning-making rather than with numbers as in quantitative research (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative research is based on interpretivism while it is interpreting words and hence understand the social world. In this research specifically, the social world is understood through an analysis of news articles. The qualitative research method of discourse analysis is used to understand the beliefs and experiences of individuals in The Netherlands regarding controversial statues. The analysis of a discourse is the analysis of a set of statements in a social context. However, in the following paragraph discourse analysis are further explained and embedded in this research.

Discourse analysis

Societies build their world – thus create meaning – through language in the form of interactions, symbols, objects, values and beliefs (Gee, 1999, p. 11). Discourse could be defined as a system that draws on language and encodes specific forms of knowledge. It is the way in which a group is making statements that structure how the groups think about the specific subject. Discourse can hence be seen as specific knowledge about the world which shapes how it is understood and how things are done (Rose, 2001, p. 136). Discourse analysis studies how meanings are constructed as truthful through what Foucault calls the regimes of truth (Rose, 2001, p. 138). Powerful discourses are based on the claim that their knowledge is true and with this claim of truthfulness the social effect of the discourse is the greatest. Nonetheless, what is perceived as truthful shifts over time due to new insights, so the ground on which truth is claimed is called the regime of truth. It refers thus to a specific truth that predominates during that time (Rose, 2001, p. 138). This concept of regime of truth relates to the concept of hegemony as described in the literature section. The group with the hegemonic power decides on which grounds truth can be claimed and hence can decide which discourses are most powerful. Discourse analysis is chosen as a method because in this research it is important to study the ideas of the public and discourses specifically are socially instead of individually. In practice, news articles are studied to distinguish relatively unnoticeable social

ideologies within Dutch society. While exposure to media and news, influences, forms, transforms and underlines the opinion of individuals (O'Keeffe, 2006, p. 1). Newspapers can be seen as the building blocks of a public debate and are therefore representative of the stances of the public in the debate. Therefore, news articles were selected as research material for this discourse analysis. With the use of Atas.ti the articles were coded so that social ideologies in the news articles under study could be discovered. Accordingly, it is learned what the dominant perspective is on the preservation of controversial statues is in mainstream media. However, further practicalities of this research will be discussed in the operationalization.

Operationalization

In the attempt to answer the research question systematically, I have gathered articles regarding the iconoclasm as a consequence of the Black Lives Matter protests in the Netherlands³. Therefore, the discourses around the statues and buildings under study, are studied with articles that are published between 25 May 2020 – the day George Floyd died – and 1 March 2021. This time window makes sure that the objects under study are discussed within the revived discussion of Black Lives Matter and accompanying heritage. The articles were gathered via NexisUni on the term *beeldenstorm* (iconoclasm). This search term already provided a wide range and a various number of articles. Moreover, while other search terms like Black Lives Matter in combination with *standbeeld* (statue) was also looked into, this did not result in desired hits regarding controversial statues. However, these search terms were leading to articles about anti-racism protests in general with only short attention towards statues. Therefore, the search term *beeldenstorm* led to articles that were more suitable to answer the research question. Out of 632 results, 90 articles were selected in a long list. Only written and published articles could be selected for this long list and therefore, other search hits like a radio or TV guide were not selected. The long list was selected based on word count – sort letters of readers and articles below 150 words are not incorporated in this research as these only shortly reflect on the events happening. Also, relevance to the objects

³ In addition, one of the statues which were often mentioned in the news articles – the one of J.P. Coen in Hoorn – was visited in person by the researcher. Besides this statue being widely discussed now, the statue in Hoorn was also controversial in 2012 whereafter a critical sign was added to give extra context regarding the deeds of J.P. Coen.

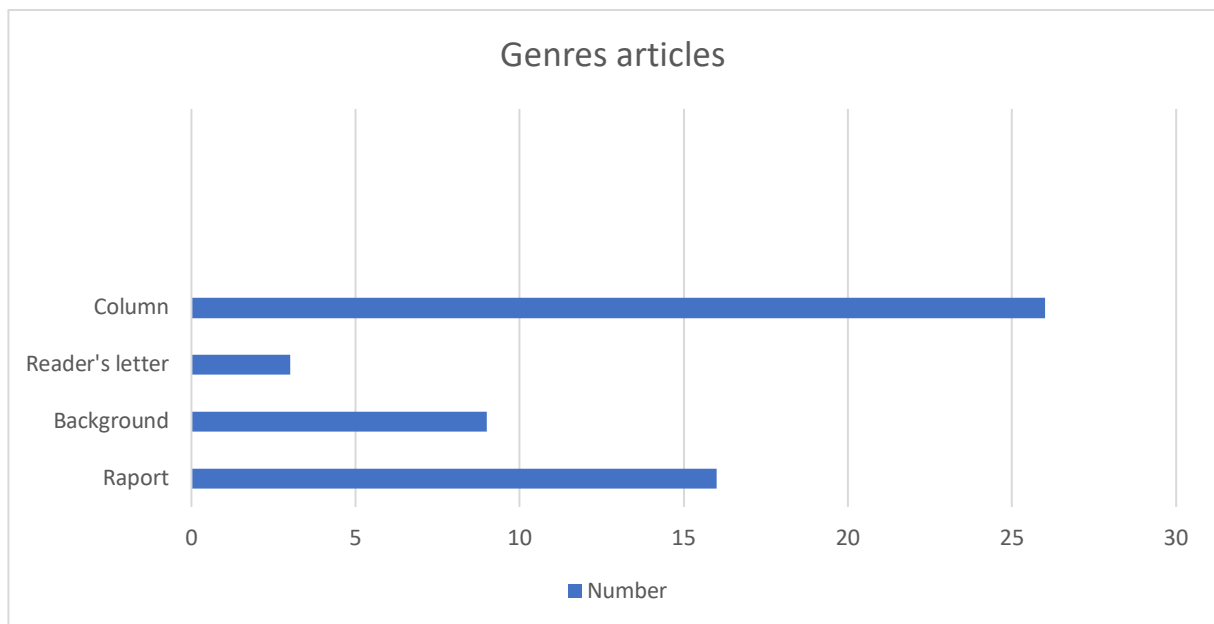
under study based on the title and synopsis of the articles was regarded in the selection of the long list. In addition, articles that describe a range of events, like a summary of the news of a specific day, were also not incorporated while these articles only minimally reflect on the iconoclasm. Then, the 90 articles of the long list were read fully and were again filtered according to the relevancy to the object under study. Articles that were filtered out, did not become part of the analysis due to double published articles in different papers and articles that did not contain information related to the subject under study. However, these articles came forward while filtering on the search term iconoclasm while they for example referred to the Dutch iconoclasm of 1566 but did not refer to the iconoclasm of 2020; reported on iconoclasm outside The Netherlands only; were articles about the vandalism of statues without any ideological aspiration can hence do not fit within this research; or were primarily about controversial street names rather than statues. Eventually, 54 articles were analysed with Atlas.ti. At first, 40 articles were coded were after preliminary findings were written. Then, the whole selection of articles was coded again, thus the total of 54 articles. After this coding process, all codes were studied and categorized according to the discourses and repertoires found. In addition, document groups were made to identify the various news outlets in which the articles were published.

The articles studied were published in the following Dutch news outlets: *Algemeen Dagblad*, *Brabants Dagblad*, *de Gelderlander*, *Zeeuwse Courant*, *Elsevier Weekblad*, *Financieel Dagblad*, *Haarlems Dagblad*, *De Limburger*, *Nederlands Dagblad*, *Noord-Hollands Dagblad*, *NRC* (including *NRC. Next* and *NRC. Handelsblad*), *Het Parool*, *PZC*, *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, *Telegraaf*, *Trouw*, and *de Volkskrant*. Due to the limits of time, the researcher has chosen not to further study if there are differences in published articles between the news outlets. Hence, there is no selection of news outlets understudy has been made. However, the articles were selected based on the value of the articles for this research as this research looks into the discourses described in the articles themselves rather than the discourse that an overarching news outlet represents. Moreover, as stated before, some articles were published double in various papers. Nevertheless, by the partition of double articles, there is no attention paid to the outlet in which it was published.

Especially news about controversial issues is brought with explanatory context, thus are produced with interpretive frameworks. This means that news is encoded to meanings and hence not reality. The public is also expected to decode the news again, to understand the message and make meaning of the news brought. However, what these understand meanings are, are dependent on the shared interpretive framework, used codes and knowledge of both

the public and journalist. Nonetheless, getting the message of the journalist is not the same as sharing an agreement. Understanding the literal meaning is namely something different than understanding the interpretive meaning (Hall, 1981, p. 277). When this occurs, there can be consensus about the literal meaning, while at the same time having conflict about the interpretation. Conflict about the interpretation affects the perceived objectivity of the journalist (Hall, 1981, p. 277). Therefore, journalists are always looking for a consensual position in any debate to be perceived as objective news-maker.

Figure 1 - Genres of articles



For journalist writing reportages, finding the consensual position is, therefore, most important, while reports are a presentation of events happening, which are factually described and underpinned in principle. In addition, background articles give context to current affairs or events. Background articles describe one or more perspectives on the actual news and thus further explain reports. Finding the consensual position is therefore still important to the writer of a background article, as they are expected to work from an objective point of view. Their personal opinion, thus logically, should not interfere with their task to provide objective information on the current events. Nonetheless, the more controversial the topic, the harder it is to determine the consensual position because journalists have to determine which definitions of the situations they show. However, within the process, the public is likely to conform to the consensual position that is manufactured in news media. As demonstrated in figure 2, reports and background articles, are found respectively 16 and 9 times in the articles reviewed. Together, these groups hence form the largest part of the articles reviewed and it,

therefore, can be concluded that most articles are written from a principle of providing objective information for as far as this information can be objective. Yet, 26 of the articles can be classified in the genre column as showed in figure 1, this means that these articles are personal experiences and opinions of the writer rather than an actual report of events. These articles are subjectively written, as it is a description of a personal experience, and hence do not require to look for the consensual position in the debate. Moreover, the writers of columns often try to convince readers of their particular point of view.

In conclusion, discourses analysis can be used to identify how meanings are constructed through language. A discourse is a specific knowledge about the world which shapes how it is understood and how things are done (Rose, 2001, p. 136). The aim of this research is to understand how meaning is made out of the iconoclasm of 2020 and how controversial statues should be preserved according to Dutch society. While news outlets shape and develop the public debate, news articles published between 25 May 2020 and 1 March 2021 are used to answer this research question. The analysis of these articles will be presented in the following chapter. The results on structures and power relation represented through the articles will first be described. Hereafter, the different repertoires and overarching discourses will be discussed.

Results

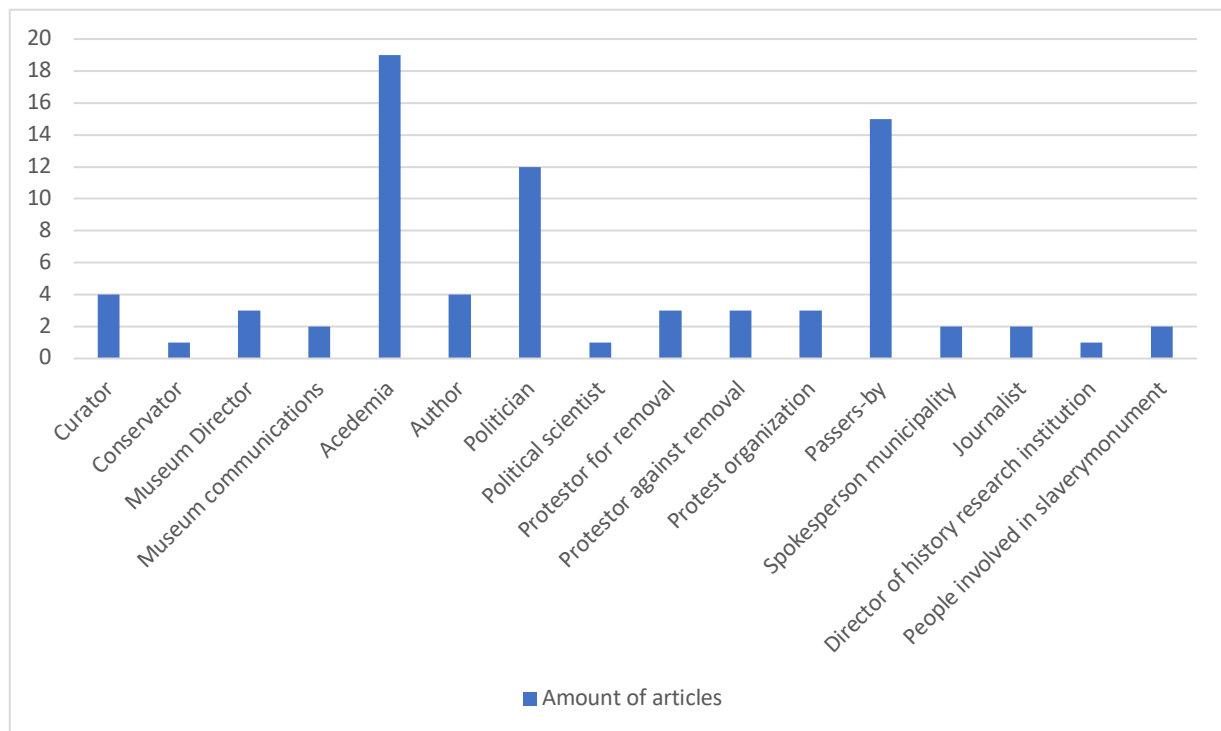
In this chapter, the results of the discourse analysis will be presented in different paragraphs, each representing a different stance in the current debate about removing statues in the Netherlands. I will start with an examination of the represented structures within the news articles. Moreover, it is described which of the (groups of) people are heard and are not heard within the mainstream news. From this paragraph, it can be concluded that academia and politicians are the primary definers of the debate. In addition, these two groups, accompanied by the opinions of passers-by, are also perceived as spokespersons of the consensual point by journalists. However, it may also be concluded that protesters are seen as the less powerful and hence are barely heard in the articles reviewed. This will lead to consequences for this research, as their voice would therefore be only minimally represented in the found repertoires and discourses. Nonetheless, after the paragraph regarding structures of news and power, the various distinguished repertoires will be examined. There are eight repertoires found in total: (1) the nationalists; (2) the trivialists; (3) the relativist; (4) the pragmatic contextualist; (5) the idealistic contextualist; (6) the artistic defacers; (7) the museologists and (8) the radical anti-colonialist. The earlier three repertoires are a part of the colonial discourse, while the latter five are embedded in the post-colonial discourse. From the colonial discourse, it is argued that no changes should be made towards the statues, underpinned with different reasons indicated by the three repertoires. However, from the post-colonial discourse, it is advocated that the public sphere should change, reasoned from more or less radical repertoires on how this should be done.

The structures of news and power

While one would expect protestors to be heard in the news, since they have ‘created’ the situation and are demanding change, in the articles under review almost only people in power are asked to define the situation. In figure 2 it can be seen that mainly politicians and historians are asked for an evaluation on the events. These established individuals are hence the primary definers as Hall (1981, p. 281) describes. Protestors are however not regarded as powerful by journalists, this can be concluded while only (so-called) experts and authorities are providing their stances on the situation. Protesters are thus only minimally asked to share their perspective on the situation. Their perspective, if already heard, is the secondary definition, which is a counter-argument towards the primary definer. Hence, these groups are mostly only responding to the primary definition instead of creating their own definition.

Other groups quoted in the articles under review are as shown in figure 2 are: curators of the city of Amsterdam or museums; museum conservators; museum directors; employees of museums PR and communication departments; authors of books about slavery or about the controversial historical figures; political scientists; protestors from both stances in the debate; spokespersons of the protest organizations; employees of the communication departments of the municipality; journalists who researched slavery legacies and people involved in the erection of a slavery monument. These groups have different perspectives on the events happening. For example, as explained in more detail later, conservators advocate a more inclusive representation of history within museums, in which it would be explained how history should be interpreted (Tetelepta, 2020). However, curators of the city of Amsterdam are stating that they do not want to remove any statues, yet there should be created space for more discussion in the public through counter monuments (Dijksterhuis, 2020). These groups hence have a different perspective on the preservation of statues, both reasoned from their own profession. Nonetheless, there are also differences within the groups. The author of the bibliography of Van Heutsz, Vilan van de Loo (Slechte, 2020; Rozema & Bouwman, 2020) would come to another conclusion – namely to leave the statue as it is – than Harry Kuiper (Tetelepta, 2020) who is author of books about the civilian experiences in the Second World War. Moreover, some groups also overlap in their stances, museum directors would for example advocate that the issues around controversial statues are a societal question, however, see it as their task to facilitate the public debate (Tetelepta, 2020; Borst, 2020; de Bruin, 2020; Bezemer, 2020). Most politicians agree with this idea about the controversial statues being a societal question that need to be answered through a public debate (Koops, 2020; Bolwijn, 2020; van Schoonhoven, 2020; Jurgens, 2020). Hence, from figure two it can be identified which voices are represented in the debate, however, people belonging to a specific group does not automatically indicate their stance in the debate.

Figure 2 - Frequency of heart experts



In the articles reviewed, experts and authorities like academics and politicians are mostly heard first. They get the opportunity to define what is relevant in the discussion as they are in positions of power. As stated earlier, these groups are thus the primary definers of the situation. However, noticeable is that, although passers-by are also frequently heard, they do not have the power to be the primary definers of the situation. Passers-by would rather be heard as they represent the consensual position, the point which implies an agreement about the interpretation of events (Hall, 1981, p. 277). Passers-by are asked to react to all the fuzz around the situation and protests. They mostly do this with a strongly formulated opinion. When passers-by are heard in the articles under review, there is always more than one person asked to give their opinion (Van Dam & Duk, 2020; Pernis, 2020; Borst, 2020). However, for the other groups earlier mentioned – academics and politicians – this is not necessarily the case. Because these three groups are heard so often in comparison with all other groups out of figure two, but especially in comparison with protesters, they can be seen as the spokespersons of the consensual position which journalists are seemingly looking for. As explained earlier, the consensual point is the perspective in which the journalist's tent to find most of his public is likely to agree with the presented interpretation of events (Hall, 1981). However, the primary definition is most likely to be in line with the consensual point as these supports each other within news articles. However, news outlets have the power to shape the

consensus and manufacture consent (Hall, 1981, p. 279) Therefore, it is likely that the public will come to agree with the primary definition of academics and politicians as well as the stances of passers-by.

From the consensus point, it is broadly argued that the reason for the iconoclasm in the Netherlands is the death of George Floyd. Although this can be seen as the direct starting point for protests, the protests are also an "expression of frustration about years of discrimination and about ignoring the history of oppression of large groups of people in our own society (van Geest, 2020) [my translation]". Nonetheless, this barely comes forward in the majority of the articles while most journalist's do not seek a further explanation of the events. The description of events is merely a superficial perception as if the events are only happening as a response to an international call without any basis within the national borders or earlier background. As Stuart (1999, p. 51 & 56) argues this superficial perception is due to the complexity of the contemporary world and the efficient mentality of news outlets. Thus, while a lot of different events are happening in the contemporary complex world, journalists have to provide a lot of different information so that the public can make meaning of all different events happening. This, in combination with the rapidity and efficiency in which news is expected today, causes that the ruling, hegemonic ideas are reproduced over and over again, brought to society as being the only way possible to interpret the events happening (Stuart, 1999, p. 51). This also means that protestors or leading members of action groups are heard only occasionally. Hence, the representation of these voices is negligible, their demands are not clearly presented to the public and consequently, the public is not able to form a fully informed opinion about the protests. This underrepresentation of the protestors is also influencing this research, while as a consequence of being barely heard in the articles reviewed, their discourse will also be only minimally represented in the results of this research. Nonetheless, their discourse does exist in alternative media as One World and on social media pages of protest organisations. Furthermore, while other voices are likely to be quoted, protestors views are only given from a secondary view. This means that journalists do not expect the point of consensus to be on the side of protestors as journalists are looking for this point of agreement on the interpretation of events, in their articles. At the same time, the public is not likely to conform with the position of the protestors since it is not presented as the consensus point nor the primary definition which carries most authority (Hall, 1981). Thus, journalists are trying to describe a perspective from the consensual point in which they think there is a broad agreement on the interpretation of events with their public. While at the

same time the perspectives of the public are influenced through media, however, because protestors are barely heard the public is not likely to confirm with their stances.

However, although frequently asked to share their perceptions politicians and the local governments they represent, are often criticized for their stances in the discussion. Politicians are asked for their opinions which they mostly formulate with hesitation and would rather leave the final verdict for the statues up to society. The critique is especially focused on the wait-and-see attitude of politicians. For example in Amsterdam, where Rutger Groot Wassink is accused of taking the 'Rutte-route', "because, of all people, it was (...) Rutger Groot Wassink who won the council elections in 2018 with an activist agenda (...) who reacted in anticipation this week (Koops, 2020)." Koops stresses that when push comes to shove, politicians will say that it is up to the citizens to decide so that they can eventually take a stance when citizens have agreed with each other. Hence Koops shows that he thinks politicians are rather followers than leaders in the discussion. In addition, Jürgens (2020) also states that the debate about historical figures have long ceased to concern only citizens of the municipality, in response to the municipality Hoorn stating that the future of the statue of J.P. Coen should be called by the citizens of Hoorn and therefore organizing a city debate. As Jürgens stresses, this is a concern that has dimensions crossing the borders of the country since the Rhodes Must Fall ⁴demonstrations in South Africa and the United Kingdom in 2015 and the international iconoclasm in 2020. Hence Jürgens implies that it would be too short sides if the municipality would only solve the problem with a city debate and would rather advocate for drastic changes in the public sphere (Jürgens, 2020). Moreover, Van Schoonhoven (2020) critically states that the municipality of Amsterdam would only argue for an explanation of history because they fear protests on the canal ring:

"It [the municipality] issued a statement saying it will not accept vandalism and is 'not in favour of erasure, but of explanation'. Well-spoken. But, you can also feel fear. When the militant anti-slavery activists are done with the statues, they can move on to the canal belt. (...) Amsterdam was co-owner of the colony of Suriname. So yes, all understanding that Amsterdam would rather 'explain than 'eradicate' (Van Schoonhoven, 2020) [my translation]."

⁴ The Rhodes Must Fall protest movement originally demonstrated against the statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town. However, the movement also reached the United Kingdom at the University of Oxford, where students also protested for the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes from Oriel College.

However, contrary to politicians, historians are barely criticised by the journalists and their points of view are presented as the only scientifically based truth using their title as academics. Their perspective on the situation is stated as if this a fact rather than their stance in the debate:

“Historian and political scientist Coen de Jong (51) warn to not give in too quickly to a ‘limited number of strong ideological activists’. ‘The removal or relocation of statues should be widely supported. Otherwise, you don’t know where it ends’ (van Dam & Du, 2020) [my translation].”

“The new organization *Helden van Nooit* is completely unknown, says Jacco Pekelder (Utrecht University), who specializes in the radical left terrorism and activism. He does not rule out that it is again coming from anti-Zwarte Piet activists. ‘In recent years, it has become apparent that the urge to act is greater than just demonstrating on the street with a sign’. (..) Historian Pekelder points out that not only black people were enslaved, but also white people. They were captured by North African pirates and traded (van Dam, 2020) [my translation].”

Nonetheless, academics do not always conclude with the same findings. Thus, the authority of academics in their field is not questioned within the articles under review. However, it would be worthy to do so, while it would give a better idea of the perspective from which the academic is speaking. In several articles, historians are invited to share their thoughts about the discussion regarding controversial statues. Remarkably, especially one historian, Piet Emmer, is mostly cited. He is heard in a third of the articles that cite historians. Emmer states more than once that he is surprised by the commotion around the statues, as he assumed that democratic societies would handle these discussions with more care. In addition, he stated that he had the idea that everyone by now knew that The Netherlands is just an ordinary country which also influenced by racism. From the articles in which Piet Emmer is cited it becomes clear that he is against the removal of the controversial statues. He argues that people try to project the current norms and values on history and hence try to label what is right and wrong. However, Emmer says, then every statue, street name, relic and monument could be removed as these labels of right and wrong would only fit very few of them. In addition, he questions whether other representations of memory in the public sphere as the Stolpersteine with names of Jews may stay (Runhaar, 2020). Although Piet Emmer is known as a specialist on slavery and immigration, his work is also very much criticized for his

Eurocentric stances in the slavery debate (Van Casteren & Vermaas, 2000). In his work and interviews about that work, he downplayed the severity and the legacy of transatlantic slavery (Van Casteren & Vermaas, 2000; Özdil, 2020; Hoek, 2020). It, therefore, might be no coincidence that especially this historian is asked to shed his light on the discussion around controversial statues. It is not mentioned in the articles that this historian has a dubious reputation amongst slavery specialists. Although the use of his scientific title as a historian does not mean that every historian has the same thought as Emmer, usage of the title in combination with a perspective implicates that the perspective comes from a scientific and objective consensus.

In conclusion, the primary definition is mostly given by academics and politicians. In addition, the consensual point is found by these two groups and is complemented with the opinions of passers-by. Thus, these groups mostly lead the discussion around controversial statues and will represent stronger repertoires within this research. However, due to the underrepresentation of especially protestors in the articles reviewed, their repertoires will be only minimally represented in this research. The further results of this research will be presented through various repertoires and their two overarching discourses. The repertoires can be perceived as a difference in nuance within the discourse they belong to.

The repertoire of the nationalist

This first repertoire boils down to the proud nationalist idea that there is nothing wrong with the statues nor the historical figures they represent. "These are enterprising men who left everything behind, dared to go on an adventure and turned the Netherlands into a world power (de Lange, 2020) [my translation]", hence still deserve to be honoured in the public sphere through their statue.

However, most journalists do not describe the function of statues in the public sphere. Nor do they outline what these statues represent with regards to how the men are pictured and where the statues are placed. Hence, there is no light shed upon what representations of cultural heritage in the public sphere means for the national identity. As discussed in the literature before, heritage presented in public spheres aims to create a national identity and therefore a sense of belonging to a group (UNESCO, 2017; Graham & Howard, 2008). This vital point (which makes clear that some groups are excluded and others are included on purpose in the representation in the public sphere) is left out in most of the articles representing this repertoire. Thereby, the articles do not create room for a profound

conversation and thus remain rather superficial. Another nationalist perspective can also be found in a quote from a citizen of Hoorn: "They should leave our Coen alone, damn it (Borst, 2020) [my translation]". This citizen considers the statue as a part of the community and as their possession, hence protesters should stay away from it. While this citizen of Hoorn felt a connection with the hero coming from Hoorn, the marine Jeannot Schmidt felt a similar connection with the sea hero and founder of the Dutch Marines Michiel de Ruyter: "When the statue of De Ruyter become controversial, he thought it was time for action. 'Something struck me then, yes', says Schmidt (*De Telegraaf*, 2020) [my translation]". In response, Jeannot Schmidt guarded the statue together with other marines. From these examples, it shows that these individual marines and citizen in Hoorn feel a great emotional connection with the historical figures as they are proud of their own background and identity represented through the statue, as Parkeh (2008) mentioned and was indicated in the theoretical framework.

However, another nuance difference is the repertoire of the trivialists in which it is argued that every person does wrongful things sometimes, but this hence not means that they cannot be heroes for the things they did well.

The repertoire of the trivialist

From this repertoire it is thus advocated that everyone is either good and bad, hence if searched long enough one could always find something that will make a hero fall off his pedestal. It is thus argued that a statue which is erected in 1893 cannot be seen within the moral standards of contemporary society, because we could "better remove everything, otherwise (Borst, 2020) [my translation]". This argument is also advocated by Piet Emmer, while he says that removal of controversial history out of the public sphere is a disastrous approach: "Then there is no statue allowed anymore and street should be numbered, no street names any longer. Therewith, you stop every discussion about history (Runhaar, 2020) [my translation]". With these and other similar statements, individuals in this repertoire argue that no one – historical figure or contemporary hero – has a clear conscience. Consequently, protestors are seen as posers and it is reasoned that they should not make such a big deal out of the statue and their morality. In addition, it is questioned who determines who can still be seen as a hero and who is not:

"But what is the limit? Which hero is of flawless behaviour? Joost van den Vondel wrote beautiful poetry but also glorified colonialism. Or what about smearing the statue of Winston Churchill. English protestors did not doubt it: he was a racist. (..) He gave us [the allies] - to put it simply – victory in the Second World War. However, his performance in India was not pretty (de Lange, 2020) [my translation]".

From this quote, it becomes clear that trivialists find it difficult to determine which truth is absolute while both are true and important when it comes to controversial issues. Besides, from this perspective, it is argued that statues should not be removed as the stories, represented through statues, are a part of our past and history cannot be erased. From this point of view, it is further reasoned that removing statues will only worsen the situation of protestors as history will be forgotten then:

“Statues and other cultural-historical expressions in the public sphere appeal to the past, to *our* past. A past that we must know in order to learn from it (Hoek, 2020) [my translation and emphasis].”

In the quote above it is stated that we have to leave the statues where they are, while we would otherwise fall back into the old systems which are represented by the statues. In this light Piet Emmer is also arguing that it could be dangerous to erase history:

"Under the National Socialistic regime, all German cities had streets named after Hitler. These were all renamed without explanation plates, after the war. Hitler's name was blotted out. In the '60s, a Frenchman made the documentary 'Hitler connais pas', in which he had discovered that the German youth did not know who Hitler was (Runhaar, 2020) [my translation]."

Nonetheless, statues do not represent history directly as they are a representation of an interpretation of history (Atuire, 2020). History will hence not be removed by removing a statue, but the interpretation of history is changed due to new insights.

However, from another repertoire, it is argued that the statues should not be removed as these are not even honoured, hence, there is no need to remove them.

The repertoire of the relativist

The third repertoire represents the idea that statues are not honoured by passers-by and therefore there is no need to remove the statues. Hence the influence and meaning of statues in the public sphere are relativized and the importance of statues in the present is diminished. In a reaction to the news, a reader writes: "I have never seen a statue (..) as a 'tribute'. To me, it is more of an indication of an important part of our history (Hendrikje, 2020) [my translation]". In the same light, Kromhout also argues that the statues do not carry a meaning of tribute:

“Nowadays statues from the nineteenth century receive little veneration. They have become relics of a distant and strange past. Despite this, many citizens are attached to it. Not because they worship the depicted persons as heroes, but because the images give them an aesthetic pleasure and are part of their familiar, historically formed living environment (Kromhout, 2020) [my translation].”

Although the above citation describes the statues as relics from a distant past rather than heroes, they were once placed on prominent spots in the public sphere with the idea to be honoured as heroes in future, according to postcolonial theorists (Grindle, 2017; Lorenz, 2018). The perception that iconoclasm of summer 2020 is disproportionate, is a perspective that can also be recognized in the tone of writing – which can be characterized as cynical – and is identifiable in the citation below:

"Iconoclasm exhibit a point of view in which good and bad, black and white, guilty and innocent, are fixed. Anyone who is looking at Coen is apparently infected by a racist virus. Then the worship, or the insult, starts automatically, depending on the colour of your skin. If the statue is gone, the risk of contamination is also gone (Sommer, 2020) [my translation].”

Sommer tries to convince the reader that statues are not worshipped by passers-by, contradictory to what protesters would argue. Sommer (2020) would say that removal of the statues would not help to accomplish the goals of protestors in the long term because racism would suddenly stop existing by removing a few statues.

In short, within this repertoire, the misdeeds of historical figures are relativized and in that way diminished in importance. This, and the other two earlier mentioned, repertoires are

part of a larger colonial from which it is advocated that statues should stay as they are, however, for different reasons.

Discourse 1 – The colonial discourse

The three before-mentioned repertoires are part of a larger colonial discourse. This discourse hence engages with a Eurocentric world view in which colonial ideas are more or less still represented. This discourse is thus rather conservative and reasoning from a perspective in which traditions are very important. It is advocated that everything should stay as it is, as it is already done this way for years. Change is seen as a threat to current society rather than an improvement. The colonial discourse implies that the statues should stay in place, without any change. This discourse comes from various groups of people, from historians to passers-by, journalists and marines. However, the different repertoires represent nuanced differences within the larger discourse. First, there is a nationalist repertoire in which people advocate that the historical figures sculptured are true heroes. This repertoire is therefore most largely connected to ideologies of colonial times. Secondly, trivialists are arguing that all people are both good and bad, hence if searched long enough one could always find something that will make a hero fall off his pedestal. Lastly, there is the repertoire of the relativists, who state that the statues are not honoured and hence do not see why the statues should be removed.

Relativist hence does not acknowledge the influence of statues in the public sphere and the importance of heritage representation for their national identities, as is discussed in literature earlier (Graham & Howard, 2008; Smith, 2006; Berry, 2013). This colonial discourse reveals ideas that postcolonial theorists are identifying with their research (Lorenz, 2017; Grindel, 2017; Harrison & Hughes, 2009). However, postcolonial theorists, try to identify these ideas to break these patterns and evolve to more idealistic multicultural societies, instead of assimilation societies (Macionis & Plummer, 2012). Nonetheless, these postcolonial voices are also heard in the articles reviewed. This postcolonial discourse is built out of five nuanced repertoires, which will first be explored.

The repertoire of pragmatic contextualist

In the first repertoire of this postcolonial discourse, it is said that explanatory signs help opening up the conversations around controversial statues. At the same time, explanatory signs give every individual the opportunity to learn about history:

"History is what it is. It cannot be changed or disguised. Taking down statues is not revolutionary. It misses the mark. (...) Rather start the conversation, let yourself be heard and above all: listen to the other. We can burn our fingers in the heat of the battle. We can burn the black pages or study them, understand and learn how we can do things differently in the future (Keizer, 2020) [my translation]."

Keizer (2020) thus argues that the statues should stay where they are and individuals should listen to each other while discussing colonial pasts. There is hence also understanding for the perspectives of the protestors:

‘Ilona Bakker does not think there should be any negative talk about Steyn and comparable historical figures. ‘This takes place in a different time, you cannot bring back history. However, I do understand the reactions and an extra explanatory sign seems good to be, only with all the statues’ (Pernis, 2020) [my translation].’

Another example of an argument in this repertoire is that of Van Schoonhoven (2020):

"You do not remove controversial statues, has been the motto in Hoorn for years. With controversial statues, you neatly explain what the historical figure has done and who take offence on these deeds. You can hardly call such statues a tribute. Pooped on from top by the pigeons and from the bottom by historical facts [my translation]."

Van Schoonhoven would rather say such statues are Mahnmals, which loosely translated means cautionary memorial. This indicates Van Schoonhoven's stance in the debate: he thinks the complete removal of the statue would not serve the goal of the demonstrators as these are no tributes, due to the explanatory signs.

This repertoire is also found by some historians, as they argue that the deeds of the historical figures have to be viewed and explained upon in the context of history: times in which whole societies profited from colonialism, crimes against humanity and where people believed these crimes could be justified. Nonetheless, a critical note was already placed at the statue of J.P. Coen in Hoorn in 2012. The plaque says: ‘Critics say Coen's violent trade policy in the Indian archipelago deserves no tribute’. This plaque is seen as an act of progressive insight and good consultation, according to historian Geerten Walling (Bouwman & Rozema, 2020). Walling also stresses that no one should vigilante justice about history and

memories: "Sometimes I ask left-wing people: what if a group of Forum members [Forum voor Democratie] comes to remove statues (Bouwman & Rozema, 2020)? [my translation]" The example Walling gives indicates that he assumes that especially people oriented on the left of the political spectrum are supporters of the iconoclasm and hence could not stand the idea of Forum voor Democratie voters removing statues either. However, this is a short-sided perspective that creates a 'left' versus 'right' discussion, which would only further polarize parties rather than unite them.

In conclusion, in this repertoire, it is argued that the public sphere can remain the same when the historical figures are placed in the correct historical context. Thus, the glorified stories regarding the person should be stripped and replaced by more nuanced narratives. Nonetheless, in the following repertoire, it is advocated that the public sphere at large should be more nuanced through the coming of counter monuments.

The repertoire of idealistic contextualist

While Geerten Walling appreciated the addition of critical plaquettes, Hans Nijenhuis (2020) wonders if a plaquette covers the dark sides of great deeds when these exact deeds are the dark side themselves. Therefore, within this repertoire is proposed to place so-called counter monuments, as this could create interesting stories in the public sphere. Alternative stories on history are already represented in the public sphere of Amsterdam by two slavery monuments, a gay monument and statues of Anton de Kom and Allende (Dijksterhuis, 2020). However, there are still a lot of perspectives and stories which remain untold and hence can be covered with new monuments. Ideas of figures who deserve new statues are also proposed, amongst them: Tula, initiator of the slave revolt in Curaçao (Bouwman & Rozema, 2020); Anton de Kom, a Surinamese resistance fighter (Bouwman & Rozema, 2020); Soekarno, the first prime minister of Indonesia (Runhaar, 2020); and raden mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat, who wrote an anti-colonial book in 1913 (Bouwman & Rozema, 2020).

From this perspective, it is advocated that placing new monuments and statues is more effective than removing the old ones as the public spheres will become representative of the current views and perceptions on history then. This, again, has to do with the idea that history should not be forgotten. Also, historian Oostindie states: "If you take them away, you don't remember what happened (Boere, 2020) [my translation]". Nonetheless, from the profession of historian, this is an irregular perception, while, as mentioned before, removing statues does not mean that history is erased but rather that the interpretation of history is different in

contemporary societies. Though, placing counter monuments would also show the inclusivity of contemporary societies. Historians who wrote articles themselves, like Anne-Lot Hoek and Arie Wilschut, advocate that there are always more sides to history and there is no one objective truth. They consequently argue for a broadening of colonial history by opening up the conversation for other perspectives on that history. Society has become very multicultural in the past sixty years: the amount of Dutch people with a non-Western background has grown from almost nothing to 50 per cent of the residents (van Houtert, 2020). The public sphere has to change along with society, therefore, it is important that heritage representations change too.

Thus, in this repertoire, it is argued that the public sphere at large should become more inclusive and representative of current society with the placement of new statues and monuments. New statues have the power to change the visual discourse in the public sphere. Nonetheless, the visual discourse can also be changed by aesthetically changing the controversial statues as advocated in the next repertoire.

The repertoire of artistic defacers

In this third repertoire, it is advocated that the controversial statues could be changed artistically so that the visual discourse of the statue changes. In that way, passers-by can see that this is a controversial figure without the need to read the extra information sign. While "a lot of people probably do not even know who Coen was or what he did (Kromhout, 2020) [my translation]", aesthetical changes would change the sight of the statue, in which they are pictured looking down on the passers-by proudly. This repertoire is, however, barely heard in the discussion around controversial statues. Nonetheless, Banksy



Picture 1 - Artistic changes statue in Colston by Banksy

proposed this as a solution for the statue which was thrown in the river in Colston (Bral, 2020), as pictured above. Besides, the changes made when the Van Heutsz Monument turned into Monument Indië-Nederland, can also be perceived as little esthetical changes. Because, the portrait of Van Heutsz was removed and new pillars were added (Niemantsverdriet, 2020). In short, this repertoire represents the idea of changes in the public sphere through changing the controversial statues.

In conclusion, from this repertoire, it is argued that the statues should remain a part of the public sphere, however, do not honour the artistic and historical values of the piece by changing it. However, the next repertoire advocates that the artistic and historical values should be honoured, though not in the public sphere.

The repertoire of museologists

From this repertoire, it is argued that there is no place for the statues in the public sphere anymore. However, while they should not be destroyed entirely due to historical, educational and artistic values, they should be placed in a museum or park. This idea comes from Budapest and Moscow, where they have created parks in which statues from the communist period are brought together. This park is now a tourist attraction and also visited by schoolchildren to educate them about the communist period. Lex Heerma van Voss, director of the Huygens Institute for Dutch History, thinks this is a good solution because relocating the controversial statues is important. He proposes the museum and knowledge centre of Dutch colonial and military pasts, museum Bronbeek, spontaneously as a possible new location (de Lange, 2020). Museums offer space to show more perspectives on the statues, like stories about the person portrayed; who created the statue and why and the group that advocates removal (Smits, 2020). Hence, museums have more room for inclusive stories. Museums also see themselves as a facilitator of conversation and are open for various perspectives on history, like in Bronbeek according to conservator Hans van den Akker:

“We are now in the process of completely reforming the museum. We want to open as a museum that provides an even more complete picture of history in 2022. For example, at Second World War monuments, we want to commemorate all fellow citizens of that time: Europeans, Indo-Europeans and Indonesians. With the statue of Jo van Heutsz, I can also imagine that we are going to give an explanation of how his actions are now viewed at this time (Tetelepta, 2020) [my translation].”

Nonetheless, the head of Museum Bronbeek, Pauljac Verhoeven, would like to see that visitors draw their own conclusions rather than imposing visitors with their view on certain periods of history. Hence from this perspective, it is said that people should be able to respectfully discuss their views on history with each other, without the need to vandalize

statues. Slierlings also agrees that placing the statues together in a museum could be very helpful in educating future generations when the correct context is provided:

“By preserving ‘hero images’ and names like ‘The Golden Age’ we could keep the memory alive and educate new generations with lessons from the past by placing the names and periods in the historical context. However, it is then of great importance that we provide the *correct* historical context (Slierlings, 2020) [my translation and emphasis].”

Slierlings (2020) means that the correct historical context should be given regarding the reason why the statues were placed. Thus according to Slierlings, it should also be told that the statues were once placed when nations states were looking for national heroes which could be placed on a pedestal and thereby feed the national pride. Instead of only providing the story of misdeeds of the figure, which had taken place hundreds of years before the erection of the statue. According to Slierlings (2020) this context could be best provided in a museum or park:

"After the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, Budapest found a nice solution for the anachronistic heritage from the communist era. Statues of celebrities as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Lenin have been removed from the public sphere and were place in Memento Park. Resulting in a beautiful theme park, that does not only show different art styles but also provides historical context about this dark period in Hungarian history [my translation]."

In short, this repertoire carries out the idea that statues should be preserved, however not in the public sphere. Therefore, they should be placed in a museum so that the artistic and historical value will be preserved and there is enough room to shed light on different perspectives on history, while not honouring the representation of the statues any longer. Nonetheless, within the next repertoire, it is argued that there is no place at all for these statues and hence should be destroyed.

The repertoire of radical anti-colonialists

As earlier explained, this repertoire is not extensively heard in the articles under review, as protestors are barely asked to respond to the situation themselves. However, this repertoire manifests itself in the few responses of protestors who were heard and other sympathizers of the demonstrations. In the report of Marjon Bolwijn (2020), few protestors are interviewed in Hoorn. One of them came to the protest with a banner saying 'Genocide is no heroic act'. She explains that citizens of Hoorn are conservative and rather look away than start the discussion about controversial statues. Her grandfather was a history teacher in Hoorn, who regularly had a discussion with angry parents when he was teaching the children about the wrongdoings of historical figures (Bolwijn, 2020). Also, Rochelle van Maanen, from the Decolonization Network former Nederlands-Indië, states that it is inappropriate that Coen still has his statue in Hoorn while "He slaughtered my forefathers (Bolwijn, 2020) [my translation]". She argues that it is time to shine a light on the dark sides of the colonial period in the Netherlands (Bolwijn, 2020). Also, Harry Kuiper, who is a former journalist and author of various war books, would argue in favour of removal and wonders why museums would rather like visitors to draw their own conclusions:

“What nonsense that it is argued that it is not possible to conclude what an outrage is. For Second World War we have the Niod (Dutch Institute for War Documentation) which can explain in detail what wrongdoing was. Why should a museum on colonial history not be able to do that? (..) People like Van Heutsz are now shown as military daredevils. However, if deeds are at the expense of other people, it is never right. So, remove that thing (Tetelepta, 2020) [my translation]!”

In short, within this repertoire, there is no room for any discussion regarding the statues, as they are destroyed. Moreover, does not allow negotiation of cultures and thus not have the opportunity to create a shared identity through the use of the controversial statues. This is hence a quite radical idea and is scarcely represented in the mainstream media.

Discourse 2 – Critical post-colonialist discourse

The five aforementioned repertoires build the second discourse distinguished in this research: the critical postcolonial discourse. This discourse and repertoires are, again, advocated by various people as academia, politicians, curators and protestors. The five repertoires that form

this discourse vary in the level of radicalism about changing the public sphere. In the first repertoire, of pragmatic contextualist, it is argued that explanatory sign should be added to the existing statues. With these signs, everybody should be informed about the misdeeds and can hence determine if the historical figure sculptured is a hero. However, in the second repertoire, of idealistic contextualist, it is argued that the meaning of the public sphere at large should change through counter monuments. With this method, the public sphere would become more representative of current society. In the repertoire of artistic defacer, however, it is also stated that the public sphere should be changed so that passers-by notice more inclusivity. Nonetheless, within this repertoire, it is advocated that the current statues should be aesthetically changed, rather than placing counter monuments. Within the fourth and fifth repertoire, it is advocated that the statues should be removed from the public sphere. However, in the repertoire of museologists, it is argued that the statues should be preserved within museums so that there is more room for different perspectives. However, from the repertoire of radical anti-colonialists, it is argued that there should be no place at all for the statues and hence should be destroyed. As a consequence of protestors only being barely heard in the articles reviewed, this repertoire is minimally represented in this research. Nonetheless, this repertoire is still heard through the voices of sympathizers of the action groups like passers-by and journalists.

In short, this discourse represents post-colonialist ideas regarding the preservation of controversial statues. These ideas are progressive and enhance change of the public sphere, which facilitates a debate towards a more inclusive and multicultural society. This discourse is most frequently heard within the articles reviewed. Yet, the repertoires which are mostly represented from this discourse are the ones that honour the historical and artistic value of the statues. Hence, it can be stated that statues should represent not only tribute, but should also catalyze the debate regarding colonial pasts, either through explanatory signs, counter statues or by placing it in museums.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is found that academics, politicians and passers-by are heard most often in the articles reviewed. Academics and politicians are the primary definers in the articles reviewed. The consensual point is found by these two groups and is complemented with the opinions of passers-by. Therefore, it can be stated that these three groups lead the public debate. However, on the contrary, protestors are barely asked to shed their light on the events occurring. This group is seen as less powerful and if heard, their ideas are reported as the secondary definition. This group is therefore automatically put into a defensive position, as they have to produce the counter-argument against the primary definers and the public is not familiarized with their ideas through these articles. Moreover, this group is not strongly heard in this discourse analysis.

Furthermore, there are two overarching discourses noticeable regarding the discussion around controversial statues in mainstream news articles. The first discourse is the colonial discourse, which is built out of three repertoires. The first repertoire is that of the nationalists, from which it is argued that the historical figures sculptured are true heroes that made the Netherlands a glorious and wealthy country. This repertoire representing nationalistic ideas that are most closely related to colonial ideologies. The second repertoire within this discourse is the trivialists stating that all people are simultaneously both good and bad depending on the perspective from which one is looking. Nonetheless, trivialists might be critically questioned about which perspectives should be taken into account when a historical figure is immortalized with a statue. In addition, it could be wondered from which point the respectable sides and glorious perspectives, no longer offset the misdeeds of a historical figure. However, relativists are arguing that the statues are not honoured at all through their repertoire. Thus, from the relativists repertoire, it is therefore argued that removal of the statues would not help with achieving the goal of the demonstrators. From this stance, relativists hence ignore the influence of heritage forms on the national identity. Nevertheless, according to the earlier established theoretical framework heritage most certainly influences the national identity. The overarching colonial discourse is found by various people, like historians, passers-by and journalists, as perceived from this research. It hence cannot be argued that there is a specific group of stakeholders engaging with this discourse. However, this discourse reproduces more or less colonial and Eurocentric world views which can be seen as anti-multiculturalist. Therefore, it can be stated that people engaging in this discourse

are not willing to negotiate cultural differences with other cultures and are therefore not capable to create a shared identity in a multicultural society.

Nonetheless, the second discourse, the post-colonial discourse, represents more inclusive ideas. This discourse is most dominant in the articles reviewed, however, also has more nuances to it. This discourse is namely built out of five repertoires. The first and most modest of them is the repertoire of pragmatic contextualist. From this stance, it stated that the context of the statues should be changed by practically adding an explanatory sign to the existing statues. However, from my critical stance as a researcher, I question if this solution would be satisfactory while such a sign was already added to the statue of J.P. Coen in Hoorn in 2012. Yet, this statue is still controversial. According to the repertoire of idealistic contextualist, the explanatory signs are also not enough to change the representation of the public sphere. Therefore, they are in favour of adding new statues and counter-monuments. Hence, the public sphere at large could become more representative of contemporary societies. Another idea, to make sure statues become less celebratory in function, is proposed by artistic defacers. While not heard frequently, within this repertoire it is argued that statues should be changed artistically so that passers-by would immediately notice that the particular statue is contested. However, this solution to the issue of controversial statues could also cause reactions from the cultural and historical field in regards to the artistic and historical value of the statue being dishonoured. Though, these values are honoured by museologists in the fourth repertoire. Because museologists argue that the statues should be preserved in museums so that there would be enough room to shed light on the different perspectives regarding the controversial statues. Moreover, from this is repertoire it is thus argued that the statues should be removed from the public sphere. This stance is also developed from the repertoire of anti-colonialists. However, anti-colonialists would like to see the statues being destroyed. Nonetheless, this repertoire is only marginally heard within the articles reviewed. Besides, this repertoire might cause likewise reactions as the repertoire of artistic defacers, as it dishonours artistic and historical values. Nonetheless, it can be argued that this discredit is the core of this repertoire. Together, these five repertoires are accommodated in the postcolonial discourse.

As shortly mentioned before, this postcolonial discourse at large is most dominant in the articles reviewed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the current dominant stance in the debate is quite progressive. However, considering the repertoires, the more modest – pragmatic contextualist, idealistic contextualist and museologists - repertoires are mostly represented. This could indicate a slow change towards progressive ideas in Dutch society and

increased awareness, as also proposed in the theoretical framework. These repertoires all honour the artistic and historical values of the statue, yet also advocate that the public sphere should change and become more representative for contemporary society. These repertoires thus allow negotiation of various perspectives on the national identity and heritage. Hence these repertoires may form a good starting point for the creation of a shared identity in the Netherlands. However, again, this discourse is reproduced by various groups and stakeholders. Therefore, the discourse nor repertoires could not be defined from the perspectives of the stakeholder groups. So, statues that are connected to national colonial histories are looked upon from eight different repertoires, nonetheless, these cannot be ascribed to specific stakeholders. Nonetheless, according to the dominant discourse in the public debate, the statues should be preserved with regards to postcolonial values. However, as claimed through the dominant repertoires within this discourse, there are three ways in which the statues could be preserved. First, they could be preserved with explanatory signs. Second, statues could be preserved, however, only if counter-monuments are added in the public sphere so that the public sphere at large becomes more representative of contemporary society. Lastly, the statues could be preserved in museums so that there is enough room to shed light on different perspectives on history. Which of these three repertoires fits best, should be determined per situation, statue and historical figure, according to my opinion.

The limitations of this research are related to the data set. While the articles for this research were gathered through LexisNexis, there are only mainstream media involved. This causes that there might be another conclusion when articles from alternative media were also studied or when the debate was followed from social media through netnography. However, this also creates opportunities for further research. In addition to these ideas for further research from another methodological base, it might also be good to do further research into for example street names and the evolving of Dutch national identity in general.

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