Political discontent in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21th century

Brons, C.R.

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Political discontent

in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21th century

GRMBLL

!!! !!!

Claartje Brons

POLITICAL DISCONTENT

Political discontent

in the Netherlands
in the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan Tilburg University
op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. Ph. Eijlander, in het openbaar
te verdedigen ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties
aangewezen commissie in de aula van de Universiteit op

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door

Clara Reina Brons

geboren op 28 oktober 1980 te Amsterdam

Promotores: Prof.dr. G.J.M. van den Brink
                   Prof.dr. F. Hendriks

Overige leden van de promotiecommissie:

Prof.dr. M. Boogers
Prof.dr. P. Dekker
Prof.dr. M. Elchardus

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When I told people about this research project, and especially about my conversations with politically cynical citizens, I typically got two responses. The first one was: 'Why don't you come and talk to me?' The second one was: 'It must have made you terribly unhappy, talking to all those cynics!' The beautiful, unexpected thing is that the interviews in particular brought me many new insights, as you will read in the following. The interviews were fun because they were interesting personal conversations, with recognisable stories and frustrations. They were also valuable because they put a fresh perspective on the much discussed and studied topic of waning political trust. I would like to thank all the interviewees who welcomed me into their homes. You have told me so openly about your expectations and frustrations in politics. I hope you recognise your stories.

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Preface

My first job after college was as an employee for the 'Nationale Conventie', a temporary advisory council for government reform instituted in the Netherlands in 2006. On the job, I witnessed many discussions about declining political trust and the growing gap between citizens and politics. Some council members said that Dutch parliamentary politics had lost all trust and credibility and teetered on edge of a crisis. Politics had to turn 180 degrees towards citizens, they claimed. Other members thought no grand redesign of the Dutch polity was needed. Politicians could benefit from greater distance from their voters, as they thought was fitting in a representative democracy such as the Netherlands. After a year of intensive discussion, the Nationale Conventie published an impressive set of recommendations to renew relations between citizens and politics. Among other things, the Conventie proposed to enrich the constitution with an imaginative preamble, to institute citizen referendums and forums to give citizens a more direct voice in politics and to strengthen the positions of Parliament, the Prime Minister and political parties in the Netherlands and the European Union (Nationale Conventie, 2006).

Although many of the recommendations were (and still are) appealing to me, the discussion about citizens' political discontent left me wondering and unsatisfied. Discontent with politics was considered by a large majority of the Conventie to be manifest and growing, but we had not come any closer to understanding what this discomfort was about. Many questions remained alive and unresolved. What was citizens' discontent really about? Was it new and growing? How should it be explained: as an expression of radical democratisation or merely as an impoverishment of democracy?

These questions kept troubling me, also when the Nationale Conventie finished its work and I became an employee with the Bureau Strategische Kennis Ontwikkeling (SKO) at the Ministry of the Interior. I was happy to discover that I was not alone with these questions. My former manager Meine Henk Klijnsma and former Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior Jan Willem Holtslag also felt we

knew too little about citizens' perspectives on politics. What were citizens' expectations, worries and frustrations about?

Things came together when Gabriel van den Brink and Frank Hendriks from the School of Public Administration and Politics (TSPB) at Tilburg University turned to the Ministry to support their extensive research programme 'Tracing Trust'. The exploration of distrust from a citizens' perspective was one of the proposed research projects. It was then that a perfect match was made and the Ministry and TSPB enabled me to study citizens' political disaffection in the Netherlands in a PhD research project.

This is the report of my research project. I am pleased to share my findings with you.

As a wonderful coincidence, one of the advisory members of the Nationale Conventie at the time of publication became Minister for the Interior and is my current political chief. Minister Plasterk, I am delighted to present the results of my research project to you. I hope you find the findings useful and see opportunities to translate these research results into political and policy results. I am most willing to help you in this challenge.

1   Political discontent in the exemplary case of the Netherlands

Confidence in democracy as an ideal form of government is high among citizens who live in democracies with a long tradition of civil liberties. At the same time, citizens in these democracies seem deeply dissatisfied with the functioning of political institutions. Erosion of public support for political institutions such as parliament and political parties has been observed in many well-established democracies like the USA, Britain, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands (Dalton, 2004, Hay, 2007, Norris, 1999, 2011, Stoker, 2006).

The issue of these so-called 'dissatisfied democrats' draws much attention at the beginning of the 21st century. Research generated a fierce debate about sources, seriousness and consequences of the actual citizens' political discontent. Some detected a growth of political disenchantment across well-established democracies (Dalton, 2004, Elchardus and Smits, 2002, Hay, 2007, Norris, 1999, 2011, Stoker, 2006, Stoneman, 2008). Others emphasised the diversity in political support across countries (Dekker, 2006). Still others point out that critique on representative politics is of all times, as is the belief that parliamentarians today are less competent and eloquent than before (Aerts, 2009).

International comparative survey research has shown that political discontent at the beginning of the 21st century does not necessarily indicate a declining support for democratic ideals (Thomassen, 2010). There seems to be no linear trend in declining institutional trust. Satisfaction with democratic performance, trust in government, parliament and political parties varies over time and between European countries (Norris, 2011). The citizens' political discontent at the beginning of the 21st century mainly seems to be aimed at the functioning of representative institutions and authorities (Elchardus and Smits, 2002, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011).

Different claims are made about the forces that accelerate people's discontent about politics. Some blame the cynical reporting styles of the media (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997). Others point at the malfunctioning of the institutions of repre-

sentative democracy and the need for more direct democracy (Stoker, 2006). Still others find explanations in the increasingly critical mindset and value system of citizens (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).

Despite the wide range of survey research available, the profile and drivers of politically dissatisfied citizens are unclear. Dissatisfied citizens can be profiled as a new generation of highly educated democrats longing for more participation in representative democracy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). They can be characterised as average citizens who have little ambition to engage themselves in politics but are dissatisfied because of the limited control they have over their political authorities (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). The dissatisfied can also be believed to be 'threatened' citizens who live in uncertain socio-economic conditions and demand security and recognition from their political authorities (Van den Brink, 2002, 2007).

Some caution that dissatisfaction about representative democracy will spread and in due time will lead to a crisis of democracy if no action is taken (ROB, 2010). Others are more neutral about the consequences. A negative disposition towards politics or government could make people turn away from politics *or* activate them to participate in all kinds of ways: in elections, in (new) political parties or social/political movements, to take part in demonstrations, to send letters to newspapers, to take part in discussions on the internet or to write hate-mail to politicians (Dalton, 2004).

Political discontent in the Netherlands

I chose to study the different faces of political discontent in detail in one country: the Netherlands. The Netherlands is an interesting case. It is a country with a long tradition of democracy and relatively high political trust ratings. Furthermore, it is said to have been a long lasting outlier, deviating from the pattern of growing public disenchantment with politics. Analysis of comparative survey research, such as the World and European Values Studies indicates that trust in politicians increased in the Netherlands in the period between 1971 and 1994, as did trust in political institutions, social trust and interpersonal trust (e.g. Norris, 1999). Since 2000, the analysis of these and other survey sources (such as Eurobarometer and Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies) indicate that trust in political institutions such as parliament, political parties and government has also plummeted in the Netherlands (e.g. Bovens and Wille, 2006, 2008, 2011, Hendriks, 2009, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011). Even after the Dutch drop in political trust at the beginning of the 21st century, satisfaction with democratic performance, trust in government, parliament and political parties is relatively high, compared to other European countries (Norris, 2011, using World Values Studies as a datasource).

Most authors agree that the dip in political trust in the Netherlands reflects 'the national mood' after some extraordinary events at the beginning of the 21st century and major shifts in the political (party) landscape. The political murder of the Dutch party leader Pim Fortuyn, barely a year after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 2001, is said to have caused major feelings of insecurity, which were amplified by the murder of the Dutch filmmaker and public opinion leader Theo van Gogh for political religious motives in 2004 (Nationale Conventie, 2006). New anti-immigration and anti-political establishment parties came up (TON, PVV), some gaining much popularity among voters. The number of 'seats' going from one party to another in national elections has grown spectacularly at the same time, as shown by Aarts, Van der Kolk and Rosema in their analysis of the Dutch Parliamentary Elections (2007). Especially the political parties that are known critics of the political establishment have grown in popularity (Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011).

Irrespective of the turbulent events at the beginning of the 21st century, the Netherlands kept the position of a so-called 'high trust country' (Fukuyama, 1995). Still, the debate about dissatisfied citizens and possible solutions for regaining political trust in the Netherlands has been fierce. Contemplations, trends and figures on the state of democratic governance and the Dutch drop in political trust have been debated by many over the last few years (e.g. Adriaansen, 2011, Aerts and De Goede, 2013, Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011, De Gruijter & Smits van Waesberghe and Boutellier, 2010, Dekker and Den Ridder, 2011, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011, Korsten and De Goede, 2006). Furthermore, diminishing political support and the search for citizens' political discontent is a topic that interests journalists, politicians and government institutions alike.

Contradictory claims have been made in the Dutch debate on political trust, reflecting the different theories and claims in the international debate on political trust. I will elaborate on the explanations that dominate the Dutch debate on political trust in Chapter 2. Here it suffices to mention that despite available numbers and figures, in-depth knowledge of the background of politically dissatisfied citizens and their related political behaviour is still limited. Furthermore – and this matter has virtually never been studied – no satisfactory answer has been offered as to why the issue of political distrust is an issue of major interest in newspapers, news shows and debate centres at the beginning of the 21st century.

The goal of this thesis is to examine the issue of dissatisfied democrats in the exemplary case of the Netherlands and to come closer to understanding what the citizens' political discontent in this specific case is about. How should we interpret the citizens' political discontent in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 21st century in terms of its objects, explanations and related political behaviour?

In most part of this thesis I examined questions on political trust and political discontent through the eyes of Dutch citizens. I analysed trends in citizens' political support over time through the analysis of survey data. I gained insight into the intensity, sources and potential consequences of their discontent with politics through in-depth interviews and comparatively studied the relation between different type of political discontent and political behaviour on basis of survey data. Research questions I studied were:

– When we compare the items available in longitudinal surveys, what can we learn about political support and political discontent in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century?
– When we interview cynical citizens, what are they dissatisfied about and what do they search for in politics? How cynical are they really and what are factors that influence their attitude towards politics?
– How is political discontent (and political cynicism in particular) related to non-voting, voting and other types of political protest?

In the last part of this research I take a different research angle and explore the public attention for the issue of political discontent.

– How is citizens' political discontent discussed in newspapers and parliament and how has this changed over time? Why do so many journalists and politicians alike feel that the issue is of such urgency that it should be addressed? What are they reporting?

The concept of political discontent

Analysing the object of political discontent in the Netherlands is the starting-point of this study. I use a broad concept of political discontent, which entails different levels and objects of discontent that can be distinguished. The objects of discontent and trust can potentially range from individual politicians, certain policies to specific political institutions and the total political system (Dekker, 2006). Central towards the concept of political discontent as used in this thesis is that it implies a set of norms, values and expectations of citizens towards politics. Political trustworthiness only exists when products, processes, institutions of conducts on the side of politics give a convincing answer to interests, values or expectations on the side of the public (TSPB, 2009). When political performance rivals personal norms, values and expectations, discontent exists. Depending on what is at stake, the intensity of discontent may vary from mild scepticism to distrust, cynicism, repulsion or outright hatred. It is a common theoretical understanding that political support is a multidimensional phenomenon, ranging from abstract support for the national community to concrete support for political au-

thorities or policy (Easton, 1957), and I use this notion for defining the concept of political discontent.

Translating the multidimensional notion of political discontent into empirical research, however, has proven to be a complicated matter. It is important to distinguish at what political object and level discontent is directed. The meaning and possible actions and consequences of political discontent may differ depending on the objects of discontent. This requires a precise observation over time to assess how political support is developing. In this thesis, I have developed the notion of multidimensionality and used it to map out empirically the political objects of citizen dissatisfaction (see Chapter 2 on concepts, trends and theory).

21st century distrust

As a timeframe I focus on political support and political discontent in the first decade of the 21st century. This does not mean that critique of politics was a non-issue in earlier times. The question whether actual political discontent is a serious threat to the political system of representative democracy has always been a vital issue in political and social science. The concern that political discontent may evolve into cynicism and denial of the democratic system has drawn attention to the issue of political trust and distrust from time to time. For instance, the Interbellum was a time when contemplations on crisis and critique of democracy were popular (Bonger, 1934) as well as the 1970s (Hart, 1978). Also in the 1990s, a relatively political quiet era in the Netherlands, opinions were published about the 'displeasure with politics' and 'the gap between citizens and politics' (Van den Brink, 1996, Van Gunsteren and Andeweg, 1994). In this study of the actual citizens' political discontent at the beginning of the 21st century, therefore, I regularly refer to thoughts and analyses of previous decades. I have used surveys to compare the trends in the different dimensions of citizens' political discontent from 1970 to 2010. In a media analysis of how the issue of political discontent was discussed in newspapers, I travel back to the 1970s.

Research approach

The choice of limiting this thesis to the Netherlands opened up the possibility to look into the citizens' political discontent in detail with different and complementary research angles. Most research dealing with political trust and political discontent is dominated by the use of data from large survey panels. This is the result of a scientific effort to collect enormous amounts of survey data, potentially giving a detailed understanding of the values, beliefs and dispositions of citizens all over the

world. They provide an opportunity to study macro-patterns in the dispositions of citizens using all kinds of statistical analyses. Occasionally, a more anthropological approach has been used with in-depth interviewing (De Gruijter & Smits van Waesberghe and Boutellier, 2010, Van Wessel, 2010, 2011). The political communication of journalists has been analysed by way of media analysis, attempting to uncover the degree of cynicism they employ in news articles and news shows (Adriaansen, 2011, Kleinnijenhuis and Scholten, 2013).

The limitation of using only one research approach is understandable for time constraints. I believe, however, that a lot can be learned from a more integrated approach. Surveys alone offer broad knowledge of citizens' attitudes and behaviours but often leave much to interpretation. In-depth interviewing can add to the understanding of the intensity of citizens' attitudes, their drivers and related behaviour. At a different level, how media report the issue of political discontent can add to our understanding of the discussion. In this thesis, I have used a combination of survey research, in-depth interviews and media analysis. I have focused on what is also called 'the demand side of politics', analysing citizens' attitudes towards politics through survey analysis and in-depth interviews.

Political discontent at the micro-level

Mapping out the statistics of political support in the Netherlands, I have exploited the richness of survey data available. I have searched for available and comparable survey data to describe trends in the beliefs, values and opinions of citizens towards politics and democracy. There are various international and national surveys, containing interesting indicators on citizens' values and political attitudes: on support for democratic ideals, institutional trust, political satisfaction, political cynicism and political behaviour. Some surveys (such as the Dutch National Election Studies) go back to the 1970s, while other data sources are from a more recent date. I have, therefore, used both international and national data sources: European Value Studies (EVS), Eurobarometer (EB), Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES) and European Social Studies (ESS).

Because of the often multi-interpretable questions and answer possibilities posed in surveys, it is however often hard to interpret the answers given by the respondents. The currently used survey questions leave many theoretical nuances unnoticed and leave much to the interpretation of both the interviewer and the interviewees. It remains unclear what people do (not) support in politicians in general, parliament or political parties, how deep-seated the dislike of people is and how discontent relates to certain (possibly anti-democratic) convictions and actions. What do people for instance mean by stating that they do not trust politicians in general? If people say they are dissatisfied with politicians and institutions,

what do they have in mind? If they feel politicians are not to be trusted, what are they are referring to?

In this thesis, therefore, I proceed where most research on political cynicism stops. I not only mapped the statistics of political discontent in the Netherlands but also conducted twenty in-depth interviews to get a profound understanding of the individual values and beliefs of so- called 'politically cynical' citizens in survey studies. Through in-depth interviews, subtle gradations of personal discontent could be explored, clarifying what people are dissatisfied about in politics and indicating how deep-seated their cynicism is. These interviews yielded valuable information to put some survey results on politically dissatisfied citizens into perspective.

Political discontent at the macro-level

In my study of politically dissatisfied citizens in the Netherlands, I came to understand more about trends in political trust, the multidimensionality of political discontent, the intensity of political cynicism and related political behaviour at the individual level. I have largely approached questions on political trust and political discontent through the eyes of Dutch citizens. I analysed trends in citizens' political support over time. I gained insight into the intensity, sources and potential consequences of their discontent with politics through in-depth interviews and through the analysis of survey data.

I realized, however, that looking into citizens' individual values and beliefs is not enough to understand the complexity of the political discontent in the Netherlands. Individuals can be dissatisfied with a certain aspect of politics, and it is possible to investigate their discontent through conversation and inquiry. Citizens' political discontent, however, also shows at a level other than the individual one. Political trust rates and levels of political discontent have been major topics on the public agenda. Newspapers and news shows have been full of discussions about the perceived problem of waning political trust, 'angry citizens' and untrustworthy politics. When journalists and politicians refer to citizens' political discontent in media and politics, they address citizens' political discontent as a public concern, as a social question at the macro-level that requires a solution.

Therefore, I also took a different research angle to understand the degree of public attention for the issue of political discontent. Why do many journalists and politicians alike feel that the issue is of such urgency that it should be addressed in public? To get hold of the public discussion, I performed a systematic analysis of how citizens' political discontent of was discussed in newspapers and parliament in the first decade of the 21st century. What actors asked attention for citizens' political discontent and why did they consider it necessary to do so? How did they explain discontent with politics and why did they think it had grown substantially? I also compared how citi-

zens' political discontent was represented in writing over a series of decades, starting with the 1970s. I analysed whether the problem definition, the actors involved and proposed solutions changed over time and attention paid to the issue of political discontent actually grew. These studies, each from its own partial perspective, together give an extensive overview of citizens' political discontent in the Netherlands.

The Table below presents an overview of the research methods and data sources I used. In the separate Chapters of this study, I have elaborated on the different methodologies in question.

Table 1: Overview of research questions, data sources and methods

Research questions	Goal	Type of data source	Method	Years	Chapter
What are citizens (dis) satisfied about in politics? Has political discontent grown over time?	Representative knowledge of politial support and political discontent of Dutch citizens at different levels of politics over a long period of time	Surveys: Dutch Political Election Studies (DPES), Eurobarometer (EB), European Value Studies (EVS), European Social Studies (ESS)	Trend analysis	1972-2010	Ch 3
How do cynical citizens relate to politics? How cynical are they really and what are they dissatisfied about in politics? How did cynical citizens obtain their negative evaluation of politics? How is their discontent linked to political behaviour?	Deepening understanding of the political discontent of politically cynical citizens	Twenty interviews with so called 'politically cynical' citizens (selection through answers on political cynicism items in TNO NIPO survey)	In-depth interviews, narrative and interpretative analysis	2011	Ch 4/5
How does political discontent relate to political behaviour?	Representative knowledge of the relation between political discontent and political behaviour	DPES 2010	Correlation analysis and ordinal regression procedure	2010	Ch 5
How is citizens' political discontent discussed in newspapers and parliament and how has this changed over time?	Understanding the public belief in the increasing political discontent of citizens	A selection of newspaper articles and parliamentary documents. Data sources: national archive, LexisNexis and Officielebekendmakingen.nl	Content analysis of a selection of newspaper articles and parliamentary documents	1970-2010	Ch 6

On the research choices made

In this thesis, I chose to study in detail what Dutch citizens were dissatisfied about in politics and how citizens' political discontent developed as an issue for newspaper and parliamentary discussion. I consequently left many other research angles unexplored. I did not systematically and empirically study whether the political cynicism uttered by individual citizens or journalists was justified. And I did not compare the discontent of Dutch citizens to the discontent of citizens in other contemporary democracies. Furthermore, I did not analyse the so-called 'supply side of politics' of political authorities, political parties and political institutions. I did not investigate whether Dutch politicians had become more or less competent over time or whether their moral integrity should be questioned or trusted more or less than in recent history. And I did not study the character and development of the Dutch political parties that are known critics of the Dutch political establishment. It would require another research focus and a great deal of additional research to get a thorough understanding of such questions.

As there were not many indications in available research to suggest that politicians had lost competence or integrity[1], it seemed illuminating to me to study the persistent perception of those who felt that politics was becoming increasingly dysfunctional and those who thought political cynicism was growing. Why did they believe so? As mixed research designs on the study of political trust were scarce, I was convinced, furthermore, that combining surveys, in-depth interviews and media content analysis in one study could be both innovative and insightful.

Structure of this thesis

In the second Chapter, I review some important trends and theories regarding political support and political discontent. In this Chapter, I also elaborate on the possible consequences of political discontent and present the analytical framework for empirical research that disciplined this research. The third Chapter is devoted to distinguishing and analysing the different levels of political discontent in the Netherlands through studying citizens' attitudes and values in available survey research. The fourth Chapter puts into perspective the political discontent in

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1   The Netherlands consistently scores high on international rankings of democracy, political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2012). The Freedom in the World reports and the Freedom House country status and ratings show that the Netherlands has always had the maximum freedom rating since 1973 (source: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world).

the Netherlands through in-depth interviews with twenty citizens. In the fifth Chapter, I explore the possible consequences of political cynicism in political behaviour, using a combination of both survey data and in-depth interviews. In the sixth Chapter, I report how the concern for citizens' political discontent was described in newspaper and parliamentary documents over time. In Chapter seven, I summarise and reflect on the findings and (policy) implications of this study.

2 On Political Support and Political Discontent: Concepts, Trends and Theories

Discussions about political support easily derail because of the many dimensions and objects involved. In this Chapter, therefore, I will clarify how we define the concepts. How does political discontent relate to other concepts such as political support, political trust or trustworthiness, political cynicism and populism? What do these concepts mean and in what way are they exchangeable? I will present several theoretical models to analyse political support and explain how I integrate these theories into one conceptual framework. I will use this conceptual framework to investigate and assess some of the claims in the Dutch debate empirically, based on the main controversies in the Dutch debate. As the positions and controversies in the international debate on political trust and political distrust have been described adequately in the work of others (e.g. Norris, 1999, 2005), in this thesis I concentrate on highlighting the main findings and positions in the Dutch debate. I will describe the main controversies in the Dutch debate that need further examination and give a brief summary of the empirical evidence available.

On political discontent and political support: concepts and meaning

In broadest sense, concepts such as political trust, political support, political discontent, political cynicism and political distrust are all about the relationship between citizens and politics. They try to catch a set of more or less deep-seated attitudes, expectations, norms and values of citizens towards politics and the will to act upon those attitudes. Political distrust, political discontent and political cynicism, on the one hand, are concepts that are evidence of a negative evaluation and attitude towards politics, whereas the concepts of political trust, trustworthiness, political satisfaction and political support, on the other hand, define a more or less positive evaluation and attitude towards politics (Dekker, 2006).

The reach and intensity of support may vary. Positive feelings and expectations towards politics may range from satisfaction to trust. Negative evaluations may manifest themselves in reluctant acceptance of politicians and policy decisions, in outspoken discontent, critique and antipathy, but also in cynicism or violent opposition (Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011). Political cynicism and distrust thus involve more intense negativity than political discontent. In all cases, political authorities and political institutions are expected not to work in line with what one would like, and politicians and the political system are seen as both immoral and incompetent (Dekker, 2006). A study of Adriaansen (2012) furthermore confirmed that reliability and competence are both valid and comprehensive dimensions of attitudes towards political actors and furthermore revealed that people who are negative about government give more and more specific arguments than those who are positive about government.

I should note that what is defined here as 'political cynicism' can also be seen as one of the key characteristics of populism. Radically rejecting the established political order and the 'corrupt elite' is in the scientific literature on populism generally agreed upon as one of the defining elements of populism (e.g. Betz, 1993, Canovan, 1999, Taggart, 2000, Mudde, 2004, 2007). The concept of populism however transcends the concept of political cynicism and is generally associated with several other key themes. Populism is observed to contradict the 'corrupt elite' against the values and common sense of 'the pure people', an imagined and idealised community of ordinary citizens (e.g. Canovan 1999, Taggart 2000, Mudde, 2004, 2007). Another theme that is often described as a crucial element of populism is its chameleonic character, adding on elements of other ideologies (such as nationalism, socialism or liberalism) that are important to the context of the populist movement. An important difference between populism and political cynicism is that while the concept of political cynicism is narrowed down to specifying an utterly negative political attitude, populism in the academic community is for all related to explaining the occurrence of populist movements and parties. Furthermore, some definitions of populism include as a theme the opposition between 'the people' and 'dangerous others' (such as immigrants, e.g. Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008). Especially in Western Europe, populism is often related to the rise of radical right anti-immigrant parties (Mudde, 2004, 2007, Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, De Lange, 2008).

Concepts such as trust, distrust, cynicism or credibility are all intrinsically relational and contextual. A trusts B, and this happens in some respect (Hardin, 2006). As in every relationship, causes for dissatisfaction and distrust can be found on the side of the object as well as on the side of the subject: expectations, promises and actions may not be in line, demands may have increased or differentiated and cer-

tain objects may no longer be worthy of giving trust for some reason (Hart, 1978). Political trustworthiness only exists if products, processes, institutions or conduct on the side of politics give a convincing answer to interests, values or expectations on the side of the public (TSPB, 2009).

In research of political support and political discontent, the role of expectations cannot be easily underestimated. Every citizen has a personal set of both explicit and implicit moral norms, values and expectations about what politics should do and how the political system and politicians should function. If interests, values or expectations on the side of politics are opposed, discontent may arise. Analysing political discontent in practice, therefore, also implies explicitly searching for citizens' expectations, norms and values towards politicians and politics. In addition, research of political support and political discontent also requires sensitivity and clarity towards changes in citizens' expectations over time.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that political trustworthiness exists in a relationship characterised by impersonalised trust. The relation between citizens and politics is largely mediated by the media coverage of politics. It is through images in the news, news articles and through discussion of these items with friends and family that attitudes towards and evaluations of the trustworthiness of politics and politicians are formed. In this thesis, therefore, political support has been defined as the evaluation of politics in a three-part relation of support of citizens, politicians and media.

The object and focus of political support and political discontent in this three-part relation of citizens, politicians and media may vary. Where disappointment in 'politics' may refer to the performance of specific ministers or members of parliament, it might also be discontent towards the performance of government, the way political parties work or the functioning of the representative democratic system. Discontent with politics may refer to disagreements with policy decisions but may also be rooted in the unjust way government and politicians are perceived to approach citizens or each other. Citizens may judge politics on an operational level, judging the performance and output of concrete public services delivered by political institutions, authorities or a regime. However, it is also plausible that citizens are satisfied with the output but dissatisfied with the quality of the interaction and 'the way things go' between citizens and politics. Or citizens may be judging political institutions by the constitutional quality they perceive in political institutions: are checks and balances working? Are the institutions seen as fair and equal? (Toonen and Hendriks, 1998). The evaluation of politics may thus be confined to one political object or policy or reach out to include all political authorities, government policies and political institutions, including constitutional principles. The support may contain factual assessments of the input, throughput

or output of the political system and, at the same time, be interspersed with values, feelings and expectations about political competence and morality. Negative evaluations may concern not only the moral behaviour and performance of political authorities but also the competence of their policy actions. A minister, for example, may arouse public anger because of particular scandalous behaviour, but also because certain statements and policies are regarded to be incorrect. In practice, trust and satisfaction are often used in the same meaning, as are political distrust and discontent.

Theoretical models for analysing political support

How can we analyse political support or the lack of it? For one thing, we need to distinguish different objects and levels of discontent in analysis and should explicitly elaborate on the value of support on different political levels. Studying different theories of political support, we see that one distinction is more dense than another. Many scholars refer to the theory of David Easton, who makes a distinction in levels of support and distinguishes abstract support for the political community, support for the political regime and concrete support for government (Easton, 1957, 1965). He defines support for the political community as the mutual intention among the members of the system to act and work together and peacefully resolve conflicts of interests and opinion. He defines support for the political regime as support for the fundamental rules of the game within the political system, the so-called constitutional principles and arrangements by which societal disputes are settled. Support for the government is what Easton calls the third and most concrete level of support, as it undertakes concrete policy actions and decisions in settling societal disputes. In the conceptual framework of this research I build on the concept of political support of David Easton, as it gives the conceptual room to differentiate between different types and levels of political support and political discontent in the three-part relation between citizen, politics and media.

Others have adjusted the levels of support distinguished by Easton to suit their own contexts. Norris *et al*. (Norris, 1999, 2011), for instance, differentiate between five categories of political support. At the most abstract level, they (like Easton) distinguish support for national identities, which they define as feelings of patriotism and national pride. Norris *et al*. make an additional distinction at the level of regime support between approval of core regime principles and values, evaluations of regime performance in practice and confidence in regime institutions. Support for regime principles and values is not only defined as support for the

rules of the game. In the definition of Norris *et al.* this category covers support for a wide set of democratic principles, such as elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, the right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information, associational autonomy as well as the rejection of autocratic principles and support for democratic values such as political equality and political freedom. Support for regime performance in the definition of Norris *et al.* is about satisfaction with democracy in practice. It is about satisfaction with government and the evaluation of their decision-making processes and policies. Confidence in regime institutions is about satisfaction with the performance of institutions such as the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, security forces and central, state and local governments (Norris, 2011). At the most concrete level of support, Norris *et al.* distinguish approval of incumbent officeholders, which they define as positive evaluations of the honesty, probity and responsiveness of politicians and the approval of particular presidents, prime ministers, party leaders, elected representatives and civil servants.

Hendriks *et al.* distinguish three different categories of political legitimacy and support: the political system, political actors and policy actions (Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011). The most abstract level of political support – support for the political community – is disregarded. Hendriks *et al.* do not define support for state institutions and procedures as a separate level of support. They define support for the system in a broad sense as support for the political-administrative system, democratic government and public administration in general. This system level covers support for the idea and performance of democracy, support for the electoral system and procedures and the level of political cynicism. They measure support on this level by a range of survey questions about trust in democracy, satisfaction with how democracy functions, a positive evaluation of democracy as a form of government and support for the idea of democracy as best form of government (and dissent with the idea of strong leadership), a wish for democratic renewal and disconnection with representative politics (political cynicism), and satisfaction with the rule of law.

Actors are defined in the line of 'new institutionalism' both as individual political authorities and as political institutions, that is, all those actors that have official decision-making power in public administration. The third category is that of concrete policy actions in all kinds of different areas. Easton and Norris do not distinguish this as a distinct level of support but as 'output' of the political system. How Easton, Norris *et al.* and Hendriks *et al.* define the levels of political support has been summarised in the table on the next page.

Table 2: Levels of political support

	Easton	Norris et al.	Hendriks et al.	What is it about?
Diffuse support	Support for political community	National identities		Feeling of common belonging to fellow citizens (Easton), feelings of patriotism and national pride (Norris)
	Support for political regime	Approval of core regime principles and values	System legitimacy	Support for constitutional arrangements, rules of the game (Easton). Support for democratic procedural principles as (Dahl, Norris): elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, the right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information, associational autonomy. Support for democratic values such as support for political equality and political freedom
		Evaluations of regime performance		Support for how democracy works in practice
		Confidence in regime institutions	Actor-legitimacy	Support for how different political institutions work, such as government, parliament and political parties
	Support for government	Approval of incumbent officeholders		Support for government (Easton) and the (individual) officeholders in government and public sector such as MP's, the Prime Minister or President in office, public officials (Norris)
Concrete support			Policy-legitimacy	Support for the different government policies, for example: education, social security and national security

Distinguishing distinct levels of political support facilitates the analysis of political discontent and its related consequences in different gradations. But how dense should this distinction be? The core criterion in the theoretical model presented in this thesis is to what extent lack of political support may eventually cause disruption of political life. In every democratic country, there is a substantial gap between actual and ideal democracy (Dahl, 1998). Discontent, therefore, is an intrinsic part of democratic societies, and not every type of political discontent by definition leads to a crisis of democracy. On the contrary, openly criticising politics in the public sphere is inextricably bound up with the expression of freedoms and political rights in democracy. On the other hand, political support makes people work together to peacefully dissolve conflicts when differences of opinion and interest arise. This is why a certain level of mutual support and trust is considered important to society and to politics (Fukuyama, 1995).

Depending on the political level of support under stress, political discontent may eventually lead to different types of crises, with different characteristics and possible consequences. Inspiring in this respect is the distinction made by historian De Jonge in his analysis of the crisis in the Netherlands during the Interbellum. He distinguished a small crisis of democracy and a large crisis of democracy (De Jonge, 1968). A small crisis of democracy solely pertains to the functioning of state institutions, whereas a large crisis of democracy affects the deeper values of democracy. Drawing upon the theories of Easton, Norris *et al.*, Hendriks *et al.* and De Jonge, we can distinguish different types and levels of political discontent, which are presented in the Table below.[1]

Table 3: Theoretical model

	Model Brons, this thesis	Different types and levels of political discontent
III	Discontent with democratic principles and values	Discontent and distress around democratic processes, principles and values
II	Discontent with politicians in general and the functioning of political institutions	Discontent and distress around the functioning of the political processes, political institutions and moral conduct of politicians in general
I	Discontent with current government (policies) and incumbent officeholders	Discontent and distress around the products or moral conduct of current government (policies) and incumbent officeholders

I: Discontent with current government (policies) and incumbent officeholders

At the most concrete level, I distinguish discontent with the products or conduct of *the current government (policies) and incumbent officeholders*. At this level, this includes not only discontent with the current government but also with specific officeholders in the political domain, whether these are ministers, leaders of politi-

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1   The most abstract form of political support defined by Easton and Norris, namely political support for the national political community, has not been included in the model as a distinct type or level of political discontent. In this thesis, I have chosen not to engage in an in-depth empirical analysis of the discrepancy between citizens' sense of national political community and what is offered in this account on the side of politics, as such an analysis by itself would be worthy of a PhD thesis. Therefore, I limit myself to incidental remarks when data used in this research raise controversies on the level of political community. This does sometimes happen as expectations, values and norms of Dutch citizens about national belonging, national identity and national representation have regularly clashed with what was offered on the side of politics and political authorities in the first decade of the 21st century. This happened, for instance, on the issue of European integration and on issues of immigration and integration.

cal parties or specific members of parliament. As I define discontent conceptually, discontent occurs at this level when citizens' expectations, values and norms not in line with what is offered by current government and current political authorities, either in moral conduct or in policy products. An important characteristic of political discontent at the level of the current government (policies) and incumbent officeholders is that this type of discontent is of a specific and volatile nature. Support and discontent at the level of political authorities is often personal and linked with personal sympathies for different politicians and parties in office and the different policies they promote. People can be extremely dissatisfied with the performance of a particular politician or political party while being enthusiastic about others at the same time, and although they may be highly dissatisfied and disappointed with government (and a specific policy) at one time, a different political government formation in the future may change these attitudes at once. Discontent at the level of political authorities, therefore, is relative: it can be abated or deepened by public apologies about particular conduct, by adjustments made to a controversial policy, by personal changes in political party leadership or by the resignation of a minister or the cabinet. For this reason, discontent with the current government and the current authorities and their policies have all been placed at the same level in this theoretical model.

If citizens' discontent with the immoral or incompetent performance of specific political authorities manifests itself publicly to a sufficient extent, this lack of support may eventually lead to the resignation of the political authority in question. Lack of trust in a particular minister (and his or her policy) may thus lead to a Cabinet crisis or Ministerial crisis. Discontent with a specific Member of Parliament's performance or a minister's policy actions does not necessarily undermine trust in the government, political institutions or democracy. On the contrary, it is a democratic right of citizens and their political representatives to replace untrustworthy authorities. After resignation, new elections will follow, and citizens can decide once more whom they will support, and trust in authorities may recover. Now, however, with a government in office with a different political signature, other citizens who do not sympathise with the political ideas of this government will surely become dissatisfied.

II: Discontent with politicians in general and the functioning of political institutions

The second level of political support I distinguish is *discontent with the functioning of political processes, political institutions and the conduct of politicians in general.* How I define discontent at this level comes closest to what Easton calls regime support and Norris *et al.* define as confidence in regime institutions and regime prin-

ciples. This level is about support for how politicians, political institutions such as parliament and political parties work and perform in practice. Support is about the belief that political institutions and politicians within the political system can formulate convincing answers to societal challenges and that, while doing their job, politicians within the institutions promote the general interest and not their own interest.

As I define it conceptually, discontent, at this level, stems from a growing discrepancy between citizens' expectations, values and norms regarding the functioning of the political processes, political institutions and the conduct of the political class and what is offered in this respect on the side of politics. Political discontent at this level is no longer restricted to a certain minister, political party leader or cabinet, and replacing particular political authorities will not immediately revive trust in government because all political institutions, their procedures and the politicians within are regarded with scepticism. Discontent at this level can also be described as cynicism about the competence and morality of representative political institutions and politicians in general and cynicism about the institutional rules of the political game. In the spirit of the Dutch historian de Jonge (1968), an outburst of critique of the practices of political institutions and politicians in general can be defined as a 'small crisis of democracy' because of its institutional character. In such a situation, there is a spreading moral belief that the political institutions are inefficient, cannot solve the urgent problems of society and that the politicians within the institutions only promote their own interests.

Lack of trust in the capacities and morality of political institutions and representatives to solve societal threats may result in a cascade of public critique on the workings of political institutions in a general sense. Discontent with politics at this level can translate into different types of political behaviour. It is a matter of controversy whether citizens turn to political protest behaviour or to non-participation, to either exit or voice (Hirschman, 1970). A negative disposition towards politics or government could make people turn away from politics or activate them to participate in all kinds of ways: in elections, in (new) political parties or social/political movements, in demonstrations, by sending letters to newspapers or taking part in discussions on the Internet or by writing hate-mails to politicians (Dalton, 2004). Frustration about the political process and a political culture of self-interest and nepotism can translate into protest votes and support for populist parties, support for democratic reform as a check on selfish political authorities and even legal disobedience, as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse show on basis of survey research (2002). Research based on both survey analysis and interviews with Dutch non-voters indicates a relation between political cynicism and not voting

(Dekker, 2006)[2]. When politicians and political parties appear in a bad light, depending on the political opportunity structure and openness of the political system, new (protest and populist) parties can rise and flourish by contradicting and protesting against the established political culture, procedures and routines. Using data of Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2006 Aarts, Van der Kolk and Rosema (2007) showed that citizens' discontent about the functioning of democracy in the Netherlands has translated partly in a vote for new political parties, particularly protest parties from both the left (sp) and the right (pvv). Analysis of data in the survey Cultural Values in the Netherlands furthermore indicates that cynical statements about politics can be found more frequently with those citizens who want to see changes in the political system, whether through more direct political participation or through stronger political leadership (scp, 2005). Criticism may be expressed as a protest vote against the government parties in the next elections, as suggested by Bovens and Wille (2011), but discontent may also slumber and remain latent in any visible way.

III: Discontent with democratic principles and values

Thirdly, I distinguish *discontent with democratic processes, principles and values.* Norris *et al.* define support at this level as the degree of support citizens have for democratic ideals and their rejection of autocratic principles (Norris, 2011, p 24). Citizens' support for democratic principles and values is defined here not only as support for the general idea of democracy as a form of government, but also as support for democratic ideals and values such as political freedom and political equality. In this respect, political support at this level is just as much about support for democratic principles such as 'one man, one vote', 'free and fair elections', 'a free press' and 'free political organisation', as about the conviction that government and politics should guard and guarantee democratic principles and should act according to principles of good governance such as integrity and transparency (Dahl, 1998, Freedom House, 2012, Tilly, 2007). As I define it conceptually in this thesis, discontent with democratic values and principles arises when expectations, values and norms of citizens regarding democratic principles and values clash with what is offered in this respect on the side of politics.

However, this means that discontent with democratic principles and values may arise from two very different causes. First of all, discontent may stem from the fact

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2 This does not mean, however, that non-voting always is a sign of lack of institutional trust. Interviews with Dutch non-voters indicate that, in general, one-third of non-voters did not vote out of disenchantment with politics, whereas others did not vote out of disinterest or because of circumstances (Dekker, 2002).

that citizens no longer embrace (certain) democratic values and principles as en-shrined in the constitution and in political processes. This may cause discontent to give way to a so-called 'big crisis of democracy' with a spreading moral belief that not all citizens should have equal rights to make political decisions (political equality) or have equal rights to use certain political freedoms (freedom of speech, freedom of association, etc.) and that politics and government are better off in the hands of one strong leader (De Jonge, 1968).

On the other hand, discontent with democratic values and principles may also be caused by citizens' expectations of what political processes and politicians should offer in guarding democratic principles and values over and above the ac-tual political situation. Then there is a call for further democratization or change of the democratic system in practice.

Studying discontent with democratic principles and values should take both scenarios into account.

To complicate discontent at this level, we should note that it is not clear-cut how discontent with democratic values and principles relates to individual politi-cal behaviour. Discontent with democratic values and democracy as a political sys-tem may cause people to abstain from any political activity. On the other hand, people who are intensely dissatisfied with democratic principles and values may also engage in democratic or anti democratic movements or parties, depending on the scenario. Especially citizens who highly cling to democratic ideals and values are perceived to actively monitor the acts of politicians and institutions and to participate in all kind of elite-challenging forms of political protest (Norris, 2011, Verhoeven, 2009).

We should furthermore note that democratic principles and values are inter-preted differently in different types of democracy. What may be judged as fair and just political decisions and what is seen as 'good citizenship' depends on the type of democracy in question and varies from the perspective of a majoritarian or a non-majoritarian (and more participatory or consensus oriented) democracy (Hen-driks, 2006). Democracies with a majoritarian system, for instance, in general take majority rule as a core principle and use this for defining the winner of elections ('the winner takes all'). Non-majoritarian democracies on the other hand (like the Netherlands) attach more value to including and integrating minority interests and building a broad coalition for political decisionmaking. Also within majoritarian and non-majoritarian democracies citizens and political parties disagree and de-bate on what is democratic, both with regard to democratic procedural principles as to the importance of democratic values. Although nowadays all political parties represented in parliament and most people call themselves democrats, how they define (the boundaries of) democratic rights and institutional principles remain a topic of debate. In a liberal opinion of democracy, minority rights are of great

importance and it is thought undemocratic to deny people who radically reject the ideal of democracy their democratic rights. In a more totalitarian or authoritarian concept of democracy, it is thought acceptable to defend democracy by denying individuals certain democratic rights, such as voting and the right of association, if they are seen to dangerously affront democracy (Fennema, 2010).

Interesting are the ideas of Margaret Canovan on the relation between democracy and populism (Canovan, 1999). As Canavan describes, representative democracy has two contrasting faces. The ideals, hope and promises that accompany 'the redemptive face' of democracy fundamentally clash with the 'pragmatic face' and handwork that accompanies democracy. When the gap between ideals and practice of democracy becomes too big, this is a breeding ground for populist parties. Question is whether populistic parties are antidemocratic. Mudde (2007, p 155-157) on basis of his studies of populist radical right parties in Europe states that *'the populist radical right is not antidemocratic in a procedural sense, but core tenets of its ideology stand in fundamental tension with liberal democracy'*. According to Mudde *'populist radical right parties will defend an extreme form of majoritarian democracy, with an emphasis on monism and monoculturalism.'* In the ideological programs and policies of these populist radical right parties the tenure is that *'minority rights can only exist only as long as the majority supports them. Similarly constitutional provisions are valid only as long as they have majority support.'* Many of the parties Mudde describes would however argue they are truly democratic parties, in contrast to the (established) mainstream political parties they oppose.

Fluidity and limitations of this theoretical model

The theoretical model presented here is no more and no less than an analytical tool to distinguish different types of discontent and corresponding consequences. The levels of political discontent as described in this model are, of course, fluid in reality. The distinguished types of discontent may be connected to one another, occur simultaneously or reinforce each other, like interplaying waves. However, it is useful to distinguish precisely what type of political support and political discontent we are facing, as the nature and consequences of discontent may differ.

Persistent discontent with concrete government policy decisions, for example, may well lead to demands for changing the rules of the game. When ministerial crises and cabinet crises occur over a longer period of time and people get increasingly dissatisfied with the performance of political authorities, this may eventually lead to a wider discontent with the functioning of political institutions and provoke a so-called 'small crisis of democracy'. On the other hand, it is true that a small crisis of democracy does not have to coincide with a loss of support for democratic values. A crisis of political institutions can either open up new democratisation ten-

dencies or make people receptive to anti-democratic sentiments and movements, thus encouraging a large crisis of democracy (De Jonge, 1968).

To give an example of how severe discontent with politicians in general and political institutions can have different consequences, let me compare the so-called small crises of democracy both in the Interbellum and in the 1960s. The attack on traditional lines of authority in the 1960s is generally cited as an example of a crisis of political authority, leading to many democratisation tendencies in what used to be considered the private domains of education and family matters (De Rooij, 1999). Consultations between citizens and the state opened up and became more equal, protected and mutually binding. New parties and new movements found their way into society and politics and enforced democratic reforms in culture and structure. The crisis of representation in the Interbellum, on the other hand, in which political representatives in the Weimar Republic lost all credibility due to internal conflict and division, is well known as the prelude to de-democratisation and a 'big crisis of democracy' (De Jonge, 1968).

Analysing these two historical situations through the lens of different types of political discontent, we would probably observe that there was a great variation in the nature of discontent with democratic principles and values, in spite of there being severe discontent with current government (policy), politicians in general and political institutions in both situations. While discontent with democratic values and principles led to further democratisation because citizens' expectations went beyond those of politicians and the actual political processes in the 1960s, democratic principles and values themselves were losing support, both from citizens and politicians, in the Weimar Republic of the 1930s.

Macro-level economic cycles and economic downturns as well as disruptive societal events are known to greatly influence how political discontent at the macro-level may evolve and translate, for instance, in populist movements and parties (see Taggart, 2000).

How different types of political discontent provoked each other, interacted and prevailed in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21st century remains a great question for empirical research. To summarise, I use the concept of political discontent as a central concept guiding this research as it facilitates a broad analysis. Distinguishing levels and types of political discontent facilitates the empirical analysis of political discontent. In this way we can determine whether we witness political discontent directed at specific government(policies) and incumbent officeholders, genuine political cynicism or discontent about (certain) democratic values and principles. We should note that there are different viewpoints on possible consequences of both political cynicism and discontent with democratic principles and values. When the political discontent is voiced, this can be in the form of protest and populist voting and in involving in either protest or populist movements.

To study the political discontent of citizens ideally thus asks for a tailored approach that facilitates the analysis of both the belief system and political behaviour of citizens, including their involvement in political movements in a given democratic context. In this thesis, I chose to study from the perspective of Dutch citizens what they were dissatisfied about in politics on the several levels distinguished, through survey studies and interviews. I did therefore not study the character and development of the Dutch political parties that are known critics of the Dutch political establishment. However, the multidimensional concept of political support and political discontent described in the above could of course also be handled as a conceptual tool to analyse what anti establishment, protest or populist parties are specifically rebelling against.

Notes on the conceptualisation of political discontent in survey research

Despite of the theoretical distinctions possible, the study of political discontent and political support in practice is influenced highly by how multidimensional political support and political discontent is conceptualised and operationalised in practice. A great deal of research on political trust and distrust of citizens relies on survey material. Survey questions and statements contain their own distinct conceptualisation of citizens' potential political discontent. It is thus a legitimate question whether the questions and statements in survey research match with the distinctions made in the theoretical model described in this thesis. First of all we can observe that surveys contain questions or statements about the amount of (dis)satisfaction or (dis)trust citizens have with regard to a certain political object or with the political system in general. This suits the theoretical distinction between various levels and objects of political support and political discontent. There are items tapping support of and discontent with current government (policies) by asking citizens about their general satisfaction with government. There are items that measure support for political institutions such as parliament and political parties. Among them are the so-called 'political cynicism items'. And there are some questions and statements concerning support for the democratic system and democratic principles. We should however note that in surveys some objects and levels of support are measured more extensively than others, which constrains the possibility to study political support through survey studies as multidimensional as we might theoretically wish for.[3]

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[3]   See Chapter three for an overview of available survey items measuring political discontent on different levels.

We should secondly note that respondents may not always think in the theoretical distinctions outlined in the above. There are several studies that suggest citizens judge politicians, government as a whole and do not make detailed distinctions between for instance government and parliament (e.g. Tiemeijer, 2008, Adriaansen, 2012).

Thirdly, the items in survey studies sometimes lack the clarity to study gradations of a certain type and level of political discontent. This is for instance the case with the political cynicism-items. The cynicism-items consist of a subset of three statements, whose answers have been widely used to show how cynicism about politics has evolved over time because they have been available since the early 1970s (Aarts & Van der Kolk and Rosema, 2007, Adriaansen, 2011, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011). These items tap what in this research is called the second level of political discontent: *discontent with politicians in general and the functioning of political institutions.*

The statements are:
– Politicians promise more than they deliver;
– Ministers and junior ministers are primarily self-interested;
– Friends are more important than abilities to become a member of parliament

All statements contain a judgement of politicians, whether these are ministers, junior ministers or members of parliament. When a respondent agrees with all statements, this is generally seen as an indication of political cynicism. In the statements the political authorities are evaluated negatively both on aspects of reliability as on competence. One can however discuss if these items measure genuine political cynicism or merely healthy realism. Agreement with the statement that politicians promise more than they deliver, for example, may also be considered as the obvious result of Dutch coalition politics, in which all parties have to negotiate, rather than as a cynical attitude towards politics in general. The political cynicism as operationalised in survey research is thus less outspoken as we might expect theoretically. Furthermore, as has been mentioned by Adriaansen (2012), a measurement instrument of political cynicism would ideally comprise statements that vary in the level of negativity and positivity and contain several elements of both reliability and competence. In practice, the measurement of citizens' attitudes towards politics, in both a positive and negative way, does not match the multidimensionality that is conceptually desirable.

Trends and theories

Different theories, contradictions and claims are made in the Dutch debate on political trust and political distrust. These predominantly reflect the contradictions in the international debate. First, there is no consensus on what discontent is about and whether it should be explained as a temporal or structural phenomenon. Discontent is interpreted as discontent with government but also as discontent with policy, political representation or coalition politics. Secondly, there is disagreement on factors that best explain actual political discontent.

Declining political support over time?

Diminishing political trust and growing political disenchantment of Dutch citizens has been observed in the Netherlands in several survey studies[4] (Korsten and De Goede, 2006, SCP, 2007, 2008). As a consequence, government and parliament have frequently reflected critically on their own functioning over the last few years (Nationale Conventie, 2006, SCP, 2007, Stuurgroep Parlementaire Zelfreflectie Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2009). However, the popular idea that political support is waning has also been contradicted. Distrust of politics is said to be considerable but not larger than in recent periods (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011, Bovens and Wille, 2011, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011). A large quantity of survey data indeed shows that satisfaction with democracy has remained high since the 1970s. Satisfaction with Dutch democracy increased steadily until 1998 and has declined slightly since then, but still remains at more than 70 per cent. It is said in this respect that what has grown is not discontent per se but the possibility to utter discontent (Aerts, 2009).

Trust in political institutions such as parliament, political parties and the incumbent government fluctuates over time. Satisfaction with government policy has fluctuated over the last few decades. Longitudinal analysis of data on government satisfaction in Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies show this ranges from an average of 40 per cent in 1970 to 20 per cent in 1994 and 35 per cent in 2006 (see Aarts & Van der Kolk and Rosema, 2007). It is only since 2001 that trust in political institutions such as parliament, political parties and government has plummeted. The data in the Cultural Values survey indicate that while trust in government in 1995 and 1996 was around 75% and grew to almost 89% in 1998, the decline in trust in government started in 2000. It first fell back to 75% and

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4   Several survey sources are used to illustrate the trends: the Eurobarometers (1977, 1999, 2001-2004, 1991-2004), International Social Survey Programme, Cultural Changes in the Netherlands (1991-2004), European and World Value Studies, Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies.

dropped sharply in 2002 and 2004 to a rate less than 50%. There have been great variations in trust since then (Van der Meer, 2009) . Since the 1970s, trends visible in data of Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies indicate that political cynicism has grown slightly, but political interest and political efficacy have increased more (see Aarts & Van der Kolk and Rosema, 2007). Whereas only 50 per cent said they were interested in politics in 1970, this number rose to more than 90 per cent in 2002 and 2003. Comparative research, furthermore, shows that trust in Dutch parliament and the cabinet was still high in 2008 in comparison with other European countries (Van der Meer, 2009). Quarterly studies of The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (scp) on citizens' perspectives, based on both on quarterly surveys and focus groups, show that Dutch citizens are very satisfied with their own lives, but dissatisfied with society and, above all, dissatisfied with politics. In 2008, politics was in the top 5 of most-mentioned societal problems (Steenvoorden, 2009). Citizens often mention politics in The Hague as a major problem and refer to the failure of politics, politicians, the cabinet or the government. When describing why, in their opinion, the Netherlands is heading in the wrong direction, they mention different things: they point at policies that they think are failing, shortcomings in the way national politics and the democratic process work, the failure of the cabinet, specific politicians or the failure of international politics (Steenvoorden, 2009).

Explanations for political disaffection at the beginning of the 21st century

In the Dutch debate on political trust at the beginning of the 21st century, a number of theories can be discerned to explain the political discontent of citizens. These theories stress the different sides in the relationship between citizens, politics and the media and largely reflect the different positions in the international academic debate on political trust. There are also theories that combine the perspectives of citizens, politics and the media in a more 'holistic' explanation. On the supply side of politics, the (economic) performance of government, as well as the capacity of political actors and institutions to solve societal problems have been brought forward to explain political discontent of citizens. On the demand side of politics, explanations for political disenchantment can be found in citizens' changed value systems and rising expectations. Furthermore, the strategic reporting on politics by the media and their focus on strategy, emotion and conflict is another factor that is seen as accelerating political cynicism. I will now explore the most popular explanations in the Dutch debate on political trust.

Explanations on the demand side of politics

Many scholars put the political discontent at the beginning of the 21st century into perspective by pointing at citizens' changed value system. The critical stand towards political institutions and authorities has been perceived as a result of a new highly educated post-materialistic generation and an expression of eroded hierarchical relations in society (Inglehart, 1997, Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), but it may also be an expression of eroded social or interpersonal trust in society (Putnam, 2000). Trends (largely based on surveydata of the World Values Surveys) that are put forward by both Inglehart and Welzel (2005) and for instance Norris (2011) are that support for democratic principles and values seem to have grown since the 1970s. Citizens are perceived to be critical of the functioning of political institutions and political elites. This is why some talk about 'dissatisfied democrats' or 'critical citizens', who value democratic principles but are disappointed with how democracy works in practice (Dalton, 2004, Norris, 1999, 2011). Citizens' critical disposition towards politics is seen as a broader reflection of the loss of esteem for authority in society and the rise of expectations towards politics. The notion that Dutch citizens have 'post-materialistic' characteristics is confirmed in the Netherlands. As in all established democracies, in the Netherlands the democratic system is highly valued (Hay, 2007, Stoker, 2006). When asked to specify what people are satisfied about in surveys and focus groups of the SCP, most people mention they are satisfied with the democratic freedoms in the Netherlands (Steenvoorden, 2009). Changes in citizens' values can also be detected in the Netherlands. The 1960s gave way to more free and equal relations of citizens (and the media) with authorities. The idea spread that politics should become more informal (see historical study of Aerts, 2009). All sorts of authorities became suspect; inequality between citizens and authorities was no longer accepted; and politicians were increasingly expected to be responsive to citizens (Van Gunsteren and Andeweg, 1994). Citizens have gained a broad range of engagement possibilities to criticize political authorities and use these to swing into action when they need to (Verhoeven, 2009, Rosanvallon, 2008).

Some Dutch studies challenge the idea that a new generation of highly educated, post-materialistic Dutch citizens is increasingly critical of the functioning of politics. Van der Brug *et al*. (Hosch-Dayican, 2011, Van den Brug and Van Praag jr., 2006), for instance, show in an article based on a statistical analysis of data in Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2006 that trust in democracy and in democratic institutions is not much lower in the current generation of Dutch youngsters than in other generations.

Various studies, also based on the statistical analyses of public available surveys find that education matters: citizens with low educational attainment levels are far more dissatisfied with parliament and government than people with high

educational levels (Bovens and Wille, 2010, Steenvoorden, 2009, Van der Meer, 2009, Dekker, 2006). Political cynicism in the Netherlands is related to low self-esteem and low confidence in others, as for instance Dekker (2006) showed on basis of a statistical analysis of Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2002/2003. Other studies (based on a statistical analysis of the Cultural Changes in the Netherlands survey) conclude that negativity towards politics at an individual level furthermore also relates to individual feelings of uncertainty, fear of future possibilities and the feeling of being left aside in modern society (Van den Brink, 2002, 2007). Psychological mechanisms at the individual level thus seem important. Interviews with politically cynical non-voters in the Netherlands confirm that cynicism may sometimes be explained as a feeling of being disconnected with society and being left out and left behind, but that it is also often the result of bad personal experiences, shocking events and witnessing political affairs (Dekker, 2002). A theory that might explain the observed background characteristics of dissatisfied citizens in the above is that citizens who feel they do not count in life or society may project their sour, negative feelings about themselves onto politics (Hooghe, 2001).

The idea that political discontent is an expression of eroded social or interpersonal trust in society (Putnam, 2000) is much debated. Contrary to findings in the United States, Dutch research into the relation between social trust and political trust in surveys provides no extensive evidence to support the idea of a broad decline of trust in societal institutions and organisations in the Netherlands (e.g. Halman, 2006).

Media logic

Another type of explanation focuses on the effects of the media on political trust. Politicians, on the one hand, have come to rely on the possibilities of the mass media to interact with the public. On the other hand, as several authors have observed politicians cannot do their job without journalists watching over their shoulders (e.g. De Beus, 2011, Luyendijk, 2010, RMO, 2003, Van Weezel, 2011). The interaction with the media is often mentioned as a major negative influence on how politicians are perceived by citizens. Negative strategic reporting on politics in television shows (in the US) is considered as an accelerator of political cynicism and political discontent among citizens (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997). In the Netherlands, 80 per cent of the members of the Second Chamber indicated that they react too much to incidents and messages in the media, as a parliamentary survey study conducted in 2006 revealed (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2007). The existence of an increasingly negative strategic reporting and its effects on citizens' political support in the Netherlands, however, is still a matter of discussion.

Research on this topic during the campaigns of 1998 to 2012 parliamentary elections, for instance, counters the idea of an increasing 'medialogic' and shows that the Dutch newspapers during campaigns relatively paid less attention to individual politicians (with exception of party leaders), paid more attention to content than to conflicts or 'racing news' and became relatively more positive in the tone of their political reporting, especially after 2002 (Kleinnijenhuis and Scholten, 2007). The effects of news on political trust are not straightforward either. Analysis of survey research (cob 2008) indicates that people who watch news shows for more than 30 minutes each day are more satisfied with politics (Steenvoorden, 2009); people who do not follow the news at all are less satisfied with politics in The Hague; and people who are frequent users of certain news channels (such as the popular internet site of newspaper Telegraaf.nl) seem less trustful of parliament (Dekker and Steenvoorden, 2008).

Explanations on the supply side of politics

Others point at developments on the supply side of politics that can explain discontent with politics. De Graaf and Huberts, for instance, investigated whether the integrity of Dutch government might be a reason for public discontent with politics. They conclude, however, that the (policy)attention for integrity in public administration is relatively high and the level of corruption in the Netherlands is limited in comparison to other countries and cannot serve as a plausible explanation (De Graaf and Huberts, 2011).

Another explanation why politicians have lost prestige is the on-going transfer of political tasks and responsibilities to organisations in the private sphere, societal organisations, semi- private governments, (multinational) corporations, European Union and other multinational administrations, judges or (local) administration. A popular theory is that a cluttering of responsibilities has caused citizens to question what politicians and politics stand for, leading to a decline of public sector prestige, political disinterest and discontent (Aerts, 2009, Blokland, 2008, Hay, 2007). Citizens are thought to have adjusted to this situation by finding new channels for influencing politics through judges, one-issue movements, consumer boycotts or Internet actions (Hay, 2007). Survey research does indeed show wide evidence of changing participation of citizens, away from active involvement in political parties and into other type of actions (see for instance Hay, 2007, Leyenaar and Jacobs, 2011). The claim that the cluttering of political responsibilities is related to and causes political discontent of citizens however lacks empirical evidence so far.

Discontent with politics is also often related to the rise of new parties and in specific radical right populist parties. Betz (1993, p 671) for instance explains the

gains of radical right-wing populist parties through the widespread disaffection with politics and growing cynicism toward the established political parties. He refers to analyses of survey data (Switzerland, Austria, Italy) that provide support for this proposition. Also Mudde (2007, p 221) and Norris (2005) refer to findings (also based on surveys) that (Western) European populist radical right parties are supported by people with strong anti-establishment sentiments. However, the idea that new parties thrive on anti-establishment feelings in the Netherlands is a matter of debate. Thomassen for instance, argues that political discontent is really about the absence of political opposition and the absence of voice on important policy issues such as integration and immigration (Thomassen, 2010). Others state that it is because of discontent with Islam, immigration and integration that new political movements that can be described as populist radical right parties have become popular, not because of the sudden discontent with political culture and the functioning of the parliamentary system (e.g. Van Rossem, 2010). On the other hand, (e.g. Van Ostaaijen, 2012, Boogers, Lucardie en Voerman, 2006) local political newcomers in the Netherlands clearly mention discontent with local policies and the functioning of democracy as a major reason to start a new party.

Bovens and Wille (Bovens and Wille, 2006, 2008, 2011) argue that the most plausible explanation for the decline in political trust in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 21st century can be found in polarising performance and the distinct political signature of succeeding Christian-Democratic cabinets, in combination with a dip in consumer trust. They find support for this analysis in the similar trends of consumer trust and political trust and in the fact that lack of trust in a cabinet can predominantly be found with citizens who have voted for opposition parties.

Hendriks (Hendriks, 2009) emphasises the more structural, systematic causes that may be concealed behind the factors that Bovens and Wille address. Hendriks distinguishes three related interdependent clusters of factors or 'currents' that wash over and interact with each other: the slow undercurrent of the Dutch consensus democracy, the more recent current of emotional culture and the surge of risk society. In Hendriks' interpretation, the legitimacy problem of 21st century Dutch politics springs from 'a fundamental mismatch between relational and role patterns that are an integral part of the consensus democracy on the one hand, and shifting expectations and perceptions on the other hand that are related to the rise of an emotional culture and an increasingly perceived risk-society'. With the rise of an emotional culture and a risk society, citizens have come to expect and value another kind of relationship than the system of consensus democracy offers. The strength of consensus democracy is rooted in careful collaboration, depoliticisation and delivering qualitative policy products, but it can easily fall short in emotional and relational perspectives. The accumulation of shocking events

at the beginning of the 21st century in the Netherlands, stressing the surge of a risk society in what was believed to be a safe, well-organized country, combined with the rise of an emotional culture that allowed for events to be dramatised, increasingly put the common way of conflict resolution in consensus democracy under pressure. Citizens increasingly do not want to be bystanders, watching how representatives arrange societal matters; they want to play along. Because of the structural character of emotional culture, risk society and consensus democracy, Hendriks does not expect that people's suspicion of politics will disappear any time soon.

Van Wessel (Van Wessel, 2010) also stresses that critique of the government appears to be related to the specific type of Dutch coalition politics. On basis of interviews she concludes that citizens want simple and direct politics: representation by consultation, direct leadership, steadiness in viewpoints and perceptible output. Citizens expect consistency in goals and results, but their experiences of the messy and complex political reality does not live up to these expectations (Van Wessel, 2010). Representation fails because citizens consider politicians to be inconsistent representatives of their ideas or interests. They feel that politicians decide too much on their own, that their principles and viewpoints are weak and that their promises are unreliable.

In the analysis of the state of democracy in the Netherlands, Andeweg & Thomassen[5] (2011) the perspectives of Bovens & Wille and Hendriks can both be found. With reference to Bovens & Wille, they note that survey statistics on support for democracy, government and parliament do not confirm the public idea of a widening gap between citizens and politics. However, they find that the substantial belief in the distance between politics and citizens requires further diagnosis and cannot be fully explained by temporal factors. Like Hendriks, they define structural causes that, in their opinion, pose a challenge to the specific Dutch democratic system, which is characterised by (elitist) representation of opinion and the search for consensus. They define five structural modernisation processes: individualisation, horizontalisation of authority, globalisation, multiculturalisation and mediatisation. All these processes have had their effects on how consensus democracy is developing. In this context, for instance, Andeweg & Thomassen perceive a softened authority relation between politics and citizens, waning political participation in political parties, increasingly volatile elections and the growing popularity of inter-

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5   In 2011, the results of the 'Democratic Audit' were published, an evaluation by numerous political scholars on the state of democracy in the Netherlands. This Dutch Audit, to quote the authors, is 'unlike the British Democratic Audit, not only about the formal requirements of democracy, but explicitly deals with the functioning of democracy in practice, the political institutions and politicians within'. The Audit thus covers a broader concept of democracy. Andeweg & Thomassen (2011) composed and analysed the research findings on different aspects of democracy.

active policymaking. Andeweg & Thomassen emphasise the societal developments that put consensus democracy under pressure, as Hendriks does. Bovens & Wille, on the contrary, are not inclined to search for structural factors that can explain political discontent, as they perceive no structural increase of political discontent and distrust.

Analysis of the differences between political trust in surveys in European countries shows that differences between citizens matter more than differences between countries. However, the level of political trust can also be explained to some extent by international variation in corruption, the democratic tradition and the voting system (proportional representation). Economic development does not make a difference (Van der Meer, 2009).

An important conclusion of the Dutch Democratic Audit is that the way voters play their role in elections is highly democratic. They vote for the party that best represents their opinion, and they reward or punish the government parties for their actions. A more problematic development Andeweg & Thomassen note is that, in the wake of societal developments, traditional political opposition has softened and that consensus democracy is developing into cartel democracy, with an increasingly monistic relation between parliament and government and a fragile base for political parties. They refer to research on the problematic role of political representation in parliament and political parties. Krouwel, for instance, notes that political parties in the Netherlands are seen to have developed from broad-based political parties into professionalised 'cartel parties' focusing on recruiting governors instead of focusing on representation (Krouwel, 2004). The transformation of mass parties into 'cartel parties' as observed by Krouwel in the Netherlands is reflecting a more broadly observed international trend described and studied (Katz and Mair, 1995, Mair, 1997).

Whether parliament and political parties have become less representative is more controversial. Bovens & Wille, for instance, say that representation in parliament is distorted: in comparison with the 1970s, Dutch parliamentarians have a distinct background that is not representative of the Dutch population. Politicians are increasingly higher educated and mainly follow a professional career in fraction politics and public service (Bovens and Wille, 2010). Aerts contradicts this claim by noting that politics has always been the domain of the aristocracy and the upper class. Between 1917-1960, parliament was the least unrepresentative in history (Aerts, 2009). Others mention that, although members of parliament may not be representative from a demographic perspective, the opinions of members of political parties do in general reflect the opinions of the Dutch voters (Den Ridder & Van Holsteyn and Koole, 2011).

Specified research questions

How should we interpret the citizens' political discontent in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 21st century in terms of its objects, explanations and related political behaviour? In the introduction I highlighted the questions I study in the different parts and chapters of this research. As the different theories and claims in the Dutch (and international) debate have now been described, some of these research questions can now be specified.

1. Regarding the objects and multidimensionality of the political discontent of citizens in the Netherlands there has been a fierce debate about what Dutch citizens are dissatisfied with at the beginning of the 21st century. The Dutch debate puts forward different claims. Are Dutch citizens predominantly:
– dissatisfied with the government (Bovens and Wille, 2011)?
– dissatisfied with the responsiveness of politics (Van Wessel, 2011)?
– dissatisfied with the systematic features of the democratic system, such as Dutch coalition politics or the lack of direct democratic influence (ROB, 2010, Van Reybroeck, 2013)?

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this research we study what longitudinal survey studies and interviews with politically cynical citizens can learn us about the multidimensional character of Dutch political discontent. With both our theoretical model as an analytical tool to distinguish three different levels and types of discontent and the different claims set out in the Dutch debate we analyse what Dutch citizens are dissatisfied about in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21th century.

2. There is debate about what explains the political discontent of citizens. Two profiles of dissatisfied citizens often appear:
– Political discontent as a manifestation of the disappointment of modern citizens who feel strongly about democratic principles but are unhappy about the effect of democracy in practice (e.g. Dalton, 2004, Norris, 1999). Political discontent as a result of a highly-educated, post-materialistic generation and an expression of eroded hierarchic relations in society (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).
– Political discontent as a characteristic of socially deprived and orphaned citizens who cannot keep up with modern times (Hooghe, 2001, Van den Brink, 2007).

Building on the Dutch debate we ask (Chapter 4):
– What can interviews with politically cynical citizens learn us on what profile (if any) Dutch cynical citizens have? How cynical are they really and what are factors that influence their attitude towards politics?

3. Different ideas exist about whether and when political discontent leads to either exit or voice (Hirschman, 1970). A negative disposition towards politics or government can be related to:
– Turning away from politics; not voting (e.g. Dekker, 2006, Marien, 2012).
– Activating citizens to participate in all kinds of ways: in casting a protest vote (Aarts, Van der Kolk and Rosema, 2007), supporting populist parties (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002) or by joining in demonstrations, by sending letters to newspapers or taking part in discussions on the Internet or by writing hatemails to politicians (Dalton, 2004).

Building on this debate I study how the political discontent of Dutch citizens relates to certain political behaviour, namely non-voting, protest voting or other kinds of political protest. Do citizens who are dissatisfied with politics alienate themselves from politics by non-voting and non-participation in political protest activities? Or do dissatisfied citizens turn to protest, through protest voting and other kind of protest activities, joining demonstrations or speaking in on government meetings? On basis of interviews with political cynical citizens and a statistical analyses of Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 I study in Chapter 5 whether citizens' discontent relate either to alienation from politics or to mobilisation into political protest actions.

4. Regarding the relation between citizens, politics and the media, there's a controversy in the Dutch debate about whether so-called medialogic in political newsreporting actually increases and whether medialogic accelerates a negative or cynical attitude towards politics. In Chapter 5, I contribute to the deepening of the debate on the relation between media, citizens and politics by exploring the public attention in newspapers for the issue of political discontent of citizens over a long period of time. How is citizens' political discontent discussed in newspapers and parliament and how has this changed over time? Why do so many journalists and politicians alike feel that the issue is of such urgency that it should be addressed in public? I do thus not study whether medialogic in political news reporting has grown as such or whether the influence of a certain media reporting accelerates political cynicism. The analysis does however offer insights on the changing relationship between newsmedia agents, citizens and politicians.

3 Mapping (the Survey Statistics) of Political Discontent in the Netherlands

Over the past few decades, survey studies have become increasingly available, offering us the opportunity to gain broad representative knowledge of citizens' political attitudes and behaviour over a long period of time. In this Chapter, I have used publicly available survey studies to present an overview of the political support and political discontent of Dutch citizens from the 1970s up to the first decade of the 21st century. To trace the political discontent of Dutch citizens, I have used a variation of survey data that contain interesting items for analysing the political support and political discontent of Dutch citizens. These studies are: Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES), European Values Studies (EVS), Cultural Changes (CV SCP), Eurobarometer (EB) and European Survey Studies (ESS). The studies differ in the number of times they have been conducted and the survey items that have been included in each wave. The Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies, for instance, dates back to 1971 and allows us to compare attitudes over a relatively long period of time. The survey is rich in tapping political cynicism, (political) trust and voting behaviour. The European Values Studies, on the other hand, date back to 1994 and are rich in tapping citizens' values and cultural beliefs but is only conducted once every nine years. The European Social Studies have been conducted every two years since 2002 and contain useful items on support for different regime institutions and support for political authorities. The Eurobarometer mainly contains questions about Europe and European integration, but also some questions about satisfaction with government and democracy, which have been asked every half year since the 1970s. The surveys differ greatly, therefore, in the number of times they have been performed: while the European Values Studies is performed every nine years, the standard Eurobarometer survey is conducted every six months.

Theoretically, various levels of politics can be under stress. It structures and sharpens the mind to distinguish types and levels of political support in the empirical analysis of political discontent. In this thesis, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of David Easton, Norris *et al.* and Hendriks *et al.*, I distinguish three

types or levels of political discontent (see Chapter 2 for details): discontent with democratic principles and values; discontent with politicians in general and the functioning of political institutions; and discontent with current government policies and incumbent officeholders.

When we compare the (longitudinal) items available in public available surveys, what can we learn about the type and level of political support and political discontent in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21st century? Building on the controversies in the Dutch debate: Are citizens primarily dissatisfied with the government (Bovens and Wille, 2011)? Are they dissatisfied with the responsiveness of politics (Van Wessel, 2011) or with the systematic features of the democratic system, such as coalition politics (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011, Hendriks, 2009) or the lack of direct democratic influence (ROB, 2010, Van Reybroeck, 2013)?

To map out the political discontent of citizens in the Netherlands, I used available survey items that tapped citizens' support and discontent at one of these three distinguished levels. There are great differences in the number of available survey items and survey sources to describe the trends on each level. Items tapping support of and discontent with current government (policies) by asking citizens about their general satisfaction with government are widely available; this item can be found in various survey studies and on numerous points in time. Items concerning support for democratic principles and values, on the other hand, are surprisingly scarce. In my selection of survey items, I preferably used items that could be compared over time. I did not use survey items whose answer categories changed over the years. In such cases, it may seem as if citizens' attitudes have changed drastically, while in effect this change may have been partly caused by a change in answer options.[1] If trends had already been extensively documented by others, I confined myself to describing these findings. Detailed trends on the ups and downs in Dutch

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[1] Many survey items seemed interesting at first glance, but proved too ambiguous to use for a time analysis on closer inspection. To give an example: in 2002, 86 per cent of the respondents in DPES answered that *government did a (very) poor job handling the most important societal problem'*. A similar question, asked in DPES 1971, showed that only 11 per cent of the respondents thought *'ministers did not do a good job in handling the most important societal problem'*. When comparing these results, it seems at first glance as if citizens' confidence in government performance and ministers had indeed worsened dramatically. However, comparing these results might be misleading as the answer categories used in both years were different and may explain part of the answers. In 1971, more subtle, less outspoken answer categories to this statement were available to respondents. In 1971, respondents could not only answer 'Ministers do a good or poor job in handling societal problems', but they could also answer 'Ministers occasionally do a good job' and 'Some ministers do a good job but others do not'. Most respondents in 1971 chose such moderate answer categories: while 30 per cent of respondents indicated that 'ministers do a good job in handling the most important societal problem', 31 per cent of respondents agreed that ministers occasionally did a good job, and 28 per cent of respondents agreed that 'some ministers do a good job but some do not'.

government satisfaction throughout the years can be found, for instance, in the quarterly research reports on citizens' perspectives (Dekker and Den Ridder, 2011, Den Ridder and Van der Meer, 2011) of the Dutch Institute for Social Research or the two yearly reports on The State of the Netherlands.

Table 4 on the next page shows both survey items I would have used ideally and the survey items available in survey studies.

Growing discontent with current government (policy) and incumbent officeholders?

On the level of support for current government (policy) and incumbent office-holders, I would ideally have included a range of items that tap how politically (dis) satisfied and (dis)trustful citizens are on a very concrete and personal level. These items could include questions about how citizens evaluate the functioning of cabinet in general, how they evaluate specific government policies and specific political officeholders (such as the Prime Minister, the Ministers, the party leaders, but also different Members of Parliament). In reality, some items were widely available in survey studies, whereas others were virtually non-existent.

Volatile discontent with government

Questions on general satisfaction with the current government (policy), for instance, are widely available and can be found in the European Social Survey, the European Values Studies, the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies, the Eurobarometer, in the Cultural Values survey, and in the quarterly surveys on citizens' opinions (COB) conducted by the Governmental Institute of Social Research (SCP). Trends on government satisfaction, therefore, are well documented, as are trends in policy satisfaction.

The surveys show great fluctuations in government satisfaction and government trust over time. Schyns & Van der Meer, for instance, show on basis of the Cultural Values survey that satisfaction with the Dutch government was high in 1998 (Schyns and Van der Meer, 2009), with around 80 per cent of Dutch citizens indicating they were satisfied with the government. In 2000, satisfaction with the incumbent government dropped to 60 per cent, and in 2004 it fell once more to a satisfaction rate below 50 per cent. There have been large variations in satisfaction since then. Others point at similar patterns on the basis of other surveys, such as the Eurobarometer and surveys on citizens' perspectives (COB SCP). Trust in the government was high in the late 1990s, fell sharply after 2000 and has fluctuated ever since (Bovens and Wille, 2011, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011). The quarterly surveys on

Table 4: Survey items used

Brons	Items I would like to see in survey research	Items available in survey research
Discontent with democratic principles and values	Items tapping the amount of discontent and support for democratic procedural principles as: one man, one vote, elected political officials, free and fair elections, suffrage, the right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information, associational autonomy. Items measuring discontent and support around political equality and political freedoms. For instance: Do citizens believe that all citizens are equally fit of making political decisions and should be allowed to make political decisions? How important do citizens find the different freedoms and political rights in their country? Do people find the amount of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association that is available for themselves and for others too big or too small? Do citizens believe certain (minority) groups have more rights and freedoms than should be allowed? Items tapping the conviction that government and politics sufficiently guard and guarantee democratic principles and act according principles of good governance such as integrity and transparency, treating citizens equal and unprejudiced.	"Satisfaction with democracy in the Netherlands (DPES), Proud of democracy (CV), Agree with the statement: democracy may have its problems, but is better than any other form of government (EVS, CSES, DPES), In democracy, the economic system runs badly. Democracies are indecisive and have too much squabbling. Democracies aren't good at maintaining order (EVS). Support for democracy as way of governing the country (EVS). Support for political system in which the army governs the country (EVS). Support for political system in which experts rule the country (EVS). Support for one strong leader ruling the country (EVS).
Discontent with politicians in general and the functioning of political institutions	Items tapping the perceived morality and competence of the political class and the political institutions in practice. Do political institutions, such as government, parliament and political parties and the political authorities as a class find convincing solutions for societal questions of our time? Do political institutions and politicians as a class pursuit goals in general interest, are they integer and broadly represent citizens? Do citizens agree that politicians in general are moral and competent enough to solve societal challenges? Do citizens agree that the democratic rules of the game work in practice or do they urge change of institutions and conduct of the political class?	Support for democratic renewals, Trust in parliament (DPES, CV, ESS), political parties (ESS), trust in politicians (ESS), satisfaction with the way democracy works in country (ESS), Support for institutional reforms. Parties are only interested in my vote and not in my opinion (DPES), Politicians are honest (DPES), Politicians are reliable (DPES), Politicians keep their promises (DPES), Politicians are capable of solving problems in society (DPES), Politicians promise more than they can deliver (DPES), Politicians are corrupt (DPES), Politicians get a kick out of power (DPES), Politicians are profiteers (DPES), Politicians only have fine talk (DPES), Members of Parliament don't care about opinions of people like me (DPES, CV), Friends are more important than abilities to become a Member of Parliament (DPES), Ministers and junior-ministers are primarily self-interested (DPES), Parliament is too focused on powerful groups (CV).

Table 4: Survey items used

Brons	Items I would like to see in survey research	Items available in survey research
Discontent with current government (policies) and incumbent office-holders	Items tapping support and discontent about current government and current political authorities. Do citizens support current government performance? Do citizens support the different government policies (such as health care, crime and others)? How do citizens judge the performance of the Prime Minister? Are citizens satisfied and trusting about the Prime Minister? How do citizens judge the performance of the current ministers in government? How do citizens judge the performance of specific Members in Parliament? And for all: how do citizens judge the performance of the MP they have voted for in parliamentary elections?	Satisfaction with performance current government (DPES), general satisfaction with government (DPES), satisfaction with government (EVS), satisfaction with national government (ESS), general trust in Dutch government (EB), faith in .. as Prime Minister (DPES), sympathy for politician ... (DPES), satisfaction with policy (CV, SSN).

citizens' perspectives confirm the picture of high variations in government trust. At the beginning of 2008, around 50 per cent of Dutch citizens said they trusted the government. At the beginning of 2009, 60 per cent of Dutch respondents said they trusted the government. In the second quarter of 2010, government trust fell back again to just over 45 per cent (Dekker and Den Ridder, 2011).

In Figure 1 om the next page, I added complementary trend information on the political discontent with the government, available in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (1971-2010) and the European Social Survey (2002-2010). In the Figure, another item has been added about faith in a specific political authority: the Prime Minister (1981-2010).

Trends in government satisfaction that can be retrieved from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies trace satisfaction with the government back to the beginning of the 1970s. Roughly the same fluctuating pattern in government satisfaction can be seen here as in the Eurobarometer. However, the trend goes back further in time, so we can place the ups and downs in government satisfaction at the beginning of the 21st century in a broader time perspective. Compared to the beginning of the 21st century, discontent with government seemed relatively low in the 1970s, with only between 13 and 22 per cent of Dutch citizens saying they were (very) dissatisfied with the government in the 1970s. At the beginning of the 1980s (in 1981), discontent with the government was more substantial: 36 per cent of Dutch citizens indicated they were (very) dissatisfied with the government. In the latter part of the 1980s and halfway the 1990s, discontent ebbed away a little, with those saying they were (very) dissatisfied with government fluctuating around 20 to 30

Figure 1: Support for government and Prime Minister
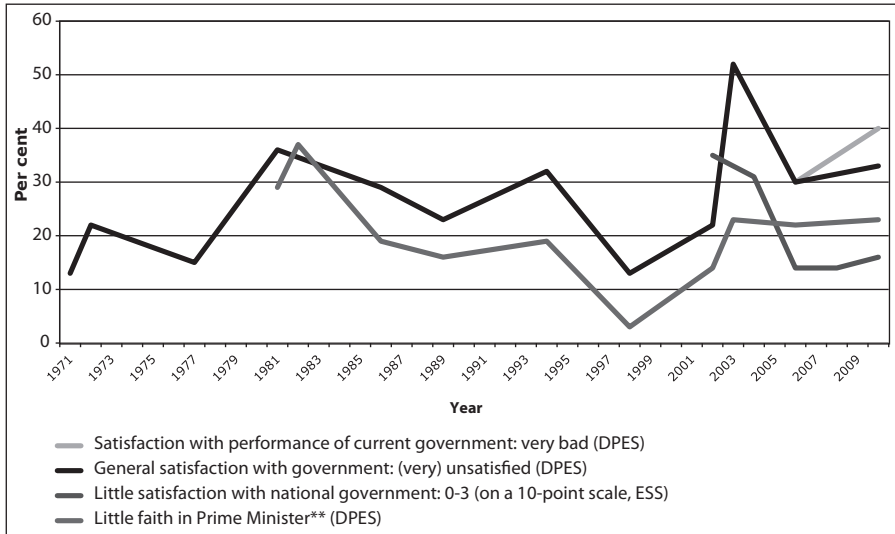
per cent. In the latter part of the 1990s just as at the beginning of the 1980s, people indicated they were very satisfied with the government, with only 13 per cent saying they were (very) dissatisfied in 1998. A massive rise of discontent can be seen at the beginning of the 21st century (2003), when more than half the Dutch citizens indicated they were dissatisfied with the government. Discontent then fell back again to around 30 per cent in 2006 and 2010. Another question in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies that was included solely in 2010 showed a somewhat higher discontent with the current government, around 40 per cent.

In the European Social Survey, citizens are asked how satisfied they are with their national government. They answer by scoring their satisfaction on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). These items are available every two years starting in 2002. An overview of government satisfaction in the ESS, therefore, helps to get a more detailed picture of support for the national government in the first decade of the 21st century. The results show that discontent with the government (scores 1-3) follows a pattern similar to that of discontent with the government in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies. Discontent was relatively high in 2002, dropped until 2006 and then stabilizes. Severe dissatisfaction with the government in the European Social Studies was relatively low between 2006 and

2010: around 15 per cent of Dutch citizens scored a 1, 2 or 3 for their satisfaction level. By comparison, around 70 per cent of Dutch citizens scored satisfaction with the government between 1 to 5 on a 10-point scale in 2002; around 50 per cent of Dutch citizens scored government satisfaction between 1 to 5 on a 10-point scale in 2010. The number of citizens showing moderate discontent with government, therefore, follows the same trend but is considerably larger.

Government satisfaction figures in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies show fluctuations between a low point of 13 per cent of Dutch citizens saying they were dissatisfied with the government in both 1971 and 1998, to a high point of 51 per cent of Dutch citizens saying they were dissatisfied with the government in 2003. The European Social Studies confirms the picture of high discontent with the government between 2002 and 2004. Around 2003 was the only time that can be traced back in the available surveys so far when such a large number of Dutch citizens indicated they were (very) dissatisfied with the government.

Support for government policies

For trends in satisfaction with government policy, we can refer to the overviews by Dekker & Den Ridder (Dekker and Den Ridder, 2011), who give an overview of trends in policy satisfaction in different policy domains from 1996 to 2009. It is striking that most citizens seemed to be mildly satisfied with government policies. At the end of the 1990s, satisfaction with government policy was relatively high, then it dropped after 2000 and rose again after 2004. In general, the mean policy satisfaction score follows the same pattern as government satisfaction in general. The only difference is that the 2004 dip in policy satisfaction was less steep than current government satisfaction (Dekker and Den Ridder, 2011). In 2009, a large majority gave their satisfaction with twelve different areas of government policy a score of 6 or higher on a 10-point scale. Satisfaction differs between policy domains, but not that much. All policies score a mean between 5.8 and 6.3. The biggest differences in 2009 are between satisfaction in education and healthcare. While 78 per cent of Dutch citizens scored a 6 or higher (with a mean of 6.3) on education, only 58 per cent of Dutch citizens scored a 6 or higher (with a mean of 5.8) on healthcare policies. In the dip between 2002 and 2004, a majority of Dutch citizens still scored a 6 or higher on government policy. Massive discontent with government policy can only be seen in a few distinct policy areas at distinct moments. In 2000, a low of 32 per cent of Dutch citizens, for example, scored a 6 or higher on healthcare policies. In 2002, a low of 39 per cent of Dutch citizens scored a 6 or higher on law enforcement. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, support for healthcare and law enforcement policies rose again, with a large majority scoring a 6 or higher on a 10-point scale on healthcare (58 per cent) and law enforcement (75 per cent).

Support for individual politicians

What about the trends in support for individual politicians? On basis of a for this purpose designed survey study (LISS panel) conducted between 2007 and 2010, Wisse observed that Dutch citizens highly value reliability, honesty and competence in Cabinet Ministers more than anything (Wisse, 2014). However, there are not so many publicly available longitudinal survey items available that measure the support for individual politicians. One exception is the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies that contains a question measuring faith in leaders from different political parties in the role of Prime Minister. I have tracked faith in the party leader that actually was Prime Minister during election times (see Figure 1). The results show that faith in the Prime Minister does not fluctuate as much as government satisfaction does. The number of Dutch citizens indicating they had little faith in the Prime Minister was the highest in the early 1980s, when 29 per cent had little faith in Van Agt as Prime Minister during the 1981 elections. In the 1998 elections, the number of people that indicated they had little faith in Kok as Prime Minister was negligible (3 per cent). It is interesting, as Figure 1 shows, that Dutch citizens did not specifically lose faith in Balkenende as their Prime Minister during the strong rise of discontent with government between 2002 and 2004.

Also in years with high government satisfaction (1998) and a lot of faith in the Prime Minister (1998), a large number of people obviously did not sympathise with certain politicians and party leaders. In 1998, while only 8 per cent of Dutch citizens thought Prime Minister Wim Kok (very) unsympathetic, more than 40 per cent of Dutch citizens indicated they thought the leader of the right-wing Christian party (GPV/CU: Gert Schutte) was (very) unsympathetic, and around 40 per cent felt (very) unsympathetic about the leader of the liberal party (VVD: Frits Bolkestein) and the leader of the Green Left Party (Paul Rosenmöller). The other way around, also in years with low government satisfaction, for example 2003, a large number of people sympathised with certain politicians and did not sympathise with others. In 2003, for example, only 17 per cent thought the leader of the Social Democratic Party (PvdA, Wouter Bos) was unsympathetic, while 54 per cent thought the leader of the very popular List Pim Fortuyn (LPF, Mat Herben) was (very) unsympathetic.

In summary, available survey studies do not indicate that discontent with the current government or specific political authorities is substantially growing over time. Support fluctuates, with satisfaction with government sometimes being high and disbelief in its main representative, the Prime Minister, being negligible, as in the late 1990s, and sometimes being low, with a depth in discontent around 2003. Interestingly, discontent with policy concentrated on distinct policy domains: healthcare and law enforcement. There was an exceptionally high discontent with government and government policy at the beginning of the 21st century, around

2003. Interestingly, during the dip in government and policy satisfaction between 2002 and 2004, faith in the Prime Minister, the main representative of the government, was relatively high.

No specific survey questions are available that might explain why citizens were so deeply dissatisfied with government around 2003. However, a plausible explanation for the drop in government trust around 2003 (also noted by Bovens & Wille, 2011) is that the period around the 2003 parliamentary elections was marked by the controversial government participation of political newcomer LPF, the daily internal fights and struggles in this political party and the fall of the CDA-VVD-LPF cabinet after only 87 days of governing. When the new cabinet took office and the LPF party was no longer in this government, indications of massive public discontent with government dropped in the surveys.

Growing discontent with political institutions and politicians in general?

There are several survey items that trace the perceived trustworthiness of political institutions and citizens' faith in the rules of the political game, as well as their belief in the competence and morality of politicians in general. There are items that measure general trust in politicians and political institutions, such as parliament and political parties. There are also survey items measuring political cynicism and the perceived competence and morality of politicians. Several questions are available that pertain to citizens' wish for institutional change. Questions about citizens' consent with the political rules of the game are scarce. Do citizens feel that the rules of the political game are equal and unprejudiced? An overview of all items available in the different survey sources is given in the Table on surveys and survey items used.

Support for political institutions

The Institute for Social Research has documented trends on trust in parliament in several two-yearly research reports. I will describe these trends briefly and add complementary information about citizens' trust in parliament and political parties in Figure 2 below. Studies by the Institute for Social Research show that citizens' trust in the Second Chamber of Parliament follows a pattern similar to citizens' satisfaction with government. At the end of the 1990s, 65 per cent of Dutch citizens tended to trust Parliament. In 2003, trust in Parliament took a dip, with only 43 per cent of Dutch citizens indicating they trusted parliament. After 2003, Dutch citizens increasingly tended to trust Parliament again, and in 2008 trust in parliament was back at the same level as in 1999 (Schyns and Van der

Meer, 2009, scp, 2007). Additional survey data from the European Social Survey on trust in both national parliament and politicians in general show a similar picture (see Figure 2 below). The number of Dutch citizens who indicated they *'have little trust in parliament and politicians'* increased a little in 2004, but citizens appeared to become more trusting again in subsequent years (2006, 2008 and 2010). Most citizens score their trust in Parliament between 5 and 6 on a 10-point scale. If we look at the trends of citizens' confidence in Parliament and politicians in general, we can thus not see a distinct rise or decline in the last years.

We do not have longitudinal data for trust in political parties, only few time points in each survey: 2008/2009 (evs) and 2010 (dpes). Both measures show that people are considerably less trustful of political parties than they are of the national parliament. In the 2008 European Values Studies, almost 70 per cent of Dutch citizens indicated they had little or no trust in political parties. The 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies indicated that somewhat less than 50 per cent of Dutch citizens had little or no trust in political parties. I cannot easily explain the large variation between the level of confidence and trust in political parties as measured in the different surveys of evs and dpes. There are no obvious methodological reasons (apart from the slightly different phrasing of the statements) that might explain a 20 per cent difference in trust. The variation is far too large to be explained by differences in the samples used in both survey studies. The most plausible explanation is the variation in time. However, there is no obvious reason why Dutch citizens would be far more sceptical about political parties in 2008 than in 2010. The lack of longitudinal datapoints here makes it difficult to give any reliable trend information.

Figure 2: General support for political institutions
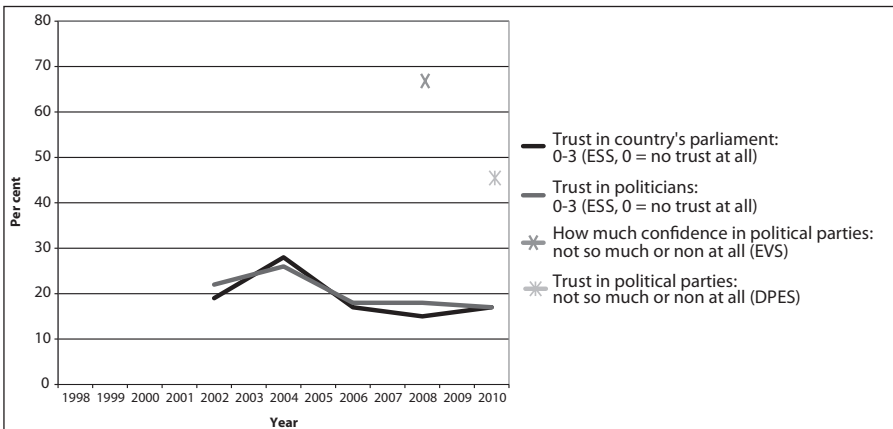
Support for politicians in general

There are only a few items that measure support for political institutions over a long period of time. These include the so-called political cynicism items, a subset of three statements, whose answers have been widely used to measure political cynicism. These statements are:

– Politicians promise more than they deliver;
– Ministers and junior ministers are primarily self-interested;
– Friends are more important than abilities to become a member of parliament.

As noted in Chapter 2, it is a matter for debate whether the answers to these statements measure genuine political cynicism or healthy realism. Irrespective of this discussion on the clarity of the cynicism items, they are often used to show how scepticism about politics has evolved over time because they have been available since the early 1970s (Aarts & Van der Kolk and Rosema, 2007, Adriaansen, 2011, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011). An overview of the trends in political cynicism items is given in Figure 3 below, together with some other similar items that are available in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies over time.

At the beginning of the 21st century, a substantial number of citizens (40 to 50 per cent) appeared to agree with the idea that politicians, members of parliaments or political parties do not care about their opinion. Half the Dutch citizens agreed with the statement that *friends are more important than abilities to become*

Figure 3: Support for political institutions and politicians in general

Legend:
— Parties are only interested in my vote and not in my opinion: true
— Politicians promise more than they can deliver: (fully) agree
— Members of Parliament don't care about opinions of people like me: true
— Friends are more important than abilities to become Member of Parliament: (fully) agree
— Ministers and junior-ministers are primarily self-interested: (fully) agree
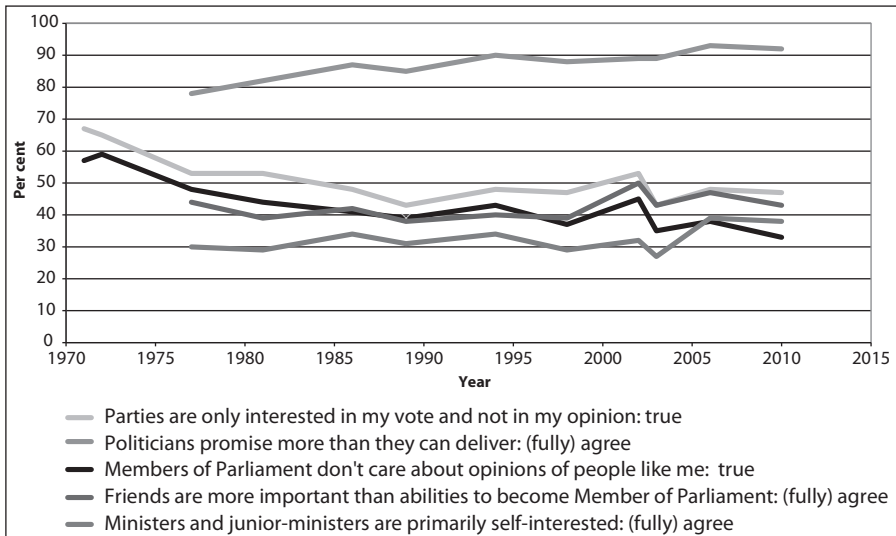
a Member of Parliament'. Over the years, we can see a steady increase in the number of respondents agreeing with the statement that *'politicians promise more than they deliver'*: from 70 per cent up to more than 90 per cent in 2010. In 2010, therefore, almost everyone (90 per cent) was sceptical about the idea of politicians keeping their promises. Political cynicism as measured by the so-called cynicism items, therefore, is widespread.

When we look at how people respond to so-called 'external political efficacy items', with statements such as *'parties are only interested in my vote and not in my opinion'* and *'members of parliament do not care about opinions of people like me',* it seems that people were more critical about political institutions in the 1970s than they were in the first decade of the 21st century. With the exception of 2002 and 2003, ideas about political parties and politicians being self interested and non-responsive have remained fairly stable over the years.

On the whole, cynicism about the responsiveness and openness of politicians and political institutions, as measured through the political cynicism-items, has been relatively stable since the early 1980s. If we look at the movements in political cynicism, a dip in cynicism about the morality and competence of politicians and political institutions in general can be detected in 2003. With hindsight, this dip in cynicism can be explained by how the Dutch political system proved to be a relatively open and responsive electoral system around the 2002 and 2003 parliamentary elections, in which political newcomers could easily make their entry. Since then, political cynicism grew again, although on the whole not up to the levels of cynicism in the1970s. A notable difference over time, moreover, is that the belief that politicians promise more than they can deliver has become commonplace and that the belief that ministers and junior ministers are primarily self- interested has spread.

Some questions in the 2006 and 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies give a more detailed view of how citizens assessed the competence and the morality of politicians in the first decade of the 21st century. Evidently, evaluations of politicians in general differ greatly, depending on the aspect in question. A negligible number of Dutch citizens in either year thought politicians were corrupt, an indication that not so many people questioned the integrity of politicians. Substantially more people did seriously question the honesty of what politicians said and promised. Around 15 to 20 per cent of Dutch citizens thought politicians were profiteers, and an equal number of Dutch citizens did not think that politicians were capable of solving problems in society. A negative judgement of politicians in general was slightly more widespread in 2010 than in 2006. Still, if we rely on the DPES 2010 statistics, never more than 27 per cent of Dutch citizens were (highly) dissatisfied with either the morality or the competence of politicians. In Figure 4 on the next page, I show the numbers of citizens who were (very) dissatisfied with politicians in general. It is striking that most people refrained from giving an

outspoken opinion and chose the neutral answer category of 'I do not know' if this category was available.

Figure 4: Support for politicians in general
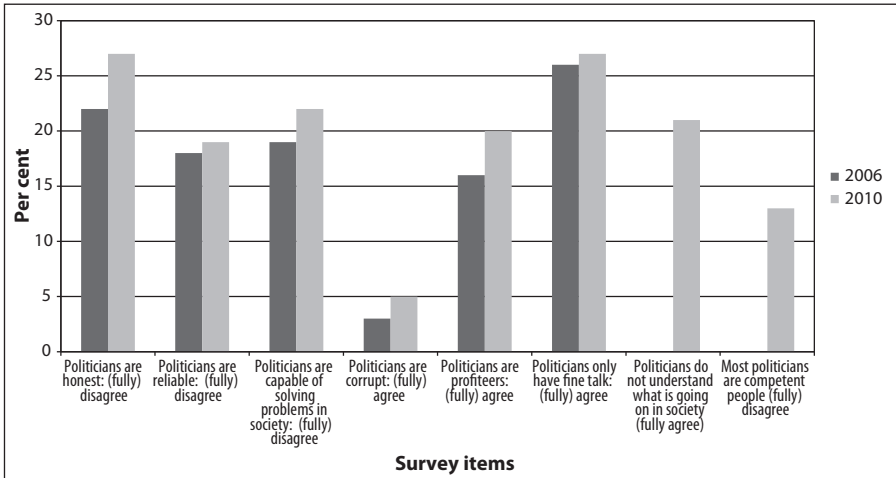
When we look at the survey statistics so far, actual political cynicism may be interpreted as a substantial yet quite stable form of discontent. Other questions available in other surveys confirm this picture. The 1975 edition of the Cultural Values survey asked Dutch citizens about the most important motive for people to become politicians: was this driven by conviction, ambition, it being a good job or self-interest? Surprisingly, the number of people who thought self-interest was the main driver for people to become politicians was somewhat similar to the number of people who, in 2006 and 2010, (fully) agreed that politicians were profiteers, namely around 20 per cent (see Figure 5 on the next page).

In 2010, furthermore, 58 per cent of Dutch citizens (strongly) agreed that Members of Parliament quickly lost contact with voters. The 1994 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies contained a similar statement: *'Politicians and voters are alienated'*, on which roughly the same percentage of 52 per cent of respondents agreed. Although the number of people who thought politicians and voters were alienated was substantial, no excessive rise of cynicism about politicians in general or towards political institutions can be perceived here either.

A wide range of items on the morality and competence of political institutions and politicians show that at least a substantial minority of Dutch citizens is cyni-

Figure 5: Most important motives for politicians
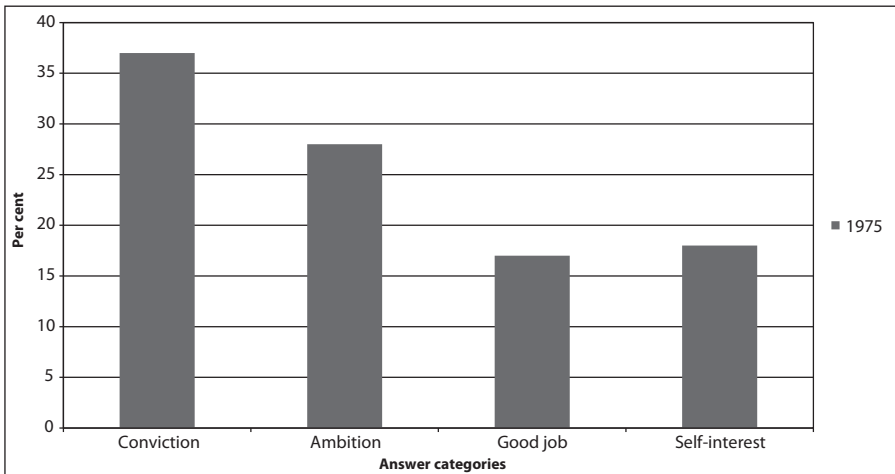
cal about politicians and political institutions in general. A substantial number of Dutch citizens seems cynical about politics and has been quite cynical about politics for as long as we can trace back in time. Political cynicism, if we may believe these survey statistics, is not a last decade phenomenon. Although the survey items give us a broad idea of how citizens value the behaviour of politicians on different aspects of competence and morality, it is not easy to deduce what citizens value most in the (moral) conduct of politicians, what they expect and to what extent the conduct of politicians clashes with their values and expectations. This kind of information is absent from the available public survey studies.

A way of tracing support for the political rules of the game is to analyse to what degree citizens want to alter the rules of the game and support institutional renewal. Hendriks, Boogers & Van Ostaaijen (2011:24) have mapped out the wish for democratic renewal on the basis of survey items in several surveys and show a widespread support for different types of institutional change and more citizen participation over a long time period. Especially support for democratic renewal is strong. Since this has been measured in the Cultural Values survey in the late 1990s, an overwhelming majority of Dutch citizens have supported the introduction of more direct kinds of citizen participation in politics through a referendum (70-80) and an elected mayor (70 per cent). Support for democratic reform, therefore, is substantial. The questions on support for democratic renewal available in the different surveys, however, do not tell us how important citizens find these renewals and whether citizens have serious doubts about the actual rules of the political game in the Netherlands.

With respect to citizens' support for the rules of the political game, unfortunately not many survey items are available or, if so, only at one point in time. The 1981 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies, for instance, contained the statement *'Political decisions are too often made in secrecy',* with which 40 per cent of respondents agreed. DPES 2010 contained two somewhat similar but more cynical statements: *'solely backroom politics is performed in the Hague'* with which a minority of 18 per cent (fully) agreed. The other statement was: *'Dutch politics is corrupt'* with which 23 per cent (fully) agreed. DPES 2010 also contained the statement *'Dutch politics stands up for everyone's interests'* with which 29 per cent of respondents agreed (strongly), 72 said they neither agreed nor disagreed and 28 per cent disagreed (strongly). Over all, cynicism about the rules of the game, backroom politics and political representation seems far more limited than support for democratic renewal.

Growing discontent with democratic principles and values?

To put discontent with government (policies), political authorities and political institutions into perspective, I will now turn to support for democracy. Although scientists, policymakers and journalists alike usually emphasise the importance of support for democracy, few specific questions are available in survey studies. There are questions that measure support for the democratic system in general. The European and World Values Studies, for example, contain questions about what people think of different ways of governing the country. These questions are presented in Figure 6 and 7 below.

Figure 6: Support for political system

Figure 7: Support for democracy
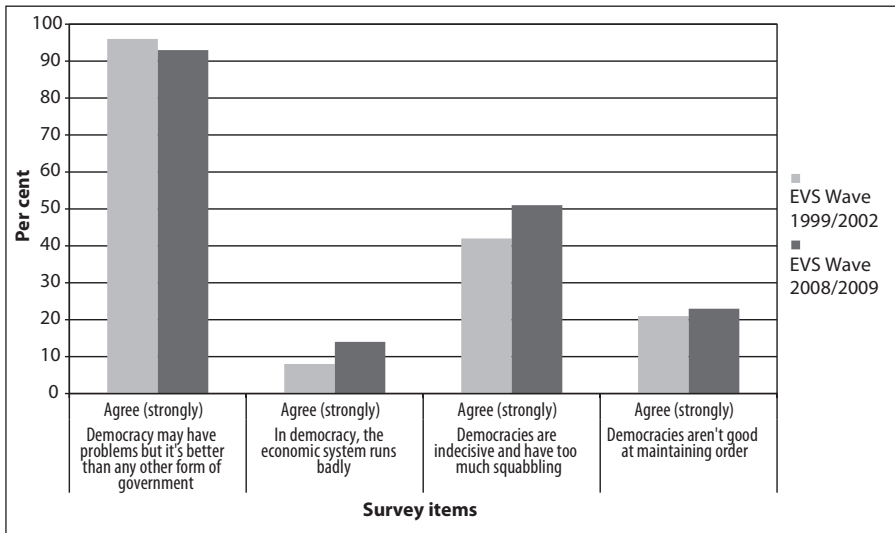
The results show that virtually all citizens see democracy as the best way of governing the country. There is overwhelming agreement with the statement that *democracy may have its problems, but is better than any other form of government*. In comparison, a political system in which the army governs the country can bank on hardly any support. A political system in which experts rule the country can count on substantial support, and also quite a few people support the idea of one strong leader ruling the country.

Questions on satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in practice are also common. There are questions about how satisfied citizens are with the functioning of democracy (EB, DPES, ESS) and with the way democracy develops (EB). Trends in satisfaction with democracy have been well documented, and I will confine myself, therefore, to a summary on how satisfaction with democracy has developed (see, for example, Bovens & Wille, 2010, Hendriks *et al.*, 2011: 22). It is notable that satisfaction with democracy increases from the beginning of the 1970s until the beginning of the 21st century, albeit with some ups and downs. Even after a sudden rise of discontent with democracy at the beginning of the 21st century, satisfaction with democracy (depending on the data source used) is equal to or higher than during the 1970s or 1980s of the 20th century: between 50 and 70 per cent. When asked to indicate their satisfaction with the working of democracy in their country, most people give a score of 7 on a 10-point scale (ESS).

The question remains whether the answers to these democracy questions can be used as a sound measure for detecting support for democratic principles and val-

ues. Because the available questions do not describe democracy in detail, they make it hard to judge what it is that people support in democracy. There has been some discussion on the matter. According to Tiemeijer (2010), Dutch citizens are above all supportive of their democratic freedoms and critical about the institutional design of democracy. He said that citizens' satisfaction with democratic freedoms and rights in 2010 was around 69 per cent, while satisfaction with political decision-making in democracy was considerably lower: around 49 per cent (Tiemeijer, 2010). Criticism of democratic decision-making, however, is not unambiguous. Tiemeijer's own study, for instance, shows that most Dutch citizens understand very well that negotiation and compromise is part of Dutch politics. Only a very small percentage of citizens (15 per cent) thinks that politicians should cling to their ideals and should not compromise.

The lack of survey items on democratic principles and values is probably why judgements on the state of democracy are often restricted to reports on how satisfied citizens are with how democracy functions in general and whether citizens support the general idea of democracy. Only the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies asks whether people think that democratic freedoms should be available for everyone. The results are presented in Figure 8 below. Around 60 to 70 per cent of Dutch citizens in 2010 (fully) agreed that everyone should be free to say or write what they want in public. The number of people who (fully) disagree that everyone should be free to write, say or protest in public is negligible. Only 6 per cent of Dutch citizens (fully) disagree that everyone should be free to protest in

Figure 8: Support for democratic freedoms
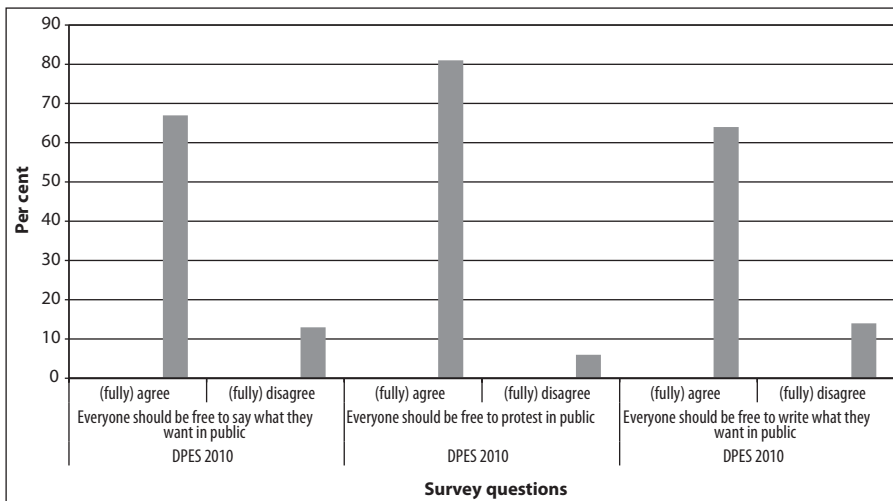
public. A slightly larger number of citizens (fully) disagree that everyone should be free to say and write what they want in public. As these answers show, support for democratic freedoms is considerable but lower than people's general support for having a democratic system. Here too, it remains ambiguous how this single statement should be interpreted. It remains unclear to what extent democratic freedoms are important to people, whether people believe these freedoms are (or have been) under threat or whether they believe these democratic freedoms are equally distributed and protected.

In summary, although some claim with great certainty that support for democracy is either under pressure (ROB, 2010, Van Reybrouck, 2013) or large (Bovens & Wille, 2011), I can only state that the empirical evidence in survey studies for a statement on the matter is thin. The few items that are available in surveys do indicate a widespread support for democracy as a political system, but these items are put in general terms. As it is not self-evident what citizens mean when they support 'democracy' or when they plea for stronger leadership, citizens' support for democratic principles and values cannot be easily described and analysed on basis of available survey data. Questions that tap the level of support for democratic principles and democratic values are virtually non-existent in surveys. As democratic rights and civil liberties are an important part of how citizens and most political scientists define and understand democracy, the lack of survey questions on support for democratic principles and values signifies a definite deficiency in existing survey studies.

Comparing types and levels of political discontent in survey studies

My analysis of several publicly available survey studies that contain items on political support indicate that political discontent in the first decade of the 21st century has not been primarily aimed at the government (policies) or at the systematic features of the democratic system. It is the level of discontent with politicians and political institutions in general that draws attention. Survey data do indicate there is a substantial cynicism about the morality and competence of politicians and political institutions and negativism about politics. However, there has been no clear growth of political cynicism since the 1970s, no sudden 'crisis', at least not in a way that is clearly visible in the statistics. These findings confirm the idea that dissatisfaction of citizens is primarily grounded in a perceived lack of responsiveness of politics and politicians in general (Van Wessel, 2012). My analysis of survey data presented in this Chapter suggests that support for incumbent political authorities and the government peaks and dives depending on the moment in time. Occasionally, discontent with the current government was exceptionally high, as in 2003.

This discontent, however, also ebbed away quickly, and as soon as the new cabinet took office, trust was regained. Support for the democratic system seems consistently high, although I should note that it is hard to assess the level of democratic support on the basis of the few survey questions that are available. In the available survey items there are no clear signs that Dutch citizens reject systematic features of the specific Dutch democratic system, such as coalition politics. On the other hand, there is substantial support for democratic renewal.

On the limitations of the findings and research questions

The survey data presented in this Chapter give a broad yet limited idea of what Dutch citizens have been satisfied and dissatisfied with in politics at different levels over the last few decades. If available, longitudinal trend information was given. There are however multiple reasons to handle the results of this survey-based overview on the political support and political discontent of citizens in the Netherlands with care.

First of all, the survey results show fragments of the respondents' opinions on politics. Personal comments are often missing, and the user of the results cannot collect more information about beliefs, motives or wishes. The lack of background information and context makes it difficult to deduce opinions and attitudes from the survey results. The respondents' motives, expectations and arguments are, for the main part, a *black box*. In general, it is impossible to know whether respondents who give the same answer to a question such as '*politicians are driven by self-interest only and are not interested in my opinion*' interpret this statement in the same way. The survey results, therefore, do not give any specifics about what people are dissatisfied with in politics, nor do they give us any idea about the intensity or depth of the political cynicism of Dutch citizens. Citizens' opinions need to be explored further to be able to assess the character of political cynicism. How deep-seated is this substantial yet stable cynicism towards politicians and political institutions we perceive in the survey studies? Therefore, the study of political discontent in survey studies would greatly benefit from additional in-depth study and, as I will show in the next Chapter, in-depth interviews.

Secondly, many important aspects of citizens' support for politics are not raised in the available survey studies, while this would probably offer valuable insights. Questions that tap the gradations of how citizens' embrace democratic principles and values, for example, are virtually non-existent in surveys, while these could give us information on how deeply citizens are attached to democracy. Also missing are questions that make clear what citizens expect and value in political conduct and performance and questions on how they experience what politics is or is not offer-

ing them. For future research on political support and political discontent, I highly recommend the inclusion of more survey questions on these matters. I believe a thorough study of political support can only be done on the basis of information about citizens' support for politics at different levels: for democratic values and principles, for the political rules of the game, for political institutions and processes, for the conduct and products of politicians in general and for the government and incumbent officeholders. Therefore, I plea for including such support items in survey studies. In the overview of survey items at the beginning of this Chapter, I have made suggestions for the type of items I would like to include in survey studies to be able to study the degree of political support and political discontent at different levels with greater thoroughness.

Thirdly, the trend information we could provide did not always show a clear direction, in either a rise or decline of political support. The amount of political cynicism for instance seemed rather stable, as did the support for Dutch Parliament in the last five years. We should note that potentially some of the available trend information may be obscured by the analysis on item level and a clear direction may only become visible at a more abstract level. For instance, in the Netherlands there might be a clear rise in discontent with specific representative political institutions, while the separate items measuring support for parliament, MP's or political parties may not show so. The available data in the survey material in the Netherlands unfortunately does not provide enough items and similar datapoints over time to lift the analysis to a more abstract and still significant level.

4   In conversation with politically dissatisfied citizens

'They Are Living in Another World'

Introduction: Behind the Survey Questions

Survey results show that the political cynicism of Dutch citizens has been substantial over the years. Although these results are readily used for further consideration and interpretation, the answers are not unambiguous. The results show shards of the respondents' opinions on politics. The deepseatedness of the cynicism, the respondents' motives and arguments remain, for the main part, a *black box*.

Curious about the world behind the survey questions and results, I was inspired to collect information about people's opinions on politics through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews do not yield any information that is representative of how 'the' Dutch citizen views politics in general, nor are they meant to. The objective is to gain more insight into the 'political cynicism' behind the surveys. Object is also to learn about those aspects of political support absent in survey studies. In what amount do political cynics still support politics and support democratic freedoms and democratic principles?

In-depth interviews allow for questions about the interviewees' personal situation, experiences and beliefs; the world behind the survey question. Interviews also enable surveyors to ascertain whether people who in surveys pass negative judgements all hark back to similar reasonings and experiences. Through interviews I wanted to establish the objects and intensity of the negative beliefs and feelings about politics. At what is the discontent directed? How deepseated is this substantial yet stable cynicism towards politicians and political institutions we perceive in the surveystudies? Can the interviewees be described as either cynical or perhaps populist? How does the political cynicism for instance connect to discontent about government and discomfort with democratic principles and values?

I have also used the interviews for scrutiny of several explanations for political discontent that feature in scientific literature. Today's criticism of political authorities and institutions is sometimes seen as a result of a highly-educated, postmaterialistic generation and an expression of eroded hierarchic relations in society

(Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), as a manifestation of the disappointment of modern citizens who feel strongly about democratic principles but are unhappy about the effect of democracy in practice (Dalton, 2004, Norris, 1999). Others see political discontent just as much as a characteristic of socially deprived and orphaned citizens who cannot keep up with modern times (Hooghe, 2001, Van den Brink, 2007). Do the interviews confirm one of the two pictures?

Before discussing the insight offered by the interviews into the above questions I will describe the selection of interviewees, the interview guidelines and the method of processing the interviews.

Selection of Respondents

I selected my interviewees on how negative they answered several questions on politics in a well known survey panel. TNS NIPO, a market research company, which conducts surveys among its own representative survey panel,[1] presented a survey with several statements about politics on two occasions in 2010 (January and April).[2]

– The government is in touch with the people.
– Politicians understand the problems citizens face.
– Member of Parliament (MP's) don't care about the opinion of people like me.
– Political parties are interested only in my vote and not in my opinion.

The last two statements are often used in survey research to gauge political cynicism among citizens. The first two statements were included to position citizens' feelings about the responsiveness of politicians and the government. The statements addressed both aspects of (im)morality and (in)competence of political cynicism (Adriaansen, 2011, Schyns and Van Dorp, 2006). The answers to the statements are displayed in the graphics below. The results show that a large amount of Dutch citizens is cynical about politics, even more than can be perceived in Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies of 2010.[3] A large majority does not think that Mem-

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1   In the survey the panel members were asked whether they were willing to take part in an interview. 362 out of 2167 respondents said they were interested.

2   The survey questions were presented to the TNS NIPO panel in the context of another survey commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and conducted by M. van Wessel (2011)

3   What keeps puzzling me looking at survey results is how much survey results may vary, depending on the survey used. The difference in the results may partly lie in methodological questions, such as different selection methods of TNS Nipo (webbased) versus DPES. Another plausible explanation for the variation is the timing of the survey, suggesting political cynicism may be much more volatile than can be perceived on basis of one longitudinal, once measured in every 4 year, research.

bers of Parliament or politicians care about their opinion. Some controversy exists around the idea whether government is in touch with people and whether politicians understand the problems citizens face.

Figure 9: The government is in touch with the people
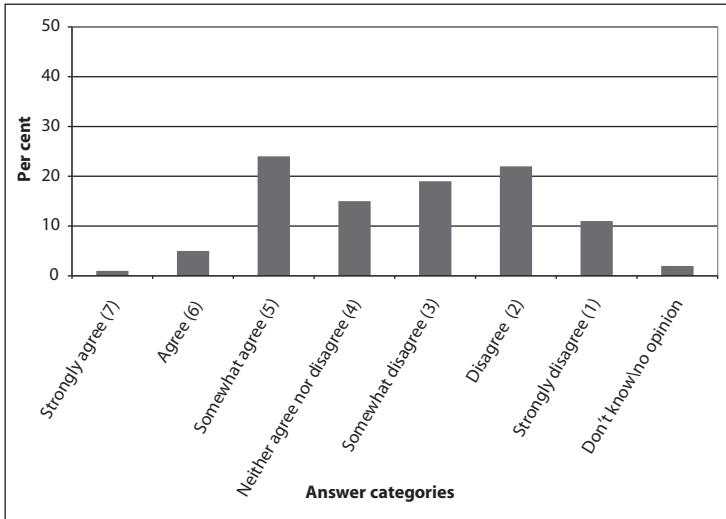
Figure 10: Politicians understand the problems citizens face
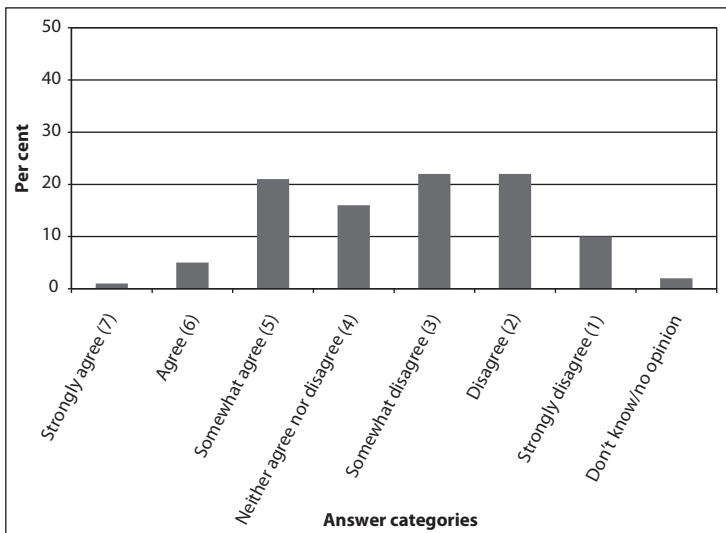
Figure 11: Member of Parliament (MP's) don't care about the opinion of people like me
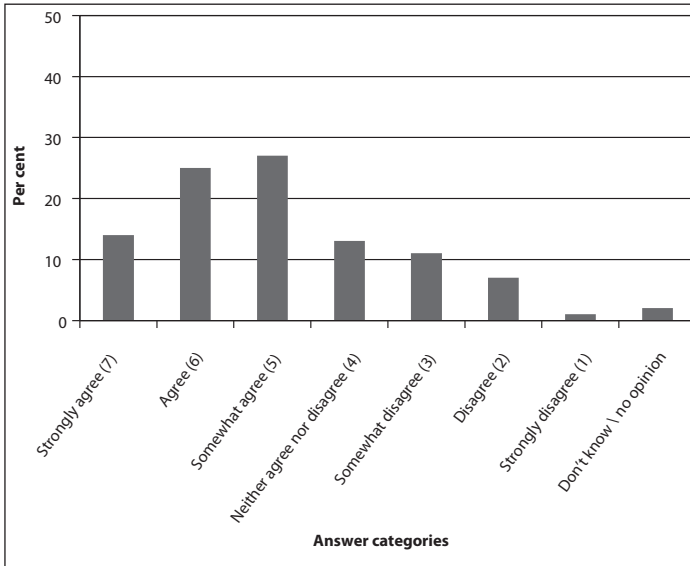
Figure 12: Political parties are interested only in my vote and not in my opinion
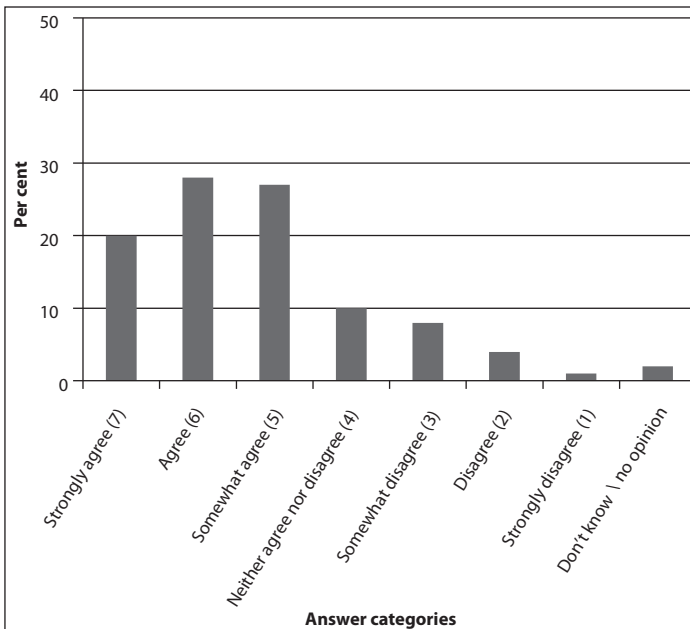
In the search for more details on the political cynicism in the Netherlands I was interested primarily in interviewees with a clearly negative attitude towards politics. For this reason I selected respondents who chose the most negative answer category for all statements about politics and the government: the so-called downright political cynics.[4] In this way I expected to interview the most homogenous – by statistic standards – group of truly politically cynical respondents. In cooperation with TNS NIPO I sent these (41) respondents a personal invitation to an in-depth interview.[5] With the remaining 20 people who were open to an interview, available and approachable I arranged in-depth interviews at their homes.

Background of the Interviews and Interviewees

I conducted all twenty interviews in the first three weeks of January 2011. I did this at home with the interviewees, who lived all over the Netherlands: from Noord-Holland, Drenthe to Zuid-Limburg. From major cities (Utrecht) and suburbs (Spijkenisse) and mid-sized towns (Enkhuizen, Heerhugowaard) to small villages (Bathmen, Ellemeet or Valthermond). The length of the interview varied from one hour to almost three hours. The interviews revealed the many different worlds behind the category 'political cynics'. Although this was not one of my selection criteria – my selection criterion was, after all, severe discontent with politics and politicians in general – a natural variety emerged in place of residence, background, attitude to life and political preference of the interviewees. The interviewees' ages ranged from early twenties to well into their eighties. Their education varied from primary school to university. The living conditions of the interviewees ran from galleried flats, terraced houses to detached villas. There was variety, too, in economic and social conditions and attitudes to life: from long-term unemployed to double-income couples. Some people referred to themselves jokingly as '*alone in the world*'; their lives revolved around a single activity like hospital visits. Others visibly enjoyed telling me about the richness of their social contacts and activities. Political preference and background varied as well. Some grew up in a '*leftish family*', while others came from '*conservative-voting stock*'. Voting preferences ranged from SGP (Reformed Party) to PvdA (Labour Party), SP (Socialist Party), VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), CDA (Christian Democratic

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4   The percentage of political cynics prepared to take part in an interview is (n=41) 11%, which approximately corresponds with the percentage that in the TNS NIPO panel (n=2167) chose the most negative answer category for the individual statements, i.e. 5.5%

5   The invitation (by E-mail) described the survey and the interview subject in general terms, emphasising that the interview could be conducted at a time convenient to the respondents, and participation would be rewarded with 30 Euros' worth of tokens.

Party), GroenLinks (Green Left) and pvv (Freedom Party). In general the interviews showed a slight bias in the selection in terms of age, employment, social class, and immediate surroundings. A comparatively large number of the people I interviewed was middle-aged (between 40 and 65). In addition to employed interviewees (9x) a comparatively large number was retired (5x), unemployed (3x), certified incapable of work (2x) and/or stay-at-home moms (2x[6]). Most interviewees fell into the lower social classes. Although survey research has shown that the factors age and social class correlate to the degree of political cynicism (Dekker, 2006) and that therefore it is logical that the elderly and socially inactive are strongly represented in the selection, the bias in terms of age and inactivity may be due in part to the fact that these people have more time and are more likely therefore to take part in an interview. What also struck me is that I almost always (16x) ended up at a terraced house in a typically Dutch new housing estate, regardless of the area or town. In terms of political preference a comparatively large number of interviewees said to have voted for pvv in the 2010 Parliamentary Elections (8x), followed at some distance by vvd (4x) and PvdA (3x). Although survey research has made apparent that people voting for pvv have a rather negative basic attitude towards politics (Aarts & Van der Kolk and Rosema, 2007) the interviewees' preference for PVV was rather prominent among the interviewees.[7]

Interview Methods

At the start of the in-depth interview I first discussed with the interviewee the subject and preconditions of the interview, using an interview form.[8] During the interview I focused on obtaining an as detailed as possible impression of how the interviewees judged politics in their everyday lives and how they arrived at that judgement.[9] Using interview guidelines I reviewed several subjects. Given the

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6   Where the text refers to ...x as quantification, this means that this aspect applies to ...x of the 20 interviewees in total. This quantification illustrates how I came to define several red threads in the interviews. The quantification is not intended to make any judgements about a larger number of people than the twenty I interviewed.

7   In the TNS NIPO survey political preferences appeared reasonably well-distributed over the existing political parties. However, on several occasions the interviewees said that in the national elections in 2010 they had voted for another party than they had indicated in the general TNS NIPO survey. This became apparent upon comparison of said voting behaviour in the interview with the survey.

8   It was agreed that the interview would be taped and that the results would be processed anonymously and that interviews received a small consideration in the form of tokens. The audiovisual data and transcriptions are available for further research and stored in DANS data archive.

9   In designing the interview format and interview contract I used the lessons of Robert. S. Weiss in 'Learning from Strangers' (1994).

selection the interviewees were expected to readily give a negative assessment of politics of their own accord. For that reason I deliberately started off the interviews on a neutral footing, asking open questions about the place of politics in their lives, their involvement in politics and the significance of politics in their life. Following interview guidelines I then asked the interviewees to describe in as much detail as possible, using examples, experiences and feelings, with what they were dissatisfied and satisfied in politics and (if it did not come up) how they viewed democracy in the Netherlands. Other subjects that came up were decisive experiences that contributed to their assessment of politics, possible solutions to restore (their) trust in politics and the degree to which the interviewees believed others to be politically dissatisfied and this subject played a role in society.[10]

Assessment of Politics: Objects of Discontent in Detail

How do 'political cynics' assess politics? Can their discontent be specified? How like-minded are they in their cynicism and how deepseated is their cynicism?

The interviews showed that to the interviewees politics meant in first instance anything related to national politics: the government, (members of) the Lower House, ministers, political parties, politicians in general and the perceived working practices of politicians. The government and politicians were mentioned most; the level of national political authorities. In examples references to local politics came second. Just occasionally reference was made spontaneously to characteristics of the political system and in particular to the functioning of certain elements, such as the functioning of the rule of law (and the courts) or the functioning of the political party system. Many people do not make a precise distinction between politicians' separate political functions of administration and representation. Ministers and Members of Parliament are frequently confused and at times local council is used for local executive.

Almost all interviewees criticized politics to a greater or lesser degree, but the objects of their criticism differed.[11] Roughly four types of discontent could be distinguished. First, the interviews revealed marked frustration about the *doings of the "political class" in the Netherlands* and the individual politicians and parties in

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10 The interview guideline can be found as an annexe (in Dutch as the interviews were conducted in Dutch).

11 With the exception of one interviewee who responded neutrally and on some points even positively, in particular with regard to the performance of the Rutte administration.

that class. This type of discontent was quite consistent and came up in the same manner in almost every interview (17 out of 20x). The special privileged status of politicians and the drive for (financial) self-interest were the main targets of criticism. Second, people were unhappy about *policy, both current and long-term government policy.* A spectrum of policy issues came by, with policies on care (for the eldery) and the police and the judiciary prevailing. The alleged injustice of the policies and the wrong deployment of resources were the main sources of annoyance. Third, the interviewees were dissatisfied with the functioning of the *political party system* and in particular the abundance of political parties represented in the Lower House. Besides discontent with policy, political class or party system, contemplations about the government and politics frequently featured concerns about *today's society*; in this respect criticism was directed at the selfishness and lack of solidarity perceived in others. In the following I will describe the different type of discontent in more detail.

Discontent with the Doings of the Political Class

Regardless of political interest, personal situation or voting behaviour many interviewees (17x) displayed marked discontent with what was frequently called '*the political or higher class*'. The roots of this discontent lie primarily in the perception that politicians have a privileged financial status and position of power compared to other members of society. Their ample income and the special financial arrangements to which policitians are entitled owing to their positions as Member of Parliament or minister made people think that other rules applied to politicians than to the people for whom they take decisions.

'Ordinary people have to worry about social and unemployment benefits but not politicians.[12]*'*

The idea of a uniform higher class was reinforced by the conviction that politicians usually have had the same high – generally – university education and financially favourable career prospects thanks to their political positions. The image of a separate, higher class living in a world of its own, on easy street, was strong. People found the existence of such a class hard to digest.

'Old-boy network. If you get thrown out you can still be mayor of some town. Those social democrats all have cushy jobs. And that cow of the Christian democrats has now

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12   The original Dutch quotes of the interviews used in the text of this chapter are added as an appendix to this thesis.

*been appointed Queen's commissioner in Drenthe. But it is all hand in glove, that's
what I mean. And nice salary, too. I can show you a list of what they all make. I don't
understand why they even bother getting into the Dutch government. That pays a
measly 120,000 Euros a year. There are much more lucrative jobs. How about those
social democrats. Mr Bos. He did well for himself. And that Femke Halsema. She al-
ready had a job at the University, three days a week, for a couple hundred thousand
Euros. Excellent. Not bad. I would do the same.'*

Besides envy about the financially favourable status some interviewees had the idea
that the political class does not feel the (financial) implications of its decisions. As
members of a financially privileged class, so it was reasoned, politicians are unable
and incapable of taking decisions that have a major effect on other people's lives.
This gave rise to the idea that politicians are not in touch with the people.

*"Politicians should not make such stupid comments about minimum-income house-
holds. That they can do this or that. Them and their plushy jobs. They are living in
another world. Have no idea of reality. Let them get by on 900 Euros. He's not gonna
make it, I can tell you. Those liberals. They have no idea. And of course not, when you
have been making more than 120,000 Euros a year for years on end. How would they
know how Average Joe lives. Why would you be interested. They all went to university
and all. They should try and imagine what minimum-income households have to do
to get by on those few cents and still have a little extra.'*

A recurrent theme is what many people call the mismanagement or squandering of
tax money (12x). People often blame the background of politicians for the squan-
dering. They reason that because politicians themselves have financial headroom
they do not understand what really matters to people and are spendthrifts with
tax money. People believe that policies are often not directed at essential issues
(like healthcare, safety and education) and for that reason are a waste of time and
money. Often cited examples are that while for years cuts have been made in ba-
sic provisions in the Netherlands, like care (for the elderly), the police and public
transportation, funds are laid out for a police mission to Afghanistan, the EU, sub-
sidies to the arts, luxury facilities for criminals and New Year's receptions or the
money and time spent on political (emergency) debates on minor issues.

*'The decisions taken in The Hague at the time are of course unrealistic, why don't them
pay for that? Those ministers make serious money. Let them use part of their salary to...
Let them make do with a little less. Let them tighten their belts. They make enough in
The Hague, all of them. A lot of people say the same. When you talk with people. Up
there are those fancy, mega-rich people, and they tell us what to do or not to do. Just*

look at those Euro-Parliamentarians or in The Hague, several of them can just sit on their butts and wait to be served. And then healthcare. I've seen it on TV. That was about changes in health insurance. Some MP's even get automatic health insurance. Free of charge. They sometimes get offered as many as three. Free of charge. It cost them nothing. And they earn so much already. Why should they get all the perks? That's not for the likes of me. I think it goes for you as well. That you have to pay for everything. See for yourself. You hear it from everyone, right.'

In the stories people tell the alleged motive of self-interest often has, besides a financial side, a content-specific aspect as well. In this case self-interest refers to the tendency of politicians and political parties to tout their own views and not be receptive to open debates or reconsideration of their views. The interviewees believed that many decisions are '*forced through*' the way politicial parties want them to, regardless of what other parties or the majority of the electorate wants and regardless of the promises made at election time. Experiences with local and national politics fuel the idea that politicians and political parties are not really listening with an open mind to what the majority wants and that the electorate has little to say (11x).

'The worst thing is the squirming just to get out of admitting they're wrong. What delusions of grandeur are that, I ask you? What a load of rubbish. When the citizens find out that something is wrong, you should have the guts to go back on a decision. Don't say something like we decided so and so as we are the ones who know best! That is my conclusion!'

Another point of criticism of the political class that occasionally came up in the interviews are manners (6 x). People get angry at the '*mud-slinging*', '*the rowing and carry-on*' between individual politicians they see and hear in the media. This is at odds with the idealized picture that people should treat each other with respect, even if they disagree. In their opinion the political class does not set the right example.

'Then that Lubbers geezer starts playing the pity card. Starts howling in the backbenches. They say you should not vote PVV, start patronizing. In my eyes, you are a man when you can say 'okay, we went wrong. We lost. We are down. We made a lot of mistakes, big ones and small ones. Our foreign affairs policy was not so pretty either. Afghanistan. Shouldn't have gone there. Should have stayed out. And all that Wilders bashing. I admit, Wilders is asking for it but just don't. I am telling you: it is a mess. And now we have a government after all those preparations and still they're hitting out at each other. Take that party conference of the Left. Mr Cohen drumming up his

buddies and telling them, let's all work together and bring that PVV down. No, don't. Govern the country instead. Correct the mistakes you made. Yes, PVV is cheap. But it is a fact that a lot of people of standing voted for that same PVV. They cannot all be idiots. But no one mentions that. No, they call them names. Start digging up their pasts. And sure, there is no justification. But come on. You have to govern the country. We have to move on. What do you do when you're a professional? You say sorry, I was wrong. What can we do to make it right. Or something. But this is a sorry spectacle. It goes to show how cheap those people are. It is easy to blame others. It is clear who the real loser is.'

Discontent with the Political Party System

On several occassions the interviewees expressed their discontent with the fragmented party system (8x). In their eyes the large number of political parties in the Lower House reinforces the Lower House's inefficient way of working and its indeciveness. Minor one-issue parties are considered superfluous because they cannot take a stand and lack the power to govern from a social viewpoint.

'And yet another party comes in. The Party for the Elderly. Sometimes I think about how much time they spend in the Lower House, debating and discussing every subject, and every party has to put in its two cents. I did the math. If there are four parties and everyone gets fifteen minutes, it takes an hour. But when there are twenty parties it takes half a day, and still no progress. So many opinions, and you haven't moved an inch. And the people who are in some positions, they don't get enough power. There always have to be rules and laws. He should not have too much power in some area or other.'

A substantial number of interviewees spontaneously criticized the functioning of the party system. However, they did not assess democracy without being asked. When asked explicitly whether they were content with the democratic system, the majority (13x) indicated they were happy or as one interviewee said *'it's the best there is'.* Different grounds were given for this contentment, which illustrated that democracy means something different to everyone. Most people referred to individual liberties or the welfare produced by democracy, while others pointed to the positive effect of democracy on the acceptance of decisions. Then there were those who mentioned an undemocratic aspect, such as contentment with the royal family as part of Dutch democracy. Besides the abundance of parties and the accompanying indecisiveness the curtailment of freedom of expression was criticized several times. Every time reference was made to the violence against outspoken people: politician Pim Fortuyn who was murdered because of his political views

and opinion maker Theo van Gogh who was murdered for producing the film *Submission,* which was critical of the Islam.

Discontent with Policy

The interviewees largely based their judgement about the morality and competence of political authorities on how these authorities make and pursue policies. Policy was often used to illustrate the incompetence and other-worldliness of the political class. A whole range of policy issues came by, in particular issues that were close to home; issues that touched on their lives or with which they had had unpleasant experiences. This could be criticism of current government policy, but also discontent with long-term government policy. Discontent with policy generally targets the misallocation of tax money in certain policy areas, the inadequate or inconsequent government action in certain areas in which public involvement is considered necessary, but on the other hand unnecessary investments in areas in which results are not immediately apparent.

'Take the housing market and Afghanistan, why? I don't get it. I think that we could use more security here at home. Here, too, there is a terror threat. We need those soldiers here, and not in Afghanistan. Here things are going on, too.'

The policy issue most frequently cited is healthcare in general (8x) and care for the elderly in particular (12x). There is great discontent with the increasing cost of healthcare. Many people are concerned that the weaker sections of society, the elderly and minimum-income households in particular, will no longer be able to pay the monthly health-insurance premiums and excess. Many people are angry about the cuts in care for the elderly and found it incomprehensible and inhuman that people who have worked all their lives have to pay for the economic crisis. Along these lines many people worry about what in their eyes is an unfair and unjust distribution of burdens and cuts (11x). Around them they see elderly and minimum-income households have a hard time affording basic provisions like care and education, while others (the higher class, which is considered to include politicians) wallow in wealth and decadence. Many people feel that the government does little or nothing to distribute burdens equally, even encourages the inequal distribution of burdens by not going after the high earners and banks. Uncertainty about the indexation of pensions and state pension age rises is a source of concern and discontent for the people close to retirement (5x).

'All these measures are so unjust. All the prices go up, and the big earners earn even more. All at the expense of old people who have worked so hard to give us a good life.'

Another frequently cited policy issue is the police and the judiciary (11x). Criticism focuses on the velvet glove treatment of criminals and trouble makers, and wrong prioritisation. People are under the impression that the police (forced by political policy) have a wrong sense of priorities, for instance motoring offences, and that they cannot properly guarantee safety due to the closedown of police stations in many towns following cuts. The police and the judiciary cannot and may not concentrate on law enforcement because of the *policy of tolerance* pursued in the Netherlands while according to many people convicted criminals are granted a disproportionate amount of facilities or rights.

'To give an example, they picked up several drug dealers. And now they are out again. These people have like a mansion. I don't think that's right. Should I do the same thing? I could buy a mansion. Just do some time and that's it. I really don't get it. I'm really upset about that.'

'The police has to go out in force. They are under siege. And as often as not there is no police to be seen. Or they are in the wrong place with their ticket books and speed guns. That type. The whole police force. We as a society need protection and that protection has shifted. The collecting of fines has taken the place of protection. If you drive down the motor way you just know not to speed, or one of those geezers will come after you.'

Discontent or content with current government (policy) has a lot to do with the perceived government action in the areas listed above: action by the police and the judiciary, and the alleged unjust distribution of burdens. Some interviewees (6x) were happy with the coalition government of VVD and CDA with the backbench support of PVV. They were under the impression that retaliation against criminals is swifter and stricter. Reference was made to the 'tit for tat' strategy and fast-track justice applied around 2011's New Year's eve. Others are critical or simply dissatisfied with government policy (7x), in particular with the distribution of the effects of cuts in healthcare, the housing market and education.

The interviewees frequently criticized EU policy, the adverse effects of immigration policies, policies on employment and education. The prevailing view was that EU policy costs more than it's worth (8x). The media tell people that the political class in the Netherlands pours money into struggling economies like Greece, Portugal and Spain, but instead of benefits for the Netherlands they see cuts in basic provisions. Interviewees were also critical of several effects of open borders – within Europe but also between Europe and other countries. Criticism of the adverse effects of immigration (12x) targets lack of space (5x), nuisance and criminality of poorly integrated ethnic (read: Moroccan and Turkish) young men (6x)

and Eastern Europeans (2x), fear of Islamic domination (and the attendant Islamic laws) and the suppression of liberties like freedom of expression and equality of men and women (3x). Incidentally, there is equally intense discontent with how PVV leader Geert Wilders excludes and treats Dutch muslims (2x). Another point of content-specific criticism is the government policy of affirmative discrimination (4x) pursued by several successive governments over the past years with regard to gender, party preference or ethnic origin; it is thought that on the employment and housing market this policy has had unjust effects for the majority of Dutch citizens.

Another policy issue that falls subject to criticism is education (4x). Interviewees were under the impression that over the years personal attention has become a scarcity in education and that a host of government measures has made education prohibitive and thus inaccessible to children from lower economic classes.

Several people were dissatisfied with government policy on benefit recipients (2x) and employment (3x). This criticism came from people who because of unemployment or illness had to do with the administration agencies. The – often highly emotional – accounts tell of discontent and incomprehension about the stance and method of operation of administration agencies towards benefit recipients. Over the years the spate of changes, system reviews and uncertainties has had a major impact on the personal lives and well-being of benefit recipients. The ever-tightening rules, increasing focus on figures and not on the individuals behind the figures make people feel they are not accepted and respected, as if they apply for benefits for the wrong (fraudulent) reasons. They often feel treated discourteously and unfairly. Moreover, the policy is considered hypocritical; there are no incentives or prospects to encourage going back to work. One interviewee was offered a job that paid less than the benefits he received and for another interviewee the costs of child care exceeded income from employment.

Social Discontent

Discontent with the political class and government policy is interlarded with social criticism, in particular of the selfishness observed in (young) people. From all interviews materialised the same pessimistic expectation of society in the future. Every single interviewee had the idea that things would get worse in the future; either in terms of social security, with a decline in respect and solidarity, or in terms of the welfare state and social services. People see a culture emerge of greed, decadence and waste (4x). Moreover, they feel that people increasingly leave others to fend for themselves, and comment on the lack of social manners (4x). In the same

breath it is mentioned that children, too, are increasingly left to their own devices because the importance their parents place on work and career, and the easy-going parenting of immigrants, who let their children roam the streets without supervision.

Interim Conclusion: What Political Cynics are dissatisfied about

As far as the objects of discontent, the viewpoints of the citizens interviewed fit with the classic picture of political cynics. Predominantly, politicians and political institutions are watched with scepticism and are in general judged as self interested and non-responsive to citizens' opinions. Their discontent is directed at the political class's alleged immorality as well as its competence. More than surveys can possibly do, the interviews give insight in the object of citizens' cynicism. The interviews indicate that the negative evaluation of politics mainly springs from the belief that the privileged political class is not fair and just in dealing with issues of distribution in society. The discontent is primarily rooted in the belief that politicians in general cannot sufficiently represent citizens due to their allegedly detached socially and financially privileged status. Once in the (financial) power position of chosen representative or governor, politicians are thought to become incompetent to a just and wise decisionmaking.

The interviews show that the criticism of political cynics is however not solely directed at the level of politicians and political institutions in general. Cynicism about politicians and institutions is illustrated often by how the political rulers pursue specific policies. People often note to be highly dissatisfied with government or specific politicians. To a lesser degree the citizens interviewed also mention discontent with the political (party) system. They note to be dissatisfied about the fragmentation of power and political parties and are worried about violent threats they perceived against democratic freedoms. Furthermore, all interviewees shared a pessimistic outlook on society.

Intensity and deepseatedness of the cynicism

How genuine and deepseated is the political cynicism of the interviewees? Because the interviewees in the TNS survey opted for an explicitly negative assessment of politics, in the interviews I expected all interviewees to be highly critical about Dutch politics. Wat striked me however is how the intensity of their cynicism and the emotions involved varied from person to person.

Half of the interviewees responded to the neutral question 'what do you think about politics?' with a negative reflection like '*money-grabbing*' or '*extortion*'. Conversely interviewees just as well came up with a neutral or even positive assessment of politics, like: '*Lower House, Ministers, debating over standpoints*', '*taking decisions*' or '*happy with this government*'.

Some people were predominantly cynical and negative in their assessments and expectations.

'*Politics is like theatre. And most of them are money-grabbers. Like Marcel van Dam and the likes of him. Mr Kok. Full of talk about how they are all for the working man but when all is said and done they are fat cats, just like the others. Maybe I would do the same. Maybe. I understand but I don't approve. It makes me sick. I think that 75% of the politicians are like that. The rest might still act out of ideals.*'

There were also interviewees who – even though they did come across as clear political cynics in the survey – had predominantly positive expectations of the motives of politicians.

Interviewer: If I say to you 'Politicians and political parties are all driven by self-interest.'

'*I hope not, and I think not, no. What would that self-interest be? No, I don't think so. No. Of course there are people who do their four years and when they get kicked out they get redundancy. But I certainly hope that is not why people go into politics. I expect someone to go into politics because he has ideals. Not just for the heck of it. I don't think it is a picnic, being a member of the Lower House. It is not a five to nine job, after all.*'

Interviewer: 'And are political parties and politicians receptive to the opinions of people like you and me?'

'*Yes, I think they are. Only the other day a member of the Lower House for healthcare and welfare went to see a doctor, an oncologist, a chemo specialist, asking them what a cancer patient costs these days. That illustrates that they are interested in how, what and where improvements can be made. And during election time it is obvious, of course. That's when I am thinking: go out in the streets the rest of the year, too. Not just when the elections are coming up.*'

The intensity and type of emotions that arise differ greatly. Many people get passionate and emotional when talking about politics.

'Just seeing Rutte's face makes me nauseous. Just the way he looks. That shifty look of his.'

Another interviewee told me laconically he could not be bothered and was not really interested in political goings-on.

'It is not my number one. I don't get excited about it.'

Feelings of discontent may be raked up, stabilized or put into perspective over time by experiences. Several interviewees indicated that following new personal experiences (for instance the loss of a partner or work-related training courses) they had learned to put negative emotions into perspective and now do the same where politics is concerned.

'But after that period five years ago something has changed. I have put it aside. Now I think, let's live by the day. I have everything. We are happy with that. And let's leave it at that. That's important. I don't get so excited anymore. I was raised with injustice and fighting that. But not so much these days. The fighting. I can't see the point anymore. I have also seen how you can make people unhappy when you are like that. Because you go overboard at some point. What is the point of getting so worked up about injustice when your life can change in seconds? We've been there. These days I don't get into a state anymore. I used to get really angry. I would... I was really intense. Must have been my upbringing. I have learned to put things into perspective. Not to get worked up so much anymore. Because of what I've been through. Over the past years there have been many learning moments, when I learned to calm down. The same applies to politics, I guess. Let it go. Everything will work out.'

Other interviewees on the contrary saw their experiences as proof of the incompetence or immorality of the authorities. They feel wronged, and as they grow older they cultivate this as their view of the world and of politics.

'I have reached an age when I have become a little blasé (raises middle finger) . *I am thinking: see if I care. You are not taking me seriously, why should I take you seriously? Really. This time I only voted because it was tense. Or I would not have voted. That's how far I've come. You are screwed any way you look at it... Maybe it is not politics that has changed over the years, but my insight into politics. You grow older, you gain insights, experience of life, maybe that's it. Maybe politics has always been a bloody mess,*

and back-stabbing and I did not want to see it when I was young and full of ideals.
Maybe that's what it is.'

The points for political discontent evoked a range of emotions, as the excerpts show: frustration, anger, nausea, recalcitrance, bitterness, indignation, a sense of injustice about certain decisions, irritation, incomprehension or powerlessness, but also resignation, and occasionally sympathy for politicians and their decisions.

Some tried to avoid getting worked up about politics by steering clear from politics when talking to others, or by skipping the political items in the newspaper.

'I don't want to get even more upset. I'm like a stork [sic] *sticking my head in the sand.*
I don't even want to know what's going on. Every single one of those measures is so
unfair... I am no longer critical. I have totally lost heart.'

It was clear that other interviewees saw politics as a pleasant form of release. '*It feels*
good to get in a state, vent your anger,' one interviewee explained. Or it is a good conversation topic: '*I don't get worked up. It doesn't rule my life, doesn't keep me up at*
night. I just like talking about it.'

Apart from the objects and intensity of discontent, the interviews also revealed the standards applied by politically dissatisfied citizens to the political authorities. Between the lines the interviewees were constantly defining desires and ideals with which politicians and their policies should comply. The interviews showed a wish for political authorities with empathy and attention to justice. The ideals were mirrored where the interviewees indicated their dislikes: '*all that squabbling, the slander*', conduct that is '*cheap*', and policies that are called '*unfair or unjust*'. The same was done in describing sympathetic politicians or sound policy: they were called '*civilised*', '*sincere*' or '*sympathetic*'.

When I asked what could be done to soften their view of politics, most interviewees gave as solution a reduction of the number of political parties (6x), greater empathy on the part of the political class (5x) and changes in political and government communication (5x): be honest and open about how things are, be transparent and explain things in plain language. Solutions that were mentioned less frequently: the introduction of policy measures for a more equal distribution of income (4x), better care for the elderly (2x), improvements in safety (2x) and more severe punishments (2x). A single interviewee said '*abolish redundancy payments*
(1x), '*get rid of politicians and hand over power to the royal family*' (1x), '*introduce*
an independent news source' (1x), '*stop development aid*' (1x), '*quit the EU*' (1x) and
'*clamp down on young Muslim boys*' (1x). Only rarely was increased control of citi-

zens mentioned as a solution; introduction of referenda (2x) and the introduction of an elected mayor and elected prime minister (1x). The desire for trustworthy representation thus seemed stronger and more widespread than the desire for more direct democracy or for more authoritarian politics.

What Influences the Intensity of Political Cynicism?

The interviews indicate that political interest influences how intense and deep-seated the negativism about politics is. Precisely the interviewees who said they were moderately or strongly interested in politics were extremely negative in their assessment of politics. The interviewees who said they were not interested in politics (3x) refrained from an explicitly negative assessment, because politics does not play a role in their world and interests. By comparison they were remarkably mild about the political class and politics in general.

Interviewer: What Place Does Politics Take in Your Life?

Interviewee: 'Hardly any, until the elections. Then I concern myself with politics. Sometimes when something happens, but I don't think about politics every day. I am not hugely interested. When I have to. Like at election time. We watch TV the evening before but I am not going to watch question time. The news usually, once or twice a day nu.nl and with that fire now even more often. Only what's important interests me. Everyone has to do what he is good at. So they do this. As long as someone is governing the country and not like in South-Africa where they suddenly have two presidents, it is fine by me. We are not at war, we all have a roof over our heads if we want to. For the rest, well, everyone can live well if he is willing to work. And for the rest. As long as it goes on like this, I think we are doing well. I could get really worked up, but what's the point. When we're lucky I can go vote at least once every four years, and then you have to wait another four years. That's it for me.'

Furthermore, negative experiences with political authorities or political administration agencies may evoke intense feelings of discontent and can play a major role in how people assess politicians and institutions. The more unfair and unjust people feel treated by (political) authorities, the more intense their discontent. It is despite politics – so the people who feel misunderstood – that they are alive (and well). People who have fallen ill and had to undergo medical exams by the authorities keep referring to this in their opinion about politics.

'When I was still recovering I was so recalcitrant. And then you feel it twice as much. Measures taken by the government. How much you get stigmatized. I was concerned with that more than with politics and things like that. I found it hard to get over. Especially when that re-examination came up, when people had to be re-examined according to new standards. And all the pissing about. The names they called you and how they treated you. I was angry, angry, angry.'

'It was the beginning of the nineties. (starts to cry) Yes, it got to me. Debates by PvdA about the WAO [Occupational Disability (Insurance) Act]. That at some point PvdA no longer put up a fight against the cuts in the WAO, justifying themselves with a fake report of all things, and that six months later they had to admit that the figures were wrong. At that time my livelihood was under serious threat. So I can take it. We are a democracy. If a decision is taken democratically I may disagree but I will not take to the barricades. It is what we have chosen, unfortunately. Little you can do. It is the democratic process. But there was something strange about the whole discussion. And then it turned out they got the figures wrong. That they had gone along with a cut on grounds that turned out to be incorrect. At the time I took de Volkskrant so I think read it in that newspaper. Background reports. I thought it was beneath PvdA. I had expected them to go along only if the arguments had been good. The prior debate did not feel right. So when six months later I found out that the figures had been wrong I was angry for I did vote for PvdA at the time, but after that I had had it with them.'

Besides political interest and negative political experiences also political socialisation is often mentioned as a decisive factor in a person's outlook on politics. From their parents the interviewees have acquired a sense of justice or opinion about the authorities that is decisive in how they asses politicians and certain political parties.

'I come from a family of confirmed socialists. It makes me who I am. For all I know that is how they talked about it. Again, I am just as recalcitrant. Anyone above me and they're in for it. Partij van de Arbeid [social democrats] it was. VVD, they were stuck-up. The well-heeled. I still hear my parents ranting against them. How it was always the man in the street who got it. Still is. You know. I now lean more towards SP and GroenLinks. Yes. You know, it is funny to talk about a class system. But the class differences should be less strict. That healthcare is in order. The way I see it, it cannot be that just because some have been luckier than others, got more brains, parents that had money so they could go to university, that they should be better off than the common man who is working his butt off and still misses the gravy train.'

'You cannot deny upbringing. As soon as there is injustice. In fact I see something of myself in Wilders. I am as undaunted as he is. In that respect. At the merest hint of injustice Marja speaks up. Come on. There's always two sides. I used to go to union meetings. Got union lessons. How red do you want to be.'

Summary, Review and Discussion

This chapter described in detail how twenty Dutch citizens, who further to survey research could be qualified as political cynical, perceive Dutch politics. This has yielded information about the world behind the survey questions and the experiences and beliefs of these politically dissatisfied citizens.

At what is the political cynicism directed?

The interviews offered fresh insights into the critique of so called 'political cynics'. Roughly four types of discontent were distinguished. First, the interviews indicated clear frustration about the doings of the 'political class' in the Netherlands, and the individual politicians and parties it contains. This type of discontent was rather consistent and came up in almost every interview (17 out of 20x). The picture of a political class that does not feel any consequences of the decisions it takes, does not sympathise with the people, promotes self-interest and takes the wrong (costly) decisions in distributing scarce goods dominated the stories of the interviewees.

Politicians' privileged exceptional status and their furtherance of (financial) self-interest were the main points of criticism. Once in the (financial) power position of chosen representative or governor, politicians are thought to become incompetent to a just and wise decisionmaking. Second, people were discontent with policy, current government policy as well as long-term policy. A range of policy issues came up, in which discontent with the policy on care (for the elderly) and police and the judiciary prevailed. The alleged injustice of policy and the misappropriation of resources were the main sources of dicontent, although these are different policy issues. Third, many people were not happy with the way the party system works (8 out of 20x); in particular the abundance of political parties represented in the Lower House. In addition to discontent with policy, political class or party system, the reviews of government and politics frequently featured concerns about today's society (8 out of 20x); criticism concentrated on the selfishness and lack of solidarity perceived in people. In three of the types of discontent moral objections prevailed: the political class, the policies pursued and society were no good according to the citizens. The political authorities do not live up to the (high)

standards of reliable administration and good governance that the interviewees formulate in the interviews.

Striking were the normative objections to the doings of the political class. Politicians have an exemplary function and are continuously judged on their position of power. All available information on the doings of politicians is evaluated through the eye of morality. Are the acts in line with norms and ideals of decent behavior and good and just governance? In their stories the interviewees all displayed a strong sense of justice and high standards with regard to political authorities. Interviewees expected politicians in their positions of power to set an example for others. Politicians were demanded to virtuously watch over those who are not as well off and expected to ensure a fair society. The following standards for politicians could be distilled:

– the search for the common good and fair (re)distribution, looking out for the less fortunate
– treating other politicians and political parties with respect. Even if they disagree they are expected to keep an open mind; courteous, with empathy and willing to compromise for the common good.
– comprehensible, open and honest communication towards citizens.

This underlines the significance of good governance by political authorities and political institutions and the importance of conveying virtues in political communication. The question is whether political authorities are sufficiently aware of these eyes of morality of citizens that judge them twice as hard because of their perceived exceptional status.

The opinions of the respondents who in survey research had been recorded as political cynics and which I tried to give a voice in this chapter, negated theories that today's political cynicism stems mostly from the desire for more (direct) democratic control (Norris, 1999). The interviewees' accounts did not so much indicate a desire for more personal political control or direct democracy as a desire for sympathetic, reliable and goal-getting political authorities. Striking was their strong feeling of (in)justice. In what they witnessed through media and personal experiences, politics did not follow their (high) standards and expectations. The interviewees could thus be only be characterized as 'dissatisfied democrats' in the sense that they demanded more 'good governance'.

The stories of the interviewees are in line with theories arguing that citizens do not wish to get involved in politics themselves but most of all would like the necessary checks and balances to confine a political culture of self-interest and nepotism (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). The interviewees scrutinize political authorities when their doings are felt to be untrustworthy, undecent, unsympathetic and

driven out of financial, party or self interest. By formulating their critique in their stories the interviewees at the same time paint an ideal of trustworthy, decent and sympathetic political authorities seeking justice and the common good. In this way the critique of the interviewees can also be interpreted as an indirect plea for more virtues in politics. In the stories of the interviewees the political authorities are subjected to high standards and values, that can be described as somewhat 'post-materialistic' (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). On the one hand the interviewees are satisfied with democratic freedoms and fearful of losing these freedoms. On the other hand they expect free and equal relations of citizens (and the media) with political authorities. Political authorities should set the right example and be irreproachable in all respects.

As has been suggested in theory, can the negativism about politics be understood as a feeling of being left out and left behind in society (Dekker, 2002, Van den Brink, 2002, 2007)? In what way do citizens project their negative feelings about themselves on politics (Hooghe, 2001)? The interviewees showed a natural variety in place of residence, background and attitude to life. Their education varied from primary school to university. The living conditions of the interviewees ran from galleried flats, terraced houses to detached villas. There was variety, too, in economic and social conditions and attitudes to life: from long-term unemployed to double-income couples. Some people referred to themselves jokingly as '*alone in the world*'; their lives revolved around a single activity like hospital visits. Others visibly enjoyed telling me about the richness of their social contacts and activities. Although a single interviewee indeed felt to be left behind in society, this is not the dominant picture I could derive from the interviews. Although negative about politics, virtually all interviewees mentioned they are happy with their lives. They mentioned to be generally happy with the area in which they were living and considered themselves fortunate to live in a comparatively '*well-organised and rich country like the Netherlands*'. That people are happy with their own lives, but not with the functioning of politics and society is a result previously obtained in survey research (SCP, 2007, 2008) and confirmed by the interviews.

How deepseated is the cynicism towards politicians and political institutions we perceive in the surveystudies?

If we define political cynicism as an utterly negative evaluation and expectation towards politics and politicians in general (Dekker, 2006), the outlook of the interviewees could not be qualified as politically cynical *per se*. Sometimes viewpoints of the interviewees on politicians were truly negative, but sometimes they are merely a realistic view of the priviliged position of politicians. The interviews

showed that the intensity of political discontent varied greatly. Intensity varied from positive neutral desinterest to frustration and anger. Apparently statements that try to gauge political cynicism in surveys do not by definition select downright political cynics. Almost none of the interviewees had utterly negative expectations of politics and politicians in general. On the contrary, all interviewees had high expectations of how politics and politicians should function. The interview stories thus question whether the interviewees are as politically cynical as their answers to the TNS NIPO survey statements have suggested. Results of survey research should be interpreted with care. The substantial yet stable political cynicism in surveys as the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies may well be as multifaceted as the stories of the 'political cynics' in this study.

The interviewees may largely reject the doings of politicians and political institutions, but how dissatisfied are citizens at other levels of politics? The interviews show that the criticism of so called 'political cynics' is not solely directed at politicians and political institutions in general. Cynicism about politicians and institutions is illustrated often by how government or specific politicians pursue specific policies. When their public behaviour does not confirm to citizens' moral standards, they are judged accordingly. That politicians can no longer solve societal problems due to the shift of public and political responsibilities to other domains (Aerts, 2009, Blokland, 2008, Hay, 2007) is no dominant storyline.

Citizens also occasionally criticize specifics of the Dutch consensusdemocracy. They note to be dissatisfied about the fragmentation of political parties and power in parliament and the difficulties of multi party governing. They however do not criticize the careful collaboration or depolitisation that is also specific of consensus democracy. Many interviewees realize that Dutch politics is a process of consensusmaking in which it is necessary to negotiate to handle problems. They do not agree with political parties that only pursue their own interests as much as they do not agree with a political class that handles out of self-interest.

The interviewees support the general idea of democracy as a form of government. But do these political cynics also support democratic values? Do they support the idea that every human is a reasonable being who's political opinion is equally worthy of being heard and equally worthy of political participation (De Jonge, 1968)? To counter the perceived abundance of political parties and the accompanying indecisiveness, a single citizen does plea for strong authoritorian leadership. This however is an exception. Democratic principles and values are only seldom rejected in the interviews. Interviewees mention their pride of their democratic rights, such as the right to vote. Their critique of democracy mainly exists out of fear. They are dissatisfied and fearful about events in the last decade that to their idea indicate a curtailment of democratic freedoms, such as the political murder on the politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and the political murder and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2005.

The interviewees can be described as both cynical and populist in the respect that most interviewees reject the doings of the political elite and more than once appeal to common wisdom and common sense of ordinary citizens. However, the interviews also indicate that the intensity of their radicalism against 'a corrupt elite' varies.

What about other characteristics that are often related to populism, such as the fear of others and voting for populist radical right parties? In illustrating why interviewees are dissatisfied with the doings of the political elite some interviewees do sometimes refer to the negative influence of 'dangerous others', such as immigrants, criminals, Islam and EU. However, we should note that this critique is not dominant.

Furthermore the rejection of the political elite as a dominant critique does not relate perfectly to support for a specific type of political party or movement. What stands out is that the interviewees are multicoloured in their political preferences. Some interviewees support parties that in the academic literature defined as 'populistic radical right parties' such as the PVV. Other interviewees however support political parties that are generally defined as political 'mainstream' or 'establishment' parties as the PvdA or VVD.

In the interviews the intensity of discontent appeared largely fed by the political interest of the interviewees, their upbringing and experiences with, for instance, administration agencies or local political authorities. Interviewees regularly refer to the influence of their parents' assessment of politics to explain how they judge politics. The personal experience of being treated unfairly by the authorities seems to have a major impact on the formation of political judgement. The more people feel affected personally or ignored in the political power relationship, the more intense their negative emotions about politics appeared to be. Also, political interest was a factor that explained the intensity of interviewees' discontent. Interviewees who indicated that politics was important to them were more intensely dissatisfied with politics than those interviewees who indicated that politics did not really interest them.

In short, the interviews have gained some fresh insights into the arguments and stories of so-called political cynics. The results indicate that behind the category of 'political cynics' in survey research a wide scale of emotions hide, but also specific arguments and judgements about the moral doings of politicians in general.

This study raises many new questions. Are political authorities sufficiently aware of this moral evaluation of citizens that judges them twice as hard because of their perceived exceptional status? To what extent do political authorities know the ethical opinions of citizens and do they take them into account, for instance in political communication and in the selection of politicians?

I believe the ethical dimension still receives too little attention in scientific discussions around political cynicism and political distrust. Research into political trust and distrust does not readily investigate the moral dimension of citizens' criticism of Dutch politics. Studies currently available look at perceived integrity[13], good governance and the implementation of integrity policies in government[14], or trends in the (educational) background of Dutch parliamentarians (Bovens and Wille, 2010). However, no research is available on how privileged Dutch political authorities really are, and how their position compares to political authorities in comparative consensus democracies such as the Netherlands. Nor are any studies available on how lucrative a career in Dutch politics really is to deny or corroborate the cynical yet popular idea that politicians are in it for the money.

Based on these 20 interviews conducted at one time point, it is difficult to conclude to what extent the moral critique is specific for the development of the traditional Dutch consensus democracy into what is sometimes called cartel democracy, with professionalized 'cartel parties' focusing on recruiting governors instead of focusing on representation (Krouwel, 2004). Comparative interviews conducted in other decades and in other contemporary democracies could shed more light on this matter.

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13 The Netherlands, for instance, consistently scores high on the international rankings of democracy, political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2012). The Freedom in the World reports and the Freedom House country status ratings show that the Netherlands has always had a maximum freedom rating since 1973 (source: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world).

14 See www.integriteitoverheid.nl. The focus of The National Integrity Office is improving integrity in public and political office, for instance by facilitating the use of a code of good governance in public organisations and by stimulating research and providing training and education in ethics and integrity.

5   Political Discontent and Political Behaviour in the Netherlands

Exit or voice?

Political discontent does not relate to political behaviour in any straightforward way. A negative disposition towards politics or government is thought to activate people in all kinds of ways: it would motivate people to vote in elections, to join (new) political parties, to take part in demonstrations, to send letters to newspapers, to take part in Internet discussions or to write hate-mail to politicians (Dalton, 2004). Frustrations about the political process and political culture are said to translate easily into protest voting and support for populist parties, a wish for democratic reforms and non-compliance with the law (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). Marien (2011) in a European comparative study confirms a clear relation between political trust and the act of voting in elections and between political discontent and political protest behaviour. Adriaansen (2011) furthermore showed on basis of a multivariate analysis of the data collected by TNS NIPO in collaboration with ASCoR/Univerity of Amsterdam 2006 that political cynicism does not influence turnout. Politically cynical citizens however are more hesistant in their vote choice and change party more often in-between elections than less cynical citizens. However, there is also said to be a relation between political cynicism and non-voting (Dekker, 2006). In the terms of Alfred Hirschman (Hirschman, 1970), it is plausible that discontent leads either to 'exit' or to 'voice'.

In this Chapter, I investigate how the political discontent of Dutch citizens relates to certain political behaviour at an individual level, namely non-voting, protest voting or other kinds of political protest. Do citizens who are dissatisfied with politics alienate themselves from politics by non-voting and non-participation in political protest activities? Or do dissatisfied citizens turn to protest, through protest voting and other kind of protest activities, joining demonstrations or

speaking in on government meetings? To put this differently, does citizens' discontent relate either to alienation from politics or to mobilisation into political protest actions?

Whether political discontent is related to a certain type of political behaviour may well be related to the object of discontent. Discontent with the performance of government may relate to a certain type of political behaviour, whereas cynicism about politicians and political institutions in general or discontent with democracy may relate to a different kind of political behaviour. Discontent with government, for instance, may drive people to vote in favour of an opposition party in the next parliamentary elections, whereas discontent with democracy as a form of government may stimulate people not to vote at all.

In this chapter I have used two different methods to study the relation between political discontent and political behaviour. I have first analysed the relation between political discontent and political behaviour on the basis of the publicly available Dutch Political Election Study 2010 (DPES). In these survey studies, a large representative sample of Dutch citizens[1] were questioned on their political behaviour and how they thought about politics.

    To take the multidimensionality of political discontent into account, I have analysed the relation between political discontent and political behaviour at three distinct levels in DPES 2010. I have analysed the relation between *government satisfaction* and political behaviour. I have analysed how *cynicism about politicians and political institutions in general* relates to political behaviour. Thirdly, I have analysed how *discontent with democracy as a political system* relates to political behaviour. Is there a relation between different types of political discontent and particular political behaviour?

    Secondly, I used twenty in-depth interviews with politically cynical citizens I conducted in 2011 to learn about their political (voting) behaviour and how this relates to their attitudes about politics at a more profound level.[2]

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1   A representative sample of Dutch voters was selected by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in the Netherlands. Details on the sample can be found in the sample descriptions of CBS (www.dpes.nl)

2   In this Chapter, the same interviews have been used as in Chapter 4, but now I focus on the political behaviour of the interviewees. The twenty interviewees were selected on basis of how cynically they responded to a selection of statements on politics in a survey performed by TNS NIPO. The interviews were performed in January 2011. For details on the selection of the interviewees, see Chapter 4.

I start with describing the set-up and results of my analysis of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies. Then I will turn to the methods and findings of the in-depth interviews.[3]

Political discontent and political behaviour in Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010

The Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 (DPES) contains three different variables that are suited to analyse the three different type of discontent described above. Support for the current government and incumbent officeholders can be tapped by the question how satisfied people are about government. The exact question in DPES 2010 is: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you in general about what the government has done in the past three years? The answer to this question gives us a broad idea of how (dis)satisfied respondents were with the government in office in 2010.

The political cynicism index in DPES 2010 can be used to tap the support for politicians and political institutions in general and consists of three statements.
– Politicians promise more than they deliver;
– Ministers and Junior Ministers are primarily self-interested;
– Friends are more important than abilities to become a member of parliament.

How respondents scored on this so-called political cynicism index gives us an understanding of how dissatisfied and cynical they are about politicians and political institutions in general. With respect to the democratic system, respondents were asked in DPES 2010 how much they agreed with the following statement: 'Democracy knows many problems, but it is the best form of government there is.' People's satisfaction with government, political cynicism and their support for democracy as best form of political system give us an idea (albeit a superficial one) of how people assess government, politicians, institutions and democracy as a political system. These items have been used as dependent variables in the three analyses of political discontent and political behaviour. We should note that in Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 the three variables are correlated statistically significantly to one another.[4] However, the variables are not related sufficiently that it would

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3 For the sake of clarity, I refer to the citizens included in the survey study as respondents. I refer to the Dutch citizens I interviewed as interviewees.
4 The correlation between satisfaction with government and support for democracy as best form of political system is 0.066 (sig.: 0.001). The correlation between satisfaction with government and political cynicism is 0.247 (sig.: 0.001). The correlation between political cynicism and support for democracy as best form of government is 0.128 (sig.: 0.001).

improve the analysis by merging them in one dimension or scale. When the three variables are indeed combined in one scale, Cronbach's Alpha is 0.321, indicating a very poor internal consistency of such a scale.[5]

The Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 contains a lot of questions on citizens' political behaviour. Do people generally vote in parliamentary elections or do they abstain from voting? What party do they vote for? How inclined are people to participate in political action when Parliament is discussing a law that people find unjust and wrong? Did people try to influence politics and government in the last four years through some form of political action? Did they, for example, turn to radio, television or newspapers to influence politics? Did they try to get a political party involved? Did they contact a politician or civil servant? Did they participate in a government meeting? Did they join a civil action group or perhaps participate in a public demonstration or protest act? Did they undertake any political action through the Internet, email or text messages? To analyse the relation between citizens' support for politics on different levels and their political behaviour, I took into account all of the above items on political behaviour. An overview of the survey items used in the analysis is described in Appendix F of this thesis, with some notes on the recoding of some variables. Also the abbreviations of the political parties that took part in the 2006 and 2010 elections have been explained in an Appendix.

In this Chapter I studied the relation between different types of political discontent and political behaviour. It was not my goal to build the best statistical model possible to explain different types of political discontent. My goal was to study whether politically dissatisfied citizens are distinctive in their (non)voting and protest behaviour. Political discontent of citizens, whether it is directed at government performance, politics in general or democracy may of course be related to other attitudes and types of behaviour. Several statistical studies based on survey data have been done to explain why people do or do not trust government, political institutions or politicians in general, taking numerous explanatory variables into account. Paul Dekker (2006) in his analysis of why Dutch citizens do not trust Dutch government, based on the survey Cultural Changes in the Netherlands in 2004, for instance showed that education has an effect on the amount of trust Dutch citizens have in government. Included as control variables in her structural equation model on the relation between political cynicism and voting

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5   When the three variables are analysed in a factor analysis, the factor analysis does intend to combine the three variables into one dimension. However, the eigenvalues indicate that while this first dimension may explain 46% of the variance, the second dimension still explains 28% of the variance and the third dimension still explains 24% of the variance.

behaviour in 2006 Adriaansen showed that political interest is negatively related to political cynicism. Those who are politically cynical intend to be less politically interested. In the same analysis, also more general socio-economic factors such as education prove to be related to political cynicism, while income and gender show no relation (Adriaansen, 2011). In an explanatory analysis of political cynicism Dekker furthermore found that education is a factor of influence, as is the amount of trust respondents have in others (Dekker, 2006). Therefore in this statistical analysis the variables education, political interest and social trust are included in the analysis as control variables. Social trust is tapped by how respondents answer to the statement 'most people can be trusted' or 'you can't be too careful'.

All dependent variables and most independent variables used in DPES 2010 were ordinal, meaning that people could choose from a scale of answer possibilities. The answer categories can be ranked, but the precise distance between the values remains unknown. Respondents could choose, for example, if they agreed (strongly), neither agreed nor disagreed or disagreed (strongly) with the statement that democracy is the best form of government. I have applied statistical analyses that incorporate the ordinal character of the variables. A rank correlation measure was used (Spearman's rho) to get a broad idea of the strength of the association between the dependent variables and all independent variables.[6] The assumption of Spearman's correlation analyses is that there is a monotonic relation[7] between the variables of interest, but this assumption was not met for all variables in my analysis. Furthermore, correlation analyses only measures the strength of the association between two variables, while in my analyses I had multiple variables of interest. Therefore, I also used an ordinal regression procedure (Polytomous Universal Model or PLUM) to analyse the association between discontent and political behaviour in a more precise manner. This regression model is an extension of the general linear model to ordinal categorical data. It takes into account the ordering of the different categories of independent and dependent variables. Through the ordinal regression analysis, both the direction and strength of the association can be measured for all ratings in the independent and depend-

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6   Correlation coefficients can range from -1 to 1, with 1 indicating a perfectly increasing monotonic relationship between two variables and -1 indicating a perfectly decreasing monotonic relationship between two variables and zero suggesting no relationship. The correlations between the dependent variables and all independent variables included in the statistical analysis are displayed in Appendix F.

7   A monotonic relationship is a relationship that does one of the following: as the value of one variable increases, so does the value of the other variable; or as the value of one variable increases, the other variable value decreases.

ent variables. The maximum amount of information available in the data can thus be used.[8] In the analysis, I have used pairwise deletion as a method to deal with missing values.[9]

As both the answers to the recoded variable 'general satisfaction with government' and the variable 'political cynicism' were evenly distributed, the logit link function was used in the regression analysis. 'Satisfaction with democracy' was not evenly distributed. Here lower categories ('fully agree' and 'agree') are more probable, and negative log log was used, therefore, as a link function (Norusis, 2012).

Because the variable 'voted for ...in 2006' and 'vote intention 2010' were recoded into dummy variables (for example: Did or did not vote for Party 1 in 2006 elections), I needed to leave one category out of the regression analysis as a standard to prevent multicollinearity. I chose D66, a political party at the centre of the political landscape (and non-government party in both 2006 and 2010), as a base party to compare the other political parties against. Because the answers to the variables 'voting in 2006' and 'vote intention 2010' were closely related to each other, I chose to analyse the variables in separate models and in a combined model. All results are presented in this Chapter.

The relation between satisfaction with government and political behaviour

I will now discuss what we can learn about the relation between political discontent and political behaviour from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies. First I explain how discontent with the current government relates to political behaviour. Then I turn to the relation between political cynicism and political behaviour. After that I concentrate on how discontent with democracy as a form of government relates to political behaviour. At the end of this section, I compare how the different types of political discontent relate to political behaviour.

Discontent with the government may be directed at the political colour and political signature of the government in office. Citizens who are dissatisfied with the government might be expected to use their vote in elections as a protest vote against the government, trying to vote it out of office. People might also show their discontent with government (policy) in concrete political actions: in

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8   Details on Ordinal Regression can be found in Generalized Linear Models (second edition) by P. McCullagh and J.A. Nelder, Chapman & Hall/CRR, 1999, pp 151-155.

9   Missing value analysis for the variables used in the analysis indicated that less than 10 per cent of the values were missing in systematic patterns that might distort the statistical analysis.

demonstrations, boycott actions, using media to influence government policy or speaking in on government meetings. Vice versa, one might expect that people who vote for a government party are explicitly satisfied when this government takes office. Can any of these relations be perceived in the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies? How does discontent with the government relate to political behaviour?

The Figure below shows the results of the correlation analysis and the different ordinal regression analyses I have performed. The first column contains the coefficients of Spearman's rho correlation analysis. The second row shows the estimated coefficients from the ordinal regression analysis, in which the variables about non-voting, political behaviour and 'Voted for Party... in 2006 parliamentary elections' were included. The third row shows the estimated coefficients from the same ordinal regression analysis, but now with the variables of non-voting, political behaviour and 'Intends to vote for party ... in 2010 parliamentary elections'. The fourth row shows the estimated coefficients from the ordinal regression analysis in which all variables were included together. I decided to show the results of all regression analyses to make clear that, when we include only the party voted for in either 2006 or 2010, some variables appear significantly related to the assessment of the government, while when we include all variables together in the analysis, some of the relations are insignificant. Both the statistical significance of the coefficients, the direction of the coefficients and the relative size of the coefficients in the ordinal regression analysis are of interest (columns 2, 3 and 4).

A usual measure for assessing the quality of a regression analysis is R square. A traditional R square cannot be calculated for ordinal regression, but several R-like statistics (Pseudo Rs) can. They measure the strength of the association between the dependent variable and the independent variables. All three Pseudo Rs are displayed at the end of the Table.

Table 5: The relation between satisfaction with government and political behaviour

	Spearman Rho coefficient	PLUM parameter (model including vote 2006)	PLUM parameter (model including vote intention 2010)	PLUM parameter (model including all variables)
Non voting				
Did always vote in parliamentary elections	**0.12**	1.10	**-16.40**	-0.36
Did sometimes abstain in parliamentary elections		1.32	-16.16	0
Did vote in 2006 parliamentary elections (0=no, 1=yes)	**-0.10**	0	0.25	0
Considered not to vote in 2010 elections (=0)	**0.11**	**-0.89**	-0.54	-0.39

Table 5: The relation between satisfaction with government and political behaviour

	Spearman Rho coefficient	PLUM parameter (model including vote 2006)	PLUM parameter (model including vote intention 2010)	PLUM parameter (model including all variables)
Protest behaviour				
Chance acting against unjust national bill (1=very big)	-0.03	0.14	-0.212	-0.16
2=big		0.26	0.031	0.05
3=small		*0.24*	-0.083	-0.07
Did not try to get radio, TV or newspaper involved	0.00	-0.18	-0.196	-0.27
Did not try to involve political party or organization	0.00	0.21	-0.071	0.03
Did not contact politician or civil servant	0.03	-0.18	-0.101	-0.06
Did not participate in a meeting organized by government	-0.01	0.08	0.054	0.05
Did not join a civic action group	0.00	0.28	-0.153	0.24
Did not join a demonstration	0.01	-0.18	-0.203	-0.30
Did not use Internet, email or SMS	0.03	-0.34	-0.295	-0.34
Did not do other things to influence government	0.03	-0.43	-0.361	-0.35
Did none of the above	-0.01	-0.23	-0.122	-0.13
Party voting				
Party voted for 2006: CDA	**-0.26**	**0.87**		0.25
Party voted for 2006: PvdA	0.03	-0.07		-0.23
Party voted for 2006: VVD	0.08	*-0.46*		-0.28
Party voted for 2006: GroenLinks	0.04	-0.08		-0.14
Party voted for 2006: D66	-0.00	base party		base party
Party voted for 2006: SP	**0.13**	**-0.66**		-0.41
Party voted for 2006: SGP	0.01	-0.25		0.21
Party voted for 2006: PVV	**0.16**	**-1.61**		-0.14
Party voted for 2006: CU	**-0.06**	0.32		0.10
Party voted for 2006: PvdD	0.01	-0.23		-0.23
Party voted for 2006: Other	*0.05*	-0.59		0.48
Vote intention 2010: CDA	-0.30		**1.48**	**1.22**
Vote intention 2010: PvdA	-0.03		0.14	0.33
Vote intention 2010: VVD	**0.09**		-0.32	-0.21
Vote intention 2010: D66	-0.04		base party	base party
Vote intention 2010: GroenLinks	0.03		-0.09	0.05
Vote intention 2010: SP	**0.07**		*-0.68*	-0.46
Vote intention 2010: PVV	**0.25**		**-1.42**	**-1.61**
Vote intention 2010: CU	**-0.10**		0.58	0.50
Vote intention 2010: SGP	0.00		-0.15	0
Vote intention 2010: PvdD	0.02		-0.34	-0.1
Vote intention 2010: Other party	0.00		-0.01	0.4
Control variables				
Political interest (=1)	0.01	0.21	0.24	0.13
Political interest (=2)		-0.04	0.02	-0.07
Education (1)	*-0.05*	0.04	0.34	0.29
Education (2)		0.25	0.05	0.03
Education(3)		0.21	0.16	0.15
Education (4)		0.13	0.01	-0.04
Social trust (1)	**0.15**	**-0.38**	**-0.41**	**-0.40**
Pseudo R (Cox and Snell)		0.12	0.17	0.17
Pseudo R (Nagelkerke)		0.14	0.19	0.19
Pseudo R (McFadden)		0.06	0.08	0.09

Scale answering categories satisfaction government: 1= (very) satisfied, 2= not satisfied, nor dissatisfied, 3= (very) dissatisfied. Sig. (2-tailed)>0,01 is displayed in **bold**. Sig. (2-tailed) >0,05 is displayed in *italic*.

I will now elucidate the figures in the Table above.[10] The first thing to note is the quality of the fit of the model used. As the figures in the Table show, the values of the different Pseudo R statistics are all low, ranging from 6 to 19%. The pseudo Rs indicate that the relation between satisfaction with the government and the political behavioural variables in this model is not very strong. The model containing (non-) party voting variables and variables on political protest behaviour explains only a small part of how people assess the performance of the government. The limited relevance of the model is confirmed by analysis of the predicted values of the model. The independent variables in this model do predict the right direction of how satisfied or dissatisfied people were with the government, but with a bias towards the answer category 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Classification table of general satisfaction with the government

Count

		Predicted Response Category			Total
		very satisfied	not satisfied, not dissatisfied	(very) dissatisfied	
general satisfaction with government recoded	very satisfied	100	145	28	273
	not satisfied, not dissatisfied	53	227	82	362
	(very) dissatisfied	17	163	131	311
Total		170	535	241	946

Correlation analysis indicates that no matter whether people are dissatisfied or satisfied with the government, they do not try to influence the government more than others by participating in meetings organised by the government, by getting radio, TV or newspapers involved, by using the Internet, email or SMS, contacting politicians or civil servants, joining a civic action group or joining a demonstration. None of these actions show a relation with how people assess the government. There is a relation between people's satisfaction with the government and voting for particular political parties (first column of Table 5). The higher respondents rated their satisfaction with the government, the more they indicated they voted for the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) or the smaller ChristianUnion (CU). The lower respondents scored their satisfaction with the government, the more they indicated they voted for the Socialist Party (SP), People's Party for Freedom

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10 For all analyses, I checked whether the assumptions of the PLUM regression model were met. All ordinal regression analyses have an adequate parallel model and the model fits.

and Democracy (VVD) or the Freedom Party (PVV). There is also a correlation between non-voting and how people thought about the government. Respondents who said they often abstained from voting, who said they did not vote in 2006 and who considered not voting in 2010, appeared to be to less satisfied with the government than respondents who indicated they did vote. There also is a positive relation between social trust and being satisfied with government.

How should the parameters for the ordinal regression measure be read (rows 2, 3, and 4)? When all the variables are included in one regression model (column 4), government satisfaction proves not to be significantly related to non-voting behaviour. Respondents who were dissatisfied with the government are not more eager than others to vote (and vote the government out of office). The rating of government satisfaction, furthermore, is not related at all with political protest behaviour.

Only two voting variables, namely the intention to vote for the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) in 2010 and the intention to vote for the Freedom Party (PVV) in 2010 proved to be significantly related to government satisfaction. The assessment of the government's performance, therefore, appears to be related to voting for certain political parties that took part in the 2010 parliamentary elections. The relation between the assessment of the government and voting for PVV or CDA appears to be significant.

Another aspect that should be noted is the (plus or minus) sign of the coefficients of the significant independent variables, indicating the direction of the relationship. The coefficients of voting for CDA and PVV show that these variables are related to the assessment of the government in an opposite direction. In other words, respondents who voted PVV scored lower on satisfaction with the government than respondents who did not vote PVV. Voting CDA in 2010 in the regression analysis, on the other hand, proves to be significantly associated with a positive satisfaction with the government. Respondents who voted for the governing party CDA were more satisfied with the government than people who did not vote for CDA.

When it comes to party voting behaviour, it seems fairly logical that people who have voted for the main governing party CDA are also relatively satisfied with government. They can see their own policy stands and political sympathy reflected in government (policies). Respondents who said to be dissatisfied with government more often voted for the Freedom Party (PVV). This may seem surprising, because this party has been officially supporting the government in office between 2010 and 2012. However, when this survey was conducted in 2010, PVV was still an opposition party and a fervent criticaster of the government in office. Perhaps in the data of the parliamentary election studies of 2012, which are not available on the moment of writing, the direction of the relationship between government satisfaction and voting for PVV has thus changed.

The variable 'social trust' also proved to be significantly related to government satisfaction. The more respondents indicate that most people can be trusted, the more

they are satisfied with government. Columns 2 and 3 show that in the regression analyses where 'voting for party x in 2006' and 'voting for party x in 2010' where included separate in the analysis also some other (weak) relations exist. I mention them here and in the Table to give a complete picture of the analyses I have done. Next to voting for the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) in 2006 en 2010 and voting for the Freedom Party (PVV) in 2006 and 2010 also voting for the left wing Socialist party SP in 2006 now appears to be related to the rating of respondents' government satisfaction, as is the variable 'Considering not to vote in 2010'. As can be read in the Table the coefficients for these variables are small, indicating a weak relation. It is therefore not surprising that when all variables are included in one analysis the relations are too weak to call significant at a 0.05 or 1 per cent significance level.

Another aspect of interest is the relative size of the coefficients of the significant variables in the Table. The coefficient of voting for the Christian Democratic Party CDA in 2010 is 1.22. The coefficient of voting for the Freedom Party (PVV) is -1.61. The coefficients of the variables are relatively the same size, indicating a relationship of equal effect, though in opposite direction. The effect of social trust is -0.40, having a somewhat smaller effect.

In summary, the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES) show a relation between government satisfaction and voting for particular political parties. Respondents who voted CDA in 2010 evaluated the performance of government more positively than others, whereas people who voted PVV in 2010 were less satisfied with the government than others. These relations are equal in strength. Furthermore, there appears to be no relation at all between government satisfaction and political protest behaviour. There is also no clear relation between non-voting and the assessment of the government. Respondents who were negative about the government's performance do not appear to be more eager to vote than others. There is a significant relation between social trust and government satisfaction. I should note that non-voters are generally under-represented in survey studies (Dekker, 2002). Also in the data of DPES 2010 non-voters are poorly represented. We should therefore be cautious in drawing conclusions about the relation between discontent and non-voting, as these conclusions may be biased

Political cynicism and related political behaviour

How does a negative assessment of politicians and political institutions in general (also called 'political cynicism') relate to political behaviour? What kind of behaviour appears to dominate: protest or abstention from any form of political participation? The results of both the correlation and regression analyses are presented in Table 7 on the next page. Here too I show the results of all regression analyses.

Table 7: The relation between political cynicism and political behaviour

	Spearman Rho coefficient	PLUM parameter vote 2006	PLUM vote intention 2010	PLUM parameter (model including all variables)
Non voting				
Did always vote in parliamentary elections	**0.11**	-1.2	-0.3	*0.68*
Did sometimes abstain in parliamentary elections		-1.31	-0.2	0.55
Did vote in 2006 parliamentary elections (0=no, 1=yes)	**-0.12**	0	0.3	0
Considered not to vote in 2010 elections (=0)	**0.10**	**-0.74**	-0.5	-0.59
Protest behaviour				
Chance acting against unjust national bill (1=very big)	**0.08**	-0.42	-0.52	-0.51
2=big		-0.2	-0.22	-0.18
3=small		-0.11	-0.08	-0.11
Did not try to get radio, TV or newspaper involved	0.01	**-0.46**	**-0.62**	**-0.63**
Did not try to involve political party or organization	**-0.07**	0.38	0.43	0.42
Did not contact politician or civil servant	*-0.05*	-0.13	0.12	0.09
Did not participate in a meeting organized by government	**-0.09**	0.07	0.03	0.01
Did not join a civic action group	0.03	-0.49	-0.56	-0.58
Did not join a demonstration	-0.02	-0.17	-0.16	-0.22
Did not use Internet, email or SMS	**-0.06**	-0.29	-0.34	-0.31
Did not do other things to influence government	-0.02	-0.11	-0.39	-0.40
Did none of the above	0.08	-0.30	-0.28	-0.31
Party voting				
Party voted for 2006: CDA	**-0.07**	0.31		0.57
Party voted for 2006: PvdA	-0.02	0.19		0.53
Party voted for 2006: VVD	0.01	-0.17		0.48
Party voted for 2006: GroenLinks	-0.04	0.22		0.46
Party voted for 2006: D66	-0.04	base party		base party
Party voted for 2006: SP	*0.06*	-0.29		0.07
Party voted for 2006: SGP	0.04	-0.78		-0.37
Party voted for 2006: PVV	**0.11**	-0.76		0.10
Party voted for 2006: CU	-0.01	0.01		*1.36*
Party voted for 2006: PvdD	*0.05*	-0.57		-0.41
Party voted for 2006: Other	0.03	0.09		*1.26*

Table 7: The relation between political cynicism and political behaviour

	Spearman Rho coefficient	PLUM para-meter vote 2006	PLUM vote intention 2010	PLUM para-meter (model including all variables)
Vote intention 2010: CDA	*-0.07*		0.27	0
Vote intention 2010: PvdA	0.00		-0.14	-0.02
Vote intention 2010: VVD	-0.01		*-0.50*	**-0.75**
Vote intention 2010: D66	**-0.11**		base party	base party
Vote intention 2010: GroenLinks	*-0.06*		-0.24	-0.40
Vote intention 2010: SP	0.02		-0.35	-0.31
Vote intention 2010: PVV	**0.20**		**-1.22**	**-1.34**
Vote intention 2010: CU	0.01		-0.46	*-1.36*
Vote intention 2010: SGP	0.05		-0.66	0
Vote intention 2010: PvdD	**0.08**		*-1.34*	-0.73
Vote intention 2010: Other party	0.03		-1.11	0
Control variables				
Political interest (very much)	**0.12**	*-0.41*	*-0.52*	**-0.68**
Political disinterest (somewhat)		*-0.35*	*-0.47*	**-0.57**
Education (elementary)	**-0.23**	**0.81**	*0.69*	*0.68*
Education (lower vocational)		**0.70**	*0.55*	*0.55*
Education (secundary)		*0.42*	0.44	0.45
Education (Middle level voca-tional)		*0.24*	0.22	0.30
Social trust (1)	**0.24**	**-0.77**	**-0.54**	**-0.60**
Pseudo R (Cox and Snell)		0.12	0.13	0.14
Pseudo R (Nagelkerke)		0.13	0.14	0.15
Pseudo R (McFadden)		0.05	0.05	0.06

Sig. (2-tailed)>0,01 is displayed in **bold**. Sig. (2-tailed) >0,05 is displayed in *italic*.
Scale answering categories political cynicism: 0=low, 3= high

What is the quality of fit of this model? The several R-like statistics (Pseudo Rs) in the Table that measure the strength of the association between the dependent variable and the independent variables indicate that the values of the different Pseudo R statistics are weak, ranging from 5 per cent to 15 per cent at best. The model containing party voting, non-voting variables and variables on political protest behaviour and several control variables thus explains only a small part of the respondents' political cynicism. Analysis of predicted values confirms that the political behaviour variables used in this model do not predict very well how politically cynical people are (see Table 8 on the next page). With the variables used, there is a bias towards predicting that people are only mildly cynical, whereas in reality they score higher on political cynicism.

Table 8: Classification table political cynicism

Count

		Predicted Response Category			Total
		1	2	3 High	
Political cynicism score	0 Low	70	3	1	74
	1	325	52	20	397
	2	188	76	32	296
	3 High	81	71	31	183
Total		664	202	84	950

Correlation analysis (first column) shows that the higher respondents scored on political cynicism, the more likely they were not always to vote in parliamentary elections, not to have voted in the 2006 parliamentary elections and to have considered non-voting in the 2010 elections. With respect to political (protest) behaviour, there appears to be a correlation between political cynicism and not acting against an unjust bill, not participating in government meetings, not involving in political parties or political organisations and not involving new media to influence politics. Furthermore, correlation analysis shows that people who score high on political cynicism appear more likely to vote for the Freedom Party PVV, the Socialist Party (SP) or the Party for the Animals (PvdD). The lower respondents scored on political cynicism the more they indicated they voted for the Christian Democratic Party (CDA), GreenLeft (GL) or the Democrats '66 (D66).

Column four shows that, when all variables are included in the ordinal regression analysis, political cynicism sometimes is significantly related to non-voting behaviour. Respondents who indicate they always vote in parliamentary elections have significant lower political cynicism scores (at a 0.05 significance level). With concern to protest behaviour, most variables indicate no distinct relation between political cynicism and political protest behaviour. With one exception: people who score high on political cynicism do seem more active in getting radio, TV or newspaper involved to influence politicians and government.

Only two voting variables, the intention to vote for the Freedom Party (PVV) and the intention to vote for the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in 2010, are significantly related to political cynicism at a 0.01 significance level. How negatively respondents assessed politicians and political institutions in general appears related their intention to vote for the Freedom Party (PVV) and their intention to vote for the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in 2010.

The minus sign of the coefficients of the significant dependent variables shows that the intention to vote for the PVV and the intention to vote for the VVD are both

related to political cynicism in the same direction. In other words, respondents who intended to vote for the pvv or the vvd in the 2010 parliamentary elections scored higher on political cynicism than respondents who did not vote for one of these two political parties. The relative size of the coefficients of the significant variables however indicates a relationship of unequal effect. The coefficient of voting for the pvv is -1.34, while the coefficient of voting for the vvd is smaller: -0.75.

All control variables included in the analysis also prove to be significantly related to political cynicism. Political cynicism relates equally strong to political interest and social trust. People who indicate they are very much or somewhat interested in politics significantly score lower on political cynicism. Furthermore, people who say most people are to be trusted score lower on political cynicism. The relation between political cynicism and education is somewhat weaker, but still significant at a 0.05 level. A low level of education relates to a higher score on political cynicism.

When 'voting for party x in 2006' and 'voting for party x in 2010' were included separately in the regression analysis, some other weak relations also appeared (columns 2 and 3). Considering not to vote in the 2010 parliamentary elections and voting for Party for the Animals (PvdD) for instance also appeared to be related to the respondents' political cynicism to some extent. As the Table shows, the coefficients for these variables are small, indicating a very weak relation. It is not surprising, therefore, that, when all variables are included in one analysis, the relations are too weak at a 1 per cent significance level to be called significant.

In summary, the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES) only shows a relation between political cynicism and voting for particular political parties. Respondents who intended to vote for the Freedom Party (pvv) or the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (vvd) in 2010 scored higher on political cynicism than respondents who voted for other political parties. Furthermore, there appears to be a weak relation between political cynicism and non-voting. Respondents who indicate they always vote in parliamentary elections have significant lower political cynicism scores.

With concern to protest behaviour, most variables indicate no clear relation between political cynicism and political protest behaviour. Political cynics did not try to influence politics to a greater or lesser degree than others by any means, whether by the Internet, email or text messages, by contacting government officials or politicians, by participating in meetings organised by the government, by joining civic action groups or demonstrations. One exception is visible: people who score high on political cynicism do seem more active in getting radio, TV or newspaper involved to influence politicians and government.

The analysis of DPES 2010 indicates the relation between political cynicism and political (non-voting) behaviour is not as strong as has been suggested. The results

suggest a weak relation between political cynicism and non-voting or non-participation in politics. The data of the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Elections Studies suggest that people who score high on political cynicism are for most part not inclined to abstain from political activity or to withdraw from the political arena more than others.

How should we interpret the relation between political cynicism and voting for specific political parties? The results of this analysis show a clear relationship between political cynicism and voting for the PVV in 2010. The PVV was founded in 2004 by the former Member of Parliament of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Geert Wilders. In 2006, the PVV was first elected in parliament with 9 seats. With its focus on the issues of migration, justice and Islamisation, the PVV can be considered as the most right-wing party in parliament in 2006. Next to the focus on the issue of immigration and Islamisation of Dutch culture, the party is also known for its opposition to the left-wing political establishment (Otjens, 2012). The PVV has furthermore more than once been characterised as a critic of the Dutch left-wing political establishment. In this sense, the observed relation between political cynicism and voting for PVV in the data of DPES 2010 is not that surprising. The (less strong) statistical relation between political cynicism and vote intention for VVD in 2010 on the other hand is surprising, as this party can be characterised as a mainstream party and part of the political establishment.

Discontent with the democratic system and related political behaviour

Table 9 below presents the results of the correlation and regression analyses for how thinking about democracy as a form of government relates to political (voting) behaviour.

Table 9: The relation between belief in democracy as best form of government and political behaviour

	Spearman Rho coefficient	PLUM parameter (model including vote 2006)	PLUM parameter (model including vote intention 2010)	PLUM parameter (model including all variables)
Non voting				
Did always vote in parliamentary elections	**0.10**	-0.36	1.28	0.04
Did sometimes abstain in parliamentary elections		-0.28	1.21	0

Table 9: The relation between belief in democracy as best form of government and political behaviour

	Spearman Rho coefficient	PLUM parameter (model including vote 2006)	PLUM parameter (model including vote intention 2010)	PLUM parameter (model including all variables)
Did vote in 2006 parliamentary elections (1=yes)	**-0.08**	*-0.55*	0.30	0
Considered not to vote in 2010 elections	**-0.08**	0	0.48	0.23
Protest behaviour				
Chance acting against unjust national bill (very big)	**0.12**	**-1.06**	**-1.20**	*-0.93*
Chance acting against unjust national bill (big)		-0.25	0.20	-0.25
Chance acting against unjust national bill (3=small)		0.02	-0.07	-0.41
Did (not) try to get radio, TV or newspaper involved	0.01	-0.35	-0.11	-0.13
Did (not) try to involve political party or organization	**-0.09**	-0.12	0.14	0.16
Did (not) contact politician or civil servant	**-0.11**	-0.00	0.13	0.18
Did (not) participate in a meeting organized by government (0=sig)	**-0.15**	**0.52**	0.42	0.43
Did not join a civic action group	0.01	*-0.76*	*-0.85*	*-0.90*
Did (not) join a demonstration	-0.01	-0.14	0.09	0.12
Did (not) use Internet, email or SMS	**-0.10**	-0.20	0.09	0.06
Did (not) do other things to influence government	-0.04	-0.26	-0.43	-0.46
Did none of the above	**0.12**	-0.17	-0.05	-0.03
Party voting				
Party voted for 2006: CDA	0.01	*-0.44*		-0.46
Party voted for 2006: PvdA	-0.02	-0.22		-0.45
Party voted for 2006: VVD	**-0.08**	-0.38		0.29
Party voted for 2006: GroenLinks	*-0.05*	-0.45		-0.70
Party voted for 2006: D66	**-0.08**	base party	base party	base party
Party voted for 2006: SP	**0.07**	-0.47		-0.52
Party voted for 2006: SGP	0.04	*-1.22*		**-1.51**
Party voted for 2006: PVV	**0.08**	**-1.03**		*-1.08*
Party voted for 2006: CU	-0.01	-0.01		-0.16
Party voted for 2006: PvdD	0.02	-0.50		0.34
Party voted for 2006: other (TON/ local parties/blanco, invalid vote, do not know)	**0.08**	**-1.41**		*-1.41*

Table 9: The relation between belief in democracy as best form of government and political behaviour

	Spearman Rho coefficient	PLUM parameter (model including vote 2006)	PLUM parameter (model including vote intention 2010)	PLUM parameter (model including all variables)
Vote intention 2010: CDA	0.00		-0.30	-0.11
Vote intention 2010: PvdA	-0.01		-0.28	-0.10
Vote intention 2010: VVD	-0.02		-0.26	-0.54
Vote intention 2010: D66	*-0.06*		base party	base party
Vote intention 2010: GroenLinks	-0.04		-0.42	-0.13
Vote intention 2010: SP	0.03		-0.4	0.01
Vote intention 2010: PVV	**0.09**		*-0.71*	-0.39
Vote intention 2010: CU	0.01		-0.30	-0.31
Vote intention 2010: SGP	0.03		*-1.20*	
Vote intention 2010: PvdD	*0.07*		-0.87	-1.38
Vote intention 2010: Other party (TON/local parties/blanco, invalid vote, do not know)	-0.03		-0.24	-0.23
Control variables				
Political interest (very much)	**0.19**	**-0.69**	*-0.66*	*-0.64*
Political interest (somewhat)		*-0.36*	*-0.37*	
Education (elementary)	**-0.19**	**0.82**	**0.94**	**0.99**
Education (lower vocational)		**0.54**	**0.64**	**0.65**
Education (secundary)		0.23	0.09	0.31
Education (Middle level vocational)		0.36	*0.37*	*0.38*
Social trust (1)	**0.18**	**-0.44**	*-0.38*	-0.30
Pseudo R (Cox and Snell)		0.11	0.10	0.12
Pseudo R (Nagelkerke)		0.13	0.12	0.14
Pseudo R (McFadden)		0.06	0.05	0.06

Sig. (2-tailed)>0,01 is displayed in **bold**. Sig. (2-tailed) >0,05 is displayed in *italic*.
 Scale answering categories democracy best form of government: 1= fully agree, 2= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= (fully) disagree
Link function: negative log log
When a parameter is set to 0, this is because it is redundant in the analysis.

The several R-like statistics (Pseudo Rs) in the Table that measure the strength of the association between the dependent variable and the independent variables range from 5 per cent to 14 per cent at best. The analysis indicates, therefore, that the assessment of democracy as a form of government can only be explained by the behavioural variables in this model for a small part. Predicted values confirm that the model containing variables on political protest and (non-) voting behaviour only partly predicts how positive or negative people are about democracy as a form

of government. The model has a bias towards predicting respondents who agree with democracy as a form of government (see Table 10 below).

Table 10: Classification table assessment of democracy as best form of government

Count

		Predicted Response Category		Total
		fully agree	agree	
democracy best form of gov recoded into 4 categories	fully agree	65	218	283
	agree	47	494	541
	neither agree nor disagree	3	67	70
	(fully) disagree	1	43	44
Total		116	822	938

Correlation analysis (first column of the Table) shows that support for democracy as a form of government correlates positively with voting in the 2006 and 2010 parliamentary elections. The more respondents supported democracy, the more likely they said they (always) voted in parliamentary elections. Furthermore, support for democracy as a form of government correlates with being politically involved. Respondents who agreed with democracy as a form of government said it was very likely they would act against an unjust law. They were more likely than others to get involved in political parties or political organisations to influence politics. They also contacted politicians or civil servants, participated in government meetings or used the Internet, email or text messages to influence politics more often than others. Correlation analysis also shows that respondents who supported democracy were more likely to vote for the Democrats' 66 (D66) or the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). They were less likely to vote for the Freedom Party (PVV) or the Reformative party (SGP). They were also less likely to choose for what I merged into the category of 'other': voting for the party TON, voting for a local party, submitting a blank ballot, casting an invalid vote or answering 'do not know' to the question for which party they voted. Also all control variables included in the model correlate with how respondents assess democracy as best form of government.

The fourth column shows that, when all variables are included in the ordinal regression analysis, only one voting variable is significantly related to the assessment of democracy at a 0.01 significance level. There is a distinct relation between the assessment of democracy as a form of government and voting for the Reformative Party (SGP). The minus sign of the coefficient here indicates that voting for

the Reformative Party (SGP) in 2006/2010 significantly relates to not believing in democracy as a form of government. Respondents who did not vote for the SGP in 2006/2010 believed more in democracy as a form of government than those who voted for this party. Also education proves to relate to the assessment of democracy at a 0.01 significance level. Respondents who have completed only elementary school or lower vocational education more than others disagree with the statement that democracy is the best form of government.

At a 0.05 significance level also several other variables are related to the assessment of democracy as a form of government. With regard to voting variables respondents who agree with democracy as a form of government were less likely to vote for the Freedom Party (PVV) in 2006 and less likely to choose for what I merged into the category of 'other': voting for the party TON, voting for a local party, submitting a blank ballot, casting an invalid vote or answering 'do not know' to the question for which party they voted. With regard to protest behaviour, respondents who agree with democracy as a form of government are more likely to act against an unjust law. There also is a relation between agreeing with democracy as a form of government and not joining a civic action group in the last four years. Furthermore, there is a relation between high political interest and agreeing with democracy as a form of government.

The coefficients of the significant variables differ in size. The coefficient of the intention to vote for the Reformative Party (SGP) in 2010 (-1.51) is much higher than the coefficient for low education (0.99 or 0.65). The relation between voting for the Reformative Party (SGP) and not believing in democracy as the best form of government might be explained by the fact that many voters for this party are orthodox Christians and may cling to the idea of theocracy more than democracy.

When 'voting for party x in 2006' and 'voting for party x in 2010' were included separately in the regression analysis, some other (weak) relations also appeared (columns 2 and 3). The chance of acting against an unjust bill and voting for the Freedom Party (PVV) in 2006/2010 now also proves to relate weakly to the assessment of democracy as a form of government. When all variables are included in one analysis, however, these relations prove to be no longer significant at a 1 per cent significance level.

Many relations between the assessment of democracy and political behaviour prove not to exist at all. There does not appear to be a clear relation between the assessment of democracy and non-voting. Whether people are dissatisfied with democracy as a form of government or not, this analysis suggests that 'non-democrats' are not any less likely to vote in parliamentary elections than people who embrace the ideal of democracy as a form of government. Also here we should however be cautious in drawing conclusions because of the poor representation of non-voters in the dataset in Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies. The regression analysis of

DPES 2010, furthermore, does not show that the assessment of democracy relates to political (protest) activity. How one assesses democracy, for instance, does not appear to be significantly reflected in joining demonstrations or involving media to influence politics. My analysis of DPES 2010 indicates that whether people think highly of democracy as a form of government is not clearly reflected in active political involvement. There even appears a (weak) relation between agreeing with democracy as a form of government and not joining a civic action group in the last four years. One exception can be mentioned: respondents who agree with democracy as a form of government do say they are more likely to act against an unjust law.

A comparative analysis of political discontent and related political behaviour

Do citizens who are dissatisfied with politics alienate themselves from the political arena by non-voting? Or do they turn to protest or anti-establishment parties? In Table 11 on the nect page, the results of the ordinal regression analyses are presented once more, but now the results are shown next to one another to facilitate comparative analysis. The table shows only the results of the analyses in which all variables (party voting in 2006 and 2010, non-voting and protest behaviour) are included in the ordinal regression analysis and for reasons of clarity now only the most clear relations are presented in the table at a 0.01 significant level. In the remainder of this Chapter, I will illuminate the most surprising similarities and differences in the results.

My analysis of DPES 2010 indicates that the relation between the assessment of democracy, politics and the government and political voting and protest behaviour is not as strong as has sometimes been suggested. The assessment of democracy, politics and the government can be explained by the behavioural variables in this model for a small part only.

All non-voting variables included in the analysis do not appear to be related to any type of political discontent at all at a 0.01 significance level. Whether respondents did or did not consider voting in the 2010 parliamentary elections, whether they had or had not voted in the 2006 elections and whether they had always or had never voted in elections, it does not appear to matter strongly. My analysis of DPES 2010 suggests that respondents who are dissatisfied with the government do not appear to be more likely to vote than respondents who are satisfied with the government. Furthermore, respondents who do not agree with democracy as a form of government appear to vote and fulfil their democratic duty as much as others. There does seem to be a relation between always voting in parliamentary elections and a low score on political cynicism , but only at a 0.05 significance level.

Table 11: Comparative regression analyses of the assessment of politics on three different levels and related political behaviour

	Satisfaction government	Political cynicism	Democracy best form of government
Protest behaviour			
Did not try to get radio, TV or news-paper involved		-0,63	
Party voting			
Party voted for 2006: SGP			-1,51
Vote intention 2010: CDA	**1,22**		
Vote intention 2010: VVD		-0,75	
Vote intention 2010: PVV	-1,61	-1,34	
Control variables			
Political interest (very much)		-0,68	
Political interest (somewhat)		-0,57	
Education (elementary)			**0,99**
Education (lower vocational)			**0,65**
Social trust	**-0,40**	-0,60	
Pseudo R (Cox and Snell)	0,17	0,14	0,12
Pseudo R (Nagelkerke)	0,19	0,15	0,14
Pseudo R (McFadden)	0,09	0,06	0,06

Sig. (2-tailed)>0,01 is displayed in **bold**.

Little evidence could be found that discontent with the government, politicians and political institutions in general mobilises people into political action. No detectable relation was found between political protest behaviour and satisfaction with government. Respondents who are dissatisfied with government (policy) do not join in demonstrations, participate in civic actions or undertake any other type of political action to influence politics, such as contacting a politician or political party, participating in government meetings or internet actions any more than others. Nor could a clear relation be detected between political protest behaviour and political cynicism. With one exception: people who score high on political cynicism do seem more active in involving radio, TV or newspaper to influence politicians or government.

The assessment of the government, politics and democracy does relate to specific party voting behaviour. With respect to the assessment of the government, the ordinal regression analysis indicated that respondents who were satisfied with the government were more likely to vote for the main governing party in

2010: the Christian Democratic Party (CDA). Respondents who were dissatisfied with government and who scored higher on political cynicism appeared more likely than others to vote for the Freedom Party (PVV) in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Respondents who scored high on political cynicism, furthermore, also appeared more inclined to vote for the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in 2010. Citizens who were less likely to agree with democracy as the best form of government, furthermore, relatively often voted for the Reformative Party (SGP).

The control variables included in the analysis showed a clear relation with different types of political discontent. Trusting others proved to be related to satisfaction with government and a low score on political cynicism. Political interest seemed for all related to political cynicism. Respondents who indicated they are very much or somewhat interested in politics significantly scored lower on political cynicism. The analysis furthermore suggests a relation between a low level of education and disagreeing with democracy as a best form of government.

The political behaviour of political cynics through interviews

To get a better understanding of the relations between political discontent and political behaviour, I conducted 20 in-depth interviews with so-called 'political cynics' in 2011. I selected the interviewees on how negatively they answered several statements on politics and government in the well-known survey panel of TNS Nipo. I selected respondents who chose the most negative answer category for all statements: the so-called downright political cynics. The specifics of the interviewee selection procedure, the interviewees' background and the interview procedure are described in Chapter 4. In this Chapter, I discuss the interviewees' thoughts and doings with respect to political participation and political protest behaviour.

I questioned the interviewees about (the motives of) their political behaviour. How do political cynics describe their political (voting) behaviour? How do they motivate their actions and non-actions? How is their discontent with politics reflected in actual political behaviour?

As I describe the results of the interviews, it is important to recall that the interviewees' political preferences and backgrounds varied. Some grew up in a *'leftish family'*, whereas others came from *'conservative-voting stock'*. Voting preferences ranged from SGP (Reformed Party) to PvdA (Labour Party), SP (Socialist Party), VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), CDA (Christian Democratic Party), GroenLinks (GreenLeft) and PVV (Freedom Party). In terms of political

preference, a comparatively large number of interviewees said they voted for the PVV in the 2010 parliamentary elections (8x), followed at some distance by the VVD (4x) and the PvdA (3x). The interviewees preference for the PVV was thus rather prominent among the interviewees, in line with both the survey research in this Chapter as in other studies that made it apparent that people voting for the PVV have a rather negative basic attitude towards the government and politics in general (Aarts & Van der Kolk and Rosema, 2007). What additional insights do the interviews give us on the relation between political cynicism and political (voting) behaviour?

(Non-) Voting and protest voting

The interviews revealed that politically cynical citizens usually vote and have a high voting intention. In this respect, the interviews confirm the picture from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies that there is no clear relation between political cyncism and non-voting. Almost all the interviewees I talked to – whether they said they were politically interested or politically dsinterested and no matter how intense their discontent with politics was – thought it was important to vote in national elections.

Most of the interviewees thought it their moral duty to vote and held *'that people who don't vote don't have the right to complain'.* Only one interviewee had never voted, because of his religous beliefs. There is a strong sense of duty that people should vote in the national elections, despite the fact that some interviewees did not feel any connection with a political party. Interviewees often referred to their pride of being able to vote at all.

'I was raised on the notion that our forefathers fought for the vote. So I go and vote. But I vote because I was taught to, not because I have strong beliefs.'

'I vote out of principle. I never abstain from voting. I did once as a joke. Submitted a blank vote and voted invalid. Tried everything once. But I voted loyal in the last years. There are only a few countries were you can vote as in the Netherlands. Where you are almost sure you are not played with in elections. Even if it is only a very small vote, a drop in the ocean, I still think I should have voted.'

Although almost all interviews showed a strong intention to vote, they also admitted that they wondered who to vote for around election time. Many of the interviewees confessed they changed allegiance every election.

'I am a switching voter. I switch from one party to the other you could say. Yes. Well, if you stay too long with one party and this party is not good for the people in the country then I automatically react with: forget it with all your crap. Next time I vote for someone else.'

In relation to vote switching, none of the interviewees said they identified wholly with a specific political party. Political party sympathies are unsteady. Most interviewees indicated they sympathised clearly with parties on either the left or the right end of the political spectrum and switched within the left or right block.

'My sympathy does lie more with one party than with another. Some parties I despise. All parties are flawed of course. All parties have things that are appealing and things that are not.'

A few interviewees indicated they had switched from a left-wing party to a right-wing party – for instance from the SP to the PVV. Still, the interviewees voting for those parties reasoned that they were not far apart: both parties focus on social issues, both parties address the common working man, and both make a stand against the extravagance of the political class.

'You're really looking for the party that talks least crap, that you respect at least a little bit. So for some time I voted for Jan Marijnissen (SP, red.). But only a few people deserve your vote. I just see an individual, and for a long time that was Jan Marijnissen. But that party got so big, you don't know anymore. I don't even remember who I voted for in the local elections, I didn't like any of them. I don't know which tiny party I chose. I think I used the voter's guide. But national elections, the PVV last time. And the time before that EenNL of Marco Pastors. But I wouldn't be able to say: I chose that party because this or that happened. It is about someone's sincerity. I don't really have a party. It's almost impossible to. It was not a strategic choice. The only thing I like about the PVV is their critical stance.'

Because of their loose party identification, people's party voting choice was merely based on how and with which issues the political parties presented themselves, on the appeal of the political leaders in question but also on people's disaffection with or fear of other political parties and political party leaders.

'I did not wanted to vote actually. But it seemed too close to call and I did not want to look at a leftish government again... And the fear that Geert Wilders would become the biggest. That was my biggest fear. That was my main reason to vote for the VVD'.

Many interviewees did indeed use their vote as a protest vote *'against an unwanted block of parties on the left or the right'* or *'against the political class and the established parties'.* One interviewee who voted for the pvv motivated his voting choice as follows:

'I could have also voted for the vvd. But I did not want these leftist rascals. I do not agree with their politics. It has partly been a protest vote. From fear and it was still close to call. I did not wanted those leftist rascals in government. It was too close to call.'

Some interviewees indicated that they were disappointed in what happened to their protest vote for the pvv in the last elections.

'I voted for Wilders. He is rebelling against everything. That's always interesting. But now he is in it, in government. But now he plays a large role in government I and many people with me are dissappointed. Because he's only focused on those muslims. That's not my daily interest. I am concerned about what he does for the people. For the elderly and the like. And he keeps getting worked up about those muslims. I think people are fed up with all this talk about those muslims. I voted for him as a rebel. But what he should be rebelling against is not obvious. You only read about those muslims.'

Political participation and political protest

Although interviewees regularly referred to voting for certain political parties as a way to protest against mainstream politics, the interviews did not show that political discontent in itself prompted other types of political protest. An occasional interviewee had sent letters to the editor or addressed a meeting of local councillors, but most interviewees expressed their discontent at election time.

None of the interviewees considered becoming politically active in a political party. When asked, the interviewees indicated they preferred not to participate actively in politics. They thought it was important to vote in the national elections but were not inclined to join a political party or actively to involve themselves in politics. In general, the interviewees said they shied away from traditional political participation. The large majority had not taken part in citizen participation schemes or used any form of political protest activity to influence politics. Reasons for people to leave political responsibilities to others included lack of time or interest, the idea that active political participation requires certain qualities (such as public speaking) they did not possess, but also the notion that they *'talk without end'* in political parties.

One interviewee explained why he was not attracted to politics:

'I am not a talker. I don't want to be in the limelight. I used to be a union executive. Well, it is a lot of idle chatter and nothing ever comes of it.' Asked why he would not be politically active, he said: *'Things that are unfair in my eyes, those I would fight for and I would run into a brick wall, as I cannot change anything. I am no Don Quixote.'*

Compromise is another thing that many interviewees see as an intrinsic part of politics, but also as something that they personally would have difficulty dealing with.

'I would find it difficult to support things I do not support myself. Because every party has it. Governing is working together, you have to compromise. Even on the small, regional issues.'

When people do not actively engage in politics, this does not necessarily mean they are not concerned with political affairs. Everyone – whether or not they are politically interested – keeps up with the political news to a greater or lesser degree through newspapers, TV and/or the internet. Everyone has their own preferences when it comes to (combinations) of news sources: newspapers, news magazines, newsletters by E-mail, websites or particular current affairs programmes on the radio. Some of the interviewees said they liked to follow the political news because it gave them something to talk about. Others said they followed the political news critically because of the possible effects of political decisions on their daily lives.

'I am not politically active, but it is something I have become interested in over the last few years. What is happening, and how the game is played and I also start to see the importance of what politics is doing and has done. I do read about it. I also find it an important subject to talk about with the family.'

A small minority of the interviewees said they had done something to influence politics. Two of the interviewees had been involved in community projects for years. Four of the interviewees said they had lately signed an online petition about subjects close to their hearts. Two of the interviewees said they had sent a letter to the editors of their local newspapers in the last few years. Five of the interviewees said they had actively engaged in specific protest activities against the local government, such as speaking in on town council meetings or local government meetings, writing objections against local government decisions (on the subject of social justice) or contacting government officials and politicians to protest against specific government decisions affecting their local neighbourhood.

What is the trigger for such (protest) actions? The few instances of interviewees who said they had actually turned to any form of time-consuming protest behaviour tell us something about how substantial and concrete discontent with policy decisions must be to galvanise people into any form of action. The main trigger for action was a sudden local government decision that negatively affected the interviewees' personal life environment and urged people to respond.

'I act out of necessity. To look what is coming... It is my living environment. I am not active out of community love or something. No it is more out of necessity. I have a house here. My money is here. What is happening around me. That is the motivation.'

In summary, the twenty in-depth interviews I conducted with people who proved to be highly cynical about politics in a TNS Nipo survey, revealed that the vote intention of so-called 'political cynics' does not necessarily diminish. Even severe discontent with politics did not motivate the interviewees to refrain from voting in elections. On the contrary, most interviewees indicated they felt it was important to vote. Personal political discontent did play a role in voting preferences and frequently resulted in protest votes. For instance, votes were frequently cast against an unwanted block of left-wing or right-wing parties, against the *'political class and established parties'* or against a specific party or politician. At the time of the interview, none of the interviewees considered becoming politically active. Engagement in community politics or participation in political protest campaigns varied greatly per person. Some interviewees were or had been very active in their community but most did not participate at all, neither in traditional forms of political participation nor in political protest activities. The interviews do not show that political discontent inspires outside opposition or actions. The few times interviewees said they had taken any political action, such as speaking in on a government meeting, the main trigger for taking political protest action was that their personal life environment was threatened by certain sudden local government decisions.

Interesting puzzles remain. The opinions of the respondents who in survey research had been recorded as political cynics did for instance not so much indicate a desire for more personal political control or direct democracy as a desire for sympathetic, reliable and goal-getting political authorities. On the other hand, we know that a large majority of Dutch citizens is in favour of introducing elements of direct democracy, such as referenda (see Chapter 3). How do these findings relate to one another? Do citizens not attach as much meaning to direct participation as is suggested in the survey statistics? Or might other (not cynical) citizens perhaps have different ideas and desires with respect to direct political participation?

Comparing results

It is commonly assumed that cynicism about politics may either lead to political alienation or to severe political protest. Neither the analysis of Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 nor the interviews with politically cynical citizens, however, showed a clear relation between political discontent and non-voting. No matter how dissatisfied people were with the government, with politics in general or with democracy as a form of government, the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies did not show clearly that politically dissatified citizens abstain from voting in parliamentary elections. However, the in-depth study of the voting behaviour of politically cynical citizens revealed that even interviewees with highly cynical views of politics attach great importance to voting in parliamentary elections. No matter how cynical, these citizens also keep up with political events and vote in parliamentary elections. Apart from the occasional protest vote in parliamentary elections (to counter specific political coalition or against specific politicians and policies), discontent with politics did not naturally drive them into political action.

The interviews indicate that political discontent offers only a partial explanation of party voting behaviour in elections; or why voters switch votes. Other factors determining voting behaviour include personal sympathies for specific party leaders, a preference for certain policies, but also the interviewees' political socialisation.

When we reflect upon the results of the interviews and the statistical analyses, the political behaviour of politically dissatisfied citizens appears to incline to traditional political behaviour, mostly voting in parliamentary elections. The findings run counter to the idea that political discontent relates to either active political protest (voice) or to political alienation (exit). The political behaviour of politically dissatified citizens stays in line with what is traditionally expected of citizens in a representative democracy such as the Netherlands: to monitor the actions and doings of the political class and to participate in elections (Almond and Verba, 1963). These results may contradict both popular belief and earlier research findings (e.g. Dekker, 2006, Marien, 2011), but are in line with other research finding (Adriaansen, 2012) indicating no clear relation between political cynicism and abstention. Additional research on more data is needed, using different survey studies and different time points to more firmly confirm or reject these findings. I am cautious in my conclusions because of the difficulties in studying the relation between political discontent and non-voting. Non-voters tend to less than others participate in other activities, including research. Non-voters are for instance underrepresented in survey studies (Dekker, 2002). The selection of political cynics I interviewed might suffer from the same bias towards participation.

Could the finding that Dutch citizens tend to ordinary political behaviour, no matter if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with politics, be specific for the Netherlands? Is the Netherlands in other words an outlier or anomaly? One possible explanation of the findings on political behaviour of dissatisfied citizens in the Netherlands might be found in the systematic features of the Dutch democracy. In the specific consensus democracy of the Netherlands with its strong emphasis on proportional representation, it might well be that Dutch citizens feel they have sufficient possibilities to voice their discontent. As small political parties and political newcomers in the specific electoral system of the Netherlands can comparatively easily enter parliament, dissatisfied citizens may not have to turn to other than electoral methods to express their concern and critique. Could it perhaps be that due to these specific characteristics of Dutch consensus democracy, dissatisfied citizens may not feel inclined to use other means than their vote to protest? This would be an interesting question for further examination.

6 Understanding the Public Attention for Political Discontent

In October 2010, two scholars from the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) wrote in the daily newspaper *'Financieel Dagblad'*: *'There is no crisis in political trust in the Netherlands'* (Dekker and Van der Meer, 2010). In their article, the writers emphasised that various time series and international surveys showed that Dutch political trust was still high compared to other countries in Europe. I quote: *'Dutch citizens in comparison still have much trust in the competence and performance of politicians, as well as in their responsiveness and integrity'*.

Together with the opinion article in the newspaper, there was a cartoon that countered and ridiculed the idea that there was no crisis of political trust (Hein de Kort, 2010). The cartoon shows two men molesting each other. *Rat. Dog. Ouch*, they say. Meanwhile behind two open doors journalists are taking pictures and notes of the fight. A person in the doorway says: *'There is no, I repeat, no trust crisis. The gentlemen are only being.. ehh .. playful'*.

These contradictory messages on the state of political trust on top of each other are typical of the debate on political trust. The reassuring survey statistics on Dutch political trust do not seem to correspond with the dominant public belief that citizens' political discontent is on the rise. This public belief seems to be strong. In the summer of 2008, the national newspaper '*Trouw*', for instance, devoted a series of articles to the seemingly growing discontent of Dutch citizens (Bax, 2008). A year later, the rise of the 'angry citizen' was a topic of wide-ranging discussion in the political television show '*Buitenhof*' and part of a larger series about 'the grim Netherlands' (*Buitenhof*, 2009). How should we understand this discrepancy that there is a public belief of waning political trust, whereas various survey statistics on political trust (see Chapter four) suggest that citizens' discontent with politics in the Netherlands has been volatile, but also fairly stable over the last forty years?

In previous Chapters of this thesis, I have examined questions on political trust and political discontent through the eyes of Dutch citizens. I analysed trends in citizens' political support over time. I gained insight into the intensity, sources and related political behaviour of their discontent with politics through in-depth interviews and through the analysis of survey data. In this Chapter, I will take a different research angle: I will explore the public attention for the issue of political discontent. Why do so many journalists and politicians alike feel that the issue is of such urgency that it should be addressed immediately? What are they reporting? How do they address political discontent?

Data and methods

To get hold of the public discussion, I systematically analysed how citizens' political discontent was discussed in newspapers and in parliament. What actors raised the issue of citizens' political discontent and why did they consider it necessary to do so? How did they explain the discontent with politics and why did they think it had grown substantially? I explored how the subject was dealt with in newspapers in the first decade of the 21st century, but also compared these findings to how citizens' political discontent was reported in other decades, back to the 1970s. I analysed whether the problem definition, the actors involved and the proposed solutions changed over time and whether an accumulation of attention for the issue of political discontent took place. Did political discontent gain (a greater) public and political voice in the 21st century? An overview of the data and methods I used for the analysis is given in Table 12 on the next page.

Table 12: Data used for analysing political discontent in newspapers and parliament

	Data source	Selected time period	Selection criterion	Important coding decisions
A	National newspaper articles of *NRC Handelsblad, De Telegraaf* en *de Volkskrant* (National Archive, The Hague)	Daily news articles in September 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010	Handcoded search on headlines and text of the articles. Do headline and text of the article give a negative evaluation of a political object?	If headline or text give a negative evaluation of a political object (no matter what object), I did a closer analysis of the article
B	National and regional newspaper articles in Lexis Nexis	Daily newspaper articles between 1990-2010	Computerised search on selection of terms in headlines of news articles.	Closer analysis of articles if the following search terms were found in the headline and text of the articles: political trust, political distrust, political cynicism, political discontent, gap between citizens and politics, dissatisfied citizens, crisis of politics, crisis of democracy
C	Parliamentary documents and debates in parliamentary database Officiele Bekendmakingen.nl	Parliamentary debates and documents between 1995-2010	Computerised search on selection of terms in headlines and text	

I tracked attention paid to the issue of political discontent by analysing a selection of newspapers articles and parliamentary documents. For practical and methodological reasons, I combined an in-depth content analysis of newspaper articles between 1970 and 2000 in three national newspapers with a computerised search strategy and analysis of all national and regional newspapers articles between 1990 and 2010.[1]

A

I analysed news articles in three national newspapers between 1970 and 2010: *de Volkskrant*, NRC *Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf*[2]. These newspapers are all widely

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[1] The original Dutch terms for searching in Lexis Nexis and Officiele Bekendmakingen.nl are: politiek vertrouwen, politiek wantrouwen, politiek cynisme, politieke onvrede, kloof tussen burgers en politiek, kloof tussen burgers en de politiek, ontevreden burgers, crisis van de politiek, crisis van de democratie.

[2] These Dutch national newspapers are available for analysis on microfilm and microfiches in archives (Nationaal Archief, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Den Haag).

read and well-known Dutch national newspapers, reflecting different political alignments. For matters of time efficiency, I chose benchmark years for the analysis, every ten years: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. In each of these benchmark years, I analysed all newspaper articles published in the month of September. I chose to analyse this month because September is a month of political debate and reflection. Every year, parliamentary debates and reflections follow on the Queens' Speech on the third Tuesday of September, in which the cabinet plans for the following year are presented. To analyse the newspaper articles, I used the following broad search strategy. First I scanned all headlines of the articles in the newspaper. The most important ground for subjecting a newspaper article to closer inspection was that it involved a negative evaluation of a political subject. If so, I analysed the article more closely on content and context. I analysed what the object of discontent was and in what context and by whom the political discontent was addressed.

B

Analysing newspaper articles one month in every decade allowed me to assess newspaper attention over time. However, important themes in the public discussion on political trust and political discontent might be missed that way. For this reason, I also performed a computerised dictionary-based analysis of Dutch newspaper articles in the 1990-2010 period. The analysis was selective of the chosen terms, but broad in the sense that all national and regional newspapers articles from the 1990-2010 period were included in the analysis. I chose to analyse the headlines of all news articles between 1990-2010 on word combinations that were often mentioned in writings and debates about the issue of political discontent. The dictionary I used, consisted of the following terms: 'political trust', 'political distrust', 'political cynicism', 'political discontent', 'gap between citizens and politics' and 'dissatisfied citizens'. The words in this dictionary all focused on a negative evaluation of politics but did not differentiate a certain level. A disadvantage of this strict search strategy was that articles not containing these words would not be found. However, my intention in this computerised search was not to cover all articles ever written about the subject of political support and political discontent, but to get a broad idea of the debate on political trust and political discontent. An advantage of a computerised search in Lexis Nexis is that it delivers reliable (repeatable) results. To make sure that the results of the search were not context blind, the articles in which the terms occurred, were analysed more closely.

C

To understand how the issue of political discontent had been discussed in the po-
litical arena of parliament and government, I analysed parliamentary documents
in the online database *Officielebekendmakingen.nl³*, a website containing all parlia-
mentary documents from January 1995 on. I searched the parliamentary database
with the same dictionary I used for the newspaper analysis. Here too, I analysed
all search results more closely: In what context was the issue of political trust and
political discontent discussed and by whom?

Some notes on the data used

Due to the way I selected newspaper articles and parliamentary documents, it was
inevitable that this would only reveal a part of the debate on the political trust and
political discontent over time. My analysis does not give a complete overview of all
articles ever written on the issue, nor does it intend to. The focus lies on comparing
how the issue was debated in newspapers and parliament over a series of decades.
This, consequently, led to an account that may not do justice to the fullness of the
debate as it actually took place, if we may believe the accounts of others (Van den
Brink, 1996, Van Gunsteren and Andeweg, 1994).

Newspaper attention for political discontent from 1970-2010

Dutch newspaper debate on political discontent in the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century

The newspaper analyses and the parliamentary document analysis together give
an incomplete, but comprehensive overview of how and by whom the issue of po-
litical discontent was discussed in major national newspapers and in parliament. I
start with an account of how the issue of citizens' political discontent was discussed
in Dutch newspapers in the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century. This account is the re-
sult of 1) a hand-coded analysis of the news headlines in three national newspapers
in the month of September in 2000 and 2010; and 2) an analysis of the headlines
in the online newspaper database LexisNexis from 1990-2010.
    As I explained earlier, I used a select number of search terms associated with the
debate on political discontent and political distrust to search the online newspaper

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3   This online government database contains all official government and parliamentary documents
    since 1 January 1995 (www.officielebekendmakingen.nl).

database LexisNexis for headlines. Some search terms could not be found at all in the headlines, such as *'gap between citizen(s) and politics'.* Twenty news articles were found in which the search terms were mentioned in the headlines. Closer analysis, however, revealed that a large part of these news articles (11 of 20) discussed (dis) trust or discontent with a non-political object. There was a news article, for instance, that dealt with the trust local politicians had in the local theatre: *'Political trust in Chasse: Theatre causes optimism* (*Dagblad voor ZuidWest Nederland*, 2000). Another news article was about the trust of Dutch political authorities in the national football team*: 'Political trust in Orange'* (*Algemeen Dagblad*, 2002). The trust issue was sometimes also discussed as a phenomenon of interest in other countries, such as Britain, Germany or Belgium. For instance: *'British people can imagine Joanna Lumley as Prime Minister. Political trust in media stars.'* (*De Pers*, 2-6-2009)

Of the 20 news articles in which the exact search terms appeared in the headlines, about half focused on political discontent in the Netherlands. Four of these news articles did not discuss citizens' discontent with politics but the discontent and distrust of politicians at either a local or national level. They dealt with internal struggles and distrust between politicians and political parties. An example of two of the headlines: *'No mutual political trust; Werkendam alderman is dissatisfied with cooperation'* (Brabants Dagblad, 25-6-2003*).* And *'A fire is raging in the council. The Heusden mayor is criticising political distrust.'* (*Brabants Dagblad*, 2-10-2003).[4]

The other news articles did address the Dutch citizens' discontent with politics. The news article *'Political discontent unusually large'* (*Dagblad van het Noorden*, 2-12-2000) mentioned citizens' growing discontent in the context of the sudden success of the local political party *'Leefbaar Nederland'.* The journalist wrote: *'More and more people have the gut feeling that the country is evolving in the wrong direction. Add to this a growing discontent with or disinterest in national politics and a large potential is opening up. The new party (Leefbaar Nederland) is manipulating these feelings without any scruples and without much care for the feasibility of their plans.'*[5] This news article, therefore, makes a link between political discontent and disinterest and between being dissatisfied with politics and voting for specific political parties.

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4   Original Dutch text: 'Geen onderling politiek vertrouwen'; Werkendamse wethouder ontevreden over samenwerking', (*Brabants Dagblad*, 25 juni 2003) 'In de raad woedt een veenbrand'; Heusdense burgemeester hekelt politiek wantrouwen (*Brabants Dagblad*, 2 oktober 2003)'

5   Original Dutch text: 'Politieke onvrede zeldzaam groot. Dat het de verkeerde kant op gaat met de leefbaarheid van ons land is een onderbuikgevoel dat steeds meer mensen bekruipt. Voeg daarbij een groeiende afkeer van of gebrek aan interesse voor het Haags politiek bedrijf, en er ligt een groot terrein braak. De nieuwe partij (Leefbaar Nederland) bespeelt deze gevoelens zonder veel scrupules en ook zonder zich erg druk te maken over de gevolgen of de haalbaarheid van haar voorstellen.' (*Dagblad van het Noorden*, 2-12-2000)

The association of rising political discontent with the rise of new parties was made more often. At the time of the 2006 parliamentary elections, there was the following headline: '*Many new parties are born out of political discontent*' (NRC *Handelsblad*, 6-9-2006). In this news article, the chairman of the National Election Board was quoted to explain the rise of political parties that registered for the parliamentary elections: '*Many new parties are born out of discontent with the actual political climate.*[6]'

Shortly after the local elections in 2010, the popular newspaper *De Telegraaf* elaborated on the outcome of the local elections: '*Majority is going to the polls despite political distrust (De Telegraaf*, 3-3-2010). The articles available in LexisNexis between 2000-2010 that discuss citizens' political discontent were written in the context of elections and supported the idea that political discontent was growing and how this would affect voting for particular political parties. Explanations for rising discontent were not discussed at length in the news articles. Only one journalist pointed at the many fights between the coalition parties in the former cabinet as an explanation for loss of trust. '*Although many have gone to the polls, the results in general show a large distrust in politics. After the squabbles over prolongation of the Uruzgan mission, the cabinet crisis that ensued and the shameless mud flinging between the former coalition parties that followed, many have lost their trust in politics. Not only the established national parties and their leaders are being criticised. Also the fact that local councillors are never heard of again after they have been elected, angers many.* (De Telegraaf*, 3-3-2010)*'[7]

Do the hand-coded analyses of three national newspapers in September 2000 and 2010 give a similar snapshot of how political discontent and political trust was discussed in the first decade of the 21st century? In the newspapers of September of 2000, the idea that political trust was waning and that citizens were dissatisfied with politics was not very prominent in headlines or articles. Citizens' political discontent does not really seem to be a topic of discussion or reflection

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6   Original text: 'Veel nieuwe partijen zijn geboren uit onvrede met het huidige politieke klimaat, constateert Schutte. Dat merk je wel als je in hun statuten kijkt.'

7   Original text: 'Hoewel velen dus gaan stemmen, blijkt uit de antwoorden over het algemeen een groot wantrouwen in de politiek. Na het gekrakeel over wel of niet verlengen van de missie in Oeroezgan, de kabinetsval daarover en het onbeschaamde moddergooien tussen de voormalige coalitiegenoten daarna hebben velen het geloof verloren in de politiek. Niet alleen de gevestigde landelijke partijen en hun leiders krijgen ervan langs. Ook het feit dat raadsleden na de verkiezingen niks meer van zich laten horen, maakt velen boos. Het geeft hun het gevoel dat kiezers alleen voor de verkiezingen belangrijk zijn. "Landelijk of lokaal – het maakt niet veel uit. Politici beloven op ieder niveau gouden bergen maar maken niks waar", meldt een teleurgestelde stemmer. Gekozen raadsleden zouden na verloop van tijd duidelijk moeten maken welke doelstellingen uit hun verkiezingsprogramma's zij hebben bereikt. Dat zou de binding met de kiezers vergroten.'

in the newspapers. This does not mean that there were no critical articles about politics to be read. Despite economic welfare, severe criticism was articulated on cabinet policy and cabinet ministers, whether on the subject of asylumseekers, peacekeeping missions, education, healthcare or financial policies. *'Peacekeeping missions badly prepared'*, quotes the NRC *Handelsblad* (4-09-2000), *'Cabinet deceives the people'* (NRC *Handelsblad*, 30-09-2000) or *'Parliament condemns Minister Van der Ploeg's art policy* (de *Volkskrant*, 20-09-2000). Perceived shortcomings in the functioning of parliament and government were criticized. *'This country is not far removed from a dictatorship of the leaders'* said two political opposition leaders, criticising what they felt was the excessive power of government (*Volkskrant magazine*, 16-09-2000)[8] A columnist observed mockingly: *'In principle, interruptions are essential for political debate. But what is the use of the 187th interruption of an argument, seven hours after the debate began?'* (Gijsbet van Es, NRC *Handelsblad*, 18-09-2000).

Severe political cynicism can also be found in the newspaper columns. *'When I see all those bigwigs in that disgusting Politbureau throwing their weight around, then I get angry because of the empty and idle show that Parliament has become. The ceremony of power is just as thin as the layer of gold on the royal coach ... I have always believed in democracy ... But it takes people who can resist the temptation of power ... This has been eroding everywhere. For a long time now, Members of Parliament have not been the best among us but reflect dull mediocrity. They are not so much committed to public affairs as to their own careers* (Nelleke Noordervliet, de *Volkskrant*, 25-09-2000).[10] *'* Another example of apparent political cynicism in a column on the content of the Queens' speech in September 2000: *'The whole*

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8 'Van Ardenne: We zitten in dit land niet ver af van de dictatuur van de macht. De PvdA wil in paars over alles de macht hebben. Paars probeert zijn macht op de instellingen, scholen en besturen te versterken in plaats van mensen hun eigen verantwoordelijkheid te geven. Kant: Er is eerder een dictatuur van de markt ontstaan. Ze hebben in zes jaar alles afgebroken, het hele land naar z'n grootje laten gaan.' In: 'Agnes en Agnes. We zitten niet ver af van de dictatuur van de macht.'

9 'Welgeteld 223 keer moest een fractieleider op die eerste dag van de algemene beschouwingen zijn betoog onderbreken om een collega afgevaardigde aan het woord te laten komen... In beginsel zijn interrupties onmisbaar in het politieke debat. ..Maar wat is de waarde van de 187ste onderbreking van een betoog, zeven uur na aanvang van een debat? Verzucht van Es.'

10 Translation of part of the column of Nelleke Noordervliet in de *Volkskrant*. Original Dutch text: 'Als ik daar al die drukke baasjes en bazinnetjes in dat wansmakelijke Politbureau gewichtig zie rondstappen, dan bekruipt me woede om de lege en ijdele vertoning die het parlement inmiddels is geworden. Het ceremonieel van de macht is net zo dun als het bladgoud van de koets...Ik heb altijd in een democratie geloofd...Daar zijn mensen voor nodig die zelf de verleiding van de macht kunnen weerstaan...Dat wordt aan alle kanten aangevreten. Kamerleden zijn allang niet meer de besten onder ons maar een afspiegeling van de grauwe middelmaat. Ze zijn niet zozeer de publieke zaak toegedaan als wel hun eigen carrière.'

arsenal of his management pep talk was poured over us. Enthusiasm with politicians should always be observed with the biggest distrust. (Prof.dr. Smalhout, *De Telegraaf*, 23-09-2000).

Another columnist (Anet Bleich) warns us against political discomfort and citizens' disinterest and even the waning of democracy. *'The paradox is that today's understandable political disinterest is a threat to the roots of democracy. Politics is privatising; political parties are shrinking as they have lost an inspiring message; and the leaders do their governing without being checked by a critical constituency keeping an eye on them ... This discomfort seems justified. This political complacency is raising some substantial questions*[11] (*de Volkskrant*, 20-09-2000). Political discomfort is associated with political disinterest here.

By comparison, September 2010 shows a far greater number of articles in which political discontent and distrust are a matter for debate and reflection. However, I should also note that many September 2010 news articles were not concerned about citizens' discontent with politics, but about the discontent of politicians and political parties with each other. The newspaper attention of 2010 is dominated by internal party critique and crises on one specific issue: the cabinet formation after the elections and the negotiations of the liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) and the Freedom Party (PVV). The decision of the VVD and the CDA to work together with the PVV in a government coalition caused a storm of criticism within these political parties. The fierce internal party criticism and party crisis that evolved within the Christian Democratic Party was widely covered in the newspapers. Headlines such as *'Atmosphere of intimidation in the CDA faction; reproaches about betrayal and murder'* (*NRC Handelsblad*, 11-09-2010), *'Klink is selling nonsense: PVV and VVD accuse CDA man of lies* (*De Telegraaf*, 2-09-2010)' or *'Trust under attack'* (*de Volkskrant*, 7-09-2010) show that distrust within and between parties was a major topic. Numerous opinion articles appeared in the papers, with critical comments being made about politics. The conduct of leading politicians and the parties they led was fiercely scrutinised. A few examples: *'Prominent CDA members are upset about "beating about the bush" of political party'* and say that *'the party plays power politics'* (*NRC Handelsblad*, 8-09-2010). *'Should you really want this, Mark? Former minister Pieter Winsemius shows himself concerned about liberal values in open letter* (*NRC Handelsblad*, 28-09-

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11   Translation of part of the column of Anet Bleich in *de Volkskrant*. Original text: 'Het paradoxale is echter dat de begrijpelijke politieke desinteresse de wortels van de democratie bedreigt. Het politieke bedrijf verzelfstandigt zich, de politieke partijen lopen leeg bij gebrek aan een inspirerende boodschap en de bestuurders besturen, zonder dat een kritische achterban hen op de vingers kijkt. ...Dat onbehagen lijkt me terecht. Want onder de politieke zelfgenoegzaamheid gaan wezenlijke vragen schuil.'

2010).[12] Articles report on an evolving internal party crisis: *CDA is tough on internal party critics: what happens after the crisis?' (NRC Handelsblad, 1-09-2010)).*

In one opinion article, entitled *'Party of Freedom ruthlessly reveals crisis; who answers?' (NRC Handelsblad,* 4-09-2010)*,* journalist Chavannes reflected on the crisis he perceived in Dutch politics. *'The crisis of the Christian Democrats is the crisis of Dutch politics as we have known it. Geert Wilders and his one-man party are not the cause but the catalyst of that crisis. Just like Pim Fortuyn, he only needs to point his finger and a part of the old order is cracking and smoking.'* This article was also written in the context of the parliamentary elections. Chavannes associated the assumed crisis of Dutch politics with the defeat of established parties in elections and the increasing popularity of political newcomers, here the PVV and the LPF. Chavannes sought to explain the crisis of established politics in how these political parties functioned; they lost their original political mission and focused too much on governing and political jobs:

'With respect to the defeat of old politics in the elections of June and again this week, the thing for all parties is to make a turn towards more open and enthusing politics. Say what you are in for. That is the problem of the CDA. What is the party about? Once it was about the emancipation of Catholics without money. When this goal was reached and the secularisation of society spread, the Christian democrats increasingly became a governing party and a jobs machine without a mission for 2020. The Social Democrats were also focusing on jobs ... The political leaders are inclined to search for solutions in their own circle. But the time may come when the political parties lose their exclusive rights to government formation[13]'.

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12   Reconstructions of the *'nasty war in a torn power party'* (*NRC Handelsblad*, 11-09-2010) can be read from day to day. Personal portraits are made of the parliamentary criticasters within the CDA that resist against the cooperation with PVV in government. For instance: *'Inspired Christian, cross CDA member. Dissidents Ferrier and Koppejan can frustrate coalition'*(*NRC Handelsblad* 28-09-2010).

13   Original text: 'De crisis van het CDA is de crisis van de Nederlandse politiek zoals we die hebben gekend. Geert Wilders en zijn eenmanspartij zijn niet de oorzaak maar de katalysator van die crisis. Net als Pim Fortuyn hoeft hij maar te wijzen en een deel van het oude bestel kraakt en dampt...Een nauwkeuriger samenvatting van het dilemma-Wilders is deze week niet beschikbaar. Hij wijst op de voosheid van de oude politiek maar wil zich daartegen wapenen met een eis die bewijst dat hij lak heeft aan de Grondwet. Nu is dat document een oude, kromgegroeide eik. Maar de principes die er in staan zijn springlevend, althans voor een ruime meerderheid van het parlement...Gezien de nederlaag van de oude politiek bij de verkiezingen van 9 juni en opnieuw deze week, is het zaak voor alle partijen een draai te maken. Naar open en enthousiasmerende politiek. Geen heldendaden beloven, geen te grote broek aan trekken. Zeggen waar je voor staat. Dat is het basisprobleem van het CDA. Waar gaat dat over? Ooit over de emancipatie van kleine luiden en rooms-katholieken zonder geld. Op basis van een gemeenschappelijke grondslag. Met het bereiken van die doelstelling en het ontkerkelijken van de bevolking werd het CDA steeds meer een bestuurspartij en een banenmachine. Zonder droom voor 2020...Hand in eigen boezem, ook de

Other journalists also saw a crisis of established politics in the Netherlands. When an article had appeared in the French newspaper Le Monde, the editorial office of *de Volkskrant* opened the newspaper of 6-09-2010 with a major news article on the political crisis situation in both the Netherlands and Belgium. Both countries were said to be *'suffering from the same ailments. The rise of selfish populism is one of them. A public opinion that is turning itself away from a political system that is out of breath is a second one. And the fragmentation of the political landscape is a third. This is something that is also noted by political scientists working in both countries and being interviewed by the Volkskrant. They also point at the lack of trust that plays a big role in both political crises. According to them, mutual trust has diminished because of the arrival of rebellious newcomers, who by now dominate the political landscape in Belgium and the Netherlands. Despite all the differences, both the PVV of Geert Wilders and the Flemish-nationalist N-VA profile themselves as anti-establishment parties'14* (*de Volkskrant*, 6-09-2010).

Some columnists put the Dutch crisis of the political establishment in an even wider international Western perspective, for example, columnist Henk Hofland: *'In most countries of the West, the political elite does not seem able to solve the big issues ... In the Netherlands, we still do not have a new government three months after the elections. All media have been following this failure from day to day. This in itself already cultivates a motion of distrust against the established order. In addition we now have the new public opinion feeding this raging discontent even more through the Internet'15* (*NRC Handelsblad*, 8-09-2010). The crisis of politics is associated here with

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PvdA heeft zich vergrepen aan de baantjes. De politieke leiders in Den Haag zijn tot in het oneindige geneigd de oplossing alleen in eigen kring te zoeken. Maar er kan een moment aanbreken waarop 'de partijen' (met hun geringe ledentallen toch al curieuze stemtrechters) hun alleenrecht op de formatie verliezen. De bel voor de laatste puur partijpolitieke ronde heeft geklonken.'

14 Original text: De Lage Landen verkeren in crisis... Belgie en Nederland, aldus de krant, 'lange tijd gezien als voorbeelden vanwege de kunst van het compromis, lijden aan dezelfde kwalen'. De opkomst van een egoistisch populisme is een van de kwalen. Een publieke opinie die zich afkeert van een politiek systeem dat 'buiten adem' is een tweede. De versplintering van het politieke landschap is een derde...Dat constateren, in gesprek met de *De Volkskrant*, ook politicologen die in beide landen werkzaam zijn. Zij wijzen bovendien op het gebrek aan vertrouwen dat in beide politieke crises een grote rol speelt. Het onderling vertrouwen is volgens hen afgekalfd door de komst van rebelse nieuwkomers, die inmiddels zowel in Belgie als in Nederland het politieke landschap domineren. Ondanks alle verschillen profileert zowel de PVV van Geert Wilders als de Vlaams-nationalistische N-VA zich als anti-establishmentpartij.'

15 Original text: 'In de meeste landen van het Westen blijkt de politieke elite niet in staat om de grote vraagstukken op te lossen. Wat daarvan de oorzaak mag zijn blijft hier in het midden, maar in Nederland zitten we drie maanden na de verkiezingen nog zonder nieuw kabinet. Alle media hebben dit falen dagelijks op de voet gevolgd. Dat kweekt op zichzelf al een motie van wantrouwen tegen het gevestigde bestel. Daarbij komt dan nog de nieuwe publieke opinie die via internet de zinderende ontevredenheid verder aanwakkert.'

the slow coalition forming process after elections. The rise of political discontent is associated with the Internet.

Several columnists reflected on the question why citizens turned away in anger from established political parties in the 2010 elections. Columnist Bas Heijne located the cause in the blindness and arrogance of the governing class on the issue of immigration: *'The governing class is arrogant, looks down on average Joe, is blind to the ill effects of mass-immigration and the annexation drift of the Islam, to which average Joe, living in his deprived area, is a daily witness'* (NRC Handelsblad, 6-09-2010).[16] Journalist Martin Sommer sought the cause why citizens were rebelling *'against the status quo and the out-dated institutions'* in the way left-wing parties had developed their attitude towards citizen involvement over time: *'The people should not interfere too much because they have bad taste and little education. That is the real problem for the left-wing parties, for they still see themselves as carriers of emancipation. However, they have come to dislike the people*[17] (de Volkskrant, 18-09-2010).'

Just like the analysis of LexisNexis, the hand-coded analysis of newspaper articles in 2010 shows that reports on citizens' political discontent are often related to elections. Discontent is associated with the defeat and crisis of established political parties in elections and the rise of new political parties, who are seen as *'rebellious newcomers'*. Also dominant in the September 2010 newspapers is the severe internal party criticism (especially in the Christian-Democrats) of the coalition forming process of a new government. Overall, in 2010 columns and newspaper articles paint quite an alarming picture of the state of Dutch politics. Citizens' political discontent is described as being on the rise and showing itself in voter detachment from established political parties and their radical turn to new political parties.

Furthermore, in September 2010 (just as in 2000), many negative observations can be found about the moral motives and capacities of politicians and politics in general. An ex-mayor, for instance, was quoted as saying: *'Citizens are already saying: it is all power play in The Hague.* (Ex-mayor Gert Leers in NRC Handelsblad, 3-09-2010), and a former parliamentarian wrote in a column: *'You should not generalise, but it is clear that nowadays many politicians, at the local or national level, see*

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16 Original text: 'De regerende klasse is arrogant, kijkt neer op de gewone man, toont zich blind voor de kwalijke gevolgen van massa-immigratie en de annexatiedrift van de Islam waarvan de gewone man in zijn achterstandsbuurt dagelijks getuige is.'

17 Original text: 'Het volk moet zich er toch maar niet te veel mee bemoeien, vanwege slechte smaak en opvoeding...Dat is het kernprobleem waar de linkse partijen niet uitkomen, aangezien ze zichzelf nog altijd beschouwen als dragers van de emancipatiegedachte. Ze hebben een hekel aan het volk gekregen.'

their work in the first place as a job in which you can build a career'[18] (Marcel van Dam in *de Volkskrant*, 2-09-2010). In addition to politicians and columnists, the 2010 opinion pages give ample room to readers to express their grievances about politics: *'We are totally fed up with all the machinations and beating about the bush'* (*De Telegraaf*, 7-09-2010). Incidentally, there are quotes of Internet reactions, showing people's perceptions of the government formation process. The government formation is seen *as: 'A mess', 'messy', 'beating about the bush', 'a soap', 'puppet show', 'worthless'* and *'a disgrace'*. They do not have anything positive to say about the leading actors in politics*: 'A miserable bunch of amateurs. Many think they play party politics and do not take the national interest into consideration enough'* (*De Telegraaf*, 9-09-2010).

The picture that arises from the content analysis of newspaper articles in the first decade of the 21st century, therefore, is that citizens' political cynicism and political discontent is on the rise. This indeed is a very different picture from the one emerging from the time series survey statistics on political trust. The issue of political discontent is merely discussed in the context of elections. My analysis of the newspaper articles shows that a connection is often made between being dissatisfied with established political parties and turning to new political parties in elections. Explanations for the waning trust in established political parties are mainly sought in the doings of these parties; for instance, they are seen to be too focused on governing and securing political jobs, and they are said to have lost their vision and to be blind to immigration issues. The newspaper articles regularly stage a politician or journalist summoning the established political parties to reinvent themselves and restore relations with their voters.

The Dutch newspaper debate on political discontent from 1970-2000

Having described how the issue of waning political trust and political discontent was discussed in the newspapers at the beginning of the 21st century, I will now look back on how the issue was discussed in the near past, from the 1970s on. In doing so, I have also based my analysis on a twofold strategy: an analysis of Lexis-Nexis headlines from 1990-2000 on select search terms and a hand-coded analysis of newspaper articles in September 1970, September 1980 and September 1990. There are newspaper articles to be found in every decade in which actors suggest that citizens' political trust is waning, but the level of attention for the issue differs as well as the context of the discussion.

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18   Original text: 'Je mag niet alle partijen over een kam scheren, maar het is evident dat tegenwoordig veel politici, op lokaal en landelijk niveau, hun werk in de eerste plaats zien als een baan waarin je carrière kunt maken.'

Newspaper discussions on political discontent in the 1990s

In general, the news articles in Lexis Nexis and in three national newspapers in 1990 do not reflect an atmosphere of political cynicism and discontent. When I searched the headlines of newspapers in LexisNexis with my search terms, I found only one news article between 1990 and 2000 that addressed the discontent of Dutch citizens towards politics.[19] This article quoted the leader of the Social Democratic Party (PvdA) Jacques Wallage, who raised the issue of the credibility of politics in a parliamentary debate. *'Politics should seek the cause of its lack of credibility in itself ... restoration of trust begins here. It is not the market, not individual citizens, but it is we who we have the credibility of politics in our own hands. The distance between what is said here and what happens on the street is so big that it is beginning to corrode trust (Trouw, 21-9-1995).*[20] A hand-coded analysis of three national newspapers five years earlier, in September 1990, shows citizens' political discontent being addressed once more in a speech by political leader Wöltgens of the Social Democratic Party (PvdA), in which he tried to explain why he felt citizens were turning away from politics: *'The politicians of today only have an eye for their own position on the market of voters ... They have handed political decision-making over to technocrats of non-political organisations. It is only logical that many citizens turn away from politics' (de Volkskrant, 25-09-1990).* Here, citizens' discontent was not mentioned in the context of elections. Both party leaders questioned citizens' political involvement in the context of a perceived technocratisation of government and parliament.

Although the trust relations between citizens and politicians do not seem to be discussed as thoroughly in the newspapers of the 1990s as in the first decade of the 21st century, this does not mean that there is no criticism of government policy and the doings of specific political authorities. Several headlines can be found in which the government was severely criticised. For example: *'Deetman gave Parlia-*

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19 Initially three articles were found in which the search terms were found in the headlines. Closer analysis revealed that only one article addressed citizens' political discontent. Another article reported on the regional election victory of the right wing Front National party in France. 'The French regional elections have become the success of the dissatisfied. The results of yesterday should merely be understood as a protest against traditional politics' (*NRC Handelsblad*, 1992). In the second article, a journalist warned against 'dying politics and loss of the nation state' in the context of globalisation and 'a crisis of the welfare state as a crisis of democracy' (*Trouw*, 1994).

20 Dutch original text: 'PvdA-fractieleider Jacques Wallage meent dat de politiek de oorzaak van haar gebrek aan geloofwaardigheid vooral bij zichzelf moet zoeken. "Herstel van vertrouwen begint hier', zei Wallage gisteren in de Tweede Kamer. "Niet de markt, niet de individuele burger, maar wij hier hebben de geloofwaardigheid zelf in de hand.' "De afstand tussen wat hier wordt gezegd en wat er op straat gebeurt is zo groot dat het begint te vreten aan het vertrouwen.'

ment incorrect figures' (*nrc Handelsblad*, 14-09-1990)²¹, '*The State spent 500 mil-lion wrongly last year*'²² (*nrc Handelsblad*, 14-09-1990) and: '*Braks loses trust of the PvdA faction in Parliament*' ²³ (*nrc Handelsblad*, 19-09-1990). Contrary to the first decade of the 21st century, however, I did not find any cynical accounts of the morality and capacity of politicians and political institutions in general in the newspaper articles of the 1990s.

Newspaper discussions of political discontent in the 1980s

The 1980s newspaper articles are not available in a digitalised format. To discover how the issue of political trust and political discontent was discussed, therefore, I had to rely on a hand-coded analysis of newspaper articles of three national news-papers in September 1980. The September 1980 editions of the newspapers were dominated by criticism of the government's budget policy²⁴ and headlines men-tioning riots and violence among squatters.²⁵ The diminishing status and lack of functioning of Parliament was addressed once. This happened in an interview with ex-minister and member of Parliament Jan Pronk: '*As a democrat at heart, he likes to note that the parliamentary system in the Netherlands has been subject to erosion over the last few years. The Second Chamber of Parliament is no longer the political counterforce that it should be towards administrations and the civil service. Parlia-ment does not see this clearly, does not want to make anything of it and is not offering*

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21 Dutch original text: 'Deetman gaf Kamer onjuiste cijfers'. Also in this category: '*Van der Linden informed Parliament incorrectly about the Pasport project* (*nrc Handelsblad*, 25-09-1990) and *Braks keeps making up excuses for Parliament*' (*De Volkskrant*, 1-09-1990).

22 Dutch Original text: 'Rijk gaf vorig jaar 500 miljoen ten onrechte uit.' Er bestaat twijfel of betalin-gen van het Rijk wel volgens de wettelijke regels zijn gedaan volgens onderzoek van de Algemene Rekenkamer. Also in this category: '*Government manipulates social funds*' (*nrc Handelsblad*, 1-09-1990),

23 Dutch Original text: 'Braks verliest vertrouwen PvdA-fractie'. Other examples: '*Conflicts paralyze the Ministry* (*nrc Handelsblad*, 29-09-1990). The failures of government policy were also criti-cised: '*The Court of Audit condemns government policy on healthcare*'(*De Telegraaf*, 4-09-1990), on the functioning of police and justice: '*Corrupt guards, ample drugs, numerous escapes, but jus-tice does nothing*'(*De Telegraaf*, 1-09-1990).

24 Examples: Raad van State geeft kabinet onvoldoende (*nrc Handelsblad*, 16-09-1980), PvdA: kabinet in defensief, D'66: beleid is mislukt (*nrc Handelsblad*, 16-09-1980), Inzicht in ge-maakte fouten maakt nog geen beleid (*nrc Handelsblad*, 16-09-1980),, CNV: Begroting mist elk elan. Kritiek ongekend hard (*de Volkskrant*, 17-09-1980), Raad van State veegt vloer aan met beleid 1981 (*De Telegraaf*, 17-09-1980)

25 Examples: '*Looting in the capital. Squatters' violence brings chaos again*' (9-09-1980, *De Telegraaf*) or strikes, actions and demonstrations against unemployment or against nuclear energy; featur-ing headlines like '*Strike at the port is spreading*' (*de Volkskrant*, 24-09-1980) or '*Actions feared at nuclear plant*' (*de Volkskrant*, 3-09-1980)

any counterforce to big companies either. Furthermore, there are decision-making pro-
cedures that are out of step with the times. That is why it cannot cope with many things,
is too busy with minor issues and never gets round to the big issues (nrc *Handelsblad*,
20-09-1980)²⁶'.

One news article in September 1980 dealt with citizens' political discontent
as an object of discussion. Interestingly, the news article focused primarily on the
politicians' discontent with citizens instead of citizens' discontent with politics. I
quote: '*The average Dutch politician feels a great aversion towards his or her voters.*
Our parliamentarians see their voters as political Sammies ... Most members of Par-
liament, moreover, also doubt the functioning of their colleagues. Parliamentary seats
serve as a springboard to other and better jobs.'²⁷ (*De Telegraaf*, 27-09-1980). The issue
gained prominence because of survey research among Members of Parliament that
was done by political science groups at universities in 1980. '*The actions and thoughts*
of Dutch Members of Parliament have been investigated scientifically for the first time.
Voters have been studied by political scientists before: only 40% of them proved to have
any trust in our politicians. The other way around the situation is even worse. The cho-
sen ones have no trust at all in those that have procured them their seats: the voters!'. In
the September 1980 newspapers, therefore, there is also a suggestion (albeit rarely)
that citizens' political trust is low. The emphasis here, however, is on politicians' lack
of trust in citizens. The issue is addressed in the context of a major scholarly study,
rather than in the context of elections and the rise and decline of political parties.

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26 Dutch original text: 'Als democraat in hart en nieren wil hij graag genoteerd zien dat het parle-
mentaire systeem in Nederland de laatste jaren aan sterke erosie onderhevig is. De Tweede Kamer
is niet meer de politieke tegenkracht tegenover administraties, het ambtenarenapparaat. Het
parlement ziet dat niet in, wil er zelf niks van maken en biedt ook geen behoorlijke tegenkracht
tegenover ondernemingen. Bovendien zijn er besluitvormingsprocedures die niet meer in deze
tijd passen. Daardoor kan het een heleboel dingen niet aan, is te lang met details bezig, komt aan
de grote dingen niet toe.'

27 Dutch original text: 'De doorsnee Nederlandse politicus voelt een grote afkeer voor zijn kiez-
ers. Onze parlementariërs zien hun kiezers als politieke onbenullen. Dit blijkt uit een onderzoek
naar het gedrag van Eerste en Tweede Kamerleden uitgevoerd door politicologische instituten
onder leiding van de Erasmus Universiteit. De meeste Eerste en Tweede Kamerleden twijfelen
daarbij ook aan het functioneren van veel hunner collega's. Kamerzetels fungeren – inderdaad
- als springplank naar andere en betere banen. Het is voor het eerst dat doen en denken van
Nederlandse Kamerleden wetenschappelijk onder de loep is genomen. De kiezers daarentegen
werden door de politicologen eerder bestudeerd: slechts 40% van heen bleek enig vertrouwen
in onze politici te hebben. Omgekeerd is het dus nog veel somberder. De gekozenen hebben
helemaal geen vertrouwen in degenen die hen hun zetels bezorgden, de kiezers! 82 tot 94 procent
van Tweede en Eerste Kamerleden meent dat de kiezers eigenlijk niets van politiek weten en
bovendien alleen stemmen uit eng eigenbelang...Voor het eerst krijgt Kamerlid Schakel nu dus
officieel gelijk; toen hij in 1974 een aantal Kamerleden ervan verdacht hun zetel als springplank
te gebruiken, kreeg hij een storm van verontwaardiging te verduren.'

Newspaper discussions of political discontent in the 1970s

To discover how the issue of political trust and political discontent was discussed in the 1970s, I had to rely on a hand-coded analysis of newspaper articles. I analysed three national newspapers in September 1970. This analysis showed that, although strikes and protest actions were daily news and dominated the 1970s headlines, newspapers reports on distrust in political authorities or politics in general were scarce. A reasonably large number of articles reported on strikes and on unemployment issues in the Netherlands, bearing headlines such as *'Leftish agitation in Rotterdam port unrest' and 'Storm of criticism over cabinet'* (*De Volkskrant*, 16-09-1970)[28]. A substantial number of articles in three national newspapers in September 1970 also observed *'a crisis of authority'*, as NRC Handelsblad mentioned in its editorial (*NRC Handelsblad*, 15-09-1970). When South Moluccan youngsters occupied an embassy in Wassenaar in September 1970, the Moluccan leaders cried: *'The government has deceived us',* (*NRC Handelsblad*, 12-09-1970).[29]

A reporter from the national newspaper *De Telegraaf* suggested in an interview that many Dutch citizens were dissatisfied with politics: *'Surely you know that many Dutch citizens are averse to politics?'* This suggestion was counterattacked by the interviewee, Professor F. Duynstee, who was then also a columnist with *De Telegraaf*. *'One should be very careful with such antipathy. Who thinks politics is a dirty business is totally wrong. In my opinion, politics in the Netherlands is generally of a very high ethical level. The motives of politicians are generally pure. I am not talking about their competence. That is a totally different story. I do believe we have a lack of competent people. Barring exceptions, they do not often go into politics in our country.*[30] (*De Telegraaf*, 12-09-1970).

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28 Dutch original text, articles on strikes: 'Linkse agitatie in Rotterdamse havenonrust' (*De Telegraaf*, 3-09-1970) en *'Storm van kritiek op kabinet. Vakcentrales weigeren medewering aan plan regering De Jong om een loonpauze af te kondigen'*(*de Volkskrant*, 16-09-1970).

29 Dutch original text: 'De regering heeft ons misleid. Gesprek met Molukse/Ambonese gemeenschap na overval in Wassenaar. We zijn onder valse voorwendselen naar NL gehaald. We hoopten op een snelle terugkeer. De Nederlandse regering wist heel goed dat het niets zou uithalen.'

30   Dutch original text: Vraag van *De Telegraaf*-journalist: "U weet dat veel Nederlanders afkerig staan tegenover de politiek..." Antwoord: men moet verschrikkelijk oppassen met een dergelijke antipathie. Wie politiek een vies bedrijf vindt ziet het totaal verkeerd. Naar mijn mening is de politiek in Nederland in het algemeen van een zeer hoog ethisch gehalte. De drijfveren van onze politici zijn in het algemeen zuiver. Ik heb het niet over hun bekwaamheid, dat is een heel andere zaak. Het schort volgens mij wel aan voldoende bekwame mensen. Die gaan, uitzonderingen daargelaten, bij ons niet zo gauw in de politiek.'

Quantifying the growth of newspaper attention

So far in this Chapter, I have described the relative growth of attention paid to political discontent in newspaper articles in a qualitative manner. However, the relative growth of attention paid to political discontent can also be illustrated quantitatively, by counting and comparing the number of news articles addressing political discontent in different decades.

     If we do a count of newspaper articles, both the hand-coded analysis of news articles and the computer-based search in LexisNexis show a similar pattern of a growing attention being paid to the issue of political discontent in the early 21st century. Hand-coded analyses of newspapers in 1980 resulted in 30 news articles with negative evaluations of a political object. In September 1970, September 1990 and September 2000, 50-60 articles were found with a negative evaluation of a political object. The hand-coded analyses of newspapers in September 2010 led to a total of 139 articles, indicating a massive growth of attention being paid in the first decade of the 21st century.

     The computer-based search of headlines of news articles (see Figure below) suggests a similar pattern of growing attention being paid to the issue of political discontent in the first decade of the 21st century. As Figure 13 shows, 3 articles were found in LexisNexis in the 1990s with one of the search terms associated with the discussion on political discontent being used in the news article's headline. In comparison, 9 of such articles were found in the 2000-2010 period.

Figure 13: Attention paid to political discontent in headlines
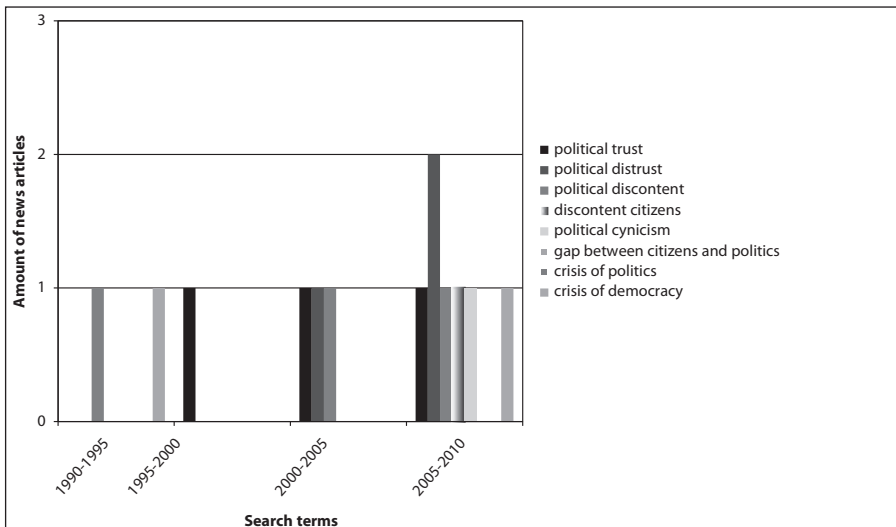
One should not be distracted by the small numbers in the figure, for the modest number of articles on the issue of political discontent in the Netherlands is due to the strict search in LexisNexis (strict terms, headlines only) rather than to the lack of attention being paid to the issue in newspapers. As one might expect, when I searched for the same terms not only in headlines but in the complete text of a news article, a substantially higher number of articles was found in the 1990-2010 period. See Figure 14 and 15 below.

Figure 14: Attention paid to political discontent in headlines and text
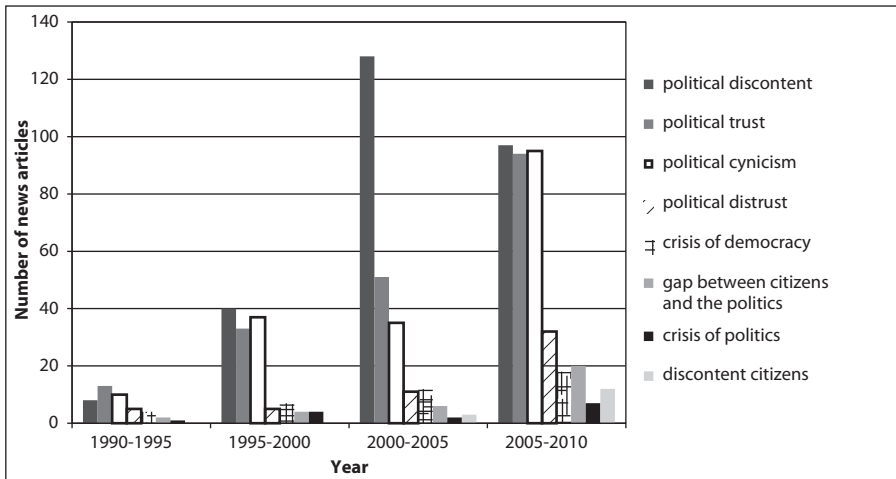
Figure 15: Number of news articles on 'gap between citizens and politics'
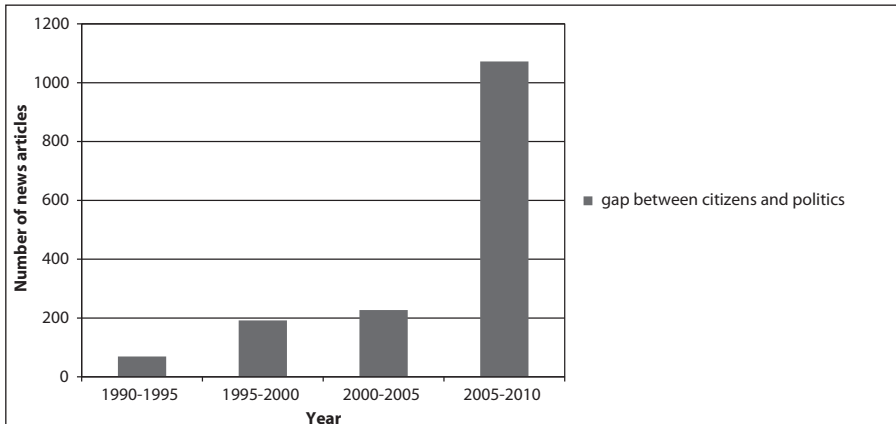
Here too a relative rise of attention being paid to political discontent is visible. Especially between 2005-2010, there is a substantial growth in the use of the search terms in headlines and text of news articles. We can see a steady rise in the use of the terms 'political trust' and 'political cynicism'. Especially popular in the Dutch discourse on political discontent is the use of the term 'gap between citizens and politics'. Between 1990 and 1995, 'gap between citizens and politics' was mentioned less than 50 times in news articles. Between 2000 and 2005, 'the gap' was referred to more than 200 times, and between 2005 and 2010, the term was mentioned in more than 1000 articles.[31]

Interim conclusions and reflections on the growing attention for political discontent in newspapers

If we reflect on what has changed in newspaper discussions on political discontent from the 1970s to 2010, several things stand out. If we look at the issue over time in 1970, 1980 and 1990, we see that the matter was raised in all decades, but clearly not as outspokenly as in the first decade of the 21st century. Throughout the decades, criticism of politics in newspaper articles has grown. My newspaper analysis indicates that in comparative perspective, up to the 1990s, citizens' political discontent is hardly ever a topic for discussion or reflection. In newspaper articles of September 1970, citizens' distrust and discontent are no distinct topics for discussion. In newspaper articles of September 1980 and 1990, there are only incidental remarks hinting at substantial political discontent among citizens. From 1990 onwards, political discontent and politically cynical accounts become increasingly noticeable in newspaper articles (especially in columns and opinion articles). Especially from 2000 onwards, with a peak after 2005, reflections can be found which suggest there is growing discontent among citizens with established politics. In comparison to 1970, 1980 or 1990, newspapers in the first decade of the new century multiplied their public reflections and discussions on the issue. This newspaper analysis thus indicates that citizens' political discontent has become an increasing popular object of newspaper writing and reflection. Whereas in my analysis incidental observations only were to be found on the distance between citizens and political authorities or existing discontent and distrust

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31   For reasons of time efficiency, I have not done a content analysis of the news articles in which the search terms were mentioned in the text of the articles. This means that the numbers in the diagram above have not been corrected for the number of times that the articles were about foreign rather than about Dutch issues or dealt with non-political issues. To get an idea of the validity of the search, I did take a systematic sample of every fifteenth article of a total of 1560 news articles in which the popular search term 'gap between politics and citizens' was used. All articles in the sample were about discontent with politics.

with voters in the 1970s or 1980s, the subject matter became more common in the newspapers from 1990 onwards, steadily increasing in the new millennium.

Secondly, this newspaper analysis shows how the societal and political context has changed over the decades. In 1970, attention paid to political discontent centred on the so-called 'crisis of authority', visible in protests and (violent) action for democratisation and employment. In 2010, the headlines were dominated by 'party crises' and the 'crisis of established politics'. The issue of political discontent in the first decade of the 21st century is often reflected upon in the context of elections, the electoral success of political newcomers and the perceived crisis of established political parties. The wish to grasp the state of citizens' political trust and political discontent in the newspapers, therefore, seems to be mainly predicated on the need to interpret and understand volatile election results. Journalists (and politicians) try to explain radical electoral shifts. Distrust with politics is often used as an explanation to make sense of changes in the party landscape and the rise of new parties. My analysis of the newspaper articles revealed that the Dutch newspaper discussion on political trust in the 21st century is bound up with internal political logic, such as the rise and decline of political parties around election time. The newspaper analyses of political discontent, therefore, do not so much aim to understand what might be troubling Dutch citizens, as they aim to understand political changes.

In comparing the Netherlands at the beginning of the 21st century against other decades, it is interesting to see how the spectrum of actors addressing the issue of political discontent has changed and widened over time. In the newspapers of September 1970s and 1980s, criticism of the functioning of politics was exclusively voiced by leading politicians or union leaders. Such discontent was expressed through social movements (unions) and new and existing political parties, who voiced the concerns and discontent of demonstrators, walking in front, leading strikes, and proposing change. In the 1990s, leaders of opposition parties also increasingly got newspaper space to criticise government policy and the functioning of politics. During the 1990s, columnists and independent government institutions made their entrance as starring actors voicing political discontent. From 2000 onwards, the room for columnists and other opinion makers to express criticism seemed to widen. In 2010 moreover, prominent party members and newspaper readers were also starring in newspaper articles.

At the beginning of the 21st century, politicians, columnists, scholars and newspaper readers regularly mentioned the substantial and growing discontent with politics. They reflected on the issue in the context of elections, the electoral success of political newcomers and the perceived crisis of established political parties. Space in opinion pages and columns, however, was also increasingly used to give both columnists and readers a starring role to proclaim unseasoned, critical opinions and accounts of the functioning of politics and politicians.

It is an interesting question what the role of opinion-makers is in this 'republic of opinions'. They obviously take different roles. Sometimes columnists and opinion-makers take a detached position, reflecting from the sidelines on the political changes, struggles and crises they perceive. Sometimes, however, opinion-makers feel free to act as mood-makers, using their columns as megaphones to cry criticism, believing that it is their role to revolt against authorities and represent a broader citizens' perspective.

Interesting point furthermore is, that the steady rise of newspaper attention for the issue of political discontent is still growing after 2005, while the 'Dutch drop' of citizens' trust in government in survey statistics can be pinpointed somewhat earlier, around 2002-2005. Apparently, newspaper attention follows its own dynamic and logic and does not coincide with survey 'events', such as the Dutch drop in citizens' satisfaction with government.

Parliamentary discussions on political discontent since 1995

I will now turn from the public arena of newspapers to the political arena of parliament. In what way did politicians and political parties in parliament discuss citizens' political discontent at the beginning of the 21st century? Was it an issue at all? Was the issue discussed in parliament in the same context as in the newspapers? To discover how the issue was mentioned in parliament, I did a search in *'Officiele Bekendmakingen.nl',* the online database containing all parliamentary documents since 1995. I searched both the headlines and the texts of these documents with a selection of terms highly associated with the discussion about citizens' political discontent. These are the same terms I used to search the newspapers: political trust, political distrust, political cynicism, political discontent, gap between citizens and politics and dissatisfied citizens. The analysis gives a broad idea of the parliamentary discussions around the issue of political trust and political discontent since 1995. We should however also be aware of the limitations of this approach; not all parliamentary discussions of interest may come into view. Parliamentary discussions before 1995 that focused on the need for democratic renewal (such as the Special Committee-Deetman in 1990 and Committee of State-Biesheuvel in 1982) for instance remain out of sight in this study.

The results are as follows.[32]

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32 Between 1995 and 2010, a search with *'political trust'* in the parliamentary database produced 42 parliamentary documents; *'political distrust'* produced 5 documents; *'political cynicism'* produced 9 documents; and *'political discontent'* produced a total of 19 documents. The other search terms were not mentioned in the parliamentary documents.

When any of the search terms were present in a parliamentary document, they mostly did not refer to Dutch politics as the main object of discontent or only referred to it in passing. To give an example: the term *'political trust'* was used by the parliamentarian Kees Vendrik of the GreenLeft Party (GL) to describe the trust politicians had in a financial institution during a parliamentary investigation. *'I do think that it has something to do with what I described: there was great political trust in the functioning of the Dutch Bank.'* (KST140323, 2010).[33] When the issue of political trust and political discontent was mentioned in parliament, it was often done as a side remark. In one parliamentary debate, for instance, a member of parliament criticised the lack of mutual political trust between the minister and junior minister for education and the effect this might have on the trust professionals had in their political authorities. *'The field of education cannot be anything but extremely disappointed in its political authorities. Tonight is not only about restoring political trust; it is especially about restoring trust in the field of education. My political faction is very curious how the political authorities think they will set about restoring this trust. We have little faith* (H-TK-20032004- 81-5252).[34] The search terms were sometimes used as self-evident explanations or as motivations to discuss another matter of interest. The research report *'European Times',* sent to parliament by the Ministry of Foreign affairs in 2006, for instance, mentioned low political trust to explain the Dutch refusal of the new European constitution in a referendum on this issue in 2006[35].[36]

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33 Original Dutch text: De heer Vendrik (GL): Ik denk dat dat mede te maken heeft met wat ik zojuist beschreef: er was een groot politiek vertrouwen in het functioneren van de Nederlandsche Bank. Men voelde ook niet zo de behoefte dat punt van de Rekenkamer actief uit te werken.

34 riginal Dutch text: 'Voor ons is het niet zo dat alleen de staatssecretaris vertrouwen terug moet winnen. Er zijn hier drie verliezers: de staatssecretaris, de minister, maar vooral het onderwijs. Het onderwijs kan niet anders dan buitengewoon teleurgesteld zijn in zijn bewindspersonen. Het gaat er vanavond niet alleen om dat er weer politiek vertrouwen komt. Het gaat er vooral om om vertrouwen te herwinnen bij het onderwijsveld. Mijn fractie is werkelijk benieuwd, hoe de bewindslieden dat willen gaan herwinnen. Wij zien het nog niet. Het onderwijs heeft meer verdiend dan dit kwakkelende tweetal.'

35 Original Dutch text:'De uitslag van het referendum moet dan ook niet worden gedramatiseerd als de uitbarsting van al lang bestaande onvrede. Veeleer moet deze worden gezien als de uitkomst van een samenloop van omstandigheden, waaronder een stemming van gering politiek vertrouwen, en vooral van een proces van publiekeopinievorming met een hoge mate van eigen dynamiek.' (Dekker, P. & Ederveen, S., rapport van CBS en SCP, 2006)

36 Some search terms refer to another document. For instance: The VROM council mentioned decreasing political trust by referring to a WRR report entitled '*Trust in the neigbourhood*', which deals with *'decreasing involvement of people with one another (social trust), decreasing involvement with democratic institutions (political trust)'.* Decreasing social cohesion has negative social effects, such as anonymity, alienation, insecurity, criminality, decreasing well-being (and perhaps economic welfare). Eventually, this will complicate the legitimation of government action as authorities are separating from citizens. This will affect the functioning of democracy (VROM Raad, 2010).

Occasionally, the issue of political discontent was addressed and discussed at length in a parliamentary debate. These documents were all sent to parliament after 2005. I will now describe these documents in chronological order. In July 2005, the Minister for Democratic Renewal sent a letter to parliament with the headline *'Serving trust'*. In this letter, Minister Pechtold of the party Democrats '66 (D66) proclaimed a series of policy measures to *'restore trust between politics and citizens,'* including an elected mayor, a referendum, a national citizen forum *'Het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel'* to develop proposals for a new electoral system and a National Convention (*Nationale Conventie*) to develop proposals to regain trust between citizens and politics. The loss of political trust was mentioned in the letter as the prime motive for democratic renewal. The trust problem itself was defined in the letter as follows:

'Representative democracy is under pressure. Citizens do not seem to recognise themselves in their representatives. Citizens appear to be alienated from the political authorities. Instead of being participants in the democratic process, they have become passive onlookers. They feel that the political administrative process is not there for them; they cannot influence it, and this diminishes their trust' (Pechtold, 8 juli 2005).[37]

The Minister stressed the need to strengthen the relation between citizens and politics by referring to several official advisory committees' research reports.

'The feeling of urgency that something needs to be done is widely shared. The Council of State[38] has pointed at the dysfunction in several of its year reports. Also the WRR, SCP and ROB[39] have pointed out the problems in the relation between political authorities and citizens in their reports over the past few years. There is full debate on this issue in several political parties now.'[40]

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37 Original text: De representatieve democratie staat onder druk. De burger lijkt zich onvoldoende in zijn vertegenwoordigers te herkennen...Burgers lijken vervreemd van het bestuur. In plaats van deelnemers in het democratische proces zijn ze geworden tot toeschouwers. Ze hebben het gevoel dat het bestuurlijke proces er niet voor hen is, dat ze het niet kunnen beïnvloeden en dat vermindert hun vertrouwen

38 The council of State (Raad van State) is the oldest official advisory board of parliament and government in the Netherlands. It advices parliament and government on legislation and governance and it is also the highest general administrative court in the Netherlands.

39 Note on the abbreviations used in the original text: WRR refers to the Scientific Council of Government. SCP refers to The Netherlands Institute for Social Research. ROB refers to the Council of Public Administration. Both WRR, SCP and ROB are instituted to advice government on a broad range of topics, among others public administration and democracy.

40 Original text: achtereenvolgende jaarverslagen op diverse feilen gewezen. Ook de Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau en de Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur hebben de afgelopen jaren in hun rapporten gewezen op de problemen in de

A range of societal trends was described to explain waning political trust.

'Trends that were already observed at the time of the Deetman advisory committee and that some assumed were only temporary now seem to have become structural. The trends that are most apparent are the ongoing removal of traditional religious and socio-political barriers, individualisation, personal influence in politics, globalisation, the increased influence of the media and, above all, the Internet, intercultural migration and the influence of the European Union.'[41]

The trust issue was not located in the context of elections and party politics in the first decade of the 21st century but in the context of a changing society. Societal trends, such as depillarization and individualisation, were assumed to have eroded citizens' political trust. The problems in the relation between citizens and political authorities were perceived to date back further than the 21st century. In this respect, the Minister referred to a former advisory committee, the Deetman committee, who was commissioned in the 1990s to reflect on the relation between political authorities and citizens.

In 2006, the *'Nationale Conventie'*, the advisory committee that had been installed by the Minister for the Interior one year before, sent its advice to parliament (2006). The Nationale Conventie wrote about *'a crisis of trust'* and described the causes of this crisis as follows: *'The causes of decreasing trust are much debated and varied. Without being complete, we mention the following: the globalisation of the economy, the internationalisation of politics and government, the partial loss of party and political ideologies, the growing volatility in voter preferences, individualisation, erosion of social bonds, the consequences of the IT revolution, mediatisation and 'cluttering' of public administration, putting processes of accountability under pressure and causing citizens to lose their way. All of this can be described in terms of complexity and insecurity. Regaining trust is about diminishing this complexity and insecurity.'[42]*

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relatie tussen bestuur en burger. In een aantal politieke partijen is het debat hierover momenteel volop bezig.

41 Original text: De trends die ten tijde van de commissie-Deetman al gesignaleerd werden, en waarvan destijds sommigen nog aannamen dat ze tijdelijk waren, zijn inmiddels structureel gebleken. Trends die daarbij in het oog springen zijn de verdergaande ontzuiling in combinatie met individualisering en verpersoonlijking van de politiek, de globalisering, de toegenomen invloed van de media en met name ook het internet, de interculturele migratie en de invloed van de Europese integratie.

42 Original text: 'De oorzaken van het dalen van vertrouwen zijn veelbesproken en gevarieerd. Zonder uitputtend te willen zijn noemen wij de volgende: de globalisering van de economie, de internationalisering van politiek en bestuur, het gedeeltelijke verlies van partij- politieke ideolo-

'These underlying causes have had their impact on the turbulent political period in the Netherlands around the 2002 elections: the revolt of Fortuyn. These developments started earlier and were accelerated by the terrorist attacks of the 11th of September 2001. Political debate then concentrated on relations among citizens and between citizens and politics. Regaining trust was not that easy. At critical moments, it became apparent that the Netherlands was changing and that politics and society were both developing in another direction. Tensions among citizens surfaced when Van Gogh was assassinated. The distance between citizens and politicians on the subject of the EU became clearly apparent in the referendum outcome on the EU constitution.'

In its problem analysis, the *Nationale Conventie* referred to a wide range of societal and political developments that were perceived to have complicated relations between citizens and politics. These included *'the partial loss of party and political ideologies'* and *'the growing volatility in voter preferences'*. The Conventie also emphasised the significance of certain crisis events in the early 21st century that were considered to have brought societal tensions to the surface, such as the WTC attacks of 11 September 2001, the revolt and political assassination of politician Fortuyn and the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a politically radical Islamic terrorist. The Conventie thus framed the trust problem in a broad societal and political perspective.

Another wide-ranging reflection on the topic of citizens' political trust was found in the 2006 annual report of the Nationale Ombudsman (Nationale Ombudsman, 2006). The Nationale Ombudsman is an independent expert body established in order to give Dutch citizens an opportunity to lodge complaints about the government practices. To back up the idea that citizens' political trust was waning and had *'diminished to a level below 40 per cent'* since the beginning of the 21st century, the Ombudsman referred to several publications on citizens' political trust, such as the book *'Building political trust'* published by the Government Council of Public Administration in 2006 (ROB, 2006)[43] and the SCP.

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gieën, de groeiende schommelingen in de voorkeuren van kiezers, de individualisering, de erosie van het maatschappelijk middenveld, de gevolgen van de ICT-revolutie, de mediatisering en de verrommeling van het openbaar bestuur waardoor verantwoordingsprocessen onder druk staan en de burger niet meer weet waar hij terecht moet. Dit alles wordt gevat in de termen complexiteit en onzekerheid. Het herstel van vertrouwen heeft deels te maken met het verminderen van deze complexiteit en onzekerheid.'

43 The Council for Public Administration (ROB) is the author of several documents sent to parliament and referred to several times; these include 'Bouwen op democratie' (2010), a research report about the working of Parliament 'Binnenhof van binnenuit' (2007) and the book 'Building trust' (2006). All documents suggest that citizens' political trust is waning.

In its problem analysis of the trust relation between government and citizens, the Nationale Ombudsman – just like the Minister of the Interior and the Nationale Conventie – referred to broad societal trends to explain low political trust. *'Perhaps trust in institutions and authority was self-evident in earlier times, but in our times trust is a gradual phenomenon. This is caused by the modernisation, secularisation, individualisation and post-modernisation of society. Individual wellbeing, personal autonomy and personal development are increasingly people's focus of attention.*[44] The Ombudsman emphasises that due to these societal trends, it is not enough for public organisations just to follow the rules. To gain citizens' trust, the government should take greater care to communicate directly and honestly with citizens as they demand to be handled fairly and equally, with personal care and honesty.[45]

In 2006, the Minister for the Interior and Kingdom Relations sent another letter to parliament, now accompanying two research reports on *'The State of Democracy'* and *'The State of Public Administration'* (2006). The research reports outlined some trends on citizens' political trust, but the issue of political trust and political discontent was not discussed at any great length. In a cover letter , the Ministry observed that *'Trust in politicians seems to have decreased. Citizens don't seem to recognise themselves in their government. Solutions have been discussed and proposed from different angles, by the Nationale Conventie, among others. The question remains what kind of problem this is, and, if it is structural, what should be done about it.'* Decreasing trust in politicians was defined as a complex problem that needed to be attended to but that no one knew how to solve.

In the *'Parliamentary Self-Reflection,'* the Dutch Parliament reflected on its own tasks, methods, procedures and culture in 2007 and 2009. This was the only parliamentary document I found in which the idea of waning political trust was countered. The parliamentary commission wrote: *'The process of reflection has also put some oft-mentioned problems into perspective. The parliamentary system in the Netherlands is doing well in comparison. Trust in democracy in the Netherlands is very high in comparison with other Western countries. The dip in voter trust in parliament and*

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44 Original text: 'Het kan zijn dat in vroegere tijden instituties en autoriteit als vanzelf vertrouwen inboezemden, in deze tijd is vertrouwen een gradueel verschijnsel. Oorzaak daarvan is de modernisering, de secularisering, de individualisering en postmodernisering van de samenleving. Individueel welzijn, persoonlijke autonomie en zelfontplooiing staan voor steeds meer mensen in het centrum van de aandacht.'

45 Original text: Voor burgers gaat het erom dat ze netjes behandeld zijn, dat ze serieus genomen worden en vooral dat ze eerlijk behandeld worden. Als het om deze vormen van behoorlijkheid gaat, dan is moeilijk voorstelbaar dat de burger te veeleisend zou kunnen zijn.

government after 2001-2002 is almost the same as the dip in other Western countries, just as its recuperation after 2005-2006. In 2008, trust was back at the level of the 1990s.[46]

Placing citizens' political trust in an international perspective by referring to international survey data, parliament here contradicted the picture that citizens' political trust was alarmingly low. The Parliamentary Self-reflection, moreover, countered the idea that the relation between citizens and politics was problematic: *'In general, the Netherlands is well governed, citizens' political involvement is not very substandard and the "gap" between The Hague and the rest of the Netherlands is big but understandable and possibly not even a bad thing, in the opinion of many people we spoke to'.*[47]

Interim conclusions and reflections on the growing attention for political discontent in parliament

Summarising, my analysis of the text of parliamentary documents between 1995 and 2010 shows that several reflections on the topic of political trust took place in parliament. All of these reflections took place after 2005. The issue of waning trust was discussed in two letters by the Minister for the Interior. Several independent advisory committees reflected on the issue, as did a broadly based parliamentary committee. At the time when the issue was discussed in parliamentary documents, there seemed to be some congruence in problem definition. Whether it was described by the author as a *'crisis of trust'* or *'a hardened relation between citizens and politics'*, all but one publication mentioned that trust in politics was under pressure. Only the parliamentary committee rejected this idea by placing Dutch political trust in an international perspective.

Interestingly, the explanations given for waning political trust in parliamentary documents are quite different from the explanations offered in newspaper articles.

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46 Original text: Het reflectieproces heeft overigens ook enige relativering van vaak genoemde problemen opgeleverd. Het parlementaire systeem staat er in Nederland relatief gezien goed voor. Het vertrouwen in de democratie is in Nederland in vergelijking met andere westerse landen zeer hoog (meer dan 75% van de bevolking is tevreden met de wijze waarop de democratie functioneert). En de dip in het kiezersvertrouwen in parlement en regering na 2001–2002 is vrijwel gelijk aan de dip in andere westerse landen, evenals het herstel daarvan na 2005–2006. In 2008 is het vertrouwen weer terug op het niveau van de jaren negentig.

47 Original text: Nederland wordt over het algemeen redelijk goed bestuurd, de politieke betrokkenheid van burgers is in ieder geval niet ondermaats en de «kloof» die bestaat tussen Den Haag en de rest van Nederland is groot maar goed te begrijpen en wellicht niet eens kwalijk, menen meerdere gesprekspartners.

Newspaper articles write about political discontent and waning political trust in the context of elections and party politics. The explanation for the waning political trust in parliamentary documents, however, is mainly located in broad societal developments that are perceived to have complicated trust relations between citizens and politics. The Nationale Conventie advisory committee is the only actor that directly links the crisis of political trust to a range of crisis events in the first decade of the 21st century.

Why political actors felt the urgency to address the issue around 2005 has not been explicitly recorded. The political context in which a Minister for Renewal was installed, may largely explain the fact that the subject made its way onto the parliamentary agenda in 2005. Closing the gap between citizens and voters had always been of major importance to this political party. Now was the time for the Liberal Democratic party D66 to realise proposals on political renewal that had long been part of their political programme. The National Ombudsman's interest in the issue, on the other hand, can be explained by its core business: to deal with complaints about the government, which makes it the institution's intrinsic task to improve relations between citizens and the government.

Concluding reflections on the growing newspaper and parliamentary attention for political discontent

In this Chapter, I studied how the issue of political trust and political discontent was discussed in newspaper articles and parliamentary documents from 1970-2010. How (much) and by whom was the issue debated? What has changed over time? The analysis illustrates how citizens' political discontent became an increasingly popular object of newspaper reflection and parliamentary discussion. Over the decades, public dismay grew. The issue was increasingly voiced in newspaper articles and columns. Whereas only incidental remarks about political discontent and distrust were found in newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s, attention paid to the issue rose from 1990 onwards, steadily increasing in the new millennium. After 1990 (and especially after 2000), an increasingly broad intellectual elite of writers, scholars, politicians and opinion-makers addressed the issue. After 2005, Parliament also followed with a range of reflections on the matter of political trust and political discontent.

I started this Chapter by describing the discrepancy between the academic, survey-based picture of political trust and the popular belief in growing political distrust. This analysis made it clear that, while both refer to the state of political trust, they do so from different perspectives. Social science scholars generally

report on changing trends in public opinion and public trust, and occasionally have done so since first survey research was carried out in the 1970s. Every now and then, when new survey research became available, the results were reported in newspaper articles. Observations on waning political trust and 'crisis' in the newspapers, however, generally do not refer to the same trends in public opinion. My analysis of newspaper articles made clear that the rise of Dutch newspaper attention in the first decade of the 21st century was explicitly bound up with parliamentary elections, the rise and decline of political parties and internal political struggles. Wanting to make sense of these political events and changes, journalists refer to political discontent and political distrust; political discontent proved to be a beloved explanation for changes in the party landscape and the rise of new parties.

The results suggest that newspapers and politics both followed a different pace in addressing the issue of political discontent over the decades. Apparently, the attention in newspapers and politics for the issue of political discontent also have a different dynamic than citizens' attitudes towards government and politics as can be perceived in survey statistics.

If we visualize the growing attention paid to citizens' political discontent as a surging wave, different sub-sets or sub-streams can be distinguished.We can characterize citizens' opinions and attitudes towards politics as measured in survey research as a separate, underlying sub-stream, that every now and then draws attention in media and politics, having its own dynamic. Available surveys for instance indicate peaks and dips in government satisfaction on one dimension and substantial but fairly stable political cynicism on another (see also Chapter 3).

As a second current or sub-stream, we can distinguish newspaper attention, which grows and spreads over time (symbolized in the model by a thickening line), as does the spectrum of actors who regularly mention the substantial and growing discontent with politics in the newspapers. Although scholars or leading politicians occasionally reflected on political discontent in newspapers in the context of available survey research in the 1970's and 1980's, newspaper reporters in the first decade of the 21th century mainly do so in the context of (volatile) elections.

In a distinct sub-stream after 2005, we can see a surging wave of political attention, when parliament occasionally reflected on the issue of waning political trust. The explanation for the waning political trust in parliamentary documents, however, is mainly located in broad societal developments that are perceived to have complicated trust relations between citizens and politics. One should note I analysed parliamentary documents from January 1995 on. Parliamentary discussions before 1995 that focused on the need for democratic renewal (such as the Special Committee-Deetman in 1990 and Committee of State-Biesheuvel in 1982) remained out of sight in this study.

Figure 16: Model of rising attention for political discontent
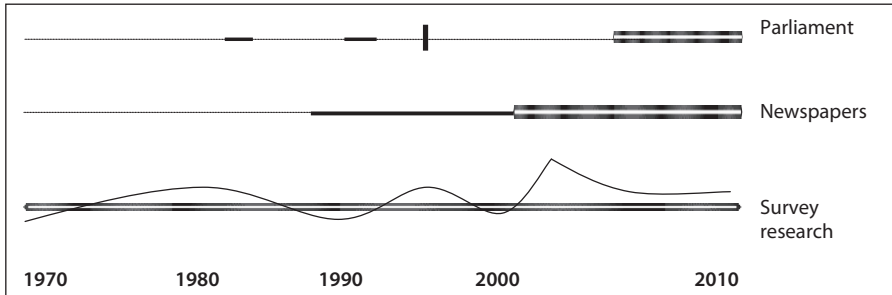
Explaining the growth of attention

I believe two factors largely explain the growing newspaper attention and the widening range of actors over the years: the many political crisis events and the changing media landscape. The many political crises events at the beginning of the 21st century in the Netherlands are one factor explaining the rise of newspaper and parliamentary attention being paid to the issue of political discontent. This newspaper analysis indicates that the numerous cabinet crises during the first decade of the 21st century, corresponding parliamentary elections and the dynamic rise and decline of political parties explain a large part of the newspaper attention. The series of volatile elections has obviously inspired newspaper journalists to reflect on the significance of these events.

Secondly, Dutch newspapers serving as a platform for reflection, opinion and mood-making and the starring role of columnists and opinion-makers who gave political discontent a voice in newspapers in the first decade of the 21st century should be considered within a broader framework of a changing media landscape. Since the 1970s, the number of radio channels, newspapers and (commercial) television channels increased and fragmented, as in all countries in Europe. (Arbaoui & Van Praag jr. and Van der Brug, 2013). New styles and formats of news reporting were introduced. Columns, parliamentary portraits of politicians, interviews, television talk shows, national election debates and election shows have become part of the contemporary media repertoire (Van Praag jr., 2002, Wijfjes, 2002). The perspective of journalism changed from political journalism to civic journalism, using citizens' perspectives as a starting-point (Drok, 2002).

New actors and media platforms have become prominent in bringing the issue of political discontent out into the open since the beginning of the 21st century. Whereas demonstrations, sit-ins, 'happenings' and printed flyers were common vehicles for political protest against 'the political establishment' in the 1970s,

these types of political protest have become less popular at the beginning of the 21st century. While almost all other forms of political participation are on the wane, Dutch citizens increasingly participate in political discussion or action through the Internet by signing Internet petitions or by sending emails or text messages (Leyenaar and Jacobs, 2011). A hashtag now suffices to organise a massive virtual meeting to enforce political change (Kniesmeijer, 2009). Journalists, citizens and politicians alike have set up websites, web forums, blogs and chat rooms, which are found to be great channels for political discussion. While giving a boost to political discussion, the Internet also functions as a perfect platform for expressing political grief, discontent and cynicism. This is something newspaper columns and the Internet share: they act as outlets for personal opinions and feelings. So columnists, opinion-makers and citizens also possess a channel for publicly holding politicians and politics to account when they doubt their sincerity and respectability.

I believe that the analysis of newspapers articles and the role of columnists and opinion-makers in voicing the issue of political discontent accurately illustrates a broader tendency of agents in the media system. This tendency was also described separately by De Beus and Elchardus, who claimed that popular representation, attention and confidence of the public in media compete with members of parliament and the government in representing the latent demands and opinions of ordinary people (Elchardus, 2002, De Beus, 2011).

An interesting puzzle is how we can relate the findings of this study to existing research findings on medialogic in the Netherlands. Research during the campaigns of 1998 to 2012 parliamentary elections, namely, counters the idea of an increasing 'medialogic' in the Netherlands. Dutch newspapers over time relatively paid less attention to individual politicians, paid more attention to content than to conflicts or 'racing news' and became relatively more positive in the tone of their political reporting, especially after 2002 (Kleinnijenhuis and Scholten, 2007). Furthermore, the fragmentation of the media market in the Netherlands does not self-evidently have a negative effect on political trust (Arbaoui & Van Praag jr. and Van der Brug, 2013).

My analysis of newspaper and parliamentary documents, on the other hand, indicates that attention for the issue of political discontent in newspapers has grown clearly since the 1970s and furthermore gives reason to believe that space in opinion pages and columns is increasingly used to give both columnists and readers a starring role to proclaim unseasoned, critical opinions and accounts of the functioning of politics and politicians. In what way are these findings related to one another?

I am inclined to believe that the results are not as contradictory as they might on first hand seem, as the different results might well be explained through differ-

ences in research approach. In my newspaper analysis I have, for instance, not made a systematic analysis of all political news reporting in the daily newspapers, including an analysis of the tone of news (positive or negative), the amount of 'horse race'-news or the amount of personalisation in the political news, as Kleijnijenhuis cs. did, during the campaigns. I have focused on how is written on the topic of political trust and political discontent in newspapers over several decades, including other sections of the newspapers than strict political news- such as columns, readers' letters and opinion articles. These non-political sections of the newspapers are generally not taken included in the standing research on medialogic, which might explain the different findings on the tone of news. However, as my newspaper analysis suggests that space in opinion pages and columns is increasingly used to criticize the functioning of politics and politicians, I would not be surprised if another (less positive) picture of political news-reporting might arise, when in the study of medialogic also columns, readers letters and opinion articles would be included as units of analysis. As the design of this study of newspaper and parliamentary attention is limited in size and design, more than one question for further research remains. Will the detected patterns of growing attention for the issue of political discontent and the changes in newspaper-reporting be confirmed or rejected when repeated during campaign, with a more comprehensive and detailed search strategy and when applied to different types of media, such as Internet and television reporting? And more specific: what can future research tell us about the changing role, function and influence of new media agents, such as columnists, opinion makers and citizen journalists?

7 Summary, Closing Reflections and Policy Implications

Summary

The character of the political discontent of Dutch citizens in the first decade of the 21st century is studied in detail in this thesis. How should we interpret citizens' political discontent in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 21st century?

The political trust and political discontent of citizens in the Netherlands have been fiercely debated over the last few years. There is no consensus on what this discontent is about and whether it should be explained as a temporal or structural phenomenon: it is interpreted as discontent with government (policy), as discontent with the working of political representation or as frustration about Dutch coalition politics. Opinions also differ on the main factors that drive the discontent of our time. The poor performance of the government as well as the diminished capacity of political actors and institutions to solve societal problems have been brought forward to explain actual political discontent. Reasons for political disenchantment have also been sought in citizens' changing value systems and rising expectations. Strategic media reports of politics and their focus on strategy, emotion and conflict is another factor that is believed to accelerate political cynicism. (See **Chapter 2** for a full account of the debate).

Different claims have been made about the characters and drivers of politically dissatisfied citizens. On the one hand, dissatisfied citizens have been profiled as a new generation of highly educated democrats longing for more participation in representative democracy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). On the other hand, they have been characterised as average citizens without much ambition for political engagement, who are unsatisfied because of the limited control they have over their political authorities (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). The dissatisfied are also believed to be 'threatened' citizens who live in uncertain socio-economic conditions and demand security and recognition from their political authorities (Van den Brink, 2002, 2007).

In addition, there are different viewpoints on the consequences of political discontent. Some warn that dissatisfaction with representative democracy is spreading and will in due time lead to a crisis of democracy if no action is taken (ROB, 2010). Others are more neutral about the consequences. A negative disposition towards politics or government could make people turn away from politics *or* activate them to participate in all kinds of ways: in elections, in (new) political parties or social/political movements, in demonstrations, by sending letters to newspapers, by taking in discussions on the Internet or by writing hate mails to politicians (Dalton, 2004).

Research approach

In this thesis, I studied Dutch political discontent at the beginning of the 21st century: its objects, explanations and related political behaviour. It is a common theoretical understanding that political support is a multidimensional phenomenon, reaching from abstract support for the national community to concrete support for political authorities or policy (Easton, 1957). I have used this notion to define the concept of political discontent. Drawing upon different theories, I have defined a theoretical model with three distinct types of political discontent[1]:

– Discontent with democratic principles and values
– Discontent with politicians in general and the functioning of political institutions
– Discontent with current government (policies) and incumbent officeholders

Discontent at the level of current government (policy) and incumbent political officeholders may be characterised as personal, volatile and relative. Depending on citizens' personal political preferences, their evaluation of specific governments or policies and specific officeholders may differ. Discontent can be quickly abated by making public apologies, making adjustments to controversial policies, making personal changes in political party leadership or by effecting the resignation of a minister or cabinet. Discontent at the level of political institutions and politicians, on the other hand, may erode citizens' conviction that politicians in general should serve the general interest and should come up with convincing answers to important societal challenges. This so-called 'political cynicism' involves scepticism about politics in general and criticism of the rules of the political game. It is controversial how this type of discontent might relate to behaviour: political cynicism is said to provoke a call for institutional

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1   The theoretical model is discussed in detail in Chapter 2

renewal and political protest behaviour, such as protest voting and demonstrating, but is also said to be related to disinterest, non-voting and alienation from politics. Thirdly, I distinguish discontent with democratic processes, principles and values. As I define it conceptually in this thesis, discontent with democratic values and principles arises when citizens' expectations, values and norms regarding democratic principles and values clash with what is offered in this respect on the side of politics.

Whereas most studies on political trust rely on one specific data source or method, I used a combination of survey research, in-depth interviews and media analysis in this thesis to leverage insights. I exploited the richness of various publicly available survey data on political support to describe trends in the beliefs, values and opinions of Dutch citizens regarding politics and democracy. I conducted twenty in-depth interviews to get a deeper understanding of the individual values and beliefs of the so-called 'politically cynical' citizens in survey studies. The combination of methods allowed me to reveal the subtle gradations of personal discontent, improving our understanding of the objects and the intensity of discontent and related political behaviour. Using the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 (DPES 2010), I examined in detail how different types of political discontent relate to different types of political behaviour. Furthermore, I analysed how political trust and political discontent have been discussed and reflected upon in newspapers and parliamentary documents over several decades, giving yet another perspective on the changing public concern about the political discontent of Dutch citizens. A summary of research questions, data and methods can be found in **Chapter 1** of this thesis.

Summary of research results

What are Dutch citizens (dis)satisfied with in politics, and has the political discontent of Dutch citizens grown over time? In **Chapter 3**, I present an overview of the size and scope of political discontent of Dutch citizens on the basis of publicly available survey research. I used a variation of survey data that contain interesting items for tracing the amount of political support and political discontent of Dutch citizens from the 1970s to the first decade of the 21st century.[2]

The items on political support in various survey studies show there are highs and lows in support for the government (policies) and political officeholders, depending on the moment in time. Sometimes discontent with the government at the time was exceptionally high, as was the case in 2003. However, this severe

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2   These studies are: Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES), European Value Studies (EVS), Cultural Changes (CV SCP), Eurobarometer (EB) and European Survey Studies (ESS).

discontent with the government also ebbed away quickly. As soon as the new cabinet took office and the government crisis was overcome, citizens' trust in government rose again. Survey data also indicate there is substantial cynicism about the morality and competence of politicians and political institutions. However, available survey data do not indicate that such cynicism has clearly grown since the 1970s: citizens' cynicism about politicians and political institutions proves to be substantial but stable over time. The overview of available survey data presented suggests that political discontent in the first decade of the 21st century was not primarily directed at systematic features of the democratic system. The answers to the few survey questions available indicate that Dutch citizens are relatively satisfied with the functioning of the democratic system and highly value the democratic political system as a form of government.

The surveys indicate that political institutions, their procedures and the politicians are regarded with substantial scepticism and distrust, but that this has been the case since the1970s. As a crisis is defined by a sudden instability, it appears inappropriate to define the early 21st century discontent with politicians and institutions as a 'crisis'. How then should we assess this substantial Dutch political cynicism? The available survey results do not provide any specific information about political cynicism, nor do they give us any idea of its sources and intensity. The respondents' motives and arguments for their negative attitudes towards politics remain, for the main part, a black box.

To deepen our understanding of the political discontent of politically cynical citizens, I conducted twenty interviews with politically cynical citizens. In **Chapter 4**, I examine how these citizens perceive Dutch politics. What is their political cynicism about and how intense is it? Political cynics prove to have a wide range of emotions but also specific arguments and judgements about the moral doings of politicians in general. The interviews indicate clear frustration with the morality of the political class in the Netherlands. This type of discontent is rather consistent and comes up in almost every interview: the privileged status and the perceived (financial) self-interest of politicians are the main points of criticism. Occasionally, they criticise aspects of the Dutch consensus democracy. Interviewees are dissatisfied with the fragmentation of political parties and power in parliament and the complications of multi-party governing. However, they do not criticise the collaborative effort that is also specific to consensus democracy. Many interviewees say they are aware that Dutch politics requires negotiation and consensus to tackle problems. Interviewees mention their pride in possessing democratic rights, such as the right to vote. Their criticism of democracy is driven by fear. They are dissatisfied and fearful about

events that took place in the last decade and that, in their minds, amount to a curtailment of democratic freedoms, such as the political assassination of politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and the political assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2005.

The interviewees' stories are in line with theories arguing that citizens do not wish to get involved in politics themselves but most of all want there to be checks and balances to confine a political culture of self-interest and nepotism (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). Theories proclaiming that today's political cynicism is predicated on a wish for greater (direct) democratic control (Norris, 1999) are contradicted. The interviewees' strong feeling of injustice was striking. The interviewees express disapproval of political authorities when their doings are felt to be untrustworthy, undecent, unsympathetic and driven by financial, party or self interests. In what interviewees witness through the media and personal experiences, politics does not live up to their moral standards and expectations. In voicing their criticism, the interviewees inherently project an ideal of trustworthy, decent and sympathetic political authorities seeking the common good. In the stories of the interviewees the political authorities are subjected to high standards and values, that can be described as somewhat 'post-materialistic' (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). The interviewees are satisfied with democratic freedoms and expect free and equal relations of citizens (and the media) with political authorities. Political authorities should set the right example and be irreproachable in all respects.

In this way, the interviewees' criticism can also be interpreted as an indirect plea for greater virtue and more good governance in politics. Although they are negative about politics, virtually all interviewees were satisfied with their lives: they said they were generally happy with the area in which they were living and considered themselves fortunate to be living in a comparatively *well-organised and rich country like the Netherlands'*. Although a single interviewee appeared to feel left behind in society, this is not the dominant picture. The results are in line with results previously found in survey research (SCP, 2007, 2008) indicating that people are happy with their own lives but not happy with the state of politics and society.

The political cynics in survey research proved to differ greatly in the intensity of their negative emotions towards politics. Their personal experience of being treated unfairly by the authorities appeared to have a major impact on their political judgement. The more people felt personally affected or ignored by the political power relationship, the more intense their negative emotions about politics appeared to be. Political interest was another factor that appeared to influence the intensity of interviewees' discontent: interviewees who indicated that politics was important to them were more intensely dissatisfied with politics than those who

indicated that politics did not really interest them. Furthermore, interviewees often referred to the influence of their parents' assessment of politics to explain how they themselves assessed politics.

In **Chapter 5**, I examine how the political discontent of Dutch citizens relates to political behaviour. Is there a relation between different types of political discontent and particular political behaviour? In the first part of this Chapter, I analysed the relation between three different types of political discontent and political behaviour on the basis of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES) 2010. How does government dissatisfaction, cynicism about politicians and political institutions and discontent with democracy as a political system relate to political behaviour? In the second part of this Chapter, I used the results of twenty in-depth interviews with politically cynical citizens to explore the relation between political cynicism and political behaviour at a more profound level. Using the DPES 2010, I examined in detail how different types of political discontent relate to different types of political behaviour. I used statistical analysis[3] to study the relation between three different types of political discontent: discontent with the functioning of the current government, political cynism and discontent with democracy as a form of government and three different forms of political behaviour: non-voting, voting for political parties in parliamentary elections and joining in any type of political action.

Although it is commonly assumed that cynicism about politics may either lead to political alienation or to severe political protest neither the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 nor the interviews with politically cynical citizens, however, indicated any such thing. No clear relation could be found between political discontent and non-voting. No matter how dissatisfied people were with the government, with politics in general or with democracy as a form of government, : the analysis of Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 did not clearly show that politically dissatified citizens abstain from voting in parliamentary elections. The in-depth study of the voting behaviour of politically cynical citizens revealed that even most interviewees with highly cynical views of politics attach great importance to voting in parliamentary elections. No matter how cynical, these citizens also keep up with political events and vote in parliamentary elections. Apart from the occasional protest vote in parliamentary elections, discontent with politics did not drive them into political action.

Also no clear relation can be observed in DPES 2010 between political discontent and political protest behaviour. People who are dissatisfied with gov-

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3   Correlation analysis and ordinal regression procedure.

ernment (policy) do not more than others appear to join in demonstrations, civic actions, or undertake any other type of political action to influence politics, such as contacting politicians or political parties or participating in government meetings or Internet actions. The data in DPES 2010 suggest that severe discontent with politicians and political institutions in general does not mobilise people into taking political action. With two exceptions: political cynicism does seem to relate to involving radio, TV or newspapers in influencing politicians or government. Furthermore, a positive assessment of democracy as the best form of government and 'political action' by indicating to be willing to act against an unjust bill was the only relation that could be found in this respect.

A relation that can be perceived is one between political discontent and specific voting behaviour. The analysis of DPES 2010 indicates that respondents who were satisfied with the government appeared more likely to vote for the main governing party in 2010, the Christian Democratic Party (CDA). Respondents who were dissatisfied with government and who scored higher on political cynicism appeared more likely than others to vote for the Freedom Party (PVV) in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Respondents who scored high on political cynicism, furthermore, also appeared more inclined to vote for the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in 2010. Citizens who were less likely to agree with democracy as the best form of government, furthermore, relatively often voted for the Reformed Party (SGP).

Twenty in-depth interviews with politically cynical citizens confirmed that the vote intention of so-called political cynics did not necessarily diminish: even severe discontent with politics did not induce the interviewees to refrain from voting in elections. On the contrary, the interviewees indicated they found it important to vote. The interviews did not indicate that political cynicism inspires outside opposition or political actions. Engagement in community politics or participation in political protest campaigns varied greatly per person. Some interviewees were or had been very active in their community, but most did not participate at all, neither in traditional forms of political participation nor in political protest activities. The few times interviewees said they had undertaken any political action, such as speaking in on a government meeting, the main motivation and trigger for their political protest action was that the interviewees felt urged to respond because their personal life environment was threatened by local government decisions. The interviews suggested that political discontent did play a role in voting preferences and frequently resulted in protest votes. For instance, interviewees indicated they frequently voted against an unappealing block of left-wing or right-wing parties, against the *political class and established parties'* or

against a specific party or politician. This does not mean the interviewees necessarily voted for so called protest or populist parties. They voted for parties of all political colours.

Political discontent appeared to explain only for a small part why the interviewees voted for a certain party in elections or why they switched votes. As the interviews with political cynics indicated, factors other than discontent with the political establishment also played a role: personal sympathies for particular party leaders and the preference for certain policies may play a role, but also political socialisation.

The control variables included in the analysis showed a clear relation with different types of political discontent. Trusting others proved to be related to satisfaction with government and a low score on political cynicism. Political interest seemed for all related to political cynicism. Respondents who indicated they are very much or somewhat interested in politics significantly scored lower on political cynicism. Also, a low level of education relates to a higher score on political cynicism. The analysis furthermore suggests a relation between a low level of education and disagreeing with democracy as a best form of government. These findings are in line with former research results of others based on surveys (e.g. Dekker, 2006 Adriaansen, 2012). Interestingly, these findings at the same time deviate somewhat from what I found through interviews (**Chapter 4**). The interviews with political cynics showed a certain variation in political interest, education and social trust. Furthermore, political interest for all seemed a motivator for intense political cynicism. These mixed results can add to a fuller empirical understanding of factors influencing political cynicism. Obviously, politically interested citizens are more likely to score low on political cynicism. Within the category of politically cynical citizens, political interest however does seem to be a factor that steers the intensity of the political cynicism, in combination with other influential factors, such as the experience of feeling treated unfairly by governmental or political authorities and the influence of education and political socialisation.

Whereas I dealt with questions of political trust and political discontent through the eyes of Dutch citizens in the other Chapters, I changed perspective in **Chapter 6**. To get hold of the public discussion on political discontent and political trust, I systematically analysed how the citizens' political discontent was discussed and reflected upon in newspapers and parliament over several decades. I described how the subject was reported in newspapers in the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century and how it was discussed in parliament. I compared these findings with the way citizens' political discontent had been portrayed in

previous decades, back to the 1970s. I analysed whether the problem definition, the actors involved and proposed solutions had changed over time and whether an accumulation of attention being paid to the issue of political discontent had taken place.

The newspaper analyses and the parliamentary document analysis together give an overview of how and by whom the issue of political discontent was discussed in major national newspapers and in parliament. In all decades, the newspapers reported criticism of specific politicians or government policies. In comparison to 1970, 1980 or 1990, newspapers and parliament multiplied their public reflections and discussions of the issue in the first decade of the new century. In the first decade of the 21st century, a wide range of actors, politicians, columnists, scholars and newspaper readers regularly mentioned the substantial and growing discontent with politics they perceived or felt. The issue of political discontent was often reflected upon in the context of elections, the electoral success of political newcomers and the perceived crisis of established political parties. The newspapers attempted to assess the state of political trust and political discontent of citizens in their effort to interpret and understand volatile election results. Journalists (and politicians) tried to explain radical electoral shifts. Distrust of politics was used to explain changes in the party landscape and the rise of new political parties. Established parties were urged more than once by journalists to reinvent themselves and restore ties with their traditional voters. My analysis of parliamentary documents from 1995 to 2010 showed that the state of citizens' political trust was also discussed and reflected upon in parliament (albeit only after 2005) several times. The Minister for the Interior twice raised the issue of citizens' waning political trust, and several advisory committees also addressed the issue. The discourse in the parliamentary documents, however, differed from that in the newspaper articles. In the parliamentary documents, the matter was discussed in the context of broad societal developments that were perceived to complicate relations between citizens and politics, urging for democratic renewals and good governance. My analysis of newspaper and parliamentary documents indicates that attention for the issue of political discontent in newspapers has grown clearly since the 1970s and furthermore gives reason to believe that space in opinion pages and columns is increasingly used to give both columnists and readers a starring role to proclaim unseasoned, critical opinions and accounts of the functioning of politics and politicians.

The most important results of this research have been summarised and structured in Table 13 on the next page.

Table 13: Research results

Discontent with democratic principles and values	Ch3: No indications of lacking support for democracy as a form of government, democratic principles and values in survey data. Ch4: Interviews do not suggest waning belief in democratic principles and values but show high expectations of democratic governance. Interviewees occasionally indicate fear of losing democratic rights. Ch5: No relation found between satisfaction with democracy as a form of government and non-voting. Only a very weak relation between being satisfied with democracy and taking political action. Only a weak relation between being dissatisfied with democracy and voting for particular parties. Ch6: Occasionally newspapers suggest that democratic principles and democratic values are waning.
Discontent with politicians in general and the functioning of political institutions	Ch3: Surveys confirm substantial criticism at this level but no sudden crisis. Ch4: Interviews indicate political cynicism varies in intensity. Criticism appears mainly directed at the moral doings of 'the political class'. No indication that political cynicism stems from the desire for more (direct) democratic control. Ch5: A (weak) relation found between political cynicism and non-voting. Hardly any relation found between political cynicism and political action. A (weak) relation found between political cynicism and voting for particular parties. Interviewees say they regularly cast a protest vote. Ch6: Newspaper articles regularly report a 'crisis of politics' and do so increasingly since the 1990s. They warn for waning support of established political parties in the context of elections and the rise and decline of political parties.
Discontent with the current government (policies) and incumbent officeholders	Ch3: Surveys show a dip in government trust and satisfaction around 2003. Since then government trust rose again. Satisfaction with government fluctuates over time. Ch4: Interviews show government satisfaction is highly personal and volatile, depending on political signature and political leaders in office. Citizens evaluate the doings and decisions of individual politicians with a moral eye. Ch5: No relation found between government satisfaction and non-voting. No relation found between government satisfaction and political action. A (weak) relation found between being (dis)satisfied with government and voting for particular parties. Ch6: In all decades since 1970s there was criticism of the government (policies) and specific political authorities and crises. However, the level of attention has increased over time and an increasingly wide range of agents (citizens, journalists, columnists and scholars) report and reflect on the doings of the current government.

Closing reflections

If we reflect on all research results of this thesis – the combination of survey research, in-depth interviews and media analysis – what do we learn about the character and nature of Dutch political discontent?

A kaleidoscopic view

From a methodological point of view I believe the mixed design used in this thesis has produced richer yields than I would have found when relying on one method only. The dissatisfied citizens who were only numbers in survey studies got a voice in the in-depth interviews. They made it possible to put the knowledge obtained in survey studies into perspective. However, had I only relied on in-depth interviews, I would never have been able to consider the stories and arguments of dissatisfied citizens in a broader time frame. For this reason, both the survey analysis and the media analysis proved very useful. The multidimensional conceptualisation of political discontent furthermore proved a useful analytical tool for the analysis of the different objects, layers and gradations of the political discontent of citizens.

The multidimensional research approach gives a kaleidoscopic view, with different perspectives on the character of Dutch political discontent in the first decade of the 21th century. The picture we get from Dutch political discontent turns out differently in newspapers, parliamentary documents, survey studies and the stories of dissatisfied citizens. The picture and character of political discontent thus appears to be dependent on the context one studies. Newspaper articles suggest that political discontent in the Netherlands is on the rise. They generally frame political discontent and political crisis in the context of elections; as a means to explain the electoral losses of some established political parties and the success of some political newcomers. Survey research and in-depth interviews indicate there is substantial discontent with the doings of the political class but counter the idea of a sudden crisis.

Interviews with political cynics do not indicate massive criticism of democratic principles and values. Rather than showing their dislike with the way Dutch democracy operates, interviewees emphasise their attachment to democratic rights and freedoms. Nevertheless, this research has also shown that the knowledge about citizens' support for democratic principles and values is still limited. Future research could in more detail explore how substantial democratic support is, what norms and expectations deserve to be attended to and how this varies in different types of contemporary democracies.

This research indicates that politically cynical citizens show few signs of outspoken political protest behaviour or political alienation. Their political behaviour appears to be in line with what is traditionally expected of citizens in a representative democracy such as the Netherlands: to vote in elections, to occasionally throw a protest vote and to monitor the actions and doings of the political authorities. Additional research on more data, using different survey studies and different time points, could be useful to place these findings in a broader perspective. Interesting questions remain. Could the finding that Dutch citizens tend to ordinary political behaviour, no matter if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with politics, for instance be specific for the Netherlands? In the consensus democracy of the Netherlands with its strong emphasis on proportional representation, it might well be that Dutch citizens feel they have sufficient possibilities to voice their discontent. As small political parties and political newcomers in the specific electoral system of the Netherlands can comparatively easily enter parliament, dissatisfied citizens may not have to turn to other than electoral methods to express their concern and critique. Could it perhaps be that due to these specific characteristics of Dutch consensus democracy, dissatisfied citizens may not feel inclined to use other means than their vote to protest? This is an interesting question for further examination.

An ethical perspective

In-depth interviews proved valuable in revealing an often unheard moral perspective. Politicians are assumed to be *'living in another world'*, in which they can count on special arrangements and do not feel the effects of their own political decisions. Ideally, from a citizens' perspective, politicians should virtuously watch over those who are not well off and are expected to ensure a fair society, search for the common good and fair (re)distribution, look after the less fortunate and ensure equal treatment of all citizens. Citizens' stories stress that politicians and political parties should treat one another with personal respect. Even if they disagree, they are expected to keep an open mind, be courteous and show empathy and willingness to compromise for the common good. Furthermore, politicians are expected to communicate with citizens in a comprehensible, open and honest way and inform citizens about the results of their policy decisions and policy actions. In sum, citizens expect politicians in their positions of power to set an example for others with regard to standards of moral behaviour. On the other hand, privileges attendant upon political status are neither tolerated nor accepted. The political authorities are subjected to high standards and values, that indeed can be described as somewhat 'post-materialistic' (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Citizens value and expect free and equal relations of citizens (and the media) with political authorities. Political authorities should set the right example and be irreproachable in all respects.

The interviews with dissatisfied citizens bring insights, but also raise new questions. Are political authorities, for instance, sufficiently aware of this moral evaluation of citizens that judges them twice as hard because of their perceived exceptional status? To what extent do political authorities know the ethical opinions of citizens and can they take them into account, for instance in political communication and in the selection, recruitment and education of politicians?

I believe the ethical dimension still receives little attention in scientific discussions around political cynicism and political distrust. Not much in-depth knowledge is available of the existence, working and privileges of the Dutch political class. Research into political trust and distrust does not readily investigate the moral dimension of citizens' criticism of Dutch politics. Studies currently available look at perceived integrity[4], good governance and the implementation of integrity policies in government[5], or trends in the (educational) background of Dutch parliamentarians (Bovens and Wille, 2010). However, no research is available on how privileged Dutch political authorities really are, and how their position compares to political authorities in comparative consensus democracies such as the Netherlands. Nor are any studies available on how lucrative a career in Dutch politics really is to deny or corroborate the cynical yet popular idea that politicians are in it for the money. Also, only little empirical research is available that systematically studies the way former and actual (Dutch) political authorities handle the moral dilemmas (and privileges) that are bound up with their power position. These offer interesting venues for further research on the 'supply side' of politics.

It remains an interesting question to what extent the character of the actual political discontent in a contemporary democracy such as the Netherlands is shaped by specific systematic features. Both the survey data and the interviews used in this research give us no reason to believe that Dutch citizens have become averse towards political negotiation and coalition processes, as has been suggested by Andeweg & Thomassen (2011), Van Wessel (2010) and Hendriks (2009). Interviewees in general understood very well that political negotiation and compro-

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4   The Netherlands, for instance, consistently scores high on the international rankings of democracy, political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2012). The Freedom in the World reports and the Freedom House country status ratings show that the Netherlands has always had a maximum freedom rating since 1973 (source: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world).

5   See www.integriteitoverheid.nl. The focus of The National Integrity Office is improving integrity in public and political office, for instance by facilitating the use of a code of good governance in public organisations and by stimulating research and providing training and education in ethics and integrity.

mises are sometimes necessary to reach a political outcome. The critique on the fragmentation of politics and political parties (found in both Dutch newspaper articles and interviews) can on the other hand easily be read as a critique on the downsides of the Dutch electoral system of proportionality, in which many (and according to some too many) new political parties can easily enter the political arena.

The moral critique on the doings of Dutch political authorities (found as a dominant critique in interviews) can be interpreted not so much as a critique on Dutch consensus democracy, but as a critique that is bound up with representative party democracy in general. In every representative party political authorities struggle with dilemmas that are inherent to their representative power position. Furthermore, in every representative party democracy political appointments take place, as political parties take care of their people as soon as they leave national politics. It remains an interesting question how the character and amount of citizens' political discontent varies in different types of democracies, as structural elements in the political institution of democracy may effect what type of critique prevails. It is for instance a plausible idea that countries containing more direct elements of democracy (such as a chosen mayor) know less critique regarding political appointments.

The dominant moral critique on the doings of political authorities can above all be reflected on as an expression of how the norms, values and expectations of Dutch citizens have changed over time. This has, I believe, not so much to do with the specific Dutch political structure, but with (changes in) Dutch political culture. Class differences and positions of privilege are accepted less openly and it is a plausible idea that as democratization and emancipation progressed in the Netherlands, this has had its effect on how political authorities are judged. Illustrative is how special income, expenses, benefits and pension arrangements, originating from the 1960s to make the political office accessible and interesting are slowly being contained or abolished. Notable in this respect are the changes that were set in motion by the Dijkstal committee in 2004, which made recommendations on the financial and legal positions of those at the top of political and civil office. Redundancy schemes for politicians in office have been increasingly restricted.[6] Also the awareness of ethical and integrity questions in government and politics is gradually

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6   Income and special expenses arrangements are regulated in documents on the legal status of political officeholders. The rules on pension and allowances arrangements have been laid down in APPA. See details in reports of the Ministry of the Interior, such as 'Wat betekent 'Dijkstal' voor u? Een overzicht van de veranderingen in de rechtspositie van politieke ambtsdragers van provincies, gemeenten en waterschappen'. See also: 'Sollicitatieplicht en outplacement voor politieke ambtsdragers'.

growing.[7] Although the financial privileges of political authorities have been increasingly restricted, the standards remain high: political authorities are expected to set an example in all respects. The importance of political ethics might indirectly also be interpreted as a side-effect of a wider process of secularisation. Although for many Dutch people religious saints have lost their relevance in setting standards of moral conduct, the need for exemplars of political virtue and moral behaviour has obviously remained alive. This is not surprising if one recalls that, in popular culture, this message is continuously repeated in TV shows, films, magazines and books. Interesting questions thus remain. To what extent is the character of the political discontent of citizens in contemporary democracies shaped by (the pace of) cultural processes, such as emancipation and secularisation or by the development of systemic features of democracy?

Some results of this research remain puzzling and difficult to interpret. An interesting remaining puzzle is the discrepancy I found between the widespread support for forms of direct democracy in survey research (**Chapter 3**) and the low support of interviewees for introducing democratic renewals, such as referenda (**Chapter 4**). Obviously, citizens who support direct forms of democracy in surveys want something else than what the Dutch democratic system offers them now. It is however interesting that in interviews, dissatisfied citizens attach more meaning to ethics and integrity of responsive and goal-getting political representatives than to more direct popular influence in politics. How these specific research results relate to each other remains an interesting question for further resesarch. Do citizens perhaps not attach as much meaning to direct participation as the answers to the survey questions on democratic renewals suggest? Might other (non cynical) citizens perhaps have very specific ideas and desires with respect to direct political participation?

At the beginning of the 21th century newspaper articles regularly warn for a crisis of political parties and a crisis of the political establishment. The perceived crisis is mentioned in the context of elections in which established parties are seen to lose support and political newcomers seem to win. The impact of both switching and protest voting behaviour is worthwhile to reflect on in more detail, as newspaper journalists are not alone in perceiving a crisis of established politics. Van der Meer

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7   The National Integrity Office, for instance, is devoted specifically to facilitating knowledge development and training of public and political authorities on integrity and ethical dilemmas See www.integriteitoverheid.nl The focus of The National Integrity Office is improving integrity in public and political office, for instance by facilitating the use of a code of good governance in public organisations and by providing training and education in ethics and integrity.

et al. (2012) for example also perceive a Dutch crisis of established political parties. They (and also others, see for instance Aarts *et al.*, 2006) observe an exceptional volatility in elections in the Netherlands. Indeed, only a look at the election results suffices to see that in almost all parliamentary elections in the first decade of the 21th century Dutch voters could prove very receptive to the promises of political newcomers. In the elections of 2002 the newcomer LPF won 26 seats in parliament out of nothing and in 2010 the newcomer PVV won 15 seats in parliament. The support for other (established) political parties proved highly volatile. Their amount of seats could change drastically, depending on the moment. The social democratic party (PvdA) for instance lost 22 seats in parliamentary seats in 2002, but won 19 seats in the elections 2003. The Christian Democratic party (CDA) won 14 seats in 2002, but lost 20 seats in 2010. A negative effect of the electoral volatility is thought to be the fragmentation of the political landscape and the difficulties to build and contain steady government coalitions in such a volatile environment. There are indeed indications of instable political governing coalitions in the Netherlands, as not one cabinet in the first decade of the 21th century served its full duty and the amount of cabinet crises in the first decade of the 21th century are exceptional in Dutch political history. This research has only indirectly touched upon the topic of volatile elections, looking into the relation of political discontent and political behaviour on an individual level. My analysis indicated that dissatisfied citizens (like other citizens) switch votes regularly and occasionally throw a protest vote. Van der Meer *et al.* (2012) in this respect indicate Dutch voters have become not fickle, but self-confident, critical voters, who knowingly choose between a range of parties in the left or right block. Interesting question for further research is what the effects of volatile elections are. What impact does switching and protest-voting for instance have on the mentality and performance of political governing coalitions in contemporary democracies as the Netherlands?

Another remaining question is how we can relate the findings of this study to existing research findings on medialogic in the Netherlands. My analysis of newspaper and parliamentary documents indicates that attention for the issue of political discontent in newspapers has grown clearly since the 1970s and furthermore gives reason to believe that space in opinion pages and columns is increasingly used to give both columnists and readers a starring role to proclaim unseasoned, critical opinions and accounts of the functioning of politics and politicians. It is an interesting question what the role of opinion-makers is in this 'republic of opinions'. They obviously take different roles. Sometimes columnists and opinion-makers take a detached position, reflecting from the sidelines on the political changes, struggles and crises they perceive. Sometimes, however, opinion-makers feel free to act as mood-makers, using their columns as megaphones to cry criticism, believing

that it is their role to revolt against authorities and represent a broader citizens' perspective.

This tendency was also described by De Beus and Elchardus, who claimed that popular representation, attention and confidence of the public in media compete with members of parliament and the government in representing the latent demands and opinions of ordinary people (Elchardus, 2002, De Beus, 2011). However, research during the campaigns of 1998 to 2012 parliamentary elections, counters the idea of an increasing 'medialogic' in the Netherlands. Dutch newspapers over time relatively paid less attention to individual politicians, paid more attention to content than to conflicts or 'racing news' and became relatively more positive in the tone of their political reporting, especially after 2002 (Kleinnijenhuis and Scholten, 2007). Furthermore, the fragmentation of the media market in the Netherlands does not self-evidently have a negative effect on political trust (Arbaoui & Van Praag jr. and Van der Brug, 2013). As the design of this study of newspaper and parliamentary attention is limited in size and design, more than one question for further research remains. Will the detected patterns of growing attention for the issue of political discontent and the changes in newspaper-reporting be confirmed or rejected when repeated during campaign, with a more comprehensive and detailed search strategy and when applied to different types of media, such as Internet and television reporting? As my newspaper analysis suggests that space in opinion pages and columns is increasingly used to criticize the functioning of politics and politicians, I would not be surprised if another (less positive) picture of political news-reporting might arise, when in the study of medialogic also columns, readers letters and opinion articles would be included in the analysis.

One might say that Dutch politicians could respond to Dutch citizens' call for moral justification by securing good governance in day-to-day practice and by conveying virtue in political communication. Although the value of political communication is acknowledged widely in the world of politics and government – with increasing numbers of press officers, journalists and communication managers to prove it – I believe responding to citizens' call for moral leadership involves quite a challenge. Consistent conveying moral justifications of why and how decisions and policies are made would drastically alter the style and the substance of most political statements. This forces politicians to explain consistently what the moral justification behind political decisions is. Interesting research questions lie in the field of political communication: How should politicians and governments communicate with citizens to (re)gain political trust? What are communication strategies that work? If we follow the line of reasoning of the critical citizens I spoke to during this research, politicians could do more to make explicit how and why they believe decisions are equal and just. More than they are already doing, politicians can

communicate the most important values and virtues they pursue. If, for instance, fair and equal treatment is a core value for a politician, this should be explicated consistently, both in personal stories and in political decisions. Why is this of such great importance and to whom? Why would this make for a better society? And how does this show in concrete political decisions and policies that come within the compass of their responsibility? Taking into account the moral dimension does not necessarily mean that politicians should provide more information or transparency on technical details of the policymaking process and political decisions. It implies, above all, another emphasis to political communication: less emphasis on technocratic elements and more on personal norms and values that drive and explain policy decisions and conduct. Interesting in this respect is the recent research on the effects of personalisation of political communication, that indicates that a larger emphasis on the personal life of politicians has a positive effect on engaging cynical citizens (Achterberg and Houtman, 2013).

To conclude, this thesis has no easy message or solution. It will not be easy for politicians to live up to the ideal expected of them by dissatisfied citizens. Standards are high and politicians in their positions of power and privilege are judged severely. Not acknowledging the moral dimension in citizens' expectations will serve to maintain a cycle of discontent as the Dutch citizens' standards towards political authorities are not likely to change. Political authorities and political parties can anticipate on the moral judgement of dissatisfied citizens by providing public attention to the ethics of their profession in their performance, recruitment and training. They can publicly reflect on their own position and privileges, they could investigate and decide whether and in what way modernisation of the position of political authorities is necessary. Furthermore, politicians and political parties can respond to citizens' demands by emphasising the moral dimension of their work and by communicating the political virtues that are important to them in their actions and decision-making.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table 14: Dutch Political parties in parliament between 2006-2010

Dutch name	English name	Abb.
Christelijk Democratisch Appel	Christian Democratic Party	CDA
Partij van de Arbeid	Labour Party	PvdA
Volkspartij voor Democratie en Vrijheid	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	VVD
GroenLinks	GreenLeft	GL
Democraten '66	Democrats '66	D66
Socialistische Partij	Socialist Party	SP
Partij voor de Dieren	Party for the Animals	PvdD
Partij voor de Vrijheid	Freedom Party	PvdV
Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	Reformed Party	SGP
ChristenUnie	ChristianUnion	CU

Appendix B

Consent form interview

Universiteit van Tilburg,
Tilburgse School voor Politiek en Bestuur (tspb)
In samenwerking met tns nipo

Onderzoek naar politieke onvrede in Nederland

1. Wat is de doel van het onderzoek?
Dit onderzoek heeft als doel om meer te weten te komen over hoe Nederlanders tegen de politiek aankijken. Het onderzoek maakt onderdeel uit van een groter (promotie)onderzoek aan de Universiteit van Tilburg naar de politieke onvrede van burgers in Nederland aan het begin van de 21e eeuw. We hopen meer te weten te komen over de betekenis van politiek in het denken en dagelijks leven van mensen, hoe mensen politiek evalueren, waar ze wel en waar niet ontevreden over zijn en waarom dat zo is.

2. Over de selectie
We interviewen ongeveer 25 mensen. Deze mensen zijn geselecteerd uit het tns nipo panel om aan het onderzoek mee te doen.

3. Wat er gevraagd wordt van de geïnterviewde
Deelname aan het interview houdt in een gesprek van circa anderhalf uur bij u thuis. Het interview wordt opgenomen met een taperecorder. Delen van het gesprek worden uitgeschreven voor gebruik in het onderzoek.

4. Toegang tot het interviewmateriaal en vertrouwelijkheid
Het gesprek wordt afgenomen door Mevrouw C. Brons van Universiteit Tilburg.

Alleen zij en hoogleraar G. Van den Brink en hoogleraar F. Hendriks hebben toegang tot de opnames en transcripties van het interview. Deelname aan het interview is vrijwillig. In publicaties die volgen uit het onderzoek zal persoonlijke informatie zoals uw naam geanonimiseerd worden.

5. Wat er gepubliceerd wordt
Resultaten uit deze studie zullen verwerkt worden in een proefschrift over de politieke onvrede van burgers aan het begin van de 21^e eeuw. Daarnaast zullen resultaten mogelijk gebruikt worden in artikelen. Meer informatie over het onderzoek is verkrijgbaar bij C. Brons.

6. Vergoeding voor het gesprek
Als dank voor uw bijdrage aan dit onderzoek ontvangt u na afloop van het gesprek een vergoeding van €30,- (in de vorm van cadeaubonnen).

Claartje Brons, Onderzoeker   Respondent:

....

Datum:

....

Appendix C

Interview format used (in Dutch)

Introductie

Dit interview is er op gericht om te onderzoeken hoe mensen tegen de politiek aankijken, hoe ze deze beoordelen en evalueren. Het maakt onderdeel uit van een groter onderzoek aan de Universiteit van Tilburg naar de tevredenheid en ontevredenheid van burgers over de politiek aan het begin van de 21e eeuw.

1: persoonlijke context
Kunt u me eerst iets vertellen over hoe uw leven eruit ziet? Wat is daarin belangrijk en wat zijn daarin de belangrijkste activiteiten?

Vbb...
– Gezinssituatie?
– Werk?
– Vrienden? Hobby's?
– Mantelzorg/vrijwilligerswerk?

2: Plek politiek in dagelijks leven/ Betrokkenheid bij de politiek
Welke plek neemt politiek in uw leven in? Praat of leest u erover, of juist niet? Of bent u misschien op de een of andere manier politiek of maatschappelijk actief? En uw omgeving?

Vbb:
– Praat u over politiek? Hoeveel (elke dag tot bijna nooit) en met wie?
– Leest u over politiek in kranten? Welke kranten?
– Kijkt u naar nieuwsprogramma's op TV? Welke programma's?

- Volgt u de politiek op internet? Welke internetsites?
- Bent u politiek actief? Op welke manier?
- Stemmen bij verkiezingen
- Lid politieke partij/ actief partijlid
- Deelname demonstraties
- Tekenen van manifesten/internetacties
- Deelname aan boycotts
- Anders, namelijk...

3: Oordeel over politiek
Als ik u vraag naar hoe u aankijkt tegen de politiek, waar denkt u dan in eerste instantie aan bij 'politiek'?

Wat betekent politiek voor u?

Bent u even positief of negatief over al die dingen waaraan u denkt bij 'politiek' of maakt u een duidelijk onderscheid in waar u tevreden en waar ontevreden over bent?

4: Negatief oordeel politiek
Kunt u zo gedetailleerd mogelijk aangeven waar u ontevreden over bent in de politiek? (open vraag).

Doorvragen op genoemde voorbeelden:

Vraag om de laatste keer te beschrijven dat men hier ontevreden over was.
Wanneer en waar was dat? Wat gebeurde er toen? Wat voor gevoelens riep dat op?
Wat deed de respondent vervolgens? Wat deed de omgeving?

Kunt u zich herinneren wanneer u voor het eerst, wat deed u toen, waarin is die situatie anders dan eerder? gevoelens, intensiteit...

Vbb:
- De nationale politiek
- Regering
- Parlement
- Politieke partijen (kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een politieke partij(en) waar u zich in herkent?)
- Politici (kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een politieke partij(en) waar u zich in herkent?)
- Een specifieke politicus

– Overheid
– Gemeentepolitiek

5: Positief oordeel politiek
Kunt u zo gedetailleerd mogelijk aangeven waar u tevreden over bent of trots in de
politiek? (open vraag).

Doorvragen op genoemde voorbeelden:

Vraag om de laatste keer te beschrijven dat men hier tevreden over was.
Wanneer en waar was dat? Wat gebeurde er toen? Wat voor gevoelens riep dat op?
Wat deed de respondent vervolgens? Wat deed de omgeving?

Kunt u zich herinneren wanneer u voor het eerst, wat deed u toen, waarin is die
situatie anders dan eerder? gevoelens, intensiteit...

6. Proces oordeel politiek
Kunt u gebeurtenissen in uw leven voor de geest halen die beinvloeden of hebben
beinvloed hoe u tegen de politiek aankijkt? Kunt u me die situatie beschrijven?
Wat gebeurde er? Wat deed u vervolgens?

7: Impact tevredenheid/ontevredenheid over politiek op gedrag

Zorgt hoe u denkt over de politiek ervoor dat u bepaalde dingen wel of niet doet?
Heeft u wel eens iets op een bepaalde manier gedaan of gelaten vanwege hoe u
tegen de politiek aankijkt? Wanneer en hoe gebeurde dat?

vbb:
– wel of niet stemmen,
– wel of niet lid zijn van een politieke partij
– wel of niet demonstreren
– ...

8: Oplossingsrichtingen

In hoeverre is politieke onvrede van burgers volgens u een maatschappelijk pro-
bleem dat opgelost zou moeten worden?

Wat zou ervoor moeten gebeuren om uw tevredenheid met de politiek te ver-
groten?

Als dit niet ter sprake wordt gebracht zelf ook vragen naar:
– Meer directe democratie?
– Referenda
– Gekozen Minister President/Gekozen Burgemeester
– Ander poltiek stelsel: Twee partijen stelsel

9: Poltiek en democratie
In hoeverre betekent uw oordeel over de politiek iets over hoe u democratie/democratische vrijheden beoordeelt?

Hoe tevreden bent u met de democratie?

10: Vergeten zaken
Zijn er nog andere dingen die in dit gesprek niet aan de orde zijn gekomen, maar die u graag nog zou willen opmerken?

Appendix D

Original text of parts of the interviews used in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 (in order of appearance)

The audiovisual data and transcriptions of the interviews are available for further research and stored in DANS data archive.

Chapter 4:

"Gewone mensen hebben te maken met een uitkeringen en ww, maar dat geldt niet voor politici."

"Vriendjespolitiek. Als je er uit gegooid wordt kan je nog burgemeester hier of daar worden. Die van de Partij van de Arbeid hebben allemaal leuke baantjes. En die trut van het CDA is nou commisaris van Drenthe geworden. Maar ik bedoel dat is allemaal handjeklap. En ze hebben een leuk salaris. Ik kan je een lijst laten zien met wat ze allemaal verdienen. Ik begrijp trouwens ook niet dat ze in de regering gaan zitten. Dat levert maar 120.000 euro per jaar op. Er zijn veel lucratievere baantjes. Wat denk je van de Partij van de Arbeid. Bos. Nou heb het leuk gedaan. Wat denk je van Femke Halsema? Ze had al een baantje in de Universiteit voor 3 dagen voor een paar ton. Nou, dat is toch prachtig? Het is toch wel lekker. Ik zou het ook doen hoor."

"Politici zouden niet zulke stomme dingen moeten zeggen over de minima. Dat ze dit of dat kunnen. Hun zitten lekker op het pluche. Ze zijn niet van deze wereld. Weten echt niet wat er speelt. Ik wil nog zien als hij van 900 euro rond moet komen. Redt hij echt niet hoor. Die van de VVD. Ze hebben geen flauw idee. En dat is logisch als je jaren achter elkaar dik 120.000 euro verdient. Dan weet je toch niet meer hoe de gewone

man leeft. Dat interesseert je toch ook niet. Ze zijn allemaal goed gestudeerd en alles. Ze moeten zich eens inbeelden hoe een minima leeft om met die paar centen rond te komen en dan nog wat extra's te kunnen doen."

"De beslissingen die zijn genomen in Den Haag toentertijd zijn natuurlijk onrealistisch, want kunnen hun dat niet zelf betalen? De ministers verdienen zoveel per jaar. Laten ze een deel van hun salaris apart leggen om... Laat hun het anders wat minder nemen. Laat hun een stapje terug zetten. Ze verdienen met zijn allen toch genoeg in Den Haag. Dat hoor je ook van heel veel mensen hè. Als je met ze praat. Er zit daar een soort rijkelui die heel rijk zijn en die bepalen wat wij wel en niet moeten doen. Kijk maar naar die Europarlementariërs en ook in Den Haag zitten er diversen die hoeven niets te doen. Want alles wordt hun aangereikt. En de zorg. Ik heb wel eens een stukje gezien op TV. Dat ging toen over de verandering in de zorgverzekeringen. Er waren zelfs parlementariërs die kregen een automatische zorgverzekering. Gratis. Ze kregen er wel drie aangeboden. Gratis. Hoefden ze niets voor te betalen. Die mensen verdienen al zo veel geld. Waarom moeten ze dan ook nog eens zulk soort voordeeltjes krijgen? Want ja, ik hoef dat niet te verwachten. Ik denk dat je dat zelf ook hebt. Dat je toch voor alles gewoon moet betalen. Dat zie je. Dat merk je ook bij de mensen he."

"Het erge vind ik dat ze zich in allerlei bochten wringen om hun ongelijk maar niet hoeven toe te geven. Ik denk wat is dat voor grootheidswaan? Voor kul? Als burgers er achter komen dat iets niet in orde is dan moet je op je beslissing terug kunnen komen. Dan moet je niet zeggen dat hebben we besloten in onze almachtige wijsheid! Dat is de conclusie die ik daaruit trek!"

"Dan zie je een Lubbers opeens zielig doen. Die begint in de achterban te brullen. Dan zeggen ze je moet geen PVV stemmen, beginnen ze te betuttelen. Voor mij ben je een kerel als je zegt jongens we hebben het fout gedaan. We hebben verloren. We zitten in de put. We hebben een heleboel fouten gemaakt zowel in het groot als het klein. Ten aanzien van het buitenland hebben we ook geen fraaie rol gespeeld. Afghanistan. Moet je niet meedoen. Moet je wegblijven. En dan maar naar Wilders smijten. Nu geef ik toe. Wilders is iemand die wel uitlokt dat er naar gesmeten wordt, maar dat moet je niet doen. Daarom zeg ik: ik vind het een rommeltje. En na heel veel voorbereiding hebben we nu een kabinet en dan blijven ze nog maar trappen. Neem bijvoorbeeld dat congres van links. Dat meneer Cohen zijn lotgenoten heeft opgetrommeld en heeft gezegd nu gaan we allemaal samen. En we moeten en we zullen PVV ten val brengen. Nee dat moet je niet. Je moet regeren. Je moet die fouten herstellen die je toen gemaakt hebt. Ja de PVV is goedkoop. Maar het is wel zo dat een heleboel mensen van naam op die PVV hebben gestemd. Die zijn toch niet achterlijk. Maar daar wordt helemaal niet over

*gepraat. Nee, schelden. Wroeten in hun verleden. Het is ook niet goed te praten wat
ze daar uithalen. Maar jongens. Je moet nu regeren. We moeten nu vooruit. Wat doet
iemand als ie een vakman is? Dan zegt hij sorry, ik heb het fout gedaan. Dus kunnen
we dit herstellen. Of nou ja. Maar dit is een zielige vertoning. Het toont ook aan hoe
goedkoop deze mensen zijn. Want schelden op een ander is makkelijk. Dat is je verlies
erkennen."*

*"Nu is er weer een partij bij. De Ouderenpartij. Ik denk wel eens hoeveel tijd brengen
ze nou in de Kamer zoet met. Als ze een onderwerp hebben en er moet over gediscussi-
eerd worden dan moet iedere partij zijn zegje hebben. Ik heb het wel eens uitgerekend.
Als je nou 4 partijen hebt en ieder krijgt een kwartier dan zit je op een uur. Maar als
je 20 partijen hebt dan ben je wel een halve dag bezig en ben je nog geen stap verder.
Dan heb je zoveel meningen gehoord, ben je er ook geen stap verder mee. En men geeft
te weinig macht aan de mensen die op bepaalde posten zitten. Men is te snel van er
moeten regeltjes komen. Er moeten wetten komen. Hij moet niet teveel te babbelen
krijgen in dit of dat onderwerp."*

*"Zoals met de huizenmarkt en Afghanistan, waarom? Dat snap ik niet. Ik vind dat
we hier ook wel meer veiligheid mogen hebben. Ik vind dat we hier ook wel meer veilig-
heid moeten hebben. Hier is toch ook dreiging van terreur. Dan hebben we die militai-
ren toch zelf nodig en niet in Afghanistan. Hier is ook wat, gebeurt ook wat."*

*"Het zijn allemaal zulke onrechtvaardige maatregelen die er zijn. Wat er allemaal
duurder wordt en hoe meer je verdient hoe meer je omhoog gaat. En alles ten koste van
de oude mensen, die ervoor gezorgd hebben dat jij het goed hebt."*

*"Hier hebben ze bijvoorbeeld verschillende dealers opgepakt. Die staan gewoon weer
op straat. Die hebben hier nog een kast van een huis. Dan denk ik dat klopt niet. Moet
ik dat ook gaan doen? Kan ik ook een kast van een huis kopen. Kan ik even gaan zitten
en that's it. Dat snap ik echt niet. Daar ben ik echt heel ontevreden over."*

*"Nu politie agenten moeten ze massaal uitrukken. Ze worden belaagd. En vaak is er
geen politie. Of ze staan op een verkeerde plek boetes uit te schrijven of te flitsen. Dat
soort. Het hele politie apparaat. We hebben bescherming nodig toch in de samenleving
en die bescherming is verschoven. Er is veel minder bescherming gekomen, maar er
is wel het innen van boetes. Als je op de snelweg rijdt weet je dat je niet te hard moet
rijden want dan zit er weer zo'n kerel op je."*

*"Politiek is een toneelstuk. En de meesten zijn zakkenvullers. Zoals Marcel van
Dam en nog meer van die jongens he. Meneer Kok. Grote mond dat ze zogenaamd*

voor de arbeiders zijn maar als het puntje bij het paaltje komt dan zijn hun zakken zo groot en daar past heel wat in. Als ik er zelf zou zitten zou ik het misschien ook doen. Misschien. Ik begrijp het wel. Keur het niet goed. Misselijkmakend vind ik het. Ik denk dat 75% van de politici zo is. De anderen zijn het nog uit overtuiging misschien."

Interviewer: Als ik jou de stelling voorleg "Politici en politieke partijen zijn allemaal uit op hun eigenbelang?"

"Dat hoop ik en denk ik niet nee. Welk eigenbelang zouden ze daarbij hebben? Nee, mijn beeld zegt van niet. Nee. Tuurlijk zijn er ook mensen die voor vier jaar en als ze eruitgekickt worden hebben ze wachtgeld. Maar ik hoop niet dat mensen daarom de politiek ingegaan zijn. Ik verwacht dat iemand als hij de politiek ingaat dat hij ideaalbeelden heeft waar hij het voor wil doen. Niet zomaar. Het lijkt me ook geen pretje om al die tijd in die Tweede Kamer te moeten zitten. Het is geen 9 tot 5 baan natuurlijk."

Interviewer: "En dat politieke partijen en politici open staan voor de mening van mensen zoals jij en ik?"

"Ja, dat denk ik wel dat dat gebeurt. Laatst nog iemand in de Tweede Kamer voor zorg en welzijn die met een arts ging praten een oncoloog, een chemo arts, die vroeg van wat kost een kankerpatiënt nu. Aan dat soort dingen zie je wel dat ze geïnteresseerd zijn in hoe, wat en waar kan je verbeteren. En met de verkiezingen zie je dat natuurlijk wel altijd. Dan denk ik wel: ook de rest van het jaar op straat lopen. Niet alleen maar dan."

"Als ik die kop van Rutte zie word ik al misselijk. Alleen zijn uiterlijk al. Die gluiperige smoel."

"Het is niet mijn nummer 1. Ik maak me er niet zo druk over. Ik kan me er wel druk over maken, maar ik weet wel dat als ik me er druk over maak, dat er dan niets verandert. Je moet het zo zien. Met verkiezingen kies je ergens voor en als het niet in jouw richting is, ja. Je kan je er boos over maken, maar het helpt natuurlijk niet. Je kan het niet veranderen. Ik heb het goed, verder niet."

"Maar na die periode nu vijf jaar geleden is dat wat veranderd. Ik heb dat wat meer naast me neergelegd. Want ja, ik heb nu zoiets van we leven elke dag. Ik heb alles. Daar zijn we gelukkig mee. En daar houden we het bij. Dat is belangrijk. Ik maak me wat minder druk over dingen. Ik ben opgegroeid met onrechtvaardigheid en al-

tijd strijden daarvoor. Maar dat heb ik niet meer zo. De strijd. Ik zie er het nut niet meer zo van in. Ik zie ook dat als je zo bent is dat je ook vaak mensen ongelukkig maakt. Omdat je op een gegeven moment te erg gaat worden. Wat is de belangrijkheid ervan om je zo druk te maken over onrechtvaardigheden terwijl je leven zo maar in een zucht over kan zijn? Dat hebben wij toen gezien. Ik maak me tegenwoordig er niet meer zo druk om. Vroeger kon ik echt boos worden erom. Dan kon ik echt... Vroeger was ik vrij heftig. Dat zal wel in de opvoeding zitten. Heb ik geleerd om te relativeren. Om me niet zo druk te maken om dingen. En om wat ik meegemaakt heb. Voor mij zijn daar heel veel leermomenten geweest de afgelopen jaren om wat rustiger te worden. En dat zal bij de politiek ook wel meespelen. Laat maar waaien. Komt wel weer eens goed."

"Ik ben op een leeftijd aangekomen dat ik een beetje blasé geworden ben (steekt een middelvinger op). Dat je denkt: bekijk het even. Want jullie nemen mij niet serieus. Waarom zou ik jullie serieus nemen? Echt waar. Ik ben dit jaar alleen nog stemmen geweest omdat het er om ging. Anders was ik niet eens meer gegaan. Zo ver ben ik ongeveer. Want, je wordt aan alle kanten genaaid...Misschien is niet de politiek veranderd maar mijn inzicht in de politiek in de loop der jaren. Je wordt wat ouder, je krijgt inzichten, levenservaring, misschien is het dat ook wel. Misschien is het altijd wel een klerezooitje geweest in de politiek en een achterbaks gedoe en heb ik dat toen ik jong was door mijn idealen niet willen zien. Dat kan natuurlijk ook."

"Ik wil me niet nog kwaaier maken. Ik ben als een ooievaar die zijn kop in het zand steekt. Ik wil het niet meer allemaal weten wat er allemaal gebeurt. Het zijn allemaal zulke onrechtvaardige maatregelen die er zijn...Ik ben juist niet meer kritisch. Ik ben nu juist helemaal gedemotiveerd."

Interviewer: Welke plek heeft politiek in jouw leven?

"Weinig, tot de verkiezingen. Dan houd ik me er bewust mee bezig. Soms als er wat gebeurt, maar ik ben niet dagelijks met politiek bezig. Het heeft niet een enorme interesse. Ja op het moment dat het nodig is. Zoals bij verkiezingen kijken we de avond van te voren verkiezingen, maar eh ik ga niet het vragenuurtje zitten te kijken. Meestal wel het nieuws, 1 of 2 keer per dag nu.nl en nu met die brand doe je dat meer. Het boeit pas als het belangrijk is. Iedereen moet doen waar hij goed in is. Dat doen zij dus. Zolang het land geregeerd wordt en niet zoals in Zuid Afrika we opeens 2 presidenten moeten hebben vind ik het allemaal wel prima. We hebben geen oorlog, we hebben allemaal een dak boven ons hoofd als we dat willen. Voor de rest, ja, iedereen kan een goed bestaan hebben als hij daarvoor wil werken. En voor de rest. Zolang dat zo is denk

ik dat we het goed hebben, Ik denk ik kan me er wel heel erg druk over maken, maar wat schiet ik ermee op? Als het mee zit kan ik als het goed gaat in ieder geval 1 keer in de 4 jaar stemmen en dan moet je het maar weer doen tot de volgende vier jaar. Dat is het voor mij."

"Toen ik nog bezig was met revalideren was ik zo recalcitrant. En dan voel je het dubbel. Maatregelen die de regering neemt. Hoe je gestigmatiseerd wordt. Daar was ik eigenlijk meer mee bezig dan met politiek en dat soort dingetjes. Dat kon ik heel moeilijk van me afzetten. Vooral toen de ronde van herkeuring kwam, dat mensen weer herkeurd moesten worden volgens nieuwe maatstaven. En gesodemieter daarmee. En hoe je betiteld en bejegend werd. Ik was alleen maar kwaad, kwaad, kwaad."

"Het was begin jaren negentig. (begint te huilen). Ja, het raakt me. WAO debatten in de PvdA. Dat de PvdA op een gegeven moment geen tegengas meer gaf tegen de bezuinigingen op de WAO en in feite met een fake rapport dat verdedigde en een half jaar later moest toegeven dat de cijfers verkeerd waren. Ik werd op dat moment rechtstreeks bedreigd in mijn boterham. Ik kan het dus hebben. We zijn een democratie. Als er iets democratisch besloten wordt kan ik het er niet mee eens zijn, maar dan ga ik niet de barricaden op. Het is wat wij gekozen hebben helaas. Je kan er weinig aan doen. Dat is het democratisch proces. Maar, de hele discussie ging al op een vreemde manier. Vervolgens bleek nog eens een keer dat ze hun cijfers niet goed hadden. Dat ze meegegaan zijn in een bezuiniging op grond van een aantal argumenten die niet klopten. In die tijd las ik de Volkskrant, dus ik denk dat ik dat via de Volkskrant gelezen heb. Achtergrondrapportages. Ik vond het de PvdA onwaardig. Had verwacht dat ze uitsluitend meegegaan waren in de discussie als het op grond van goede argumenten was geweest. In het debat daarvoor zat al iets oneigenlijks. Toen ik dus een half jaar later er achter kwam dat die cijfers niet klopten was ik kwaad, want ik heb wel degelijk in die tijd ook PvdA gestemd en dat was dus voor mij ook finito."

"Ik kom uit een ontstellend rood nest. Dat vormt je ook he. Ik weet ook niet anders of er werd op die manier over gesproken. Nogmaals, de recalcitrantie zit ook in mij. Er hoeft ook maar iets boven mij te staan of die is gigantisch aan de beurt. Partij van de Arbeid was het. VVD dat waren de kakkers. De rijkelui. Ik weet niet anders of dat mijn ouders daar tegenaan schopten. Dat altijd de kleine man werd gepakt. Nog steeds he. Weet je wel. Ik zit meer op de SP en GroenLinks. Ja. Weet je het is zo gek om over klassenstelsel te praten. Maar dat die klassenverdeling wat minder scherp wordt. Ja dat je toch de zorg voor elkaar hebt. Het kan voor mijn gevoel niet zo zijn dat de een omdat hij wat meer geluk heeft, hersens heeft meegekregen, ouders die geld hadden zodat je

kon studeren, dat die het beter hebben dan de gewone man die zich kapot werkt en dan nog financieel gezien achter het net vist."

"De opvoeding verloochent zich gewoon niet. Zodra er iets met onrecht uitkomt. In feite ik herken me soms nog wel in Wilders. Ik ben ook nog wel zo onverschrokken. In dat opzicht. Er hoeft maar een woordje van onrecht in te zitten en dan komt Marja wel. Ja kom zeg. Er zijn twee kanten aan een zaak. Ik ging vroeger ook wel mee naar de vakbond. Kreeg je cursus in de vakbond. Hoe gekleurd wil je worden."

Chapter 5:

"Ik ben groot gebracht met het idee dat onze voorouders gevochten hebben voor stemrecht, Dus ik ga stemmen. Maar ik stem omdat ik van huis uit moet stemmen, maar niet omdat ik ergens van overtuigd ben."

"Ik maak principieel gebruik van mijn recht om te stemmen. Zelfs bij de Provinciale Staten, ik sla nooit over. Vroeger voor de gein een keertje voor de gein overgeslagen. Blanco gestemd, een keer ongeldig gestemd. Alles een keertje geprobeerd. Maar de laatste jaren trouw gestemd. Er zijn maar weinig landen waar je normaal goed kan stemmen. Waar je bijna zeker weet dat je niet bedot wordt. Al is het maar een hele kleine stem, een klein drupje in de oceaan, vind ik toch dat ik gestemd moet hebben."

"Ik ben een zwevende kiezer. Ik zweef van het ene naar het andere zeg maar. Ja. Kijk als je te lang bij een bepaalde partij blijft en die partij is zeg maar niet goed voor de mensen in het land. Dan ga ik automatisch van bekijk het maar met je rotzooi. Ik stem een volgende keer op een ander. Dan kijk ik wel naar een ander."

"Mijn sympathie gaat wel meer uit naar een partij dan naar de andere. Bepaalde partijen heb ik een bloedhekel aan. Alle politieke partijen deugen geen van allen natuurlijk. Alle partijen hebben dingen die aanspreken en dingen die niet aanspreken."

"Eigenlijk zoek je de partij die de minste bullshit uitkraamt, waar je nog een beetje respect voor hebt. Dus ik heb een tijdje op Jan Marijnissen gestemd. Maar er zijn maar weinig mensen die verdienen dat je die je eigen stemmetje geeft. Ik zie daar gewoon een persoon staan, dat is dus een tijd lang Jan Marijnissen geweest. Maar die partij werd zo groot, dus dan weet je helemaal niets meer. Dan heb ik dus, ik weet niet meer wat ik bij de gemeenteraad gestemd heb, zat helemaal niets bij. Welk klein partijtje het toen geworden is. Geloof dat ik toen de kieswijzer heb ingevuld en gekozen heb. Maar de

landelijke politiek, de laatste keer PVV. *De keer daarvoor op EenNL van Marco Pastors. Maar ik kan niet zeggen: door die en die gebeurtenissen was het die partij. Het gaat me ook om de oprechtheid van de persoon. Ik heb niet echt een partij. Dat kan ook haast niet. Het was geen strategische reden. Het enige aantrekkelijke van de* PVV *vind ik de kritische houding."*

"Eigenlijk had ik niet willen stemmen. Maar het leek zo kiele kiele te zijn en ik had geen zin weer naar een linkse regering te kijken. We zijn echt toe aan rechts beleid. En de angst dat Geert Wilders de grootste zou worden. Dat was eigenlijk nog een grotere angst. Dat vond ik een belangrijke reden om VVD *te stemmen"*

*"*VVD *had ook gekund. Maar ik wou die linkse rakkers niet hebben. Ik ben het met hun politiek niet eens. Het is ook een beetje een proteststem geweest. Uit angst en het scheelde nog niet veel. Ik wilde die linkse rakkers niet in de regering. En het scheelde niet veel."*

"Ik heb de laatste keer Wilders gestemd en bij mij zit het echt op Wilders of SP. *Wilders is een opstandeling. Dat is altijd wel interessant. Hij schopt overal tegenaan. Maar nu hij er ook in zit, in de regering. Hij zit het wel niet, maar heeft er wel een grote rol in, valt hij mij en een heleboel andere mensen tegen. Omdat hij alleen maar over die moslims bezig is. Dat is mijn dagelijkse interesse niet. Het gaat mij erom dat hij wat doet voor de mensen. Voor de bejaarden en dat soort dingen. En hij zit maar te melken over die moslims. Volgens mij komen die moslims bij de mensen volgens mij de strot uit. Ik heb op hem gestemd als tegenhanger. Maar waar hij nou tegen moet zijn en alles, dat komt er niet uit. Het enigste wat je leest is over moslims. Ook zijn nieuwsbrief het is alleen gezeik over moslims. Je kan hier hooguit een verdwaalde Pool tegenkomen die probeert in te breken, maar niet een moslim ofzo."*

"Ik kan niet praten, ik hoef niet zo op de voorgrond. Ik ben een tijdje bestuur van een vakbond geweest. Nou, dat is een hoop geouwehoer en er komt niets uit."

"Dingen die ik niet eerlijk vind, daar zou ik me tegen verzetten en dan zou ik met mijn hoofd tegen de muur aanlopen, want ik kan het niet veranderen. Ben geen Don Quichot."

"Ben niet politiek actief, maar het is wel iets waar ik me de laatste jaren steeds meer ben voor gaan interesseren. Wat er gebeurt en hoe het spel gespeeld wordt en ik begin ook het belang te zien van wat politiek doet en gedaan heeft. Ik verdiep me er wel in. Ik vind het ook een belangrijk onderwerp om over te praten met mijn gezin."

"Uit noodzaak. Om te kijken wat er op ons af komt. We zijn hier met meerdere mensen behoorlijk actief... De tijd die ik er aan besteed is niet zo groot. Als ik verschil kan maken probeer ik er wel te zijn. Want het is mijn woonomgeving. Ik ben niet bezig uit een soort gemeenteliefde. Nee het is meer vanuit een rug tegen de muur situatie. Ik heb een huis hier. Mijn geld zit hier in. Wat gebeurt er om me heen. Dat is de motivatie."

Appendix E

Overview of newspaper articles, quoted in Chapter 6

The first decade of the 21ᵗʰ century

'Politiek vertrouwen in Chasse: Theater zorgt voor optimisme', *Dagblad voor ZuidWest NL,* 24-05-2000

'Politiek vertrouwen in Oranje', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29-01-2002.

'Geen onderling politiek vertrouwen'; Werkendamse wethouder ontevreden over samenwerking', *Brabants Dagblad*, 25-06-2003

'In de raad woedt een veenbrand'; Heusdense burgemeester hekelt politiek wantrouwen, *Brabants Dagblad*, 02-10-2003

'Politieke onvrede zeldzaam groot', Dagblad van het Noorden, 02-12-2000

'Veel nieuwe partijen uit politieke onvrede', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06-09-2006

'Kiezer stemt voor veiligheid. Ondanks politiek wantrouwen gaat meerderheid naar stembus', De Telegraaf, 03-03-2010

'Vredesmissies slecht voorbereid', *NRC Handelsblad*, 04-07-2000

'Agnes en Agnes. We zitten niet ver af van de dictatuur van de macht', *Volkskrant magazine*, 16-09-2000

Gijsbet van Es, Column, De Haagse Staat, *NRC Handelsblad*, 18-09-2000

Nelleke Noordervliet, Column, *de Volkskrant*, 25-09-2000

Prof.dr. Smalhout, Column, *De Telegraaf*, 23-09-2000

'Sfeer van intimidatie CDA-fractie; Verwijten over verraad en moord', *NRC Handelsblad*, 11-09-2010

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The 1980's

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'Generatiekloof zeer groot probleem', Interview met Prof. F. Duynstee, *NRC Han-
  delsblad*, 12-09-1970

Appendix F

Overview of survey items used in Chapter 5

Source: Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010

First survey wave (before the elections)

CAPI/CATI 1e golf (Computer Assisted Personal Interview, Computer Assisted Telephone Interview)

v073
Hoe tevreden of ontevreden bent u in het algemeen met wat de regering in de afgelopen drie jaar heeft gedaan. Bent u daarover:

1. zeer tevreden,
2. tevreden,
3. niet tevreden, maar ook niet ontevreden,
4. ontevreden, of
5. zeer ontevreden?

v535
Op 9 juni zijn er verkiezingen voor de Tweede Kamer. Gaat u dan stemmen of weet u dat nog niet?

1. Gaat wel stemmen
2. Gaat niet stemmen
3. Weet het nog niet

v081
Op welke partij gaat u stemmen op 9 juni?

1. CDA
2. PvdA
3. VVD
4. GroenLinks
5. SP
6. D66
7. ChristenUnie
8. SGP
9. Partij voor de Vrijheid (Geert Wilders)
10. Partij voor de Dieren
11. Trots op Nederland (Rita Verdonk)
12. Blanco
13. Ongeldig
14. Lokale partij
15. Andere partij
16. Weet niet

v240
De vorige verkiezingen voor de Tweede Kamer zijn in 2006 gehouden. Hebt u toen gestemd of niet?

1. Ja
2. Nee
3. Mocht niet stemmen

V241
Op welke partij hebt u gestemd in 2006?

1. CDA
2. PvdA
3. VVD
4. GroenLinks
5. SP
6. D66
7. ChristenUnie
8. SGP
9. Partij voor de Vrijheid (Geert Wilders)

10. Partij voor de Dieren
11. Trots op Nederland (Rita Verdonk)
12. Blanco
13. Ongeldig
14. Lokale partij
15. Andere partij
16. Weet niet

v244
Hebt u vóór de verkiezingen van 2006, als u mocht stemmen bij Tweede Kamerverkiezingen:

1. altijd gestemd,
2. hebt u soms niet gestemd,
3. hebt u daarvoor nog nooit gestemd, of
4. mocht u daarvoor niet stemmen?

Second survey wave (after elections)

CAPI/CATI 2ᵉ golf

Onderstaande 3 stellingen vormen samen de politieke cynisme score (v752):

V748
Tegen beter weten in beloven politici meer dan ze kunnen waarmaken.

1. Helemaal mee eens
2. Mee eens
3. Mee oneens
4. Helemaal mee oneens

v749
Ministers en staatssecretarissen zijn vooral op hun eigenbelang uit.

1. Helemaal mee eens
2. Mee eens
3. Mee oneens
4. Helemaal mee oneens

v750
Kamerlid word je eerder door je politieke vrienden dan door je bekwaamheden.

1. Helemaal mee eens
2. Mee eens
3. Mee oneens
4. Helemaal mee oneens

CAPI 2e golf:

v781
Stel: de Tweede Kamer behandelt een wetsvoorstel dat u zeer onrechtvaardig of verkeerd vindt. Hoe groot is de kans dat u zou proberen daar iets tegen te doen, is die kans:

1. zeer groot,
2. groot,
3. klein, of
4. zeer klein?

V782
Er zijn verschillende manieren om iets politiek aan de orde te stellen of invloed uit te oefenen op politici of de overheid. Wilt u de volgende mogelijkheden bekijken, en mij dan zeggen van welke daarvan u in de afgelopen 5 jaar gebruik hebt gemaakt?

1. Radio, televisie of krant ingeschakeld
2. Politieke partij of organisatie ingeschakeld
3. Meegedaan aan een door de overheid georganiseerde inspraakbijeenkomst, hoorzitting of discussiebijeenkomst
4. Contact opgenomen met een politicus of ambtenaar
5. Meegedaan aan een actiegroep
6. Meegedaan aan een protestactie, protestmars of demonstratie
7. Via Internet, e-mail of SMS meegedaan aan een politieke discussie of actie
8. Iets anders
9. Geen van deze

v856
Een democratie kent vele problemen, maar is de beste vorm van regeren die er is. Bent u het daarmee:

1. helemaal eens,
2. eens,
3. niet mee eens, niet mee oneens,
4. oneens, of
5. helemaal oneens?

Control variables used in the analysis:

CAPI 1e golf:

V410
Voor welke opleiding waarmee u 2 jaar of langer bezig bent geweest heeft u als laatste een akte, getuigschrift of diploma behaald?

1   Lager Beroepsonderwijs, vmbo basisberoepsgerichte of kaderberoepsgerichte leerweg
2   Mavo, vmbo theoretische of gemengde leerweg, ulo, mulo
3   Havo, vwo, Gymnasium, hbs, mms
4   Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (mbo, bol, bbl)
5   Bachelor, Kandidaats, Hoger Beroepsonderwijs/Master, Doctoraal, (semi) Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs, Universiteit

V024
Bent u zeer geïnteresseerd in politieke onderwerpen, tamelijk geïnteresseerd of niet geïnteresseerd?

1   zeer geïnteresseerd
2   tamelijk geïnteresseerd
3   niet geïnteresseerd

CAPI 2e golf:

V813
Vindt u over het algemeen dat de meeste mensen wel te vertrouwen zijn, of vindt u dat men niet voorzichtig genoeg kan zijn in de omgang met mensen?

1.   De meeste mensen zijn wel te vertrouwen
2.   Men kan niet voorzichtig genoeg zijn in de omgang met mensen

Notes on the recoding of variables

For the analysis, some nominal variables needed to be recoded into dummy variables to make the ordinal regression analysis work properly. The variables that were recoded into dummy variables were: 'Political party voted for in 2006' (answer categories: Party 1, Party 2, Party 3 etc.) and 'Vote intention 2010' (answer categories: Party 1, Party 2, Party 3 etc.). These variables were recoded into 'Party voted for in 2006 is Party ...' with the answer categories 'yes' or 'no'. A

Also recoded for the analysis were 'Voted in 2006 elections' and 'Did always vote in parliamentary elections'. The category 'Not entitled to vote' was categorised as a missing value, so that a ranking in the answers became possible (1= always voted before, 2 = abstained sometimes, 3 = never voted before).

To improve the model fit of the ordinal regression analysis, some of the dependent variable categories were merged together. I merged the categories of 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied with government' into one category of '(very) satisfied' and merged the categories 'very dissatisfied' and 'dissatisfied with government' into the category '(very) dissatisfied'. The category 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' remained the same, giving us a total of three categories for this variable. For the variable 'democracy best form of government?' I merged the categories of 'disagree' and 'disagree strongly' into one category: 'disagree (strongly). After recoding, this variable had four instead of five categories.[1] Because of the very small frequencies in some of the categories of the survey item 'party voted for in 2006' and 'vote intention 2010' also here some categories were merged together to improve the analysis. Merged into one category of 'party voted for in 2006' were: Voted for TON in 2006, voted blanco, casting an invalid vote, voting for a local party, voting otherwise and do not know. Also for the variable 'vote intention 2010' these same categories were merged into one category.

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[1] The choice of merging the answer categories of the variable 'democracy best form of government' into four categories was based on the frequency distribution of respondents' answers to this question. As only few people disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement, the model had a better fit if we merged these groups into one category.

Table 15: Correlations between the dependent and independent variables used in the analysis

Spearman's rho correlation analysis
Sig. (2-tailed) >0.01 is bold. Sig. (2-tailed)>0.05 is italic.
Displayed in the table is the correlation coefficient

	Political cynicism score	Satisfaction government	Support democratic system
Non voting			
Did (not) always vote in parliamentary elections	**0,11**	**0,12**	**0,10**
Did (not) vote in 2006 parliamentary elecitons	**-0,12**	**-0,10**	**-0,08**
Considered not to vote in 2010 elections	**0,10**	**0,11**	0,06
Protest behaviour			
Chance acting against unjust national bill	**0,08**	-0,03	**0,12**
Did (not) try to get radio, TV or newspaper involved	0,01	0,00	0,01
Did (not) try to involve political party or organisation	**-0,07**	0,00	**-0,09**
Did (not) contact politician or civil servant	*-0,05*	0,03	**-0,11**
Did (not) participate in a meeting organized by government	**-0,09**	-0,01	**-0,15**
Did (not) join a civic action group	0,03	0,00	0,01
Did (not) join a demonstration	-0,02	0,01	-0,01
Did (not) use Internet, email or SMS	**-0,06**	0,03	**-0,10**
Did (not) do other things to influence government	-0,02	0,03	-0,04
Did none of the above	0,08	-0,01	**0,12**
Party voting			
Party voted for 2006: CDA	**-0,07**	**-0,26**	0,01
Party voted for 2006: PvdA	-0,02	0,03	-0,02
Party voted for 2006: VVD	0,01	0,08	-0,08
Party voted for 2006: GroenLinks	-0,04	0,04	*-0,05*
Party voted for 2006: D66	-0,04	-0,00	**-0,08**
Party voted for 2006: SP	*0,06*	**0,13**	0,07
Party voted for 2006: SGP	0,04	0,01	0,04
Party voted for 2006: PVV	**0,11**	**0,16**	0,08
Party voted for 2006: CU	-0,01	**-0,06**	-0,01
Party voted for 2006: PvdD	*0,05*	0,01	0,02
Party voted for 2006: Other	0,03	*0,05*	**0,08**
Vote intention 2010: CDA	*-0,07*	**-0,30**	0,00
Vote intention 2010: PvdA	0,00	-0,03	-0,01
Vote intention 2010: VVD	-0,01	**0,09**	-0,02

Table 15: Correlations between the dependent and independent variables used in the analysis

Spearman's rho correlation analysis
Sig. (2-tailed) >0.01 is bold. Sig. (2-tailed)>0.05 is italic.
Displayed in the table is the correlation coefficient

	Political cynicism score	*Satisfaction government*	*Support democratic system*
Vote intention 2010: D66	**-0,11**	-0,04	*-0,06*
Vote intention 2010: GroenLinks	*-0,06*	0,03	-0,04
Vote intention 2010: SP	0,02	**0,07**	0,03
Vote intention 2010: PVV	**0,20**	**0,25**	**0,09**
Vote intention 2010: CU	0,01	-0,10	0,01
Vote intention 2010: SGP	0,05	0,00	0,03
Vote intention 2010: PvdD	**0,08**	0,02	*0,07*
Vote intention 2010: Other party	0,03	0,00	-0,03
Political interest	**0,12**	0,01	**0,19**
Education	**-0,23**	*-0,05*	**-0,19**
Social trust	**0,24**	**0,15**	**0,18**

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Politieke onvrede in Nederland in het eerste decennium van de 21ste eeuw

Samenvatting in het Nederlands

In 2010 waarschuwde de Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur dat de sterk groeiende onvrede over de representatieve democratie binnen niet al te lange tijd kan leiden tot een heuse crisis van de democratie (ROB, 2010). Bij het lezen van dergelijke berichten zou je haast denken dat de politieke onvrede van Nederlandse burgers alarmerende proporties aanneemt. De huidige staat van de democratie en de al dan niet groeiende politieke onvrede van burgers is een populair onderwerp voor discussie en reflectie (e.g. Adriaansen, 2011, Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011, Dekker and Den Ridder, 2011, Hendriks & Van Ostaaijen and Boogers, 2011, Korsten and De Goede, 2006)

Verschillende beelden waren rond over de huidige politieke onvrede en politiek ontevreden burgers. De politiek ontevreden burgers van nu worden getypeerd als een nieuwe generatie hoog opgeleide democraten die snakken naar directe politieke participatie (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), als 'bedreigde burgers' in sociaal economische onzekere omstandigheden, op zoek naar politieke geborgenheid en veiligheid (Van den Brink, 2002, 2007) en als doorsnee burgers die vooral extra controle willen op het doen en laten van hun politieke autoriteiten (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002).

Hoe moeten we de politieke onvrede in Nederland in het eerste decennium van de 21ᵉ eeuw duiden? Is de politieke onvrede van burgers gegroeid en waar is deze op gericht? Wat is de relatie tussen de politieke onvrede van burgers en hun politieke gedrag? En hoe verschilt de politieke onvrede van burgers aan het begin van de 21ᵉ eeuw van politieke onvrede in eerdere decennia?

Dit zijn de vragen die ik in dit onderzoek tracht te beantwoorden. Ik onderzoek het karakter van de politieke onvrede in Nederland in het eerste decennium van de 21ᵉ eeuw aan de hand van een multidimensionaal concept van politiek onvrede

en met een combinatie van onderzoeksmethoden. Aan de hand van grootschalige publiek beschikbare enquêtes en twintig diepte-interviews probeer ik inzichtelijk te maken hoe burgers naar de politiek kijken, waar zij ontevreden over zijn en hoe politieke onvrede al dan niet gerelateerd is aan hun politieke gedrag. Aan de hand van een analyse van krantenartikelen en Tweede Kamerstukken beschrijf ik bovendien het publieke en politieke debat over de vermeende politieke onvrede en hoe dat door de jaren heen (1970-2010) veranderd is.[1]

Om de gedachten te ordenen onderscheid ik – op basis van verschillende theorieën (David Easton, Pippa Norris en Hendriks *et al.*) – drie verschillende niveaus of typen van politieke onvrede:
– Onvrede over democratische principes en waarden;
– Onvrede over het functioneren van politici en het functioneren van politieke instituties;
– Specifieke onvrede over het huidige kabinet(sbeleid) of specifieke politieke gezagsdragers.

Op alle niveaus kunnen verwachtingen, meningen, waarden en overtuigingen van burgers botsen met die van de politiek. Maar het object en karakter van de onvrede verschilt. Voor de verschillende typen onvrede geldt: men kan heel goed tevreden zijn over het een, maar ontevreden over het ander. Met name een sterke onvrede over de democratie of over het functioneren van de politieke klasse en instituties worden verondersteld gerelateerd te zijn aan specifiek politiek gedrag. Politiek ontevreden burgers worden verondersteld de barricaden op te gaan, ofwel zich af te keren van de politiek (e.g. Dalton, 2004 of Van den Brink, 2002, 2007).

Resultaten

De verschillende deelonderzoeken geven samen een genuanceerd en vernieuwend beeld over de staat van de politieke onvrede in Nederland aan het begin van de 21e eeuw. Hoewel vaak een relatie wordt gesuggereerd tussen politieke onvrede en bepaald politiek gedrag, biedt dit onderzoek daar geen overtuigend bewijs voor. Zowel mijn analyse van het Nationaal Kiezers Onderzoek 2010 als de diepte-interviews geven geen aanleiding te geloven dat politiek ontevreden burgers zich massaal uit de politiek terugtrekken. Of mensen ontevreden zijn over de regering, cynisch zijn over de politiek of niet geloven in democratie als vorm van bestuur, ze blijven niet vaker weg van de stembus dan anderen. Alleen mensen die laag scoren

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1   Een samenvatting van onderzoeksvragen, de gebruikte data en methoden zijn terug te vinden in de introductie van dit proefschrift.

op politiek cynisme lijken wat geregelder te stemmen dan anderen. Het gedrag van politiek ontevreden burgers lijkt over de gehele linie op het gedrag van andere burgers in een representatieve democratie: ze stemmen bij verkiezingen en volgen het doen en laten van politieke autoriteiten via de media. Dit onderzoek suggereert dat onvrede over de democratie, over de politiek als geheel of over de regering maar voor een klein deel samenhangt met een bepaalde politieke voorkeur. Politieke cynici blijken een veelkleurig gezelschap aan ontevredenen, met verschillende politieke voorkeuren en een verschillende achtergrond. De mate van politiek protest en politieke participatie in hun eigen leefomgeving verschilt sterk per persoon en lijkt niet sterk gerelateerd aan de (type) politieke ontevredenheid van mensen. De enige duidelijk aanwijsbare relatie is die tussen politieke onvrede en proteststemgedrag. De geïnterviewde burgers hebben aangegeven geregeld een tegenstem uit te brengen, tegen een ongewenste regeringscoalitie, tegen de vermeende politieke klasse of tegen een bepaalde partij of politicus. Al met al lijkt politieke onvrede maar één van de vele factoren die bepaalt waarom mensen op een bepaalde partij stemmen, of waarom ze van partij wisselen bij verkiezingen. Sommige vragen blijven. Is het als vrij traditioneel te kenmerken politieke gedrag van Nederlandse politiek ontevredenen bijvoorbeeld uitzonderlijk en te verklaren door het specifieke politieke electorale systeem van proportionele vertegenwoordiging? Dit – beperkte – onderzoek naar de relatie tussen politieke onvrede en politiek gedrag in Nederland vraagt om een uitgebreider vergelijkend vervolgonderzoek, met verschillende databronnen en landen.

Het onderzoek laat zien hoe de berichtgeving over politieke onvrede in Nederlandse kranten en parlementaire stukken exponentieel is toegenomen in het eerste decennium van de 21ᵉ eeuw. We zien een steeds breder en bonter gezelschap van zowel politieke journalisten, (oud-) politici, columnisten en andere opiniemakers een rol spelen in het verkondigen van de stem van (kritische) burgers. Zelden gaat het in de artikelen over de leefwereld van burgers en hoe zij naar de politiek kijken. Journalisten refereren vooral aan de bestaande politieke onvrede van burgers in de context van verkiezingen en gebruiken het als een verklaring voor de electorale winst en verlies van politieke partijen in verkiezingstijd.

Enquêteonderzoek en diepte-interviews vertellen een ander verhaal. Ze laten zien dat Nederlandse burgers wisselend tevreden zijn over het doen en laten van de regering en politici. In het eerste decennium van de 21ᵉ eeuw zijn burgers over de hele linie niet veel cynischer over de politiek geworden en de steun voor de democratie is wel iets afgenomen, maar nog steeds op alle fronten hoog, zo laten enquêtes zien. De resultaten geven dus geen aanleiding te geloven dat Nederlandse burgers zich van de Nederlandse democratie afkeren. Ze weerleggen het idee van een plotselinge crisis. Daarbij moet ik opmerken dat het ontbreken van specifieke vragen

naar de steun voor democratische principes en waarden een opvallend hiaat vormt in bestaande survey studies. Eventuele afbrokkelende steun voor de democratie in Nederland is daarmee slechts oppervlakkig te detecteren aan de hand van het bestaande survey materiaal. Wel tonen ze de al langer bestaande substantiële onvrede over het doen en laten van de politieke klasse. De diepte-interviews laten wat dat betreft een verhaal horen dat tot nu toe vaak achterwege blijft in de discussie over politieke onvrede. In de visie van burgers leven politici in een andere wereld, als een aparte klasse, waar ze kunnen rekenen op allerlei (financiële) privileges en de effecten van hun eigen politieke beslissingen niet voelen. Dit botst met de hoge morele verwachtingen die burgers hebben ten aanzien van hun politieke autoriteiten. Door de kritische verhalen van ontevreden burgers heen klinken verschillende normen en waarden ten aanzien van politieke gezagsdragers. In het ideale geval zouden politici zich bijvoorbeeld moeten bekommeren om een rechtvaardige en eerlijke samenleving, waarin gelijke behandeling en het algemeen belang voorop staan. Van politici wordt verwacht dat ze zich aan gangbare fatsoensnormen houden: dat ze, ook als ze het met elkaar oneens zijn, openstaan voor elkaars mening; dat ze elkaar op een hoffelijke manier en met inlevingsvermogen bejegenen, de bereidheid hebben in te schikken als dat nodig is om tot een besluit te komen en dat ze open en eerlijk communiceren met burgers.

Kortom, in deze inmiddels geseculariseerde samenleving wordt van politici verwacht dat zij een soort van 'moderne heiligen' zijn en in alle opzichten het goede voorbeeld geven. Degenen in een machtspositie worden op de voet gevolgd, niet alleen ter controle van hun technische optreden en vakkennis, maar juist ook ter controle van hun morele doen en laten. De verminderde acceptatie van de geprivilegieerde positie van politici illustreert een andere opstelling richting autoriteiten. De voortschrijdende emancipatie en het gelijkheidsdenken heeft zijn uitwerking op de beleefde positie van politieke autoriteiten: zij moeten net zo behandeld worden als andere burgers. Juist omdat politici besluiten nemen die alle burgers aangaan, omdat ze wetten maken waarvan de (financiële) consequenties door een ieder gevoeld worden en omdat ze uit algemene middelen betaald worden, zo gaat de redenering, worden privileges niet getolereerd en geaccepteerd.

Dit onderzoek heeft geen makkelijke boodschap en geen eenvoudige oplossing voor de bestaande politieke onvrede in Nederland. Een van de opvallendste inzichten is de sterk morele blik waarmee burgers het doen en laten van politici beoordelen. De standaarden zijn hoog en politici worden twee keer zo hard beoordeeld als anderen. Dit morele oordeel is niet iets dat zo maar zal veranderen, het is iets waar politieke partijen en politieke autoriteiten rekening mee moeten houden en zich continu bewust van moeten zijn.

De opvattingen van diegenen die in survey onderzoek als politiek cynisch te boek staan en die ik in dit onderzoek meer stem heb proberen te geven, ontkrachten theorieën die menen dat hedendaags politiek cynisme vooral stamt uit het verlangen naar meer direct democratisch zeggenschap (Norris, 1999). In de verhalen van burgers is niet zozeer een verlangen naar meer persoonlijke politieke zeggenschap of directe democratie te herkennen, maar wel een verlangen naar invoelende, betrouwbare en resultaatboekende politieke autoriteiten en naar deugden in de politiek. Die opvattingen sluiten veeleer aan bij theorievorming waarin gesteld wordt dat burgers zich niet zelf willen mengen in het politieke werk, maar met name verlangen naar een betrouwbare, controleerbare politieke klasse en de nodige *checks and balances* willen zien om een politieke cultuur van eigenbelang en nepotisme in te dammen (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002).

Het gelijkheidsdenken ten aanzien van de positie van politieke ambtsdragers druppelt geleidelijk door in de politieke arena. Het is immers zo dat gunstige regelingen, bijvoorbeeld ten aanzien van inkomen, uitkering, onkosten en pensioen, die dateren van de jaren zestig om het politieke ambt toegankelijk te maken, langzaamaan worden beperkt en afgeschaft. Na het advies van de commissie Dijkstal in 2004 over de financiële en juridische positie van de top van de politiek en ambtenarij zijn de nodige veranderingen in gang gezet. Wachtgelden voor politici worden bijvoorbeeld steeds sterker gelimiteerd en er komt binnen de overheid steeds meer aandacht voor een goed en deugdelijk bestuur, integriteitvraagstukken en ethisch gedrag van politieke bestuurders en ambtenaren.[2] Het is echter alsnog de vraag of politici en politieke partijen zich voldoende bewust zijn van het morele oordeel dat burgers continu vellen en dat hen twee keer zo hard treft als anderen. In hoeverre kennen zij de ethische opvattingen van burgers ten aanzien van hun beroepsgroep en houden ze er rekening mee, bijvoorbeeld in hun politieke communicatie of bij het werven en trainen van politici?

Er is nog weinig onderzoek beschikbaar dat de morele kijk van burgers op de politieke klasse als vertrekpunt neemt. De enige beschikbare studies kijken naar beleefde integriteit van politici (Transparency International), de implementatie van integriteitsbeleid in publieke organisaties of de achtergrond (onder andere het opleidingsniveau) van Nederlandse parlementariërs (zie Bovens, 2010). Er is echter geen onderzoeksinformatie voorhanden over hoe geprivilegieerd de Nederlandse

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2 Regelingen voor inkomen en speciale onkostenvergoedingen zijn gereguleerd in een juridische regeling voor politieke ambtsdragers. Regelingen t.a.v. pensioenen en uitkeringen zijn vastgelegd in APPA. Een aantal details is te vinden in de rapporten van het Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, zoals de publicatie 'Wat betekent 'Dijkstal' voor u?'. Zie ook: 'Sollicitatieplicht en outplacement voor politieke ambtsdragers'.

politieke klasse daadwerkelijk is, hoe lucratief een carrière in de Nederlandse politiek is en hoe de (ethische) positie van Nederlandse politici is in vergelijking met andere consensus democratieën. Het bestaande beeld bij burgers over een geprivilegieerde politieke klasse wordt bevestigd door incidentele journalistieke berichtgeving over schandalen en integriteitkwesties, maar niet diepgravend onderzocht. Het onderzoeken, adresseren en mogelijk ontkrachten van het beeld van een losgezongen politieke klasse kan de politieke representatie in Nederland ten goede komen. We weten ook weinig over de ethiek, waarden en normen van aspirant en ex politici. Hoe gaan zij om met de privileges, verantwoordelijkheden en morele dilemma's die onlosmakelijk aan hun positie verbonden zijn? Hier liggen volop mogelijkheden voor relevant vervolgonderzoek.

Dit onderzoek suggereert dat het een positief effect zou kunnen hebben op het politieke oordeel van (cynische) burgers als politici de morele dimensie van hun werk meer benadrukken. Ook in het (experimenteren met) anders communiceren door politici, alsook in het onderzoeken van de effecten daarvan, liggen volgens mij mogelijkheden voor politieke vernieuwing en voor verder onderzoek. Wat voor type persoonlijke politieke communicatie kan politiek vertrouwen van burgers versterken?

Op welke wijze kunnen politici en beleidsmakers tegemoet komen aan de morele kritiek en verlangens van politiek ontevreden burgers? Ten eerste kunnen politici in hun doen en laten de waarden en deugden die voor hen belangrijk zijn door laten klinken. Oog hebben voor de morele dimensie in de politieke oordeelsvorming van burgers betekent niet per se dat politici veel meer informatie of openheid zouden moeten geven over technische details van beleid of beleidsprocessen. Over de morele dimensie communiceren betekent anders communiceren: minder technocratisch en met meer aandacht voor ethiek en de eigen normen, waarden en deugden van politici als beroepsgroep. Om politiek optreden en politieke besluiten meer dan nu te rechtvaardigen vanuit een morele invalshoek, vraagt verandering van toon en invalshoek waarmee politici boodschappen naar buiten brengen, optredens verzorgen en besluiten verkondigen. Het vraagt van politici om steeds weer – bij ieder besluit en optreden – uit te leggen waarom hun doen en laten redelijk, eerlijk en rechtvaardig is.

In mijn visie kunnen politieke ambtsdragers en politieke partijen daarnaast meer aandacht besteden aan de ethiek van hun beroepsgroep. Zij zouden meer dan nu gebeurt als beroepsgroep kritisch kunnen reflecteren op hun eigen positie en daarbij behorende privileges, onderzoeken en beslissen of en op wat voor manier modernisering van de positie van politieke ambtsdragers nodig is. Daarbij hoort ook de reflectie op hoe de ethiek van hun beroepsgroep naar eigentijdse standaarden vormgegeven en uitgedragen kan worden naar burgers. Politieke gezagsdra-

gers als beroepsgroep kunnen de ook voor hen geldende 'code goed bestuur' verder uitwerken in integriteitsbeleid en een eventuele gedragscode voor politieke ambts- dragers en daarmee aan burgers uitdragen hoe ze tegemoet komen aan de vereisten van een behoorlijk bestuur.

Index

Political discontent

in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21th century

GRMBLL

This book introduces a refreshing perspective on the popular idea that citizens' political discontent is on the rise. Citizens' perspectives on politics are studied thoroughly through survey studies and in-depth interviews. Results reveal that there is no sudden crisis of politics or democracy, but a persistent image problem of a privileged political class, resulting in an urgent call for political virtue and moral leadership.

The research also examines the strong rise of attention for the issue of political discontent in newspapers articles and parliamentary documents. Surprisingly, newspapers and parliament prove to have a perspective on current political discontent in the Netherlands that is very different from that of politically dissatisfied citizens.