# Performing the City's Past

## The Performative Perspective on the Collective Memory of the Reconstruction Period in Rotterdam

Nicole van der Wilt (3984230)
29 June 2017
Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy
Supervisor: Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink
Second Supervisor: Konstantina Georgelou

Utrecht University

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Master Thesis
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Author: Nicole van der Wilt
Student number: 3984230
Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy
Utrecht University
Email: N.vanderWilt1@students.uu.nl


Supervisor: Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink
Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy
Utrecht University
Email: l.w.grootnibbelink@uu.nl


Second Supervisor: Konstantina Georgelou
Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy
Utrecht University
Email: k.g.georgelou@uu.nl

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# Acknowledgements

# Abstract

The main focus of this research is on the concept 'performing the city's past.' The aim is to find out how the past of Rotterdam is performed through the bearers of memory, the 'Fire boundary' (*Brandgrens*) and the 'Soul of the Reconstruction' (*Ziel van de Wederopbouw*) and how this produces a collective memory. The past is impossible to grasp, so the performance of the past will always be a representation of a (remembered) past. Only the remembered history can be performed by putting it in a contemporary frame of reference; therefore, it is about memory and not history. The performed past of Rotterdam is the collective memory of the Reconstruction period (1940-1968). Two bearers of memory through which this is done are the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction. Though these bearers of memory share the same subject and exist both for less than ten years, these are nevertheless two very different performances due to each of its creative appropriation of the past, which becomes apparent in the analysis on the criteria location, audience address and affect. The results show that two performances of the past, which both contribute to the same collective memory for the city, do this through different types of performances, in different settings (symbolic and staged versus material and place of history) and focussing on different parts of the collective memory (reconstruction and the undefeatable versus destruction and the battle). In this research, the concept of performing the city's past proved to be useful to explain the renewed interest in Rotterdam for its past but I am convinced that it can also be used to account for other social, economic and cultural processes in society.

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# 1. Introduction

*To make something of a theatrical analogy: cities take forms in which specific kinds of showing and looking, doing and interacting occur.*

Nicolas Whybrow

## 1.1 Performing the City's past

A city's past is what sets itself apart from all other places in the world. In the age of globalisation where homogenisation is happening to most cities, the past is an opportunity for the city to create or keep its unique character. The city's past is therefore an integral part of the present and is performed on a regular basis to make sure it is being kept alive in the community. The main source for the performance of the past is the sharing of a collective memory. Therefore, performing the city's past is a memory in performance rather than a history in performance. The concept of collective memory, which forms the basis of this research, is developed by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1887–1945). He extended the notion of memory in the 1920s to the social level by looking for collective memory in the dynamics of social life.[1] He argued that all memory is socially framed, because even the most private recollections come about through communication and social interaction. For that reason, Halbwachs defined collective memory as "a social reality, transmitted and sustained through the conscious effort and institutions of groups. Social groups construct their own images of the world through agreed upon versions of the past, versions constructed through communication".[2] As communication played an important part in the transition of memory, Halbwachs made a sharp distinction between history and memory. The moment at which the past is no longer remembered or experienced by any group in society, is the moment at which history begins because it then stands outside reality. According to different scientific studies on oral history, this time span of lived memory does not date back more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past, which equals three or four generations.[3] But in the performance of a city's past, we can all name examples of pasts that are performed in the present that extend far beyond the notion of lived memory, such as the Roman Empire in Rome or the Golden Age in Amsterdam. The passing of time does not always mean the losing of memory because through cultural formation (which is named a

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[1] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memories The Geographical Point of View* edited by Peter Meusburger, et al., 15-27 (Heidelberg, Germany: Springer, 2011), 16.
[2] Maurice Halbwachs in Jacob J Climo and Maria G. Cattell, *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (U.S .: AltaMira Press, 2002).
[3] L. Niethammer, 1985, in: *Cultural Memories The Geographical Point of View,* edited by Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, and Edgar Wunder, 15-27 (Heidelberg, Germany: Springer, 2011), 19.

bearer of memory in this research) the past becomes part of the present. Therefore, in the second chapter of this study, the concept of collective memory is widened from the social frame to the cultural frame using German scholars Aleida and Jan Assmann's variations on collective memory, and to the performative frame using historian Jay Winter's ideas of the performative aspect of the collective memory in mediated memories, such as film.

Collective memory is thus a shared agreed upon version of the past which allows a social group to position themselves as 'us' and not 'them', which brings me to the notion of collective identity. Collective identity is all about 'us' and 'them', and the interactions between those two. Karin Skill remarks that "collective identities are constructed in relation to other groups, and certain traumatic historical events can be used to create identities".[4] For that reason, I claim that the traumatic event of the destruction of the city centre in Rotterdam by the German bombing of 1940 informs part of the collective identity in Rotterdam. This historical event is part of the collective memory that is constantly being performed in the modern city by different bearers of memory. It was literally ground-breaking for Rotterdam, life-changing for the community, and it was seen as a defining moment in the history of the city. In order to investigate how Rotterdam performs this specific past, I will address the following research question:

> *How can we regard the bearers of memory the 'Fire Boundary' and the 'Soul of the Reconstruction' as a way of performing the past, and how does this performance produce a collective memory of Rotterdam?*

The performance of the bearers of memory does not only produce a collective memory but also a collective identity. I claim that the collective memory of the Reconstruction period is a performance of the past which contribute to the creation of certain aspects of the collective identity of Rotterdam. Rotterdam has a multitude of identities and based on the research by Kees Fortuin and Peter van der Graaf,[5] three identities have been selected from a longer list of collective identities that have been mentioned in the interviews and writings of different actors from the city. The three identities that I will consider in relation to the collective memory of the Reconstruction period are (1) Rotterdam as a port city, (2) Rotterdam as a city without a heart, and (3) Rotterdam as a second city. One aspect from the performance of the bearers of memory can be related to more than one identity of the city, such as the influence of port companies which can be seen as an aspect of the port city but also the second city. By analysing the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction, I will demonstrate

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[4] Karin Skill, "Review: Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka," *Transforming Anthropology*, 17: 1 (2009): 69-70, 69.
[5] Kees Fortuin and Peter van der Graaf, *De Stad Verhaalt van de Stad. Lokale Cultuur en Identiteit van Rotterdam als Hulpbron* (Utrecht: Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2006).

how they perform the city's past and how they contribute to the collective memory of the Reconstruction period in Rotterdam, which as a side effect informs some of the identities of the city.

## 1.2 The Field Performing the City's Past

Performing the city's past is an interdisciplinary subject, namely one that links the research domains of performing the city and performing the past together. For this research, I consulted different writings from history, performance and geography. Different scholars wrote about performing the city's past and because of the interdisciplinary character of the research I came across mostly bundles of work, such as from performance studies scholar Nicolas Whybrow,[6] historians Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter[7] or culture studies scholar Marnix Beyen and political historian Brecht Deseure.[8] What these works have in common is their interdisciplinary approach in which they bring different works of scholars from different disciplines together focussing on a common theme such as performance, memory or the city.

Whybrow shows in his work the interdisciplinary nature of the field of performance and the city by collecting a multitude of urban writings from different disciplines with the focus on performance. According to Whybrow, cities are interesting for performance scholars because "they are places in which things happen in a multitude of ways, and the ways in which they actually do happen are what determines how these cities and their inhabitants (are permitted to) become what they are, but they are not always going to remain that way".[9] The city is a dynamic entity, not just concrete, bricks and glass, but it comes alive in the bodies, habits, and movements of their inhabitants. The dynamics of the city can be initiated or disturbed by a performance, such as a flash mob, but also by everyday activities like walking. The different urban writings all investigate how things and people moved or behaved within in the city by focussing on the spatio-temporal movement (which are implied by the performance) and tell us something about the conditions in the city. Tilmans, Van Vree and Winter's edited work focus more on social history and the notion of collective memory and identity are linked to the performance of the past. The key question of their work is how Europeans have configured their relation with the past through cultural practices, surrounding monuments, novels, plays, films, academic scholarship, and individual human bodies. What links the writings in this work together is

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[6] Nicolas Whybrow, *Performance and the Contemporary City, An Interdisciplinary Reader (*New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).
[7] Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter, *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
[8] Marnix Beyen and Brecht Deseure, *Local Memories in a Nationalizing and Globalizing World* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[9] Whybrow, 5.

their treatment of history, memory and identity as performative imbedded in cultural practices which frames individuals and groups. They interpret the performative aspect of remembrance as an activity, which addresses the old but also engenders something new, as something that is slightly different than before on every occasion.  Beyen and Deseure's work focusses on how collective memories develop out of a never-ending negotiation between local, national and transnational actors. The second chapter of this work, written by historian Willem Frijhoff, is particularly relevant for this study because it deals with the collective memory of Rotterdam.[10] The chapter explains how urban authorities and dominant social groups create and successfully circulate biographies of their own cities, and give sense to specific events within such a biographical narrative. Frijhoff unravels different approaches through which inhabitants and political elites tried to transform the urban space of their largely destroyed city into a new 'civic' space with connections to its past. He did so by exploring the construction of monuments, the urban planning decisions for reconstruction, and the politics of street naming.

The choice to focus on the city's past as a performance rather than choosing a performance in or about the city provided me with the opportunity to link my knowledge gained from performance studies and human geography. The concept of collective memory helps to explain how the city's past is performed in the contemporary city and how this is related to the collective identity of the city, which allow me to link the past, performance and geography together. The social process of remembering requires a bodily practice of commemoration, while the build environment facilitates the commemorative performance by reproducing and producing social relations.[11] Place-bound actions and/or cultural artefacts renew the collective memory and knowledge of the past. The past, performance and geography are therefore intertwined in the collective memory. The performance keeps the past alive in the community and the geography gives context to the past and the community.

## 1.3 Performing the Past in Rotterdam

The past is only alive when it is performed and the collective memory only comes about in the performance. This type of performance is similar to the notion of performative utterance in the work of philosopher of language John L. Austin (1911-1960). In the 1950s, Austin referred to situations, in

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[10] Willem Frijhoff, "Physical Space, Urban Space, Civic Space: Rotterdam's Inhabitants and their Appropriation of the City's Past, " in: *Local Memories in a Nationalizing and Globalizing World,* edited by Beyen and Deseure, 27-50  (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[11] J.C. Wright,  "The Social Production of Space and the Architectural Reproduction of Society in the Bronze Age Aegean during the 2nd Millennium B.C.E.," in *Constructing Power: Architecture, Ideology and Social Practice*, edited by J. Maran, C. Juwig, H. Schwengel, and U. Thaler, 49–74 (Hamburg: LIT, 2006), 50.

which saying something was regarded as doing something, as performative utterances. With regard to the collective memory of the Reconstruction period, the bearers of memory (Fire Boundary and Soul of the Reconstruction) are  descriptors of the past as well as bringing the past into the present and giving it new life, but a bearer of memory can only be performative through a practice of remembrance, such as annual commemorations, pilgrimages, or laying flowers. Two important characteristics of the performance of the past are, therefore,  the citational and witnessing aspect. For that reason, the performance of the past needs a bearer of memory as well as a visitor or participant.

The reason why I identified the Reconstruction period of the city as the performance of the past for Rotterdam is based on the observation that the focus of most bearers of memory are on the reconstruction rather than the destruction of the city. It is interesting to see how a negative event in history has turned into a positive aftermath which is still part of the identity formation for the city. The bombing in the Second World War has undoubtedly cost lives, but this traumatic event offered the city and its population with the opportunity for a new beginning. The story goes that people started removing the debris the following day and that the plans for the reconstruction the city started being created only four days after the bombing. Because of this, Rotterdam does not only have a commemoration day on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May but also a Reconstruction Day on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. The destruction of the city centre by the German bombs and the subsequent fires left urban planners with the unique 'blank canvas' that every planner probably has dreamt of. After a group of modernists in the city influenced the urban plans of Willem Gerrit Witteveen, moving him into retirement, Cornelis van Traa took over and the plans for a modern city unfolded. The old structure of the city completely vanished from the new plans and a modern city was meant to be build after the Second World War.[12]  Rebuilding the psychical city was one aspect of the Reconstruction; another aspect was the reconstruction of the moral in the city. This was achieved by allowing the people to follow the construction activities closely through different forms of documentations and activities. There were Reconstruction-rides with the RET (Rotterdam bus company), different exhibitions such as '*De Maasstad in de Steiger'* (1949) and '*Een stad herrijst'* (1950), events such as '*E55*' (1955) and '*Floriade*' (1960), Reconstruction magazines, and the municipality produced different films about the Reconstruction and assigned artists to register the construction activities.[13] Though one was proud of what the city had accomplished in the period between 1940 and 1968, some criticism and scepticism on the Reconstruction arose towards the end of the 1960s. The new

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[12] Cornelis  Wagenaar, *Welvaartsstad in Wording. De Wederopbouw van Rotterdam, 1940-1952* (Groningen: s.n., 1993).

[13] Platform Wederopbouw Rotterdam, http://www.wederopbouwrotterdam.nl/nl/over-de-wederopbouw/, last visited on 16 June 2017.

modern city centre was perceived to be empty, business-like and not cosy according to the population of Rotterdam and had to become more attractive, more social and much greener, which meant more space for houses and recreation facilities was needed. Some buildings from the Reconstruction period were demolished and replaced by architecture from the 1970s. Therefore, the appreciation of the modern city centre is a trend from the present day.

As a city, Rotterdam was never really invested in becoming an 'open air' museum because of its zest toward the new.[14] For that reason, the performance of the past which seemed to have emerged around the 2010s, is a particularly interesting observation. The fear of losing lived memories and forgetting about the Reconstruction period of the city (which is about to reach the milestone of eighty years) seems to have triggered a renewed interest into this past, which is expressed in the re-appreciation of things made during that period and the emerge of different bearers of memory. Examples include the revival of the old city shield with the slogan 'stronger through effort' (*sterker door strijd*), buildings from that period receiving the monumental status, the trend in the city in which old buildings are expanded on with new building constructions such as the Timmerhuis, and the creation of bearers of memory such as the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction. The Fire Boundary (*Brandgrens)*[15] is a 12 kilometre long border of spotlights in the pavements of the city centre which was officially presented to the public on the 14th May 2010 (70 years after the bombing). This bearer of memory was initiated by the bench of the Mayor of Rotterdam and Aldermen and its aim was to psychically mark the fire boundary as '*lieu de mémoire'* of the destruction of the historical city centre and as a 'phenomenon' that in a blink of an eye clarifies why Rotterdam has a modern city centre.[16] The origins of the Dutch term *Brandgrens* can be traced back to the Rotterdam urban planners and the term is therefore unique to Rotterdam. The original documentation of the *Brandgrens* was meant to register the exact area of households who could qualify for funding because their houses were demolished by the bombs and the subsequent fire. The Fire Boundary can be followed with the help of a map and an audio-tour. The other case-study is the Soul of the Reconstruction (*Ziel van de Wederopbouw)*[17]. This is an audio-performance including 101 personal stories on the Reconstruction of Rotterdam and which was played in the exhibition on the Reconstruction period in Verhalenhuis Belvédère in Katendrecht (a neighbourhood in Rotterdam) from December 16th 2016 until April 15th 2017. The audio-performance was made in 2016 as part of the cultural manifesto for the 75-year anniversary of the Reconstruction 'Rotterdam celebrates the

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[14] Fortuin and Van der Graaf, 22.
[15] *Brandgrens Audiotour*, coproduction of Gemeente Rotterdam, Historisch Museum Rotterdam and Bonheur Theaterbedrijf Rotterdam, made by Henk van Dijke and Koos Hage, Rotterdam, 13 April 2017.
[16] Koos Hage, *Rotterdam, De Brandgrens van 14 mei 1940 (*Rotterdam: Veenman Publishers, 2008), 11.
[17] *Ziel van de Wederopbouw,* directed by Erik Post, 2016, Verhalenhuis Belvédère, Rotterdam, 10 March 2017.

city'. The stories were professionally recorded in a mobile recording studio of Verhalenhuis Belvédère. The excerpts of all the storytellers were selected and brought together by Erik Post, and accompanied by music from the composer Marlies de Mosch. They created four different audio-performances with personal stories on the Reconstruction in total.

## 1.4 Method of Research

The method of research in this MA thesis is based on different concepts that are interrelated to the theory of collective memory. Collective memory refers to memory in performance, in which an activity in a time and place before other people is implied. Therefore, I distinguished the following three criteria of analysis: location, audience address, and affect. The three criteria will be used to analyse the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction in more detail. In the focus on performing the city's past it is not only about performance or the past but also the city. The city is not only a concept but also something which is connected to place. Therefore, in Chapter 3 I will analyse how the location adds more substance and meaning to the collective memory of the Reconstruction period. I will draw on the concept 'site of memory' *(lieux de mémoire)* by historian Pierre Nora to account for the interaction and relation between the social process and the environment within the performance of the past. In my research, I do not focus on the individual memory but on the collective memory, and so, I will analyse the types of audience address of the bearers of memory and how the performances frame the past in Chapter 4. The Soul of the Reconstruction has an intimate sphere inside a house, whereas the Fire Boundary puts you in the city centre, making you move actively through the city. The analysis of both location and address shows that the two bearers of memory are different performances of the past, which also evokes different types of the affect nostalgia. In Chapter 5, I will analyse how they evoke different types of nostalgia, and what this nostalgia means for the collective memory and identity of the city. The two-folded typology of nostalgia, the reflective and restorative nostalgia, based on the work of literature scientist Svetlana Boym (1959-2015) will be used in this chapter. The different bearers of memory created different types of feelings, spheres and narratives in their performance of the past. These different performance of the past will show how the collective memory on the Reconstruction period in Rotterdam is constructed, functioning, and affected, and how this relates to different collective identities in Rotterdam. In the final chapter, the analysis will be reflected upon and my findings are considered into a wider context.

# 2. Collective Memory

*Memory performed is at the heart of collective memory.*

Jay Winter

## 2.1 Performance and Geography in Collective Memory

Historian Jay Winter claims that collective memory is memory in performance. When individuals and groups express, embody, interpret or repeat a moment from the past, they reinforce the ties that bind groups together and secure additional memory traces about the past in their own mind and in society. "Thus the performance of memory is both a mnemonic device and a way in which individual memories are relived, revived and refashioned".[18] The way the term performance is used by Winter, as well as in this research, is related to Austin's theory of performativity in speech acts. The utterance of the words "I do" (said under the right circumstances by the right speakers with the right intentions) transforms the utterer from being unmarried to being married. The performative act thus both describes a condition and creates it. The notion of performativity in speech acts is similar to the notion of remembrance, according to Winter. "Memories return to past experience but add their traces to the initial story".[19] Stating or recalling something is breathing renewed life into it by doing so at the same time. The recalling of memory of the Reconstruction period by the two bearers of memory in this study therefore both describe the past as well as bringing the past alive in the present. The right circumstances are crucial for the performance of the past. Memory is recollecting the past and thus a citational act, but this citational act is only meaningful if it is socially shared with others. For that reason, the performance of the past needs both a bearer of memory and an audience who is willing to witness the act of remembering. In addition, the performative act of remembering rehearses and recharges the emotion, which gave the initial memory its binding power and resistance to oblivion. The performance of the past does not often happen spontaneously, there are almost always bearers of memory that trigger people into sharing their memory. Throughout the world, monuments, statues, and symbolic landscapes act as mnemonic devices; acting as the storage vessels of cultural identity and information; as educational and other media of communication; as triggers for sensations, emotions, and sensibilities; and as "spatial anchors for historical traditions,"[20]

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[18] Jay Winter, "The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity," in *Performing the Past : Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe,* edited by Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter , 11-23 (Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 11.
[19] Ibidem.
[20] Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, and Edgar Wunder, *Cultural Memories The Geographical Point of View* (Heidelberg, Germany: Springer, 2011), 305.

or as I like to name them 'bearers of memory'. Memory is not only linked to time (the past) but also to place (the location of the memory). The collective memory is, for that reason, nearly always a local articulation of the past. Only a few events in history, such as the Holocaust, are memorialised on a larger scale than the local scale.

## 2.2 Performance and Collective Identity

Similar to how the act of remembrance is performative, some of the bearers of memory are also performative according to the way they are set up. The case studies in this research are more performative than other bearers, such as a statue, because apart from being part of an annual commemoration their practice of remembrance include more everyday activities such as listening or walking, which can be done by the different people on multiple occasion the year round.  In the reiterated act of the performance of the past, the collective memory is constructed and this shows a resemblance to how Judith Butler used Austin's performativity in the 1990s to explain how gender is constructed in society. Though I am aware that the performance of gender is rather different from the performance of the past or collective memory,  performativity is still a process in which social subjects are produced through performances, like how memories are produced in performance. These performances are regulated by social norms, but possibilities for subversion can arise from slippages between actual performances and the norms or ideals that they cite.[21] Butler emphasises that gender is not a natural, essentialised identity, but rather a performed identity in the everyday and embodied practice. The notion of gender and what it means to be a woman or man is created and sustained through acts, gestures, mannerisms, clothing, and so on. In this sense, identity is continuously recreated through repeated performances.[22] In this study, the bearers of memory and collective memory are citational performances in that they cite established roles and identities of the city. The collective identity is constantly brought into being and thus gives the impression of coherence and stability. Though the construction of gender identity of an individual is not the same as the construction of collective identity of a city, the social interaction and performance play a role in the formation of both types of identities. Collective identity refers to the idea that individuals can gain a sense of belonging and an identity that goes beyond the individual by participating in social activities. The collective identity does not require personal relationships amongst group members or

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[21] Derek Gregory, Ron Johnston, and Geraldine Pratt, "Performativity," in: *Dictionary of Human Geography*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
[22] Noel Castree, Rob Kitchin, and Alisdair Rogers, "Performativity," in:  *A Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

communities, but it is shared among group members based on common features.[23] One of those features could be the collective memory.

The discussion of a collective identity of a city is somewhat problematic because a city has a multitude of identities. In the research of Fortuin and Van der Graaf on the identity of Rotterdam, different actors in the city were interviewed and different writings about the city were analysed. They concluded that it is difficult to capture identity because it always changes and there are a multitude of identities out there. Because of that, I argue that the collective memory of the Reconstruction period is a performance of the past that brings certain aspects of the collective identity of Rotterdam into being. Despite the difficulty of the task, Fortuin and Van der Graaf did identify a multitude of identities attached to Rotterdam such as 'Rotterdam as port city', 'Rotterdam as lively', 'Rotterdam as a second city', 'Rotterdam as a city of 'low culture'', 'Rotterdam as a city of diversity', and 'Rotterdam as a city of minorities'. A lot of these identities overlap and relate to each other, which is also true for the collective identities selected for this research: Rotterdam as a port city, Rotterdam as a city without a heart and Rotterdam as a second city. Rotterdam as the port city is linked to the image of Rotterdam as a working city. "The image of a city where shirts with rolled up sleeve are sold".[24] It is also a city where the interest of the (port) entrepreneurs is always taken into account. Fortuin and Van der Graaf link the zest for action in the city and the mentality of 'doing first and thinking second' and 'actions speaks louder than words' to the identity of a port city. Another collective identity of the city is Rotterdam the city without a heart and therefore the space for the new. The destruction of the city in 1940 created an empty space for modern experiments, but it needs to be said that Rotterdam was never a city with a strong historical feel. The practical aspect was always favoured over history, for example, when the old city hall (which dated from the 14th century) was demolished in 1914 and was replaced and relocated by the current city hall.[25] Nevertheless, Rotterdammers "see in the little ugly duck the swan it can grow out to be,"[26] not by preserving the city as an open-air museum but also by looking forward and envisioning the future, which implies an openness for novelty. According to sociologist Jan Willem Duyvendak, the side effect of this space for novelty was that migrants started to identify with the city. They regard the city as open, not 'warm'. The open space in the city, both psychically and mentally, offered migrants the opportunity to make it their own city.[27] The last collective identity that will be discussed in this

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[23] Marilynn Brewer and Wendi Gardner, "Who Is This "We"? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71,1 (1996): 83-93.
[24] Fortuin and Van der Graaf, 19.
[25] Idem, 21.
[26] Idem, 22.
[27] Jan Willem Duyvendak, *Rotterdam, een Open Stad* (Rotterdam: Gemeente Rotterdam, 2002).

study is Rotterdam as a second city and relates to the identities mentioned earlier, as well as the second-city syndrome. Second cities are often industrial cities known for their resilience, and characterised by immigration, a lot of labour, dependency on one or two sectors, and entrepreneurs as main influences. In other words, here we have the identity of Rotterdam as a port city and the city without a heart. The term second city-syndrome is a sociological phenomenon referring to a city that constantly positions and compares itself to another city. This 'syndrome' is expressed through repeated references to significant historical examples of the city's perceived 'second' status in response to urban comparison and rivalry.[28] Even though the collective memory of Reconstruction period has nothing to do with the rivalry on national scale, it does emphasise the story of David against Goliath. Therefore, the grand narrative that covers almost all the collective identities of Rotterdam is 'the city that is constantly battling bigger forces then them, but will not be defeated'.

In drawing similarities with gender performativity, I would like to add a critical note on collective memory and identity. Like gender, collective memory is not a neutral thing, but regulated by social norms. Collective memory is a social construction, and as mentioned by Halbwachs, it encompasses a selected past which is shared and remembered. It is about making sense of the world around you and positioning yourself in the wider world with the notion of 'us' and 'them'. Collective memory does, therefore, not exist without exclusion. This exclusion is two-folded. The first type of exclusion is related to the selection of the collective memory; some historical events are (conveniently) forgotten, while others are remembered. For example, the 128 bombings on Rotterdam by Allied Forces during the Second World War, which cost as many deaths as the German Bombing of 1940is not part of the collective memory.[29] The second type of exclusion is related to the collective identity linked to the collective memory, namely the exclusion of people who do not share this version of the past. Hence, not every part of history nor everyone in the community is part of the collective memory.

## 2.3 Collective Memory as Social Frame

Until the 1920s, the subject of memory within academic research had its origins in the human neurophysical system, namely the individual's personal memory. It was not until sociologist Maurice Halbwachs that the concept of collective memory was introduced and developed. Halbwachs expanded the notion of memory to the social level of memory by looking for collective memory in the dynamics of social life. He discovered "that human memory depends, like consciousness in

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[28] Deb Verhoeven and Brian Morris. 'Second City Syndrome': Media Reportage of Urban Rankings. *Evaluation in the Media Conference*, Paris, 15-16 March 2012, 1.
[29] Frijhoff, 38.

general, on socialization and communication and that memory can be analysed as a function of social life".[30] In his work, Halbwachs wanted to emphasise the fact that all individual memories are socially framed or conditioned. Memory does not exist outside of individuals but it is never completely individual in its character[31]. Even the most private and personal recollections come about through communication and social interaction. All these experiences depend on interaction within the context of an existing social frame of reference. "There is no memory without perception that is already conditioned by social frames of attention and interpretation".[32] A person is only able to remember that which can be reconstructed as a past within the referential framework of their own present. Memories live and survive through communication, and if the communication ceases to be or the referential frame disappears or changes, then memories are forgotten. Halbwachs' clear distinction between history and memory is built on this assumption. To put it simply , Halbwachs' views history as the 'dead' past, which can only be accessed through historical records because it is neither experienced nor remembered by any group, and therefore stands outside reality. On the other hand, memory is seen as something alive, the active past that informs our identities because of their performance in the present. The moment when the past is no longer remembered and lived, is the moment when history begins. According to different scientific studies on oral history, this time span of lived memory does not date back to eighty and (at the very most) one hundred years into the past, which equals to three or four generations.[33] Halbwachs's radical separation of history and memory is critically reviewed by different scholars, such as Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann and Jay Winter.

## 2.4 Collective memory as Cultural Frame

While Halbwachs puts collective memory in a social frame, Aleida and Jan Assmann, add the cultural frame to Halbwachs's theory.  According to Assmann and Assmann, the passing from memory to history is not always just a matter of time. Some events never cease to be bearers of memory for a specific group and this can be explained through variations of the collective memory which Assmann and Assmann started to distinguish in the 1990s. In Aleida Assmann's view, the collective memory is

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[30] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 16.
[31] Chiara Bottici, "European Identity and the Politics of Remembrance," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, edited by Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter, 340-359 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 340.
[32] Halbwachs, 169.
[33] L. Niethammer, 1985, in: *Cultural Memories The Geographical Point of View* edited by Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, Edgar Wunder (Heidelberg, Germany: Springer, 2011), 19.

made up of three memories: social, political and cultural memory.[34] "Social memory refers to the past as experience and communicated (or repressed) within a given society".[35] This type of memory constantly changes and will disappear with the death of individuals because it is embodied in human beings. The social memory is generational and does not change gradually but undergoes a perceptible shift after periods of about 30 years with the rise of new generations who take over public responsibility and authorise their own vision of history.[36] While the social memory is embodied, the "political and cultural memory […] are mediated and, in order to become a kind of memory, they both need to be re-embodied".[37] Both types of memories can be found on durable carriers of symbols and material representations, such as the bearers of memory in this research. For this reason the social memory is built on inter-generational communication, while political and cultural memory are designed for trans-generational communication, involving not only libraries, museums, and monuments but also providing various modes of education and repeated occasions for participation. With regard to the variations on collective memory, Aleida Assmann shows that in addition to social interaction and communication, there is also a cultural and institutionalised component used to keep the memory alive in the community. Though Aleida Assmann divides collective memory up into three types of memories, her husband Jan Assmann only makes the distinction between the cultural and the communicative memory. According to Jan Assmann, the communicative memory is based on everyday communication and the cultural memory is based on cultural formation and institutional communication. "Communicative memory offers no fixed point which would bind it to the ever expanding past in the passing of time".[38] The only other way for the collective memory to become fixed in time is through a cultural formation. However, this would go beyond the informal, everyday memory and will indicate a transition from the communicative memory into a cultural memory, a transition that was never part of Halbwachs' collective memory because it would then become history. Cultural memory is a matter of institutionalised expressions. It focuses on fixed points in the past but it is unable to preserve the past as it was, because it uses current referential frames. Therefore, cultural memory "tends to be condensed into symbolic figures to which memory attaches itself, and are celebrated in festivals and used to explain current situations".[39] In cultural memory, like communicative memory, it is not the factual but remembered

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[34] Aleida Assmann, "Re-framing Memory. Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing the Past," in: *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, edited by Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter, 35-50 (Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
[35] Idem, 41.
[36] Idem, 42.
[37] Ibidem.
[38] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, 65 (1995): 125-133, 127.
[39] Jan Assmann, "Memory Culture, Preliminary Remarks," in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, 16-69 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 28.

history that counts. Though Assmann and Assmann have different conceptions of collective memory, they both expand the notion of collective memory from a social frame to a cultural frame. The cultural memory enables 'survival of type' consistently across generations because of its institutionalised formation. The insight that "in the context of objectivized culture and of organized or ceremonial communication, a close connection to groups and their identity exists which is similar to that found in the case of everyday memory"[40] makes the concept of collective memory useful for my analysis on bearers of memory. The collective memory is no longer only found in the dynamics of social life but also in cultural formations.

## 2.5 Collective memory as Performative Frame

While the Assmann's cultural formation of collective memory surpasses the transition in history as described by Halbwach, Winter focusses more on the intersection of history and memory. Winter witnesses more overlap between history and memory than Halbwachs did. "History is memory seen through and criticized with the aid of documents of many kinds – written, aural, visual. Memory is history seen through affect. And since affect is subjective, it is difficult to examine the claims of memory in the same way as we examine the claim of history".[41] According to Winter, the intersection of history and memory is important, because the performative perspective can highlight their commonalities and how important it is to avoid a rigid distinction between the two. The performative memory intensifies the overlap between history and memory because it borrows from both.  The collective memory and performance of the past is not a matter of calling on historical facts; it is invested in the remembered history, meaning that the act of remembrance is more important that historical accuracy. The expressions of a collective memory  "offers us truth statements rather than true statements, though the two coincide more frequently".[42]  Winter mentions the film *La Grande Illussion* by Renoir as an example in this context.  "In the film, released in 1937, he used a castle in Alsace to stand in for a prisoner of war camp further to the east in Germany and adapted elements of the memoirs of French prisoners of war in the script" [43]. The film offers some truths about the Great War, but it is not historically true. This is also the case for both the performative bearers of memory in this study. The bearers of memory give 'truth statements' in the sense that they present a reality that once was, but this does not necessarily mean that these are factual, 'true statements'. Therefore, Winter emphasises the importance of the overlap between history and memory, because the performative character of collective memory is created at the

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[40] Assmann and Czaplicka, 128.
[41] Winter, 12.
[42] Idem, 13.
[43] Ibidem.

intersection between history and memory, which can make the performance of the past more vivid and moving. For this reason, Winters likes to discard the simplistic distinction between history and memory, so "we can appreciate more fully the wide field of creative activity in which people perform the past together and in public".[44]

As for Winters' focus on the performative aspect, one could say that he provides us with the performative formation of a collective memory. He did so by paying attention to the performative aspect of the social interaction in collective memory and by focusing on the tension between history and memory in mediated bearers of memory such as film. The ability to reconstruct is important to bearers of memory. Symbols and signs represent places and times that are no longer here anymore, but, in the sense of history accuracy, they make these performance of the past neither true nor false. Memory is subjective, and therefore, one can never claim it is not the truth. The performative aspect of collective memory is most valuable with regard to its ability to look beyond the distinction between history and memory. It is remembered history which is the focus of this research, and the performative perspective provides me the tools to show how collective memory of the Reconstruction period is constructed, functioning and affected by the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction.

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[44] Winter, 14.

# 3. Location

*There are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory.*

Pierre Nora

## 3.1 Site of Memory

As stated in the quote above, Nora argues in his work on site of memory that people link their identities to sites because they feel a sense of loss. If people did not lose the ability for remembering things spontaneously or would still have 'real environments of memory,' the sites of memory would not exist because there would be no need for these sites. The emergence of sites of memory is therefore related to a sense of loss, or as Judith Butler formulated it, it is the communities' coping mechanism to deal with the loss of loss, and because something has been lost, it becomes desirable.[45] The community is about to lose a place or thing which is not needed nor part of the modern community anymore. In order to avoid this loss of loss or the fear of forgetting it, they create sites of memory to keep this past alive well beyond the timespan of the lived memory. The sense of loss is therefore an important factor of the concept of 'site of memory' and it can be used to explain the emergence of different bearers of memory of the Reconstruction period in the present day. The emergence of bearers of memory of the Reconstruction period is two-folded; it is related to coping with the absence of a historical city centre, and the urge not to forget a period in time in which the community had to set up and form the surroundings of the city as it is today. The generation who has lived memories of the Reconstruction period is disappearing, and different bearers of memory are constructed to cope with that loss. The Fire Boundary focusses on both the loss of the historical city centre and the loss of lived memories of the Reconstruction period, while the Soul of the Reconstruction only copes with the loss of lived memories of the Reconstruction period.

The Fire Boundary with its spotlights in the pavements of the city centre functions obviously more as a site of memory than the stories in the audio-performance Soul of the Reconstruction. The Fire Boundary is a direct and an actual psychical example of a site of memory, because the bearer of memory is established on the 'actual' place where the fire boundary once was or at least where it was documented to be. The Soul of the Reconstruction is a site of memory in a more indirect, mental way, in terms of the recollections of reconstruction of the city. Both bearers of memories could be

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[45] Judith Butler, "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?," in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, 467-470 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

regarded as sites of memory according to Nora's notion of the term. According to Nora, "*Lieux de memoire* are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration".[46] The sites can be 'material', such as commemorated locations or statues, 'symbolic', like ceremonies and pilgrimages, or 'functional', such as associates or dictionaries.[47] It is important to note that these different aspects of site of memory always coexist amongst one and other. For example, "A purely functional site, like a testament, belongs to the category only inasmuch as it is also the object of a ritual".[48] Whether they take the material form of actual places and objects, or the immaterial form of stories and pieces of music, sites of memory are definite according to the fact that they cause attention on those doing the remembering and therefore becomes a symbolic investment in keeping the memory alive.[49] In addition to this, sites of memory can help to reduce the proliferation of disparate memories and provide a common framework for appropriating the past. Therefore, a site of memory can act as a framework in which memories come together because they provide "a maximum amount of meaning in a minimum number of signs".[50] Because of these signs, sites of memory constantly get new meanings, especially with the passing of time and changes in frames of reference.

## 3.2 Site of the Fire Boundary

The Fire Boundary is a site of memory in the material sense of the concept. After the research on the original Fire Boundary which was documented in 1946, a temporal Fire Boundary was marked in 2007 and 2008 and became a permanent part of the city pavements later in 2010. The markings of the monumental lights (figure 3.1) in the pavements are a site of memory in itself, but include other sites of memory at the same time. Different sites of memory on the map of the Fire Boundary are marked with numbers, which correspond to audio-fragments. These sites of memory either focus on the loss of the historical city centre or on the loss of lived memories of the bombing on the 14th May 1940. The loss of the historical city centre is expressed as a material site of memory in the sense that it is marked by the boundary itself, but also marked with special markers on the map that point to places where the new and the old city centre collide. In addition to this material site of memory, there are also symbolical sites of memory in the Fire Boundary audio-tour. It involves symbolic sites of memory especially when the loss of lived memories comes up. It is more symbolic because there is no material "proof" anymore of the destruction of the city, though you are standing on the spot

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[46] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7-25, 18.
[47] Idem, 19.
[48] Ibidem.
[49] Ann Rigney, Plenitude, "Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural memory," *Journal of European Studies* 35:1 (2005): 11–28, 18.
[50] Pierre Nora in Rigney, 18.

where the event of the bombing happened. That is, unless you argue that the new buildings which have replaced the old ones are "proof" of destruction, but I will not make this claim because the focus of the Fire Boundary lies more on the destruction rather than reconstruction of the city. I would consider the new buildings as the materialisation of this reconstruction. The loss of lived memories of the bombing are, thus, more related to the symbolical site of memory, and the loss of the historical city centre is more related to the material site of memory, but both the symbolical (the sketches of life before the destruction) and material sites of memory (markings in the pavement) support one other in the Fire Boundary.



**Figure 3.1:** On the left the three oldest houses of Rotterdam on the bank of the *Rotte*, and on the right the marking in the pavement at night with the silhouette of the statue 'the Destroyed City' in it.

The material markings of the Fire Boundary as well as the surroundings you encounter during the walk are given more meaning through the symbolical sites of memory and vice versa. As Winter pointed out, the performance of the past becomes more vivid and moving at the intersection of history and memory. The historical facts that are told and the material surroundings are made more meaningful through the symbolic descriptions of the sites in the audio-tour. For example, on the Rechter Rotterkade (figure 3.1) the loss of the historical city centre is emphasised by pointing out the old houses that are still there. "On the corner of the Rechter Rottekade the oldest houses of Rotterdam can be seen. Three mercantile houses dating back from 1700 are still standing tall support by each other".[51] In addition, this place is even more symbolic because it situates the audience at the riverbank of the Rotte, the river that the city is named after. It is at this point where the audience can literally and symbolically walk the line of 'history'. These three old houses on the riverside of the Rotte become symbols of memory for the city because of the performance of the past in the Fire Boundary. In this example, the material site was there and became more symbolic because of the performance, but the Fire Boundary also has numerous examples by which the symbolic site on the

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[51] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 15 Rechter Rottekade.

audio becomes a material site of memory. At different points on the map, the audience can play the corresponding audio of sketches on the city before, during or after the bombing of 1940. While standing at the actual site in a modern cityscape they describe the same site in another time. In one of the audio-fragments, a story is told of how the construction of the new infrastructure of the Westblaak came about, while you are standing on the Westblaak where no reference to life before 1940 can be seen. This seemingly modern and regular road through the city is not the material site of memory, but a symbolic site of memory of the collective memory of the Reconstruction period. It is symbolically the battle ground where the influence of entrepreneurs in the city became apparent and the destructive side of the Reconstruction period is shown.

> Here has been a fight, a sort of bureaucratical battle over the organisation of the city, the movement of traffic […]  Two men bowed over the map of the new city, they are drawing the new city. […] They are standing with their back against each other. One looks back, the other forward. One man is named Witteveen […] The other man is called Van der Leeuw. He is the director of the Van Nelle Fabriek. And when the Germans called off a construction stop in July 1942, he used the possibility to criticise Witteveen's plans. They don't go far enough according to him. It has to be more modern. Van der Leeuw wins.[52]

The audio also tells us that the modern plan meant that the old Bijenkorf (a Dutch warehouse designed by Dudok) had to be demolished in the Reconstruction period to make way for this new road and that some of the population of Rotterdam raised the question "What was worst? The bombing or the Reconstruction".[53]  This seemingly regular road in the city is now transformed to a symbol of the reconstruction period and thus a site of memory. The memory of this site makes this place more meaningful now.

Rotterdam with its modern city centre was mostly a symbolic site of memory. The history of the city centre could come alive only through ceremony or memory,  as there are not many historical reference points in the city like most other European cities. For that reason, the Mayor and Aldermen of Rotterdam decided to incorporate the Fire Boundary in the pavement of the contemporary city. The Fire Boundary was incorporated "as a *lieu de mémoire* for the catastrophic destruction of the historical city heart".[54] The actual environment of memory is not there anymore, but the site of memory offered the city with an alternative place of remembrance.  It is built with the intention to perform an explanation for the lack of a historical city centre and emphasises the modern character of the city by placing a border around it opposing the old infrastructures of the city. This public

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[52] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 6 Westblaak.
[53] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 6 Westblaak.
[54] Hage, 11.

display of the past, therefore, open ups the opportunity for many generations to come ,and for tourists to learn about the past and collective memory of the city, even though the actual environment and lived memory are lost.

## 3.3 Site of the Soul of the Reconstruction

The audio-performance Soul of the Reconstruction is a site of memory, because it includes different stories of the Reconstruction period. Sometimes these stories can be disparate, but they do form one common framework for the appropriation of the Reconstruction period in the collection. The collection of anecdotes about the Reconstruction period is a site for memory in itself, but like the Fire Boundary, this bearer of memory also includes other sites of memory. Though the collection of anecdotes is a symbolic site of memory, the other sites of memory referred to in the performance are examples of material site of memory carrying symbolic meaning in what can be remembered about that time.
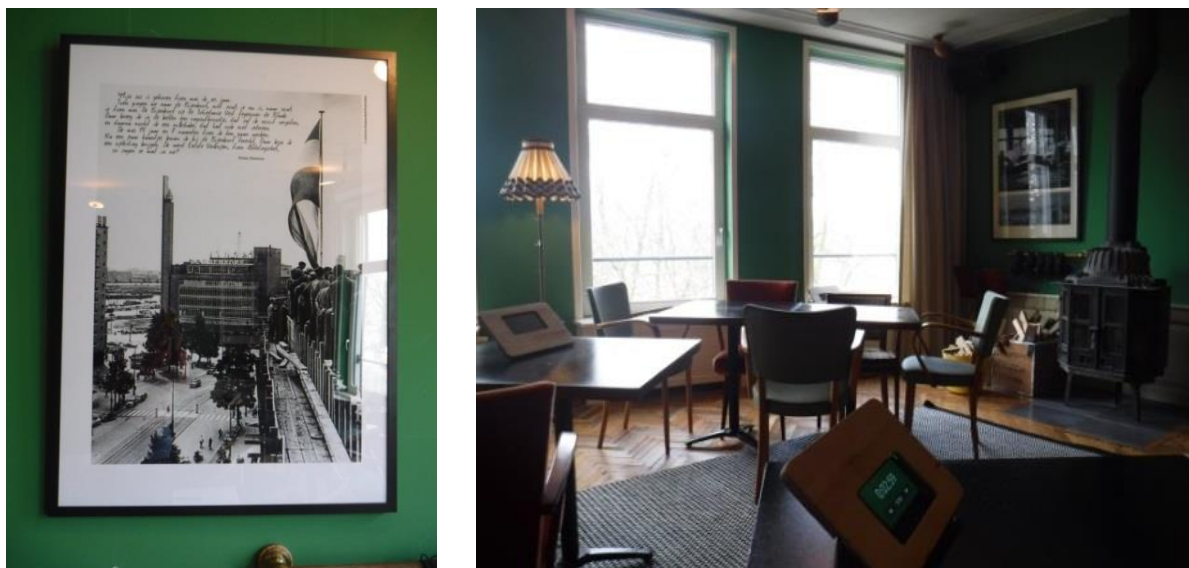


**Figure 3.2:** Some of the anecdotes in the audio-performance Soul of the Reconstruction are framed with a photograph and hung on the wall as décor pieces in the listening theatre of Verhalenhuis Belvédère.

The anecdotes are ordered according to theme, and one of the themes can be named hotspots in the city during the Reconstruction period, which are examples of material sites of memory such as the concert hall De Doelen, Grandcafé Engels and restaurant Old Dutch. These sites of memory which are mentioned more than once in various anecdotes, have some features in common which can explain why these places are part of the collective memory of the Reconstruction period. The first common feature is the entertainment factor. These sites were visited in a social and fun setting most of the times, which consequently means more pleasant memories, people are more likely to share. Another feature these hotspots share is the fact that these sites are visited by numerous people on a regular

base, which increases the chance to build a memorable memory in or around that place. Grandcafé Engels is situated in the Groothandelsgebouw in Rotterdam, next to Rotterdam Central Station. In Grandcafé Engels, different nationalities came together to work, which in turn resulted in marriages between different nationalities. The café also grew to become a huge entertainment centre in the city and the café was expanded with a bowling alley, a Hungarian restaurant and a cinema.[55] The concert hall De Doelen is discussed in the context of its opening by Queen Juliana and the different and various performances and events are held there. The concert of Iggy Pop is remembered, but also performances by Suriname artists and events such as 'Turkish Children's day' with music and films[56] are mentioned by more than one person. The diversity of the type of visitors brings me to the third feature these sites of memory have in common, namely the ability to relate to people from different social classes. Though, the Old Dutch is perceived to be a place belonging to the richer part of Rotterdam.

The numerous visits and social activities in the anecdotes and the act of repetition make these places sites of memory. In the reiterated performances by different storytellers, the collective memory of these sites of memory is formed. The importance of these sites of memory are stressed, because they become more meaningful and more important in the collection. This would be different if a site of memory is only mentioned once or twice, or these anecdotes would have not been collected and brought together by Erik Post. It was the maker who selected and structured the anecdotes in the Soul of the Reconstruction, but in the collective memory of the Reconstruction period, this structuring and selection is done by the dominant group in the city. For this reason, this example can also be regarded as a symbol of how collective memory in general is constructed because it shows how anecdotes structured by a theme within the bigger collection of anecdotes become more important. Therefore, the Soul of Reconstruction is not only symbolic as a site of memory but also symbolic for how collective memory works and how it is constructed.  Using this statement, I would like to emphasise again how collective memory and performance of the past is a social construct which entails only a selection of history, and which is not always shared by everyone in a community.

## 3.4 Site of Memory and Performing the City's Past

The analyses of the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction show that they both function as sites of memory for the performance of the past in Rotterdam. In both the bearers of memory, the overlap between material and symbolic aspect of the site of memory makes the collective memory

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[55] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 4.
[56] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 4.

come alive and make these performances of the past more vivid. The reference to actual places in the city together with the memory of those places breathes new life to these sites. The three old houses on the riverside of the Rotte will never be just three old houses, because of the symbolic attachment given during the walk of the Fire Boundary, and Grandcafé Engels will not be just any café in Rotterdam, but a place of historical significance because of the many different memories that were referred to in the Soul of the Reconstruction. The performance of the past of both bearers of memory differ because the Fire Boundary is more a material site of memory and the Soul of the Reconstruction is more a symbolic site of memory. This difference does not only relate to the type of site, but also to the way in which the audience is addressed in the bearers of memory. Therefore, I will analyse the way in which the audience is addressed in the performances of the past in the next chapter.

# 4. Audience Address

*History consists of a swarm of narratives, narratives that are passed on, made up, listened to and acted out; the people does not exist as a subject; it is a mass of thousands of little stories that are at once futile and serious.*

Jean-Francois Lyotard

Jean-Francois Lyotard reminds us that history in narrative is always moving which the term performance also implies. In the previous chapter, it became clear that the past comes alive and becomes the performance of the past at the point where history and memory meet or where historical accuracy and historical remembrance overlap. The performance of the past, just like any other performance needs an audience. The focus of this chapter will be, therefore, on the audience and in particular how the audience is positioned and addressed in very different ways by the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction. Consequently, these different ways of audience address lead to two very different conceptions of how the past should be performed.

## 4.1 Listening to the City's Past

The audio-performance Soul of the Reconstruction is performed in the listening theatre of Verhalenhuis Belvédère that is situated on the second floor of a house, and  looks like the setting of your grandmother's kitchen (figure 4.1). As a visitor, you take a seat at one of the four tables, put on one of the headphones and start playing one of the four different audio-performances which last for one hour each. The headphones and recorded audio create a distance with the audience, as the audience is not part of the conversation and positions the audience as listening in on people telling stories about the Reconstruction period of Rotterdam. The idea of listening in on peoples own personal stories combined with the setting of your grandparents' house make this performance of the past an intimate one. The intimate atmosphere of the Soul of the Reconstruction gives this performance of the past a more exclusive feel, as if you are in on the secret of the collective memory because no one else can hear it. This outsider-looking-in perspective made me think of voyeurism but instead of looking, you are eavesdropping.

Different aspects in the Soul of Reconstruction position the audience as an eavesdropper. First, there is the staging  of a homely ambiance that makes you feel like you are in someone else's home and the headphones which allow you to hear the stories that nobody else can hear. Secondly, there is the structure with the personal but anonymous stories as no names are mentioned and the flow of the

audio which contributes to one coherent story rather than separate fragments. The short anecdotes on related subjects are brought together in parts that I call themes. The themes are moving smoothly, and the introduction of a new subject in one anecdote can be the start of another anecdote related to that subject. For example, the theme of the living conditions of some groups in the city is discussed and moves from transvestites, sexual development and the arts to poverty and poor housing conditions in the 1960s and 1970s, and to demonstrations in the 1980s for new housing. If the maker Erik Post wanted to make a more abrupt move to another subject, there would be a moment without talking and the music of composer Marlies de Mosch introduces the beginning and the end of a new part of the audio. This flowing structure of anecdotes with smooth transitions make the Soul of the Reconstruction as if you were listening to two friends recollecting the same event, even though the storytellers were not together at the same time and place when the recording took place.



**Figure 4.1:** The 'Listening theatre' with a 'Soul of the Reconstruction covering 101 personal stories on the Reconstruction, found on the second floor of Verhalenhuis Belvédère in Katendrecht, Rotterdam.

In addition to the staging and structure of the audio, which positions the audience as eavesdropper in the intimate atmosphere of the house, the audience is also addressed in a certain way through the content of the audio. The Reconstruction period is often perceived as the period from 1940 till 1968, but in the audio-performance, this period is interpreted in a much broader sense. For the audio-performance, people were asked to talk about the reconstruction of the city, and this brought up different stories for different people of different ages in a rough timeframe from 1946 till now. For this reason, the themes are related both to the actual Reconstruction period and to the time when the word 'reconstruction' was no longer used but the process of reconstruction continued. This means that some themes are exclusively about the Reconstruction period such as the anecdotes on growing up and playing during the Reconstruction period, but there are also themes that relate to different periods in time. One example of such a theme is the working life in the modern warehouse Ter Meulen. The warehouse Ter Meulen was built in Rotterdam in 1897, so it existed before, during and after the Second World War. The store was bombarded and after having a store in a temporary

building (*noodwinkel*), a modern warehouse was built in 1948. This building is still part of the city these days, although the company went bankrupt in 1993. The iconic statues of Ter Meulen is especially foregrounded by the former employees who seem to idolise the workplace in their anecdotes. It is often been claimed that Ter Meulen was one of the fewer places with a multicultural staff, referring to people from various cultures working in the same departments. Phrases like "everybody wanted to work at Ter Meulen" and "according to the employees it was a warm warehouse to work in"[57] are just two of the many phrases about Ter Meulen. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the influence of entrepreneurs in a port city is more apparent than in other types of cities, and this also becomes apparent in the Soul of the Reconstruction. Ter Meulen is not the only employer who is mentioned more than once; other large companies like Van Nelle and Shell are also referenced to multiple times. Work is an essential part for a city that is known as a working city, and the storytellers are definitely performing this identity as part of the performance of the past due to the many references to their working life.

Another subject that spans across different periods of time is the immigration to Rotterdam. Different immigrants from different countries - such as Portugal, Suriname, and Bosnia - share their anecdotes about the reconstruction of the city often in relation to their adjustment to a new life in Rotterdam. The first immigrants arrived in the 1950s from former colonies or on invitation to work here, but the influx of immigrants is still on-going, which had a big impact on the city that currently houses 174 nationalities. In this theme, some talk about a demographical reconstruction of the city. "The city continues its development even though the name reconstruction has disappeared. Reconstruction is not only about the construction of buildings but also about a changing population"[58] and "the community is changing, it is still in development. There are a variety of people, who need to build the city together, and we will fill the heart of the Zadkine statue together".[59] The extended notion of the demographical reconstruction of the city can be linked to the collective identity of the 'city without a heart', which is related to the openness of the city, providing both a psychical and mental space for people of different nationalities to make the city their own. This space becomes foregrounded in some of the anecdotes, "when I go on holiday, I feel home sick for Rotterdam. Isn't it crazy for someone from Somalia to think that?"[60] or in the anecdote of a lady from Bosnia "Rotterdam is an affected city but rose above it all, it gives me hope that this can happen with people too after a war trauma".[61]

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[57] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 4.
[58] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 1.
[59] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 1.
[60] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 1.
[61] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 4.

The audience address of the Soul of Reconstruction give this performance of the past a domestic and intimate feel, while you are the outsider listening in at the same time. This set-up of outsider listening in makes this performance somewhat one-sided. The audience has no influence on the performance, expect for the ability to start, pause or end the audio. It is the audio-performance that is telling stories, while the audience has no voice in this performance. This one-sided performance of the Soul of the Reconstruction resembles very much what happens in a traditional theatre setting, in which the audience is sitting in the dark while looking at another world. In addition, the cosy sphere and the positive reading of the anecdotes also makes this a one-sided reading of events. In the structure of the Soul of the Reconstruction, I missed a more critical reading of the past, but again this seems to be symbolic of how collective memory is constructed; some parts of history are remembered and others are conveniently forgotten.

## 4.2 Walking in the City's Past

Armed with a map and a MP3-player with headphones, the audience of the Fire Boundary is ready to follow the markings in the pavement of Rotterdam (figure 4.2). The audience address in the Fire Boundary is one of a double-role: the spectator and the participant. The audience follows a narrative 'line' through the city, as well as following a scenario with instructions like "look towards the end of the street" (which can be interpreted as stage directions) at the same time. Therefore, the audience embodies the performance of the past, both for themselves and before other people in the city. In addition to this ambiguous address of the audience, the structure also positions the audience ambiguously. The audience is positioned as part as well as not part of the everyday life in the city. The map in your hand and the headphones make you stand out from the everyday crowd, whilst at the same time you are walking around in the city, as many people in the city do.



**Figure 4.2:** On the left the map with the Fire Boundary, walking route and the points of the audio fragments. On the right one of the markings in the city centre of Rotterdam.

The double role of spectator-participant for the audience is not uncommon in theatre and performance. There are many examples of performances where the boundary between the 'audience space' and 'performer space' is blurred because the performance demands an active participation of its spectators.[62] According to Kurt Lancaster, "the popularity of what can be termed performance-entertainments indicates that traditional theatre productions are not providing for many a sense of group (or tribal) social interaction or catharsis, in which it was meant to provide".[63] Examples of performance-entertainments are movie theme parks, karaoke, participation theatre, and role-playing games. The Fire Boundary as a performance of the past can also be regarded in this context. Instead of only being taught about the past of the city, the set-up puts the audience in the middle of the action and asks the audience to actively interact with their surroundings. The performance of the past is carried out in public and even though walking is an everyday movement, the structure of the audio and the map offers the audience a special role in the public space, like a tourist who is unfamiliar with the city. This places emphasis on the fact that the audience is doing something special. This became, for example, apparent in the impact I had on the people around me, who were unconsciously part of the performance of the past. When I stopped somewhere or looked at things relevant for the performance of the past, it had consequences for the present. The residents in the city moving around me had to either divert their daily movements to avoid bumping into me or join me in gazing at the surroundings. The daily routine was broken for a moment and my performance of the past was transformed to others, even though they would never know. The taken-for-granted history of the city is emphasised by participants performing the past but also by lighting up the spotlights in the pavement at night. The spotlights which are always present, as the modern city centre is always present, is enhanced by this performance of the past.

Apart from the structure of the headphones and the map, the content of the audio in the Fire Boundary also poses the audience as tourists. The content of the audio puts the audience at a distance because it is more similar to a historical reading of events than a remembrance of the old city centre. A lot of information and facts about the history of the bombing in 1940 is provided and more general stories are told, which made me miss a more personal perspective. It would have been easier for the audience to relate to this past if a more personal perspective was added to the audio. The whole set-up of this performance of the past, therefore, seems to be more focused on outsiders, on tourists without any knowledge of the historical event in the city, rather than being part of sharing the collective memory of the city within the community.

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[62] Kurt Lancaster, "When Spectators Become Performers: Contemporary Performance-Entertainments Meet the Needs of an "Unsettled" Audience," *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 30:4 (1997): 75–88, 77.
[63] Ibidem.

## 4.3 Audience Address and Performing the City's Past

The Soul of the Reconstruction and the Fire Boundary are two very different performances of the past. The Soul of the Reconstruction is set in the intimate atmosphere of a house and addresses personal memories but it is also a one-sided performance of the past because of the headphones and lack of interference of the audience on the performance. This makes this performance of the past staged. The Fire Boundary is set as a participatory performance of the past; the audience has an impact on the performance because of their ability to skip certain stops or to stay longer in a place. However, this does mean that the performance is more fragmented and the audio is rather distant. This performance of the past is set in the contemporary city, and it emphasises the past in the present, because the audience is placed in the actual place, where the history as described by the audio took place. The different settings of the bearers cause the Soul of the Reconstruction to resemble more of a traditional theatre setting with the traditional relationship between performer and audience and the Fire Boundary to resemble a more modern participatory performance setting in which the participant is both the audience and the performer. Apart from these differences in audience address, both bearers of memory position the audience as both an insider and an outsider, albeit done in very different ways. In the Soul of the Reconstruction, the audience is positioned as an outsider who is listening in, and who is addressed in a more personal way, causing the audience to feel part of the collective memory now. The outsider becomes part of the collective memory. In the performance of the past by the Fire Boundary, the audience is positioned as an insider by embodying the performance of the past, but the distant and historical address created a sphere that resembles a tourist attraction rather than contribution to the sharing of the collective memory in the community. The outsider is placed in the city as an insider but in the end does not seems to be part of the collective memory.

# 5. Nostalgia

*Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, of past and present, of dream and everyday life.*

Svetlana Boym

## 5.1 Nostalgia

Collective memory is about a shared past in the referential frame of the present, and the notion of nostalgia lies within the tension between the past and the present. Before I analyse how nostalgia is evoked by the performative bearers of memory, the history of the concept of nostalgia must first be unpacked. The term 'nostalgia' comes from the Greek for "longing" (*algos*) and "return home" (*nostos*) and was coined by the medical profession in the eighteenth century to refer to the diagnosis of yearning for a lost home, and expanded its meaning to refer to a desire to return to a lost place or time.[64] By the twentieth century, nostalgia surpassed the boundary of the medical condition and found its way into the cultural studies, in which nostalgia is seen as a "style, design or narrative that serve to comment on how memory works. Rather than an end reaction to yearning, it is understood as a technique for provoking a secondary reaction".[65] The focus of studies on nostalgia shifted from finding a cure for the disease of yearning for a place or time to a focus on the sociocultural conditions in which nostalgia came to exist, and how nostalgia can in turn influence the sociocultural and political circumstances. Nostalgia is related to both historical events and social change and this is why revolutions are usually followed by outbreaks of nostalgia, such as the technological revolution. Technology was once seen as a promise to bridge modern displacement and distance, and offered a miraculous cure for nostalgic aches, but technology and nostalgia have become co-dependent these days. New technology and advanced marketing evoke artificial nostalgia – for things you never thought you had lost -  and anticipatory nostalgia - for the present that flees with the speed of a click. "In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world".[66] Nostalgia can therefore be described as a defence mechanism which reappears in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals, but which also has

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[64] Maria Todorova, "Introduction, From Utopia to Propagande and Back," in: *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, edited by Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille ( New York : Berghahn Books, 2010), 2.
[65] Sean Scanlan, "Introduction: Nostalgia," *Lowas Journal of Cultural Studies* (2004), 5.
[66] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," *The Hedgehog Review*, 7-18 (2007), 10.

its side effects. The evocation of nostalgia and its side effects will now be explained by placing the bearers of memory within the theoretical framework of literature scientist Svetlana Boym (1959-2015) and her two-folded typology for nostalgia: the reflective and the restorative nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia stresses nostos (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the 'lost' home, while reflective nostalgia thrives in algos, the longing itself.  In this context, the reflective nostalgia is more related to the type of nostalgia evoked in Soul of the Reconstruction, while the restorative nostalgia is more related to the type of nostalgia evoked in the Fire Boundary, but as Boym states they are not absolute binaries. "They can use the same triggers of memory and symbols, the same Proustian madeleine cookie, but tell different stories about it".[67]

## 5.2 Reflective Nostalgia

Reflective nostalgia is the nostalgia that seeks not to re-establish the past, but reflects emotionally and sometimes playfully on the irretrievability of the past, through sentimental dreams of and yearnings for the past.[68] According to Boym, the focus here is not on the recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth, but on the meditation on history and the passage of time. This type of nostalgia is ironic, humorous, inconclusive, and fragmentary. It dwells on the uncertainties of human longing (algos) and it is more oriented towards an individual narrative which enjoys details and memorial signs. It is the recollection of memories that matters, not the return to a lost time. It is precisely this distance from time that drives nostalgic people to tell their stories, to narrate the relationship between past, present, and future. Because of that longing, they discover that the past is not something which no longer exists, but something that exists through the notion of the present. In this individual reflection on the past, there is more space for interpretation and doubt about the historically claimed absolute truth.[69] For this reason, the audio-performance of the Soul of the Reconstruction can be regarded as a evoker of reflective nostalgia. The audio-performance is based on recollections of personal stories of a time that is never going to come back, and which is structured by putting excerpts of individual narratives on the same subject together.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, not much critical reflection on the past is heard in the Soul of the Reconstruction, only indirectly in the ironic telling of some of the anecdotes. There was, for example, one man who spoke about his childhood in the Gouvernedwarsstraat during the Reconstruction period and his fights with gangs in an ironic and playful way. He says "every street had its own

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[67] Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," 15.
[68] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 49-50.
[69] Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents."

gang"[70] but the tone in which he spoke is far from serious and hints to irony. Another example comes from a woman from Suriname who immigrated in 1966 and talks about how she did not feel discriminated back then, "I felt like an exotic princess, my classmates were fighting over who could carry my bag".[71] She also remembered that it was really cold, that the house was small, and that she never got used to eating at six o'clock, but the humorous and playful reference to the past make her struggle of adjusting to the Netherlands not a narrative of a struggle but a narrative of overcoming. The lightness and irony in these stories is used to present a positive outlook of the past. One of the fewer examples of direct criticism on the Reconstruction period of Rotterdam is expressed within the theme of buildings making up the skyline of Rotterdam. A woman expresses her dislike of the building style in Blaak, an area in the city centre of Rotterdam, in a humorous and light way. She calls the different buildings "a collected mess," "amusement park hassle" and "too jovial"[72] but even this criticism ends on a positive note, when she recalls that the market in this area is "awesome". One side effect of these positive narratives on the reconstruction of the city is their confirmation of parts of the grand narrative which encompasses the identities of Rotterdam. The Soul of the Reconstruction, therefore, confirms the 'will not be defeated' part of the grand narrative, because of its focus on good memories, recovery of the city, and its broad use of the word 'reconstruction'.

The Fire Boundary, on the other hand, conforms another part of the grand narrative, the battling part, because of its focus on bad memories, the trauma for the city, and destruction. The choice of the makers of the audio-tour in the Fire Boundary to limit the personal stories contributes mostly to why the Fire Boundary evokes restorative nostalgia and not so much the reflective nostalgia. The only reflection that is present in the Fire Boundary mostly comes about in the lively sketches of the life in the city before the bombing of 1940. One example of this is the description of Zalmhaven before the bombing of 1940. "What a life, what a fuss. Salmon and oysters are popular, it was the food of the people. You hear shoutings and rattlings, the clatter of ropes. A little further away, you hear a drunk sailor sing '*toen wij uit Rotterdam vertrokken*' and everywhere flags, sparkles and scents".[73] The image sketched in some of the audio-tour, therefore, sounds appealing. It sounded like beautiful and lively places, places where I would have loved to spend some time if I would have lived in that period of time. It make me long for a place and time I never knew existed until now. But even these positive memories of the old historical city centre, contribute to the emphasis of the destruction of the city, due to the set-up in the audio. The contrast between the lively sketches of life

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[70] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 1.
[71] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 4.
[72] Ziel van de Wederopbouw, 1.
[73] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 2 Zalmhaven.

before the bombing and the destruction during and after the bombing, creates a feeling of loss amongst the audience.

## 5.3 Restorative Nostalgia

The second type of nostalgia that Boym mentions is the restorative nostalgia. This is the kind of nostalgia that can be regarded as a politicised transformation of its reflective counterpart. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. This type of nostalgia tries to protect this 'absolute truth.' Restorative nostalgia can often be found in historical revision and identity formation based on ahistorical discourse of origins, authenticity, truth, tradition, and ethnic or cultural purity.[74] This type of nostalgia is often witnessed in countries with various communities which try to legitimise their communities and the places they live in, by providing 'proof' of their roots in that area. It is this kind of nostalgia that is often found at the heart of national and religious revivals. Restorative nostalgia is not so much about the past, but about presenting values, family, nature, truth and so on as shared values. "To understand restorative nostalgia, it is important to distinguish between habits of the past and habits of the restoration of the past".[75] Restoration of the past is often characterised by a higher degree of symbolic formalisation and ritualisation compared to the actual past they are modelled after.

The lack of an old historical city centre in Rotterdam triggered the municipality to come up with the new tradition of lighting up the Fire Boundary. The Fire Boundary is an example of how this bearer of memory both evokes and is evoked by restorative nostalgia. While reflective nostalgia is embodied in the essence of the movement, the restorative nostalgia is all about embodying a destination. For example, in the reflective nostalgia in the Soul of the Reconstruction, it is a matter of remembering a place or time, whereas the Fire Boundary focusses more on claiming the place on the destination itself. The longing of the reflective nostalgia, therefore, got their materialisation (their home) in the contemporary city. The longing for reconstructing the past is shown in the way the municipality formulated their aim in the research report prior the execution of the project. The Fire Boundary was created as "a 'phenomenon' that in a blink of an eye clarifies why Rotterdam has a modern city centre".[76] The markings of the Fire Boundary, therefore, seem to be more about place branding, that is presenting the past of the city to outsiders, rather than presenting the feelings of the local population. This becomes apparent in the tourist-like audience address. The type of nostalgia evoked

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[74] Boym, "The Future of Nostalgia," 41, 45.
[75] Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," 14.
[76] Hage, 11.

by the Fire Boundary is therefore meant to give meaning to the city aiming at identity formation rather than to reflect on a past or a longing for a time or place that was once there.

The audio-tour of the Fire Boundary is generally structured in an informative but distant way. This distance is created due to the fact that the audio-tour is based on historical 'facts' rather than memories, allowing the audio-tour to show the darker side of things, that is, the cold numbers and bad memories. Such historical 'facts' in the audio-tour can be found in, for example, the narrative on the German bombing in 1940, "The first formation of 54 Heinkel bombers flew from east to west, and bombarded the city from Kralingen to Hofplein. At 13:27, the first bomb fell on Kralingen. […] Around 13:40, the centre of the city was in ruins and on fire within fifteen minutes".[77] The historical 'facts' are interchanged with personal stories about the struggle after the bomb attack. In contrast to the Soul of the Reconstruction, all the personal stories in the Fire Boundary are taken very serious, such as the excerpt of the personal story of a twelve-year-old child who thought he would die under the debris of his own house (figure 5.1).

> Twelve-year-old Dirk Koenen survived to tell the story. '[…] I was stuck between big concrete pillars and stones. I understood I could never escape on my own. […] When all the air was gone, I got smothered. But what was that, is somebody pulling my arm? […] When I felt those hands, I wanted to get out and became as strong as Tarzan and with help of my brother I could free myself from the debris. I stood on the debris of our house, the chalk was in my hair as the blood was flowing from my head.' As if he came back from the dead, passed the border once again, just like Rotterdam began to breathe again. [78]



**Figure 5.1:** On the left the corner of the Noordsingel, where the story of the 12-year-old survivor is told, and on the right a sign in the Posthoornstraat that reminds us of the historical city.

Drawing an immediate relation between the personal story and the city evokes restorative nostalgia. This example shows how personal stories in the Fire Boundary are symbolic of how the city started to

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[77] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 3 Het bombardement op Rotterdam.
[78] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 14 Noordsingel.

come back to life after the bombing, what is characteristic for restorative nostalgia. Apart from this example, the Fire Boundary has a lot of different metaphors on the city as a biological body which can come back to life, such as "here, beats the new heart,"[79] and "slowly the Witte de With rises from the ashes".[80] These metaphors evoke restorative nostalgia, and in doing so, they also actively contribute to the construction of the identity of the city without a heart as well as the port city. It symbolises the longing for a new city but also a zest of action is found in the Fire Boundary, such as in the personal story of a debris worker.

> […] the debris was tackled with unimaginable speed and decisiveness. In the words of 26-year-old debris worker Wim Laurent, 'you arrived into a dead city, clearly. The city had to be cleaned up and that is why you did it. These were the facts. It was a tragedy. I stood there when three people were taken out of a buried basement […]. But you went back to work.[81]

Even in similar formats such as personal stories, the difference between the performances of the past becomes apparent. The light-hearted anecdotes of the Soul of the Reconstruction versus the serious personal stories of the Fire Boundary. But even in the Soul of the Reconstruction, some characteristics of restorative nostalgia can be seen. The audio-performance was part of an exhibition in Verhalenhuis Belvédère, and although the story-house is not officially part of the audio-performance, I would like to mention this as the restorative aspect of the performance. The whole atmosphere in the house felt like stepping into your grandparents' place, with its typical lamps, carpets and other furniture. This ambience was even felt on the toilet (figure 5.2). The story-house tries to capture the sphere of a past in the present and is therefore involved with the restoration of the past. The restorative aspect in Soul of the Reconstruction is therefore not found in the actual audio-performance, but in the surroundings where the audio-performance is performed.



**Figure 5.2:** Some spherical images of 'Verhalenhuis Belvédère' taken during my visit on 10 March 2017.

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[79] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 8 Mauritsweg.
[80] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 5 Witte de Withstraat.
[81] Brandgrens. Audio fragment, 14 Noordsingel.

## 5.4 Nostalgia and Performing the City's Past

The Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction both evoke nostalgia. The Soul of the Reconstruction evoked reflective nostalgia in the light-hearted personal stories in the audio-performance, and the Fire Boundary evoked restorative nostalgia through its actual restoration of the track in the city walk. According to Boym, both types of nostalgia have their own reflection in the present. The reflective nostalgia of the Soul of the Reconstruction comments on the Reconstruction period in a profoundly positive way and focusses on the reconstruction of the city. This results in the performance of the undefeatable part of the grand narrative, which is an essential part of the collective identity in Rotterdam. The restorative nostalgia evoked by the Fire Boundary seeks to reinvent the past as a platform for potential future action, whether it is in relation to city building or identity formation. In the feel of truth and historical facts, and the focus on the destruction of the city surroundings, the Fire Boundary performs the historic low of the city of Rotterdam to emphasise the battle in creating a modern city centre. The analysis on the different types of nostalgia in both bearers of memory shows how the referential frame of the present determines the collective memory of the Reconstruction period and how selective this can be.  The Soul of the Reconstruction and the Fire Boundary are two very different performances of the past, which both focussing on different aspects of the same collective memory (reconstruction and destruction).

# 6. Conclusion

*In museums, in opera houses, in the streets, in the schools, in theatres, in films, on the internet and beyond, narratives about the past circulate today at a dizzying speed. Producing and selling them is big business.*

Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, Jay Winter

Performing the city's past is by definition a performance of a memory rather than history, because the past is impossible to grasp, so the performance of the past will always be a representation of a (remembered) past. The past which is performed in Rotterdam is the Reconstruction period (1940-1968). This past is relatively new, especially compared to the performances of the past in cities such as Amsterdam or Rome. Apart from this relatively young past which is performed, the performance of the past as a whole is something completely new for Rotterdam. Rotterdam was always oriented towards the new and lacked a historical feel. There was always a preference for the practical aspect rather than the preservation of the history in the city. The fact that the historical city centre was bombarded by the Germans in 1940, was therefore the main driving force in creating a modern city centre, but the mentality for novelty contributed hugely to development of the city in this way. However, this part of the past is conveniently left out in the performance of the past and the collective memory of the Reconstruction of the city. The appreciation of the past is, therefore, a new movement in the city. The bombing that destroyed the city centre is seventy-seven years ago, which means the lived memories of this past are disappearing as people age and pass away but Rotterdam is willing to invest in the preservation of this past. One way to preserve the past is by means of performance; performing the past informs and keeps the memory alive in modern society. In this research, the performance of Rotterdam's past is investigated, and more specifically how the bearers of memory, the Fire Boundary and the Soul of the Reconstruction, can be considered as ways of performing the past and how this performance produces collective memory. Both bearers of memory share the subject of performance and are relatively new (less than ten years old), but this is where their similarity ends, because they are both very different performances of the past. It is the creative appropriation of the past which makes the Soul of the Reconstruction and the Fire Boundary very distinct performances of the past.

In the analysis of the bearers of memory in relation to location, audience address and affect, it became clear that they have different perceptions of performing the past. The Soul of the Reconstruction is more of a symbolic site of memory in which the past comes alive, making it a vivid

performance of the past. The staged setting of a kitchen table in a house that could have been of your grandparents and the numerous personal anecdotes about the reconstruction of the city, add to the creation of circumstances in which the collective memory of this past gains importance and get its meaning.  It also evokes the reflective nostalgia by focussing on the reconstruction of the city and the undefeatable part of the narrative. The personal stories are the only source of information; no extra historical facts or context are given. Therefore, the personal and light-hearted Soul of Reconstruction is a performance most suitable for an audience with some sort of knowledge or interest in the Reconstruction period, which means it is probably most enjoyed and best understood by locals. The Fire Boundary is more of a material site of memory, in which the past comes alive on the location in the present, making it a vivid performance of the past. The set-up of the performance puts the audience in the contemporary city, and you can hear about the history of the exact place where you are standing. The combination of the here and now and the here and then create the circumstances in which the collective memory gains importance and get its meaning.  It also evokes restorative nostalgia by focussing on the destruction of city and the battle part of the narrative. The amount of historical facts and context given in the audio-tour restores this performance of the past as some sort of truth. Therefore, the Fire Boundary is more suitable for a wider audience without any knowledge of the past of the city and offers an explanation of how Rotterdam came to have a modern city centre, thus acting more as a tourist attraction.

The result of these two performances of the past in this research is  that they perform two sides of the same coin, or in this case collective memory. A collective memory based on the 'grand narrative' of Rotterdam as a city which is constantly battling bigger forces but will not be defeated, strongly related to the identity of Rotterdam as a second city . Second cities are resilient and industrial, therefore, the other two identities of the city discussed in this research (Rotterdam as the city without a heart and Rotterdam as the port city) also contribute to this identity and narrative of the city. It is a narrative used to tell the story of the past, but also the story of the present. As the second city, Rotterdam is constantly competing with Amsterdam in attracting important stakeholders, including consumers, investors and policy-makers, and now perhaps the city is even competing with more cities as we live in the age of globalisation, in which the whole world is connected to each other through the internet and can be reached because of increased mobility. As a consequence of globalisation, more cities where drawn into this competitive environment, while at the same time homogenisation was also going on, in which the environment, infrastructure and amenities built in different cities tended to become more similar. Therefore, cities use different techniques to distinguish themselves from their competitors. City marketing and place branding gained importance when cities started to be treated as commodities and the urban governance moved from a

managerial way of working to a more entrepreneurial way of working.[82] Performing the city's past is one way to position the city as being unique, and this performance of the past is based on the ability to cultivate the collective memory.

The performance of the city's past is, thus, a socio-cultural concept which takes place in certain social circumstances but in turn also affects said social circumstances. The socio-economic circumstances in which the concept of performing the city's past gained interest is the shift from a service economy towards an experience economy. According to Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, we live in an experience economy in which the commodity we buy is not a product or service, but an experience.[83] In light of this view, it would be interesting to investigate how the performance of the past and the referential frames of the performances of the past has changed over the years and what this can tell us about the type of economy during that time. Both bearers of memory which are examined for their performance of the past in this study are relatively young but what about other bearers of memory which originated in different periods of time? I believe the performance of the city's past can then be used to account for the emergence of the experience economy and show how the type of performance of the past can tell us more about the present than the past. In addition, I am convinced that a performative perspective such as the performance of the city's past can be used to explain other socio-economical shifts and/or circumstances in the world. The integration of the academic disciplines human geography and performance studies hopefully proves to be a valuable addition to this type of research. In the future, I would like to keep investigating human geographical phenomena with the perspective of performance, because research involving raw data and/or interviews are a good source of information, but also the presentation of referential frames can provide many explanations about the society that we live in.

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[82] David Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism," *Geografiska Annaler*, 71:1 (1989): 3-17.
[83] Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, 1999 (Brighton: Harvard Business School Press, 2012).

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## Bearers of memory:

*Brandgrens Audiotour*. Coproduction of Gemeente Rotterdam, Historisch Museum Rotterdam and Bonheur Theaterbedrijf Rotterdam. Made by  Henk van Dijke and Koos Hage. Rotterdam, 13 April 2017.

*Ziel van de Wederopbouw.*  Directed by Erik Post. 2016. Verhalenhuis Belvédère, Rotterdam, 10 March 2017.

# 8. Appendices

## 8.1 Photo Images Soul of the Reconstruction and the Verhalenhuis Belvédère

## 8.2. Photo Images of the Fire Boundary Walk