

Introduction

The Dutch famine of 1944–1945, popularly known in the Netherlands as the ‘Hunger Winter’, is one of the major European World War II famines and has been central to the Dutch collective memory of the German occupation since the country’s liberation in May 1945.¹ The food crisis took place in the urbanised western Netherlands during the final months of the German occupation when the Allies had already liberated the southern part of the country. After November 1944, official daily rations for the once well-nourished Dutch dropped below an already meagre 750 calories per capita, decreasing to less than 370 calories just before the German surrender in May 1945. While the Dutch had also experienced problems with the food supply during the First World War, widespread hunger and famine-related mortality had not reoccurred since the European Potato Failure in the mid-nineteenth century.² On the contrary, in the 1940s the Netherlands enjoyed a highly developed economy, modern health care system, and strong civil society: as Stephen Devereux has stated, ‘those who suffered during the famine were probably the wealthiest, best educated and most mobile victims of any famine in history’.³

Thanks to the advanced registration practices in the Netherlands, the physiological consequences of the famine have been well documented. The Hunger Winter has provided epidemiologists with a unique ‘natural experience’ to study the long-term effects of prenatal exposure to malnutrition on health in later life and is one of the most important cases for testing the ‘fetal origins hypothesis’. Studies on the ‘Dutch Hunger Winter Cohort’ have revealed that prenatal famine exposure changed

¹ For decades, the Hunger Winter featured more prominently in the Dutch collective memory of the German occupation than the Holocaust. David Barnouw, *De Hongerwinter* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999), 76; Hein A. M. Klemann, ‘De Hongerwinter’, in *Een Open Zenuw: Hoe Wij Ons de Tweede Wereldoorlog Herinneren*, eds. Madelon de Keizer and Marije Plomp (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010), 256–264.

² Daniel Curtis et al., ‘Low Countries’, in *Famine in European History*, eds. Guido Alfani and Cormac Ó Gráda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 123–133.

³ Stephen Devereux, *Theories of Famine* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 159.

the epigenetic profile of the survivors and that those who were born or conceived during the crisis suffer from higher risks for conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and schizophrenia.⁴ While the long-term effects of the Hunger Winter were dire, actual casualties in the western Netherlands remained relatively low compared with other famines of the twentieth century, with famine-related mortality among the 2.6 million people who were affected reaching approximately 20,000 in 1944–1945.⁵ How, then, did the Dutch survive these famine conditions until liberation in May 1945?

Thus far, no clear answer to this question has been formulated. Indeed, while we continue to learn about the tremendous physiological impact of the Dutch Hunger Winter, much less is known about how and why the famine evolved the way it did. Due to a significant lack of non-Dutch publications on the Hunger Winter, international literature still reproduces profound misunderstandings about the famine, particularly where the role of the German occupier is concerned. For similar reasons, even less is known about the social consequences of the famine and efforts to confront the crisis. This book is the first attempt to fully document these causes and effects of the Dutch famine.

The focus of this book is on the social and political responses to the Dutch famine. While previous studies on the Hunger Winter have generally only considered the role of the failing state and of self-serving individuals, I argue that this orthodox view on food provisioning has overlooked vital forms of societal resilience and agency – actions that played a decisive role in the course and impact of the famine. To correct such myopic understandings, this study considers a wider range of responses by investigating Dutch, German, and Allied state institutions, the affected households, and local communities. By revealing the

⁴ L. H. Lumey and Frans van Poppel, ‘The Dutch Famine of 1944–45 as a Human Laboratory: Changes in the Early Life Environment and Adult Health’, in *Early Life Nutrition and Adult Health and Development: Lessons from Changing Dietary Patterns, Famines, and Experimental Studies*, eds. Lumey and Alexander Vaiserman (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2013), 59–76. These studies are discussed elaborately in Chapter 3.

⁵ For example, in occupied Greece in 1941–1944 ($\pm 250,000$ – $450,000$), besieged Leningrad 1941–1944 ($\pm 700,000$), and the Warsaw ghetto in 1940–1942 ($\pm 58,000$ – $98,000$). By comparison, in early 1942 in besieged Leningrad, the same number of deaths was recorded weekly. Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941–1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 158; Nadezhda Cherepenina, ‘Assessing the Scale of Famine and Death in Besieged Leningrad’, in *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941–1944*, eds. John Barber and Andrei Dzeniskevich (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 43–44, 62–65; Charles G. Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 98.

interactions among various levels and actors and the effectiveness of their efforts, this book offers a comprehensive and multifaceted view of the socio-political context in which the famine emerged and was confronted.

At the same time, this book also examines the broader question of how a modern society with a highly developed economy such as the Netherlands coped with food shortage and famine. The Hunger Winter provides an excellent case for studying responses to modern war-induced famines in general, not least because of the relative abundance of archival materials left in its wake. By taking a wider comparative view, it identifies important similarities and differences between the Dutch famine and other food crises that occurred in Nazi-occupied Europe, revealing how and why the German occupier found reasons to cooperate and allow relief in the Dutch case. By doing so, this study aims to further our understanding of the hunger politics of Nazi Germany and of the functioning of modern societies facing famine.

Famine as a Weapon in Nazi-Occupied Europe

The Dutch Hunger Winter forms an integral part of the history of Nazi-occupied Europe. Since the ‘new imperial turn’ in German historiography scholars have begun to view Nazi Germany in the period 1933–1945 as an empire with race, culture, and economics as its defining elements. Although there were great discontinuities with prior ‘traditional’ German colonialism in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific in the years 1884–1918, its expansionism also showed continuities in terms of the ideology of territorial acquisitions and violent repressive measures, not to mention the resemblances to the attitude and behaviours of other imperial powers such as Great Britain. What set Nazi imperialism apart, however, was its late timing, its fixation on European territories, and, most importantly, its genocidal racial doctrine.⁶ Empire and imperialism can be useful categories for thinking about fascism, particularly because they help to frame the relationship between Nazi Germany and the occupied peoples as that of coloniser versus the colonised.

This imperialistic perspective is especially useful when considering the hunger politics pursued by Nazi Germany in its occupied territories. Food became a crucial element in the policies of the Nazi leadership, which connected the constant need for labour with the brutal ideological

⁶ Uta G. Poiger, ‘Imperialism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Germany’, *History and Memory* 17 (2005): 117–143; Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Allen Lane, 2008); Shelly Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

imperative for genocide.⁷ Throughout the war, the Nazi agricultural sector struggled to produce ample food to provide adequate rations for German civilians and the *Wehrmacht*. This was exacerbated by the necessity of feeding the growing number of forced labourers with barely enough food to continue productivity for the German war economy.⁸ The very inception of the foreign labour programme in the spring of 1940 had also derived from this food conundrum as, with the absence of German farmers, bringing in foreign workers became imperative for the cultivation of the land. At the height of this programme, in the autumn of 1944, the number of forced labourers had grown to an astonishing 7.9 million: equivalent to 20 per cent of the German workforce. At that moment, over 300,000 of them were Dutchmen.⁹

In the pursuit of German '*Lebensraum*' (living space) and agricultural self-sufficiency, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi leadership were convinced that 'useless mouths' needed to be exterminated. In the first weeks of 1941, the Reich Ministry of Food and the *Wehrmacht* agreed on the Hunger Plan, which called for the deliberate starvation of 20–30 million Soviet civilians. However, as war conditions changed over the winter of 1941–1942 and German food supplies dropped to dangerous levels, the Nazi leadership abandoned the impossible plan of killing millions of civilians in Eastern Europe and turned their attention towards the largest coercive labour and genocidal programmes ever seen. In the Nazi empire's quest for food, countries deemed inferior were plundered of their resources, most notably, Ukraine and Poland.¹⁰

The spring of 1942 saw a return to the principles of the Hunger Plan but now coupled to the programme of racial genocide, beginning with the murder of all Jews in Poland and followed by those of the other occupied countries. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who starved to death in ghettos and concentration camps, an estimated three million Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) were deliberately starved as

⁷ Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 520, 538–539; Gesine Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁸ Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 155–164.

⁹ Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 517; Ben A. Sijes, *De Arbeidsinzet: De Gedwongen Arbeid van Nederlanders in Duitsland*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1990), 624. Contrary to the situation in other occupied countries, there were hardly any women among these Dutch forced labourers.

¹⁰ Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Martin Winstone, *The Dark Heart of Hitler's Europe: Nazi Rule in Poland under the General Government* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2015).

part of the Nazi famine policies.¹¹ The central idea was to support only workers who were fundamentally contributing to the economic future of the Third Reich. Also, emerging from this compromise between racial ideology and economic pragmatism was the policy of ‘*Vernichtung durch Arbeit*’ (destruction through labour), which was established in concentration camps from 1942 onward.¹² Food and famine thus became two of Nazi Germany’s prime weapons of war and repression in occupied Europe.

The Dutch Hunger Winter has been subsequently regarded by scholars to be the result of similar Nazi hunger politics. Despite Germany’s focus on Eastern Europe as a source of plunder, it has been demonstrated that Western Europe contributed more to its wartime food supply than the entire Soviet Union. While the Hunger Winter was the only full-blown famine that struck in Western Europe, in the process of creating a self-sufficient empire, hunger was also exported to countries such as Norway, Belgium, and France by means of exploitation and low rations. Indeed, people across occupied Europe suffered from food shortages; in particular, the famine in occupied Greece in 1941–1944 added substantially to the suffering experienced by the population in Eastern Europe.¹³ As Hermann Göring stated in a meeting with the leaders of occupied Europe on 6 August 1942: ‘The Fuhrer repeatedly said, and I repeat after him, if anyone has to go hungry, it shall not be the Germans but other peoples.’¹⁴

¹¹ Gerhard Hirschfeld, ‘Chronology of Destruction’, in *Policies of Genocide: Jews and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany*, ed. Hirschfeld (Boston: Allan & Unwin, 1986), 145–156; Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Deutsche Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Zürich: Pendo Verlag, 2001), 154–156; Hirschfeld, ‘Food and Genocide: Nazi Agrarian Politics in the Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union’, *Contemporary European History* 18 (2009): 45–65; Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Vintage, 2011), 162–182; Alex de Waal, *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 101–105.

¹² Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 513–551; Tooze, ‘The Economic History of the Nazi Regime’, in *The Short Oxford History of Germany: Nazi Germany*, ed. Jane Caplan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 168–195; Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

¹³ Polymeris Voglis, ‘Surviving Hunger: Life in the Cities and the Countryside during the Occupation’, in *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, eds. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Anette Warring (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 16–41; Tatjana Tönsmeier, ‘Supply Situations: National Socialist Policies of Exploitation and Economies of Shortage in Occupied Societies during World War II’, in *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*, eds. Tatjana Tönsmeier, Peter Haslinger, and Agnes Laba (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3–23.

¹⁴ Cited in Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 156.

According to many studies, the Dutch Hunger Winter fits in perfectly with Göring's words. The German occupier allegedly prohibited all food transportation to the western Netherlands from September 1944 onward, thereby deliberately creating the conditions for famine.¹⁵ 'The intention was cynical and brutal – to starve the Dutch into submission', Devereux stated.¹⁶ It has even been assumed that the Germans cut off food supplies as well as all other basic necessities such as gas, electricity, and water in the Netherlands during the final months of war.¹⁷ According to these studies, the Dutch famine was the result of a collective punishment measure by the Nazis that was unique in the Western European context or, as Ian Buruma explained, 'Slavic peoples had been subjected to this treatment, but not Western Europeans'.¹⁸

In Dutch historiography, these views on the role of the German occupier in the Netherlands were abandoned about three decades ago in favour of a new perspective. Studies have convincingly demonstrated the relatively favourable economic position enjoyed by the 'Germanic' Netherlands in the years 1940–1944 compared to the rest of occupied Europe, which assured that the Dutch diet maintained quantitative and qualitative sufficiency until September 1944.¹⁹ This economic view of the German occupation of the Netherlands also caused a shift in considerations of the causes of the famine. While earlier studies placed the blame on the German occupier, Dutch historiography has negated these assumptions by bringing other contributing factors to the fore; namely, the devastating consequences of the national railway strike, which was instigated by the Dutch government-in-exile in London in September 1944 to support the Allied war effort, and a period of winter frost that lasted from late December 1944 until the end of January 1945. Dutch

¹⁵ E.g., Walter B. Maas, *The Netherlands at War: 1940–1945* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 205; Wallace R. Aykroyd, *The Conquest of Famine* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974), 98–103; Zena Stein, Mervyn Susser, and Gerhard Saenger, *Famine and Human Development: The Dutch Hunger Winter of 1944–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 44; Voglis, 'Surviving Hunger', 22; Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 280–281; Kevin Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Viking, 2012), 34–37.

¹⁶ Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 160. ¹⁷ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 176.

¹⁸ Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013), 54.

¹⁹ J. C. H. Blom, 'Nazificatie en Exploitatie', in *De Organisatie van de Bezetting*, eds. Henk Flap and Wil Arts (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 17–30; Gerard M. T. Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger: De Voedselvoorziening 1940–1945* (Utrecht: Stichting Matrijs, 1985), 53–63, 201–202; 409–414; Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948: Economie en Samenleving in Jaren van Oorlog en Bezetting* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2002). See also: Klemann, 'Did the German Occupation (1940–1945) Ruin Dutch Industry?' *Contemporary European History* 17 (2008): 457–481; Klemann, 'Die niederländische Wirtschaft von 1938 bis 1948 im Griff von Krieg und Besatzung', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1 (2001): 53–76.

historians have argued that the government in London ‘exacerbated hunger’ by refusing to terminate the railway strike that had led to no or minimal gain at the expense of a humanitarian disaster.²⁰ Some have even stated that, while the German occupation was the underlying cause of the famine, the Dutch railway strike and the failed Allied invasion were the famine’s causal triggers.²¹

In this book, I argue that monocausal and highly politicised explanations, focusing on either the German food blockade or the Dutch railway strike, do not do justice to the unfolding of events that eventually led to famine in the occupied western Netherlands. Certainly, the fate of the war was the determining factor – the underlying cause – but the causal triggers of the Dutch famine were much more complex. As Devereux has elegantly phrased it: ‘Famines are too complicated to be explained by one single factor.’²² Understanding famine in the occupied Netherlands, therefore, means examining the context of war and occupation as well as all contributory economic, social, and natural factors. This not only applies for discerning the complex events and interactions that eventually cumulated into famine, but also for determining all political and social efforts that mitigated its effects.

Coping with Hunger and Famine

A new understanding of famine causation in the occupied Netherlands also enables investigation of human behaviour during the crisis. Previous studies have commonly assumed that the Hunger Winter was a period of far-reaching social disintegration, in which most people were left to fend for themselves.²³ Where does this prevailing view come from? And how does this view on Dutch behaviour align with general knowledge of social responses to famine? The central question of this new understanding

²⁰ Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger*, 383; Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948*, 465–466; Ralf D. Futselaar, *Lard, Lice and Longevity: A Comparative Study on the Standard of Living in Occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940–1945* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 33.

²¹ Chris van der Heijden, *Grijs Verleden: Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, 10th ed. (Amsterdam: Olympus, 2009), 316.

²² Devereux, ‘Famine in the Twentieth Century’, IDS Working Paper 105 (Brighton: IDS, 2000), 15, 29. See also: Ó Gráda, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 9–13; Robert W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2004), xiii–xx, 441.

²³ E.g., G. J. Kruijer, *Sociale Desorganisatie. Amsterdam tijdens de Hongerwinter* (Meppel: J. A. Boom & Zoon, 1951); Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger*, 375; Jeroen L. van der Pauw, *Rotterdam in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006), 637; Futselaar, *Lard, Lice and Longevity*, 77–78.

therefore focuses on what people at various levels of society did when faced with the threat of famine. Before discussing this issue further, it is first necessary to clarify some of the terms and concepts central to this study: ‘famine’, ‘food crisis’, ‘food shortage’, ‘food poverty’, ‘food deprivation’, ‘hunger’, and, first of all, ‘Hunger Winter’.

The term ‘hunger winter’ first appeared in Dutch newspapers during the final days of occupation. Around this time, the resistance press used it in a general sense to describe the hardships of previous months; the capitalised name ‘Hunger Winter’ was actually a post-war construct.²⁴ In scholarly writings, use of the term is rather ambiguous as historians have used it as both a periodisation, which refers to the last eight months of occupation following the Allied Operation Market Garden (i.e., September 1944–May 1945), and at the same time, as a synonym for ‘famine’, the exact duration of which commonly remains unmentioned.²⁵ To exemplify the arbitrary use of the term, the Wikipedia article on the Hunger Winter states that it lasted from November 1944–April 1945, implying that the famine ended before the country was liberated.²⁶

Despite its problematic usage, Hunger Winter has become an integral part of Dutch collective memory and popular culture, comparable to ‘An Gorta Mór’ (1845–1850) in Ireland or ‘Holodomor’ in Ukraine (1932–1933); thus, its use should not be rejected. In this book, I adopt the popular definition of the term Hunger Winter, which does not align with a defined period or measurable famine but refers to the whole event and all its consequences. In other words, Hunger Winter in this study is used to refer to the food and fuel crisis emerging in the western Netherlands in the autumn of 1944, the circumstances of which eventually led to famine.

Building on seminal studies by Cormac Ó Gráda, Paul Howe, and Stephen Devereux, ‘famine’ is defined as a shortage of food or purchasing power directly leading to excess mortality from starvation, hunger-induced diseases, and fertility decline. These measurable indicators distinguish famine from a more moderate ‘food crisis’, in which there are also serious problems with the food supply, but elevated mortality is not necessarily linked to food deprivation. Common symptoms of an ‘early-stage famine’ (i.e., in cases when food shortages result in

²⁴ See, for example: ‘Nogmaals Handhaaft Zelfdiscipline’, *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, 20 April 1945; ‘Nieuwsberichten’, *Trouw*, 5 May 1945.

²⁵ E.g., Henri A. van der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland 1944–45* (London: Jill Norman & Hobhouse, 1982); Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger*; Devereux, *Theories of Famine*; Barnouw, *De Hongerwinter*; Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948*; Lowe, *Savage Continent*; Buruma, 1945.

²⁶ <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hongerwinter>. Accessed on 13 June 2017.

measurable detrimental effects but supplies are not yet fully depleted) are rising prices, black-market trade, food riots, increase in crimes against property, and rise in temporary migration – all of which are investigated in this book.²⁷ Examining these indicators provide new insight into the geography and chronology of the Dutch famine, allowing me to place the famine in a prolonged period defined as food crisis.²⁸ Instead of ending with the liberation of the country in May 1945, as is common in literature on the Hunger Winter, this book focuses on the entire crisis period between the first responses to the impending food crisis in September 1944 and the dismantling of emergency organisations over the summer of 1945. The terms food crisis and famine will be used accordingly to demarcate the difference in food situation in a certain place or time.

Applying the clear definitions provided by Sara Millman and Robert Kates of the three levels at which a scarcity of food may manifest itself, ‘food shortage’ is defined as the insufficient availability of food within a bounded region: insufficiency being understood as relative to the usual or expected supplies. ‘Food poverty’ applies to the circumstance in which a certain household cannot obtain enough food to fulfil the nutritional needs of all members of the household – the smallest organisational unit within which individuals routinely share food. At the lowest level, ‘food deprivation’ refers to the inadequacy of individual food intake to satisfy individual needs. A clear distinction among these three levels is imperative; for example, it is perfectly possible for a household coping with food poverty to have some of its members living in food deprivation while others do not, or alternately, for food poverty to occur in a society without food shortage.²⁹ At each of these levels of aggregation, factors other than actual scarcity can also operate, such as conflict and competition or shifts in the distribution of rights to food: the so-called entitlements. As will be explained later, it was the entitlements that ultimately determined which groups or individuals were most affected by the food shortage.

Following these more or less measurable qualifications, ‘hunger’ is probably the most difficult concept to define. Generally, hunger refers

²⁷ Paul Howe and Devereux, ‘Famine Intensity and Magnitude Scales: A Proposal for an Instrumental Definition of Famine’, *Disasters* 28 (2004): 353–372; Devereux, ‘Famine in the Twentieth Century’, 4; Ó Gradá, *Famine*, 3–6.

²⁸ Hionidou argues the same for the food crisis and famine in occupied Greece. Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece*, 32–33.

²⁹ Sara Millman and Robert W. Kates, ‘Towards Understanding Hunger’, in *Hunger in History: Food Shortage, Poverty and Deprivation*, ed. Lucile F. Newman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11–15. An excellent study on household inequality in times of food shortage is: Jeremy Lise and Shannon Seitz, ‘Consumption Inequality and Intra-Household Allocations’, *Review of Economic Studies* 78 (2011): 328–355.

to physiological, quantitative malnutrition: the inadequacy in individual dietary food intake relative to the kind and quantity of food required for growth, physical and mental activity, and for the maintenance of good health: such a definition makes the term synonymous to food deprivation.³⁰ Similar to the latter, hunger is, by definition, individual and independent of larger social units. While this physiological hunger is difficult to measure, psychological hunger or 'feeling hungry' is impossible to calculate.³¹ Yet both the physiological and the psychological aspects of hunger can be determinants of human behaviour. As this book focuses on responses to the famine, it is imperative not to define hunger in only a narrow, physiological way. Therefore, this study's definition of hunger includes all psychological experiences and social behaviour in relation to food deprivation.

If we consider what historians have argued about social behaviour during the Dutch famine, it seems as if hunger dissolved virtually all expressions of solidarity and sense of community. While early post-war studies had noticed the resilience of civil society during the famine,³² community responses have been largely overlooked in most later historical studies on the Dutch wartime food supply. Indeed, studies on the Hunger Winter have generally stressed that the collapse of central food rationing caused society to disintegrate by provoking self-preserving behaviour among the population.³³ After September 1944, ordered society is said to have disappeared and neither the authority of resistance

³⁰ Millman and Kates, 'Towards Understanding Hunger', 3.

³¹ Futselaar, *Lard, Lice and Longevity*, 204–223; Ann G. Carmichael, 'Infection, Hidden Hunger and History', in *Hunger in History: The Impact of Changing Food Production and Consumption Patterns on Society*, eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 51–68.

³² Cornelis Banning, 'Food Shortage and Public Health, First Half of 1945', *Annals of the American Academy for Political and Social Sciences* 245 (1946): 94–95. See also: Banning, 'De Gezondheidstoestand in Nederland: De Algemeene Sterfte en Sterfte door Verhongerding', *Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* XXVII (1945): 311–315; Banning, 'Voeding en Voedingstoestand', in *Medische Ervaringen in Nederland tijdens de Bezetting, 1940–1945*, ed. Ite Boerema (Groningen: Wolters, 1947), 235–267; Jan M. Romein, 'The Spirit of the Dutch People during the Occupation', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 245 (1946): 177; George C. E. Burger et al., eds., *Malnutrition and Starvation in Western Netherlands: September 1944–July 1945*, part I (The Hague: General State Printing Office, 1948), 21–22. The most elaborate exposition of community responses to the famine can be found in De Jong, although he only listed some of these efforts anecdotally, thereby refraining from interpretation. Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, 10b (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 231–234.

³³ Kruijer, *Sociale Desorganisatie*, 52–59; Van der Zee, *De Hongerwinter*, 56–57; Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger*, 381; Trienekens, *Voedsel en Honger in Oorlogstijd 1940–1945: Misleiding, Mythe en Werkelijkheid* (Utrecht: Kosmos Z & K, 1995), 104; Barnouw, *De Hongerwinter*, 48–50; Bart van der Boom, *Den Haag in de Tweede*

groups nor the churches – not even the Dutch government-in-exile – was capable of controlling the situation.³⁴ The basic assumption has been that, when the state failed to allocate food at subsistence level, civil society proved incapable of maintaining social cohesion. Following the same line of reasoning, the only significant famine relief reaching the starving Dutch during the crisis was sent by external and state actors – the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and, significantly, the Allies in the final days before liberation.

This common characterisation of the Dutch famine as a period of far-reaching social disintegration seems especially odd when taking into account the general knowledge about social behaviour during famines. Following pioneering studies such as the Minnesota Semi-Starvation Experiment (1944–1945) and the General Adaptation Syndrome study of the human body's reaction to stress (1950s), social scientists have identified generalisable patterns and sequences in the adaptation of famine coping strategies.³⁵ Generally speaking, in the first stages of famine, most people display a hyper-activation and intensified interaction with others in virtually every sphere; in the second stage, increasing energy deficits force a decrease in activity and social ties begin to erode; in the final stage, only personal survival comes first. In other words, a shift occurs from a social orientation to individual needs as food deprivation persists.³⁶ This last stage of famine is what Pitrim Sorokin has famously described as the 'evaporation' of normal rationality and sociability under the stress of hunger.³⁷

Was the Dutch famine truly such an extreme, long-lasting famine, in which solidarity and sense of community 'evaporated'? In this book,

Wereldoorlog (Den Haag: Seapress, 1995), 231; Van der Heijden, *Grijs Verleden*, 320; Klemann, *Nederland 1939–1948*, 561; Futselaar, *Lard, Lice and Longevity*, 77–78.

³⁴ Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948*, 561.

³⁵ Ancel Keys et al., *The Biology of Human Starvation*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: s.n., 1950); Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956).

³⁶ Derrick B. Jelliffe and Eleanor F. Patrice Jelliffe, 'The Effects of Starvation on the Function of the Family and of Society', in *Famine: A Symposium Dealing with Nutrition and Relief Operations in Times of Disaster*, eds. Gunnar Blix, Yngve Hofvander, and Bo Vahlquist (Upsala: The Swedish Nutrition Foundation, 1971), 58; Robert Dirks, 'Social Responses during Severe Food Shortages and Famine', *Current Anthropology* 21 (1980): 21–43; R. Brooke Thomas, Sabrina H. B. H. Paine, and Barrett P. Brento, 'Perspectives on Socio-Economic Causes of and Responses to Food Deprivation', *Food & Nutrition Bulletin* 11 (1989): 41–54.

³⁷ Pitrim A. Sorokin, *Hunger as a Factor in Human Affairs* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1975). See also: Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity: The Effects of War, Revolution, Famine, Pestilence upon Human Mind, Behavior, Social Organization and Cultural Life*, 4th ed. (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1946).

I first investigate the scope and intensity of the famine, which provides the necessary background for examining responses to the crisis. If the Hunger Winter was not an extreme-stage famine, but rather an early-stage one, then societal resilience should logically be considered when examining coping strategies during the famine. All food crises challenge social structures by eroding hospitality, solidarity, and community, but they can also bring out the best in people. Stories about charitable relief efforts and local self-help entities in times of widespread hunger are as numerous as their negative counterparts.³⁸ These communal coping strategies and mutual support networks have indeed been the subject of many studies on pre-modern and modern famines alike, most notably following E. P. Thompson's famously coined concept of the 'moral economy'.³⁹ Recently, the focus in World War II studies has also begun to shift from policies of exploitation to self-organisation and collective coping strategies.⁴⁰ This scholarly consensus about reciprocity and cooperation as acknowledged coping strategies in the early phases of famine accentuates the importance of reintegrating community responses into the history of the Hunger Winter.

Vulnerability and Resilience

The relevance of investigating responses to the famine lies not only in ascertaining the mechanisms of policy-making and human behaviour but also in revealing the efficacy of various actions. It has been demonstrated that, in times of famine, death and survival are always partly biologically determined and partly the result of social processes operating at different levels of society. From state to household levels, human actions

³⁸ Ó Gráda, *Famine*, 47–48.

³⁹ Most importantly: E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76–136; James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976); David Arnold, *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 73–86; Eric Vanhaute and Thijs Lambrecht, 'Famine, Exchange Networks and the Village Community: A Comparative Analysis of the Subsistence Crises of the 1740s and 1840s in Flanders', *Continuity and Change* 26 (2011): 155–186; Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davies, 'Feeding the Cities', in *Capital Cities at War: London, Paris, Berlin 1914–1919*, eds. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 309. On African famines and communal coping, a special issue of *IDS* was dedicated in 1993: Jeremy Swift, 'Understanding and Preventing Famine and Famine Mortality', *IDS Bulletin* 24 (1993): 1–15; Alayne Adams, 'Food Insecurity in Mali: Exploring the Role of the Moral Economy', *IDS Bulletin* 24 (1993): 41–45.

⁴⁰ Tönsmeier et al., eds., *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation*.

ultimately determine how available food resources are divided.⁴¹ In compliance with these observations, this book also relates to the connection between responses to famine and their measurable impact. This enquiry requires an examination of all formal and informal food distribution systems – not just at state and individual levels, but incorporating community efforts operating between these levels as well.

The association between social relations and vulnerability to famine correlates with the ‘entitlements theory’ coined by economist and philosopher Amartya Sen. Until the late 1970s, the dominant view on famine causation was still very much in line with Thomas Malthus’s *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). In this famous essay, Malthus argued that population increase is limited by natural resources and that famine is nature’s intervention mechanism to regulate population growth and balance the demand for food with available supplies.⁴² Sen has challenged this view of famine as an event triggered by food availability decline (FAD). A paradigm shift occurred after the publication of *Poverty and Famines* (1981), in which Sen demonstrated that historical famines were not always triggered by FAD but could also be the result of market failures. His ‘entitlement approach’ showed the inability of certain groups of people to command enough food for subsistence, irrespective of food availability. In his theory, Sen distinguished four legal ways of acquiring food: production, trade, labour, and gifts or transfers. Accordingly, individuals and households face starvation when their specific entitlement set fails to provide them with adequate access to food.⁴³

While Sen’s study has been challenged for his empirical basis as well as for his rejection of the FAD approach,⁴⁴ his reconceptualisation of the nature of famine has been widely acknowledged. The Dutch Hunger Winter has also been considered to accord with the entitlement approach, which has led to the hypothesis that people who only held buying entitlements (i.e., official rations) were most likely to succumb

⁴¹ Joan P. W. Rivers, ‘The Nutritional Biology of Famine’, in *Famine*, ed. Geoffrey A. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 92–93; George Kent, *The Politics of Children’s Survival* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 2–3.

⁴² Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (London: J. Johnson, 1798).

⁴³ Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). See also: Sen, ‘Starvation and Exchange Entitlements: A General Approach and Its Application to the Great Bengal Famine’, *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 1 (1977): 33–59. Another influential study approaching famine as market failures is: Martin Ravallion, *Markets and Famines* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

⁴⁴ Devereux, ‘Famine in the Twentieth Century’, 9, 20; Devereux, ‘Sen’s Entitlement Approach: Critiques and Counter-Critiques’, *Oxford Development Studies* 29 (2001): 245–263; Meghnad Desai, ‘The Economics of Famine’, in *Famine*, 112–114.

first.⁴⁵ Because the entitlement theory includes the legal and moral framework upon which distributive networks rest, the approach is a useful tool. It tells us that vulnerability can be seen as the socio-economic space that is delineated by three domains: market disturbances, coping thresholds, and social security limitations.⁴⁶ However, the essentially economic theory primarily explains how certain groups of people fail to acquire sufficient food supplies. By examining the underlying mechanisms and strategies at various levels of society this study aims to add why this distribution was organised in particular ways as well.

In this book, I assess responses to the famine from the household to the international level. Not only politics, but social relations, culture, and institutions should be taken into account when investigating famine responses. As Ó Gráda has argued: 'Effective and compassionate governance might lead to competitive markets, sanctions against corruption, and well-directed relief. Healthy endowments of social capital might mean less crime, and a greater willingness to help one's neighbour or community.'⁴⁷ In light of these words, one might ask: How did various actors involved in the crisis respond to the food shortage? Who benefited from these efforts and which groups of people were left out? How was the effectiveness of various applied strategies perceived and measured, and how did they adapt in the course of the famine? In order to investigate these challenging and fundamental questions about the impact and effectiveness of famine responses, this book includes the famine's demographic impact, revealing which groups of people were most and least affected physiologically by the conditions. These quantitative observations provide the background against which the qualitative investigation into social and political responses to the famine can be considered.

A New Perspective

While the vast amount of studies on the long-term consequences of the Dutch Hunger Winter continues to add to our understanding of the physiological impact of the famine, much remains unknown about how the crisis unfolded the way it did. Seventy-five years after the end of

⁴⁵ Futselaar, *Lard, Lice and Longevity*, 77–78.

⁴⁶ Michael J. Watts and Hans G. Bohle, 'Hunger, Famine and the Space of Vulnerability', *GeoJournal* 30 (1993): 119.

⁴⁷ Ó Gráda, *Famine*, 13. Fiona Watson's chapter on why no famine struck in besieged areas of Bosnia in the years 1992–1995 is a good example of this approach. Fiona Watson, 'Why are There no Longer "War Famines" in Contemporary Europe? Bosnia Besieged, 1992–1995', in *The New Famines: Why Famines Persist in an Era of Globalization*, ed. Devereux (London: Routledge, 2007), 269–289.

World War II, this question is in urgent need of reconsideration. In this book, I examine the causes and measurable effects of the famine as well as the efforts of households, communities, and state institutions to fight these famine conditions during the final months of the German occupation. In doing so, I propose a shift from a monocausal explanatory framework to one that reveals the multiple dimensions of the famine, thereby enhancing our understanding of German occupation policies during World War II and of modern famines in general.

In exploring this new perspective, this study builds on the vast literature that regards food politics not as a top-down process, but views consumers and civil society as active players in the food system.⁴⁸ Understanding these responses also means understanding the dynamics of the occupational regime, and recognition of the complexities that characterised the relationships among the occupiers, populations, and liberators in wartime and the direct post-war period. The concept of 'legitimacy' provides a valuable means of approaching these complexities of interaction, which is understood as the informal set of values that exists within political cultures and dynamically shapes rulers and ruled alike.⁴⁹ This approach allows for examining how notions of what constituted legitimate government influenced the ways in which political actors, individuals, and communities responded to the famine conditions, and how these responses in their turn shaped political and social environments.

The issues this study aims to address require a wide variety of sources. To reveal decision-making at the international and national level, I have consulted archival documents from the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the National Archives in The Hague, the National Archives in Kew, London, the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland, the United Nations Archives and Records Centre in New York City, and the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde. To reveal community responses, I have consulted local archives located throughout the Netherlands. For the investigation of household and individual coping strategies, ego documents such as

⁴⁸ E.g., Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just, 'Introduction', in *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars*, eds. Trentmann and Just (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2; Liz Young, 'World Hunger: A Framework for Analysis', *Geography* 81 (1996): 97–100; Antoon Vrints, 'Alles is Van Ons: Anonieme Brieven over de Voedselvoorziening in Nederland tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog', *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 126 (2011): 25–51; Bonzon and Davies, 'Feeding the Cities'.

⁴⁹ Martin Conway and Peter Romijn, 'Political Legitimacy in Mid-Twentieth-Century Europe: An Introduction', in *The War for Legitimacy in Politics and Culture, 1936–1946*, eds. Conway and Romijn (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008), 1–27.

diaries, memoirs, and correspondence materials have also made a vital contribution. Materials from private collections, graciously lent to me by people who have experienced the famine first hand, have also been of crucial value, bringing an indispensable personal dimension to this study. Although I have chosen not to use oral history materials systematically for reasons of feasibility and reliability, the conversations I shared with survivors have greatly added to the focus of my study. Finally, thanks to the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, I have also examined demographic data, enabling me to answer crucial questions about the specifics of death and survival during the Hunger Winter.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The specific order reflects current explanatory models that solely focus on the role of the state and the individual, revealing the lacuna in historiography by not including community responses in the analyses. Chapter 1 situates the crisis in its historical context and gives an essential background to the most important events during the German occupation of the Netherlands prior to the famine. Chapter 2 investigates the causes of the famine and development of the crisis. Chapter 3 is devoted to the famine's demographic impact; most notably, mortality, fertility, and the long-term physiological effects. The government policies on the central level by the Dutch food administration and German civil authorities are central to Chapter 4. Chapter 5 takes state intervention to a higher level by exploring the politics and practices of Allied relief. Chapter 6 zooms in on individual and household coping strategies and investigates important famine markers such as crime, black-market trade, food expeditions, and the hunt for fuel. The final two chapters investigate community responses to the crisis. Chapter 7 provides a detailed account of the emergence of local self-help entities, the constitution of the main NGO during the famine, local child-feeding initiatives as well as women's food protests. Chapter 8 investigates the evacuation of Dutch children out of the famine-affected areas, providing a case in point for the positive outcomes of community efforts in the face of disaster.

With these explorations, I hope this book contributes to a new understanding of the Dutch Hunger Winter and provides insight into the strategies and coping mechanisms of a modern society facing catastrophe.