

TALKING XTC

Berrie van
der Molen

Drug discourse in post-war Dutch
newspaper and radio debates



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Drug discourse in post-war Dutch newspaper and radio debates

Over XTC gesproken
Drugdiscours in naoorlogse Nederlandse kranten- en radiodebatten

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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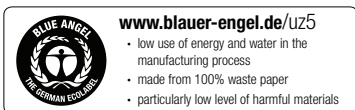
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Hearts (pumping), pressure (rising)
Breath (taking), rump (shaking)
Music (make you), lose (control)

- KM

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A tree has been planted for every copy of this thesis.

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Figure 1 | Radio tapes are being digitised at the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, Hilversum.

INTRODUCTION

STUDYING DRUG DEBATES IN POST-WAR DUTCH
MEDIA

Introduction | Studying drug debates in post-war Dutch media

'Ecstasy, or X-T-C: the question is whether we should be scared of it or if it's a drug that offers a solution. It's definitely cheap, it's not addictive according to experts, and it's said to lead to all kinds of fun.' Radio presenter Govert van Brakel during the 22 February 1990 broadcast of current affairs radio program *Met Het Oog Op Morgen*¹

Presenter Govert van Brakel offered this take on ecstasy at the start of a radio discussion about the drug that was becoming more and more popular in the Netherlands at the start of the 1990s. In newspapers and on the radio, plenty of items were being dedicated to this new drug. Ecstasy had officially become a hard drug under the Dutch Opium Law in November 1988, which may not have been at all apparent given the presenter's introduction: his words belie the reputation one might expect of a substance classified as a hard drug.

Ecstasy was probably unfamiliar to many people in early 1990, but at present virtually everyone in the Netherlands is likely to have heard of it. At the time the Covid-19 pandemic halted the entertainment sector in its tracks in early 2020, ecstasy was the most commonly used party drug in the Netherlands.² In 2020, ecstasy use prevalence was higher in the Netherlands than in any other European country,³ and more than 50% of the respondents of a large-scale survey among outgoing people had used ecstasy at least once in their life.⁴ In 2018, the mayor of the Dutch city of Breda asked "Why should I ban XTC?", in an interview about recreational ecstasy use and ecstasy regulation for newspaper *De Volkskrant* in December 2018.⁵ The mayor wondered why ecstasy - a substance that, according to addiction research, was much less dangerous than the more or less socially accepted tobacco and alcohol⁶ - was forbidden.

1 *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 22 February 1990.

2 M. van Laar and others, *Jaarbericht 2020*, Nationale Drug Monitor (Utrecht: Trimbos Instituut, 2021) <<https://www.trimbos.nl/aanbod/webwinkel/product/af1862-jaarbericht-nationale-drug-monitor-2020>> [accessed 7 April 2021].

3 van Laar and others, p. 16.

4 van Laar and others, p. 17.

5 Jan Tromp, 'Bredase burgemeester Paul Depla: "Waarom zou ik xtc moeten verbieden?"', *de Volkskrant*, 17 December 2018, section Nieuws & Achtergrond <<https://www.volkskrant.nl/gsb7b31ae4>> [accessed 1 May 2020].

6 See for example: David Nutt, *Drugs without the Hot Air. Minimising the Harms of Legal and*

Ecstasy's legal position at this time had not changed since November 1988: its status as a classified hard drug meant that production, trade, and possession of ecstasy was illegal. Apparently, the media was a platform on which this position could be contested, in this case by a mayor. In recent years, the Dutch minister of Justice, Ferdinand Grapperhaus (CDA), has also frequently commented in the media on the popularity of ecstasy. He told newspaper *Het Parool* in 2019 that he advocated for more stringent ecstasy regulation and implied that users were partially responsible for liquidations, money laundering, corruption, fraud and environmental crimes associated with the illegal production and distribution of ecstasy.⁷ In recent years, a number of progressively leaning political parties in the Netherlands have expressed support for drug regulation reforms, arguing that from a public health perspective it would be better to regulate the market for substances like ecstasy, in turn taking the wind out of organised crime sails.⁸ Contemporary public opinion on ecstasy in the Netherlands often seems to rest between what can with broad strokes be painted as, on the one end, liberal and, on the other, repressive stances. It seems that the question whether, as the radio presenter put it in 1990, we should fear ecstasy or whether it "offers a solution," is still relevant today, and that the story of ecstasy is still unfolding.

The media is frequently seen as a domain strongly related to or even 'interlocked with' policy making.⁹ For better or worse, the media represents an increasingly important arena for public debate,¹⁰ and, as Kockelmans described it in his modern history of Dutch politics, 'almost all politicians today have become half-populists out of necessity, always willing to listen to the presumed popular will and to adjust their positions if the opinion polls give cause for this.'¹¹ This thesis investigates *Illegal Drugs* (Cambridge: UIT, 2012), p. 43.

7 Ruben Koops, 'Grapperhaus: "Jumpen op pilletjes moeten we niet gedogen"', *Het Parool*, 14 March 2019, section Amsterdam <<https://www.parool.nl/gs-ba76c8fa>> [accessed 1 May 2020].

8 'Drugsmanifest. Tijd voor een nieuwe drugsaanpak', *D66*, 2020 <<https://d66.nl/nieuws/drugsmanifest-tijd-voor-een-nieuwe-drugsaanpak/>> [accessed 13 June 2021]; 'Waarom wij voor het legaliseren van XTC zijn', *GroenLinks* <https://groenlinks.nl/nieuws/waarom-wij-voor-het-legaliseren-van-xtc-zijn> [accessed 4 February 2021].

9 Jon Silverman, *Crime, Policy and the Media. The Shaping of Criminal Justice, 1989-2010*. (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

10 James Deane, 'Media, Democracy And The Public Sphere', in *Media and Glocal Change: Rethinking Communication for Development*, ed. by Thomas Tufte and Oscar Hemer (Nordicom, 2005), pp. 177–92 (p. 178).

11 Fons Kockelmans, *Van verzuiling tot versplintering. De Nederlandse politiek sinds de nacht van*

public debates in the media to improve our understanding of shifts in the public perception of drugs in relation to drug policy.

The ways in which drugs were discussed in public debates in Dutch media in the post-war period have not been studied structurally. Therefore, little understanding exists of the detailed dynamics of the public debate regarding drugs in this period. Filling this gap is important considering that it was in the post-war period the double dual-track policy was born. Since 1976, Dutch drug policy has been officially defined by two dual-tracks.¹² One of these draws a line between, on the one hand, drug use, a problem approached from a public health perspective, and on the other hand drug production and trade, a problem that is approached with active repression. The second dual-track distinguishes between soft drugs (cannabis products) and hard drugs (drugs with an unacceptable risk to health). Drug policies are based on the tolerance of drug use in Dutch society, and when it comes to soft drugs (cannabis products), even its sales are tolerated within specific settings. This approach, which deviates from the often more repressive drug policy climates of most other countries, has led to continuous scrutiny and discussion, both on the national level and from the international community.¹³

The uniqueness of the liberal aspects of Dutch drug policy is well-known, but the ‘structural undercurrent of increasing [drug] regulation’ in the post-war period is an understudied domain.¹⁴ This thesis explores the interrelation of Dutch post-war drug policy with changing public perceptions on drugs with four historical analyses of Dutch newspaper and radio material. Three of these studies concern public debate analyses regarding ecstasy and one study concerns public debate regarding amphetamine. Each study provides answers to the question “What were the developments and dynamics in post-war drug discourse in Dutch newspaper and radio debates?”

With this thesis, I will build on digital history scholarship by studying drug debates in newspapers in the post-war period. The field of digital history has benefited from access to full-text search of digitised newspaper data archives enabled by Optical Character Recognition metadata enrichment. The significance of the opportunities provided by large, searchable data archives has been described as possibly representing a ‘digital turn’ for historical research.¹⁵ The availability of *mil-Schmelzer*, 1e edn (Rotterdam: Ad. Donker, 2015), p. 9.

12 Marcel de Kort, *Tussen patiënt en delinquent* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1995), p. 17.

13 de Kort, p. 9.

14 ‘Imperative of Regulation’, *Imperative of Regulation* <<https://www.imperativeofregulation.nl/>> [accessed 25 March 2021].

15 Bob Nicholson, ‘The Digital Turn: Exploring the Methodological Perspectives of Digital Newspa-

lions of searchable digitised newspaper pages provided by the National Library of the Netherlands has led to numerous studies providing new insights into historical Dutch drug debates.¹⁶

Furthermore, this thesis is the first to study Dutch drug debates occurring on Dutch radio. The title of this thesis, *Talking XTC*, is not only literal; it does not just refer my talking about ecstasy a lot. Primarily, the title underlines the methodological new territory this thesis has entered, accomplishing historical analyses about ecstasy in newspaper and radio debates along the way. Studying structurally what was literally *spoken*, not written, about drugs or any topic, as in radio debates, had been impossible up until recently, as radio archives could not be searched efficiently. In the past two years, Dutch radio items have been made searchable as they were enriched with Automatic Speech Recognition metadata at the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (S&V).¹⁷ Parts of the Dutch digital radio archive became searchable in the same fashion as the Dutch digital newspaper archive: if a drug was mentioned in a radio item, it could now be retrieved by means of keyword search.¹⁸ I was able to base my public debate analysis of drugs in Dutch media not just on digital newspaper data but also on digital radio data, meaning that this thesis represents a step towards a better understanding of historical drug debate dynamics in a complex cross-media landscape. Radio items, such as the per Archives, *Media History*, 19.1 (2013), 59–73 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2012.752963>>. 16 Hieke Huistra and Toine Pieters, 'Using Digitized Newspaper Archives to Investigate Identity Formation in Long-Term Public Discourse', in *Digital Humanities 2014: Book of Abstracts* (Lausanne, 2014), p. 210; Lisanne Walma, 'Filtering the "News": Uncovering Morphine's Multiple Meanings on Delpher's Dutch Newspapers and the Need to Distinguish More Article Types', *Tijdschrift Voor Tijdschriftstudies*, 2015 <<https://doi.org/10.18352/ts.345>>; Stephen Snelders and others, 'A Digital Humanities Approach to the History of Culture and Science. Drugs and Eugenics Revisited in Early 20th-Century Dutch Newspapers, Using Semantic Text Mining', in *CLARIN in the Low Countries*, by Jan Odijk and Arjan van Hessen (London: Ubiquity Press, 2017), pp. 325–36; Lisanne Walma, "'The Land of Narcotics": Depictions of U.S. Abuse of Morphine, Heroin and Cocaine in Dutch 1920s Newspapers', *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, 32 (2018), 38–59 <<https://doi.org/10.1086/SHAD3201038>>; Lisanne Walma, *Between Morpheus and Mary. The Public Debate on Morphine in Dutch Newspapers, 1880-1939.*, FI Scientific Library, 103 (Utrecht: Freudenthal Institute, 2020).

17 'Speech Recognition', *Beeld en Geluid* <<https://archiefstats.beeldengeluid.nl/speech-recognition>> [accessed 22 June 2021].

18 'Krantenoverzicht Delpher', *KB Nationale Bibliotheek* <<https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten#krantenoverzicht>> [accessed 23 June 2021].

one from which I cited above, offer an important, previously absent, perspective of Dutch drug debates: despite competition from print media, television and Teletext, radio remained an important source of news and current affairs in the Netherlands throughout the post-war period.¹⁹

I did not approach the research of this thesis as just a digital historian, but also from the perspective of a media scholar aiming to contribute to method development in Digital Humanities. While presenting historical case studies on drug debates in Dutch media in each chapter, this thesis also takes a journey along the conceptualisation, application, and conclusion of a structural methodological approach that I called the leveled approach.

Existing scholarship | Drugs and news media research

With this thesis I explore the shifting public perception of drugs in post-war Dutch media debates in relation to post-war drug regulation in the Netherlands. Although no structural research of drug debates has been done for this period in the Netherlands, drugs and news media have been the subject of Dutch and international scholarly research, often with particular attention paid to their relation to policy and drug regulation.

Lisanne Walma analysed digitised Dutch newspapers between 1880 and 1939 in order to reconstruct the role of newspapers in the identity construction of morphine, heroin and cocaine.²⁰ Walma showed how substances could possess different identities at the same time, particularly when substances had a reputation for both medical and non-medical use. Walma's central argument concerns the two sides of morphine: the medical Morpheus and the street drug Mary. By showing how newspapers connected these sides structurally to particular users, locations, causes and consequences of drug use, morphine was the only substance to maintain a medical reputation to the public. Walma observed that study of other media forms is needed to understand drug discourse in recent history. This thesis, with studies into radio discourse, is an effort to fill that gap. Moreover, I build on Walma's newspaper analyses by studying drug debates in the post-war period.

There are several relevant studies of the dynamics in coverage of drugs in news media of other countries. Firstly, there is some scholarship on drug coverage in news

19 Anya Luscombe, 'Radionieuws en informatiecultuur', in *De radio. Een cultuurgeschiedenis*, ed. by Huub Wijfjes (Amsterdam: Boom, 2019), pp. 213–47 (p. 242).

20 Walma, *Between Morpheus and Mary. The Public Debate on Morphine in Dutch Newspapers, 1880-1939*.

media in the United Kingdom. The relation between drugs and media in the British press has also received scholarly attention. Incidents and fatalities that can be related to drug use often led to hyperbolic reports about the drug's risks and traits in the media, even when such incidents are rare. Such campaigns and media storms have been characterised as 'ritualised sequence[s] of moral panic.'²¹ Following ecstasy's abrupt rise in popularity in the mid-1980s United Kingdom, 'British newspapers were saturated with alarmist inanity. [...] The symbiotic and sometimes corrupt relationship between crime-reporters and the police led to an eruption of distorted or dishonest reports about Ecstasy and other designer drugs.'²² The death of a thirteen-year-old Scottish boy from water intoxication while high on ecstasy in 1997 led to a media campaign filled with inaccuracies with the intent of scaring users in the United Kingdom.²³ During the campaign, the number of drug related fatalities in Scotland was wildly exaggerated. Criminologist Jon Silverman suggested that the British situation, wherein policymakers are frightened to question whether drug policies should be reformed, is kept intact by the country's influential tabloid media, 'which feeds its readers a daily diet of binary archetypes - 'evil' drug dealers, 'innocent' victims, and so on - and thus imprisons the policymakers in a tiny legislative space.'²⁴ Analysis of newspaper discourse in the UK has suggested that the debate regarding ecstasy classification primarily centered around two contrasting governmental strategies aimed at minimising individual harm: advocating repression of all use cases of the substance or believing in self-regulation based on expert assessments of actual risks.²⁵ My research will show that stories from the British tabloid press also play a role in the discursive formation of ecstasy in Dutch media debates.

Similar patterns in drug narratives have been identified in the United States press, in which a strongly repressive war on drugs ideology is dominant. The persistence of this approach can be explained by its 'deep political and cultural roots.'²⁶ Over the course of the past four decades, 'the drug war's discourse about illicit substanc-

21 Matthew Collin, *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2009), p. 93.

22 Richard Davenport-Hines, *The Pursuit of Oblivion. A Global History of Narcotics* (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 484.

23 Davenport-Hines, p. 490.

24 Silverman, p. 114.

25 Jeremy W. Collins, 'Sending a Message: Ecstasy, Equasy and the Media Politics of Drug Classification', *Health, Risk & Society*, 13.3 (2011), 221–37 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13698575.2011.558622>>.

26 Anne L. Foster, 'The Philippines, the United States, and the Origins of Global Narcotics Prohibition', *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, 33.1 (2019), 13–36 (p. 15).

es has effectively formed the frameworks through which the American legislation, criminal justice, medical diagnosis and treatment, drug reform and popular culture imagine and discuss users.²⁷ Walker described how the American war on drugs narrative, instigated by President Nixon in 1971, has led to a discourse with a sharp distinction between medical and nonmedical use of substances: 'the prevailing assumption is that if you use illicit drugs, they control you. If you use licit drugs, you regain control over your life.'²⁸ In his book on methamphetamine and American media, Travis Linneman explored the hypothesis that the American media play an integral role in the war on drugs: different media, including news outlets, help to keep intact a terrifying methamphetamine imaginary that justifies the continuation of the war on drugs.²⁹ Quantitative research has explored whether there could be a relation between the volume of opioid coverage in the news and opioid-related mortality in the United States.³⁰ American media coverage of new drugs is often ill-informed, sensationalist and has been found to lead to detrimental health legislation as the media play an important role in how new drugs are perceived.³¹

These examples of how drugs are covered in the British and American press show how particular patterns in media dynamics limit the breadth of possibilities for imagining policy alternatives. Scholarship dedicated to Australian coverage of drugs in the media describes similar dynamics.³² Effort has been made to improve the general understanding of the relation between the effects of Australian media's coverage on policy regarding illicit drugs by applying models from the communication studies paradigm.³³ Media coverage was found to play a role in not only setting agendas for drug issues, but also framing drug issues in a particular way, influencing attitudes regarding

27 Ingrid Walker, *High: Drugs, Desire, and a Nation of Users* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2017), p. 7.

28 Walker, p. 8.

29 Travis Linnemann, *Meth Wars. Police, Media, Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

30 Nabarun Dasgupta, Kenneth D. Mandl, and John S. Brownstein, 'Breaking the News or Fueling the Epidemic? Temporal Association between News Media Report Volume and Opioid-Related Mortality', *PLOS ONE*, 4.11 (2009) <<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0007758>>.

31 Natasha Swalve and Ruth DeFoster, 'Framing the Danger of Designer Drugs: Mass Media, Bath Salts, and the Miami Zombie Attack', *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 43.2 (2016), 103–21 (p. 117).

32 Philip Bell, 'Drugs and the Media', *Australian Alcohol/Drug Review*, 4.2 (1985), 235–42 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09595238580000401>>.

33 Kari Lancaster and others, 'Illicit Drugs and the Media: Models of Media Effects for Use in Drug Policy Research', *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 30.4 (2011), 397–402 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3362.2010.00239.x>>.

drugs and related issues and, lastly, influencing the political debate regarding drugs. We will see these mechanisms reflected in the historical analyses of this thesis as well. Although strictly focused on the Netherlands, this thesis explores ‘the extent to which media influence perceptions of risks and norms surrounding the acceptability of ecstasy use,’ an issue previously highlighted as in need of further investigation.³⁴

I will investigate what patterns can be identified in how drugs and, in particular, ecstasy were discussed in Dutch news media in the post-war period. For this period, the Netherlands is known as a country with liberal drug policies. At the same time, however, it has been subject to increasing drug regulation, so it is relevant to examine how public media discourse developed when ecstasy came to the Netherlands in the 1980s, in addition to when it was swiftly classified a hard drug. How were drug stories reported in news items, what stakeholders were influential in news debates, was there space for free policy discussion? And how do these patterns compare to drug debate dynamics in foreign news media contexts and to earlier time periods in the Netherlands?

Method | **Digital historical public debate research**

In this thesis these questions are answered with studies into drug coverage in newspaper and radio debates. These studies were possible because of the availability of search and visualisation techniques and digitised newspaper and radio archives. For my research, I conceptualised a structural research approach around such techniques for print and audio-visual data archives that builds on the existing scholarship in DH and digital history, while also attempting to address a number of the challenges associated with digital media analysis. Here I will go through the main developments and existing points of concern in the field before I arrive at explaining how I hoped to address these with the conceptualisation of the leveled approach.

State of the art | **“Big data” and new search and visualisation techniques**

In recent years, large amounts of data with great humanistic and historical relevance have become available to researchers. Digitised archives of socio-culturally relevant material such as newspaper, historical records and material native to the digital sphere (online fora, social networking sites) have been expanding at a considerable rate. Many scholars have already benefitted from the availability of socio-culturally

³⁴ Lancaster and others, p. 400.

relevant big data archives, and many have made important observations about the opportunities and challenges of this material and the techniques used for analysing it. Digital Humanities (DH) concerns itself with the study of digital sources and methods across the humanities, and the field of Digital History, while strongly related, focuses on the application of said sources and methods for studies into the past.³⁵ Many DH scholars believe that the wealth of new information represents great potential to the humanities – some have even suggested that “big data” has allowed scholars in the humanities and history to ask new, different questions.³⁶ They have predicted that digital tools would answer such new questions eventually.³⁷ With this thesis I answer historical questions regarding drug debate dynamics by exploring these large digital mass media data archives.

Distant reading and text mining

Computational techniques can be used to search and visualise aspects of digital data archives, which is referred to as *distant reading*:³⁸ the properties of the dataset are “read,” generating information about the content of the data archive without having to read the actual sources. In this context, the opposite of distant reading is close reading, or actually reading/listening to individual items. Digitised print sources can be distantly read by means of keyword search enabled by Optical Character Recognition (OCR) metadata: an enrichment technique that recognises printed text on scanned pages and generates searchable text. This means that search and visualisation techniques can be used to “mine” relevant digitised historical datasets, such as the newspaper sources used to search for items about particular drugs.

Text mining tools offering search and visualisation techniques, along with access to digitised print data archives, enable a bottom-up key word search strategy, which is of great significance for historical research and has been described as potentially heralding a ‘digital turn’ for the field.³⁹ Researchers can now easily find mentions of any term in large data archives without having to manually search the entire archive or depend on secondary properties, like archivist tags. Access to large digitised

35 Hannu Salmi, *What Is Digital History?* (John Wiley & Sons, 2020).

36 See for example: Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 88 <<http://historymanifesto.cambridge.org/>> [accessed 24 February 2015].

37 Tom Scheinfeldt, ‘Where’s the Beef? Does Digital Humanities Have to Answer Questions?’, *Found History*, 2010 <<http://foundhistory.org/2010/05/wheres-the-beef-does-digital-humanities-have-to-answer-questions/>> [accessed 30 May 2016].

38 Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013).

39 Nicholson.

datasets by means of keyword search within the historical sources has therefore led to new search opportunities for historical research: it may help researchers to determine 'what the significant themes in public debates within a specific time frame actually were.'⁴⁰ The combination of text mining and visualisation has, according to some scholars, the potential to lead to new historical insights.⁴¹ Recent research output continues to highlight the potential of doing historical research based on mass access to digital source material.⁴² The exceptional availability of Dutch digitised newspaper data in the National Library of the Netherlands (KB),⁴³ coupled with these new search and visualisation techniques, provides opportunities for structural research into the reputation of drugs in Dutch newspapers in the post-war period.

DH and digital history research into public debates has hitherto focused primarily on print media sources mostly via digitised newspapers. In comparison with textual sources, audio-visual data archives have been underdescribed.⁴⁴ Now, attention for audio-visual data in digital history is expanding, this is also reflected in a recent special issue of academic journal *Digital Humanities Quarterly* dedicated to audio-visual data.⁴⁵ For this thesis with its interest in discourse in news media in the post-war period, radio and television archives are also deserving of investigation. Technological developments with Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) can provide a new dimension to public debate research: when radio and television data archives are enriched with ASR metadata, these data archives become searchable on a full-text level like the newspaper archives have been for some time now. The ASR enrichment process has commenced for the Dutch radio and television archives of S&V. This enabled

40 Joris van Eijnatten, Toine Pieters, and Jaap Verheul, 'Big Data for Global History: The Transformative Promise of Digital Humanities', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 128.4 (2013), 55–77 (p. 75) <<https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.9350>>.

41 Joris van Eijnatten, Toine Pieters, and Jaap Verheul, 'Using Texcavator to Map Public Discourse', *Tijdschrift Voor Tijdschriftstudies*, 35, 2014, 59–65 (p. 64).

42 Wouter Klein, *New Drugs for the Dutch Republic. The Commodification of Fever Remedies in the Netherlands (c. 1650-1800)*, Fl Scientific Library, 101 (Utrecht: Freudenthal Institute, 2018); Walma, *Between Morpheus and Mary. The Public Debate on Morphine in Dutch Newspapers, 1880-1939*.

43 'Krantenoverzicht Delpher'.

44 Emily Vinson, 'Reassessing A/V in the Archives: A Case Study in Two Parts', *The American Archivist*, 82.2 (2019), 421–39 <<https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc-82-02-05>>; Stephanie Sapienza and others, 'Healing the Gap: Digital Humanities Methods for the Virtual Reunification of Split Media and Paper Collections', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 15.1 (2021).

45 Taylor Arnold and others, 'Introduction: Special Issue on AudioVisual Data in DH', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 15.1 (2021).

me to use distant reading techniques for public debate analysis of both newspaper and radio archives. Structurally researching AV material for public debate analysis as I have in this thesis is virgin territory. Accordingly, this thesis is explicit about each methodological step of the analyses, and each chapter reflects on the assets and drawbacks of incorporating search and visualisation techniques for that study.

Text mining challenges

Scholars were quick to recognise the potential of DH techniques for historical research, but the challenges and risks associated with distant reading and text mining have been discussed extensively already.⁴⁶ boyd and Crawford warned that big data analysis does not automatically lead to objective research results and stressed that ‘interpretation is at the centre of data analysis,’⁴⁷ emphasising that scholars should be explicit about the involved methodological processes. Drucker stressed that visualisation techniques were essentially ‘representations (substitutes and surrogates) that pass themselves off as presentations (the information itself),’⁴⁸ pointing out that visualisation as a process of remediation and translation is easily overlooked.⁴⁹

It has been argued that the adoption of a big data approach in a discipline risks blindly reproducing old assumptions.⁵⁰ Without a thorough awareness of how search and visualisation techniques work, using such techniques might tempt researchers to use them to confirm previously held views or draw erroneous conclusions. New search techniques can be used to test existing historical hypotheses, but scholars should be cautious that they do not use the techniques to find ways to support such hypotheses. Instead, it is important that techniques are used to allow the possibil-

46 See for example: Christine L. Borgman, ‘The Digital Future Is Now: A Call to Action for the Humanities’, *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 3.4 (2009) <<https://works.bepress.com/borgman/233/>> [accessed 13 July 2016]; Merja Mahrt and Michael Scharrow, ‘The Value of Big Data in Digital Media Research’, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 57.1 (2013), 20–33 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.761700>>.

47 danah boyd and Kate Crawford, ‘Critical Questions for Big Data’, *Information, Communication & Society*, 15.5 (2012), 662–79 (p. 668) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.678878>>.

48 Johanna Drucker, ‘Graphical Approaches to the Digital Humanities’, in *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. by Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), pp. 238–50 (p. 245) <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118680605.ch17/summary>> [accessed 13 July 2016].

49 Drucker, p. 249.

50 Trevor J. Barnes, ‘Big Data, Little History’, *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 3.3 (2013), 297–302 (p. 301) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820613514323>>.

ity that the data shows patterns differing from that which was previously assumed. From hundreds of thousands of newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, or television broadcasts, any historical claim can be supported through biased selection criteria. Historians have become highly aware of issues regarding digital selectivity.⁵¹ I have addressed this in this thesis by making all digital search and visualisation strategies explicit so that the historical conclusions partially based on digital search and visualisation techniques can be critically assessed in the context of its full research trajectory.

A strong emphasis on the important role of humanistic interpretation of digital methods and its results has been expressed in the DH field since the second *Digital Humanities Manifesto* in 2009.⁵² Early research on big data in DH might have presented digital results (data visualisations) as end results with intrinsic humanistic or historic relevance, but scholars have been moving away from this.⁵³ In their article on the potential of DH techniques for historical research, Van Eijnatten et al concluded that DH could not 'produce a historical narrative authored by a craftsman whose evocation of the past depends on individual erudition, scholarship, insight, talent and the ability to tell a story.'⁵⁴ Leaving the interpretative process to computational processes was seen as impossible, as the historian's ability to reflect on the results is essential for meaningful observation and interpretation. Patterns or trends found using distant reading techniques should not be accepted as evidence-based research results, but they can support the interpretive capacity of the researcher. DH methods can help to make improved *interpretations* of sociocultural phenomena in the past: the researcher needs to draw explicitly on historical contextual awareness to interpret search results. Digital search results do not generate direct answers to the "So What" research question; they offer support in identifying and asking more informed and significant research questions.⁵⁵ Historical or humanis-

51 Jon Coburn, 'Defending the Digital: Awareness of Digital Selectivity in Historical Research Practice', *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 2020 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000620918647>>.

52 Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, and Jeffrey Schnapp, 'Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0', 2009 <http://www.humanitiesblast.com/manifesto/Manifesto_V2.pdf> [accessed 30 October 2021].

53 See for example: Rens Bod, 'Who's Afraid of Patterns?: The Particular versus the Universal and the Meaning of Humanities 3.0', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 128.4 (2013) <<https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.9351>>; Drucker.

54 Eijnatten, Pieters, and Verheul, 'Big Data for Global History', p. 76.

55 Marc Bron, Jasmijn Van Gorp, and Maarten de Rijke, 'Media Studies Research in the Data-Driven Age: How Research Questions Evolve', *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 67.7 (2016), 1535–54 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23458>>.

tic expertise could enable researchers to refine and reframe relevant questions. Snelders et al summarised this perspective succinctly in the following way:

Insights gained by means of distant reading may help to frame new research questions, thus catalysing historical research. Digitally produced results often lead to unexpected associations that turn out to be promising for further research, but, in order to be meaningful, these require further conventional close reading.⁵⁶

The opportunities given to distant reading, in other words, do not make “close reading” (historical/humanistic interpretation and reflection) unnecessary. One way to combine distant reading with close reading in practice is to include sections in which the steps of distant reading (DH search and/or visualisation techniques) that led to a relevant subset for close reading (historical analysis) are described.⁵⁷ Navigation between distant and close reading and the relevant functionalities of digital tools can affect historical research results.⁵⁸ The field has not developed a standard approach yet for combining distant and close reading of digitised media datasets. Conceptualising and operationalising this gap - by making explicit the steps between the distant reading methods and close reading of the material - is essential to creating a solid methodological foundation for historical research on public debates: this is precisely my goal with the leveled approach in this thesis.

Zaagsma described the challenge for historians to take a ‘hybrid’ approach, i.e. to integrate traditional and digital methods.⁵⁹ This means that the reputable, pre-digital practices of the field should be used in tandem with the benefits provided by the new technological functionalities. Digital techniques come with new challenges and require new skills.⁶⁰ Noordegraaf suggested that the challenge was in adapting tools and techniques to the needs of the humanities scholars, as opposed to keeping at a distance the big data-based techniques from the complex analysis of

⁵⁶ Snelders and others, p. 334.

⁵⁷ See for example: Hieke Huistra, ‘Experts by Experience. Lay Users as Authorities in Slimming Remedy Advertisements, 1918–1939’, *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 132.1 (2017), 126–48 (p. 132) <<https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10313>>.

⁵⁸ Walma, ‘Filtering the “News”’, p. 67.

⁵⁹ Gerben Zaagsma, ‘On Digital History’, *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 128.4 (2013), 3–29 (p. 17).

⁶⁰ Huistra.

culture.⁶¹ The most sustainable way forward is sought in combining expert knowledge of field scholars with a critical and cautious adoption of DH techniques. Since the fields of DH and digital history are relatively new and quickly developing, early research in these fields often focused on method development and reflection. This is changing: research executed with digital techniques that is relevant for both its methodological advances and its historical outcomes has been materialising.⁶² This thesis contributes to this body of scholarly work that combines piloting new methodological approaches to fully realised historical studies.

Methodology | **A structural research approach for analysis of print and AV-media data archives**

For this thesis I used a media analysis approach for historical public debate research that benefits from the opportunities provided by distant reading while at the same time addressing its associated challenges. Finding my way through a quickly developing landscape of tools, datasets, and techniques, I conceptualised the leveled approach to enable structural exploration of the drug debates in Dutch print and audio-visual media. The approach is based on methodological applications of the concepts of public sphere and discourse.

Public debate and the public sphere

The leveled approach assumes that there is a relationship between public media and the public debate surrounding that topic. Jürgen Habermas' theory about the public sphere, which is also helpful in understanding how public debate in the media relates to democratic government (explained below), underlies this conception.⁶³

The concepts of public debate, public sphere and public opinion are closely intertwined. The following is how I utilise each of them in this thesis. With the concept of 61 Julia Noordeggraaf, 'Computational research in media studies: Methodological implications', *Tijdschrift Kwalon* (Boom uitgevers Amsterdam, 2018), p. 56 <https://www.tijdschriftkwalon.nl/inhoud/tijdschrift_artikel> [accessed 8 June 2020].

⁶² See for example: Melvin Wevers, *Consuming America. A Data-Driven Analysis of the United States as a Reference Culture in Dutch Public Discourse on Consumer Goods, 1890-1990* (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2017); Walma, "'The Land of Narcotics'"; Jesper Verhoef, *Opzien tegen modernisering. Denkbeelden over Amerika en Nederlandse identiteit in het publieke debat over media, 1919-1989* (Utrecht University, 2017) <<http://localhost/handle/1874/350877>> [accessed 26 March 2021].

⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

public debate, I refer to the conversations about a topic that are held in public locations. Contemporary public debate about ecstasy takes place in traditional media, such as newspapers and television, on social media and in public lectures. The term *debate* implies that there is a responsive relation between the different elements of the conversation, however I use public drug debate to refer to any comments spoken (or written) in public on drugs. Distilling the dominant perspective on a topic in such a debate exposes what is understood to be the public opinion of the topic. Public opinion plays an important role in a representative democracy, as one important duty of the representatives is to defend the interests of their voters. Public opinion can be measured by polls and surveys, which is also often done for select groups of citizens based on political preference or demographic criteria. Because I analyse what has been said about ecstasy in newspapers and on the radio in search of patterns, this thesis engages with both the public debate and public opinion of ecstasy.

Jurgen Habermas postulated that in modern societies, mass media is part of a *public sphere* that accommodates a 'society engaged in critical public debate.'⁶⁴ This perspective, which is rooted in critical theory, is useful for my research aim because of its critical stance towards power relations in society. The existence of a public sphere could foster true democratic public opinion, but it also has the potential to serve as a tool with which the bourgeois class can reproduce desirable political thought.⁶⁵ This means that it is important to critically assess what stakeholders play important roles in the public debate. This is naturally relevant vis-a-vis public debate on ecstasy and regulation: is the public debate on ecstasy mostly transformed by its users, by policymakers or by other stakeholders, such as law enforcers or medical specialists? And to what degree do comments made in the public sphere align with the classified status of drugs? Can the legal status of a substance be a topic of free discussion, or does that substance's inclusion on one of the lists of the Opium Law quickly lead to consistent stigmatisation in the public sphere as well? The answers to these questions are likely complex. The question is not just how public debate transforms over time, but also what stakeholders are influential in that process. Because my research concerns public debate and drug regulation, I am particularly interested in the role that is given and/or assumed by politicians in the public sphere.

⁶⁴ Habermas, p. 52.

⁶⁵ William Outhwaite, 'Jurgen Habermas', in *Key Sociological Thinkers*, ed. by Rob Stones, Second Edition (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2008), pp. 251–60 (p. 251).

The discursive formation of drugs

The leveled approach, explained in detail below, is in essence a structural way to combine search, visualisation, and analysis techniques. These techniques are used to select relevant media items based on the fact that they share a combination of keywords (related to particular drugs in this dissertation) in the searchable metadata. As they are items from public media, a domain in the public sphere, the results are part of what can be seen as the public debate surrounding ecstasy. Methodologically, however, the items should be considered discursively related as opposed to directly related in a coherent debate.

Search, visualisation, and analysis techniques can help to understand the historical public debate around drugs in the media datasets, as the methodological analytical lens is aimed at the level of discourse. Everything that is said about particular drugs in these media items is connected in that it is all produced by the same society at the same time, which means that these items can be understood as part of what Michel Foucault has called *discourse*: the historically specific, culturally constructed conditions of truth, which is in opposition to what is not true.⁶⁶

These discursive conditions - conditions of truth - are in dialogue with power over the truth in *all* relations between people.⁶⁷ This means that discursive conditions both enable and restrict what can be said about drugs at any given time. In a society with a strong narcophobic discourse, it might be risky to suggest that ecstasy should be legalised, as this might have serious consequences to your social standing, that is unless your position of power and/or knowledge empowers you to make such statements (e.g. an influential politician or field expert). Discourse is continuously reproduced in all relations between people, while the discursive conditions shape and develop simultaneously. Reflecting on traces of such moments of reproduction (in print or spoken record, for instance) can help me to understand shifts in perception on drugs over time. Foucault called this looking at the techniques (e.g. texts) themselves in a search for patterns.⁶⁸ In this thesis I investigate how drugs were defined over time in relation to the changing discursive conditions: my studies are concerned with studying this *discursive formation* of drugs in Dutch media.

Discourse analysis, which is defined more by its analysis level than a shared method
66 Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', in *Untying The Text. A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (Boston: Routledge, 1981), pp. 48–78 (p. 54).

67 Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge, The History of Sexuality*, 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 97.

68 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France, 1977 - 78* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 8.

odology, is used widely across disciplines in the humanities and has also been used for significant research on drugs and media.⁶⁹ More specifically, this thesis is indebted to the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that ‘examines communication in various institutional settings and aims to identify how discourses shape society.’⁷⁰

The leveled approach

Combining distant and close reading has become common practice in DH, but I wanted to structure and explicate the steps between distant and close reading. For this I developed a model that I called *the leveled approach*. This name indicates that there are different analytical levels in the approach, while paradoxically playing on the English definition of leveled (‘flattened,’ ‘having no part higher than another’), as it utilises distant and close reading as equally important stages of digital public debate research. I based the approach on the functionalities of AVResearcherXL and Texcavator, two text mining tools that were available in 2017 for search and analysis of digitised Dutch media datasets.⁷¹ The available functionalities were:

1. keyword search: the possibility to search and find relevant material based on keywords;
2. timeline visualisation: a visualisation of the search results in chronological order;
3. word cloud visualisation: a visualisation of the most frequently co-occurring unique words in the search results;
4. resource viewer: the possibility to read, listen or watch the results individually.

The approach is based on an iterative navigation process between the functionalities on three methodological levels of analysis (see Figure 2).⁷² The available search

⁶⁹ See for example: Stuart Taylor, ‘Outside the Outsiders: Media Representations of Drug Use’, *Probation Journal*, 55.4 (2008), 369–87 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0264550508096493>>; Susan Boyd and Connie I. Carter, ‘Methamphetamine Discourse: Media, Law and Policy’, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 35.2 (2010), 219–37; S. Taylor, ‘Moving beyond the Other: A Critique of the Reductionist Drugs Discourse.’, *Cultuur and Criminaliteit*, 6.1 (2016), 100–118 <<https://doi.org/10.5553/TCC/221195072016006001007>>; Walker; Linnemann, p. 165.

⁷⁰ Rolf Lidskog and Ulrika Olausson, ‘To Spray or Not to Spray: The Discursive Construction of Contested Environmental Issues in the News Media’, *Discourse, Context & Media*, 2.3 (2013), 123–30 (p. 124) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2013.06.001>>.

⁷¹ Appendix I includes information on the tools and data used in this thesis.

⁷² In his influential article about distant reading of historical newspaper archives, Nicholson also

and visualisation techniques are used as functional steps between distant and close reading in the leveled approach. The search and visualisation techniques ultimately function as a signposting strategy to collect material with shared discursive conditions, but understanding historical shifts in public discourse is done by close reading of the individual media items. Analysing how ecstasy was talked about by different types of stakeholders at particular times can lead to an understanding of the substance in the context of its time's discursive conditions.

The cycles of navigation between the macro, meso and micro levels should lead to a set of results that can be analysed with close reading methods (read, listened to, watched). Using a keyword search query, a first selection of search results creates a first selection called the macro level. On this macro level, timeline graphs are used to adjust the historical search period, creating a smaller selection for meso level analysis. On this meso level, word clouds are used to understand the discursive strands that are present in the results. Using relevant words, different discursive strands can be found by expanding the search query with the specific terms found with the word clouds, creating an ultimate set of results on the micro level ready for interpretation by close reading. On each of the three levels, the analysis techniques help to refine keyword search of the dataset. Distant reading techniques function as signposts in finding relevant material for close reading: by repeating cycles iteratively across these levels, the researcher can make meaningful thematic selections in the datasets, which can be analysed on the close reading level.

Since the leveled approach does not isolate, group, or contextualise historical events, extensive knowledge of the historical context (the different media, featured politicians, historical events) at the time is necessary for a plausible interpretation of the visualisations and search results. Each step of the leveled approach relies on such knowledge. In the same way, to use the leveled approach to formulate and answer questions about the discursive formation of ecstasy and drug regulation in the Netherlands, prior knowledge about drugs and the Netherlands is also required. This means that the search and visualisation path followed before close reading of the actual items becomes a part of the historical analysis - it is an interpretive process. My aim with structuring this process was to enable self- and peer reflection at stages of research that might otherwise end up being seen as merely explorative.

To make this less abstract, I will describe these steps as they would occur in a distinguished between macro and micro level analysis. In his text, however, the terms are used to demarcate two different distant reading levels, and in it the terms are not used to operationalise the continuum from distant to close reading: Nicholson, pp. 68–70.

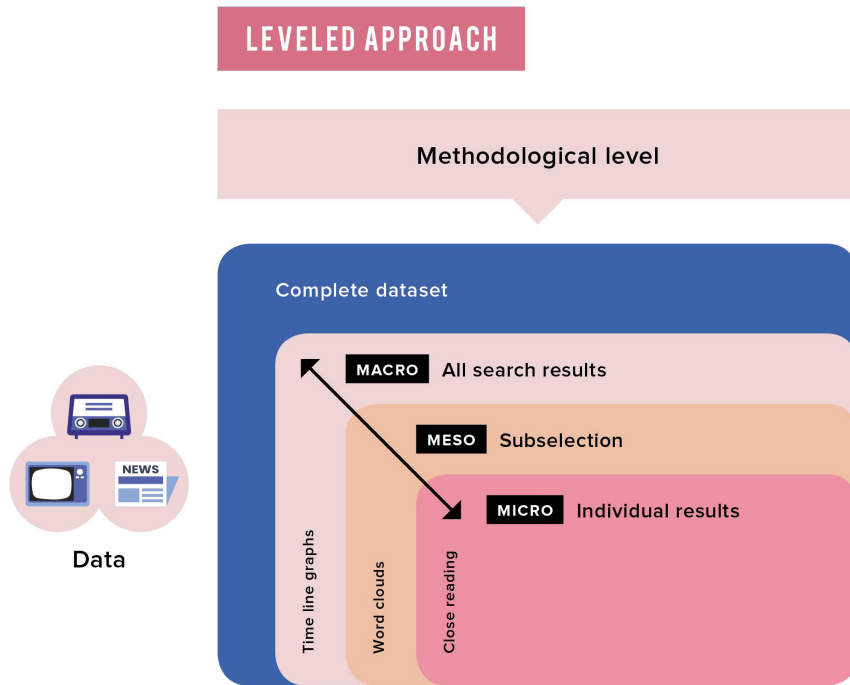


Figure 2. The leveled approach

brief imagined ecstasy search trajectory. The following search scenario should work in any text mining tool with the required functionalities, and with (a) dataset(s) enriched by searchable OCR or ASR metadata. In order to start with the first keyword search of the dataset(s), an initial search query is required. The following is what such a query looks like for the drug ecstasy: $(xtc \text{ OR } mdma \text{ OR } ecsta*y)$. This query contains what I would expect to be the most common ways to refer to the substance. It covers different spelling variations "ecstasy" and "ecsta.y." It contains the pharmacological abbreviation "MDMA," but not the full pharmacological term "3,4methylenedioymethamphetamine," as it is highly unlikely that this would be used in media coverage.⁷³ With the boolean operator "OR" I ensure that any result featuring one of these terms would appear in the search results. This search query functions as the starting point of the research process in a text mining tool to per-

⁷³ Note that this might not be the case if the approach was to be used to research other types of datasets, for instance medical journals. That would require a different strategy, in addition to adequate knowledge of pharmacological terms.

form a keyword search for the relevant media datasets.

On the **macro level**, I set the relevant historical period and use the *timeline* functionality to interpret the search results of the initial keyword search query. The pattern's peaks and valleys on the timeline enable demarcation of potentially relevant sub-periods. A peak in the timeline could indicate that there was a burst of attention paid to amphetamine in the media. If the text mining tool offers the option, it is preferable to work with relative frequencies, as opposed to absolute frequencies, to minimise potentially distorting effects of uneven data availability. At all times, expert knowledge of the composition of the dataset is crucial for correct interpretation of timelines: what might look like an attention peak for ecstasy could in fact be caused by archival issues such as a period of duplicate items or the inclusion of more titles/programmes in a particular year.

The initial search query can then be used again for each of the shorter sub-periods. The results for each of these sub-periods form the basis of the **meso level** of analysis. I compare the *word clouds* generated for each of these isolated periods, looking for strongly associated terms that indicate the existence of possible themes/discursive strands. In the case of ecstasy, some terms could imply a criminal strand, while other terms might imply attention paid to its recreational use. Again, expert knowledge is essential when interpreting and grouping the terms on this level. Grouped terms (e.g. medical terms, criminal terms, recreational terms) should be collected so that they can be used to create targeted subqueries.

On the **micro level**, I read, view or listen to the relevant results by means of close reading. Close reading (done in resource viewer) has two overall roles in the leveled approach. Firstly, frequent use of the resource viewer for close reading is important at all stages of the research to ensure that the researcher maintains a grip on the material. The visualisations do not represent the complexity of the material. Secondly, all results found by using keyword search with targeted subqueries (enriched with relevant terms found on the meso level) are analysed to formulate and then answer targeted research questions. This could mean, as an example, that all material relating to the criminal strand in the discursive formation of ecstasy is collected for analysis by means of expanding the initial query in this way: `(initial query) AND (politie OR illeg*1*)`. In the end, reading/viewing/listening to the actual results is necessary to develop a proper understanding of the historical and cultural significance of the discursive role of the different strands.

Throughout this process - repeated several times in iterative cycles - information is accumulated, which helps to formulate informed and enriched research questions. Based on this information, the search query/queries can be adapted and

tweaked. New relevant terms and/or spelling variations can be discovered and added at any time in the research process. This addresses some challenges associated with keyword search for historical research:⁷⁴ by continuously adapting the search query based on new information throughout the research process, the risk of not ending up with the most relevant subset is minimised. Repeated iterations between the research levels are crucial in ensuring that the signpost potential of the distant reading techniques is maximised, while the occasional close readings avoid losing sight of the material itself and thereby minimises search bias.

Searching newspaper and radio data archives with the leveled approach facilitates the creation of an overall tapestry of cultural conceptions from the different media items. Small remarks or passing mentions of ecstasy may turn out to be just as meaningful as larger ongoing debates around it. This makes discourse analysis a particularly suitable framework for this approach of treating digitised media datasets as big data: the historical argument does not depend on individual articles but on the transcending cultural truth conditions of the time period. I assume that close reading the selected items gives pointers to the discursive formation of ecstasy beyond the subset (like the arrows in Figure 3): every result reveals a little bit of information about what might have been said about ecstasy at a particular time in the context of its discursive conditions.

Potential issues such as the high probability that some relevant articles are overlooked due to methodological issues (e.g. metadata errors), or biases in the search steps are unlikely to have a significant effect on the narrative construction of the discursive formation of drugs; the discursive level transcends the significance of each individual item.

In sum, in this thesis I combine search and visualisation techniques with close reading of media items to study the discursive formation of drugs in the public debate that takes part in mass media, a domain in the Dutch public sphere. In Figure 3, the interrelation between citizens and the media in the public sphere is visualised. Citizens exist in relation to the public sphere as they consume, contribute to and interact with public media. Looking for historical traces of this interaction in print and audio-visual media gives insight into the discursive conditions of ecstasy. Of course, public debate in the media is also defined by the logic inherent to media: different media function differently. Research into different types of media is necessary to understand how each medium might play a different role in the discursive development. Marshall McLuhan influentially postulated that the medium

⁷⁴ Hieke Huistra and Bram Mellink, 'Phrasing History: Selecting Sources in Digital Repositories', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 49.4 (2016), 220–29 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2016.1205964>>.

is the message, which is to say that the medium defines what can be said, thus disturbing the sharp distinction that is often made between form and content.⁷⁵ This means that to understand historical public discourse, it is necessary to also understand precisely how different media shape meaningful public debate differently. In this thesis, the differences between discursive dynamics in newspaper and radio debates have been investigated.

Historiography | **Drugs, ecstasy, and regulation**

With my studies of the discursive formation of drugs in Dutch media, I aim to contribute to our knowledge of the history of drugs, which goes back a long way. The history of drugs, and that of ecstasy, has been documented from different angles: within academia (the history of drugs and alcohol has a dedicated academic society and journal⁷⁶) and in more journalistic publications and policy documents. A general introduction over a few pages to drugs and drug regulation, as is included here, is bound to leave out more events and substances than it can include.

This historiography serves as a wider historical context to the media analyses of this thesis. It consists of a general historiography of drugs and regulation and a historiography of ecstasy and regulation. Historical research on international developments is also included when relevant, as the history of drugs in the Netherlands cannot be understood without looking outside of Dutch borders.⁷⁷

75 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge, 1964).

76 See <historyofalcoholanddrugs.typepad.com> [accessed 31 October 2021] for information about the Alcohol and Drugs History Society and access to its journal *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*.

77 A large share of the most influential historical work on drugs originates in and focuses on either the United States or the United Kingdom, which is reflected in this historiography that includes predominantly US and UK academic references. Countries like the US and, especially, the UK have also played important roles in the discursive formation of drugs in Dutch media, as will be shown in this dissertation. A look at a recent issue of the journal *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* shows that the field has broadened its scope with articles and reviews of books that relate to drug history in countries like Brazil, South Africa, China and Egypt (*The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, vol. 34.2, Fall 2020).



Figure 3. Digitised media datasets in the context of the public sphere

A brief historiography of drugs and regulation

The perhaps best-known scholarly work on the history of drugs, *Forces of Habit*, goes as far back as 6000 and 4000 B.C., to the origins of viticulture, the selective cultivation of grape vines for creating wine between the Black and Caspian seas.⁷⁸ In this work, a distinction is made between the main psychoactive resources, grouped as the big three (alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine) and the little three (opium, cannabis and coca). Over time, some of the drugs made from these resources came to be accepted in societies, while others were banned. Five categories of politically consequential objections to nonmedical drug use are outlined: 1) direct harm to the user and/or to others; 2) a concern about social costs; 3) religious disapproval; 4) associations of drugs with deviant/disliked groups; 5) the perception

⁷⁸ David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit. Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*, Third printing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 9.

that drug use might endanger the future of the group (tribe, nation, race).⁷⁹ The diverse character of these objections indicates the sociocultural complexities that surround drugs and regulation.

Forces of Habit also showed that whether nonmedical use of a drug is permitted in a particular society is often confined by commercial interests. Pertinent examples of drugs that are socially and legally permissible in the Netherlands are tobacco and alcohol. Both these substances have proven to be important sources of revenue and tax globally, despite being considered two of the most harmful drugs. Tobacco and alcohol rank high among the most harmful substances: in an expert ranking from 2010 that compared 19 different drugs based on physical harm, social harm and dependence, tobacco and alcohol ended up in the top 5 most harmful.⁸⁰ Only crack cocaine (number 1) and heroine (number 2) ranked higher than tobacco (number 3) and alcohol (number 4), with methamphetamine rounding out the top 5. This shows that drug regulation is not exclusively dictated by public health concerns.

Alongside commercial interests, drug regulation and drug policy should also be understood in the context of moral bias and stigmatisation. David Nutt founded the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs (ISCD) and wrote the book *Drugs Without the Hot Air* after he was fired from his position as chair of the British Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in 2009.⁸¹ He had been asked to resign following publicity in the wake of one of his lectures in which he questioned the decision to treat cannabis as a dangerous drug to err on the side of caution. After he refused to step down, he was fired. It had not been the first time that Nutt's scientifically grounded statements about drug harm had led to public outrage in the United Kingdom: notable is his comparison between the risks of horse-riding and taking ecstasy, which ended up becoming the topic of the first chapter of his book.⁸² Regardless of whether the comparison was legitimate, even the suggestion that the risk of taking a drug could be comparable to the risk of an activity like horse riding was widely condemned.

Drugs have developed into an incredibly socially sensitive topic. In the book *The Pursuit of Oblivion*, covering a span of about five centuries of drug history, the author states in the prologue that 'absolute sobriety is not a natural or primary

79 Courtwright, p. 168.

80 Jan van Amsterdam and others, 'Ranking the Harm of Alcohol, Tobacco and Illicit Drugs for the Individual and the Population', *European Addiction Research*, 16.4 (2010), 202–7 (p. 204) <<https://doi.org/10.1159/000317249>>.

81 Nutt, p. 1.

82 Nutt, p. 9.

human state.⁸³ The state of intoxication is not unnatural or deviant to his mind. Due to the cultural weight and connotations of the term *drugs*, some scholars concerned with the history of drugs have adopted use of the more neutral term *intoxicants*.⁸⁴ The *Pursuit of Oblivion* was framed by the author as a historical work that 'marshals evidence that conflicts with many assumptions of the prohibitionists.'⁸⁵ The question as to whether certain drugs should be prohibited or regulated has been a pertinent question for at least a century. It also features prominently in the media debates analysed in this study. This question has not always been central to drug discourse: in the nineteenth century, stimulants and tonic agents were embraced as contributors to a public health ideal of 'a fit and able individual and collective body.'⁸⁶

International drug regulation began at the start of the twentieth century with the United States taking a leading role. Rather than as an individual problem, substance abuse was starting to be seen as a threat to the people and state (ibid). National drug regulation in the Netherlands also started just over a century ago when it participated in a number of international Opium Conventions. The first of these was held in Shanghai, China in 1909 by the initiative of the United States, which was seeking to limit and eventually ban the use of opioids.⁸⁷ The first Opium Law in the Netherlands was established in 1919, functioning to restrict opioid trade. At the time of the Law's implementation in 1920, the idea existed that there was no domestic drug trade issue in need of combating within the Netherlands.⁸⁸ This changed in 1927 when it became clear that the Rotterdam harbour had turned into an important gateway for illicit substance trafficking.⁸⁹ The Rotterdam police department adopted a central role in the process of professionalising drug trade combat in the Netherlands between 1920 and 1940 that relied on international cooperation from the start.⁹⁰

In 1928, use and possession of opioids was made illegal in the Netherlands through an updated version of the Opium Law. This version of the law, under which

83 Davenport-Hines, p. 12.

84 'Intoxicants and Early Modernity', *Intoxicants and Early Modernity* <<https://www.intoxicantsproject.org/>> [accessed 22 January 2021].

85 Davenport-Hines, p. 17.

86 Sietse van der Hoek and Toine Pieters, *Supergenen en turbosporters. Een nieuwe kijk op doping* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, 2009), p. 39.

87 T Blom, *Opiumwetgeving en drugsbeleid* (Deventer: Wolters Kluwer, 2015), p. 1.

88 de Kort, p. 83.

89 de Kort, p. 84.

90 de Kort, p. 87.

cocaine and morphine were now banned alongside opioids, forms the basis of the Opium Law that exists today. The addictive potential of these substances was known in the medical professions before this: around 1900, there had been calls for the legal regulation of non-medical uses of opiates and cocaine.⁹¹

It is relevant to note that in these early decades of formal drug regulation, drug trade and, especially, use regulation restrictions were implemented in the Netherlands in accordance with international conventions, not out of public concern: in the Netherlands there was no drug use that was seen as a significant societal problem. Addiction to morphine and cocaine was seen, in the first place, as a problem of the individual; opium use cultures in the Netherlands only existed on the margins of society. The opium that was traded and used recreationally was seen as a particular issue of a marginalised part of society, particularly the community of Chinese seamen in the Dutch ports.⁹² The Netherlands, in fact, had commercial interests in opioids and cocaine that were put at risk with the regulation efforts.⁹³ This shows how, from the start, drug regulation in the Netherlands was intertwined with international drug regulation developments and issues.

It was not until the 1960s that the Netherlands first had to confront a major domestic drug use issue: cannabis and LSD use amongst the blossoming hippy youth culture. Under the existing Opium Law, all non-medical and non-scientific drug use was illegal, which made the (predominantly young and white) people who used cannabis offenders. The harsh police action against hippies provoked social discussions. The developments of this time need to be understood in the context of an end to a period of far-reaching pillarisation in the Netherlands. Perhaps more so than other European countries, the ideological pillar someone belonged to defined someone's social life and circles. The pillars, built around specific ties to ideological, religious or secular worldviews, 'set up a whole array of organisations encompassing practically every sphere of social life such as primary relations, work, education, politics, health care, leisure, and the media.'⁹⁴ By the 1970s, people started breaking away from these traditional ties through the comfort afforded to them by the welfare state and economic prosperity, and in this context new challeng-

⁹¹ de Kort, p. 41.

⁹² See for example: de Kort, p. 94; Stephen Snelders, *Drug Smuggler Nation. Narcotics and the Netherlands, 1920-1995* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), p. 54.

⁹³ Blom, p. 3.

⁹⁴ Paul Dekker and Peter Ester, 'Depillarisation, Deconfessionalization, and De-Ideologization: Empirical Trends in Dutch Society 1958-1992', *Review of Religious Research*, 37.4 (1996), 325-41 (p. 325) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3512012>>.

es to authority could thrive.⁹⁵ The most emblematic of these was the Amsterdam Provo movement, which explicitly challenged the existing order and authority by so-called *happenings* (public protests) that generated intense media coverage. The counterculture of the 1960s, framed as a generational crisis by some historians, is seen as another catalyst for the process of depillarisation in the Netherlands.⁹⁶

For the first time in the Netherlands, white middle- and upper class people were associated with a visible drug problem: in the context of hippy and Provo counterculture, this created a moral panic of the drug issue.⁹⁷ In response, the Netherlands transformed to a less repressive form of authority. It has been argued that this was not just a pragmatic response; it should also be viewed to include 'a bundle of assumptions and expectations that were self-consciously modern.'⁹⁸

The ecstasy and LSD drug culture that caused social panic in the 1960s is often seen in retrospect as rather tame compared to what quickly followed. Over the course of the 1970s, the popularity of heroin rapidly increased in the Netherlands, after cheap heroin supplies filled a gap in the market created by the stronger combat of opium trade.⁹⁹ Heroin would go on to become the most problematic drug in the Netherlands. It gained some subcultural status in the 1970s, and it has been suggested that the drug was a nihilistic answer to the youth of this 'depressive decade,' a period of stunted progress and economic recession.¹⁰⁰ A far cry from hippy culture, indeed.

The situation eventually led to an amendment of the Opium Law in 1976.¹⁰¹ This amendment introduced the double dual track policy, under which production and trade of illegal drugs stayed illegal, while drug use itself was decriminalised. In addition, a distinction was made between substances with an unacceptable health risk (List 1) and other substances (List 2). Cannabis products - legally categorised as soft drugs under the new policy - were placed on list 2, while opioids, cocaine, heroin

95 James C. Kennedy, *A Concise History of the Netherlands* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 411.

96 Hans Righart, 'Moderate Versions of the "Global Sixties": A Comparison of Great Britain and the Netherlands', *Journal of Area Studies*, 2008, p. 89 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02613539808455834>>.

97 van der Hoek and Pieters, p. 54.

98 James C. Kennedy, 'New Babylon and the Politics of Modernity', *Sociologische Gids*, 44.5-6 (1997), 361-74 (p. 364).

99 de Kort, p. 231.

100 Gemma Blok, "'We the Avant-Garde". A History from Below of Dutch Heroin Use in the 1970s', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 132.1 (2017), 104-25 <<https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10312>>.

101 Blom, p. 49.

and, the newly listed, amphetamines were placed on list 1, aka hard drugs. In 1978, sales of cannabis products by so-called “huisdealers,” dealers in youth centres, were tolerated. Contrary to popular belief, cannabis product sales were never actually legalised. The current day “coffee shops” in the Netherlands, where the sales of cannabis products are tolerated, can be understood as the successor to the “huisdealer.”¹⁰² The paradox of cannabis sales being tolerated while its commercial production is illegal and, thus, actively combated has frequently led to discussions ever since.¹⁰³

As a result of the Opium Law amendment in 1976 and its decriminalisation, drug use started to be approached more as a public health issue rather than a criminal issue. With the amendment, the Netherlands had legally established that the use of drugs was not punishable, but possession of drugs was. In *Ziek of Zwak*, Gemma Blok wrote that in the twentieth century ‘Dutch addiction care slowly grew towards recognition of the given that addiction is in many cases hard to cure.’¹⁰⁴ This was not a linear process: addiction care discourse had already swayed multiple times between abstinence and harm reduction. Addiction care had faced the same, socio-cultural developments that drugs in general were subjected to, but starting from the 1980s, abstinence policy took a backseat to harm reduction policies. Treating heroin users as patients first, and providing methadone or heroin treatment therapy, is exemplary of the harm reduction approach, and its adoption in the Netherlands strengthened the country’s international reputation as being highly accommodating to drug users.¹⁰⁵ In an effort to counter its reputation in a European context as a drugs paradise in the 1970s, Dutch political representatives downplayed the Netherlands’ liberal cannabis policies and, instead, emphasised its hard drug trade combating efforts.¹⁰⁶ From that point forward, Dutch drug regulation and international frameworks for drug regulation have never existed without

102 Blom, p. 52.

103 Recently, trials with legal production of ecstasy have started under the moniker weed experiment (“wietexperiment”), see: ‘Experiment gesloten coffeeshopketen (wietexperiment)’, *Rijksoverheid.nl* (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2019) <<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/experiment-gesloten-coffeeshopketen-wietexperiment>> [accessed 10 December 2020].

104 Gemma Blok, *Ziek of zwak. Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Nieuwezijds, 2011), p. 6.

105 The Netherlands was not unique or even the first to have such policies. The United States, for instance, had supplied opium addicts with morphine maintenance doses as early as in 1910, although that policy was abolished soon after (Blok, 2010, p. 5).

106 Rafaela de Quadros Rigoni, “‘Drugs Paradise’: Dutch Stereotypes and Substance Regulation in European Collaborations on Drug Policies in the 1970s’, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 46.3 (2019), 219–40 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0091450919847846>>.

tension. International drug regulation and the idealistic notion of prohibition are, according to some researchers, primarily the result of moral “narcophobic” discourse that intrinsically condemns drug use.¹⁰⁷

The observation that some of the most serious problems associated with drug use (in particular, criminal behaviour linked to heroin use) were a result of, or even made worse by, its illegal status was highlighted in Dutch drug policy documents in 1985.¹⁰⁸ This led to discussions regarding the necessity of normalising drug use and the cultural integration of drug problems. Despite this, the resources and policies aimed at combating drug trade and production by means of repressive measures only increased throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in the Netherlands, much like they had internationally as well.¹⁰⁹

A new drug use culture developed at the end of the 1980s, when, along with house music, synthetic drugs became popular among a new generation of drug users.¹¹⁰ Different so-called *designer drugs* kept flooding the market over the next decades, which caused new challenges for the regulatory regimes.¹¹¹ The drug called ecstasy, the street name given to the pill form of MDMA, a substituted methylenedioxyphenethylamine, would become the most popular of these “new” substances.

A brief historiography of ecstasy

Ecstasy was not at all new when it became popular in Amsterdam clubs in the late 1980s: MDMA was first synthesised in Germany in the early twentieth century. Ecstasy’s origins lie in the medical world. Within the history of pharmacy and substances, one approach to studying drugs is by tracing a substance’s historical “drug trajectories.”¹¹² Wouter Klein explained this practice succinctly in his dissertation

107 Fernanda Mena and Dick Hobbs, ‘Narcophobia: Drugs Prohibition and the Generation of Human Rights Abuses’, *Trends in Organized Crime*, 13.1 (2010), 60–74 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-009-9087-8>>.

108 de Kort, p. 265.

109 de Kort, p. 269.

110 Tibor M. Brunt and Raymond J. M. Niesink, ‘The Drug Information and Monitoring System (DIMS) in the Netherlands: Implementation, Results, and International Comparison’, *Drug Testing and Analysis*, 3.9 (2011), 621–34 (p. 621) <<https://doi.org/10.1002/dta.323>>.

111 See for example: *New Psychoactive Substances in Europe. An Update from the EU Early Warning System* (Luxembourg: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, March 2015).

112 Toine Pieters, *Historische Trajecten in de Farmacie. Medicijnen Tussen Confectie En Maatwerk. Inaugural Lecture*. (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004); Stephen Snelders, Charles Kaplan, and Toine

about early modern fever remedies in the Netherlands: ‘drug trajectories denote developmental processes of remedies, such as growing *economic* importance of a drug [...], shifts in *scientific* interest [...], and acceptance or rejection of drugs in the *public* domain, [...] [they] represent specific aspects of the history of drugs which can be studied diachronically [...] or synchronically.’¹¹³ Studying drugs’ specific historical trajectories can help to untangle their complex meanings. Drugs can move between the medical and non-medical spheres, as their multiple trajectories develop in different but related domains such as commerce, science and the public sphere. With this thesis I contribute to our understanding of ecstasy’s drug trajectory by investigating its historical reputation in the public debate. In this historiography I outline its drug trajectory in a broader sense.

In the first place, there is the pharmacological trajectory of ecstasy, which naturally lies in the medical sphere. Chemically, psychoactive drug 3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine, or MDMA in short, falls under two classes: the substituted methylenedioxyphenethylamines and substituted amphetamines. This means that MDMA is an atomically adjusted compound, created in a chemical laboratory by tweaking existing compounds. It is an empathogenic and stimulating substance, which means it makes users experience a strong sense of empathy while also contributing to higher levels energy. Ecstasy was “discovered” in Germany: it was first synthesised in 1912 in the laboratories of Merck, Darmstadt.¹¹⁴ It is often written that the substance was first discovered during a search for new anorectics, but more recent historical research has shown that it was synthesised when Merck was looking for new, patentable haemostatic substances.¹¹⁵ Initially patented as methylsafiramin, there are no records of the substance being tested on humans until 1960.¹¹⁶ By the mid-1970s, it had made its way into the therapeutic community of American psychologists and psychiatrists via chemist and psychopharmacologist Alexander Shulgin. In this context it was originally used as an experimental treatment for anxiety and stress related disorders.¹¹⁷ Shulgin Pieters, ‘On Cannabis, Chloral Hydrate, and Career Cycles of Psychotropic Drugs in Medicine’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 80.1 (2006), 95–114 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2006.0041>>. 113 Klein, p. 22.

114 Daniel M. Perrine, *The Chemistry of Mind-Altering Drugs: History, Pharmacology, and Cultural Context* (American Chemical Society, 1996), p. 302.

115 Roland W. Freudenmann, Florian Oxler, and Sabine Bernschneider-Reif, ‘The Origin of MDMA (Ecstasy) Revisited: The True Story Reconstructed from the Original Documents’, *Addiction*, 101.9 (2006), 1241–45 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2006.01511.x>>.

116 Freudenmann, Oxler, and Bernschneider-Reif, p. 1244.

117 Perrine, p. 303.

quietly distributed the substance within his circle of psychotherapists, fearing the kind of adverse publicity that had led to the end of LSD-assisted therapy.¹¹⁸ MDMA never did materialise as a legitimate medicine in the medical mainstream, also being hindered by its 1985 List 1 Scheduling in the United States. Covertly, however, therapists across the world have been experimenting with MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for the past few decades.¹¹⁹ Since the late 1980s, the Multidisciplinary Organisation for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) has advocated and researched MDMA's potential as a treatment aid in MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).¹²⁰ The MAPS clinical trials have proven successful and have recently moved on to Phase 3 in the United States, with trials now underway in the Netherlands as well. Legal Dutch studies with MDMA have been extremely limited too, explained at least in part by the Netherlands scheduling the substance as a List 1 hard drug with unacceptable risks to public health in November 1988. Even though it is classified as a hard drug throughout the world, scientifically MDMA is considered a relatively safe substance in comparison with many other substances, including alcohol and tobacco, as mentioned at the start of this historical overview.

The 1988 scheduling started MDMA on its way to a clandestine commodity in the Netherlands, but it had already been being produced at a relatively small scale by amateurs, often users themselves, for a few years before that.¹²¹ While the 1988 scheduling made MDMA production illicit, its use prevalence was still publicly understood to be very minimal in the Netherlands, although this perception would soon change. The primary reason for its inclusion on List 1 of the Opium Law was due to international pressure on the Netherlands to curb its production and export of the substance.¹²² Its inclusion has been described as a 'political act, of symbolic importance for smoothing international governmental relations'.¹²³ MDMA production was 118 Snelders, p. 238.

119 Torsten Passie, 'Observations on MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy in Clinical Practice' (presented at Opening up. Shaping the future: therapeutic applications of MDMA, Amsterdam, 2019).

120 Michael C. Mithoefer and others, 'MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy for Treatment of PTSD: Study Design and Rationale for Phase 3 Trials Based on Pooled Analysis of Six Phase 2 Randomized Controlled Trials', *Psychopharmacology*, 236.9 (2019), 2735–45 (p. 2736) <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-019-05249-5>>.

121 Snelders, p. 240.

122 Arno Adelaars, *Ecstasy. De opkomst van een bewustzijnsveranderend middel* (Amsterdam: In De Knipscheer, 1991), p. 114.

123 Inge P. Spruit, 'Ecstasy Use and Policy Responses in the Netherlands', *Journal of Drug Issues*, 29.3 (1999), 653–77 (p. 654) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/002204269902900312>>.

indeed slowly growing in the Netherlands, although recent scholarship suggests that it was only by 1990 that domestic production had outgrown import.¹²⁴ In the next decades, the extremely profitable clandestine production of MDMA continued to grow despite increasing police efforts at curbing it.¹²⁵ The police conservatively estimated the street value of MDMA and amphetamine produced in the Netherlands in 2018 to be least 18.9 billion euros,¹²⁶ although this number has been disputed.¹²⁷ Regardless of whether the exact number is correct, the Netherlands remained a significant international producer of MDMA and other synthetic drugs.

MDMA's most well-known and well-documented trajectory lies in the non-medical sphere and concerns its recreational role as a party drug. When MDMA started to be sold under the name ecstasy (also XTC or just X) in a select number of clubs in the US, its popularity quickly spread around the globe. Beginning from the US clubs, it became popular with a wide array of users, including 'new agers, travellers, gays, students, therapists, business people, DJs, hippies, party tourists' and then went on to grow in popularity in India, Ibiza and the UK, finally reaching the Netherlands and Belgium by 1988.¹²⁸ When ecstasy became popular in the Netherlands in the mid-1980s, Dutch drug policy was characterised by a liberal climate, and the Netherlands had a head-start in implementing harm reduction measures.¹²⁹ The distinction between hard and soft drugs had been set up to help distinguish between harmful and less harmful substances. Ecstasy was in fact seen as a light substance initially.¹³⁰ Its swift inclusion on List 1 of hard drugs was not primarily motivated by health concerns but is usually explained as an attempt by the Netherlands to assuage international pressure to curb its production.

Ecstasy's mass use developed in tandem with the house music cult, which has been described as a convergence of three different tracks: technology (the appropriation of the Roland TB-303 synthesiser), culture (an evolution of dance music and disco mu-

124 Snelders, p. 242.

125 Snelders, p. 251.

126 Pieter Tops and others, *Waar een klein land groot in kan zijn. Nederland en synthetische drugs in de afgelopen 50 jaar*. (Den Haag: Boom Criminologie, 2018).

127 Ton Nabben, 'Twee gram speed per dag? Onmogelijk', *NRC.NEXT*, 4 September 2018, p. 18.

128 Ton Nabben, *High Amsterdam: Ritme, roes en regels in het uitgaansleven* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2010), p. 186 <<https://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=bb-f4e68a-82cc-423d-9223-159f9a353a43>> [accessed 26 January 2021].

129 Brunt and Niesink, p. 621.

130 Spruit, p. 654.

sic) and pharmacology (the availability of ecstasy).¹³¹ Acid house, the first sub-genre of house music, quickly became popular in the United Kingdom and Ibiza in 1987 after it had blown over from the United States.¹³² Although drug use was intimately connected to the genre from the beginning, the original meaning of the word “acid” is uncertain: it could have referred to the drug LSD that was popular in the Chicago house scene where the subgenre was born; or it could have been because the word sounded trippy, just like the synthesiser sound. Either way, the term stuck after the Chicago house music collective Phuture created and released their Acid Tracks in 1987.¹³³ Acid house was the first house subgenre that became popular in the Netherlands in 1988 after DJs had been attempting for a while to introduce house records, in particular at the Amsterdam club RoXY.¹³⁴

Ecstasy ‘brought a normalising influence to drug scenes.’¹³⁵ Ecstasy was used hedonistically ‘by young people who did not consider themselves outlaws’ (ibid). Even though ecstasy was (and still is) often combined experimentally with other substances, its party reputation distinguished it from other drug scenes. Ecstasy users in the Netherlands as well do not think of their behaviour as irresponsible, and they weigh the benefits of the drug’s effects carefully against its risks.¹³⁶ Around the time of ecstasy’s initial surge in popularity in the United States, parallels had already been drawn between ecstasy and the psychedelic movement of the 1960s.¹³⁷ Ecstasy was often labelled *love drug*, with the summers of 1988 and, to a lesser degree, 1989 being deemed Second Summers of Love, in reference to the original Summer of Love of 1967 in San Francisco that had been defined by cannabis and LSD. Especially in comparison to heroin and cocaine, ecstasy quickly adopted a much softer reputation. The role ecstasy and house music culture had in forming the personal and social identities of Dutch adolescents has received attention in both social and academic contexts, highlighting the normalised character of the drug.¹³⁸

The 1990s would turn out to be a decade in which venues across the Netherlands would fill up every weekend with thousands of ravers dancing the night (and maybe

131 Nabben, *High Amsterdam*, p. 187.

132 Collin.

133 Collin, p. 19.

134 Job de Wit, *RoXY en de houseevolutie* (Amsterdam: Fast Moving Targets, 2013), p. 82.

135 Davenport-Hines, p. 477.

136 Nabben, *High Amsterdam*, p. 186.

137 Collin, p. 27.

138 Tom Ter Bogt and others, ‘“Dancestasy”: Dance and MDMA Use in Dutch Youth Culture’, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 29.1 (2002), 157–81 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/009145090202900107>>.

even day) away to house music; a decade in which ecstasy became the go-to recreational substance for hundreds of thousands of party goers. In the first half of the 1990s, house parties were often held in old warehouses and factories.¹³⁹ A Drugs Information and Monitoring System was set up in 1992 as a harm reduction initiative: this made it possible to issue national warnings when dangerous ecstasy pills were found in the pill testing system.¹⁴⁰ Pill testing itself was often contested politically and socially: facilitating pill testing was often seen as a form of open facilitation and even encouragement of ecstasy use. A 1995 policy document from the ministries of Health, Justice and Domestic Affairs called *Drugs Policy in the Netherlands, Continuity and Change* emphasised that public health consideration was the cornerstone of Dutch drugs policy, but acknowledged that this at times conflicted with public nuisance issues, local zero tolerance enforcement initiatives, the involvement of organised crime and foreign criticism of the Dutch drugs policy.¹⁴¹ By the mid-1990s, house parties had become an established part of the Dutch nightlife, with tens of thousands of ecstasy users attending large-scale house parties each weekend.¹⁴² The conditions and safety measures at these events improved steadily (e.g. first aid and security facilities) under the influence of harm reduction campaigns, also funded by national and local governments.¹⁴³

House music and ecstasy use had grown apart somewhat by 2009: the disappearance of Amsterdam's ecstasy hotspots Mazzo, RoXY and iT; the growth of new party locations; an upgraded and more mainstream outgoing public; and the rise of urban culture were said to have contributed to a declining popularity of ecstasy.¹⁴⁴ And yet still, in 2020, ecstasy was the most popular party drug in the Netherlands.¹⁴⁵ A recent journalistic "biography" of ecstasy in the Netherlands described ecstasy's many settings, ending in 2020, a year in which the substance continued to be used at raves organised illegally while the country reeled under the weight of the covid-19 pandemic.¹⁴⁶ Ecstasy never disappeared from the Netherlands after its arrival in the mid-1980s.

139 van de Wijngaart and others, 'Ecstasy Use at Large-Scale Dance Events in the Netherlands', *Journal of Drug Issues*, 29.3 (1999), 679–701 (p. 680) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/002204269902900313>>.

140 Spruit, p. 658.

141 Spruit, p. 666.

142 Wijngaart and others, p. 680.

143 Wijngaart and others, p. 681.

144 Nabben, *High Amsterdam*, p. 193.

145 van Laar and others.

146 Philippus Zandstra and Wietse Pottjewijd, *XTC. Een biografie* (Amsterdam: Querido Fosfor, 2020).

Important recent developments in the Netherlands regarding ecstasy include the outspoken positions of progressive parties in favour of the legalisation of drugs, including ecstasy,¹⁴⁷ and the on-going trials for MDMA and its potential role in the treatment of PTSD patients.¹⁴⁸ These developments could potentially create new relations between ecstasy's drug trajectories: could we see divergent reputations for its medical and nonmedical role existing simultaneously, perhaps by way of branding? If ecstasy sales were to be legalised, in effect changing its legal reputation, how would the commercial product be positioned?

To answer such questions and to be able to view these new developments in the appropriate historical context, this thesis investigates how ecstasy's current reputation originated and developed in media debates.

Contents | **Structure of this thesis**

Each chapter of this thesis is structured equally and contains two parts: one outlines its methodological approach, and the other is a historical analysis. The thesis follows two paths: one, the methodological development and, two, the developing narrative surrounding drugs in Dutch media based on historical analysis. In the methodological parts, I describe that chapter's methodological aim, the digital platform and the dataset that were used. Each historical analysis consists of two parts: the search and visualisation steps taken before close reading, and the historical narrative based on close reading the selected items. The search and visualisation steps are included as part of the analysis, as these should be seen as a part of the interpretive trajectory of the studies.

The methodological development path starts in Chapter 1 with the first pilot of the leveled approach: a newspaper study done with the tool Texcavator. This chapter is followed by two chapters that enable comparison between keyword search of OCR metadata and keyword search of ASR metadata. In Chapter 2, I use Delpher to read all newspaper articles regarding ecstasy found via an OCR metadata keyword search. In Chapter 3, I use the CLARIAH Media Suite to analyse all radio items found with a keyword search of ASR metadata. In Chapter 4, I do a second radio study in the Media Suite, this time combining it with a Jupyter notebook, for which I used the leveled

¹⁴⁷ See for example: 'D66 — Drugsmanifest'; 'Waarom wij voor het legaliseren van XTC zijn'.

¹⁴⁸ For recent developments, see: Max van Baalen and Toine Pieters, 'Post Traumatische Stress Stoornis (PTSS) in Coronatijd. Beloftevolle Behandeling Met Combinatie MDMA En Psychotherapie', *De Psycholoog*, 12, 2020.

approach to explore a historical hypothesis raised by the analysis of Chapter 3. In this way, each methodological step, while confined by the methodological possibilities at the time of research, develops towards the possibility of using the leveled approach for discourse analysis of the radio debates in the last chapter.

The overall thesis structure thus reflects the research trajectory with successive stages of methodological development and technological possibilities. Each chapter represents a step from conceptualisation towards full implementation of the leveled approach, enabled and constrained by what was methodologically possible at that time.

The historical narrative path of this thesis starts with a precursory study of the drug amphetamine in Dutch newspapers between 1945 and 1990 in Chapter 1. The demise of amphetamine's medical reputation in the newspapers is considered in relation to its regulatory changes during these decades. Chapter 2, I will go to the start of ecstasy's discursive formation in the Netherlands with a newspaper study about ecstasy in the second half of the 1980s. The analysis will show that the discursive formation of ecstasy was multifaceted from the start, with early tendencies that accommodated, problematised and criminalised the drug existing simultaneously. Chapter 3 expands on this study with an analysis of the discursive formation of ecstasy based on radio items. I will show how the idea of ecstasy as a soft drug that was prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s, sometimes scornfully called romanticism, became less dominant by 2006 in favour of a more narcophobic discourse. Chapter 4 zooms in on a hypothesis concerning the changing reputation of the ecstasy user in radio debates and shows harm reduction losing its dominant position with many stakeholders questioning whether to continue tolerating ecstasy as a party drug. The four chapters are followed by the overall conclusion, wherein I take stock of the historical findings and the methodological assets and new challenges this thesis raises. A schematic overview of this thesis's structure is presented in Table 0a.

The research for this thesis was carried out in the context of two projects. The first of these is the research project Imperative of Regulation.¹⁴⁹ In this project, the hypothesis that the Netherlands has been subject to an increasing imperative to regulate drugs in the post-war period is explored. The multidisciplinary project consists of four subprojects, each focusing on a different domain: the illegal production and trade networks of drugs, national drug policies in a European context, national drug policies in relation to local policies, and the public perceptions of drugs in news media. This thesis presents the case study of ecstasy in Dutch news media as a contribution to research into this historical imperative to regulate as related to public discourse. The second project is Debate Research Across Media (DReAM),
149 'Imperative of Regulation'.

Chapter	Historical RQ	Digital platform	Dataset	Methodological aim
1 <u>Amphetamine's new regulatory realities</u> : Piloting the leveled approach with Dutch newspaper data using text mining tool Texcavator	How did the medical strand within the discursive formation of amphetamine develop as the substance went from over-the-counter drug to prescription drug to classified hard drug? (1945-1990)	Texcavator	Newspaper dataset (KB)	Leveled approach pilot study of the newspaper archive
2 <u>Making sense of a "new" drug</u> : The beginnings of ecstasy's discursive formation in Dutch newspapers between 1985 and 1990	How did the discursive formation of ecstasy develop in Dutch newspapers? (1985-1990)	Delpher		Keyword search benchmark analysis (OCR metadata)
3 <u>The rise and fall of the love pill</u> : Ecstasy in Dutch radio debates between 1985 and 2006	How did the discursive formation of ecstasy develop in Dutch radio debates? (1985-1991, 1996, 2001, 2006)	Media Suite	Radio archive (S&V)	Keyword search benchmark analysis (ASR metadata)
4 <u>NL stands for No Limits</u> : Discussing ecstasy use in Dutch radio items from the 1990s and 2000s	How did the discursive formation of ecstasy use change between the 1990s and the 2000s? (1997, 2003)	Media Suite +Jupyter notebook		Leveled approach study of the radio archive

Table 1. Schematic overview of the main chapters

the CLARIAH research pilot that allowed me to participate in a testing and co-development trajectory of the media analysis infrastructure CLARIAH Media Suite with my research on drug discourse in Dutch media.¹⁵⁰ DReAM offered the opportunity to test and use the leveled approach with the digital tools of the Media Suite infrastructure, and, importantly, also involved testing opportunities to search the radio archive using newly available Automatic Speech Recognition metadata

¹⁵⁰ 'DReAM: Debate Research Across Media on drugs and regulation', CLARIAH <<https://clariah.nl/nl/projecten/dream-debate-research-across-media-on-drugs-and-regulation>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

bij de chronische tobbers



DRINAMYL

veroorzaakt een rustige stemming

Drinamyl voor
de opgejaagde
patiënt

Angst, vrees of depressie kunnen oorzaak zijn van een reeks van ziekten. Een bemoedigende glimlach of een vertrouwelijk schouderklopje zullen sommige patiënten van hun ongemotiveerde zorgen afhelpen. De chronische topper echter heeft *méer* nodig dan zulk een bemoediging zodat de moeilijkheden krachtiger dienen te worden aangepakt.

"Drinamyl" veroorzaakt die geestelijke rust welke dergelijke patiënten zo zeer van node hebben.

Soepel en onmerkbaar wordt de emotionele spanning verlicht:

Rustige zelfverzekerdheid komt in de plaats van het opgejaagde gevoel en de angsten. De patiënt is weer in staat om de problemen het hoofd te bieden en het reageren op een behandeling verbetert snel.

"DRINAMYL" TABLETTEN (IEDER TABLET BEVAT 5 MG DEXTRO-AMPHETAMINE SULFAAT)



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Nieuwe Kade 3 - 4. Tel. 30344, Arnhem

DL: PAB:HE

Figure 4. Drinamyl advertisement. *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*, 23 November 1957.

CHAPTER ONE

**AMPHETAMINE'S NEW REGULATORY REALITIES:
PILOTING THE LEVELED APPROACH WITH
DUTCH NEWSPAPER DATA USING TEXT
MINING TOOL TEXCAVATOR**

Chapter I | **Amphetamine's new regulatory realities: Piloting the leveled approach with Dutch newspaper data using text mining tool Texcavator**

In a 1957 advertisement printed in the Dutch medical trade magazine *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*, drinamyl was touted as a pill that would provide a sense of calm to stressed patients (Figure 4). Marketed by the pharmaceutical company Smith, Kline & French (SKF), Drinamyl was the brand name of a medicine containing dextroamphetamine. In the advertisement, it was marketed to Dutch medical professionals as a means to treat chronic worriers who were in need of more than 'an encouraging smile or a familiar shoulder tap.' In those years, the same substance was also marketed as a prescription anorectic, while its amphetamine component was even available over-the-counter (OTC) as a decongestant under brand name Benzedrine. Benzedrine was marketed directly to consumers in Dutch newspapers as well.¹ The main ingredient of Drinamyl and Benzedrine was amphetamine. Amphetamine had been discovered in 1887.² Originally it was perceived as a scientifically developed miracle drug, successfully marketed as an antidepressant in the 1940s, but also used as a performance enhancer, as well as an anorectic.³ The widespread use of amphetamine among soldiers in World War II possibly played a role in its post-war prevalence in the Netherlands.⁴ In the 1950s, it was frequently prescribed by doctors as an antidepressant, or as part of weight loss treatment (*ibid.*). Its use eventually spread outside of the medical context and the substance proved to be addictive, eventually prompting regulatory responses.⁵ In 1968 some types of amphetamine became prescription only, and in 1969 further regulation of sales and stocking of amphetamine occurred under the Cerebral Stimulants Decree ("Wekaminenbesluit").⁶ In the 1976 modification of the Dutch Opium Law, a distinction was made between drugs with an unacceptable level of harmfulness (List I) and less harmful drugs (List II).⁷ Amphetamine was included on List I, classifying it as a hard drug and putting an end to the use of amphetamine

1 See for example: *Arnhemse Courant*, 15-02-1952.

2 de Kort, p. 173.

3 Nicolas Rasmussen, *On Speed: The Many Lives of Amphetamine* (NYU Press, 2008), p. 3.

4 de Kort, p. 173.

5 de Kort, p. 174.

6 Toine Pieters, 'Een eeuw omgang met "moeilijk en druk" gedrag', *Signaal*, 53 (2005), 12–27.

7 Blom, p. 48.

beyond a strictly medical context. This process of regulation was contested by government stakeholders, since amphetamine had a strong medical reputation, and its recreational use was often assumed to be very minimal.⁸ Today amphetamine is also well known by its street name speed.

In this chapter I research what was written about amphetamine in Dutch newspapers between 1945 and 1990. This first foray into researching drug debates in Dutch media analyses how the regulatory changes of amphetamine were related to its discursive formation in the newspapers. This substance's trajectory and the moments of regulatory change represent a clear starting point for my exploration of the relationship between drug discourse and regulation. I look closely at what happened around the time of this transition, wherein the substance was first an OTC drug and then classified a hard drug. The study of this chapter is also a historical prelude to the subsequent three chapters investigating the discursive formation of ecstasy. Like amphetamine, ecstasy became a classified hard drug, although much earlier in its discursive formation process. Moreover, ecstasy falls in the class of substituted amphetamines, and both substances have become recreationally used party drugs as well.

Methodological set-up

Aim | **Leveled approach pilot study**

The methodological trajectory of this thesis started with the conceptualisation of the leveled approach as I outlined in the introduction. The leveled approach was based on a combination of visualisation techniques that were available in the two digital text mining tools AVResearcherXL and Texcavator. The approach was explicitly conceptualised to work for the analysis of both print and audio-visual media datasets, but only the newspaper archive was searchable at a full-text level. I therefore did a leveled approach pilot study based on this searchable archive with the most suitable text mining tool, Texcavator.⁹

The drug on which I began my research, before I continued with studies of ecstasy's
8 de Kort, p. 175.

⁹ In this process I also tested the text mining tool AVResearcherXL. For the original paper that includes observations regarding both Texcavator and AVResearcherXL, see: Berrie van der Molen, Lars Buitinck, and Toine Pieters, 'The Leveled Approach. Using and Evaluating Text Mining Tools AVResearcherXL and Texcavator for Historical Research on Public Perceptions of Drugs', *ArXiv:1701.00487 [Cs]*, 2017 <<http://arxiv.org/abs/1701.00487>> [accessed 24 January 2017].

discursive formation in media debates, was amphetamine. The reason behind my research interest in this substance was that it changed from an OTC drug to a classified hard drug. For amphetamine, the 1960s and 1970s represented a clear period of regulatory change. By using the leveled approach for a study of the digitised newspaper dataset, I sought to research how this shift occurred discursively in the newspapers. The historical research aim was to analyse the discursive formation of amphetamine in this period of great regulatory change.

The study was a first applied test of the leveled approach for the analysis of drug discourse in digitised media debates: it operationalised the approach to test how the conceptualised combination of DH techniques with close reading worked out in practice. This enabled me to improve the approach based on research practice, and it helped to identify important usability criteria to be shared with tool developers. The method/tool testing process was an exercise in digital tool criticism, a DH practice that is concerned with critical assessment of digital tools.¹⁰ Studies that make explicit how scholars from different disciplines in the field of humanities and/or social sciences use digital data and (visualisation) techniques are of great value to the field of DH.¹¹ This chapter makes explicit how search and visualisation techniques can be combined expediently for historical discourse analysis of digitised print media archives with the leveled approach.

Digital platform | **Texcavator**

The research for this chapter was done using the text mining tool Texcavator, a web application developed as part of the research project Translantis, offering full-text search and visualisations of the KB newspaper dataset.¹² It was a redeveloped version of two early text mining tools called WAHSP and Biland. According to its developers, ‘the main added value of Texcavator lies in its possibilities for

10 Marijn Koolen, Jasmijn van Gorp, and Jacco van Ossenbruggen, ‘Toward a Model for Digital Tool Criticism: Reflection as Integrative Practice’, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 34.2 (2019), 368–85 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqy048>>.

11 See for example: Adam James Bradley and others, ‘Visualization and the Digital Humanities. Moving towards Stronger Collaborations’, *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*, 38.6 (2018), 26–38 <<https://doi.org/10.1109/MCG.2018.2878900>>; Rik Hoekstra and Marijn Koolen, ‘Data Scopes for Digital History Research’, *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 52.2 (2019), 79–94 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2018.1484676>>.

12 ‘Texcavator’, *CLARIN-NL* <<https://portal.clarin.nl/node/14375>> [accessed 19 May 2021].

exploratory reading of historical patterns in public debates.¹³ This means that the tool was developed with the explicit aim of *exploratory* historical public debate research. In this study, the functionalities of Texcavator were used in a structural fashion as conceptualised in the leveled approach in order to test the tool's application for *structural* public debate research.

Next to keyword search, Texcavator offered all functionalities required for the leveled approach: timeline visualisation (macro level), word cloud functionality (meso level) and resource viewing in Document View (micro level). A screenshot of the Texcavator user interface is included (Figure 5).¹⁴

Dataset | **Digitised newspaper archive (National Library of the Netherlands)**

For this chapter, Texcavator was used to explore a static copy of the digitised newspaper archive of the National Library of the Netherlands (KB) that contained over 11 million digitised newspaper pages at the time of research.

The OCR metadata that enables keyword search and visualisations was generated automatically and is not 100% accurate. Thus, even the most carefully constructed search queries offer no guarantee that all instances of key words are found. The quality of OCR metadata for material in the post-war period is generally good: these newspaper pages are relatively new and use uniform, modern fonts easily recognised in the OCR process, which enables good quality scans.

Texcavator worked with a static copy of the newspaper archive because KB does not provide an API for live access to its dataset in external applications. The study in this chapter was done with a copy of the archive that did not include De Persgroep newspaper titles that were added to the archive in 2017,¹⁵ therefore some of the Netherlands' most important newspaper titles (*Algemeen Dagblad*, *Trouw*, *De Volkskrant*) were not included in this study.

¹³ Eijnatten, Pieters, and Verheul, 'Using Texcavator to Map Public Discourse', p. 63.

¹⁴ It is relevant to note that at the time of the completion of this thesis in 2021, Texcavator was no longer accessible/in use. The source code for the tool was still available. Texcavator was succeeded by the tool I-analyzer in Utrecht University's Digital Humanities Lab in 2017. See: 'I-Analyzer', *UU Digital Humanities Lab* <<https://ianalyzer.hum.uu.nl/>> [accessed 7 June 2021].

¹⁵ 'Digitalisering Na-Oorlogse Kranten. Persgroep En KB Slaan Handen Ineen Om Belangrijk Erfgoed Voor Nederland Online Beschikbaar Maken', *KB Nationale Bibliotheek*, 2017 <<https://www.kb.nl/nieuws/2017/digitalisering-na-oorlogse-kranten>> [accessed 19 May 2021].

newspapers in the post-war period; and 2) to observe how effective the leveled approach would be in practice, beyond its conceptualisation, using the most suitable available tool. This study thus tested my assumption that the leveled approach could contribute to the practice of historical interpretation of relevant digitised newspaper data, making all the research steps explicit in the process.¹⁷

I did not set out with an exact research question. The leveled approach was used to formulate informed, targeted research questions based on visualisations along the way, as will become apparent from the description of this process that follows. The iterative research process began with the newspaper dataset, the research topic amphetamine, and an understanding of the historical and regulatory context of amphetamine in the post-war period. As I outlined in the introduction to this chapter, amphetamine underwent regulatory changes in the post-war period.

The first step was to create a keyword search query to interpret the overall time frame in Texcavator (macro level analysis). With this query, I aimed to find as many newspaper articles mentioning amphetamine as possible. The query that I used was (am*etami* wekami* benzedri* perviti* me*ylam*etami* isophan neopharmedri* preludin* fencamfamin* actedron*). This query incorporated the spelling variations and brand names I was aware of that were used during the period between 1945 and 1990. Entering this query generated a timeline graph in Texcavator, which displayed the quantitative development of articles mentioning amphetamine in Dutch newspapers (relative to the overall dataset) (see Figure 6).

In a spreadsheet (see Figure 7) I combined the most co-occurring words for every year between 1945 and 1990 (detail in Figure 8). Every column represents a year, with the most co-occurring word listed at the top and the numbers decreasing to the bottom. I looked for noteworthy terms in the context of my historical research interest in the interaction between regulation and public discourse (meso level analysis). I colour coded words that I thought were significant in this context into different categories (see caption of Figure 7). This was an interpretive process not without challenges: some words have more than one definition and would be appropriate for more than one category. In addition, the different meanings of a word may not fit into the assigned category (e.g. "staat" meaning both *state* and *stands* (verb) in Dutch). Looking for such categories helped to create an impression of the predominant thematic contexts in which amphetamine was mentioned in the

¹⁷ To enhance readability of this chapter, the process is described here mostly in one overall direction (from distant to close reading), but in practice iterative navigation between distant and close reading enabled me to ask and answer targeted research questions.

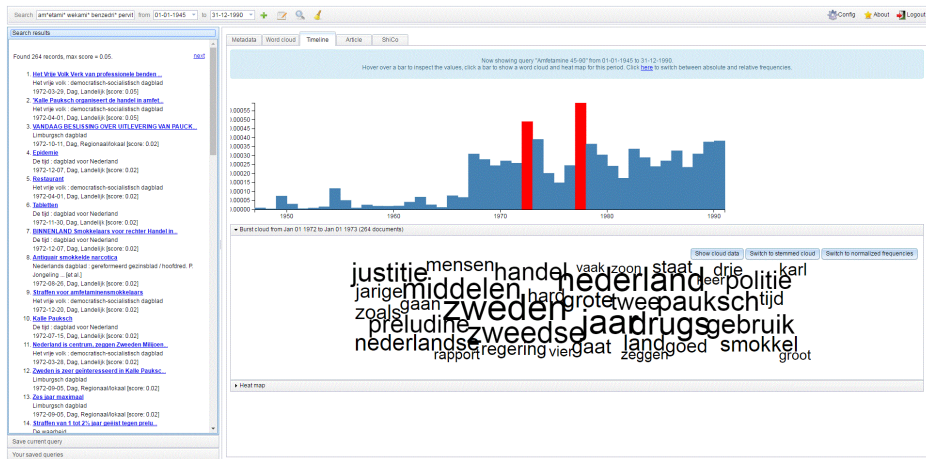


Figure 6. Texcavator. Displaying the timeline graph for the amphetamine combined query between 1945 and 1990 and the word cloud for the year 1972 (Screenshot from 31 January 2017)

articles. I regularly alternated between the macro level and the meso level: I used the timeline to ascertain whether there was much discussion about amphetamine in a given year, all the while interpreting the possible contexts behind periods of increased attention by analysing the developments of the different categories.

Already at this stage of the research, I scanned individual search results using *Document View*, which helped to avoid misconceptions based on interpretation of the visualisations and to maintain an empirical grip on the material. Throughout the process, then, I alternated between distant and close reading.

Alternating between distant and close reading led to several main observations. The first of these was that the medical terms became less dominant after 1969. Another was that, from the early seventies, a rapid increase in criminal/judicial terms could be seen: until the end of the overall period, criminal terms appeared to characterise the debates most often. This could be interpreted as being in line with what I could expect historically, as amphetamine regulation began in 1968. Thirdly, a concentration of regulatory terms appeared from 1964 until 1977. As this is the timeframe in which regulation took place, this development was also in line with my historical expectations: it seemed apt to suppose that the regulatory changes were being discussed in the newspapers.

Based on these observations, I formulated a research question. I wanted to understand how the discursive formation of amphetamine changed in the public debate, seeing as legislation in the period changed the status of amphetamine from an OTC drug to hard drug. The assumption I made was that amphetamine had a medical

1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100
1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100

Figure 7. PDF overview of the co-occurring words for each of the years between 1945 and 1990. Orange = criminal; Red = medical; Green = sports; Yellow = other intoxicants; Purple = governmental.

1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
amfetamir	jaar	amfetamir	jaar	jaar	jaar	jaar	jaar
jaar	amfetamir	politie	politie	twee	amfetamir	amfetamir	amfetamin
twee	politie	jaar	amfetamir	amfetamir	twee	politie	politie
politie	jarige	twee	twee	middelen	doping	twee	twee
jarige	twee	jarige	jarige	doping	gaan	drugs	werden
handel	middelen	onderzoek	cocaïne	simpson	politie	tilburg	gebruik
middelen	kilo	zaak	drie	tour	onderzoek	jarige	gisteren
rechtbank	maanden	drugs	grote	drie	verbrugger	werden	jarige
doping	drie	middelen	werden	kilometer	drie	nederland	justitie
drie	heroïne	heroïne	drugs	werden	heel	gebruik	kilo
zweeden	werden	kilo	justitie	drugs	grote	fignon	nederland
maanden	mensen	justitie	rechtbank	gebruik	gaat	grote	middelen
zaak	officier	gebruik	officier	fignon	eerste	rechtbank	drie
gevangeni:	rechtbank	werden	onderzoek	gisteren	mensen	onderzoek	eerste
gulden	gebruik	amsterdam	vier	ventoux	maanden	maken	gaat
werden	handel	aangehou	aangehou	kwam	werden	laboratori	stegeman
drugs	drugs	gaan	heroïne	politie	vier	drie	onderzoek
grote	justitie	gisteren	maanden	tijd	sport	kilo	maanden

Figure 8. Detail from top right selection of Figure 7.

reputation, a non-medical reputation and possibly a transitional period between them. The question I formulated was “How did the medical strand within the discursive formation of amphetamine develop as the substance went from OTC drug to prescription drug to classified hard drug between 1945 and 1990?” The question assumed that this medical strand likely had changed over time, but it was left open to any qualitative outcome following further iterative distant and close reading cycles.

Having established a more targeted research question, I expanded the initial keyword search query. I added all the medical terms I found in the word clouds to the original query, which led to the following targeted query: (+ (am*etami* wekami* benzedri* perviti* me*ylam*etami* isophan neopharmedri* preludin* fencamfamin* actedron*) +(dokter* dokter arts* arts medisch psychiatri* internist apothe*k* geneesmiddel* patiënt* medicijn* medicament*)). This query yielded all articles that included 1) at least one of the amphetamine names/ variations of the original keyword search query, and 2) at least one of the most frequently co-occurring medical terms. Doing this helped me to make a meaningful thematic selection of newspaper articles. This targeted query generated 1170 results (Figure 9).

Recapping the process so far, I started with an attempt to find as many articles mentioning amphetamines as possible to interpret potential discursive strands. After which I created a subset of articles in which amphetamines were mentioned with



Figure 9. Texcavator. Displaying the timeline graph for the medical amphetamine combined query between 1945 and 1990 and the word cloud for the year 1972 (Screenshot from 31 January 2017)

at least one medical term. It is a given that I would not be able to find *all* articles in the dataset about amphetamine with a medical connection, but I could rest assured that I selected most articles that mention any of the medical terms occurring in the 50 most frequently used words in each of the years searched.

I did not proceed to a close reading of all 1170 results at this stage. Instead, I used the information from the visualisations to adopt a more informed perspective before deciding which results to analyse in detail. The two timeline graphs helped me to select particularly noteworthy years for close reading and discourse analysis. One timeline graph showed concentrations of amphetamine debates, the other graph showed the prevalence of amphetamine debates with a medical term. For both of them, the relative prevalence (the number of results in relation to the overall number of articles that year) was selected in Texcavator.

I ultimately formulated five research questions based on a combination of interpretation of the visualisation techniques and historical knowledge of drug regulation. These questions were not direct results of the quantitative queries: they were questions grounded in my historical understanding of the period. Answering these questions required close reading with discourse analysis of the newspaper articles. I answered each of the questions by reading the articles for the respective years (less than 100 for each of the mentioned years). I was interested in the degree to which amphetamine was seen as a medicine in the period, taking into consideration the regulatory changes of 1969 and 1976.

The overall research question 'How did the medical strand within the discursive formation of amphetamine develop as the substance went from OTC drug to prescription drug to classified hard drug between 1945 and 1990?' was explored with the answers to the research questions below.

RQ1: How can the medical terms in articles from the years 1954 and 1955 be interpreted considering the co-presence of other drugs (alcohol, opium, morphine) in that time period?

The appearance of medical terms here is not surprising per se, as this is the period when amphetamine was better known as a somewhat innocent OTC drug. The word for doctor ("arts") appears much more often in these years than it does in previous and successive years. A relative increase can also be seen in the number of articles mentioning amphetamine compared to previous and subsequent years (Figure 9). The strong appearance of other drugs in the articles asks for further inspection, however, since there is no immediate reason as to why amphetamine would be mentioned in other drug debates. Close reading of the articles showed that the co-occurrence with other intoxicants (alcohol, morphine, and opium) is the result of two types of reports. First, there was an ongoing discussion surrounding a number of court cases in which doctors who were said to have been drunk-driving used the argument that they were under the influence of Pervitin ("Pervitine," an amphetamine brand name) as a defence. Secondly, there were reports on two separate cases of medical professionals stealing drugs (morphine or opium) from pharmacies. One of these, a nurse, was reported as an opiate addict, in addition to also having been reported stealing amphetamine. The other, a doctor, was reported to be a morphine addict who asked the apothecary for Pervitin while stealing morphine from the pharmacy stock.

Both types of reports indicate that amphetamines appeared in the context of socio-cultural problems stemming from other drugs, but amphetamine's discursive formation

¹⁸ This study does not contain references to individual newspaper articles, as these were not included in the original book chapter where this study was included as a demonstration scenario (Van der Molen and Pieters, 2017). The study could not be replicated in Texcavator to retrieve the references as the tool Texcavator had been discontinued when the study was revised for inclusion in this thesis in early 2021. All articles are part of the publicly available newspaper dataset from the National Library of the Netherlands via <delpher.nl>. This study is not a comprehensive historical study on amphetamine in Dutch newspapers for the period that it covers, as it focuses on specific periods and a specific discursive strand.

at that point made it unlikely for suspicion to be raised around amphetamine itself. In all cases, amphetamine appeared in the context of problematic substance use, but the discursive formation of the other substances (alcohol in the context of traffic; opium and morphine as substances known to cause iatrogenic addiction) meant that amphetamine was not brought into association with traffic risks or addictive behaviour.

Looking at these newspaper items while keeping in mind the period, it is notable that amphetamines were already appearing in close proximity to regulated intoxicants in public debates. Moreover, although it was not considered an addictive substance yet, in retrospect it is possible to identify the reports of medical professionals stealing drugs as likely cases of iatrogenic amphetamine addiction. In the discursive formation of amphetamines at the time such a conclusion was naturally not easily drawn. In the reports on doctors driving under the influence of Pervitin, I could also sense public unease with existing legislation, as government officials commented that the situation in which substances could endanger road safety needed to be regulated: here you can find the beginnings of a call for amphetamine regulation in so far as it posed a risk to others. Conclusively, although these newspaper items do not give the impression that amphetamine was seen as a problematic or addictive substance, it did appear in close proximity to other intoxicants as early as the mid-1950s.

RQ2: Why was there a resurgence of medical terms in articles in the years 1961 and 1962? Is this related to the seemingly sudden appearance of doping-related terms?

Barely half a decade had passed, but the discursive formation of amphetamine seemed to have changed noticeably since 1955. I noticed a rise of doping-related terms from this period onwards in the word clouds. Upon a close reading of the articles, however, I realised that the attention paid to doping was not the only way in which amphetamine's discursive formation had changed. Doping was indeed one of the prominent amphetamine-related topics of this time, with commentators complaining that within cycle racing, using substances ending in "-ine," including amphetamine, had become the rule rather than the exception. The use of amphetamine in sports seemed related to concerns about the origins and availability of non-medical amphetamine. In neighbouring countries, amphetamine had become prescription-only at this time. In the Netherlands, amphetamine could still be bought at pharmacies, although there was a growing concern about its non-medical use, with articles warning about pill addiction, in addition to linking its use by young people. This corroborates with historical research that suggests that sports doping was developing as a social issue following reports

on its widespread use at the Summer Olympic Games of 1960, when doping was also linked to the fatal accident of a Danish cyclist.¹⁹ On May 4th, 1961, the Dutch Society of Manufacturers of Pharmaceutical Products (“Nederlandse Vereniging van Fabrikanten van Pharmaceutische Producten”) published a letter responding to the public unrest surrounding the “pill chaos”. Several articles made mention of the plea by pharmacology professor Booy to make amphetamine a prescription-only drug. I also found several articles from 1962 on the risks of deformation in children because of Preludine - a brand of amphetamine - used during pregnancy. As a result of these reports, representatives of the pharmaceutical industry responded by attempting to rebuke such claims.

Over the course of a few years, public unrest around amphetamines seemed to have risen sharply. Concerns about doping in cycle racing were not the only concerns. Amphetamine was starting to lose its strong connection to medical use - instead it was starting to appear as a performance enhancer in sports and a stimulant used gratuitously by young people. The substance appeared in a very different context compared to the 1950s. Even though by this time there was an ongoing discussion on whether to include amphetamine in the Opium Law,²⁰ there was still no legislative change regarding amphetamine. That is until the change to the prescription-only classification of several types of amphetamine in 1968, and stricter control on sales and possession of amphetamine under the *Wekaminenbesluit* of 1969. Public unrest preceded regulation.

RQ3: How can the increased appearance of medical terms in amphetamine newspaper coverage in 1972 be understood in its historical context of regulatory transition?

In the articles from 1972 that mentioned amphetamine, regulation of amphetamine was frequently called for. In the word cloud for the year, the words Sweden and Pauksch became prominent. Pauksch was the name of an amphetamine smuggler who had gained media notoriety starting from 1971. Articles featured calls for strong action against the amphetamine trade. This was due to the fear that the Netherlands was turning into an amphetamine trade hub as a consequence of its more lenient regulations, from which drug traders from other European countries were bound to profit. Penalties for amphetamine production and trade were much lower in the Netherlands. Furthermore, it is telling that there was more public unrest surrounding amphetamine trade than use, which is in line with the Netherlands’

¹⁹ Sietse van der Hoek and Toine Pieters, *Supergenen en turbosporters. Een nieuwe kijk op doping* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, 2009), p. 47.

²⁰ de Kort, p. 174.

dual track policy. Amphetamine appeared mostly in a criminal context because of this international trade position. Stories concerning international crime networks' increased attention for amphetamine were most prominent in amphetamine's discursive formation in 1972. Similar to how public unrest regarding amphetamine's OTC-status had preceded its change to a prescription-only drug (RQ3), amphetamine's inclusion in the Opium Law of 1976 had been preceded by public concern about the substance's role in criminal networks.

RQ4: How does the resurgence of medical terms in the years 1979 and 1980 relate to the regulation of 1976?

In an article from *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* from 28 May 1979, a doctor was accused of prescribing a dangerous treatment (“een gevaarlijke kuur”) that included amphetamine to eleven patients. In articles related to doping, amphetamine was mainly mentioned in relation to anabolic steroids. Having come under scrutiny at this time, steroids were contrasted with amphetamine as being more medical (e.g. *Het Vrije Volk*, 17 August 1979). It seems then that the medical terms appearing in conjunction with amphetamine in these years were used to define amphetamine as having no place in medicine anymore.

Amphetamine was regularly linked to substance addiction too: in the discussions surrounding doping, the risk of addiction was usually mentioned as the biggest danger related to the use of amphetamine (along with the danger to others, whose development since my observations from RQ1 is especially interesting). There were also several reports of pharmacy raids in this time period. In 1980, discussions on how to improve the safeguarding of drugs in pharmacies appeared as a consequence of increasing drug theft, where amphetamines were usually mentioned simultaneously with opiates. A rise in the theft of amphetamine is not surprising: the substance had been available rather easily at pharmacies until a decade prior. It is unlikely that the demand for the substance disappeared with its regulation; some users needed to find new ways to get their amphetamine, the black market being one such way.

Amphetamine did remain in use in some capacity in the medical context, and a few traces of its medical reputation remained in these articles too. A doctor who commented on the unrest regarding doping in *De Volkskrant* from 22 September 1979 commented that he understood athletes feeling amphetamine doping was not outrageous, given that doctors also prescribed the substance as part of weight loss treatments. Another trace of its medical reputation appeared in relation to doping in a *Het Vrije Volk* article dated 11 October 1980: a doctor remarked that, providing it was administered professionally, amphetamine was more innocent than anabolic steroids.

Amphetamines were losing their medical reputation and appeared mostly in criminal and doping debates. It was generally thought of as addictive and dangerous. A few exceptions remained, in which it was remarked that, under the right medical circumstances, use of the substance could be acceptable.

RQ5: What can be said about amphetamine's medical reputation in 1988, over a decade after it had been brought under the Opium Law, at a time when the articles concerning amphetamine seem to have been dominated by terms implying a criminal reputation?

The articles found in 1988 no longer placed amphetamine in a medical context. There were some cases of iatrogenic addiction, wherein pharmacists steal from the stock, and some passing remarks about amphetamine addicts. Most results were reports featuring doping discussions. Questions rose concerning the cost of the ever increasing doping controls, with discussions on whether doping should be considered such a grievous misstep.

There was no public outcry over amphetamine either: reports on amphetamine smuggling were reported in a matter-of-fact tone. A number of articles reported on the inclusion of ecstasy/XTC (e.g. *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 29th of December 1988), an amphetamine derivative, on List I in an amendment of the Opium Law. These had a similarly non-sensationalising tone. A report on the inclusion of amphetamine in the kit of alpinists (*Limburgsch Dagblad*, 2nd of April 1988) mentioned that there was, according to one alpinist, no need to be secretive about this part of his outfit, implying it was a legitimate emergency option for alpinists.

Compared with the discursive formation of amphetamine in 1979-1980, it was no longer framed as an explicitly dangerous drug. Reports of smuggling and use were formal, but consistently placed the drug within the criminal sphere. The drug appeared to be framed as an illegal drug only by this time, the medical co-occurring terms no longer connecting amphetamine to a medical setting. Amphetamine's reputation in newspapers had changed significantly compared to earlier time periods analysed in this research demonstration.

Conclusion

This study led to a detailed understanding of the medical strand in amphetamine's discursive formation in the newspapers. The search, visualisation and analysis steps led to new, informed research questions with regards to discourse relating specifically to doping or crime in this period.

Already in the fifties, amphetamines had been appearing in close proximity to other drugs. They were not connected to addiction debates and were discussed in a medical context. This changed before their inclusion on List I of hard drugs in 1976: in the early sixties, they were starting to be connected to a different context, that is, to younger people and athletes as possibly dangerous performance enhancers. Before the end of the seventies, the general view was that amphetamines were harmful and addictive, unless used under professional medical supervision. Later in the eighties, a decade after regulation, the medical strand had almost disappeared from its discursive formation. However, I also noticed that it was no longer seen as particularly dangerous. Public unrest appeared to have subsided once it was more firmly rooted as a controlled illegal drug.

It would be relevant to continue the analysis for more recent periods, such as the 1990s, in which prescriptions rose steeply for the closely related, central nervous system stimulant methylphenidate (usually sold as Ritalin), used as first line medication for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.²¹ Methylphenidate has since become the most widespread treatment form for ADHD.²² Follow-up studies could investigate whether along with this new medical application there was also a discursive medical revival of amphetamine in later decades.

When looking at this chapter as a precursory study to the subsequent studies in this thesis about ecstasy discourse and drug regulation, it is relevant to note that for both instances of amphetamine regulation, public unrest in the newspapers preceded the moments of amphetamine regulation. Ecstasy's regulatory and pharmacological trajectory were markedly different from amphetamine's trajectories, however, as ecstasy had no established medical reputation before it was brought under the Opium Law in 1988.

Using Texcavator for a leveled approach study made it possible to draw some first conclusions about the effectiveness of the leveled approach for historical research. With this study I was able to show that the leveled approach enabled me to formulate targeted research questions in a process of iterative cycles of distant reading techniques and close reading. Interpretation of the timeline graphs and word clouds was guided by my understanding of the historical context of the topic. This means that the leveled approach as a combination of distant and close reading should be used to investigate topics and historical periods of which the researcher has prior knowledge.

21 Toine Pieters, 'Een eeuw omgang met "moeilijk en druk" gedrag', *Signaal*, 53 (2005), 12–27.

22 Jason Y. C. Chan, Talisa A. Dennis, and Melissa A. Macleod, 'The Over-Prescription of Ritalin for Suspected Cases of ADHD', *Revue Interdisciplinaire Des Sciences de La Santé - Interdisciplinary Journal of Health Sciences*, 2.2 (2016), 35–40 <<https://doi.org/10.18192/riss-ijhs.v2i2.1519>>.

Using the leveled approach to target the articles featuring medical terms, thereby exploring the dynamics of the medical strand in amphetamine's discursive formation, helped me to develop a detailed understanding of the substance's transition in public discourse. I was able to build on this experience in the leveled approach radio study of Chapter 4.

Throughout the analysis I came across other important elements (and possible strands) within amphetamine's discursive formation (e.g., crime, sports). The results discussed in this study should therefore be understood as one part of a possible comprehensive analysis of amphetamine discourse in newspapers. Strands concerning its criminal discursive formation or its role in sports doping debates could be researched with additional targeted research cycles that would create a multifaceted narrative of the discursive formation of amphetamine in newspapers.

This process also helped me to generate evidence-based tool criticism for developers and to identify how particular tool functionalities made the use of the leveled approach more or less effective.²³ Easy and quick options for navigability between the levels of the approach turned out to be important. Text mining tools enabled effective iterative cycles of the leveled approach when enabling easy navigation between the three levels. The ability to switch between the overall time frame and smaller time frames, and the ability to alter the queries with new terms (all based on insights gained from using the visualisation techniques), were essential for proper effectiveness of the signpost function of techniques. Texcavator's clickable timeline bars for each year offered direct access to each year's respective word clouds, which enabled the creation of a meso level view for each year with one click, which proved useful.

A second important usability factor was the option to store and explore the search history. Search sessions were significantly more effective with the option to browse previous searches. Texcavator's option to save searches made navigation between searches easy. Rather than continuously moving on from one set of results to the next, a collection of, and variations on, prior searches could be saved. This functionality, combined with its advanced exporting possibilities (even including OCR data) made it well-equipped for systematic research. Access to previous searches for different periods helped to make navigation between the levels of analysis easier in Texcavator. The stability of search settings in the tool was important in this context as well. I lost time, however, having to reset all the filters when adding a search term to the query.

²³ The observations regarding the usability of tool functionalities for the leveled approach were based on a comparison between Texcavator and AVResearcherXL. In this chapter, only the findings regarding Texcavator are included.

The process of methodological conceptualisation followed by operationalisation by means of this study helped me to evaluate the tool and to generate evidence-based feedback for the developer team. Collaboration and communication between end users (researchers) and developers is an important step towards the realisation of a 'transdisciplinary working programme aimed at articulating the needs of the users [of digital tools]²⁴ that is needed to maximise the potential of DH tools and techniques for historical research. Chapters 3 and 4, in which I analyse the discursive formation of ecstasy on Dutch radio, were done using the digital research infrastructure CLARIAH Media Suite, during a period in which I collaborated closely with the infrastructure's developers.

A last point of reflection is the importance of understanding the dataset's composition. First, what is and what is not included in the dataset affects the results of an analysis. A more comprehensive study of the discursive formation of amphetamine in the newspapers could be done with the most recent version of the KB newspaper data archive that includes all major newspaper titles. Second, the way material is catalogued in the dataset can affect interpretation on the different levels of the approach. One lengthy article that was printed in 1961 came up in the results multiple times, thereby distorting the frequencies shown on the timeline graph. A thorough understanding of the composition of the data archive was required. Since the final interpretation level of the leveled approach is based on close reading, the qualitative claims of the historical narrative are not affected by these issues. It does mean that a thorough understanding of the data and metadata of the digital archive is essential in interpreting the findings of keyword search and visualisation studies, an insight that led me to include more detailed sections on how (meta)data availability affects historical research practice with digitised datasets in the subsequent studies.

24 Stephen Snelders and others, 'A Digital Humanities Approach to the History of Culture and Science. Drugs and Eugenics Revisited in Early 20th-Century Dutch Newspapers, Using Semantic Text Mining', in *CLARIN in the Low Countries*, by Jan Odijk and Arjan van Hessen (London: Ubiquity Press, 2017), pp. 325–36 (p. 333).

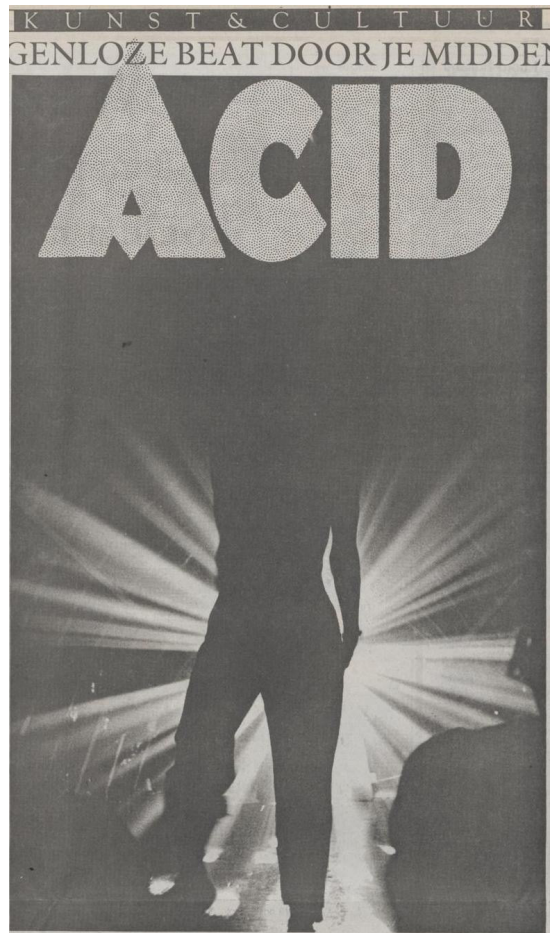


Figure 10. A raver in a newspaper article about acid house. Photograph by Frans Schellekens, used with permission (De Volkskrant, 02-09-1988).

CHAPTER TWO

MAKING SENSE OF A “NEW” DRUG: THE BEGINNINGS OF ECSTASY’S DISCURSIVE FORMATION WITHIN DUTCH NEWSPAPERS BETWEEN 1985 AND 1990

Chapter 2 | Making sense of a “new” drug: The beginnings of ecstasy’s discursive formation within Dutch newspapers between 1985 and 1990

The photograph in Figure 10 was taken by photographer Frans Schellekens in the Amsterdam night club RoXY. Pictures such as this appeared in Dutch newspapers at the tail end of the 1980s. These pictures sometimes accompanied articles by culture editors reporting on acid house parties, a new fad at the time in Dutch nightlife. “Ravers” were photographed dancing the night away to house music. An important component of these parties was the popularity of ecstasy pills, sometimes referred to as “love pills” in newspapers in those years. House music and ecstasy had become increasingly popular in the preceding years in parts of the United States, the United Kingdom and Ibiza, but both the genre and the drug were new to the Netherlands. As I described in the introduction to this thesis, ecstasy’s popularity would grow rapidly, and by the early 1990s hundreds of thousands of ravers were taking ecstasy every weekend at massive house parties that were organised all over the Netherlands.

With the study of this chapter, I show that ecstasy’s discursive formation in Dutch newspapers can be understood as consisting of three different strands from the start: discursive tendencies to (1) problematise and (2) criminalise ecstasy started in the Netherlands at the same time as a tendency that looked to (3) accommodate the substance. Although drug policy in the Netherlands was known for its focus on harm reduction in the 1980s, it was also subjected to international pressure to be more repressive, in addition to internal tensions surrounding the question as to whether drug use should be seen exclusively as a public health problem, or instead as punishable behaviour. In all these contexts, ecstasy was regularly juxtaposed with, and compared to, other substances in the interest of different purposes and by different stakeholders. With this discourse analysis of the drug in Dutch newspapers, I show that pinpointing a single meaning of ecstasy would not reflect the complex dynamics of its discursive formation. It turns out that the ingredients of the contemporary public debate about ecstasy originate in these first few years.

Methodological set-up

Aim | **Keyword search benchmark analysis (OCR metadata)**

With ecstasy as the main historical research object of my thesis, I decided to aim for depth over breadth, and thus moved from the idea of studying several drugs at once to focus on one drug. Ecstasy came to the Netherlands as a “new” substance in the mid-1980s. In the interest of research into the discursive formation of drugs in Dutch media, this moment of introduction of ecstasy offers the opportunity to research the start of a drug’s discursive formation process in the media. Historically, the first few years must have been a crucial period in ecstasy’s discursive formation process, and as this period also encompasses the transition from legal substance to illegal hard drug, it is of primary relevance to the research investigation around drug debates and drug regulation.

Ecstasy discourse had not been studied structurally in any Dutch medium yet, so turning to the recently expanded Dutch newspaper dataset of the National Library of the Netherlands (KB) was a sound starting point. Available text mining tools Texcavator and AVResearcherXL, both of which I tested and one of which I used in Chapter 1, provided visualisation techniques along with search functionality of static copies of the KB newspaper dataset. However, since neither of the tools provided access to the newly expanded version of the KB newspaper dataset (see Dataset below), I chose to use Delpher, the online search platform of KB, to research the first years of the substance’s discursive formation in Dutch newspaper coverage.

The study was also intended as a benchmark analysis to compare with leveled approach studies. The leveled approach enables the use of DH techniques to create thematic subsets from a relevant dataset for the purpose of close reading. But to judge the added value of this search and selection approach, it should be compared to the process of close reading all results that feature the relevant keyword(s). The study of this chapter uses no DH techniques beyond keyword search for two methodological purposes: 1) to understand how the discursive formation of a substance can be researched when all search results are analysed; and 2) to see how different discursive strands in the material can be constructed manually. In other words, the study was intended as a baseline keyword search strategy. Instead of making thematic selections based on distant reading techniques, this study takes a manual approach: I analysed all relevant material found with one basic keyword search query to construct the story of the first years of ecstasy’s discursive formation in Dutch newspapers.

Digital platform | **Delpher**

The research for this chapter was carried out with the public digital search platform of KB: Delpher.¹ Delpher was created in 2013 to provide online access to a selection of different book, magazine and newspaper collections possessed by scientific institutions, libraries and cultural heritage institutions. Delpher offers keyword search based on searchable Optical Character Recognition (OCR) metadata, which means all the pages in these collections are fully searchable at a text level. Delpher also offers the opportunity to bookmark search results in the browser. It does not offer any annotation functionalities. Selections can be made in the search process based on coverage range (national, local, foreign) and item type (articles, advertisements, family notifications, illustrations).

Dataset | **Digitised newspaper archive (National Library of the Netherlands)**

Delpher was used to access KB's digitised newspaper dataset that comprised over 11 million pages of newspapers at the time of research. Whereas not all Dutch newspaper titles were featured in the collection, Delpher's acquisition of several newspaper titles from De Persgroep at the end of 2017² meant that its collection offered an improved representation of both conservative and liberal newspapers at the time of research. The four national newspaper titles with the largest circulation, sometimes called the 'big four' (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Telegraaf*, *De Volkskrant*)³ were all represented in the data archive for the period between 1945 and 1995. The representation of the major newspaper titles across the post-war period makes the radio archive a unique historical source: its serial character - in which form remains mostly consistent, even while the news content itself changes over time - makes comparisons over time possible.⁴ Whereas the consistent representation of

1 'Delpher', *KB Nationale Bibliotheek* <<https://www.delpher.nl/>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

2 'Digitalisering Na-Oorlogse Kranten. Persgroep En KB Slaan Handen Ineen Om Belangrijk Erfgoed Voor Nederland Online Beschikbaar Maken', *KB Nationale Bibliotheek*, 2017 <<https://www.kb.nl/nieuws/2017/digitalisering-na-oorlogse-kranten>> [accessed 19 May 2021].

3 Piet Bakker, 'Voorbij de Gouden Eeuw. De Onzekere Toekomst van de Krant', in *Journalistieke Cultuur in Nederland*, ed. by Jo Bardoel and Huub Wijffjes, Tweede volledig herziene uitgave (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), pp. 77–97 (p. 82).

4 Marcel Broersma, 'Nooit meer bladeren? Digitale krantenarchieven als bron', *TMG Journal for Media History*, 14.2 (2015), 29–55 (p. 35) <<https://doi.org/10.18146/tmg.135>>.

the different newspaper titles makes the dataset a good source for historical research, there are challenges, such as avoiding an analysis based on “cherry picked” items that support a particular interpretation and ensuring an understanding of the provenance of items and aspects of such a vast media archive.⁵

Analysis | **The discursive formation of ecstasy in Dutch newspapers**

Search and analysis steps | **Keyword search, manual annotation, close reading**

First I constructed a keyword query that combined the three most common ways to refer to ecstasy: `(ecsta*y OR mdma OR xtc)`. The terms in this query are mostly unambiguous: *ecstasy* is an English language term that has no other meaning in the Dutch language, while *MDMA* and *XTC* are specific abbreviations. This added to the effectiveness of the search query. In the Delpher search settings I excluded advertisements, family notifications and illustrations with captions as item types. This meant my search process only yielded newspaper articles, and being that my research focused on the discursive formation in news media, I was only interested in the article type. Illustrations would be found during close reading as these were printed alongside relevant articles. With Delpher’s *Range* setting, I selected the national and local/regional Dutch newspaper titles in the corpus, meaning I excluded newspaper titles from the Antilles, Surinam, Indonesia, and the US, as I did not consider these to be of primary relevance to my research question.

I did not use Delpher’s functionality to store/bookmark results in the user’s browser history for this study considering this was not a reliable way to store results: selections might have gotten lost between different browser sessions. Moreover, the bookmark functionality offers no means to annotate the material. I therefore manually logged the search trajectory and annotations in an extensive text processing log file. I kept a record of search steps, methodological observations, and annotations.

To ensure that I would find in the available data the earliest mention of ecstasy in print, I started the search process by going through all the results of the query from 5 Broersma, p. 42; Trevor Owens and Thomas Padilla, ‘Digital Sources and Digital Archives: Historical Evidence in the Digital Age’, *International Journal of Digital Humanities*, 2020 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42803-020-00028-7>>.

1 January 1970. Although it was unlikely that I would find a relevant result in that period, I knew that MDMA was used experimentally by a small number of therapists in the US in the 1970s. The first relevant hit, however, was found in 1985. The query yielded more than 700 search results from the period between 1 January 1985 and 31 December 1990, some of which were irrelevant to the research question due to different meanings of words in the query (e.g. there is a band and a football club called XTC) and/or OCR issues (see Table 2).

Period	Results	Results included in study
1970-1979	185	0
1980-1984	294	0
1985	15	4
1986	84	1
1987	157	4
1988	102	92
1989	274	254
1990	153	130

Table 2. Articles included in the analysis

I read all results chronologically, keeping extensive annotation notes in my text processing file. For my annotations I used an analytical lens loosely based on Norman Zinberg's model of drug, set and setting.⁶ This model has become influential in drug research for the interpretation/explanation of different types of drug use: differences between types of drug use are explained by structurally analysing the properties of the drug itself; the user of the substance; and the setting in which use occurs. Expanding this model by paying close attention to how ecstasy was positioned as a substance, the actor types that were connected to it, and the setting in which it appeared proved to be a useful analytical lens for close reading on its discursive formation. In the analysis I noted what specific constellations of substance/actor/setting descriptions were constructed by what stakeholder types. If, for example, ecstasy was positioned as a dangerous substance for young people in a particular newspaper article, I made reference to whether this particular positioning of the drug and its users was put forward by either drug experts, psychiatrists, politicians or parents. Although

⁶ Norman E. Zinberg, *Drug, Set, and Setting: The Basis for Controlled Intoxicant Use* (London: Yale University Press, 1984).

all annotations were kept with references to the respective specific newspaper titles, the analysis did not focus on the specific role of different newspaper titles. This study focused instead on grasping an overall narrative of the discursive formation of ecstasy across the newspapers in the dataset.⁷ This annotation process was done chronologically and included no further iterative cycles.

With the annotation notes taken during the close reading process, I kept track of 1) specific constellations of descriptions of the drug, connected actors and different settings and 2) which different stakeholders discursively contributed to these different meaning constructions of ecstasy, and how they did so. With the help of two of the articles included in this analysis that coincidentally were printed side by side on page 9 of the 24 January 1990 edition of newspaper *Het Parool* I will illustrate the close reading procedure.⁸

The article on the left, headlined ‘Koffeman (CDA) asks for action against house parties’ (“Koffeman (CDA) vraagt aanpak house parties”), is on concerns held by Christian Democrat Representative Koffeman regarding ecstasy use at acid house parties. Koffeman had asked the Justice Minister for a reaction to the fact that acid house parties were tolerated in the Netherlands despite these parties being known to have a high prevalence of ecstasy consumption: ‘Representative Koffeman notes that tickets are sold by Tourist Offices too. “Is this for one of those ‘acid house parties’ where ecstasy is sold and used?” he asks [Minister of Justice Hirsch Ballin]. The Representative – chairman of the Christian Police Union until last year – referred to an article in *Algemeen Politieblad* in which a chief officer from Leiden reported on two acid house parties ‘full of dealing, swallowing and blowing.’ The article proposes to ban acid house parties after the British example. The substance itself has been included in the Opium Law since 1988.’ Koffeman was clearly concerned that ecstasy consumption had reached problematic levels at these parties and, given the fact that ecstasy was a classified hard drug, suggested banning the most well-known use setting of the substance: the acid house party. The drug’s Opium Law scheduling is positioned by the politician as a reason for why its use should be prevented.

In the article on the right, headlined ‘International reputation to blame for ecstasy policy’ (“Internationale reputatie debet aan ecstasy-beleid”), the Opium Law

⁷ The different newspaper titles in the dataset contribute differently to this discursive formation: e.g. *De Volkskrant* is more progressive than the more conservative *De Telegraaf*. This study did not focus on the role or position of specific newspaper titles in relation to the topic.

⁸ The page from *Het Parool* dated 24 January 1990 with the two articles about ecstasy, printed at the bottom, can be accessed through Delpher: <<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=AB-CDDD:010834155:mpeg21:p009>> [accessed 31 October 2021].

scheduling is seen by drug experts as the cause of more dangerous ecstasy pills. The article is a report on an ecstasy symposium that had taken place in Amsterdam the day before. It was suggested at the symposium that ecstasy had been brought under the Dutch Opium Law not because of public health concerns, but rather to put an end to the Netherlands' role as a transit country for ecstasy production. The scheduling was seen as regrettable from a public health perspective: 'A negative effect of ecstasy's criminalisation is that many of its producers went underground. Because users used to know the manufacturers, they could apply an effective consumer control mechanism, but now they have lost track of where and how the pills are manufactured. Criminals are starting to gain control of the drug circuit and the quality [of ecstasy] is decreasing. Increasingly, speed and amphetamines are sold as ecstasy. The completely different effects of those substances have led to a more negative reputation of ecstasy. Since ecstasy falls under the Opium Law, concluded J. Filedt Kok, pharmacist at the Amsterdam University Medical Centre, the amount of rubbish on the ecstasy market is increasing.' Both drug experts and the pharmacist suggested that the situation before regulation had been safer from a public health perspective, implying that criminalising the production of ecstasy had had a negative health consequence for ecstasy users (connected actors).

These two articles show how different stakeholders contributed to different ecstasy constellations simultaneously. The Opium Law inclusion was used by the Representative as an argument for stronger repressive measures, while at the same time drug experts and a pharmacist argued that criminalisation had led to a more dangerous market, implying that accommodating the substance with a legal supply network would have been preferable.

Close reading all the relevant newspaper articles in this way resulted in a chronological overview of detailed annotations. I reflected on these annotations and observations to decide which overall tendencies, discursive patterns or strands I could make out. This resulted in a distinction between three discursive strands or perspectives on ecstasy: accommodation, problematisation and criminalisation. The strands each embody a different tendency found in the newspaper articles, all spanning the same time frame. Accommodation refers to the articles in which Dutch ecstasy use was acknowledged and, to a degree, normalised: this was the strand most in line with the dominant drug policy climate regarding drugs in the Netherlands at the time. Problematisation describes the articles in which ecstasy was viewed as problematic. In the criminalisation strand I grouped the articles in which ecstasy was discursively criminalised. With "discursive criminalisation" I meant the tendency to position (aspects of) ecstasy as criminal, whether they were

legally criminalised or not. For all strands I made explicit if there were effects of ecstasy's Opium Law scheduling in November 1988 and, if so, what they were.

Ultimately, I used these three strands to write three coexisting, interrelated narratives about ecstasy in Dutch newspapers which are presented as three separate sections in the next part of this chapter: Accommodation, Problematisation and Criminalisation. By separating the three strands and by highlighting the contrasts and relations between them, it became possible to distil each strand's dominant constellation of ecstasy along with the most influential stakeholders in that constellation's construction. This helped to untangle the complexity of ecstasy's discursive formation.

Historical narrative | **Three different discursive strands**

Accommodation

Public health measures and the push to de-stigmatise drug users had become prominent within the Dutch drug policy climate of the 1980s, even though the term *harm reduction* only became customary in the Netherlands in 1990.⁹ The double track policy, in place since 1976, meant that criminalisation was reserved for illegal drug production and trade, while the criminalisation of drug users was considered undesirable.¹⁰ Methadone provision for heroin users, sometimes facilitated in special methadone buses, was emblematic of this harm reduction climate that sought to minimise health hazards for users.¹¹ The "new" drug, ecstasy, arrived in the Netherlands under this dominant climate wherein drug users were not stigmatised or criminalised. This climate, in which drug use was openly acknowledged rather than actively repressed, was reflected at the start of ecstasy's discursive formation in the newspapers. In the following section this "accommodative" discursive strand is described: newspaper coverage of ecstasy with a particular openness to give the substance a place in Dutch society, even if cautiously so.

In the fall of 1987, a number of people were arrested on the Spanish island of Ibiza for selling ecstasy pills to partygoers. Supposedly these pills had been produced in the Netherlands. *De Volkskrant* wrote that it was far from certain where the pills came from, even though the Dutch capital's infamous reputation for drug production made the Spaniards firmly believe it was Amsterdam.¹² Further inquiry

⁹ Blok, *Ziek of zwak. Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg in Nederland*, p. 221.

¹⁰ de Kort, pp. 241–46.

¹¹ 'Methadonverstrekking', *Veldwerk Amsterdam* <https://veldwerkamsterdam.nl/?page_id=304> [accessed 12 May 2020].

¹² *De Volkskrant*, 01-10-1987.

by the newspaper suggested that they originated in the United States. The drug, called 'sex pill' in the headline, was described as a slimming agent that could be useful in therapy, according to psychiatrists, who also claimed it had no harmful side effects. *Het Vrije Volk* made note of the MDMA trade in Spain. In their short article, however, a rather different picture of ecstasy was painted:¹³ labelling it a hard drug that should have never ended up on the streets, a plethora of negative side effects (e.g., it makes users nervous, confused, crazy, depressed and even insane) was listed before opining that this 'love pill has little to do with love.' Two days later, *De Volkskrant* published another article about the incident after an Amsterdam drug dealer contacted the newspaper's editorial staff.¹⁴ Contradicting the police's statement that ecstasy had not been gaining ground in the Netherlands, he stated that business in ecstasy had already been booming for more than two years in the Netherlands. He felt that Dutch people did not really take to the substance (he estimated that ecstasy users made up 10% of his clientele), but he derided the Dutch police for their inability to recognise ecstasy users, leading to the headline 'The police didn't see the big smiles in the discotheques,' alluding to the drug's euphoric qualities. The dealer stated that most of his ecstasy buyers were relatively wealthy, over 30 years of age, and also frequently bought cocaine. According to the dealer, ecstasy helped many of these clients end their cocaine addiction: 'A lot of people can finally stop using cocaine. They use [cocaine and ecstasy] simultaneously for a little while, then they leave out the coke. And ecstasy is not addictive, so they quit that then too.' While some editors made mention of ecstasy's supposedly serious negative side effects, in other articles psychiatrists referred to MDMA as a substance without harmful side effects. The substance ecstasy did not have an established meaning. The different articles provide a plethora of perspectives on ecstasy, but they are similar in that they represent supportive or oppositional interpretations of a potential position in Dutch society. The first associated set (wealthy thirty-somethings who were already cocaine users) and setting (discotheques) were connected to the substance by a drug dealer, while it was suggested that the police were unaware of the substance's limited spread in the nightlife.

By mid-1988, numerous articles started appearing in the opinion and cultural sections of different newspapers on ecstasy's increasing popularity in the Netherlands. *NRC Handelsblad* published an opinion piece suggesting modern life could be illustrated by the popularity of particular drugs: earlier times were brought into relation with cocaine and heroin, harder substances that were now declining in

¹³ *Het Vrije Volk*, 03-10-1987.

¹⁴ *De Volkskrant*, 03-10-1987.

popularity, while lighter drug ecstasy's was reportedly on the rise.¹⁵ After editor Hubert Smeets described ecstasy as 'pills developed in the laboratories of the grey pharmaceutical circuit of the United States in the 1970s that enabled the user to open up his heart and to party for five hours,' he wrote that 'as long as the pills won't be traded *en masse* on the streets, no words will be wasted [on this drug] in [the government in] The Hague or the Amsterdam city hall.' *Leeuwarder Courant* briefly described magazine *Nieuwe Revu's* coverage of ecstasy in July 1988, where-in ecstasy had been called a drug that provides a relaxing feeling without hallucinogenic side effects.¹⁶ Several reports on the increasing attention followed later that summer, some of which had a less optimistic tone: a pharmacologist was quoted on the front page of *NRC Handelsblad* stating that 'someone psychologically on the edge can go permanently crazy [from using ecstasy].'¹⁷ Columnist Tom Rooduijn wrote a user review for *NRC Handelsblad* in August 1988 following a number of other user reports in Dutch magazines.¹⁸ In his highly positive (and hyperbolic) review, he wrote that he was confident that 'the drug would have prevented both world wars if it had been available freely in Europe in 1914.' He referred to an information brochure on ecstasy that stated the pill was no sedative, 'but a medicine that is recommended by countless psychiatrists.' For the capital's main newspaper, *Het Parool*, Theodor Holman parodied the storm of positive stories with a satirical take on the user report of the drug.¹⁹ The reputation of ecstasy as merely a contemporary cultural phenomenon was emphasised by the glowing user reviews in newspapers and magazines. It is worth noting that this was likely still considered controversial, as one of them, Rooduijn, denied that he used the pill in a subsequent column.²⁰ And although there were warnings about ecstasy's negative side effects, most of the initial reports about the increasing popularity of ecstasy in the Netherlands did not outright condemn its use. Regulation was expected to follow should a huge clandestine market develop, but its use was not considered a good reason for drug regulation. On one end of the argument, a pharmacologist warned about severe risks; on the other, psychiatrists supposedly recommended it. Some reporters expected that regulation would follow if its popularity increased, but most reports simply described ecstasy as a new cultural phenomenon.

15 *NRC Handelsblad*, 22-06-1988.

16 *Leeuwarder Courant*, 29-07-1988.

17 *NRC Handelsblad*, 10-08-1988.

18 *NRC Handelsblad*, 06-08-1988.

19 *Het Parool*, 12-08-1988.

20 *NRC Handelsblad*, 12-08-1988.

When the acid house dance rage started to bloom in the Amsterdam club scene, newspapers began giving attention to it in their cultural sections in the late summer of 1988. *Trouw* dedicated an article to acid house - 'the new rage' - in late August 1988, and it was written that 'the adjective 'acid' refers to the pill XTC or Extasy [sic] that causes ecstatic experiences in combination with the music.'²¹ Although a party-goer was quoted as saying the Amsterdam scene was a weak extract of the harder London and Ghent scenes, implying that the Dutch capital's scene was less druggy, ecstasy's psychedelic dimension was still described as essential to the acid house experience. The article ended with recommendations for upcoming house parties. Three days later, *De Volkskrant* also published a full page article with two pictures to describe the acid house rage of 1988's 'summer of love.'²² The acid house experience was described by reporter Gert van Veen as grotesque and ratio-disruptive even without the consumption of ecstasy, and he included an elaborate introduction to the new drug that was said to add a 'psychedelic element to the dance culture that was missing thus far;' that is, previously popular party drugs cocaine and speed were described as stimulating rather than psychedelic. Parallels were therefore drawn with the softer LSD culture of the 1960s. A little later in 1988, local newspapers joined in on reporting about the acid house rage. In the coverage of the first acid house party that was organised in the southern province Limburg, *Limburgsch Dagblad* wrote that 'in certain circles, acidhouse [sic] is best consumed in combination with the drug Ecstasy [sic].'²³ *Leeuwarder Courant* wrote that, although acid house was becoming popular in Friesland, Frisians tended to be more into beer than into drugs, thus ecstasy pills were nowhere to be found in Friesland.²⁴

The culture editors mostly described ecstasy consumption in connection to the house party phenomenon: its popularity was even contextualised historically in a tradition of nightlife drug scenes. The scenes in the United Kingdom and Belgium were described as more serious or intense than their counter parts in the Netherlands. In turn, editors of regional papers described their provincial scene as milder than the scenes in major cities. This exemplifies the strong tendency to describe local scenes as milder than other supposedly more intense scenes. This tendency to only consider *other* drug use scenes as problematic is described in more detail in the next section of this chapter below. Discursively, a particular formation started to crystallise: the substance as a drug that was softer than cocaine and speed, taken specifically at acid house parties by ravers.

21 *Trouw*, 30-08-1988.

22 *De Volkskrant*, 02-09-1988.

23 *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 07-10-1988.

24 *Leeuwarder Courant*, 27-12-1988.

In January 1989, in the wake of the List 1 status ecstasy had acquired in November 1988, reports started being printed about the discoveries of illicit ecstasy laboratories. Whereas these articles mostly contributed to ecstasy's criminal discursive formation (see 'Criminalisation' below), newspaper editors also started making estimates on the drug's popularity in the Netherlands. According to an expert from addiction clinic Jellinek, at least several hundred of their patients had used ecstasy at least once.²⁵ In the same article from *Leeuwarder Courant*, the head of Amsterdam's mental health service (GG&GD) stated that the drug's market consisted of relatively wealthy, young people. *Trouw* wrote that 'according to the drugs prevention team, ecstasy is the most popular drug in Amsterdam now.'²⁶ *De Volkskrant* similarly stated that 'it is assumed that XTC is used in large quantities in certain kinds of discotheques.'²⁷ In an in-depth article about the persisting popularity of acid house in the western part of the Netherlands, *Trouw* also discussed the dance scene's connection with ecstasy.²⁸ Drug counsellors suspected that ecstasy was being used in most Dutch cities, and the expert from Jellinek warned about the dangers of psychological addiction, along with a prediction about a 'user group with severe XTC problems.' Here we see that the popularity of ecstasy in Dutch discotheques was starting to be underlined and acknowledged. With that awareness, a new group of actors entered the public debates: drug case workers from drug prevention groups and addiction centres. While highlighting its increasing popularity and mentioning that its use was mostly experimental, they also warned against possible addiction problems, sometimes comparing the current situation to the early days of other substances, such as hash and cocaine. As the substance was mostly unknown at this stage, drug and addiction experts warned that reliable information regarding its harmfulness was not yet available.

In *Nederlands Dagblad* at the end of June 1989, there was attention being paid to the fact that the methadone bus project had been running successfully in Amsterdam for a decade.²⁹ The methadone bus is a harm reduction project that structurally supplies medical methadone to heroin addicts. The article suggested that the project had earned a solid reputation with its focus on harm reduction for addicts rather than aiming for total abstinence: 'Health Service affirms that the project is no rehab centre. "You have to accept that a group of users will keep using."' Ecstasy was mentioned in

²⁵ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 07-01-1989.

²⁶ *Trouw*, 07-01-1989.

²⁷ *De Volkskrant*, 07-01-1989.

²⁸ *Trouw*, 14-01-1989.

²⁹ *Nederlands Dagblad*, 28-06-1989.

the article only in passing when a researcher of the government's Research and Documentation Centre stated that known addicts usually had no preference for ecstasy. The researcher's findings were also covered on that day in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, where it was written that the findings debunked stigmatising and prejudiced myths surrounding the criminality of hard drug users in the Netherlands.³⁰ Ecstasy was only briefly mentioned in these articles. Whereas it was highlighted that known drug addicts were not typically ecstasy users, these reports were the first to put it in a context of harm reduction and de-stigmatisation.

In mid-July 1989, many newspapers covered a report on ecstasy written by drug expert and harm reduction advocate August de Loor.³¹ Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* printed the heading 'Don't make XTC use an offence',³² and *NRC Handelsblad* printed the heading 'XTC use calls for a passive government attitude' and wrote that criminalisation of ecstasy had made responsible ecstasy use impossible.³³ The report by De Loor, who would become a vocal advocate of a harm reduction approach to ecstasy, condemned the Dutch government's decision to criminalise ecstasy and pledged for a total reversal on the criminalisation of ecstasy's use, production and distribution. *Het Parool* also covered the report, suggesting that despite the associated risks, sensible ecstasy use would be possible if it came with a leaflet.³⁴ The capital's main newspaper also printed De Loor's explanation of Amsterdam's bad reputation when it came to drugs (and especially the visibility of heroin users in Amsterdam): 'According to De Loor, the fact that the Netherlands is judged abroad is merely a result of the way the problem has been made visible in the Netherlands. [...] in fact, Amsterdam gets its bad name from a good policy.' The implication was that the Dutch public health approach to drug users and, moreover, its tolerance of soft drug use had created a negative reputation abroad, as the harm reduction climate led to drug use being more visible. *De Telegraaf* printed an article about the report two months later, concluding that the Amsterdam city council did not take up any of the recommendations of 'widely respected Amsterdam drug world expert' De Loor.³⁵ De Loor said that ecstasy criminalisation had been 'an enormous blunder.'

30 *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 28-06-1989.

31 August de Loor, *Het middel ecstasy bestaat niet. Een onderzoek*. (Amsterdam: Adviesbureau Drugs, 1989).

32 *Het Parool*, 10-07-1989.

33 *NRC Handelsblad*, 11-07-1989.

34 *Het Parool*, 15-07-1989.

35 *De Telegraaf*, 19-08-1989.

De Loor pleas: "Accept the XTC phenomenon. In a certain way, it's a development in a positive direction. The substance causes less harm than we've gotten used to with drugs over recent years. That is to say, when people are well informed and when people don't have to engage with the criminal circuit to obtain pills for 25 to 35 guilders. Hear me when I say, I don't promote any drug. It's the government's responsibility to point out the risks. But when it comes to ecstasy, they seem to want to adhere to repression. Without any social discussion or assessment, the substance was brought under the Opium Law. A shame, a big shame. This causes more problems than it solves." *De Telegraaf*, 19-08-1989.

De Loor's plea for ecstasy decriminalisation is a clear example of a position in the accommodative discursive strand and an example of space for criticism of political decision-making in the public sphere. The drug was deemed too light to be scaled between other hard drugs, its users were seen as socially functioning individuals that came from 'wider layers of the population',³⁶ and the setting of the discotheque meant that ecstasy was an occasionally-used rather than addictive drug.³⁷ The report by De Loor led to articles that explicitly questioned the criminalisation of ecstasy in the Netherlands, showing that newspapers were not necessarily following the regulatory regime and that a harm reduction perspective with minimal stigmatisation was acceptable.

The attention paid to De Loor's report immediately led to criticism too: a sarcastic column by Theodoor Holman was printed in *Het Parool* in which Holman responded to De Loor by suggesting that harmful things like ecstasy *should* be forbidden to help people live longer.³⁸ The harm reduction discourse ignited by De Loor's report provoked a prohibitionist reaction too (see also 'Problematisation' below).

Throughout the rest of 1989, articles appeared regularly that critically reviewed ecstasy's illegal status and/or acknowledged that its popularity required a harm reduction approach rather than repressive. *Het Parool* dedicated a front page article to the popularity of ecstasy among Amsterdam's 19-23 year olds in September.³⁹ Addiction centre Jellinek's Institute for Alcohol and Drug prevention Amsterdam (IADA) had researched this and came to the conclusion that ecstasy use prevalence

³⁶ *Het Parool*, 10-07-1989.

³⁷ *NRC Handelsblad*, 11-07-1989.

³⁸ *Het Parool*, 17-07-1989.

³⁹ *Het Parool*, 23-09-1989.

was growing, and that it was still mainly used at acid house events. The institute issued a leaflet titled *The Key to Ecstasy*, in which advice on responsible use measures was given. For instance, users experiencing decreased highs after repeatedly using ecstasy were advised to wait a little longer before using the drug again. *De Volkskrant* also wrote about ecstasy's popularity, its risks and its legal status,⁴⁰ opening an article titled 'XTC trendy drug with unknown risks' with the sentence 'It is great for making love. It is light. It is soft. And cheap. But most of its users are unfamiliar with its risks.' Drug education was considered desirable for the growing ecstasy user group, and the drug's inclusion in the Opium Law was seen as an obstacle for education. Here, ecstasy was positioned as an increasingly popular recreational drug for which advice on responsible use, along with education about its risks, was considered important.

Dutch house parties and its strongly associated ecstasy use became the subject of a public backlash at the end of 1989. This backlash helped flare up the problematisation strand in ecstasy's discursive formation (see 'Problematisation' below), but it also prompted stakeholders to defend the ecstasy user. Many newspapers covered the proceedings of a conference on ecstasy held in the Amsterdam venue Melkweg on 23 January 1990 by the Netherlands Institute for Alcohol and Drugs (NIAD) in order to 'debunk the many misconceptions about ecstasy.'⁴¹ It was implied that one of the biggest misconceptions surrounding ecstasy - that ecstasy was unacceptably harmful - was a direct result of the Dutch government's decision to include the substance on List I of the Opium Law: 'Putting ecstasy on the list with the heaviest drugs implies that it is a heavy drug, whereas ecstasy is reportedly relatively innocent.'⁴² *Het Parool* wrote that 'both the NIAD as representatives of street work and ecstasy users advocated a law amendment that would remove [ecstasy] from the Opium Law.'⁴³ NIAD representative Eric Fromberg, who recommended the decriminalisation of production and distribution of ecstasy, was quoted in *Trouw* saying that 'moderate use of ecstasy can hardly be called unacceptable.'⁴⁴

De Volkskrant covered the conference as well and printed some statements by one of the speakers, ecstasy user Margriet: 'Margriet wanted us to take note of the fact that she has been happily married for seven years and that she has a six year old son. Fairly normal, as she said herself, "But I do want to shake things up with

40 *De Volkskrant*, 19-10-1989.

41 *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 24-01-1990.

42 *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 24-01-1990.

43 *Het Parool*, 24-01-1990.

44 *Trouw*, 18-01-1990.

XTC once or twice a month."⁴⁵ Just a few days previously, *De Volkskrant* had printed an article about the profile of the average cocaine user in Amsterdam.⁴⁶ Social geographer P. Cohen's research had shown that the typical Amsterdam cocaine user was neither part of the elite nor a deviant in any way: cocaine users were leading normal lives. In the article, ecstasy was mentioned only in passing when it was suggested that ecstasy was probably a trendier drug among younger users. Both of these articles in *De Volkskrant* suggested that ecstasy (and cocaine) users were leading otherwise normal, uncontroversial lives.

Frustration was starting to grow with what was perceived as increasing stigmatisation of ecstasy users and acid house. Remarks were printed in a brief opinion piece in *Trouw* on the verbal attack on acid house parties by member of parliament Gert Koffeman (CDA): both Koffeman's lack of understanding of acid house (he was said to erroneously think it was a form of hip hop) and his refusal to change this by getting acquainted with the phenomenon were ridiculed.⁴⁷ The implication was that acid house and ecstasy were not problematic or harmful, and that Koffeman would have realised this if he had been open to trying and understanding the rave scene.

Another important aspect that had been discussed at the NIAD ecstasy conference found its way into the newspaper pages: the dangers of impure ecstasy on the Dutch market, an issue that was also starting to receive attention in newspapers outside the context of the conference at the time. Pills sold as ecstasy were increasingly being found to contain other substances than MDMA, which happened to be more dangerous. Addiction centre Jellinek demanded attention for the tainted ecstasy market, which was reported in *Het Parool*⁴⁸ and *Trouw*.⁴⁹ Tests showed that many pills sold as ecstasy did not even contain the substance MDMA at all. August de Loor was stated as advocating for a knowledge campaign and that ecstasy users be given the ability to test pills at house parties in an article titled, 'The real XTC is starting to become difficult to find' in *Het Parool*.⁵⁰

The increased stigmatisation of ecstasy and acid house parties was causing ecstasy users and harm reduction activists to become increasingly defensive and to actively campaign for the decriminalisation and controlled production and distribution of ecstasy. Harm reduction activists felt that criminalising the substance had

45 *De Volkskrant*, 24-01-1990.

46 *De Volkskrant*, 18-01-1990.

47 *Trouw*, 26-01-1990.

48 *Het Parool*, 23-01-1990.

49 *Trouw*, 24-01-1990.

50 *Het Parool*, 27-01-1990.

made responsible use near impossible due to the lack of knowledge among users, in addition to the market that was now quickly being polluted. The substance itself was not seen as unacceptably harmful in this context: the biggest danger mentioned in relation to ecstasy was the risk of pills containing other substances than MDMA. The typical ecstasy user in these articles was described as a normal functioning citizen who used ecstasy in moderation to help facilitate having a good time occasionally. The threat was dangerously tainted ecstasy, which was often considered a result of its criminalised status.

Because of the commotion, in February 1990 the question as to whether ecstasy's hard drug classification was justified made it to the Dutch political arena. Justice minister Hirsch Ballin defended the decision to include ecstasy on List 1, which was reported in *Nederlands Dagblad*⁵¹ and *Trouw*.⁵² The minister said that ecstasy's inclusion on List 1 had been based on advice from the World Health Organisation, also stating that ecstasy had already started to 'appear in the criminal sphere' prior to its legal criminalisation, rebuking the suggestion that criminals started spoiling the market as a consequence of ecstasy's List 1 inclusion.

In *Het Parool*, the status of ecstasy was juxtaposed with alcohol's as part of its coverage of an addiction care congress in March 1990.⁵³ The director of addiction centre Jellinek stated that 'the classic junk is going extinct,' and he suggested that drugs like cocaine and ecstasy were being used by prosperous citizens in a controlled way that did not lead to addiction problems. The problems associated with widespread excessive alcohol consumption were found to be significantly more serious. In December 1990, an article in *Het Parool* discussed the possibility of critically reassessing the status of ecstasy and other hard drugs.⁵⁴ The Dutch tendency to have less repressive policies was said to be the subject of increasing international admiration as a more effective strategy than repressive policies. Questioning whether hard drugs like cannabis could be legalised or tolerated, the reporter wrote that 'concerning the illegal psychoactive stimulants, we would be at the start of a long road that needs to be taken with small steps in order to reach normalisation of the availability of these substances with minimal adverse side effects.'

Users, psychiatrists and harm reduction advocates called for a critical reassessment of ecstasy's inclusion on List 1 of the Dutch Opium Law, seeking to normalise the drug and its users with the following discursive formation of the substance: a

51 *Nederlands Dagblad*, 21-02-1990.

52 *Trouw*, 21-02-1990.

53 *Het Parool*. Amsterdam, 16-03-1990.

54 *Het Parool*. Amsterdam, 20-12-1990.

drug with a relatively low addiction risk, only used occasionally on nights out on the weekends by “normal” people searching for a little extra fun.

Newspaper coverage of ecstasy quickly facilitated ways to accommodate ecstasy use in the Netherlands as being part of domains like nightlife culture and the acid house phenomenon. The substance was even briefly welcomed as a new element of the Dutch nightlife. The Opium Law scheduling of ecstasy in 1988 did not criminalise or target the ecstasy user in accordance with the dual track policy, but it did make obtaining the drug illegal for all users. This provoked a harm reduction response in the public debate that criticised this regulatory imperative for its preclusion of a controlled ecstasy market, in addition to forcing ecstasy users to access the criminal circuit for their supply of pills. Ecstasy was discursively positioned as too light to warrant its List 1 inclusion according to its users, certain psychiatrists, and harm reduction advocates.

The accommodation of ecstasy in the Netherlands was the first strand in ecstasy’s discursive formation within newspapers. It appears that it was the dominant strand at that time, which could be explained by the strong belief in harm reduction measures in Dutch drug policy. Simultaneously, however, in a different discursive process, ecstasy and its users were positioned as intrinsically problematic. This second strand of ecstasy’s discursive formation is described next.

Problematism

Starting in late 1985, before Dutch clubbers began using it, indirect problematisation of ecstasy was the first discursive tendency in Dutch newspapers. The first articles in Dutch newspapers that mentioned ecstasy referred to the drug in passing: they covered the surge in popularity in the United States of the designer drug Eve (3,4-Methylenedioxy-N-ethylamphetamine, or MDEA).⁵⁵ The articles carried a tone of alarm, with warnings about Eve’s rapid spread and exclaiming that Eve was just as dangerous as ‘related drug ecstasy.’ Via Eve, ecstasy was brought in relation to heroin (Eve was labelled ‘synthetic heroin’). Medical experts warned about its potential to turn users into ‘living corpses’ and ‘zombies,’ and they were deemed extremely dangerous, even lethal. The articles questioned the veracity of the claim by addicts that synthetic drugs were safer than non-synthetic drugs. The articles appeared in the foreign news section and highlighted Eve as one of several, recently identified, highly dangerous drugs used by American drug addicts.

The hyperbolic tone was characteristic of the repressive, “war on drugs” morale common to the United States, which is described in the introduction to 55 *Trouw*, 11-12-1985; *Het Parool*, 12-12-1985; *Nederlands Dagblad*, 30-12-1985.

this thesis. American drug users were represented in these articles as a homogeneous group of addicts/junkies, prone to adapt to the latest available drug. There was no specification of further demographic user details. This is not unlike how drug users are frequently represented in American media.⁵⁶ Although medical experts warned about the many dangers of the substances, there was no mention of their medical origin in this context: ecstasy and Eve were positioned as new drugs, maliciously designed to be as addictive as possible. The two new synthetic drugs were linked to heroin, which had a highly negative reputation, both in the United States and the Netherlands. Although it was written that an increase in ecstasy use was expected in the United States, ecstasy was not seen as a risk to the Dutch population. The geographic/cultural positioning presented ecstasy as an American problem. According to these articles, Eve and ecstasy were cunningly made for and eagerly consumed by addicts/junkies, not by “normal” citizens. This is a double example of *othering* as a discursive strategy. Othering strategies can be used to maintain a sense of ideal, or normal, citizenship: by consistently defining what *is not us*, what *is us* is reiterated so that social order can be maintained. Drug users are often seen as causers of social ills, which makes the abjection of drug users easier and more common.⁵⁷ It is tangible in physical public spaces when drug users are rendered abnormal, so that the idea of a safe public space in line with the social (drug-free) norm can be believed. Here this strategy can be seen on a discursive level: by positioning the ecstasy problem as American (not Dutch), and by posing it as a risk for junkies (not for normal people), it was discursively constructed outside of normal Dutch citizenship. Historically, othering drug users in public debates is a common discursive tendency. Indeed, with regards to Dutch history, this has been shown to be prevalent in public debates during the beginning years of both opium⁵⁸ and morphine.⁵⁹

Othering is the earliest discursive strategy that I came upon in my research of the discursive formation of ecstasy use in Dutch newspapers. Ecstasy use was othered by connecting it directly to the American drug addict. This was most likely a result

⁵⁶ Walker, p. 21.

⁵⁷ See for example: Marcia England, ‘Stay Out of Drug Areas: Drugs, Othering and Regulation of Public Space in Seattle, Washington’, *Space and Polity*, 12.2 (2008), 197–213 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13562570802173281>>.

⁵⁸ Snelders and others.

⁵⁹ Walma, *Between Morpheus and Mary. The Public Debate on Morphine in Dutch Newspapers, 1880-1939*.

of Dutch newspapers parroting the American press, which was in general more characterised by a strong narcophobic discourse.

The problematisation of ecstasy use continued in 1988, when acid house reached the mainstream. Reports appeared in the foreign news sections of Dutch newspapers on the difficulties facing authorities in the United Kingdom in controlling the British acid house scene and its associated mass ecstasy consumption. *De Volkskrant* wrote on how the British police were helpless in controlling the privately organised acid house parties that attracted both addicts and drug dealers.⁶⁰ Warning about the danger of 'moral decay' among British youth, a fear of young people turning into drug addicts was apparent. *Limburgsch Dagblad* wrote about the BBC's decision to stop playing songs associated with the acid house rage out of respect for the victims of ecstasy, which was claimed as the reason behind the death of a 21-year-old girl.⁶¹ *Het Parool* wrote about the dangerous situation facing the United Kingdom in its article about acid house's Belgian sister genre, *new beat*.⁶² British teenagers were said to be jumping off tall buildings en masse under the influence of ecstasy. The Amsterdam club RoXY, which had hitherto become the centre of the Dutch acid house scene, was described as "child's play" in comparison to the London club Shoom.

Lethal ecstasy consumption associated with the acid house scene was reported as a serious problem amongst young people in the United Kingdom. Comparisons between the Dutch scene and the British scene resulted in a clear distinction made between the two, wherein the Dutch scene was positioned as much milder than its British counterpart. In the coverage of the Dutch acid house parties that were happening around that time (appearing mostly in the cultural sections of the newspapers, also see 'Accommodation'), ecstasy use was not viewed as something so problematic. A fear of moral decay, the high risk of addiction, and the attraction of the scene to drug dealers, all of these aspects associated to the British acid house scene created a more problematic image than the Dutch. Ecstasy in the British context was described as a peril threatening the youth of the United Kingdom. The bad reputation given to the British ecstasy user was also likely a result of the Dutch newspapers' drawing from the British press that was, as I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, quick to raise an alarm about the acid house scene. The British press tended to exaggerate drug use problems, and ecstasy was no exception.

By early 1989 newspapers started to report on the illegal production of ecstasy in Dutch laboratories following its inclusion on List 1 the Opium Law in November

⁶⁰ *De Volkskrant*, 08-11-1988.

⁶¹ *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 18-11-1988.

⁶² *Het Parool*. Amsterdam, 19-11-1988.

1988. At first, this accelerated ecstasy's criminal discursive formation (see 'Criminalisation'). But in the burst of attention that followed the coverage of these illegal labs, there came with it renewed attention paid to the substance's popularity in the Netherlands. Comparisons with the British acid house scene and its ecstasy users were still common in the articles that followed. *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* printed on January 12 that the 'problems around XTC were starting to mount', particularly in the United Kingdom, where the situation was getting out of hand.⁶³ This was said to be unlike the situation in the Netherlands, where 'the hysteria isn't running so fast, even though XTC has been put on the Opium-1 list.' The next day, in an article in *Het Parool*, an even more direct comparison between British and Dutch users was made by the director of Amsterdam night club RoXY, saying that XTC was not very popular in Amsterdam: 'British youngsters are going crazy [on ecstasy] in Amsterdam, where the local scene, not entirely free of XTC either, is watching disapprovingly.'⁶⁴ Although awareness was growing of ecstasy's production and use in the Netherlands, British ecstasy use was highlighted as the problematic kind in articles concerning the drug. In the article quoting the RoXY director, a discursive distinction was made between the Dutch and British ravers in Amsterdam. These articles connected the illegal production of ecstasy more directly to the British ecstasy user, despite ecstasy becoming popular in the Netherlands at the same time. The fact that the Netherlands was still dealing with the heroin epidemic - a much more visible and serious drug problem in the 1980s - might explain why the use of what was seen by the Netherlands as merely a party drug in Dutch clubs and parties was not raising more eyebrows at first.

Early 1989 also saw some articles that discussed a backlash against the acid house scene. Some of these articles announced or predicted the end of acid house. *NRC Handelsblad* claimed the demise of both acid house and new beat in their culture section, although they expected that electronic music in general would become the music style of the 1990s.⁶⁵ A prominent acid house DJ wanted to put an end to acid house, while at the same time making way for new developments in the house scene, such as deep house. It was mentioned by the reporter that the British tabloids had printed exaggerated stories about acid house's connection to ecstasy, which had provoked threats of club closures. *De Volkskrant* wrote about the emergence of the deep house genre in April, putting the new genre in stark opposition to 'drug-riddled acid house,' which was reportedly subject to a backlash following

⁶³ *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 12-01-1989.

⁶⁴ *Het Parool*, 13-01-1989.

⁶⁵ *NRC Handelsblad*, 24-03-1989.

the second summer of love in the United Kingdom.⁶⁶ Later that same month, *Het Vrije Volk* questioned this supposed end of acid house in a full page article about the risks of ecstasy.⁶⁷ The article, headed 'The deadly romance of XTC,' discussed the results of their research into the drug in cooperation with the Rotterdam public health service. Comparisons between ecstasy and cocaine's drug trajectory were drawn: it was suggested that, like cocaine, ecstasy could very well turn out to be more addictive and harmful than had been assumed at the time.

The reputation of acid house parties and ecstasy was getting worse, primarily stemming from the situation in the United Kingdom, where acid house parties and the police attention around them received a lot of press. At the same time there was an awareness that the British tabloid press had blown the drug stories out of proportion. Vigilance with regards to drugs based on prior experience with cocaine, combined with British horror stories, was changing the perception of these parties. This change in perception appeared unconnected to the ecstasy consumption of Dutch people: the Dutch raver had no clear role in this development.

Stories on problems with Dutch acid house parties at the end of 1989 heralded the beginning of the problematisation of Dutch ecstasy users. Despite the musings of some newspapers about the end of acid house parties, the popularity of acid house music and ecstasy only kept growing. Dutch ecstasy use had hitherto been positioned as unproblematic in comparison with British ecstasy use, but this was changing. A house party organised by British citizens at Amsterdam venue Melkweg led to commotion in December 1989.⁶⁸ The police raided the party stating that, in their commitment to maintaining public order, they could not permit 'organised drug use.' *Het Parool* also wrote about the incident: 'People call XTC a love drug, but it can make users aggressive as well. Just last week damage was done to a mosque following one of these drug parties.'⁶⁹ More newspapers picked up on this: *De Volkskrant* added that 'the Amsterdam police didn't really pay attention to XTC thus far because the drug is generally not found on addicts who encounter the police. The acid house parties haven't yet led to major problems.'⁷⁰ *Het Parool* printed another article following the increased police surveillance and the mosque incident with the heading 'Drugs are ruining acid house parties,' in which a DJ defended the acid house scene, insisting that 'acid house music and the

⁶⁶ *De Volkskrant*, 07-04-1989.

⁶⁷ *Het Vrije Volk*, 13-04-1989.

⁶⁸ *NRC Handelsblad*, 18-12-1989.

⁶⁹ *Het Parool*, 18-12-1989.

⁷⁰ *De Volkskrant*, 19-12-1989.

drug ecstasy are no married couple.⁷¹ The DJ, while acknowledging that ecstasy was used at the parties, stated that the parties were fundamentally about the music and that he would be happy to see the end of drugs. He did not want parties to go underground however, something that had happened in the United Kingdom following increased police attention to the ecstasy trade. A letter to the editor of *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* printed in January 1990 expressed a similar sentiment, claiming that a recent drug free house party in Groningen proved the lack of an intrinsic connection between house music and drugs.⁷² Organisers of acid house parties made similar claims in *De Telegraaf* following questions in parliament raised about acid house by the Christian Democrats.⁷³

The Dutch acid house scene and its relationship with ecstasy consumption was starting to gain notoriety, despite organisers insisting that there was no obvious relation between the parties and drug consumption. Descriptions of the drug itself changed too in this context: it was no longer described as a love drug. It was now described as something that could also cause aggression in users. Moreover, the mosque vandalism was the first time an incident of public nuisance was associated to ecstasy users. Acid house parties and their venues were starting to be seen as problematic drug places in need of police surveillance. In these stories, the Dutch ecstasy user was not kept out of scope by means of othering foreign ecstasy users. Even though it was mentioned that Dutch ravers had hitherto not been known to cause public nuisance or engage with law enforcement, a shift seemed to be occurring in the discursive formation of the acid house ecstasy user across the board.

The harm reduction activists' efforts to decriminalise and, thereby, normalise ecstasy in 1989 and 1990 (described in 'Accommodation') led *Het Vrije Volk* to underscore the dangers of ecstasy.⁷⁴ Their full-page article scathingly cited passages from addiction centre Jellinek's ecstasy information brochure, *The key to ecstasy*, and ended with the suggestion that a different brochure titled *Ecstasy, no thanks* ("Ecstasy liever nie") was needed. The original leaflet was condemned by the reporter, who suggested it almost made readers feel like they were missing out if they did not try taking ecstasy. It was repeatedly described, however, that the drug's main danger was that other, more dangerous drugs were being sold as ecstasy as a result of the criminal market. In this context, pure ecstasy was described as 'not necessarily more dangerous than aspirin.' Despite this, the article ended with the story of a young man who found the drug's effects too

71 *Het Parool*, Amsterdam, 27-12-1989.

72 *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 09-01-1990.

73 *De Telegraaf*, 26-01-1990.

74 *Het Vrije Volk*, 01-08-1990.

radical, and the tone implied that its popularity was about to become very problematic. Several newspapers printed letters from the chair of the Dutch Narcotics-Free Society Association who expressed her concerns over house parties,⁷⁵ the motives behind its inclusion on List 1 of the Opium Law of this very 'dangerous drug',⁷⁶ and the 'unacceptable' statements from Jellinek suggesting the existence of increasing, non-problematic recreational drug use in the Netherlands.⁷⁷

Following the problematisation of the setting of the acid house party (first the British scene, then the Dutch scene) and the user (first the British raver, then the Dutch raver), ecstasy itself was now problematised too. The main reason for this was the danger surrounding pills being sold as ecstasy containing harmful substances other than MDMA; impure pills were now seen as the main risk of ecstasy use. Taken literally, this implies that *pure* MDMA was seen as less harmful. As an argument against ecstasy - being an MDMA pill - this might seem paradoxical. But in the discursive formation it helped worsen the general reputation of ecstasy.

Over the course of the first years in which ecstasy was discussed in Dutch newspapers, the tendency to problematise ecstasy and its users in different ways first existed in part as a hegemonic relation to the discursive strand that accommodated and normalised ecstasy use. Problematisation initially concerned non-Dutch (and predominantly British) ecstasy use. The negative, tabloid-fuelled reputation of acid house parties in the United Kingdom, in addition to the British ecstasy tourists that came to the Netherlands, eventually affected the reputation of Dutch ecstasy users, as well as house parties. Ultimately ecstasy as a substance was problematised: this was due to, on the one hand, cultural connections made to other hard drugs, such as cocaine; and on the other hand, ecstasy pills were starting to be made with other substances than MDMA that were more harmful. The harm reduction stance clamouring for the full decriminalisation of ecstasy could count on opposition too. By 1990, accommodation and problematisation of ecstasy co-existed in its discursive formation: where one positioned it as a party drug for normal people, the other positioned it as a dangerous hard drug used by notorious ravers.

Criminalisation

When it comes to its users and use settings, tendencies to both accommodate and problematise ecstasy could be seen in newspapers. Often, they clashed. In this last section, I turn to a third strand within ecstasy's discursive formation that

⁷⁵ *De Telegraaf*, 31-01-1990.

⁷⁶ *Het Parool*, 28-02-1990.

⁷⁷ *Het Parool*, 18-04-1990.

comprises the ways in which it was discursively criminalised, both leading up to and following its legal criminalisation. How did criminalisation of ecstasy in the discursive sphere relate to the legal trajectory of ecstasy, as part of which it was included on List 1 of hard drugs of the Dutch Opium law in November 1988? The Dutch dual track policy meant that the production and distribution of ecstasy was actively combated and criminalised from that point onwards. This policy led to an environment in which users were generally protected from criminal stigma, albeit their drugs originated from a criminal network.

Before the Dutch Opium law inclusion, newspapers were reporting on ecstasy illegalisation in other countries. *De Volkskrant* wrote about the popularity of ecstasy in Spain in 1987 (also see 'Accommodation') and early 1988.⁷⁸ It was mentioned that in the United States, ecstasy had been on the list of prohibited substances since 1985. A Spanish judge had ruled that it was not only addictive but deadly too, making ecstasy use an offence: 'the risk of love in a pill form is clear: addiction, life danger and at least half a year in prison.'

In August 1988, ecstasy was mentioned in passing in a column for *De Volkskrant*.⁷⁹ The author mocked the police's decision to dissolve a criminal investigation team that had been investigating the printing of counterfeit currency to instead focus on other priorities; the author listed ecstasy with other, mostly ridiculous possible police priorities. The way in which ecstasy was sarcastically mentioned in passing as a potential police priority in this article shows how it was starting to be viewed as something that might actually require law enforcement attention, despite the fact that its production, distribution and use were legal at this time.

The influx of British acid house fans that travelled to Amsterdam following the regulation of ecstasy in the United Kingdom led to a number of reports in Dutch newspapers in December 1988. As I described in the previous section, British ravers brought with them a bad reputation. Reports by *Limburgsch Dagblad* en *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* stressed that regulation was necessary in order to prevent drug tourism and to protect the Netherlands' international reputation.⁸⁰ The police were said to be unaware of the 'special parties in Amsterdam, where English tourists in particular indulge in Extasy [sic].'⁸¹

After the few times ecstasy had been brought up in a criminal context, it was its popularity among British tourists that led newspapers to start discussing the need

78 *De Volkskrant*, 08-03-1988.

79 *De Volkskrant*, 13-08-1988.

80 *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 19-12-1988; *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 19-12-1988.

81 *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 19-12-1988.

for regulation. Most of the newspapers appeared to be unaware that the regulation of ecstasy in the Netherlands was happening around that very same moment. Pressure to make ecstasy illegal followed from the awareness that the Netherlands was becoming a destination for ecstasy tourism. A discursive distinction between British and Dutch ecstasy use existed in 1988, with the problematic British use making national and international news, while discussion of Dutch use was found relegated to the cultural sections. Most historians agree that ecstasy regulation in the Netherlands did indeed happen as a result of the international position in Europe.⁸² From the beginning, the expressed need to regulate ecstasy in the Dutch newspapers was a response to its problematic use by British tourists that threatened to give the Netherlands a negative international reputation.

When ecstasy was brought under the Opium Law, *Het Parool* reported about this at first in December 1988.⁸³ *Het Parool* wrote that this happened under pressure from the Central Criminal Information Service (“Centrale Recherche Informatiedienst”) to banish international clandestine trade with countries in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom, in which ecstasy had been regulated previously. *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* also reported on the regulation of ecstasy shortly after.⁸⁴ They erroneously wrote that the substance had been on List 1 of the Dutch Opium Law for nine months already in their article on acid house’s popularity in Groningen. ‘Although users like to exclaim that [ecstasy] “is allowed and legal,” the way in which the pill is obtained indicates ostrich behaviour, since it is sold by the (hard)drug dealer.’ With the Dutch expression “ostrich behaviour,” sticking one’s head in the ground and ignoring what is happening around you, it was implied that users were well aware that ecstasy was not so innocent. Both the Amsterdam police and the Groningen police were said to be (formally) unaware of the popularity of ecstasy in these articles, and *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* suggested that the police’s drug list in Groningen may not be up to date with national regulation.

The decision to place ecstasy on List 1 of the Opium Act went mostly unnoticed in the newspapers, which is perhaps unsurprising given that its regulation was not communicated widely.⁸⁵ The regulatory change itself did not lead to coverage, although it was mentioned in a number of articles about ecstasy in the following weeks. The police were said to be unaware, or “formally unaware,” of the popularity of ecstasy in the Netherlands. An explanation could be that the police were

⁸² Spruit, p. 654.

⁸³ *Het Parool*, 20-12-1988.

⁸⁴ *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 29-12-1988.

⁸⁵ de Loor, p. 31.

unaware of its use as there was little public nuisance caused by it.⁸⁶ But it could also have been that the limited nuisance made the police focus on other matters: the Netherlands was dealing with the much more serious and visible drug problem of heroin and the related AIDS epidemic.⁸⁷ Regardless of the reason, the police did not get involved in the discussion around ecstasy at this time, and they had no active role in the discursive formation of it in Dutch newspapers until 1989.

A few small-scale ecstasy laboratories were discovered by the police in early January 1989. The discoveries were widely reported by most of the national and local newspapers.⁸⁸ *De Telegraaf* covered the exposure of the laboratories, a spokesperson of the police force of The Hague commenting that the 'disco-drug' was sold at a price ranging between 50 and 70 guilders.⁸⁹

The Opium Law amendment of late 1988 had hardly been covered by the newspapers, but the exposure of the ecstasy laboratories was widely reported. Regulation had brought a new group of actors into the public discourse: the manufacturers of ecstasy. Their laboratories - with their appearance of intricate science installations in domestic spaces, such as kitchens or holiday bungalows - became a recurring element of ecstasy coverage as newspapers started printing pictures of these laboratories regularly.⁹⁰

On 13 January 1989, several newspapers announced that evening's broadcast of critical research journalism television show *Brandpunt*.⁹¹ This episode of the Catholic Radio Broadcasting (KRO) organisation's show featured a segment on the use and risks of ecstasy in the Netherlands. It would turn out to be one of two controversial and bizarrely connected items that would end up damaging *Brandpunt's* credibility. The other item, which aired a little later, was about an alleged trade in human heads in the Netherlands. Both items were eventually claimed to be (partially) staged.⁹² The owner of the human heads publicly claimed that he staged a fake ecstasy laboratory by setting up 'differently coloured liquids and Vitamin C tablets' at the request of the show's producers for their ecstasy item. Due to questions surrounding both the

⁸⁶ This was implied the year after, when it was written that the Amsterdam police's policy was to only take action once drug use causes social nuisance: *De Volkskrant*, 19-10-1989.

⁸⁷ Blok, *Ziek of zwak. Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg in Nederland*, p. 221.

⁸⁸ *Het Vrije Volk*, 06-01-1989; *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 07-01-1989; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 07-01-1989; *Trouw*, 07-01-1989; *Het Parool*, 07-01-1989; *De Volkskrant*, 07-01-1989.

⁸⁹ *De Telegraaf*, 07-01-1989.

⁹⁰ E.g.: *De Volkskrant*, 07-01-1989.

⁹¹ *NRC Handelsblad*, 13-01-1989.

⁹² E.g.: *De Telegraaf*, 04-02-1989; *Trouw*, 04-02-1989.

authenticity of the broadcast's ecstasy laboratory and the segment on the human heads trade, the rest of February saw a storm of articles written accusing *Brandpunt* of deceitful journalism, including front-page articles in *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant*.⁹³ As a result, a public clash between the KRO and the police occurred, wherein a police officer accused the KRO of staging their items, and the KRO claimed in return that the police were conspiring against them.⁹⁴ It was implied by the television producers that the police sought to discredit the KRO as the exposed scandals embarrassed the police. Newspaper *Trouw* would go on to call the scandal the most important media story of February in their year review of 1989.⁹⁵

The *Brandpunt* scandal was not really about ecstasy in the first place: the fake ecstasy laboratory was directly connected to the gruesome claim of the existence of a human head trade. More importantly, it was a scandal about journalism and the role and responsibility of the media to the public. It was still the most intensely covered ecstasy-related event in newspapers up to that point; newspapers kept printing articles about the scandal for weeks.⁹⁶ This meant that, even though the scandal was not about ecstasy, it made the illegal ecstasy laboratory a prominent visual representation of ecstasy in the Netherlands, and it turned gave more prominence to ecstasy producers as actors in the discursive formation of ecstasy. Although ecstasy use was not considered problematic in the Netherlands at the time, its illegal production was starting to become a well-covered issue.

Throughout 1989, articles about different illegal ecstasy production locations continued to be published. In February, *Nederlands Dagblad* and *Het Parool* wrote about the discovery of MDMA production at German chemical company Imhausen.⁹⁷ In April, a laboratory was discovered in an Utrecht home and was described in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* as 'a hobby that got out of hand.'⁹⁸ In July, an ecstasy laboratory was found in the Brabant town of Oss by the police during an investigation into 'extensive cocaine trade.'⁹⁹ The summer brought more news about the illegal ecstasy trade with a 'world catch of XTC pills' that was widely reported on in August,¹⁰⁰ and a connection to Belgian buyers of Dutch ecstasy in Limburg in

93 *NRC Handelsblad*, 04-02-1989; *De Volkskrant*, 04-02-1989.

94 *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 04-02-1989; *Nederlands Dagblad*, 07-02-1989.

95 *Trouw*, 30-12-1989.

96 *De Volkskrant*, 11-02-1989.

97 *Nederlands Dagblad*, 21-02-1989; *Het Parool*, 21-02-1989.

98 *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 21-04-1989.

99 *De Telegraaf*, 15-07-1989.

100 *De Telegraaf*, 22-08-1989.

the same month.¹⁰¹ In October, *De Telegraaf*, *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* printed articles about the French police's successful roll-up of an 'ecstasy drug line between the Netherlands and France.'¹⁰²

Articles about law enforcement efforts to combat ecstasy production became the most common topic of reports on ecstasy in 1989. Throughout the year the production sites uncovered gradually changed: starting from small laboratories in holiday bungalows and apartment kitchens, they grew to include big chemical factories that were uncovered as hubs in international drug trafficking networks. As the discoveries became bigger and the drug networks went transnational, the articles printed about this started to become briefer and more matter of fact in tone. It appears that throughout 1989 ecstasy became commonly known and understood as one of the major drugs produced and traded illegally. The first ecstasy laboratory discoveries were accompanied by explanations of the drug and its users, whereas later roll-ups of often international criminal drug networks did not have such explanations printed with them. Within a year following ecstasy regulation, the criminalisation of the production and distribution of ecstasy had taken root in the discursive formation of ecstasy in newspapers. The criminalisation of ecstasy was initially limited to its production and distribution, with the simultaneous rise in ecstasy consumption remaining mostly unconnected in these reports.

In late 1989, ecstasy's criminalised status was subject to critical reflection in a few contexts. A number of court cases regarding producers of ecstasy in the Netherlands received attention in November. In a *Trouw* article about such a case, it was insinuated that it had been the *Brandpunt* scandal that made ecstasy's illegal status publicly known, implying that before the scandal people were not aware that it had become illegal.¹⁰³ In the criminal proceedings a criminal law expert suggested that ecstasy regulation had not been based on public health concerns, but instead had been the result of a fear of international reprimands. In *De Volkskrant* a professor of criminal law, Rüter, urged that only mild sentences should be given in ecstasy trade cases to prevent its embedment in the 'heroin and cocaine circuit.'¹⁰⁴

Asked by court president Van den Ende whether the Netherlands made the right decision to schedule ecstasy under the Opium law, Rüter answered that there was no other option: "We must follow in-

101 *NRC Handelsblad*, 17-08-1989.

102 *De Telegraaf*, 19-10-1989; *NRC Handelsblad*, 19-10-1989; *De Volkskrant*, 19-10-1989.

103 *Trouw*, 04-11-1989.

104 *De Volkskrant*, 04-11-1989.

ternational developments. But we must deal with ecstasy trade and use like we're used to in the Netherlands." *De Volkskrant*, 04-11-1989.

Low penalties were indeed given as a result, according to an article in *De Volkskrant* that followed the verdict.¹⁰⁵ The judge had taken into account that 'more severe sentences would lead to an increased appeal [of ecstasy] for "mafia-like groups."' In an article about British youth culture and its intimate relation with ecstasy, *De Volkskrant* questioned the effectiveness of the repressive policy in the United Kingdom: 'the sentences are severe, but the repressive attitude of the police has led to little more than an increase in the prices and a diminishing [ecstasy] quality.'¹⁰⁶ In *Trouw*, however, the British hard-line policy was praised as successful at intercepting international drug trade.¹⁰⁷ Lastly, there were harm reduction experts that pleaded for decriminalisation in order to increase chances of responsible ecstasy use nationwide (see Accommodation).

The Opium Law scheduling of ecstasy was questioned for different reasons within a year after regulation. Friction between the Opium Law as a necessity because of international regulation on the one hand, and a "Dutch way" of dealing with drugs on the other - a supposedly more lenient approach in its enforcement when it comes to users - became apparent. The strongly repressive British attitude towards ecstasy and acid house parties was cited as an example of ineffective ecstasy policy considering the popularity of the parties kept growing, although their overall hard stance was also praised as effective in combating the drug trade. The newspapers reflected different sides of a new debate regarding the legal status of ecstasy. The opposing perspectives of actors involved in the court cases were reflected in the articles.¹⁰⁸

In 1990, mostly short reports about ecstasy dealers, laboratories and trade networks appeared.¹⁰⁹ In May, police had discovered a drug laboratory on a houseboat in Maastricht, which was suspected to be an ecstasy production site.¹¹⁰ In an article printed a few days later, it was reported that research had concluded it had not

¹⁰⁵ *De Volkskrant*, 18-11-1989.

¹⁰⁶ *De Volkskrant*, 15-12-1989.

¹⁰⁷ *Trouw*, 18-12-1989.

¹⁰⁸ It is worth noting that most of the articles that questioned whether scheduling ecstasy had been a good idea appeared in *De Volkskrant*.

¹⁰⁹ *De Volkskrant*, 19-01-1990; *De Telegraaf*, 09-02-1990; *De Telegraaf*, 10-04-1990.; *Trouw*, 09-11-1990.

¹¹⁰ *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 26-05-1990.

been MDMA but an MDMA derivative, referred to as 'a little brother of xtc,' that had been produced on the houseboat, which meant no violation of the Opium Law occurred.¹¹¹ The manufacturer commented that he never violated the law because he consciously created legal substances, while the police stated that this derivative should be a classified substance too.

The shorter articles on the illicit ecstasy trade showed that ecstasy continued to be known commonly as an illegally produced drug in the Netherlands, sometimes in the context of international drug networks. The police started to play an increasingly prominent role in the public debate, and commented that they should be given legal means to act against the production of ecstasy's derivatives too. Here the beginnings of the problem of designer drugs produced specifically to evade the Opium Law can be seen.

The increasingly vocal position of the police can also be seen in a different way in newspaper articles about ecstasy in 1990. *Het Parool* reported that the Amsterdam RAI venue refused to host a house party following consultation with the police.¹¹² Because the organisers of the party had previously held parties at which drugs were consumed, the police stated that they could not guarantee control of possible calamities. In turn, the police's pressure on house parties led activists to take a stand and 'fight for their right to party' following similar protests in the United Kingdom.¹¹³ The central criminal investigation office commented on the NIAD's harm reduction brochure regarding ecstasy use in June 1990.¹¹⁴ They called the brochure's implication that 'sensible use' of ecstasy was possible incomprehensible and unacceptable, and insisted on the substance's List 1 classification: 'as long as the substance is classified, the inspector thinks the substance should remain forbidden, just like propaganda for it.'

The position of the police appeared to have changed following ecstasy's regulation: its Opium Law scheduling was used as a legitimisation for condemnation of not just its criminal production, but also its use. This represents a clear change in position as the police had in previous years repeatedly taken no action because of the generally limited public nuisance ecstasy users caused. The Rotterdam police indicated that ecstasy's List 1 scheduling had given ecstasy trade a 'more chaotic character.'¹¹⁵ Some discotheques in Rotterdam were said to have been working with

111 *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 29-05-1990.

112 *Het Parool*, 05-04-1990.

113 *De Volkskrant*, 09-04-1990.

114 *De Telegraaf*, 11-06-1990; *Het Parool*, 12-06-1990.

115 *Het Vrije Volk*, 27-03-1990.

ecstasy house dealers, which the police tolerated 'because according to them there was no public health hazard or disturbance of public order.'

The idea of the ecstasy user as a drug user who usually did not cause public nuisance or encounter police was still present, but the police were starting to express frustration with the tolerance and health advice granted to ecstasy users. According to the police, the increasing tolerance of a user group that used ecstasy (and other drugs such as cocaine) only incidentally as part of otherwise normal and fully functioning lives (see Accommodation) legitimised the use of a substance whose supply network was combated by the police in accordance with drug regulation. This dichotomy was starting to cause tension.

Criminalisation was mostly reserved for the production side of ecstasy in the newspapers between 1985 and 1990. Ecstasy first appeared in a regulatory context in Dutch newspapers before it was criminalised, in part due to coverage of ecstasy regulation decisions in other countries, and because ecstasy users got their ecstasy through the existing illegal dealer network. Following its regulation in 1988, which was itself hardly covered, the ecstasy production and distribution networks became newspaper fixtures, and ecstasy use was generally not discussed in this context at first. This mirrors the dual track policy characteristic of Dutch drug policy. Eventually the police - who initially only got involved with ecstasy use reluctantly, insisting that the drug was not causing public nuisance in the Netherlands - became frustrated with the situation, wherein acid house parties were tolerated, and ecstasy users were given drug use advice. In their view, this legitimised the illegal substance and its associated criminal supply network.

Conclusion

This analysis showed that the discursive formation of ecstasy in Dutch newspapers can be understood as consisting of three discursive strands in these first six years. Within the different discursive strands, specific constellations of descriptions of ecstasy itself, of its commonly connected actors, in addition to its settings, can be identified. Moreover, these constellations were constructed by different stakeholders in the articles that were analysed. These constellations are simplified abstractions, but they effectively illustrate how the meaning of ecstasy was a heavily contested discursive space from the start.

Within the accommodation strand, healthcare professionals, drug experts, harm reduction activists, and users were the most dominant stakeholders. In this strand,

ecstasy was seen as a soft party drug used by normal people on the weekends. A significant part of the articles in this strand appeared in newspapers' culture sections.

Within the problematisation strand, foreign news reports, conservative politicians and, to a lesser degree, pharmacologists were dominant. In this strand, ecstasy was first seen as a dangerous drug taken by British ravers known for their fearsome acid house scene. The reputation of the British acid house scene eventually led to stigmatisation of the Dutch acid house scene as well. The tainted market was soon seen as the primary problem with the drug itself. Harm reduction activists also flagged the tainted ecstasy market as a risk, but they viewed this as a result of ecstasy's criminalisation.

Within the criminalisation strand, the police were the most dominant stakeholder. Ecstasy was seen as an increasingly important criminal commodity here, with the most commonly associated actors developing from amateur manufacturers to international organised crime networks. This strand existed independently from the accommodation and problematisation strands at first, but normalised ecstasy users eventually became a source of frustration as they were blamed for being the reason for the illegal drug production network.

Ecstasy's inclusion on List 1 of the Opium Law was itself hardly covered in the newspapers, but it had clear and different effects in all the discursive strands. It was the catalyst for the criminalisation strand: the drug laboratory findings and law enforcement efforts to combat ecstasy production and trade did establish ecstasy as an illegally produced and distributed drug within a year of the start of its discursive formation. This process was accelerated by the widely reported *Brandpunt* scandal with its staged ecstasy laboratory. The List 1 status was used as an argument for stronger repression of its use within the problematisation strand as well. Within the accommodation strand, ecstasy's inclusion on List 1 was seen as a cause of harm, since it was seen as the reason for the tainted ecstasy market, and because it forced outgoing people to get in contact with a criminal supply network. Making the drug part of the Dutch double dual track policy led to increased tension between the different discursive strands in two ways: first, whereas ecstasy's hard drug status was frequently contested in the accommodation strand, it was fully adopted in the problematisation and criminalisation strand. Secondly, it led to a contested status of the ecstasy user: the situation in which ecstasy users were acknowledged and even accommodated with harm reduction measures eventually caused frustration for the police, who viewed harm reduction efforts aimed at ensuring safe ecstasy use as legitimising the criminal network behind its production and supply.

Another relevant aspect to note is the strong influence of foreign news in the discursive formation of ecstasy in the Netherlands. Modern drug regulation can only

be understood within its international context, and this study showed that the same can be said for the development of its discursive formation in the newspapers. News about foreign regulatory contexts, especially of that printed in the British tabloid press about acid house and ecstasy, had effects on the Dutch discursive formation of ecstasy. Initially othering strategies created a demarcation between Dutch and British ecstasy users, positioning only the latter as problematic users. A mostly unproblematic, somewhat tolerated group of Dutch ecstasy users was discursively kept separate from the more problematic British ecstasy users and drug tourists that were seen as threats to the Dutch reputation. The reputation of the British users and their desire to party in the Netherlands to escape the UK's repressive anti-drug climate led to discussions in Dutch newspapers about a need for ecstasy regulation in the Netherlands.

The debates that arose in the first six years of ecstasy coverage contain elements that still play a role in the discursive formation of ecstasy today. Despite the lenient approach to drugs for which Dutch drug policy was known at the time, this chapter showed that tendencies to normalise ecstasy were also frequently contested in the public debate in the newspapers.

This study provided several insights regarding the values and drawbacks of the methodological approach: analysing all articles found by using a relatively simple keyword search query for mining the OCR metadata of the newspaper dataset. A benefit of the manual interpretation of the search results that preceded the creation of the three different discursive strands was that it ensured that these strands were created from an awareness of the complete ecstasy coverage in the newspapers for this period. Knowing that I had come across most articles about ecstasy for the period of study (I say "most" because OCR metadata errors or search bias might have allowed a few to slip by) gives me confidence that the observations and conclusions of this study are historically valid.

The period of study, from 1985 until 1990, is rather brief from a historical perspective; continuing with the strategy of detailed analysis of all relevant newspaper articles about ecstasy for the 1990s and the 2000s would have been relevant. It would, however, take up so much time that it might not be a viable approach to tackle historical questions for longer periods. Having so much available information for a very short time frame also made it challenging to recognise overarching patterns. At the same time, persevering through this allowed me to witness subtle shifts in ecstasy's discursive formation, which might have gotten lost in an analysis based only on a sub-selection of relevant items, as is the aim of the leveled approach.

A methodological consequence of this approach deserving of attention is that it might lead to rash observations about related topics that then become part of

the analysis. Whereas it is likely that this approach allows the researcher to get a rather complete impression of the discursive formation of ecstasy (in this dataset, in this period), this is not certain for the discursive formation of related topics, such as house parties or organised crime. House parties and organised crime could be analysed with independent keyword search strategies, potentially leading to results that might add more nuance to the role that these aspects play in the findings of this analysis. The researcher needs to draw on their historical understanding of the topic and the period of study, or refer to secondary literature, to ensure that the analysis does justice to the material.

I will compare the analysis of the keyword search study of this chapter (and of Chapter 3) with the analysis of Chapter 4 in which more visualisation techniques will be used for a more targeted search and analysis strategy. Being able to make this comparison is methodologically relevant because it will provide insight into how analysing all relevant items found with a keyword search query (like I have done in this chapter) compares to analysing items within specific subsets created with the steps of the leveled approach.

CHAPTER THREE

**THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LOVE PILL:
ECSTASY IN DUTCH RADIO DEBATES
BETWEEN 1985 AND 2006**

Chapter 3 | **The rise and fall of the love pill: Ecstasy in Dutch radio debates between 1985 and 2006**

In this chapter, the analysis of ecstasy's discursive formation in Dutch media continues with an analysis of radio debates. How did ecstasy's discursive formation develop in radio debates? In Chapter 2, I showed that in newspapers the drug possessed a complex, multifaceted meaning from the start. Dutch newspapers printed articles that problematised, criminalised and accommodated ecstasy between 1985 and 1990. Although the accommodative strand seemed dominant, which reflected the Netherlands' lenient policy climate regarding drugs at that time, this accommodation of the new drug did not go uncontested.

I analyse radio items from the same time period to understand how ecstasy's discursive formation developed in public radio debates. This helps to acquire an understanding of how this drug's discursive formation process happened in a different medium. Taking the analysis beyond the 1980s, I also analyse several years of radio debate from the 1990s and 2000s to untangle how the discursive formation of ecstasy developed through the two decades that followed. Throughout the 1990s, house parties became extremely popular in the Netherlands, with hundreds of thousands of ravers dancing while high on ecstasy and other party drugs. Whereas ecstasy was regulated relatively quickly in the Netherlands, when it was classified as a hard drug in 1988 before it reached mass popularity, this chapter shows that in radio debates the substance was usually viewed more as a rather soft drug during the nineties. The criminal production of ecstasy, however, was being taken very seriously from the beginning as an issue in need of prosecution: the underlying principle of the dual track policy was reflected in how ecstasy use and production were seen as problems deserving different policy responses. The use of ecstasy was initially tolerated and approached as an issue in need of harm reduction measures rather than repression. Pill testing was one of the harm reduction initiatives set up in the 1990s to help party goers use ecstasy more responsibly: ravers could get their drugs professionally tested at parties without fear of any type of repercussion. In the introduction to this thesis, I described that such initiatives were not supported across the political spectrum in the Netherlands. In this chapter, such initiatives, in addition to the underlying belief that public health concerns should be the most important factor when discussing policies regarding ecstasy use, are some of the most recurring talking points over the years. I show how the underlying belief in the efficacy of a harm reduction approach to drug use at house parties and clubs became less dominant in the 2000s, as some stakeholders were becoming frustrated with what they perceived as a growing sense of romanticism surrounding ecstasy.

Methodological set-up

Aim | **Keyword search benchmark analysis (ASR metadata)**

The historical research aim of the study of this chapter was to explore the beginnings and development of the discursive formation of ecstasy on the radio. In the wake of the availability of searchable Automatic Speech Recognition metadata, searching the spoken text of parts of the Dutch radio archive had become possible by keyword search. Structural analysis of radio debates on any topic by full text keyword search had hitherto been impossible, and therefore no previous studies of this kind had been done. This study into the discursive formation of ecstasy in Dutch radio debates was not novel just in the field of drug history, but also in digital history overall. I wanted to compare the discursive formation of ecstasy as it developed in newspaper and radio debates: did the discursive formation of ecstasy develop differently in radio debates, and what are the different discursive dynamics of the public debate between that found in newspapers and that found on the radio?

The methodological aim of this chapter built on the newspaper study of Chapter 2. It would be useful to compare a benchmark key word search study based on ASR metadata to Chapter 2's OCR key word search study. This means that the search and analysis path of this study did not include any word frequency visualisation techniques. I analysed all available radio items found with the previously used ecstasy keyword search query. Comparison of the two key word search studies would enable a reflection on the differences between studies into historical topics in media debates based on OCR and ASR metadata enrichment.

Digital platform | **CLARIAH Media Suite**

CLARIAH's¹ online media research infrastructure platform Media Suite² provides media scholars and digital humanists with access to datasets from different institutional providers for exploration and mixed-media research.³ The Media Suite hosts func-

1 CLARIAH (Common Lab Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities) was a Dutch infrastructure project related to CLARIN.eu and DARIAH.eu. The activities of CLARIAH are continued in the currently running project CLARIAH PLUS, within which development of the Media Suite is ongoing.

2 'Media Suite', CLARIAH <<https://mediasuite.clariah.nl/>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

3 Roeland Ordelman and others, 'Media Suite. Unlocking Audiovisual Archives for Mixed Media Scholarly Research', *Selected Papers from the CLARIN Annual Conference 2018, Pisa, 8-10 Octo-*

tionalities (called “tools”) that users can use in combination with the available datasets. The available functionalities in 2019 (when this study was done) are *Inspect*, *Explore*, *Search* and *Compare* (see Figure 11). *Inspect* helps the user to understand the composition and evenness of a dataset by offering visualisation of the availability and completeness of a dataset’s different metadata. *Explore* is a serendipitous linked data search functionality that allows the user to trace a historical event across different datasets. *Search* allows the user to use keyword search in a dataset. The user can select what metadata field is used for the search query. *Compare* is the redeveloped AVResearcherXL functionality that enables comparison between different searches. Next to access to data and tools, the Media Suite also has a user *Workspace* in which the researcher can create projects. In such user projects, data selections and annotations can be stored. *Workspace* allows the user to work systematically, in addition to continuing their research flow in different sessions. Items and their metadata can be viewed and annotated in the infrastructure’s *Resource viewer*.

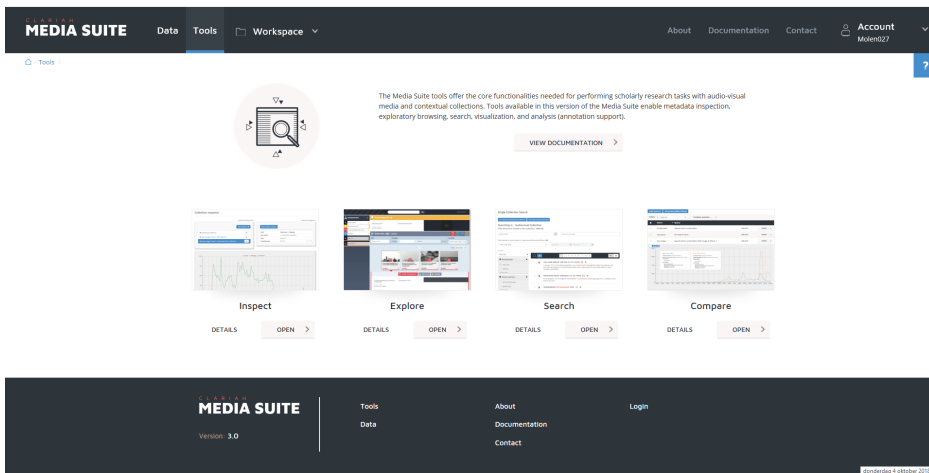


Figure 11. The tools tab in the CLARIAH Media Suite version 3.0 (Screenshot from 4 October 2018)

Dataset | **Radio Archive (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision)**

In this study the Media Suite was used to search the iMMix version of the digitised Radio Archive of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (S&V). This dataset contained over 400.000 radio items in July 2018.⁴ The Media Suite enables search

⁴ The iMMix version of the radio archive is in the process of being replaced by a new version (labeled Radio Archive in the Media Suite). In the new version, radio broadcasts from the year 2018 and

of this dataset based on the Automatic Speech Recognition metadata enrichment. The majority of items in the collection have not been enriched yet. The ASR enrichment process is time-consuming, and thus a prioritisation of material for enrichment was made based on researcher needs. Current affairs and news programming were given high priority, which led to the decision that the public broadcasting station with the strongest current affairs profile (currently going by the name NPO Radio 1) be given high priority in the process. This study was done while this enrichment process was still ongoing. This influenced the research trajectory since parts of the dataset became searchable over time (see below).⁵

A little bit of historical background information on Dutch radio and its role as a news medium is included here to contextualise the analysis of this study in the media landscape. The Dutch public broadcasting system originated in a pillarised context (see 'Historiography' in the introduction to this thesis), which meant that the different broadcasting organisations were defined by pillars: social or political identities. Television and radio stations never had a singular pillarised identity, as stations divided broadcasting time between the different broadcasting organisations.⁶ Although the content of the public radio stations is to this day supplied by broadcasters with specific religious and/or political profiles, the depillarisation process that started in the 1960s had led to a situation in which even the organisations' content itself was no longer strongly aimed at collective edification for their followers by the 1990s.⁷ In the late, 1980s commercial radio stations started entering the broadcasting landscape, whose content was not created by the public broadcasting organisations. The radio studies of this thesis only focus on stations in the public broadcasting system.

The majority of the items in this study are news and current affairs items from Radio 1. Radio 1 is currently known as NPO Radio 1, the result of a process of increasing current affairs profiling. In 1979, Hilversum 2 was the designated station for sport will be added. All potentially relevant items for my research were in the iMMix version. Also see: 'Sound and Vision Radio Archive (up to 2018, IMMIX Version, Deprecated)', *CLARIAH Media Suite* <<https://mediasuitedata.clariah.nl/dataset/nisv-catalogue-radio>> [accessed 6 May 2021].

5 In 2021 the ASR enrichment process was still ongoing. For the most up-to-date status information, see: 'Speech recognition availability', *Beeld en Geluid*, 2019 <<https://archieffstats.beeldengeluid.nl/speech-recognition/availability>> [accessed 6 May 2021].

6 Holli A. Semetko, 'Media and Politics in the Netherlands, Introduction: Polders, Pillars, and Understanding Dutch Democracy', *Political Communication*, 15.2 (1998), 139–47 (p. 144) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609809342362>>.

7 Huub Wijffjes, 'Het dynamische levensgevoel, 1960-2019', in *De radio. Een cultuurgeschiedenis*, ed. by Huub Wijffjes (Amsterdam: Boom, 2019), pp. 97–136 (p. 119).

ken word and current affairs programming of the different organisations. This name changed from Hilversum 2 to Radio 2 in 1985.⁸ In 1992, Radio 1 took over Radio 2's profile, which was altered to focus on current affairs and sports.⁹ In 2000, Radio 1's current affairs profile became more prominent with the introduction of three daily news blocks from Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (NOS), the broadcaster devoted to news, sports and events.¹⁰ NOS, also tasked with the overall organisation of the public broadcasting system, had become increasingly dominant in supplying radio news since depillarisation had started in 1967.¹¹ Although the popularity of radio was overtaken by other media forms, such as television and later the internet, following its golden age between 1930 and 1960, radio remained a medium with major social and cultural significance.¹² Television's popularity meant that listening to the radio became more of a background activity that sound-tracked other activities.¹³ Music and up-to-date information became its focal points in this adjusted media landscape. Due to its focus on listener interaction, radio has been gaining significance again since the nineties.¹⁴ In sum, Hilversum2/Radio 1/NPO Radio 1 has been radio's main station for news and current affairs, and therefore being a consistent major news source in the entire Dutch media landscape. This makes it a plausible source for this radio study into ecstasy coverage in news media.

Analysis | **The discursive formation of ecstasy in Dutch radio debates**

Search and analysis steps | **(Meta)data inspection, keyword search, close reading**

This study was set up to be comparable to the study of Chapter 2: the aim was to use one basic keyword search query to find and analyse all relevant material about

8 Wijffjes, 'Het dynamische levensgevoel, 1960-2019', p. 112.

9 Wijffjes, 'Het dynamische levensgevoel, 1960-2019', p. 119.

10 Wijffjes, 'Het dynamische levensgevoel, 1960-2019', p. 121.

11 Luscombe, p. 239.

12 Huub Wijffjes, 'Inleiding. Een eeuw radio', in *De radio. Een cultuurgeschiedenis*, ed. by Huub Wijffjes (Amsterdam: Boom, 2019), pp. 9–18 (p. 13).

13 Wim Knulst, 'Omroep En Publiek', in *Omroep in Nederland. Vijfenzeventig Jaar Medium En Maatschappij, 1919-1994*, ed. by Huub Wijffjes and Eric Smulders (Zwolle: Waanders, 1994), p. 327.

14 Wijffjes, 'Inleiding. Een eeuw radio', p. 13.

ecstasy in the radio dataset for a specific time period. This was to ensure that comparisons could be made between ecstasy's discursive formation in the newspapers and on the radio, and to find out if discursive dynamics were different between debates in the two media.

As previously described, the ASR metadata enrichment was ongoing for Radio 1. This means that I had to adapt my strategy to what could and could not be researched. In September 2019, when I started the study, overall completeness of ASR enrichment for the items from Radio 1 was 84.5%. Figure 12 shows what parts of the collection had ASR enrichment in each broadcasting year. The figure clearly shows that a significant part of the items from the 1990s were still awaiting ASR enrichment. This means that I could not start my search in the 1980s and analyse items chronologically as the radio items for the 1990s were not sufficiently searchable yet.

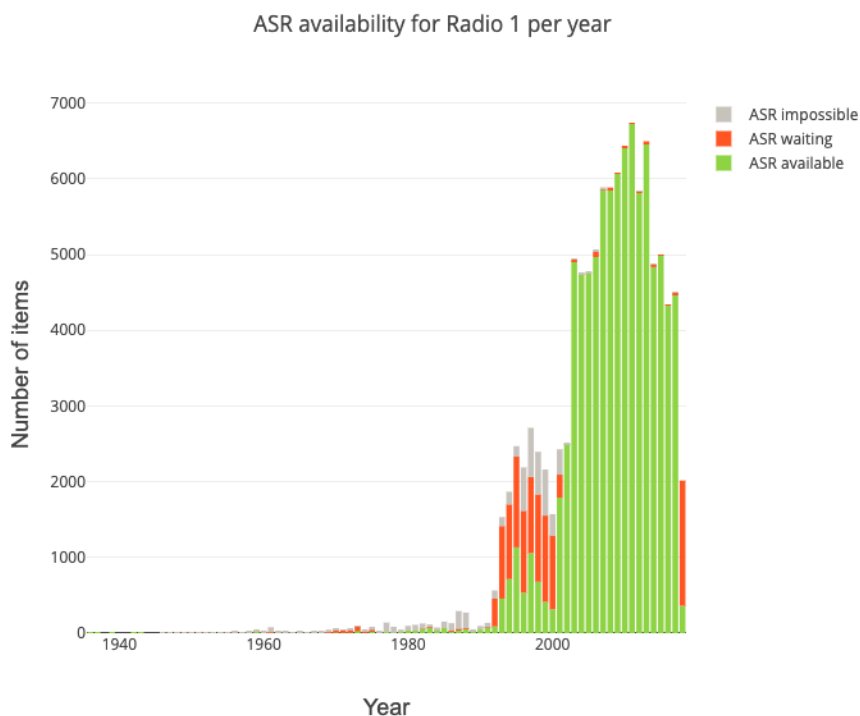


Figure 12. Availability of ASR metadata in September 2019 (Screenshot from 8 September 2019)

The next step was using the Media Suite's *Inspect* functionality to inspect the completeness of the broadcaster metadata field in the S&V Radio Archive. This was necessary because I aimed to use this field to make a data selection: I planned to base the study on the Radio 1 items. The metadata inspection showed that this

metadata field was mostly complete from the mid-1990's onwards, while mostly incomplete in the years prior to that (see Figure 13). The overall completeness of the metadata field "broadcasting station" was 76.47%. This means that this facet was only useful to select material from the mid-1990s onwards: using it for any of the previous years would provide no certainty that I had been able to select all the material from a particular broadcasting station.

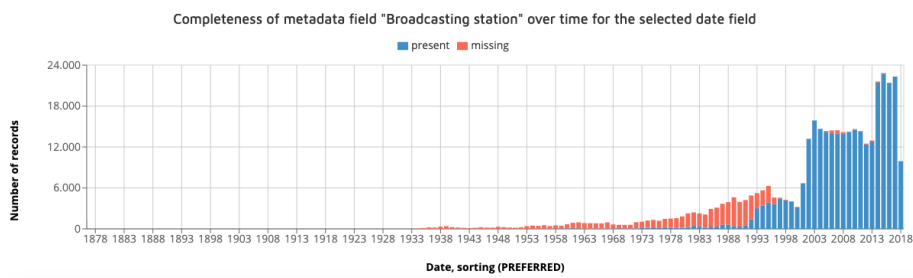


Figure 13. The completeness of metadata field "Broadcasting station" in the Radio Archive (Screenshot from 24 September 2019)

With this knowledge of the dataset and metadata availability, I decided on the most effective research strategy. One of the goals was to create historical overlap between this study and my newspaper study that focused on the period between 1985 and 1990. The radio items up until the 2000s were not fully searchable yet. Whereas I knew that the missing decades were in the process of being enriched, it was possible that technological obstructions could arise in the process. I therefore decided not to wait and instead set up my search process so that I could start with the available data by analysing two different years of radio items from the 2000s: 2001 and 2006, two years with five years between them. When the earlier decades became searchable (with the completion of ASR enrichment), I analysed the items from 1996, and lastly, I came to the period between 1985 and 1991. The particular one year analysis periods (1996, 2001, 2006) were not selected for specific historical reasons: listening to all items about ecstasy every fifth year could help me understand how ecstasy's discursive formation was shifting.

The Media Suite Search functionality was used to find relevant material with the same keyword search query from the previous chapter for the newspaper study (`ecsta*y OR xtc OR mdma`). For the years 1996, 2001 and 2006 I included all radio items that were 1) broadcast on Radio 1, 2) catalogued in current affairs programs in the S&V Radio Archive in the CLARIAH Media Suite, and 3) mentioned one of the three words in the keyword search query in the ASR metadata (and/or

the archival metadata) as part of this study.

The search criteria for the period of 1985-1991 were different: for this period, I included items from all genres and all broadcasting stations. I selected all genres for this period to enable comparison to the newspaper study, wherein I looked at articles in all sections of the newspapers. I selected all broadcasting stations (consequently items from Radio 2, Radio 3 and Radio 5 were also part of the study for this period) as my metadata inspection had shown that this facet was incomplete for the years of this period. A benefit of this broader search strategy was that this yielded enough items to analyse for the 1985-1991 period: the radio collection contains a significantly smaller overall number of items in this early period (see Figure 12). An overview of the material that was selected for close reading can be found in Table 3.

Period	Facets in Media Suite	Search Results	Final selection
1985-1991	Broadcasting station: All stations Genres: all genres	35 (16 irrelevant results) (2 inaccessible results)	17
1996	Broadcasting station: (NPO) Radio 1 Genres: Current affairs	12 (1 irrelevant result)	11
2001	Broadcasting station: (NPO) Radio 1 Genres: Current affairs	42 (4 irrelevant results) (2 inaccessible results)	36
2006	Broadcasting station: (NPO) Radio 1 Genres: Current affairs	70 (8 irrelevant results) (1 unclear result)	61
	Total: 159	Total:125	

Table 3. Overview of search results of search query (*xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y*).

For each of these time periods I played the radio items in the Media Suite using *Resource viewer*. As I listened, I kept annotations in two places: in the Media Suite's *Workspace* and in an external spreadsheet. In *Workspace* I saved each relevant radio segment to my user project, along with a brief description. I kept more extensive annotations in an external spreadsheet. In this annotation spreadsheet I included columns that built on my observations from the newspaper analysis. For each item, I described the topic in which ecstasy was mentioned, and I kept track of 1) whether it could be categorised under (a combination of) accommodation, criminalisation and/or problematisation; 2) descriptions of the substance, connect-

ed actors and connected settings; 3) which other drugs were mentioned (and why); 4) direct references to drug regulation; 5) which stakeholders commented; 6) the name of the program in which the item appeared; 7) that program's broadcasting organisation; 8) other countries mentioned; and 9) other media referred to.

The analysis below is made up of one section for each search period. The text is written as an analysis of ecstasy's discursive formation on the radio. Although I contextualise all mentions of ecstasy in the relevant radio item, the items are not analysed exhaustively. The text focuses on constellations of substance descriptions, connected actors and settings. The study also focuses on the role of the different stakeholders (e.g. health care specialists, politicians). To turn all observations into a readable analysis about ecstasy's discursive formation for each period, I decided to order the results by type of topic first and then chronologically. If I were to describe all items in chronological order, it would become difficult to highlight recurring discursive dynamics and patterns, which was the aim of the study. This means that, within each section, the narrative is not completely chronological. This was a trade-off I deemed acceptable, given the fact that these minor chronological inconsistencies, while greatly improving readability, do not affect the results on a discursive level.

Historical narrative | **The rise and fall of the love pill**

1985-1991 | **Dealing with the ecstasy media hype**

In the late 1980s most of the items on the radio about ecstasy dealt with making sense of the new drug for the listeners. Ecstasy's quickly rising popularity in those years led to a media hype (which the newspaper study in Chapter 2 also showed) that was often brought up on the radio. Many items featured drug and healthcare experts invited on to address this hype and to interpret and contextualise the popularity of the drug.

In August 1988, a professor of pharmacology named Jacobus van Rossum was interviewed following comments he made about the new drug ecstasy in the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*.¹⁵ In the radio item, Van Rossum warned about the risks of the substance and drew a parallel to the history of synthetic heroin from California that had turned out to cause dopamine reduction, in addition to causing Parkinson's disease.¹⁶ In the newspaper study, I showed that warnings like this had been printed in newspapers as early as 1985. The presenter did not seem easily convinced of the 15 *Radio 5 Welingelichte Kringen*. 12 August 1988.

¹⁶ There is research about the relation between synthetic heroin and Parkinson's disease in the late 1980s. See for example: B.K. Gupta, MD, 'Synthetic Heroin-Induced Parkinsonism', *Jefferson Journal of Psychiatry*, 4.2 (1986) <<https://doi.org/10.29046/JJP.004.2.006>>.

harmfulness of the drug and asked whether ecstasy should be considered more or less harmful than alcohol (see Box 1). Van Rossum categorised ecstasy with cocaine and LSD in order to emphasise that it was potentially much more harmful than alcohol. The difference with alcohol, he said, was that the effective amount of alcohol (a few glasses) was relatively harmless, whereas the effective amount of drugs, such as ecstasy, was harmful. Although the presenter suggested that people who used ecstasy frequently indeed ‘had to be crazy,’ he wanted to know what Van Rossum thought about the many people in the Netherlands who used drugs for 20 or 30 years without suffering serious consequences. Van Rossum answered that such stories were rare, after which the presenter suggested that such cases only *seem* rare because most people would not talk about their drug use freely. The presenter seemed to hint that controlled drug use was more widespread than publicly disclosed drug use. He remained reluctant to take Van Rossum’s warning seriously, which might suggest that recreational drug use was not extremely controversial in the presenter’s view.

Joop van Tijn (presenter): However, Van Rossum, it is known about alcohol and other things that it is not very healthy to take them. Is- in how far should we consider ecstasy as something much worse or does it belong in that same category?

Jacques van Rossum (professor): Well, not with alcohol, that much is clear.

Joop van Tijn (presenter): Alcohol is worse?

Jacques van Rossum (professor): Yes, this is without doubt in the same league as cocaine.

Joop van Tijn (presenter): Oh, alcohol is less bad?

Jacques van Rossum (professor): I would say so, yes.

Joop van Tijn (presenter): Oh well, I’m not sure.

Box 1. Transcript excerpt from radio broadcast *Welingerichte Kringen*, 12 August 1988

Other drug experts that discussed ecstasy on the radio in the subsequent years offered a different perspective: as ecstasy’s notoriety in the media was growing, drug experts tended to play down reports about its harmfulness in radio items at the start of the 1990s.

In most items, the popularity of ecstasy was seen by drug and addiction experts

as characteristic of a “light” trend in drug use, in which users looked for ways to get high at weekends without losing control since they had to get back to work on Monday. It was not a hippy or a junkie drug; this was a drug for working people who were looking for some extra fun on the weekends. August de Loor, who was featured in many newspapers with his plea for decriminalisation of ecstasy (see Chapter 2), appeared on the radio as well.¹⁷ De Loor saw the popularity of ecstasy as emblematic of the late 1980s, what he considered to be the “mature” phase of drug use. In his perspective, this drug use phase followed the 1960s, a decade in which hallucinogens like LSD had been popular, and then the following harder times of cocaine and heroin in the 1970s. Now, lighter drugs were back in demand as people wanted to integrate a little bit of extra fun into their lives without it affecting their careers. The taste for lighter substances like ecstasy came with a dark side in the form of polydrug use, according to De Loor, meaning people were often open to combining different party drugs. He felt that this problem should be addressed with harm reduction measures, not repressive policies.

Eric Fromberg from the Netherlands Institute for Alcohol and Drugs (NIAD) played down the pharmacological harmfulness of ecstasy in a radio interview about an ecstasy congress that NIAD organised in order to respond to the large amount of what he perceived as often ill-informed and sensationalist media attention to the substance.¹⁸ Fromberg attempted to shift attention to the risks of the polluted ecstasy market that he thought was a result of bad drug policy. He was not happy with the Dutch government’s decision to list ecstasy as a hard drug and thought this was not in line with the effective practice in Dutch drug policy of treating drugs differently based on their harmfulness. Fromberg suggested that ecstasy was too light for its List 1 status.

NIAD’s director Brandenburg had also commented about ecstasy’s increasing notoriety in a radio interview about ecstasy.¹⁹ According to Brandenburg, the media attention was not proportionate to the drug’s popularity. Like Fromberg, Brandenburg spoke about a light trend in drug use and did not think that a research project into ecstasy use was necessary since, according to him, ecstasy was not a serious problem.

The experts’ insistence on ecstasy’s limited harmfulness was also mentioned a radio item that addressed the issue of polydrug use.²⁰ The presenter asked Amsterdam addiction center Jellinek representative Roel Kerssemakers, ‘it is said that ecstasy is relatively innocent, is that true?’ Kerssemakers responded that not using

17 *Radio 5 De Andere Wereld van Zondagmorgen*. 22 October 1989.

18 *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 22 February 1990.

19 *Radio 1 MM-magazine*. 11 December 1989.

20 *Radio 1 Klasse*. 15 November 1990.

drugs at all was the wisest thing to do then went on to say that the impurity of ecstasy on the illicit market was the drug's biggest risk. In July 1991, Jaap Jamin, who was employed in Jellinek's drug prevention department, was interviewed on the radio.²¹ The interview followed the Jellinek research publication about ecstasy with the title 'A new wonderpill,' alluding to the media hype surrounding ecstasy. Jamin gave an overview of historical drug use in Amsterdam, emphasising that hard drugs were no longer trendy. When asked about future trends, he reluctantly predicted that drugs in the 1990s should allow people with working lives to party on occasion, for which, as an enhancement to that, ecstasy would be a suitable candidate. Jamin warned against the recent habit of labelling drugs as innocent, pointing out that any psychoactive substance came with its own set of risks.

From these interviews and discussions with drug experts it becomes clear that ecstasy had become the subject of intensified media attention. In Chapter 2, I showed that most of the negative media attention for ecstasy use in the newspapers bled over from sensational stories printed by the British tabloid press. The radio items that addressed this hype featured drugs and addiction experts who sought to downplay the risks of ecstasy itself and instead draw attention to the exaggeration within the media and, as a result of the substance's inclusion on List 1 of the Opium Law, the polluted ecstasy market.

Starting in early 1989, some radio items mentioned the illicit ecstasy production in the Netherlands. The laboratory in the holiday bungalow in Twiske, in addition to the staged ecstasy laboratory of the notorious *Brandpunt* episode, also covered in the newspapers, marked the radio start of the reports on illegal ecstasy production. The ecstasy laboratory discovery in Twiske was mentioned in a short news item.²² The drug was described in this item as 'a new stimulant that is mostly used by school-going youngsters.' It was reported that this was the first time that Dutch-made ecstasy was found, as the drug had previously only been discovered in import batches from the United States and the United Kingdom.²³ The *Brandpunt* scandal surrounding the human heads affair and the staged ecstasy laboratory was the topic of a radio item during *Bal Op het Dak*.^{24,25} The item turned into a heated argument between Willibrord Frequin and Ton Verlind from KRO against Amsterdam police spokesper-

21 *Radio 2 De Ronde Van Hilversum*. 6 July 1991.

22 *Radio 1 VIP-Roem*. 6 January 1989.

23 As I describe in the introduction, ecstasy had in actuality been produced in the Netherlands since the mid/late 1980s.

24 *Radio 2 Bal Op Het Dak*. 4 February 1989.

25 See Chapter 2 for more details about the *Brandpunt* affair.

son Klaas Wilting on integrity. The affair seemed to be the stage of a wider conflict between investigative journalism and the Amsterdam police department. Still, the attention paid to ecstasy in this particular context, and the sensational stories about the journalists' contacts in the Amsterdam underworld, coincided with the beginning of attention to the role of ecstasy as a criminal commodity.

Ecstasy's notoriety as a criminal commodity seemed to exist mostly independent from its reputation as a party drug in its discursive formation, a division that I observed in the newspapers as well. In 1989, there had been an exception to this pattern: a radio item appeared wherein recreational use of ecstasy was connected to criminal behaviour. This connection was made during an interview in May about the concept of recreational crime with criminologist Balthazar Beke.²⁶ Combined alcohol and drug use, including ecstasy use, often led to forms of minor crimes, such as traffic offences, vandalism and theft on youth recreation sites, such as popular camping grounds.

Other items about ecstasy's illicit origins made no connection to its use setting. A news item about an ecstasy laboratory roll up in Amsterdam²⁷ and a news item about the British police's discovery of 220 kilograms of ecstasy and amphetamine in a Dutch truck²⁸ indicate that ecstasy had started to become more commonly known as a criminal commodity in the radio debates at the turn of the decade.

At the start of the 1990s, ecstasy appeared to be positioned as a soft drug in a majority of the radio items. Drug experts often played down the problematisation of ecstasy that was proliferating in the public debate. Furthermore, they attempted to contextualise ecstasy popularity in both a cultural context and history of drug use, implying a certain accommodation of recreational drug use, now ecstasy use, in the Netherlands. Drug cultures and drug regulation regimes of other countries that featured frequently in newspapers, such as the United Kingdom, played no significant role in these radio items. Independently from its reputation as a moderately harmful party drug, the drug also began to be known as an illegally trafficked criminal commodity.

The topics that were covered both on the radio and in newspapers show how the initial discursive formation of ecstasy took place in a cross-media landscape. Radio items addressed topics as they were covered in the newspapers, and both radio and the newspapers covered the controversy regarding the episodes of television show *Brandpunt*. In this cross-media landscape, radio shows seemed to assert a "finger on the pulse" function: experts were questioned to help interpret the intensifying attention for ecstasy across the different media.

²⁶ *Radio 2 Spijkers Met Koppen*. 20 May 1989.

²⁷ *Radio 1 Woensdageditie*. 12 June 1991.

²⁸ *Radio 1 Nieuwsradio*. 29 October 1991.

1996 | Widespread belief in the benefits of harm reduction

A majority of the items in which ecstasy was mentioned in radio broadcasts in 1996 centred around drug policy. The Netherlands found itself in a diplomatic conflict with France surrounding the liberal Dutch drug climate. The philosophy behind the Dutch dual track policy, which aimed to combat drug trade and production while decriminalising drug users, seemed to be supported strongly in public debates on drug policy. Opponents expressed dismay over the dominant harm reduction approach towards drug use, but this did not shake the widespread confidence in it.

Several news broadcasts contained items about a diplomatic conflict surrounding drug regulation between France and the Netherlands. France and the Netherlands were in disagreement on the Dutch tolerance policy regarding soft drugs: in the eyes of French officials, the policy undermined European efforts to combat drug trafficking.²⁹ The Dutch position on important issues was particularly politically salient in a European context at the time, as the Netherlands was about to preside over the Council of the European Union in the first half of 1997. The Dutch public health approach to drug users and its harm reduction focus had come under fire. The dual track drug policy was seen as successful by Dutch addiction experts and politicians that featured in the radio items to discuss Dutch drug policy. Nevertheless, the Netherlands had been dealing with the negative reputation as a “drugs paradise” in European politics since the 1970s.³⁰ This had led the Dutch to be more conciliatory in the European political context, and it meant that the Dutch were used to foreign scrutiny of its drug policy.

The public health aspects of the Dutch dual track policy were seen as in need of protection. Member of the European Parliament Gijs de Vries (European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Group) had asked Ireland to intervene in the Dutch/French crisis, which led *Radio 1 Avondjournaal* to invite a number of politicians to discuss the implications of a potential Irish intervention in July 1996.³¹ De Vries mentioned that ‘the public health aspects of [the Dutch] drug policy are widely recognised as positive.’ Hedy D’Ancona (Socialist Group in the European Parliament) expressed her sorrow regarding Ireland’s potential role as mediator in the radio item: she felt that Ireland lacked crucial public health aspects in their own domestic drug policy. In her eyes, this made it likely that Irish mediation would not safeguard the Dutch public health aspects. Any potential solution for the conflict that did not possess sufficient public health considerations, one pillar of the dual

²⁹ Guy Arnold, *International Drugs Trade* (Routledge, 2005), p. 196.

³⁰ de Quadros Rigoni.

³¹ *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 17 July 1996.

track policy, was considered unacceptable. The Dutch drug policy in a European context was the topic of a report by Ron Kas.³² Kas stated that the Netherlands was proud of their approach to drugs with keeping drug use out of a criminal setting, while at the same time targeting hard drugs more forcefully than soft drugs. In the report, Jan Walburg from the Jellinek addiction clinic mentioned the numbers that in his opinion proved the success of the Dutch policy: he compared the two ecstasy deaths due to dehydration in the Netherlands in the previous year to the sixty deaths caused by the same ailment in the United Kingdom in that same year. With this comparison, he suggested that the Netherlands' more liberal drug policies had better public health effects than the British's more repressive drug policies. Hanja Maij-Weggen (CDA, Group of the European People's Party) expressed her desire to abandon the Dutch tolerance policy in the item. She thought Sweden would be a good reference country for better drug policies: Sweden had recently moved from more liberal drug policies towards a stronger anti-drug climate, which had led to international admiration, according to Maij-Weggen. She wanted the Netherlands to join a hard, collective, European stance against drugs that would focus on combating production and aim for drug use abstinence. Maij-Weggen did emphasise that attention should be paid to public health concerns, but she saw that as independent from drug policies that should be more prohibitionist. Her position was juxtaposed with statements from the other stakeholders in the broadcast who felt that the Dutch tolerance policy and harm reduction climate should be protected, as they were scientifically proven to be more effective.

The Netherlands' position as a major producer of synthetic drugs like ecstasy was acknowledged as a huge concern by all the stakeholders in the radio discussions on drug policy. CDA representative Jaap de Hoop Scheffer lamented the situation in which Frau Antje, the Dutch mascot promoting Dutch cheese abroad, no longer sold just cheese (implying the Netherlands was starting to become more famous for its drugs than for its cheese) and that the Dutch wooden shoes and windmills had been replaced by 'XTC and other products.'³³ In other words: concerns existed that the Netherlands would start to become better known for the production and international export of illegal drugs. All stakeholders agreed that the illegal production and distribution of synthetic drugs in the Netherlands was problematic and in need of active repression. The Cabinet was intensifying its focus on combating the production of ecstasy to tackle this problem, a course that was reported on in news

32 *Radio 1 Dingen Die Gebeuren*. 28 November 1996.

33 *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 26 March 1996.

items a few times over the course of the year.³⁴

It was suggested from time to time that France's concerns about the Dutch dual track policy were a means to deflect from its own drug control problems. The Belgian domestic affairs minister reportedly supported the Dutch stance: in a news item, it was said that he thought France might be treating the Netherlands as an external scapegoat for the drug problems that France was dealing with at the time.³⁵ In a news item from the end of the year about drug abuse numbers in France, the newsreader suggested that president Chirac had enough to keep him busy in his own country, in reference to France's public disapproval of Dutch drug policy.³⁶ The issue that was highlighted in particular was the rise in ecstasy use in the French capital, Paris. These items show the complexities and consequences of national drug policies within a European context. While drugs and ecstasy use were problematised in the Netherlands, repressive measures, like those advocated by France, were not seen as a desirable drug policy.

Drug use was not celebrated, but its place in society was to some degree tolerated, as this allowed control and a minimisation of public harm. This general tolerance appeared to be specific to particular users and use contexts. A small part of a radio interview³⁷ with retiring general Hans Couzy about his book³⁸ showed that a social tolerance towards ecstasy use did not extend to Dutch servicemen. When the presenter suggested that people might have little sympathy for the army if they read about drug use among stationed troops in the newspapers, Couzy responded that drug use could be expected anywhere in a society that tolerates soft drugs and, to a lesser degree, ecstasy. Nevertheless, he underlined that appropriate measures were taken when servicemen were caught either using or, even worse, dealing drugs. He made the acceptability of ecstasy use relative to the context of the setting: it might be acceptable to some degree in the wider society, but it needed repression when used by servicemen in the army. A sense of pragmatism seemed to permeate the discursive formation of ecstasy use: whereas it was tolerated in a clubbing context because of public health considerations, drug use in the military was seen as extremely problematic.

The generally accommodative attitude regarding ecstasy was criticised too. Health minister Els Borst, responsible for green lighting harm reduction initiatives

³⁴ *Radio 1 Journaal*. 18 June 1996; *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 30 August 1996.

³⁵ *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 26 March 1996.

³⁶ *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 16 December 1996

³⁷ *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 7 July 1996.

³⁸ H.A. Couzy, *Mijn jaren als bevelhebber* (Amsterdam: L.J. Veen, 1996).

like pill testing, was directly addressed in a spoken column by novelist Natasha Gerson.³⁹ Gerson was known for her controversial debut novel about intrigues in the Amsterdam squatter's movement.⁴⁰ She expressed her disbelief with what she saw as the Dutch government's lax attitude regarding magic mushrooms sold in the Netherlands. In the column, she criticised the tolerant attitude towards ecstasy when she addressed the hard and soft drug distinction. Such a distinction, which according to her justly separated cannabis from other drugs, would only make sense if harder drugs were being combated actively. Ecstasy was such a drug in her opinion, and she was in disbelief about 'the masses of people that pop several pills every weekend.' Gerson anticipated that her opinion would be an unpopular one, as she satirically predicted how people would respond to her column: 'Oh Natasha, such a right-wing move to be so anti-drugs.' The spoken column shows that there was a certain tolerance towards ecstasy use, but it also shows that this was contested.

A radio reporter visited Amsterdam night club RoXY to ask the club's management about its drug policies as part of a radio report in December.⁴¹ Night club drug policies had come under media attention because of a recent police raid aimed at combating drugs at Amsterdam club Mazzo. The raid, which was unusual for the time period, had motivated six Amsterdam clubs to cooperate with the Amsterdam police to curb drug trade in the Amsterdam nightlife. The intensified security measures at RoXY, which included a structural search upon entry of the club, were characterised as 'no warm welcome' by the reporter. The RoXY co-owner said such measures had become inevitable due to the apparent new attitude of the Amsterdam city council towards drugs in the nightlife. Years later, Mazzo's owner suggested in an interview that the raid had been a strategic, isolated political move aimed at calming the unrest regarding Dutch policies in Europe.⁴² Whether this was true or not, the radio item about the incident in 1996 shows that this kind of repressive drug action was unusual in the Netherlands.

Although ecstasy use was not uncontroversial in 1996, this analysis of radio items shows a widespread faith in the benefits of keeping ecstasy use out of a criminal setting. International criticism directed at the Dutch drug policy, most obvious in the conflict with France, did not lead stakeholders to reconsider the existing harm

39 *Radio 1 Dingen Die Gebeuren*. 8 October 1996.

40 Natasha Gerson, *Plaatstaal* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 1996).

41 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 28 December 1996.

42 'Vertrek Amsterdamse club Mazzo laat herinneringen achter', *VPRO 3voor12*, 2004 <<https://3voor12.vpro.nl/lokaal/amsterdam/artikelen/archief/2004/augustus/vertrek-amsterdamse-club-mazzo-laat-herinneringen-achter.html>> [accessed 10 May 2021].

reduction approach to ecstasy and drug use. Opponents of the non-repressive drug use practice were countered with statistics that underlined the public health benefits of harm reduction. At the same time, all stakeholders considered the Dutch position as a major ecstasy producer a serious issue that needed to be addressed. The dualism underlying the dual track policy was dominant in the political and public discursive formation of ecstasy in 1996.

2001 | Fatal house party incidents

In 2001, most of the attention given to ecstasy in current affairs programs on Radio 1 came from its reputation as a party drug used at wildly popular house parties. Two serious incidents involving deaths of ecstasy users led to an abundance of coverage on ecstasy. Although the question as to whether more repressive policies should be considered were discussed in response to the incidents, most involved stakeholders still expressed belief in harm reduction measures.

The first of two covered ecstasy controversies in 2001 was the circulation of dangerous ecstasy pills in late October that was associated with the death of a 23-year-old man. The pills contained PMA, short for amphetamine derivative para-Methoxyamphetamine. PMA is sometimes found in pills sold as ecstasy, but PMA's effects are different from MDMA's, which has historically led to fatal accidents for unlucky drug users who believed they took MDMA.⁴³ The second controversy was the consternation surrounding dance parties held at Zaanstad club Fundustry after news started to circulate about the deaths of two clubbers in November. These deaths were believed to have resulted from combined ecstasy and GHB use. GHB is short for gamma-hydroxybutyric acid, a naturally occurring neurotransmitter, also produced as an intoxicant. Both incidents concerned ecstasy fatalities involving other substances, leading to radio discussions about ecstasy in particular, but also drug policy in general.

A number of radio items were dedicated specifically to discussing (policy) solutions to the problem. In a segment during the *1 op de Middag* broadcast from 8 November 2001, drug policy was discussed between three stakeholders: Freek Polak from the Amsterdam health services (GG&GD), Jan Huib Blans from addiction clinic Jellinek and PvdA Representative Thanasis Apostolou (see Box 2).⁴⁴ Apostolou defended a combination of prohibition and education, but Polak and Blans were

⁴³ See for example: R. W. Byard and others, 'Amphetamine Derivative Fatalities in South Australia-Is "Ecstasy" the Culprit?', *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*, 19.3 (1998), 261–65.

⁴⁴ *Radio 1 Op De Middag*. 8 November 2001.

sceptical of this suggestion. Polak insisted that the Netherlands needed a detailed regulation (“fijnregeling”) for drugs like that which was in place for legal intoxicants alcohol and tobacco, and that ‘forbidding drugs is a stupid and enormously harmful policy that causes immense damage,’ since it would only cause users to move on to other substances that come with a new set of potential risks and uncertainties. Blans also rejected the concept of drug prohibition, suggesting that the Netherlands’ focus on drugs came with a dangerous blindness to the much more severe problem of alcohol abuse, and that the ‘stupid’ Opium Law should be replaced with a new Stimulants Law under which drugs would be available with proper information. According to Blans, users were inclined not to take advice from anyone with a fundamental anti-drugs stance, suggesting that drug education based on prohibition would not be effective. Blans also suggested that the polluted drug market on which PMA was sold as ecstasy was a consequence of political policies that made it hard for MDMA precursors to be brought into the country, emphasising that prohibiting drugs was only a catalyst for new problems in his view.

Liesbeth Kruit (Presenter): But how do you keep [drugs] away, not by banning them, or maybe so?

Thanasis Apostolou (PvdA): Well, you have to try to ban a number of things that are very dangerous, or at least make arrangements in such a way that you can get a grip on them. For example, that drug you just mentioned, that someone has died, from GHB, that particular drug is sometimes sold in smart shops. I think that we are failing at the moment that we have no regulation in place regarding these shops, and so all kinds of stuff are sold there that are not responsible to use. So, I think you should sort that out too. If you say, ‘we should never come across these kinds of drugs at smart shops,’ yes then you can take measures, then you protect the market a little bit.

Jan Huib Blans (Jellinek): Yes, that is certainly true and see what that means, which of course you probably also want, is that we move towards something like a Substances Act, instead of that stupid Opium Act, because that law really only makes it possible to ban something, while you can’t regulate. What he [Apostolou, BvdM] also wants is that it should maybe be available in other places where you get a better

message, good information, a leaflet, or anything, while it is indeed not responsible to sell it in shops where it can be found amidst the Delftware clogs.

[...]

Freek Polak (GG&GD): Well, yes, if Apostolou says that we should try to ban those substances, yes you might say: 'hasn't that been tried long enough?' That's what was tried in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s with alcohol, with that ban, and that caused great misery. And we have been trying to do that for- it's hard to say when it started exactly, it's actually been introduced insidiously all over the world, that drug prohibition, and that has also led to a huge amount of misery worldwide.

Box 2. Transcript excerpt from radio broadcast 1 Op De Middag, 8 November 2001

In another radio discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of banning house parties, D66 Representative Boris Dittrich said that 'ecstasy is a part of youth culture,' which made him believe that aiming for an absolute ban of house parties was an illusion.⁴⁵ CDA Representative Henk de Haan reluctantly agreed in the segment that banning parties would not solve the problem and would lead to a loss of control over the situation. PvdA Representative Nebahat Albayrak also preferred to focus on harm reduction measures in dealing with the problem. In the item, it was suggested that countries with more repressive drug policies than the Netherlands were not doing any better, and sometimes worse, at controlling drug use or the illicit drug market.

The argument that criminalisation led to a less safe ecstasy market was starting to appear more often on the radio in 2001. In a reflection on the Dutch tolerance policy regarding cannabis, Jaap de Vlieger from the Rotterdam police department suggested that ecstasy had become dangerous after it had been made illegal.⁴⁶ According to him, ecstasy had been produced responsibly and safely during the few years that its production was legal, and it had become dangerous when criminals

⁴⁵ *Radio 1 Op De Middag*. 16 November 2001.

⁴⁶ *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 28 October 2001.

took over the production of the substance following its scheduling on the Opium Law. He expressed regret about the fact that the tolerance policy for cannabis in 1976 had not led to similar thinking about substances like ecstasy.

John Laan, from the largest industry association for hospitality in the Netherlands (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland), gave his opinion in a radio item in which house party bans were discussed.⁴⁷ He suggested that serious drug use incidents were still relatively rare, given the large number of people that frequently partied and used drugs. Instead of banning parties, he suggested focusing on improved drug education for young people. He did not think that forbidding parties was a realistic solution for the problem. In an online listener poll that was part of the radio item, the votes were roughly split between 'in favour' and 'against' a party ban, but from the 10 people that called into the broadcast to share their opinion live on air, two people agreed with a ban. Three of the listeners suggested that drug policy was in need of progressive reform. The fact that the online vote was split suggests that the audience of the radio show did not widely agree with the permissive climate surrounding house parties propagated by the item.

In the wake of the restrictions on parties imposed by the mayor of Zaanstad following the fatal incidents of two clubbers, the mayor of nearby municipality Huizen was also investigating the possibility of a party ban in Huizen. The fear existed that clubbers banned from partying in Zaanstad would instead go to nearby Huizen. A radio reporter visited an afterparty in Huizen to interview people there.⁴⁸ He asked the different people in Huizen what they thought of the mayors' desire to ban the house parties. Everyone involved thought that a ban was unjustified, in most cases because there had been no incidents of note at the parties there. One of the security guards was also interviewed. He suggested that, despite the best security measures, drug use could not be prevented. However, in his opinion, banning the parties would have made them go underground, which would have led to less control over the situation. Therefore, the security guard believed improving information about drugs for party goers would be more effective. One of the interviewed clubbers stated 'drugs are not such a big problem, it's just that... if you drink too much, it will kill you too.' Mayor Jos Verdier of Huizen himself was also questioned. When the interviewer suggested that banning the parties in his municipality would only cause the problem to move (into illegality or to different municipalities), the mayor responded that his responsibility did not reach further than the people in his municipality. Mayor Vreeman of Zaanstad defended his ban when he was questioned

47 *Radio 1 Stand.nl*. 14 November 2001.

48 *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 25 November 2001.

on the radio in another item.⁴⁹ Politician Henk de Haan (CDA) suggested that this should be seen as a local problem that depended on the responsibility of club managers.⁵⁰ The problem showed different perspectives in terms of who should be seen as responsible for preventing incidents in the future: some stakeholders thought this was an issue that should be addressed with national policy, whereas mayors were implementing local bans. The issue of the degree of responsibility of club managers, party organisers and drug users in this context played out as well.

Minister of Health Els Borst continued to allow Trimbos Institute to facilitate ecstasy pill testing at parties, even though the Parliament opposed this facility for fear of legitimising illegal substances.⁵¹ CDA Representative Wim van de Camp expressed his disagreement with harm reduction measures, such as pill testing and Trimbos' safe use campaign *Drugs, don't let them fool you* ("Drugs, laat je niks wijsmaken"), endorsed by minister Borst.⁵² In his opinion the concept of safe use legitimised drug use in general. Van de Camp did not want to ban parties, but he condemned the tolerant attitude towards ecstasy and GHB and wanted to 'end the romanticism surrounding ecstasy and GHB in the Netherlands.' Even though measures such as pill testing were contested both from within the Cabinet and by the opposition, harm reduction measures prevailed.

A preference for harm reduction solutions also still seemed to dominate the discussions on the risks at house parties, but police attention paid to the parties increased after both the PMA situation and the ecstasy/GHB deaths in Zaanstad. A number of broadcasts in October reported on the police's efforts in finding the dealers and producers of the pills containing PMA.⁵³ The reports included a warning about the tainted pills, in addition to detailed descriptions on their appearance, which made the broadcasts serve as harm reduction messages too. With such items, radio became part of the harm reduction structure: the news items were used to repeatedly warn ecstasy users to be on guard for dangerous pills. When PMA was found in ecstasy pills again mid-November, *Met Het Oog Op Morgen* gave attention to a Trimbos warning about the pills, attempting to help users recognise the dangerous pills.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 22 November 2001.

⁵⁰ *Radio 1 Op De Middag*. 16 November 2001.

⁵¹ *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 17 October 2001; *Radio 1 Met Het Oog op Morgen*. 13 December 2001.

⁵² *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 14 November 2001.

⁵³ *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 25 October 2001; *Radio 1 Op De Middag*. 26 October 2001; *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 26 October 2001.

⁵⁴ *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 15 November 2001.

Other radio items gave attention to the increased police surveillance of the Fundustry discotheque in Zaanstad.⁵⁵ It was mentioned that police searches at these parties frequently led to the discoveries of drugs and weapons, linking the party setting to the criminal supply context due to the drug dealers that flocked to the parties. Mayors of Zaanstad and Huizen and a number of politicians insisted on the importance of actively combating the drug supply surrounding house parties (as previously described in this section). Increased security efforts were meant to minimise drug use, but the police's combat efforts at these parties still targeted the distribution of drugs rather than at direct drug use, which reflects the dual track drug policy.

National and international efforts in combating ecstasy production and distribution featured regularly in news broadcasts. The seizure of a large amount of an ecstasy pill precursor in Limburg was mentioned in October.⁵⁶ In November, radio reported on a Dutch person caught with 100.000 ecstasy pills in Spain.⁵⁷ In another radio report that month, the US president George Bush was said to have praised joint US and Dutch efforts in combating ecstasy production and distribution, although the Netherlands' status as one of the biggest production and distribution countries of ecstasy in the world was also emphasised.⁵⁸ The addition of 90 detectives to the ecstasy combating efforts of the Dutch police was mentioned in items of two different radio shows on 13 November 2001, both of which mentioned the internationally infamous reputation of the Netherlands as a major ecstasy production and distribution country.⁵⁹ The reports on the international ecstasy trade usually made no connection to the use setting of the house parties, also reflecting a distinction between repression of drug trade and tolerance towards users.

Two short items during news broadcasts mentioned the results of scientific research on the negative effects of ecstasy. One news item reported that doctoral research carried out at the University of Amsterdam had indicated that MDMA affected memory and serotonin production of users.⁶⁰ The other news item reported research results from the Academic Medical Center Amsterdam, suggesting female ecstasy users' serotonin systems were affected more severely than male ecstasy users.⁶¹ Both items focused strictly on the pharmacological properties of the sub-

⁵⁵ *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 11 November 2001; *Radio 1 Stand.nl*. 12 November 2001.

⁵⁶ *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 16 October 2001.

⁵⁷ *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 6 November 2001.

⁵⁸ *Radio 1 op de Middag*. 7 November 2001.

⁵⁹ *Radio 1 Stand.nl*. 13 November 2001; *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 13 November 2001.

⁶⁰ *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 24 November 2001.

⁶¹ *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 30 November 2001.

stance itself and, beyond the mentioned gender differences, made no connection to house parties or any type of use setting. The radio coverage of these research projects shows that attention was given to scientific research into the risks of ecstasy and drugs, which correlates with a pragmatic perspective on drug use.

Some radio items reported about drug use and production trends in the Netherlands. Ecstasy's popularity was in decline according to one news item from September.⁶² Whereas ecstasy was reportedly losing ground, cocaine was said to be making a comeback. Items from two radio shows mentioned major findings of the annual European drugs report on 20 November 2001:⁶³ drug use in Europe was stabilising, cocaine was becoming more popular, and the Netherlands was still the biggest global producer of ecstasy. Items like these show how ecstasy's reputation was subject to change in relation to other drugs, and they show that in discussing drug trends the distinction between use and production/distribution was also being made. Ecstasy, which had grown in popularity at the cost of cocaine's status in the late 1980s, was now losing ground again to that same drug according to these reports: the drugs were brought in relation with each other as recreationally used substances.

In summary, the radio debates give the impression of an accommodative attitude towards house culture and ecstasy use in the Netherlands in 2001, but the deaths of clubbers challenged this accommodative attitude. The majority of the stakeholders did not believe that banning parties was the best solution to this problem and insisted on the proven efficacy of harm reduction measures. Some politicians and mayors implemented or called for party bans, but they struggled to convince most invited drug experts, politicians or radio presenters that banning parties was an effective measure. Police experts and security guards also expressed faith in improved harm reduction measures, such as improved drug education. The prevailing attitude seemed to be that an ideal situation would be one in which clubs and the clubbers could be monitored as closely as possible by means of well-organised safe spaces, in addition to improved information on drugs. Efforts in combating the production and distribution of ecstasy continued to be a mostly separate part of ecstasy's discursive formation, although parties were seen as places in need of policing to curb on-site trade. The dual policy that targeted production and distribution of drugs while prioritising the health of drug users was still reflected in these radio items as it had been in the items from 1996, but the issues surrounding house parties made this principle a point of debate.

⁶² *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 28 September 2001.

⁶³ *Radio 1 Op De Middag*. 20 November 2001; *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 20 November 2001.

2006 | A diminished tolerance for the ecstasy user

The accommodative attitude towards ecstasy that still seemed to dominate the tone of the debates of 2001 had mostly vanished five years later. Dance parties and the related controversies were no longer the most frequently discussed topics in relation to ecstasy. The two themes that were most common in radio items mentioning ecstasy in 2006 were ecstasy's role as a criminal commodity and activism that targeted drugs and ecstasy tolerance. These two major themes connected a number of often discussed events.

The majority of the radio items in which ecstasy was mentioned in 2006 concerned its role as a criminal commodity. The drug was the subject of numerous police and customs corruption stories, and its production and trade were highlighted as the main business of a number of infamous key figures in Dutch organised crime. On 18 January, the twenty-year sentence and one million US dollar fine for Dutch criminal Henk R., also known as the Black Cobra ("De Zwarte Cobra"), for his involvement in the international ecstasy trade was reported during two morning shows.⁶⁴ In a news item about corruption within the Dutch police, ecstasy trade was mentioned as one of the criminal activities of another infamous criminal: Klaas Bruinsma.⁶⁵ In the same month, crime journalist Bas van Hout was interviewed regarding the question on whether the Dutch police was in control of organised crime in the Netherlands.⁶⁶ He mentioned that Willem Endstra, yet another well-known criminal, used to be one of the country's most important producers and exporters of ecstasy, and that all of the facilities Endstra had set up functioned to support his illegal drug trade. These criminals - Black Cobra,⁶⁷ Klaas Bruinsma⁶⁸ and Willem Endstra⁶⁹ - had been some of the most notorious names in Dutch media for years. The fact that they were now linked explicitly to ecstasy production and distribution indicates ecstasy's increased notoriety as a criminal commodity.

Another crime story involving ecstasy trade that received regular attention throughout the year concerned the criminal proceedings against two former directors of Dutch airline Air Holland. On 13 March, a number of news items were

⁶⁴ *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 18 January 2006; *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 18 January 2006.

⁶⁵ *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 21 January 2006.

⁶⁶ *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 31 January 2006.

⁶⁷ See: Steven Kees Aaron Brown, *Killing fields Amsterdam* (Uitgeverij Elmar, 2007), p. 25.

⁶⁸ See: Bart Middelburg, *De dominee: opkomst en ondergang van mafiabaas Klaas Bruinsma* (Veen, 2004).

⁶⁹ See: Harry Lensink, *Stille Willem: de dodelijke spagaat van vastgoedbaron Endstra* (Uitgeverij Balans, 2012).

broadcast on the directors' supposed involvement in laundering €5m in drug money (cocaine and ecstasy) to prop up their struggling airline.⁷⁰ A news item from 20 November reported that prison sentences were demanded: they had reportedly received grocery bags full of cash made on the illicit ecstasy trade.⁷¹ Despite their persistent denial of any awareness of the origins of the drug money, the judge found the two of them guilty with the financial director seen as the mastermind behind the laundering scheme.⁷² The reports on the Air Holland affair, along with the news stories about the notorious criminals and their involvement in ecstasy trade, focused exclusively on ecstasy's status as a criminal commodity: the reports did not discuss the demand side of ecstasy or its use setting.

Ecstasy was the subject of more trafficking stories, often involving corrupt customs or police officers. Two Royal Marechaussee officers were involved with ecstasy trafficking in January;⁷³ two Dutch ecstasy smugglers were caught with 33.000 pills at the airport of the Dominican Republic;⁷⁴ another Dutch man was caught with 100.000 pills on the border between Bulgaria and Serbia.⁷⁵ In July there were two reports about the involvement of police and customs officers in ecstasy trade to the United Kingdom, in which the implications surrounding the integrity of the Dutch police were discussed.⁷⁶ During an October evening news broadcast, the integrity of the police was once again discussed: one of the reasons why police officers had been suspended was ecstasy use.⁷⁷ In the broadcast, police integrity teacher Kees Sjouwerman suggested that the Dutch tolerance policy created a difficult tension for police officers: how could they reconcile the tolerance towards ecstasy in the private sphere while combating the production of that same substance as part of their job? Ecstasy and the tolerant atmosphere around it were in this way framed as a risk to the integrity of law enforcement agents in the Netherlands.

Incidents regarding the domestic illegal production of ecstasy featured in a number of radio items too. The incident that received the most attention was the discovery of an active ecstasy laboratory in the Dutch village Goirle mid-April. The coverage of

70 *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 13 March 2006; *Radio 1 Stand.nl*. 13 March 2006; *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 13 March 2006.

71 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 20 November 2006.

72 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 7 December 2006.

73 *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 9 January 2006.

74 *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 30 May 2006.

75 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 14 July 2006; *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 14 July 2006.

76 *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*, 28 July 2006; *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 29 July 2006.

77 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 12 October 2006.

the dismantling operation was reminiscent of the spectacle of a live historical media event:⁷⁸ reporters were on location to tell listeners what the crime scene looked like, and over the course of two days live updates on the operation kept being featured in successive news broadcasts.⁷⁹ There was a strong emphasis placed on it being an ordinary street on which a grave danger was exposed, in addition to the fact that a 100-man strong team of emergency services was on the location. 'A lot of people have come to look at what's happening here; this is an ordinary house, on an ordinary street in an ordinary village,' said a reporter on site.⁸⁰ 'Who could have predicted this, this is such a peaceful street, it is unbelievable,'" contributed a neighbour.⁸¹ Dick Arendsen, a dangerous substances advisor from the Dutch Institute for Fire Brigade and Disaster Relief, was interviewed to interpret the incident and was asked for tips on how citizens can recognise illegal synthetic drug laboratories themselves.⁸² The items positioned ecstasy laboratories as major threats to everyday life.

Throughout 2006, a number of newly founded action groups targeting problematic drug use received radio attention. At the start of the year, Gary Kok, a mother from Volendam, a small Dutch town with a reputation when it came to drug use prevalence,⁸³ was interviewed during *De Ochtenden* about the action group Brave Mothers ("Moedige Moeders") she had founded with other concerned mothers from Volendam.⁸⁴ The mothers had decided to speak out about their children's problematic drug use. Kok discussed her son's addiction problems with cocaine, speed and ecstasy and repeatedly stressed that addiction was a disease that needed to be taken seriously. When the presenter asked her whether 'the soft and hard drugs should be legalised in the Netherlands,' she responded, 'of course not, that's ridiculous.' Ecstasy was placed in the same category as intoxicants like speed and cocaine in the context of addictive drug use among youth. During a news item in May it was reported that the Brave Mothers initiative was expanding beyond Vo-

78 Daniel Dayan, Elihu Katz, and Daniel Dayan, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

79 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 16 & 17 April 2006; *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 16 & 17 April 2006; *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*, 17 April 2006

80 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 16 April 2006.

81 *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 17 April 2006.

82 *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 17 April 2006

83 See for example: Helene Butijn, 'Veel combi-gebruik drugs in Volendam', *Trouw*, 28 January 2004 <<https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/veel-combi-gebruik-drugs-in-volendam~b6dfbabf>> [accessed 21 August 2020].

84 *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 4 January 2006.

lendam: one in twenty students in the Netherlands had supposedly experimented with hard drugs such as ecstasy and cocaine, which meant that more action was required.⁸⁵ A month later, parents in Putten started a group with the same goal called Drug Free Putten, which was reported during the evening news.⁸⁶ In the item it was suggested that young people 'start with an innocent joint, then switch to hard drugs such as speed and ecstasy.' In December, the success of self-help groups such as Narcotics Anonymous was discussed on the radio.⁸⁷ Former drug addict Mark described his fight with alcohol and 'party drugs cocaine and ecstasy' addiction as 'having to learn to walk again' in the item. The items on new and existing action groups in which ecstasy was explicitly mentioned show an emerging discursive formation of the substance as an addictive and potentially life-derailing substance that required active combating, especially when it came to children.

In a large number of radio items mentioning ecstasy in 2006, cocaine appeared along with it.⁸⁸ In most cases, the relation between the two was either its shared status as a recreational substance or its shared status as a criminal commodity. GHB, the drug with which ecstasy had been mentioned most often in 2001, was not mentioned at all in 2006. This might also indicate that the discussion around ecstasy was drifting away from its party drug reputation. The house party - the use setting that on its own had a worsening reputation at least since 2001 - no longer dominated the discursive formation of ecstasy use: it was now more often associated to other drugs that were seen as harmful and addictive. This was also a result of a different group of stakeholders that had become more dominant on the radio in 2006: many items featured concerned parents, whereas in earlier years party goers themselves were interviewed, in addition to drug experts that downplayed the risks of ecstasy in relation to other substances.

A more critical attitude towards ecstasy use emerged from other radio discussions too. A visitor at a cannabis convention, who was interviewed during the morning news on 20 January 2006, expressed his dissatisfaction with the label "party drugs" for cocaine and ecstasy, which he believed led to a detrimental romanticisation.⁸⁹ When the Amsterdam Mental Health service released a report about the issue of transaction sex among young teenagers in certain parts of Amsterdam, *De Ocht-*

85 *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 6 May 2006.

86 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 21 June 2006.

87 *Radio 1 Dingen Die Gebeuren*. 21 December 2006.

88 Cocaine was mentioned twenty times. Other intoxicants that were mentioned at least five times in broadcasts that also mentioned ecstasy in 2006 were cannabis (8), alcohol (7) heroin (5).

89 *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 20 January 2006.

enden invited a number of experts to discuss this issue in February.⁹⁰ Laetitia Griffith from the Amsterdam department of political party VVD was asked whether condoms should be supplied to these teenagers as a harm reduction measure. She rejected this idea with a comparison to ecstasy pill testing facilities at house parties, stating both strategies endorsed undesirable behaviour: condoms would endorse sex, much like pill testing would endorse taking drugs. Her comparison was not challenged in the discussion that also included politicians Lodewijk Asscher (PvdA) and Maarten van Poelgeest (GroenLinks). In earlier years, politicians had generally been defensive about harm reduction initiatives like pill testing. During a discussion about political campaigns that was part of an election radio special broadcast on 7 March 2006, professor of political science Gerrit Voerman also made a passing remark about ecstasy.⁹¹ He suggested that political party GroenLinks' campaigning efforts in a discotheque in 1994 were problematic, as it had later become clear that this was a discotheque in which partygoers used ecstasy. Ecstasy use was starting to become something to actively distance oneself from, especially in a political context. The notion that harm reduction measures implied drug use endorsement started to become customary.

Trimbos Institute, the national research institute concerning mental health and addiction care, came under fire in June 2006. Trimbos was accused of trivialising drug problems like cannabis and cocaine usage in the Netherlands.⁹² Donald Uges, a toxicologist from the University Medical Center Groningen, claimed that his warnings about increased cocaine usage were ignored by the institute, which, according to him, operated in an 'Amsterdam style, freedom and happiness, everyone's free to experiment, no interference' manner. Jaap de Vlieger, from the Rotterdam police, suggested that the people who work at Trimbos, who according to him were mostly former or present drug users, were biased towards a particularly liberal stance on drugs. He said that the situation at Trimbos was problematic as a lot of drug policy was based on the recommendations of former drug users. Harold Wiegel from Trimbos Institute was interviewed critically by the presenter, who made it clear that he was not confident the institute was taking drug problems seriously enough. The broadcast shows the emerging idea that there were serious drug problems in the Netherlands that were not being sufficiently addressed. The position of the Trimbos Institute had been the same in previous years: the severity of drug problems in the Netherlands was nuanced, while attention was drawn to alcohol abuse. In 2006, the institute's reputation was subverted by the framing of its drug stance as biased and

⁹⁰ *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 23 February 2006.

⁹¹ *Radio 1 Journaal*. 7 March 2006.

⁹² *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 2 June 2006.

partial due to a claimed history of former drug use amongst their staff. In previous years, Trimbos officials had often been featured in both newspapers and on the radio as reliable authorities on drug issues.

A number of radio broadcasts reported on police measures against drug users in the last months of 2006. In October, Remco Gerritsen from the Amsterdam police department was interviewed regarding the arrest of 131 people at the Awakenings dance festival.⁹³ Some of the attendees had been arrested for their involvement in drug trade, but most of them were accused of drug possession. Duncan Stutterheim, one of the founders of ID&T, the largest dance party organisation in the Netherlands, was interviewed about the increased police actions against drug users.⁹⁴ He explained that in the past, drug policies at their dance parties had been based on co-operation with local governments and police departments. More recently, however, he stated as experiencing a changing climate, one in which there was no discussion and zero tolerance from the police at parties. The presenter asked how important drug use was for the dance parties, which Stutterheim defined as hedonistic. Stutterheim suggested that drug use was a social issue that was not limited to dance parties and mentioned that drug use could also be found at provincial barn parties, music concerts and dance nights at Amsterdam pop venue Paradiso. CDA representative Cisca Joldersma also commented in the item on the supposed move from a tolerant climate towards zero tolerance at dance parties. She expressed her happiness with the shift towards zero tolerance and added that CDA would also like to see the end of coffeeshops in the Netherlands, indicating that she did not subscribe to tolerance policies: 'we have a clear Opium Law in the Netherlands, which means that cannabis and drugs are forbidden.' Stutterheim got frustrated with Joldersma's position and stressed that alcohol caused more problems than drugs. Joldersma responded that she would like to draw attention to drug addicts' parents who were pleading for stronger drug regulation in the Netherlands. The presenter asked Joldersma if she thought that the last two years of more repressive drug enforcement in the Netherlands should be seen as a result of European or American stances on drugs, to which Joldersma responded that she thought it was more likely local governments had realised that drug policies had been too lax. Stutterheim pointed out that the tolerance policy was included in the prosecution guidelines based on the ideas of criminologist Tim Boekhout van Solinge, who was part of an interest group of dance party organisers. This made the shift to repression unlawful in Stutterheim's eyes.

The positions of Stutterheim (who was defending his commercial interest in the

⁹³ *Radio 1 NOS Langs De Lijn*. 8 October 2006.

⁹⁴ *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 24 November 2006.

parties) and Joldersma (as representative of moderate political party CDA) might be expected, but the heated discussion between Stutterheim and Joldersma shows a change in the discursive formation of ecstasy: it was starting to be viewed as intrinsically harmful. This shift also seems evident from the public suspicion surrounding the Trimbos research institute. A more conservative political climate along with public fears of drugs were replacing a faith in pragmatic harm reduction policies that had been characteristic of Dutch ecstasy policies since the late 1980s. The shift from harm reduction to repression seemed to be informed by a moralistic perspective on drugs. Opposing positions were not discredited by citing scientific study but by mentioning concerned parents or by claiming that progressive drug policy advocates had to be (ex-) users themselves. These discursive strategies side-lined harm reduction proponents, whose arguments based on research started to succumb to the moralistic argument that ecstasy and drugs were intrinsically bad.

Despite a climate that was shifting away from harm reduction, in other items stakeholders did defend a harm reduction approach to ecstasy use. A convention held in celebration of LSD inventor, Albert Hofmann, was covered on the radio in January.⁹⁵ LSD user Luc Sala and Amsterdam Mental Health Services Freek Polak disagreed with the presenter's suggestion that psychedelics were banned for good reasons, emphasising that alcohol was also dangerous and not forbidden. Polak advocated harm reduction measures over use repression. Ecstasy was remarked in passing when Sala compared its effects with what he labelled a "disco dose" (smaller dose) of LSD. In a report about an increase in violent incidents that involved a combination of cocaine and alcohol use, Jaap de Vlieger from the National Drugs Expertise Unit and professor of criminology, Ronald Knibbe, gave their opinion on good policies.⁹⁶ De Vlieger said that cocaine appeared to be taking over ecstasy's popularity among young people. Both experts underlined that local harm reduction policies were desirable. Knibbe said they had proven to be effective for ecstasy in the past, and De Vlieger mentioned that providing good information was a strategy to which young people were generally susceptible.

Ecstasy's discursive formation had changed considerably between the items that were analysed from 2001 and from 2006. Although a number of people still advocated a harm reduction perspective, this was no longer the norm when it came to thinking about ecstasy. Surging concerns regarding ecstasy use were reflected in the establishment of several interest groups of parents, in addition to a strengthening belief that ecstasy use should in no way be legitimised, which led to the rejection

⁹⁵ *Radio 1 Met Het Oog op Morgen*. 11 January 2006.

⁹⁶ *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 2 February 2006.

of harm reduction measures such as pill testing facilities or safe use information. Ecstasy's changing reputation was also reflected in its association to addictive drugs such as cocaine and heroin; this seemed to go hand in hand with its disappearing reputation as a lighter drug, a soft drug or a party drug. This shift was most apparent in interviews with action groups such as Brave Mothers. The house party and the partygoer moved to the background of the debate in this period. The credibility of drug experts from the Trimbos Institute, who maintained their harm reduction stance and opposition to criminalisation of drug use, was questioned. The Trimbos position that drug problems were not as serious as alcohol problems in the Netherlands was undermined with the suggestion that their policy recommendations were biased as their employees were former drug users themselves. Ecstasy was seen differently, and the tolerant atmosphere had become the topic of discussion and evaluation. Ecstasy's meaning as a criminal commodity was becoming more prominent: it was linked to notorious Dutch criminals, and the dismantling of an ecstasy laboratory became an intensely covered media-event. Criminalisation of ecstasy users, a break with the dual track policy tradition, was no longer controversial: police actions against individual users at house parties were discussed as a part of a demolishing of harm reduction and tolerance policies towards individual drug users.

Conclusion

The discursive formation of ecstasy on Radio 1 changed between each of the time periods that were analysed. In the first years, the new drug was actively interpreted on the radio. In this initial discursive formation process, the radio items often functioned as a finger-on-the-pulse for the listener: the media hype surrounding the new drug was frequently mentioned and presented as in need of interpretation, usually by experts from the fields of addiction care and drug research. Expert interpretation in the late 1980s and early 1990s had two recurring characteristics: it played down the hysteria and worries surrounding the new substance and it contextualised the popularity of the drug in a cultural history of drug use in the Netherlands. The problematisation of ecstasy that was implied by the media attention and its List 1 hard drug status was seen as exaggerated or unnecessary - ecstasy was often referred to as a soft drug despite its legal hard drug status.

Independently of its reputation as a party drug, ecstasy also quickly earned a reputation as an illegally produced and trafficked criminal commodity. By 1996, this dual meaning, which was seen as the "Dutch way" of dealing with drugs was most

clear: on the one hand, ecstasy users were consistently kept out of a criminal context and approached with harm reduction measures; while on the other, the need to actively combat the production and distribution of the substance was staunchly supported. This was especially apparent in items regarding the diplomatic issues in Europe that arose for the Netherlands as a result of this dual track policy: almost everyone, including most Dutch politicians, was steadfast in their belief in the policy. The issue to combat was the rapidly growing role of the Netherlands as the primary producer of synthetic drugs in the world.

The radio items in 2001 still showed a tolerant attitude towards ecstasy use, which had by then become a staple of large scale dance parties. The radio news was used to generate awareness about dangerous ecstasy pills containing PMA in 2001. Detailed descriptions of this dangerous pill were repeated on national radio news to ensure that users could recognise a bad pill if they came into possession of one. In this way, radio news played a role in the harm reduction infrastructure in the Netherlands.⁹⁷ Although perhaps not formally established, the public broadcasting system supported the harm reduction approach to drug/ecstasy use.

But the death of a number of clubbers challenged how party drugs were seen and made the tolerance policy a topic of contention. Experts still insisted on the effectiveness of harm reduction and the public health benefits of decriminalising drug use, but politically this position seemed to be weakening. Some local administrators started banning house parties, but this was seen as a poor solution by almost everyone involved: improved drug information and education were underlined as better practices.

Ecstasy was starting to be seen in a different light, which was very apparent in the radio items of 2006. Harm reduction advocates had become a minority, and the accommodative attitude towards ecstasy seemed to be disappearing: it was no longer seen as a party drug, but as a harmful hard drug in need of use prevention. The public health argument that cited the benefits of harm reduction measures was discursively put aside by implying that acceptance of any type of drug use could only come from (former) drug users themselves and by depending on emotions to bolster opposition.

There were a number of historical conclusions to draw from comparing this radio study to the newspaper study from Chapter 2. The studies cannot be compared one to one, since there were differences between them: the newspaper study contained local newspaper titles, whereas the radio study is based exclusively on national public radio. Additionally, the newspaper study contained items from a variety of titles and from all newspaper sections, whereas the majority of this study was based on items from

97 Spruit.

one genre (current affairs) and one broadcasting station, Radio 1. My conclusions here should be seen as initial observations, taking into consideration potential differences between discursive dynamics in these media and how these affect the discursive formation of a particular topic, ecstasy in my study, and needs further research.

In the newspaper study, accommodation, problematisation and criminalisation - the three different discursive strands - were discussed separately. This structural decision reflected the demarcation between these strands that I observed in the newspaper articles. In this chapter, they are not separated. The discursive strands are connected to the different discussion topics. The discursive strands were not included separately since they often converge and clash in radio debates. When different actors with opposing points of view were invited to debate, it is in the discussion between these actors that the different positions become apparent. This is a clear difference with the discursive formation of ecstasy in the newspapers, in which articles more frequently fell into one of the discursive strands.

This is related to another difference between the radio and newspaper debates. Since stakeholders with opposing views discussed topics live on air in many of the current affairs programs on the radio, they seemed to be enticed to making bold statements. The live nature of radio in this way contrasts with the more redacted and edited nature of print media.

A last, historical conclusion of this study is that the discursive formation of ecstasy on the radio was not as strongly affected by the press stories from the United Kingdom as it was in the newspapers in the late 1980s. Current affairs programs seemed to focus more strongly on discussing what was happening in the Netherlands.

The methodological aim of this chapter was to test the use of searchable ASR metadata to select items for analysis of the discursive formation of ecstasy. One of the promises of ASR metadata enrichment was that it was thought to make audio-visual datasets searchable and analysable in the way that OCR metadata enrichment disclosed digitised newspaper dataset for search and analysis.

Using ASR metadata to search the Radio Archive did enable me to find relevant material for close reading in a similar way to my newspaper study. The same keyword search query proved to be effective. This means that the availability of ASR metadata brings the possibility of researching historical topics in their cross-media reality closer, representing the potential of a cross-media turn in digital history to follow the digital turn instigated by the availability of OCR metadata.⁹⁸

There are differences between the use of OCR and ASR metadata for keyword search. OCR metadata enrichment makes print text searchable, but ASR metadata

⁹⁸ Nicholson.

enrichment turns spoken language into searchable print text. This difference led to different experiences between the close reading stages of this study and the newspaper study: listening to the recorded audio was crucial to understanding the dynamics in and the meaning of radio items. ASR metadata is less structured than OCR metadata due to the difference between edited text in newspapers and that of spoken discussions in radio debates. Of course, reading newspaper articles was also important since contextual information is also lacking from individual OCR'd terms. Even so, OCR'd text is closer to printed words in a newspaper article than ASR's text is to spoken words in a radio item: there is no process of remediation or translation, from speech to print text, in the OCR enrichment process. This means more critical reflection based on practice is required for 1) the use of ASR metadata for different analysis techniques, and 2) for possible differences between visualisations based on either OCR and ASR metadata.

A last point of reflection specific to this study concerns the implications of the chosen analysis periods. The first analysis period of this study spanned several years, whereas the next three all represent one year of radio coverage. Low data availability in the earlier years (see Figure 12) meant that data from more years was required to accumulate enough items and this also created historical overlap with the newspaper analysis. This enabled comparison between the discursive dynamics on the radio and in the newspapers, but it also meant that the four sections in the resulting historical narrative were uneven in terms of what they cover: the first section does not represent a one-year snapshot like the others. This was, in part, a consequence of working with uneven data availability. As more audio-visual data(sets) become searchable with ASR enrichment in the future, considerations and issues such as this will occur less.

CHAPTER FOUR

**NL STANDS FOR *NO LIMITS*: DISCUSSING
ECSTASY USE IN DUTCH RADIO ITEMS IN
THE 1990S AND 2000S**

Chapter 4 | **NL stands for *no limits*: Discussing ecstasy use in Dutch radio items in the 1990s and 2000s**

During a debate between party leaders on Dutch radio in January 2003, Jan-Peter Balkenende, the Christian Democrat prime minister of the Netherlands, exclaimed that the country's code NL appeared to be becoming better known as short for *no limits*.¹ Balkenende used this to express his dissatisfaction with the Dutch tolerance climate. It was a question of whether 'tolerance is disastrous to standards and values,' and ecstasy, the drug used by thousands of ravers at underground house parties, was one of the examples discussed in that context. The discussion item showed how the tradition of drug use tolerance, rooted in pragmatism, was now starting to be associated to a supposed loss of standards and values in the Netherlands.

Thus far, I analysed newspaper articles and radio items in which ecstasy was discussed or mentioned. This enabled me to describe different aspects of ecstasy's discursive formation in newspaper and radio debates, such as its reputation as a party drug, its status as a criminal commodity and even its potential use as a treatment aid in psychotherapy. Chapter 3's radio study gave off the impression that the tolerant climate surrounding ecstasy use in the Netherlands was starting to lose public support between 1985 and 2006. This chapter investigates this hypothesis by zooming in on the discursive formation of ecstasy use: was public support for ecstasy policies based on harm reduction starting to dissipate by the end of the 1990s and the 2000s? I use the leveled approach to answer this research question regarding a change in the discursive formation of ecstasy use. This chapter investigates the reputation of ecstasy use in radio debates to see if these debates show whether drug regulation in Dutch post-war history was characterised by a strengthening imperative to regulate, the hypothesis of overarching research project the Imperative of Regulation.

Methodological set-up

Aim | **Leveled approach study of the radio archive (ASR metadata)**

This study was a continuation of the historical conclusion of Chapter 3, wherein I analysed the mentions of ecstasy in radio coverage within an entire year at five-year

¹ *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 12 January 2003.

intervals. One of the conclusions was that there seemed to be a shift in the discursive formation of ecstasy use from the 1990s to the 2000s: in this period, ecstasy use appeared to be losing its reputation as a soft drug. In this second radio study I used the leveled approach, the structural combination of search, visualisation and analysis techniques, to investigate this hypothesis in more depth.

This means that the study also represented a methodological evolution of Chapter 3. The search and analysis processes of Chapters 2 and 3 were comparable: I used one keyword search query to select a subset of relevant results for close reading in particular years. Chapter 2's keyword search was done using the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) metadata; Chapter 3's keyword search was performed using the Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) metadata.

In this study, all aspects of the leveled approach were used to investigate a historical hypothesis: the relevant items were found after an iterative process involving keyword search, timeline visualisation interpretation and word cloud/word frequency list analysis enabling me to construct a targeted search query.

This leveled approach study of the digital radio archive allowed me to reflect critically on two methodological questions. What are advantages and drawbacks of using the leveled approach to analyse radio items to investigate a historical hypothesis? How do the results of a leveled approach study compare to the results of a keyword search study?

Digital platform | **CLARIAH Media Suite (+Jupyter notebook)**

This radio study was done using the CLARIAH Media Suite infrastructure, the basic features of which are described under Digital Platform in Chapter 3. In this study, I went beyond the use of keyword search, considering I used more visualisation techniques to execute all stages of the leveled approach. It is relevant to note that as the main researcher of CLARIAH research pilot DReAM,² I was involved in the co-design of the Media Suite infrastructure and worked to ensure that the leveled approach could be used for historical analysis of different media datasets in the Media Suite.³ One of the visualisation techniques needed for the leveled approach
2 'DReAM'.

3 As part of CLARIAH research pilot DReAM (May 2017 - February 2018), I tested combinations of relevant functionalities in the Media Suite to make the leveled approach possible across three digital data archives: the digitised newspaper dataset of the National Library of the Netherlands (KB) and the digital radio and television archives of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (S&V). An important aspect was testing the usability of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) metadata. I

had not been implemented in the infrastructure yet, however. The meso level of the leveled approach is based on analysis of word frequency visualisation (in cloud or list form) based on ASR words found in selections of items by means of keyword search queries. I started this study in June 2020 when word clouds were only available for visualisation of ASR metadata of individual items in the Media Suite *Resource Viewer* (see Figure 14). The required cumulative word clouds for lists of results based on keyword search queries were not available yet, although these are on the implementation horizon for later versions of the Media Suite. Different options for word cloud functionality incorporation had been tested in the context of research pilot DReAM.

For this study, the missing word frequency visualisation functionality issue was addressed by the use of a Jupyter notebook, a Python web browser application. With Jupyter notebooks, additional visualisations of data archives from the Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision (S&V) could be created. Such Jupyter notebooks only have data access with authorisation from S&V or when accessed from their premises. I myself had no personal authorisation, and since the S&V premises were closed due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, I had to devise a different route to access Jupyter notebook that could provide the required word frequency list visualisations. I decided to do the initial macro and meso stages of the leveled approach in collaboration with a data engineer from S&V. The engineer and I collaborated using the video conferencing application Zoom. Ahead of these Zoom meetings, I prepared search queries, while the engineer prepared a Jupyter notebook in which it was possible to create word frequency lists to explore in combination with the other available search and visualisation techniques of the Media Suite. The engineer shared their screen so that I could see how, based on my instructions, the engineer generated timeline visualisations and word frequency lists based on the radio data with the Jupyter notebook. All parts of this process are described in detail in the analysis of this chapter.

worked closely with developers on the co-design of the infrastructure and implementation of the leveled approach in the Media Suite. The development process was iterative: as a researcher, I set out by outlining my ideas and needs in a so-called Demonstration Scenario; developers then worked on this, after which I then tested the implementations and provided feedback. As such, developer steps were based directly on explicit research requirements. AVResearcherXL, the aforementioned text mining tool that enabled comparison of newspaper and radio/television data, was redeveloped as the *Compare* functionality in the Media Suite. Whereas the tool AVResearcherXL had been developed as a distant reading tool for media researchers to discern patterns in media representations, my involvement in DReAM aimed to make its embedment in the Media Suite suitable for structural historical analysis of media datasets by testing its capacity to accommodate the leveled approach.

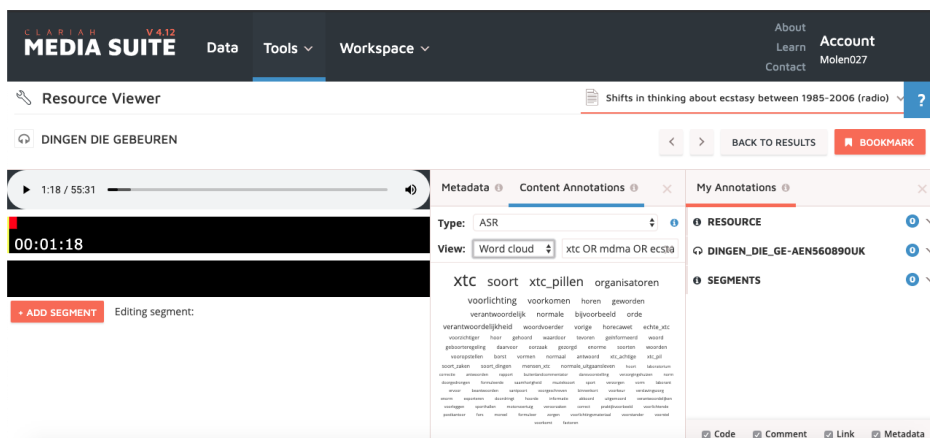


Figure 14. *Dingen Die Gebeuren* radio item in CLARIAH Media Suite Resource Viewer. The middle panel offers word cloud functionality for the item based on ASR enrichment metadata. (Screenshot from 28 April 2020)

Dataset | **Radio Archive (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision)**

Like the study of Chapter 3, the research of this chapter was done using the iMMix version of the S&V radio archive.⁴ The study is a continued exploration of the radio archive using additional visualisation techniques in the search and analysis strategy, described in detail below. The resulting historical narrative was based on radio items from the current affairs genre and was not restricted to a particular broadcasting station.

Analysis | **The discursive formation of ecstasy use in Dutch radio debates**

Search and analysis steps | **Leveled approach radio study**

This section presents the steps taken from the initial keyword search query to the final selection of radio items analysed with close reading. It is in that way similar to Chapter 1, the leveled approach pilot study of amphetamine in Dutch newspapers. Decisions and steps taken in the execution of the leveled approach are described in detail.⁵ The visualisation techniques used on the macro and meso levels of the

4 This data archive is described in more detail in the Data section of Chapter 3.

5 Throughout the research process I kept a research diary in which I documented my progress and decisions. This is necessary in the execution of the leveled approach, as interpretive decisions are made

approach functioned as signposts that helped me to compile relevant material for close reading on the micro level. The search and selection process that preceded the analysis represents an integral interpretive part of the research process.

The study built on the experience of working with ASR metadata of Chapter 3's radio study. With the possibility of using Jupyter notebooks in collaboration with the data engineer, ensuring word cloud functionality and an increased amount of available items with ASR metadata, I dove back into the digitised radio archive, able to carry out for the first time the leveled approach for a radio study. The substantive starting point of the search process picked up where Chapter 3 left off. That chapter ended with a conclusion on the dissipating harm reduction climate regarding ecstasy use in Dutch radio debates. The use of ecstasy was beginning to be condemned more strongly on moral grounds, whereas the pragmatic public health perspective's influence seemed to be waning. Ecstasy's discursive formation changed as it was no longer seen as a soft party drug but rather as a seriously harmful hard drug that put people at risk, especially youth.

At this stage I considered three different strategies in using the leveled approach to find relevant radio items that would help to flesh out this hypothesis about the discursive formation of ecstasy use in radio coverage. The first strategy was to stay relatively close to the ecstasy query that I used in the previous chapter. I could analyse relevant word clouds to find clusters of significant terms that could help me to develop more targeted search queries to query the material. Perhaps I would find a cluster of terms concerning harm reduction that could help formulate a targeted *xtc + harm reduction* query. The second possible strategy was to follow a similar approach using an entirely different query. I could use this strategy to look into the discursive formation of another drug, for instance cocaine, as cocaine had frequently come up in my results as well, often alongside ecstasy. Using the word clouds of the results of a new query on cocaine, I might then be able to construct a subset of radio items that could help me understand whether the harm reduction trend was specific to ecstasy. Or I could create a general drug query, including synonyms for the term drugs, to research how harm reduction and drugs in a broader sense had developed over time. The third possible strategy was to use new different search strategies to find relevant material that could help contextualise the findings of Chapter 3: for instance, by looking for items specifically about drug policy or about harm reduction. All three strategies would be relevant possibilities in using in the explorative stages on the macro and meso levels of the research process. During these stages, many successive steps are taken and settings are adjusted continuously, which means extensive documentation is required to ensure reproducibility, and thereby avoid digital selectivity problems.

the leveled approach to continue research into my historical hypothesis: by diving deeper, by zooming out, by means of comparison or by means of contextualisation. In other words, the leveled approach helped to structure how visualisation techniques can support different types of historical research questions. Mapping how researchers use tools and questions to work with digital media datasets is an important developing issue in DH and digital history.⁶

I decided to move forward with a combination of the first two possibilities: diving deeper into the ecstasy discourse and then zooming out from there by looking for a wider discourse regarding drugs in general. Although I wanted to explore the hypothesis on a changing reputation of ecstasy use, one aim of the leveled approach was to also maximise the chance of finding previously unknown patterns, which is so often seen as the big potential to large datasets and text mining tools. My aim was to compare both the pattern of ecstasy and the pattern of drugs in general in the radio archive by using DH techniques. I formulated the research question: “Was there a shift in ecstasy’s discursive formation from a harm reduction view to a more moralistic perspective on ecstasy in the radio debates between 1985 and 2006? If there was, how should this shift be understood contextually?”

Next, I outlined the required research steps to answer this question (Box 3). Steps 1-5 form the steps of the leveled approach, in which step 4 highlights its iterative character. Steps 1 and 2 were performed during Zoom collaborations with the data engineer. The engineer worked using a Jupyter notebook that offered word cloud functionality, in addition to the same functionalities as the Media Suite. To ensure that the search settings were all the same as they are in the Media Suite, I repeated and double checked the search queries in the Media Suite. During the Zoom sessions, I explored the data with the help of the engineer, deciding what timeline visualisations and word frequency lists were relevant. After each session, the engineer shared the used Jupyter notebook and the relevant generated frequency lists.⁷ I recorded the Zoom sessions so that I was able to retrace the steps in the process later. With this information I could move to steps 3 and 4, and after two iterative cycles I decided on a relevant subset of radio items for close reading, interpretation and writing (steps 5-6).

⁶ See for example: Bron, Van Gorp, and de Rijke; Hoekstra and Koolen.

⁷ The Jupyter notebook is only functional with authorized access to the S&V data, thus the notebook used for this study has not been made publicly available. All steps taken with the notebook except for the word frequency lists can be replicated in the CLARIAH Media Suite. The word frequency lists are included as part of Appendix I.

1. Macro: Explorative search of radio dataset with time-line visualisation (Media Suite/Jupyter)⁸
2. Meso: Establish suitable targeted queries with word clouds (Media Suite/Jupyter)
3. Macro: Creating a list of relevant results (Media Suite)
4. Micro: Quick check of relevant results → repeat steps 1-3, or move on to step 5
5. Micro: Using annotation sheet to interpret radio items (Media Suite/Spreadsheet)
6. Interpretation: Identify key developments in discursive formation of ecstasy/drugs (Spreadsheet)
7. Writing: Write analysis to answer research question

Box 3. Research plan

I prepared two queries to start with step 1 of the research plan. The first query was the ecstasy query from the previous chapters (`xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y`) and the second was a new general drugs query (`drugs OR verdovende middel(en)`). All search settings used in the Jupyter notebook were identical to the settings of the CLARIAH Media Suite. However, for the word cloud functionality that was only possible in the Jupyter notebook, I had to make some decisions about settings. The stop word list used to exclude words from the word clouds was the same list of Dutch stop words used in the Media Suite. During the process, I decided that the word clouds would only display words appearing in the ASR metadata of the segment in which the search term was found. Some items in the archive consist of several hours of recorded radio cut up into segments, e.g. hours. Words that

⁸ The distant access to the Sound & Vision archive meant that word clouds could not be generated for the full 1985-2006 period. This was not a big drawback as word clouds only become useful when they can lead to insights about a particular period in time and when changes between different periods can be compared.

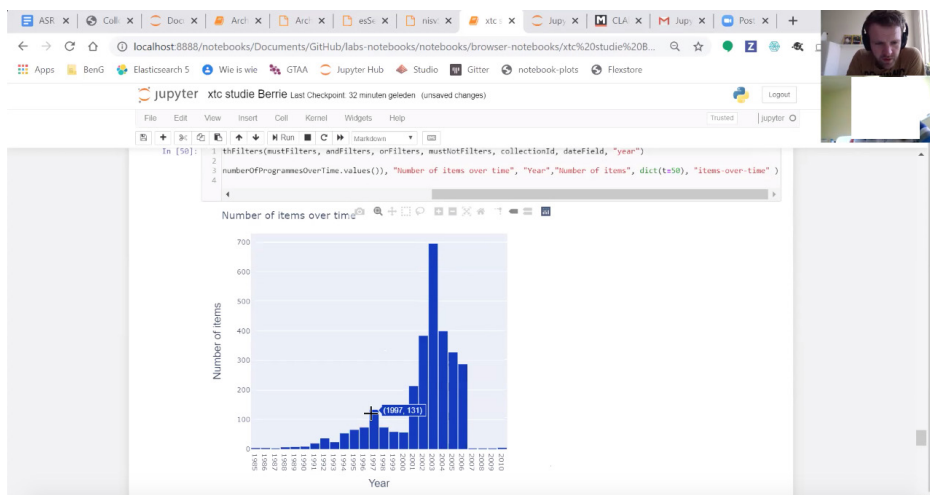


Figure 15. Screenshot of the Zoom session recording with on display the timeline for the ecstasy query (*xtc OR ecsta*y OR mdma*) in all available radio broadcasts with ASR metadata. (Session on 7 May 2020, Screenshot taken on 11 May 2020)

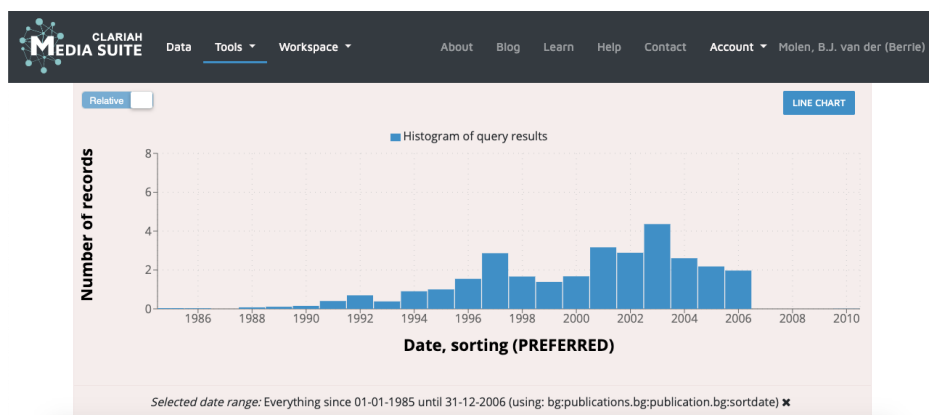


Figure 16. The ecstasy query (*xtc OR ecsta*y OR mdma*) from Figure 15 replicated in the CLARIAH Media Suite with relative frequencies. (Screenshot taken on 10 September 2020)

appear in other segments are usually not related to the segment in which words were found with keyword search. This means that without this extra limitation on the reach of the word cloud functionality, word clouds would be virtually meaningless.

First I looked at the timeline visualisation for the ecstasy query, which can be seen in the screenshot from the session in Figure 15. The first thing that stood out looking at this visualisation was that there were many more items after 2000 than there were in the 1990s. In the 1990s, there was a small peak in 1997 and in the 2000s there was

a larger peak in 2003. The Jupyter timeline visualisation in Figure 15 was based on absolute frequencies, so I also cross-referenced the query in the Media Suite using relative frequencies (Figure 16). This confirmed that years 1997 and 2003 both had peaks of interest in ecstasy. It also showed that the steep absolute increase in items in the 2000s was mostly relative to a larger overall number of items in the collection of for that period. The years 1997 and 2003 seemed to be two relevant years to zoom in on, and a comparison between these two could help in investigating my hypothesis, seeing as one year is in the 1990s, and another is in the 2000s.

Next, I looked at the timeline visualisation for the drugs query (Figure 17). The timeline visualisation of this query showed no particular peaks. It did show a similarly steep increase in items in the second half of the period. A repeated search in the Media Suite with relative frequencies (Figure 18) made clear that this increase in the 2000s was caused in part by the larger overall availability of searchable radio items in that period. Despite the fact that the relative increase of attention to drugs in the 2000s was smaller than the absolute increase, I could see that the attention paid to drugs in these radio debates only grew between 1985 and 2006. The attention to both ecstasy and drugs in general slumped slightly again after 2003, thus 2003 seemed to have been the year with the most attention paid to both ecstasy and general drugs in this dataset.

I also tried to generate word clouds for both the ecstasy and the drugs query for the entire period, but that proved impossible: this process was too heavy to perform with distant access to the collection from the data engineer's home workplace. In the context of the leveled approach, this made little difference, as word clouds are particularly useful when they enable comparison of different periods in time.

From this first comparison on the macro level, I could use my new knowledge to explore the meso level (Step 2 of the research plan): I made an informed selection of particular years to research. Since the ecstasy query gave me two years of peak interest, I decided to focus on these two years: 1997 and 2003. My next move was to compare the word clouds for these years for the ecstasy query and the drug query. I also decided to introduce a new search facet at this point: I generated word clouds for all results and word clouds for items catalogued in the Current Affairs ("Actualiteiten") genre.

This yielded 8 word clouds and underlying frequency lists that I compiled in an Excel sheet (see Appendix I). Both queries were used with four different search setting combinations: 1. 1997 in all items; 2. 2003 in all items; 3. 1997 in current affairs; 4. 2003 in current affairs. This means I was able to look into what had changed between 1997 and 2003 in four different ways: all items about drugs on all available radio; all items about drugs in current affairs; all items about ecstasy in all available radio; all items about ecstasy in current affairs.

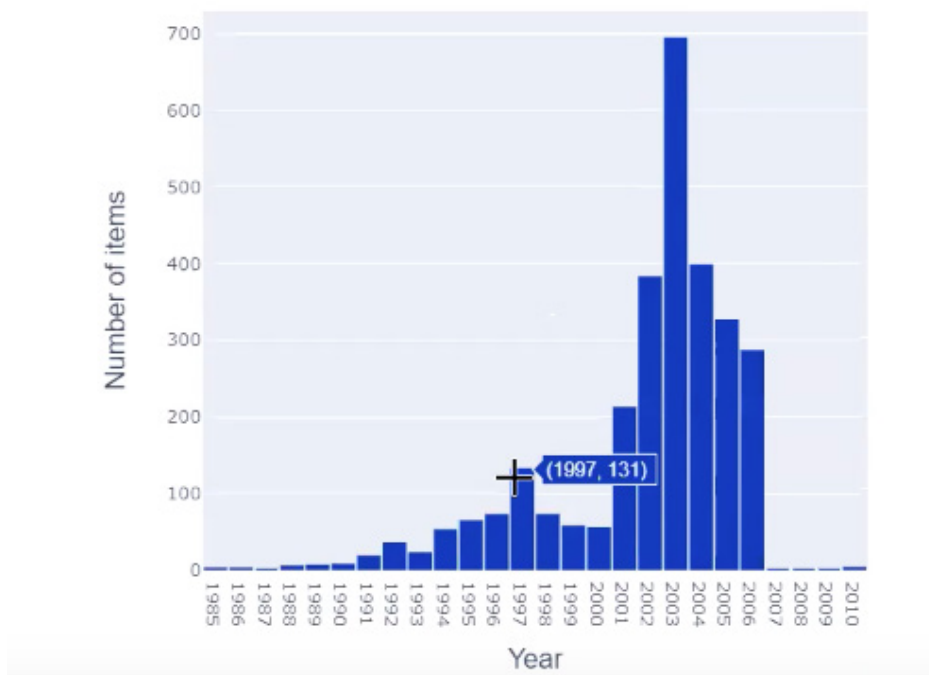


Figure 17. Detail of a screenshot from the Zoom session with the Jupyter notebook timeline visualisation for the general drugs query (*drugs OR verdovende middelen*) (Session on 7 May 2020, Screenshot taken on 11 May 2020)

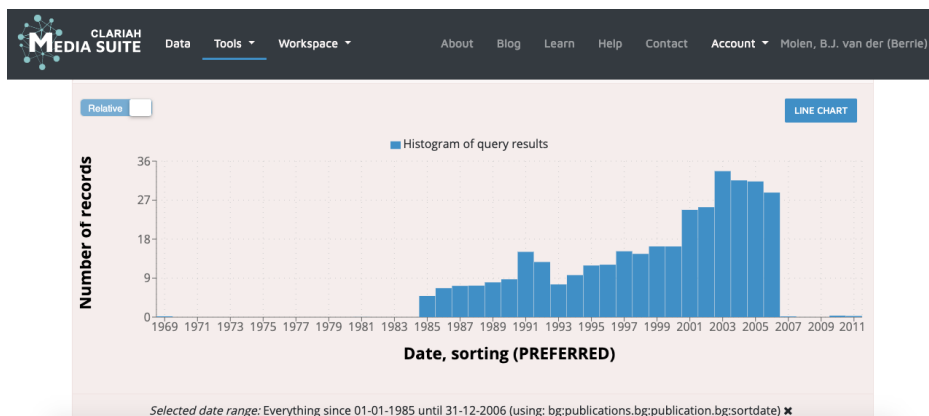


Figure 18. The general drugs (*drugs OR verdovende middelen*) query from Figure 17 replicated in the CLARIAH Media Suite with relative frequencies. (Screenshot taken on 10 September 2020)

The first thing I did was to mark yellow the words related to use (“gebruik,” “drugsgebruik,” “gebruikers” etc.) in all the word frequency lists. This helped me to make some initial observations. Words directly referring to use can be found in all searches of both years. However, all searches showed a difference between 1997 and 2003: words related to use were less present in 2003 for each of the searches, both for the drugs and the ecstasy queries. Does this mean that the focus moved away slightly from drug use in these radio items?

I also looked for the appearance of the word *police* (“politie”). Again, this word appeared high in all the searches. In this search, a clearly different pattern can be seen between the ecstasy queries and the drug queries: for the ecstasy query, the word *police* became more present in 1997; for the drugs query, the word was strongly present in both years. The shift seemed to indicate that ecstasy and *police* became more closely associated to each other in 2003, whereas for drugs and *police*, this relation was already strong in 1997. This is an interesting pattern that could indicate ecstasy’s discursive formation becoming increasingly criminal in this period, and that ecstasy was less criminalised in the 1990s than drugs were in general.

The word for public health (“volksgezondheid”) featured in both the 1997 searches for ecstasy and the 1997 current affairs search for drugs in general. It does not appear in the 2003 lists, which might support my hypothesis about a move away from a harm reduction climate (based on public health considerations). The term harm reduction itself, which is used in the Dutch context as well, does not appear in the results. This underlines a well-known keyword search challenge that also affects the leveled approach: not all answers can be found with targeted keyword search queries. Harm reduction is a very specific term that borders on jargon to describe the policies aimed at reducing the harmfulness of drug use. Searching for the term harm reduction will most likely result in relevant items about this practice, but it will most likely not help to find the majority of the relevant material considering harm reduction is not always explicitly framed as such. This would be an even bigger challenge with research into more abstract historical shifts, such as conceptual change.⁹

This stage of the leveled approach helped in the process towards a relevant subset for close reading: no conclusions regarding visualisations were drawn per se. The appearance or absence of a word in particular years cannot lead to historical conclusions about the meaning of it in context. Whereas the appearance

⁹ The research tool ShiCo (Shifting Concepts) was created to visualise how word use regarding topics develops over time in historical datasets. This is a promising research direction for addressing this challenge. See: Carlos Martinez-Ortiz and others, ‘Design and Implementation of ShiCo. Visualising Shifting Concepts over Time’, *HistoInformatics 2016*, 1632 (2016), 11–19.

of the term *public health*, for instance, does indicate that it is a term and concept discussed in the context of ecstasy, its appearance could have vastly different discursive meanings. It could be mentioned by people with a harm reduction agenda when arguing that their policies are in the interest of public health. But it could also be used by prohibitionists who argue that drugs should be banned for public health reasons. Similarly, only from the appearance of words about drug use, it is impossible to deduce the meaning of its appearance without examining the sources. As signposts, however, the appearance of significant words could help me to decide on the next step towards close reading of the radio items.

The next step was an attempt to target items focusing on ecstasy and drug use in particular. To do this, I expanded the two existing queries by adding a part with words for use and/or users. For the general drugs query, this became ((drugs OR verdovende middelen) AND (gebruik* OR drugsgebruik*) AND politie), and for the ecstasy query this became ((xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y) AND (gebruik* OR drugsgebruik*) AND politie). I then interpreted the timeline visualisations for these new targeted queries (Figure 19-22), moving back up from the meso to the macro level.¹⁰

There were several points to note at this stage. The years 1997 and 2003 still appeared to be peak years of interest for the ecstasy use query. For the general drugs query, 1991 seemed to be an important year as well. There appeared to be a roll-off in the 2002 results in Current Affairs that was not reflected in all genres for the general drugs query. A continuous increase of attention seemed more consistent for drugs in general than it was for ecstasy. Now it was time to compare the word clouds for each of the queries and searches to find out if there were any leads as to how the items about drugs and/or ecstasy use changed discursively.

Up until this stage I had been comparing timeline visualisations for all results in addition to all results in the Current Affairs genre, but from here on out I decided to continue exclusively with radio items with Current Affairs genre tags (“actualiteiten” and “actuele informatie”). I had two reasons for this choice. First of all, in the process of ASR metadata enrichment, the current affairs genre had been prioritised. This meant that what was searchable under all genres (not using the genre search facet) was incomplete, whereas the Current Affairs genre was the genre with the most complete availability. Distant reading/interpreting timelines and word clouds based on all genres would not be plausible, as all genres were not yet searchable.

¹⁰ In some of the timeline visualisations, results appear for years later than 2006. This is because radio items originally broadcast in the search period (1985-2006) that were rebroadcast in later years are automatically represented in each applicable broadcast year.

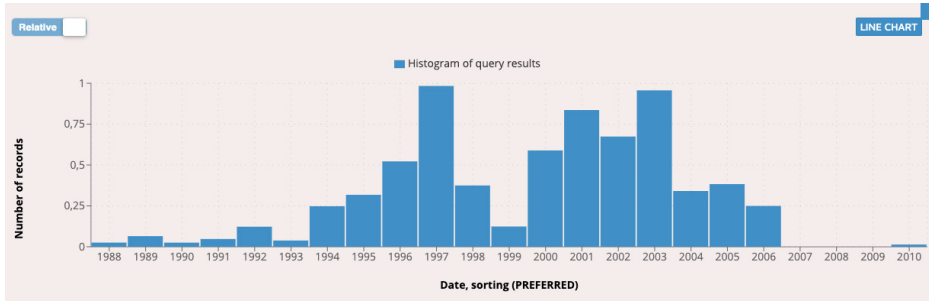


Figure 19. *(xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y) AND (gebruik* OR drugsgebruik*)*
Results in radio collection, in ASR transcripts, (date sorting: "date, sorted"): 570 (in 1985-2006)
Relative timeline chart for all genres. CLARIAH Media Suite (Screenshot from 15 May 2020)

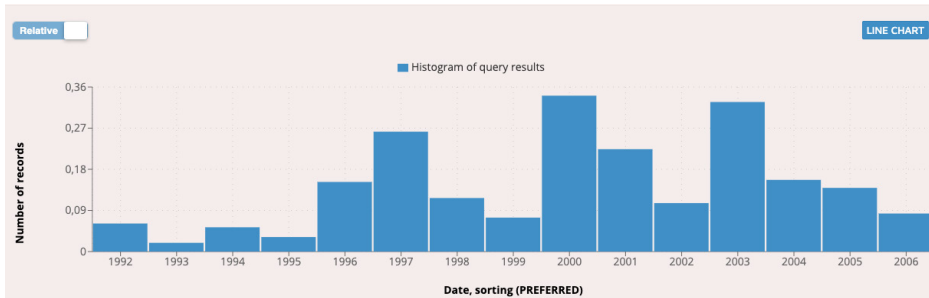


Figure 20. *(xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y) AND (gebruik* OR drugsgebruik*)*
Results in radio collection, in ASR transcripts, (date sorting: "date, sorted"): 183 (in 1985-2006).
Relative timeline chart for Current Affairs. CLARIAH Media Suite (Screenshot from 15 May 2020)

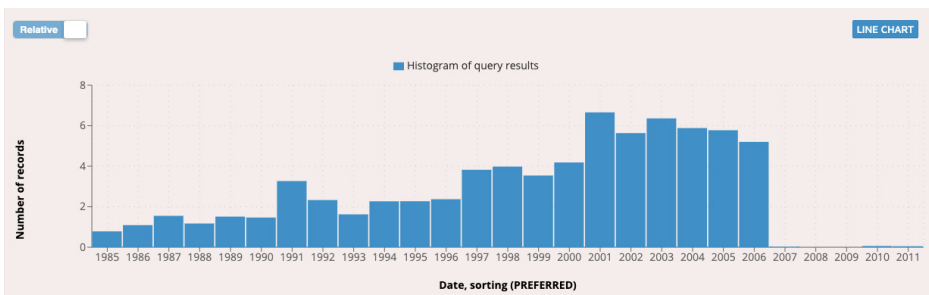


Figure 21. *(drugs OR verdovende middelen) AND (gebruik* OR drugsgebruik*)*
Results in radio collection, in ASR transcripts, (date sorting: "date, sorted"): 6290 (in 1985-2006).
Relative timeline graph for all genres. CLARIAH Media Suite (Screenshot from 20 May 2020)

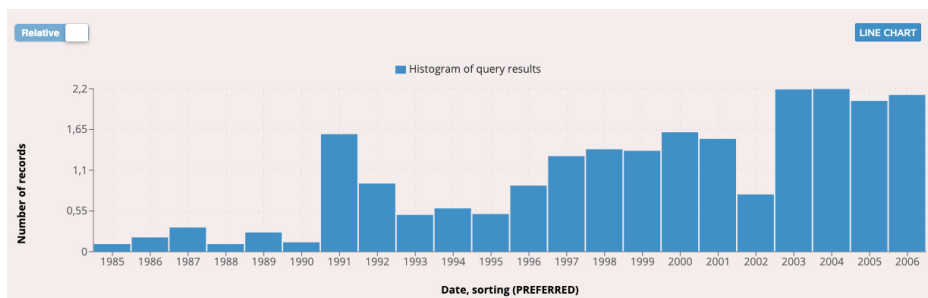


Figure 22. (*drugs OR verdovende middelen*) AND (*gebruik* OR drugsgebruik**) Results in radio collection, in ASR transcripts, (date sorting: "date, sorted"): 1982 (in 1985-2006). Relative timeline graph for Current Affairs. CLARIAH Media Suite (Screenshot from 20 May 2020)

The second reason why I decided to continue with items in the current affairs genre was that these items generally revolve around news stories, and news media coverage is the primary area of interest for this research project.

While comparing the word frequency lists of the new targeted use queries (returning to the meso level), I noticed that in the year 1997 the word *police* was not as common in the ecstasy results as it was in the general drugs results. In 2003, the word was nearly as common on both result lists. This could indicate that drug use discourse in general was criminalised in both years, whereas ecstasy use discourse became more criminalised in 2003. With an even more specific query, that incorporated the word *police* in the ecstasy use query (see Figure 23 for the timeline visualisation of the relative results in the Media Suite), further targeted search was possible. This query yielded 86 results between 1991 and 2006, which means analysing/close reading all of these would be possible if I were to choose to trace the relation between ecstasy use and police in the radio items for this time period.

After interpretation of this second series of word frequency lists and exploration of the targeted use combined with police query, I considered three ways by which to make a data selection for close reading:

1. Using the *ecstasy use + police* query for the period between 1985 and 2006, enabling close reading of the entire period
2. Using the targeted *ecstasy use* query for the years 1997 and 2003, enabling comparison between items from these two years with close reading
3. Using the *general drugs + use* query for the years 1997 and 2003, enabling close reading to investigate if and how users of different drugs were seen differently, and how this changed between 1997 and 2003

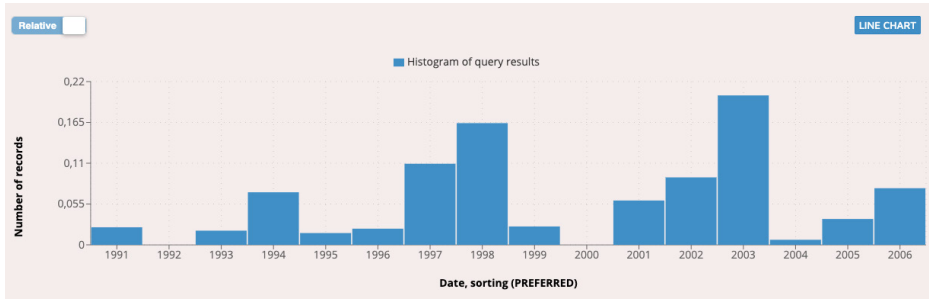


Figure 23. Targeted ecstasy use + police query ((*xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y*) AND (*gebruik* OR drugsgebruik**) AND *politie*) in the CLARIAH Media Suite. (Screenshot taken on 29 May 2020)

Option 1 seemed like a good option since it would cover radio items from the entire research period, although it might have also narrowed the results too far down. By only including results about ecstasy use in which police are mentioned, the selection of radio items would probably lead to a narrative excluding other reports featuring no aspects of criminalisation. Option 3 would allow for potentially insightful comparisons of ecstasy with other substances, but I was particularly interested in using the leveled approach to answer a targeted research question about the changing perspective on ecstasy use in the Netherlands. I therefore decided to pursue Option 2. By not focusing on the police element but listening to all items that likely were about ecstasy use, I had the best possible chance to find relevant information about a changing reputation of ecstasy use.

The search and visualisation techniques used throughout Step 1-4 of my research plan ensured that I felt confident about my data selection, so I moved on to Step 5, to the micro level: close reading of the radio items. All radio items tagged as current affairs in the S&V Radio Archive in the years 1997 and 2003 that were found with the query (*xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y*) AND (*gebruik* OR drugsgebruik**) were part of this analysis (Table 4). In my annotation sheet I noted 1) the topic of each item; 2) the exact descriptions of ecstasy use(rs); 3) whether the item could be understood as example of (a combination of) accommodation, criminalisation and/or problematisation; and 4) which stakeholders contributed to the discursive formation of ecstasy use in which way.

Period ¹¹	Facets in Media Suite	Search Results	Usable results
1997	Broadcasting station: All stations Genres: Current affairs	12	12
2003	Broadcasting station: All stations Genres: Current affairs	52 (4 duplicates)	52 (48 unique results)
		64	64 (60 unique)

*Table 4. Overview of search results of search query (xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y) AND (gebruik* OR drugsgebruik*)*

This part of the research process was done using the Media Suite infrastructure: I used the *Search* functionality to repeat the searches previously explored with the Jupyter notebook, I used the *Resource Viewer* to listen to the items, and I bookmarked each item in my *Workspace* with a concise annotation. The close reading process was the same as the close reading process I followed for the previous radio study of Chapter 3. After annotating the items, I reflected on these annotations and mapped the important developments in the discursive formation of ecstasy use in both years (Step 6).

The resulting analysis, a historical narrative about the discursive formation of ecstasy use (Step 7), is presented below in two sections, one for each search period. The items and the topics covered in the items are not described exhaustively: each item is contextualised insofar as was necessary to explain how it played a role in the discursive formation of ecstasy use.

Historical narrative | **Growing doubts about ecstasy tolerance**

1997 | **Questioning ecstasy's soft reputation**

The current affairs radio items on ecstasy from 1996 analysed in Chapter 3 showed a discursive formation of the drug that was in line with one of the tracks of the double dual track policy: there was widespread support for a public health approach to ecstasy users, while there were serious concerns regarding the Netherlands' internationally significant role in the illegal production of ecstasy and other synthetic drugs. Even in the face of international pressure regarding the Dutch tolerant policies, all drug experts and most politicians did not waver in their support for them. However, the radio items in which ecstasy was mentioned from 1997, analysed here, appear to show a transition: the custom to look at ecstasy as a soft drug was

¹¹Radio 1 NOS Radio Nieuws. 4 March 1997; Radio 2 NOS Radio Nieuws. 4 March 1997.

questioned. At times, ecstasy was beginning to be approached as a hard drug. The main reason for ecstasy's mention in radio coverage was its role in the ongoing international criticism of the Dutch tolerance policy.

Ecstasy was mentioned several times on the radio news in March after the United Nations' drug committee released its annual World Drug Report. The report caused consternation within the UN about a rise in drug use in Europe, with ecstasy being singled out as one of the drugs leading to the rise.¹² The news items highlighted how the UN report singled out the Netherlands as having a role in the production of synthetic drugs. It was mentioned that the CDA asked Justice minister Sorgdrager to address the report, to which Sorgdrager reportedly responded that the report had been based on outdated information, and that the Netherlands had already started combating synthetic drug production more actively. Although the concern surrounding a rise in drug use in Europe was expressed in all the reports, the main significance for the Netherlands was its key role in synthetic drug production.

The day after the first reports, in another news item about European drug regulation reforms, it was mentioned that France had criticised Dutch drug policies.¹³ In the report, the Netherlands' key role in ecstasy production was mentioned again, but the targets of France's criticism were the cannabis tolerance policies and coffee shops, that, according to the French, undermined a European front against drugs. As had been the case in 1996, the expressed concern on the radio was mostly with the Dutch role in the production of drugs; the tolerance policies regarding soft drugs in the Netherlands were not re-evaluated or discussed on the radio as a result of the criticism. The UN observation about the Dutch's leading position in ecstasy production was again mentioned on March 6 on a breakfast show.¹⁴ In a segment highlighting news articles from that morning's newspapers, it was mentioned that *Trouw* had run an article about the Dutch police's suspicion that ecstasy was created in mobile laboratories, after which it was repeated that the Netherlands had been singled out as one of the leading producers of synthetic drugs. That same day, *Tijdsein* broadcast an extensive report about ecstasy, which was introduced as 'a drug problem that even the Cabinet wants to put an end to.'¹⁵ The report was about ecstasy production and use in the Dutch countryside. It was stated that political parties VVD and CDA felt the ecstasy problem in the Netherlands was not being combated proactively enough. The report emphasised that ecstasy use was widespread throughout the Netherlands

¹² *Radio 1 NOS Radio Nieuws*. 4 March 1997; *Radio 2 NOS Radio Nieuws*. 4 March 1997.

¹³ *Radio 1 Journaal*. 5 March 1997.

¹⁴ *Radio 2 Ontbijtradio*. 6 March 1997.

¹⁵ *Radio 1 Tijdsein*. 6 March 1997.

by highlighting its popularity in the countryside. Reporter Ron Paul visited the small towns of Diever and Dwingeloo where a police spokesperson stated that it was a mistake to focus solely on ecstasy use in the big cities, considering it was also widely popular in the countryside. Its use was not limited to house parties, as it was said to also be used on regular nights out. Representatives from political parties PvdA and VVD also discussed the issue, with VVD Representative Korthals opining that ecstasy should be approached as a hard drug, and that for too long in the Netherlands the drug had been viewed as a soft drug.

The report on ecstasy use in Drenthe seemed to be part of a renegotiation process of the existing perspective on ecstasy in the Netherlands: its use was stated as having both spread to teenagers in the smallest country towns and further beyond the context of house parties, which, according to the police, meant that the time for a different approach had come. It is also relevant to note that, in this case, trade in ecstasy and its use were discussed as part of the same affliction.

This process of discursive renegotiation, wherein ecstasy appeared to be becoming seen less as a soft drug and increasingly as a hard drug, also seemed to have occurred in a radio documentary about ecstasy that was broadcast a few weeks later.¹⁶ The report sought answers to the question as to whether ecstasy was a dangerous drug following news that health minister Els Borst had asked a team of experts (toxicologists and psychiatrists) to research the drug and assess the risks. 'It was introduced as the "love drug," and now people call it the joint of the 1990s' was how the presenter introduced the topic, and then went on to state that 200.000 youngsters in the Netherlands had become users of the substance. The report featured interviews with users, a mother of a user, a pill tester and Jaap de Vlieger, a drug expert from the police. Some users described the pleasant effects of the drug, while one user also described how the use frequency increases over time: 'you turn into a bit of a weekend junkie at some point.' When the raver's mother mentioned that her daughter's condition worsened after she started using ecstasy, the presenter wondered whether this could be a result of puberty. The pill tester was reluctant to label ecstasy good or bad saying that any substance (even water) was potentially harmful, as it all depended on the context and the amount. He also said that no pill was intrinsically good; pill testing did not make any ecstasy pill better or worse, it merely helped the user to assess the risks. Police expert De Vlieger expressed concern and described how his own perception of the drug had changed over the past decade, stating he used to see 'cheerful teenagers ten years ago' but had now come to see ecstasy as 'a bitter pill.' He also expressed that addiction experts should start being very explicit about how ecstasy and drug use were very serious issues.

¹⁶ *Radio 1 Dingen Die Gebeuren*. 25 March 1997.

From this item, it is relevant to note that the health minister had asked drug experts and mental health experts to assess the risks, which expresses the public health approach underlying drug policies. The police expert had asked drug experts to take a stance and condemn more explicitly ecstasy and drugs in general. Users were also given a platform in the debate.

In these radio items, the production of ecstasy in the Netherlands alongside pressure from other European countries to curb it seemed to also work as a catalyst to reassessing the position of ecstasy use. Ecstasy seemed to be wavering between soft and hard in its discursive formation. This oscillating position was apparent in a number of other items as well: ecstasy was sometimes seen as a hard drug, other times as soft (“the joint of the 1990s”) and, in other items, neither hard nor soft.

In a brief news item from 12 June about an increase in soft drug users asking for help in dealing with their addiction, ecstasy was mentioned in passing: ‘many of the soft drug users also use other stimulants like cocaine, ecstasy and amphetamine.’¹⁷ In this news item, it was framed between other hard drugs.

In an interview with Trimbos Institute researcher Wil de Zwart from 19 June, ecstasy was classified as both hard and soft.¹⁸ De Zwart had been invited on to comment on a Trimbos publication whose research results indicated that there had been an increase in soft drug use in the Netherlands since 1992. No significant increase in hard drug use was found during the same period. The presenter specifically asked De Zwart about ecstasy trends, as, according to him, ‘its use is supposed to be explosive according to media messages.’ De Zwart answered that research suggested there had only been a minor increase in ecstasy use between 1992 and 1996. The way that ecstasy was mentioned in this item, outside of the soft and hard dichotomy, suggests it was difficult at this time to categorise it as either hard or soft.

Author Hetty van der Wal was interviewed during *Dingen Die Gebeuren* on 23 October following the publication of her book about gabber culture.^{19,20} The book described “gabber” culture, a subculture surrounding hard-core dance music, as strongly associated with house parties. “Gabbers” (the term is an Amsterdam street language word for friend), the electronic dance music enthusiasts associated with these parties, were known for their shaved heads, tracksuits and their dance style, “hakken,” a fast leg movement. In researching the book, the author had spent time among gabbers, and the radio interview came across as a defence of them: Van

17 *Radio 1 Dingen Die Gebeuren*. 12 June 1997.

18 *Radio 2 Thuis op Twee*. 19 June 1997.

19 Hetty van der Wal, *Hakkuh En Strakstaan* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1997).

20 *Radio 1 Dingen Die Gebeuren*. 23 October 1997.

der Wal mentioned she had been surprised by the open character and friendliness of gabber culture. Party organiser and self-proclaimed gabber Sander Groet was also interviewed in the item: Groet argued that the atmosphere at house parties was better and more peaceful than the atmosphere at traditional discotheques. The bad reputation surrounding gabbers was mentioned a few times, which was refuted as a distorted response to gabbers' predilection for hard music, drug use and their 'radical appearance.' The Dutch flag used as a part of the style was explained by Groet as an expression of unity rather than nationalism, as had often been claimed. Drug use was discussed after the presenter asked Anja, the mother of a gabber daughter, who was also interviewed, if she was concerned about the drug use found at the parties her daughter attended. Mother Anja answered that she felt the parties had sufficient self-regulation in place and that she did not think drug use at house parties was any worse than drug use in the regular nightlife circuit. Groet said he wished that ecstasy would be known as a nightlife pill ("uitgaan-spil") instead of a party pill to better reflect the pill's widespread use in the nightlife, not as something just found at house parties. Van der Wal added that she thought the Dutch government's approach to the ecstasy pill was too naive. According to her, it could be easily bought at any street corner in the Netherlands. She said that the government should acknowledge its popularity and invest in better drug education. Money invested in combating illegal trade (which, she added, led to tainted pills) should be invested in better drug education. Mother Anja added that she thought young people knew well what they were doing when it came to drugs, to which Van der Wal added that more research into ecstasy was necessary due to the 'incredibly large user group' in the Netherlands. The overall perspective of the interviewees about ecstasy seemed to be that its popularity should be reason enough for the Dutch government to implement better harm reduction policies. It was clear that gabbers were dealing with reputation issues, which in part stemmed from their high ecstasy consumption. The radio item sought to accommodate as a youth subculture gabber style, its music and even the related ecstasy use. Comparisons were made with older youth cultures, like hippies, nozems, punks and rockers. The stakeholders' openness about ecstasy use did not disqualify them as participants in this debate, and drug use risks were positioned as best addressed with drug education initiatives.

In a short news item in December, it was reported that the Amsterdam City Council was planning to regulate ecstasy sales in the city after young users had asked for authorised selling points to counter the polluted ecstasy market.²¹ In the item, 21 Radio 2 NOS Radio Nieuws. 10 December 1997.

it was mentioned that August de Loor from Stichting Adviesburo Drugs, a drug research foundation, welcomed the news, as he thought this might lead to the disappearance of drug dealers in clubs, in addition to better opportunities to educate ecstasy users. Users and drug expert De Loor continued their campaign for a decriminalised supply side in the name of harm reduction, as they had been doing since the early 1990s (see Chapter 2). Ecstasy users still had the possibility of assuming a role in public debates about harm reduction initiatives in 1997. Regulated ecstasy sales never became a reality, but the possibility had been seriously considered. This indicated that ecstasy was viewed here as a soft drug.

These radio items from 1997 gave the impression of a discursive formation of ecstasy use in transition: it appeared to be publicly seen as a soft drug, but this did not go without its challenges. Ecstasy use was not criminalised at this time, but the question arose whether it should be approached as a more serious problem. Pill testers and ecstasy users themselves were given a place in the radio debates, in addition to being asked for their opinion on a potential need for a reevaluation of the substance. Pill testing was not usually seen as controversial, and the health Minister's response to these new questions regarding ecstasy was to have mental health and drugs experts re-assess the risks associated with it. This implied that it was the norm to rely on drug research in the face of controversy. The music genre house, gabber style and, although definitely controversial, ecstasy use were all seen as a part of youth culture. The police and a number of politicians were dissatisfied with the substance's relatively innocent reputation: the substance, according to them, should no longer be seen as a soft drug. Police representative De Vlieger, for instance, insisted that experts should start emphasising more the harmfulness of drugs. A number of times, ecstasy use was problematised when it was associated to the increase in the illegal production and distribution of synthetic drugs in the Netherlands. Cracks were starting to appear in the belief that ecstasy use should be understood as a soft drug that was a part of youth culture.

2003 | Harm reduction under pressure

The radio items analysed for this section are from 2003. My analysis of radio items from 2001 (Chapter 3) showed that a number of incidents at house parties led some stakeholders to criticise the harm reduction policies, leading to potential bans on parties. And in 2006 (also analysed in Chapter 3), harm reduction seemed to have moved to the margins of the discursive formation of ecstasy on the radio. Statistics about effective policies appeared to have become less influential while emotional and moral arguments and an increasingly dominant belief that drugs were intrinsi-

cally bad became more common: even calls to criminalise the drug user could be seen, a break with traditional Dutch drug policy. The items from 2003 in which ecstasy use was mentioned, analysed here, give the impression that another transition was occurring: the climate surrounding ecstasy use was becoming more divisive, and stakeholders still advocating harm reduction measures were put on defence.

Ecstasy was one of the topics discussed during a political party leader debate broadcast on the radio on 12 January, preceding the upcoming general election.²² One statement given to party leaders to discuss was ‘tolerance is disastrous to standards and values.’ The party leaders talked about the example of ecstasy in this context. Jan Peter Balkenende, the sitting Prime Minister (CDA) of the Netherlands, thought the Netherlands had gotten ‘too soft’ and considered the dual track policy confusing and thus ecstasy should not be tolerated at house parties. Wouter Bos (PvdA) responded by saying that having house parties without control (unorganised, underground parties being presumably a result of ending ecstasy and party drug tolerance) was not an ideal scenario either, because, in his view, the lack of supervision would lead to situations wherein parents could not feel secure in knowing their children would make it home safe. Mat Herben of Lijst Pim Fortuyn expressed his belief in zero tolerance drug use policies. Jan Marijnissen (SP) said that he thought tolerance policies were good practice for soft drugs and that he would be in favour of legalisation if the option came up. Balkenende, Bos en Marijnissen’s positions were consistent with the guiding principles of their respective parties. Balkenende’s and Herben’s positions might also be understood in the changed, more polarised post-9/11 political context.²³ In this context, a more conservative perspective grounded in a belief that traditional norms and values were under threat had been bolstered.

The fact that the tolerance policy was singled out as an important issue in the party leader debate highlights a shift in the climate surrounding tolerance policies regarding ecstasy: the harm reduction reasoning behind it became less important in the face of a growing belief that tolerance had led to a deterioration of norms and values. Balkenende exclaimed in the discussion that NL, the country code for the Netherlands, had regrettably come to stand for *no limits*. From this conviction, it felt as though a normative boundary had been crossed with the liberal ecstasy policies in the Netherlands.

The release of the 2003 drug report from the United Nations International Narcot-

²² *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 12 January 2003.

²³ Jac Bosmans and Alexander van Kessel, *Parlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), p. 225.

ics Control Board (INCB) was the topic of several short news items on 26 February.²⁴ The Netherlands was reported as being the main global producer of ecstasy. It was also mentioned that the Netherlands was one of the top 5 ecstasy use prevalence countries in the world. The INCB had advised stronger international cooperation in curbing ecstasy use. Following the news items, the drug report became the topic of an hour-long debate during *1 Op De Middag* on 27 February.²⁵ The debate was centred around the question as to whether ecstasy should be legalised in the Netherlands in light of the INCB drug report, which the presenter introduced as 'a report that is devastating to us as a country.' Different stakeholders participated in the debate: Peter Cohen from Centrum Drugsonderzoek, Martin Witteveen as justice chief of the Synthetic Drugs Unit, criminal lawyer Inez Weski and EU parliamentarian Arie Oostlander (CDA). The first part of the discussion was about the production of synthetic drugs in the Netherlands. Weski stated that she regularly observed the negative reputation of Dutch drug policy as having part in influencing foreign judges to more likely hand out harsher sentences to Dutch drug criminals. Oostlander mentioned that 'the Netherlands has a permissive climate when it comes to use and production of drugs,' which he felt led to clandestine drug production in the Netherlands. Cohen disagreed that a permissive climate necessarily correlated with more clandestine drug use, pointing out that the US also had significant synthetic drug consumption despite its strongly prohibitionist drug policy.

The second part of the discussion turned to the question as to whether ecstasy should be legalised. The presenter suggested that soft drugs were legalised in the Netherlands, but no hard drugs were. Oostlander pointed out that no drugs were legalised, as legalisation is not the same as tolerance. Oostlander and Witteveen did not believe in legalisation, but Cohen did, pointing out that combating use was in his opinion a 'perpetual job creation project,' implying that it would never bring drug use to a halt. Weski pointed out that the 'entire justice system budget' was reserved for drug criminality, that forbidding substances might only make them more attractive to users and that, in her view, substance regulation has been historically random. Witteveen said that 'experts find ecstasy use more dangerous than cocaine use at the moment,' which Cohen, a drug researcher, said was not true. Weski asked whether the substance should be banned or not, even if it was assumed that it was highly harmful, possibly shifting the discussion towards users' agency. Oostlander responded that he found 'the strong Dutch belief in the self-determination of the human individual a curious phenomenon.' His remark, which should perhaps

²⁴ *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 26 February 2003.

²⁵ *Radio 1 Op De Middag*. 27 February 2003.

also be understood as a reference to his party's Christian principles, underlines a belief in prohibitionist policy: if something is forbidden by law, policy should be along the same line. Harm reduction and tolerance policies did not go well with this framework. Weski and Cohen, who were both in favour of tolerance policies and pointed out the adverse effects of ecstasy criminalisation, were forced to take a defensive position throughout the discussion. Witteveen kept positioning ecstasy use as a substance that was viewed as intrinsically harmful by drug experts, despite the drug expert being on the same panel stating otherwise.

Cohen was interviewed again in April to comment on the reports of a recent meeting between Dutch and American justice officials in the Hague.²⁶ In the meeting, officials had reportedly agreed to stronger Dutch/American cooperation, faster extradition of drug criminals and the instalment of US justice officials in the Netherlands. Ecstasy use in the Netherlands was discussed, with Cohen saying ecstasy-related incidents had become rare since the late-1980s as users were better informed following their years of experience with the substance. Cohen expressed great sorrow about the stronger influence of American justice officials in the Netherlands since the Dutch policy was, according to him, 'better in every way' than the American. The item suggested that the Dutch policy was starting to erode.

Two weeks later, State Secretary of Health Clemence Ross (CDA) was interviewed about her participation in a congress about combating drugs in Vienna.²⁷ According to the presenter, the Dutch parliament had given her the task to propagate the Dutch liberal stance on drugs explicitly. PvdA, D66, VVD and GroenLinks had reportedly been in favour of this, as there were concerns that the reputation of the Dutch drug policy had gotten worse in Europe. Ross confirmed her mission, insisting that she had always propagated the "Dutch way" abroad. She said that some countries did believe that the Dutch soft drugs tolerance led to an increase in drug production, but she also said that some countries still looked upon the Netherlands as an example of public nuisance prevention and harm reduction drug policies.

The UN report, the increased cooperation with American justice officials in combating drugs and the fear of a loss in reputation of the Dutch harm reduction perspective on drugs abroad showed that the Dutch approach to drugs and ecstasy was being subjected to intense international pressure. This had been the case for decades, but the tone of the resulting debates in the Netherlands was changing, and the question as to whether soft policies implied a moral decay in the Netherlands was becoming increasingly prominent.

²⁶ *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 2 April 2003.

²⁷ *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 17 April 2003.

Within this context, the reputation of ecstasy as a recreational drug seemed to be shifting at home in the Netherlands as well. Supposed widespread ecstasy use within the Amsterdam police force became an intensely covered scandal on the radio. On 27 May, in the evening news' highlights of newspapers, it was reported that *Het Parool* had printed that three Amsterdam police officers had been dismissed as a result of their involvement in 'use of or even trade in ecstasy,' and that 15 officers in all had been connected to ecstasy in the past ten months.²⁸ In the evening paper radio reading on 5 June, it was reported that *Het Parool* had printed that 15 officers had been dismissed for use of ecstasy and GHB: '*Het Parool* calls it disturbing and fears an image of swallowing, snorting and dealing officers, while the officers themselves don't take it nearly as seriously: "We were young, fresh off the police academy, and liked to go out, which meant a pill would come by every now and then."' ²⁹

Throughout the following days, several radio shows took up the issue. A television report from well-known crime journalist Peter R. de Vries on the 'large scale hard drugs use in the police force' scandal was the topic of several evening news items.³⁰ Harry van Rijn from the police union commented on the television report in which it was reported that 20 to 25 officers had been involved in the scandal, and it also discussed drug use amongst on-duty police officers. Van Rijn was reluctant to believe the issue was as serious as De Vries was suggesting, but he expressed concern about the damage to the police's reputation, adding he wanted to avoid police officers being seen as 'pill users' on the street. A police officer commented that he found it hard to believe that the scope of the scandal was as significant as De Vries' report suggested, as 'if that is the case, all of society is rotten and that would mean the end of everything.' A reporter attended the criminal proceedings against several the police officers on 12 June.³¹ The coverage led to a discussion about whether private drug use affected the integrity of police officers. The coverage referred to the two deaths at Zaandam house party, Fundustry, that happened 2001 (see the analysis in Chapter 3), wherein the two victims were said to have been police officers. One of the officers on trial argued that police officers were not on duty 24/7 and that they had, what he called, a 'normal person' too, suggesting a need for a distinction between what was acceptable in the private and professional sphere. The judge concluded that more research was needed to reach a verdict. That same evening fired police officer Antje

28 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 27 May 2003.

29 *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 5 June 2003.

30 *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 6 June 2003.

31 *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 12 June 2003.

was interviewed during a news broadcast.³² Antje had been the whistle-blower in the ecstasy scandal: she had reported that a colleague had used drugs in the police car with her while on-duty. When she was heard as a witness in the internal investigation, she had admitted to taking an ecstasy pill once four years prior. Officially she was fired for drug use, although Antje believed she was terminated due to her being the whistle-blower. She said that, although ecstasy was tolerated, it also fell under the Opium law and she should not have used the substance, even though it was done during her private time. She did not believe this was the reason for her termination, seeing as how plenty of officers use drugs and drink gratuitously when they are off duty. A few days later she was quoted during the radio news from a newspaper article in *Het Parool*: she was reported as saying she considered herself to have been a good police officer and that she should not have been fired for using ecstasy in her private time.³³ The tolerance policy regarding private, individual ecstasy use was associated with a compromised police force integrity.

In September, drug use within the police force was the topic of a radio discussion.³⁴ CDA Representative Wim van Fessem and Police Union spokesperson Jan Willem van de Pol discussed the statement ‘a police officer should not be allowed to smoke weed in a coffee shop,’ something that Domestic Affairs minister Johan Remkes (VVD) had proclaimed the previous day. Van Fessem and Van de Pol strongly disagreed with one another. Van Fessem thought that it went without saying that police officers should not go anywhere near coffee shops, which he framed as places with ‘a scent of criminality.’ Van de Pol believed police officers should be allowed to go to a coffee shop for a joint seeing as how they were allowed to visit a bar for a beer. Bars, in his opinion, were not necessarily less criminal environments than coffee shops (as Van Fessem implied): he knew plenty of bars which were regularly targeted by police for ecstasy sales. The presenter then asked Van de Pol if police officers should be allowed to use ecstasy in their spare time. Van de Pol did not think so as, in his opinion, only that which is either allowed by law or socially acceptable should be permitted to policemen.

Ecstasy use was framed as socially unacceptable by Van Fessem, and although this point of view seemed to be shared most strongly within CDA, the reputation of ecstasy and party drugs appeared to be deteriorating in general. In early October, a reporter went along with politicians visiting nightclubs to which they had been invited as part of

³² *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 12 June 2003.

³³ *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 17 June 2003.

³⁴ *Radio 1 Op de Middag*. 4 September 2003.

an initiative to improve the reputation of nightclubs.³⁵ No clubbers were interviewed, but one of the interviewed politicians, Willibrord van Beek (VVD), commented that he was particularly interested in checking the search procedures at the entrance to the club. On the one hand, drug use was seen as a part of club culture. On the other hand, that culture had had a bad reputation which it was attempting to repair.

Two radio news stories indicated that ecstasy use was not just seen as problematic, it was directly criminalised. The first was the raid of Amsterdam night club Escape that had been covered in several news items in May.³⁶ The Amsterdam police had raided the club on Sunday night with 200 police officers and detection dogs because they suspected that large amounts of XTC, GHB and cocaine were being sold in the club on Sundays. Three dealers and ten users were arrested. Dealers were not the only target; clubbers had also been searched for possession of drugs. People with a small amount of drugs on them were given the chance to pay a fine on the spot. Clubbers had attempted to avoid arrests or fines by dropping their drugs on the floor: 'the floor was littered with ecstasy pills, tubes of GHB and cocaine packages.' In one of the radio items, Amsterdam mayor Job Cohen commented that he would need to come up with very good arguments for avoiding the closure of Escape. The incident did not lead to policy discussions.

The second news story in which ecstasy use was problematised and criminalised was the death of a 15-year-old girl at a Heerlen house party event called Mega Rave Party. The death of the girl had been first reported in several news items on August 23.³⁷ In the items, it was mentioned that the girl had died in the hospital, but that it was unclear whether the cause of death was from overdose or a tainted ecstasy pill. A police representative was interviewed and commented that the police were happy with the security agreements at the party that had been otherwise occurring without incidents. Twelve party goers had been arrested for the possession of hard drugs. The presenter asked whether a next edition of the party should be allowed to be organised given the girl's death, to which the police responded that incidents like this could never be prevented completely, and that the organisation of the party had always been in order.

On August 24, the club's director was interviewed on the radio to comment on the incident.³⁸ The director felt responsible for the girl's death, but he also went on to explain all the prevention measures that had been in place, with which, he in-

³⁵ *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 5 October 2003.

³⁶ *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 26 May 2003; *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 26 May 2003.

³⁷ *Radio 1 Met Het Oog Op Morgen*. 23 August 2003; *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 22 August 2003.

³⁸ *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 24 August 2003.

sisted, the police had always been satisfied. The presenter appeared to be critical, pressing him on the fact that twelve people had been arrested for the possession of hard drugs at his party. The two also talked about how it was possible that the 15-year-old managed to get in despite the minimum age being 16.

The next morning the incident was again referred to when a 1975 radio report on alcohol use among youth was rebroadcast, showing substance abuse among youth was considered a persistent problem.³⁹ The presenter painted a bleak picture: 'Alcohol, alcohol and pills. The image of the outgoing youth is one of limitless alcohol and drug use, which is reinforced by last weekend's death of a 15-year-old girl following ecstasy use at a discotheque.' After the broadcast of the 1975 item, Harald Wiegel from the Trimbos institute was interviewed to comment on the event. He mentioned that serious drug incidents were relatively rare and that, although they could never be prevented completely, risks could be minimised with good drug education and pill testing. The presenter expressed frustration about the government's decision to ban on-site pill testing at parties, as he did not believe that youth would make the effort of getting their pills tested at the Trimbos institute.

The coverage around the party highlights the shift in the discursive formation of the ecstasy user. Although traces of the harm reduction approach were clearly still present (the presenter's belief in on-site pill testing, the Trimbos' emphasis on drug education), drug users were being arrested and ecstasy use was no longer seen as merely an innocent part of youth culture. Instead, it was being considered as a very serious problem. The local policy response following the death was covered on the radio as well.⁴⁰ The mayor of Heerlen had decided to enforce a zero-tolerance drug policy for all discotheques, to enforce stricter age controls and to completely ban all house parties. He commented that while he did not believe this would solve the drug problem completely, he was still responsible for public order as a mayor, and this responsibility was guiding his decisions. The mayor's response reflected the more controversial climate regarding ecstasy use and the deterioration of policies based on harm reduction principles.⁴¹ New policies were aimed at abstaining from ecstasy use as opposed to minimising risks to users.

Although the overall temperature regarding a harm reduction approach to ecstasy users appeared to have cooled off considerably, in addition to the instances of criminalisation of ecstasy users, harm reduction was still a topic of discussion in 39 *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 25 August 2003.

40 *Radio 1 Ochtendjournaal*. 12 November 2003; *Radio 1 Avondjournaal*. 12 November 2003.

41 In the radio items from 2001, a similar pattern regarding ecstasy-related deaths at parties and the local authorities' response could be seen (see Chapter 3).

some news items and radio discussions. In several brief news items on 28 March, results of a Jellinek centre study on the effects of pill testing at parties were released.⁴² Based on research done among 700 party-goers in Vienna (Austria), Hannover (Germany) and Amsterdam, it was found that the presence of pill testing facilities at parties led to more responsible ecstasy use. Partygoers who had their pills tested were inclined to use less, and party goers who were on the fence about using ecstasy sometimes refrained from doing so after spotting the pill testing service. The results were seen as surprising in light of the existing assumption that pill testing would encourage drug use. This assumption had been part of discussions about pill testing in radio items in the 1990s as well, but in those years the belief in the public health benefits of testing was more dominant.

A radio report about first aid at festivals was introduced by describing drug users at festivals as ‘youngsters who are out of control because of excessive consumption or abuse of [...] ecstasy, GHB, weed and hash, most of the time combined with alcohol.’⁴³ The reporter visited participants of a first aid course specifically aimed at first aid administered for drug induced incidents. The main aim of the course was described as helping first aid people to recognise the effects of different drugs. When the presenter asked about first aid at house parties, participants stressed that drug incidents were only a minor problem experienced at first aid stations at house parties: 98% of the incidents reportedly had more to do with physical issues such as ankle and knee injuries. One of the participants of the course mentioned that festival goers were sometimes reluctant to reach out to first aid in fear of their parents being informed about their drug use, something the interviewees claimed was unlikely to happen. The first aid worker added, ‘[using drugs] is his choice, so be it, don’t judge that.’ In the second part of the report, the reporter visited a first aid station at the Pinkpop festival happening that weekend. The first aid worker there told the presenter that alcohol and drugs incidents were negligible; she referred to them as ‘pinpricks.’ Surprised by this, the presenter asked how that was possible, to which another first aid respondent stated that ‘the youth deal with such things much better nowadays.’ It appeared that the reporter had a much bleaker assumption about the festival attendee’s reality than that described by first aid workers, who downplayed any suggestion that drug use was a significant problem at festivals.

On 1 August, several news items reported on news from the Trimbos institute about a decrease in incidents relating to party drugs (“uitgaansdrugs”): in particular

42 *Radio 1 Wereldnet*. 28 March 2003; *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 28 March 2003; *Radio 1 Stand.nl*. 28 March 2003; *Radio 1 Op de Middag*. 28 March 2003.

43 *Radio 1 Op de Middag*. 9 June 2003.

lar, speed and ecstasy-related incidents were said to have become less frequent.⁴⁴ Alcohol-related problems, however, were increasing. The reasons given for this positive development in drug-related incidents were wiser users, improved pill testing and improved organisational aspects of parties (prevention measures, less tickets sold, professional health workers on site). Although these harm reduction measures were presented as successful, Trimbos was not in favour of legalising ecstasy, as there was concern that making ecstasy legal would lead youngsters to riskier substances. For Trimbos, however, being able to supply safe ecstasy was considered a potential advantage of ecstasy legalisation.

Psychiatry and addiction professor Wim van den Brink also said there could be public health advantages to ecstasy legalisation in a radio interview in early September.⁴⁵ Van den Brink was invited to comment during a science item on recent American scientific experiments in which results showed ecstasy had been found to be harmful to unborn rat babies.⁴⁶ Van den Brink commented that while it was hard to extrapolate this type of research to human beings, his own research into the effects of extreme ecstasy use on humans had led to similar findings. The presenter then wondered whether this type of research was reliable, bringing up a recently withdrawn American ecstasy study in which researchers had accidentally used methamphetamine instead of MDMA, plus a recent *New Scientist* publication that had suggested it was almost impossible to get research results published that downplayed the harmfulness of ecstasy.⁴⁷ Van den Brink insisted that his research results were reliable; he did not address the moral bias the presenter implied. The presenter also asked what Van den Brink thought about ecstasy legalisation, to which Van den Brink answered that he did not believe policy significantly affected use patterns. He understood, however, why people were considering legalisation, as taking ecstasy out of the criminal sphere might have some beneficial effect.

Science appeared to begin functioning increasingly as one of several perspectives or even opinions on ecstasy, not as information on which policy makers could

44 *Radio 1 Stand.nl*. 1 August 2003.; *Radio 1 Op de Middag*. 1 August 2003; *Radio 1 Wereldnet*. 1 August 2003; *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 1 August 2003.

45 *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 9 September 2003.

46 James B. Koprach and others, 'Prenatal 3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine (Ecstasy) Alters Exploratory Behavior, Reduces Monoamine Metabolism, and Increases Forebrain Tyrosine Hydroxylase Fiber Density of Juvenile Rats', *Neurotoxicology and Teratology*, 25.5 (2003), 509–17 <[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0892-0362\(03\)00091-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0892-0362(03)00091-6)>.

47 'Ecstasy. How Dangerous Is It Really?', *New Scientist*, 20 April 2002 <<https://www.newscientist.com/issue/2339/>> [accessed 24 September 2020].

rely more or less blindly. In this way, research that indicated harmfulness was questioned by the presenter by referring to previous unreliable science studies. This climate was affecting the position of harm reduction policies: if drug research was viewed as just one of several possible perspectives in addressing the problem, policies based on other perspectives, like prohibition, were on the table too.

In November, a radio item reported on American research into the effectiveness of combining psychotherapy with a provision of 'party drug ecstasy' for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder patients.⁴⁸ It was mentioned that, in the Netherlands, similar research had been carried out in the past by professor Bastiaans using the drug LSD. In another news item from the same day on the topic, Peter Geerlings from Jellinek centre was interviewed to comment on the American research.⁴⁹ Jellinek centre questioned the relevance of the research: in a soundbite a representative commented that they had 'known for a long time that ecstasy causes nerve cell degeneration in rats' and that research carried out at the Academic Medical Center in Amsterdam by Liesbeth Reneman⁵⁰ showed similar results in human beings. Furthermore, Geerlings said that combining psychotherapy with MDMA had been unsuccessfully attempted in the past: 'it never came to fruition, probably due to neurotoxicity.' Geerlings doubted whether Bastiaans' past research with LSD had actually been effective. The presenter asked Geerlings whether the substance used was the same drug as ecstasy 'for which our countrymen are infamous abroad.' Ecstasy's notoriety was making it difficult for the drug to be taken seriously as a medicine.

In the radio items analysed for the study of 2003, ecstasy was referred to as a soft drug only once in June in a foreign news report on the death sentence given to a Dutch ecstasy criminal in Indonesia and the severe persecution of drugs and ecstasy trade there.⁵¹ A radio correspondent in Indonesia spoke to a member of the action group Stichting Granaat that fought drug crime and asked him 'You are very much against drugs, aren't you? Are you aware of the difference in the Netherlands, where ecstasy is actually a soft drug?' In the context of the other items about ecstasy from 2003 that I analysed, this is noteworthy, as ecstasy was otherwise never characterised as soft in the radio items about ecstasy use in the Netherlands. In juxtaposition to the harsh Indonesian drug policy climate, the Dutch perspective on

48 *Radio 1 Wereldnet*. 24 November 2003.

49 *Radio 1 Middagjournaal*. 24 November 2003; *Radio 1 Stand.nl*. 24 November 2003.

50 L. Reneman and others, 'Effects of Dose, Sex, and Long-Term Abstinence from Use on Toxic Effects of MDMA (Ecstasy) on Brain Serotonin Neurons', *Lancet (London, England)*, 358.9296 (2001), 1864–69 <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(01\)06888-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(01)06888-X)>.

51 *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 23 June 2003.

ecstasy was still propagated and characterised as liberal.

The radio items from 2003 showed that the discursive formation of ecstasy use had changed. Ecstasy had been a classified hard drug in the Netherlands since November 1988, but throughout the 1990s ecstasy had a public reputation more reminiscent of a soft drug. The items from 2003 seem to be at the heart of a change in that reputation. The tolerant attitude towards ecstasy use was increasingly seen as too soft, especially by more conservative politicians and the police. This had been the case in previous years too, but in 2003 this perspective was becoming dominant. More progressive and liberal politicians were still in favour of an international propagation of the Dutch liberal drugs climate, but in debates about ecstasy policies and potential legalisation, for example, the campaign to decriminalise ecstasy use had begun to come under attack. The reputation of the ecstasy user and clubbing culture in general appeared to have deteriorated, and it was further problematised in the media by the scandal surrounding ecstasy use within the Amsterdam police corps, in addition to the death of the girl at the Heerlen house party. The arrests of party goers for possession of ecstasy and the lack of controversy following this showed that the notion that ecstasy users should be first approached with public health in mind might not have been as widely shared anymore. Party goers were not given a platform in the debates on ecstasy use, which is another change from the items from 1997. Drug experts did keep propagating harm reduction policies, but in this new climate of approaching ecstasy use with prohibition, experts struggled to convince other stakeholders of their perspective based on scientific research into the public health benefits of harm reduction.

Conclusion

This analysis of radio items from 1997 and 2003 in which ecstasy use was mentioned showed a process of change in the discursive formation of ecstasy use and users during this period. The years show periods in which ecstasy use was first commencing and then establishing a process of discursive change: in 1997, questions were starting to be asked regarding the toleration of ecstasy use; in 2003, support of that toleration seemed to have dropped off considerably.

The items from 1997 showed a dynamic in which the status of ecstasy as a tolerated party drug used at house parties had come under question. Discursively, ecstasy had usually been considered a soft drug in this period, but this tendency was also coming under scrutiny. This scrutiny was not the result of new controversies

surrounding house parties (like the deaths of clubbers in Zaandam in 2001 and the death of a 15-year-old girl in 2003; instead, the reevaluation that was taking place on the radio seemed to have been instigated by the international attention paid to the Netherlands for its being an important global producer of illegal synthetic drugs. Yet, although questions had started to be asked, a faith in the tolerance policy based on harm reduction principles remained dominant.

In 2003, this process of discursive transition seemed to have reached a new stage: ecstasy use was now seen as a serious problem. In this climate, the tolerance policies were not only questioned, they were also put on defence. In drug policy discussions, harm reduction and tolerance policies were no longer the foundation from which to approach this problem. The Amsterdam police department itself was at the heart of a scandal surrounding ecstasy use among officers both while on the job and in their private time. The widely covered death of a 15-year-old girl at a house party in Heerlen also showed that the reputation of ecstasy use had shifted: ecstasy use was seen as a problem in need of hard-line solutions, perhaps even criminalisation.

There were also clear differences in which stakeholders were invited to comment. Ecstasy users themselves were given space to speak in radio items in 1997, but that was no longer the case in 2003. The debate in 1997 was dominated by politicians and police officers. Furthermore, there was a change in the role and reputation of drug experts, who remained staunch believers of the benefits of harm reduction policies. Expert knowledge appeared now to be considered as just another opinion, standing in stark contrast to how seriously their knowledge was taken when forming the dual track policy approach, which was based on a scientific understanding of a hard reduction approach.

This study based on keyword search and visualisation techniques of words from the ASR metadata enrichment enabled me to take stock of various assets and challenges of the leveled approach. First, it seems that the leveled approach guided me to defining years in the discursive transition rather than years characterised by coverage of particular events or topics. More studies would have to be done to confirm that this is the case. This could mean that the leveled approach is capable of signifying periods in time in which the discursive formation of topics changed as opposed to just guiding attention towards particular historical topics or events that led to increased coverage.

Explicitly documenting every step of the leveled approach helped to understand what questions could and what questions could not be answered with the available (meta)data and techniques. By examining each methodological step in the light of (meta)data scarcity, it became possible to answer a historical question despite the uneven character of (meta)data.

There were limits to the usefulness of creating combined search queries when no proximity between the elements of a query could be set. With the combined search query (xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y) AND (gebruik* OR drugsgebruik*) any radio item was retrieved whose segment contained both one of the ecstasy terms and a word for (drug) use. In the analysis, it became clear that all radio items did indeed feature talk about the drug ecstasy, but not all items were about use of drugs. The word *use* (“gebruik”) is common and is likely to be used frequently in any radio item. A search in the Media Suite conducted on 14 September 2020 showed that of the 17.718 items radio items catalogued with the broadcasting tag ‘NPO Radio 1,’ 16.846 were retrieved with the search term *gebruik**. Many items are segmented in the radio archive, and the word frequency lists I generated only featured words that appeared in the same segment. Regardless, the *use* part of the query was not a very precise means to target the search. For the search strategy to be more precise, proximity operators need to be supported.⁵² With proximity operator support, researchers will be able to retrieve items in which the different parts of the search query are close to each other and, thus, more likely to be related.

The study was aimed to flesh out the hypothesis about a change in the discursive formation of ecstasy use. With the analysis of items from 1997 and 2003, I was able to make this historical hypothesis more plausible, as close reading of the items did point towards a clear change. However, there are still a number of methodological issues when this leveled approach study is compared to the key word search studies of Chapters 2 and 3, wherein all items for particular periods were analysed. These observations are important to keep in mind in the further development of the leveled approach.

In this way, there are challenges related to the risk of digital selectivity, an important challenge in DH.⁵³ I noticed that, during the distant reading stage of this study, I was quickly enticed to arrive at relatively strong interpretations. Comparing the two years side-by-side created almost a dichotomy in my mind, especially since I was exploring the hypothesis that such a change had indeed occurred: the year 1997 came to represent harm reduction and 2003 was the year of criminalisation. Listening to the results during close reading of the radio items, however, effectively broke the illusion of any kind of dichotomy and divulged the grey tones and nuances in the material.

The process of historical interpretation of word frequency lists made me aware that combining DH techniques in order to find relevant material requires alertness of the risk that an interpretive path can be coloured by digital selectivity flaws. On

⁵² Proximity operators will be supported in the Media Suite in the future. See: <<https://mediasuite.clariah.nl/documentation/howtos/single-search>>.

⁵³ Coburn.

the one hand, historical expertise and understanding is crucial when interpreting and contextualising material. On the other hand, prior knowledge makes it tempting to see patterns that confirm the knowledge base. This underlines the importance of the occasional close read throughout the process of the leveled approach: regularly listening to actual items was an effective way to prevent potential rash interpretations prompted by data visualisations.

The initial stages of the leveled approach were done in collaborative Zoom sessions with the data engineer. Although the sessions were born out of necessity due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it created an unusual research setting that led to new methodological insights. I experienced some anxiety about having to collaborate on the research project live. Normally, exploratory search is an individual exercise. I was not used to a situation in which someone viewed my actions: I felt pressure to be thorough and knowledgeable as a digital historian. This felt like a stage of research that is usually private, which highlights that some stages of digital public debate research, specifically what might be thought of as the exploratory stage that comes before research results, happens ‘behind the scenes.’ Having to collaborate remotely on a shared screen because of the Covid-19 pandemic thus forced me to be fully open about this stage of research. In digital history, a field in which methodological practice is still continuously under development, and in which standards for digital tool evaluation need to be established, this was useful as it forced me to reflect on my approach.⁵⁴

Ahead of the Zoom sessions, I questioned whether it would be possible to effectively go through the steps of the leveled approach, considering I would not be in direct control of the Jupyter notebook. The collaborative aspect turned out to have a number of unanticipated advantages. Having a Digital Humanist and a data engineer together go through every research step created a highly critical research environment. The engineer and I continuously fine-tuned the search strategy and methodology from the perspective of our respective disciplinary positions: I was checking whether what we were doing made sense in relation to the research question; whereas the engineer remained on the lookout for coding inconsistencies and search setting irregularities. Observing what goes on “behind a Graphical User Interface” (a Jupyter notebook is a live coding environment) made me realise how I might not always be sufficiently aware of the effects of choices underlying methodological steps and decisions. An example of this is the interaction between item segmentation and data visualisation settings I described earlier.

Lastly, it was insightful to see the coding being done in real time during the Zoom sessions. This improved my understanding of the logic of coding and of

⁵⁴ Koolen, van Gorp, and van Ossenbruggen.

how different configurations of settings affect search results. Close collaboration with a data engineer or programmer should perhaps be more common practice in DH research if the scholar, like me, possesses little to no programming skills.

CONCLUSION

TALKING XTC

Conclusion | Talking XTC

The possibility of finding mentions of amphetamine and ecstasy in millions of digital newspaper pages of Delpher using key-word search enabled me to explore hundreds of descriptions and perspectives on these substances particular to past decades. I observed how divergent strands developed within the discursive formation of these drugs and how ecstasy transitioned rapidly from a new drug in need of interpretation for the reader in the late 1980s to a well-known and soon infamous party drug. In other words, full-text searchability of large historical newspaper archives enabled by Optical Character Recognition metadata made it possible to immerse myself in the zeitgeist of previous decades.

With Automatic Speech Recognition on the horizon at the start of this research project, I had been anticipating that during my PhD research a similar opportunity would become available for historical radio debates. When finally, after a period of testing different options for search and visualisation techniques of radio material in the CLARIAH Media Suite, I was able to *listen* to the historical public debate unfold for the first time, it felt significant. I heard stakeholders respond to each other's positions, get emotional in the heat of an argument and, in this way, I was provided with a unique insight into how ecstasy was perceived in a different time. Hearing the historical public debate on ecstasy, a topic that I had in the previous years only encountered in the newspapers, was an experience I would describe as the equivalent to being unexpectedly confronted with an image or a video of something you had previously only read or heard about.

Being one of the first researchers to analyse Dutch radio debates using keyword search and visualisation techniques based on Automatic Speech Recognition metadata enabled me to add a new dimension to our understanding of historical drug debates, as structurally studying shifts in the public perception of drugs in archives other than Optical Character Recognition-enriched print media had hitherto been impossible. Being able to structurally research the discursive formation of drugs, ecstasy in particular, in both newspaper and radio archives made it possible to get a broader perspective on how shifts in the public perception of drugs developed in the post-war period in a context of regulatory change.

The unexplored territory I trod in the process of doing structural digital analysis of newspaper and radio debates led to methodological insights and new challenges, on which I will elaborate and reflect here. In this concluding chapter, I take the opportunity to zoom out and see what I have learned: first, discussing the dynamics

of drug debates in Dutch newspapers and on Dutch radio; second, observations on doing digital public debate research with the leveled approach in print and audio-visual media data archives; and finally, I take the opportunity to highlight a number of directions for future research that my thesis gives rise to.

Historical conclusions | **Drug discourse in Dutch newspaper and radio debates**

With this thesis I investigated the research question “What were the developments and dynamics in post-war drug discourse in Dutch newspaper and radio debates?” in order to fill the gap in our understanding of the post-war drug debates in the Netherlands. This period represents a time in which the Netherlands was, on the one hand, known for an internationally unique policy approach to drug use based on public health considerations, while simultaneously subjected to increasing drug regulation. My four studies investigated how public perceptions of drugs developed in this context.

Summary of the most important findings by chapter

In Chapter 1 I investigated to what extent amphetamine was known as a medical substance in articles appearing in Dutch newspapers between 1945 and 1990. Like ecstasy, amphetamine turned into a classified hard drug in the Netherlands, which means the chapter functioned as a precursor study to the subsequent chapters discussing the discursive formation of ecstasy: both substances underwent similar regulatory changes that can be researched in relation to their discursive formation. In articles from the 1950s, amphetamine often appeared in the context of issues regarding other drugs, although it appears that at the time, its medical reputation was so strong that amphetamine itself was generally not seen as problematic. In the 1960s this changed, when amphetamine was starting to become known for its popularity as a performance enhancer for young people and athletes, which some stakeholders believed might be harmful. These concerns preceded regulation of the substance that occurred in 1968, when it became a subscription only drug, and in 1976, when it was classified as a hard drug under the Opium law. The medical strand in amphetamine’s discursive formation disappeared for the greater part in the following years. By the end of the 1970s, it was only seen as acceptable under strict medical supervision and, in the 1980s, it was generally regarded as an illegal drug and a criminal commodity. Its medical reputation had mostly dissipated by

then. Amphetamine's regulatory changes in 1968 and 1976 were preceded by a few years of public debate in the newspapers.

In Chapter 2, I investigated the origins of ecstasy's discursive formation with my analysis of its occurrence in public debates in Dutch newspaper articles printed between 1985 and 1990, the years in which it arrived in the Netherlands and quickly developed into a popular party drug. I showed that its reputation was contested from very early onwards, as it was subjected to specific constellations of 1) descriptions of the substance, 2) its commonly connected actors and 3) settings within three different, mostly separate discursive strands. This indicates that in post-war Dutch media debates, drugs can be productively understood as having multiple simultaneous meanings, a pattern that Walma also identified in her studies into the discourse on morphine, heroin and cocaine in the first half of the twentieth century.¹

In the dominant strand, accommodation, ecstasy was seen as a soft party drug used by "normal" people looking to supplement their fun on nights out, particularly during acid house parties. Dominant stakeholders in this strand - mainly users, drug experts and harm reduction advocates - sought to normalise ecstasy use. In the problematisation strand, ecstasy was seen as a dangerous drug in need of active repression, often by politicians from conservative parties. Originally this primarily stemmed from the bad reputation around British ravers, as foreign news sections in Dutch newspapers included sensationalist stories from the British tabloid press. This eventually led to the stigmatisation of acid house and ecstasy use in the Netherlands. In the last discursive strand, criminalisation, ecstasy developed a strong reputation as a criminal commodity while the Netherlands quickly developed into a major international producer of illegal ecstasy. This strand originally developed mostly separate from the accommodation and problematisation strands, but eventually police representatives - the stakeholders that were most dominant in the articles I identified as part of this strand - drew attention to the untenable situation wherein ecstasy use was normalised while they were expected to combat the criminal supply chain. As such, the tensions that still exist in the contemporary public debate regarding ecstasy - in which positions range from full legalisation to calls for more repressive measures - were found to originate in this early period.

In Chapter 3, I turned to radio items in which ecstasy was discussed between 1985 and 2006. With my analysis of the dynamics in ecstasy's discursive formation in these radio items, I was able to show how its dominant reputation changed in these first twenty years from a relatively innocent party drug to a problematic

¹ Walma, *Between Morpheus and Mary. The Public Debate on Morphine in Dutch Newspapers, 1880-1939*.

substance. The different discursive strands distinguished in the newspaper articles were also observed in radio discussions between the stakeholders invited on to interpret issues related to drugs and drug policy. This radio dynamic was different from the dynamic in the newspaper debates, where the different strands and perspectives were more often found in separate articles.

In the first years, the media hype surrounding the new drug was frequently downplayed by drug and addiction experts who were invited to contextualise the issue. There existed a dominant belief in the effectiveness of approaching ecstasy as a public health problem, which means issues associated to ecstasy were usually seen as best addressed with harm reduction measures like drug education and pill testing services for ravers. The first of the two dual tracks of the Dutch drug policy - under which drug trade is criminalised while drug use is deliberately decriminalised for public health reasons - was reflected in radio items until sometime in the 1990s. Ecstasy production and trade was usually seen as a separate issue requiring different measures. I also observed this duality in the newspaper articles.

Up until 1996, ecstasy was discursively more often seen as a soft drug than a hard drug. This is not in line with the second of the dual tracks: ecstasy had been a classified hard drug since November 1988. The only drugs classified as soft were cannabis products. By 2006, the discursive formation of ecstasy and its relation to the dual track policy had shifted. By then, harm reduction and tolerance policies regarding ecstasy use were seen as too soft, and many stakeholders called for more repressive use policies and even criminalisation of ecstasy use, representing a divergence from the first of the dual tracks. In the years leading up to that point, frustration had been building concerning ecstasy's soft reputation, with stakeholders reiterating that ecstasy was in fact classified as a hard drug. In this last regard, ecstasy's reputation in these radio debates had become more closely aligned with its classified hard drug status.

In Chapter 4, I zoomed in on the discursive formation of ecstasy use in radio debates in the 1990s and 2000s, investigating the hypothesis from Chapter 3 regarding a shift in ecstasy's reputation from innocent party drug to problem drug. Levelled approach analysis of the radio data archive based on search and visualisation techniques resulted in a selection of radio items from the years 1997 and 2003 for close reading. Close reading showed that these years can be understood as times in which the problematisation of ecstasy first disturbed (1997) and then surpassed (2003) the accommodative attitude towards its use as a party drug. In radio items from 1997, the tolerance policies surrounding ecstasy use that had hitherto been depended on were questioned. In radio items from 2003, tolerance policies were starting to be regarded as problematic. Harm reduction mentality remained domi-

nant in 1997 but it was beginning to be challenged, but in 2003 it took the backseat to a belief that harder measures and even ecstasy use criminalisation should be considered. Analysis of the many lively stakeholder discussions surrounding drug policy on current affairs programs showed that problematisation of ecstasy use had become more dominant than accommodation.

Different types of stakeholders were dominant in the two years: in 1997, stakeholders that had a role in the discussions were those involved in the parties themselves (users, staff, organisers) and contributed to the discursive formation of the substance; while in 2003, the debates were dominated by politicians and police representatives. Drug and addiction experts were invited to the radio discussions in both years, but their reputation appeared to have changed considerably later on. In 1997, their views, based on research and experience with the effects of different policies, were seen as authoritative. In 2003, however, their views were discursively disqualified: the expert view was increasingly seen as one of the possible perspectives, not the final word, and it was suggested that drug experts were downplaying ecstasy and drug problems, or that they could not be trusted. Differences between how foreign criticism of Dutch drug policies was discussed on radio debates in 1997 and 2003 also showed that ecstasy and the tolerant climate surrounding its popularity as a party drug was dissipating over the years.

Discursive dynamics in a cross-media news landscape

These findings allow me to make several broader observations about the discursive formation of drugs in post-war Dutch newspaper and radio debates, thus contributing to existing scholarship about these substances' historical drug trajectories. Although the newspaper and radio studies only partially overlap in terms of time period, the methodological relatedness of the studies makes it possible to also draw comparisons between the different dynamics found in newspaper and radio debates.

From both newspaper and radio analyses, it became apparent that the discursive formation of ecstasy was complex and best understood as multifaceted: strands within which ecstasy was accommodated, problematised or criminalised usually revolved around particular "truth" constellations of ecstasy: by emphasising different descriptions of the drug itself, connecting particular actors and/or settings to it, different reputations of ecstasy originated. For example, the reputation of ecstasy as a party drug popular with ravers often existed independently from its reputation as an illicit good with increasing significance in the organised crime networks.

Generally speaking, these different strands appeared further apart more often

in the newspaper debate than in the radio debate. In the newspapers, I found the different meaning constellations most often in separate articles, whereas on the radio I found them together in clashes between stakeholders with different opinions and perspectives. The live nature of radio provided stakeholders with an unfiltered platform and enticed participants to make bold statements when confronted by opposing stakeholders with whom they disagreed. In this way, discussion programs during current affairs shows on the radio show the public debate in a less composed way than newspaper articles. The effects of this dynamic were seen in my studies on the discursive formation of ecstasy, which shows that analysing searchable radio and newspaper archives enables an enriched perspective on the historical cross-media debates. Newspaper and radio archives offer different windows into the historical public debate, with newspaper articles often showing specific meaning constellations, whereas radio discussions show in a more intense way how such constellations and their corresponding perspectives related or clashed.²

Despite important differences between how the discursive formation of drugs developed in the different media debates, my analyses show that post-war drug debates in the media are fundamentally cross-media debates. Stories regarding ecstasy developed and intensified between different news media, as both newspaper and radio items referred to reports in other media. In both the radio and the newspaper studies, controversial television items played a significant role in its discursive formation process. The *Brandpunt* episode from January 1989 featuring a staged ecstasy laboratory marked ecstasy as a criminal commodity. In June 2003, an item from crime journalist Peter R. De Vries' television show about drug use at the Amsterdam police force led to intensified discussions regarding tolerance policies and the drug's soft reputation in the Netherlands. In the radio debates, media hype regarding ecstasy was often the topic of heated debates regarding drug policy in the Netherlands. The result of this dynamic was that intensified media coverage became the catalyst for even more media coverage and discussion, underlining the media's constructive role in the discursive formation of ecstasy.³

These differences and similarities between discursive dynamics in newspaper

² This is not an absolute distinction, and exceptions were found in both directions. In the newspapers, for instance, there were also longer articles outlining the different sides of a debate. Not all radio items were in-depth stakeholder discussions.

³ This is a known dynamic in news reporting that has been characterised as the result of 'making news, instead of reporting news events', see: Peter L.M. Vasterman, 'Media-Hype: Self-Reinforcing News Waves, Journalistic Standards and the Construction of Social Problems', *European Journal of Communication*, 20.4 (2005), 508–30 (pp. 515–16) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323105058254>>.

and radio debates that were found show that studying them in relation to one another does justice to the relations in a complex cross-media landscape. Having shown how public debates in radio (and presumably television) archives can now be studied in conjunction with the newspaper archive might help towards further emancipation of 'audiovisual collections as primary historical records,' 'which as a general rule do not enjoy a level of descriptive attention anywhere close to their textual counterparts.'⁴ The potential significant methodological hurdle for digital cross-media public debate analysis can be overcome with distant and close reading techniques for data archives enriched with OCR or ASR metadata.

My studies suggested that the discursive formation of drugs developed at a different pace from changes to its legal status. Concerns regarding the addictive potential of amphetamine preceded its classified hard drug status. Ecstasy was seen as a soft drug for almost a decade after it had been classified as a hard drug. This dynamic indicates that the newspaper and radio debates were able to function as an arena for free democratic debate in this period in the Netherlands: different perspectives, at times out of sync with the legal status of substances, existed in media debates and were sometimes even dominant.⁵

Despite ecstasy's classified hard drug status in 1988, there appeared to be a highly tolerant attitude regarding its use as a somewhat innocent party drug in the 1990s. The erosion of support for the public health approach and a tolerant climate regarding ecstasy use from the 1990s to the 2000s occurred, at least in part, because drug experts and evidence-based research underlying harm reduction measures were starting to be disqualified with emotional discursive strategies ('I would really like to point out to you the many parents of addicts who say 'Please, if only the Netherlands had different policies''⁶) or demonisation of stakeholders ('I sometimes get the impression, even though I should not say this out loud, that some people [from addiction research institute Trimbos] are themselves cocaine users or have cocaine users as acquaintances, which does make me wonder - does that make you blind?'⁷). Ecstasy users were hardly asked to contribute to the debates regarding ecstasy in the 2000s - in stark contrast to the previous decade - whereas the role of politicians and police had by that time become more dominant. This raises questions about what other

4 Sapienza and others.

5 The degree to which these debates represent an ideal arena for true democratic discussion in the public sphere is also highly dependent on the production context (e.g. what stakeholders were in- or excluded), an issue that my research did not investigate (see Methodological Challenges below).

6 *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 24 November 2006.

7 *Radio 1 De Ochtenden*. 2 June 2006.

social and/or production-related developments underlie these changes. What drove such change is beyond the scope of this thesis, but highlighting its effects shows that analysing the media debates provides insight into the sociocultural meaning of drugs that cannot be deduced from its legal context only.

Ecstasy's discursive formation should be understood as originating and developing within an international media landscape. Ecstasy's discursive formation cannot be understood in isolation from international developments. Patterns as they have been identified in studies of drug debate dynamics in American⁸ and British⁹ press (e.g. exaggeration, sensationalisation) had an indirect influence on the discursive formation of drugs in the Dutch newspapers as well. Sensationalist American and British news stories were often parroted in the Dutch newspapers and, consequently, the reputation of the ecstasy user in Dutch newspapers was affected. In the radio debates, international drug issues generally only became a discussion topic in current affairs programs if they directly affected the Netherlands, keeping in line with the medium's historical 'rootedness in specific geological or cultural locations.'¹⁰ International reports on foreign criticism of the Dutch drug policies led to plenty of radio debate regarding the tolerant climate in the Netherlands. My studies thus show that there are differences in how specific international drug issues affect the discursive formation of drugs in the newspapers and radio debates.

The way ecstasy was perceived in the Netherlands should be understood as in discursive negotiation with international relations and foreign policy climates and perspectives. This especially seemed to hold true for international relations within Europe, which complements historical research that has shown how the Dutch drug policy climate existed in constant conciliation with international scrutiny in a European political context.¹¹ At the same time, local drug concerns and policy solutions played an important role in the media debates: difficulties faced by local politicians attempting to reconcile their responsibilities to their local communities with national tolerance policies regularly led to discussions on drug policies on the radio. Research into Dutch local drug policies has highlighted the importance of understanding the role of pragmatic responses to local situations by local authorities and politicians in

8 See for example: Linnemann; Walker.

9 See for example: Collin, p. 93; Davenport-Hines, p. 484.

10 Tobias Hochscherf, Richard Legay, and Hedwig Wagner, 'Radio Beyond Boundaries: An Introduction', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 39.3 (2019), 431–38 (p. 431) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2019.1647969>>.

11 de Quadros Rigoni.

interaction with national drug policies,¹² and I have shown that a similar historical relation can be found in ecstasy's discursive formation in newspaper and radio debates.

Methodological reflections | **The leveled approach**

Structural analysis of drug discourse in newspaper and radio data archives

In this thesis I combined existing search and visualisation techniques with close reading of items in Dutch digital newspaper and radio archives. Such techniques had been applied to the newspaper archive before, but in this thesis I also used them to analyse drug discourse in the digital radio archive. Use of all the individual techniques utilised in this thesis is an established practice, as is the principle of combining distant reading with close reading in digital humanities¹³ and digital history.¹⁴ My approach further built on this practice by extending its applicability from OCR to ASR metadata enrichment, which enables analysis of cross-media debates.

I called the structural, layered combination of distant and close reading techniques the "leveled approach" and piloted the approach in Chapter 1 with a newspaper study. In this approach there are three analytical levels, between which the researcher can navigate iteratively to make informed data selections. After starting with a keyword search query, the researcher can interpret patterns in quantitative coverage using timeline graphs on the macro level. Next, word clouds for particular periods within the timeline are used to investigate possible discursive strands on the meso level. By collecting and adding relevant keywords found in this process to the initial query, it becomes possible to create specific subsets for close reading.

With the benchmark keyword search studies based on Optical Character Recognition metadata (Chapter 2) and Automatic Speech Recognition metadata (Chapter 3), I was able to show that keyword search of both data enrichment types enabled subsequent search and analysis of relevant items in print and audio data archives to support structured studies into the discursive formation of drugs.

In Chapter 4, I showed that the leveled approach can be used to make informed
12 Arjan Nuijten, 'High In The City. Dutch Drug Policy at the Local Level in Amsterdam, Arnhem and Heerlen, 1968-2001 [Provisional Title]' (University of Amsterdam, 2022).

13 See for example: Bron, Van Gorp, and de Rijke; Hrim Mehta and others, 'Metatation: Annotation as Implicit Interaction to Bridge Close and Distant Reading', *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction*, 24.5 (2017), 35:1-35:41 <<https://doi.org/10.1145/3131609>>.

14 Snelders and others.

and targeted data selections for close reading of the radio archive. Although OCR and ASR metadata do not relate in exactly the same way to their respective source data, radio and television data archives can be “mined” in a way that is comparable to newspaper data archives. The leveled approach enables public debate research across these types of data archives.

The leveled approach connected the search and visualisation techniques to the-
orisation on the public sphere¹⁵ and discourse.¹⁶ By operationally connecting these theoretical concepts to the new DH techniques, I sought to emphasise how digital history methods can be seen as a continuation of historical and humanistic research practice in hybrid research forms that incorporate both old and new theoretical and methodological practices.¹⁷

Access to and searchability of different media datasets coupled with search and visualisation options enables insight into how different topics were discussed in cross-media debates. This makes it possible to investigate the historical reputation of specific topics such as drugs in this part of the public sphere. Consequently, investigating the minute changes in discursive dynamics and the role of different stakeholders over time enabled critical reflection of the how the media functions as a domain for public debate.

The combination of search and visualisation techniques with close reading matched conceptually well with an analysis on the level of discourse: the items can be interpreted as have been subjected to specific discursive conditions of “truth”: items selected for close reading shared a topic and they were produced contemporaneously within the same cultural context. The concept of discursive formation, as I applied it, was helpful in discovering how the meaning of both amphetamine and ecstasy was defined by shifts and changes in their relation to different, at times conflicting, discursive strands.

Explication of search and visualisation steps

The second way in which my thesis contributes to public debate research in digital history lies in the framework it provides for making steps based on search and visualisation techniques an explicit part of the historical analysis. This opens up important interpretive parts of the digital historical analysis to critical self- and peer reflection.

The search and visualisation steps are an integral part of the leveled approach: before a historical narrative based on close reading on the micro level can be writ-

¹⁵ Habermas.

¹⁶ Foucault, ‘The Order of Discourse’.

¹⁷ Zaagsma.

ten, interpretative search and selection decisions need to be made on the meso and macro analysis levels. Therefore, I have made the deliberate effort to present extensive sections outlining search and visualisation steps in each historical analysis. The decisions made in the search and visualisation process represented a crucial part of the interpretive process of each chapter.

The leveled approach thus helped to structure the space between distant and close reading. This space, without which deliberate explication might be underestimated as merely part of the exploratory research stage, is thereby made explicit and introduced as an intrinsic part of the analytical process. This contributes to the scholarship invested in making explicit how digital data and techniques affect how research questions can be formulated and adapted.¹⁸ I found that there were several advantages to making each part of the analysis explicit.

First, detailing how the search and visualisation techniques helped me to decide on a particular subset of items for historical public debate analysis enabled critical self-reflection on the full interpretive process. Moreover, the inclusion of each chapter's full analysis trajectory hopefully improves critical peer discussion around all stages of the interpretative process, not just on the resultant historical narrative. Such critical reflection and discussion around data selection paths could be an effective way to address the potential risk of selectivity issues in digital history research:¹⁹ this would be much harder to pinpoint if this part of the research would be left implicit.

Second, this practice helped me to both make explicit and reflect on the challenges of working in a context of uneven (meta-)data availability and (meta-)data scarcity. This is relevant since studies can consequently be realised in the context of changing technological- and data contexts. Having a model for explication, the role of search and visualisation techniques in the process of historical analysis might help us move closer towards what has been called a 'critical practice' in digital history²⁰ and a critical digital humanities²¹ that goes beyond the distant and close reading dichotomy, instead applying consistently principles of source criticism to all stages of the methodological approach.

Since including search and visualisation decisions as part of the historical analysis
18 Bron, Van Gorp, and de Rijke; Hoekstra and Koolen.

19 Coburn.

20 Andreas Fickers, 'Towards a New Digital Historicism? Doing History in the Age of Abundance', *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 1.1 (2012), 19–26 <<https://doi.org/10.18146/2213-0969.2012.jethc004>>.

21 Nicola Glaubitz, 'Zooming in, Zooming out. The Debate on Close and Distant Reading and the Case for Critical Digital Humanities', in *Anglistentag Regensburg 2017*, ed. by Anne-Julia Zwierlein and others, Proceedings, XXXIX (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2018).

helped to bridge the gap between distant and close reading, I would suggest that this practice deserves to be embraced, regardless of whether the leveled approach is followed. Making explicit as opposed to leaving implicit parts of historical analysis based on distant and close reading might be a way to respond to the increasing focus on transparency in digital history research, emphasised in the recently founded journal *Journal of Digital History*, which asks researchers to publish articles consisting of layers of hermeneutics, data and narrative.²² Developers of digital tools and research infrastructures like the Media Suite might consider supporting and structuring the creation of data selection paths by developing options to save and retrieve data exploration paths.

Methodological challenges

I deliberately chose to do studies using changing tools and techniques, and uneven or incomplete data archives. This has influenced the results of each study, in addition to limiting the possibility to compare some of the studies to each other. The studies of Chapter 1 and 2, for example, were carried out with different versions of the newspaper archive and different tools, making it harder to compare the findings of the two chapters. The chosen periods of study in Chapter 3 were partially determined by which part of the archive was available to search, as ASR metadata enrichment was ongoing while I was creating the analyses. I expect that, as techniques and data availability continue to improve, issues such as these will become less impactful. Moreover, perfect historical archives – physical or digital – might always remain somewhat of a unicorn. Full methodological transparency is an effective strategy that makes it possible to pursue research in the face of these issues.

Persevering studies in the context of change is warranted and even necessary as it enables critical reflection on new functionalities based on actual research projects. Testing and/or piloting functionalities without a thorough research question to guide it might not lay bare the areas of weakness or necessary points of improvement. I was better equipped to provide feedback to redesigned versions of the Media Suite user interface, as due to extensive experience with previous versions, I instinctively felt what would and would not work for me as a public debate researcher.

By choosing national news media as the sole domain for an analysis of drug discourse, other sources from alternative domains inside or outside the public sphere were precluded from the resulting historical narratives of this thesis. Other relevant sources to study would be oral history sources, interviews with policy makers or

²² 'Journal of Digital History', 2021 <<https://journalofdigitalhistory.org/en>> [accessed 7 July 2021].

politicians, non-mainstream media, and interviews with media producers and consumers to have a more accurate understanding of their impression of drugs. These would all be relevant domains to investigate aspects of the history of ecstasy that were not covered in this thesis. They would, if pursued, expand our understanding of drug perceptions derived from mainstream news media debates.

By focusing on only the news media items, I kept different possible focus points out of the scope of this thesis. Discourse analysis of digitised newspaper, television and radio sources could focus on what is *in* the sources (textual analysis), on agenda setting points (production history analysis), or on how they were likely understood by the public back then (reception research). All of the focus points on this continuum are legitimate options for researching the public discourse occurring in the public sphere's media. There are many ways to understand and account for the different levels of meaning on this continuum. For instance, the encoding/decoding model that suggests audiences decode the media they consume based on their individual backgrounds, meaning that media can have different encoded (intended) and decoded (interpreted) meanings.²³ It is problematic to assume that meaning is consistent across these different focus points. All different focus points could lead to different meaningful observations. The historical interpretation was based on close reading of the selected media items themselves, meaning that production and reception perspectives on drugs were not considered. Investigating power relations and dynamics on the production level in particular might provide insight into how democratic the arena of media was for public debate in the public sphere.

Three of the four studies in this thesis benefitted from close collaboration with programmers and data engineers. I provided feedback and collaborated with developers of Texcavator²⁴ (Chapter 1) and the CLARIAH Media Suite²⁵ (Chapter 3 and 4). As part of research pilot DReAM, I contributed to the co-design of some of the features of the Media Suite.²⁶ The distant reading stages of the leveled approach

23 Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', in *Culture, Media Language*, ed. by Stuart Hall and others (London: Hutchinson, 1980).

24 van der Molen, Buitinck, and Pieters.

25 Berrie van der Molen, Jasmijn van Gorp, and Toine Pieters, 'Operationalizing "Public Debates" across Digitized Heterogeneous Mass Media Datasets in the Development and Use of the Media Suite', in *Selected Papers from the CLARIN Annual Conference 2018, Pisa, 8-10 October 2018* (Linköping University Electronic Press, 2019), CLUX, 200–208 <<https://ep.liu.se/ecp/article.asp?issue=159&article=021&volume=0>> [accessed 15 November 2020].

26 For a closer look at how researchers and developers collaborated on development of the Media Suite, see this blog post about the 2018 CLARIAH Summer School: Berrie van der Molen, 'CLARI-

study of Chapter 4 were done in close collaboration with a data engineer who used a Jupyter notebook while sharing their screen during Zoom sessions.

As a result of these different collaborative processes, my understanding of the data and techniques improved. A thorough awareness of how tools and techniques represent data to me as a researcher has influenced directly each stage of the analyses, as it demarcated what questions I should and should not pursue with the available data and techniques. Without knowing how to code, collaboration with programmers and data engineers enabled 'humanistic data analysis that is exploratory, iterative and dialogic [...] while raising new questions about [data] collections,' thus allowing me to grow in what Ryan Cordell called data humanism, a fundamental understanding of humanistic data analysis that does not have to incorporate actual programming skills.²⁷

I was, however, inspired by noticing the differences between doing research with Graphical User Interfaces (Chapters 1-3), and doing research which incorporated live coding in collaboration with the data engineer (Chapter 4). It made me conscious of my personal lack of coding skills and how this might obstruct me in developing more thorough data literacy, an asset which is not only increasingly important across the digital humanities,²⁸ but evidently required at the highest possible level for further development of the leveled approach. I do not think it is necessary for me as a digital historian to match the coding expertise of those creating the tools I use, but I do believe that communication between digital historians and coders/data engineers would benefit from a shared understanding of the logic of coding. I therefore intend to develop basic programming skills in the future and would, based on my experience, expect that this might become a general requirement for practicing digital history in the future.

AH Summer School 2018', *Beeld en Geluid Kennis*, 2018 <<https://beeldengeluid.nl/kennis/blog/clariah-summer-school-2018>> [accessed 15 June 2021].

27 Ryan Cordell, 'Teaching Humanistic Data Analysis' (British Library, 2019) <<https://ryancordell.org/research/teachingHDA/>> [accessed 2 July 2021].

28 Tibor Koltay, 'Data Literacy for Researchers and Data Librarians', *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 49.1 (2017), 3–14 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000615616450>>.

Future research | **Directions for and application beyond historical drug debate analysis**

Paths for future research into Dutch drug debates

There are several opportunities for follow-up research into the discursive formation of drugs in post-war news media debates that are worth pursuing. First, the discursive formation of ecstasy in the Netherlands in the period after 2006 is deserving of further research. In recent years, its popularity as a party drug has persisted, and with it the opposing repression and harm reduction positions: on the one hand, ecstasy use is at times stigmatised when politicians suggest that users of illegal drugs should be seen as responsible for the serious issues associated with the organised criminal networks;²⁹ while on the other hand, political³⁰ and academic³¹ initiatives advocating drug policy reforms and exploring ecstasy legalisation continue to emerge. My thesis showed that these perspectives have been present in newspaper and radio debates since ecstasy first came to the Netherlands, but follow-up research could focus on the discursive dynamics in media debates of the last fifteen years.

Second, it would be relevant to investigate the discursive formation of other drugs in Dutch media debates within the same period. This would make it possible to determine whether some of the shifts and patterns found in this thesis were general or more specific to the discursive formation of ecstasy. It seemed like there had been a shift from a dominant harm reduction perspective in the 1980s and 1990s to a more repressive view of drug use in the 2000s, which could be further investigated by looking into the discursive formation of, for instance, cannabis and cocaine. Research into the discursive formation of different drugs could also help determine whether drugs in general tend to be subjected to the cross-media news hype dynamic found in this thesis, or even help identify other recurring patterns.

The third direction for studying drug debates in news media would be to widen the scope to include additional media types. In order to understand post-war dynamics in drug debates in the context of the entire media landscape, studies of additional news media data archives are required. Studies into television news and, for the most recent decades, new and social media could contribute to a more

²⁹ Koops.

³⁰ 'D66 — Drugsmanifest'; 'Waarom wij voor het legaliseren van XTC zijn'.

³¹ Jan van Amsterdam, Gjalt-Jorn Ygram Peters, and others, 'Developing a New National MDMA Policy: Results of a Multi-Decision Multi-Criterion Decision Analysis', *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, 35.5 (2021), 537–46 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881120981380>>.

comprehensive understanding of cross-media drug debates.

Finally, it would be insightful to study the discursive formation of ecstasy (or other drugs) in news media data archives of other countries. Structural studies into news media drug coverage in countries with contrasting drug policy climates in particular would help to expand our understanding of the relation between national drug policies and public drug discourse in an international context.

Further methodological development

Using the leveled approach methodology coupled with the increasing searchable radio and television data, different historical research questions regarding cross-media public debates around other topics can become the subject of historical analysis. Historical topics can be explored across newspaper, radio and television archives with the leveled approach, providing new ways of researching the cross-media reality of media practices and historical topics, helping to fulfil a key promise of recent data access developments in DH.³² Research into topics less clearly demarcated than specific drugs (e.g. changing attitudes) might need more elaborate query building strategies. Executing this thesis' studies into drug debates was particularly effective using keyword search strategies because of the relatively low ambiguity of the search terms.

With this thesis I have taken the first steps in using ASR metadata for structural public debate analysis. More studies are bound to follow, which would be important as further practice-based reflection on the differences between OCR and ASR metadata in the context of historical public debate analysis is necessary. This especially holds true for macro and meso level analysis, for which it is important to be aware that the two enrichment types differ in their relation to the source material: OCR terms are closer to print text than ASR terms are to spoken word. This will only get more complex now that television data archives are also available to search with ASR metadata enrichment.³³ ASR terms have no necessary relation to what is shown in the media item, meaning that they are even further removed from television items than ASR terms are from radio items. Alternative search and analysis

32 A. W. Badenoch and B. Hagedoorn, 'TV on the Radio/Radio on Television. European Television Heritage as a Source for Understanding Radio History', *VIEW. Journal of European Television History and Culture/E-Journal*, 7.13 (2018), 97–113 (p. 17).

33 ASR metadata enrichment of the Dutch digitised television archive has in meanwhile begun at the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, meaning that the CLARIAH Media Suite has started offering full-text search of parts of its television collection.

strategies might be required for the macro and meso levels, such as semi-automatic annotation of video properties.³⁴

In the future, the leveled approach might be applied to research into the discursive formation of topics over longer time periods than I have covered in this thesis. If data archives will become more consistently accessible and searchable over longer time periods, the approach's capacity for investigating discursive change per se could be tested, since in this thesis I have limited myself to investigating the discursive formation of topics; or how the "truth" about topics was constructed by means of changing relations to different discursive conditions. Historical public debate analysis, particularly in the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis,³⁵ can continue to work with and build on the leveled approach as different datasets will be made available and/or enriched with OCR or ASR metadata.

The leveled approach could be made more powerful with linked data incorporation. Research possibilities on all levels of the leveled approach could be expanded. If it becomes possible for the infrastructure to recognise specific actors, topics, events or localities in the key words, the approach will become even more powerful: more informed search and visualisation techniques can then be used prior to the close reading stage. An example of how this could have been relevant for the studies of this thesis would be if the infrastructure could visualise over time which stakeholders had a recurring role in specific selections of search results.

A future challenge lies in integrating the methodology with research of new and social media, which would be required for serious investigations into public debates in the cross-media landscape of the most recent decades. Media research infrastructures like the CLARIAH Media Suite with a modular approach, in which datasets and tools can be combined freely by the researcher, bode well for developments in this regard.

The leveled approach might have potential for application beyond public debate research in the field of digital history as well. Mass media datasets can be used to assist research questions and topics originating from different disciplines in the humanities, such as media studies, cultural studies, art history and even the study of the modern Dutch language. The close reading stage can be adapted for different types of research questions: as long as there is a play-out function, researchers can focus on any aspect of the item for close reading (e.g. visual aspects, sentiment analysis, linguistic patterns).

Further development of the approach for application in the medical domain has commenced in the digital research infrastructure project *Homo Medicinalis* (HoMed)

³⁴ Liliana Melgar Estrada and others, 'Film Analysis as Annotation: Exploring Current Tools', *The Moving Image*, 17.2 (2017), 40–70.

³⁵ Bradley and others, p. 30.

(see Figure 24).³⁶ In HoMed, the leveled approach will be undergoing continued development as an analysis method for research into privacy-sensitive Dutch doctor patient consultation recordings. Combining a new, specialised medical speech recogniser with the leveled approach to make meaningful data selections within doctor patient consultation datasets, the project aims to make possible the investigation of research questions regarding developments in medical practice and the reputation of medicines in medical-professional debates.

If successful, the HoMed speech recogniser and methodology will be made available to other domains with specific jargon and privacy sensitive material, like confidential police recordings. The domain-specific speech recogniser will also be integrated in the Media Suite, opening up opportunities for medical-professional debate analysis in conjunction with the other functionalities (e.g. *Inspect*, *Compare*) of the Media Suite. Research into the reputation of medicines in public and medical-professional debates will then be possible, naturally within constraints of data availability.

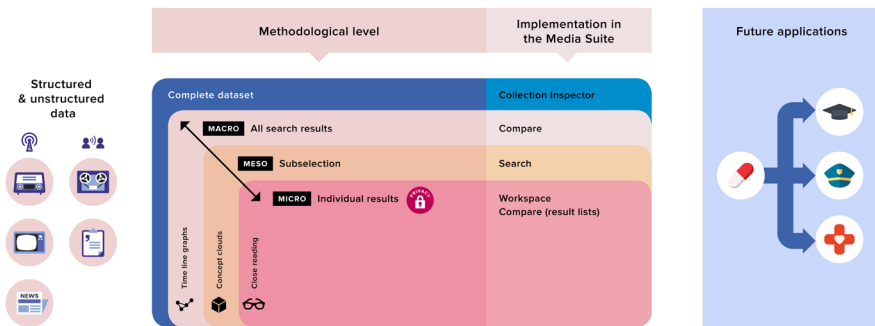


Figure 24. The leveled approach and its role within the HoMed research infrastructure

A cross-media turn in digital history?

Completing four historical studies into the discursive formation of drugs in Dutch media datasets, while also developing and testing a novel methodological approach in a context defined by changing tools, techniques, and data availability, has been both rewarding and challenging. In the introduction to this thesis, I cited the radio host who in early 1990 wondered on air if ecstasy was something to be concerned about or whether it offered solutions. It is not up to me to answer that question, although I hope that this thesis has provided the reader with new insights into the complexities of its discursive formation in Dutch media debates.

In 2013, Bob Nicholson deemed the searchability of newspaper data archives
 36 'Homo Medicinalis', *HoMed*, 2020 <<http://homed.ruhosting.nl/>> [accessed 10 June 2021].

enabled by OCR metadata enrichment so significant for historical research that he thought the time had come to consider whether the field was on the cusp of a “digital turn.”³⁷ Perhaps, now that a start has been made with operationally connecting search and visualisation of print and AV-data archive types, we can cautiously ask the question whether we might be in for a “cross-media turn” for digital history research. As more data archives of audiovisual cultural heritage will be enriched with ASR metadata, we can treat these archives as new domains to add to the print media archive that Nicholson called ‘a living dictionary’³⁸ in which ‘the changing meanings and connotations, and differing contexts’³⁹ of words and topics can be explored. Expanding these possibilities to radio and television archives, or any other archives with audio-visual material, could enable us to investigate the historical discursive formation of drugs and other topics in more breadth.

The question the radio presenter asked about ecstasy might be asked about the rise of digital datasets and search and visualisation techniques in historical public debate research as well. Should we fear the new digital possibilities, or do they provide a solution?⁴⁰ To that question, I would unreservedly answer that, countless challenges notwithstanding, they offer possibilities that we have only just begun exploring.

37 Nicholson.

38 Nicholson, p. 70.

39 Nicholson, p. 71.

40 In fact, the possibilities of new digital tools and distant reading methods have been questioned exactly along this line, see for example: Bod.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I : TOOLS AND DATA

**APPENDIX II : OVERVIEW OF DUTCH CABINETS
AND POLITICAL PARTIES BETWEEN 1982 AND 2007**

Appendix I | Tools and data

In this thesis, four digital research infrastructures or tools offering search and visualisation techniques for the exploration of Dutch mass media datasets are used. They are included below in the overview below.

Tool/Platform	Description	Relevant dataset(s) ¹	Institutional provenance
AVResearcherXL ² (No longer accessible in 2021)	Exploratory tool enabling users to search across, compare and visualise both the metadata of Dutch public television and radio programmes, and a selection of Dutch newspaper articles of the Dutch Royal Library ³	Radio and television datasets (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision); Newspaper dataset (National Library of the Netherlands)	CLARIN-NL Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision; Centre for Television in Transition at Utrecht University; ILPS at University of Amsterdam
Delpher ⁴	Search engine of the National Library of the Netherlands	Newspaper dataset (National Library of the Netherlands)	National Library of the Netherlands
Media Suite ⁵	Media analysis infrastructure offering digital search and visualisation tools with access to several media datasets	Radio and television datasets (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision); Newspaper dataset (National Library of the Netherlands)	Infrastructure projects CLARIAH (2014-2018) and CLARIAH-PLUS (2019-2024)
Texcavator ⁶ (No longer accessible in 2021)	Search engine and text mining application for creating word cloud and timeline visualisations of large text corpora	Newspaper dataset (National Library of the Netherlands)	Netherlands eScience Center; University of Amsterdam; Utrecht University

1 In this column the datasets explored for the research of this thesis with the relevant tool are listed. Some tools offer search and/or visualisation techniques of additional datasets.

2 'AVresearcher XL', *Digital Humanities Lab* <<https://dig.hum.uu.nl/avresearcher-xl/>> [accessed 8 June 2020].

3 J. van Gorp and others, 'Digital Media Archaeology : Digging into the Digital Tool AVResearcherXL', *VIEW. Journal of European Television History and Culture/E-Journal*, 2015 <<http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/321428>> [accessed 26 January 2017].

4 'Delpher', *KB Nationale Bibliotheek* <<https://www.delpher.nl/>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

5 'Media Suite', *CLARIAH* <<https://mediasuite.clariah.nl/>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

6 'Texcavator', *CLARIN-NL* <<https://portal.clarin.nl/node/14375>> [accessed 19 May 2021].

General note on search results as secondary sources in this thesis

Footnotes with reference to individual results found with Delpher or the Media Suite include the name of the newspaper title or radio show and publication or broadcast date. They can be retrieved by means of search in Delpher (newspaper articles) or the Media Suite (radio items). Chapter 1, for which the analysis was done with Texcavator, is an exception, as the analysis of this chapter was originally written as a research demonstration for a book chapter that did not consistently refer to individual articles.

Appendix to Chapter 4: Word frequency lists analysed in radio study

Overview of the word frequency lists generated with a Jupyter notebook. There are four lists for both queries, with the different settings mentioned in the top rows of the overview. Each list cuts off after the fortieth word.

Query: *xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y*

All genres				Current Affairs			
1997		2003		1997		2003	
Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
xtc	525	xtc	1530	xtc	53	xtc	632
pillen	247	pillen	479	jaar	11	nederland	205
drugs	128	nederland	438	pillen	10	pillen	195
amsterdam	102	jaar	251	drugs	8	jaar	115
handel	98	politie	241	pil	7	drugs	96
verkoop	93	drugs	221	nederland	7	politie	83
amfetamine	84	mensen	187	mensen	6	ecstasy	77
gemeente	83	ecstasy	167	nul	6	mensen	76
nederland	79	nederlandse	163	handel	5	amerika	72
jongeren	77	verenigde	162	gebruikt	5	nederlandse	66
gecontroleerde	71	amerika	153	jaren	5	verenigde	65
gebruik	60	staten	138	jongeren	5	amerikaanse	56
grote	59	handel	112	negentien	5	handel	56
jaar	56	meisje	111	ecstasy	5	staten	50
politie	53	aangehouden	107	overheid	4	gaan	50
ecstasy	52	gaan	104	vorig	4	veroordeeld	42
chemische	46	amerikaanse	104	gaat	4	smokkel	41
commissie	45	justitie	99	volksgezondheid	4	blijkt	41
gaat	44	zegt	98	onderzoek	4	gebruik	40
denkt	40	gebruikt	96	slikken	4	zegt	40
verkooppunten	40	grote	95	gebruik	4	gaat	38
onzuivere	40	onderzoek	94	Xtc	4	onderzoek	38
onderzoek	40	veroordeeld	91	mee	4	gebruikt	38

All genres				Current Affairs			
1997		2003		1997		2003	
Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
productie	40	man	90	politie	4	meisje	37
kilo	39	cocaïne	88	cocaine	3	grote	35
mensen	37	gevonden	87	gaan	3	komt	35
stichting	36	smokkel	83	krijgt	3	aangehouden	34
gaan	35	kilo	81	bestrijding	3	gearresteerd	34
borst	34	beslaggenomen	81	staat	3	kilo	34
cocaïne	33	gaat	79	stellen	3	bijvoorbeeld	33
sorgdrager	32	k	79	goed	3	staat	33
zat	31	gebruik	79	blijkt	3	cocaïne	33
gedaan	31	n	78	ministerie	3	weten	33
beslaggenomen	31	blijkt	76	radio	3	synthetische	33
gulden	31	gearresteerd	76	document	3	n	32
gebruikt	31	grootste	71	housepartys	3	land	31
zegt	30	komen	70	ruim	3	gevonden	31
miljoen	30	komt	69	regelmatig	3	indonesië	31
gevraagd	28	synthetische	66	amfetamine	3	amfetamine	31
verkocht	27	staat	65	land	3	komen	30

Query: drugs OR verdovende middelen

APPENDIX I

All genres				Current Affairs			
1997		2003		1997		2003	
Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
drugs	1157	drugs	5225	drugs	204	drugs	1844
nederland	376	mensen	1267	nederland	57	mensen	463
politie	324	nederland	914	jaar	50	nederland	452
jaar	261	jaar	860	softdrugs	44	jaar	367
mensen	221	politie	781	politie	44	gaat	300
nederlandse	201	gaat	733	mensen	44	politie	293
drugshandel	162	gaan	721	harddrugs	38	gaan	274
gaat	149	softdrugs	605	gaat	37	komen	266
drugsbeleid	142	n	573	nederlandse	32	zegt	226
zegt	137	komen	555	denk	28	natuurlijk	223
suriname	129	natuurlijk	529	natuurlijk	28	softdrugs	219
softdrugs	129	zegt	460	alcohol	26	nederlandse	195
gaan	128	grote	445	frankrijk	24	grote	187
amsterdam	123	nederlandse	430	zegt	24	drugskoeriers	165
harddrugs	119	goed	390	gaan	24	n	161
gebruik	110	alcohol	374	goed	23	drugshandel	157
natuurlijk	108	zeggen	371	handel	23	antillen	152
drugsgebruik	105	harddrugs	348	drugshandel	23	zeggen	147
handel	105	komt	338	drugsbeleid	22	minister	144
komen	104	kilo	338	gebruik	22	schiphof	140
n	103	gebruiken	333	bouterse	21	justitie	138
xtc	103	mee	319	n	20	donner	136
aantal	102	drugshandel	315	minister	19	goed	132
grote	98	allemaal	311	amsterdam	18	alcohol	131

All genres				Current Affairs			
1997		2003		1997		2003	
Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
gebruiken	98	gebruikt	309	manier	18	kilo	130
negentien	96	hele	309	grote	18	mee	130
jongeren	95	echt	306	justitie	18	bijvoorbeeld	126
bouterse	94	bijvoorbeeld	305	komen	17	harddrugs	125
commissie	92	denk	297	gebruiken	17	komt	122
zeggen	88	drugsgebruik	293	zeggen	17	land	121
kilo	88	drank	289	ministerie	17	xtc	120
verdacht	88	leven	288	bijvoorbeeld	16	denk	119
middelen	86	antillen	281	rotterdam	15	vindt	116
gebruikt	86	aangehouden	279	drugsgebruik	15	hele	115
chemische	84	schiphol	275	middelen	15	probleem	111
onderzoek	83	drugscoeriers	273	suriname	14	allemaal	110
aangehouden	82	middelen	269	land	13	krijgen	108
staat	76	geld	268	probleem	13	gebruikt	107
frankrijk	76	minister	262	drugsgebruikers	13	drugsgebruik	107
drugscoeriers	76	xtc	256	terecht	13	amsterdam	105

Appendix II | Overview of Dutch Cabinets and political parties between 1982 and 2007

This rudimentary overview of Cabinets and political parties between 1982 and 2007 is included to support (Chapter 2, 3, and 4 of) this thesis.¹

Cabinets, chronological

Period ²	Cabinet
4 November 1982 - 14 July 1986	Lubbers I Consisting of: CDA, VVD Prime minister: Ruud Lubbers (CDA) Minister of Health: Elco Brinkman (CDA) Minister of Justice: Frits Korthals Altes (VVD)
14 July 1986 - 7 November 1989	Lubbers II Consisting of: CDA, VVD Prime minister: Ruud Lubbers (CDA) Minister of Health: Elco Brinkman (CDA) Minister of Justice: Frits Korthals Altes (VVD)
7 November 1989 - 22 August 1994	Lubbers III Consisting of: CDA, PvdA Prime minister: Ruud Lubbers (CDA) Minister of Health: Hedy D'Ancona (PvdA), Jo Ritzen (PvdA) Minister of Justice: Ernst Hirsch Ballin (CDA), Aad Kosto (PvdA)
22 August 1994 - 3 August 1998	Kok I Consisting of: PvdA, VVD, D66 Prime minister: Wim Kok (PvdA) Minister of Health: Els Borst (D66) Minister of Justice: Winnie Sorgdrager (D66)
3 August 1998 - 22 July 2002	Kok II (PvdA, VVD, D66) Prime minister: Wim Kok (PvdA) Minister of Health: Els Borst (D66) Minister of Justice: Benk Korthals (VVD)

¹ For a more complete overview and parliamentary history, see: Jac Bosmans and Alexander van Kessel, *Parlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011).

² Periods include demissionary times, following the fall of a Cabinet and leading up to a new election.

22 July 2002 - 27 May 2003	Balkenende I (CDA, LPF, VVD) Prime minister: Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA) Minister of Health: Eduard Bomhoff (LPF) Minister of Justice: Piet Hein Donner (CDA)
27 May 2003 - 7 July 2006	Balkenende II (CDA, VVD, D66) Prime minister: Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA) Minister of Health: Hans Hoogervorst (VVD) Minister of Justice: Piet Hein Donner (CDA)
7 July 2006 - 22 February 2007	Balkenende III (CDA, VVD) Prime minister: Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA) Minister of Health: Hans Hoogervorst (VVD) Minister of Justice: Piet Hein Donner (CDA), (Rita Verdonk (VVD),) Ernst Hirsch Ballin (CDA)

Political parties, alphabetical

This alphabetical overview includes the Dutch political parties mentioned in this thesis.

Abbreviation	Dutch	English
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl	Christian Democratic Appeal
D66	Democraten 66	Democrats 66
GL	GroenLinks	'GreenLeft'
LPF	Lijst Pim Fortuyn	Pim Fortuyn List
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid	Labour Party
SP	Socialistische Partij	Socialist Party
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

SAMENVATTING

SUMMARY IN DUTCH

**OVER XTC GESPROKEN: DRUGSDISCOURS
IN NAOORLOGSE NEDERLANDSE
KRANTEN- EN RADIODEBATTEN**

Samenvatting | **Over XTC gesproken: Drugsdiscours in naoorlogse Nederlandse kranten- en radiodebatten**

Dit proefschrift beschrijft mijn onderzoek naar drugs-discours in historische Nederlandse kranten- en radiodebatten. Het is een boek over wat er over drugs, voornamelijk ecstasy, werd geschreven en gezegd in die media. Omdat er tot op heden geen structureel onderzoek is gedaan naar de manieren waarop drugs besproken werden en betekenis kregen in naoorlogse Nederlandse media, bestaat er een gebrek aan kennis over de dynamieken in drugsdiscours in Nederlandse mediadebatten in deze periode. In dit boek geef ik met vier verschillende studies, waarvan één over amfetamine en drie over ecstasy, antwoord op de onderzoeksvraag “Wat waren de ontwikkelingen en dynamieken in naoorlogs drugs-discours in Nederlandse kranten- en radiodebatten?”

Het onderzoek van dit proefschrift valt onder het historische onderzoeksproject *The Imperative of Regulation*, waarbinnen gedurende de afgelopen jaren onderzoek is verricht naar ontwikkelingen wat betreft drugsregulering in naoorlogs Nederland. In dit proefschrift wordt de relatie tussen de voortschrijdende drugsregulering in Nederland en veranderingen in de publieke perceptie van drugs in mediadebatten belicht. Er bestaat onderzoek naar drugsdiscours in Nederlandse krantendeбаты voor vroegere periodes, maar er is geen onderzoek naar drugsdiscours in Nederlandse radiodebatten.

Naast deze historische doelstelling richt dit proefschrift zich ook op de methodologische uitdaging die hoort bij het combineren van kranten- en radiodata. Binnen *digital humanities* en *digital history* wordt al enkele jaren structureel onderzoek gedaan naar krantendeбаты door middel van *Optical Character Recognition* (OCR) metadata: een technologie die gedigitaliseerde tekstdata op woordniveau doorzoekbaar maakt door middel van zoeken op trefwoord. De recente beschikbaarheid van *Automatic Speech Recognition* (ASR) metadata maakt gedigitaliseerde audiovisuele data doorzoekbaar op een vergelijkbare manier: met zoeken op trefwoord kan daardoor ook in het gesproken woord gezocht worden. Maar hiervoor, en in het verlengde hiervan voor crossmedia-onderzoek, bestaan nog geen geijkte methodologische kaders. Parallel aan de lijn met uitwerking van verschillende historische vraagstukken over drugsdiscours, loopt er in dit boek daarom ook een pad langs de conceptualisering, toepassing en conclusie van een structurele methodologische benadering van digitale tekstuele en audiovisuele datasets die ik de *leveled approach* noem.

Het is gemeengoed geworden om technieken die vallen onder de zogenaamde *distant reading*-benadering, waarbij de computer visuele representaties van de metadata van een dataset creëert op basis van input van de onderzoeker, te combineren met

close reading, het interpreteren van de eigenlijke media items. De *leveled approach* is een manier om technieken uit deze twee benaderingen op gestructureerde wijze te combineren en daarmee stappen uit het onderzoeksproces voor publiek debatonderzoek op basis van gedigitaliseerde bronnen expliciet te maken. Het is bovendien een methode die tracht om het mogelijk te maken om dit op vergelijkbare manier te doen voor datasets met gedrukte en audiovisuele bronnen. Dit brengt de mogelijkheid om structureel historisch crossmedia publiek debatonderzoek te doen dichterbij.

De *leveled approach* bestaat uit drie analytische niveaus, waartussen de onderzoeker in iteratieve cycli navigeert om zo uit enorme datasets een relevante subset te creëren die helpt bij het beantwoorden van historische onderzoeksvragen. Met relevante trefwoorden wordt getracht middels een zoekopdracht zoveel mogelijk resultaten over een bepaald onderwerp te vergaren. Op het macroniveau gebruikt de onderzoeker vervolgens de chronologische tijdlijnvisualisatie om te onderzoeken of er periodes met meer of minder aandacht voor het onderwerp bestonden. Vervolgens wordt de zoekopdracht herhaald voor op basis van de tijdlijnvisualisatie geselecteerde tijdperiodes binnen het gehele bereik. Voor elke periode gebruikt de onderzoeker dan, op het mesoniveau, woordwolken om te kijken welke thematische richtingen onderscheiden kunnen worden in de wolk trefwoorden. Woordwolken zijn visualisaties van de meest voorkomende unieke trefwoorden. Door uit deze wolken relevante bij elkaar horende trefwoorden te verzamelen en toe te voegen aan de zoekopdracht, kan uiteindelijk op het microniveau door middel van *close reading*, het analyseren van de bronnen, een historisch narratief over het onderwerp zoals dat zich binnen de dataset(s) ontwikkelde beschreven worden. Op elk niveau van de *leveled approach* is interpretatie op basis van kennis van de historische context van grote invloed.

Deze benadering maakt het mogelijk om voor een specifieke periode zoveel mogelijk media-uitingen te vinden waarin een bepaald onderwerp besproken wordt. Door deze resultaten in samenhang te analyseren, ontstaat de mogelijkheid om onderzoek te doen naar wat ik de "discursieve formatie" van dat onderwerp, in dit boek drugs en dan met name ecstasy, noem. Discours, een begrip dat in de betekenis zoals ik het gebruik te herleiden is tot de Franse filosoof Michel Foucault, zou omschreven kunnen worden als de historisch veranderlijke sociaal-culturele "waarheid." In een samenleving met een sterk narcofobisch discours zou bijvoorbeeld sterke argwaan ten opzichte van drugs verwacht worden. Discours staat in directe relatie met de macht over wat de "waarheid" is, en dus ook over wat *niet* de waarheid is. Verschillende mensen kunnen hier meer of minder invloedrijk in zijn. De historisch veranderlijke discursieve omstandigheden of patronen rondom drugs kunnen in kaart gebracht worden door zoveel mogelijk momenten te analyseren waarop er over drugs werd geschreven of

gesproken in een bepaalde tijd. De manier waarop deze discursieve omstandigheden de reputatie van drugs beïnvloeden noem ik de discursieve formatie van drugs. Dat heb ik onderzocht in dit boek, wat in essentie gaat over de verschillende en mogelijk tegenstrijdige manieren hoe men in Nederland drugs duidde in mediadebatten.

De belangrijkste bevindingen van de historische narratieven uit de vier hoofdstukken geven samen antwoord op de hoofdvraag over de ontwikkelingen en dynamieken in naoorlogs drugs-discours in Nederlandse kranten- en radiodebatten.

Hoofdstuk 1 onderzoekt met behulp van de *leveled approach* in hoeverre de reputatie van amfetamine medisch gekleurd was in krantenartikelen in Nederlandse kranten tussen 1945 en 1990. Net als ecstasy werd amfetamine officieel geclassificeerd als een harddrug onder de Opiumwet, wat dit hoofdstuk in historische zin een voorloper maakt van de navolgende hoofdstukken die allemaal over ecstasy gaan. De stoffen ondergingen vergelijkbare reguleringsprocessen die onderzocht kunnen worden in verhouding tot hun discursieve formatie in de mediadebatten. In krantenartikelen uit de jaren '50 werd amfetamine regelmatig genoemd in de context van problemen die betrekking hadden op andere drugs. Omdat de medische reputatie van amfetamine toen erg sterk was, leek het alsof amfetamine niet als problematisch werd beschouwd. Dit veranderde in de jaren '60, toen amfetamine berucht werd als prestatieverbeteraar voor jongeren en atleten. Sommige betrokkenen vonden dit zorgwekkend. Deze zorgen gingen vooraf aan regulering van amfetamine in 1968, toen de stof alleen nog op recept beschikbaar was, en in 1976, toen de stof officieel als harddrug werd opgenomen in de Opiumwet. De medische reputatie van amfetamine verdween in de opeenvolgende jaren. Tegen het einde van de zeventiger jaren werd de stof alleen nog onder strikt medisch toezicht als acceptabel gezien, en in de jaren '80 werd de stof nog uitsluitend beschouwd als illegale drug en criminele handelswaar. Van de medische reputatie was toen weinig meer over. Veranderingen in regulering van amfetamine in 1968 en 1976 werden dus voorafgegaan door een aantal jaren van publiek debat in de kranten.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt het begin van de discursieve formatie van ecstasy in krantenartikelen uit de periode tussen 1985 en 1990 onderzocht. Dit is de periode waarin ecstasy in Nederland in gebruik raakte en zich razendsnel ontwikkelde tot populaire partydrug. Ik laat met behulp van een analyse van alle krantenartikelen over ecstasy in deze periode zien dat de reputatie van de stof vanaf het begin niet eenduidig was en tot stand kwam in de context van verschillende discursieve strengen met daarin specifieke 1) beschrijvingen van de stof zelf; 2) actoren die in verband werden gebracht met de stof en 3) settings die in verband werden gebracht met de stof. Ecstasy had zogezegd verschillende betekenissen tegelijk in de kranten.

In de dominante discursieve streng, accommodatie, werd ecstasy gezien als een softdrug die werd gebruikt door “normale” mensen op zoek naar extra plezier tijdens een avondje uit, veelal tijdens zogenaamde acid house-feesten. De dominante belanghebbenden, met name gebruikers, drugs-experts en *harm reduction* activisten, poogden het gebruik van ecstasy enigszins te normaliseren. In de tweede streng, problematisering, werd ecstasy, veelal door politici van conservatieve politieke partijen, gezien als een gevaarlijke drug waarvan het gebruik bedwongen moest worden. Dit werd in het begin vooral veroorzaakt door de slechte reputatie van Britse *ravers*, onder invloed van sensationele verhalen over problemen in Groot-Brittannië uit de Britse roddelpers die werden overgenomen in het buitenlandse nieuws. Uiteindelijk leidde dit ook tot stigmatisering van acid house en ecstasygebruik in Nederland. In de laatste discursieve streng, criminalisering, ontstond een duidelijke reputatie van ecstasy als crimineel handelsgoed terwijl Nederland zich ontwikkelde tot één van de grootste producerende landen van illegale ecstasy. Aanvankelijk ontwikkelde deze streng zich min of meer onafhankelijk van de andere strengen, maar vertegenwoordigers van de politie, de belanghebbenden die dominant waren in deze streng, vroegen uiteindelijk aandacht voor de onhoudbare situatie waarin ecstasygebruik aan de ene kant genormaliseerd werd, terwijl de productie ervan actief bestreden moest worden. De spanningen die we ook vandaag nog tegenkomen in het publieke debat over ecstasy, waarbinnen standpunten zich bevinden tussen legalisering en sterkere repressie, ontstonden allemaal in deze vroege periode.

Hoofdstuk 3 richt zich op radiodebatten waarin ecstasy genoemd werd tussen 1985 en 2006. De analyse van dynamieken in de discursieve formatie van ecstasy in radio-items laat zien hoe de dominante reputatie in twintig jaar tijd verandert van onschuldige partydrug tot probleemdrug. De verschillende discursieve strengen kwamen met name tot uiting in live discussies tussen belanghebbenden met verschillende standpunten. Dit suggereert dat er op de radio een andere dynamiek bestond dan in het publieke debat in de krant, waarin de discursieve strengen veelal in afzonderlijke artikelen tot uiting kwamen.

De eerste jaren werden gekenmerkt door interviews met drugs- en verslavingsexperts die uitgenodigd werden om de mediahype rondom ecstasy te contextualiseren. Er was een sterk geloof in de effectiviteit van het benaderen van ecstasy als een volksgezondheidsprobleem, wat ertoe leidde dat er op ecstasykwesties vooral gereageerd werd met *harm reduction*-maatregelen zoals drugsvoorlichting en pilttestservice voor feestgangers. Drugscriminaliteit werd veelal als afzonderlijk probleem beschouwd. Dit past bij het eerste tweespoor van het dubbele tweespoor drugsbeleid: actieve repressie van drugsproductie en decriminalisering van drugsgebruik. Maar

na verloop van tijd vond hier een verschuiving plaats, en in 2006 bestond er vooral frustratie over het wat dan als een te soft ecstasybeleid gezien wordt. Ecstasy werd toen steeds minder als softdrug en steeds vaker als harddrug beschouwd, wat aansluit bij hoe ecstasy voor de wet geënclassificeerd is. Dit betekent dat de reputatie in dat opzicht juist steeds meer ging aansluiten bij het andere tweespoor, met verschillende regels voor softdrugs en harddrugs. De discursieve formatie van ecstasy in de publieke media week dus gedurende de hele periode af van de wettelijke context: eerst omdat de stof meestal niet als harddrug werd beschouwd, en later omdat de tolerante houding ten opzichte van gebruik door velen als ongepast gezien werd.

Het laatste hoofdstuk, waarin de discursieve formatie in het radiodebat verder wordt onderzocht, laat zien dat het, net als bij de kranten in hoofdstuk 1, ook mogelijk is om een historische onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden door het toepassen van de *leveled approach* op radiodata. Het hoofdstuk borduurt voort op de conclusie van hoofdstuk 3 en duikt dieper in het materiaal om scherp te krijgen hoe de reputatie van ecstasygebruik veranderde in de eerste decennia in Nederland waarin de stof populair was. Analyse op het macroniveau en mesoniveau leidde tot *close reading* van radio-items over ecstasygebruik in de jaren 1997 en 2003. In het historische narratief dat volgde op dit proces van *close reading* blijkt dat de accommoderende houding ten opzichte van ecstasygebruik eerst verstoord (1997) en vervolgens verdrukt (2003) werd door problematisering van ecstasygebruik. Er bestonden tussen de twee jaren verschillen wat betreft de belangrijkste betrokkenen die in de radiodebatten aan het woord kwamen. In 1997 was er ruimte voor mensen die zelf betrokken waren bij de housefeesten, zoals gebruikers, personeel en organisatoren, terwijl in 2003 vooral politici en politiemensen aan het woord waren. In beide jaren werden drugs- en verslavingsexperts betrokken. Echter, hun standpunt, waarin ecstasygebruik doorlopend genuanceerd en op basis van onderzoek benaderd werd, werd in 1997 als leidend gezien, terwijl experts in 2003 regelmatig discursief gediskwalificeerd werden door het in twijfel trekken van hun autoriteit, waardoor het perspectief van de drugsexpert eerder als één van de mogelijke standpunten gezien werd.

In de overkoepelende conclusies van het proefschrift maak ik onderscheid tussen historische en methodologische bevindingen. De historische analyses vormden aanleiding tot een aantal overkoepelende historische conclusies over de discursieve formatie van drugs en ecstasy in Nederlandse media. Deze bredere historische conclusies dragen, net als de bevindingen van elk hoofdstuk, bij aan de beantwoording van de hoofdvraag over de ontwikkelingen en dynamieken in naoorlogs drugs-discours in Nederlandse kranten- en radiodebatten.

De discursieve formatie van drugs ontwikkelde zich op een ander tempo dan ver-

anderingen in drugsregulering: publieke onrust over amfetamine bestond voordat het middel onder de Opiumwet werd geschaard, en ecstasy werd juist nog vele jaren vaker als softdrug gezien ondanks de officiële harddrugstatus. Ontwikkelingen in de discursieve formatie van ecstasy ontwikkelden zich in een cross-mediaal, internationaal medialandschap. Op die manier speelden patronen die nadrukkelijker voorkomen in met name Britse en Amerikaanse media, zoals overdrijving en sensatiezucht, ook duidelijk een rol in de discursieve formatie van ecstasy in Nederland. Tegelijkertijd speelden ook problemen op lokaal niveau regelmatig een belangrijke rol in het mediadebat over ecstasy en waren daarmee van invloed op de discursieve formatie van de stof.

Er zijn duidelijke verschillen tussen hoe de discursieve formatie van ecstasy zich ontwikkelde in het krantendeбат en het radiodebat. De discursieve formatie van ecstasy valt het best te begrijpen als veelzijdig: verschillende discursieve strengen ontwikkelden zich rondom specifieke waarheidsconstructies van ecstasy. Maar in de krantenartikelen ontwikkelden deze zich vooral afzonderlijk van elkaar, terwijl deze in het radiodebat juist ten opzichte van elkaar tot uiting kwamen in de live-discussies. Ook specifieke internationale drugszaken veroorzaakten in de kranten- en radiodebatten verschillende veranderingen. Deze verschillende tendensen laten zien waarom het voor historisch publiek debat-onderzoek waardevol is om naast de geschreven media ook de audiovisuele media structureel te onderzoeken.

Met de studies van dit proefschrift heb ik op twee manieren bijgedragen aan structureel publiek debat-onderzoek met gedigitaliseerde bronnen. Ten eerste heb ik met de *leveled approach* een structureel raamwerk voor het combineren van *distant* en *close reading* verwezenlijkt dat toepasbaar is op OCR- en ASR-metadata. Dit zorgt voor een concrete mogelijkheid voor cross-mediaal publiek debatonderzoek als gevolg van de ontsluiting van gedigitaliseerd audiovisueel onderzoeksmateriaal. Ten tweede heb ik, door de zoek- en visualisatietechnieken van het macro- en mesoniveau te structureren en documenteren en als integraal onderdeel van elke historische analyse op te nemen, de iteratieve ruimte tussen *distant* en *close reading* expliciet gemaakt. Dit niveau van transparantie maakt concrete aanknopingspunten voor zelfreflectie en peer review mogelijk en biedt daarnaast een manier om in een context van (meta)data-schaarste, ongelijkmatige (meta)databeschikbaarheid en veranderende technologieën toch onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden.

Dit onderzoek biedt verschillende aanknopingspunten voor vervolgonderzoek. Het Nederlandse drugdebatonderzoek zou voortgezet kunnen worden op verscheidene manieren. Gezien recente ontwikkelingen in het publieke debat in Nederland, met een ruk naar sterkere repressie van drugsgebruik, en tegelijkertijd ook juist een sterkere roep om legalisering van drugs zoals ecstasy, verdient het aanbeveling om

ook de periode vanaf 2006 tot nu onder de loep te nemen. De bevindingen van dit proefschrift zouden in een bredere context geplaatst kunnen worden door 1) het debat in andere (nieuws-)media te onderzoeken (met name op televisie en in digitale media), door 2) niet alleen naar ecstasy maar ook naar de discursieve formatie van andere drugs in nieuwsmedia te kijken, of door 3) een soortgelijk onderzoek op te zetten naar de discursieve formatie van ecstasy in nieuwsmedia van andere landen.

Naast deze onderzoeksrichtingen voor verder historisch drugdebatonderzoek zijn er relevante aanknopingspunten voor vervolgonderzoek in bredere, met name methodologische zin. Ten eerste zou de *leveled approach* over langere tijdperiodes toegepast kunnen worden om te zien in hoeverre het mogelijk is om onderzoek te doen naar de ontwikkeling van discursieve omstandigheden los van specifieke onderwerpen, zoals ik in dit proefschrift heb gedaan. Ook inhoudelijk andere onderzoeksvragen kunnen met de *leveled approach* onderzocht worden. Bijvoorbeeld nieuwe historische kwesties, maar ook in bredere zin zou onderzocht kunnen worden hoe effectief de methode is bij het doen naar onderzoek in bijvoorbeeld mediastudies, cultural studies, kunstgeschiedenis of de Nederlandse taal. Het is wel van belang om dan te kijken of er alternatieve *query building*-strategieën nodig zijn, vooral als er onderzoek gedaan wordt naar meer abstracte concepten dan drugs. Er is ook meer onderzoek nodig naar de wezenlijke verschillen tussen het doen van historisch publiek debatonderzoek op basis van aan de ene kant OCR- en aan de andere kant ASR-metadata – met name op het macro- en mesoniveau van de *leveled approach* bestaan er grote verschillen tussen de mate waarin deze metadatatypes van het oorspronkelijke materiaal afstaan. De *leveled approach* zou mogelijk effectiever worden met behulp van *linked data incorporation*: als de infrastructuur met zulke technieken bijvoorbeeld automatisch specifieke actoren of locaties herkent in de zoekresultaten, kunnen zoek- en visualisatietechnieken op het *distant reading*-niveau nog gericht worden toegepast. Indien getracht zou worden de methodologie toe te passen om de meest recente periode te onderzoeken, zou moet worden gekeken hoe onderzoek naar sociale en nieuwe media geïncorporeerd kan worden.

Omdat dit boek laat zien dat niet alleen gedigitaliseerde krantenpagina's, maar ook gedigitaliseerde radio-uitzendingen met een soortgelijke methodologische benadering onderzocht kunnen worden, durf ik voorzichtig te stellen dat de digitale geschiedenis wel eens aan de vooravond van een *cross-media turn* zou kunnen staan, in navolging van de *digital turn* die ingeluid werd door de doorzoekbaarheid van digitale kranten. De mogelijkheid om historische publieke debatten dwars door gedrukte en (audio)visuele media te kunnen volgen kan meer diepgang opleveren in ons begrip van de historische discursieve formatie van niet alleen drugs maar ook andere onderwerpen.

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Curriculum Vitae

Berrie van der Molen was born in Heerenveen, where he got his gymnasium diploma from OSG Sevenwolden in 2007. He obtained a bachelor's degree in Media and Culture (cum laude) from University of Amsterdam in 2011, followed by a research master's degree in Media Studies from the same university in 2014. He focused on television and film analysis, cross-media approaches, and social theories, completing a minor in Sociology of Culture. During his master's program, he took electives in philosophy and screenwriting at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.

In 2016, he joined the project "The Imperative of Regulation" as a doctoral researcher to study the relation between drug regulation and public perception of drugs in postwar Dutch media debates at Utrecht University. This project's results, relevant to drug history and method development in Digital Humanities, are presented in this thesis. The project was selected for a nine-month research pilot in research infrastructure project CLARIAH, called "Debate Research Across Media." During this pilot, elements of the online media analysis research environment Media Suite were co-developed to accommodate historical cross-media public debate research in the Media Suite. Parts of the research of this thesis have been published in two articles and a book chapter and presented at various international conferences in Digital Humanities and cultural history.

Berrie has taught, coordinated, and developed bachelor's and master's courses, and supervised research projects at the Freudenthal Institute. He has co-organised this institute's PhD meetings and research meetings and represented the institute on the PhD council of the Graduate School of Natural Sciences.

In November 2020, Berrie started postdoctoral research in the project "Homo Medicinalis." In this project, he builds on the methodological work of *Talking XTC* with his contribution to the creation of an Automatic Speech Recognition infrastructure for doctor-patient consultation recordings.

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I dedicate this thesis to Erik van der Molen and Ineke Tuttel: my parents who have believed in me unwaveringly for as long as I can remember. This is your achievement too.



When ecstasy came to the Netherlands in the late 1980s, it was swiftly classified as an illegal hard drug under the Dutch Opium Law. Despite this, it has maintained its popularity as a party drug ever since. At the same time, it has become increasingly notorious as a criminal commodity. Within the domain of post-war media debates, the effects of historical changes in drug regulation in Dutch society are understudied. This book steps into that gap by exploring newspaper and radio debates from that period, studying not just what was written but also what was said about drugs and ecstasy in particular. The detailed historical media narratives that make up this book contribute to our understanding of the complexities and development of the reputation of ecstasy in the Netherlands.

New methodological territory is entered as the cross-media ambitions of Talking XTC are realised. Each historical narrative is preceded by a section that outlines the search and visualisation steps taken to select the newspaper articles or radio items on which the narrative is based, as these should be seen as integral parts of each analysis. Public debate analysis based on distant and close reading of digitised newspaper archives has become an established research practice in the field of digital history. This book presents a methodological approach for incorporating digitised radio archives in this practice, working towards enabling the study of historical topics in the context of a cross-media landscape.