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Dutch Coal Mining in the Papers

A 20TH CENTURY COMPARATIVE MEDIA STUDY

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Abstract

This thesis conducts a comparative media analysis, using the *Telegraaf* and *Limburgsch Dagblad*, of the Dutch coal mines during the twentieth century. This analysis focuses on three events: the opening of the mine Maurits in 1926, the oil-crises of the seventies, and the silver jubilee in 1990. The analysis focuses on the identity and import of the mines on a national and regional level. While all of the Netherlands was initially intent on creating a shared industrial identity during the early twentieth century, this quickly fell out of favor when the industry was no longer the main focus of the Dutch economy. Meanwhile, Limburg had changed into a mono-economy, with industry and coal mining serving a central role. The province thus incorporated these aspects in its regional identity. The *Telegraaf* continued to publish less on coal and the mines as the Dutch identity changed. The Netherlands forgot about what coal mining had meant for the country and destroyed most of the physical heritage. The closure left Limburg with an enormous trauma which influenced a victimized identity. For the Netherlands it was easier to let go of the industrial heritage as the country at large had not solely relied on it like its province Limburg. For Limburg the identity became so intertwined with the regional identity that the shock of the closure still resonates to this day.

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Introduction

The *Zollverein* in Germany is a grand museum detailing the rich industrial history of Essen. It details various aspects of coal mining such as the lives the workers led in nearby cities or the fossils found during the excavation of the black gold. *Zollverein* has even become a UNESCO world heritage site, which shows the important role this heritage fulfills in German culture.¹ The Netherlands has a coal mining history as well. It was the major economic focus of Limburg, a province in the Southern Netherlands, for half a century. Thirteen mines were excavated in the search for solid carbon beneath the earth. After the closure, only a handful of buildings, mountains of excavated rock, and a solitary coal museum in an old marl-mine were almost all that remained.

Coal mining seems to hold a different meaning for the Dutch than it does for the Germans. Even though coal mining had served as the foundation for the Dutch industry and energy sector for many decades, there was barely any recognition of this. Only very recently, in 2020, have the coal mines been added to the Dutch Canon, which is an overview of the most important events in Dutch history taught in Dutch schools, and a new mining museum was established in 2005.² How different this perception regarding coal must have been in the Netherlands when all twelve mines were still in operation. When coal was still needed throughout the land not only to create electricity, but also to warm homes. After the discovery of natural gas in the Northern Netherlands and the decline of the mines, the Dutch destroyed almost everything related to the coal mines. What was left for the proud coal miners who remained in Limburg?

This thesis will vie to analyze the national and regional perceptions the Dutch held concerning the coal mining industry through the lens of three different events during the twentieth century. These events will be explored through a national and regional newspaper. The thesis starts with the official opening of the mine Maurits in 1926, the oil-crises of the seventies, and the silver jubilee of the closure of the mines in 1990. Central to the thesis will be the perceived value of the mines for the national and regional communities and how coal tied into their identities. A brief history of the coal mines follows as context for the chosen events.

¹ UNESCO, 'Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex in Essen', <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/975/> (16-01-2021).

² Canon van Nederland, 'Kolen en Gas: het energievraagstuk', <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/nl/page/142180/kolen-en-gas> (05-01-2021). Nederlands Mijnmuseum, 'Over NMM', <https://www.nederlandsmijnmuseum.nl/over-nederlands-mijnmuseum/> (17-01-2021)

Historical Context of the Dutch Coal Mines

Coal has served as the backbone of industrialization around the globe and many countries were keen on exploiting coal resources. The Netherlands shares the area in which its coal deposits can be found with Belgium and Germany in the very south-eastern tip of the country called South-Limburg. Coal has been extracted in this area for almost a millennium. Possibly longer, as coal was still available at the surface during the Middle Ages. Coal has always been a reliable source of energy. When the industrial revolution took place and the applications for different kinds of coal grew, the mining industry took off. In 1850 the Netherlands had just one coal mine. By the 1930s, this number had grown to twelve. Most of these mines had been built after the turn of the century.³

The 1920s were the apex of the coal mining era. The great recession and the Second World War would hamper the coal mines. After the Second World War, there was a short boom until the mid-1950s.⁴ The industry was still one of the most important economic branches in the Netherlands and coal was often indispensable for it to function. However, the importance of the industrial branch would not last long. During the fifties, most industries in the Netherlands were shutting down and moving their production to cheaper countries. The deindustrialization of the Netherlands had begun and the transformation towards the service industry was well underway.

During the late 1950s, the *Staatsmijnen*, which was the mining company owned by the Dutch government, wanted to build another mine called Beatrix. *Staatsmijnen*, also known as DSM, was also the company that worked Maurits. The construction of Beatrix started in 1954. Its excavation had gotten to a depth of 710 meters in 1962, when the construction was halted.⁵ The doom of the Dutch coal mines had come, and the mine Beatrix had become its first victim. There were multiple reasons for the decline of the Dutch mines. Dutch coal did not occur in great layers like in the United Kingdom or the United States. As such, the Dutch mines needed to put more effort into mining less coal than the competition.⁶ Eventually, other natural resources were discovered in the Netherlands in the forms of natural gas and oil.⁷ These resources were easier to exploit and a vast quantity of natural gas was available. The Groningen Gas Field was the largest natural gas reserve in Europe and discovered in Groningen, a Northern province of the Netherlands. Furthermore, the Dutch government did not subsidize the coal mines. However, other

³ J.H.L. Voncken, 'Ontstaansgeschiedenis van de Steenkoolwinning in Nederland', *Natural Resource* 10 (2008) 4, 32-37.

⁴ Ad Knotter (red), *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: Een Sociale Geschiedenis* (Vantilt Nijmegen 2012), 529-532.

⁵ Voncken, 'Ontstaansgeschiedenis van de Steenkoolwinning in Nederland', 37

⁶ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg*, 530-531.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 531.

countries did support their mines with subsidies, which created more of an uneven playing field for the Dutch mines.⁸

The Dutch coal industry was dying. However, this did not mean that the country stopped using coal. The Netherlands has always served as one of the biggest trade hubs of Northwest-Europe and vast quantities of coal are transported through its harbors and rivers. In 2017 fifty million tons of coal moved through the Netherlands of which fifteen million tons were designated for the Dutch market.⁹ The demand for coal has never left the Netherlands, but the coal that could be mined in Limburg was simply too expensive. In the end, Limburg had no way of competing with other coal mining nations.

In November of 1965, the official end of the coal mines was announced by Joop Den Uijl, the minister of economic affairs at the time. All the Dutch mines, including the private companies, were to shut down. In short order, this meant that well over 70.000 people were to find themselves out of a job. This number consisted of 40.000 jobs related to the mines, like coal miners and administrators, and a further 30.000 indirect jobs which relied on coal production, such as transport.¹⁰ The loss of these jobs would hit the area hard. Even now, South-East Limburg is in some respects still less developed than the rest of the country.¹¹

The government tried to alleviate the problems connected to shutting down an economic branch on which the local economy was completely focused. Initially, the government presented subsidies to attract more businesses and jobs to the area. However, much of this money went to already established or failing companies. Furthermore, most of the companies that did move to Limburg were industrial as well. A branch of the Dutch economy that was already dying. Attracting more industry to the province was not a long-term solution.¹²

In the end, the government did succeed in finding work for all the 40.000 miners who lost their job. The same cannot be said for the indirect jobs and the younger generations. Young Limburgers could previously always count on relatively well-paid jobs in the coal mines. It would take years and many changes in governmental policy, both national and regional, before Limburg had fallen in line with the rest of the country again.¹³

⁸ Ibidem, 531.

⁹ CBS, 'Daling kolenoverslag in Nederlandse zeehavens zet door' (13-6-2018), <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2018/24/daling-kolenoverslag-in-nederlandse-zeehavens-zet-door> (15-12-2020).

¹⁰ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: Een Sociale Geschiedenis*, 537.

¹¹ Ibidem, 618-619.

¹² Ibidem, 537-559.

¹³ Ibidem, 537.

After the closure of the mines, there was a lot of resentment for the *Hoge Heren*, high lords, who ran the mining companies and government. They had gotten rich over the backs of the miners and mostly succeeded in getting out or transitioning their company. *Staatsmijnen*, for example, had successfully transitioned into a chemical company. It already had some branches in chemistry during the coal mining era of the company because it came with the industry. These branches were expanded, and the company continues to operate to this day.¹⁴ Many miners were less fortunate. There were those who were declared unfit for work due to black lung disease and others whose welfare payments were lower than expected.¹⁵ The anger concerning the closure of the mines persisted well into the 1990s, two decades after the closure of the mines. The last lawsuits regarding welfare were settled at the turn of the millennium.¹⁶

The closure of the mines did not only have impact on labor, but on the communities that were built around the coal mining identity as well. When the mines gave out, the miners essentially lost their community. Before the closure, the communities were held together by the mine and the catholic church, as these were the main organizations that took care of the people in the area. Many aspects of the miners' lives were taken care of by the mining corporations, for example housing and bank accounts. The church provided them with moral support and told them to be obedient workers. However, when the mines closed the structure of the mine fell away. Furthermore, the church did not act at the behest of its congregation or supported their communities during these tough times.¹⁷ The way the church acted was felt like another betrayal.

Most of the physical remains were destroyed after the mines were closed. Barely anything of the giant gardens of steel and concrete was left standing as the motto became *From Black to Green*. Limburg's environment had to change, as the province was to become friendlier for its inhabitants.¹⁸ Because of the anger at the time, most miner-families were not concerned with any conservationist movements. They were mourning a loss of life, because of the illnesses and many deaths in the mines, and livelihood. As for the rest of the country, they were not as concerned. They either had their problems in transitioning economic structures or were busy with ruling the country. To be frank, the closure of the mines was mostly a regional problem.

As remarked before, the anger lasted until the end of the millennium. Then, a new movement for remembrance of the coal mines started to grow amongst the communities that were left. Many people in

¹⁴ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: Een Sociale Geschiedenis*, 537.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 569-571.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 599.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 614-619.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 601-605.

the area had fond memories of growing up in the miner environment. Everything was taken care of in these communities, and the jobs provided independence no other job could compare with. This nostalgia regarding the coal mines had grown and new conservationist movements had sprung up to save some of the heritage that still survived. A good example of this is the *Gedachteniskapel* in Kerkrade. This was a former mortuary in which diseased mineworkers were laid out if there was no room at home. After the closure, the mortuary turned into an electrical sub-station for the local power grid. In 2001 the building was changed into a memorial chapel for all mineworkers who have died while working in the coal mines.¹⁹

Methodology and Framework

To research the local and national perceptions during the three different events this thesis will make use of two newspapers: *De Telegraaf* and *Limburgsch Dagblad*, henceforth abbreviated to L.D. The *Telegraaf* was historically one of the most popular daily newspapers in the Netherlands during the 20th century. It was founded in 1893 in Amsterdam and grew to be one of the biggest newspapers in Europe. There exists a short gap in the *Telegraaf*'s publications after the Second World War. The paper was accused of working with the German occupiers and banned from publishing from 1945 until 1949.²⁰ However, the daily paper had shown how resilient it was by becoming the most popular Dutch paper again when it could publish.

L.D. was a regional newspaper founded in 1918 with nowhere near as much renown as the *Telegraaf*, but it was still one of the biggest papers in Dutch Limburg.²¹ Both newspapers have served completely different sides of Dutch society. There exist vast cultural differences between Limburg and the *Randstad*, the heavily urbanized Western portion of the Netherlands which serves as the governmental and economic center of the Netherlands, in terms of religion, language, and even food. As such, the contrast between the two could not be bigger. These newspapers will provide the primary sources and the lenses through which Dutch society during these events can be observed.

Both papers have been digitalized rather well on *Delpher* and go as far back as their respective founding. Furthermore, both papers have respectively been designated as the most popular national and regional papers since 1986. Before 1986 the publication numbers become elusive. It is doubtful that both newspapers were the most popular in the 1920s. However, because of takeovers, name changes, and

¹⁹ Harry Slechtrien, 'Gedachteniskapel - Eerbetoen verongelukte mijnwerkers' (01-04-2006), <https://www.demijnen.nl/actueel/artikel/gedachteniskapel-eerbetoen-verongelukte-mijnwerkers> (25-05-2020).

²⁰ IsGeschiedenis, 'Geschiedenis van De Telegraaf', <https://isgeschiedenis.nl/nieuws/geschiedenis-van-de-telegraaf> (10-01-2021).

²¹ De Limburger, 'Titel 'Limburgs Dagblad' is niet meer, laatste abonnees over naar De Limburger' (12-12-2017), https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20171212_00052164 (18-01-2021).

bankruptcy not all newspapers have the same number of digitalized issues available on *Delpher*. In terms of popularity, longevity, and digitalization both papers are the right choice for this research.

As indicated before, the comparative analysis in this thesis will make use of newspaper articles. While newspapers and the articles they produce seem straightforward, there are aspects one needs to keep in mind while working with them. As Stephen Vella explains in *Reading Primary Sources*, newspaper articles are the product of a business and of the society for which the paper publishes. A newspaper business is aimed towards making a profit either through selling the paper itself or by getting paid for advertisements. As such, a paper has a clear incentive to write for a specific audience that wants to pay for its paper or is willing to buy the advertised products. The paper decides what information to publish for this chosen public and hopefully profiting from it. A paper can never write about all the news, which would provide a cumbersome stack of paper and a bored audience. Therefore, the paper is a representation of the specific society it writes for. It censors or focuses on specific news as desired.²² As such, a newspaper will publish articles on contemporary events that they deem necessary for their audience. The layout, language, and silence within a newspaper could thus present the perspectives of the public on a certain subject during a specific period.

While the aspects of newspapers are important to keep in mind for this thesis other theories will be relevant as well. Coal mining history is part of industrial heritage and cultural history. While not much physical evidence of this history in the Netherlands, the cultural influence still lingers. Within the communities that worked the mines exists a demand for coal mining heritage. Evidence of this demand can be found in projects like the chapel or the numerous monuments that have been erected to honor the miners. When natural gas eventually comes to the same end as coal once did, it might behoove those in power to look back at how the coal industry was treated. Decisions will have to be made about what industrial heritage might remain, which will have consequences for the local communities.

As the Dutch did not have a lot of interest in the coal mines, not much research was performed on the subject after the closure. However, in recent times the subject seems to thrive once more. Coal mining books and articles are getting published. Historiography on the Dutch coal mines mainly concerns itself with two different approaches to writing coal mining history. It is either written from above, like Ad Knotter's *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: een sociale geschiedenis*, or history from below, like *In en onder het Dorp: Mijnwerkerleven in Limburg* by Wiel Kusters. Ad Knotter is one of the most prominent historians researching the history of the mines. He has written several texts on the mines including *Arbeid van*

²² Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann, *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History* (Routledge, New York, 2009), 192-205.

vrouwen in Limburg in de twintigste eeuw: een stille revolutie, a book on the role of women in the work-environment of Limburg during the 20th century, in 2018 and the chapter on mining in the *Handbook Global History of Work* in 2017. However, there do not seem to be any media studies about coal mining. This thesis seeks to fill in that gap in historiography about the Dutch coal mines.

Another theory that will be useful is the Imagined Communities theory penned by Benedict Anderson in 1983. Anderson analyzed nationalism, as it was quite an undetermined concept, and explained how identity was created and imagined by communities. According to Anderson, the media contributed to this creation of an imagined community as well. During the eighteenth-century printed media as books and newspapers contributed to a national identity by establishing the boundaries of what people would consider their nation. Who was part of their community, even though one could never meet all those who belonged.²³ In this thesis, this concept of an imagined community will be of use as well? Both the Dutch and the Limburgers have identified themselves with the coal mines. Coal was part of the imagined identity these communities, for a time, shared.

With the theoretical framework in mind, this thesis will analyze the different events in chronological order starting with the opening of the Maurits mine in 1926. Currently the coal mining industry was relatively new and still getting to its economic peak. The value of the mines would be of great importance to the Netherlands. This is also a time that has been chosen because it did not intersect with any grand events for the Netherlands. It is also not represented as well as the fifties in the current historiography. The second chapter will cover the oil-crises of the seventies. There were two oil crises in 1973 and 1979 which will be analyzed together as they posed the Netherlands for the same problem in a relatively short amount of time. This was a peculiar time, when public appreciation for the mines would be low as they were closing. However, the energy crisis would bring a revival of the mines into question. Chapter three will conclude with the silver jubilee of the 1965 announcement by Den Uijl in 1990. Most of the Netherlands would have had barely any interest in the coal mines and their legacy, except for the communities that were closely tied to the industry.

²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, London, 2006), 1-9, 24, and 25.

Chapter One: A New Royal Mine in 1926



Figure 1: Mine Maurits in 1967.²⁴

Background

For the Netherlands, the years leading up to the 1920s were quite uneventful. The Dutch had come, relatively unscathed, through the First World War, as its neutrality was respected by both sides.²⁵ While other nations were gearing up for total war, the Dutch could still expand their economy in relative peace. To illustrate this, the construction and production of several mines had started during the Great War.²⁶

²⁴ Demijnen.nl, 'Staatsmijn Maurits 1967' (1967) in: *Fotocollectie: demijnen.nl/dsm*, <https://www.demijnen.nl/collectie/foto/staatsmijn-maurits-1967/all/?keys=&tid=&index=2&page=0&over=1> (18-01-2021).

²⁵ Friso Wielenga, *Geschiedenis van Nederland: Van opstand tot Heden* (Boom, Amsterdam, 2012), 272-280.

²⁶ Voncken, 'Ontstaansgeschiedenis van de Steenkoolwinning in Nederland', 34-37.

Furthermore, the Dutch were not as influenced by the political developments of the decade that followed the war like fascism. Fascism appeared on the international stage when Mussolini took power in Italy in 1922 and Hitler tried the same with a coup in 1923.²⁷ The Dutch were simply left to their own devices and as such could continue to expand their economy and increase the production of coal.

During the winter of 1926, one of these mines that had started construction during the war, called Maurits, was officially put into production. All the state-owned mines were named after members of the royal Orange-Nassau lineage. The name Maurits was borrowed from Maurice of Orange, the second son of the father of the Dutch nation William of Orange. Both father and son held the high office of stadtholder, akin to a national leader, during the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish Monarchy from 1566 until 1648. They are also distant forefathers of the current Dutch royal house.²⁸ As such, these mines were not just run by the state, but were also representative of the nation.

Currently, coal was of great import for the Netherlands as an industrialized nation. However, for the Limburgers coal mining was relatively new. The Limburg identity was not yet entwined with coal and the nation at large still had a keen interest in anything to do with coal. In this regard, the imagined communities were not yet opposed to each other.

The Popularity of coal

During the twenties, the *Telegraaf* vastly outproduced L.D. in terms of articles related to coal. Searches with the term *steenkool*, coal, on *Delpher* showed 297 articles in 1925 and 631 articles in 1926 for the *Telegraaf*. L.D. shows 56 articles with *steenkool* in 1925 and 112 in 1926. L.D. does show more hits for Maurits, 174 over the 1925-1926 period. As opposed to 60 published in the *Telegraaf*

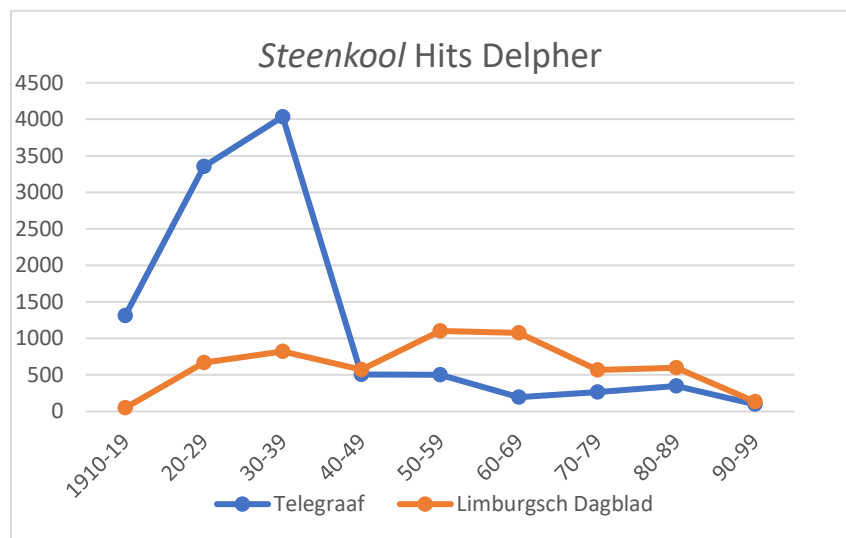


Figure 2: Graphs depict Steenkool hits on Delpher during the 21st century. The graph can also be found in the appendix.

²⁷ Wielenga, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, 281-296.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 47-55

during the same timeframe. This shows an enormous difference between the newspapers. Especially, when compared to later decades during which L.D. wrote more articles on coal than the *Telegraaf*. It is also surprising, as it makes more sense for L.D. to have written more about coal since it was a local industry. So why did the *Telegraaf* deem coal so important?

At the time, the Netherlands was a coal mining nation and heavily involved in the coal trade. As such, the *Telegraaf* reported on ships that were going in and out of Dutch harbors. Reports included where these ships were from and whether they were carrying coal or something else.²⁹ The paper also included articles that featured events which could impact this trade. For example, the paper interviews Frank Hodges, a trade union leader, on the coal crisis induced by the United States. At the time the U.S. was trading coal in South America and outcompeting the European nations that were used to trade there.³⁰ What was most significant in the narrative present in the *Telegraaf* was the image of the Netherlands as an industrialized nation. A Western country that was civilized and at the forefront of innovation with the other great Western empires.

As a proper industrialized nation, the Netherlands needed to be kept up to speed on what was going on with these other nations. 'De allerbedenkelijkste industriele crisis in het nabije Engeland, ten deele ontstaan door de overmacht van de vakbewegingen, gaf ... aanleiding de vakbeweging en economische toestanden hier en in Engeland met elkaar te vergelijken.' This quote shows that the *Telegraaf* was comparing the Dutch unions and economy with their counterparts in England. The reason for this was because of a recent coal miners' strike.³¹ So, for the *Telegraaf* and its audience this image of an industrialized nation was a well-established concept. It was important to be an industrialized nation and to keep up with the 'civilized' parts of the world. Coal was a major part of that image.

Some of this import for the *Telegraaf* could also be inferred from how the *Telegraaf* had several correspondents in the Limburg mining areas. These correspondents kept the *Telegraaf* up to speed on any events. Even relatively small events, like a mine elevator which fell for less than two meters, were reported on by the paper. The accident only lightly injured a miner.³² A minor accident seems hardly worthy of national attention. However, the *Telegraaf* still decided that it was important enough. Other such events

²⁹ Delpher, 'SCHEEPSTIJINGEN. ZEEVAART OP AMSTERDAM', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1927/12/25), p. 15, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565924:mpeg21:p015> (18-01-2021).

³⁰ Delpher, 'FINANCIEN EN ECONOMIE DE CRISIS DE STEENKOOLINDUSTRIE. EEN INTERVIEW MET FRANK HODGES.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/11/2), p. 13., <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565258:mpeg21:p013> (12-01-2021).

³¹ Delpher, 'Vergelijking tusschen Engeland en Nederland', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/09/10), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564567:mpeg21:p005> (18-01-2021).

³² Delpher, 'ONGEVAL IN DE STAATSMIJN MAURITS', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/11/25), p. 10, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564801:mpeg21:p010> (06-12-2020).

that appeared in the *Telegraaf* focus on deaths and the housing situation for workers.³³ These examples showed that the *Telegraaf* was not solely focused on the financial benefits the coal mines brought the Netherlands, but there was also an identification with the miners themselves. After all, these miners were responsible for at least some of the industrial progress the Netherlands was making. These mines represented part of the industrial prowess of the Netherlands. Limburg was not yet the peripheral province it would become. At this time, it was still the industrial engine that drove the Netherlands onwards.

Naturally, the *Telegraaf* was also highly interested in the economic achievements of the mines themselves. As a large part of the coal mining industry was run by the state. DSM was the biggest mining company operating in the Netherlands. Money that belonged to the Dutch people was at stake in these endeavors. As such, the *Telegraaf* would publish articles on the profits and amount of coal the mines produced.

The comparatively low numbers on the side of L.D. were due to several reasons. First, L.D. did not publicize all of the shipping records as the *Telegraaf* did. All these smaller items in the *Telegraaf* inevitably produced more hits per paper. However, it has been established that the *Telegraaf* was very much concerned with publishing articles on the miners and not just in showing numbers. As seen in the graphs, the *Telegraaf* published remarkably fewer articles on coal during the second half of the century. This is where another set of circumstances regarding L.D. comes in. L.D. was a relatively new newspaper. It had only been established in 1919. Furthermore, the industry was relatively new to Limburg as well. Yes, mining had taken place for centuries in the Domaniale mines, but these mines were situated in a small area at the border with Germany. Most of the mines started construction after 1900. At the time Limburg was still predominantly agricultural.³⁴ The industry was not yet completely integrated into Limburg society and the population had not had enough time to identify themselves with the mines.

The newness of the industry was evident through such articles as *mijnbedrijf* in L.D. These articles were meant to educate the Limburg population, or at least those that read L.D., on the various aspects of coal mining. *Mijnbedrijf I* even answered the question to “What is coal?”³⁵ The series of articles showed the need for an explanation of this new endeavor to the wider Limburg population and why this industry

³³ Delpher, ‘GEZELLENHUIS GEOPEND IN DE MIJNSTREEK’, *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/12/04), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010564817:mpeg21:p006>, (06-12-2020). Delpher ‘DE MIJNEN EISCHEN HUN SLACHTOFFERS. Droevig ongeluk in de Staatsmijn „Maurits”’, *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/08/08), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564405:mpeg21:p005> (06-12-2020).

³⁴ Voncken, ‘Ontstaansgeschiedenis van de Steenkoolwinning in Nederland’, 34-37.

³⁵ Delpher, ‘HET MIJNBEDRIJF’, *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1926/04/22), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010932444:mpeg21:p005> (11-12-2020).

was needed. It served not only for the betterment the country but for the province as well. As time passed, the daily paper and the coal industry became better established. The province identified itself more with coal and in return, the subject featured more prominently in the paper.

The articles from L.D. did cover most of the same subjects as the *Telegraaf* wrote on. Through columns like *mijnwezen*, translated as mining, Limburg was kept up to speed on foreign and domestic developments regarding coal as well.³⁶ Any events, like the England strike, could have had an impact on the domestic industry and the sales of the mines. Accidents were also reported on, which compared to the *Telegraaf* made sense because an accident directly affects L.D.'s audience. As such, L.D. contributed to the creation of this imagined community that included coal mining.

Maurits and Limburg Identity

A coal mine does not 'open' at a specified time. As soon as excavation starts some washing, transport, and waste disposal needs to be done as well. Even when open, a mine slowly develops until it is at peak production. Even then, a mine is constantly expanding with new shafts, new towers, and new production buildings. A mine is never done. Except, when there is no more coal or money. With the official opening of a mine, a seemingly arbitrary number of shafts and personnel is crossed, at which time it was decided that the mine was now in business. For Maurits, this line was crossed in 1926 after it had been in development for almost a decade since 1916. The anticipation as to what the mine would contribute to the Dutch economy was great.

The *Telegraaf* publicized a brief announcement in 1925 which translates as: 'The shaft of government-mine "Maurits" built out of concrete has been completed. 1100 workers are now employed at the mine. The coal that has already been mined, has a high concentration of gas.'³⁷ The translation shows that Maurits had already been producing some coal with a sizeable crew. Though the event seems rather mundane, the *Telegraaf* did decide to feature this milestone for the mine. The *Telegraaf* could also have decided to feature the mine when it was officially put into production. Meaning that the progress of the last mines was deemed consequential and newsworthy.

During the winter of 1926, the mine was officially announced to be in exploitation. The crew was expanded to 3600 workers, of whom 2700 miners. The article describes how several new expansions to

³⁶ Delpher 'DE STAKING IN DE ENGELSCH MIJNINDUSTRIE. De resolutie der gedelegeerden conferentie door de districten goedgekeurd.', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1926/10/16), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010932287:mpeg21:p003> (11-12-2020).

³⁷ Delpher, 'De Staatsmijn Maurits', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/01/17), p. 7, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565141:mpeg21:p007> (06-12-2020).

the mine were under construction.³⁸ The photo pictured below describes the mine as 'What in a few years will become the biggest Dutch mine.'³⁹ The article and the photo seem to exude a certain pride in this achievement. This mine was to be celebrated and everybody should be expecting great things from the mine.

Wat over eenige jaren Nederlands grootste mijn zal zijn – De iepenziekte woekert voort . . .

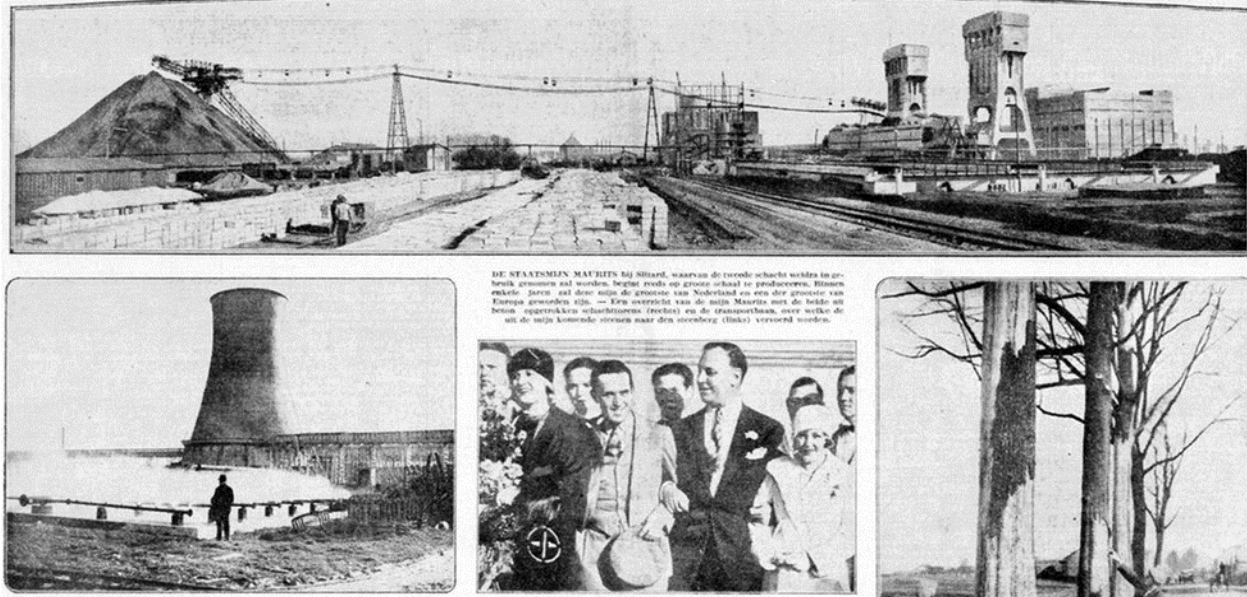


Figure 3: Top and down-left pictures depict Maurits in the *Telegraaf*, 1927.⁴⁰

The *Telegraaf* also took an interest in the financial aspects of Maurits. Over the years Maurits had become a bit more expensive than initially planned.⁴¹ This article also suggested that the mine should be opened as soon as possible so that the government could account for its expenses on the revenue from the mine. The article also featured conjecture about the possible construction of another mine near Peel.⁴² Another article shot this idea down because the government planned on selling all the expensive

³⁸ Delpher, 'DE MIJN „MAURITS” TE GELEEN. Hoever de ontginning reeds gevorderd is. O.M. BOUW VAN COKESOVENS.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1927/01/31), p. 6,

<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564909:mpeg21:p006> (18-01-2021).

³⁹ Delpher, *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1927/01/30), p. 4,

<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564908:mpeg21:p004> (18-01-2021).

⁴⁰ Delpher, *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1927/01/30), p. 4,

<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564908:mpeg21:p004> (18-01-2021).

⁴¹ Delpher, 'HOOG KOSTEN DER STAATSMIJN MAURITS. Op afschrijvingen aangedrongen. VÓÓR VESTIGING VAN EEN MIJN IN DE PEEL.' *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/11/18), p. 3,

<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010564788:mpeg21:p003> (05-12-2020).

⁴² Delpher, 'FINANCIEN EN ECONOMIE BINNENLAND. GEEN STAATSMIJN IN DE PEEL. Concessie aan een particulier concern niet uitgesloten.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/11/19), p. 13,

<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010564791:mpeg21:p013> (05-12-2020)

equipment that was used during the construction of Maurits.⁴³ Further articles mention Maurits in the brevity of the entire state-owned company. Like how much it had already produced and how much it could produce.⁴⁴

As mentioned before the *Telegraaf* also focused on the minor details of mines. This was certainly the case with Maurits as well. Fires, deaths, accidents, and the opening of a boarding house in and around Maurits all got reported.⁴⁶ The only other noteworthy articles about Maurits were on how steamship crews liked the quality of the coal coming from Maurits and on cracks in the cement of the shaft gate, which were discovered to be cracks in some plaster.⁴⁷ All these publications speak volumes as to the import the *Telegraaf* places on coal mining and Maurits. There was value in reporting on these subjects for a national public that cared.



Figure 4: Depicts Maurits Shaft-tower.⁴⁵

⁴³ Delpher, 'TOENEMENDE EXPANSIE.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/02/04), p. 13, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565373:mpeg21:p013> (06-12-2020). Delpher, 'STAATSMIJNEN IN LIMBURG.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/05/27), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110563093:mpeg21:p003>, (06-12-202).

⁴⁴ Delpher, 'STEENKOOLOPRODUCTIE IN 1925. Ruim zeven miljoen ton.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/01/21), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565349:mpeg21:p005> (06-12-2020).

⁴⁵ Delpher, 'DE NIEUWE STAATSMIJN MAURITS te Lutterade. De machtige schachttoren — de grootste ter wereld (55 M. hoog).', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1925/05/05), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010932759:mpeg21:p006> (06-12-2020).

⁴⁶ Delpher, 'BRANDEN.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/02/06), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565175:mpeg21:p006> (06-12-2020). Delpher, 'DOODELIJKE MIJNONGELUK', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/10/09), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010564720:mpeg21:p006> (05-12-2020). Delpher, 'GEZELLENHUIS GEOPEND IN DE MIJNSTREEK', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/12/04), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010564817:mpeg21:p006>, (06-12-2020). Delpher, 'DOODELIJK ONGELUK IN DE MIJN „MAURITS“', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/07/08), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564457:mpeg21:p005> (06-12-2020). Delpher 'DE MIJNEN EISCHEN HUN SLACHTOFFERS. Droevig ongeluk in de Staatsmijn „Maurits“', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/08/08), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110564405:mpeg21:p005> (06-12-2020).

⁴⁷ Delpher, 'NEDERLANDSCHE BUNKERKOLEN. Een waardeerdend Engels oordeel, — Reeds een factor van beteekenis in den internationalen kolenhandel.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1926/11/27), p. 11, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010564804:mpeg21:p011> (06-12-2020). Delpher, 'SCHEUREN IN DEN SCHACHTTOREN DER STAATSMIJN MAURITS. Het werken van cement.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/11/04), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565220:mpeg21:p005> (06-12-2020). Delpher, 'GEEN SCHEUREN IN DEN MIJNBOK DER STAATSMIJN MAURITS.', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1925/11/08), p. 12, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110565227:mpeg21:p012> (06-12-2020).

L.D. did report more on the societal and cultural aspects of Maurits. A photo was shown of the mightiest and biggest shaft gate in the world, as depicted on the previous page.⁴⁸ Some articles shared the same spirit as those in the *Telegraaf*, on deaths and other smaller events. These events would have had a greater impact on the local readers. It was interesting to see the description of cultural events taking place at the mine. The Saint Nicholas celebration with 2000 children at the mine was described and some short announcements showed that the mine had a drawing class, a football team, and a theatre department.⁴⁹ The mine was a cultural center for the Limburgers living around them. These examples made it clear that coal mining was not simply a job, but a lifestyle, and identity. Eventually, this identity would come to play an important role in the imagined community that was shaping Limburg.

Concluding

What all these publications on Maurits showed, was that coal was a popular subject in Dutch society. Ministers welcome the opportunity of opening a new coal mine and advancing Dutch interests. Coal was an important aspect of the Dutch identity as an industrial country. Both L.D. and the *Telegraaf* did their best in reinforcing this part of Dutch identity. There was a familiarity with the mines, shown by depicting any events that took place near the mines. The mines were a part of the Netherlands, as opposed to just being a part of Limburg. For L.D. the relation with the mines were more intimate as their readership worked at the mines. The paper made more of an effort to include cultural events and minute details for those who inhabit the area around the mines.

The Netherlands was an industrialized nation that was very much concerned with its mines. Coal and industry were part of the Dutch identity and the daily papers were complicit in creating this imagined community. While Limburg still was coming to accept this identity as more mines were being constructed to delve its resources, the nation at large was very keen on emulating the bigger neighbors. An industrialized identity was key to being accepted as an important country that was doing business around the world.

⁴⁸ Delpher, 'DE NIEUWE STAATSMIJN MAURITS te Lutterade. De machtige schachttoren — de grootste ter wereld (55 M. hoog).', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1925/05/05), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010932759:mpeg21:p006> (06-12-2020).

⁴⁹ Delpher, 'SINT NICOLAAS IN DE MIJNSTREEK. Op de Staatsmijn Maurits te Lutterade deelde de Sint aan meer dan 2000 kinderen cadeaux uit, van welke gelegenheid wij hierbij een foto geven.', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1926/12/11), p. 7, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010932334:mpeg21:p007> (06-12-2020). Delpher, 'LUTTERADE.', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1926/09/30), p. 2, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010932273:mpeg21:p002> (06-12-2020). Delpher, 'LIMBURGSCHE VOETBALBOND.', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1926/11/13), p. 9, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010932310:mpeg21:p009> (06-12-2020).

However, as Europe would start to deindustrialize during the second half of the century, this industrialized identity became redundant. The Netherlands shifted its attention towards other endeavors and Limburg got stuck with an industrial legacy. A legacy it could not cast off quite as quickly as the rest of the country.

Chapter Two: The Energy crises of the Seventies



Figure 5: The destruction of a washing plant at state-owned mine Hendrickx.⁵⁰

Background

After the Second World War, the interests of the Netherlands had started to change. The industry was collapsing during the fifties and with its collapse, the Dutch economy needed to adapt. The new interests of the Dutch nation showed themselves through the lower number of articles the *Telegraaf* produced about coal. Meanwhile, on the other side in Limburg, the numbers for L.D. began to rise as coal became more intertwined with Limburg society. By now, the industry had become Limburg's most important economic sector. Even though coal started to fall out of favor with the nation, events would happen that would bring the subject back in the national headlines. This chapter will look at the energy crises of the seventies and how it impacted both the local and national narratives on coal and the coal mines in the Netherlands.

⁵⁰ Demijnen.nl, 'Het omschieten van de wasserij van de Staatsmijn Hendrik' (16-09-1972) in: *Fotocollectie: demijnen.nl/dsm*, <https://www.demijnen.nl/collectie/foto/het-omschieten-van-de-wasserij-van-de-staatsmijn-hendrik> (18-01-2021).

In 1965 the minister of economic affairs Joop Den Uijl had publicly announced the imminent closure of the coal mines in Limburg. The mines were supposed to shut down within ten years. The economy in Limburg was focused almost entirely on industry by now and as such new jobs had to be created for the people whose lives were bound to the coal mines. However, there were problems with switching the local economy to different companies and economic branches. The thought was that with subsidies new companies would come to Limburg and the miners could easily convert to another job. However, the subsidies were often used to support the already failing industry in the local area. Furthermore, it was mostly industry that was attracted to moving down to Limburg, which in a deindustrializing nation was not particularly a future-proof plan. In the end, new jobs were mostly created for miners who lost their job directly due to closure. Not as many thoughts were spared for the younger generations, which previously could always count on jobs in the coal mines.⁵¹

The mines were slowly shutting down and many people were facing unemployment in Limburg. But there was no economic sense in keeping Dutch coal going. It was simply too expensive. That was until the 1973 oil-crisis. An oil-embargo was used by the OPEC to strike at countries that were supporting Israel during the Yom Kippur War, when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel. The Netherlands was part of these Israeli supporting countries and thus faced higher oil prices. An energy crisis was emerging. The energy sector in many Western countries was shown to be incredibly vulnerable and measures needed to be taken to counter this new threat.

Another result was a renewed interest in different forms of energy, both “old” and “new”. Coal and nuclear energy were on everybody’s mind. The United States and other nations scrambled to get their energy supplies in order and become less dependent on imported resources. As international oil prices were rising the exploitation of coal on Dutch soil seemed like it could become profitable again.⁵² As such, it might no longer have been necessary to close all the mines in Limburg. Maybe some mining jobs could be saved. There were, however, a couple of obstacles in the way of reviving the Dutch coal mining industry. First, from 1968 until 1973 most of the Dutch energy sector had been converted from coal to natural gas and oil. Second, most mineshafts had already been destroyed. It would take enormous investments in terms of money and time to rebuild the infrastructure for using coal again.

Though this oil-crisis was the first it would not be the last. In 1979 there would be another oil crisis though this one was due to the Iranian revolution. The revolution caused Iranian oil production to drop, which caused a spike in oil prices. Discussions on the Dutch energy-policy became more severe as the

⁵¹ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: Een Sociale Geschiedenis*, 535.

⁵² *Ibidem*, 532.

volatile international energy-market seemed to become a threat to national security. It was now clear that any event, either on purpose or as an unintended consequence, could threaten the energy supply of those countries without sufficient carbon resources.

A Renewed Interest

Dutch coal was finished. It either did not get the support it needed from the government, was too expensive to dig out of the earth, or was outcompeted by Dutch gas. Whatever the reason, the mines were no longer viable and slated for destruction since the announcement of 1965. Modern energy sources were on the horizon like nuclear and solar energy, though both would still be decades away from being able to support the entirety of the Netherlands. That was until the countries that fueled the oil trade decided not to supply oil anymore. OPEC 'threw soot in our food', as the Dutch would say. As oil dried up and long lines formed at gas stations some people started to wonder about the coal in Limburg again.

A former director of Shell, K. Swart, most prominently advocated for a reevaluation of coal in the Dutch energy sector during 1980. He estimated that the usage of coal would increase to as much as 30 million tons of coal a year and was critical of how the government had spent natural gas money.⁵³ This was in conjunction with a statement from Roy Jenkins, the chairman of the European Commission in 1980, who stated that ECC, the European Coal Community, would strive to increase the availability and use of coal in western Europe.⁵⁴ This renewed focus on coal would both protect national security and increase economic activity for the countries involved.

An article in the *Telegraaf* detailed the response from the DSM to this public probe into restarting the Dutch coal mining industry. DSM acknowledged that restarting the mining industry was probably not going to happen anytime soon. However, another article from 1980 in the *Telegraaf* still kept the question on Dutch coal open. The head of the geological bureau for the mining-area questioned whether there was a trillion tons of coal left in Dutch soil. Which was an enticing prospect for a country without any oil supply.⁵⁵ Another Engineer by the name of Berding, a former chairman for the ECSC, wrote in a Magazine called *De Ingenieur*, the engineer, that in the 1980s the exploitation of coal in Limburg would become economically feasible again. A host of mechanical innovations and a new layout should have made Dutch

⁵³ Delpher, 'Steenkool', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1980/05/10), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011200721:mpeg21:p008> (20-11-2020).

⁵⁴ Delpher, 'CRISIS', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1980/02/13), p. 9, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011200698:mpeg21:p009> (20-11-2020).

⁵⁵ Delpher, 'Juiste omvang kolenvoorraad nog open vraag', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1980/03/21), p. 7, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011200754:mpeg21:p007> (20-11-2020).

coal profitable. Though in the article the DSM had commented that the coal-layers in the Dutch were too much of a jumble to exploit properly.⁵⁶ The energy crises of the seventies seemed to drive most western countries to their knees. Any event that had an impact on the production of oil could cause global economic devastation. Transport came to a halt. Electricity, and heating became more expensive. Enough problems that could resurrect an old industry. In the end, this resurrection did not happen, but it was a scenario that was considered.

One needs to be aware of the persons interviewed or quoted for these articles all either had worked in the carbon industry or were still working there. Naturally, they believed that coal mines should reopen because through their position in the field they were biased or could have had a monetary incentive in advising such a policy. An article from 1973 showed that plans were made to revert powerplants to work on coal again. However, it was made clear that the coal would not be native and sourced from countries like Poland and the United States.⁵⁷ However, the statements did have an effect, as representatives within the Dutch government began to ask about a renewal of Dutch coal as well.

Articles in the *Telegraaf* showed that the Social and Economic Council, SEC, expected in 1974 that the energy crisis would last quite a while and that mass-consumers of natural gas should prepare to make a switch back to coal after 1978.⁵⁸ This article showed how much the crisis had scared the Dutch government as it was expected that natural gas would last a long time and could supply the nation with energy. The council was proven right as big powerplants in Gelderland and Brabant switched back to coal.⁵⁹ However, this switch did not result in any change within the Dutch imagined community. Even a decade later coal was still rarely taught in history classes as being a big part of Dutch history.

For Limburg, the story was quite different. The fossil fuel experts and governmental representatives who advocated for the revival of coal were met with hope. The hope that coal mining could continue. At this time, L.D. was filled with ideas and concepts that could keep the mining industry

⁵⁶ Delpher, 'Opmerkelijke uitspraak oud-directeur EGKS: Kolenwinning in Limburg nu economisch haalbaar', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1979/05/23), p. 37, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011200423:mpeg21:p037> (21-11-2020).

⁵⁷ Delpher, 'DUUR', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1973/11/21), p. 1., <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011197035:mpeg21:p001> (20-11-2020).

⁵⁸ Delpher, 'Aanbeveling van SER-commissie voor groot-verbruik: Kolen moeten gas na '78 vervangen Prijsstijging voor kleine afnemers', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1974/03/30), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011198440:mpeg21:p001> (21-11-2020).

⁵⁹ Delpher, 'Elektriciteitscentrales gaan over op kolenstook', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1979/07/02), p. 4, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011200506:mpeg21:p004> (21-11-2020).



Figure 6: Short circuit.⁶¹

alive. Overall, there did not seem to be any clarity about keeping the mines in Limburg going. Both essays on the doom of the Dutch coal industry and the global need for coal were prevalent. Furthermore, representatives in the *Tweede Kamer*, the equivalent of the house of commons, asked the minister of finance if the mines could stay open.⁶⁰ A scathing opinion piece from L.D., pictured on the left, lambasts the government for breaking down an industry, which they now needed. Coal from Limburg had become national product number one. Even though most mines were closed, there were vast reserves of coal, which explains ‘the number one product’ line. Now the government needed to reconsider whether the Dutch would still mine for coal. It also pointed towards a recently publicized report which alleged that the

Mining council advised waiting with closing mine Emma.⁶² The opinion piece showed some of the

confusion that took hold of Limburg. Could they continue mining or not? Another aspect that became very clear was the anger and frustration that the miners were feeling. Their jobs were taken from them even though the crisis had proven that they were still needed.

⁶⁰ Delpher, ‘Volgens ir. Raedts hebben Emma en Beatrix toekomst Centrales moeten kolen blijven stoken’, *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1974/01/30), p. 21, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560547:mpeg21:p021> (21-11-2020). Delpher, ‘Directie vroeg minister Lubbers om rijkssteun JULIA KAN JAAR LANGER IN PRODUCTIE BLIJVEN’, *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1974/01/05), p. 23,

<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560526:mpeg21:p023> (21-11-2020). Delpher, ‘Kamerlid Dragstra vraagt minister: Kans op openhouden van enkele mijnen?’, *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/06/23), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010561080:mpeg21:p003> (21-11-2020).

⁶¹ Delpher, ‘Kortsluiting’, *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/12/13), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560480:mpeg21:p001> (28-11-2020).

⁶² Delpher, ‘Kortsluiting’, *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/12/13), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560480:mpeg21:p001> (28-11-2020).

A Changed Identity

For most of the Netherlands, the industry had become undone by various processes. For the *Telegraaf* the coverage of coal and the mines in the Netherlands were different. While coal was deemed an important factor for the global infrastructure for years to come, the mines less so. The Dutch mines just were not as interesting in the national narrative of an energy crisis. There were certainly still questions concerning whether a mine should be kept open for the stability of the Dutch energy supply, but this would happen at an economical deficit. For the *Telegraaf*, the narrative on whether the mines should be kept open seemed more straightforward.

An article in the paper from 1973 showed this quite well. The subject was the Royal Shell company drawing-up plans to get into coal. Towards the end, the anonymous author muses on whether the mines would completely shut down by 1975 or whether new calculations could alter those plans.⁶³ Another article alluded to the same idea, based on the overall increase in energy consumption and a predicted consumption of an equivalent of 220 million tons of coal.⁶⁴ As such, a possible return to coal was solely based on economic incentives and the expected transition to nuclear energy. The article proposed to use these expendable resources for a while longer until the Netherlands would not need them anymore.

The *Telegraaf* did acknowledge that the economy had changed. There were short columns that featured stories from people or companies formerly tied to the coal industry, like Jef Slenter from Gulpen who changed his career from a tradesman in coal to one in barrels.⁶⁵ He seemed to have been one of the people directly affected by the closure of the mines. Overall, the publications on coal might have been decreasing, but not completely gone or forgotten. However, these stories also depict how the country has changed and found new ways of making a profit. The Netherlands was moving on from coal. Coal was just not needed anymore and the only Dutch people who were truly suffering used to work in the mines.

The *Telegraaf* also showed some compassion with those people who had relied on coal for their livelihoods. A review of a public broadcasting service documentary on coal *Devaluatie van het Zwarte Goud*, devaluation of the black gold, remarks on some of the hardships these people had to endure. However, it also ends on a more scathing tone, lambasting the miners for living in a welfare society provided by the mining corporations. These miners dared to expect that someone would care for them

⁶³ Delpher, 'Koninklijke in de steenkool', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1973/03/30), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011197015:mpeg21:p003> (20-11-2020).

⁶⁴ Delpher, 'Glorietijd', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1973/05/03), p. 27, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011197413:mpeg21:p027> (20-11-2020).

⁶⁵ Delpher, 'Van kolen naar vaten', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1972/11/23), p. 4, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011197203:mpeg21:p004> (20-11-2020).

when their jobs were gone when they were pampered by the mining companies.⁶⁶ That last part seemed especially harsh, but mining corporations were known to take care of everything for their workers. From bank accounts to living arrangements.⁶⁷ However, it was hard to change a mono-economic society and find new jobs for people with an industrial skillset.

In contrast to the closure of Emma in L.D., in which several articles covered substantial parts of the newspaper in terms of surface area, the event only begets a small column in the upper-left corner in the *Telegraaf*.⁶⁸ The placement of these articles shows how much import the mines had for the respective parts of the country at the time. Sure, the mines might have been crucial in the development of the Netherlands, but they had been completely supplanted by natural gas in terms of heating and energy production. No Dutch person had to walk around with a bag of coals for the stove at home anymore.

The *Telegraaf* was also more focused on different forms of energy as opposed to L.D., which seemed to focus more on carbon fuels and their derivatives. The *Telegraaf* also featured wind energy, solar energy, and quite prominently nuclear energy. According to an article in the *Telegraaf* from 1974, the Netherlands could have had three nuclear power plants by 1982. This would then have fulfilled some of the Dutch energy requirements and made the Netherlands more self-sufficient.⁶⁹ Though nuclear energy was posed as a futuristic idea; it was the end-goal that would supplant all forms of carbon-based energy. Even a renewed reliance on coal just served until the world could finally fully adapt to nuclear energy. The solar-based forms of power, wind turbines and solar panels, seemed to be quite far off and unproven. Solar power was at this time still 'unsolved' and the wind was a more expensive yet less reliable solution.⁷⁰ These new forms of energy and the expectation that fossil fuels were just a temporary solution showed that the Netherlands as a country was done with coal. The eyes were focused on the future where new technologies reigned. The industry had become a thing of the past.

⁶⁶ Delpher, 'UIT DE GOOISE LIUCHT GEGREPEN', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1972/03/14), p. 2, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011197080:mpeg21:p002> (20-11-2020).

⁶⁷ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg*, 614-617.

⁶⁸ Delpher, 'Koninklijke in de steenkool', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1973/03/30), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011197015:mpeg21:p003> (20-11-2020).

⁶⁹ Delpher, 'Futuroloog Herman Kahn over liet energieprobleem: „Waaizin, dure olie als brandstof” door H.F. VAN LOON', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1974/03/14), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011198426:mpeg21:p005> (21-11-2020). Delpher, 'STEENKOOL', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1974/10/02), p. 9, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011198608:mpeg21:p007> (21-11-2020). Delpher, 'Aardolie', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1974/09/27), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011198577:mpeg21:p003> (21-11-2020).

⁷⁰ Delpher, 'wind-energie toekomstmuziek', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1974/12/17), p. 7, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560793:mpeg21:p007> (18-01-2021).

The number of articles on coal in Limburg during the seventies was increasing. An enormous part of the economy that had kept Limburg society working, was being lost. One article described the history of coal as the last mines were closing. In it the writer remarks that Dutch coal was too expensive and safe for global isolation, there would probably never be a need to gather it from Limburg again.⁷¹ However other articles featured members from the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* who wanted to open new mines in Limburg. The most feasible option would be the half-excavated mine Beatrix. However, it could have taken between three or four years to be made exploitable again.⁷² These stories probably kept some hope going within Limburg society that at least some mines would continue to operate in the future.

There was also a lot of anger at how the situation in Limburg could have gotten to this point and the Dutch government was at fault. The government was indecisive on whether to support the mines and ultimately conservative with what it did give. In the end, an opinion piece concluded it might have been better if the mines would have been axed sooner rather than the economic malaise which Limburg was experiencing.⁷³ The irony that the rest of the country now suffered as well was also not lost on them. L.D. featured an article in which the Northerners, where the competing natural gas came from, had an increasing demand for the 'black gold' that once made Limburg prosperous.⁷⁴ Another article probably fanned the flames in many an ex-miner's hart. This article described a report commissioned in 1963 by the European Economic Society. The report was alleged by the article to have predicted



Figure 7: Cartoon depicting miner going into the North Sea.¹

⁷¹ Delpher, 'Geen soulaas', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/11/06), p. 4, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560576:mpeg21:p004> (20-11-2020).

⁷² Delpher, 'Kamerleden roepen om Limburgse steenkool', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/11/15), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560584:mpeg21:p001> (20-11-2020).

⁷³ Delpher, 'DE FEITEN: VISIE OP LIMBURG Mijnen te vroeg of te laat dicht?', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/05/03), p. 4, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010561037:mpeg21:p004> (21-11-2020).

⁷⁴ Delpher, 'Limburgse oliehandel probeert hamsteren te voorkomen KOLEN WEER IN TREK', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/10/30), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560574:mpeg21:p003> (18-01-2021).

something like the energy crisis could happen. Even though coal might have been becoming more expensive, it could have been better for the European Community to have kept the mines going.⁷⁵

There was also a news item that Royal Shell had found coal beneath the North Sea in their search for more natural gas and oil. A cartoon was published by L.D., featured on the previous page, which showed a miner in full gear going into the North Sea to mine this coal. It is a hilarious cartoon, but it also has a tragic side to it. It shows how deeply ingrained the mineworkers' life was for some people. This was the only lifestyle they had ever known, and they would mine in the North Sea if they could.

Concluding

Even though, Dutch coal became the object of interest again for a nation starved of oil. The industry would never again take on a central role in the Dutch identity. By 1974 too much had changed and been given up turning back now. The *Telegraaf* no longer supported the coal mines as a part of the Dutch imagined community. Coal could be needed for the energy security of the Netherlands, but this was just a short-term solution until scientific progress was made. The *Telegraaf* did at times acknowledge the coal mining past, but it was never nostalgic about it.

In Limburg, the oil-crises presented confusing and chaotic times. Could the mines stay open? Would coal continue to be the bedrock of Limburg society? In hindsight, the answer would be a resounding no. However, coal had become an intrinsic part of the Limburg regional identity. The trauma and anger concerning the closure of the mines would continue well into the nineties. An anger which lingered for 25 years as a day of remembrance was being planned for the silver jubilee of the announcement by Den Uijl.

⁷⁵ Delpher, 'Belang van steenkool werd miskend door Henk Thonen', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1973/11/17), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010560586:mpeg21:p003> (20-11-2020).

Chapter Three: The Silver Jubilee

The silver jubilee of the announcement made by Den Uijl took place in 1990. Mister Zeil, the mayor of Heerlen, the former capitol of mining in Limburg, decided to make use of this opportunity and organize some events for this occasion. A symposium was to be held on 17 December 1990 to which prime minister Lubbers would come and hold a speech. It was to remember the mines. However, sentiment towards the closure had become more negative as hindsight and a new equilibrium had replaced the promises and chaos from the 1970s and 1980s.⁷⁶

The closure of the mines between 1965 and 1975 was financially disastrous for the mining communities and most of Limburg. Jobs had to be replaced and the economy reworked. The closure was not the only problem bothering the miners, as these communities had been suffering from

other side effects of coal mining for a long time. Damage to properties happened regularly due to earthquakes and sinkholes. There were other complications related to the miners' health as well. Not



Figure 8: 25 Years aboveground Special Edition of L.D..⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: Een Sociale Geschiedenis*, 600-619.

⁷⁷ Delpher, '25 JAAR BOVENGRONDS', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/15), p. 31, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624162:mpeg21:p031> (18-01-2021).

only did the miners hazard their lives in an accident-prone work-environment, but the act of mining itself also posed a longtime risk to their health because of coaldust.⁷⁸

Black lung has become a well-recognized consequence of coal mining. This was not always the case. For a long period, miners with lung problems were often misdiagnosed with asthma or bronchitis. Often the cause for lung diseases was put as smoking by the occupational physicians who worked for the mines. The mining companies knew that coal dust was a problem for the lungs, and they tried to mitigate any responsibility on their part. However, the actual number of miners suffering from diseases following their mining career were quite high. After the mines closed many of these miners were designated disabled. These miners then relied on the government for welfare or their pensions for their livelihoods.⁷⁹

Additionally, the miners were also being shorted on these pensions. The pensions were based on a capitalist system in which a fund would invest the pensions. This required a long-term perspective, and any minor decisions would have major consequences for the pool available in the future. The wrong investments meant that the pensions were not quite as high as anticipated by the miners. Moreover, new laws concerning old-age pensions were implemented. Changes to the laws inevitably meant that there were some oversights. The old-age pension would be paid out after someone turned 65 but in the mines laborers who worked underground retired with 55 and those who worked aboveground at 60. This meant that the workers needed to span those remaining years until they could get their old-age pensions. A host of rules needed to be implemented to take care of who was entitled to what and when they could get it.⁸⁰ One can imagine these rules did not make for many happy miners.

The personal circumstances of the miners also tied in with the grander developments taking place in the province. After the closure of the mines, the government, the province, and various other institutions were busy reshaping the economy of Limburg. Promises were made that the people who would lose their jobs when the mines close would get a new one. None of the institutions delivered on this promise until the 1990s.⁸¹ During the 1970s and 1980s Limburg had some of the highest unemployment rates in the country. So, by 1990, it was understandable that the Limburgers were somewhat peeved by everything that had happened.

⁷⁸ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: Een Sociale Geschiedenis*, 569-587.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 587-596.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 587-596.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 546-567.

Well in the Past

For the *Telegraaf*, the coal mining glory days were completely in the past. The *Telegraaf* only publicized a handful of articles on anything regarding the coal mining industry in the Netherlands. The subject was truly out of sight and out of mind, as for the rest of the country coal barely mattered anymore. The energy crises of the seventies had passed and outside of Limburg the mines had no enduring cultural or social influence. This lack of interest in the mines was also reflected in the number of articles the *Telegraaf* published. The number of published articles concerning the coal mines was at an extremely low level. The *Telegraaf* only produced eight articles in 1990 with the word *mijnsluiting*, mine-closure, in it. This should have been a particularly pertinent term for the year with a silver jubilee. The same term showed 157 results in L.D. The numbers show the lack of interest the rest of the country had when it came to coal and the disappearance of the industrial identity from public consciousness.

The *Telegraaf* also seemed to write about Dutch coal mining as a chapter that was finally coming to a complete end. The support from the government for Limburg was being halted as the government deemed the economic problems sufficiently close to solved. According to Lubbers, Limburg was no longer the black sheep of the Dutch provinces after investments of 10 billion guilders and should be able to handle the last hurdles by itself.⁸² Knotter suggests, though, that the South-Limburg area was still somewhat behind the rest of the province. These areas were, like many other former industrial areas, no longer of interest to the new generations and most young people fled to the big cities.⁸³ As such, the area is not quite as promising for investors and companies.

Another article portrayed the Limburgers as finally living the good life again, implicating that the rest of the country was already doing so.⁸⁴ However, at the time Limburg was not the only province that needed a complete economic redevelopment. The Northern provinces and Brabant needed restructuring as well. These provinces were mainly focused on agriculture or industry as well. The industry has already been established as a failing sector. However, agriculture was also going through its share of developments as well. The agricultural sector needed fewer hands because of automatization and crop improvements, which meant bigger farms and less jobs. These changes occurred around the same time as the closure of the mines in Limburg but compared to the Northern provinces Limburg had adapted

⁸² Delpher, 'Lubbers wil extra steun aan Limburg beëindigen', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1990/12/18), p. 9, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010646252:mpeg21:p009> (22-12-2020).

⁸³ Delpher, 'Toeristen', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1990/12/29), p. 23, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010646260:mpeg21:p023> (22-12-2020).

⁸⁴ Delpher, 'Limburger gezonder dan rest Euregio', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/11/28), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010623943:mpeg21:p001> (18-01-2021).

quite well.⁸⁵ Which could also have been a reason as to why Limburg was probably not much of interest to the rest of the country. Sure, the province had gone through hardships, but other provinces had done worse and still needed help.

However, there were still some problems that needed to be solved. Prime minister Lubbers had admitted that the rest of the Netherlands "owed an honorary debt" to the coal miners, specifically those with a misdiagnosed black lung disease. It would take until 1994 for the government to make good on its honorary debt and pay a few hundred miners 20.000 guilders. However, a miner had to have worked underground for at least five years and a diminished lung performance of 30 percent.⁸⁶ This meant that there were still some miners who fell through the cracks.

Limburg seemed to be a solved problem. Though the situation was not always handled particularly well, by 1990 the province was capable of fending for itself. Economically, it was almost at the same level as the rest of the country. The future looked bright for Limburg and there was barely anything of interest in the province to report on. Just another "ordinary" Dutch province that no longer served as a linchpin in the Dutch energy sector. That some former miners and provincials were mad was just a side issue.

The approach from the *Telegraaf* was completely different when compared to 1926. Back then, the paper did take an interest in the minutiae of the mines. The *Telegraaf* used to be very much concerned with what the Limburgers were up to, but not anymore. Limburg was no longer an economic center or instrumental to the industrial identity. Limburg had become, like most of the Dutch provinces, an appendage.

The Coal Mining Legacy

On the fifteenth of December in 1990, L.D. publicized a bigger issue of its paper concerning the silver jubilee. Extra pages and articles were added, which looked back on the history of the mines and how the closure had impacted the province. It was a mix of both positive and negative stories on the closure of the mines. People from all walks of mining-life got to talk, from the mayor of Heerlen to a black-lung diseased ex-miner. By now many Limburgers seemed to identify themselves with coal mining. L.D. publicized a couple of articles on honorary Limburgers and the newspaper often mentioned any involvement with the

⁸⁵ Delpher, 'Noorden doet het nu op z'n Limburgs', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/15), p. 39, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624162:mpeg21:p039> (18-01-2021).

⁸⁶ Delpher, 'Overheid lost ereschuld aan long-patiënten in Oud-mijnwerkers krijgen f 20.000 door Jo Cortenraedt', *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, 1994/06/24), p. 3, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010691924:mpeg21:p003> (22-12-2020).

mines.⁸⁷ This could be because most of these Limburgers have worked in the mining industry. After all, it was such a prominent industry. It also could be because having something to do with mining in their past connected more with the Limburg society 1990. The fact was that L.D. publicized more articles on the former miners and shutdown mines compared to the *Telegraaf*.

One could also see this identification with the coal miners in other facets of Limburg society. Some Limburgers like the writer Frans Dieteren made a living off the negative sentiment towards the closure of the mines.⁸⁹ There was also a baker called Meels who disturbed the symposium in Heerlen by reciting a

ridiculing poem for prime minister Lubbers.⁹⁰ With both Limburgers, it was pointed out in L.D. that they were not miners. The baker allegedly never worked at the mines. The author had worked at the mines but never underground. This distinction was emphasized in the article, as though working in the mines proper, truly sets one apart. It bears the consequence that only ex-miners would be allowed to talk about the mines and the consequences of closing them.⁹¹

The identity issue could also have been noticed in local politics at the time. Most political parties or politicians that were active in Limburg had at least something to say on the matter of the mines and how the closure was handled.⁹² These political figures had to pander to the Limburgers just like L.D.



Figure 9: Photo showing baker Meels.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Delpher, 'Habets vijftig jaar 'een hart van staal' DOOR LEON JEURISSEN', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1994/10/28), p. 19, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010638113:mpeg21:p019> (24-12-2020), Delpher, 'Heerlenaren Bijsmans en Cox onderscheiden 'Ach, die ondergrondse wereld was magnifiek'', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1994/12/17), p. 17, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010638142:mpeg21:p017> (24-12-2020).

⁸⁸ Delpher, 'Gelukkig', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/18), p. 13, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624164:mpeg21:p013> (24-12-2020).

⁸⁹ Delpher, "'Mijnspoor" zevende boek van Frans Dieteren Geestelijk testament van mijnbouwkundige', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/11/08), p. 19, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010623926:mpeg21:p021> (24-12-2020).

⁹⁰ Delpher, 'Gelukkig', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/18), p. 13, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624164:mpeg21:p013> (24-12-2020).

⁹¹ Delpher, 'Triest', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/05), p. 13, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624153:mpeg21:p013> (24-12-2020).

⁹² Delpher, 'Terugkerend Kamerlid wil meer 'Limburg' op het Binnenhof De warme start van Jos van Rey', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/21), p. 19, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624167:mpeg21:p019> (24-12-2020).

needed to. The miners and their extended families were not few in numbers. In 1965 it was estimated that about 70.000 would lose their jobs when all mines were closed. This number did not include those that had already worked in the mines or were planning on working in the mines.⁹³ Limburg counted around 1.1 million inhabitants in 1990 and this group would amount to at least five percent of the population.⁹⁴ Most miners were probably males, so the number would then come close to ten percent of the male population. Ten percent is a sizeable number, especially considering this did not include any extended family.

The miners were often angry at the 'lords' of the mines and politicians of the West. They spoke about how they knew what these people with power had done and how it had affected the miners.⁹⁵ Though when asked what these lords had done and what the impact entailed; the miners did not answer. The author of the article writes as if he had asked the question many times and had never gotten a concise answer. However, the feelings of betrayal and division seemed very much alive amongst the miners.

In fact, most of the Limburgers in 1990 still felt like the closure of the mines had a negative impact on the province and continued to have a negative influence on things like jobs and prosperity.⁹⁶ This article was written concerning an inquiry held by a research group. It was understandable where these feelings came from. Disease, unemployment, and economic restructuring were all they had known for 25 years. If Limburg had gotten out of its misery, it had only done so recently. As such, the memory of hardship would still be fresh and not easily forgotten.

There was also an article that featured Frans Dohmen, a president of the labor union to which most miners belonged. Dohmen suggested quite early that Limburg should change economically as the mines were no longer viable. When the mines started to close, he actively worked with the government towards the shutdown. This made him a traitor in the eyes of many miners, who thought that the union should have had their backs no matter what.⁹⁷ In retrospect Dohmen was right, but hindsight does not make a man beloved. Dohmen's story showed how divisive the closure of the mines was for Limburg society. Those who relied on the mines felt betrayed by anybody who did not stand with them, even when there was a very good reason not to.

⁹³ Knotter, *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: Een Sociale Geschiedenis*, 537

⁹⁴ Arbeidsmarktinzicht.nl, 'Bevolkingsdaling Limburg geremd door toename immigratie', <https://arbeidsmarktinzicht.nl/bevolkingsdaling-limburg-geremd-door-toename-positief-migratiesaldo>

⁹⁵ Delpher, 'Triest', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/05), p. 13, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624153:mpeg21:p013> (24-12-2021).

⁹⁶ Delpher, 'Den Haag liet Limburg Barsten', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/15), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624162:mpeg21:p001> (18-01-2021).

⁹⁷ Delpher, 'Dohmen zag vroeg de noodzaak van nieuwe industrieën', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/15), p. 32, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624162:mpeg21:p032> (18-01-2021).

Positivity

The narrative concerning the closure of the mines was easily put in a negative light. Especially when an angry old miner talked about complot theories. He talked about how the high lords from the West actively tried to destroy the miners.⁹⁸ Like the government, which had actively employed thousands of people, had suddenly decided to hurt them. However, L.D. did not only write about the negative aspects. There were also articles about how Limburg had regained a better economic position since the closure of the mines. The province had received 10 billion guilders in support and especially Maastricht had become quite a popular city for businesses and higher education.⁹⁹ Limburg had made a remarkable change and was becoming popular. Its economy was more diverse than it had ever been, a healthy change for its inhabitants. The chances of a single development in the international market directly influencing the entire economy of Limburg were now remarkably low. Hindsight had given the paper and most inhabitants of Limburg a better idea of how the coal mining industry could not compete with foreign countries. The closure was inevitable though some people would still hold on to the idea that mines could have stayed open for many years.

Another article suggested that because of a recent European report Limburg was healthier than other mining regions in Europe. Limburg's death rates were slightly lower than the surrounding areas, most notably the surrounding coal mining areas of Belgium and Germany. However, the rates were still higher than the rest of the country.¹⁰⁰ This seemed to have been meant as some form of relief, in a sense it could have been worse. Though it was doubtful if anyone would be relieved after they had seen a family member die from blood filling their lungs. L.D. did try to show how Limburg had come through the past fifteen years better than other provinces.¹⁰¹ In this regard, these articles seemed to oppose the negative narratives that came from some of the former miners. However, negativity often sells better. But the paper seems to actively work towards a more positive identity of Limburg. Not just victims, but a society that was strong enough to bounce back from an economic crisis.

⁹⁸ Delpher, 'Met wrok in het hart', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/15), p. 41, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624162:mpeg21:p041> (18-01-2021).

⁹⁹ Delpher, 'Westelijke Mijnstreek is klap allang te boven', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/15), p. 43, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624162:mpeg21:p043> (18-01-2021).

¹⁰⁰ Delpher, 'Limburger gezonder dan rest Euregio', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/11/28), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010623943:mpeg21:p001> (18-01-2021).

¹⁰¹ Delpher, 'Noorden doet het nu op z'n Limburgs', *Limburgsch dagblad* (Heerlen, 1990/12/15), p. 39, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010624162:mpeg21:p039> (18-01-2021).

Concluding

For the rest of the Netherlands, the chapter on coal mining was almost completely done by 1990. There might have been some loose ends that needed to be tied. The coal mining industry had no longer the weight or meaning it had just a couple of decades prior. With that, the interest of the country at large faded. The province no longer had an exceptional role to play. Coal mining had become something that the Netherlands did not want to remember. It was a dirty industry with a deadly legacy. The only aspects of coal mining left for the rest of the country were some lawsuits and angry talk from a province at the edge of the country.

For L.D. the situation was quite different. Coal mining had become an identity. Coal miners had become a cause for most Limburgers to stand behind as these people did have financial problems and were suffering from diseases. These people had the right to be angry and a right to be helped. However, these grievances do not take away that the province did reshape its economy in a better shape with the help of the government. Overall, the paper does seem to admit that the closure of the mines was for the best, but it does have critique on the handling of the situation.

It seems clear how the newspapers differed in their narratives. The narratives were based on their audiences. The interests between these two groups, one local and one national, had completely different values. In L.D. miners were a part of Limburg and a mining a part of its identity. For the *Telegraaf*, this group was relatively small and did not 'deserve' all the attention they got when the sector was not as important for the Netherlands anymore.

Conclusion

How the *Telegraaf* and L.D. have portrayed the mines has changed radically throughout the century. This portrayal has ranged from an industrial nation that wanted to belong with the most important countries, to a population that wanted to commemorate a way of living. Many events came together to change the narratives that were written by these daily papers. Maurits showed that in 1926 all the Netherlands seemed to be working towards a common industrial identity. This identity, like that of a colonial imperium, seemed key in terms of international relations and standing. The *Telegraaf* heartily contributed to this image. For instance, they reported on many small Limburg affairs, which seems unimaginable for the paper now. This reporting fostered a connection with between the center of Dutch power and a remote industrial area. Limburg was an important part of this image because it had coal. It still needed to adjust to this new image, as it had mostly been used to dealing with an agrarian economy. L.D. tried hard to propagate the industrialized image that the province would eventually have as well. This chapter shows some of the power which written texts have in creating an imagined community. The coal mines were incredibly valuable in establishing this image for both the Netherlands and Limburg. The newspapers reinforced the industrial image well, almost too well.

The oil crises showed how much the narrative from the newspapers had changed over half a century. Much of the Dutch population was no longer interested in an industrialized identity. Meanwhile, Limburg had wholeheartedly accepted its identity as an industrial province. The colloquialism from the first chapter was making place for division. Almost everything that would have had some value as industrial heritage was torn from Limburg's landscape. Limburg was ruined. The oil crises suggested some hope for Dutch coal. However, it all turned out to be a false promise. No coal mining revival ever took place and slowly but surely all mines got sealed with a giant concrete cork. As the Netherlands had found other riches, it did not value the mines anymore. However, for Limburg the mines had gotten indispensable. The closure would become a traumatic event for Limburg and these hard times would create a lasting impression on its imagined community.

During the silver jubilee a big part of Limburg society was still convinced that the closure had hurt Limburg society and was still doing so. At the same time, most of them had also come to realize that coal mining had become untenable. The inevitable had happened and they had made the best of the situation. Many of those who had worked in the mines were still angry and felt betrayed. However, the jubilee showed the first signs of healing from the closure and L.D. tried to contribute to this process as well. It showed how much this heritage mattered to those living in Limburg. How much they identified with it.

For the *Telegraaf* the import of the mines had passed. There was no sense in reporting on a subject for which the country did not care. The mines no longer added to Dutch society and it would take years before coal returned to the public consciousness.

All in all, the thesis shows how the national and regional narratives developed at a different pace and with a different mindset. Because the country wanted to profile itself as an industrialized country, the province was forced to adapt. However, when this identity was no longer of use Limburg had already committed to it. A large part of its male population was working in the mines, which also served as community centers. Working for the mines was not simply a job, it was a way of living. A way of living that is now fondly remembered. For the newspapers, coal presented different opportunities and narratives they could sell their audiences. After the mines had closed, there no longer was much point to publish on the subject for the *Telegraaf*. It mostly did so as the controversial legacies of coal mining touched other parts of Dutch society, as with the honorary debt and the pensions for the miners.

The different narratives did not only show a cultural divide but also a historical divide as both papers served communities that had experienced coal mining under completely different circumstances. The regional Limburg was active in facilitating the industry, while the Randstad ruled from afar. In this regard, it was the same relationship that many rural outlying regions share with the centers of governance and big cities. This conclusion was to be expected. However, the opinions and narratives that were shown through the newspapers can still be useful in contemporary research as the papers reflected society. These narratives differ from interviews many years after the fact or diaries. These articles show a broader societal narrative of a specific time that fills some of the gaps between the narratives from above and below.

A further point of research might be to contrast these findings with newspapers from the Northern Netherlands with articles featuring the natural gas industry. It could show how the imagined identity and narratives differed from Limburg. Overall, the narrative in the North has been extremely negative with earthquakes and unsellable homes due to living in this area. It is hard to imagine that any sense of nostalgia could develop from this trauma. However, both provinces seem to share the same narrative as a region that was mistreated by those with wealth and power. At some time, the North must have had pride in the Royal Shell company and the biggest natural gas field in Europe. Undoubtedly, the natural gas industry would have supported a sizeable workforce. It would be interesting to see how the developments concerning value, identity, and media narratives coincide with those described in this thesis. What was different about the Northern industry if these circumstances do not correlate?

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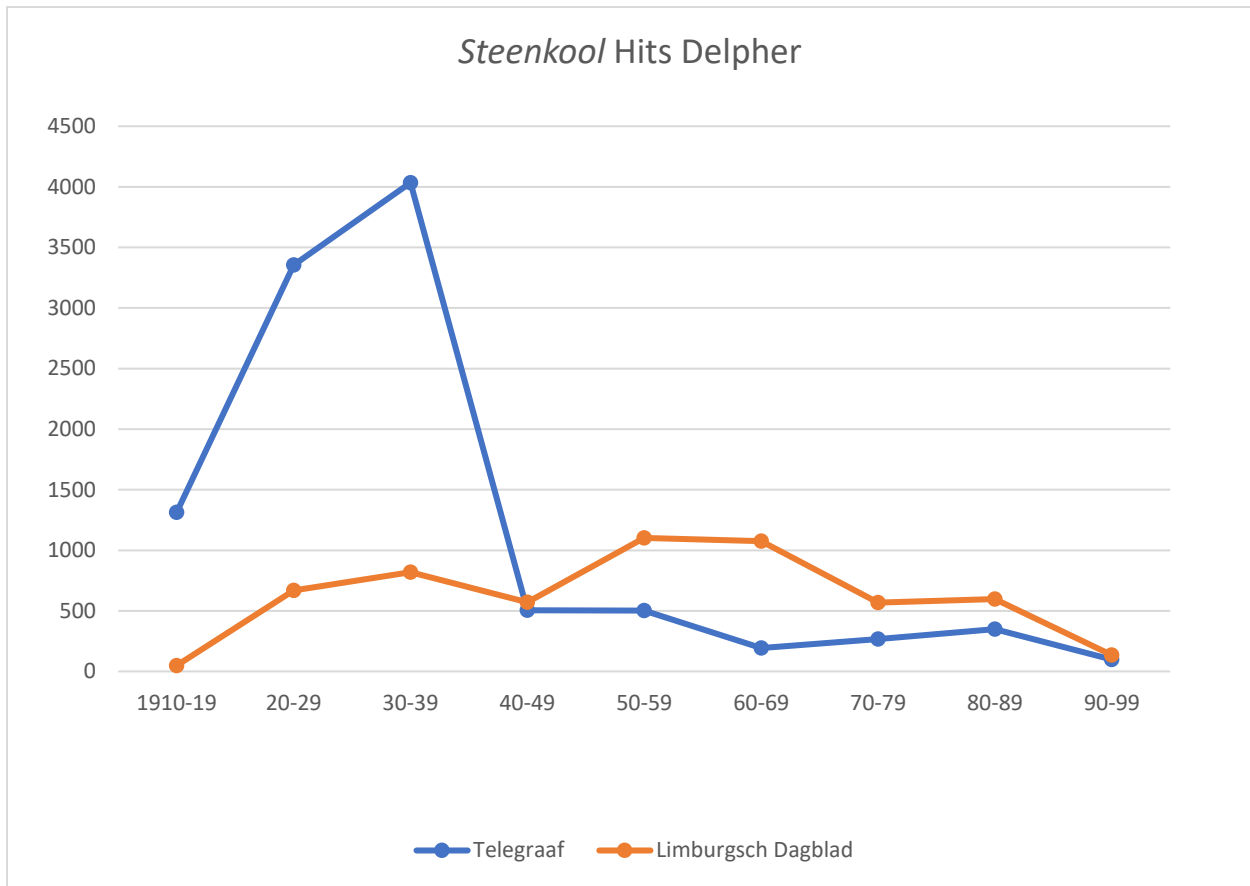
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Appendix 1:



	Telegraaf	Limburgsch Dagblad
1910-19	1312	49
20-29	3355	668
30-39	4034	820
40-49	505	572
50-59	503	1102
60-69	194	1074
70-79	266	567
80-89	348	598
90-99	98	136