

**The Advent of the Citizen Consumer**  
**Opinion Polls and Electoral Experts on Radio and Television in the**  
**Netherlands (1965-1989)**

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*Figure 1: 'Liesbeth told me this morning: if opinion polls had to keep you up at night, you would never sleep again in your life...'* Cartoon of PvdA leader Joop den Uyl in *Het Vrije Volk* of 8 January 1986.

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## Introduction: Between the Mediatisation and the Scientisation of the Political

### *Introduction*

The past year has been tough on the image of political opinion polling. In June 2016, the citizens of the United Kingdom went to the polls to decide about their country's future in the EU referendum. The eventual Leave-vote did not only leave many Remain campaigners dazzled, it was also a bitter pill to swallow for the British pollsters: only 55 out of 168 opinion polls carried out after the announcement of the referendum predicted this outcome correctly.<sup>1</sup> Less than six months later, the same happened in the United States, when most pollsters were not able to foresee that Republican candidate Donald Trump, and not Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, would be elected President.<sup>2</sup> The events of November 2016 sparked a fierce debate about the role and reliability of polling. Do polls serve a purpose when the electorate is too evasive to measure? Or should the mass media be more careful and critical when it comes to covering polls, by paying more attention to the margin of error or by emphasising that polls are snapshots and not predictions?

These questions were also topic of debate in Dutch news media. Newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* critically reflected on the nature of opinion research in a two-page article, while VARA talk show *De Wereld Draait Door* subjected its 'celebrity' pollster Maurice de Hond to a ferocious interrogation by political commentator Sywert van Lienden.<sup>3</sup> The editors probably had not forgotten about the aftermath of the parliamentary elections of 2012, when numerous observers accused the mass media of influencing the election outcome by boosting a competition between Mark Rutte (leader of the right-wing Liberal party VVD) and Diederik Samsom (leader of the Social Democratic party PvdA). It was later also argued by media scholars that polls had played an indispensable role in this competition narrative. They pointed out the fact that recurring surveys, which showed the margin between the party leaders was too close to call, had encouraged voters to vote for one party to prevent the leader of the other party ending up being Prime Minister.<sup>4</sup> In the run-up to the 2017 elections several media outlets changed their policies on reporting on polls and allegedly developed a more critical attitude towards opinion polls. Several news channels, such as state broadcaster NOS and *NRC Handelsblad*, announced that they would limit the use of polls in their coverage of the elections campaign. This way, the news media sought to avoid not

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<sup>1</sup> Pamela Duncan, 'How the pollsters got it wrong on the EU referendum', *The Guardian* (24 June 2016), <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/24/how-eu-referendum-pollsters-wrong-opinion-predict-close>> (consulted on 26 September 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Jim Rutenberg, 'A "Dewey Defeats Truman" Lesson for the Digital Age', *The New York Times* (9 November 2016), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/business/media/media-trump-clinton.html?mcubz=0>> (consulted on 26 September 2017).

<sup>3</sup> 'Peilingen, dat zijn dus geen voorspellingen', *NRC Handelsblad* (28 November 2016); *De Wereld Draait Door*, VARA-television, 28 November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Philip van Praag, 'Het televisienieuws: in de ban van debatten en peilingen', in: Philip van Praag and Kees Brants (eds), *Media, macht en politiek: de verkiezingscampagne van 2012* (Diemen, 2014), 85-105.

only that they would invest in a potential wrong prognosis of the elections (as their British and US news media had done) but also that polls would again affect the outcome of the elections. Yet, as the satirical VPRO television show *Zondag met Lubach* wittily demonstrated, polls eventually were ever-present in the coverage of 2017 election campaign.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the omnipresence of polls and the controversy that often surrounds them, little attention has been paid by historians to the emergence of electoral research as a key facet of Dutch political journalism. Instead, polls in the media are often taken for granted as an aspect of modern political culture or presented as a side-effect of other historical developments. In this thesis, however, I put the mediatisation of electoral research – that is, the development in which electoral research became a mass media phenomenon – centre stage and problematise its emergence in radio and television broadcasts and establishment within the public sphere. The focus is on its influence on Dutch political culture and ideas of democratic representation. As such, this thesis ties in with three existing strands of research: the study of the culture of elections, the mediatisation of the political, and the scientisation of the political. After discussing these three aspects, this introduction further clarifies the research question, methodology, sources, and outline of this thesis. A list of all the used abbreviations of political parties, broadcasters, and other organisations can be found on the last page of this thesis.

### *The Bielefelder approach and the culture of elections*

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, political historians have increasingly concerned themselves with the so-called ‘New Political History’, which has incorporated the challenges posed by both the cultural and the linguistic turn.<sup>6</sup> The study of political history moved beyond the traditional sites, figures, and themes of political power, as it was recognised that power was also exercised latently in the everyday life of people.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the study of political culture, as established by scholars such as Keith Baker, Lynn Hunt, and Robert Darnton, further emphasised that the soft side of politics (that is, the rituals, language, symbols, and traditions) are as essential to understand the workings of politics as traditional governmental history.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Zondag met Lubach*, VPRO-television, 5 March 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Remieg Aerts, ‘De uilen van Lyotard: over postmodernisme en politieke geschiedenis’, *Ex Tempore* 25 (1999), 203-225; Susan Pedersen, ‘What is Political History Now?’, in: David Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke, 2002), 36-56.

<sup>7</sup> In this, historians are mainly inspired by Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault and their concepts of the exercise of power: Simon Gunn, ‘From Hegemony to Governmentality: Changing Conceptions of Power in Social History’, *Journal of British History* 39:3 (2009), 705-720.

<sup>8</sup> Glen Gendzel, ‘Political Culture: the Genealogy of a Concept’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28:2 (1997), 225-250; Thomas Mergel, ‘Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), 574-606; Keith Baker et al. (eds), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, 4 vol. (Oxford, 1986-1994); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984); Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (Harmondsworth, 1985).

However, more recently, the call for innovation has emerged once again, as historians from the University of Bielefeld have recognised that many of these new political historians still ‘seemed to work with a rather intuitive understanding of what “politics” is and where its ultimate reference point lies’.<sup>9</sup> Instead, the Bielefeld historians have argued for the problematisation ‘of the ever changing definitions, demarcations, modalities, and enactments of “politics” and “the political” themselves’: they believe ‘the political’ is not a fixed and everlasting category, but instead is an autonomous and communicative space that is constantly negotiated.<sup>10</sup> In this view, they are inspired by political philosopher Pierre Rosanvallon, who has argued that ‘the political’ can be conceived of as the order of rules and institutions that determines the space in which a society can move and develop.<sup>11</sup> As such, scholars of the ‘Bielefelder approach’ are not interested in the outcome of political processes, but in the functioning of ‘the political’ itself, that is: the ongoing debate on what politics is and what it should and should not encompass. Within such understandings, the political is not a given or fixed arena, but rather an ‘essentially contested concept’, for what is grasped as ‘politics’ or ‘political’ depends on temporal, spatial, and socio-cultural contexts and is therefore constantly communicated through various communicative practises.<sup>12</sup> It must be noted that, within these practices, political language is not descriptive of socio-political reality, but – at least partly – constitutive to it: as such, ‘the political’ can only exist within these communicative practises and is therefore a communicative space in itself.

One of the recurring historical moments in which these communicative practises are displayed is the election campaign. Historians have recently started to study the culture of elections and electioneering from the perspective of conceptual history. Traditionally, elections and election campaigns are analysed in close relation to their results and are therefore grasped in terms of a zero-sum-game: in the struggle for votes, there are those who are successful and there are those who are not.<sup>13</sup> However, for scholars of New Political History, the question of efficiency is not that relevant, for they are primarily concerned with the *culture* of elections. Elections, historian Thomas Mergel argues, are not just the foreplay of the actual outcome in which political programs are presented, but communicative phases in which the self-image of the political system, the political actors, and societal conflicts that are considered relevant are symbolically performed to the audience.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, historian Jon Lawrence

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<sup>9</sup> Willibald Steinmetz and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, ‘The Political as Communicative Space in History: The Bielefeld Approach’, in: Willibald Steinmetz, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds), *Writing Political History Today* (Frankfurt-New York, 2013), 11-33, there: 20-21.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, ‘Towards a Philosophical History of the Political’, in: Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk (eds), *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Walter Bryce Gallie, ‘Essentially Contested Concepts’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56 (1956), 167–198.

<sup>13</sup> Historian Thomas Mergel has refuted this traditional approach in, amongst others: ‘Americanization, European Styles or National Codes? The Culture of Election Campaigning in Western Europe, 1945-1990’, *East Central Europe* 36 (2009), 254-280, there: 255.

<sup>14</sup> Mergel, ‘Americanization’, 256; Thomas Mergel, *Propaganda nach Hitler: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Wahlkampfes in der Bundesrepublik 1949-1990* (Göttingen, 2010), 14.

acknowledges the significance of studying electoral culture: ‘elections are one of the few moments when politicians and public are brought into direct, face-to-face contact with each-other’.<sup>15</sup> Analysing the various forms of interaction during elections (that is: the images, discourses, and bodies that signify the period in which politicians appeal to the people’s vote) offers historians insight in what was and was not attributed to political communication, or – in other words – what was deemed to be political and how political representation was believed to function. For instance, research has shown how increasing dominance of popular culture and growing ideologisation of politics pushed Dutch politicians to start displaying elements of their private lives as a means to forge relationships with the electorate. In turn, this led to a more emotional electoral culture.<sup>16</sup>

Ever since the late 1980s, communication scientist Kees Brants and political scientist Philip van Praag have edited volumes on individual Dutch election campaigns, in which they pay valuable attention on changing forms of political communication.<sup>17</sup> In the last fifteen years, historians Ron de Jong and Harm Kaal have put the historical study of electoral culture and electioneering on the Dutch research agenda. In respective studies they have explored the culture of electioneering in the province of Gelderland, the political language in Social Democratic election propaganda, the approach of female voters, the politics of place, and the emergence of the election debate on Dutch television.<sup>18</sup> This thesis contributes to this branch of research and analyses how opinion polling became an integral part of Dutch electoral culture in the between the mid-1960s and the end of the 1980s, and how this new communicative practice affected political actors’ understandings of political representation in the Netherlands.

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<sup>15</sup> Jon Lawrence, *Electing our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford, 2009), 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Remieg Aerts, ‘Emotie in de politiek: over politieke stijlen in Nederland sinds 1848’, in: Carla van Baalen et al. (eds), *Emotie in de politiek: Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis 2003* (Den Haag, 2003), 12-25; Harm Kaal, ‘Van zelfbeheersing naar zelfexpressie: politiek en populaire cultuur in de jaren vijftig’, *Ex Tempore* 35:1 (2016), 12-25.

<sup>17</sup> Kees Brants, Walther Kok, and Philip van Praag Jr., *De strijd om de kiezersgunst: verkiezingscampagnes in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1982); Cees van der Eijk and Philip van Praag (eds), *De strijd om de meerderheid: de verkiezingen van 1986* (Amsterdam, 1987); Kees Brants and Philip van Praag (eds), *Verkoop van de politiek: de verkiezingscampagne van 1994* (Amsterdam, 1995); Kees Brants and Philip van Praag (eds), *Tussen beeld en inhoud: politiek en media in de verkiezingen van 1998* (Amsterdam, 2000); Kees Brants and Philip van Praag (eds), *Politiek en media in verarring: de verkiezingscampagnes van het lange jaar 2002* (Amsterdam, 2005); Brants and Van Praag, *Media, macht en politiek*.

<sup>18</sup> Ron de Jong, *Electoral culture en politieke oriëntatie: verkiezingen in Gelderland 1888-1940* (Hilversum, 2005); Harm Kaal, ‘Constructing a Socialist Constituency: The Social Democratic Language of Politics in the Netherlands, c. 1890–1950’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 53 (2013), 175-202; Harm Kaal, ‘De cultuur van het televisiedebat: veranderende percepties van de relatie tussen media en politiek’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 127:2 (2014), 293-316; Harm Kaal, ‘Appealing to the Female Vote: Dutch Political Parties and the Approach of Women Voters in General Election Campaigns, c.1922–1980’, *Women’s History Review* 24:5 (2015), 776-808; Harm Kaal, ‘Politics of Place: Political Representation and the Culture of Electioneering in the Netherlands, c.1848–1980s’, *European Review of History* 23:3 (2016), 486-507; Kaal, ‘Van zelfbeheersing naar zelfexpressie’.

### *The mediatisation of the political*

Mergel has demonstrated and emphasised that the mass media, especially in the last fifty years, occupy an important place within European electoral culture, not just as intermediaries, but also as designers and judges of political communication.<sup>19</sup> This thesis also ties in with research on the history of the political-media complex, which encompasses the relation between political institutions and the mass media and how this relation has changed. Media scholars often refer to this history in terms of ‘the mediatisation of politics’.<sup>20</sup> The traditional narrative dictates that three phases (or: logics) have shaped the political-media complex: partisan logic (in which media outlets were ideologically bound to political organisations), the public logic (in which political journalists served public interest), and media logic (in which the mass media identify with the public’s need for entertainment and sensation).<sup>21</sup>

The narrative of mediatisation perfectly ties in with the dominant Dutch narrative of pillarisation, which dictates that from the late 19<sup>th</sup> till the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch society was vertically divided in four distinct and closely-knit networks of social, political, religious, and economic organisations of respectively Socialist, Catholic, Protestant, and Liberal or neutral signature.<sup>22</sup> Hence, the history of Dutch political journalism and the changes in the Dutch political-media complex are often explained in terms of depillarisation and mediatisation.<sup>23</sup> Until the 1960s, Dutch newspapers and public broadcasters were facets in the societal fabric of pillarisation and most – though not all – media outlets were ideologically and sometimes even organisationally bound to a political party. Political journalism and political communication were closely controlled by the political organisations of each pillar. When, from the second half of the 1960s onwards, depillarisation and deconfessionalisation were set in motion, the mass media had to relate to this new societal reality by means of emancipating from their traditional role. Journalists started to identify with the public good and began to critically and independently follow their former patrons, an attitude that historian Huub Wijffjes has called a ‘culture of critical confrontation’ (*kritische confrontatiecultuur*).<sup>24</sup> When commercial television entered the media landscape in 1989 and competition between the various media

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<sup>19</sup> Mergel, *Propaganda*, 14, 157-205.

<sup>20</sup> Kees Brants and Karin Voltmer, ‘Introduction: Mediatization and De-centralization of Political Communication’, in: Kees Brants and Karin Voltmer (eds), *Political Communication in Post-Modern Democracy: Challenges to the Primacy of Politics* (Basingstoke-New York, 2011), 1-19, there: 4; Jesper Strömbäck, ‘Four Phases of Mediatisation: An Analysis of the Mediatisation of Politics’, *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13:3 (2008), 228-246.

<sup>21</sup> Brants and Voltmer, ‘Introduction’, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley, 1968); Peter van Dam, *Staat van verzuiling: over een Nederlandse mythe* (Amsterdam, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> RMO, *Medialogica. Over het krachtenveld tussen burger, media en politiek* (Den Haag, 2003); Kees Brants and Philip van Praag, ‘Signs of Media Logic: Half a Century of Political Communication in the Netherlands’, *Javnost – The Public* 13:1 (2006), 25-50; Kees Brants, ‘Van medialogica naar publiekslogica? Verschuivende verhoudingen tussen journalistiek, politiek en publiek’, in: Jo Bardoel and Huub Wijffjes (eds), *Journalistieke Cultuur in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 2015), 234-253.

<sup>24</sup> Huub Wijffjes, *Journalistiek in Nederland, 1850-2000 : beroep, cultuur en organisatie* (Amsterdam, 2004), 335 ff.

outlets increased, the mass media more and more started to write and broadcast what they thought the public would want to read, hear, or see. Dutch political parties, who were also confronted with a decline in popular support, had to relate themselves and their communication to the mass media regime of excitement and entertainment to get their political message across.<sup>25</sup>

Both in academic and popular observations, consolidation of media logic and the mediatisation of politics is often referred to in terms of colonisation and degradation: the omnipresence of mass media in the public sphere and its strong preference of form over content and personality over message would have irreversibly and negatively changed political communication and the way political reality is perceived.<sup>26</sup> According to the well-known philosopher Bernard Manin mediatisation has even influenced our conception of political representation. In his 1996 monograph *The Principles of Representative Government*, he had argued that we would currently live in an ‘audience democracy’, in which the mass media have replaced political parties as the main bearers of public opinion and representatives that claimed to speak *for* the people are replaced by representatives that can only speak *to* the people through the channels of the same mass media, hoping to claim a substantial part of the volatile voters market.<sup>27</sup>

In recent years, this historical narrative and the discourse of decline that often accompanies it has been subjected to academic criticism. Brants and Van Praag have formulated several fallacies regarding what they deem the conceptual fuzziness of both mediatisation and media logic, of which some are relevant for the historical study of the political-media complex. Firstly, they criticise how within most scholarly work various types of media – written, audio-visual, and more recently digital – are all lumped together. This does not justify the dynamic and highly fragmented market that the mass media are in reality. Secondly, they have problems with the way these concepts assume a linear and inevitable history of the political-media complex, leaving little room for counterevidence.<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, both scholars argue that mediatisation and media logic are not just explanatory but also normative categories, since they are based on the implicit conception that representative democracy requires well-informed citizens that rationally make their electoral decisions. Lastly, Brants and Van Praag recognise that studies focusing on mediatisation largely presuppose a passive role for a third important political actor: the public.<sup>29</sup>

From a more historical perspective, Wijfjes has argued that an overt focus on media logic ignores the way more complex relation between the mass media and political actors, which cannot be

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<sup>25</sup> Brants, ‘Van medialogica naar publiekslogica?’, 238-241.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Elchardus, *De dramademocratie* (Tielt, 2002); Thomas Meyer, *Mediokratie: Die Kolonisierung der Politik durch das Mediensystem* (Frankfurt am Main, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge, 1997), 218-235.

<sup>28</sup> This argument aligns with empirical research of scholars of political communication that has shown that personalisation of political news is not a recent phenomenon and that, at least in Dutch media, the media logic has even decreased: Rosa van Santen, *Popularization and Personalization: A Historical and Cultural Analysis of 50 Years of Dutch Political Television Journalism* (Amsterdam, 2012); Jan Kleinnijenhuis et al., ‘Gevaren van medialogica voor de democratie?’, in: Remieg Aerts and Peter de Goede (eds), *Omstreden democratie: over de problemen van een succesverhaal* (Amsterdam, 2013), 111-130.

<sup>29</sup> Kees Brants and Philip van Praag, ‘Beyond Media Logic’, *Journalism Studies* 18:4 (2017), 395-408.

reduced to such an easily understood frame of colonisation and take-over. While he admits that the control the mass media exercise over the public sphere has increased over the last couple of decades, he emphasises that the historical study of the political-media complex should focus on more dynamic processes of interplay between the various actors within the public sphere.<sup>30</sup> Wijfjes has also criticised the ways in which politics and the media are often perceived as separate entities. Instead, he emphasises that both are part of the communicative space that is the public sphere and that historical transformation of the political-media complex should not be understood through media pressure, but as a more general transformation of political culture.<sup>31</sup> Unlike Brants and Van Praag, however, Wijfjes does not want to discard the notion of mediatisation as an analytic frame, for he believes that this concept – as opposed to ‘media logic’, which he sees as a static concept – allows for an inclusive and multidimensional study of how the presence of the mass media has influenced political culture.<sup>32</sup>

Building primarily on Wijfjes’ understanding, I use the concept of the ‘mediatisation of the political’ not in the negative sense, but as an analytical frame to study how the Dutch mass media as actors have contributed to the communicative structuring of the political in the timeframe investigated. By means of focusing on the emergence and use of one specific facet of political journalism – survey research –, this research does not presume the unavoidable succession of partisan, then public, and then media logic, but will instead probe deeper into the multiform relation between politics and media.

### *The scientisation of the political*

The emergence of opinion polls in the mass media is only one example of how types of (social) scientific knowledge have expanded into various fields of the societal fabric. In order to draw academic attention to this phenomenon, historian Lutz Raphael introduced the concept of ‘the scientisation of the social’ in 1996. This concept encompasses the transformation of social scientific knowledge into various layers of society and studies the direct and indirect consequences that the ‘continuing presence of experts from the human sciences, their arguments, and the results of their research had in administrative bodies and in industrial firms, in parties and parliaments’.<sup>33</sup> Raphael has argued that the embedding of social sciences in scientific institutions, social policies, and opinion polling has to be regarded as vital to grasp how Western societies have functioned since the late nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Huub Wijfjes, ‘Vorm of vent? Mediatisering in de politieke geschiedenis’, in: Gerrit Voerman and Dirk Jan Wolframm (eds), *Kossmann Instituut: benaderingen van de geschiedenis van politiek* (Groningen, 2006), 32-38.

<sup>31</sup> Huub Wijfjes, ‘Introduction: Mediatization of Politics in History’, in: Huub Wijfjes and Gerrit Voerman (eds), *Mediatization of Politics in History* (Leuven-Paris-Walpole, 2009), ix-xxii, there: ix-x.

<sup>32</sup> Wijfjes, ‘Vorm of vent?’.

<sup>33</sup> Lutz Raphael, ‘Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 22 (1996), 165-93, there: 166.

<sup>34</sup> See also: Benjamin Ziemann et al., ‘Introduction: The Scienitization of the Social in Comperative Perspective’, in: Kerstin Brückweh et al. (eds), *Engineering Society: The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke, 2012), 1-40, there: 2.

Additionally, historian Sarah Igo demonstrates that the dissemination of opinion research can drastically affect the ways in which a society comes to describe itself. By studying how large-scale survey inquiries were executed in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Igo has shown how Americans have developed a statistical way of understanding their society as a mass public in which they can fit themselves.<sup>35</sup> However, Raphael and other scholars of scientisation emphasise that the spread of social scientific methods and expertise from one societal subsystem to another often met with resistance and that scientisation therefore should be studied through the processes of cautious negotiations.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of scientisation also bears the potential to study how the political sphere and understandings of political representation have been influenced by the social sciences. Social science based knowledge has profoundly affected the ways in which political parties have approached voters. One of the first historians who has demonstrated this is historian Anja Kruke. In her study of the rise and establishment of electoral research in West Germany she shows how both CDU and SPD have appropriated electoral research in the development of political strategies, concepts, and forms of communication since the late 1940s.<sup>37</sup> In his work on the West German electoral culture, Mergel similarly emphasises the increasing role of opinion research in the organisation and professionalisation of German election campaigns.<sup>38</sup> For other countries, the study of the scientisation of the political has recently taken off as well. Historians Laura Beers, and Jon Cowans and Loïc Blondiaux have shown, respectively, for Great Britain and France how political elites and parties were reluctant to use opinion research at first, but were increasingly drawn to the use of electoral research from the 1960s onwards.<sup>39</sup> For the Netherlands, Kaal and his colleague Wim de Jong demonstrate the great influence of party think tanks and the scientific data these think tanks produced on the political strategies of political parties in the decades after the Second World War.<sup>40</sup>

Scholars of different backgrounds have also emphasised that opinion polling has played an important role in developments of the political-media complex, especially since the 1970s. Bernard Manin, for instance, has argued that the dissemination of non-partisan opinion surveys has been one of

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<sup>35</sup> Sarah E. Igo, *The Avarage American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, MA-London, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Scholars of scientisation have recently linked Raphael's concept to the work of sociologist Niklas Luhmann, and especially his works on 'functional differentiation', which has shown how subsystems within society function on the basis of their own communicative codes and has helped to further conceptualise scientisation as a process of translation and adaptation instead: Ziemann, 'Introduction', 7-8.

<sup>37</sup> Anja Kruke, *Demoskopie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Meinungsforschung, Parteien und Medien* (Düsseldorf, 2007), 61-318; see also: Anja Kruke and Benjamin Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign: Opinion Polls and the Restructuring of the Body Politic in West Germany, 1945-1990', in: Brückweh, *Engineering Society*, 234-251, there: 235-242.

<sup>38</sup> Mergel, *Propaganda*, 87-119.

<sup>39</sup> Laura Beers, 'Whose Opinion?: Changing Attitudes towards Opinion Polling in British Politics, 1937-1964', *Twentieth Century British History*, 17:2 (2006), 177-205; Jon Cowans, 'Fear and Loathing in Paris: The Reception of Opinion Polling in France, 1938-1977', *Social Science History* 26.1 (2002), 71-104; Loïc Blondiaux, *La fabrique de l'opinion. Une histoire sociale des sondages* (Paris, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Wim de Jong and Harm Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos: The Scientisation of the Political, Electoral Research and Political Parties, c. 1900-1980', *Contemporary European History* 26:1 (2017), 111-138.

the important components of modern societies' transformation towards audience democracies, as they would contribute to the de-coupling of electoral and non-electoral expressions of public opinion and thus delegitimise the position of political parties as bearers of the people's will.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, communication and media scholars quite often argue that opinion polling has rather negatively influenced the level of political journalism: an overt focus on the results of opinion polls would facilitate a superficial interpretation of election campaigns in terms of a competition between political parties or political candidates? In this respect, political scientist C. Anthony Broh coined the metaphor 'horse race journalism' to comprehend the news coverage of the 1976 United States Presidential elections. He complained that this kind of political journalism trivialised 'one of America's greatest democratic phenomena' and marginalised important issues of public policy.<sup>42</sup> According to Broh, the use of electoral research in political journalism would have flattened the coverage of electoral news, since the content of candidates' policy proposals was no longer the main focus of reporting, but rather their personality, staff relations, and electoral strategy. Likewise, Dutch scholars and political observers have argued that opinion polls have become a key element of the 'media logic' that dominates the Dutch playing field of politics and political journalism. They mostly focus on the question to what extent opinion polls and horse race journalism obscure news about public policies, affect the information supply towards citizens, and endanger a smooth functioning of democracy.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, such normative observations take the presence of opinion research in political journalism for granted and move beyond the question of why and how a mediated polling discourse came into being in the first place. Except for Kruke, who has shown that the appropriation of opinion polling since the 1970s was an important means for the mass media to reclaim a place in the public sphere, few historians have paid attention to this question.<sup>44</sup> This thesis recognises that the mediatisation of electoral research is an important phase in the scientisation of the political and studies how the appropriation of opinion research not only by political elites but also by journalists and media makers has informed new ideas of political representation and democratic legitimacy.

### *Research question, methodology, and sources*

Joining the previously discussed research strands, this thesis is structured around the following research question: How has the appropriation of electoral research by Dutch radio and television formats

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<sup>41</sup> Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*, 230.

<sup>42</sup> C. Anthony Broh, 'Horse-Race Journalism: Reporting the Polls in the 1976 Presidential Election', *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 44:4 (1980), 514-529, there: 515.

<sup>43</sup> Philip van Praag and Kees Brants, 'Gefascineerd door de horse race', in: Van Praag and Brants, *Politiek en media in verwarring*, 66-91; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 'Gevaren van medialogica voor de democratie?'; Kasper Heijting and Roy de Haan, 'De gestage teloorgang van de politieke inhoud: campagnes in vijf dagbladen', in: Brants and Van Praag (eds), *Politiek en media in verwarring*, 44-56; 'Kletsen uit de nek. Verkiezingen 2012: de media en de verkiezingen', *De Groene Amsterdammer* (13 September 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Kruke, *Demoskopie*, 437-506; see also: Anja Kruke, 'Der Kampf um die politische Deutungshoheit: Meinungsforschung als Instrument von Parteien und Medien in den Siebzigerjahren', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 44 (2004), 293-326, there: 322, and: Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 242-245.

influenced Dutch political culture and notions of political representation between circa 1965 and 1989? The starting point was chosen because the run up to the parliamentary elections of second half of the 1960s marks the first time that various broadcasters extensively disclosed (commissioned) electoral research. The timeframe that is investigated ends in 1989 because commercial television entered the media landscape in this year, which changed its internal dynamics and therefore marks the beginning of a whole new chapter in Dutch media history.

Two other decisions I have made in establishing my research question need to be further specified. Firstly, I have chosen to study the broader concept of ‘electoral research’ (which comprises all research that is aimed at accumulating data on the electorate), instead of just opinion polls. Even though opinion (or survey) research was the most predominant type of electoral research that was appropriated by the mass media, focusing on all types of electoral researchers and electoral experts allows me to be more flexible. For example, some of the electoral experts I discuss in this thesis did not base their expertise knowledge on survey research. Secondly, I have made the decision to solely focus on radio and television. While not ignoring newspapers’ and opinion magazines’ appropriation of electoral research, it must be acknowledged that especially the audio-visual media were the trendsetters in regards to new and innovative forms of exercising journalism in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. As historian Jan Bank demonstrates, especially television, which was introduced in the Netherlands in 1953, was the booster of innovation in regards to form and content and had a key influence on Dutch political culture.<sup>45</sup>

How does this thesis answer its main research question? In a recent article, Raphael argues that the study of the scientisation of the social requires the analysis of the five main roads that ‘social science knowledge took in its way from academic scholarship into society’.<sup>46</sup> These five perspectives will function as the basis of my methodological approach. Firstly, I study and scrutinise how scientific discourses, concepts, and metaphors have led to the introduction of new descriptions of voters and understandings of political representation in the political sphere. Secondly, I am concerned with the role of experts in the transfer of social-scientific knowledge into the political sphere. Thirdly, I analyse the interplay between the creators of social-scientific knowledge (polling agencies and electoral researchers) and their clients (broadcasters). Fourthly, I focus on the techniques that are used to acquire knowledge about the electorate, most prominently opinion polling. Lastly, I pay attention to the role of various institutions (such as polling agencies, political parties’ think tanks, and university departments) that have produced and processed knowledge on electoral behaviour.

Besides a broad selection of secondary literature, four main types of sources are studied in order to answer the research question. First of all, I analyse scientific reports and scholarly articles in which

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<sup>45</sup> Jan Bank, ‘Televisie in de jaren zestig’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 101:1 (1986), 52-75, there: 75.

<sup>46</sup> Lutz Raphael, ‘Embedding the Human and Social Sciences in Western Societies, 1880-1980: Reflections on Trends and Methods of Current Research’, in: Brückweh, *Engineering Society*, 41-56, there: 43-48.

the results of electoral research are discussed. Many of these reports are printed and published, while some of them can be found in the archives of broadcasters or political parties. Scholarly articles are often published in scholarly journals like *Sociologische Gids* and *Acta Politica*, and sometimes in the scientific journals of political parties or opinion magazines. The exploration of the surveys discussed in these reports and articles is not built on the premise that they objectively measure and express the will of the people, on the contrary: it assumes that polls are discursive forms that shape public opinion. The concepts that are used and questions that are raised in surveys and the analysis of the results provide relevant information concerning the way in which electoral researchers perceived socio-political reality.<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, the minutes of meetings of the NTS and NOS are consulted. The NTS, founded in 1951 by four Dutch broadcast companies (the socialist VARA, the Catholic KRO, the Protestant NCRV, and the liberal AVRO), was to regulate and oversee the content that was made for Dutch television by the various broadcasters (as well as producing ‘neutral’ television formats, such as news show *NTS Journaal*). When the NTS merged into the NOS in 1969, it also became responsible for supervising the content of Dutch radio programmes. The minutes of the discussions of various working groups (in which comparable radio and television shows of different broadcasters were coordinated) as well as the programme councils for radio and television (in which the content of joint television and radio formats, like election night broadcasts, was discussed and coordinated) of the NTS and NOS offer insight into the various motivations, intentions, and considerations behind the development and deployment of polls in radio and television formats.

Thirdly, I make use of the audio-visual material that is stored by the *Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid* (The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision). The institute collects, looks after, and provides access to over 70% of the Dutch audio-visual heritage and will allow me to study numerous radio and television broadcasts in which electoral research was deployed.<sup>48</sup> These radio and television shows were not neutral transmitters of information about electoral behaviour, but signified the data by means of embedding them in a narrative structure: the data was interpreted and often visualised. As such, as historian Stephen Vella argues, journalists deployed a certain framework for understanding societal developments and thus influenced it.<sup>49</sup> Analysing the ways in which the scientific data of electoral research are embedded in the broader narrative structure of the media polling formats shows how opinion polls contributed to the construction and dissemination of specific conceptions of political reality.

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<sup>47</sup> Anja Kruke, ‘Opinion Polls’, in: Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History* (London/New York, 2009), 106-122, there: 110; Lisbeth Lipari, ‘Towards a Discourse Approach to Polling’, *Discourse Studies* 2 (2000), 185-215, there: 192-198; Chris Dols, *Fact Factory: Sociological Expertise and Episcopal Decision Making in the Netherlands 1946-1972* (Nijmegen, 2015), 23.

<sup>48</sup> Sonja de Leeuw, ‘Het archief als netwerk: perspectieven op de studie van online televisie-erfgoed’, *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 14.2 (2012), 10-28, there: 12-13.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen Vella, ‘Newspapers’, in: Dobson and Ziemann, *Reading Primary Sources*, 192-208, there: 192-193.

Finally, I study the written press as an important source of information on the reception of these broadcasts. As Vella argues, newspapers (and opinion magazines) do not only ‘reveal those events of which contemporary readers were made aware’, but also ‘document the ways in which reporters and editors thought about their own society and the world around them’. Hence, the written media show how contemporaries thought about current events.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, journalists often reacted to the polls that were broadcasted on radio and television. However, as Kruke indicates, their relation vis-à-vis electoral research was somewhat contradictory: on the one hand, newspapers frequently made news out of the broadcasted opinion polls, hence increasing their news value, but on the other hand, these polls were also critically discussed by political observers or journalists in the features pages.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, newspapers and opinion magazines were the main forums on which not only polling results, but also the practise of opinion polling in general were discussed by (critical) observers.

### *Research outline*

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the pre-history and context of the scientisation of the political and, as such, sets the scene for the rest of the thesis. It deals with the transatlantic origins of opinion research – which would revolutionise Dutch electoral research after the Second World War – and discusses how opinion research was appropriated by political elites in the design of political and electoral strategies in Western Europe in general and in the Netherlands in particular. It also discusses how newspapers and opinion magazines started experimenting with publishing opinion polls since the mid-1940s.

Afterwards, the focus will shift to the broadcasters. The second chapter investigates the ways in which electoral research was deployed in Dutch television and radio formats from 1965 till 1989. It analyses which types of electoral research (such as, opinion polls of commercial polling agencies, exit polls by individual researchers, and large-scale survey projects by universities) were adopted by broadcasters, how the data of this research was interpreted in media formats, how the results of opinion research were visualised, and how these surveys were received by various audiences. It studies how and in which ways these manifestations influenced notions of democratic legitimacy and political representation.

The third chapter zooms in on one aspect of the broader history that is touched upon in the second chapter: the relation between disclosure of electoral research and new ideas about democracy and political representation in the period 1966-1976. This chapter provides an analysis of how progressive ideals of the left-wing political movement Nieuw Links (founded in 1966) were embodied in various initiatives that aimed at broadcasting opinion research on radio and television. This chapter analyses how the movement’s political ideas cohered with the activities that some of its main members

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<sup>50</sup> Vella, ‘Newspapers’, 192.

<sup>51</sup> Kruke, ‘Opinion Polls’, 109.

deployed in the mass media, such as the exit poll that was broadcasted on television for the first time on election night 1967 (which was invented by Marcel van Dam) or the monthly NIPO political polls in radio show *In de Rooie Haan* (which was an initiative of Jan Nagel).

In the fourth and last chapter, another aspect of the mediatisation of electoral research will be singled out, as close attention will be paid to the phenomenon of the electoral expert on radio and television. It will analyse how one of the Netherlands' foremost 'polling celebrities' Maurice de Hond was able to establish an expert status through his performances on radio and television and what his function was in the public sphere. Finally, the conclusion brings together the results of the four chapters, provides an answer to the research question, and proposes three strands of further research.

# 1. The Scientisation of the Political in International Perspective

## *Introduction*

While electoral and opinion research was appropriated by public broadcasters in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s, it had already become an integral part of the Dutch public sphere. Political parties had utilised opinion polls as a means of gathering knowledge on the electorate with the results occasionally making the news in the written press. In order to understand that the public broadcasters' discovery of electoral research (as investigated in the next chapters) did not come out of nowhere, this short first chapter offers a proper understanding of the context and pre-history of the Dutch scientisation of the political and shows where opinion polling came from and it was received amongst political elites and journalists between the 1950s and the 1970s. This short first chapter therefore concentrates on developments that were already set in motion long before the 1960s as a means of a historical introduction to the actual theme of this thesis. It does so by taking an international perspective, since, firstly, the introduction of opinion polling in Western Europe can only be understood through its development and use in United States, and, secondly, it elucidates some of the unique features of the Dutch reception of opinion research. This chapter first focuses on the arrival of the modern opinion poll in the 1930s, after which its reception in Great Britain, France, West Germany, and – a bit more extensively – the Netherlands is analysed briefly. Finally, it describes the early appropriation of opinion research by the Dutch written press.

## *The arrival of the sample survey*

Methods to gather information on the population have existed for centuries.<sup>52</sup> According to sociologist Peter Wagner, the idea of developing social knowledge can be traced back to the Revolutionary era, which he describes as the first large-scale application of social and political theory for the purpose of social betterment.<sup>53</sup> However, as historian Susan Herbst argues, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the 'vital period' in which these methodologies professionalised and the practice of polling manifested itself in politics and industry.<sup>54</sup> Especially the technique of statistical sampling distinguished the modern opinion poll from older forms of social research. A series of mathematical developments now allowed researchers to generalise about extremely large groups by collecting data from relatively few participants. Sampling was based on the notion that opinions are distributed normally throughout society and that a properly constructed random sample of citizens can yield accurate information about the

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<sup>52</sup> L. John Martin, 'The Genealogy of Public Opinion Polling', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 472 (1984), 12-23, there: 15.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Wagner, 'The Uses of the Social Sciences', in: Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (eds), *The Cambridge History of Science: Volume 7, The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge, 2003), 537-552, there: 537.

<sup>54</sup> Susan Herbst, 'Polling in Politics and Industry', in: Porter and Ross, *The Modern Social Sciences*, 577-590, there: 577.

distribution of opinion throughout the population as a whole.<sup>55</sup> This new technique proved to be revolutionary, because it rendered the expensive and time-consuming counting of every individual redundant.<sup>56</sup>

It was the American statistician George Gallup who paved the way for the application of this new technique to gauge political opinion. In 1936, he correctly predicted Franklin D. Roosevelt's victory on the basis of statistical sampling, while the *Literary Digest*, which made use of the more traditional straw poll, foresaw a victory for Alfred Landon and thus got it completely wrong. Due to all the positive attention, the 1936 Presidential elections marked a milestone for the modern opinion poll and by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gallup style public opinion polling had become the most familiar practice to produce empirical data on the body politic in the United States.<sup>57</sup> Opinion polling was deemed a democratic science since everybody could be asked and every opinion had its rights, and Gallup reinforced this notion by propagating opinion polling as 'a new instrument which may help to bridge the gap between the people and those who are responsible for making decisions in their name'.<sup>58</sup> Polling had its limitations, however, which became clear in 1948: while Gallup predicted a victory for Thomas Dewey, it eventually was Harry Truman that was elected President of the United States. It raised the awareness that opinion polling was based on probability rather than precise accuracy.<sup>59</sup>

#### *The appropriation of opinion research in Europe*

By then, the United States had boosted the spread of public opinion polling to Western Europe. Various European polling institutes became affiliated with Gallup's AIPO, such as the British BIPO (founded in 1937), the French IFOP (founded in 1938), and the Dutch NIPO (founded in 1945).<sup>60</sup> Opinion polling was implemented in a more direct fashion in West Germany: as Kruke and her colleague Benjamin Ziemann have demonstrated, the allies appropriated polling after the Second World War in order to monitor possible anti-democratic sentiments and to ensure that Germans would learn to value the transparency of a free society as quickly as possible. It led to the establishment of various polling institutes, such as Emnid and the Institut für Demoskopie, and thus to a more plural field of pollsters and methodological approaches.<sup>61</sup> In all these countries, polling institutes laid the infrastructure through which opinion polling gradually became an integral part of public life.

Besides corporations that used survey research in order to map consumers' preferences, political parties also grasped the idea that they could use opinion polls to tap into the behaviour of their electorate.

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<sup>55</sup> Sarah E. Igo, 'Hearing the Masses: The Modern Science of Opinion in the United States', in: Brückweh, *Engineering Society*, 215-233, there: 216; Martin, 'Genealogy', 19-21.

<sup>56</sup> Ziemann, 'Introduction', 26.

<sup>57</sup> Igo, 'Hearing the Masses', 217-218; Ziemann, 'Introduction', 26.

<sup>58</sup> Kruke, 'Opinion Polls', 107; George Gallup and Saul Forbes Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy: The Public Opinion Poll and how it Works* (New York, 1940; reprint 1969), 14.

<sup>59</sup> Ziemann, 'Introduction', 26.

<sup>60</sup> Beers, 'Whose Opinion', 182; Cowan, 'Fear and Loathing in Paris', 75-76.

<sup>61</sup> Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 235, 247.

However, political elites in most countries were rather hesitant when it came to the appropriation of opinion polls in the design of their political and electoral strategies. Beers has shown that British political parties were afraid that opinion research would be a threat to the independence of their MPs and were therefore reluctant to use it up until at least the 1960s.<sup>62</sup> Cowans has argued for France that public opinion was perceived as something that could disrupt the balance of powers and delegitimise the authority of parliament. Polling only became useful to French politicians by the late 1950s, as France's constitutional transformation into a Presidential system demanded a greater sensitivity to public opinion.<sup>63</sup> In West Germany, the acceptance of polling occurred rather smoothly: despite some conservative critique in the 1950s, polls pervaded all aspects and institutions of the country's political system within 15 years after their introduction.<sup>64</sup>

In general, the initial reception of opinion polling in these countries was typical of the disciplined democracies that emerged after the Second World War: polling was perceived as something that could endanger the order and harmony of the system of political representation.<sup>65</sup> The polities eventually were key in the political parties' embrace of opinion polling, as the two-party (Great Britain and West Germany) or Presidential (France) system in either of these countries required parties to move beyond their core electorate to win the elections.<sup>66</sup>

#### *Embedding electoral research in Dutch politics*

How does this contrast with the reception of opinion polling in the Dutch political life? Just like West Germany, a rather plural field of various commercial polling institutes emerged during and after the Second World War: besides the Gallup-licenced NIPO, there was the NSS (founded in 1940), while bureaus like Lagendijk, Veldkamp, Intomart and Inter/View would follow in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>67</sup> Polling was soon accepted as a scientific method to grasp public opinion and political parties would swiftly start making use of it quite frequently. As such, it complemented and – eventually – squished older ways of accumulating data on the electorate, such as social geographical research on the basis of election results. However, just like in other Western European countries, polling was initially not accepted wholeheartedly and was perceived as something that should be contained.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Beers, 'Whose Opinion', 180

<sup>63</sup> Cowans, 'Fear and Loathing in Paris', 81-82.

<sup>64</sup> Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 246.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Conway, 'The Rise and Fall of Western Europe's Democratic Age 1945-1973', *Contemporary European History* 13:1 (2004), 67-88, there: 75.

<sup>66</sup> Beers, 'Whose Opinion', 198-199; Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 240; Conway 'Fear and Loathing in Paris', 85.

<sup>67</sup> Jaap van Ginneken, *De uitvinding van het publiek: de opkomst van opinie- en marktonderzoek in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1993), 64-73.

<sup>68</sup> De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 115-120.

Political parties started to use opinion research more systematically as they were confronted with electoral losses in the 1960s and began to experiment with new ways to approach voters.<sup>69</sup> Especially the scholarly work of political scientist Hans Daudt and his conception of the ‘floating voter’ proved to be influential in political parties’ search for new conceptualisations of the electorate. In his doctoral thesis, published in 1961, Daudt had proposed to see electoral behaviour as a political and not as a social phenomenon: decisions of voters were not determined by their socio-religious backgrounds, but by their political preferences and the extent to which the policy proposals of political parties coincided with these preferences.<sup>70</sup>

One of the first party strategists to urge for new ways to approach the floating voter was Ed van Thijn, who would become the PvdA’s most influential political and electoral strategist during the 1970s. Van Thijn aligned with Daudt – who had been his tutor during his university studies – and his conception of electoral behaviour and argued that voters’ political opinion should be taken more seriously. He proposed that the PvdA should focus its election campaigns on so-called ‘target voters’ and should emphasise in its propaganda the issues this group of voters deemed important.<sup>71</sup> On the basis of electoral research, he also came to the conclusion that discontent among voters could only be curbed if the pluralist political field was transformed into a comprehensible field of two opposing blocks of political parties.<sup>72</sup> As such, Van Thijn became the main architect of the PvdA’s polarisation strategy that was aimed at forcing confessional to leave the political centre. Also within other political parties, a new generation of political scientists came into play and utilised electoral research in their pleas for new forms of electoral strategy or political organisation. The KVP, for example, moved away from religious based interpretations of voting behaviour when they started collaborating with the sociological institute ITS at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, which was founded in 1963. Nijmegen based political scientists, such as Leo de Bruyn, started to urge the KVP to move beyond its confessional-based politics. These recommendations were initially taken seriously, for the party indeed started to minimise references to religion in its party propaganda.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, this all happened in a very politicised context: even though they were often subscribed to the data of commercial polling agencies, parties mostly relied on experts of their own partisan think tanks. And eventually, they were not as flexible as their European sister-parties when it came to abandoning social-determinist understandings of the electorate. Because the Dutch multi-party system made it impossible for one party to dominate parliament, opinion research ‘was always embedded in a

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<sup>69</sup> See, for example: Anne Vondeling, *Nasmaak en voorproef. Een handvol ervaringen en ideeën* (Amsterdam, 1968), 1-33.

<sup>70</sup> Hans Daudt, *Floating Voters and the Floating Vote: a Critical Analysis of American and Election Studies* (Leiden, 1961), 176; De Jong and Kaal, ‘Mapping the Demos’, 128.

<sup>71</sup> De Jong and Kaal, ‘Mapping the Demos’, 131.

<sup>72</sup> E. van Thijn, ‘Kritische kanttekeningen bij een trek naar rechts’, *Sociologische Gids* 10:5 (1963), 239-248; Philip van Praag Jr., *Strategie en illusie: elf jaar intern debat in de PvdA (1966-1977)* (Amsterdam, 1990), 44-45; De Jong and Kaal, ‘Mapping the Demos’, 131-132.

<sup>73</sup> De Jong and Kaal, ‘Mapping the Demos’, 132-133.

party political context in which strong convictions, ideological considerations and political contingencies also played their part'.<sup>74</sup> The Dutch Social Democrats of the PvdA, for example, were afraid that other small left-wing parties would steal their thunder if they would no longer treat the working-class as their core-electorate.<sup>75</sup> Parties' unwillingness to fully trust social scientific expertise also became clear in the reception of the reports of PvdA's think tank WBS, which repeatedly urged its party to revisit the polarisation strategy. Opinion research had demonstrated that voters were not abandoning the political centre. The Social Democrats, however, downplayed or ignored these advices and stubbornly stuck to their conceptualisation of electoral behaviour that was once inspired by survey research, but had now turned into an ideologically-driven mantra.<sup>76</sup> Also the foundation of the political party CDA, in which KVP and the protestant parties ARP and CHU had merged, illustrates the tensions between social scientific expertise and the practice of party politics: especially the Protestants made the case for the establishment of a truly Christian Democratic party, thereby ignoring research that claimed that voters did not base their choices on religious principles.<sup>77</sup>

#### *The early appropriation of opinion polls by the printed media*

Unlike Great Britain, where the proliferation of polls published in the printed media preceded the use of polls by political parties, Dutch newspapers and magazines more gradually came to publish the results of surveys in the immediate post-war decades.<sup>78</sup> As soon as polling agencies started to conduct surveys on the Dutch public, newspapers and magazines sometimes made news out of the results. Opinion magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer* had already published its own surveys in the 1930s, but one of the first media outlets to start collaborating with professional pollsters was the right-wing magazine *Elseviers Weekblad*, which had a subscription on the data of NSS directly after the Second World War. In 1946, it used these data to predict the outcome of the parliamentary elections, following the American example.<sup>79</sup> Around the same time, NIPO got its polls published in the Amsterdam-based newspaper *Het Parool* and, a little later, it would also secure contracts with *NRC*, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *De Tijd*, *Haarlems Dagblad*, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, and the Dutch Press Agency. NIPO very much profited from all this media coverage, as it increased its brand awareness and became the most favourable polling agency in the 1950s.<sup>80</sup>

Although, many of these polls were on non-political topics and only occasionally would newspapers publish the results of surveys about electoral behaviour. The scarce deploy of political opinion polls was the result of the political-media complex: until the 1960s, the nature of political

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>76</sup> Van Praag, *Strategie en illusie*, 74-76 and passim.

<sup>77</sup> De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 135.

<sup>78</sup> Beers, 'Whose Opinion', 195.

<sup>79</sup> Van Ginneken, *De uitvinding van het publiek*, 65.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 71.

journalism was very much characterised by a culture of appeasement and depoliticisation. Strong organisational ties existed between media outlets and political parties and the agenda of political news was to a high extent characterised by this organisational structure of pillarisation. As political scientists Arend Lijphart and Hans Daalder have argued, the real political events took place behind closed doors, where the political elites of competing political signatures fought out their battles, while journalists deliberately stayed out of these backrooms of pacification politics. It was believed that the disclosure of these events could endanger the balance between the various pillars and the smooth functioning of democracy.<sup>81</sup> Journalists conceived it as one of their most important tasks to contribute to the consensus within the own socio-political segment of society.<sup>82</sup> Even though this did not mean that the pillarised media outlets were mere mouthpieces of the political parties they were affiliated with, the overall given was that, while the media were politicised, the public sphere remained rather depoliticised and depolarised. Since opinion polls were perceived as something that needed to be contained, the written press was very careful when it came to publishing political surveys: they could raise political discussion or delegitimise political party's authority.

As we shall also see in the second chapter, changing self-description of journalists very much affected the political-media complex in the 1960s. Especially the written press lifted themselves from their subordinate roles as mouthpieces of political parties relatively swiftly – newspaper *De Volkskrant* and opinion magazine *Vrij Nederland*, for example, shook of their respective Catholic and Protestant feathers quite radically.<sup>83</sup> Journalists wanted to be the autonomous and critical interpreters of political life. As a result of this new, less paternalist notion of political journalism, the written press started to display a more systematic interest in the results of polling from the second half of the 1960s onwards. Especially the alleged crisis of democracy, which emerged when the traditional people's parties suffered electoral losses while small, radical parties entered parliament in the mid-1960s, fuelled mass media's thirst for opinion research (as will be explained in more detail in the next chapter). One of the first newspapers to publish a series of opinion polls was right-wing newspaper *De Telegraaf* when it started to publish the survey results of Bureau Veldkamp on a monthly basis in the run-up to the general elections of 1967 (see figure 2). Other newspapers and magazines would follow suit.<sup>84</sup> From then on, the written press would also make more creative use of charts and other forms of visualisation (see figure 3). It resembles the developments in West Germany, where opinion polls were discovered by the mass media as a source of news and became a firmly established part of the media coverage in the election campaign in the years between 1965 and 1972.

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<sup>81</sup> Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation*, 122-138; H. Daalder, *Van oude en nieuwe regenten: politiek in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1995), 11-39.

<sup>82</sup> Huub Wijfjes, 'Koningin der aarde in het parlement: twee eeuwen journalistiek rond de Tweede Kamer', in: Remieg Aerts et.al. (eds), *In dit Huis: twee eeuwen Tweede Kamer* (Amsterdam, 2015), 223-249, there: 233-236.

<sup>83</sup> Wijfjes, 'Koningin der aarde in het parlement', 240-241.

<sup>84</sup> Popular magazine *Revu* for example based their series '*Politiek in Nederland*' ('Politics in the Netherlands') on the results of Attwood Statistics N.V. in). The series was published respectively in the last three editions of 1966 and the first three editions of 1967.

## Kroonprinses in Den Haag



Van een Maaszen redakteur...  
 De kroonprinses Beatrix werd vanochtend in Den Haag verwelkomd door een groot aantal Nederlanders. Ze werd begeleid door de stad en de koninklijke wacht. Ze zal de komende maanden veel tijd doorbrengen in Den Haag. Ze zal ook veel tijd doorbrengen in Den Haag. Ze zal ook veel tijd doorbrengen in Den Haag.

## EXCLUSIEF VERKIEZINGSONDERZOEK

# Zó zou de Kamer er uitzien

(Als Nederland nu had gestemd)

**KVP de grote verliezer; VVD winnaar**

VAN ONZE SPECIALE VERSLAGGEVER  
 AMSTERDAM, vrijdag  
 WANNEER Nederland in de week na de val van het kabinet-Cals zijn volkvertegenwoordigers had moeten kiezen, dan zou de KVP, vergeleken bij de kamerverkiezingen in 1963, 11 zetels verloren hebben en de PvdA 4 zetels. Beide partijen zouden 39 zetels hebben gekregen en de VVD zou 4 zetels hebben gewonnen.

**Echte verkiezing**  
 In de week volgend op de val van het kabinet heeft het bureau VELD/KAMP/MARKTONDERZOEK in opdracht van DE TELEGRAAF/DE COURANT HET NIEUWS VAN DE DAG ruim 2500 Nederlandse stemgerechtigden bevestigd.

	Kamer 1963 (verdeling NU)	Zielverdeling op grond van verkiezingen maart 1966	Onze enquête okt. 1966
KVP	50	46	39
PvdA	43	7	39
VVD	16	15	20
AR	13	13	14
CHU	13	15	13
PSP	4	7	5
CPN	4	4	5
SGP	3	3	3
GPV	1	1	1
Boerenpartij	3	10	9
D'66	-	-	2
Noodr./Stam	-	-	-
	150	150	150

## Massamoord in Peking

Van een correspondent...  
 De bevolking van Peking wordt voortdurend bedreigd door de Chinese regering. De Chinese regering wordt beschuldigd van een massamoord in Peking. De Chinese regering wordt beschuldigd van een massamoord in Peking.

## Nieuwe poging tot vorming tussenkabinet

Van een parlementaire redakteur...  
 De Tweede Kamer heeft een nieuwe poging gemaakt tot de vorming van een tussenkabinet. De Tweede Kamer heeft een nieuwe poging gemaakt tot de vorming van een tussenkabinet.

Of dacht U dat God er alleen is voor Kerkmensen?



**BELANGRIJKE AUTO- en RADIO-SHOW**  
 VAN ONZE VOORLOPER  
 OPRANDVERBODEN

**LEWENSTEIN**  
 De meest bekende...  
 De meest bekende...  
 De meest bekende...

Figure 2: De Telegraaf, 28 October 1966. 'This is how parliament would look (if the Dutch had gone to the ballot box today).' The first publication in a series of opinion polls published in the months before the parliamentary elections of 1967.



Figure 3: Elsevier's Magazine, 12 August 1972. 'This is how the Netherlands votes today'. A fine example of the innovative use of bar charts (in colour!) by opinion magazines and newspapers.

### *Concluding remarks*

Just like in other countries in Western Europe, opinion research was introduced in the Netherlands as an American science and was only hesitantly embraced by political parties as a foundation for political and electoral strategies. However, unlike Great Britain, France, and West Germany, opinion research was deployed in a very politicised setting and did not sway political parties to let go of ideologically fuelled understanding of the electorate completely. The written press was also hesitant to publish opinion research at first as well, for it did not fit in their paternalist idea of political journalism. However, this started to change in the second half of the 1960s – not coincidentally – around the same time that broadcast companies discovered opinion research as something that could be disclosed on radio and television.

## 2. Broadcasting Electoral Research on Radio and Television

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, the use and deployment of electoral research by broadcast companies in Dutch television and radio formats from 1965 till 1989 is surveyed. This chapter examines the presence of electoral research in the audio-visual media as an aspect of political culture: it does not study the actual content of the news that was made out of opinion polls, but instead focuses on the symbolic presence of polls in Dutch electoral culture. It analyses how the dissemination of electoral research in the audio-visual mass media influenced and fuelled new notions of political representation and democratic legitimacy and how it became established as a key aspect of the Dutch public sphere.

To grasp opinion polls on television and radio as a cultural phenomenon, this chapter emphasises three characteristics. Firstly, attention is paid to appropriation by broadcasters: what types of electoral research were adopted in the audio-visual media? Especially in the early years, broadcasters did not only commission their own surveys, but also hired experts to execute one-time opinion polls, or interviewed political scientists from Dutch universities about their large-scale survey projects. Secondly, it examines in which forms the information was presented: how was the data interpreted and – in the case of television formats – how was the data visualised? Thirdly, the reception of electoral research is analysed: how did politicians and political commentators react to surveys in on television and on the radio and how did they value opinion research as a component of the Dutch public sphere? As such, the various phases in the mediatisation of electoral research are not to be described as isolated media events, but as multiform processes that reflected on, and were part of, the broader changes of Dutch electoral culture.

### *Narrating political crisis*

Until the second half of the 1960s, the presence of opinion polls on Dutch radio and television was very marginal, for there was hardly any electoral research to be broadcasted at all. For a great deal this had to do with the position of the political sciences and electoral research in the Netherlands: the discipline had only taken off after the Second World War and until the mid-1960s, Dutch voter research was very limited in frequency, methodology, and scale.<sup>85</sup> In addition, broadcasters were restricted in their coverage of electoral news until 1963: they were forced by the Dutch government not to broadcast propaganda and not to boost polemics up to three weeks before the elections.<sup>86</sup> This paternalist idea of political journalism limited the leeway for editors to experiment with innovative ways for reporting electoral campaigns.

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<sup>85</sup> Cees van der Eijck and Kees Niemöller, 'Election Studies in the Netherlands: Pluralism and Accommodation', *European Journal of Political Research* 25 (1994), 323-342, there: 323-324.

<sup>86</sup> Kaal, 'De cultuur van het televisiedebat', 298.

From the second half of the 1960 onwards, electoral research became more visible in the Dutch mass media. The increase of electoral volatility – as reflected in the unprecedented electoral losses for the PvdA and the KVP in 1966 and 1967 – stimulated a greater interest in voting behaviour, just like the manifestation of the ‘*Wechselwähler*’ and ‘swing voters’ had made political scientists in West Germany and Great Britain reconsider the parameters of electoral behaviour.<sup>87</sup> Most noteworthy was the electoral research that was executed by a group of researchers from the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam (under supervision of Gijsbert Kuypers and Andries Hoogerwerf) and was funded by the National Science Foundation.<sup>88</sup> The innovation of this large-scale survey prompted that, from 1971 onwards, scholars from all Dutch political science departments would start to collaborate in the governmentally funded National Voters Survey (NKO), which would, from now on, take place after every parliamentary election.<sup>89</sup> In those years, the NKO research was often carried out by young social and political scientists (such as Hoogerwerf, De Bruyn, and Wil Foppen) who, just like the executors of the 1967 electoral survey, were inspired by Anglo-Saxon methodology and hoped to demonstrate how voter instability was the result of structural changes in the attitudes, values, purposes, perceptions, and identifications of the electorate.<sup>90</sup>

This new conceptualisation of electoral behaviour, which – as we have seen in the first chapter – was introduced by Daudt, demonstrated a broader shift in ideas about political representation. This type of research, which took the political views of the electorate more seriously, indicated that it was no longer believed that the political identity of voters was formed around socio-religious principles, but rather that voters based their electoral choices on the political parties’ agendas. The new premise was that voters were active and opinionated citizens that did not switch parties because of a lack of interest or ignorance, but because they decided at the ballot box which political party best matched their own situation and needs.<sup>91</sup>

Even though political parties found it difficult to fully abandon the social-determinist idea of political representation, the audio-visual media were eager to attribute the growing electoral instability to political discontent among the Dutch people. The executors of the NKO were extensively interviewed in news shows such as *NOS Journaal* and *Den Haag Vandaag*. With the implementation of the Broadcasting Law in 1969, the NOS had become legally obliged to produce television and radio shows that informed audiences about broader societal developments. By means of interviewing the NKO

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<sup>87</sup> Van der Eijck and Niemöller, ‘Election Studies’, 325; Kruke and Ziemann, ‘Observing the Sovereign’, 240-241; Beers, ‘Whose Opinion’, 201.

<sup>88</sup> A. Hoogerwerf, ‘De Nederlandse kiezers en het partijstelsel. Verbondenheid, weerstand en voorstelling’, *Acta Politica* 2 (1967), 297-330; *De Nederlandse kiezers in 1967: enkele eerste resultaten van een landelijke enquête* (Amsterdam/Brussel, 1967); the final publication appeared ten years later: *Kiezen in 1967: eindverslag van het nationaal verkiezingsonderzoek 1967* (Amsterdam, 1977).

<sup>89</sup> R. de Hoog et al., ‘Nationaal verkiezingsonderzoek’, in: *Acta Politica* 6 (1971), 29-44.

<sup>90</sup> Van der Eijck and Niemöller, ‘Election Studies’, 326; *De Nederlandse kiezer ’72* (Alphen aan de Rijn, 1973); *De Nederlandse kiezer ’73* (Alphen aan de Rijn, 1973).

<sup>91</sup> De Jong and Kaal, ‘Mapping the Demos’, 128.

researchers, they could respond to growing qualms about political instability: the researchers were offered a stage to clarify that the deconfessionalisation of party politics persisted and that dissatisfaction with the political system had increased.<sup>92</sup>

In general, the Dutch audio-visual media were eager to broadcast the results of these kinds of research. Historian Hans Righart has once argued that the narrative of ‘the sixties’, as the connected period in which political, cultural, and societal transformations took place, in part was the product of the mass media in general and of television in particular: media zoomed in on whatever was changing, and as such showed and edited their version of what was going on.<sup>93</sup> Current affairs shows, such as VARA’s *Achter het Nieuws* and KRO’s *Brandpunt*, went even further than the ‘neutral’ NOS shows: the editorial boards and teams of presenters of these shows consisted of young journalists that were often politically engaged and aimed at confronting traditional political elites and emancipating the ‘common man’.<sup>94</sup> For this reason, in such programmes there was a strong preference for broadcasting items that produced the image of a political culture that was in crisis and drastically in need for renewal. The results of electoral research frequently met these preferences. In this way, a fruitful interplay started to occur between electoral researchers and political journalists: while the former increasingly started to investigate the underlying motives of voters as a means to offer a perspective on the increasing electoral instability of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the latter picked up those results and offered a platform for these researchers to comment on their findings, thus further fuelling and echoing the narrative of political crisis.<sup>95</sup>

This chemistry between electoral researchers and the mass media had already taken off from the mid-1960s. When, in 1965, a survey by market researcher IPM had found that only 22% of the Dutch citizens had a positive esteem for Dutch parliament, AVRO’s current affairs television programme *Parlementaire Spiegel* reacted by letting their young political journalist Ferry Hoogendijk critically interview three prominent politicians (Frans-Joseph van Thiel, Anne Vondeling, and Norbert Schmelzer).<sup>96</sup> He confronted them with the claim that the obsolete and old-fashioned ‘PR strategies’ of the Dutch parliament were in need of revitalisation.<sup>97</sup> All three politicians endorsed Hoogendijk’s perspective and came up with suggestions to increase the esteem of parliament: Van Thiel, who was the

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<sup>92</sup> *NOS Journaal*, NOS television, 2 February 1972; *Den Haag Vandaag*, NOS television, 13 October 1973.

<sup>93</sup> Hans Righart, *De wereldwijde jaren zestig: Groot-Brittannië, Nederland, de Verenigde Staten*, (Utrecht, 2004), 72-80; see also: Marjet Derks, ‘The Gospel of the Old : Media, Gender, and the Invisible Conservative Dutch Catholic in the Long 1960s’, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte* 104 (2010), 135-154, there: 137.

<sup>94</sup> Chris Vos, ‘Van propagandist naar makelaar: de uitvinding van de Nederlandse televisiejournalistiek’, in: Jo Bardoel et al. (eds), *Journalistieke cultuur in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 2002), 269-288, there: 277-278.

<sup>95</sup> Likewise, historians Marjet Derks and Chris Dols have demonstrated that a similar interplay between social scientists and mass media occurred when it came to the staging of the Dutch celibacy crisis: ‘Sprekende cijfers: katholieke sociaalingenieurs en de encensering van de celibaatcrisis, 1963-1972’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 123:3 (2010), 414-429.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Bij Nederlandse bevolking: weinig interesse voor parlement’, *De Telegraaf* (23 January 1965).

<sup>97</sup> ‘Waarom krijgt de vrijdag niet meer aandacht?’, *Leeuwarder Courant* (6 February 1965), 7.

Chair of parliament, for example argued that members of parliament should stop reading out their speeches and learn them by heart instead. KRO appropriated the results of the survey in the launch of a new current affairs format, *Vanavond in Nieuwspoort*, which was hosted by Ad Langebent and Frits van der Poel. The programme aimed at closing the gap between parliament and the Dutch audience by familiarising the latter with their elected representatives in The Hague.<sup>98</sup> For similar reasons, Marcel van Dam's exit polls became an important component of almost all election broadcasts of current affairs programmes. In the third chapter, the nature of the exit poll will be examined more closely.

The results of electoral research turned out to be perfectly amendable to visualisation and television programmes therefore often moulded these results in attractive shapes, such as pie charts and line diagrams.<sup>99</sup> Not only were these forms of visualisation attractive to the viewer and did they give the oral interpretation of the research an aesthetic component, the spread of 'objective' representation of numbers and figures was also a first step in the familiarisation of the larger Dutch audience with mathematic types of representing public opinion (see figure 4).<sup>100</sup> Television editors built upon the example that was already set by newspapers and opinion magazines in this regard, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, already experimented with attractive representation of survey data.

	1967 GEMEENTERAAD OUD HELMOND	1967 2DE KAMER	1966 GEM RAAD
KVP	40,4	52,1	48,1
PvdA	20,4	16,0	22,1
Jong./CDU	3,4	—	11,9
Gem. Belangen '1	13,5	11,0	9,5
CPN	7,3	4,1	3,5
Jong Dem. Centrum	2,7		
Prakt. Pol. Partij	0,2		
Kath. Democraten	1,4		
PSP	0,6	1,7	
Boerenpartij	1,7	5,1	
D'66	8,4	6,2	
	100,0	96,2	95,1
Overig		3,8	4,9
1 ARP · CHU · VVD		100,0	100,0

Figure 4: Still of the broadcast of the election night in Helmond, NTS-television, 29 November 1967. In the early years of the mediatisation of electoral research, visualisation of opinion research (in this case: the exit poll) sometimes occurred in a rather archaic fashion.

<sup>98</sup> 'Nieuwe parlementaire rubriek KRO-tv', *Leeuwarder Courant* (3 February 1965), 7

<sup>99</sup> See, for example: *Gemeenteraadsverkiezingen in Helmond*, NTS television, 29 November 1967.

<sup>100</sup> Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 245; Christiane Reinecke and Thomas Mergel, 'Das Soziale vorstellen, darstellen, herstellen: Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert', in: Christiane Reinecke and Thomas Mergel (eds), *Das Soziale ordnen: sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/New York, 2012), 7-30, there: 21-21.

### *Broadcasters commissioning their own polls*

The manifestation of electoral instability also inspired Dutch television and radio to commission their own opinion polls. Unlike the large-scale NKO surveys, these polls were mostly aimed at gauging how voter's preferences shifted over smaller periods of time or predicting the outcome of elections to-come. As such, the broadcasters started to collaborate with polling institutes and the first to do so was the NCRV when it introduced a television format called *NIPO-these* in 1966. This programme was completely organised around the results of surveys that polling institute NIPO conducted for the NCRV and was aired six times in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 1967.<sup>101</sup> Every broadcast was centred on a prominent politician of each major political party, who was invited to respond to the results of NIPO's 'imaginary elections'. Due to the newness of using opinion polls on television, considerable airtime was reserved for reflection on the practise of conducting the electoral research itself. The first episode, which was aired on 17 October 1966, opened with a re-enactment of a pollster visiting a respondent at home, while a voiceover explained to the audience at home how the research was performed. The format in general was characterised by functionality and modesty: even though *NIPO-these* was introduced in the press as a programme that would 'look through' politics and 'confront' the politicians with the survey results, the results rather fuelled a friendly discussion between interviewer and the attending politician on various topics.<sup>102</sup>

Still, the NTS was very cautious about the influence of *NIPO-these*. It felt a certain responsibility towards the electoral behaviour of its audience and feared that opinion polls could affect this behaviour. NTS's programme commissioner J.W. Rengelink therefore argued in a letter to the NTS's Programme Council that, out of carefulness, the last episode should be aired at least one week before the elections. Rengelink probably feared that NIPO's predictions would incite citizens to change their voting behaviour.<sup>103</sup>

Shortly thereafter, already existing current affairs programmes such as VARA's *Achter het Nieuws*, KRO's *Brandpunt*, and NCRV's *Hier en Nu* started to commission their own opinion polls as well. In doing so, the broadcasters started collaborating with polling institutes such as Bureau Veldkamp, NIPO and Intomart and broadcasted the results on television. Just like it had been the case with *NIPO-these*, the editors of these programmes felt a certain responsibility to make their audiences accustomed to the new source of information and therefore often reflected on the way the opinion poll was conducted.<sup>104</sup> Research had indicated that, by the mid-1960s, at least two out of three households had never participated in a survey, thus were hardly familiar with the practise of opinion polling.<sup>105</sup> Yet,

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<sup>101</sup> *NIPO-these* was aired by the NCRV-television on 17 October 1966, 14 November 1966, 18 December 1966, 4 January 1967, 6 February 1967, 10 February 1967. Snaps of the first episode are available in Beeld en Geluid.

<sup>102</sup> 'Nipothese', *Leeuwarder Courant* (17 October 1966), 2.

<sup>103</sup> Nationaal Archief (NA), Den Haag, 2.25.70, Archief NOS en rechtsvoorgangers 1947-2001, inv.no. 301, Letter of J.W. Rengelink to Programme Council, 7 December 1966.

<sup>104</sup> See for example: *Achter het Nieuws*, VARA-television, 4 November 1968.

<sup>105</sup> Jaap van Ginneken, *De uitvinding van het publiek: de opkomst van het opinie- en marktonderzoek in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1993), 88.

until the mid-1970s, the broadcasting of opinion polls in shows like these occurred quite irregularly: often, these polls were not commissioned structurally and only sporadically gauged electoral behaviour, mostly just in the run-up to elections.

Even though newspapers were often eager on reporting and making news out of on the polls that were commissioned and disclosed by the television shows, the reception of the polls was somewhat lukewarm. Due to the fact that, firstly, the polling results of various broadcasters often varied, and secondly, the predictions often did not reflect the actual outcome of the elections, most political observers were rather sceptical about polling as a way to measure public opinion.<sup>106</sup> In 1967, psychologist R.P Greiner argued in *Algemeen Handelsblad* that there was still room for improvement when it came to the way in which the polling results were interpreted, and in 1972, journalist of *NRC Handelsblad* Leon de Wolff remarked that many of the participants of polls were not motivated enough to be measured.<sup>107</sup>

In addition, political scientists themselves argued that polls not only reflected but also shaped public opinion.<sup>108</sup> Broadcast companies were frequently confronted with accusations that they appropriated polls as a means of political propaganda. Especially VARA was repeatedly confronted with such allegations, for conservative political observers still assumed an instrumental relation between the left-wing broadcaster and the PvdA. In 1970, VARA was accused of unjustly predicting that the KVP would lose seats, and two years later, DS'70 politician Mauk de Brauw claimed that *Achter het Nieuws* intentionally manipulated polling results to show that his party (which was a split-off of the Social Democrats) was losing popular support.<sup>109</sup> Such allegations tie in with the polarised electoral and political culture of the 1970s, which was very much characterised by a sphere of public conflict between the progressive and conservative segments in society.<sup>110</sup>

The reliability of the results of opinion polls and its added value for democracy was publicly questioned in other countries as well. Already in the late 1950s, the right-wing German journalist Paul Sethe had argued against the 'galluping consumption' of democracy through polling in his home country. He feared that democratic leadership would be endangered by 'the rule of 2000' (by which he referred to the number of individuals that make up a random statistical sample).<sup>111</sup> In France, the biggest criticism was formulated by progressive political observers. Well known sociologist Pierre Bourdieu had for example published an article in which he argued that there was no such thing as public opinion.

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<sup>106</sup> Johan van Merriënboer, 'Formatie '67: Jelle wil niet, Joop mag niet, Norbert kan niet en Barend durft niet', in: Johan van Merriënboer and Carla van Baalen (eds), *Polarisatie en hoogconjunctuur: het kabinet-De Jong 1967-1971* (Amsterdam, 2013), 15-58, there: 19.

<sup>107</sup> 'De opinieonderzoeker heeft altijd gelijk – als hij geen fouten maakt', *Algemeen Handelsblad* (4 February 1967), 19; 'Verkiezingspolls zijn ook niet alles', *NRC Handelsblad* (4 November 1972), 19.

<sup>108</sup> De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 135.

<sup>109</sup> 'NIPO doet nooit voorspellingen. Manipuleren met cijfers van verkiezingsonderzoek', *De Tijd* (17 March 1970), 3; 'Intomart spreekt beschuldigingen De Brauw tegen', *De Tijd* (26 October 1972), 2.

<sup>110</sup> Piet de Rooy, *Republiek van rivaliteiten: Nederland sinds 1918* (Amsterdam, 2002), 258-261.

<sup>111</sup> Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 242-243.

Instead, the ‘public opinion’ as it was uncovered by polls only benefitted interested elites such as the politicians and journalists that commissioned them rather than the citizenry at large.<sup>112</sup>

### *Professionalisation and institutionalisation*

By the second half of the 1970s, polls had become a recurring phenomenon in the audio-visual media, particularly in political radio shows. From 1972 onwards, AVRO’s *Delta* had been one of the first programmes to broadcast results of electoral research outside of election periods. However, it was VARA’s *In de Rooie Haan* that marked a shift in the public reception of polls and set the tone when it came to the further establishment and professionalisation of opinion polls on Dutch television and radio. The VARA announced that their monthly polls would be more accurate than the polls of other pollsters. Maurice de Hond, who was responsible for these polls, introduced his own method (*methode-De Hond*) that aimed at following the development of electoral behaviour more closely and over time.<sup>113</sup> Not only did he conduct his poll on a way more frequent basis (once a week) and did he make use of a larger sample than other pollsters, he also aimed at correcting certain over- or under-representations in his data (his methodology will be analysed more closely in the fourth chapter). Because the *In de Rooie Haan* polls were introduced with grand pomp and ceremony – the presenters announced that they would have enormous public impact – and the results proved to be quite shocking – the poll indicated that the backbone of the left-leaning Den Uyl cabinet had lost vast popular support – they received a great deal of public attention.<sup>114</sup> Initial scepticism from other electoral researchers (which will also be studied in the last chapter) soon vanished after the outcome of the 1977 parliamentary elections affirmed De Hond’s last prognosis.<sup>115</sup>

The period between the elections of 1977 and 1986 was characterised by the further institutionalisation of electoral research in the Dutch mass media.<sup>116</sup> Opinion polls became a firmly established part of Dutch electoral culture, as more news and current affairs shows started to regularly broadcast polls. Not only did Maurice de Hond keep presenting his polls in *In de Rooie Haan* until the end of the 1980s, he also became the regular pollster of *Achter het Nieuws*. Other broadcast companies eventually followed VARA’s example, as TROS’s political radio show *Kamerbreed* started

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<sup>112</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Public Opinion Does Not Exist’, in: Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub (eds), *Communication and Class Struggle vol. 1: Capitalism, Imperialism* (New York, 1979), 124-130.

<sup>113</sup> M. de Hond, ‘De meting van politieke voorkeur: een methode tot vermindering van fouten’, *Acta Politica* 12:1 (1977), 90-110.

<sup>114</sup> Jan Nagel, *Boven het maaiveld* (Soesterberg, 2001), 138; ‘Kritiek op methode stembusonderzoek’, *NRC Handelsblad* (13 oktober 1976); ‘Over de NIPO-bom, of arrogantie der sociologen’, *Het Vrije Volk* (13 October 1977), 4; ‘Wat is eigenlijk de waarde van verkiezingsonderzoeken?’, *Dagblad van het Noorden* (7 december 1976).

<sup>115</sup> ‘Erkenning Maurice de Hond steeg gelijk met die van Den Uyl’, *Het Vrije Volk* (28 May 1977), 4.

<sup>116</sup> After the elections of 1977, the Working Group Current Affairs even intended to draft guidelines for the use of opinion polls in current affairs programmes: NA, 2.25.70, 1039, Minutes of a meeting of the ‘Werkgroep Actualiteiten’, 14 September 1977. Whether such guidelines have eventually been drafted and what they encompassed, however, cannot be determined, since they were not to be found in the archives.

broadcasting surveys of polling institute NSS in 1983.<sup>117</sup> In the run-up to the general elections of 1986, AVRO's current affairs programme *Televizier* even fielded its own polling expert: NIPO director Ger Schild.<sup>118</sup> Around the same time, the practice of conducting of polls professionalised with the implementation of telephonic interviewing (instead of interviewers that went from door to door), which made possible the more frequent survey of political preferences.<sup>119</sup> As such, opinion polls became a pivotal characteristic of political journalism: they turned from individual news events into recurring political 'forecasts' of the political landscape.<sup>120</sup> Polls offered an accurate and comprehensible picture of 'how the Dutch voter would vote if today was election day'. The visualisation of polls professionalised as well: the use of computers and other electronic recourses brought an end to programme makers' dependency on rather archaic means of presentation and made it possible to digitally mould the results in more dynamic ways (see figure 5).



*Figure 5: Still of a *Achter het Nieuws* broadcast, 1986. Maurice de Hond (on the right) presents one of his opinion polls.<sup>121</sup>*

The increasing representation of survey results in the mass media further fuelled changing conceptions of political representation and democratic legitimacy. The main focus of the broadcasts was no longer on long-term, abstract, and structural explanations of changing approval rates of political parties, such as deconfessionalisation and political crisis had been a decade earlier. Instead, the shifts of

<sup>117</sup> 'Radioprogramma's', *Leeuwarder Courant* (16 September 1983), 2.

<sup>118</sup> 'Televizier', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (17 January 1986), 2.

<sup>119</sup> 'Wat zegt de uitkomst van een opinieonderzoek eigenlijk', *Nederlands Dagblad* (9 January 1982), 20-21.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 245.

<sup>121</sup> 'Achter het nieuws - De Stemming - Verkiezingen Fabeltjesland (1986)', *YouTube*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRyUuT6udtI>> (consulted on 6 October 2017).

political preference were presented and interpreted as if the electorate were a stock market: opinion polls publicly mapped which political party had the greatest ‘market demand’ at any given time. It contributed to the image of voters as ‘citizen consumers’, who are individuals ‘that will question every aspect of elite provision and will no longer accept being told by the elite what is good for them’.<sup>122</sup> Opinion polls confirmed that citizens no longer perceived their party choice as a fixed given, but rather critically and constantly compared politicians’ claims to their own demands and needs and, if necessary, switched party preference – as if it were a consumer good. This conceptualisation of politics as an open marketplace led to the acknowledgement that political parties’ could only win elections if they would be able to attract undecided voters by putting forward those issues that prevailed among the this share of the electorate.<sup>123</sup>

By wrestling control over the public representation of polling data, the media manifested themselves as the crucial mediators between the political parties and the political sphere as a whole on the one hand, and the critical Dutch citizens on the other.<sup>124</sup> To some extent, polls had become a form of what Rosanvallon calls ‘counter democracy’, for they had turned into an officious channel (that is: outside of the official electoral-representative institutions) through which popular wishes and needs were communicated and vigilance vis-à-vis political behaviour was generated and regulated.<sup>125</sup> Exemplary are the ‘De Stemming’ polls that were broadcasted on a monthly (and later weekly) basis in *Achter het Nieuws* in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 1986 and were conducted by Maurice de Hond’s polling institute Bureau Inter/View.<sup>126</sup> Participants were not only asked about their voting preferences, but also about important political issues and how ‘politics’ should react to them (such as the position of the group of ‘Tamil’ refugees in the Netherlands and the reduction of working hours), as well as what they perceived as the most favourable coalition of political parties.<sup>127</sup>

Opinion polls also boosted an electoral culture that was increasingly personalised, as it had become common practice to survey the popularity and trustworthiness of political leaders. It was also not unusual for pollsters to ask participants whom they would prefer as Prime Minister, even though the position of Prime Minister was (and still is not) open for election.<sup>128</sup> The general elections of 1977, which more than earlier elections were framed as a battle between the opposing candidates of the three

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<sup>122</sup> Darren Lilleker and Richard Scullion, ‘Introduction’, in: Darren Lilleker and Richard Scullion (eds), *Voters or Consumers: Imagining the Contemporary Electorate* (Cambridge, 2008), 1-11, there: 1; see also the contributions in: Kerstin Brückweh (ed.), *The Voice of the Citizen Consumer: A History of Market Research, Consumer Movements, and the Political Public Sphere* (London, 2011).

<sup>123</sup> De Jong and Kaal, ‘Mapping the Demos’, 132.

<sup>124</sup> Kruke and Ziemann, ‘Observing the Sovereign’, 245; Vos, ‘Van propagandist naar makelaar’, 270.

<sup>125</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust* (Cambridge, 2008), 39.

<sup>126</sup> ‘De Stemming’ was also published in *Het Vrije Volk*; see for example: ‘PvdA blijft wel de grote winnaar, maar: CDA en VVD krabbelen op’, *Het Vrije Volk* (5 December 1985), 13.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Tamils gelijk behandelen’, *Het Vrije Volk* (8 May 1986), 13; ‘Harde acties voor ATV?’, *Het Vrije Volk* (25 March 1986), 13.

<sup>128</sup> See for example: ‘PvdA blijft wel de grote winnaar, maar: CDA en VVD krabbelen op’, *Het Vrije Volk* (5 December 1985), 13.

major political parties ('Joop, Dries en Hans'), were characterised by recurring polls that surveyed who was the most popular candidate for Prime Minister.<sup>129</sup> In 1986, political observers spoke of a 'Lubbers effect', which was prompted by the high popularity ratings of the Prime Minister and CDA leader in the polls and the question of whether these would be translated into an election victory for the Christian Democrats.<sup>130</sup> That same year, Maurice de Hond even went as far as surveying the popularity of not only Den Uyl but also of Wim Kok, who was the rising man of the Social Democrats, to find that the PvdA had a better chance of winning the election if the latter was party leader.<sup>131</sup> The poll increased the pressure on the board of the PvdA, which – after seemingly nonchalantly stating that they were flattered that the opinion poll had generated attention for not one but two PvdA politicians – eventually announced that Den Uyl would remain party leader, but that Kok would be assigned an important role during the campaign and after.<sup>132</sup> As such, the poll boosted the appointment of Kok as Den Uyl's successor-to-be and proved that politicians to some extent cared about the results of opinion polls in the media.<sup>133</sup> In the long run, the public representation of polls affected the organisation of political campaigns: political parties started relying on experts in the field of media and communication, whom could assist them in perfecting the performance of politicians on television.<sup>134</sup>

### *Polls as entertainment*

In the meantime, the televised media had discovered polls as a means not only to inform audiences, but to entertain them as well. As of the early 1980s, electoral research was increasingly deployed as formats of 'infotainment' or 'politainment': in such formats, political communication is rendered into a superficial form of entertainment through the mingling of (political) information with techniques and forms from popular culture and informal forms of journalism.<sup>135</sup> Even though polls had already been part of television and radio programmes that can be categorised as infotainment shows (such as *In de*

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<sup>129</sup> Johan van Merriënboer, 'De moeder van alle formaties: de kabinetsformatie van 1977', in: Carla van Baalen and Alexander van Kessel (eds), *Kabinetsformaties 1977-2012* (Amsterdam, 2016), 11-80, there: 16; 'Den Uyl "net" voor Van Agt', *Limburgs Dagblad* (22 October 1976), 1; 'Laatste cijfers', *Leeuwarder Courant* (30 December 1976), 5; 'Den Uyl spaart Van Agt', *De Waarheid* (23 May 1977), 3.

<sup>130</sup> 'Van Leijenhorst wil "proeve" niet als wet', *Nederlands Dagblad* (15 February 1986), 3; 'RPF: stop het gegoochel met het aantal werklozen', *Leeuwarder Courant* (29 April 1986), 5.

<sup>131</sup> 'Kok scoort hoger dan Den Uyl', *Het Vrije Volk* (9 January 1986), 12; 'Lijstverbinding is middel tegen zetels voor rechts', *De Waarheid* (9 January 1986), 1.

<sup>132</sup> 'Liever Kok dan Den Uyl', *Het Vrije Volk* (8 January 1986), 1; 'Joop, laat die kroonprins nu kiezen', *Het Vrije Volk* (9 January 1986), 4.

<sup>133</sup> Johan van Merriënboer, 'De prolongatie van premier Lubbers: de formatie van het kabinet-Lubbers II (1986)', in: Van Baalen and Van Kessel, *Kabinetsformaties*, 161-189, there: 162; Monique Leijenaar and Kees Niemöller, 'Tussen peilglas en glazen bol: Opiniepeilingen en de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 1986', in Van der Eijk and Van Praag, *De strijd om de meerderheid*, 27-47, there: 30.

<sup>134</sup> De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 136; 'Reclamebureaus werken aan het imago van de lijsttrekker', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (14 March 1981), 41.

<sup>135</sup> Kees Brants, 'Who's Afraid of Infotainment?', *European Journal of Communication* 13:3 (1998), 315-335; Andreas Dörner, *Politainment: Politik in der medialen Erlebnisgesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 2001).

*Rooie Haan*, which was characterised by an alternation of formal and more casual content), programme makers now turned polls themselves into infotainment.<sup>136</sup>

*Brandpunt* initiated this category of using polls in four election specials that were broadcasted during the election campaign of 1981.<sup>137</sup> Every episode was centred on one of the four political leaders from the four biggest political parties (Jan Terlouw, Hans Wiegel, Joop den Uyl, and Dries van Agt), who were invited to the studio. Not only did journalists Ad Langebent and Ton Verlind interview them, they also had to participate in two poll-based games. The first was the ‘budget-cut game’ (*bezuinigingsspel*): the political leader had to express their austerity plans by distributing seven red chips (each representing a cutback of one billion guilders) over twelve policy areas, after which they were confronted with the results of a NIPO poll that had asked 1200 participants to do the same. The second game concerned the personality of the political leader: out of a list of seven personality features (such as trustworthiness, likability, and understandability) they had to pick what they perceived as their best and worst personal trait, after which their choice was again confronted with the results of a NIPO poll about the same question. By giving the ‘correct’ answers, the party leaders could demonstrate that they were in touch with public opinion and, as such, were good representatives.

The quiz *Hollands Kwartiertje* went even further. In this recurring component of the VARA talk show *Bij Koos*, that was aired between 1984 and 1986 and was anchored by journalist Koos Postema, Maurice de Hond was staged as a full-blown quizmaster.<sup>138</sup> Each episode consisted of two politicians that had to guess the percentages of a poll on all kinds of different questions (often following up on current developments in- and outside of Dutch politics), after which they were granted points if they succeeded in matching the results of De Hond’s survey.<sup>139</sup> In the end, the final scores were tallied up and added to the over-all ranking, which over the course of the television season made legible which politicians could best emphasise with the electorate and which could not.

In both formats, viewers at home were presented with an enjoyable game element that allowed for participation at home: they could make educated guesses themselves and see if they were as good as the politicians on television. *Hollands Kwartiertje* even actively attempted at boosting participation of the television audience, as each episode of the quiz concluded with the interactive ‘audience question’, to which they could respond to by mail.

These game formats fuelled a specific conception of political representation: politicians were good representatives when they were in touch with public opinion and able to give the ‘right’ answers to the quizmaster’s questions. The fact that they often failed in doing so affected their authority, as

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<sup>136</sup> Huub Wijfjes, *VARA: biografie van een omroep* (Amsterdam, 2009), 301-302.

<sup>137</sup> See for example: *Brandpunt*, KRO-television, 9 May 1981.

<sup>138</sup> See for example: *Bij Koos*, VARA-television, 10 February 1986.

<sup>139</sup> During the first season, not only politicians, but also other Dutch celebrities were invited to participate in *Hollands Kwartiertje*. However, as the parliamentary elections of 1986 approached, the editors of *Bij Koos* decided to focus on the former group of participants.

becomes clear in a letter written by a viewer of *Hollands Kwartiertje* published in newspaper *Het Vrije Volk*:

What strikes me every week is that the most prominent politicians have drifted away from the basis so much that they often do not know what political views prevail amongst the electorate. They do not even know what their own fellow party members think. It is hardly remarkable that a lot of people have lost their trust in politics and that they do not perceive these individuals as real representatives.<sup>140</sup>

These game formats tacitly magnified a populist characteristic of (non-partisan) opinion polls in general: they demonstrated a cleavage between electoral and non-electoral expressions of the people's will and thus delegitimised the authority of political parties and elected representatives as mouthpieces of public opinion.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, this effect must not be overstated, since the *Brandpunt* specials and *Hollands Kwartiertje* were exceptions to the rule that the bulk of all the opinion polls were presented in a rather informative setting.<sup>142</sup> Besides, as will become clear, the events that took place during the elections of 1986 would leave little room for the quiz-like deployment of political surveys.

#### *The debacle of 1986 and thereafter*

Over the course of the second half of the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, systematic critique on opinion polling faded away. Political observers started to accept that opinion research was there to stay and that it was an important aspect of representative democracy.<sup>143</sup> During the election campaign of 1986, all polling institutes (Inter/View, NIPO, NSS, and Intomart) surveyed the popular support of political parties and saw their polls being broadcasted on radio (in programmes such as *In de Rooie Haan*, *Kamerbreed*, and AVRO's *In de Wandelgangen*) and television (in programmes such as *Achter het Nieuws*, *Brandpunt*, and *Bij Koos*).<sup>144</sup> Newspapers eagerly reported on all the various polls.<sup>145</sup>

However, the public opinion vis-à-vis opinion polls made a U-turn after the elections in May. Whereas all polling institutes had predicted a victory for the PvdA, CDA eventually won 54 out of 150 parliamentary seats, two more than the Social Democrats.<sup>146</sup> This debacle revitalised the discussion

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<sup>140</sup> 'Wat mij echter elke week weer verbaast is dat de heren politici, onder wie vaak mannen van grote naam, zover van de basis zijn afgegroeid dat zij veelal niet weten wat er onder het kiezersvolk leeft. Zelfs wat onder hun eigen partijgenoten leeft weten zij niet. Het is niet verwonderlijk dat veel mensen het vertrouwen in de politiek verloren hebben en dat zij deze personen dan ook niet zien als echte volksvertegenwoordigers.': 'Bij Koos', *Het Vrije Volk* (4 April 1985), 5.

<sup>141</sup> Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*, 230.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Leijenaar and Niemöller, 'Tussen peilglas en glazen bol', 27.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 244.

<sup>144</sup> Leijenaar and Niemöller, 'Tussen peilglas en glazen bol', 29.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-40.

<sup>146</sup> Van Merriënboer, 'De prolongatie van premier Lubbers', 136.

about the facts and fables of opinion polls.<sup>147</sup> Paradoxically, the mass media themselves were one of the boosters of the debate: Maurice de Hond and Ger Schild were critically interrogated in their ‘own’ shows (*In de Rooie Haan*, *Bij Koos*, and *Televizier*) whereas editor-in-chief of *Het Vrije Volk* Herman Wigbold disapprovingly argued that polls had influenced the behaviour they only sought to measure. The fact that the polls had declared that Den Uyl would win the elections had encouraged citizens to cast their vote for another party, it was argued.<sup>148</sup> In turn, the pollsters pointed at the influence of the mass media to explain the discrepancy between the polls and the actual outcome. The director of Intomart accused the mass media of failing to present the nuances of the polling research.<sup>149</sup> Maurice de Hond pointed at the influence of the televised debate between the party leaders that was aired the weekend before the elections.<sup>150</sup> A survey after the debate pointed out that CDA leader Ruud Lubbers had performed better than the others, and the so-called ‘bandwagon effect’ (that is, the tendency to vote for the winner) would have pushed voters in the arms of the Christian Democrats.<sup>151</sup> As such, De Hond claimed he was not wrong, but that he had merely stopped polling too early: his final poll had been presented in *In de Rooie Haan* on Saturday afternoon, a day before the final debate had taken place.<sup>152</sup>

A third group of commenters were academics. Several days after the elections, Hoogerwerf proposed that surveys should be prohibited in the last two weeks before the elections for they rendered political news superficial. Communication scientist Anne van der Meiden agreed with Hoogerwerf, and argued that electoral behaviour was much too evasive to predict.<sup>153</sup> More than before, the criticism was not aimed at the alleged abuse of opinion polls as propaganda, but at the corrupting influence of broadcasting (and publishing) opinion polls on political communication *in general*. These arguments demonstrate a broader shift in the way the relation between politics and media was perceived: Dutch democracy had turned into a television democracy, in which the performances of political leaders in political television debates and the quick succession of polls in order to measure the quality of these performances (the so-called ‘horse race journalism’) had rendered the content of their policy proposals irrelevant.<sup>154</sup> Opinion polls became the target point of complaints about the infamous mediocracy and proposals like those of Hoogerwerf and Van der Meiden were aimed at curbing this new balance of powers.

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<sup>147</sup> See: Rudy B. Andeweg, *Tussen steekproef en stembus: beschouwingen over verkiezingspeilingen naar aanleiding van de discrepantie tussen de peilingen en de verkiezingsuitslag van 21 mei 1986* (Leiden, 1988).

<sup>148</sup> Leijenaar and Niemöller, ‘Tussen peilglas en glazen bol’, 42-43; *In de Rooie Haan*, VARA-radio, 24 May 1986; *Bij Koos*, VARA-television, 24 May 1986.

<sup>149</sup> Leijenaar and Niemöller, ‘Tussen peilglas en glazen bol’, 44.

<sup>150</sup> Kaal, ‘De cultuur van het televisiedebat’, 310-311.

<sup>151</sup> ‘De onderzoekers’, *Het Vrije Volk* (22 May 1986), ‘Lubbers: schrik van opiniepeilers’, *Leeuwarder Courant* (23 May 1986); Kaal, ‘De cultuur van het televisiedebat’, 311.

<sup>152</sup> ‘Niet opiniepeilers in de fout, maar kiezers grillig’, *Limburgs Dagblad* (17 July 1986), 5.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Opiniepeilers’, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (22 May 1986), 4; ‘Opiniepeilers bevorderen dat de uitslag toch anders wordt’, *De Telegraaf* (23 May 1986),

<sup>154</sup> Kaal, ‘De cultuur van het televisiedebat’, 313-314.

These arguments resemble criticism abroad. In his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas had also argued that the omnipresence of opinion polls in the public sphere distorts the deliberative public debate. He claimed that polls remove the necessity to verbalise attitudes in discussions and thus render public opinion into something that is dictated by pollsters instead of the public itself.<sup>155</sup> In France, the publication and broadcasting of opinion polls in the week before elections had already been banned since 1977. Proponents of the ban had argued that the publication of polls produced ‘sheep-like movement’ and ‘collective madness’. A prohibition would ‘create a proper environment in which voters could make up their mind’ and thus protected the integrity and fairness of the electoral process.<sup>156</sup> This legislation was often referred to by Dutch critics that also wanted to curb the alleged influence of opinion polls.<sup>157</sup>

The debacle of 1986 marked a definitive shift in the reception of opinion polls. The controversy heralded the definitive establishment of what scholars have called ‘secondary scientisation’, which is a more critical and reflexive attitude towards the results and deployment of social-scientific research.<sup>158</sup> Especially critical political and social scientists would promote the argument that opinion polls had little predictive value and were nothing more than snapshots of voting behaviour.<sup>159</sup> However, things did not change as drastically as this discussion had indicated, for prohibiting polls was perceived as an assault on freedom of expression.<sup>160</sup> Just like polling in the United States did not vanish after Gallup’s failure to predict the outcome of the 1948 Presidential elections, polling remained a fundamental aspect of Dutch electoral culture after 1986. The criticism levelled at the polls could be perceived as a ‘testimony to their importance’ and its persistence demonstrated that opinion polls had effectively squished other ways of gathering social information.<sup>161</sup>

However, in their evaluation of the elections of 1986, the Current Affairs Working Group of the NOS did recognise that it had to take care of a more cautious presentation of polling results in the future.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, in the immediate years after the debacle of 1986, the presentation of opinion polls became more sober, as a frank and more scientific way of presenting polling results could perhaps restore the damaged trust in opinion polls. This can best be recognised in *De Politieke Barometer*, which had already been a segment of *Achter het Nieuws* since 1984, but was turned into an independent television programme in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 1989.<sup>163</sup> In this monthly broadcast, journalist Paul Witteman interviewed De Hond on the latest shifts in voting preference. Following the example of

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<sup>155</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1989), 241.

<sup>156</sup> Cowans, ‘Fear and Loathing’, 94-95.

<sup>157</sup> ‘Val der peilers?’, *Leeuwarder Courant* (27 May 1986), 1.

<sup>158</sup> Ziemann, ‘Introduction’, 4.

<sup>159</sup> ‘Politieke enquêtes laten kiezer koud’, *Het Vrije Volk* (21 August 1989), 2; ‘Opiniepeiling’, *Nederlands Dagblad* (2 September 1989), 3.

<sup>160</sup> ‘De onderzoekers’, *Het Vrije Volk* (22 May 1986), 3.

<sup>161</sup> Igo, ‘Hearing the Masses’, 228.

<sup>162</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 1039, Minutes of a meeting of the ‘Werkgroep Actualiteiten’, 4 June 1986.

<sup>163</sup> See for example: *De Politieke Barometer*, VARA television, 21 May 1989.

the German television programme *Politbarometer*, the style was clinical: the conversation between Witteman and De Hond was straightforward and the presentation of the results was cool and objective, as was the design of the studio in which the interviews took place (see figure 6).<sup>164</sup> It also tied in with the electoral culture that, in contrast with the polarised electoral culture of the 1970s, had become rather calm in the 1980s.<sup>165</sup>



Figure 6: Stills from *De Politieke Barometer*, 27 August 1989. Maurice de Hond (left) is being interviewed by Paul Witteman on his latest polling results.

### *Concluding remarks*

By means of exploring the representation of opinion polls on television and radio and the way it has been received by political observers, I have demonstrated that the emergence of electoral research in the audio-visual mass media has very much shaped Dutch electoral culture. First of all, I have argued that the spread of opinion polls has fuelled changing notions of political representation and democratic legitimacy. Polling brought attention to the wishes and needs of the critical voter (or citizen consumer), that expresses its discontent with politics through volatile electoral behaviour. Some polling formats on television went as far as explicitly confronting politicians with survey results and, as such, delegitimised their authority as representatives of the people. Opinion polls forced political elites to reflect on their style of campaigning, as polling increasingly framed politics as a product that was in need of selling. Moreover, I have demonstrated that the presentation of electoral research has consequently affected the electoral ‘mood’ of that decade: in the 1960s, the emphasis on large-scale surveys boosted the narrative of political crisis, while opinion polls tied in with the atmosphere of personalisation and polarisation in the 1970s and the more matter-of-fact (‘no nonsense’) culture of the 1980s. Furthermore, I have shown

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Kruke and Ziemann, ‘Observing the Sovereign’, 245.

<sup>165</sup> Harm Kaal and Fons Meijer, ‘Het volk in beeld: Nederlandse politici op zoek naar het volk in de jaren zestig en zeventig’, in: Carla van Baalen et al. (eds), *Het volk spreekt: Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis 2017* (Amsterdam, 2017) 65-72, there: 72; Aerts, ‘Emotie in de politiek’, 22.

that the visualisation of statistical information about the electorate has changed as editors of television programmes appropriated digitalised technology.

Yet, despite its firm establishment within the public sphere, I have also shown that opinion polling has never been accepted as an uncontroversial means of representing public opinion. In the 1970s, polls were often perceived as a means of political propaganda that were spread by political parties and ‘their’ broadcasters in order to mould public opinion. In the late 1980s, especially after the events of 1986, polling was increasingly seen as a form of political communication that only focussed on the performances of political leaders in television debates and, as such, diverted attention from the actual content of their policy proposals. Until this very day, complaining about opinion polls has remained a way in which political observers could formulate their broader worries about the political-media complex.

### 3. Nieuw Links and the Disclosure of Electoral Research

#### *Introduction*

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the VARA was repeatedly accused of disclosing the results of political surveys as a means of propaganda in the 1970s: critics argued that the left-wing broadcaster aimed at harvesting positive publicity for the PvdA by demonstrating that the Social Democrats were gaining public support while their electoral opponents were not. Whether these claims were true or not, it cannot be ignored that the VARA was a very active player in the appropriation of electoral research on television and radio. Unlike Great Britain and West Germany, where especially the conservative and liberal media makers had appropriated opinion polls in the 1960s and 1970s, many of the early Dutch audio-visual polling formats were thought up or proposed by progressive media makers.<sup>166</sup> More than that, of the key visionaries behind these proposals many were affiliated (or had been affiliated) to the progressive political movement Nieuw Links ('New Left'). For example, the exit poll was initiated by Marcel van Dam, who eventually became one of the most recognisable politicians of Nieuw Links in the 1970s. Likewise, it was Nieuw Links co-founder Jan Nagel that, in his role as editor of *In de Rooie Haan*, invited Maurice de Hond to present political polls on VARA radio. Both initiatives had quite an impact in a media landscape that had only recently and hesitantly embraced opinion polls as an aspect of political journalism and it is therefore that this chapter analyses why so many of the early polling initiatives on radio and television were initiated by members of Nieuw Links.

In this chapter, the activities of Van Dam and Nagel are analysed in the broader context of Nieuw Links and their position within the political-media complex. Both Van Dam and Nagel were active both in the political party PvdA as well as in the broadcasting world, with the goals they pursued in the one sphere being inspired by and closely connected to the goals they pursued in the other sphere. The disclosure of electoral research on radio and television is studied as part of the movement's broader convictions about political representation. This makes legible how the dissemination of electoral research cohered with the political discourse that Nieuw Links developed as well as other activities they deployed in politics and on television and radio. I argue that the disclosure of opinion polling fitted the type of political communication they pursued.

#### *Implementing progressive politics*

Nieuw Links – never officially founded but in existence from 1966 till 1971 – was established out of dissatisfaction with the political course of the PvdA. The movement disliked the fact that the party, after the right-wing Marijnen cabinet had fallen in 1965, rather willingly had entered into a coalition

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<sup>166</sup> In Great-Britain, newspapers like *Daily Express* and *Times* were pioneers in regards to the proliferation of opinion polls in the media: Beers, *Whose Opinion*, 195. In West Germany, newspapers like *Stern* and *Bild* and state broadcasters ARD and ZDF were among the frontrunners: Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 244.

government with the catholic party KVP without enforcing new elections. They deemed that the party was too conservative and undemocratic and as such had lost touch with both its left-wing roots and its electorate.<sup>167</sup> The group publicly divulged their concerns in the pamphlet *10 over rood: uitdagingen van Nieuw Links aan de PvdA* [Ten over Red: Challenges of Nieuw Links for the PvdA] on 3 October 1966, in which they argued that the PvdA had to adopt a more radical profile and should stop participating in what they believed were the opaque and undemocratic politics of coalition formation. According to Nieuw Links, the PvdA could only regain the trust of the alienated voters when they would, on the one hand, appropriate radical left-wing stances regarding socioeconomic and international politics (and would thus become recognisable as a left-wing party once again) and, on the other hand, only enter into coalition governments in which they could ensure the realisation of a basic list of progressive demands that would be set up before the elections.<sup>168</sup>

As such, the political message of Nieuw Links fitted with a new libertarian notion of democracy that had emerged in the Netherlands during the 1960s.<sup>169</sup> Sympathisers of this idea of democracy were convinced that politics had to be transparent and that citizens had to be given the full opportunity to participate in Dutch political life and, hence, rejected the paternalism, discipline, and authority of the post-war order. This new notion of democracy was given shape and body, for example, during a series of youth protests in the mid-1960s and by the anti-authoritarian political party D'66, which was founded in 1966, successfully participated in the 1967 general elections, and pursued constitutional renewal and the subversion of the paternalist system of party politics.<sup>170</sup> Unlike the founders of D'66, however, the members of Nieuw Links attempted to revitalise the Dutch political order from *within* one of the political parties.

Nieuw Links was relatively successful in affecting and determining the political course as well as the appearance of the PvdA over the course of its four years of existence and during the years after that. During those years, the party adopted a political and electoral strategy that can be recognised as libertarian. The tendency of Nieuw Links towards transparent and open political communication was very much noticeable in the so-called polarisation strategy, coined by Ed van Thijn, which was an indispensable part of the political behaviour of the Social Democrats from 1966 well into the 1970s. As was already mentioned in the first chapter, this strategy made sure that the PvdA would more explicitly and principally emphasise its left-wing signature, by means of, amongst others, setting up a minimum programme of demands before elections, and aligning and collaborating with other progressive parties (such as D'66 and the Christian Radical PPR). It was believed that this strategy would eventually force

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<sup>167</sup> Chris Hietland and Gerrit Voerman, 'Nieuw Links en de Partij van de Arbeid, 1967-1971: een beknopt historisch overzicht', in: Chris Hietland and Gerrit Voerman (eds), *10 over rood 50 jaar later* (Amsterdam, 2016), 15-26, there: 16-17.

<sup>168</sup> Philip van Praag, 'Van gedelegeerd vertrouwen naar georganiseerd wantrouwen: de betekenis van Nieuw Links voor de PvdA', in: Hietland and Voerman, *10 over rood 50 jaar later*, 45-71, there: 59-67.

<sup>169</sup> Wim de Jong, *Van wie is de burger? Omstreden democratie in Nederland, 1945-1985* (Nijmegen, 2014), 167.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-172.

confessional parties to leave the political centre and opt for either the progressive or conservative pole of the political spectre.<sup>171</sup> This strategy was emphasised in 1969, when the so-called anti-KVP resolution was adopted at a PvdA party conference. This resolution, which was written by Nieuw Links strategist Marcel van Dam, dictated that the PvdA would not collaborate with the Catholics during and after the elections to come.<sup>172</sup>

### *Nieuw Links and the use of electoral research*

As we have seen in the previous chapters, political parties appropriated electoral research as source of information that was harnessed to combat the alienation of Dutch voters by measuring what individual Dutch citizens thought and wanted. Nieuw Links also appropriated the results of survey research, mainly as a form of leverage to encourage the PvdA to adopt new forms of political communication and action.<sup>173</sup> Van Dam, for example, had legitimised his anti KVP resolution by means of NIPO polling data.<sup>174</sup>

Van Dam, who had studied sociology at Utrecht University during the first half of the 1960s, was the electoral expert of Nieuw Links. In 1966, before he became aligned with Nieuw Links and the PvdA (until then, he was a passive member of the KVP), he had published on electoral behaviour of the PvdA's electorate in the scientific journal *Sociologische Gids* and left-wing opinion magazine *Vrij Nederland*. On the basis of an opinion poll he had conducted in Utrecht soon after the provincial elections of March 1966, he argued that the PvdA could only win back the trust of its lost voters if it would become a recognisable left-wing, non-elitist party for the 'gewone man' (common man).<sup>175</sup> In the meantime, he had switched from the KVP to the PvdA, being offered a job at the party's think tank WBS, and got affiliated with Nieuw Links.<sup>176</sup> Swiftly, he would deploy his expertise status and knowledge of electoral research to support the political and electoral strategy of Nieuw Links. Together with Tom Pauka, another prominent member of Nieuw Links, Van Dam had conducted an opinion poll amongst members of the PvdA in 1968 and concluded that the ideology and course of Nieuw Links could build on quite some popular support. The poll also demonstrated that PvdA members had a positive view of the other progressive parties, which was beneficial for the initiative of Nieuw Links to

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<sup>171</sup> Van Praag, *Strategie en illusie*, 44-45.

<sup>172</sup> Van Praag, *Strategie en illusie*, 64-66; Marcel van Dam, *Niemand's land: biografie van een ideaal* (Amsterdam, 2009), 85-86.

<sup>173</sup> De Jong, *Van wie is de burger?*, 172.

<sup>174</sup> Huub Wijfjes, 'Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur: Nieuw Links, de VARA en de vernieuwing van het politiek-mediale complex', in: Hietland and Voerman, *10 over rood 50 jaar later*, 73-98, there: 91.

<sup>175</sup> M.P.A. van Dam, 'Ze zitten op het kussen en hebben lak aan ons', *Vrij Nederland* (12 November 1966), 6; John Jansen van Galen, *De gouden jaren van het linkse levensgevoel: het verhaal van Vrij Nederland* (Amsterdam, 2016), 108; M.P.A. van Dam and B. van Steenberghe, 'Het verlies van de Partij van de Arbeid in een oude arbeiderswijk bij de Statenverkiezingen van 23 maart 1966', *Sociologische Gids* 13:6 (1966), 368-382;

<sup>176</sup> Van Dam, *Niemand's land*, 83-84.

collaborate more closely with these parties.<sup>177</sup> The research was controversial, though, for some critics of Nieuw Links argued that the questions had been too suggestive and too complicated.<sup>178</sup>

However, Van Dam did not only deploy electoral research and opinion polls within the framework of party politics, he also brought them in the public sphere, as we have seen, by publishing survey results in journals and opinion magazines. Van Dam's electoral sociology was embedded in a broader endeavour to emancipate the electorate, for he believed that, by making visible and legible the details of voting behaviour, he could show how the working of democracy very much was determined by invisible societal structures.<sup>179</sup> As such, Van Dam was convinced that the results of electoral research should not be kept away from those who had been the focus of the analysis: the people. On the contrary, the peculiarities of voting behaviour had to be disclosed, for that would boost the political consciousness of the electorate and thus liberate it from the regime of political paternalism.<sup>180</sup> Based on this sense of engagement, Van Dam proposed to the NTS that he would start presenting opinion polls on Dutch television.

#### *Marcel van Dam and the exit poll*

In 1967, Van Dam wrote Warry van Kampen, who was programme maker of the NTS and the coordinator of the broadcast of election night on television, that he would be willing to give a prognosis of the election results on election night on the basis of sample research.<sup>181</sup> The NTS traditionally took care of the television broadcast of election night. Up until then, election night broadcasts had mainly consisted of the presentation, little by little, of elections results across the country, alternated with reports and interviews. Van Kampen turned out to be positive in regards to Van Dam's proposal: not only did the NTS like the idea of forecasting the outcome of the elections, they were especially enthusiastic about the idea of being able to present to the audience some data that would offer insight into the electoral behaviour of Dutch citizens.<sup>182</sup> Van Kampen thus accepted the proposal and the NTS offered Van Dam practical and financial support to execute his exit poll.<sup>183</sup>

The research was carried out on the day of the parliamentary elections, 15 February 1967: in agreement with the municipal government of Utrecht, a team of sociologists of Utrecht University conducted the opinion poll at four of the city's polling stations.<sup>184</sup> People were asked to fill in a short

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<sup>177</sup> The results of the poll were eventually published by H.A. van Stiphout, director of WBS, in 1971: 'Proeftuin der democratie', *Socialisme en Democratie* 28:8-9 (1971), 436-459; Wijfjes, 'Kritische confrontatiecultuur', 90.

<sup>178</sup> Van Praag, *Strategie en illusie*, 77.

<sup>179</sup> Van Dam, *Niemand's land*, 79-80.

<sup>180</sup> De Jong, *Van wie is de burger?*, 172.

<sup>181</sup> Van Dam, *Niemand's land*, 81.

<sup>182</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 301, Letter of P. van Kampen to the College of B&W Utrecht, 20 January 1967.

<sup>183</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 301, Letter of P. van Kampen to M.P.A. van Dam, 30 January 1967; Van Dam, *Niemand's land*, 81; it would later turn out that Marcel van Dam had conducted the first exit poll ever in history.

<sup>184</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 301, Letter of P. van Kampen to the College of B&W Utrecht, 20 January 1967; M.P.A van Dam and J. Beishuizen, *Kijk op de kiezer: feiten, cijfers en perspectieven op basis van het Utrechtse kiezersonderzoek van 15 februari 1967* (Amsterdam, 1967), 7-8.

questionnaire, answering questions about the party they had voted for, the party they had supported the previous election, their age, and their confession.<sup>185</sup> Using punch cards, Van Dam was able to swiftly analyse the results of his investigation.<sup>186</sup> Eventually, Van Dam commented on the electoral shifts and presented a prognosis of the eventual outcome live in the television studio between 8.30 and 9 pm.<sup>187</sup>



Figure 7: Still from news show NTS Journaal, 15 February 1967. Marcel van Dam (right) is being interviewed about his exit poll.

In spite of some scepticism, it turned out that Van Dam's prediction had been quite accurate as the final results came out hours later. The day after, newspapers praised the novelty: they wrote of 'an interesting and unique phenomenon' and 'an informative analysis', and *Algemeen Handelsblad* even published an interview with the young researcher about his methodology.<sup>188</sup> As such, Van Dam's status as electoral sociologist became widely confirmed and in the years that followed, his exit poll would become a regular feature of the television broadcasts on election night. For the election night broadcast after the parliamentary elections of 1972, the NOS made available state of the art equipment and expanded the scope of the exit poll: telex connections and high speed printers were used to collect polling data from no less than 21 municipalities.<sup>189</sup> The NOS would take over the responsibility to conduct the exit poll in other ways as well: whereas all aspects of the research were outsourced to Van Dam and his

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<sup>185</sup> Van Dam and Beishuizen, *Kijk op de kiezer*, 78-79.

<sup>186</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 301, Letter from P. van Kampen to J.G. Rietveld, 30 January 1967; Van Dam, *Niemands land*, 81.

<sup>187</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 301, Press release 'Uitslagen verkiezingen Tweede Kamer 1967', 6 February 1967.

<sup>188</sup> 'Verkiezingen en voetbal gingen niet samen', *Friese Koerier* (16 February 1967), 2; 'Duidelijke onduidelijkheid', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (16 February 1967), 2; 'Helpt D'66 stemmen kwam van jongeren tot 30 jaar', *Algemeen Handelsblad* (16 February 1967), 3.

<sup>189</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 1048, Information booklet 'Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 28 april 1971'.

team of sociologists in 1967, five years later, the broadcaster assembled its own team of pollsters for which it even drafted a comprehensive list of instructions.<sup>190</sup>

Thanks to its positive reception, NOS editors perceived the exit poll as a measure to combat the waning public interest in political television, a development that concerned them greatly.<sup>191</sup> Little criticism was therefore expressed in regards to the status of Van Dam's prognoses. When during a meeting of the NOS's Programme Council a member argued that the exit poll was a bit 'too much of a good thing' (*'te veel van het goede'*) as they would devalue the responses of politicians that attended the broadcast as well, his complaints did not gain any approval. Carel Enkelaar, chief of NOS television, justified the prognoses by recognising them as a valuable 'element of competition' (*'competitie-element'*) in regard to the real results.<sup>192</sup> This remark demonstrates that the exit poll was appropriated as a means to give the election night broadcast more cachet: the prognosis provided an element of 'suspense', as it fuelled the question to what extent the prediction had been correct or not.

However, the exit poll was more than a form of padding between the beginning of the election night broadcast and the disclosure of the final results later on. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the NTS/NOS was legally obliged to supply information on, and explain developments in Dutch society. Especially in the early years, the exit poll was an informative way for the state broadcaster to enable understanding of the increasing electoral volatility. Van Dam's analyses repeatedly demonstrated how young voters turned their backs on the traditional people's parties and how religious voters no longer voted according to their confession.<sup>193</sup> The exit poll was one of the first television formats that publicly uncovered the critical or floating voter as a crucial element of Dutch politics.

In turn, Van Dam's status as electoral sociologist smoothly fitted into the public persona he constructed during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as he demonstrated that he was an engaged, left-wing political talent that was not operating at a distance, but truly was a representative of the people and was aware of popular concerns.<sup>194</sup> Because of this reputation, he eventually left television to become State Secretary in the left-wing Den Uyl cabinet. By then, the feature had turned into an indispensable aspect of election night. As of the provincial elections of 1974, Intomart took over the exit poll and became the

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<sup>190</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 1048, Instruction sheet 'N.O.S.-verkiezingsonderzoek', 29 November 1972.

<sup>191</sup> As became clear in a survey that was discussed by the Programme Council: NA, 2.25.70, 838, Report of a meeting of NOS Programmaraad Televisie Sociaal-Maatschappelijke- & Politieke Programma's & Journaal, 28 April 1970.

<sup>192</sup> NA, 2.25.70, 838, Report of a meeting of NOS Programmaraad Televisie Sociaal-Maatschappelijke- & Politieke Programma's & Journaal NOS, 24 April 1970.

<sup>193</sup> 'PAK heeft veruit de beste kansen', *Het Vrije Volk* (19 March 1970), 3; 'Verkiezingsonderzoek van Marcel van Dam: nieuwe stemmen vooral naar D'66, DS'70 en PSP', *Leeuwarder Courant* (29 April 1971), 15.

<sup>194</sup> Wijfjes, 'Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur', 93.

regular polling institute of the NOS.<sup>195</sup> The presenting was transferred to television journalists like Ton Planken (NOS) and Ad Langebent (KRO).<sup>196</sup>

### *Nieuws Links and VARA*

Not only the NTS/NOS was appropriating and promoting new types of political communication: especially VARA shows became an important stage on which Nieuw Links members conveyed a new political culture of critical confrontation.<sup>197</sup> Many members of what in 1966 would become Nieuw Links had been working at the VARA since the late 1950s or the early 1960s. André van der Louw started off as editor of the VARA programme guide in 1957 and became head of the press service in 1963 and Jan Nagel had been employed at the department of radio lectures as of 1961. Nieuw Links members Van Dam, Pauka, Hans van der Doel, Reinier Krooshof, and Han Lammers were or would become affiliated with the VARA one way or another as well.<sup>198</sup> Wijfjes has argued that this overrepresentation of VARA employees in Nieuw Links was not surprising. Due to the growing competition within the media landscape and the Broadcasting Law of 1965 that had linked public funding of broadcasters to their number of members, the VARA was forced to be involved with societal developments structurally in order not to alienate their members from them. Thus, they were aware of – and even familiar with – changes that were going on in society relatively early on.<sup>199</sup>

As a result of increasing prosperity and the emergence of a new generation of editors and journalists, the VARA had developed new types of critical political journalism during 1960s.<sup>200</sup> This can be best recognised in the realisation of *Achter het Nieuws* in 1962, which aimed at thorough truth finding and critically confronting political elites.<sup>201</sup> This new conception of political journalism would sometimes lead to conflicts with the PvdA, for they often did not value the novel ways in which they were approached and framed.<sup>202</sup> Gijs van Hall, mayor of Amsterdam and eminent member of the PvdA, was for example placed in a compromising position when *Achter het Nieuws* broadcasted footage of how the Amsterdam police suppressed young protesters.<sup>203</sup> Over the course of the 1960s, it became gradually accepted that the VARA was no longer the obedient broadcaster that would willingly carry out the wishes of the Social Democrats.

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<sup>195</sup> See for example: NA, 2.19.112, Archief CDA 1980-1988, inv.no. 1406, Intomart BV 'Verkiezingsonderzoek Tweede Kamer 8 september 1982'.

<sup>196</sup> *Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 1977*, NOS television, 25 May 1977, *Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 1981*, NOS television, 26 May 1981; *Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 1982*, NOS television, 8 September 1982; 'Misser van Intomart over grootste partij: voorspelde nek-aan-nek-race uitgekomen', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (9 september 1982), 4.

<sup>197</sup> Wijfjes, 'Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur', 92; Van Dam, *Niemand's land*, 84.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-87.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85.

<sup>200</sup> Bank, 'Televisie in de jaren zestig', 66-67; Brants, 'Van medialogica van publiekslogica?', 240.

<sup>201</sup> Wijfjes, 'Koningin der aarde in het parlement', 240; Mirjam Prenger, *Achter het Nieuws en de geboorte van de actualiteitenrubriek: televisiejournalistiek in de jaren vijftig en zestig* (Amsterdam, 2014).

<sup>202</sup> Wijfjes, 'Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur', 80-81.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

Nieuw Links envisaged a type of political journalism that would go even further than just the critical investigation of political life: they developed formats in which the gulfs within society were visualised and the problems and concerns of the common man were put centre stage. They no longer willingly obeyed to the political agenda as it were, but instead created their own agenda. As such, the type of political communication that members of Nieuw Links developed on television and radio perfectly tied in with their libertarian pleas for more transparency and democracy. One of the most prominent examples of the Nieuw Links type of political journalism was the VARA television programme *De Ombudsman*. This programme was created by Pauka and featured Van Dam as the committed ‘complaints handler’ of the common man. Every episode of *De Ombudsman* investigated how bureaucracy and corporations strangled regular Dutch citizens and focussed on the question of how these problems could be solved. In essence, *De Ombudsman* confronted Dutch politics with its own shortcomings.<sup>204</sup>

Another media format that was influenced by the progressive pursue for transparency and emancipation was the radio show *In de Rooie Haan*, which was characterised by a spontaneous organisation in which political discussions were often alternated with more casual segments.<sup>205</sup> Its editor, Jan Nagel, had been one of the initiators of Nieuw Links. He had chaired the first informal meeting of the movement in June 1966 and published the critical pamphlet *Ha, die PvdA!* in September 1966, in which he held a plea for a rejuvenation of the PvdA and coined the name of ‘Nieuw links’ (then still written with only one capital).<sup>206</sup> His professional career, however, was very much focussed around the VARA, where he had been working since 1961. By introducing *In de Rooie Haan* in 1974, Nagel hoped to combat the flattening or ‘*vertrossing*’ (derived from TROS, which was a Dutch broadcaster that was founded in 1966 and mostly aired a-political entertainment shows) of the media landscape. Nagel believed that politics had to play a more central role on Dutch radio, albeit in attractive and entertaining ways, so that it would be appealing not only to a small section of society but to everyone. At the same time, Nagel did not perceive a neutral type of political radio: he was very much concerned with the question of how his PvdA could be best presented to the listener of the radio shows, which would lead right-wing political observers, like *Elseviers Magazine*, to the observation that *In de Rooie Haan* was the propaganda machine of the political party.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Marcel van Dam, *De ombudsman* (Amsterdam, 1972); Wijfjes, ‘Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur’, 92-93.

<sup>205</sup> Wijfjes, *Biografie van een omroep*, 301-302; Wijfjes, ‘Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur’, 94.

<sup>206</sup> Jan Nagel, ‘Nieuw Links: een politiek-ideologisch avontuur dat slaagde’, in: Hietland and Voerman, *10 over rood 50 jaar later*, 131-146.

<sup>207</sup> Ilja van den Broek, *Heimwee naar de politiek: de herinnering aan het kabinet-Den Uyl* (Amsterdam, 2002), 138-139; Rene de Bok, ‘De rode propaganda-machine’, *Elseviers Magazine* (19 April 1977).

*The NIPO/In de Rooie Haan surveys*

Nagel's endeavour to use radio as a stage to present and popularise progressive politics as well as propagating more transparent types of political communication encouraged him to start broadcasting electoral research in *In de Rooie Haan*. Even though presentation of the results of opinion research on radio and TV had become a more common feature since the late 1960s (as we have seen in the previous chapter), he figured that it all remained rather tame and somewhat secretive. As a member of the board of the PvdA, he was aware of the fact that his party had a subscription to the data of NIPO for internal use, and he disliked the fact that party politicians had control over a type of information that he believed should be public knowledge.<sup>208</sup> Nagel therefore planned to disclose the results of NIPO polls on a monthly basis. He was very ambitious about the new format; he would later argue that 'the eventual goal was to turn the *In de Rooie Haan*/NIPO surveys into an "institute"'.<sup>209</sup> For the analysis and presentation of the data he asked Maurice de Hond, whom he had become acquainted with through his work on the board of the PvdA.

On 9 October 1976, De Hond made his first appearance on Nagel's radio show. To ensure that the poll would have the biggest impact as possible, Nagel carefully prepared the way the results of the opinion poll would be read out. He dictated that hostess Leonie van Bladel introduced De Hond as follows: 'Most of you will not expect the data we are about to disclose. Perhaps, they will have a huge impact.'<sup>210</sup> For several reasons, the poll was indeed quite controversial. First of all, several opinion researchers criticised the method De Hond had employed to analyse the NIPO data, as will become clear in the next chapter. However, what really sparked debate was De Hond's actual prediction that Saturday afternoon: according to his analysis, the progressive parties that formed the backbone of the Den Uyl cabinet would lose ten seats, while the right-wing party VVD would win drastically: from 22 to 39 seats.<sup>211</sup> Various politicians responded to the poll in the media and on Monday, many newspapers reported it as the most important political news of that weekend.<sup>212</sup> However, not everyone was too happy with the results. Van Dam, who by then was State Secretary, responded furiously to the fact that Nagel had deliberately set up the PvdA with such negative press. He was even angrier, since he – wrongfully, as it turned out – believed that the PvdA had paid for the NIPO data used by De Hond.<sup>213</sup> He would later grudgingly argue that De Hond had to be more careful in his appropriation of polling data and should not present his predictions as if it were interim elections.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> 'De onpeilbare kiezer', *Andere Tijden* (27 May 2010), <<https://anderetijden.nl/aflevering/232/De-onpeilbare-kiezer>> (consulted on 10 October 2017).

<sup>209</sup> 'Het uiteindelijk doel was de Rooie Haan/NIPO-enquête (...) tot een instituut te maken': Nagel, *Boven het maaiveld*, 136.

<sup>210</sup> 'De cijfers die we gaan brengen, zullen velen niet verwachten. Ze zullen misschien inslaan als een bom': *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>211</sup> Van Praag, *Strategie en illusie*, 206; Nagel, *Boven het maaiveld*, 138.

<sup>212</sup> 'Kleine partijen gaan verdwijnen', *De Telegraaf* (20 October 1976); 'Verkiezingsonderzoek', *Het Vrije Volk* (9 October 1976), 9.; 'Verkiezingsonderzoek: gigantische winst VVD', *Leeuwarder Courant* (11 October 1977),

<sup>213</sup> Van Praag, *Strategie en illusie*, 206; Wijfjes, 'Naar een kritische confrontatie cultuur', 94.

<sup>214</sup> 'Waarde aangevochten van verkiezingsenquêtes', *Leeuwarder Courant* (6 December 1976), 4.

It was exactly all this publicity that Nagel had hoped for. Although the presentation became more sober in later broadcasts, the monthly NIPO/*In de Rooie Haan* poll proved to be a popular segment of the radio show and arguably raised the popular interest in politics.<sup>215</sup> In his autobiography, Nagel describes how spokespersons of political parties regularly turned to him to ask for the latest polling results.<sup>216</sup> They knew that the public image of their party would be influenced by the *In de Rooie Haan* poll – for better or for worse – and therefore preferred being aware of the ‘electoral share’ of their party beforehand. This demonstrates how the political surveys drew the attention of all actors of Dutch political life and eventually set the tone for the further institutionalisation of polls as a fixed aspect of the public sphere.

### *Concluding remarks*

In the second chapter, we have seen that the disclosure of electoral research fuelled new conceptions of political representation and democratic legitimacy: polls affirmed the idea of voters as active and opiated citizens that could express feelings of discontent, amongst others by switching parties. In this chapter, we have seen that this notion of political representation formed the basis of the left-wing movement Nieuw Links. Just like D’66, Nieuw Links aimed at introducing new forms of political communication in which ‘the common man’ would be granted a central place. Politics had to focus around the direct dialogue between political parties and citizens, and not about secrecy and ‘backroom’ decision-making.

I have analysed how two initiatives that were centred on disclosing electoral research by two prominent of Nieuw Links’s most prominent members cohered with the broader notion of political representation that the progressive movement pursued. Marcel van Dam initiated the exit poll and as such was one of the firsts to draw popular attention to the electoral behaviour of citizens. During the six years that he publicly predicted and analysed the outcome of almost all Dutch elections, he symbolically turned the critical Dutch electorate into a central factor of the Dutch electoral culture. This also applies to the polls that Maurice de Hond presented in *In de Rooie Haan* every month: by turning the NIPO/De Hond surveys into a recurring facet of his radio show, Jan Nagel made sure that the Dutch political elites were under constant scrutiny of the Dutch electorate and were continuously confronted with the electoral implications of their actions. Even though Nieuw Links had already dissolved itself in 1971, these polls echoed the claims that the six authors of *Tien over Rood* had already formulated in 1966.

Both novelties eventually had a major impact on the Dutch image of opinion polling: the exit poll and the surveys of Maurice de Hond have remained a part of the Dutch media until this very day. It could very well be argued that the establishment of opinion polls in Dutch electoral culture is one of the most considerable legacies of the progressive and emancipatory philosophy of Nieuw Links.

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<sup>215</sup> Wijfjes, ‘Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur’, 94.

<sup>216</sup> Nagel, *Boven het maaiveld*, 139

## 4. Establishing Expertise Status, the case of Maurice de Hond

### *Introduction*

One of the eye-catching phenomena of the scientisation of the political was the manifestation of electoral experts. From their academic or institutional backgrounds, these experts established themselves as the interpreters of the behaviour of Dutch voters and formulated advice on how to grasp and approach this essential facet of democracy. Electoral experts, of some sort, are as old as the founding and deepening of democracy since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but have had various backgrounds and have played various roles in political life. As electoral research and opinion polls were discovered by the mass media, some of these experts became public faces. They started to appear on radio and television to make understandable the rather crude statistical data to audiences that were often not acquainted with the theory and practise of survey research. Individuals such as Marcel van Dam, Andries Hoogerwerf, and Maurice de Hond became the central figures between, on one side, the polling institutes and research projects that collected the information on the electorate and, on the other, the mass media that were eager to use and represent polling data in certain formats.

This chapter therefore closely studies the phenomenon of the electoral expert in the mass media. It does so by concentrating on one of the foremost electoral experts from the 1970s and 1980s: Maurice de Hond. He was one of the first electoral researchers that established an expert persona mainly through performances in the mass media and did not turn away from electoral research when he was granted a celebrity status. Van Dam, on the contrary, eventually chose politics over his career as electoral scientist as he entered the Den Uyl cabinet in 1973, only six years after his first appearance as exit pollster. This chapter focuses on the dynamics through which De Hond convinced audiences that he was an authority in the field of electoral research, maps which clients consulted him for expert advice, and analyses how he reacted to the critical assessments of his expertise in the media. Studying how Maurice de Hond established his status as expert through his media performances demonstrates how the mediatisation of electoral research created a platform for individuals to become the relevant intermediaries between the mass media, politics, and the electorate.

### *Experts in an expert society*

Let us first briefly reflect on the position of experts in modern societies. Sociologist Anthony Giddens has observed an increasing dominance of experts in current societies and conceives it as one of the consequences of modernity. He argues that societies rely increasingly on highly professionalised systems of experts not just for the solving of problems, but also for understanding society itself.<sup>217</sup> Likewise, Raphael, as well as other scholars of scientisation, has observed that the rise of social scientific

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<sup>217</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, 1990), 27ff.

experts was interwoven with the formation and deepening of welfare societies since the 1880s.<sup>218</sup> Certain problems, such as working place accidents, unemployment, and rising crime rates, were no longer attributed to individual misbehaviour, but conceived ‘as the symptoms of general risks embedded in the workings of [complex] industrial society, and therefore in need of systemic solutions’.<sup>219</sup> Social experts manifested themselves as the individuals that provided solutions to these problems on the basis of their professional knowledge and specialist know-how.<sup>220</sup> It was therefore that we will see in this chapter that electoral experts were granted an important status especially after the ‘apotheosis’ of the floating voter in the 1960s: the growing electoral volatility raised insecurity among political elites and electoral experts offered guidance by predicting future electoral behaviour. They thus reduced complexity and attempted to eliminate insecurities.

Sociologists of science – especially scholars of the Science and Technology Studies – have emphasised that the authority of experts in modern societies is rather unstable.<sup>221</sup> Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar have thoroughly demonstrated that (scientific) knowledge is not universal, but is always embedded in specific social contexts.<sup>222</sup> The usefulness of expertise for society is thus not inherent to the content of certain types of knowledge, but dependent of whether the expert can convince audiences that their expert knowledge could and should be put to use in specific contexts.<sup>223</sup> Therefore, instead of grasping expertise as the passive outcome of ‘technocratic negotiations between state power, the public sphere, and academic authority’, it is increasingly argued that experts carefully shape these encounters and deploy strategies to convince relevant audiences of the added value of their expert knowledge.<sup>224</sup> Experts have to generate trust and make clear that they possess an exclusive and relevant type of knowledge that could and should be employed for the solving of pressing societal questions and problems – problems that these experts often formulate themselves. This was also the case for De Hond, and it will therefore be studied which strategies he employed to convince the Dutch audience that his methodology to analyse the Dutch electorate was better than others and to attract various groups of clients for his expert knowledge.

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<sup>218</sup> Lutz Raphael, ‘Experten im Sozialstaat’, in: Hans Günter Hockerts (eds), *Drei Wege deutscher Sozialstaatlichkeit. NS-Diktatur, Bundesrepublik und DDR in Vergleich* (München, 1998), 231-258, there: 231-232.

<sup>219</sup> Ziemann, ‘Introduction’, 3-4.

<sup>220</sup> Raphael, ‘Experten im Sozialstaat’, 231.

<sup>221</sup> See: Thomas Broman, ‘The Semblance of Transperency: Expertise as Social Good and an Ideology in Enlightened Societies’, *Osiris* 27:1 (2012), 188-208.

<sup>222</sup> Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton, N.J., 1986).

<sup>223</sup> Nico Stehr and Reiner Grundmann, *Experts: The Knowledge and Power of Expertise* (London/New York, 2011), 112-113.

<sup>224</sup> Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters and Kaat Wils, ‘Introduction: Performing Expertise’, in: Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters and Kaat Wils (eds), *Scientists’ Expertise as Performance: Between State and Society, 1860-1960* (London, 2015), 1-13, there: 3; Stephen Hillgartner, *Science on Stage: Expert Advice as Public Drama* (Stanford, 2000).

### *Electoral experts before Maurice de Hond*

In the Netherlands, the early foundations of electoral expertise were laid as democracy was given shape during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Especially the introduction of general suffrage in 1917 boosted the interest of political elites in accumulating data on the electorate, which was then provided by social geographers (such as J.C. Ramaer and J.P. Kruijt) who mapped the number of votes that political parties had won across the country.<sup>225</sup> Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, social scientists would also appropriate methods from behavioural psychology and survey research in their approach of the electorate. The relevance of such quantitative studies must not be overstated, however: the experts' interpretation of the data remained rather superficial and neither did these studies intensively inform political and/or electoral strategies of political parties. Especially the Social Democrats cared more about the ideological foundations of their political movement (that is: Marxism) than about quantitative data collected by social scientists.<sup>226</sup> However, over the course of the immediate post-war period, social scientists would increasingly become an important body of electoral experts, both within political parties as well as in commercial polling institutes such as NIPO and NSS.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the body of electoral experts was extended to incorporate a new type of electoral expert: the political scientist. The disastrous, worldwide manifestation of totalitarianism during the Second World War had sparked the need to rethink the terms and conditions of healthy democracy. With that in mind, departments of Political Sciences were founded at several Dutch universities: first at the City University of Amsterdam (1948), and later at the VU University (1953) and the Catholic University of Nijmegen (1960).<sup>227</sup> This first generation of political scientists affiliated to these departments was not really familiar with executing quantitative electoral research. Yet, they had close ties with and became important electoral advisers of various Dutch political parties: Jan Barents, who was professor of Political Science at Amsterdam University had been chair of the PvdA's think tank WBS, while professor Jelle de Jong of the VU University was affiliated with the ARP.<sup>228</sup> *Acta Politica*, the first Dutch scholarly journal for political science, which was founded in 1965, would become an important forum for debates about electoral research.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> J.C. Ramaer, *Religie in verband met politiek in Nederland* (Groningen, 1909); Jakob Kruijt, 'Kerkelijkheid en onkerkelijkheid in Nederland (1930) (slot)', *Sociologische Gids* 20:6 (1935), 426-451; De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 115-117; Ron de Jong, Henk van der Kolk, and Gerrit Voerman, *Verkiezingen op de kaart 1848-2010. Tweede Kamerverkiezingen vanuit geografisch perspectief* (Utrecht, 2011), 8.

<sup>226</sup> De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 117.

<sup>227</sup> Hans Daalder, 'Political Science in the Netherlands', *European Journal of Political Research* 20 (1991), 279-300, there: 280-281; see also: Piet de Rooy, 'Oprichters en leermeesters', in: J. Goudsblom, P. de Rooy, and J. Wieten, *In de zevende. De eerste lichting hoogleraren aan de Politiek-Sociale Faculteit in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1998), 1-9.

<sup>228</sup> De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 123-124; Daalder, 'Political Science in the Netherlands', 281; H. Daudt, 'Jan Barents, grondlegger van de Nederlandse politicologie', in: Goudsblom, De Rooy and Wieten, *In de zevende*, 10-23; Peter Bak, *Gedonder in de sociale. Vijftig jaar sociaal-culturele wetenschappen aan de Vrije Universiteit, 1963-2013* (Zoetermeer 2013), 27.

<sup>229</sup> Daalder, 'Political Science in the Netherlands', 283.

Even though the position of electoral experts had consolidated in the first two post-war decades, their influence still did not reach far. Rather than fuelling new conceptions of the electorate, electoral research was mainly aimed at overseeing the parties' standard following and confirming pre-existing party strategies.<sup>230</sup> The Dutch multiparty system allowed Dutch political parties to cling to the self-understanding that they were the representatives of a particular political community for a relatively long time. By contrast, political parties in Great Britain were forced to move beyond a social-determinist understanding of electoral behaviour already in the early 1960s, as the British electoral system required them to gain the support of voters that were not labelled as the basic following of either party in order to be first past the post.<sup>231</sup>

This changed as of the mid-1960s. As we have seen in the previous chapters, political scientists such as Hans Daudt started to grasp electoral behaviour as a political rather than a sociological phenomenon and argued that the motivations and intentions of floating voters had to be taken more seriously. His plea had not fallen on deaf ears: the growing electoral volatility of the 1960s and the electoral earthquakes of 1966 and 1967 opened up the floor for Daudt's generation of electoral experts to become the interpreters of the growing demographic of floating voters. First of all, political parties now seriously paid attention to the advice of electoral experts within their party committees and think tanks. Out of fear that they would lose their dominant position in the Dutch political landscape, most major parties started to develop new electoral strategies to attract the fickle voter. As I have shown in the first chapter, the PvdA was pushed by the research of Ed van Thijn and Nieuw Links to adapt a polarising strategy, while the KVP was encouraged by the researchers of ITS to tone down references to religion in its election propaganda. Also the Dutch government, fuelled by the perception that the election results of 1966 and 1967 were the symptoms of underlying discontent with the political system, felt the need to more closely tap into the peculiarities of electoral behaviour.<sup>232</sup> Not coincidentally, Daudt was asked to become a member of the State Commission Cals/Donner, which was appointed by the centre right De Jong cabinet in 1967 and had to formulate an advice about constitutional and electoral renewal.<sup>233</sup>

As indicated in the previous chapters, Dutch television programme makers eagerly made news out of the results of electoral research. It set in motion a process that could be deemed the 'mediatisation of expertise': the modern mass media became central intermediaries between expertise and the public sphere.<sup>234</sup> Electoral researchers – like all scientists – were no longer solely dependent on more traditional

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<sup>230</sup> De Jong and Kaal, 'Mapping the Demos', 124-127.

<sup>231</sup> Beers, 'Whose Opinion?', 198-199.

<sup>232</sup> Johan van Merriënboer, 'Slotsom', in: Merriënboer and Van Baalen, *Polarisatie en hoogconjunctuur*, 597-613, there: 597-598.

<sup>233</sup> Karin van Leeuwen, *Uit het spoor van Thorbecke: grondwetsherziening en staatsvernieuwing in naoorlogs Nederland (1945-1983)* (Amsterdam, 2013), 104, 270.

<sup>234</sup> Ariane Leendertz, 'Experten – Dynamiken zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik', in: Reinecke and Mergel, *Das Soziale ordnen*, 337-369, there: 359; Peter Weingart speaks of a broader 'Medialisierung der Wissenschaft':

channels and institutions to establish their expertise persona, but could use radio and television to directly attract the attention of an even broader audience. This had already happened in West Germany: in the 1950s, pollster Elisabeth Noëlle-Neumann had become a familiar name through the opinion research she published in the printed press, and as of the 1970s, opinion researchers such as Klaus Liepelt, Werner Kaltefleiter, and Dieter Oberndörfer were asked to comment on the results of their research in newspapers and opinion magazines and thus stepped into the media arena as well.<sup>235</sup> In the Netherlands, professor of political science Hoogerwerf, who made name for himself as electoral researcher at VU University, would become a commonly consulted political observer in current affairs programmes. Moreover, the early career of Marcel van Dam demonstrated that television was not only a channel through which electoral scientists could discuss the results of their research, it also proved to be a stage on which individuals could *become* electoral experts: Van Dam established his status as electoral sociologist first and foremost on the performances he made on television on Dutch election nights. It was exactly this mechanism that would allow Maurice de Hond to start a fruitful career as electoral expert after Van Dam had started his a decade earlier.

#### *Establishing authority*

Maurice de Hond was born in 1947 in Amsterdam and enrolled as a student of Social Geography at Amsterdam University in the 1960s. By the time he graduated in 1971, he had become scientific assistant at the Social Geographic Institute in Amsterdam, where he, amongst others, executed research commissioned by the Dutch government.<sup>236</sup> From 1973 till 1975, he worked for market researcher Inter/View and in 1975, he co-founded Cebeon, a research institute that was concerned with advising policy makers, of which he remained director till 1980.

De Hond showed a great interest in quantitative and statistical research and through his affiliation with the Social Democrats, he became one of the party's electoral advisers. He was member of the electoral research working group of the WBS and because of his affiliation with market researcher Inter/View, he was asked by the PvdA's party board to execute an opinion poll during the local elections of 1974 on the distribution of broadcasting time.<sup>237</sup> Because of his professional approach, De Hond made a good impression on board member Jan Nagel, who figured that De Hond's analytical skills could also be harnessed to broadcast political opinion polls in his radio show. *In de Rooie Haan* subscribed to the statistical data of NIPO, but De Hond was asked to deploy his own method to correct the possible flaws in these data. He did so by running an additional question in the NIPO poll on participants' previous

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Peter Weingart, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit: Zum Verhältnis der Wissenschaft zu Politik, Medien und Wirtschaft in der Wissensgesellschaft* (Weilerwist, 2001), 235-252.

<sup>235</sup> Kruke, 'Der Kampf um die Politische Deutungshoheit', 321.

<sup>236</sup> M. de Hond and J.A. Koetsier, *De tweede woning in Nederland: spreiding en herkomst der eigenaren* (Den Haag, 1970).

<sup>237</sup> Nagel, *Boven het maaiveld*, 135; 'Hoe betrouwbaar is onderzoek kiezersvoorkeur?', *Het Vrije Volk* (18 October 1976), 4.

voting behaviour. By means of the information he acquired through this question, he figured that he could downplay the sample's systemic error and was able to map the voting behaviour more precisely than other pollsters did.<sup>238</sup>

Nagel would later argue that it was only appropriate that De Hond himself would comment on his findings in *In de Rooie Haan*, since it was his personally developed method of correction that had led to certain conclusions. Nagel probably also figured that staging a young and media savvy expert would attract more attention for the predictions compared to when one of the regular presenters had plainly presented them. De Hond's first radio performance as electoral expert attracted quite some criticism, mainly from other electoral experts and market researchers. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Van Dam was quite unhappy with what he deemed the 'irresponsible' handling of the survey data.<sup>239</sup> Van der Meiden even went as far as accusing the VARA of using electoral research for propaganda purposes.<sup>240</sup> Most striking, however, was De Hond's lingering discussion with Wil Foppen, which was openly played out in both the Dutch press and *Acta Politica*. Two days after the *In de Rooie Haan* broadcast, Foppen argued in the magazine of Erasmus University of Rotterdam, *Quod Novum*, that De Hond's method was lacking reliability, since it had not been clear how big his sample had been and what corrections he had applied. Since De Hond's predictions had triggered public debate and Foppen had established himself as a respected electoral expert through his work on the NKO several years earlier, Foppen's criticism was picked up by several Dutch newspapers.<sup>241</sup> In an interview with *Het Vrije Volk* a week later, he was given the opportunity to expand on the nature of his disapproval.<sup>242</sup> Firstly, he argued that the NIPO sample was unsuitable for the study of political behaviour. Since NIPO's omnibus survey (of which De Hond's questions were part) was mainly aimed at market research for enterprises and corporations, Foppen reckoned that certain relevant demographic segments were underrepresented in the data, since the opinion of housewives was deemed more useful for market research than the opinion of, for example, students, youngsters, and soldiers. Secondly, Foppen found that De Hond's questions were not transparent: when De Hond asked 'what they had voted during the last elections', he for example did not clarify what elections he meant. Thirdly, Foppen argued that the corrections De Hond applied to correct the untrustworthy data were hardly scientific. 'A student would fail if he would use De Hond's method', he concluded rather straightforwardly. Meanwhile, Maurice de

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<sup>238</sup> De Hond, 'De meting van politieke voorkeur', 90-110.

<sup>239</sup> 'Twijfels aan waarde van opiniepeilingen', *Limburgs Dagblad* (11-12-1976), 4.

<sup>240</sup> 'Waarde aangevochten van verkiezingsenquêtes', *Leeuwarder Courant* (6 December 1976), 4.

<sup>241</sup> 'Kritiek op methode stembusonderzoek', *NRC Handelsblad* (13 October 1976), 2; 'Betrouwbaarheid "schokkend" verkiezingsonderzoek betwijfeld', *Nederlands Dagblad* (13 October 1976), 7; 'NIPO-onderzoek verkiezingen zeer twijfelachtig', *Leeuwarder Courant* (13 October 1976), 7.

<sup>242</sup> 'Hoe betrouwbaar is onderzoek kiezersvoorkeur?', *Het Vrije Volk* (18 October 1976), 4; Foppen would more elaborately set out these errors of De Hond's methodology in *Acta Politica*: J.W. Foppen, 'De manipulatie van "politieke voorkeur": kwade opzet en/of knullige onkunde?', *Acta Politica* 12 (1977), 111-138.

Hond wrote several articles to explain his method and to refute Foppen's allegations, but it was not as if the two would reach a compromise.<sup>243</sup>

The rather emotional and personal controversy was a consequence of the mediatisation of expertise. A side effect of the fact that the mass media established itself as an important stage for scientists to demonstrate their expertise was that their expertise could be questioned and placed under suspicion.<sup>244</sup> Publicly conveyed expertise often harvested counter-expertise and the mass media enthusiastically offered the stage where experts and counter-experts could fight their battles. The mass media thrived by magnifying conflicting opinions and boosting polarisation. It could be argued that the mediatisation of expertise affected the trustworthiness and authority of these individuals, as their claims were increasingly scrutinised and even proven wrong by critics. Expertise was not taken for granted and could be uncovered as ideologically corrupted; we have seen in the second chapter that the appropriation of electoral research in the 1970s was more than once perceived as a form of political propaganda.<sup>245</sup> However, I would rather argue that the mediatisation of expertise led to different ways in which expertise could be established. The controversy that was sparked by De Hond's first performance on Dutch radio did not nip his career in the bud, on the contrary; it allowed him to manifest himself to the Dutch audience as the new kid on the block. In this respect, the German sociologist of science Peter Weingart speaks of a 'discursivation' of knowledge: conflicts like those between De Hond and Foppen were not aimed at (re-)establishing a certain scientific consensus, but rather at making valid new types of expertise.<sup>246</sup> Especially for underdogs, controversy thus functioned as a resource of legitimacy, allowing them to distinguish themselves from established scholars and generate attention for their new 'product'. Especially in relation to the rather scientific and nuanced way in which experts like Foppen analysed electoral behaviour, De Hond could present himself as someone who was not bothered by the straight-jacket of scientific mores and dared to go further and formulate predictions on the basis of the data he analysed.

Yet, De Hond's key to success eventually laid in the question of whether he could correctly predict the outcome of the elections – or, at least, could convince the audience that he had done so. Since the 'real' elections were the only moments in which prognoses could be cognitively tested, electoral experts such as De Hond had to carefully manoeuvre themselves through these encounters with observers (such as journalists) using the opportunity to critically juxtapose experts' predictions with the actual outcome. For De Hond, convincing them that his prognosis corresponded with the outcome of the elections was the only means through which he could 'cash in' all the ambitious claims he had made on the basis of his methodology in the run-up to the elections. He eventually quite accurately predicted the

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<sup>243</sup> De Hond, 'De meting van politieke voorkeur'; M. de Hond, 'Antwoord op de kritiek van Foppen', *Acta Politica* 12 (1977), 139-148.

<sup>244</sup> Leendertz, 'Experten', 360-361.

<sup>245</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986); Ziemann, 'Introduction', 4.

<sup>246</sup> Peter Weingart, *Wissenschaftssoziologie* (Bielefeld, 2003), 101; Leendertz, 'Experten', 365.

outcome of the parliamentary elections of 1977: four days before the elections, he foresaw that the PvdA, CDA and VVD would respectively win 48, 47, and 27 parliamentary seats, while the electorate eventually granted them 53, 49, and 28 seats.<sup>247</sup> ‘My method has proved its worth’, he declared in the press the day after the elections. ‘The outcome of the elections has confirmed my latest prognosis.’<sup>248</sup> The extra five seats for the PvdA that De Hond had not anticipated were justified by him through pointing at the unexpected high turnout that was boosted by ‘the beautiful weather’.<sup>249</sup>

As De Hond continued to be the electoral expert of *In de Rooie Haan* after 1977, he was aware of the fact that his authority and expert status remained closely connected to the predictive value of his prognoses. His last prognosis before the parliamentary elections of 1981 therefore consisted of quite a broad margin (PvdA and CDA would both win between 41 and 48 seats, for example), thus reducing the chance that he did not hit the spot.<sup>250</sup> Paradoxically, he acknowledged that his prognoses were not predictions but only indications of future voting behaviour by only presenting margins. He had his finest moment one year later. De Hond was the only pollster that correctly predicted that the Social Democrats would win the early parliamentary elections, as NIPO and Intomart foresaw a victory for the Christian Democrats.<sup>251</sup> Even though De Hond had significantly underestimated the number of votes that PvdA and CDA would get, the image that De Hond was the Netherlands’ best pollster endured and confirmed De Hond’s status as the foremost electoral expert.<sup>252</sup>

### *Attracting audiences*

However, simply being an authority on the subject of electoral survey research did not make De Hond an electoral expert per se: expertise can only be established when one succeeds in convincing audiences that she or he does possess a *relevant* type of knowledge that should be harnessed by those audiences to achieve certain goals. To put it differently: everybody can know a lot about something, but one only becomes an expert when clients are willing to consult you for your expert opinion.

In general, as has already been argued, the growing demand for political experts like De Hond must be grasped as a consequence of an increasing complexity of politics. The growing market of critical floating voters that made elections rather unpredictable as well as the specialisation of the political process since the late 1970s had rendered the public dependent of experts that were able to make Dutch politics clear and comprehensible. Experts like De Hond offered guidance in times of growing political insecurity by offering analyses and predictions of electoral behaviour, and various audiences were keen on turning to him for prognoses and expert advice.

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<sup>247</sup> ‘Blijkens verkiezingsenquêtes PvdA en CDA aan nek’, *Limburgs Dagblad* (23 May 1977), 1.

<sup>248</sup> ‘De Hond: mijn methode heeft waarde bewezen’, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (26 May 1977), 4.

<sup>249</sup> ‘Winst PvdA vooral uit grote steden en stedelijk platteland’, *Leeuwarder Courant* (26 May 1977), 3.

<sup>250</sup> ‘Jongste verkiezingsenquête: grote winst voor VVD’, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (23 May 1981), 1.

<sup>251</sup> ‘Voorspelde nek-aan-nek-race uitgekomen’, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (9 September 1982), 4.

<sup>252</sup> This is, for example, acknowledged by historian Joop van den Berg in a review of De Hond’s first book: ‘Maurice de Hond en de Nederlandse kiezer’, *Socialisme en Democratie* 43.4 (1986), 120-121.

First of all, the VARA was eager to keep De Hond on air as their permanent political observer. We have seen that Nagel intended to turn De Hond's *In de Rooie Haan* polls into an undisputed source of information that would be consulted by all those who were in need of information on the 'state of play' of the electorate. In his autobiography from 2001, Nagel concluded that the polls indeed became an institution, and he does rightly so: De Hond's polls became one of the most popular segments of the radio show and kept on sparking public attention.<sup>253</sup> De Hond thus became a small but much appreciated component of the switch towards a more interpretive and analytical type of political journalism, that did not only focus on the formal political action, but on the broader balance of powers that surrounded it.<sup>254</sup>

De Hond's presentation style very much contributed to his popularity: his capability to translate rather crude statistical information and complex political situations into comprehensible and newsworthy snap-shots made him very media-savvy. This quality especially proved to be useful when De Hond also became the recurring pollster of *Achter het Nieuws* from 1982 onwards: whereas the broadcasts of *In de Rooie Haan* took two hours, *Achter het Nieuws* did not even last over an hour. De Hond thus had to summarise the results of his polls in no more than five to ten minutes. He did a more than satisfactory job, since Nagel eventually employed De Hond's expert status in a number of VARA's radio and television formats: besides *In de Rooie Haan* (1976-1988) and *Achter het Nieuws* (1982-1992), he was a recurring guest in *Bij Koos* (1984-1986) and the main act of *Politieke Barometer* (1989).<sup>255</sup> As such, De Hond turned into a recognisable VARA celebrity, who was not only known for his recurring political prognoses, but also for his knowledge on computational technology and his participation in entertainment formats like AVRO's *Sterrenslag*.<sup>256</sup>

Even though he cancelled his PvdA membership in 1986, De Hond continued to interfere in the debate on the party's political course well into the 1990s.<sup>257</sup> Yet, his outspoken affiliation with left-wing politics did not drastically affect his trustworthiness. Apart from some incidental and often implicit allegations that De Hond's polls were influenced by his political affiliation – after De Hond's failed prognosis of 1986, CDA minister Gerrit Braks for example disapprovingly alluded to the pollster's political affiliation when he said: '*Maurice de Hond is in zijn rooie hemd gezet*' (which translates as both 'Maurice de Hond is put to shame' and 'Maurice de Hond is wearing a red shirt') – the sincerity of his expertise was not questioned.<sup>258</sup> By no means was he just the electoral expert for the Social Democrats, on the contrary: behind the scenes, political parties of various ideological affiliations were subscribed to the De Hond's opinion polls and asked him for expert advice in their quests for the biggest

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<sup>253</sup> Nagel, *Boven het maaiveld*, 139; Wijfjes, 'Naar een kritische confrontatiecultuur', 94.

<sup>254</sup> Wijfjes, 'Koningin der aarde in het parlement', 243.

<sup>255</sup> Nagel, *Boven het maaiveld*, 139.

<sup>256</sup> 'Sterrenslag: drie landen in het strijdperk', *Leeuwarder Courant* (11 August 1987), 2.

<sup>257</sup> In 1991, he was part of the so-called *Rode Hoed-groep* (named after the debating centre in Amsterdam) with three other prominent Social Democrats, which publicly criticised Wim Kok's financial plans, see: Chris Hietland, 'Van rebellengroep tot partijelite? André van der Louw en de kerngroep van Nieuw Links', in: Hietland and Voerman, *10 over rood 50 jaar later*, 99-130, there: 125.

<sup>258</sup> 'Analyse', *De Telegraaf* (24 May 1986), 24.

share of the electoral market. He had proven in the media that he was able to grasp the peculiarities of voting behaviour and political parties were willing to harness this expertise as they were confronted with growing insecurities when it came to their electoral position. When De Hond became director of Inter/View in 1980, he no longer had to make use of NIPO's data and obtained the means to execute his own surveys. In this new institutional context, he amongst others developed the *Actualiteitenscanner*, which – just like NIPO's omnibus survey – was a continuous survey on various current issues on which various political parties had a subscription.<sup>259</sup> Moreover, he also conducted commissioned surveys into specific facets of electoral behaviour: as of 1983, he for example semi-continuously surveyed the 'image' (in English) of the CDA in order to reveal to the Christian Democrats the reasons behind the party's steady loss of electoral support.<sup>260</sup> CDA's electoral strategy of 1986 was to a high extent built on the findings of this research, as it was focused around harnessing positive aspects of the party's image (such as the profile of party leader Ruud Lubbers) to convince the more 'indifferent' (*onverschillige*) voters to vote for them.<sup>261</sup>

De Hond thus was no ideological hardliner; he rather perceived the information he gathered as an economic commodity and he manifested himself as somewhat of a 'trader' of expert advice: for those who were willing to pay, he was willing to deliver. Yet, this adviser role was very much related to his celebrity status in the media, for it can be argued that De Hond reaped what he sowed in the media: he continuously demonstrated the constant fluctuations of electoral behaviour on air, whilst offering political parties the tools to navigate themselves through this rocky electoral landscape behind the scenes.

### *Overcoming failure*

As we have seen in the second chapter, the parliamentary elections of 1986 were a low point in De Hond's career as electoral expert. He failed to predict the outcome of the elections and was therefore both criticised and ridiculed: 'counter experts' Hoogerwerf and Van der Meiden made the case for prohibiting the polls in the last weeks before the elections and the usefulness of polling was publicly questioned by various political observers.<sup>262</sup> Besides, De Hond's alleged unbiased persona was also at stake, for some critics deemed it curious that De Hond had wrongfully predicted a victory for the PvdA, the political party he was closely affiliated to. For example, Rob Hoogland, journalist of *De Telegraaf*, commented as follows: 'How does he expect to create an image of objectivity when he also is a member of the PvdA's campaign committee?'<sup>263</sup> Potentially, Maurice de Hond could have

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<sup>259</sup> NA, 2.19.112, 1406, Letter from M. de Hond to C. Bremmer, 10 June 1982.

<sup>260</sup> NA, 2.19.112, 1406, Letter from M. de Hond to C. Bremmer, 15 August 1983.

<sup>261</sup> NA, 2.19.112, 1030, 'Een gerichte campagne', January 1986.

<sup>262</sup> Kaal, 'Cultuur van het televisiedebat', 312.

<sup>263</sup> 'Hoe wil je er in vredesnaam in slagen om een imago van objectiviteit te creëren als je zitting neemt in de campagnecommissie van de PvdA?': 'Analyse', *De Telegraaf* (24 May 1986), 24.

permanently lost his credibility in those days. Yet, he overcame this moment of failure by carefully shaping the encounters he had in the period that followed election night.

One of the factors that De Hond benefited from was the fact that he was not the only pollster that had failed to foresee a victory for the Christian Democrats. As figure 7 demonstrates, all institutes expected that the Christian Democrats would gain between 30.5% and 31.5% of the votes, whereas they actually received 34.6% of the votes, 3 to 4% more than the predictions. In the case of the PvdA, however, De Hond had been quite accurate: he was the only one that foresaw that not 36% but less than 34% of the voters would cast their ballot for the Social Democrats.

	Inter/View (De Hond)	NIPO	NSS	<b>Real outcome</b>
CDA	31,5%	31,1%	30,5%	<b>34,6%</b>
PvdA	33,5%	35,9%	35,7%	<b>33,3%</b>
VVD	18,4%	16,5%	18,2%	<b>17,4%</b>
D66	7,0%	6,5%	7,0%	<b>6,1%</b>

Figure 8: The prognoses of several polling institutes and the actual outcome of the 1986 general elections.<sup>264</sup>

His reputation could have been drastically influenced if he had been beaten by the other institutes, as international polling history had already demonstrated. In 1965, the West German pollster Emnid had to admit defeat when its competitor, the Institut für Demoskopie, had been the only pollster to foresee a comfortable majority for the CDU. One year after the election night scandal, Emnid was sold off to another market researcher and quit political opinion polling.<sup>265</sup> This was not the case with the Dutch election night scandal of 1986, and – even though De Hond had been the most prominent pollster by far – the criticism was only scarcely aimed at him personally and more at the representation of polls in general.

Moreover, he deployed a well thought-out explanatory frame to clarify the inaccuracy of his polls. As we have seen, he argued that his latest poll had not been able to take into account the influence of the crucial televised debate that was aired on the Sunday before election day. Had he been able to conduct a poll after the debate, then he probably could have indicated that Lubbers had swayed a great deal of the floating voters to vote for him. The bottom line of De Hond's argument was not that his polls had failed, but that he merely had stopped polling *too early* – the public should not stop trusting him, but should trust him even more. This line of reasoning gained traction as many others also perceived the televised debate as the game changer of the election campaign, and in the long run, Maurice de Hond remained one of the country's most influential electoral experts. De Hond's traditional clientele of media

<sup>264</sup> Leijenaar and Niemöller, 'Tussen peilglas en glazen bol', 34.

<sup>265</sup> Kruke and Ziemann, 'Observing the Sovereign', 244.

and political parties did not let go of their electoral guide, as the election night scandal had demonstrated that the share of floating voters was bigger than ever and could lead to unforeseen outcomes.

### *Concluding remarks*

In this chapter I have demonstrated how Maurice de Hond became one of the foremost electoral experts through his performances in various radio and television shows. In the beginning, he appropriated the media platform to present himself to the Dutch public as the new kid on the block and made clever use of the essential dynamics of the conflict-oriented mass media to establish his expert persona. While the VARA clung to him as their media-savvy political observer and deployed him in various formats, De Hond eventually materialised his expert persona by becoming one of the directors of market researcher Inter/View. This new institutional affiliation allowed him to establish himself as an independent expert that did not only make appearances in the mass media, but also became an important adviser of not only the PvdA, but of the CDA as well.

De Hond's career demonstrates, firstly, how the subsystems of politics, media, and science merged into one-another. His background as a social geographer and market researcher, and his affiliation with the Social Democrats made Nagel invite De Hond to become the electoral expert of *In de Rooie Haan*, but the media performances itself eventually proved to be the real foundation on which his further career was built. In the 1980s, after he established his expert status, he would become a political observer on the cutting-edge between politics in the mass media. Moreover, I have demonstrated how De Hond's expert status was a component of growing electoral insecurity. By means of analysing and advising on the increasingly complex electoral behaviour of the Dutch citizenry, and thus reducing complexity and uncertainty, he offered guidance to the political parties and mass media that had to respond to this new situation one way or another.

Finally, I have demonstrated that rhetoric and self-fashioning have played an essential role in De Hond's transformation into an expert. Because of the carefully shaped encounters with counter-experts and other critics, the intelligible flaunting of his accurate predictions, and his understandable and media-savvy way of explaining statistics he was able to bypass his 'competitors' and manifest himself as the Netherland's most well-known electoral experts.

## Conclusion

Dutch post-war political history cannot be written without contemplating on the effects of electoral research. However, the scientisation of the political did not stop at the offices of government institutions and political parties, but continued as broadcasters started deploying opinion research in various television and radio formats. In this thesis, it has been demonstrated that the public dissemination of survey results during election nights on television and in current affairs programmes, talk shows, and political radio shows introduced to the wider Dutch audience quantitative conceptions of electoral behaviour. The dominance of opinion researchers' polling results in public broadcasting detached political polls from partisan usage and transformed it into a public 'language' that came to dominate political communication. Over the course of several decades, viewers and listeners got used to constantly being confronted with anchor-men, journalists, and experts presenting the results of 'this-or-that survey that shows that umpty-ump percent of the Dutch people will vote for one or other political party if today was election day'.

As has become clear in this thesis, the mediatisation of electoral research was rooted in the perception of political crisis in the second half of the 1960s. Political elites and political observers were confronted with – and had to respond to – growing and unprecedented electoral volatility. For state broadcaster NTS (and later NOS), electoral research offered a means to objectively explain the reasons that underlay the particularities of voting behaviour. Yet, I have also demonstrated that the appropriation of electoral research by broadcasters was not merely a reaction to the rapid social change of the 1960s, on the contrary, the results of political surveys were often seized to create and echo the narrative of political crisis. The investigations into the political motivations and attitudes of the electorate showed how wavering voting behaviour was not a symptom of indifference but of discontent. The coverage of survey research thus fuelled the notion that the declining support for the traditional people's parties and the rise of small parties were the manifestations of popular dissatisfaction that could only be combatted by political innovation and more appealing forms of political communication. It was not surprising therefore that political movements that were aimed at introducing and popularising a new political culture, like Nieuw Links, were especially keen on disclosing the results of survey research to a wider audience.

The demand of quantitative information of electoral behaviour increased as the floating voter did not disappear in the 1970s. More and more broadcasters found that opinion polls could be harnessed to continuously map the fluctuations of the electoral market and started to commission surveys at one of the Netherlands' market researchers. Especially the VARA realised that the continuous representation of survey results allowed them to manifest themselves as the intermediaries between politics and the

public sphere: VARA's *In de Rooie Haan* was among the first formats to structurally appropriate and present the results of opinion polls.

The utilisation of electoral research by broadcasters left its mark on Dutch electoral culture. Whereas Dutch elections were often characterised by an absence of political conflicts in the 1950s – save the rather rocky election campaign of 1956 –, opinion polls on radio and television brought into play the electorate as a central factor of electoral culture. An important facet of this changing electoral culture was the rise and manifestation of electoral experts like Marcel van Dam, Andries Hoogerwerf, and, especially, Maurice de Hond. As election results became more uncertain and electoral behaviour more complex, there was a growing need for reliable individuals that were able to paint a comprehensible picture of the growing market of floating voters. By analysing statistical information and predicting future voting behaviour, these experts offered guidance not only to political parties – which aimed at attracting the biggest share of the floating voter – but to broadcasters as well. Dwelling on their expertise, they informed the Dutch audiences at home about the ins-and-outs of Dutch politics in an understandable fashion.

The constant disclosure of survey results also changed electoral culture on a much deeper level, as it fuelled new notions of political representation and democratic legitimacy. The critical, floating voter that became visible through the opinion polls indicated that political identities were no longer formed around socio-religious parameters (such as confession or class), but around individuals' needs and wishes. The constant visualisation of the Dutch electoral market through monthly or weekly opinion polls boosted the conception that citizens critically followed politics and switched parties as if it were a consumer good – voters 'became' citizen consumers. By constantly commissioning surveys and disclosing the results, broadcasters could confront political elites with citizens' demands. Some formats even went further and literally confronted politicians with their incapability to articulate what the critical voter wanted and needed.

This changing notion of political representation drastically influenced the ways in which election campaigning was reflected on. This new notion entailed that parties could win votes if they would put forward those issues that prevailed among the market of floating voters. Especially when pollsters started to measure the popularity and reliability of individual politicians, establishing the conclusion that the personalities of political leaders affected political parties' chances during elections, parties had to abandon their social-determinist notions of political representation and increasingly started to grasp politics in terms of a product that had to be sold. They began to tap into a body of communication and marketing experts that helped perfect politicians' performances in the media. The idea that elections are won on television was further confirmed when the discrepancy between the polls and the outcome of the general elections in 1986 was explained through the good performance of Ruud Lubbers in the last broadcasted debate.

Opinion polls thus played an important role in what has been interpreted by Manin as the shift from a party democracy towards an audience democracy. The mass media had become the main bearers of public opinion and politicians, hoping to claim a substantial part of the volatile voters market, spoke to the people through these mass media channels, replacing the representatives who claimed to speak on behalf of their socio-religious constituency. However, there is one shortcoming to Manin's assessment: Manin's audience democracy presupposes a passive electorate that cannot be easily matched to the trope of the critical citizen consumer that expresses its political opinions through its electoral choices. On the contrary: the constant representation of survey results has created an atmosphere of vigilance in which political presentations are continuously assessed and in which the 'voice of the people' resonates more than ever. Opinion polls have thus become a form of counter democracy through which citizens' wishes and needs are constantly communicated.

Even though programme makers and journalists enthusiastically embraced political surveys as an aspect of political journalism, I have demonstrated that opinion polls were never completely accepted as fully objective representations of public opinion. Firstly, the fact that predictions based on sample research often turned out to be inaccurate boosted the awareness that polls were only an indication and not a forecast of electoral behaviour. When the representation of polling results was rather discontinuous in the 1970s, polling was not really taken seriously as a source of information on electoral behaviour. Also when the major polling institutes failed to predict the outcome of the 1986 general elections, political observers argued that voting behaviour is too evasive to predict.

Secondly, surveys were sometimes perceived as a form of political propaganda. The Dutch broadcasting landscape was rather polarised in the 1960s and 1970s and a lot of survey initiatives for radio and television were thought up on the cutting edge of politics and media (Van Dam's exit polls, the *In de Rooie Haan* polls). Especially the VARA, which was a key player in the disclosure of electoral research, was often accused of manipulating survey results to influence public opinion. Also the fact that Maurice de Hond was closely affiliated to the PvdA sometimes gave rise to the critical scrutiny of his expertise. These allegations demonstrate that many contemporary political observers still assumed an instrumental relationship between broadcasters and political parties, even though – as media historians often point out – the former lifted themselves from official partisan patronage in the 1960s.

Thirdly, it was argued that polling *in general* corrupted political communication. In the 1960s, the dutiful broadcast executive J.W. Rengelink already feared that the presentation of polls too close to the elections could affect electoral behaviour. This argument was raised more frequently as the presence of opinion polls in the coverage of election news increased. Especially after 1986, social and political scientists displayed a critical attitude towards the alleged mediatisation of Dutch politics. The constant stream of opinion polls would distract from the actual content of political parties' policy proposals and only focus on the performances of political leaders and their relative chances of winning the elections ('horse race journalism').

In general, the mediatisation of electoral research went hand in hand with the emergence of a more critical stance towards the deployment of scientific expertise in society ('secondary scientisation'). Complaining about the inaccuracy of surveys and its undesirable influence on the public debate has become as much an aspect of Dutch electoral culture as opinion polls themselves.

How does all this compare to developments in other Western European countries? I have demonstrated that survey based predictions of Presidential elections had already become common practise in the United States in the 1940s and that the American pollster George Gallup played an important role in the popularisation of survey research in Western Europe. It has also become clear that the appropriation of opinion research by the Dutch mass media happened more gradually in comparison to other countries. The British press already paid considerable attention to opinion research since the 1950s, while in West Germany, opinion polls had become a firmly established part of the media coverage of election campaigns between 1965 and 1972. In the Netherlands, it would take until the second half of the 1970s before opinion polls became a recurring and institutionalised aspect of electoral culture. The answer to this brief 'delay' may be found in the paternalist nature of the Dutch political-media complex until the 1960s, which was expressed through a hesitant representation of survey data. Only when journalists and editors themselves started to convey a more critical attitude towards traditional forms of political communication in the second half of the 1960s was the stage cleared for a more structural deployment of political opinion polls. Yet, I have also shown that the suspicious attitude towards polls was not a typical Dutch feature and could also to be found abroad. In France, the broadcasting and publication of polls was legally prohibited from 1977 till 2002, in turn inspiring Dutch critics of opinion polling to argue for similar legislation.

I would like to end this conclusion with a call for further research. Given the rather limited scope of this thesis, there are some aspects of the mediatisation of electoral research that have remained understudied. I have not researched to what extent the new conceptions of political representation and political identity formation have influenced the way in which citizens reflected upon themselves as voters. As Sarah Igo has demonstrated for the United States, the study of letters that are written in response to the publication of survey results and sent to market researchers (or broadcasters) can show how societies described and observed themselves.<sup>266</sup> It could be analysed more structurally if the constant stream of polling data on television and radio for example made Dutch citizens more aware about the parameters of their own electoral behaviour, or to what extent they trusted the social scientific representation of Dutch society.

The presence of experts in modern Dutch society should be studied more extensively as well. I have only focussed on the electoral expert, but – as sociological research has demonstrated – many segments of modern society has seen the emergence of groups of scientific experts that could reduce

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<sup>266</sup> Igo, 'Hearing the Masses', 224-230.

difficulty and minimise insecurity: economics, mental health, communication, and even leisure. Historical research on how these various expert groups have come into being and how they have legitimised their expertise provide an valuable insight into the formation of the modern, complex societal structures in which these individuals were manoeuvring.

Finally, the workings of other ‘counter democratic’ channels through which the voice of the people was communicated should be studied more thoroughly, such as *voxpops* (journalists interviewing ‘the man on the street’) and letters and e-mails to politicians. Just like opinion polls, these communicative practices offered (and still offer) representations of public opinion beyond the official institutions of political representation. Studying these practises will allow for a better understanding of how notions of representation and democratic legitimacy were constantly publicly negotiated.

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## Summary

This thesis does not discard opinion polls as an inferior aspect of political communication, but historically studies how the appropriation of electoral research by broadcasters has influenced notions of political representation and democratic legitimisation and has changed Dutch electoral culture between 1965 and 1989. In the first chapter, the emergence of sample based opinion research in the United States and Western Europe is outlined. The modern opinion poll was invented in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and popularised by George Gallup. Swiftly, it became an important method to gather information on electoral behaviour and political parties in Great Britain, France, West Germany, and the Netherlands appropriated it. The Dutch printed press was rather hesitant to publish the results of opinion research at first, since they were afraid that this would destabilise the public sphere and delegitimise political parties' authority. In the second chapter, I have analysed how broadcasters appropriated and presented electoral research to the Dutch audiences. The discovery of electoral research by broadcasters was rooted in the perception of political crisis in the second half of the 1960s: while the NOS aimed at explaining the increasing electoral volatility by interviewing electoral researchers, the conflict oriented journalists of other broadcasters appropriated electoral research to further echo feelings of discontent with the political system. As broadcasters more structurally started to deploy political surveys in the 1970s and 1980s, this fuelled the notion of voters as citizen consumers. Polls on the popularity and reliability of individual politicians as well as 'the debacle of 1986' also gave rise to the personalisation of electoral culture. In the third chapter, it is demonstrated that the mediatisation of electoral research was rooted in the progressive political movement Nieuw Links (1966-1971). Their pleas for more democratic and transparent types of political communication were expressed in two impactful proposals regarding the disclosure of electoral research: both the exit poll (Marcel van Dam) and the *In de Rooie Haan* polls rendered the electorate publicly visible as an powerful factor of Dutch politics. In the last chapter, the phenomenon of the electoral experts is studied through the career of Maurice de Hond. He became one of the first Dutch polling celebrities by staging himself as a media-savvy and eloquent interpreter of the voice of the people. In the conclusion, I have argued that the mediatisation of electoral research is an important phase in the Dutch scientisation of the political.

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In an attempt to saturate my A.F.Th van der Heijden addiction – which had started after reading *Vallende ouders*, a novel that concentrates on the fate of Nijmegen student Albert Egberts in the 1970s – I purchased his 2006 novella *Drijfzand koloniseren* at a second hand book market in Oss. A few weeks ago, while I was sitting at my desk and working on this thesis, its cover caught my eye and at that very moment, I realised that its title (which translates as ‘colonising quick sand’) very accurately describes the intellectual process I was going through. When I took my first ‘steps’ into the pristine landscape that would eventually become the neatly arranged garden of my thesis, I swiftly found myself sinking into the structureless soil of unanswered questions and vague ideas. Only after months of reading monographs and articles, critically analysing my sources, and writing and re-writing my chapters, I was able to create the firm ground that I was – at moments desperately – looking for.

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## List of Abbreviations

AIPO	American Institute for Public Opinion
AVRO	Algemeen Vereniging Radio Omroep (General Association of Radio Broadcasting)
BIPO	British Institute for Public Opinion
CDA	Christen Democratisch Appel (Christian Democratic Appeal)
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (German Christian Democratic Union)
CHU	Christelijk-Historische Unie (Christian Historical Union)
D'66	Democraten 66 (Democrats 66)
DS'70	Democratisch Socialisten '70 (Democratic Socialists '70)
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
IFOP	Institute français d'opinion publique (French Institute for Public Opinion)
IPM	Instituut voor Pyschologisch Markt- en Motivatieonderzoek (Institute for Psychological Market and Motivation Research)
ITS	Instituut voor Toegepaste Sociologie (Institute for Applied Sociology)
KRO	Katholieke Radio Omroep (Catholic Radio Broadcaster)
KVP	Katholieke Volkspartij (Catholic People's Party)
NCRV	Nederlandse Christelijke Radio Vereniging (Dutch Christian Radio Association)
NIPO	Nederlands Instituut voor Publieke Opinie (Dutch Institute for Public Opinion)
NKO	Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek (National Voters' Survey)
NOS	Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (Dutch Broadcast Foundation)
<i>NRC</i>	<i>Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant</i> (New Rotterdam Courant)
NSS	Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek (Dutch Foundation of Statistics)
NTS	Nederlandse Televisie Stichting (Dutch Television Foundation)
PPR	Politieke Partij Radikalen (Political Party of Radicals)
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)
TROS	Televisie en Radio Omroep Stichting (Television and Radio Broadcast Foundation)
VARA	Vereniging Arbeiders Radio Amateurs (Association of Worker Radio Amateurs)
WBS	Wiardi Beckman Stichting (Wiardi Beckman Foundation)