

Credibility in action



Sabine van Zuydam

Credibility in action: Why some political leaders gain credibility whereas others do not

Utrecht University / University of Tilburg / Erasmus University

Master program: Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science
Author: Sabine van Zuydam
Student number: 3630870
Email address: s.vanzuydam@students.uu.nl
Supervisor: Prof.dr. Frank Hendriks
Second reader: Prof.dr. Steven van de Walle
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Preface

After a Bachelor program of three years and a research master program of two years, the moment has come that I will graduate and say goodbye to my life as a student. Such a milestone provides an excellent opportunity to pause for a minute to shortly look back on the previous five years. In this preface I especially want to thank all those people who have supported me during this period.

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Chapter 1

Introducing credible political leadership

In recent years the credibility of political leaders has become increasingly important, but up to now the field of Public Administration has paid little attention to this phenomenon. Here, in this thesis, I intend to start to fill this lacuna. Before moving over to what I precisely studied about credible political leadership, first some attention is paid to the question of why the credibility of political leaders is important for contemporary governing. In this respect at least three distinct but interrelated circumstances play a role: the emergence of (network) governance, the individualization of citizens and partisan dealignment, and the mediatization of politics. After these three circumstances are discussed, this chapter continues with the thesis's research questions, the relevance of these questions and the structure of the remaining part of this thesis.

1.1 Challenges to the traditional model of government and the emergence of (network) governance

Credibility of political leaders can be considered important due to the number of topics on which government is active and the way in which policy is formulated and implemented. At this point, first some reflection on the basic assumptions of a traditional government (or classical-modernist order) is in order. In this model national governments are considered the dominant actors for deciding upon and implementing public policy, and that therefore they are able to steer society and the economy (Peters & Pierre, 1998). This assumption was based on a number of characteristics of the traditional government. The first characteristic is that there is a territorial base that distinguishes one nation

from another. Secondly, the citizens living in a certain territory (or country) choose their leaders on the basis of elections. The chosen leaders are given a mandate to speak and act authoritatively on behalf of these citizens, and their task is to ensure representation of the citizens' 'ideas, interests, and value-preferences' (Hajer, 2009: 25). Thirdly, based on Weber's ideas there is a clear distinction between politics and administration. It is in politics that priorities are set and policy goals are formulated, it is up to the neutral administration to find the means to reach these goals (Kjaer, 2004: 21). A hierarchical chain of authority and control, furthermore, coordinated this administration, meaning that each civil servant in the administration had to account for his actions to his superior. This hierarchical chain of authority and control thus ensured that the democratically legitimized representatives in parliament could control the administration that facilitated the implementation of the goals and priorities set by politics.

To the extent that this ideal typical model ever really existed, the underlying assumptions have been challenged by socio-economic changes (Kjaer, 2004). Roughly after the Second World War, the welfare state emerged in most industrialized Western countries (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This entailed the development in which governments are playing an increasingly bigger role in supporting people in need. Thus, 'from a mainly regulatory state, preserving law and order and providing basic infrastructure, the state expanded to deliver more services in education, health, pension programs, unemployment schemes' (Kjaer, 2004, 22). This expansion of governmental activity was generally accepted by the citizenry, but already quite soon led to doubts about the suitability of the rigid hierarchical structures. Mainly questions were asked about the ability of this top-down chain of authority and control to be effective and responsive enough. Another development that challenged the traditional model of government as 'a controlling and regulating organization for society' is the increased importance of the international context. As said, the traditional model of government is territorially based on the nation state. However, due to the increased economic interdependence and in Europe the continuing process of integration this assumption is put under pressure. The nature and scope of the problems that need to be addressed are less limited by the boundaries of a nation-state, which undermines the capacity of traditional governmental institutions to deal with the problems effectively and legitimately (Peters & Pierre, 1998: 223).

Since the 1980s all over the Western world, although in varying degrees, reforms have been issued to adapt the public bureaucracy to the changing conditions. These reforms were intended to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the service provision done by governments. Examples of such reforms include privatization, decentralization and introducing competition. Combined these reforms have had some intended and unintended consequences, all that are said to have diminished capacity of national government as the center to steer (Rhodes, 1996: 662). Summarized: the core executive has lost capacities to steer to societal actors, to other state actors and to supra-state entities (Kjaer, 2004: 32). Consequently, policy is less top-down decided upon and implemented accordingly, but especially in the area of implementation policy networks have gained importance. These networks have not fully replaced the traditional institutions and way of working, but have emerged alongside it. They are characterized by interdependency and continuous interactions: although central government might have lost steering capacity, they are not powerless. Rather, all actors involved in the implementation of policy need each other. As such, political leaders in central government cannot simply order a certain course of action, but has to persuade the other involved actors of its suitability: they have to be credible to achieve things.

Besides vis-à-vis the other actors involved in policy implementation, the present day way of governing and the nature of the context in which political leaders perform also has consequences for the way in which political leaders deal with individual citizens. Due to the large number of topics in which government, in one way or another, still is involved, it is not possible for even the most politically interested citizens to process all detailed promises and plans political leaders can make on all areas of governmental activity. Additionally, due to the interdependence between central government and other actors involved in the formulation and implementation of policy, the problems political leaders deal with and their possible solutions are not that predictable and controllable anymore. Consequently, detailed promises might even not be possible to make anymore, as it is difficult to foresee what will happen in the future. Taking a citizen's viewpoint, this means concrete and detailed plans for the future might not be as valuable as the only basis for voting. Rather, choosing a leader of whom citizens believe that he will do a good job might be a more adequate prerequisite (Manin, 1997: 220-221) and an important addition to other reasons for voting for a certain candidate. As such, the credibility of political leaders thus matters for citizens as a basis for voting and for his capabilities to implement policy.

1.2 Individualization of citizens and partisan dealignment

Changing from the side of government to the side of the voter, individualized citizens can be considered a second circumstance that highlights the importance of the credibility of political leaders. It should be clear that here explicitly individualization is meant and not individualism: while individualism is commonly understood as a personal attitude or preference, individualization refers to a macro-social phenomenon, which may – but just as well may not – be related to changes in the attitudes of individual persons' (De Beer, 2007: 391). As among others Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) suggest that individualization is not a development that citizens have consciously chosen for themselves, but it is rather something that followed from our modern day institutions of the welfare state. When studied up close, individualization actually consists of three separate trends: detraditionalization, emancipation and heterogenization. Detraditionalization entails that the traditional institutions have become less defining for our identity. Church, political parties and unions, among others, all still matter in the lives of individual citizens, but they have lost their prominence as the defining characteristics of individuals. To use an example from politics, a working class citizen in Great Britain would previously not likely vote for any other party than the Labor Party, whereas this nowadays might not be that controversial (Dunleavy, 2005). Emancipation, the second development within individualization, entails that the attitudes and behavior of individuals might not be that influenced anymore by the previous traditional institutions and social groups. Finally, the third development associated with individualization is heterogenization. This tendency follows from the previous two: if one's identity is no longer predominantly determined by traditional institutions like social class et cetera, and one is more free in making choices, people will also make different choices (De Beer, 2007: 392).

Whereas previously voting preferences could be understood by taking into account the economic, cultural and social background of citizens, nowadays this explanation thus seems to hold less and less (Deschouwer & Hooghe, 2005). Electoral volatility is said to have risen in the last decades, at least in Western European democracies, whereas this change is not accounted for by changes in the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the voters (Dassonneville & Hooghe, 2011). What is considered to contribute to understanding this increased volatility, on the other hand,

is the decline in partisan alignment that 'has occurred across all of the advanced democracies in the past several decades' (McAllister, 2007: 582). In this respect, the ties with political parties are said to have weakened: their loyalties to one specific party have loosened and due to individualization as described above, a strong social link – based on social class or religion – is also less often present. In other words: 'the social anchors for partisanship have eroded' (Clarke & Stewart, 1998: 362). Following this process of partisan dealignment citizens are less inclined to vote for the same party their entire life, but rather they vote – usually within a certain range of options - for the party they feel deserves their vote most. As such, voters are increasingly expected to base their position on issues and on how they value individual leaders and candidates. Considering the latter Manin (1997) notes, 'voters tend increasingly to vote for a person and no longer for a party of platform'. The chairman of the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, Paul Schnabel, has recently made a similar suggestion: 'the voter does not think, or at least less and less, according to traditional left-right schemes, but rather in terms of themes and dramas. This includes 'dramatis personae', which first and foremost must be credible' (2011: 17). Consequently, in a way it can be considered that the direct relationship between the representative (the political leader) and the citizen is resurrected.

Following the individualization of society and the partisan dealignment, political leaders no longer can build on a more or less fixed group of followers. Rather, to win votes they have to actively convince citizens of not only their own capabilities, but also of the suitability of the proposed vision for the future. In this respect credibility is important as matters for who citizens think will perform best in office and whose plans are the best apt for today's challenges. Thus, the personal qualities of political leaders have gained prominence to citizens to judge politics and government at the expense of the more traditional criteria such as a feeling of attachment with one specific political party.

1.3 Mediatization of politics

A third circumstance that underlines the importance of credibility in political leadership is the development of mediatization in politics. As Hajer (2009) argues, it has been acknowledged in the literature on governance that the mass media are important. In political communication and media studies this development has been referred to in several ways - including mediatized politics, mediatization of politics and politics in a mediatized age, but what they have in common is that they point to the 'trend towards the interpenetration of media and politics' (Hajer, 2009:36). In other words, mediatization points to the tendency of the media – in all its possible forms – to become omnipresent in all facets of every life, including politics (Friesen & Hug, 2009: 62). This omnipresence does not indicate an either/or situation of mediatization. It is not a dichotomous concept, but something that can characterize society (or more specifically politics) in varying degrees. To what extent politics can be considered mediatized is suggested to depend on four elements (Strömbäck, 2008).

1.3.1 Pinpointing mediatization

The first element entails the degree of mediation. This concept should be clearly differentiated from mediatization, as Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) suggest. A broad and general conceptualization of mediation entails the idea that for politics to be mediated, the media must have become the most

important source for acquiring information on politics and society.¹ Applied to politics and public administration this means that the media constitute the primary means via which citizens and government communicate. In this respect, citizens thus learn about politics and its leaders primarily via the media instead of via personal experience or interpersonal communication (Strömbäck, 2008: 230). This element contributes to the earlier statement that in a way the direct relationship between citizen and leader has been resurrected again. It is exactly because of the mediated politics that this is possible: for example on television citizens can see their leaders. They can see how they perform and what they say. This relationship is not one directional, but also works the other way around: via that same media government gets information about what happens in society as well. For politics to be mediated, to conclude, it does not matter whether the dominant media source is radio, television, the Internet or any other medium. As long as one of these media is the most important channel of sharing information it can be considered mediated.

The second aspect distinguished by Strömbäck (2008) considering mediatization is the degree to which media are dependent upon politics and its institutions. This element relates to the way in which the media are governed and include finance as well as dependence on content. Again, just as the overall concept of mediatization this element of it is not a dichotomy either. Political institutions do not have to govern either all media or none of them. Looking at the example of television, it is very well imaginable that public broadcasting stations coexist with commercial ones. In fact, in most European countries such a dualism exists to a certain extent. In the Netherlands, for example, the public broadcasting stations are to a large degree financed by the state (by the ministry of Education, Science and Culture), but the individual broadcasting stations are independent from political parties and government on content. Indeed, historically most broadcasting stations have an affiliation with a certain party of political movement, but so to speak these parties do not sit down with them to determine the programming of that day. In terms of mediatization as a process, the more independent from political institutions the media are, the higher the degree of mediatization. Considering this issue of media independency, some scholars, like Baker (2007, in: Strömbäck, 2008), even suggest that it might be wise to, for example, subsidize newspapers. By doing so the content and variety of sources increases and consequently the media overall become more diverse. It should, however, be kept in mind that subsidizing does not necessarily mean that the media unconditionally communicate what different sources might want them to communicate.

The third and fourth elements deal with a similar issue. The third element entails the question to what extent the content is mainly governed by a media or political logic, and the fourth poses the same question only for political actors (Strömbäck, 2008). Indeed, just like the other two elements, these two aspects of mediatization can also be conceptualized as a scale. To determine, however, what position politics in a certain country (or Europe as a whole or the domain of world politics) takes on this scale, it first needs to be clear of what both the political logic and the media

¹ This idea of the media being the most important source for politics and society to acquire information about each other does not mean that there can be no other 'mediators'. In communication sciences it is for example argued that citizens are not necessarily directly influenced by the information given to them via the media. For one because it is not likely that they are able to see, hear or process everything, but secondly that opinion leaders play an important role as well (De Boer & Brennecke, 2003). These opinion leaders take information from the media and pass a selection of it on to others. However, in this case it is still the media that are the main source of information on politics for the opinion leaders. As such, this does not exclude the statement that mediation entails that the media have become the most important source of information for politics and society about each other.

logic consist. In a political logic the main idea is still that ultimately politics is about both collective and authoritative decision-making, as well as the implementation of these decisions (Strömbäck & Esser, 2009: 213). Consequently, the main actors are the parties and politicians themselves, who are working within the political institutions and are focusing on the societal problems and possible solutions that need to be addressed. Meyer (2002) differentiated between two dimensions of this political logic. The first is the policy dimension that entails 'the effort to find solutions for politically defined problems by means of programs for action', and the second relates to the process dimension in which it is about 'the effort to gain official acceptance of one's chosen program of action' (in Strömbäck, 2008: 233). The media logic, on the other hand, center stage is taken by 'the assumptions and processes for constructing messages within a particular medium' (Altheide, 2004: 294). In this respect, the content of the message is adapted to the possibilities and limitations of the particular medium at hand. This contrasts considerably with the political logic as in that case the content of the message is supposed to be more dependent upon what citizens are required to know according to the political actors. Finally, relating to the difference between the media and political logic and the extent to which they govern the media and politics, it should be noted that the position on the scale is not fixed at all times. For varying political institutions and actors as well as for varying events, the degree to which the message depends on media or political logic might differ (Strömbäck, 2008).

If tried to pinpoint the position of, at least, the western democracies on the scales of mediatization, it can be stated that regardless of the differences between specific countries the Western world is to a high extent mediatized. As Bennet and Entman (2001:1) pose in their book *Mediated politics*: 'many polities have reached a point where governance, along with a host of related processes such as opinion formation, could not occur in their present forms without various uses of media'. Hajer (2009) poses a similar notion and states that news making and policy-making are no longer clearly separated. Indeed, it is through these news-making practices that meaning is produced on policy issues and proposals. In this regard television and newspapers constitutes the main medium source by which citizens acquire information about politics. As Gunther and Mughan (2000: 402) state: 'Everywhere, television has become the preeminent, if not overwhelmingly dominant, source of national and international political news for the majority of the population'. In the last decade this position has been challenged by the emergence of the Internet, but it seems that up to now television has not lost its dominant position considering news and politics. The Internet has a complementary function in this respect (Schütz, 2001; Graber, 2001; SCP, 2010; Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009: 168; Curran, 2010: 468).

1.3.2 Personalization in mediatized politics

In the previous the idea of a media logics was already shortly discussed. However, in light of the importance of credibility of political leaders some additional attention for it is necessary. As stated, the particular medium at hand poses certain possibilities and limitations and therefore certain types of communication are favored over others. First of all, in their reporting media employ the mechanism of narrative and storytelling. A news story is a news story for a reason, as it should have a storyline with a start, middle and end. For this storyline, media overall, but television specifically, favor drama. As such, news stories are often framed in terms of conflict or horse race with people (Hajer, 2009; Gross & Brewer, 2007). After all, who cares about people sitting at a table quietly deliberating? Another aspect of the media logic is the tendency for personalization.

Bjerling (2010) differentiates between three types of personalization. In the first personalization entails personification. In this case is referred to a person as a substitute for

something that he or she literally is not. In politics this could for example entail that the media refer to Cameron instead of to the Conservatives. The second type of this phenomenon is referred to by Bjerling is an orientation towards persona and points to the trend that media increasingly focus on the personal characteristics of political leaders. Specific attention is for example paid to the competency and trustworthiness of the candidates running for office. The third type of personalization Bjerling distinguishes is intimization. In a way, this type of personalization can be considered a variant of the second one. Whereas with the second attention is paid to characteristics of political leaders that matter for their aspired position, this third type entails that there is more attention for the person and personal traits of a leader, outside of politics. These three types combined suggest that overall the attention for political leaders or candidates has grown, at the expense of attention given to issues, institutions or parties (Kriesi, 2011).

The degree to which these two developments actually can be found in practice varies substantially (Dassonneville & Hooghe, 2011), but it is recognized that political leaders play an increasingly important role in the political process. Especially for the medium of television, almost automatically is focused on persons and their personalities. Television is about visual images and thus it is more convenient to have a familiar person telling it, than an abstract document or institution (McAllister, 2007). Additionally, also politics themselves have something to do with the fact that it is the leaders or politicians who communicate the vision, plans and proposal on television. A leader on television can communicate the intended message much more effectively, and to a much wider audience than a press release or a document containing the policy proposal can. Moreover, not only can the leader communicate the message, on instant journalists can pose questions to, for example, test the ideas brought forward. Consequently, a leader's performances can also serve as a basis for citizens to evaluate the qualities of the political leader and the likeliness that he (or she) would do well when elected for office (Verser & Wicks, 2006). In this respect the credibility of the political leaders is thus very much important: not only for how they are themselves evaluated by voters, but also for the extent to which they can credibly communicate their vision and plans for the future. The question only is, what is it that these leaders do that leads an audience to consider them and their plans credible or not? What are leaders who are considered highly credible doing different than their not so credible counterparts? Current literature on credibility and political leadership has only limitedly addressed these questions.

1.4 Problem statement

Based on the previous, this study is therefore aimed at answering the following research question:

What is it that political leaders do that makes citizens attribute credibility to some, but not to others in the same period, taking into account their performances on television and related newspaper reporting?

To research in detail what leaders are doing that contributes to them being attributed credibility this study uses cases. In this respect, two interesting cases were found in the Dutch parliamentary election campaigns of 2010 (February 19th – June 9th). In this period two political leaders of major political parties experienced an opposite development in their credibility. Whereas Mark Rutte (leader of the Liberal Party) gained credibility and was increasingly seen as a potential candidate for being prime minister, Job Cohen (leader of the Labor Party) lost a substantial amount of his credibility as a potential candidate for the same position. In various polls conducted during this

period – not only on virtual allocations of seats but also on leadership evaluations as party leaders and potential future prime ministers – it showed that Cohen started out quite strongly. After his arrival in national politics the Labor Party gained approximately 15 seats (depending on the poll), and on instant he was considered the most favorite candidate for becoming prime minister. However, the further the election campaigns proceeded, the more virtual seats the Labor Party lost and Cohen's suitability as a political leader was increasingly doubted (De Hond, April 26th 2010; TNS Nipo, June 1st 2010; Synovate, 2011a; De Hond, 2011). Mark Rutte, on the other hand, started out with approximately 20 seats at the beginning of March and he was also not considered a potential candidate for becoming prime minister. In the first polls on who citizens preferred as prime minister, for example, Rutte was not even an option (De Hond, March 14th 2010; March 19th 2010; 2011). This gradually started to change and as 'de Volkskrant' for example noted at the end of May: all of the sudden the main battle was between Rutte and Cohen, whereas Balkenende and Wilders hardly played any role (May 22nd 2010a). Slowly, but steadily Rutte gained the trust of citizens and was increasingly considered the most appropriate next prime minister, whereas Cohen lost this position (De Hond, April 26th 2010; TNS Nipo, June 1st 2010; De Hond, June 3rd 2010; Synovate 2011a). In chapter 4, the credibility developments of Rutte and Cohen is further elaborated upon, but for now it can be argued that Rutte is a case of a leader who gained credibility, while Cohen represents a case of a leader who lost a substantial amount of his credibility in the same period. As such, these two cases can be considered a concretization of the above described main research question. Adapting the main research question to this concretization it reads:

What is it that Mark Rutte and Job Cohen did that contributed to citizens attributing credibility increasingly to Rutte, while Cohen's credibility decreased in the period between February 19th and June 9th 2010, taking into account their performances on television and related newspaper reporting?

To answer this question, the following sub-questions require attention:

1. What makes political leaders credible?
2. How did Mark Rutte execute his performances on television, and what does that mean for his perceived credibility as political leader?
3. How did newspapers report on Mark Rutte's performances on television and what other elements did they consider that might have contributed to the raise in his credibility as political leader?
4. How did Job Cohen execute his performances on television, and what does that mean for his perceived credibility as political leader?
5. How did newspapers report on Job Cohen's performances on television and what other elements did they consider that might have contributed to the decline in his credibility?
6. What can be learned from comparing Mark Rutte and Job Cohen on their television performances and the newspaper reporting on them for what credible political leadership entails?

1.5 Relevancy

For the relevance of this study can be differentiated between the scientific relevancy and the relevance to society. For (at least) three reasons this proposed study adds to the scientific knowledge

on credibility and public leadership. First, the current knowledge on credibility is scattered over various scientific disciplines. In literature stemming from psychology, communication studies, political sciences and public administration, possible explanations can be found that are of use to adequately assess what qualifies as credible. Between these strands of literature, however, there has not been much interchange. As this study draws from insights of various disciplines, a start will be made to integrate the already existing knowledge to deepen our understanding of credibility.

Based on the current knowledge on credibility that was gained in the above-mentioned disciplines, some clues already can be found on what credible leadership entails. For one, as is elaborately discussed in the next chapter, credibility is commonly understood as consisting of the traits 'competency' and 'trustworthiness' (cf. Kouzes & Posner, 2003; O'Keefe, 2002). Additionally, in another field of research findings suggest that leaders can 'manage their impression' by good framing (Lakoff, 2004). What remains unknown is, for example, what it actually means to be considered competent and trustworthy: what is it that leaders actually *do* that citizens reach these attributions? What are they doing in managing their reputations that leaders are considered credible? Moreover, it might seem commonsense that good frame can contribute to conveying the desired image, for example a credible image, but what does it look like? What are the qualities of good framing and other elements, and how do leaders meet the requirements in such a way that it adds to their perceived credibility? It is to these lacunae in the literature on credible political leadership that this study aims to contribute.

Additionally, in the research on credible leadership it is rare to find a study in which all elements of a performance are taken into account, as well as that the perception of the audience is explicitly included. In the studies that focus on performances as whole, the judgment of the relevant audience is regularly not clearly involved in the analysis. On the other hand, in experiments on credibility always an audience is included. Often these are college students, but nevertheless it is tried to establish the connection between elements of credibility and on what basis the audience attributes it. Besides that these experiments take place outside daily political life, they also focus on only a few elements of credibility. Here, for example, only fluency of speech, only speaking rate or only the education of the communicator is taken into consideration (O'Keefe, 2002: 184).

Besides the scientific relevance, this study also has some relevancy in politics and society. First of all, in these days in which political leaders are put under pressure (Hendriks, forthcoming), this study can make leaders more aware of their behavior and possibly of some of the consequences. Also they can learn what they can do during their performances to convince their audience of their suitability and capabilities for leading their country. Furthermore, this study is not only relevant to leaders, but it can also heighten the awareness of the public on how they judge their leaders and how this can be seen in practice. By making those mechanisms explicit – in theory but also exemplified in two cases – citizens can gain a better understanding of what they are looking for in a leader and whether these characteristics of requirements are desirable. In other words: they can make a more moral consideration of what leaders should do and who should deserve their votes most.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

In this introductory chapter the need for studying credibility is highlighted as well as the main question to be answered and the research design. In this respect already some elements of credibility have passed in review, but this by no means does justice to the importance of the concept

in this study. To be able to study credible political leadership in particular in practice, first it should be clear what credibility actually is, how it is conceptualized in previous research and how it can be observed in empirical contexts. In the next chapter, chapter 2, these issues are addressed. Special attention in this chapter is paid to the relationship between the trait and the dramaturgical approach – the two main approaches in literature to credibility. Besides a firmer grounding of the credibility concept, the research design also requires additional thought. In chapter 3 therefore, via the underlying methodology and scientific tradition on which this study is based, the data collection and the means of data analysis are described. In this chapter also explicit attention is paid to why television performances and newspaper articles on political leaders form an appropriate base for studying their credibility. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the quality measures that were taken into account that can help to ensure the quality of the thesis.

In the next chapters, the framework developed in chapter 2 and 3 for analyzing credibility is employed in the two concrete cases of Mark Rutte and Job Cohen during the parliamentary election campaigns of 2010. Chapter 4 starts with a short introduction to the cases, in which the main events of the campaigns are described and attention is paid to relevant events for each leader personally. After this general introduction to the election campaigns and the individual cases, for both Rutte and Cohen also the television performances are one by one explored in more detail. These descriptions are aimed to support the understanding of the findings of the dramaturgical analysis and the analysis of newspaper articles. In Rutte's case, the findings of these analyses can be found in chapter 5. This chapter can be split in two parts. First his execution of the elements of staging, framing and scripting in the television performances is discussed. The findings of this analysis are immediately connected to what this might mean for his perceived credibility as a leader. Next, attention shifts to the newspaper reporting on Rutte: what is written about him and how does that relate to his credibility as a political leader. After these two individual analyses, the findings on both are integrated into a coherent interpretation of why the credibility of Rutte could have increased during the parliamentary election campaigns of 2010. In chapter 6, a similar approach is followed for discussing the findings on Job Cohen and to understand why he lost credibility in the eyes of citizens.

After the analyses of the individual cases of Mark Rutte and Job Cohen, the findings are compared in chapter 7. To ensure a systematic and thorough comparison, this chapter is organized in more or less the same manner as the previous two. A difference with the earlier chapters is that the findings on the television performances and the newspaper reporting are integrated. Consequently, the comparison is organized along the elements of contextual factors, staging, framing and scripting. The final chapter, chapter 8, is a concluding chapter and is aimed at answering the question: what is it that leaders do that citizens contribute credibility to them? Explicitly is intended to discuss what the empirical findings contribute to literature on credible political leadership and what the findings mean in light of broader debates. Besides that the findings might contribute to the literature, there are also limitations to the meaning of the findings. Therefore, especially the issue of intentionality influencing performing is discussed, as well as the limitations of deriving credibility from media performances. The concluding chapter of this thesis ends with some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Analyzing credibility: Building a theoretical framework

'Credible leaders critical to national rebirth' (Guardian, March 25th 2011). 'There is no shortage of credit, but of credible leaders' (Trouw, August 10th 2011). 'Mr. Obama's campaign, meanwhile, pointed to other polls showing that its ads are cutting away at Mr. Romney's credibility on the economy, a central theme of his campaign' (New York Times, July 16th 2012). These are just some random newspaper article headlines and quotes. In these articles, credibility was apparently an issue to consider. However in all of these, and in the use of credibility in daily life in general, hardly any reflection upon the concept is made. Citizens, journalists or other politicians consider something or someone not to be credible, but they hardly explain why. The underlying judgments remain implicit. With credibility being of central focus in this thesis, it requires further conceptualization. Interestingly, although credibility is of importance in current day politics and government (for reasons established in the introduction), but up to now Public Administration has only paid little attention to it. Fortunately, in other scientific disciplines and fields credibility have been studied for over fifty years. Using the knowledge available this literature, in this chapter a framework is build to analyze the empirical cases of (not so) credible political leadership of Job Cohen and Mark Rutte. First is focused on what credibility actually is. How can it be defined? Next, the issue of in what cases, under what circumstances, credibility emerges is addressed. Finally, a citizens' perspective and the perspective of the political leader on credibility is discussed.

2.1 Credibility: In search for precision

The literature on credibility is scattered over various disciplines. As said, Public Administration is not one of them, as there the concept still has to be discovered to a large extent. Rather it seems that the fields of communication studies, law and organizational science have paid most attention to it. In communication studies credibility is used related to the production of persuasive messages. The main assumption is that for a message to be persuasive, it has to be communicated by a credible source. Therefore, in this field of research credibility is mostly referred to as source credibility and O'Keefe (2002: 181) in this respect defines credibility as 'the judgments made by a perceiver (e.g. a message recipient) concerning the believability of a communicator'.

In law credibility is an important concept in courtrooms regarding witnesses. Credibility in this respect is often limited to truthfulness or veracity (Porter & Brinke, 2009). In criminal trials, besides forensic evidence, (eye)witness testimonies are important to prove that, for example, a certain event did or did not happen, that someone was the offender or not. If a witness is not credible, questions can be raised about whether the testimony is a factual account of events, or, in the case of an expert, whether his interpretation of what is going on is correct. As such, the perceived credibility of the witnesses can have a major influence on how the trial develops.

In organizational science, furthermore, credibility is also referred to largely referred to in terms of believability. Kouzes and Posner, for example, state specifically on leaders: '*Leadership is personal. (...) It's about you. If people don't believe in the messenger, they won't believe the message. If people don't believe in you, they won't believe in what you say*' (2003: XV, emphasizes in the original). This account of Kouzes and Posner is actually one of the few, if not the only, study in organizational science that specially deals with the issue of credibility. In other studies credibility occasionally does play a role, but mainly as part of credible leadership or (authentic) transformational leadership (cf. Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Conger and Kanungo argue, for example, that charismatic leaders advocate a vision that differs significantly from the status quo. To be successful in advocating such a vision entails that 'one needs to be a credible communicator' (Conger & Kanungo, 1987: 642).

However, knowing that credibility relates to the degree to which people expect that the other is worthy of being believed does not reveal much about the exact assumptions that underlie such a judgment. Why is one being believed in, or when is one convincing? Thus when does credibility emerge? The main answer to this question is that credibility emerges if the condition of correspondence is met. To be more precise: two different types of correspondence are necessary for citizens to attribute credibility to leaders.

The first relates exclusively to the performances of the leader and to the extent that these form a coherent whole, as perceived by citizens. The basic underlying mechanism is that 'credibility depends on whether the actor's words are subsequently confirmed or disconfirmed' (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 40). This confirmation or disconfirmation of words can be done either by other words, behavior or acts, or more tangible achievements. More concrete: for leaders to be credible what they say cannot contradict each other, at least not without a good explanation. To give an extreme example, a political leader who in one show states to be in favor of liberalizing the labor market, but in another show claims the exact opposite, is not really appreciated. The exception would be if the leader had a very good explanation for it, although the more extreme the contradiction, the more difficult it is to change position within a short timespan. Secondly, correspondence between words

and behavior basically entails ‘practicing what you preach’. To give another example: preaching very strongly against alcohol abuse, but at the same time being caught totally drunk every weekend by the media might not be considered that credible to the citizens. In this case the words of preaching against alcohol abuse do not match with the actual behavior of the leader of being drunk every weekend. Finally, word can thirdly also be confirmed or disconfirmed by the more tangible achievements of the leader. Does the political leader, for example, succeed in translating his words into concrete policy and actually obtaining results? Returning to the previous example of alcohol abuse, this would mean that the leader’s preaching against alcohol abuse is transformed into some kind of (policy) measure like increasing the age at which youngsters are allowed to drink. To make the claim of correspondence stronger for the leader, this measure preferably also has the desired effect of decreasing alcohol abuse of, in this case, youngsters.

It is not only that the words of a leader consequently have to be confirmed or disconfirmed by words, behavior or the more tangible achievements, but this also applies to the other two elements (Warren, 2006). This entails that also the behavior and achievements of leaders have to be perceived as matching each other. In other words: in principal, to determine whether a leader is credible or not, citizens can be considered to constantly – consciously and unconsciously – question whether all three elements of words, behavior and more tangible achievements match with each other (see figure 2.1). They might wonder: do I buy this? Is the overall picture consistent? Does what this leader is doing now match with his earlier performances? If not, the leader is supposed

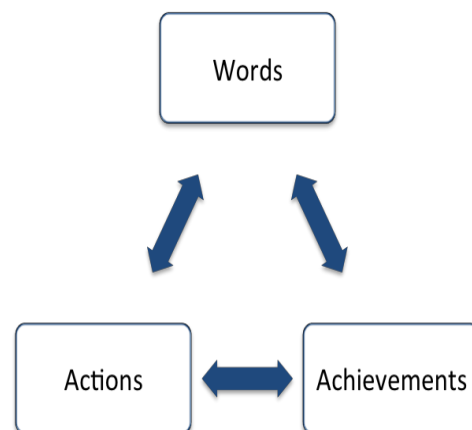


Figure 2.1: First type of correspondence: Correspondence between words, actions and achievements. This relates to the coherence within and between leaders’ performances.

to have a good reason for why this is not the case. Good in this respect means that according to the audience of citizens the reason is acceptable. It is thus important to note that whether correspondence between the words, actions and achievements is present in the leader’s performances depends on the perception of citizens (Gardner & Avolio, 1998).

Moving to the second type of correspondence necessary for credible political leadership. On a general level of government overall, this type of correspondence comes down to credibility emerging ‘when products, processes, institutions, discourses or behaviors of government are giving a convincing answer to the interests, values and/or expectations of the public’ (Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration (TSPPA), 2009:10). On the governmental side of this relationship, in political leadership this comes down to the discourses (words), behaviors (actions), and products (achievements). Together these make up the leader’s performances and combined, these have to match with the expectations, interests and/or values of citizens (see figure 2.2). Again, it is thus up to citizens to decide whether they find the performances of the leader convincing. What this second type of correspondence adds to the first is that a leader also has to be credible for they role they wish to fulfill. It is not unimaginable that the execution of the individual elements within a performance, and the performances overall, match with each other, but that citizens still do not consider a leader to be credible. This can happen when these performances, although coherent, do not match with the ideas citizens have about what a leader should be like. A leader can, for example,

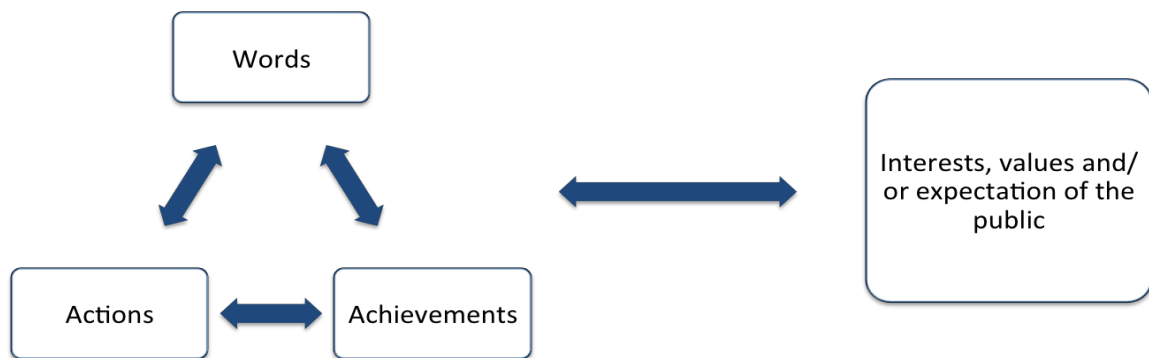


Figure 2.2: Second type of correspondence: Correspondence between the performances of leaders and the interests, values and expectations of the public. In a way the left part can be conceptualized as a form of internal correspondence, whereas on the right an external dimension is added. It is not only about the performances of a leader, but these need to be related to the interests, values and/or expectations of the audience to determine whether credibility in that role is attributed.

be perfectly consistent in his performances as a consensus builder. However, if citizens are looking for a decisive, strong leader, these consistent performances do not lead citizens to consider them credible as a political leader for whom they would vote. Additionally, as Kriesi (2011) posed, citizens are expected to vote increasingly on the basis of the evaluation of individual candidates, as well as on the basis of their positions on issues. As such, the leader also has to convince citizens via their performances of the appropriateness of their plans and stances on issues. In other words: to be considered credible, leaders also have to convince citizens that their plans adhere to the citizens' values, interests and expectations.

As a consequence of the idea that someone's credibility depends on the judgments made by a perceiver (the public) considering his believability, credibility is not a static concept that can be owned. 'It' is not a thing, but credibility emerges during the interaction process and is attributed by the public to a leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Or as O'Keefe puts it (although he disregards group dynamics): 'Communicator credibility is thus not an intrinsic property of a communicator; a message source may be thought highly credible by one perceiver and not at all credible by another' (2002: 131). Thus only the public is able to judge whether someone is credible or not. Of whom the public consists might be different in each case: for different leaders but also for different occasions. For example, the public of a CEO or manager are first of all his employees and perhaps shareholders, whereas the public of politicians constitutes of citizens, fellow politicians and other members of his party. To which public a leader is communicating depends on the occasion. On a party congress the other party members of a politician might be his prime public (although citizens are always present in the background) while in parliament the main public might be fellow politicians. However, in the end all is about the relationship with citizens, as it are citizens who political leaders represent.

At this point, some reflection on the underlying assumptions of credibility is in place. Clearly, in this thesis a relational approach is chosen, however, also a more moral approach is possible. The difference between these two approaches can be traced back to the conceptualization of when credibility emerges. In this thesis it is considered to emerge when the performances of the leaders match with the interests, values and/or expectations of citizens. In the moral perspective it is only determined whether a leader possesses the needed characteristics and adheres to the requirements. In other words: is a leader worthy of being believed, worthy of credence? However, in such an approach the public is left out almost completely, as it doesn't matter if the efforts of the leader are actually acknowledged by the public. In the more relational perspective, the public does play a central role. As said, credibility is not something that a leader owns, but is attributed to him by the

public. The audience has to decide whether they believe a leader or not, and, consequently whether they should support him or not. This means that the public or audience of a leader should recognize that a leader possesses the necessary characteristics or shows the necessary behavior. Simply put: leaders might meet the requirements in the best possible way, as long as they cannot communicate this properly to their audience they are still not considered credible and thus cannot reach their goal. This can be, for example, not winning the elections or not convincing others to agree on a policy proposal et cetera.

2.2 Communicating traits via performances

Above, credibility was considered to emerge when the words, actions and more or less tangible achievements of political leaders matched with the interests, values and/or expectations of citizens. What becomes clear in this conceptualization is that there are two sides to the story of credibility emerging. On the one side there is the story of citizens and the requirements they pose on leaders to be considered credible. More specifically, to determine whether a leader is credible citizens look for specific traits (McAllister, 2007). On the other side, the story of the leaders and how they perform is the main focus. Combined this means for leaders trying to be attributed credibility by citizens that they have to show through their performances that they possess the desired traits (see figure 2.3). Thus whereas for citizens credibility can be attributed when leaders possess the necessary traits, for leaders merely having this traits is not enough as they need to show in the performances to be considered really there.

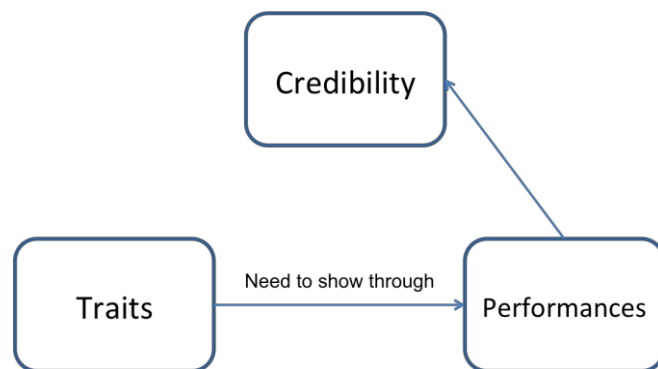


Figure 2.3: Attribution and acquiring credibility from the perspective of citizens and political leaders.

This figure should be understood as follows: Citizens attribute credibility on the basis of traits. The way in which they determine whether leaders possess these traits is via the performances of the leaders. As such, for leaders to be attributed credibility they have to show through their performances that they meet these requirements. As citizens can only derive from these performances whether leaders have the necessary traits, there is not a direct line between traits and credibility

As pointed out before, credibility is not a static concept, owned by the leader. Rather, it is a relational phenomenon in which the audience attributes credibility to a leader if they feel he deserves it (O'Keefe, 2002; Gardner & Avolio,

1998, Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Therefore, even though citizens look for specific traits in leaders, it is not actually on the basis of the traits leaders have, but on the basis of citizens' perception of these traits that they attribute credibility. As such, it does not necessarily matter which traits a leader actually holds, but only the traits he is considered to have.

The question only is what are these traits and what can leaders do during their performances that citizens also recognize these traits in them? In the remainder of this chapter these two issues are at the center of attention, starting with the perceived traits contributing to credibility.

2.2.1 Traits citizens expect

A considerable amount of research has been done since the 1960s on what characteristics or traits (political) leaders must possess in order to be credible to their constituents. An important study in

this respect is the earlier mentioned study from Kouzes and Posner (2003) who list honesty, forward looking, competency and inspiring as the four main characteristics of an admired and credible leader. Or as they are putting it themselves: 'If the qualities alone were running for office, these are the ones that would achieve consensus and victory' (Kouzes & Posner, 2003: 14).

Considering the traits of honesty, forward looking, competency and being inspiring, communication researchers refer to source credibility. This it is about the credibility of the one who is communicating information to others. Classic in this respect is the study of Berlo, Lemert and Mertz (1969) who already in the sixties studied which personal characteristics play a role in the acceptability of a message to the public. In their experiments they found relatively similar characteristics of credible leaders as Kouzes and Posner did, although the names that they gave to their concepts are quite different. Berlo *et al.* (1969) distinguish between safety, qualification and dynamism. When studying the scales used to build these dimensions, it is found that safety encompasses trustworthiness, honesty and sympathy. Qualification is strongly similar to competency and dynamism has a lot in common with being inspiring and forward looking.² O'Keefe (1990) stated that factor-analytic research had shown that not all of the above dimensions are found in every study, but that two of them stand out considering what the public looks for in credible communicators. He labeled the first of these traits 'competency', which entails the question 'whether the communicator is in the position to know the truth, to know what's right or correct' (O'Keefe, 2002: 183). O'Keefe refers to the second dimension as trustworthiness, which is associated with the question 'whether the communicator will likely be inclined to tell the truth as he or she sees it' (2002: 183). In the few studies done in political science on credibility, it is suggested that also exactly these two traits seem to matter (Teven, 2008; McCurley & Mondak, 1995). On both these aspects it is possible that the public believes a communicator is biased. A 'knowledge bias refers to a recipient's belief that a communicator's knowledge about external reality is nonveridical, and reporting bias refers to the belief that a communicator's willingness to convey an accurate version of external reality is compromised' (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978: 424). Related to the trait of sympathy, O'Keefe also refers to liking. In communication studies, liking is not conceptualized as being part of credibility, but as a different source of persuasiveness. Nevertheless, there is a relationship between the two as enhanced liking of a communicator is often accompanied with higher levels of trustworthiness attributed to the communicator. However, when liking and credibility (trustworthiness and competency) conflict, experiments show that credibility takes precedence over liking when it comes to persuasiveness. Therefore, in the following credibility will mainly be understood as consisting of competency and trustworthiness.

As the case studies analyzed in this thesis take place in the Netherlands, some reflection on credibility in the specific context of the Netherlands can be valuable. Findings of Wisse (2010) in a study on the ministers of the fourth cabinet of Balkenende suggest as well that the characteristics found, for example by Kouzes and Posner (2003), matter for credible leadership. In the Netherlands however, the relative importance of the characteristics is different. The three traits of political leaders that mattered most were trustworthiness, honesty and competency. Moreover, another

² The scales related to each of these three traits of credibility are (Berlo *et al.*, 1969: 571): *Safety*: 'safe-dangerous; just-unjust; calm-upset; objective-subjective; unselfish-selfish; patient-impatient; fair-unfair; ethical-unethical'. *Qualification*: 'trained-untrained; experienced-inexperienced; authoritative-unauthoritative; skilled-unskilled; informed-uninformed; intelligent-unintelligent; qualified-unqualified; able-unapt'. *Dynamism*: 'frank-reserved; fast-slow; energetic-tired; bold-timid; active-passive; aggressive-meek; empathic-hesitant; forceful-forceless'.

interesting trait of credible leadership that she found was sympathy, which was also partly incorporated with the studies of Berlo *et al.* (1969) and O’Keefe (2002). Furthermore, not only do the three most important traits – trustworthiness, honesty and competency – matter individually, they are also correlated. Especially leaders that were considered trustworthy were also considered honest and, to a lesser extent, competent (Wisse, 2010: 5). In the same study of Wisse (2010), for example, the cabinet minister of finances in 2009, Wouter Bos, was considered not only highly competent, but trustworthy and honest as well. Eimert van Middelkoop (cabinet minister of Defense in 2009), on the other hand, was attributed a low competence, trustworthiness and honesty score.

The approach to the traits that contribute to the perceived credibility of political leaders up to now is quite universal. As long as they are considered credible and trustworthy, leaders are credible. However, what does it mean to be competent and trustworthy? One could doubt whether the contents of competency and trustworthiness are the same in every context and for every role that a political leader. Limiting to parliamentary systems only, being an opposition leader in parliament might, for example, be considered as quite different from being a prime minister, and being a prime minister in a consensual type of democracy requires different things from a leader than in a majoritarian type of democracy (Hendriks, 2009a). What do these institutional differences imply for what credibility entails for political leaders?

Leadership styles for consensus and majoritarian democracies

In representative democratic systems, which can be found in most Western countries, it can be differentiated between two types of democracy: a majoritarian or pendulum democracy and a consensus democracy (Lijphart 1999; Hendriks, 2009a). According to Lijphart’s classic typology these two types of democracy differ on two dimensions. The first is the executives-parties dimension, which relates to the arrangement of executive power. Consensus democracies are, for example, characterized by broad multiparty coalitions and an electoral system of proportional representation, whereas single-party majority cabinets and disproportional electoral system characterize majoritarian democracies. The second dimension is the federal-unitary dimension and is ‘associated with the contrast between federalism and unitary government’ (Lijphart, 1999: 3). Thus where majoritarian democracies ideal typically have a relatively centralized government without an equal division of legislative powers between different houses, consensus democracies have a decentralized government with legislative power distributed over ‘two equally strong but differently constituted houses’ (Lijphart, 1999: 3). Hendriks (2009a) explicitly mentions the difference in the way decisions are made. Decision making in pendulum democracies can be described as aggregative, compared to a more integrative style of decision making in consensus democracies. Thus whereas in majoritarian democracies decisions are made by voting yes or no, in consensus democracies they are made by talking and deliberating.

These differences have consequences for what kind of leadership is appropriate, as both set different tasks for leaders. In the case of making decisions in an aggregative way, leaders perform the role of setting the mood after which can be decided either yes or no. Following a more integrative, ‘talkative’ style requires that leaders build bridges between the different parties and that they should get the different voices lined up during the communication process. In a consensus democracy the preferred style ‘is typically of the ‘regency’ type – not grand and exhilarating, but careful and scrupulous’ (Hendriks, 2009b: 484). Taken on the whole, leadership is more moderate and less expressive as in a majoritarian democracy where leadership is generally of the ‘gladiator’ type – grand and exhilarating to attract masses of voters. In a majoritarian democracy leaders take all, in a

consensus democracy this is not the case. Contrary, it is not even necessary to win the elections to end up in the cabinet anyway. Even though a leader might not have been able to convince the general public, he still might prove valuable later on to – together with others of course – get all interests aligned.

As a consequence of the typical characteristics of a consensus democracy, such as the many different groups in society, the presence of a multiparty system and a proportional electoral system, there is not one leader that is decisive. Rather, there are multiple leading roles, backed up by the different groups in society. The person chairing these different leaders is not dominant, but is rather a 'primus inter pares': the first among equals. Thus, just as on the bigger political level is looked for consensus to overcome the differences, the same is required from leaders. They are required to 'build bridges' between different groups and viewpoints in society, instead of putting their own personality and viewpoints up front (as would be more common in majoritarian democracies) (Hendriks, 2009a: 47, 92-93). In other words: they are political peacekeepers. This means that the ability to negotiate and deliberate is very important. How else could consensus be reached and differences be bridged, which is needed to actually achieve something?

Next to having the ability to negotiate and deliberate, also pragmatism, having a technocratic attitude and relativizing personal leadership is valued in consensus democracies. The general interest matters more than the person and leaders 'should keep things together' (Hendriks, 2009a: 94). The three mentioned attributes help in that respect. Pragmatism makes it possible to find practical compromises in which there is something to win for all. Emphasizing the technical character of issues also makes it possible to take the ideological sting out of the debate, necessary to reach consensus. Furthermore, downplaying the role of the leader in the discussions makes it easier to focus on the issue at hand instead of on personal differences. This is also necessary because even though one might 'win one battle', leaders will constantly need others along the way as no one has the majority. Thus they have to make sure that they still can get along later on.

In a majoritarian or pendulum democracy, with characteristics as a relatively homogenous society, a two party system and a disproportional electoral system, one leader can make a lot of difference. Not only because there are less leading roles, but also because one leader is dominant over others. Whereas in a consensus democracy the prime minister would be in a function in which he has to share his influence with others from different political parties, the prime minister in an ideal typically majoritarian democracy is leading a cabinet consisting of only other party members. The party that wins has a lot of control, the person leading that party thus has a lot to say as well. Leadership with a capital L – frowned upon in consensus democracies – is in majoritarian democracies seen as something worthwhile (Hendriks & Karsten, forthcoming). Their personality, viewpoints and capabilities should be brought forward to win votes. The political peace should not be kept, but the political war should be won again and again.

However, merely once winning an election is not enough. The leader constantly has to prove what he is worth. Politically speaking, the limelight is often on what he is doing, saying and achieving. If he fails to meet the demands set by the public or if he is not able to keep his promises, his political career might come to an end quite fast in the next elections. In this respect taking responsibility and convincingly showing it, is valued more than sticking to taken-for-granted responsibilities. In taking on difficult issues to solve problems, the leader should never downplay his personal contribution to the solution. Citizens want to know what he has done for him and on that basis they vote in the next elections if he can stay on or not (Hendriks, 2009a: 73). Leaders in a majoritarian democracy do not have to rely on others to make things happen, as the reigning party controls all relevant parties.

Wondering whether one might need someone in the future is not a consideration leaders in a majoritarian democracy have to make.

These differences in appropriate and needed leadership requirements have consequences for what is considered credible leadership behavior (in the broadest sense). A technocratic, pragmatic leader, constantly playing down his own contribution to ensure a focus on the issue at hand and to keep everybody on board is something that would not be regarded credible by the public in a majoritarian democracy. The expectations of the public in this respect consist of a visible leader, fighting for their wellbeing, which does not fit well with the behavior, discourses and products of consensual leaders. The opposite holds as well: for example emphasizing the personal factor of the leader might jeopardize reaching consensus and thus citizens might feel that differences are enlarged instead of reduced. Thus in either case the discourse, behavior and products of the leader do not provide a convincing answer to the interests, values and expectations of the public. This means that for leaders to be attributed credibility by the public, they have to take into account the demands set by the (democratic) system in which they function.

Again focusing on the specific context of the case studies, the Netherlands still have a culture of consensus, consultation and compromise. Therefore, regardless of the changes that have taken place in Dutch society and government, it is still appropriate to define the Dutch democracy in terms of a consensus democracy (Hendriks & Michels, 2011). The dominant and preferred type of leadership thus for a long time amounted to the 'regency' type mentioned earlier. However, due to some developments in society, this traditional type of leadership is put under pressure. For example, as a consequence of individualization, the traditional leadership style in which leaders of the pillars discussed with each other and implemented the results top-down through the pillars is no longer working. Leaders do not automatically have authority and have to prove themselves as individuals are becoming more independent. Mediatization, furthermore, calls for a more visible type of leadership instead of a careful and scrupulous one. This call for stronger leadership can also be seen in, for example, the European Value Studies. The Dutch indicate increasingly that 'a strong leader is a good type of government' (Ministry of the Interior, 2011: 21).

2.2.2 How political leaders perform to be attributed credibility

The impression that political leaders make in their performances is not completely set in stone. Leaders can influence how they perform a certain role: they can to a certain extent manage their reputation. Thus, while the traits associated by credibility might seem static – a leader either being considered competent and trustworthy according to citizens or not – he can actually do a lot himself to influence what the public thinks of him. Each performance can be seen as 'a way in which the *contextualized interaction* itself produces social realities' (Hajer, 2009: 67). In literature, creating a social reality fitting to the image a leader wants to express is referred to as Impression Management (IM). In the case of credible leadership this would mean that leaders convince target audiences that they are suited for the job. Critics associate IM with deceit, however if one assumes that social reality is constructed IM simply 'involves the packaging of information in order to lead target audiences to desired conclusions' (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 33). It is quite a cynical view that this packing of information in such a way that it convinces others is automatically not sincere. As meaning is socially constructed, it is also only in the relationship between leaders and citizens that credibility comes about. It is not immediately there, but with the 'right packaging of information', they can try to

convince citizens of their intentions. Deceit is not inherent in this process (although it also cannot be excluded).

Another term often used for impression management is the concept of self-presentation, which relates to how people regulate their identity in the presence of others (Sigelman, 2001:1). This is an ongoing process. During each performance a leader has to convince his audience of the point he tries to make. Not only about the situation at hand, but also more subtle as him being the most appropriate and competent person to execute his ideas and, for example, to lead the country. As numerous studies on IM and self-presentation show, there are different strategies that can be used to promote a certain image during a performance. These strategies cover what is being said, how it is being said, with what physical appearance and on what kind of stage. In this respect, Gardner and Avolio (1998) refer to three interesting elements that need to be executed well during performances to be considered convincing (and credible): staging, framing and scripting. In short, the first deals with the settings in which leaders perform. Political leaders perform, for example, in the settings of parliament, television and in direct contact with citizens on the street. What matters more for staging than where actually is performed, is how this stage is designed and the performance on it are designed (Schlenker, 1980). Framing, secondly, relates to the framework of basic ideas and values that leaders can use to interpret and promote themselves and their proposals. Scripting, finally, entails the way in which the employed frame of the leader is put into words. These three elements are further explored later on in this chapter, but first the idea of performances and dramaturgy requires some attention.

In the above the idea of leaders performing has already been mentioned a couple of times. Normally, when spoken of performance in Public Administration, it mostly refers to the effectiveness of governments functioning. This is not the meaning that is used in this thesis, rather when speaking of a leader's performance(s) it is used to refer to the way in which leaders 'impose their definition of reality onto others' (Hajer & Uitermark, 2008: 3). It is not necessarily said that leaders succeed in making other see the world like they does, but if he does succeed this gives credibility to his desired course of action. The assumption here is that political reality is not a clear objective entity. Contrary, 'political realities are intersubjectively negotiated' (Hajer, 2009: 54) and the basic underlying idea of a dramaturgical perspective is that 'the meaning of people's doings is to be found in the manner in which they express themselves in interaction with similarly expressive others' (Brissett & Edgley, 1990: 2-3). Performing good and convincing on the three elements of staging, framing and scripting, can thus be considered to contribute to credibility as it helps to convince citizens of the capabilities of the leader (trustworthiness and competency) directly and of his plans for the future (Verser & Wicks, 2006; Druckmann, 2004).

Staging

'In the last couple of weeks the negotiators travelled several times to the 'Catshuis' in suit, so that with a failure they could immediately speak with the press'.

As was noted regarding the cabinet negotiations on additional cutbacks (nu.nl, April 13th 2012)

The first of the three performative elements in this dramaturgical analysis approach is staging. Staging in this sense literally has the meaning of stage construction. It is about the surroundings in which a leader performs, in the presence and in front of a certain audience (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 43). Also for this element, several aspects can be distinguished, namely: the personal appearance of a leader, the props and the scenery. Personal appearance is about a leader's physical characteristics and wardrobe. Appearance has an effect on the image of leaders and we attribute certain

characteristics leaders based on their body type (Oomkes, 2000: 72). George Lakoff, for example, notes in the documentary 'drama democracy' (2010) that soft facial features express care and involvement and thus fits well with social democrats. Conservatives on the other hand are, according to him, characterized by strong and powerful facial features. Whereas these facial features are not something leaders can do much about, clothing is another story. Leaders can use clothing to communicate a certain identity and – contrary to their physical appearance – can be adjusted to each situation. To be convincing, leaders need to adapt the symbols conveyed in their clothing should match the situation. A meeting with 'the people' therefore requires more informal clothing than when giving a very formal speech (Bazalgette, 2010). Another element of clothing that matters in this respect, are the colors of the clothing that political leaders wear. Research suggests that the greater the color contrasts within one's clothing are, the more authoritative and formal that person is considered by others. In the case that leaders are for example wearing a suit, this means that the contrasts between the suit, the shirt and the tie have to be as highly as possible to achieve the most formal and authoritative image (Eisenstein, 2008: 82; De Wit, 2008; 25; Beers, 2010).

The second aspect of staging consists of the props. Schenkler describes these as '*movable objects that affect a performance and might project relevant symbolic information*' (1980: 268). These might be all kinds of objects, such as a glass of water from which a leader drinks from time to time or a briefcase a person is carrying with him. In this case as well, the chosen props have to support the message one wants to convey to be credible. An example is wearing a certain freedom pin on ones suit to underline the message of being in favor of peace. The last aspect of the staging element is the scenery, which concerns the relatively permanent background against which the performances take place (Schenkler, 1980: 268). Most importantly it is about the location and how it is furnished. Each stage poses certain demands and determines the possibilities speakers have. For example, the type of stage defines the appropriate manners (e.g. speaking via the chairman or not), and the relationship with this public. Also the design of the stage matters for this. What is the distance to the public? Is the leader standing above the rest or is there no difference between them? The position of the public influences the degree of their involvement. If the public is arranged around in the leader in a semicircle, the distance between speaker and public is at its smallest because everybody can see the speaker, just like the entire public can see each other (Hajer, 2009: 52). Thus the rules on what is appropriate on each stage differ, therefore what is considered credible also differs. If the public agrees with the rules followed on a stage, a leader has to follow them to remain credible. If the public does not accept the rules of the stage, the leader might consider breaking the rules (although it depends on the message whether this is considered credible or not).

Framing

A frame is a '*quality of communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another*' (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 41). In other words: a frame is literally a framework as it is about viewing and thinking about the world in a specific way. Interestingly, people cannot 'turn their frames off', as this is how our brain is wired. Without trying to do justice to the complex world of neuroscience: neural patterns in our brain lead to mental images of what is happening around us, based on our experiences. New events are processed on the basis of these established networks of association (Castells, 2009: 141). Thus, frames are certain basic ideas and values that people hold about reality, about right and wrong, about the plans we make and about the actions we undertake. Every bit of new information is judged and understood according to the frames someone holds. This means that if the information fits within a person's frame, it will be accepted without much consideration.

However, if the information is not fitting it will not be heard or at least not considered to be 'true' (De Bruijn, 2010: 9; Lakoff, 2004: 17). To frame, consequently, is 'to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (Entman, 1993: 52).

As every person thinks in frames, politicians as well as their audience make use of them (Lakoff, 2004: XV, 17). Given the idea that information is best accepted when it adheres to existing frames of citizens, it is necessary for politicians to concur with these to convince citizens of their ideas. In other words: the frames used by political leaders must resonate with the frames in society (Entman, 2003: 417). An important tool to activate the wanted frames is language. Using specific language gives leaders the opportunity to let their ideas correspond with the values present in society. De Bruijn (2010: 10) mentions the example of the Betuweroute. The Betuwe is a region in the Netherlands that is among others known for its nature. In recent years plans have been made to construct a new railroad from the harbor of Rotterdam to Germany, straight through this area. The project has been highly controversial. By calling it the Betuweroute the idea of a railroad running through beautiful nature, causing a lot of damage, was activated. However, if the same railroad would have become known as the A15- route, it would have been just another railroad constructed next to a highway (which is equally true), emphasizing economical growth et cetera. Both values – care for nature and more economical motives - are present in society, but proponents did not utilize the A15- route term (or at least did not become dominant). This is only one example of how politicians and other leaders can use language to activate certain frames with accompanying values.

Furthermore, language can also be used to interpret new issues and thus spin the debate on that issue in the desired direction. If a new frame is repeated often enough and also adheres to a sufficient extent to existing frames in society, it can gain wide support. This can be very powerful as frames have the tendency to be self-confirming (De Bruijn, 2010: 12). If you feel that the government is a patronizing institution, you will see it confirmed in almost every new policy initiative. Therefore, it is not advisable for opposing politicians to move into the dominant frames of their enemies. As George Lakoff puts it (2006: 33): 'if you keep their language and their framing and just argue against it, you lose because you are reinforcing their frame'. By using their words, one is actually agreeing that those are the right words to use. By reframing the debate, politicians can try to avoid being driven into a corner by their opponents. This means that a public leader is trying to develop a new frame that stands next to the already existing, but hostile frame. By reframing one can try to put the issue in a different light and thus put one's political enemies at a disadvantage (if the counter frame becomes dominant). 'Enemies' or antagonists now have to defend themselves instead of the leader. In other words: reframing is about turning the tables around. An example of this can be found in the second presidential debate during the American presidential elections of 2000 (October 11th 2000). One of the topics in this debate is issue of equal rights for gay people. When asked whether Bush agreed with this, he answered affirmative: gay people should have equal rights. At this point Al Gore steps in by referring to a law that had to ensure that people could not be fired only because they are gay. Apparently, it was blocked by a majority of opponents in Congress, but Gore wondered, would the government lend his support it? In this case Bush is almost obliged to say yes, as saying no might give the impression that he does not support equal rights after all. However, saying yes is also highly disadvantageous as it is not likely to be accepted by many of his potential voters. How did Bush deal with this situation? He tried to reframe it by drawing attention away from that specific yes/no question. He responded as follows:

'I will tell you, I'm the kind of person -- I don't hire or fire somebody based upon their sexual orientation. As a matter of fact, I'd like to take the issue a little farther. I don't really think it's any of my -- you know, any of my concerns what -- how you conduct your sex life. And I think that's a private matter. And I think that's the way it ought to be. But I'm going to be respectful for people. I'll tolerate people. And I support equal rights but not special rights for people' (2nd Presidential debate, October 11th 2000).³

Scripting

This element entails *'the development of a set of directions that define the scene, identify actors and outline expected behavior'* (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 41). Thus, scripting is an extension of framing as it can be seen as an embodiment of the frames a leader wants to put forward. However, whereas frames are based on ideas, scripts are meant to coordinate and integrate activities. In this respect Hajer (2009: 64) refers to discourses. These are patterns and structures within a discussion: thus they refer to what is being said. As also with staging and framing sub-elements could be distinguished, scripting consists of four main elements: casting of roles, building a dialogue, relating to the audience and the body language of the leader. Starting with the casting of roles, this element is about what role the political leaders and others present 'play'. Who are enemies (antagonists) and who are friends (protagonists)? The role that a leader sees for him can be expected to be closely related to how his friends are described (Hajer & Uitermark, 2008). During the elections of 2010, for example, Conservative candidate Cameron was fighting hard against the enemy of Left in general, and the Labor Party in particular who according to him spent all the money (speech David Cameron, April 19th 2010). Simultaneously, citizens who were willing to cooperate with him and willing to take responsibility were considered to be friends. Furthermore, also 'third parties' are identified. Both the political leader and his enemies need these parties for additional resources and support (Hajer & Uitermark, 2008: 7; Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 41 ff.). Clearly identifying what kind of role the leader sees for him, as well as who a leader considers to be friends and enemies, can contribute to clarifying the vision and the ideas for which the leader stands. Not only is made clear in a positive way what the leader wants to achieve, this is additionally also demarcated by what the leader specifically not wants to do.

For political leaders trying to communicate their frames and ideas, the element of dialogue is especially important. Interesting in this respect is Aristotle's distinction between pathos, ethos and logos as means to convince others. Through pathos, a speaker tries to arouse certain feelings of his audience. Audiences need to be 'touched' at a certain level by the words of a leader to be willing to act accordingly. Which feeling depends on the message the leader tries to convey (Aristotle, trans. 2004: 101). For example, if the leader wants the audience to fight with him against injustice, he might want to invoke anger or outrage. To strengthen the effect language has on an audience, leaders can use several tropes. Tropes fitting with the element pathos are for example: antitheses, hyperboles, superlatives, metaphors, rhetorical questions and anaphora (Kuitenbrouwer, 2010; De Bruijn, 2009). Ethos, secondly, relates to the character of the speaker: what image does he draw of himself (Aristotle, trans. 2004: 98)? According to Aristotle, a speaker needs to have at least the following three characteristics: understanding and expertise necessary to take the appropriate measures, integrity, and 'benevolence towards his audience' (Aristotle, trans. 2004: 98). The last means that the speaker must be willing to listen to what is of concern to his public. To be fully able to

³ De Bruijn (2011) and Westen (2007) have discussed this same example.

use ethos as a means to convince an audience, the speaker has to know them. If the speaker adheres to the character of the public, the public automatically gets an image of the speaker that fits with their own. Logos, thirdly, is a means for convincing by demonstrating that something is true or right. It is mostly about the quality of reasoning in which arguments must be in coherence and together lead to the only 'logical' conclusion (Aristotle, trans. 2004: 98). To do so, a speaker can use existing divides in society. Besides enlarging the differences between different groups, a speaker can also try to overcome them. A trope that can be of use in this is an oxymoron. This trope combines to opposite concepts. An example is 'left-liberal' in which both trust in and resentment against the government are interwoven (De Bruijn, 2009: 14). In other words: oxymora are characterized by a certain degree of ambiguity. At the same time this is also their prime strength, as citizens can interpret them slightly differently. This increases the chances of support for it. Another way in which leaders can use a logos-like argumentation is by referring to facts and figures to support a claim.

Additionally, considering the construction of the dialogue the relationship with the audience also requires some attention. For speeches and other performances to be as convincing as possible (and thus also making the leader as credible as possible), it is suggested that the audience needs to be included (De Bruijn, 2009). Limiting the distance between the leader as a speaker and citizens as the audience can be done in several ways. Specifically for speeches, De Bruijn differentiates between three ways to include the audience. The first entails that the speaker tries to give an answer to the worries and questions of the audience. The second possibility mentioned by De Bruijn (2009) is personification and connecting to the personal story of citizens. A proposed policy is for example personified into the story of the average citizen to make clear what the 'big' plans will mean for individuals. An example of this can be found in the American presidential elections of 2010 when John McCain personified the average American in 'Joe the Plumber' (although some, like Jackson (2009) wonder whether it was actually such an inclusive term for all Americans). In the Netherlands a similar rhetoric construct can be found in Wilders' 'Henk and Ingrid'. Besides using such a *parte pro totum* construction, a speaker can also directly address citizens individually by explicitly turning to them, for example by asking them a direct question. A third option is by using a 'resonating chorus' (De Bruijn, 2008). In this case a short sentence is repeated often as to enable an audience to take it on and use it again, after which it thus resonates. Of the three possibilities, this one is most likely to be used in speeches and not in the other performances. In the other performances there is more of a conversation going on that does not lend itself well for such constructions. Probably one of the most famous resonating choruses is the one Obama used in his 2008 debate: Yes we can.

Next, besides what is being said, it is also important *how* it is said as this also communicates a certain message to the public. In this respect, non-verbal communication matters for guiding actions. Distinctions can be made between posture, gestures, facial expressions and voice. Together these elements make up one's body language (Oomkes, 2000). Posture provides information about how the person in question is feeling. It says something about basic emotions like dominance versus obedience, affection versus resentment and tension versus relaxation (see figure 2.4). It is not the case that the public (always) consciously registers this information. Contrary, a lot of this happens without the public noticing. However, it is an important indicator for credibility to check the verbal message of the leader against his non-verbal message. Related, also movements are an indicator of someone's mood. Individual movements in itself do not necessarily mean anything, but in relation to each other they can tell a story. For example: fidgeting ones clothes or playing with pens indicates combined with body posture, tension and nervousness. Persons that do so are not at ease. Furthermore, also the way of walking, sitting and getting up can say a lot. Walking with one's head

down does not come across as confident as someone holding a straight posture with his head held up high (Oomkes, 2000: 74 & 75).

Additionally, facial expressions are needed to get a more nuanced idea of the expressed emotions. The more distinct several emotions are, the better they can be recognized. The difference between anger and joy is not that difficult to tell, however this is not that easy to do with happiness and joy. Eye contact is an interesting aspect in this matter, as it is one of the most intense ways of making contact. We look at one another if we want to know how the other responds to our words or if we want to dominate the other. Contrary, we avoid eye contact if we have to organize our thoughts. Finally, the use of voice. Besides facial expressions also someone's 'voice' gives away how people feel and what kind of appearance they make. In this respect, it is not about what is being said, but rather how it is being said. Vocalization can be broken down into several elements:

'loudness, pitch, clarity, voice quality (hoarseness-brightness-nasalness-throatiness-fullness), melodic or monotonous sentences, speaking rate, rhythm (fluent or nonfluent) and the changes between them. Furthermore, this also includes: sighing, clearing ones throat, sniffing, laughing, crying and yawning, just like 'ehs', 'hms', hesitations, pauses and emphases' (Oomkes, 2000: 83).

Also O'Keefe points to studies on variations in how a message was delivered influenced the communicator's credibility. It appears from experiments that non fluent, less rapid speaker, who place emphasis on inappropriate words are considered less credible than speakers who speak fluently, rapid and who emphasize the correct words (O'Keefe, 2002: 185). Thus, being credible in this sense means that all the different elements of the leader's body language should match the message they are trying to get across on a certain moment. For example, keeping a disinterested posture and accompanying facial expression and movements does not coincide with the verbal message that we really should take action.

The framework for analysis build in this chapter serves as the basis for analyzing the two empirical cases of Job Cohen and Mark Rutte during the parliamentary election campaigns of 2010. Before moving over to each case individually, first in the next chapter both cases and the performances analyzed for them are described in more detail.

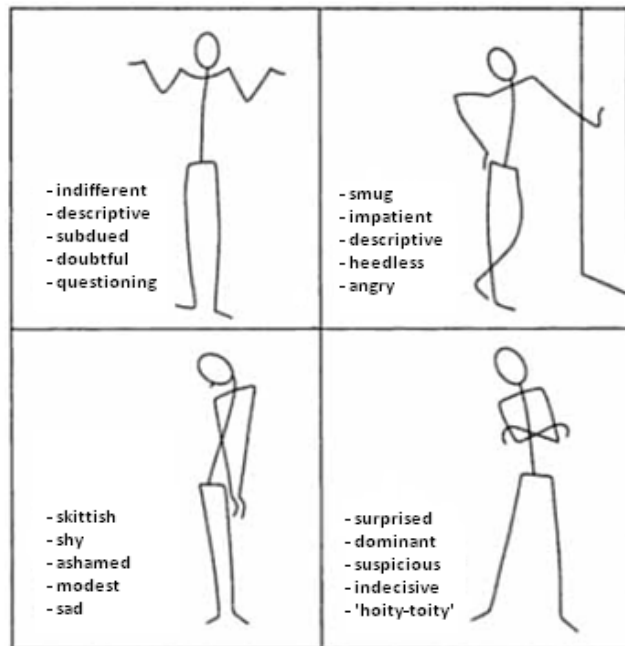


Figure 2.4: basic postures including some possible emotions that can be derived from them (Oomkes, 2000: 71; from Argyle, 1980). These possible emotions are very different, but this is understandable as the precise meaning only comes about in a specific context in combination with the other elements of body language and verbal language.

Chapter 3

Research design

After in the introduction the main research question and its relevance is formulated, and in chapter 2 the theoretical approach to answer this research question is discussed, this chapter focuses on how the empirical cases have been studied. The goal is to clarify and account for the approach taken and therefore to enhance the transparency of the study. Attention is paid to the underlying research tradition (symbolic interactionism), the research strategy (studying cases of political leadership), where to look for credibility in the cases, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and a reflection upon the quality measures set up to guard the scientific quality of the thesis.

3.1 Contextualizing research in tradition: Symbolic interactionism

Every study takes place within a certain research tradition, so does this study. As stated previously, credibility is seen as a relational concept in which the public attributes credibility to the leader based on his performances. During these performances meaning is given to the actions of the leader on the basis of which credibility is either attributed or not. Therefore, this study fits well into the tradition of symbolic interactionism as expressed by Mead, Cooley, Blumer and Goffman (although Mead, Cooley and Goffman did not use this term themselves).

Mead, a supporter of pragmatism, can be considered one of the founding fathers of symbolic interactionism. As said he himself did not use this term (it was only in 1938 formulated by Blumer), but the term seems to be quite fitting. Indeed, Mead considers the self being formed by interaction and this necessary interaction takes place by using symbols. Mead can be considered pragmatic in the sense that the interaction between individuals does not take place for no reason; rather, individuals use interaction in their desire to together overcome problems when acting. His theory can

be considered to be mainly a theory of socialization. According to him, socialization is mostly achieved by internalizing the reactions of 'the other'. People constantly take the role of the other meaning that people think about the expectations others have of them, to regulate how they act accordingly (Van Peperstraten, 2007: 233). Cooley's (1902) idea of the 'looking glass self is related to the notion that people regulate their appearance on the basis of what they think others of him and expect him to do'. This concept also builds on the premise that how one perceives oneself is an internalization of how one perceives others to think of you. These others are not merely everyone, but only the others who a person considers to be of importance. It is exactly in this respect that the metaphor of a looking glass applies: by looking in the mirror of how we think others see us, we see a reflection of us and as such develop an idea of who we are. This is not to say that who we perceive ourselves to be is a passive process; rather it is actively constructed by our imagination (Yeung & Martin, 2003). This entails three principal elements according to Cooley (1902, in Schaffer, 2005): the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification'. To give an example: John might think that because he drops something, Peter thinks he is clumsy and consequently John thinks of himself as clumsy.

However, it is not the case that all acts of people are determined by aligning to what kind of behavior others expect. Action is thus not only interaction. Mead distinguishes between an 'I' and 'me'. In his book 'Mind, self, and society' (based on lecture notes made by his students) the two are described as follows: 'The "I" is the response of the organism to the attitudes of others; the "me" is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes' (1934: 175). The 'I' is the principle of the original individuality and includes the part in an individual that takes up action initially. It contrasts with

'me' because the latter entails the socialized part of an individual. The 'me' entails the ideas that a person has of what the other thinks of him: what kind of image does someone have of me and what does that mean for what kind of actions they expect? Thus, in an organization, different kinds of actions are expected from leaders and followers. Whereas leaders might be expected to take initiative and to give orders, followers or subordinates might be expected not to question them. To a certain extent the 'I' can

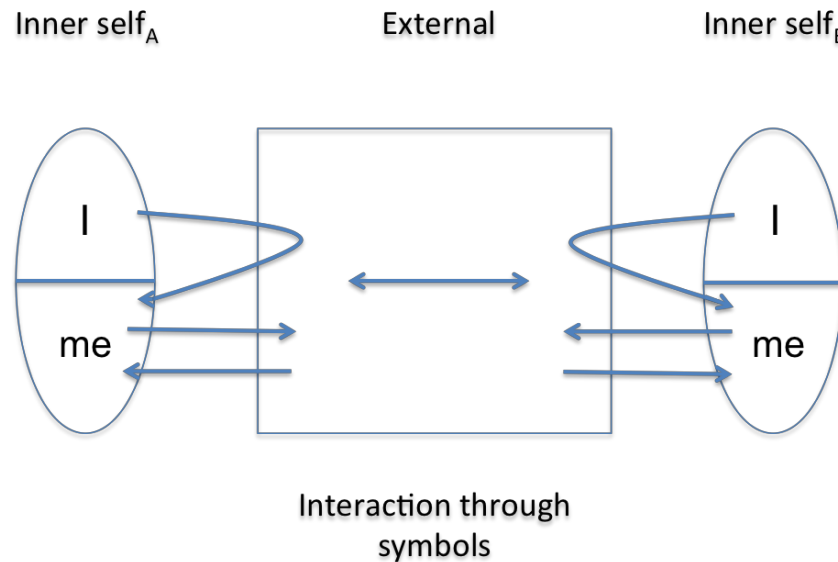


Figure 3.1: 'The interaction between two subjects and their composed identity', retrieved from Van Peperstraten (2007: 235).

In interacting with each other persons' identities are continuously crafted. For one there is a mutual relationship between 'me' and the 'interaction through symbols' because in the conversation people respond in a way that corresponds with what is expected of them, but also by doing so the idea of what someone thinks others expect of him is adjusted. Moreover, there is a relationship from I via the interaction through me. Each response has an original contribution. But over time, this original touch to the response becomes part of the expectations others have of a person and as such becomes part of 'me'.

rise above the 'me' and reflect upon the expectations perceived to be set by others. In this reflection one can either align to these expectations or challenge them (Yeung & Martin, 2003; see also Goffman, 1959), and as such actions can get a personal touch. Therefore, the original individuality that shows himself in actions (though in accordance with 'me'), becomes part of 'me' if it is repeated a couple of times (Van Peperstraten, 2007: 234). In figure 3.1 a schematic presentation of this interaction between individuals and the role of 'I' and 'me' is displayed.

Moreover, some attention to the nature of interaction is necessary. Social interaction can either be symbolic or not. Non-symbolic interaction takes place when we immediately act on others gestures, for example running from danger. 'In symbolic interaction we interpret each others gestures by making use of the meanings that are given to the gesture or object by our interpretation' (Verhoeven, 2001: 183). Thus, for example, what it means of someone smiles can be interpreted by me by taking into account the possible meanings of that smile and the situation at hand. To conclude, action and behavior does not only have an exterior dimension, but also an internal one. For doing research the above means that one should start with what is externally visible, but by using this externally visible behavior Mead wanted to make inferences about internal phenomena like intentionality and self-reflection (Van Peperstraten, 2007: 235).

Shifting focus to Blumer, he stated that symbolic interactionism starts from three basic premises. The first is that people act towards things on the basis of the meanings those things have to them. Things in this respect do not only refer to material items, but also to other people like political leaders, institutions like government or important values like freedom. Secondly, what meaning is attached to things emerges from social interaction, and is not inherent to the object itself. This premise thus deals with how meaning comes about. As meaning emerges in the interaction on how people act with regard to the things at hand, the meaning that emerges can be considered to be a 'social product'. Thinking about a nation's flag, the idea that this piece of fabric represents a specific country does not lie within the fabric, but in the meaning people give to that piece of fabric. Thus this symbol of a nation can be considered a social product upon which a group of individuals has agreed. Thirdly, the meaning of things can change because of the interpretative process a person uses to deal with those things. Blumer refers in this respect to an explanatory process that characterizes the way in which people handle meaning (Blumer, trans. 1974, Van Hulst, 2008: 37). This explanatory process consists of two parts. The first is that a person points out a certain phenomenon to himself towards he acts: he needs to point out to himself what things have meaning for him. In this respect people can be considered to communicate with themselves. When pointing out the things that have meaning to a person, this also entails trying to understand the meaning of other's behavior. The second part entails that in the process of communicating with oneself (the first part) making sense of the situation at hand follows from utilizing meanings. 'The acting person chooses, controls, postpones, regroupes and changes the meaning in light of the situation in which he is and on the basis of the direction of his acts' (Blumer, trans 1974: 16). Consequently, people are not merely applying meaning in, for example, interaction with each other, but they in their use and altering of meaning they also create it. Take for example the meaning of husband, what it means being a good husband has changed over time. Whereas in prior days it might have been that a good husband ensured that there was enough money to put food on the table, nowadays in Western culture being a good husband also entails helping out with cleaning et cetera. In the way husbands and wives relate to each other the meaning of being a good husband has thus changed.

The last major thinker to discuss in this section is the work of Erving Goffman. In the previous people's actions were considered to be regulated by how people think others think of them. In

adapting what one does to the expectations of the other, one can be considered to perform a certain role. However, what is in a way brought forward by Goffman, a person is not defenseless in that. Meaning that the way in which others see a person might also be the result of this person convincing others of seeing him the way he wants. This is one of the things Goffman discusses in his book 'The presentation of self in everyday life' (1959). In this book he 'advances a dramaturgical perspective where "actors" engage in "performances" in various "settings" for particular "audiences" in order to shape their "definition of the situation"' (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 33). In other words: in interacting with others people try to manage their reputation in such a way that others recognize the role that people are trying to play. Thus in case of leadership, one might act in such a way as to give others the impression that he is a leader. In other words: in his acts this aspired leader acts accordingly with what he thinks others expect leaders to do to convince them of his leadership qualities. A major point in Goffman's work related to this idea of role taking and impression management is the idea of a difference between front stage and backstage. Front stage is where public life takes place, and thus the area of interest in this thesis on public leadership, backstage deals with the private lives of people. Frontstage (also referred to as on stage or front region) performances 'will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society', whereas backstage (or back region), 'the performer can relax, drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character' (Goffman, 1959: 35, 112 in Sigelman, 2001: 2). This does not mean that persons in general are dishonest when in the public life and honest in their private lives; it only means that the public setting is more restricted in what is accepted as appropriate. Taking again the leadership example, front stage he might seem very decisive and in very much in charge, as that might be expected of a good leader, back stage he might share his doubts and uncertainties. Furthermore, this means that frontstage people – in this case leaders – have to adhere to the norms set for them by the public, norms that differ according to the role they play. Thus, for example, for a party leader different expectations exist than for a mayor, while both are leaders.

The assumptions outlined above in the descriptions of the work of Mead, Cooley, Blumer and Goffman underlie the further choices made in designing this study.

3.2 Research into cases of leadership

The research strategy employed for this thesis is a case study. This is a research strategy aimed at 'intensively studying a phenomenon within its natural context, in such a way that all relevant factors remain interwoven' (Hutjes & van Buuren, 1992: 15). With this strategy it is possible to gain insight into the complexity of a certain phenomenon and its background. Naturally, this research strategy has disadvantages as well as advantages (just like every other strategy), but a case study is especially suitable in situations where it is difficult to extract a phenomenon from its surroundings and when the number of units to be studied is small in comparison to the number of studied factors. What constitutes a case varies, examples are: individuals, groups, organizations, neighborhoods, cities, countries, events, laws et cetera (Van Thiel, 2007: 97).

For this study, a case study was considered appropriate because the two reasons for conducting a case study apply. Credibility is a relational concept, as argued earlier, in which the public has to attribute credibility over and over again to the leader. This attribution is made on the basis of the full extent of a leader's performances. Therefore it is interesting to study it in its natural surroundings, with all relevant (and non-relevant) factors present. Every time the public comes into contact with their leaders, different elements come together. Only extracting a few of these

elements would not do justice to the richness of the context in which public leaders perform as well as the performances themselves, especially if we want to understand what is happening. Furthermore, one could state that the number of units is quite low compared to the number of factors to be studied. During these performances, quite a lot of different elements come into play. For example, it is not only about what a leader is saying, but it also matters where he is saying it, how he is saying it, what he is wearing, his facial expression, his movements, his body posture, the audience present, how the audience reacts et cetera. These factors outnumber the possible public (political) leaders suitable for study.

There are several ways to conduct a case study. The first difference is between studying a single case and studying multiple cases. The single cases can take the form of a critical case, a prototypical case or a pragmatic case and an extreme or deviant case. When studying multiple cases, the goal is to compare the different cases or to replicate previous findings. Also with this approach different designs can be formulated. Swanborn (1996: 61-66) distinguishes between four types of strategies based on two dimensions. The first is whether the differences between the cases are minimized or maximized. The second dimension relates to whether the cases are similar or dissimilar considering the characteristics of the cases self or considering the results they have produced. A design in which the differences in the results are maximized was considered the most appropriate strategy in this thesis. The main question aims at understanding why leaders are losing or gaining credibility. What is it that they actually do? Therefore it is appropriate to compare a leader who has gained credibility with a leader who has lost credibility. If it is known how they act or perform differently, we might better understand why citizens contribute credibility to the one and not to the other. Interesting cases in this respect are Job Cohen and Mark Rutte. During the parliamentary election campaigns Cohen was initially greeted with great enthusiasm when he made himself available for the position of party leader of the Labor Party. However, relatively quickly his credibility started to drop. Mark Rutte, on the other hand, witnessed a development in the opposite direction. At the beginning of the campaigns he was not even considered a potential prime minister at all (looking at the polls of De Hond, TNS Nipo and Synovate), but gradually this started to change and eventually Rutte even became prime minister. In the next chapter, these two cases are described in further detail.

3.3 Studying credibility in cases of political leadership

For understanding what it was that Rutte and Cohen did that contributed to citizens attributing credibility to them (or not in Cohen's case), television performances of and newspaper articles on Job Cohen and Mart Rutte are studied. As stated repeatedly, credibility is a relational concept and emerges from the interaction between leader and citizens (among others O'Keefe, 2002) Credibility is thus not a thing that a leader can possess, but in the interaction citizens determine on the basis of what the leader does whether they attribute credibility to him or not. Following the ideas put forward by Goffman (1959), each time a leader interacts with citizens can be considered a performance in which leaders try to manage the impression that they make in such a way that citizens consider them good leaders. Indeed, good leaders, because they do not try to only make an impression as just any leader, they want to be considered a leader with the necessary capabilities and the rights plans for the future. In other words: they want to be considered credible in their role as political leader. Through their performances they can try to impose they view that they are suitable on citizens (cf. Hajer, 2009). For studying the question whether leaders are considered

credible or not and why, this means that one can look at the interaction between leaders and citizens. Furthermore, as I am interested in this study in what leaders do that makes citizens to consider them credible, the side of the leader and how they perform during the interaction is of special importance. Therefore: studying credible political leadership requires analyzing the performances on which citizens base their judgment.

In the introduction it was posed that contemporary governance, including political leadership, is mediatized (Bennet & Entman, 2001; Hajer, 2009). This entails among others that that the media constitute the primary means via which citizens and leaders (government) communicate. Consequently, to study the performances of leaders in the interaction with citizens involves focusing on the mediatized interactions. The use of the plural 'media' is not a coincidence. For citizens to acquire information about politics they are not limited to one medium. Contrary, they can use among others television, newspapers, radio and/or the Internet. That all these different media can be used does not necessarily mean, however, that they are used to the same extent. Research revealed that television and newspapers are the most used sources for citizens to acquire information about politics in the Netherlands, although the Internet is on the rise (SCP, 2005). Other research suggests that this finding also applies to other countries (Mughan, 2009; Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009: 168; Curran, 2010: 468). Therefore, to study credibility in the performances of Cohen and Rutte (the two cases in this study), television shows in which they made an appearance and newspaper articles in which they were discussed were taken into account.

Related to the possibilities of studying leaders' performances and credibility the nature of television shows and newspaper articles needs some additional attention. Clearly, in television shows citizens can see leaders perform relatively directly. It is still mediated and the director's choices determine what citizens at home see or not, but citizens can themselves see the leaders move and speak. In other words: citizens can see leaders perform. In newspapers this is not the case. This medium consists mostly of text with some additional photos. Furthermore, in most articles the journalist is the 'voice' of the text. The leader himself is, for example, merely quoted. Even when taking this different nature into account, it is still valuable to analyze the newspaper articles. It may then be that citizens themselves do not see Cohen and Rutte perform, the way in which on leaders is reported contributes to the basis on which citizens shape their judgments. In newspaper articles is reported on factual events, but they also provide some sort of framework for how to interpret them. In articles about polls on virtual seating allocations and trust in party leaders, regularly not only the numbers are published but journalists also try to give possible explanations to explain why, for example, certain changes occurred. Via these explanations and other cues on the leader's capabilities and feasibility of his plans for the future that can be found scattered in the various articles, the image of the leader in citizens' minds continuously takes shape. This meaning giving process in newspapers takes place in combination with the information citizens pick up via other channels; in which as said television is the most important of all.

Although this study mainly focuses on the performances and how the credibility traits show in them, this is not to discard other elements that might matter for how citizens evaluate political leadership. Besides the traits that citizens are looking for in the performances of political leaders, previous research also suggests, for example, that political and party preferences of citizens and the policy positions of leaders also matter for how candidates are evaluated (McGraw, 2011). Related to the first, Van Holsteyn and Andeweg (2010), for example, argue that evaluations of parties and candidates are interrelated: a favorable evaluation of a party contributes to a more favorable

evaluation of the candidate. Combined with a decreasing party alignment in which citizens can have multiple preferences (Mughan, 2009), this would support the idea that a candidate is more likely to be attributed credibility if what he is perceived to stand for matches with citizens' political preferences. In this respect, it is thus possible that multiple political leaders have a favorable starting position. The policy positions, moreover, are related to the political preferences of citizens' and are in part also incorporated in the performances as political leaders speak about them. The position of leaders on policy issues matters for their evaluation in the sense that a greater match between the policy positions of a leader and the policy positions of citizens might lead to more favorable evaluations of the credibility of the leader. Research suggests, though, that the degree to which this is the case is related to the strength of citizens' preferences, and as such again multiple candidates might have favorable starting positions (Krosnick, Visser & Harder, 2010). Thus, it should be noted that it is recognized that other elements also contribute to credibility evaluations. However, as these are not central in this study, and because these are considered subordinate nowadays to the performances for credibility evaluations, they are not given much explicit attention. Next, focus shifts to how the television shows and newspaper articles are collected and analyzed.

3.4 Data collection

The data collecting stage encompassed different elements, all which are discussed in this paragraph. It relates to the type of data sources, how the data is collected, where they are collected and how they are prepared for analysis. Based on the previous, the data that is collected for this study consisted of various television shows and multiple newspaper articles. Next, first is elaborated on the selection of television performances that are central in this study, how they are collected and how they are prepared for analysis. Next, the procedure for how the additional newspaper articles were selected, collected and prepared for analysis is discussed.

3.4.1 Television footage

The main part of the empirical data consists of television footage of the performances of the two political leaders. For each leader, eleven performances are selected for an in-depth study. The selection of these performances was based on six criteria. The first criterion is that the political leaders had to speak themselves, thus images in which only is spoken *about* a leader without the leader himself having a say, were not included. In this thesis the television performances are meant to study what Rutte and Cohen actually are doing, interpretations of others on television were therefore in this respect not the central focus. Secondly, also the duration of the performances was taken into account. To be able to fully judge all aspects of a leader's performance it had to last longer than a few minutes. This means that images in which political leaders were asked to react shortly to something were not analyzed, as these hardly constitute a full performance. Besides, these longer performances usually form the basis that is also used by other shows, for example by taking those performances as an illustration. Thirdly, as the case studies focus on the period prior to the elections, the performances had to be broadcasted between February 19th (when cabinet Balkenende IV was dissolved) and June 9th 2010 (the day of the elections). Fourthly, as the overall rating of the credibility of Cohen and Rutte is taken into account, it was necessary to study performances that took place on various moments during the entire period. Thus, not only performances in March had to be part of the selection, but also performances broadcasted in other months. Furthermore, a certain degree in diversity of images was needed to provide a complete picture of the performances of a leader. Only

taking into account, for example, television debates is very limited, as both Mark Rutte and Job Cohen also performed on other types of television stages. A leader might perform better on certain stages than on others, thus only studying one might have excluded important differences and could have given a biased impression. Finally, the last criterion for selecting the images is that there had to be at least one where both leaders were on the same stage and have to react on each other. It became very clear in these performances which leader did a better job than others and why. These criteria combined led to the following selection of television performances for analysis (see table 1). Besides these eleven performances Rutte and Cohen also performed on other stages. Unfortunately, resources did not allow for analyzing all television performances that adhered to the six criteria. Therefore, the television performances for analysis were limited to a total of eleven, in which for selecting them especially the distribution over time and over different formats played an important role.

Table 1: Selection of television performances to be studied for Cohen and Rutte.

Cohen	Rutte
1. Nomination speech – March 12 th 2010	1. Carlo & Irene – February 28 th 2010
2. Pauw en Witteman – March 12 th 2010	2. Business class – April 11 th 2010
3. NOVA – April 26 th 2010	3. Moraalridders – April 13 th 2010
4. Pauw en Witteman – May 5 th 2010	4. Congress speech – April 24 th 2010
5. Miljarden Gezocht RTL-Z – May 20 th 2010	5. Miljarden Gezocht RTL-Z June – May 13 th 2010
6. Premiersdebat – May 23 rd 2010	6. Knevel en van den Brink – May 18 th 2010
7. Paul Rosenmöller en – May 27 th 2010	7. Premiersdebat – May 23 rd 2010
8. Carré-debate – May 26 th 2010	8. Carré-debate – May 26 th 2010
9. De Wereld Draait Door – June 4 th 2010	9. Paul Rosenmöller en – May 31 st 2010
10. Knevel en van den Brink – June 4 th 2010	10. De Wereld Draait Door – June 2 nd 2010
11. Nova – June 7 th 2010	11. Nova – June 4 th 2010

To prepare the data for analysis, the television performances were first downloaded from different sites like YouTube and 'uitzending gemist' (broadcast missed), to ensure access to them during the entire period of research. Next they were transcribed verbatim. After these transcriptions were made, they were uploaded into the qualitative data analysis program NVivo to enhance the thoroughness of the analysis. Besides that this ensured a more thorough analysis, it also helped to increase the transparency of this study.

3.4.2 Newspaper articles

The newspaper articles formed a source with multiple faces. They included not only interviews with leaders, and reports on how Rutte and Cohen performed on television, but also other aspects of the political life of the political leaders were given attention. Therefore the newspaper articles served multiple roles, as earlier already shortly mentioned. They were a way to check the analysis of the television performances, but they also functioned as an independent source of information about performances of Cohen and Rutte that where either not televised or were impossible for me to obtain afterwards for analysis. Thus the newspaper articles served to both deepen and broaden the understanding of the results found in the television performances. The articles were selected and

collected as follows. With use of the newspaper article databank 'LexisNexis' first the six most important Dutch national newspapers were searched and downloaded, as well as the three free newspapers that circulated at the time in the Netherlands. These are the newspapers 'Algemeen Dagblad', 'Telegraaf', 'Volkskrant', 'NRC Handelsblad', 'Trouw', 'Financieel Dagblad', 'Metro', 'Sp!ts' and 'De Pers'. Not only do these newspapers combined have the largest amount of copies, they also represent different types of newspapers. Whereas 'Volkskrant', 'NRC Handelsblad', 'Trouw' and 'Financieel Dagblad' are generally seen as 'quality newspapers', 'Algemeen Dagblad', 'Telegraaf', are regarded more populist, and 'Metro', 'Sp!ts' and 'De Pers' constitute the free newspapers available in the Netherlands.

The search was done by using the key words 'Mark Rutte', 'Job Cohen', 'Rutte' and 'Cohen' and was limited to the period between February 18th 2010 and June 10th 2010. Especially these key words were chosen because the scope of articles had to be as broad as possible. Meaning: all articles in which either Mark Rutte or Job Cohen was mentioned was at least initially considered relevant as the aim was to find out how was reported on both leaders. Besides their full names, also only their last names were used as key words because it is not uncommon that articles refer to the leaders by only using their last name. These articles would be excluded if only the first two key words were used. The date February 19th was chosen because it is the day before the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV. The search was ended at June 10th 2010 as this is the first day after the national elections. Articles of the tenth were relevant to include because these are the articles that report on the events of the day of the elections, and sometimes it already included some reflection upon the entire campaign.

Initially, the search resulted in a total of 2415 articles. Compared to the available resources, this was not a feasible number of newspaper articles to analyze. Therefore I decided to select one newspaper in every category – one quality newspaper, one tabloid newspaper, and one free newspaper – on the basis of the number of copies circulating every day. This resulted in taking only the newspaper articles of 'de Volkskrant' (quality newspaper), 'de Telegraaf' (tabloid newspaper), and 'de Metro' (free newspaper) into account.

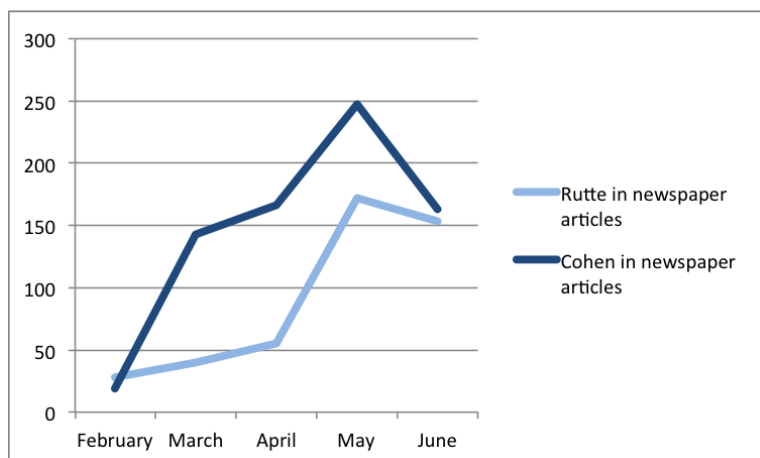


Figure 3.2: The total number of relevant articles per leader per month, for the three newspapers of 'De Volkskrant', 'De Telegraaf', and 'de Metro' combined

After making this selection in newspapers the first search resulted in 786 articles for Cohen and 469 articles for Rutte. However, after scanning through them it turned out that especially the articles that were found with the key words 'Cohen' and 'Rutte', did not always refer to the leaders and those were thus not relevant. For example, there were articles on the comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, on tennis players called Cohen, the musician Leonard Cohen and supermarket expert Gerard Rutte. As these articles are not relevant, they were excluded from the results. As a result, 1186 articles were taken into account for analysis: 738 articles for Cohen and 448 articles for Rutte. In figure 3.2 the distribution of articles over time can be seen. In this figure per leader the total number of articles is plotted, thus the articles of the three newspapers are combined. To make the analysis more structured, an especially designed for table in Word was

used to archive and analyze the articles by setting aside the most important parts of the newspaper articles. Furthermore, the newspaper articles were organized by newspaper and per newspaper a chronological order was maintained. This enabled me to not only retrace how was written about Cohen and Rutte during the entire period but also to sensitize me for the differences between newspapers on their reporting.

3.4 Data analysis

In total, two different methods were used to analyze the gathered data. First, the method that was used to analyze the collected television footage is discussed. This one entailed a dramaturgical analysis consisting of framing, scripting and staging. Secondly, the newspaper articles were analyzed by using a content analysis, focusing on the performative aspects of Rutte's and Cohen's behavior (discourses, acts and products).

3.4.1 Dramaturgical analysis

This type of analysis followed from the dramaturgical perspective as discussed in the theoretical framework. As stated before, the performances of political leaders matter for how they are perceived by the public (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Hajer & Uitermark, 2008). Therefore, leaders need to actively manage the impression people have of them. In that way, there is not much difference between the theoretical framework part and the analysis, other than it is applying the theory in practice. The analysis can be divided into three stages, corresponding to framing, scripting and staging. First, the analysis focused on the element of staging, as this is a relatively stable element during an entire performance. The actual stage hardly differs and in the kind of performances studied in this thesis, people do not usually change their outfit. Next, framing and scripting were studied more closely.

Framing was analyzed by repeatedly reading the transcripts looking for recurring themes and values. The values for example were could be retraced in how Rutte and Cohen gave meaning to events, how they judged things and what they identified as appropriate actions for the future. Naturally, in those performances in which multiple actors appear, multiple frames can occur. All these different frames in each performance were identified, as far as they challenged the frames employed by Rutte and Cohen. This is necessary as this provided means to establish which frame was dominant and which frame was contested. Furthermore, it provided insight into how (dominant) frames were tried to be reframed. Although words are necessary to communicate frames, they are not of explicit focus during the frame analysis. These mostly come into play in the stage of scripting. As described in the theoretical framework, scripting consists of several elements. One by one, all these elements are addressed in this stage of analysis. While rereading the transcripts it will be studied who are considered friends and foes according to Rutte and Cohen. Furthermore, to analyze the element of dialogue, the use of rhetorical instruments – such as pathos, ethos, and logos – were identified, as well as the tropes used to intensify them. Additionally, the relationship between the leader and his audience was taken into account. Or better said, it was studied how the leader positioned himself related to the public. Did he, for example, address them directly or not? Besides what was being said, also how it was said is part of the element scripting. This mostly related to nonverbal behavior as communicated via someone's body language. In this respect, four elements were taken into account: body posture, facial expressions, gestures and voice. These elements were studied by looking at the visual images of the performances. Of special interest were changes within

body language that deviated either from the desired image a leader wants to portray (strong, confident et cetera) or when the message communicated by body language did not match with what was actually being said. Naturally, it is difficult to assess exact emotions, however it was possible to establish whether Rutte and Cohen were relaxed or nervous based on integrating the four elements of body language. A more relaxed posture pointed at more self confidence et cetera and is this likely to fit with the message Rutte and Cohen wanted to communicate (unless his verbal message was that he is nervous, but this did not happen during the performances). Nervousness on the other hand could indicate that a leader was not that sure of himself or his message and was thus more likely to rouse suspicion.

3.4.2 Analysis of newspaper articles

The analysis of the newspaper articles followed, to the extent that this was possible, the same logic as the analysis of the television performances. Naturally, all the visual elements in the dramaturgical analysis were not possible to observe in articles, as they only provided written material. Emphasis thus laid on framing and parts of scripting as these deal with what is being said and in what way. However, this does not necessarily mean that nothing was said about visual elements, as the journalist who wrote the piece sometimes described these as well. Also, for example, reactions of the public were occasionally described. Thus, as much as possible the newspaper articles were studied for the same elements as the television performances, in which information on visual elements was dependent upon what the journalists write. Additionally, in the newspapers specifically was searched for clues on how Rutte and Cohen were described for how they acted and what they previously had achieved (as what they said was already covered by framing and staging). Besides the mere description of this, also the judgment attached to it in the article was considered.

To assess framing, scripting and staging, and to find the clues on how Rutte and Cohen acted, and what they previously had achieved, all articles were read and reread with precision. After reading and rereading the most important elements of the newspaper articles were selected and collected in an especially designed for table. First the element of framing was the focus of attention. Not only was studied which frames were dominant in each article, it was also assessed who were asserting a certain frame: the leader, journalists, other leaders or politicians, citizens et cetera. Furthermore, it was checked whether each frame that was asserted was accepted or contested. If contested, it was studied why this was the case and whether another frame was put next to it. Especially if the leaders themselves were quoted it was of interest what kind of words they used. How did they try to persuade the readers? What kind of rhetoric did they use? What kind of tropes? Considering staging remarks about the actual stage, relevant props or a leader's wardrobe were taken into account, as well as who uttered the remark (e.g. leader himself or journalist). Related to the other elements that were indicated to require attention, it was sought in the text for passages in which how Cohen and Rutte acted and what they previously had achieved was evaluated. Additionally, for these elements it was also checked who made which judgments: among others journalists, citizens and other political leaders.

3.5 Quality measures

In order to secure the scientific quality of this study several measures were taken. As the emphasis in this study is on 'verstehen' and meaning giving processes in the interaction between Rutte and Cohen, and citizens, quality criteria that fit with this type of more interpretative research were taken

into account. Schwartz-Shea (2006) mentions four first order quality criteria. The first is 'thick description', meaning 'the presence in the research narrative of sufficient detail of an event, setting, person or interaction to capture context-specific nuances of meaning such that the researcher's interpretation is supported by 'thickly descriptive' evidentiary data' (Schwartz-Shea, 2006: 101). Applying this to this thesis, this means that in this thesis the findings of the dramaturgical analysis and the analysis of newspaper articles are supported by multiple examples to support the claims made.

The second quality criterion is trustworthiness. Was the research process self-consciously deliberate, transparent and ethical? In order to adhere to this criterion as much as possible, the following measures were taken. First of all, what is happening during the performances was transcribed verbatim. In other words: everything that was said was literally transcribed, including the stuttering and stammering that occasionally took place. Secondly, for analyzing these transcripts, the manual analysis was complemented with qualitative data analysis software NVivo to improve the thoroughness of the analysis, and to make more insightful how different parts were interpreted. For the newspaper articles a table was designed to support the analysis of the newspaper articles. Furthermore, in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the results of the media performances were also checked against how was reported on the performances of Cohen and Rutte in the newspaper articles. Additionally, I have kept track of important decisions taken during analysis and made notes on the dilemmas I encountered. This helped to make insightful (transparent) what I had done and for what reasons. An example of this was on what kind of newspapers I would take into account for analysis. Originally, I planned to analyze all nine national newspapers (as mentioned above). However, while looking at the exact number of articles that required intensive study I found that this was not a feasible number of articles to analyze, as well as that the value of analyzing nine papers was not much higher than analyzing the three most important ones for answering the research question. The transcripts of the performances, moreover, also help the transparency. Finally, I have not only paid attention to what could have led to a decrease in credibility in the case of Cohen and what could have led to an increase in credibility in the case of Rutte. For both I was also open to what behavior, according to theory, might have led to an increase of credibility for Cohen and a decrease of credibility for Rutte. Thus, during the analysis not only was looked for confirmative evidence.

The third criterion mentioned by Schwartz-Shea is reflexivity. This criterion was based on a recommendation of Lincoln and Guba to keep a reflexive journal. In such a journal the researcher should record 'on a daily basis, or as needed, a variety of information about the self (hence the term reflexive) and method' (Schwartz-Shea, 2006: 102). Thus, as already mentioned, when needed I kept memos of the most important decisions made during the data collection and analysis, the dilemmas that I encountered and which steps I eventually took. Furthermore, some short scribbles helped me to think about my role as a researcher in studying credibility and in how much I can actually derive from the performances. These memos thus include my reasoning and thoughts behind certain research decisions, especially when deviating from the original proposal, as well as some reflections (sometimes more implicit) upon what I was doing as a researcher. The final and fourth criterion of quality is triangulation. Although this requirement cannot always be met in the ideal sense of approaching a phenomenon from three different angles, it was met as much as possible by first of all studying three types of performances. Thus not only debates, but also talk shows and speeches were analyzed. Secondly, besides the television performances, also newspaper articles were taken into account. Furthermore, relevant literature from different disciplines was used to build a firmer basis.

Chapter 4

The parliamentary election campaigns of 2010: Rutte versus Cohen

Very soon, 2010 promised to be a very turbulent political year in the Netherlands. Already in February, the cabinet Balkenende IV had survived several crises. Eventually, the crisis on extending the Dutch military mission in Uruzgan, Afghanistan proved to be more than the cabinet could handle. Of the three parties in the coalition, the Christian Democrats (CDA) and the Christian Union (CU) were in favor of extending the mission, while the Labor Party (PvdA) were strongly opposed to it. The latter party reckoned that because they had promised before to leave Afghanistan in 2010, it would not be credible in the eyes of the citizens to break that promise, even though behind the scenes they worked over a year to reach a compromise. The other two parties wanted to extend the mission because they wanted the Netherlands to take responsibility. After weeks of intense debate and political intrigues, the Labor cabinet ministers finally decided on February 20th at 04.00 AM that they resigned (NRC Handelsblad, February 20th 2010; NRC Handelsblad, March 27th 2010). Following the Labor cabinet ministers, the other cabinet ministers decided to resign as well to make new elections possible.

Quite soon it was announced that the next parliamentary elections would take place on June 9th 2010. In the slipstream of this announcement a range of former members of parliament declared that they would not return in parliament. The party leader of the Socialist Party (SP), Agnes Kant, stepped down for example after the disappointing results of her party in the municipal elections of March 3rd 2010. Two days later, on March 5th, Emile Roemer took over as party leader (Telegraaf,

March 6th 2010). Furthermore, the ‘crown prince’ of the Christian Democrats, Camiel Eurlings, stated on March 11th that he would not stand for election because he wanted to focus on his family life (AD, March 12th 2010). A day later, on March 12th also the leader of the Labor Party, Wouter Bos, announced his departure from national politics for the same reasons as Eurlings had done: he wanted to spend more time with his family. A few hours after his resignation, Job Cohen, mayor of the city of Amsterdam announced his candidacy for the position of party leader of the Labor Party (Volkskrant, March 13th 2010c).

The period between the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV and the parliamentary elections of June 9th 2010 is relatively long. Not this entire period can be characterized as ‘campaigning time’, rather this period can be divided into two smaller periods. The first runs from the fall of the cabinet on February 20th to approximately the beginning of May and the second period runs from the beginning of May to the actual elections on June 9th. In this respect, the first period can be considered the period leading up to the election campaigns that were ran in the second period. The changes in prominent politicians in March can thus be interpreted as a preparation for the actual campaigns. During one week in the election campaigns the campaigns were actually put on hold. Following the plane crash in Tripoli on May 12th, in which 61 Dutch people died, the biggest parties participating in the elections decided to suspend their campaigns until the 17th of May (Trouw, May 12th 2010). However, although the campaigns officially started in May, the period leading up to it also matters, as also in the earlier period a lot is spoken about the elections. Moreover, not only is spoken a lot about the upcoming elections, also some substantial developments took place. Think, for example of the big changes in candidates available.

The most important theme of these parliamentary elections relatively quickly turned out to be the economic crisis and the resulting budget cuts that had to be made. An important aspect in this respect was whether the mortgage interest relief should be saved or not. Left wing parties wanted to make adjustments – for example by reducing eligibility for people owning expensive houses – right wing parties wanted to keep the relief intact. Remarkably, immigration hardly played a role at this time, although naturally Geert Wilders, leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV), constantly tried to bring it up. Consequently, Wilders did not play as big a role as was previously expected, the battle mainly revolved around the leaders of the Liberal and the Labor Party. It was a battle between respectively Mark Rutte and Job Cohen about whose party would turn out to be the biggest (Volkskrant, May 22nd 2010a).

Interestingly enough, focusing specifically on the credibility of both leaders, various polls indicate that their credibility developed in an opposite direction. Whereas Cohen started quite strongly, with the passing of time it became clear that he was not able to live up to the expectations.

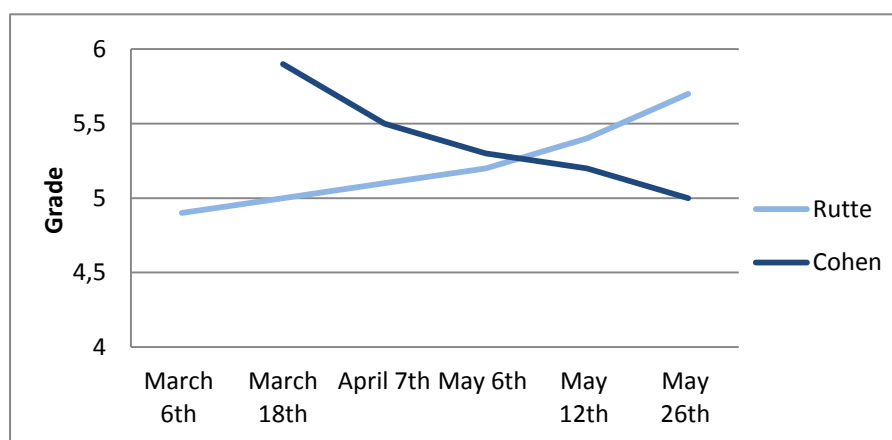


Figure 4.1: Grades for trust in Rutte and Cohen for the period between March 6th and May 12th 2010 (De Hond, May 12th 2010).

Rutte, on the other hand, was absolutely not seen as a serious candidate for leading a coalition. Indeed, in the first polls on which leaders citizens trusted most as their next prime minister, he was not even listed (De Hond, March 14th 2010; March 19th 2010).

Next to the newspapers in which this development is described as well, three types of polls suggest that Rutte gained credibility during the election campaigns whereas Cohen, after a first initial win, lost a substantial amount of his credibility. A first rough clue is provided by the polls on seating allocations. After Cohen entered national politics, the Labor Party rose in the polls from 13-20 seats (depending on the poll) to 32-34 seats at the end of March. However, they were not able to keep this up for a long time. After a few weeks they started to lose seats and this continued until the first week of June. In Rutte's case the Liberal Party started out quite low and continuously started to win votes (De Hond, 2011; Synovate, 2011a). Naturally, only polls on seating allocations are not suitable to pinpoint credibility developments. To actually vote for a certain party, more things matter than the leader of that party (Deschouwer & Hooghe, 2005). Fortunately, in the same period also polls were conducted on the extent to which party leaders were trusted (one element of credibility), and the extent to which people considered them to be good prime ministers (as stated above). These polls were formulated in two ways. In some respondents could only indicate one option. Thus in these polls indications of credibility were polled in a relative manner. At the end of May, Rutte took Cohen's position as favorite candidate for becoming prime minister, but this does not automatically indicate that Cohen indeed lost some of his credibility (De Hond, June 3rd 2010). This could however be derived from a second type of polls with questions on party leaders. In these respondents were asked to give each party leader a grade. Over time respondents started to grade Cohen lower and Rutte higher (De Hond, April 26th 2010; TNS Nipo, June 1st 2010). In this case it is thus not that relatively speaking Cohen and Rutte switch positions, but also in a more absolute manner.

In connecting these figures on Cohen's and Rutte's credibility to their performances on television and to how they are written about in the newspapers, I do not wish to imply that it is possible in this study to determine the exact change in credibility after each performance. One could also wonder whether this is even appropriate. Even though credibility is a relational concept that citizens have to attribute over and over again to their political leaders, the reputation of a political leader also plays a role in this respect. Just as a person can have store credit, the reputation of a leader can also give him some credit (McGraw & Steenbergen, 1995; Lodge, Steenbergen & Brau, 1995; Warner *et al.*, 2011). Applied to the cases, as Cohen was highly credible as the mayor of Amsterdam, he had some credit considering his leadership qualities from which he could draw during his performances as party leader. One bad performance did not mean that he completely lost his credibility as a leader: he had sufficient credit to cope with that. However, as the poor performances continued he, in a way, ran out of it for a substantial group of citizens. Rutte, on the other hand, did not have a favorable position at the beginning of the election campaigns in terms of his perceived credibility as potential prime minister. In other words: he did not have much credit related to his leadership potential. One good performance did also not immediately change this, as it could have been just luck. That over time Rutte did gain credibility can be understood to follow from his repeatedly convincing performances (as is established in chapter 5). By showing over and over again that he had the necessary capabilities, he gradually gained a reputation as a possible prime minister (Bromley, 1993; Ang & Wright, 2009).

In the remaining part of this chapter, first the case of Mark Rutte is discussed in more detail, after which attention shifts to the case of Job Cohen. After these descriptions the chapter continues with descriptions of what happened during the analyzed performances of Rutte and Cohen. These

descriptions aim to give a firmer basis for later on understanding the analyses of the television performances.

4.1 The election campaign of Mark Rutte

Starting literally at the beginning, Mark Rutte was born on February 14th 1967 in The Hague as the youngest of seven children. After graduating high school he studied History at Leiden University of which he received his degree in 1992. Although he had been active for the youth organization of the Liberal party, he did not enter national politics immediately. First worked at the multinational company Unilever for ten years, in various positions concerning human resource management. In 2002 Gerrit Zalm, former leader of the Liberal Party, asked him to fulfill the position of junior minister of Social Affairs and Employment in the first cabinet led by Balkenende (as stated in an interview in the television show 'Business Class' on April 11th 2010). In this position he was responsible for social security and labor conditions. After only 86 days of governing, this first cabinet of Balkenende fell on October 16th 2002 and was replaced on May 27th 2003 when cabinet Balkenende II was installed. Rutte retained his position as junior minister of Social Affairs and Employment (rijksoverheid.nl, 2012a; rijksoverheid.nl, 2012b). During the governing period of this cabinet, Rutte switched positions in 2004. Instead of junior minister of Social Affairs and Employment, he at that point became junior minister of Education, Culture and Science after the junior minister who previously worked this portfolio was discredited. On June 27th 2006, three days before the cabinet fell, Rutte resigned because he felt that his position as junior minister could not be combined with his new position as party leader of the Liberal Party.

A month before his resignation as junior minister, Rutte had won the internal election for the position of party leader. His candidacy for this position in May 2006 marked the start of a difficult period for Cohen. His election as party leader was not easy as he was involved in a strong competition with another candidate for the position: Rita Verdonk. She was the minister of Immigration and held quite strong views. Although some considered her controversial, she was also relatively popular among supporters of the Liberal Party (Netwerk, April 5th 2006). Eventually, he won an internal referendum among members of the Liberal Party with 51.5% of the votes, but this did not mean that his leadership was easily accepted. Contrary, his leadership remained debated for a long time (Volkskrant, May 27th 2010b). In the parliamentary elections of November 22nd 2006, which followed on the resignation of cabinet Balkenende II, the Liberal Party had to deal with substantial losses. They lost six seats and went down from 28 seats after the elections of 2003 to 22 seats after the elections of 2006. On top of that, Rutte did not manage to get the most votes. His still popular internal competitor, Rita Verdonk, managed to get 620.555 votes, whereas Rutte 'only' got 553.200 votes (Elsevier, November 27th 2006). This was a unique event in the political history of the Netherlands. In the next governing period that followed on the elections, the battle between Rutte and Verdonk continued. The fight ended when Rutte expelled Verdonk from the party's parliamentary fraction on September 13th 2007, after she had uttered severe critique on the direction of the party with regard to immigration. In the following years Rutte still had to work very hard to maintain his position, especially as the VVD was not gaining much support in the polls (Volkskrant, June 10th 2010a; Telegraaf, June 10th 2010b).

Looking at the polls on the virtual allocation of seats it is clear that shortly after the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV, the Liberal Party and its leader Mark Rutte were not considered likely candidates to take office. Indeed, at the beginning of March 2010, the Liberal Party scored an

absolute low of 19 seats, even three less than they had during cabinet Balkenende IV. From that point onwards, however, the Liberal Party witnessed a steep rise in the polls on the allocation of seats and from May they became virtually the biggest party. On the other hand, in the period between March and May the debate on the leadership of Mark Rutte was still not put to an end. Some continued to doubt his capabilities, even people from within the Liberal Party (Volkskrant, May 3rd 2010). Furthermore, rumors started that the Liberal Party would put forward specific candidates for the post of prime minister, other than Mark Rutte, shortly before the elections. Rutte responded clearly to these rumors by stating that he had the ambition to become prime minister himself, although he made some reservations by saying that he could imagine cases in which he would take place in parliament even though the Liberal Party could be the biggest (Elsevier, May 21st 2010; Volkskrant, April 26th 2010). That Rutte had become a serious candidate for the post of prime minister is also reflected in the polls. As stated previously, in the first polls on who citizens trusted most as prime minister Rutte was not even listed. Later on, in a poll on who citizens wished to have as prime minister not only Rutte was mentioned as a candidate of the Liberal Party, but Neelie Kroes (Euro commissioner) and Ivo Opstelten (at the time mayor of Tilburg) were listed as well. In this respect Kroes also obtains a higher score than Rutte did (De Hond, April 26th 2010). Interestingly enough, Rutte manages to not only turn the tide around in terms of virtual seats, but also regarding himself as a potential prime minister. The closer to the actual elections on June 9th Rutte got repeatedly an increasing share of the votes on who should be the next prime minister (De Hond, May 12th 2010; May 19th 2010; Synovate, 2011a).

Not only virtually, but also in real life the Liberal Party turned out to be the biggest party after the elections and after a long formation period Rutte became the first Liberal prime minister since 1918 (ÉénVandaag, October 17th 2010), a position he had handled relatively well for one and a half years, especially considering the difficult times the cabinet as well as the Netherlands in general are facing. During its governing period the cabinet was, for example, mostly trusted by a majority of the Dutch citizenry, and after the first hundred days of governing respondents indicated that they felt that the cabinet was still living up to the expectations and evaluated cabinet Rutte higher than its predecessor (SCP, 2012; Synovate, 2011b). Difficult circumstances entailed first of all that the cabinet did not consist of a 'normal' majority coalition but consisted of the Liberal Party and the Christian democrats. Together they formed a minority coalition that is supported by the Party for Freedom. This was a highly unusual situation in the Netherlands (Trouw, July 30th 2010). Furthermore, economically the Netherlands are witnessing a difficult time, together with other European countries. Although already during the election campaigns of 2010 the Liberal Party announced the most severe budget cuts, at the beginning of 2012 they are no longer considered adequate and extra cuts are needed. Negotiating on those requires a lot of political skills, especially in a minority cabinet. On top of that, on March 20th 2012 the party supporting the minority coalition, the Party for Freedom, lost a seat because Member of Parliament Hero Brinkman left the party and continued as an independent member. Consequently, the cabinet with support of the Party for Freedom no longer officially held a majority of the seats, which put additional pressure on Rutte (NRC Handelsblad, March 20th 2012).

To decide upon how to take the necessary additional budget cuts for the budget of 2013, the coalition partners including the Party for Freedom were facing a tough round of negotiations. To let them run as smoothly as possible, it was decided to take the negotiations behind closed doors and to

not communicate about them until the final package of measures was decided upon. In the media, this round of negotiations became known as the 'Catshuisoverleg' (Catshuis deliberation).⁴ After seven weeks of negotiations the Party for Freedom decided that they would not give its support to the measures that were taken because they would have affected the purchasing power of their followers too much (NRC Handelsblad, April 21st 2012). Besides that he did not want to support the cutback measures that were (supposed to be) agreed upon, he also withdrew his support to the minority coalition (Volkskrant, April 21st 2012). Consequently, Rutte handed in his resignation at the Queen on Monday April 23rd 2012, and the preparation for organizing new parliamentary elections started (NRC Handelsblad, April 24th 2012).

What does this all mean in terms of credibility? Considering this study it means that right after the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV, Rutte was not very credible as the next prime minister of the Netherlands, and as such not as the person leading a party with the best ideas and plans for the future of the Netherlands. However, along the way this image changed. With the passing of time, Rutte became more credible as the Netherlands' next leader. Increasingly more people had faith in Rutte that he would be a good prime minister and he got increasingly higher grades considering his leadership. On June 3rd, for example, 48% of the respondents in a poll considered Rutte to be the best candidate for becoming prime minister, while on March 14th, in the same poll, he was not even considered a potential candidate for becoming prime minister (De Hond, June 3rd 2010; De Hond, March 14th 2010). The question that remains now is what it was that Rutte did to gain credibility according to the general public. This question is answered in the next chapter.

4.2 The election campaign of Job Cohen

Contrary to Rutte, Job Cohen, leader of the Labor Party (PvdA), lost credibility during the election campaigns of 2010. When taking a look at his history, Cohen took a quite different career path than Rutte had done. Job Cohen was born on October 18th 1947 in Haarlem, a city close to Amsterdam. His parents were liberal Jews and both were historians. His father Dolf Cohen also became a professor and in the seventies also president (rector magnificus) of Leiden University. After graduating high school in 1966, Cohen went to the University of Groningen to study Law. After receiving his degree in 1971 he transferred to Leiden University where he worked on his doctoral dissertation until 1981, when he received his PhD on 'study rights in scientific education'. Next he transferred to the University of Maastricht, where he prepared the foundation of a Law School. In 1983 he became a full professor in Research Methods at this same Law School, focusing especially on the research methods used in Law and the development of Law education. In 1991 he also became president of the University of Maastricht (Parlement & Politiek, 2012a; Elsevier, June 22nd 2010).

Related to his political career, it is important to note that he already joined the Labor Party in 1967 and that both his parents were active for the same party (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010). Only two years after becoming president of the University of Maastricht, in 1993, he became a junior minister of Education in the third cabinet of Lubbers to replace Jacques Wallage who transferred to the position of junior minister of Social Affairs and Employment after the junior minister on that post resigned (Parlement & Politiek, 2012b). This function only lasted a year and after that he returned to his post at the University of Maastricht. Simultaneously, he joined the senate in 1995. In 1998 he left

⁴ The 'Catshuis' in The Hague is the official residence of the prime minister of the Netherlands. Not many prime ministers have actually lived here and today it mostly as a ceremonial function.

the University of Maastricht and became the interim managing director of a public broadcasting station, the VPRO, until August of that year. In the same month he also left the senate to become the junior minister of Justice, in the second cabinet led by Kok. In this respect he was mostly responsible for immigration and in that respect he was given the task to, with the immigration law in hand, limit immigration to the Netherlands to 'real cases'. Furthermore, he was also the junior minister who had prepared a law that made same-sex marriages possible. Cohen succeeded in getting this law through parliament and came into force on April 1st 2001 (NOS, April 1st 2011). Cohen stayed on this post of junior minister of Justice until the end of 2000, when it became clear that he would become mayor of Amsterdam (Parlement & Politiek, 2012c; Trouw, December 21st 2000).

Cohen was installed as the mayor of Amsterdam in January 2001 and fulfilled that position for nine years (Parool, January 12th 2001; Volkskrant, October 7th 2011). He was considered a quite successful mayor. In 2005 he was described by Time magazine as one of Europe's heroes (hate buster) and in 2006 he was runner up for the World Mayor Award, only preceded by John So, mayor of Melbourne (Time magazine, October 2nd; City Mayors Foundation, 2012). He was prized for his efforts to try to 'keep things together' and for his promotion of harmony over conflict. Furthermore he had the honor to perform the marriage between the Crown prince Willem-Alexander and his wife Maxima. Additionally, he also performed the first same-sex marriage in the Netherlands (Telegraaf, April 1st 2010, **78**). However, besides ups in this period Cohen also experienced some downs. One of the most striking downs is the murder on cineaste and writer Theo van Gogh in 2004, which caused a lot of tension, not only in the city of Amsterdam, but in the entire country. Critique on his motto of 'keeping things together' intensified and some became to question his 'soft' approach (Hajer & Uitermark, 2008). However, overall the majority of the Dutch citizens regarded Cohen as an admirable and competent administrator.

When cabinet Balkenende IV fell on February 19th 2010, Job Cohen was still the mayor of Amsterdam. At first Wouter Bos kept leading the Labor Party, however a month after the cabinet had fallen he resigned as leader of the party. Only a few hours after the press conference of Wouter Bos in which he had announced his resignation, Cohen made himself available for the position of party leader during a press conference held at the bureau of the party in Amsterdam. Simultaneously, Cohen resigned from his post as mayor of Amsterdam. The general public received his nomination with great enthusiasm. Before Cohen announced his candidacy, the Labor Party was not doing well considering their popularity. In the polls on the allocation of seats the Labor Party fluctuated between 13 to 20 seats (depending on which poll one takes into account). However, from the moment Cohen entered the stage of national politics, PvdA starts to climb rapidly in the polls, culminating with 34-34 seats at the end of March (De Hond, May 19th 2010; Synovate, 2011a). Additionally, Cohen was considered by far the most preferred next Prime Minister (De Hond, 2011; 2011; Synovate, 2011a). In a poll of De Hond (March 19th 2010) for example, Cohen got 59% of the votes while Balkenende, the running up favorite, only managed to get less than half of his share of votes (23%). Thus it goes almost without saying that the expectations of Cohen were sky high.

Unfortunately for Cohen, he was not able to keep up with these expectations. A month after his candidacy his popularity as the next prime minister had already gone down substantially and he had quickly learned that leading a national party during parliamentary elections was quite different from his previous positions in the governmental administration, regardless of whether it was at a university or in the positions of junior minister and mayor. Being a politician requires different traits. Especially in the period leading up to the election campaigns, and in the first major television debates Cohen had a hard time adjusting to these requirements. The critique on his poor performance during

this period related mostly to three points. The first one was that he (or at least the Labor Party) had 'turned' in the debate on a police mission to Afghanistan. The previous cabinet had fallen because of the Labor Party did not want to support such a mission, but now they were in favor of it if some special requirements were met. Although Cohen naturally was not responsible personally for the decision of the Labor Party not to support such a mission while they were in office, he still had to explain the perceived change in viewpoint. It turned out that for Cohen this was not that easy to do. A second point of critique was his knowledge of the economy. In a disastrous performance in the television show NOVA (April 26th 2010) his lack of expertise painfully became apparent when he did not manage to answer some 'simple' questions about the Dutch economy. As at the time the Netherlands were in an economical crisis, how could a leader who did not know much about economics lead this country well (Telegraaf, May 7th 2010, **72**)? Additionally, the third point of critique was whether Cohen was not much more an administrator than a politician. Was he able to keep standing in all the political violence? Was he a good enough debater to counter Wilders and later also Rutte (Parool, April 28th 2010; AD, May 1st 2010; Financieel Dagblad, June 26th 2010)?

Although with the passing of time Cohen became more accustomed to his new role, much of the damage was already done. Whereas previously he was mostly attacked by Wilders, later also the leaders of other parties joined and especially Rutte was keen to rebel against Cohen. In the actual elections it became a close call between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party, thus between Rutte and Cohen. Where Rutte managed to get 31 seats, Cohen finally managed to get 30 seats. Thus with a difference of one seat Cohen was sent to lead the opposition in parliament against Rutte, who got the opportunity to become prime minister. Just as earlier doubts were cast whether he was fit for the role of a politician, it turned out that leading the opposition in parliament was not a job that suited Cohen well at all. Repeatedly, Cohen was criticized on his functioning: he was not visible enough, he was not casted for this role, he was not able to get the PvdA back on track and he was not acting as a true opposition leader (cf. nu.nl, June 9th 2011; ÉénVandaag, September 17th 2011; Volkskrant, October 4th 2011). Although he did not give up easily, he threw in the towel on February 20th 2012, only two years after he had come to national politics. In a press conference he announced his resignation as the leader of the PvdA in parliament, as well as his departure from the House of Representatives. To explain his choice he stated, among others, that he failed 'to, in the political and media reality of 'the Hague', credibly present the way to this decent society' (NOS, February 20th 2012). Starting from January 2013, Cohen will become the new president of the program committee 'Police and Science' (Volkskrant, May 24th 2012).

Putting the above in terms of credibility and focusing on the period central to this study it can be stated that Cohen was considered highly credible as a leader after he announced his candidacy on March 12th 2010. He had a convincing track record in the public sector. However, with passing of time he lost at least some of this credibility. Especially the critique on his economical knowledge and his political leadership qualities were detrimental. In order to be credible as the next leader of the Netherlands, no one should doubt your leadership capabilities. Thus whereas Rutte gained credibility, Cohen lost some of his credibility and less people were convinced that he was the one who was the best candidate to become prime minister (De Hond, June 3rd 2010; TNS Nipo, June 1st 2010). The question that remains now is what it was that Cohen did that led the general public to attribute less credibility to him. This question will be answered in the next chapter, but first in the next section of this chapter the television performances analyzed of Rutte and Cohen are further discussed.

4.3 Mark Rutte: His television performances

To provide a firmer basis for understanding the dramaturgical analysis and analysis of newspaper articles in the next chapter, this section provides an overview of the television performances that were studied of Rutte. What kind of programs were they and what happened on them?

For Rutte, a total of eleven performances are analyzed, spread across the period between February 19th and June 9th 2010. These performances can be categorized in three types: speeches, talk shows and debates. Commercial stations broadcasted five of the performances analyzed and public broadcasting stations broadcasted the other six analyzed performances. Each of these types of performances poses different requirements on Rutte, as the questions being asked might differ, the degree to which he is able to tell his own story differs and the amount of control over the situation is not the same in every type of performance, which is further discussed in the element of staging.



Figure 4.2: The analyzed television performances of Rutte

4.3.1 Performance 1: Carlo & Irene

The first major performance analyzed of Rutte after cabinet Balkenende IV fell, was his performance on Carlo & Irene. This performance is quite different from the others as this program is usually not about politics at all. Rather it is a light entertainment program in which the hosts welcome famous and non-famous guests to discuss themes like health, cooking, leisure, fashion, lifestyle and beauty, traveling and show business. Politics, contrary, are not normally discussed. The entertainment part of this show can also be found in the type of questions asked to Rutte. Naturally politics is discussed, but also Rutte's appearance and his private life got attention. They showed two different pictures of him, the first had been taken a couple of years ago when he first came to national politics and the second had been taken around the time that the show was broadcasted. There is a huge difference between the guys in those photos. Whereas in the first Rutte looked like some kind of nerd just out of high school, now he looked like a decent, accomplished man. Carlo and Irene wondered what had changed. Considering his private life, the hosts were mostly interested in why he did not have a girlfriend and if he had ever dated before. How could he still be single?

Even when politics were discussed, Rutte was not having a hard time at all. Carlo and Irene hardly posed critical questions; they played the role of average citizens who did not know much about politics. In the same period as this performance there were also municipal elections⁵ and in this context Irene for example asked: *'Coming Wednesday we have those municipal elections, but on June 9th there are suddenly also national elections. (...) What if nationally I want to vote for the Liberal Party, while in my municipality I'd rather go for a local party. (...) What should I do'* (Carlo & Irene,

⁵ Actually, to be precise the municipal elections of 2010 were held on March 3rd.

February 28th 2010: 00:07:17 ff.)?⁶ The other questions asked to him were relatively general and open. Carlo asked him for example what the liberal party actually stands for. This gave him ample opportunity to tell his story.

4.3.2 Performance 2: Business Class

Business Class is a program broadcasted by RTL and hosted by Harry Mens in which business and financial developments of the previous week were discussed. On April 11th, Rutte was a guest in this show and was interviewed by Harry Mens. At the moment that he was interviewed he was the only guest present and thus did not have to share the time available. Topics that were discussed were among others his previous experience, how he was planning to decrease the budget deficit, how he could explain the rise of the Liberal Party in the polls, Wilders, and his willingness to become prime minister. Furthermore, also the Labor Party is discussed and whether Rutte would see any possibilities to form a coalition with them. At this point, Rutte started by emphasizing that the distance towards the Labor Party is large, a view which he continued to put forward until the end of the election campaigns. Interesting as well was that he attacked Cohen directly on his economical knowledge:

'A couple of weeks ago, you saw Cohen reading a speech out loud in Leeuwarden, he, on the economy. And I had to think for a minute about Wim Kan, what he once said about Juliana if she read the King's speech. He said: she reads the King's speech with a look of what an interesting piece, I should browse through it once. He, like that he read the speech. He clearly had not written it himself, such a kind of story of 45 minutes; he was literally reading it out loud. He does not know much about that...' (Business Class, April 11th 2010: 00:40:20 ff.).⁷

He continued to promote his capabilities by stating that he wrote all his speeches himself because he feels that 'the political leader of a party really should be fully updated on the most important drives of economical growth' (Business Class, April 11th 2010: 00:40:44 ff.). Finally, again Rutte's private life passed in review as also Harry Mens asked him about being single.

4.3.3 Performance 3: Moraalridders

On April 13th 2010, Rutte made an appearance at the show 'Moraalridders'. In this show the hosts Andries Knevel and Tijs van den Brink aimed at discovering the deeper motivations of their guests and why they have made certain choices. At the beginning of his appearance, Rutte was first asked ten questions to which he could answer yes or no. He did so for seven questions, to the other three he either answered that it depended on the circumstances or that it might be a possibility. Questions to which he gave an unclear answer ranged from whether it should be allowed to deny the

⁶ Original text: 'Aanstaande woensdag hebben we dus die gemeenteraadsverkiezingen, maar 9 juni zijn ineens plotseling de landelijke verkiezingen. (...) Als ik nou landelijk voor de VVD wil kiezen maar eigenlijk in mijn gemeente meer ben voor het plaatselijke snuffertje. (...) Wat moet ik nou?'

⁷ Original text: 'Je zag Cohen een paar weken geleden zo'n speech voorlezen in Leeuwarden he, over de economie. En ik moest even denken aan Wim Kan, dat hij ooit zei over Juliana als zij de troonrede voorlas. Hij zei: zij leest de troonrede voor met zo'n blik van interessant stuk, dat moet ik thuis eens doorbladeren. He, zo las hij die toespraak door. Hij had hem duidelijk niet zelf geschreven, zo'n verhaal van drie kwartier, hij stond dat letterlijk voor te lezen. Hij weet daar niet veel van...'

Holocaust, whether Fred Teeven would become minister if the Liberal Party turned out to be the biggest after June 9th and whether Rutte wanted to become prime minister.

Especially his last unclear answer is interesting because it shows a certain hesitation on Rutte's side to clearly state that he wanted to be prime minister. At that moment he was still not the most likely candidate to become prime minister. Stating very clearly that this was his ambition at such a moment could have been quite dangerous. He stated: 'Up to now the Liberal Party has never been the biggest party. I think it is appropriate that we go to the voter with certain modesty, and mostly convince the voter of the necessity of our program' (Moraalridders, April 13th 2010: 00:13:52 ff.).⁸ Next various other topics were discussed, for example why the program of the Liberal Party was social, the economic crisis and developmental aid. However, the topic that received most attention in this show was quite atypical for the rest of the campaign and related to the position of Christian organizations in the Netherlands. To what extent could they decide on their own human resource policy? Rutte clearly defended a liberal stance and stated that in principle people can decide for themselves what they want in the private sphere, but that discrimination on issues about which people cannot do anything (gender, race et cetera) was not allowed.

4.3.4 Performance 4: Congress of the Liberal Party

This performance can be seen as the official kick-off of the election campaign for the Liberal Party, because here Rutte presented his plan for the future of the Netherlands and under which preconditions he wanted to achieve that. Interestingly, this speech was hardly about concrete policy. Rather, it set the boundaries for the vision Rutte wanted to realize and was aimed at getting his audience enthusiastic and committed. He tried to do so with statements like 'there are people who worry, people who worry about their job, who worry about the future of their children (...)' (Congress speech, April 24th 2010: 00:00:41 ff.)⁹, or that these were the most important elections in a generation.

In total, Rutte identified three preconditions that he intended to follow while getting the Netherlands through the economic crisis. The first one reads that he realized that every euro the Dutch government could spend has to be earned by businesses. Secondly, Rutte acknowledged that the Liberal Party had a tough stance on immigration: the borders should be closed for opportunity-deprived immigrants. These were immigrants who are not likely to function well in the Dutch society in an economical sense. The third and final precondition Rutte followed was that although many people in the social security system could get more out of themselves than they were doing now, a small group was absolutely dependent upon them. Naturally (according to Rutte) for them these benefits will continue to exist. However, those people who are capable of doing more should be stimulated to do so, as 'it is not social to let people unnecessarily receive benefits' (Congress speech, April 24th 2010: 00:07:39 ff.).

His main message in the remaining part of his speech related mostly to that the Netherlands was in a bad position. While Germany and Belgium are getting back on their feet, the Netherlands was sinking deeper. To turn this around Rutte wanted first of all to get the state finances under control. Next he wanted a smaller state (compact state) with less cabinet ministers, politicians and

⁸ Original text: 'Tot nu toe is de VVD nog nooit de grootste partij geworden. Ik vind het passend dat wij met een zekere bescheidenheid ook naar de kiezer gaan, en vooral de kiezer overtuigen van de noodzaak van ons programma'.

⁹ Original text: 'Dat zijn mensen die zich zorgen maken. Mensen die zich zorgen maken over hun baan, die zich zorgen maken over de toekomst van hun kinderen (...)'.

civil servants. Finally, he wanted to decrease the amount of money the Netherlands spent on developmental aid and the European Union.

4.3.5 Performance 5: Miljarden Gezocht

As the title (billions wanted) already suggests, this fifth analyzed performance of Rutte was mainly on how he intended to cut back the budget deficit. This show was specifically set up for the election campaigns and was part of the show RTL-Z that brings daily news on the economy and the stock market. A main point in this performance was that the Liberal Party planned to cutback the most of all parties: 20 billion euros in four years and thirdly billion euros in eight years. Next to the questions asked by the host Peter Zadelhoff, an economic specialist of the RTL-Z team in a way also tested Rutte's plan. At one point during the show Zadelhoff asked him whether the proposed cutbacks were feasible at all. Mathijs Bouman, the economical expert answered that 'everything can happen of course, if you have the ultimate power in the Netherlands. Whether it can happen in a coalition is a different question' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 13th 2010: 00:09:42 ff.).¹⁰ Bouman questioned for example the idea to cut the Dutch contribution to the EU in half. Dutch politics does not have much to say about that. After that they discussed why the Liberal Party would succeed this time in implementing his plans where they had failed in previous cabinets and the Liberal position on the mortgage interest relief. The show ended with Rutte asking a question to the guest of the next day, Job Cohen. While looking straight into the camera to directly address Cohen he asked:

'Dear Job, your party is called the Labor Party. We as the Liberal Party sometimes say, we are the real Labor Party. We are the job engine. You, you are much more the party of unemployment. And I am very curious, uhm, whether you dare to say how many jobs in the Netherlands you are able to create in the upcoming years, thanks to your program. We know that with us, three to four times the city of Utrecht is created, thanks to the program of the Liberal Party. How much is that with the Labor Party or, and that is what I fear actually, will it only lead to more unemployment because of all those tax increases' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 13th 2010: 00:15:16 ff.)?^{11,12}

4.3.6 Performance 6: Knevel en Van den Brink

'Knevel en Van den Brink' is a talk show broadcasted by the Evangelical Broadcasting association (EO) and aims at discussing the news of that day with relevant guests from different corners of society. In this episode, besides Rutte also Marielle van Es (the lawyer of the 'Damscheeuwer'), Freek de Jonge (comedian) and Henk Werson (police officer dealing with human trafficking issues) were present.¹³

¹⁰ Original text: 'Nou alles kan natuurlijk, als je de ultieme macht hebt in Nederland. Of het in de coalitie dat kan is een andere vraag'.

¹¹ Original text: 'Beste Job, jouw partij heet de Partij van de Arbeid. Wij zeggen wel eens als VVD, wij zijn de echte Partij van de Arbeid. Wij zijn de banenmotor. Jullie, jullie zijn toch veel meer de partij van de werkeloosheid. En ik ben nou zo benieuwd, uhm, of jij durft aan te geven hoeveel banen jullie de komende jaren in Nederland erbij weten te krijgen, dankzij jullie programma. Wij weten bij ons dat drie tot vier keer de stad Utrecht erbij komt, dankzij het VVD programma, aan banen. Hoeveel is dat bij de Partij van de Arbeid of, en dat vrees ik eigenlijk, zal het juist leiden tot meer werkeloosheid vanwege al die belastingverhogingen?'

¹² See next section for Cohen's answer on this question.

¹³ During the Dutch Memorial Day on May 4th 2010 an incident happened. During the two minute silence on 'de Dam' in Amsterdam someone started to shout out of nowhere. Many people visit this memorial and thus the entire square was

Rutte's performance on this show was the first one studied in which Rutte had to share his stage with other guests. This meant first of all that Rutte had to share the time available with the others and therefore fewer opportunities to take the time he needed to tell his story. Secondly, besides questions from the two hosts, also the other guests could pose questions. As they were not politicians, these questions were less predictable and therefore contained a relatively large element of surprise. This posed an additional challenge on Rutte to deal with them effectively.

Especially the comedian Freek de Jonge was asking Rutte questions. He mostly entered the discussion when drug(ab)use is discussed. In a letter to the editor a former leader of the Liberal Party, Frits Bolkestein, had proposed to legalize soft and hard drugs. Rutte did not agree with Bolkestein because 'people talk about soft drugs like they are cute candy like in the sixties. (...) It is no longer that joint that was smoked before' (00:23:08 ff.).¹⁴ At that point De Jonge interferes that the entire discussion on drugs is wrong-footed. Whereas alcohol is totally accepted, we are being tight up about drugs. Next, Rutte and De Jonge got into a heated discussion, both interrupting each other a couple of times, each trying to make their point.

Other topics that were discussed during this performance of Rutte were the program changes of the Labor Party, the necessary cutbacks and how to actually achieve them, who is affected by the cutbacks, the current position of Rutte and the Liberal Party in the polls, his differences on immigration from Wilders position and possible coalitions. Finally also some attention is paid to Rutte's leadership style. Rutte stated that his style was one focused on the results that have to be achieved, that he wanted to convince the voters of the measures he wished to take and that he was not 'someone who is keeping things together, but someone who gets things moving' (Knevel & Van den Brink, May 18th 2010: 00:27:27 ff.).¹⁵

4.3.7 Performance 7: Prime ministers debate

The first analyzed debate was the Prime Ministers debate, broadcasted on May 23rd by the commercial station RTL4 and led by political commentator Frits Wester. For this debate, only the party leaders of the four major parties were invited. Besides Rutte of the Liberal Party this were: Balkenende of the Christian Democratic Party, Wilders of the Party for Freedom and Cohen of the Labor Party. The debate was organized in five rounds, each focusing on a specific topic: immigration and integration, cutbacks, mortgage interest relief, health care and leadership. At the beginning of each round each party leader got thirty seconds to make an introductory statement, during which others could not interrupt. After these statements the actual discussion started. At the end of the entire debate the party leaders also got the chance to make a closing statement of one minute. Again, during this statement leaders could not be interrupted.

To spice up the debate, an extra feature was introduced. By clinging a bell each party leader could challenge another leader once to debate one-on-one with him on the topic at hand. Rutte challenged Cohen to discuss with him the economy and the cutbacks. Rutte started offensively by

packed. The shout resulted in a massive panic and people started to run in different directions. Due to the large turnout, people were actually beaten down in the hustle and a lot of damage was done. The man who started to shout and thus was responsible for the massive panic was arrested. At the analyzed show of 'Knevel en Van den Brink' his lawyer was present to talk about the hearing that took place that day (May 18th 2010).

¹⁴ Original text: 'mensen praten over die softdrugs alsof dat van die schattige, jaren '60, gezellige snoepjes zijn (...) Dat is allang niet meer dat stickie dat vroeger gerookt werd'.

¹⁵ Original text: 'ik ben niet iemand die de boel bij elkaar houdt, ik ben iemand die de boel in beweging krijgt'.

'asking' Cohen to please change his program one more time to get the state finances under control and to actually create jobs. According to Rutte the program of the Labor Party began to look somewhat like a binder: 'you can add pages and get pages out again' (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:31:25 ff.)¹⁶, referring to the three changes the Labor Party made in their program in the past week. This domination of Rutte over Cohen continued in the remaining part of the one-on-one debate. He interrupted Cohen repeatedly and when Cohen tried to interrupt him Rutte decidedly cut him off by saying 'hold on, I just finish my story' (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:34:06 ff.).¹⁷ Only once Cohen put Rutte back in place, namely when Cohen said that Rutte acted as if he was in a student-debating club. The other time Rutte debated one-on-one was when Balkenende challenged him on the topic of health care. During this one-on-one debate Balkenende tried to portray Rutte as a cold remediator who had no feelings. Rutte countered this accusation by emphasizing that the Liberal Party did a lot to support people, after which he started to mention several examples. Next he moved over to highlight the plans of the Christian Democratic Party on health care. According to Rutte, these plans lead to steeply rising costs for citizens, contrary to the plans of the Liberal Party. Naturally Balkenende argues against this, but Rutte puts so much pressure on him that he can hardly find convincing words to counter Rutte.

Overall, the debate had a rather free format. Besides the uninterrupted speaking time during the opening statements and the closing statement, the party leaders were free to challenge who they want for the one-on-one debates. Moreover, they had the chance to speak on each topic unlimitedly. At least, as long as they were not effectively interrupted they can continue to speak. Additionally, with regard to the interruptions, no rules were set for those. If another leader did not agree with what was said, he could interrupt immediately, without needing the consent of Wester. Such a free format does not suit everyone well. Rutte, though, seemed quite capable to use the free format to his advantage: he took initiative in speaking, did not let any critique on him pass without objections and he was not afraid to put some pressure on the others.

4.3.8 Performance 8: Carré debate

The second debate analyzed took place only three days after the Prime Ministers debate. The commercial broadcasting station RTL4T also broadcasted this debate, but it was organized totally differently. Next to the four party leaders also present at the Prime ministers debate – Balkenende, Cohen, Wilders and Rutte – also the leaders of the smaller parties joined. These were Femke Halsema of the Green Left Party, Alexander Pechtold of the Liberal Democratic Party, André Rouvoet of the Christian Union and Emile Roemer of the Socialist Party. Newscaster Rick Nieman primarily led the debate. In between the general rounds of debate, each party leader was also put on the spot once and asked three 'tough' questions by the second host Mariëlle Tweebekke.

The central theme of this debate was, in the words of host Rick Nieman, the 'wallet of the voter' and was mostly aimed on how each party planned to realize the necessary cutbacks to reduce the budget deficit. In total four related themes were discussed, all by means of a proposition. The four propositions were: 'Patients have to pay more themselves on health care', 'unemployed are entitled to unemployment benefits for no more than one year', 'we have to limit the mortgage interest relief, but we also have to implement an increase in rent' and 'it is inevitable that people

¹⁶ Original text: 'je kunt er pagina's indoen en weer pagina's uithalen'.

¹⁷ Original text: 'Even wachten, ik maak even mijn verhaal af'.

with a higher income will have to pay more income tax'. To ensure sufficient time for each leader to debate, only four leaders participated in the debate on each theme. At the beginning of each theme each of the four participating leaders could make an opening statement of 45 seconds, after which the actual discussion started. To also give the leaders who could not join a theme the chance to make their statement, they were entitled to 30 seconds each after the general discussion was closed. During both these statements no interruptions could be made.

Effectively, splitting up the group meant that each leader could join the discussion on two themes. Rutte participated in the propositions on the mortgage interest reliefs and rent, and on increasing the income taxes. This meant that Rutte could only clearly put his message forward on these two themes. It could be argued that he succeeded in doing so because, as in the Prime ministers debate, he took initiative instead of waiting until he was asked to speak, and he did not let any criticism go by unanswered. Pechtold, for example, at one point insinuated that Rutte was only being a leader when everything was going fine, while if things got rough someone else (Neelie Kroes) had to step in. Although Rick Nieman did not let Rutte respond to that, he made it very clear that he did not agree with the Pechtold's suggestion, for example by constantly trying to interrupt. Furthermore, although Rutte's speaking time was limited because he had to share the stage with seven others, he still managed to make his point clear when he had the opportunity. Especially in the discussions he could join he was quite active in stating his message, and he was also not afraid to point to the (in his eyes) weaknesses of the proposals of other leaders.

As said, each leader was also asked three 'tough' questions individually by Mariëlle Tweebeeke. Rutte was invited to answer them relatively early on in the show. This was convenient for him because he could make his presence known even though he was not able to join the discussion on the first two themes. The first question Rutte had to answer was on his stance on the mortgage interest relief. During the Prime Ministers debate (May 23rd 2010) Rutte refused to make the mortgage interest relief a 'breaking point', although Balkenende dared him to do so. Rutte then said 'on vacuum cleaners you give warranty'. Tweebeeke asked him again whether the Liberal Party could guarantee that nothing was going to happen with the mortgage interest relief. Rutte answered again that he picked his own words and that he ensured that nothing would change. The other two questions asked related to the low score of the Liberal Party program in reducing the traffic jams (according to the Central Planning agency who calculated the effects of all party programs) and why Rutte had let go of his Green Right ambition.

4.3.9 Performance 9: Paul Rosenmöller en...

The performance of Rutte at the show 'Paul Rosenmöller en...' was probably one of the more difficult performances analyzed of Rutte. The host, Paul Rosenmöller, was not easily satisfied with Rutte's answer and at times let his own preferences dominate the conversation. This critical way of approaching Rutte can be retraced to his background, as previously Paul Rosenmöller was the leader of the Green Left Party. As a result, the atmosphere was quite tense and sometimes even hostile. Rutte could not let his guard down, but constantly had to defend himself and had to be careful not to be interrupted repeatedly while trying to answer the questions.

One example of a question in which Rosenmöller opinions were clear was the following: 'It were actually the liberals who were the biggest proponents of deregulation of the financial markets and of the market all over. And that surely has a direct relationship with the emergence of this crisis.'

What have you as, as liberals done wrong' (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 31st 2010: 00:02:43 ff.)?¹⁸ Rutte responded by stating that he did not agree with Rosenmöller's analysis. Contrary, in the Netherlands it was even a liberal, Gerrit Zalm, who reinforced supervision. After that Rutte stated that yes, free markets are necessary because it is beneficial to the Netherlands. However, a good market cannot function without a market supervisor.

Another example that showed the difficulties for Rutte to convey a favorable image and message related to whether the Liberal Party had moved to the right with its current program. After a long discussion on this Rosenmöller stated that 'the facts are that there are a number of elements in your program which are in there now and not four years ago, and these are of course the result of the growth of the Party for Freedom. Something else is...' (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 31st 2010: 00:14:00 ff.). Rutte was clearly not pleased with this statement and interrupted Rosenmöller. During the entire remaining performance he continued to do so every time Rosenmöller tried to interrupt him until he got his message out. In short, although Rutte was tested firmly he stood his ground and was even able to make his point clear. Other topics besides the role of the liberals in the economical crisis and the contribution of Wilders to the program of the Liberal Party discussed in this performance include developmental aid, the role of the European Union, the consequences of the Liberal program for the weakest members of society and Rutte's ideas on Green Right – ideas which he according to Rosenmöller had apparently abandoned.

4.3.10 Performance 10: De Wereld Draait Door

Although 'De Wereld Draait Door' is also a show to which multiple guests are invited, Rutte was the only guest present at the table when he was interviewed. Emile Roemer, for example, was waiting among the public until it was his turn. Matthijs van Nieuwkerk is the host of the show and was supported by two sidekicks that evening: Felix Rottenberg, former director of the Labor Party and program maker, and Maurice de Hond, one of the persons who regularly conducted (political) polls. The latter sidekick had a minor role and only spoke if, for example, the others wanted to know the exact score of Rutte in the polls compared to the other parties. This means Matthijs van Nieuwkerk and Felix Rottenberg were mainly leading the conversation.

During the show several topics passed in review. The conversation started with how Rutte had prepared himself for an upcoming debate between him and Cohen. Van Nieuwkerk wondered what there still is to prepare if you have already told it three hundred times. Rutte indicated in return that it was a matter of professionalism and respect to prepare well for a debate with your biggest opponent. Next was asked whether Rutte could mention one proposal of Cohen or the Labor party that he found strange. That this show has a higher entertainment part than most other shows analyzed (expect naturally Carlo & Irene), could be seen in the next question of van Nieuwkerk. He asked Rutte if he ever thought of things like 'wait a minute, I am going to shake Obama's hand some day'. In answering this question Rutte stayed professional and modest. He answered that his first priority were the elections of June 9th and that he had not won anything yet. Basically he warned the viewers that if they did not vote for the Liberal Party they might end up with Cohen, which was 'bad news for the Netherlands' (De Wereld Draait Door, June 2nd 2010: 00:07:01 ff.).

¹⁸ Original text: 'Het zijn eigenlijk de liberalen geweest die de grootste voorstanders waren van deregulering van de financiële markten, van marktwerking all over. En dat heeft toch een directe relatie met het ontstaan van deze crisis. Wat hebben jullie als, als liberalen fout gedaan?'

Other topics discussed were Rutte's refusal to exclude the Party for Freedom up front as potential coalition partner, the differences with the Party for Freedom, Rutte's preferred coalition, possibilities to cooperate with the Labor Party, and if Wilders could possibly become a cabinet minister in his cabinet. Rutte's part on the show ended with a short clip of Jort Kelder, a close friend of his from the time he was president of the youth association of the Liberal Party, showing all kinds of places that Rutte visited often. After the clip was finished Rutte had moved over to front row of the audience and Roemer had taken his place at the table. One final interesting note on this performance is that in the second part of the show the Twitter debate that was held amongst important candidates of different parties who were active on Twitter. Jan Kees de Jager, candidate for the Christian Democratic Party, was present in the studio and joined the debate. The aim of this was to provide some background information on how it worked. Most notable was, however, that both Roemer and Rutte did not have Twitter, but whereas Roemer continued to sit at the center table, Rutte remained at his seat in the audience and was hardly filmed anymore.

4.3.11 Performance 11: NOVAPolitiek

The final performance analyzed of Rutte was 'NOVAPolitiek' that took place five days before the elections. This show had a different format than the normal shows of NOVA and was especially set up for the elections. Whereas normally the show is recorded in a studio without any audience present, it now took place live at a café in The Hague in the presence of quite a large audience. What was also different from the normal shows was that instead of one host, two hosts were at the table, taking turns in asking questions. Additionally, Bas Jacobs, professor state finances, was invited to criticize Rutte's plans occasionally to test their solidity. Contrary, what was similar to the normal shows was that Rutte does not have to share this stage with other guests. To make the show livelier, the interview was interspersed with four clips. In the first two respectively Wilders and Balkenende commented on Rutte's plans. Whereas Wilders was relatively modest and did not attack Rutte straight on, Balkenende was very offensive. The third clip was an interview with Edith Schippers, the number two on the list of the Liberal Party, on why Rutte was a suitable candidate to become prime minister. The final clip was on the 'average' voter of the Liberal Party.

The topics discussed in this performance included Rutte being the favorite to become prime minister and how tricky this could be, whether he wanted to cooperate with the Party for Freedom and the Labor Party, his differences with these two parties, his preferred coalition, his reaction to the comments made by Balkenende that the Liberal Party was not financially trustworthy, the desired duration of coalition negotiations, and how to battle the economic crisis. Bas Jacobs, the professor in state finances, highlighted the most critical issues. He, for example, stated that keeping the mortgage interest relief intact costs the Dutch state 15 billion annually. This cost is not even worth it according to him, because it leads to one of the highest mortgage debts in the world, while it does not help to stimulate home ownership, but it only pushes up the prices. Especially a citizen who is not an economical expert might find the way in which Rutte countered this latter critique quite convincing. Rutte's stance basically came down to the idea that the mortgage interest relief was already present in the Dutch system since shortly after the Second World War. The prices however, have only gone up substantially after 1995. Therefore, it cannot be the interest mortgage relief that led to the steep increases of housing prices (NOVAPolitiek, June 4th 2010: 00:19:37 ff.). Another point that was criticized by Bas Jacobs were the proposed tax cuts. According to him the wrong taxes were cut back. Reducing the taxes on for example inheritance does not promote work and economical activity. He stated: 'retirement is subsidized while working and entrepreneurship is burdened'. This was quite a

severe critique for a party who advocated that she stood up for the hard working Dutch and who wanted to stimulate working. It is not surprising in this respect that Rutte immediately countered this critique by stating that ‘what I do not hear him say is that the Liberal Party is lowering all tires of the income tax with one percent, what I do not hear him say is that we lower the corporate tax with one percent’ (NOVAPolitiek, June 2nd 2010: 00:26:26 ff.).¹⁹

The show ended with the note that after this broadcast Rutte would be answering questions from viewers via the Internet. In other words, also contact with the viewer is sought, which gives Rutte another opportunity to convince citizens of his ideas.

4.4 Job Cohen: His television performances

As mentioned a total of eleven performances of Cohen were analyzed, spread over the period between February 19th and June 9th 2010. However, as Cohen only entered the national political stage on March 12th, this effectively means that the analyzed performances of Cohen all take place from March 12th onwards. Just like the performances of Rutte, also the performances of Cohen can be categorized into three types: speeches, talk shows and debates. A commercial station broadcasted three of these performances and a public broadcasting station broadcasted eight performances.



Figure 4.3: The analyzed television performances of Cohen

4.4.1 Performance 1: Candidacy speech

Cohen’s first performance as a politician was his speech at the press conference in which he announced his candidacy. This press conference was held on the party bureau of the Labor Party in Amsterdam. Especially for this occasion (or at least these kinds of occasions) a special room was decorated. This room included a lectern with the Labor Party logo from behind which Cohen could give his speech. Additionally, behind him, some extra red screens were placed that contained the Labor Party logo as well. At this press conference the press was present en masse, which was also put clearly into view. Furthermore, the audience present were mainly various Labor Party administrators and members of parliament.

Cohen started his speech with the following sentence: ‘Today I candidate myself, with great conviction, for the position as party leader of the Labor Party’ (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010: 00:01:40 ff.).²⁰ Then, to demonstrate his involvement with the party, Cohen pointed to his parents who had been members of the Labor Party from the first moment and specifically he mentioned his

¹⁹ Original text: ‘wat ik hem niet hoor zeggen is dat de VVD de schijven van de inkomstenbelasting allemaal met 1% verlaagt, wat ik hem niet hoor zeggen is dat wij de vennootschapsbelasting met 1% verlagen’.

²⁰ Original text: ‘Vandaag stel ik mij, met grote overtuiging, kandidaat als lijsttrekker van de Partij van de Arbeid’.

mother who had been councilor for this party as well. Furthermore, he noted that the Labor Party had adopted a new manifesto of principles in 2005, in which ‘the right to a decent existence for all, and a full participation of all in society is central’ (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010: 00:05:31 ff.).²¹ This idea was also the basis on which the remaining part of his speech as build and the following themes were discussed from this perspective: the necessary cutbacks, safety, future developments and his vision on the Netherlands. Moreover, this performance can also be seen as a milestone. During this speech he positions himself as the new leader of the Labor Party, while at the same time saying goodbye to his former position as mayor of Amsterdam. In his speech Cohen referred back to his past a couple of times, for example in how he handled the problems in Amsterdam. This past was then explicitly connected to his vision on the future.

After the speech, the journalists present were given the opportunity to ask questions, an opportunity that was made good use of. In these questions, the themes that continuously played a role during Cohen’s campaign already came back. A journalist from the NOS, for example, asked what kind of political climate Cohen expected to find in The Hague and he was also putting Cohen’s economical knowledge up for discussion.

4.4.2 Performance 2: Pauw & Witteman

That same night, after the press conference, Job Cohen was a guest at the ‘current events’ talk show Pauw & Witteman. This is one of the most popular current events shows in the Netherlands at the moment. Besides Job Cohen, other guests present in this episode were Alexander Pechtold (leader of the Liberal Democrats), Ciska Dresselhuys (journalist and feminist) and Frits Wester (political commentator). Normally all guests sit together at the table, having a conversation led by the two hosts Jeroen Pauw and Paul Witteman. This time, however, at Pechtold’s request Job Cohen did not immediately join and Pechtold himself did not stay at the table the entire show. He did not want to do so because he was there to talk about the death of Hans van Mierlo, founder of the Liberal Democratic Party. Out of respect he did not want to go back to the usual routine directly.

In the part of the show that Cohen is actually at the table several topics are discussed. First, Paul Witteman asked about the strong emphasis Cohen had put that afternoon on a ‘decent society’. Next, questions were asked about Cohen’s political capabilities. Jeroen Pauw en Paul Witteman noted that he did not had such a political position before and that Cohen had trouble debating ‘on the cutting edge’ (Pauw & Witteman, March 12th 2010: 00:27:07 ff.)²², which is common practice in politics. In this respect they referred to and show an example in which Job Cohen together with Hero Brinkman was present in a TV show and where Brinkman called him the worst mayor in the world after the Second World War. In the clip, Cohen responded to Brinkman that he considered his words ‘unnecessarily offensive’. Pauw and Witteman stated that if Cohen already considered these words unnecessarily offensive, there was still a lot lying ahead for him. Cohen reacted rather annoyed and asked whether Pauw and Witteman had any other additional examples (which they have not). Next, the quitting of Wouter Bos, Cohen’s position on immigration, whether he is looking forward to debating with Wilders, and again the political qualities of Cohen were discussed. This time, however, it is not necessarily about his debating skills but rather about his economic knowledge. Witteman

²¹ Original text: ‘het recht op een fatsoenlijk bestaan voor iedereen, en volwaardige deelname van iedereen aan de samenleving centraal staat’.

²² Original text: ‘op het scherpst van de snede’.

wondered whether it was a problem that Cohen did not have much experience on this point. Cohen responded rather vague to this and did not manage to produce a coherent answer that countered the critique.

4.4.3 Performance 3: NOVA

A third interesting performance of Cohen during the parliamentary election campaigns was his performance at NOVA on April 26th. This performance took place one day after Cohen was officially appointed as party leader of the Labor Party. Contrary to the shows like Pauw & Witteman, in which multiple guests are present, Job Cohen was the only guest in this episode of NOVA. First the host of the show, Twan Huys, shortly discussed the criticism that Wilders had uttered against Cohen, as well as the role Wouter Bos had played the last couple of weeks. The emphasis in this conversation, however, lied with the economy and the police mission to Afghanistan. Considering the economy attention was paid to the cutbacks and the situation in Greece.

As an introduction to the economic questions, Twan Huys asked Job Cohen three ‘simple’ questions about the Dutch economy. These questions were: how much does one bread cost on average, how many extra people get unemployed a month in the Netherlands, and how large is the national mortgage debt. The first question was not a problem and Cohen answered it correctly. The other two questions, however, he was not able to answer. One could wonder to what extent it is actually necessary and of use that politicians know these kinds of figures by heart, however it did make Cohen look unprepared. Citizens could wonder: is this man really suitable to get our country safe through the economic crisis? In this respect, more important than not knowing the answer is how Cohen dealt with these ‘setbacks’. He simply stated that he did not know the answer and hardly tried to make something more of it. Moreover, Cohen made a rather beaten and stoic impression, something that was also made explicit by Twan Huys. Interestingly, after Huys had asked the three test questions Cohen stated that it is necessary to make decisions on the basis of the facts, which is something that he had shown during his years as a mayor (according to himself). However, a viewer might wonder in this context: if you do not know the facts on economics, how can you make the right decisions? Overall, during this entire performance Cohen hardly took initiative, but rather awaited the questions asked to him. Consequently, his message did become very clear, especially not considering his views on the economy. In other media, but also by the Labor Party, this performance was considered to be one of the first triggers for critique on Cohen (Volkskrant, February 20th 2012).

4.4.4 Performance 4: Pauw & Witteman

On May 5th Job Cohen performed a second time on Pauw & Witteman after he had announced his candidacy as leader of the Labor Party. Besides Cohen, the other guests in this episode were Erik Dekker (former cyclist, now leading his own team), Ed Anker (member of parliament for the Christian Union), Bart Chabot (writer and columnist) and Ramsey Nasr (at the time the Dutch national poet). The first topic that was discussed was the Remembrance Day ceremony of the day before. During this memorial someone started to shout out of nowhere during the two minute silence. This resulted in a massive panic reaction among the audience present. Besides Bart Chabot, Cohen is asked for a reaction as well. After first shortly describing what happened he said: ‘it would be incredibly beautiful if we, at such a moment, end up in a society again in which, if at a given moment somebody

stands, that there is somebody next to him saying do not act silly, keep your calm' (Pauw & Witteman, May 5th 2010: 00:02:35 ff.).²³

Next, Cohen was asked about his idea to make Liberation Day an annual day off. According to Cohen the essential value of freedom is increasingly put under pressure. Therefore, it would a good idea if Dutch citizens can reflect upon the value of freedom each year. Pauw and Witteman, though, react quite skeptical to this idea and directly ask Cohen how he intends to pay for it. Again, Cohen reacts as if he is beaten and he is not able to answer the question. He tries to save himself by pointing out that he first would like to check whether others also consider this to be a good idea. Ed Anker tried to help him, after which the attention shifted to him and his action to try to be voted into parliament on June 9th. At a certain point the conversation arrives at the topic of authenticity and 'being yourself'. Cohen is asked about his performance on NOVA. The hosts Pauw and Witteman mentioned that he did not look like himself during that show and that he gave a really bad impression. Cohen hardly responded to this and tried to reduce the importance of this performance on NOVA by trying to make it look like something trivial.

In the remaining part of the show, Cohen got the chance to speak repeatedly on different topics, among others about de Giro d'Italia that started that year in Amsterdam, the suitability of Balkenende's leadership and the police mission to Afghanistan. On the Giro d'Italia Cohen was perfectly able to answer the questions, but on the latter topics he had more difficulties. On the questions about Balkenende's leadership qualities Cohen did not want to answer because he wanted to talk about contents. After a while the hosts therefore just gave up for this topic. On the issue of a police mission to Afghanistan Cohen repeated mostly the same answer: they were in favor of a police mission, but the current proposal is still too much like a military mission. If Pauw and Witteman then ask whether Uruzgan – the place where at the time the military was stationed – was also a possibility as location for the police mission, Cohen got into a difficult position. Clearly, he did not want to answer the question and he gets a bit irritated when the hosts continue to ask.

After this, Paul Witteman asked whether he liked being a party leader. Again, Cohen does not really want to answer and stated: 'I think it is important and who do I think it's important? Because I feel that there is enough at stake. And what is at stake is the question where are we going, well, where is it going to? And I have said this before here, I believe, I think that the way in which it is in the Netherlands at the moment, that could be a lot better. And then it is indeed about making sure that all kinds of people in the Netherlands, that they also know that they truly play a role in our society. And that they play more and a better role in our society that currently is the case' (Pauw & Witteman, May 5th 2010: 00:41:35 ff.)?²⁴ Next, Witteman continued on 'binding leadership' and the lack of clarity on its meaning according to him. Subsequently, Cohen was increasingly getting into trouble when he tried to answer what binding leadership actually was. He refused to mention concrete stances on issues for quite some time, making it hard for him to prove that he wanted to debate on content and that he did not think the election campaigns are a horrible period.

²³ Original text: "het zou toch wel ontzettend mooi zijn als we op een gegeven ogenblik weer in een samenleving terecht zouden komen waarin, als er op een gegeven ogenblik zo iemand staat, dat er iemand naast hem staat en zegt joh doe eens niet zo raar, zul je je even kalm houden'.

²⁴ Original text: 'Ik vind het belangrijk en waarom vind ik het belangrijk? Omdat ik vind dat er het nodige op het spel staat. En wat er op het spel staat is de vraag waar gaan we nou, waar gaat het heen? En ik heb dat geloof ik hier ook al een keer eerder gezegd, ik vind dat de manier waarop het in Nederland op het ogenblik gaat, dat kan een stuk beter. En dan gaat het er inderdaad ook om ervoor te zorgen dat allerlei mensen in Nederland, dat die ook weten dat ze ook werkelijk een rol spelen in onze samenleving. En dat die meer en een betere rol spelen in onze samenleving dan nu het geval is'.

4.4.5 Performance 5: Miljarden Gezocht

The fifth performance analyzed of Cohen was 'Miljarden Gezocht' and this was the first one that was broadcasted by a commercial broadcasting station. This show was specifically set up for the election campaigns and was part of the show RTL-Z that brings daily news on the economy and the stock market. As such, it is not surprising that this performance focused specifically on the economic part of the Labor Party's election program. A major part of the show was focused on the Labor Party's decision to cut back an extra ten billion right before the elections. Originally, they wanted to cut back 20 billion euros, but in the week of May 20th the Labor Party announced to cut back an additional 10 billion. The question is why did they decide to do so at this point and what do these additional cutbacks entail?

In answering these questions Cohen first emphasized that the Labor Party did not want to cut back recklessly. However, in conversations with the Central Planning Agency it became clear to him that they could realize additional cut backs of 10 billion in the same line of thought as the other 20 billion. According to Rutte, the problems in the Euro zone were ample reason for realizing these additional cuts at that moment. This answer was not accepted straight away as the host Peter Zadelhoff asked whether it has not been done as reaction to the pressure of the Central Planning Agency and he notes that the problems in the Eurozone are already there for over a year. Cohen responded that the Central Planning Agency really had nothing to do with it, but that he thought that if the other European countries had to have their budget in check, this also applied to the Netherlands.

Next, the attention shifted to how Cohen intended to achieve those 10 billion euros in cutbacks. Cohen proposed the following measures: he wanted to invest in employment in education, lower the income taxes, realize extra rent increases for people who rent houses that were too cheap compared to their income, medical specialist had pay some more and expansive medication had to be replaced by cheaper ones as much as possible. Especially on the issue of income tax reductions Cohen is heavily criticized. Financial expert, Mathijs Bouman, stated that this sounded great, but that in the end it would not work. It reminded him of something Reagan tried in the United States in the 1980's, which only led to the highest budget deficits in their time. Cohen reacted by repeating the same reason he used earlier: tax reductions lead to more employment, and more employment leads to less benefits and more income tax payments to the state. Other topics that got attention were the increased pension age and possible changes to the unemployment benefit entitlements.

Finally, they turned to the question that Rutte had asked Cohen earlier when he performed in this show. Rutte asked how many jobs Cohen would create. Cohen answered that the Labor Party will create 200.000 jobs in the coming years, mostly in the private sector because they will cut in the public sector as well. However, if Zadelhoff asks how many jobs will disappear Cohen does not know how to answer: 'Well that, it, uh, uh, uh, I... Look, I think that there, that you, uh, that you have to look very closely to the tasks you want to let go and on the basis of those tasks to be let go you then have to say those civil servants will have to go. How many, we still need to determine exactly, but we will cut the public sector for around three billion' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 20th 2010: 00:12:59 ff.).²⁵

²⁵ Original text: 'Nou dat, het, uh, uh, uh, ik... Kijk, ik vind dat je daar, dat je, uh, dat je goed moet kijken naar de taken die je wilt afstoten en op basis van het afstoten van de taken moet je dan ook zeggen van dan die ambtenaren gaan eruit. Hoeveel het er zijn zullen we precies bekijken, maar wij zullen in de publieke sector in de orde van grootte van drie miljard bezuinigen'.

Thereafter, Cohen was also given the opportunity to ask Balkenende a question. He asks: with the Labor Party the purchasing power remains stable. How is that with the Christian Democrats, is that stable and if not, how does Balkenende intend to tell the voters.

4.4.6 Performance 6: Prime ministers debate

The prime ministers debate was one of the first major debates Cohen attended. This debate took place on May 23rd, seventeen days before the elections, and only the leaders of the four major parties were invited. Besides Cohen, this included Rutte (Liberal Party), Balkenende (Christian Democratic Party) and Wilders (Party for Freedom). Frits Wester, journalist and political commentator, led the debate. Together, the four party leaders debated on five themes: integration and immigration, the cutbacks, the mortgage interest relief, health care, and leadership’.

Considering the rules of the debate, the four leaders each had the opportunity to once challenge another leader for a one-on-one debate. They could choose themselves who they wished to challenge. During these one-on-one debates the two leaders debating left their ‘normal’ lecterns and were requested to move to another lectern that was designed in such a way that the two leaders were standing face to face. Furthermore, at the beginning of each theme the party leaders had thirty seconds to make an opening statement. After these statements the actual discussion started. At the very end of the debate the leaders also got a minute to make a closing statement on any topic they wanted. Related to the design of the debate, the format was relatively free. The party leaders got the chance to speak – in principle – without time limits and there were no rules for interrupting others. This meant that taking initiative and being relatively aggressive was rewarded in this debate, as this increased the possibilities to speak.

This format of the debate was relatively unfavorable to Job Cohen and certainly at the beginning he was not performing well. First of all, Cohen’s attitude was very hesitant, he spoke only when the floor was explicitly given to him and for the other party leaders it was easy to interrupt him. In addition, he was constantly criticized, especially on the themes of integration (by Wilders) and the cutbacks (by Rutte). This resulted in Cohen being challenged to a one-on-one debate two times. Furthermore, during the discussion on integration he did not get much opportunity to respond to the uttered critique on him. As such he was almost obliged to challenge Wilders for the one-on-one debate (which he also did). Interesting at the end of this debate round was that Wilders left the lectern which was used during these one-on-one debates and he returned to his normal spot, leaving Cohen behind in the middle of his closing argument. This did not reflect much authority, although Wilders also might be considered rude.

However, not only in this one-on-one debate Cohen was having a difficult time, but in these one-on-one debates in general Cohen had to endure a lot of criticism. This struggle was also amplified because he did not have adequate answers ready. He needed quite a lot of time to formulate answers and viewpoints, so he was quickly interrupted. Regularly, the floor was not given back to him after such interruptions. Later in the debate Cohen made sort of a come back, because the pace of the debate slowed down. Therefore he had more time to formulate his message and he was less often interrupted. This gave him the opportunity to actually make his views known. Furthermore, it was remarkable that Cohen was not attacking others much on their personality, while the others were regularly accusing each other of ‘not telling the whole story’. The one time Cohen did make a personal accusation, it was a relatively big one, as he referred to Wilders as being a threat to the rule of law (de Rechtstaat). Moreover, he hardly joined the others in trying to overrule

their opponents to make their own statements. Cohen, conversely, usually spoke in a calm and self-possessed manner, without interrupting others.

4.4.7 Performance 7: Carré debate

The second debate analyzed of Cohen was the Carré debate, which took place only three days after the Prime ministers debate. Just like this first debate, a commercial broadcasting station broadcasted the Carré debate. In this debate eight party leaders participated, which considerably limited the time available for each leader. Besides Cohen, other leaders present were Emile Roemer (Socialist Party), Femke Halsema (Green Left), Alexander Pechtold (Liberal Democrats), Jan-Peter Balkenende (Christian Democrats), Andre Rouvoet (Christian Union), Mark Rutte (Liberal Party) and Geert Wilders (Party for Freedom). The debate was primarily led by newscaster Rick Nieman and in between the general rounds of the debate, each party leader was also asked three 'tough' questions by the second host Mariëlle Tweebekke.

In the words of host Rick Nieman the central theme of this debate was the 'wallet of the voter' and was mostly aimed at the economical aspects of the themes discussed. By means of propositions, a total of four different themes were discussed: 'Patients have to pay more themselves on health care', 'unemployed are entitled to unemployment benefits for no more than one year', 'we have to limit the mortgage interest relief, but we also have to implement an increase in rent' and 'it is inevitable that people with a higher income will have to pay more income tax'. During each round four party leaders participated in the debate. At the beginning of each theme each of the four leaders had 45 seconds to make an opening statement, where after the actual discussion started. To also give the leaders who could not join the discussion on a theme the chance to make their statement, they were entitled to thirty seconds each after the general discussion was closed. During these statements no interruptions could be made.

Only letting four leaders participate in the discussion per round effectively meant that each leader participated on two themes. Cohen participated in the rounds on healthcare and income taxes. In these two rounds Cohen did not manage to make a very strong impression. For example in the round on income taxes, besides his opening statement he only got the floor twice for more than a few seconds. Additionally, during his two turns he hardly spoke about his own vision that the income taxes should be increased, but he was mostly trying to proof that the program of the Liberal Party was unrealistic. He did so by mentioning different kinds of measures the liberal party wanted to take and concluded: 'it can not be but that the middle and lower incomes lose' (Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 01:29:55 ff.). However, he did not explain why the middle and lower incomes would lose. Why would they, for example, not benefit from cutting the taxes on inheritances?

As said each leader was also asked three 'tough' questions individually by Mariëlle Tweebekke. Cohen was asked to answer them secondly, thus relatively early in the show. The first question Cohen had to answer was whether people who receive unemployment benefits had to accept every job that was offered to them, even though it was a job below their level of education. Cohen responded that he felt that people should work as much as possible, only if they could not get a job at all they should be taken care of. Secondly Cohen was asked why he has altered the electoral program of the Labor Party three times in the past few weeks and why the Central Planning Agency had not checked all the adjustments. On Cohen's answer that the Central Planning Agency did not want to do so anymore, the audience started to laugh scornfully. The final question related to whether Cohen still did not want to formulate any break points, as the Liberal Party had announced

to cut the budget on developmental aid in half. Cohen still maintained that the Labor Party did not have any breakpoints because after the elections compromises were always necessary.

To conclude, interesting considering the debate on the last theme – whether the income taxes for higher incomes should be increased or not – was the way in which Cohen ‘helped’ Halsema. Also the Green Left Party was in favor of increasing the income taxes. Rick Nieman asked her how much money that will win, but she does not know the answer to that and Nieman turns to Cohen. Cohen jumped in and stated that it would win 250 million en noted that ‘it is incredibly important that we know all these kinds of figures by heart’ (Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 01:26:17 ff.).

4.4.8 Performance 8: Paul Rosenmöller en...

One day after the Carré debate Cohen performed on the show ‘Paul Rosenmöller en...’. This performance was part of a series on political leaders and in the same period, for example, also Mark Rutte was interviewed. One interesting note about the host Paul Rosenmöller was that he is the former leader of the Green Left party. This had consequences for the way in which he approached Cohen. Ideologically the Green Left and the Labor Party are not that far apart and in that respect it is not that surprising that he did not give Cohen a very difficult time. He accepted the answers of Cohen relatively easily, although he did ask some follow up questions on each topic.

Which topics were discussed? The interview started with the pension agreement that was reached between the social partners – the employers and the unions. What was Cohen’s opinion on it? What did he think about the missing element of people who have a physically heavy job? And, did he consider it appropriate if politicians take elements from the agreement or are they obliged to adopt the entire agreement because of the support it has? Cohen did not really give clear answers to these questions and mostly stated ‘I do not know the exact details yet so we should first have to take a closer look’. Next, Rosenmöller asked whether Cohen was a socialist and how he would apply his ideological ideas to the Netherlands of 2010-2020. This was an exquisite chance for Cohen to bring his vision forward, which he also did. Furthermore, also the reforms on the labor market (or better why these were missing), the increasing costs of healthcare for patients, the military and police mission to Afghanistan, developmental aid, when the Labor Party actually started attacking the Liberal Party, and possible coalitions after the elections were discussed.

Finally, attention was paid to the topic of leadership. Rosenmöller asked Cohen what he liked better: being a leader who stands above the individual parties or being a leader of a party. Cohen did not really choose between these and stated that his ambition was to ‘let all people reach their full potential’. Rosenmöller was not satisfied with this answer and he argued that one person cannot rise above different parties as well as leading one at the same time. Cohen responded that he agreed, but that he nevertheless felt that the ‘connecting elements’ were not given enough attention at the moment. Following this Rosenmöller stated that a party leader has to distinguish himself from others, which is quite different than connecting people. Cohen replied that trying to bring people together is exactly what distinguishes him from others. Again, Rosenmöller still did not give up and mentioned that it seemed that Cohen felt that ‘being a party leader is only an annoying interruption from a period in which you [Cohen, SvZ] as an administrator above the parties are on your way to being the administrator of the Netherlands’ (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 27th 2010: 00:09:18 ff.).²⁶

²⁶ Original text: ‘dat het partijleiderschap een wat hinderlijke onderbreking is van een periode waarin u als boven de partijen staande bestuurder in Amsterdam op weg bent naar de bestuurder van Nederland’.

Cohen clearly argued otherwise: although he naturally wished to become the next prime minister, he was also prepared to stay in parliament if this did not happen.

4.4.9 Performance 9: De Wereld Draait Door

In his performance on 'De Wereld Draait Door' Cohen did not have to share this stage for the first approximately twenty minutes. The main host of this show was Matthijs van Nieuwkerk, supported by two sidekicks: Felix Rottenberg and Maurice de Hond. During Cohen's performance, first the troubles between Cohen and Wilders were discussed. Wilders was not pleased that Cohen had called him a danger to the rule of law (de Rechtstaat) and felt that this incited crazy people to physically attack him. Cohen responded that he did not literally mean that and that it was Wilders who was inciting people to do things. Next they asked whether Wilders really was the reason for why Cohen had come to national politics, as was suggested in a press release of another television show. Cohen denied this, but he did admit that he felt that the Party for Freedom had caused people to turn their backs on each other. Now the Party of Freedom was down in the polls, Van Nieuwkerk asked whether Cohen's mission had succeeded: 'In a way you could actually say, well the mission is already a bit succeeded, perhaps I will not become the biggest, which you had hoped for, but that Wilders is gone for a while'. Cohen answers: 'Why would I not become the biggest (De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th 2010: 00:06:30 ff.)?'²⁷ This led to a conversation in which Cohen's campaigning techniques and focuses were discussed, as well as his current position in the polls and the possibilities he had the upcoming days to win votes.

Next, the conversation reached a point where they shortly reflected on the last couple of weeks in which Cohen did not seem quite like his usual self. Van Nieuwkerk asked what had happened. Cohen explained that he had to adjust to this new job and he admitted that he did not feel at ease a couple of times. Next to adjusting to the new job, he also had to learn a lot about topics that he only knew about from reading the papers. After this they focused on the possible coalitions and why Cohen did not try to cooperate more with the other Left parties. Cohen responded: 'Yes, that could be possible, but it is very much the question whether that is the case' (De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th 2010: 00:23:03 ff.).²⁸ This discussion ended with Cohen acknowledging that, although there was no official cooperation, he did have contact with the leaders of the other Left parties. Finally, the last topic discussed was what Cohen has done that he was such at ease at that moment. What kind of training did he have? Cohen did not answer this question but he beat around the bush: 'No, no, yes, I don't know' (De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th 2010: 00:27:06 ff.).²⁹

During the short break in which remarkable clips of television programs were shown, Cohen and the 'new' guests that had previously sat in the audience, switched places. These new guests were several politicians from different parties who were there to talk about their temporary band formation and what they would perform at the end of this show. It turned out to be that they would sing a song of Ramses Shaffy: 'Zing, vecht, huil, bid, lach, werk en bewonder'. Interestingly, although officially it was not planned Cohen actually joined them.

²⁷ Original text: Mathijs van Nieuwkerk: Maar u zou dus eigenlijk kunnen zeggen, nou, missie al een beetje geslaagd, ik word misschien niet de grootste, had u wel gehoopt, maar die Wilders daar zijn er even vanaf'. And: Job Cohen: 'Hoezo ik word niet de grootste?'

²⁸ Original text: 'Ja, dat zou kunnen, maar dat is zeer de vraag of dat zo is'.

²⁹ Original text: 'Nee, nee, ja, ik weet niet'.

4.4.10 Performance 10: Knevel en Van den Brink

On the same evening, after ‘De Wereld Draait Door’, Cohen also performed on the current-affairs show ‘Knevel en Van den Brink’. In this case Cohen had to share the stage with three other guests: Anne de Jong (one of the activists who was arrested by Israel because she was on a ship to bring supplies to Palestine), Ernst Daniel Smid (TV host who is there to tell about his new program) and Marjon van Rooyen (news correspondent in Peru, calling in to talk about the arrest of Joran van der Sloot). For Cohen’s performance this had two important consequences: the first was that he had to share the time available with others, and secondly that besides the hosts also the other guests could ask him questions. The first limited the time he had to get his story out and the latter could have made the performance more difficult for Cohen.

Cohen’s part on this show started when he was asked to react on the call of Anne de Jong to also actually do something about human rights instead of only talking about it. Cohen stated to be in favor, and that he wished to see an independent study to the problems in Israel and Palestine with regard to the shooting of the ship that brought supplies to Palestine. Next they moved over to the campaign and whether Cohen still had enough energy left. Also he was asked whether he enjoyed campaigning. Cohen stated that he did, although there were also some things he did not like, for example: ‘Yes, you, you also have seen that, that especially the first debates were not easy for me. Uhm, but those really also were my first debates and I see that also in that respect, that there is great progress there. And uh, uh that naturally also makes them much more fun’ (Knevel & Van den Brink, June 4th 2010: 00:22:18).³⁰ Next, they discussed the latest polls and the positions of the Labor Party and the Liberal Party towards each other considering their viewpoints. Cohen argued that the Labor Party had moved to the left while the Liberal Party had moved to the right a bit more. Then, also the relationship of Cohen with the Party for Freedom and Wilders was discussed, and again Cohen’s statement that Wilders was the reason why he entered national politics came up. Furthermore, the current state of how politicians interacted with each other received attention (which is not very decent according to Cohen), as well as the importance of religion in our society as a binding factor, the position of the Islam and the SGP (strictly Calvinist Party), the separation between church and state, and the possible coalitions. Additionally Cohen was also asked who his prime example as a prime minister was. Cohen responded that he admired the way Wim Kok had led the country, because, according to him, he was really someone who stood above all and who was very capable in dealing with complex problems.

4.4.11 Performance 11: NOVAPolitiek

The final performance analyzed of Cohen was his performance on ‘NOVAPolitiek’. This show is related to the previous NOVA show that was analyzed of Cohen, but this one was specifically aimed at politics and the upcoming elections. Another difference was that this show was not recorded in a studio – which is otherwise the case – but it was recorded live with an audience in a café in The Hague. What was also different was that instead of one host, this time two hosts were leading the show: Clair Polak and Twan Huys. Additionally also a financial expert, Bas Jacobs, was invited to ask some tough questions. However, this time he could not make it to the studio so therefore his

³⁰ Original text: ‘Ja, u, u hebt ook wel gezien dat, dat zeker in de eerste debatten die waren voor mij niet eenvoudig. Uhm, maar dat waren ook echt mijn eerste debatten en ik zie ook dat daar, dat daar grote vooruitgang in zit. En uh, uh daardoor worden ze natuurlijk ook veel leuker’.

questions were pre-recorded. Similar to the normal show, Cohen was the only guest present during the entire show. To make the show livelier, moreover, the interview was interspersed with several clips, including the one with Bas Jacobs. These clips were amongst others on an earlier debate that evening in which Wilders attacked Cohen, the average Labor Party voter, what according to Nebahat Albayrak – the number two on the list of the Labor Party – characterized Cohen, and a clip of writer Rober Vuijsje and former politician Arend Jan Boekstijn who were both closely following Cohen during the campaign.

The first topic discussed during this performance was that Mark Rutte was elected to have led the best campaign according to a jury. Cohen was asked whether he agreed with this and whether he considered Rutte to have campaigned flawlessly. Cohen responded that the campaigns were not over yet and that although Rutte's campaign was strong economically, it forgot the people behind it. Additionally, according to Cohen Rutte did not answer any questions during debates. This brought the hosts to the debate that was broadcasted earlier that evening and in which Wilders for the first time during this campaign referred to his safety problems. This provided an opening to talk about a statement Cohen had made earlier about Wilders 'rubbing against the rule of law'. This topic had been widely discussed in different performances by then and the answer Cohen gave was more or less the same as before, meaning that Wilders did not treat people equally. Other topics were the necessary cutbacks and how they differed from the Liberal Party, Cohen's Jewish heritage (if he had become prime minister, he would have been the first Jewish prime minister in the world, after Israel), how Cohen would typify this campaign, what Cohen would do first if he would become prime minister, whether he would welcome Bouterse if he would become president of Surinam, whether he would change the constitutional monarchy, his plans to get the economy back on track, his ideal coalition, and what he is going to do the next 32 hours until the elections.

Furthermore, also Cohen's campaign up until that moment was discussed. Twan Huys asked whether Cohen had perhaps underestimated campaigning. Cohen responded that he did not, but that he merely had to learn it. In response Huys noted that this had cost him quite a lot of seats and Polak wondered why he still had to learn how to debate considering his prior functions. Cohen in response continued to emphasize that being a political leader is something completely different from any other type of leadership – it is a different role. One of the possible explanations for Cohen's bad performance that came back repeatedly, as Polak suggested, was that too many people were involved in telling Cohen what to do. Cohen concluded that this was not the case and stated: 'there are various stories, various story are circulating on that and those, I like to leave those as they are' (NOVAPolitiek, June 7th 2010: 00:14:00 ff.).³¹ The show ended with the note that after this broadcast Cohen would be answering questions from viewers via the Internet. In other words, also contact with the viewer was sought, which gave Cohen another opportunity to convince citizens of his ideas.

In this chapter the individual case developments of Mark Rutte and Job Cohen were described, as well as their performances to build a firmer grounding for understanding the findings of the dramaturgical analysis and the analysis of newspaper articles. In the next chapter first the findings of the television performances and newspaper articles on Rutte are discussed, as well as how these can be understood in terms of credibility. In chapter 6, the same is done for the case of Job Cohen.

³¹ Original text: 'Daar gaan allerlei verhalen, doen daarover de ronde en die, die laat ik ook graag voor wat ze zijn'.

Chapter 5

Credibility: the case of Mark Rutte

Right after the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV, Rutte was not considered at all to be the possible next prime minister. In different polls his likeability as future prime minister was not even polled. However, gradually during the election campaigns this started to change. Rutte became increasingly credible as being able to lead the Netherlands. What did Rutte do that contributed to persuading more Dutch citizens to attribute credibility to him? This question is answered in this chapter in two parts. As is previously mentioned in chapter 2, the construction of a political leader's credibility can be done in several ways. In other words: one way in which citizens determine the credibility of political leaders is on the basis of their television performances. Furthermore, besides television also newspapers are still a major source for information about politics (see chapter 3). In this chapter first the credibility construction in television performances is studied, paying attention to staging, framing and scripting. Next, focus shifts to the construction of credibility in newspaper articles. To conclude, findings of the television performances and the newspaper articles are integrated.

5.1 Constructing credibility: Television performances

In the previous chapter, it was stated that eleven television performances of Rutte were analyzed and in that chapter these were also described to a certain extent. Each of these television performances was analyzed on the basis of staging, framing and scripting. The findings of this analysis can be found below.

5.1.1 Staging

Analyzing staging requires studying three elements: the stage itself, the props and the personal appearance of Rutte (see chapter 2). Starting with the stages on which Rutte performed, I found that

these could be categorized, as mentioned earlier, into three types: speeches, talk shows and debates.

Each of these types of stages set different demands and each also provided different opportunities to control what was happening. In the speech at the Liberal Party congress, Rutte had most control over the situation. He was the one who could determine not only what he was going to say, but also how much time he would take and in what way he would deliver his speech.

The talk shows, on the other hand, can be positioned on the other end of the scale of taking control. The rhythm of the talk shows was determined by the hosts. Starting with the number of hosts, only having to deal with one might have been easier than having to deal with multiple hosts, because in the case of multiple hosts the intensity and speed of posing questions can be increased quite easily by hosts taking turns. In the show 'Knevel en Van den Brink', for example, Rutte had to deal with two hosts and three other guests. They did not only pose questions, but also determined whether an answer sufficed and could interrupt him if they felt that it was necessary. From the perspective of Rutte, this posed a challenge on getting his story out in the way that was most favorable to him, as it limited his opportunities to take the lead in the conversation. Besides the number of hosts and other guests present that could ask tricky questions, also the background of the hosts and guests might have mattered. Was their attitude favorable to them or not? The relevance of this factor is showed clearly in Rutte's performance on 'Paul Rosenmöller en...'. In this case there is only one host present, but he is very hostile towards Rutte's ideas and propels (see the examples in the description of this performance chapter 4). Overall, the approach of Paul Rosenmöller showed a clear difference with the other performances of Rutte. In the other performances he did not seem to be in much trouble in answering the questions, but when looking at how he conducted the elements of framing and scripting (see later on) it is clear that he had to work harder on the show of Paul Rosenmöller.

Considering the possibilities to take control, the debates took a middle position. Although Rutte had to comply in both debates to the rules set, he was also given the opportunity to take the lead in some elements. In the Carré debate (May 26th 2010) for example, if selected to take part in a round Rutte was given the opportunity to posit his statement in 45 seconds without being interrupted. Furthermore, for example in the Prime ministers debate (May 23rd 2010) he could challenge another party leader to debate with him one-on-one on the issue at hand. Thus in each of the debates he was given the opportunity to speak for 30 to 45 seconds without the possibility of being interrupted. In terms of taking control this gives an advantage compared to the talk shows.

The possibility to use props goes hand in hand with the opportunity on different stages to take control. In his speech he had most opportunity to use them and thus it is not surprising that the logo of the Liberal Party was omnipresent. Not only was it projected onto three screens, also many people in the audience present wore scarves depicting the Liberal Party logo. In the other performances he was in the position to decide on the use of these kinds of props. Mostly, the only thing that he could do was to take a sip of water at a strategic moment, for example when needing time to think about his answer. His performance on 'Carlo & Irene' (February 28th 2010) included one exception in this respect as a specially prepared dish gave him the opportunity to tell a story about his parents and what he had learned from them.

Remarkable, moreover, was that he never used notes in his performances. In the talk shows this was not possible because everybody would see it lying on the table and in the Prime ministers debate, for example, it was prevented by the transparent Plexiglas lecterns. Therefore, on these two

stages it could have been expected that Rutte did not use them. Contrary, it was surprising that he did not use them during his speech, as he spoke for about 18 minutes without interruptions. The reason we know for sure that he did not use any notes is first of all because there was no pulpit on the stage, secondly because he never held them in his hands and thirdly because sometimes Rutte was filmed from the back. This gave the viewers at home a good idea about what Rutte himself could see while performing and showed that there was, for example, no autocue present. Indeed, it might have been possible that Rutte was wearing an earpiece, but there are no indications for the viewer to expect this. As a result, Rutte made it seem as if he did everything by heart.

The final element, Rutte's appearance, was the only element that he could control most during his performances. Naturally, someone's facial and bodily features are relatively fixed, but one is completely in charge of one's wardrobe and hairdo. Related to the first, it can be noted that Rutte is relatively young. He, for example, does not have grey hair yet and also his facial features showed a certain youthfulness. Purely judging on the perceived age of Rutte, this might have given the impression that he might lack the necessary knowledge, experience, and wisdom compared to more senior candidates for the position of prime minister. Moving over to his hairdo, Rutte was consistent throughout the performances between February and June 2010. Looking at a broader time period, during his performance on 'Carlo & Irene' (February 28th 2010) the comparison was made between his hairdo a few years back and now. With use of pictures they showed that Rutte had improved a lot (also see the description of performance 1): whereas a couple of years ago when he entered national politics he looked like a schoolboy, now he has the look of an adult man.

Furthermore, his wardrobe was relatively consistent throughout the studied period. Except for – again – the Carlo & Irene show, he is always wearing a dark suit (although never black) with a white or pale blue shirt.³² Additionally, he alternated his ties a bit, but mostly they were of the same tone of color. In the ten performances studied in which he wore a tie, he wore three different ones: a lavender one, a silver one and a beige one. As learned in chapter two, the more contrast between the colors in one's clothes, the more formal and authoritative one's attire is. In this respect Rutte's appearance was formal and authoritative (which is what the audience expects of a future prime minister of the Netherlands and thus credible), but he did not dress as formal as possible. Although the colors of his clothes contrasted, they could have been more outspoken. How to interpret this? Only judging on his clothes he was not communicating an image of the most authoritative, strong and formal leader. One way to understand this is that it might have fitted with the kind of image he was trying to portray of himself as a leader. As discussed in the part on scripting, Rutte continuously tried to limit the gap between himself and his audience. Furthermore, he positioned himself as a leader of ordinary citizens. A very formal appearance, with stark color contrasts, might have only alienated this audience from him as it created more distance. Additionally, what also might have played a role was that compared to the other candidates considered likely to take office, Rutte was relatively young.³³ Dressing more formally as the others (who usually also wear dark suits, pale colored shirts and ties, but with starker color contrasts) might not have been that appropriate, if only because it was not communicating a lively, energetic and 'full of plans for the future' image.

³² In 'Carlo & Irene' he did wear a dark suit with a white shirt, but he did not wear a tie.

³³ Rutte was born in 1967; Wilders, Balkenende and Cohen were born in respectively 1963, 1956 and 1947 (Parlement & Politiek, 2012d; 2012e; 2012f; 2012g). The difference with Wilders is smallest (only four years), but he was not considered as likely to become the next prime minister as Balkenende and Cohen, with whom the difference in age was much more considerable.

As his appearance in the program of Carlo & Irene showed, he was also not afraid to adapt his clothing to the type of performance. As the other talk shows, speech and debates were rather formal occasions, the program of Carlo & Irene is mostly aimed at entertainment. A suit complete and tie might have been overdressing and might have created more distance. On the other hand, appearing in jeans and t-shirt would also not be fitting for a politician and an aspiring leader (see chapter 2). The choice of Rutte to wear a suit without tie can thus be considered a wise choice: showing that he was serious while also appreciating the entertainment nature of the show by dressing slightly more casual.

Overall, Rutte took control of the design of the stage, the props and his appearance where he could. Most possibilities in this respect could be found in his speech, while less so in the debates and the talk shows. The one exception to this is his appearance: only focusing on his clothing, this was the one element that he could decide upon himself at all times. Moreover, considering the props it was impressive that it appeared as if Rutte did not need to use any notes at all, but that he did everything, including his speech, by heart. Combined, for the elements of staging it seemed that Rutte was in control.

5.1.2 Framing

Earlier framing was described as a ‘quality of communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another’ (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 40). Additionally, Lakoff defines frames as being ‘the mental structures that shape the way in which we see the world’ (2004: XV). In the analyzed television performances Rutte used one frame consistently and continuously from which all of his statements can be understood. This frame can be characterized as the ‘responsible society’ frame, which was clearly introduced in his speech at the Liberal Party congress of April 24th 2010:

‘Dear people, tonight I want to turn directly to the voter yet once more. I want to say the following: if you think that it is not too bad in the Netherlands, if you think that we can come out of this crisis by well, rearranging those, those seats a little bit, but actually not doing much. If you think that the Netherlands will become healthy spontaneously, don't vote for the Liberal Party on June 9th. June 9th is about clear choices, is about the question whether we are going to increase the taxes in the Netherlands, or if we are really going to reorganize. Is about the question whether we cover it all up a little or whether we are really going to tackle the problems. Actually, June 9th is about the question whether we are keeping things together or whether we are getting things going again’ (00:16: 45 ff.).³⁴³⁵

³⁴ Original text: ‘Beste mensen, ik wil mij vanavond toch ook nog een keer rechtstreeks tot de kiezer wenden. Ik wil het volgende zeggen: als u denkt dat het wel meevalt in Nederland, als u denkt dat we uit deze crisis komen eigenlijk door ja, een klein beetje die, die stoeltjes te verschuiven, maar eigenlijk niet veel te doen. Als u denkt dat Nederland als vanzelf weer gezond wordt, stemt u dan op 9 juni geen VVD. Negen juni gaat over duidelijke keuzes, gaat over de vraag of we de belastingen gaan verhogen in Nederland, of dat we echt gaan reorganiseren. Gaat over de vraag of we het in Nederland allemaal een beetje toedekken of dat we echt de problemen gaan aanpakken. Eigenlijk gaat negen juni over de vraag of we de boel bij elkaar gaan houden of we de boel weer in beweging gaan krijgen’.

³⁵ This last statement of not keeping things together but getting things going again is a clear attempt of Rutte to distance himself from Cohen. Cohen’s motto was for quite some time to keep things together, especially after the assassination of Theo van Gogh in 2004 (also see next chapter).

There are two fundamental values that underlie this ‘responsible society’ frame and that come back from time to time in the different performances. The first is an obvious liberal value, namely freedom. People should be able to make their own choices; they should decide for themselves how they wish to live their life. Government should not decide this for them, for example via the taxes she collects. However, this freedom is not without obligations but is accompanied by responsibility. As a citizen living in the Netherlands ‘you are responsible for your environment, naturally also for yourself, for your own actions’ (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 31st 2010: 00:03:56 ff.). This means that as a citizen the minimum requirement is that you take responsibility for your own behavior, but more than that you should also pay your dues to society by working hard (Congress speech, April 24th 2010). Or as Rutte put it on ‘Knevel en Van den Brink’ on May 18th 2010: ‘I want us to get this country started again, I want us to become active instead of passive. I want us to stop depending on others and that we put our shoulders to the wheel again. That’s what I want’ (00:27:30 ff.).³⁶

The task of politics and government was to enable people to take responsibility for their own lives and not to hamper it with taxes and inefficient governing (Knevel en Van den Brink, May 18th 2010: 00:44:54 ff.; NOVAPolitiek, June 4th 2010: 00:22:04 ff.). Another interesting element is that these values were mostly approached from an economical perspective. The economy was considered the foundation on which our society is build, as for without income there would have been no welfare. Finally, an element that was constantly emphasized by Rutte was that if we all take our responsibility and reform what is necessary, the Netherlands would get out of the economic crisis stronger than before. In other words: taking responsibility would pay off.

Retracing values into proposals and views

Many proposals and viewpoints of the Liberal Party can be retraced to these two values of freedom and responsibility. The most obvious one is that Rutte pleaded for a substantive reduction of the budget deficit and national debt. In the words of Rutte: ‘...that monster of the national debt has to get back in his cage’ (NOVAPolitiek, June 4th 2010: 00:28:16 ff.).³⁷ To do so we needed to take difficult measures. In other words: we had to take responsibility to safeguard our future. Naturally, according to Rutte the Liberal Party was the only one to own up to this task. Furthermore, Rutte considers the national debt to be a monster because the interest we have to pay limit citizens in exercising their freedom.

In the same line of reasoning we could understand the stance of the Liberal Party on the mortgage interest relief. Many other parties, such as the Labor Party and the GreenLeft Party, wanted to constrain this measure as it mostly ‘subsidized’ the higher incomes (Carré debate, May 26th 2010). Thus in a time of severe budget cuts, to at least alter the measure could help to achieve major savings. The Liberal Party, however, was fiercely opposed to changing anything about it. Rutte reasoned as follows: first of all, the mortgage interest relief was not a subsidy but a tax reduction (Miljarden Gezocht, May 13th 2010: 00:14:40 ff.). Thus that people with a higher income benefited a bit more from the interest relief was only because they also paid higher taxes (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 31st 2010: 00:25:35 ff.). Yet, according to Rutte this was not the reason why the mortgage interest relief should be retained. He stated that the majority of the interest relief benefitted ordinary homeowners. For them, the interest relief was crucial to even afford owning a house.

³⁶ Original text: ‘Ik wil dat we dit land weer aan de slag helpen, ik wil dat we van passief actief worden. Ik wil dat we stoppen met onze hand ophouden en dat we weer eens een beetje de schouders eronder gaan zetten. Dat wil ik’.

³⁷ Original text: ‘...dat monster van die staatsschuld terug in zijn hok krijgen’.

'Fiddling' with the interest relief measure would lead to a substantial loss in income for them, making it harder to live their life as they wish as well as making it harder to take responsibility for themselves as they have less means to do so (Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 00:53:57 ff.; NOVAPolitiek, June 4th 2010: 00:18:20 ff.; 00:22:04 ff.).

A third example in which the 'responsible society' frame came back was in the stance of the Liberal Party and Mark Rutte on immigration and integration. His position was that the large influx of 'opportunity deprived' (kansarm) immigrants should be stopped. This stance was not motivated in the same way as Wilders did, as according to Rutte: '... we never look at the group, but at the individual. We do not look at your decent but at your future and we do not look at your beliefs, we look at your behavior' (Congress speech, April 24th 2010: 00:06:44 ff.).³⁸ Thus you are free to think what you want, but what matters is if you take responsibility for your consequent actions. Again, the reasons for wanting to put immigration on hold lay in the sphere of responsibility; both our responsibility and the responsibility of the immigrants. Starting with the latter, immigrants have to take care for their own integration. It is their responsibility to meet the set requirements and to be successful in participating in society. However, those 'opportunity deprived' immigrants do not have the best odds at becoming successful in our society because, for example, they lack the required skills to quickly find a job. Consequently, these immigrants have a higher chance to become dependent on benefits, which is not considered taking responsibility in Rutte's book (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:08:14 ff.). On the other hand, we as a society are also responsible for our surroundings, which also means taking care of people in need. However, if the influx of those opportunity poor immigrants continued we did not have enough means to take this responsibility (Prime Ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:17:03 ff.).

When speaking about his own style of leadership and what the Liberal Party stood for, Rutte also applied the 'responsible society' frame. He was willing to take the responsibility of introducing difficult measures that were needed to for the state's finances to become healthy again and to get the country back on its feet. Additionally, Rutte took responsibility in another way as well as he stated 'I honor all agreements made with the voter, the Liberal Party honors its agreements' (Prime Ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:54:12 ff.).³⁹ Moreover, he continuously emphasized that already in 2008 they warned the former cabinet about the risks coming from America (banking crisis et cetera) and that they had made proposals to deal with it as well, but that nobody would listen (Knevel en Van den Brink, May 18th 2010: 00:20:04 ff.).

Furthermore, his position that he did not disqualify Wilders as a potential coalition partner beforehand could be understood from his 'responsible society' frame as well. Even if this was only a strategic move, it did not contradict his dominant frame. As stated before, Rutte did not wish to judge people on their beliefs, but on their actions. Translated to this situation: in Rutte's eyes, excluding Wilders up front would mean placing him outside the debate, as well as saying that he was 'morally objectionable'. This would be judging Wilders on his beliefs and not on his (in this case) proposed actions for future policy (De Wereld Draait Door, June 2nd 2010: 00:09:51 ff.).

Another way in which Rutte connected his leadership to responsibility was his call to other party leaders to stay in parliament if the situation required that, even though they might have a

³⁸ Original text: '... wij nooit kijken naar de groep, maar naar het individu. Wij kijken niet naar je afkomst maar naar je toekomst en we kijken niet naar je geloof, we kijken naar je gedrag'.

³⁹ Original text: 'Ik kom alle afspraken na met de kiezer, de VVD komt zijn afspraken na'.

majority. Instable cabinets or minority cabinets were according to Rutte examples of such situations. This should not be seen as 'walking away from the responsibility of the office of prime minister, it is to invest in the strength of such a coalition' (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 01:21:15 ff.).⁴⁰

Reception of the 'responsible society' frame: Acceptance or critique?

That someone's frame can be retraced to many of his viewpoints and proposals does not necessarily mean that such a frame is also accepted by others. How was this in Rutte's case in the period between February 19th and June 9th 2010? Although Rutte was asked some tough and difficult questions, these questions did not necessarily contradict Rutte's frame of a 'responsible society'. Rutte's viewpoints were relatively little criticized on the basis of another frame. This, however, did not mean that there was no criticism at all. If this was done, usually a more traditional leftist frame was used, in which solidarity and taking care of each other played a central role. Jan Peter Balkenende, former prime minister and former leader of the Christian Democratic Party, for example accused Rutte and the Liberal Party of taking irresponsible and asocial measures in health care: 'As I also indicated earlier, when the program of the Liberal Party was announced, the consequences will be disastrous' (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 01:02:58 ff.).⁴¹ Femke Halsema, leader of the Green Left party, furthermore stated that with Rutte 'people with lower incomes are going to bleed' because of measures that increase the burden on those income groups. (Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 01:21:08 ff.).⁴²

Another interesting element was that Rutte was hardly attacked on his leadership skills. Apparently others, journalists as well as other party leaders, did not doubt his capabilities in this respect. However, one suggestion made at the beginning of the election campaigns, namely that it might be wise if party leaders stayed in parliament instead of becoming (prime) minister if a 'complicated' coalition was formed, raised a lot of questions and repeatedly came back in discussions. Especially other party leaders speculated if he was not running away from his responsibilities. As Pechtold, leader of the Liberal Democrats, wondered: 'If the weather is nice, Rutte is the candidate, but if the weather is bad, the big sister from Brussels comes in' (by which he means Neelie Kroes, now euro commissioner for the 'Digital Agenda') (Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 01:00:02 ff.).⁴³ To be attacked on your responsibility, while that lies at the core of the dominant frame you use, was not ideal to say the least. However, what might matter more than the critique that was uttered and the 'hostile' frames that were raised was the way in which Rutte has dealt with this.

In this respect it can be stated that Rutte proved to be very capable of reframing and countering the hostile frames, regardless of whether journalists or political opponents attacked him. Indeed, critique did come up but it did not seem to stick to Rutte. The 'responsible society' frame gave Rutte quite a number of possibilities to counter the arguments in an effective manner. First of all, this frame did not pose any limitations on how he could attack others. Criticizing others on their plans basically came down to asking why they did not take responsibility. The Party for Freedom (PVV), for example, was not taking responsibility in the eyes of Rutte because they 'do not want to

⁴⁰ Original text: 'Dat is niet om weg te lopen voor de verantwoordelijkheid van het premierschap, dat is om te investeren in de kracht van zo'n coalitie.'

⁴¹ Original text: 'Ik heb al eerder aangegeven, toen het program bekend werd van de VVD, dat de gevolgen desastreus zijn'.

⁴² Original text: '... dat de mensen met de lage inkomens gaan bloeden'.

⁴³ Original text: 'Als het mooi weer is dan is Rutte kandidaat en als het slecht weer is komt de grote zus uit Brussel'.

modernize the labor market, they do not want to get the sharply rising costs in the social security system and health care under control' (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 31st 2010: 00:16:33 ff.).⁴⁴

Furthermore, as Lakoff (2006: 33) already brought forward, if you use the language and the frame of your opponent to argue against it, you will only reinforce the frame of your enemy. Rutte understood this quite well as he explicitly did not go along with the language of others and he continuously tried to reframe critique of others. An example of the first was when Rutte refused to call the mortgage interest relief measure a 'breaking point'. Multiple times he stated: 'I honor my words and I choose my own words, mister Wester. Those are not your words or those of mister Balkenende, I choose my own words and I honor my agreements and people of the Liberal Party know that' (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:55:44 ff.).⁴⁵ In other cases he also actually tried to reframe what 'social' and 'responsible' means. As said, one of the toughest points of critique was that Rutte would affect the lower incomes disproportionately harsh and that he was not social and cold in this respect. According to Rutte, however, asocial is letting people needlessly receiving benefits (Moraalridders, April 13th 2010: 00:14:38 ff.). Reasoning from Rutte's 'responsible society' frame, making people dependent upon benefits means that they are not able to take responsibility for their own lives, that they cannot fully utilize their potential and that basically they are not fully participating in society. Rutte constantly did this kind of reframing and countering of hostile frames. It was very rare that Rutte allowed critique on him to go unchallenged. This only happened after hosts interfered firmly and actively denied him to take the floor, but even in those cases Rutte did not give up easily. He still made clear that he did not agree with something even though perhaps he was not given the opportunity to tell why. This gave the impression that he was very well prepared and that he could defend his plans at all times, against all objections.

Possibilities and limitations of the 'responsible society' frame

Every frame creates possibilities for its user, but also poses certain limitations. The 'responsible society' frame is no exception. However, the degree to which Rutte was hampered by these limitations related closely to how dominant his 'responsible society' frame became during the election campaigns. Or better said: the limitations of his frame were difficult to notice because not once during the analyzed performances he was disconcerted. A possible limitation that came up while focusing on the most common uttered critique on the plans of Rutte was that his 'responsible society' frame posed high demands on citizens as well as on the Liberal Party themselves. Taking responsibility for your own life can be tough, especially if you have a lower income and every setback hits hard. Besides the chronically ill and disabled there are also others who, perhaps temporarily due to certain circumstances, need some extra support. In this sense the 'responsible society' frame and its consequences could be considered harsh, cold, and lacking attention for the human dimension. However, due to Rutte's reframing and countering skills, he was hardly elaborately criticized as such.

Looking at the possibilities of this frame, it was already noted that Rutte had quite a few. Firstly, it at least did not hamper Rutte to heavily attack others on their – according to Rutte irresponsible – plans for the future. Secondly, this frame also gave Rutte the possibility to actively promote a reputation of a young but experienced leader who wanted to take action, who wanted to get things (among others the economy) going again and who was eager to step up to take

⁴⁴ Original text: 'zij niet de arbeidsmarkt willen moderniseren, zij willen de sterk oplopende kosten in de sociale zekerheid en de gezondheidszorg niet onder controle brengen...'

⁴⁵ Original text: 'Ik kom mijn woorden na en ik kies mijn eigen woorden meneer Wester. Dat zijn niet uw woorden of die van de heer Balkenende, ik kies mijn eigen woorden en ik houd mij aan mijn afspraken en at weten mensen van de VVD'.

responsibility. This last point was only emphasized from halfway the studied period when it became clear that it was also realistic that Rutte might end up in the office of prime minister. Before that it was not that he is not willing to lead the country, on the contrary, but he was much more modest: first it was up to the voter if they are even willing to have him (e.g. in Carlo & Irene, February 28th 2010; Moraalridders, April 13th 2010).

Combining the above four elements into an integrated view on the way in which Rutte conducted framing during his performances, it can be argued that first of all Rutte's 'responsible society' frame had much potential. It resonated with values that were considered important by citizens in society and it included an all-encompassing vision on society, the economy, and government. Moreover, he used this frame as well to draw connections between individual proposals, which resulted in a coherent vision that might have given citizens the idea that he had thought it through well and that he knew what had to be done. Although this central frame was criticized occasionally, this critique hardly stuck due to Rutte's ability to reframe and counter critique: he did not let critique go unanswered during his performances and in countering it he only used his own language. Overall this resulted in that the limitations of the 'responsible society' frame did not get the upper hand, but that Rutte could mostly avoid these. Contrary, Rutte could make good use of the possibilities the frame presented for him.

5.1.3 Scripting

Scripting, finally, consists of four elements: casting the different roles, the (constructed) dialogue, the relationship with the public, and nonverbal communication (also see chapter 2). The first element, casting roles, basically consists of what kind of picture Rutte paints of himself and of others. In theatrical terms: what role does he play, who are his friends and who are his enemies?

Friends and enemies: Fighting for the interests of the average, hardworking citizens

The role Rutte brought to life with regard to his own part is the role of a leader who fights passionately for those ordinary, hard working citizens who are merely trying to make something of their lives. However, even though citizens might be fully committed to this goal, they still encounter various obstacles. Naturally, Rutte cannot help citizens to overcome them all, not the least because they are also part of citizens' own responsibility, but what he could (and wanted to) do was to enable them, to give them the necessary tools. The most important tool for taking responsibility for your own life is having a job, as this at least makes you economically independent from the state and others: '... therefore I want jobs, jobs, jobs' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 13th 2010: 00:08:19 ff.).⁴⁶

Friends or protagonists in this respect were everybody who shared the vision of Rutte on what is necessary to enable people to take control of their own lives. Friends were those who were willing to make the necessary changes and who did not run away from the responsibilities. In politics, Rutte did not exclude any party as a possible partner, but some parties were more likely than others. Whereas the distance towards the Labor Party was huge, as Rutte repeatedly emphasized (e.g. in Knevel en Van den Brink, May 18th 2010), the Christian Democrats were a more likely partner for cooperation. The latter was not stated explicitly but they did think the same about, for example, the mortgage interest relief. Additionally, Rutte stated that 'in the past it was possible to do good

⁴⁶ Original text: 'daarom wil ik banen, banen, banen'.

business with them [Christian Democrats]' (Business Class, April 11th 2010: 00:41:21 ff.).⁴⁷ Besides in politics, also in society he differentiated between people who really wanted to take action and people who did not (in his eyes). In his speech at the Liberal Party congress on April 24th 2010 he called out to voters not to vote for the Liberal Party if they thought that the situation in the Netherlands was not that bad and that no action had to be taken (see also quote on the introduction of the 'responsible society' frame). He repeated this view in his performance on Business Class (April 11th 2010: 00:45:18 ff.).

Consequently, those who according to Rutte buried their head in the sand were qualified as antagonists or enemies. These were on the one hand the citizens who felt that the Netherlands were not in such a bad position and that the wind of economical distress would blow over. As Rutte saw it, passivity was not the way to get things moving again. On the other hand, in politics these were mostly the parties that were located on the left side of the political spectrum. 'Left' did not take responsibility and also did not reward citizens if they took control of their own lives, because they often pleaded for income dependent measures. Rutte stated: 'If it is up to Left than soon we have income dependent buns in the Netherlands and you pay for those and then you have to pay income dependently for your cup of coffee' (Congress speech, April 26th 2010: 00:15:52 ff.). One 'special' enemy against who Rutte was constantly rebelling was the Labor Party and especially its leader Job Cohen. Rutte called him his 'greatest opponent', '*the adversary of his campaign*' (De Wereld Draait Door, June 2nd 2010: 00:05:06 ff.).⁴⁸

Putting the 'responsible society' frame into words: constructing the dialogue

Starting with the kind of arguments Rutte used to convince his audience (citizens) of the suitability of him and the Liberal Party to guide the Netherlands through the crisis, the performances showed that Rutte used all three of Aristotle's devices of persuasion. Pathos, ethos and logos all come back repeatedly. The three were, however, not always used at the same time, in the same combination and not all are dominant in each type of performance. Pathos was most often used in his congress speech, while less so in the debates and talk shows. Indeed, his congress speech was almost a concatenation of pathos-like wording. He started his speech, for example, with the following words:

'I realize that while I am now addressing my congress, addressing you, that many people are watching us. They are people who are concerned. People who are concerned about their job, who are concerned about the future of their children, who are concerned about the value of their homes. There are older people in the Netherlands who are concerned about their pension, or who are concerned about whether they can go out on the streets safely in Amsterdam-West or in Eden. There are youngsters in the Netherlands who asks us, no who expect from us, that we do not pass the buck of the crisis on to the next generation. All these people sense very fundamentally that the elections of June 9th, that these are the most important elections in a generation. This, ladies and gentlemen, is such a moment' (Congress speech, April 24th 2010: 00:00:44 ff.).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Original text: 'in het verleden hebben wij met hen goed zaken kunnen doen'.

⁴⁸ Original text: 'grote opponent' & 'de tegenstander in deze campagne'.

⁴⁹ Original text: 'Ik realiseer mij terwijl ik nu mijn congres toespreek, u toespreek, dat heel veel mensen naar ons kijken. Dat zijn mensen die zich zorgen maken. Mensen die zich zorgen maken over hun baan, die zich zorgen maken over de toekomst van hun kinderen, die zich zorgen maken over de waarde van hun huis. Er zijn oudere mensen in Nederland die zich zorgen maken over hun pensioen, of die zich zorgen maken of ze nog wel veilig over straat kunnen in Amsterdam-West of in Eden.

What Rutte was doing in the above fragment was trying to create a feeling with voters that there was really something at stake. A lot was not going right at that moment; people were concerned about many things. The elections of June 9th 2010 were about addressing these important issues and determine what direction the Netherlands were going. The feeling that his words might have evoked in citizens was that they were witnessing something special, to which they could contribute and thus in which they were involved. It was exciting and worrisome at the same time because it was swimming or sinking. This also reflected on the Liberal Party, because citizens 'expected' things from them, namely not passing the buck of the crisis on to the next generation. In other words: they were expected to take their responsibility. Another example of pathos in Rutte's speech at the congress of the Liberal Party is the following.

'And, ladies and gentlemen, I have seen what happens if someone on benefits goes back to work, what then happens to you, to such a family, with those children. That there is some money again, that there is some pride. If those parents come home with a story about which they can tell. I have become convinced that the Netherlands is an incredibly beautiful country and that we are going to achieve really great things with each other' (congress speech, April 24th 2010: 00:03:00 ff.).⁵⁰

In this case, however, it was not about creating involvement of the audience by highlighting that we were witnessing something special that has major consequences for our future. Rather, here Rutte called on a feeling of pride: we could accomplish much and really make a difference if we just made an effort and put our minds to it. In the debates and talk shows, Rutte also regularly used pathos but usually in those cases logos and ethos dominate. In 'De Wereld Draait Door' (June 2nd 2010: 00:11:08 ff.), for example, Rutte was asked if it was not merely a strategic argument to withhold from making an explicit choice on cooperating with Wilders or not. Rutte insisted that he made a substantive argument, because not debating on the content meant that one was also not able to show the differences. Thus not making an explicit choice followed logically from the wish to engage in a debate on content.

Interesting considering the element of logos in the talk shows and debates was that the use of pathos was often connected to it. Through the use of a reasoning based on 'logos principles', but by simultaneously using very concrete examples, Rutte was also calling on pathos. This sounds contradictory, as logos is usually seen as appealing to the mind (ratio) and pathos to the heart (emotion). However, it is not. One of the most used examples of Rutte during the parliamentary election campaigns of 2010 was the mother who was dependent upon welfare⁵¹: 'A welfare mother

En er zijn jongeren in Nederland die vragen ons, nee die verwachten van ons dat wij de rekening van deze crisis niet gaan doorschuiven naar de volgende generatie. Al deze mensen voelen heel fundamenteel aan dat de verkiezingen op negen juni, dat het de belangrijkste verkiezingen zijn in een generatie. Dit dames en heren, is zo'n moment'.

⁵⁰ 'En dames en heren, ik heb gezien wat er gebeurt als iemand uit een uitkering weer aan het werk gaat, wat er dan met je gebeurt, met zo'n gezin, met die kinderen. Als er weer een beetje geld is, als er een beetje trots is. Als die ouders thuis komen met een verhaal waar ze over kunnen vertellen. Ik ben ervan overtuigd geraakt dat Nederland een ontzettend mooi land is en dat we nog ontzettend mooie dingen met elkaar gaan bereiken'.

⁵¹ In Dutch these mothers are referred to as 'bijstandsmoeder'. The most common translation of this is 'welfare mother'. However, in English (at least in the United States) this word is interpreted in various ways. Although officially in the dictionary it is just as in the Netherlands a mother of dependent (young) children receiving government welfare benefits (dictionary.com, 2012), there is also a less flattering definition circulating, at least on the Internet. A welfare mom is also considered to be a woman who produces children just for the sake of living of welfare (urbandictionary.com, 2012). A much given example in this respect is 'Octomom', this is a mother of fourteen (among which an octuplets) who is now living on benefits after (allegedly) neglecting her children and spending enormous amounts on herself (nu.nl, May 1st 2012). Most of

now loses out on thirty-five Euros if she starts working four days a week. With our proposal [raising the employed person's tax credit, SvZ.] her position improves. That, thus, makes it more attractive get to work again' (Knevel en Van den Brink, May 18th 2010: 00:16:10 ff.).⁵² This appealed to logos as the Liberal Party's proposal to raise the tax credit could be considered a logical solution to the problem of losing income when starting to work after having received benefits. Simultaneously it appealed to a feeling of outrage. Why should someone who wants to start working again be punished for that? Other examples of where this connection between pathos and logos was made was, first, the situation of handicapped Monique, who really wanted to work but who could not do this because of bureaucracies gone bad (Congress speech, April 24th 2010: 00:07:55 ff.) and the case of developmental aid where half of it was spend to support the budget of governments while they did not collect taxes at all (Business Class, April 11th 2010: 00:36:40 ff.; Moraalridders, April 13th 2010: 00:17:48 ff.).

Considering ethos it is fair to state that Rutte was not afraid to highlight his personal qualities. In doing so he hardly made a distinction between himself and the Liberal Party. In making clear why he and the Liberal Party were well equipped to run the country Rutte usually referred to two characteristics. The first was that the Liberal Party had the knowledge and the experience to guide a country through a crisis. They had done it multiple times before so they could do it again: 'People feel a need for that, they also want the experience of a party such as the Liberal Party who can do that well' (Business Class, April 11th 2010: 00:36:11 ff.).⁵³ Secondly, he stated that he and the Liberal Party live up to the agreements made and have always taken responsibility: 'If I look at our track record: early eighties during the economic crisis the Liberal Party took responsibility. Early this century during the economic crisis we took our responsibility. Twice, in those difficult times, we have been able to almost fully execute our election program. I do not need the toughness of breaking points' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 13th 2010: 00:14:08 ff.).⁵⁴ Besides directly pointing to his qualities and the qualities of the Liberal Party, Rutte also referred to ethos when focusing on the flaws of other leaders and parties. In those he was implying that he and the Liberal Party did not have that flaw. An example was the quote mentioned in the description of the performance Business Class (April 11th 2010, 00:40:20 ff.; see chapter 4), where Rutte accused Cohen of not having any knowledge about the economy and that he did not write his own speeches. Not surprisingly, in the eyes of Rutte this contrasted with himself: 'Yes, I really make my speeches myself and, and I also think that the political leader of a party really, uh, fully has to be informed about the most important drives of economic growth' (Business Class, April 11th 2010: 00:40:44 ff.).⁵⁵ Furthermore, also Balkenende had to take the rap. Clearly he had not kept his promises before, so why believe him now (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:16:29 ff.; Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 01:01:23 ff.)?

these utterances are made by conservative Americans. Regardless of whether this second interpretation is widespread (as it is only found on the internet and mostly used by American conservatives), it should be clear that it is the first interpretation that is used in this thesis.

⁵² Original text: 'Een bijstandsmoeder nu gaat er 35 euro op achteruit als ze vier dagen in de week gaat werken. Met dat voorstel van ons gaat ze erop vooruit. Dat maakt het dus aantrekkelijk om aan de slag te gaan'.

⁵³ Original text: 'Mensen hebben daar behoefte aan, willen ook die ervaring van zo'n partij als de VVD die dat goed kan'.

⁵⁴ Original text: 'Als ik kijk naar ons track record, begin jaren '80 in de economische crisis heeft de VVD verantwoordelijkheid genomen. Begin deze eeuw in de economische crisis hebben wij verantwoordelijkheid genomen. Tot twee keer toe hebben wij die moeilijke tijden ons verkiezingsprogramma bijna volledig kunnen uitvoeren. Ik heb die stoerheid van breekpunten niet nodig.'

⁵⁵ Original text: 'Ja, mijn toespraken die maak ik echt zelf en, en ik vind ook dat de politieke voorman van een partij echt uh volledig op de hoogte moet zijn van de belangrijkste drivers van economische groei'.

As earlier discussed in the theoretical framework, some tropes are more appropriate than others to support statements through logos, ethos or pathos. All forms of exaggeration and repetition, like anaphora and antitheses, tend to fit with pathos. In his congress speech, in which the aim mostly was to get people enthusiastic about his vision, Rutte used for example the following repetitions (underlined) and an antithesis (in bold):

*'I am not going to promise that it all can happen without difficult measures, **and I am not going to promise that the solutions will all be simple.** But I am going to promise that it will be worthwhile because we know for whom we are doing it. We know for whom we are doing it, ladies and gentlemen, for the butcher, for the teacher, for the construction worker, for the carpenter, for the bicycle repairman. For all those hardworking Dutchmen and their children' (Congress speech, April 24th 2010: 00:17:49 ff.).⁵⁶*

In logos-like arguments Rutte commonly used hypophora and rhetorical questions.⁵⁷ Using again an example from his speech at the congress of the Liberal Party:

'And this is not that crazy if you realize that the income support in the Netherlands is just as high as twice the yearly income in Surinam, five times the yearly income in Iraq and no less than thirty-five times the yearly income in Somalia. Than doesn't it only make sense, ladies and gentlemen, that people come here?' (00:08:37 ff.).⁵⁸

Another interesting language device Rutte used is that in arguing pro or contra a certain statement based on logos, he simplified his language. Or rather: he was explaining what certain things were in order to strengthen his reasoning. In 'Paul Rosenmöller en ...' Rutte for example gave his definition of the European Stability and Growth Pact and of the employed income tax credit (in Dutch: arbeidskorting). The Stability and Growth Pact was 'the list of agreements we have made to keep the euro strong', and the employed income tax credit is 'the extra money you get if you start working, the discount on your taxes' (May 31st 2010: 00:05:47 ff. & 00:10:05 ff.).⁵⁹ Additionally, he also used analogies to make his point clearer, for example in the same show he stated that a good financial market cannot function without a market supervisor, just as the one you see on the weekly market in every Dutch town, who ensures that everybody is playing by the rules, is cleaning up their spot et cetera (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 31st 2010: 00:04:26 ff.).

Enumerations of achievements and personal experiences were mostly used by Rutte with ethos, as to prove that he and the Liberal Party were suitable for the job. This was also reflected in Rutte's use of language. In 'Knevel en Van den Brink' (May 18th 2010) he responded to Tijs Van den

⁵⁶ Original text: 'Ik ga niet beloven dat het allemaal kan zonder pijnlijke maatregelen, en ik ga ook niet beloven dat de oplossingen allemaal simpel zijn. Maar ik ga u wel beloven dat het de moeite waard zal zijn omdat wij weten voor wie wij het doen. We weten voor wie wij het doen, dames en heren, voor de slager, voor de leraar, voor de bouwvakker, voor de timmerman, voor de fietsenmaker. Voor al die hardwerkende Nederlanders en hun kinderen.'

⁵⁷ To refresh one's memory: anaphoras entail the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive sentences or clauses. Antitheses pose two contrasting ideas next to each other as to amplify their meaning. Posing a hypophora entails posing questions to which the speaker himself gives an answer. Rhetorical questions are relatively similar, but means posing a question to which the speaker does not expect an answer (Kuitenbrouwer, 2010).

⁵⁸ Original text: 'En zo gek is dat niet als je je realiseert dat een bijstandsuitkering in Nederland even hoog is als twee keer het jaarinkomen in Suriname, vijf keer het jaarinkomen in Irak en maar liefst 35 keer het jaarinkomen in Somalië. Dan is het toch logisch, dames en heren, dat mensen hier dan naar toe komen?'

⁵⁹ Original texts: 'dat is de lijst met afspraken die we gemaakt hebben om de euro sterk te houden' & 'dat geld wat je extra krijgt als je gaat werken, de korting op je belastingen'.

Brink who asked whether he was surprised about his position in the polls at the moment: 'Today, I had a party meeting and I said guys, we have fought incredibly hard for two years. We have said to the cabinet two years ago that bad weather was coming from America, prepare for that. That was ignored then. We have said in 2008 at Budget Day, you are presenting a party budget. Next, the economic crisis came' (00:19:34 ff.).⁶⁰ On who was to be the Liberal candidate for becoming prime minister, Rutte answered that 'we have good people in our midst. Hans Wiegel is mentioned, I could do it myself, others could do it' (Moraalridders, April 13th 2010: 00:13:40 ff.). In other words: the Liberal Party did not only have one suitable candidate, it had multiple potential prime ministers fit for the job.

Besides the tropes and language devices Rutte used more or less specifically for logos, ethos and pathos, also some general characteristics can be distinguished that Rutte applied throughout his performances. The first element is the way in which Rutte answered questions, especially the ones in which he did not agree with the analysis made by the questioner. Before going into justifications or explanations, he first gave a straight answer. On, for example, the suggestion made by host Van den Brink in 'Moraalridders' that the economic crisis originated at the right, Rutte answered: 'the crisis did not come from the right' (April 13th 2010: 00:15:41 ff.).⁶¹ Another example is his answer to the accusation of Mariëlle Tweebekke, host at the Carré debate, that Rutte had abandoned his ambitions for the environment. Rutte answered: 'I definitely have not abandoned my environmental ambitions. Contrary, our election program exudes the ideas of Green Right' (May 26th 2010: 00:21:04 ff.).⁶² Moreover, he had a tendency to use direct sentences, and thus does not hide his message behind subordinate clauses. Thus: 'what mainly happened at the banks was that there was a flaw in the bonus system' (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 31st 2010: 00:01:34 ff.)⁶³, instead of 'I have the feeling that what mainly happened at the banks was that there was a flaw in the bonus system'. In doing so, his main message became clearer because it was less diluted by additional words and phrases. A related aspect of his language use was that he hardly spoke indeterminately. Except when it was about sensitive issues or categories of citizens, like welfare recipients or asylum seekers, he referred nurses, policemen and bakers instead of people like nurses, people like policemen and people like bakers. By naming them directly citizens were addressed directly, and Rutte showed more clearly about whom he is talking. Additionally, Rutte repeated his message again and again, and even used the same examples to make it clear. The example of the welfare mom, for example, came back in almost all analyzed performances.

A final element that could be noted in the sphere of the dialogue was his attitude during the performances: Rutte took initiative. First of all he did not adapt himself completely to the question asked. Contrary, he first answered the question shortly, where after he started to elaborate on what it meant to him, what the actual problem was and what he and the Liberal Party intended to do about it. In 'Miljarden Gezocht' (May 13th 2010) the host asked what happened to the unemployed if the unemployment benefits are cut back to a maximum of one year. Rutte then first shortly answered that there were follow up benefits available if necessary, and then very quickly turns to his

⁶⁰ Original text: 'ik had vandaag fractievergadering en ik zei jongens, we hebben twee jaar vreselijk hard geknokt. We hebben twee jaar geleden gezegd tegen het kabinet er komt slecht weer aan uit Amerika, bereid je daar nou op voor. Dat is toen genegeerd. We hebben in 2008 gezegd bij Prinsjesdag, jullie komen met een feestbegroting. Vervolgens kwam de economische crisis'.

⁶¹ Original text: 'de crisis kwam niet van rechts'.

⁶² Original text: 'Ik heb de milieuambities zeker niet laten varen. Integendeel, ons verkiezingsprogramma ademt geheel dat gedachtegoed van groen rechts.'

⁶³ Original text: 'wat je vooral zag is dat bij de banken er een fout zat in het bonussysteem'.

main point: namely that people should get a job in the first six months of being unemployed. All questions that could be asked about what kind of follow up benefits, how that changes the income position of the unemployed and what that means in terms of additional guidance in getting a job et cetera, were no longer on the table with that answer. Secondly, taking initiative also took the shape of being interrupted and interrupting others. In terms of the first, Rutte did not let himself to be interrupted easily and if he was interrupted he often fought to get the floor back. In for example 'Moraalridders' (April 13th 2010: 00:15:20 ff.) one of the hosts, Tijs Van den Brink, did not even succeed in interrupting his guest Rutte, when he speaks about limiting the unemployment benefits to one year. Furthermore, it also happened regularly that Rutte as the one who interrupted others first. In Carlo & Irene (February 28th 2010: 00:07:39 ff.), the host Irene wondered what to do if she nationally preferred the Liberal Party, but in her municipality would rather vote for a local party. The other host, Carlo, also wanted to contribute something to that question and also starts talking already. However, he was not given a chance to do so because Rutte very quickly interrupted him to make his statement. One could argue that this attitude of taking initiative fitted well with his 'responsible society' frame, in which he was calling out to people to become active instead of passive and to really take action

Getting in touch with the public

As Rutte pictured himself to be a defender of ordinary, hardworking citizens, it was not that surprising that he made an effort to reduce the distance between him and citizens. Naturally, in television performances the majority of the audiences you wish to address were not physically present at the studio. In some cases, like 'Miljarden Gezocht' (May 13th 2010) and 'Paul Rosenmöller en...' (May 31st 2010) there even was no audience present in the studio at all. Still, through his performances it was possible to reduce the distance at least partially. Rutte did this in several ways.

First of all, in his speech at the Liberal Party congress (April 24th 2010) he explicitly turned to the audience at home, as he stated that he wanted to address the voter directly. Secondly, at times when an audience was present at the studio he occasionally also made direct contact with them. In the Prime ministers debate (May 23rd 2010), for example, he waved at people in the audience. Although this was not an actual conversation he at least lets them know that he had noticed their presence. Thirdly, he also reduced the distance between him and the public by using the words I, you, us, we et cetera. In a way using 'I' places you across of an audience and in that sense might increase the distance rather than decreasing it. However, combined with 'you', 'us' and 'we' he succeeded in creating the idea that the audience was involved, and that they were needed as much as he was for implementing his plans. As he put it during his performance on 'Knevel en Van den Brink' (May 18th 2010: 00:26:55 ff.): 'I love this country so dearly, so dearly. We can achieve so much together. We have one of the most beautiful countries in the world. But we really have to be willing to take a couple of difficult measures'.⁶⁴ Finally, Rutte also brought the public closer because he spoke in an inclusive manner. If talking about the Dutch citizens he referred to hard working citizens, which was likely to appeal to many citizens (who would consider themselves to be lazy?). Additionally, the inclusive way of speaking could also be found in the 'totum pro partes' he used. Regularly he spoke about 'The Netherlands' as a whole, while in fact he was only speaking about a part of it, like its citizens, its economy et cetera. However, by using the totum pro parte 'the

⁶⁴ Original text: 'Ik houd ziels, zielsveel van dit land. We kunnen ontzettend veel met elkaar voor elkaar boksen. Hebben een van de mooiste landen van de wereld. Maar we moeten echt bereid zijn een paar moeilijke maatregelen te nemen'.

Netherlands' there was no doubt about it that what he is talking about affected everybody. He stated for example that 'to make the Netherlands healthy, state finances should be set in order' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 13th 2010: 00:00:45 ff.) or that 'Balkenende had promised to the Netherlands that there would be no general amnesty' [for asylum seekers] (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:16:50 ff.).⁶⁵

Acting the job: Rutte's body language

The final element of scripting consists of Rutte's body language. As described in the theoretical framework someone's body language is composed of posture, facial expressions, gestures and use of voice. Starting with his posture, his basic position was relatively relaxed. At the performances in which he had to stand – mainly the two debates – he stood up straight with his hands loosely on the lectern. On the other hand, at the performances in which he sat down at a table – mainly the different analyzed talk shows – he did not have a straight basic posture. Rather he leaned forward, folded his hands and let them rest on the table. That this posture did not look cramped was mainly because his shoulders were not tensed: they were not pulled up, but remained loosely and relaxed. Even during his performance at the show 'Paul Rosenmöller en...' (May 31st 2010) in which he was attacked by the host Paul Rosenmöller and in which he was asked some difficult question in an almost rude manner, he outwardly remained unconcerned. Another way in which nervousness or tension could be determined is by looking at marks of excessive sweating. In Rutte's case, this could also not be found.

The message he was communicating via his posture was also supported by his facial expression. Although naturally his expression differed from time to time, he hardly looked defensive. Anger, sadness or other negative emotions were not expressions that could be seen on Rutte's face regularly. This could be established by looking at points of tension in his face, for example frowning or squeezing one's lips. His 'basic expression' was a friendly, slightly smiling expression. If something was funny, he is not afraid to laugh along with others out loud. If serious issues were discussed, Rutte had the tendency to raise his eyebrows. Not in the sense of not agreeing with what was being said but rather of careful listening.

Moving over to the element of gestures it is fair to state that Rutte used them quite often. Naturally, this in itself does not say much, as it matters mostly what kind of gestures were made. In any case they are no gestures of nervousness or impatience. He was not fidgeting or drumming with his fingers. Rather, his movements were mostly with his hands and some with his head to place emphasis. The gestures he made with his hands, furthermore, were often not only with his hands but with his entire arms and supported the message he was trying to communicate verbally. A clear example of this can be found in his performance at 'De Wereld Draait Door' (June 2nd 2010). They were talking about Wilders and whether Rutte should exclude him beforehand from being a possible coalition partner. Rutte refused to do so, because according to him that would place Wilders out of the discussion and would make contesting him on his viewpoints unnecessary. Then he moved over to highlight some differences between him and Wilders, among others on immigration: 'Look, we as well say that the border should be closed for opportunity-deprived immigrants. You cannot continue with that. But we do not put entire groups of people away' (De Wereld Draait Door, June 2nd 2010: 00:10:14 ff.). In the first two sentences he held his hands before him, slightly uplifted with his palms facing up. Next, when saying that he did not put entire groups of people away, he shifted both hands

⁶⁵ Original text: ' u, meneer Balkenende, had beloofd aan Nederland dat er geen generaal pardon zou komen'.

to his right and places them fingers down table, as if he was literally shoving them away. This gesture supported the message that this was what Wilders is doing, which was not something with which Rutte agreed. This kind of gestures could be observed in all of Rutte's performances.

Finally, his use of voice and the way he spoke was normally fluent, with hardly any stuttering. When he got unexpected questions this changed a bit, probably because he had to think more about his answer as it was not rehearsed beforehand. Although his speech was still relatively fluent, he did start to stutter a bit more. In this respect his stuttering was not word by word, but he usually repeated an entire phrase. Consequently, this gave more the impression that he was finalizing his thoughts and their formulation rather than feeling insecure about his answer. A final interesting element about Rutte's speech was his intonation. He spoke in a rather outspoken manner and clearly placed emphasis on certain words. Again using the previous example of the differences between Rutte and Wilders on immigration, the words that Rutte emphasized are underlined:

'Look, we as well say that the border should be closed for opportunity deprived immigrants. You cannot continue with that. But we do not put entire groups of people away' (De Wereld Draait Door, June 2nd 2010: 00:10:14 ff.).⁶⁶

By emphasizing these words Rutte was trying to highlight the key words of his message. Namely, that his viewpoints differed from Wilders' viewpoints with regard to the putting away of 'entire groups of people'. This made the main message he tried to convey clearer.

Integrating the findings on Rutte's friends and enemies, his construction of the dialogue, his relationship with his audience and his body language first of all revealed that Rutte made his ideas and vision very clear. By clearly establishing who his friends and enemies were Rutte could clarify his position, as this gave him the opportunity to also indicate what he did not want to happen in the Netherlands and why. In the dialogue itself it was especially interesting to note that Rutte tried to appeal to all elements and that he made innovative combinations of persuasion tools. Additionally because he included the audience in his performances, Rutte spoke to both the mind and the heart of citizens. This resulted in Rutte posing a highly compelling image that might have been difficult to ignore. Moreover, what he said gained strength because his message was underpinned by his body language: he did not convey an image of doubt, but rather of someone who knew what he was doing. Finally, a last important note relates to his attitude. In the analyzed performances Rutte was quite pro-active and took a lot of initiative in getting his story out, and as such also created opportunities to connect small ideas to the bigger picture. Now the findings on all elements of Rutte's performances are discussed, the question remains what it means for his credibility. This is discussed in the next paragraph.

5.1.4 Combining staging, framing, and scripting: Consequences for credibility

What do these findings on staging, framing and scripting mean for Rutte's credibility? How do they matter? Starting with staging, I found that he took matters in his own hands as much as he could. He dressed appropriately for the occasions, which mostly meant wearing a suit with tie. Perhaps the

⁶⁶ Original text: 'Kijk ook wij zeggen je moet de grens sluiten voor kansarme immigranten. Je kunt daar niet mee doorgaan. Maar wij zetten niet hele bevolkingsgroepen weg'.

contrast between colors in his clothing could have been a bit stronger to appear more authoritative, but in terms of credibility, this has probably not cost him much. What he did very well in terms of appearing competent and trustworthy was that he never had any notes with him, but that he apparently did everything by heart⁶⁷: he did not need any help with the facts and figures and it made him look a bit more spontaneous and authentic, especially in his speech.

In regard to framing, Rutte used one frame that was at the core of all his viewpoints. This frame can be considered the 'responsible society frame' and consisted of two basic values, freedom and responsibility. The consistency with which he applied this frame to his viewpoints as well as to his own leadership and the conduct of the Liberal Party can be considered beneficial to his credibility. However, crucial for credibility was also the degree to which this frame is accepted by others, the kind of critique he got and – perhaps most important – the way Rutte dealt with that critique. The most common uttered critique on Rutte related to themes like solidarity and not letting the weaker in society pay for the economic problems. How much responsibility did Rutte take if the weakest shoulders had to carry the heaviest burden? This critique, however, was not mainstream and never took the upper hand in the discussions. Rutte turned out to be very capable in countering the critique and imposing his interpretation on what was happening and necessary (reframing). Consequently, this leaves the impression that Rutte knows what he is talking about and that he is right. Trustworthiness was specifically addressed in Rutte's statements on leadership and the functioning of the Liberal Party. Not only did he emphasize that the Liberal Party had the necessary knowledge and experience, he also stressed again and again that the Liberal Party lived up to its agreements (which they had also shown in the past) and that they kept their promises.

In communicating a frame and countering other hostile frames, language is quite important. How a frame is received is influenced by how it is put into words. Through language Rutte could identify who his friends and enemies were, construct a dialogue, build a relationship with his audience and amplify his message through his body language. The way in which Rutte executed these elements of scripting during his performances, his message became more and more convincing. He was clear on who his enemies and friends were: his friends were all those who were willing to take action and to take the necessary measures. His main enemy was 'Left' in general and Cohen in particular. By clearly identifying friends and enemies Rutte created boundaries and made clear what he wanted to achieve. In his dialogue he used a mixture of pathos, ethos and logos in all his performances. Especially interesting was the way in which he at times combined elements of pathos and logos. Mostly he did this by giving very concrete, clear and everyday examples that were aimed at a 'how could it be!' reaction. In all performances he used different tropes that helped to get his message across to his audience. Even in performances in which Rutte had little opportunity to take the lead and had very little time to speak, he still managed to present his message in a coherent and appealing way. This was partially because he got to his main points almost immediately, after which the remaining speaking time could be used to elaborate on his statements. Moreover, putting his main points up front also helped to make his message clear. Furthermore, clarity and coherence were also served because Rutte repeated his main points again and again. For becoming more credible – convincing citizens that your answer is what they need – this was also necessary because the more a frame wears in, the more convincing it becomes (De Bruijn, 2011: 51). Additionally, Rutte included the audience in his speech, which had the effect that he was directly addressing them: citizens can also contribute to getting this country back on its feet again. Finally, his words got extra

⁶⁷ Indeed, he might have had an earpiece, but this is never visible to the viewer in the analyzed performances.

emphasis and clarity because of his body language. His gestures and intonation drew attention to specific parts of what he said and thus highlighted the important points. Combined, his posture, facial expression, gestures and voice confirmed that he had the knowledge and skills of a leader, as well as that he could be trusted.

Taking all the above into account, the analysis of his television performances shows that clues can be found in his performances for why Rutte gained credibility in the period leading up to the parliamentary elections of 2010. This is only one perspective, however. What can be learned from the reporting on Rutte in newspaper articles?

5.2 Constructing credibility: Newspaper articles

Besides television performances, also newspaper articles matter for how the credibility of Rutte was constructed because they are the second most used source of information for citizens to learn about politics. Additionally, in newspapers information on the performance of leaders is not plainly presented, but this information is also interpreted and put into context. In other words: newspapers occasionally also provide citizens with some directions on how to think about, in this case, political leaders. In this part of the chapter on Rutte's credibility several elements of the newspaper articles on him pass in review.

First attention is paid to the characteristics and background of the studied newspaper articles. Secondly, the way in which Rutte is described as a leader in the different newspapers is further discussed. In this respect four more or less separate phases can be distinguished in the period between February 18th and June 10th 2010. Thirdly, newspapers draw attention on the idea that besides the message and the performance of the leader, also the broader context in which he performs matters with regard to credibility. What this entailed in Rutte's case is further elaborated in that paragraph. Next, it is necessary to devote some attention to the type of articles in which the performances of Rutte and his suitability as prime minister were discussed. Usually in these articles the major debates were analyzed, and therefore a substantial amount of attention was paid to the debating techniques. The question is, however, to what extent being a good debater is the same as being a credible leader. Fifthly, newspapers do not only write hallelujah stories about Rutte but also write about things that he did not do very well. What are Rutte's most important pitfalls according to them? Finally, the last element that needs discussion is whether the various newspapers write differently about Rutte. Is there any difference and if so to what extent and in what way?

5.2.1 Providing some background: Characteristics of newspaper articles on Rutte

For studying Rutte's credibility a total of three different newspapers was studied: a quality newspaper ('de Volkskrant'), a tabloid newspaper ('de Telegraaf') and a free newspaper ('de Metro'). These three newspapers were selected because they cover the diversity in the types of newspapers available and in their category they had the largest amount of copies in circulation in the studied period (see chapter three).

In the period between February 18th and June 10th 2010 a little over 450 articles containing the word(s) 'Rutte' or 'Mark Rutte' were published in the three selected newspapers. After inspection a few articles turned out not to be on Rutte, party leader of the Liberal Party, but for example on a gin distillery with the same name. After deducting these articles a total of 448 articles on Rutte remained. Most of these were published by the quality newspaper 'de Volkskrant' (240). The other two newspapers, 'de Telegraaf' and 'de Metro', published respectively 139 and 69 articles. These articles were not spread out evenly across the approximately 3.5 months that were studied. Contrary, in general the closer to the elections, the more articles there were in which Rutte was mentioned (see figure 5.1).⁶⁸ Whereas, for example, 'de Volkskrant' wrote 3 articles about Rutte in week 7 (February 18th to February 21st), in week 21 (May 24th to May 30th) 51 articles referred to Rutte; a difference of 48 articles. The same trend can be seen in 'de Telegraaf' and 'de Metro', although the differences are not as large as in 'de Volkskrant'. 'De Telegraaf' and 'de Metro' published respectively 24 and 14 articles more in week 21, compared to week 7.

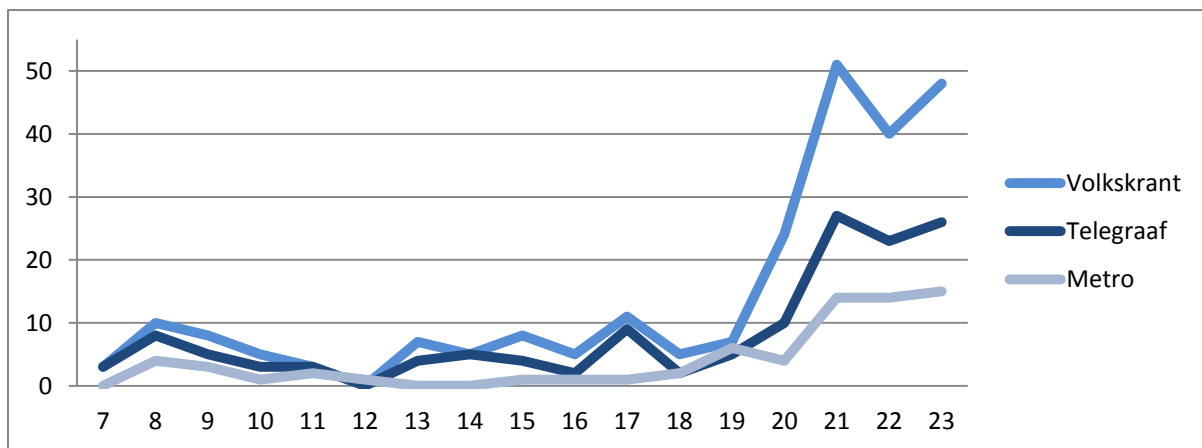


Figure 5.1: Rutte – Numbers of newspaper articles per week

Considering the topics discussed, the three newspapers also followed to a large extent the same line. In February and the beginning of March, most attention was paid to the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV and the upcoming municipal elections. Related to the first, most the articles in which Rutte is mentioned refer to a quote of him, in which he states that 'an election campaign is conducted at the expense of the soldiers in Uruzgan' (Volkskrant, February 19th 2010; Telegraaf, February 22nd 2010; Metro, February 22nd 2010), although each newspaper uses a slightly different wording.^{69,70} With regard to the municipal elections, these national newspapers did not report much about what was happening in the country and what topics mattered there, but they discussed the quality of the debate on the municipal elections between the leaders of the national departments of

⁶⁸ There is however, a remarkable drop in published articles in the week of May 31st to June 6th. This drop can be understood by taking a look at the week before. It is not that the week of May 31st to June 6th is that special as all different types of articles also come back in this week, but rather that in the week before the 'Volkskrant' and 'de Telegraaf' report multiple times on the debates held the weekend before and that week (the Prime Ministers debate of May 23rd and the Carré debate of May 26th). Additionally, the series interviews that were held with Rutte and published in 'de Volkskrant' in the week of May 24th and May 30th, explain the high number of articles in this newspaper.

⁶⁹ Original text: 'er wordt een verkiezingscampagne gevoerd over de ruggen van de soldaten in Uruzgan'.

⁷⁰ To be exact, the quote used in the main text is from 'de Volkskrant'. 'De Telegraaf' writes: 'Bos is guilty because he conducted a campaign at the expense of the military in Uruzgan' (or in Dutch: 'Bos is schuldig omdat hij over de rug van militairen in Uruzgan champagne voert'). 'De Metro' writes 'how low can you go to (Bos, Ed.) conduct a campaign at the expense of our military in Uruzgan' (or again in Dutch: 'Hoe diep kun je zinken om (Bos, ed.) campagne te voeren over de rug van onze militairen in Uruzgan').

the parties (which is a rather interesting, but totally different phenomenon) and they discuss what the results of these municipal elections mean for the position of the current national party leaders. The leader of the Socialist Party, Agnes Kant, decided to resign from her position after the disappointing results of her party in the municipal elections. 'De Volkskrant' stated in response that some endurance could have paid off in the end, as was also the case for Rutte: 'Rutte has known some heavy weather, but still managed to find his place in the rapidly changing electoral landscape' (March 6th 2010).⁷¹

From half March onwards, increasingly more was written about Rutte in his capacity as leader of the Liberal Party, instead of Rutte as a member of parliament. On March 12th 2010 Rutte was again chosen as leader of the Liberal Party for the upcoming elections. Until noon that day other contestants had the chance to candidate themselves, but nobody did so (Volkskrant, March 13th 2010b; Telegraaf, March 13th 2010a). Next, approximately until the end of March was speculated on the composition of the list of candidates. Who would leave politics and who would get what place on the list? Naturally, after this list had been composed in several articles this was also discussed: the highest new candidate on the list turned out to be Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, former member of the European Parliament (Telegraaf, March 31st 2010). Remarkable absentees were the veterans Letitia Griffith and Johan Remkes (Volkskrant, March 17th 2010; April 13th 2010). Other important dates in the period running up to the parliamentary elections for the Liberal Party were the presentation of the electoral program of the Liberal Party on April 9th (Telegraaf, April 10th 2010), the Liberal Party congress at which among others the electoral program was discussed on April 24th (Metro, April 26th 2010) and the start of the Liberal Party election campaign in Den Bosch on May 18th (Volkskrant, May 19th 2010a).

Looking at the types of articles written in which Rutte is mentioned it seemed that not all newspaper articles were the same, but that they differed on their contents, who wrote them and their format. Some articles dealt with the contents of the viewpoints and the election program that was brought forward by the Liberal Party. Attention was for example paid to the cutbacks Rutte wanted to make in the coming eight years and how he wished to realize them. Other articles contained reports on interviews that were held with several party leaders. In some of them Rutte was actually interviewed himself, in others it were other party leaders commenting on his plans or actions. In these interviews Rutte had the most opportunity to get his message out the way he wanted, and a lot of what he said in them could also be retraced to the analyzed television performances. He stated, for example, in reaction to Cohen that social is not only giving high benefits. 'Social is as well: for people who can work, to give them an outlook on getting a job. You keep them locked up in benefits. I consider that classic Social-Democratic policy' (Volkskrant, May 28th 2010).⁷² Rutte also uttered this critique for example in his speech at the Liberal Party congress (April 24th 2010). Thirdly, other articles in turn reported on the results of different polls and fourthly, in some articles the televised debates were analyzed. It is in these articles that most attention was paid to the performance of leaders: they deal with the question of who was debating well and why. The final type of articles provided background information and reflected in a way on the events. It is in these kinds of articles, for example, that

⁷¹ Original text: 'Rutte heeft zwaar weer gekend, maar in het snel veranderende kiezerslandschap alsnog zijn plaats gevonden'.

⁷² Original text: 'Sociaal is niet alleen een hoge uitkering, Job. Sociaal is ook: mensen die kunnen werken perspectief geven op een baan. Je houdt ze opgesloten in de uitkering. Dat vind ik klassiek PvdA-beleid'.

Rutte's career is discussed: from a leader who was hardly considered as such to the most likely next prime minister of the Netherlands.

Focusing on the author of the articles, more or less three different types of writers can be differentiated: journalists, citizens, and political leaders. Looking specifically at citizens, their reactions are often not formulated in a neutral way, but argue either strongly in favor or against Rutte. One citizen, for example stated: 'Does Mark Rutte have any vision? Only saying that the Labor Party is no good and flirting with the Christian Democratic Party does not demonstrate strength' (Metro, May 11th 2010).⁷³ Contrary, another citizen defended Rutte: 'Very obvious what the Left media are doing: pure rousing against Rutte/Liberal Party to damage them as much as possible' (Telegraaf, May 29th 2010).⁷⁴ Also in the case that political leaders wrote letters to the editor themselves or when they were interviewed, as can be expected their reactions are not neutral either but argue in favor of their position. The journalists, thirdly, did write in a more neutral manner as they mostly paid attention to all sides of the story, or at least they let experts judge about what happened.

Finally, looking at the format of the articles, again three different formats could be distinguished. The use of particular formats seemed to be in accordance with the author of the article. Most articles were articles written by journalists in a 'normal' article style in which several opinions and reflections on events were tied together. Other articles had the format of a letter to the editor. In this category mostly citizens were the author, but it occasionally also happened that a party leader used this means to get his message out. The third format was an interview format and was used to report on the interviews held with the party leaders.

5.2.2 Four periods: From outsider to the next most likely prime minister of the Netherlands

Considering the development of Rutte's credibility as the next prime minister of the Netherlands, four more or less separate phases could be distinguished in the way the newspapers Volkskrant, Telegraaf and Metro wrote about him.

Outsider

In the period shortly after the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV to the beginning of March, Rutte was hardly in the picture as a possible candidate for being the next prime minister of the Netherlands. On February 27th 2010 'de Volkskrant' reported that the citizens' judgment on Rutte had hardly changed compared to 2006. Although no exact numbers were mentioned he at least scored below 35 percent, as it was Pechtold – the most trusted leader in the opposition – who obtained that score. Four days later, the same newspaper gave an account of the debate between the national party leaders on the municipal elections. According to viewers Wilders had won this debate; Rutte was considered to be second to last. The journalist, however, noted that: 'That result looks more like a voting declaration than a judgment on debating skills. Wilders clearly had difficulties, but got one third of the votes, while Liberal Party leader Rutte, easily scoring points and making witticisms, was second to last with

⁷³ Original text: 'Heeft Mark Rutte wel visie? Enkel roepen dat de PvdA niet deugt en flirten met het CDA getuigt niet van eigen kracht'.

⁷⁴ Original text: 'Heel doorzichtig wat de linkse media doen: pure stemmingmakerij richting Rutte/VVD om hen maar zo veel mogelijk te beschadigen'.

only nine percent' (Volkskrant, March 2nd 2010).⁷⁵ Even when it turned out that the Liberal Party had won the municipal elections, this was not explained as a victory for Rutte. Rather, the Liberal Party only won because the Party for Freedom only took part in two municipalities (Metro, March 4th 2010).

Getting noticed

From the beginning of March onwards until the end of April, Rutte was increasingly seen as an interesting candidate who might even do well in the elections. Earlier it was already recognized by journalists that his debating skills had developed a lot and that he was performing well, however the public did not recognize this yet. This gradually started to change in this period. Whereas on March 8th Rutte scores a 4.9 on trust from the voters (Metro) and on March 19th only eighteen percent of the readers of 'de Telegraaf' would vote for Rutte, on March 29th he was considered to be the biggest competition for Cohen instead of Balkenende for becoming the next prime minister (Volkskrant). On April 3th 'de Volkskrant' even spoke about the resurrection of Rutte's leadership. They look back at the elections of 2006 in which he won 'a real beauty contest' from Rita Verdonk and was thought to have it all because he was 'young, refreshing and well-spoken'. However, at that time he was not able to live up to the expectations: he continuously had to fight against Verdonk to retain his position, people kept on nagging about his bachelorhood and a lot of his proposals were not supported. That Rutte had overcome this bad period was also reflected in the polls: both TNS-Nipo and Maurice de Hond 'reward Rutte and his Liberal Party with 25 seats – more than the Christian Democrats and the Party for Freedom' (Volkskrant, April 3th 2010).⁷⁶

Regardless of these complements, his leadership is not entirely undisputed at this point. A reader for example stated that 'Rutte was allowed to muddle through a little bit, but now the real leaders will take over' to solve the crisis' (Volkskrant, April 10th 2010). In 'de Telegraaf' a citizen referred to him as a 'screaming monkey' who was much less worthy of becoming prime minister than Cohen (April 8th 2010).⁷⁷ Furthermore, Heldring, a Dutch journalist and columnist, felt that he was laughing too much while politics is a serious business (Volkskrant, April 16th 2010). Moreover, perhaps Rutte himself was the most important factor for why his leadership was still questioned. The rise of the Liberal Party in the polls was accompanied with the question of whether Rutte wants to become prime minister. Rutte's answer to it was: If we would be the one to deliver the prime minister, I am the candidate or someone else (cf. his performance on Moraalridders April 13th 2010, but also Volkskrant, April 22nd 2010). His preference, however, was to stay in parliament. Remarkably, this idea was also taken up in polls on the ideal future leader in the beginning of May. Only taking into account people from the Liberal Party, Rutte did not obtain the highest score but he was preceded by Kroes and Opstelten. Additionally, if we look at the degree to which Rutte was trusted, we can see this score rise, but he was still not number one. Rather he was in third place behind Cohen and Pechtold (Metro, May 3rd 2010).

⁷⁵ Original text: 'Die uitslag leek echter meer op een stemverklaring dan op een beoordeling van debatvaardigheden. Wilders had het zichtbaar moeilijk maar kreeg een derde van de stemmen, terwijl VVD leider Rutte, soepel punten scorend en kwinkslagen makend, voorlaatste werd met slechts 9 procent'.

⁷⁶ Original text: 'beloont Rutte en zijn VVD met 25 zetels – groter dan het CDA en de PVV'.

⁷⁷ The term 'screaming monkey' is a literal translation of the word used in the original text. There the reader referred to Rutte as a 'schreeuwaap'.

Available as Prime minister candidate

The start of the third phase, at the end of April, was marked by a change of Rutte's attitude considering his ambition to become prime minister.⁷⁸ While in the previous period he explicitly stated that it would be desirable if party leaders stayed in parliament, he now stated that he wanted to become prime minister (Volkskrant, April 26th 2010). He made this statement at the Liberal Party congress. 'De Metro' (April 26th 2010) explained this statement as Rutte wanting to give an answer to the rumors that the Liberal Party might introduce another candidate for the premiership. 'De Telegraaf' recognized this as well, but they also reported that the matter was still not settled. According to them an anonymous source stated that 'if necessary a wildcard candidate [e.g. Kroes, SvZ] is possibly used in the last weeks before the elections of June 9th' (April 24th 2010).⁷⁹ Such a wildcard candidate as considered necessary by people within the Liberal Party because they felt that perhaps a more senior person was needed to counter Cohen. The difference in attitude compared to the previous period can thus mostly be seen in Rutte's own statements: instead that he is not the Liberal candidate for the premiership, it is now that he is the primary candidate unless the situation calls for a different leader. In for example the Prime Ministers debate he declared that only in the case that a complex coalition had to be formed, such as a cabinet with four parties or a minority cabinet, he preferred the party leader to remain in parliament. In either way, when looking at the polls on virtual allocation of seats and the degree to which Rutte was seen as a desirable candidate, he did not have to worry much. The Liberal Party was constantly rising in the polls: on April 27th the party had 32 seats, only one seat behind the Labor Party and two more than in the week before (Telegraaf, April 27th 2010). 'De Volkskrant', that mostly used polls conducted by TNS Nipo, put the Liberal Party on 31 seats on May 10th. Repeatedly, Rutte was declared the winner of the debates: 'he is the man to beat' (Volkskrant, May 22nd 2010c) and three days later a reader noted that 'Mark Rutte was well ahead of the incompetence of the others' (Volkskrant, May 25th 2010b).⁸⁰ This, however, did not mean that he was also considered the one most worthy for the premiership. In the polls, Rutte was in third place when people were asked about the most suitable prime minister, although it is recognized that he was gaining support whereas Cohen was losing that (Telegraaf, May 22th 2010).

Most likely Prime minister

The fourth and final stage with regard to the way in which the newspapers wrote about Mark Rutte ran approximately from the end of May until June 9th, the day of the elections. From this point on, also within the Liberal Party it was clear that Rutte was the candidate to become prime minister. Kroes publicly stated that 'the future of the Netherlands and the leadership of the country are in good hands with Mark' and that her 'return to the Netherlands is not necessary' (Telegraaf, May 26th 2010).⁸¹ Furthermore, in these ten days before the elections Rutte took over Cohen's position of most desirable prime minister. As the Volkskrant reported:

⁷⁸ Clearly, this overlaps a bit with the end of the previous period, as at May 3rd both Kroes and Opstelten defeated Rutte as the ideal leader. Still, the start of the next phase is set at the end of April because Rutte's attitude is clearly different than in the period before. Gradually, in the newspapers and in the polls Rutte's leadership is also taken more seriously. Naturally, no causality can be proven but it marks a significant change.

⁷⁹ Original text: 'Indien nodig wordt deze joker mogelijk in de laatste weken voor de verkiezingen van 9 juni ingezet'.

⁸⁰ Original text: 'Mark Rutte stak met kop en schouders boven het gestuntel uit'.

⁸¹ Original text: 'De toekomst van Nederland en het leiderschap van het land zijn bij Mark in goede handen' and 'Mijn terugkeer naar Nederland is niet nodig'.

'Also as a credible prime minister, Rutte has caught up incredibly. Regardless of the coalition that will be formed, Rutte may lead it according to the voter. Not only does he leave Labor Party Leader Cohen far behind him with a confidence score of 49 percent, also mastodons of the Liberal Party like Neelie Kroes and Ivo Opstelten have lost as possible prime ministers' (June 5th 2010).⁸²

In the newspapers the question was no longer whether Rutte would become prime minister, but rather what coalition he wanted to lead. Is the Labor party an option or would he opt for the Party for Freedom? Even though in the end the actual election results were quite close between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party (31 over 30 seats), the majority of Dutch voters (at least in polls) still felt that Rutte should become prime minister and not Cohen (Telegraaf, June 10th 2010c), which was quite a change compared to three months earlier.

5.2.3 Taking a newspaper perspective: Understanding the rise of Mark Rutte

Besides providing information about what happened in society and politics, newspapers also have the function of reflecting on what happened and provide a framework for how to understand certain events. In this respect, also articles were written that reflected upon the rise of Rutte as a possible candidate for becoming prime minister, as already partially discussed in the previous paragraph. What did he do well, why was he rising in the polls?

One of the reasons why Rutte was doing so well, according to journalists and some experts, was that he was just lucky that the economy became such a dominant theme. The economy was, as could also be seen in his television performances, one of the most important themes in the campaign of the Liberal Party. The message he continuously repeated was that the economy had to be cured and the state finances had to be put back in check. With the economy also becoming a dominant theme in the entire campaigning period, it became easier for Rutte to shine because he could constantly refer to his main message. Political scientist André Krouwel even stated in 'de Volkskrant' that if that newspaper did not write that much about the worsening state of the Dutch economy, but for example more on immigration, Rutte would not have won that much (May 19th 2010b). 'De Telegraaf' even linked the financial crisis to the comeback of Rutte as a potential leader. On June 10th, the day after the elections, they looked back at the development Rutte had made in the last couple of years and the last few months in particular. According to them, the turning point for Rutte came with the financial crisis. Rutte 'kept insisting that the Liberal Party had a strong economical track record' (Telegraaf, June 10th 2010b).⁸³ In other words: because of the attention to the economic crisis, Rutte got a perfect chance to convince citizens that he had the best answer for what had to be done. The question only is if this was the most important reason for why Rutte became more credible. As a reader of the Volkskrant also pointed out: 'Neoliberalism has caused the problems,

⁸² Ook als geloofwaardige premier heeft Rutte een enorme inhaalslag gemaakt. Welke coalitie het ook wordt, Rutte mag die van de kiezer leiden. Niet alleen laat hij nu met een vertrouwenscore van 49 procent PvdA-leider Job Cohen ver achter zich, ook VVD-mastodonten als Neelie Kroes en Ivo Opstelten hebben het nakijken als mogelijke premier.

⁸³ Original text: 'De omslag kwam met de financiële crisis. Rutte bleef hameren op het sterke economische visitekaartje van de VVD'.

why do all those people vote for a neoliberal party' (June 1st 2010)?⁸⁴ Additionally, even though the economy gained importance in the campaigns, Rutte still had to utilize the opportunities it provided. If he had performed badly there is ample reason to assume that he would not have gained 16 seats in the polls compared to their actual number of seats in parliament at that time. Therefore, one of the reasons why Rutte's credibility increased could also have been that the way in which he staged, framed and scripted his 'responsible society' idea turned out to be very successful. Even more strongly, in this respect he might have contributed to the salience of the economy as a theme during the elections. As stated earlier, Rutte's 'responsible society' frame became to dominate the discussions and as such raised the issue of the 'poor' state of the economy. Besides, why would Rutte per definition not play a role in a campaign in which, for example, immigration was a dominant theme? Naturally, in that case Wilders and Cohen would have started off on the best footing, but also in the studied campaign of Rutte elements can be found that he could have utilized. As was noted by a reader of the 'Telegraaf', 'Rutte has shown to be a decent alternative for Wilders' (June 8th 2010) with his stance on immigration. Furthermore, the underlying values in Rutte's campaign, freedom and responsibility, were also easily applied to immigration (as he also did). Nevertheless, the decline of the Dutch economy as an important theme in the parliamentary election campaigns of 2010 definitely did not harm Rutte's position, but rather provided him with a lot of opportunities that he would not have had that easily if another theme had become dominant.

Next to the dominance of the economy in the election campaigns, the newspapers also paid attention to Rutte's performance. In 'de Volkskrant' this was mostly done in the analyses of the several debates between party leaders. Remarkably, Rutte was considered the winner of all debates on which the winner was reported in the analyzed newspaper articles. Every time the articles discussed the debates a bit more elaborate than only reporting the winner, Rutte was complimented for his debating skills. Related to the Prime ministers debate 'de Volkskrant' referred to him as a 'clever, light footed debater with a youthful appearance' (May 25th 2010a), and considering the earlier Radio 1 debate they stated: 'A relaxed and merry Rutte countered the attacks with ease, he was able to score himself and also tried to corner Cohen on his period as mayor of Amsterdam' (Volkskrant, May 22nd 2010c).⁸⁵ Additionally, a citizen on the street noted in 'de Metro' that she thought Rutte was the best debater because he came across clear and honest (June 10th 2010). Furthermore, in 'de Metro' also some attention was specifically paid to the looks of Rutte, only this was done quite superficially. Two 'experts' noted that he had the appearance of a businessman who is not afraid. However, due to his thin lips and small eyes they say that he has a low cuddliness, which he can solve according to them by smiling a bit more (June 7th 2010). 'De Telegraaf' took a middle position, compared to 'de Metro' and 'de Volkskrant', regarding the question why Rutte did so well in the debates according to the viewers. In their eyes, Rutte reigned in the debates because of his economic knowledge and his sharp tongue (June 10th 2010a). Naturally, one could wonder whether being the best debater also means that one is the best prime minister. This is not a discussion to be taken up at this point, but it can be stated that the debates have an important function in informing people about a party's viewpoints and help citizens to get acquainted with the party leaders. Thus if party leaders do not perform well in a debate, they might not convince voters

⁸⁴ Original text: 'Het neoliberalisme heeft ons in de shit geholpen, waarom stemmen al die mensen dan op een neoliberale partij?'

⁸⁵ Original text: 'Een ontspannen en goedgehumeerde Rutte pareerde de aanvallen met gemak, wist zelf te scoren en trachtte ook Cohen in het nauw te brengen over diens periode als burgemeester van Amsterdam'.

of their plans for the future and might also lead citizens to doubt their capabilities. After all, a party leader is the prime representative of a political party.

The image painted of Rutte in the different newspapers was not only a hallelujah story. On several occasions also critique was uttered. In the case of letters to the editor written by for example party leaders of the Socialist Party of the Green Left party, this was not that surprising and considering Rutte's credibility they might not have done that much harm. Contrary, it would be odd if these people did not criticize him. They mostly attacked Rutte on content related issues, for example on his stance on cutbacks in health care and benefits. Besides this critique, however, journalists or other non-politicians also uttered some critique considering Rutte's performance. This critique mostly revolved around two related issues: Rutte's age and his occasional lack of seriousness. As already mentioned, Jerome Louis Heldring, a Dutch journalist and columnist felt that he was laughing too much while politics was a serious matter (Volkskrant, April 16th 2010).⁸⁶ Also considering other debates journalist of 'de Volkskrant' mentioned that the possible appearance of a lack of seriousness might be considered a pitfall for Rutte (May 25th 2010a). The critique on Rutte's age was somewhat related to this. The whole discussion on whether Rutte was actually the candidate for being prime minister on behalf of the Liberal Party was rooted in the idea that the junior Rutte could not compete with the more senior Cohen as the most desirable candidate. This could cost the Liberal Party votes. According to 'de Volkskrant' this was also the reason why Rutte is not depicted on the posters of the Liberal Party (contrary to all other major parties). Depicting the 'young and refreshing' Rutte could perhaps lead potential voters to doubt his leadership capabilities (May 18th 2010 & May 22nd 2010b). Interesting is though, that this critique on his performances never took the upper hand. Critique on his proposals, for example that he was a cold remediator, happened more often (mostly in letters to the editor) but these did not dominate the reporting on Rutte as well. Rather, full of wonder the newspapers described Rutte's miraculous comeback.

5.2.4 'Volkskrant', 'Telegraaf' and 'Metro': All alike?

The three different analyzed newspapers all were the leading newspapers (considering the number of copies) in their category: a quality newspaper, a tabloid newspaper and a free newspaper. The question is whether these newspapers all judged Rutte the same or whether they reported differently on him. What were the main differences between the newspaper articles in the three newspapers? Before moving on to these differences, first one note on the similarities. These were substantial, meaning that the basic analysis on Rutte, his leadership, his performances and all other aspects that were discussed in the three newspapers was the same or at least complementary. Thus, in all three newspapers the same development in how was written about Rutte could be recognized.

Considering the differences, the first obvious difference between the three newspapers was that the number of articles written in which Rutte was at least mentioned varied considerably. As noted in the introduction of this newspaper analysis, 'de Volkskrant' published 240 articles, 'de Telegraaf' contained 139 articles and in 'de Metro' 69 articles were included on Rutte. Secondly, if 'de Metro' is compared to 'de Volkskrant' and 'de Telegraaf', it can be noted that the articles in 'de

⁸⁶ It must be noted though that the issue of whether Rutte was laughing too much or not is not undisputed. As Jack de Vries, former campaign strategist for the Christian Democratic party stated: 'in a television debate eighty percent of communication is the image not the content' (or in Dutch: 'in een TV-debat is tachtig procent van de communicatie het beeld en niet de inhoud'). Following this notion, he considered Rutte doing a good job because he laughed (Volkskrant, May 27th 2010a).

Metro' were relatively short. Whereas the articles in which Rutte was mentioned in 'de Volkskrant' and 'de Telegraaf' contain on average respectively 592 and 537 words, the articles in 'de Metro' contained on average only 312 words. Consequently, it is not that surprising that the articles in 'de Metro' were mostly on news facts, which was also hardly elaborated on. It was for example mentioned that Cohen did not rise above the debating violence of Balkenende and Rutte. However, why this was the case and what happened in more detail was not mentioned. Furthermore, more than 'de Volkskrant' and 'de Telegraaf', 'de Metro' contained the opinions of people on the street. These opinions were mostly formulated in one or two sentences. Thirdly, when comparing the quality newspaper, 'de Volkskrant', with the tabloid and free newspaper one major difference comes to the fore. Whereas all three reported on the same events, in 'de Volkskrant' this was accompanied with articles in which was reflected upon those events. It was for example 'de Volkskrant' that paid most attention to the possible pitfalls of Rutte and it provided the most elaborate analysis of the debates. It, however, did not seem that, as clichés might expect, 'de Volkskrant' reported in a more nuanced or neutral manner with respect to Rutte than 'de Telegraaf' and 'de Metro' did. They all used conflict and horse-race like frames.⁸⁷ What was different between 'de Volkskrant' and 'de Telegraaf' was that the latter had written more on the results of different polls than the first.

Still, although there were a few differences between the newspapers in their reporting on Rutte, it is clear that the general line of reasoning was the same. They all more or less write in the same way about him over time, which suggests that there was a certain agreement on the rise of Rutte as a potential and credible leader.

5.2.5 Rutte's credibility in newspaper articles

What does the above mean considering Rutte's credibility? What can be learned from the way in which newspapers write on Rutte that helps to answer the question why Rutte became more credible during the parliamentary election campaign? In part the newspapers only follow what happens in the world. As can be derived from the four phases in how they had written about Rutte, the newspapers in a way also gradually 'discovered' that Rutte's star was rising. Whereas shortly after the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV Rutte was not even polled as possible candidate for being prime minister, shortly before the elections the polls showed that Rutte had even got past Cohen.

Going back to the trait approach to credibility, two essential characteristics are trustworthiness and competency. In this regard the newspapers point to several interesting things. For being credible, it is first of all important that leaders tell a coherent and consistent story. In Rutte's case this prerequisite was well covered. In the interviews that Rutte gave to the different newspapers he told a coherent story about his plans for the future of the Netherlands. Moreover, the story published in the newspapers was to a large extent the same as the story covered in the television performances. This means that not only did citizens hear the same points repeated again, which is necessary for them to stick (see theoretical framework on framing), but that Rutte also build a credible image because he did not change his story all the time. Furthermore, the consistency of his story goes back further than only the election campaigns. As was stated in, for example 'de Telegraaf', Rutte was already building this reputation for two years now (February 20th 2010).

⁸⁷ In a conflict frame emphasis is put on the fights, the differences of interpretation, and their clash between individuals, groups, institutions or countries (Groen & Van der Zwan, 2005: 95). A horse race frame is related to this, but is focused on who is winning and who is losing, During election campaigns such a frame is mostly used in respect to polls and evaluations of who did better et cetera (Van Praag & Brants, 2005: 69).

Constantly the basics were: the state finances have to become healthy again, we have to take responsibility and we need to give people who want to make something of their lives the opportunity to do so.

The reports on the televised debates, secondly, also helped to build Rutte's credible image because in these reports he was portrayed as competent and trustworthy. Repeatedly, citizens declared him the winner of the debates, but the journalists also supported this conclusion as they mentioned over and over again that Rutte performed convincingly. It was stated that he was very capable in defending himself and that he was also able to score himself. Especially Rutte's statement that he could not promise that no one would feel something of the necessary measures was appreciated. On the one hand it cut off the possible critique of the opponents and on the other hand it made Rutte look honest. Moreover, that the newspapers considered him very capable and skilled compared to the other leaders in debates also made him seem more credible. Although debate skills do not paint the whole picture, it might be a basic skill to expect from the next prime minister, as he will constantly have to defend his position. Not only in the Netherlands, but abroad as well. Besides this competency in debating skills Rutte was also praised for his economic knowledge, which was also considered important, as the economy is the basis for a nation's welfare.

Besides these positive points regarding Rutte's credibility, the newspapers also point to some pitfalls. Luckily for Rutte, these pitfalls did not become real mistakes according to majority of the voters. A few times it was mentioned, for example, that Rutte sometimes lacked seriousness, while politics was a serious deal. Furthermore, some considered Rutte's age a disadvantage. Thinking at credibility, it was expected that more experience meant more competency and wisdom. A more senior candidate would thus be better than a more junior one. In the end, Rutte proved this suggestion wrong, but in the period before he started to lead the polls there was a lot of discussion within the Liberal Party. As understandable as this may be, it was suggested occasionally in the newspapers that the rumors about this discussion might have done more wrong than right because it implicitly meant that the party apparently thought that Rutte was not good enough.

Finally, the newspapers also pointed to an interesting explanation for why Rutte and the liberal Party did so well in the elections. It was stated multiple times, for example by political scientists like Andre Krouwel, that it was beneficial to Rutte that the economy became the dominant theme. This provided him with a lot of opportunity to shine as his main storyline was perfectly cut out for that. Naturally, even though he was given a lot of opportunities it was still up to Rutte to seize them. Due to the characteristics described earlier like a good economic knowledge, a coherent story and a good debater, Rutte was able to get the upper hand and his credibility rose.

5.3 Credible leadership: The verdict on Mark Rutte

Why did Rutte gain credibility in the period between the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV and the parliamentary elections of 2010? This is the central question that needs answering in this chapter. In short the answer reads that Rutte became more credible because the entire picture of his performances fitted. Not only there was coherence within and between his performances, but his performances also matched with the broader context and the desired traits for credibility (competency and trustworthiness).

Starting with the match between broader context and the performances of Rutte, the match was present based on contents. Meaning: in his speech Rutte continuously insisted that the state was overspending (not that too little taxes were collected), that the budget deficit had to be reduced

and that simultaneously the country had to get back on track by also making the necessary investments. Such a message fitted neatly in an economical climate that was not at its best. Because of the developments within the economy and peoples' worries Rutte got a lot of opportunities to get his message out. This was beneficial because it suggested that Rutte had a clear and appropriate solution ready. Furthermore, as Hans de Bruijn (2011) and Lakoff (2004) put it: it is all about repetition. The more often a message is repeated, the greater the chance that it will stick.

In the performances and newspaper articles several reasons for why Rutte was considered credible were suggested. In the three newspapers Rutte was praised for his economic knowledge, his sharp tongue and his skills as a debater. For a country in economic difficulties, a leader with knowledge about the economy might be considered essential. Additionally, besides content related knowledge, leaders also need to have certain skills. It was suggested that one of these necessary skills are debating skills. Repeatedly, Rutte was declared the winner of the debates. According to the newspapers this was because Rutte countered the attacks on him with ease and he scored points himself. That Rutte 'really' had no difficulties and knew what he was saying can also be derived from the often-used adjectives when describing Rutte: he is relaxed and cheerful.

These findings in the newspapers were also confirmed in the dramaturgical analysis. His knowledge was suggested to be convincing as he always had his answer ready without his opponents having a clear counter argument against it (at least not often). Furthermore, he got to his point straightaway instead of beating around the bush, and to explain the 'difficult' things he simplified language by using very concrete examples. This made Rutte's viewpoints very clear and gave the impression that he knew what he was talking about. He also connected with citizens as he included them in his speech. This might help his competency reputation as it suggested that Rutte knew what citizens go through, he acknowledged that they were there and that they should be taken serious. Additionally, Rutte was not afraid to refer to his own experience when necessary. In explaining why he, for example, wanted to combine severe cutbacks with investments he referred to his experience in the corporate sector at Unilever, where he had managed several reorganizations. In other words: he had the experience and knowledge on how such reorganizations work and how they should be structured to not only bail out an organization temporarily, but also how to create space for innovation and growth. Moreover, because Rutte took initiative in the debates, his debating skills came to the fore. Instead of having to defend himself and being at the mercy of others, he was the one taking charge. Finally, Rutte was also able to show off his knowledge and skills because he had a clear enemy to fight against. By also showing why he considered the plans of 'the Left' to be wrong, normatively as well as rationally, he could reinforce his own position: not only did he have good points, they were also way better than those of 'Left'.

The analysis of the newspaper articles and the television performances also gave some other interesting indications that suggest why citizens would consider Rutte to be credible. First of all, what both the newspapers and the dramaturgical analysis showed was that Rutte's story during the election campaigns was very coherent and consistent. The newspapers even indicated that this went back to well before the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV. The analysis of the television performances showed that this coherence and consistency could primarily be understood as stemming from the two values that underpinned all his viewpoints. As he constantly emphasized freedom as well as responsibility, he was able to tie together his proposals on different policy domains and themes. Sometimes Rutte explicitly addressed credibility by stating that the Liberal Party has always kept its promises, which he exemplified with instances in history where the Liberal Party had actually done so. Simultaneously, he criticized the credibility of others: Balkenende had never made it to the finish

line and Cohen was adjusting his program over and over again because he, according to Rutte, wanted to get into the cabinet at all costs. Furthermore, this consistency in his story was also amplified by all the repetition: he repeated the same arguments and viewpoints over and over again.

Interesting moreover, was that Rutte did not use notes at any point, not even during his speech at the party conference. Besides that this might show skills and knowledge, it also instilled confidence because it gave the idea that Rutte really meant it. He did not need any notes to keep him on the right track, but he was just telling the truth. Naturally, Rutte had probably learned everything by heart and had invested a lot of preparation time, but considering how it looked it gave an authentic feel to his performances. Additionally, within the performances Rutte was also quite consistent. His body language matched his verbal message. This was important considering credibility as otherwise citizens might get the impression that either he was not sure of his case himself or that he was actually lying. In Rutte's case his credibility was also helped by his body language as his certainty that, for example, the state finances had to be put back in check was accompanied with confident, relaxed and non-nervous non-verbal behavior.

Also the other way around some interesting findings emerged from the newspaper article analysis. The most important pitfalls for Rutte that were mentioned were his age and what could be considered a lack of seriousness. However, as could be derived from the polls this did not seem to matter for his credibility. Other, older and perhaps more 'serious' candidates, like for example Cohen, were not considered more credible than Rutte. This suggests that, although seniority does not play against someone's credibility, it also does not necessarily improve it. Furthermore, that the lack of seriousness did not play a role can also be understood as originating in Rutte's performances. In the analyzed television performances Rutte was, on the whole, relatively serious. Only when the occasion allowed for it he used some humor. This might even made him more credible because he went along with the situation instead of artificially upholding his serious look. That he dared to use humor and to lighten up a bit, furthermore, can also be seen as a sign that he was at ease with the situation and that he apparently felt in control.

Finally, the final question in understanding why Rutte's credibility raised during the election campaign is why Rutte was not that credible as the next prime minister at the beginning of the studied period. Did he do anything different later on? This did not seem to be the case. Rutte's performances in the entire period were relatively consistent. In the later stages his performances were a bit more fine-tuned, but they were not remarkably different than before. So why was he not considered credible as the next prime minister, while later on he was? An answer to this question can be found in the saying 'a good name is sooner lost than won'. Credibility as a possible next prime minister does not emerge overnight; rather it has to be shown repeatedly in different performances, if only to show the audience that he really was competent and trustworthy. In other words, to attain credibility one's reputation has to be carefully built and the performances have to show consistency. After the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV a new period emerged in which Rutte got intensively into contact with citizens. Through the performances they discovered that Rutte was competent and with the passing of time he convinced increasingly more citizens that he was not a one-day fly, but a serious candidate.

Chapter 6

Credibility: the case of Job Cohen

Right after Cohen made himself available for the position of party leader of the Labor Party, citizens considered him highly credible. On instant, he became the most desirable future prime minister in the different polls (De Hond, March 19th 2010). However, during the election campaigns this gradually started to change. Cohen seemed to lose some of his credibility as a good candidate to lead the Netherlands after the elections. What did Cohen do that contributed to less Dutch citizens being persuaded to attribute credibility to him? This question is in this chapter again answered in two parts. As is previously mentioned in chapter 2 and 5, the credibility of a political leader is constructed in several ways. Meaning: one way in which citizens determine the credibility of political leaders is on the basis of their performances on television. Additionally, besides these television performances, newspapers also still constitute a major source of information about politics for citizens (see chapter 3). In this chapter first the television performances as part of the credibility construct are studied, paying attention to the way in which Cohen performed on the elements of staging, framing and scripting. Next, the attention shifts to the construction of credibility in newspaper articles. To conclude, findings of the television performances and the newspaper articles are integrated.

6.1 Constructing credibility: television performances

In chapter 4, it was stated that eleven television performances of Cohen were analyzed and there they were also described to a certain extent. Each of these television performances was analyzed on the basis of staging, framing and scripting. The findings of this analysis can be found below.

6.1.1 Staging

In analyzing the element of staging, three aspects need attention: the design of the stage, the props and the personal appearance of Job Cohen. The eleven performances can be attributed to three different types of performances. The first type of performance analyzed of Cohen was his candidacy speech on March 12th, in which he announced his candidacy as party leader of the Labor Party. This speech can be considered Cohen's first performance as a national politician and, as mentioned earlier, it took place at the party bureau of the Labor Party. During this performance Cohen was at the center of attention and the main actor on stage. He was the one who determined the course of this performance, not only considering what he said, but also how it proceeded. He, for example, decided on which journalist could ask questions at what point. In terms of taking charge, this type of performance gave Cohen many possibilities, which he also used to his advantage as discussed in the later elements of framing and scripting.

The talk shows, the second type of stage, provided Cohen with much less opportunities to take control. It were the hosts who determined the rhythm of the show; they asked the questions and were in control of whether the answers of Cohen sufficed. On some of the shows, besides the hosts also other guests were present who could ask questions. This increased the chances of unpredicted questions, and made it more difficult for Cohen to take control. The number of people present who could ask Cohen questions was not per definition a disadvantage. This also depended on the willingness of the hosts and guests to go along with what Cohen states. However, in Cohen's case it can be seen in the talk shows that he was hardly able to take control (or perhaps that he even does not try to do so). When asked questions, Cohen merely answered them without making his own story of it. At Pauw & Witteman (March 12th 2010), for example, Witteman asked whether Cohen does not get a little crazy about the tea story.⁸⁸ Cohen only answered: 'well, we, we, we will probably hear that a lot',⁸⁹ instead of using this opening to get his message out.

The debates, the final type of stage, took a middle position between the speech and the talk shows in terms of possibilities to take control. Cohen had to comply with the rules of the debate and was to a certain extent confined to the themes of the several rounds. However, in each debate Cohen had the possibility to speak for a certain number of seconds before each round, without others interrupting him and although what he said had to be on the topic of that round, he was free to use that time as he wanted. Furthermore, at the end of, for example, the Prime Ministers debate Cohen had the opportunity to make a closing statement in which he could say whatever he wanted, with no limitations on topic. Compared to the talk shows, this uninterrupted time to speak is an advantage in terms of taking control and the possibilities to get his message out clearly. Naturally, other politicians present at the debates can also ask harsh questions, but these did not constitute the entire performance. Therefore, as Cohen also did not seize many opportunities to take control, he mostly relied on his uninterrupted opening and closing statements to make his point.

The possibilities of taking control were also related to the props that Cohen used or could use during the analyzed performances. Again, the candidacy speech (March 12th 2010) provided most opportunities and Cohen made ample use of these. As this speech was held at the Party bureau of

⁸⁸ In the integration debate, Cohen's opponents often blame him for cuddling immigrants and only drinking tea with them (especially Wilders utters this critique). Paul Witteman shortens this line of critique to the whole tea-drinking story.

⁸⁹ Original text: 'Nou ja, we, we, we zullen het nog wel vaak horen'.

the Labor Party it is not surprising that many Labor Party symbols were present. Behind Cohen, big red screens were erected with the Labor Party logo on it. Additionally, this same logo was also put on his lectern. The lectern from behind which Cohen gave his speech was made of wood and designed in such a way that Cohen could keep his notes relatively unseen. Also if he was filmed from the side, it was not possible to spot them. Indications that Cohen did in fact use notes are for one that he was wearing reading glasses while giving his speech and secondly that the viewers could see him turn the pages. In the other performances, both the talk shows and the debates, it was not possible for him to use these kinds of props. Mostly, he had only the opportunity to take a sip of water at a strategic moment. Notes were mostly out of the question: on the desks during the talk shows they could be easily spotted and for example during the Prime Ministers debate the lecterns were made of see-through Plexiglas. The Carré debate was an exception, as Balkenende proved that was possible to keep a couple of pages in front of him without it being noticed. The viewer could not see whether Cohen had any there, but it can thus also not be completely ruled out.

Finally, the last aspect within the element of staging is Cohen's appearance. In terms of taking control, this was the element within staging in which he had the most opportunities to do so in all performances. Cohen's appearance consists of his more permanent facial and bodily features and his more flexible hairdo and wardrobe. Even though Cohen could not do much about his facial features, one could still argue that his appearance was favorable to an image of a credible future prime minister. Cohen is relatively tall and grand. Additionally, because of his age that also shows in his facial features and appearance, for example in his grey hair, Cohen might have conveyed an image of a wise and noble man who has gained the necessary knowledge through experience. Looking at his hairdo, there was not much variation possible there because Cohen's hair was cut very short. Also considering his clothing it was not possible to reach any other conclusion than that Cohen was consistent. At each of the eleven analyzed performances, Cohen wore the exact same combination. Every time he wore a dark suit. These were mostly black, but at the performances of June 4th on 'De Wereld Draait Door' and 'Knevel en Van den Brink' he wore a dark grey suit. This dark suit was always accompanied with a white shirt, although depending on the lighting in the studio it at times could look like pale blue. Finally, at each analyzed performance Cohen wore a red tie. The color was the same at all times, but compared along the eleven performances, it was possible to distinguish between three different ties: one plain and two patterned ones. These variations were relatively limited and as such his appearance was consistent. Related to the type of performances, Cohen's attire was in all cases suitable. The analyzed performances of Cohen were all quite serious, with a relatively low entertainment factor (as was the case for Rutte at Carlo & Irene). Therefore, a fairly formal outfit was called for.

As described in chapter 2, the clothing one wears influences his image. Considering authority, highly contrasting colors in clothing results in higher authority attributions (as is shown in several experiments, see chapter 2). The exact combination of Cohen, furthermore, was a classic one in this respect and was referred to as the most authoritative and formal one as the color contrasts were quite strong. Additionally, men wearing this combination of a dark suit, a white shirt and a red tie, are also considered to be the most trustworthy and decisive leaders (Eisenstein, 2008: 82; De Wit, 2008: 25). As a leader aspiring to be the next prime minister of the Netherlands, this is exactly the kind of image one would want to achieve. Moreover, the red color of Cohen's tie naturally also had a symbolic meaning, as this color is traditionally associated with the left of the political spectrum, including the Labor Party (for example also in their logo).

Overall, Cohen took control whenever he could in his performances of the design of the stage, including the props and his appearance. His candidacy speech provided most opportunities in this respect, while taking control was only limitedly possible in the debates and talk shows. The exception was his clothing, which was the one thing he could control in all performances. Here, Cohen was very consistent. In all analyzed performances he wore a dark suit, light shirt and a red tie. Combined with his senior appearance, this might have conveyed a very authoritative image of a leader who had the necessary wisdom.

6.1.2 Framing

Going back to what framing entails, it was earlier (in chapter 2) described as a ‘quality of communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another’ (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 40). Furthermore, Lakoff points out that frames are ‘the mental structures that shape the way in which we see the world’ (2004: XV). In the analyzed performances of Cohen, it was possible to distinguish one major frame that underpinned the viewpoints Cohen uttered. This frame can be described as the ‘decent society’ frame, and is introduced in Cohen’s first performance as a national politician:

‘In 2005 the Labor Party choose a new manifest of principles, in which the right to a decent existence for all, and full participation of all in society is central. (...) The Netherlands has a tough time lying ahead in which measures have to taken that have the potential to split society. Whether it is about measures that will follow from the reconsiderations, or whether it is about the adjustment to the higher life expectancy or whether it is about the necessary sustaining of our economic structure. The great political outlay is not whether changes are necessary, but how you do that in such a way that everybody can participate in them. That you do not get a country of losers and winners. That not the one half of the Netherlands wants to move forward optimistically and believing in the future, and the other half of the Netherlands wonders concerned and inwardly how to proceed. That is a big assignment, but it makes our economy stronger and our country simply a lot nicer to live in’ (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010: 00:05:31 ff.).⁹⁰

Solidarity and equality can be considered the values that underlie this ‘decent society’ frame. People are not considered to be isolated and detached individuals, but they are part of a society in which everyone is connected. In such a society people look out for each other and the ones with the most vulnerable position should be taken care of. Not enabling people to participate in society and social life is, in this respect, the same as letting them down. Or as Cohen stated in his performance on ‘Paul

⁹⁰ Original text: ‘De Partij van de Arbeid koos in 2005 voor een nieuw beginsel manifest, waarin het recht op een fatsoenlijk bestaan voor iedereen, en volwaardige deelname van iedereen aan de samenleving centraal staat. (...). Nederland gaat zware tijden tegemoet waarin veel maatregelen genomen zullen moeten worden die potentieel splijtend in de samenleving werken. Of het nu gaat om maatregelen die straks uit de heroverwegingen zullen volgen, of het nu gaat om aanpassing aan de stijgende levensverwachting of dat het nu gaat om de noodzakelijke verduurzaming van onze economische structuur. De grote politieke uitgave is dan ook niet of er veranderingen plaats moeten vinden, maar hoe je dat doet op een manier dat iedereen dat kan meemaken. Dat je geen land van verliezers en winnaars krijgt. Dat niet de ene helft van Nederland optimistisch en in de toekomst gelovend vooruit wil en de andere helft van Nederland bezorgd en naar binnen gekeerd zich afvraagt hoe het verder moet. Dat is een grote opdracht, maar het maakt onze economie sterker en ons land ook domweg een stuk prettiger om in te leven’.

Rosenmöller en...': 'Everyone counts. And that means that you want to have a society in which you also have to do your very best and (...) that you try to do justice to citizen's capabilities' (May 27th 2010: 00:05:15 ff.).⁹¹ Why this is necessary, hardly came back in any of Cohen's performances, but he did mention it once in his candidacy speech. There he stated that it was necessary to get our country back on track: Cohen mentioned that he had seen what society was capable of if 'we together' put our minds to it, which was according to him the only way to get forward.

These underlying values of solidarity and equality between people in society, also have consequences for the role government should play. This point is most clearly brought forward in his candidacy speech but was also reflected in Cohen's critique on Wilders, who according to him 'rubbed' against the boundaries of the rule of law (Rechtsstaat, De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th 2010: 00:04:48 ff.). The basic task of the state was to set the boundaries for societal life. However, within these boundaries, it is up to the state to make much possible: or better said, to enable people to develop their talents. Additionally, according to Cohen the principles on which the boundaries set by the state should be based are freedom of speech and freedom of religion, thus making 'no distinction between opinions and religions'.⁹² Finally, in this respect the government should not be considered the enemy of citizens, as was sometimes the underlying thought for privatizing public services, but rather, if it was up to Cohen, 'we' should work to achieve a state that is *of* the people (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010: 00:12:00 ff.).

Retracing values into proposals and views

Many of the different viewpoints of Cohen and the Labour Party could be retraced to the 'decent society' frame and its underlying values. Cohen's approach to safety is one example of this. The way he spoke about safety was quite different from the other parties. Especially the Liberal Party and the Party for Freedom considered safety to be more about more severe punishments et cetera. Cohen, contrary, did not equate safety to crime only and definitely not to immigration. Rather, he emphasized that safety was connected to a sense of feeling at home. To improve safety, not necessarily a more law and order approach was necessary but to promote it people need to be given chances and need to be involved in society. These chances include among others education. Repression and prevention had to be combined to reach the most desired results (Candidacy Speech, March 12th 2012: 00:09:39 ff.).

A second example of a viewpoint of Cohen that can be understood from his 'decent society' frame can be found in the necessary cutbacks, one of the most important themes during the elections. Cohen emphasized again and again that we should not be reckless in our approach to these cutbacks, but rather that we should do it in a 'sensible' way (NOVA, April 26th 2010; Miljarden Gezocht, May 20th 2010; Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010). In the Prime Ministers debate he stated that 'a reckless way is by, in this period, while the economy is only growing sparsely, if it is growing at all, by cutting back enormously' (May 23rd 2010: 00:30:35 ff.).⁹³ In other words: Cohen considered the current state of the economy to be very fragile. In his eyes, making those severe cutbacks would lead to more unemployed citizens. Sensible, contrary, was to implement some fundamental measures that, in time, would balance the budget again. It is in this increased

⁹¹ Original text: 'Iedereen telt mee. En dat betekent dat je een samenleving wilt hebben waar je ook echt je uiterste best moet doen en (...)dat je al die mensen wil proberen tot hun recht te laten komen'.

⁹² Original text: 'geen onderscheid maakt tussen meningen en godsdiensten'.

⁹³ Original text: 'En een roekeloze is manier is door, in deze periode, terwijl de economie maar mondjesmaat groeit, als die al groeit, door daar enorm op te bezuinigen'.

unemployment that this connects to the 'decent society'. At the core of the 'decent society' frame lies the value of solidarity. The meaning of this value should not be taken narrowly, but should also be interpreted to include involving all citizens to participate as much in society as possible. Unemployment is not desirable in this respect as it impedes the opportunities of people to 'join in and participate' fully.

Politically, some choices of Cohen can also be understood from the 'decent society' frame. In the show of Pauw & Witteman of May 5th Paul Witteman, for example, asked Cohen whether he felt Jan Peter Balkenende was a suitable prime minister. Cohen refused to answer this question and he stated that he wanted to discuss on contents instead of attacking others personally. This would be a much better way to together achieve the desired results for the Dutch society. In the show of NOVA on April 26th 2010 he posited that the only results of 'tossing and throwing' were discord and dissensus and that it was not a decent way to interact with each other.

Similarly, Cohen publically discarded Wilders as a possible partner because Wilders violated the core values of Cohen's 'decent society' frame. As mentioned earlier, Cohen considered Wilders to 'rub' against the boundaries of the Rule of Law. The first time he made this a remark he put it even more strongly. In the press it was later described as Cohen stating during the Prime Ministers debate (May 23rd 2010) that Wilders was a *danger* to the Rule of Law. Interestingly, he never actually used these exact words during this debate, but Cohen did not correct this in later performances. What he did say was that he considered the constitution not to be in good hands with Wilders (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:22:58 ff.). Cohen said this in response to Wilders's statement on whether immigrants who commit crimes should be evicted from the Netherlands or not. Not surprisingly Wilders was in favor, but Cohen argued: 'If they are Dutch, they are Dutch. And that is stated in our constitution and that is again such a point of which you think it does not matter' (Prime Ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:22:50 ff.).⁹⁴ Earlier in this debate he also stated a bit more clearly what his main objection against Wilders was: 'You [Wilders] do not check whether people cross the line, you check what their religion is. And this is what I object mostly strongly to and is something I think you should never, never, never do' (Prime Ministers debate, May 23rd 2010).⁹⁵

Related to other possible coalition partners, Cohen states that although he would be in favor of a coalition that is as progressive as possible, it was first up to the voters to decide. Moreover, as after the elections always a coalition has to be formed, he did not want to formulate 'breaking points' because forming a coalition is a game of giving and taking (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 27th 2010; De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th 2010). Reasoning from Cohen's perspective, in politics parties thus have to be brought together and cooperate just as this is necessary in society; breaking points are here not appropriate.

Finally, like the other party leaders Cohen was asked as well about his style of leadership. In Pauw & Witteman (March 12th 2010), and the debates of May 23rd and May 26th 2010 Cohen spoke about binding leadership. He wanted to build bridges between different groups in society and bring people together. In other performances, like on 'Paul Rosenmöller en...' and 'Knevel en Van den Brink' he also applied that to politics. Cohen stated that with this economic crisis the Netherlands

⁹⁴ Original text: 'Als het Nederlanders zijn dan zijn het Nederlanders. En dat staat in onze grondwet, en dat is weer zo'n punt waarvan u denkt doet er niet toe'.

⁹⁵ Original text: 'U kijkt niet of mensen over de schreef gaan, u kijkt wat hun geloof is. En dat is waar ik het grootst mogelijke bezwaar tegen heb en waarvan ik vind dat u dat nooit, nooit, nooit mag doen.'

need a firm and strong cabinet. 'And in the Netherlands we only have coalition cabinets, which means that it should really be a unified club. And well, I have, I think that I have proven in the past that I am capable of keeping that sort of, uh yes, clubs together' (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 27th 2010: 00:11:58 ff.).⁹⁶

However, although much can be retraced to the 'decent society', this did not necessarily mean that Cohen was always telling a coherent story in his performances. Contrary, Cohen hardly explicitly connected individual points to his bigger story, but rather the questions determined what he told. When asked about the smoking in inhibition in the hospitality sector, Cohen have a narrow answer to this, just as to questions on the Labor Party's opinion on extending the mission to Afghanistan or the police mission that was about to be set up. In all these cases, he just gave a (mostly short) answer without relating it to values of the decent society and without connecting it to broader ideas about what our society should look like. In other words: Cohen was quite passive in his performances and as such did not take much initiative to get his story out. This left citizens with a relatively dispersed image of Cohen in which it did not really became clear why he proposed certain things.

Reception of the 'decent society' frame: Acceptance or critique?

Furthermore, although most of Cohen's choices and viewpoints can be understood from the 'decent society' frame, this did also not mean that his views became dominant. Contrary, they were not instantly accepted and opposite Cohen's frame other frames were positioned. This was most clear in the two analyzed debates, in which the other party leaders gave their vision on the same problems, but also in his performances at 'Pauw & Witteman' and 'NOVA', 'hostile' frames were put forward. Most of these 'hostile' frames took an economic perspective. In Cohen's second performance at Pauw & Witteman, for example, after Cohen proposed to make Liberation Day an annual public holiday, the immediate response of host Paul Witteman was how and by whom it should be paid for. At this point, the underlying values of reflecting on the value of freedom were discarded, and the idea was put forward that the extra costs for the economy were more important. Cohen answered that he did not think about that yet because he first wanted to know whether others agreed with him, at which Paul Witteman stated: 'Is that not the problem of your new job, that you actually have to know how you intend to pay for it?' (Pauw & Witteman, May 5th 2010: 00:08:00 ff.).⁹⁷

Next, also interesting were the questions of the hosts Jeroen Pauw, Paul Witteman and Twan Huys about the political capabilities and the economic knowledge of Cohen. Jeroen Pauw, for example, asked in the 'Pauw & Witteman' show of March 12th 2010: 'Do you consider yourself good at that? In debating on the cutting edge with words that are sometimes really, well in fact not really nice to be said to you' (00:27:07 ff.)?⁹⁸ To further amplify this point they also showed a clip of Hero Brinkman who, in an earlier show of NOVA, said to Cohen that he considered him to be the worst mayor after the Second World War. In the clip, Cohen responded that he thought that this was an unnecessarily abusive remark. After the clip was finished Jeroen Pauw posed that if Cohen thought that was abusive, there was a lot more to come for him. In the show of May 5th, moreover, they

⁹⁶ Original text: 'En in Nederland hebben we alleen maar coalitie kabinetten, dus dat betekent ook dat het echt ook een eensgezinde club moet zijn. Nou ja ik heb, ik denk dat ik wel bewezen heb in het verleden dat ik in staat ben om dat soort, uh, ja, clubs bij elkaar te houden.'

⁹⁷ Original text: 'Is dat niet het probleem van uw nieuwe functie, dat je wel degelijk moet weten waar je dat van gaat betalen?'

⁹⁸ Original text: 'Denkt u dat u daar goed in bent? In het debatteren op het scherpst van de snede met woorden die soms erg, nou eenmaal niet zo prettig zijn om naar je hoofd geslingerd te krijgen?'

asked whether he enjoyed being a party leader. Cohen merely answered that he considered it important to do, after which Paul Witteman concluded that he did not like it, but that he thought it is important. Cohen did not correct this conclusion, which gave the idea that he really did not want to be a political (party) leader. Citizens might wonder: why should I vote for someone who does not like what he is doing? Paul Rosenmöller uttered a similar point during Cohen's performance on his show. He stated: When observing you the last couple of weeks I get somewhat the impression that being a party leader is only an annoying interruption from a period in which you [Cohen, SvZ] as an administrator above the parties are on your way to being the administrator of the Netherlands' (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 27th 2010: 00:09:18 ff.).⁹⁹

Besides that Cohen did not know how much his proposal of making Liberation Day an annual public holiday cost (Pauw & Witteman, May 5th 2010), and that these kinds of examples can also be found in other performances such as in the Carré debate, his economic knowledge was probably tested most during his performance at NOVA. In this show he was asked three questions about the economy: how much bread cost, how large the national mortgage debt was and how many additional people got unemployed a month. Of these questions, Cohen only knew the answer to the first and really did not know what to answer to the others. At the end of the show, after many more questions to which Cohen hardly knew what to say, it was not unlikely that citizens got the idea that Cohen really did not know what he was talking about.

Regardless of whether the above questioning of the political capabilities and economic knowledge of Cohen was justified, the idea that stuck with the audience depended on how Cohen dealt with these kinds of questions. The same goes for the question whether Cohen's 'decent society' frame or whether other frames dominated. Did Cohen succeed in reframing these kinds of critique or does he feel forced to go along with the frames of the others? The latter would not be beneficial to the persuasiveness and credibility of Cohen because denying a frame actually works affirmative. By using the language of the opponent, one gets pulled in the frame and vision of the other (Lakoff, 2004: 4). Looking at the analyzed performances it can be seen that Cohen regularly tried to escape from the frame of his opponents, but the results were not that fruitful. Going back to the earlier example of whether Cohen considered himself capable of debating at the cutting edge, Cohen continuously asked before they could even show the clip whether they also had other examples. In this respect he therefore in a way affirmed that Pauw & Witteman were right that he was not very good at debating fiercely.

Additionally, during – for example – the entire Prime ministers debate (May 23rd 2010), critique was aimed at him from left and right, but he did not get or take the chance to counter it. In this respect, he did not even get to reframing what was stated about him, his viewpoints and the Labor Party. In the cases that he did get the chance to do so, it either took quite a lot of time before he got to his point and he was regularly interrupted in the middle of his story before he could even make his point. Or, he answered with one short and vague sentence without taking the opportunity to turn the story around. Moreover, in trying to counter others he also regularly started with explaining why the stance of his opponent was not right. However, he did not start here from his own 'decent society' frame, rather he used the words of his opponents. Thereby he was affirming the frame of others, instead of his own. An example of this related to an example already mentioned

⁹⁹ Original text: 'Als ik u zo observeer de afgelopen weken dan krijg ik een beetje de indruk dat het partijleiderschap een wat hinderlijke onderbreking is van een periode waarin u als boven de partijen staande bestuurder in Amsterdam op weg bent naar de bestuurder van Nederland'.

previously. Cohen and Wilders were discussing during the Prime Ministers debate whether immigrants who commit crimes have to leave the country or not. Wilders stated that street terrorists should get the same treatment as terrorists, namely to be evicted from the country. Cohen stated in response: 'Mister Wilders, I would like to once again explain what the difference is between terrorists and street terrorists, there is a world of difference...' (Prime Ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:23:54 ff.).¹⁰⁰ Here, Job Cohen was affirming the existence of street terrorists and thus in a way proved Wilders right.

Possibilities and limitations of the 'decent society' frame

Each frame has both possibilities and limitations. Therefore also the 'decent society' frame of Cohen has its merits and demerits. Starting with the merits, in letting his ideas of 'joining in and participating' get to the fore, Cohen had the opportunity to formulate an alternative to Wilders ideas. Additionally, this frame also had the potential to be an alternative to Rutte's 'responsible society' frame in which solidarity and an eye for the human aspects did not take a very important position. Furthermore, the 'decent society' frame was also a frame that fitted with Cohen's reputation. In his time as a junior minister and, more importantly, in his position as the mayor of Amsterdam, he gained a reputation of being a wise, calm and sophisticated man. In other words: a reputation of a real statesman.

Shifting focus to the limitations, the 'decent society' frame might also have limited Cohen in his possibilities to defend himself against critique of others. Reasoning from the idea that you have to 'practice what you preach', Cohen had to embody his message of decency with his own words and actions. Therefore, he did not have the possibility to rant as fiercely as Cohen did, but he had to be self-controlled and respectfully utter his discontent about certain problems in society. Naturally, this did not have to mean that Cohen had to act as a push over. As long as he was respectfully approaching his opponents, Cohen could counter them. However, except for when he clearly excluded Wilders as a possible coalition partner, he did not use the possibilities he had to counter others. Therefore, he indeed became more of a push over than a strong opponent.

The extent to which the limitations and possibilities actually come to the fore, depends largely on the dominance of Cohen's frame. If his frame was easily accepted, he hardly had to defend himself. The dilemma of decency against telling others how he felt about them would not be encountered much in such a situation. However, in Cohen's case, his frame was not easily accepted and his attempts to reframe did not always work out as intended. Consequently, the issue of how to deal with the limitations became apparent. Being a calm and reasonable statesman hampered Cohen too much in adequately countering the critique he was given. Therefore, the idea remained that the others were perhaps right about him and his plans.

To summarize, with his 'decent society' frame, Cohen employed a potentially very powerful frame that was grounded in values that resonated with a large part of society. Unfortunately, this frame did not result in Cohen painting a coherent vision in which all his individual proposals were linked to the underlying ideas of the decent society. Consequently, he remained rather vague in why he wanted to do things and it might have given the idea that Cohen did not know what he wanted to achieve. Additionally, what also hampered the strength of his story was that he did not often succeed in reframing or countering the critique, thereby giving the idea that the others actually had a point. As a

¹⁰⁰ 'Meneer Wilders, ik wil u graag nog een keer uitleggen wat het verschil is tussen terroristen en straatterroristen, daar is een wereld van verschil...'

result, moreover, the limitations started to dominate over the possibilities of the 'decent society' frame, which further weakened Cohen's position.

6.1.3 Scripting

Scripting, the third element of the dramaturgical analysis consists of four elements: casting the different roles, the (constructed) dialogue, the relationship with the public, and non-verbal communication (see chapter 2). The first element, casting roles, basically consists of what kind of picture Rutte paints of himself and of others. In theatrical terms: what role does he play, who are his friends and who are his enemies?

Friends and enemies: fighting to get people facing each other again

The first role that had to be casted was the role Cohen pictured for himself. The role Cohen tried to fulfill was the role of leader of the Labor Party, who fought for a decent society in which everybody 'joins in and participates'. To achieve this goal Cohen saw himself as a leader who could bring together the different groups in society (and in politics). Although he was the leader of one political party, he wanted to build bridges with others to prevent that people were standing with their backs towards each other (Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 27th 2010). When asked what being a political leader entailed in one word, Cohen stated that a good leader 'organized support' (Prime Ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 01:12:28 ff.).

Next to the role of being the leader of the Labor party and a potential prime minister, Cohen occasionally also made references to his previous role, the role of mayor of Amsterdam. In part he referred back to this period to show his experience, capabilities and previous achievements. However, during two performances he also spoke from this role as mayor. The first time he did this during his speech in which he made himself available as party leader for the Labor Party. This press conference can be considered a moment that clearly marked his transfer to national politics. During his speech he stated that he said goodbye to his position as a mayor. The second time he, in a way, returned to his old role as mayor was in 'Pauw & Witteman' (May 5th 2010). Besides Cohen, also cyclist Erik Dekker was present to talk about the upcoming Giro d'Italia. This tour started in Amsterdam and Cohen discussed what such a tour meant for a city like Amsterdam and why he supported it.

One could wonder whether it was a smart idea to switch between different roles if one tried to be credible as the leader of a political party and a potential prime minister. When Cohen switched roles, it did not seem to be working against him. In his candidacy speech it might even be beneficial as it clearly marked his transition from mayor of Amsterdam to a national politician and party leader. Secondly, it also provided Cohen with the opportunity to convince the public by referring to his 'ethos'. In his period as a mayor, which is generally considered to be a success, Cohen could look back and tell about how he had settled matters there. The message here was: with my experience in solving problems as the mayor of Amsterdam, I can also cope with the problems of the Netherlands.

In this respect, friends or protagonists of Cohen were all who shared Cohen's vision about what needed to be done. Friends were thus those who were willing to fight for a decent society, who wanted to ensure that people looked out for each other and cooperated. In politics, Cohen stated that he did not want to talk about coalitions beforehand and that he did not want to exclude others up front. The only exception he made concerned Wilders in this respect. In terms of cooperation,

Cohen preferred to look at the left side of the spectrum, but all who were willing to realize his vision of a decent society were welcome. The likeliness of support for this vision was higher on the left, than on the right. This meant that the Liberal Party was not a likely partner, but that Cohen mostly preferred the Liberal Democrats, the Socialist Party and the Green Left Party (De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th 2010; NOVAPolitiek, June 7th 2010).

One clear antagonist was Wilders. As mentioned, Cohen explicitly excluded him as a possible coalition partner, as his viewpoints violated the core values of Cohen's decent society vision. Whereas Cohen wanted to build bridges between all people living in our society, Wilders – in the eyes of Cohen – excluded certain people on the basis of religion. It is thus fair to state that Wilders was not a friend in Cohen's battle towards his decent society. Next to Wilders, Mark Rutte and the Liberal Party can also be considered an enemy. As Cohen put it in 'NOVAPolitiek' on June 7th: The Liberal Party 'has a program that is economically well put together. But then thus economically well put together and in which the people behind it are forgotten. And he succeeds very well in keeping that hidden' (00:01:06 ff.).¹⁰¹ Looking at society, Cohen saw his enemies also in the people who did not want to give other people a chance, who did not look out for others.

Putting the 'decent society' into words: Constructing the dialogue

There are different types of arguments a speaker can use to persuade an audience of his viewpoints. Aristotle differentiates between three types: pathos, ethos and logos (see chapter 2). Looking at the performances of Cohen, it can be found that to convince his audience of the need to strive for a decent society he used all three of the persuasion devices, although their use varied for each performance. Pathos, ethos and logos were not used at the same time, in the same combination and not all were dominantly present in all performances. Pathos was mainly used in his candidacy speech on March 12th 2010, while less so in the debates and talk shows. Indeed, pathos dominated the candidacy speech. He stated, for example, that it was not always clear where citizens could go to if they had questions. Next he continued:

'And therefore, in my opinion, we work towards a government that does not stand opposed to people, but that is of the people. And that government should do more than steering on efficiency alone. Because there is more in life than making as much money as possible. The value of a society cannot be put euros and that is something we in a way all feel. Talk to people who need care, or who give care, they know what really is important. Ask a child about his dreams and a teacher about his pupils and you know what really is important. Ask a victim of a robbery and the police officer who took care of him, ask them about their feelings and you know that money is the last thing that matters. That is the assignment of the social democracy: forging a society that is based on the values of solidarity and development, for greater equality and the banishment of the excesses of casino capitalism, that has brought us the current economic crisis' (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010: 00:13:09 ff.).¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Original text: 'een programma hebben wat economisch goed in elkaar zit. Maar dan ook economisch erg goed in elkaar zit en wat een beetje de mensen daarachter vergeet. En hij slaagt er erg goed in om dat laatste punt verborgen te houden.

¹⁰² Original text: 'En wat mij betreft werken we daarom aan een overhead die niet tegenover mensen staat, maar die van mensen is. En die overhead moet meer doen dan sturen op rendement alleen. Want er is meer in het leven dan zoveel mogelijk geld verdienen. De waarde van een samenleving, die valt niet in euro's uit te drukken en dat voelen we eigenlijk allemaal zo. Praat met mensen die zorg nodig hebben, of die zorg geven, die weten wat echt belangrijk is. Vraag een kind naar zijn dromen en een leraar naar zijn pupillen en je weet wat echt belangrijk is. Vraag een slachtoffer van een overval en de agent die hem opving, vraag hen naar hun gevoelens en je weet dat geld het laatste is wat telt'.

What Cohen was trying to do in this passage was to create a feeling among the audience that there was more in life than wealth and money. The most important things in life –like family, love and health – cannot be bought, is what Cohen seemed to be saying. What is important in societies was thus not how much money each individual makes, but how citizens in that society related to each other and how they interacted. In this part of his speech Cohen seems to be trying to gain support for his decent society by ‘reminding’ people of what really matters. Besides, looking out for each other in one way or another is a quality that is valued in our society (Halman, Sieben & Van Zundert, 2012). In this sense, people rather belong to the group that looks out for each other than to the egocentric group. Addressing these feelings might have helped Cohen to gain support for his views. Cohen, furthermore, stated that ‘he also has seen what can happen if we all put our minds to it’, and that this is they only way forward.¹⁰³ Although this was only a short piece in Cohen’s entire speech, it provides a connection between what the problem is and what should be done about it. It is a pathos-like argument because Cohen tried to make clear that if we do it together much could happen. It instilled a feeling of pride, a feeling of ‘look what we can do and what our capabilities are’.

In the other two types of performances analyzed of Cohen, the debates and the talk shows, pathos as a means to support his views was used less often. Occasionally it came back, but it mainly depended on the topic at hand. In Cohen’s second performance on ‘Pauw & Witteman’, he for example tried to justify his proposal for making Liberation Day an annual public holiday, by using pathos like arguments. In this case, Cohen tries to establish emotions among his audience by emphasizing that freedom is no longer normal and self-evidently there. Occasionally it is under pressure and it is heavily debated, so to keep the underlying value of it alive, we should pay more explicit attention to it. We need to take the time to reflect on it and to realize its value. The use of pathos was also appropriate because the proposal was not set in stone yet. As Cohen emphasized: he just wanted to test whether others thought it was a good idea as well.

The use of pathos in these two examples was not the same, and the first example might be considered more successful than the latter. In the first case the use of pathos was embedded in a broader statement about Cohen’s plans for the future and concrete examples were related to values. Because of the use of examples, it was easier for the audience to relate to Cohen’s statement: they could recognize it in their own lives. In the latter example this was not the case. Indeed, the value was mentioned and Cohen stated that it was under pressure, but he did clarify, however, why it was under pressure, where we could see that and how that mattered to us. Consequently, it remained a rather vague and abstract statement.

As stated, this use of pathos in the talk shows and debates was quite exceptional. Most of the time in these performances, logos dominated as a device of persuasion. The analyzed performances showed that Cohen used this in different kind of arguments. He used it to gain support for the content of his viewpoints and to counter other’s viewpoints. In the Carré debate, for example, Cohen countered the view of Jan Peter Balkenende (Christian Democrats) on market forces in health care. Whereas, according to Cohen, the Christian Democrats pleaded for more market forces in health care, Cohen posed that this would put the quality of care under pressure. In supporting this argument he used logos, because his argument followed a ‘if... then’ pattern and he referred to ‘facts’. He stated: if you want to finance hospitals partially with private capital, then hospitals do not only aim for good care but also for making profit. Such a double goal leads to putting the quality of

¹⁰³ Original text: ‘Maar ik heb ook gezien wat er allemaal kan als we samen de schouders eronder zetten. En ik ben meer dan ooit, meer dan ooit, hartgrondig van overtuigd date r uiteindelijk geen andere manier is om vooruit te komen’.

care under pressure. Next, he continued with two different 'facts' with which he wanted to prove that market forces in health care were not a good idea: in the cases that we used them already, we could already see that it led to shortages, and, in the current situation market forces have led to increasing paperwork and bureaucracy. We did not need more of that, as it reduced the time available for care (Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 00:11:16 ff.).

Besides in expressing the content of his views, Cohen also used logos arguments in explaining why he did not formulate breaking points and in explaining why he did not do a very good job so far as leader of the Labor Party. According to Cohen, he did not formulate breaking points because: 'After the elections, there has to come a stable government en that thus means that indeed compromises need to be made and that we will...' (Cohen is interrupted; Carré debate, May 26th 2010: 00:26:30 ff.). Cohen explained his supposedly bad performance during the election campaigns in a similar manner. On 'De Wereld Draait Door' the host Matthijs van Nieuwkerk asked Cohen, after showing a short clip on Cohen's performances, what had happened an hour before his performance on NOVA (April 28th 2010). Cohen responded: 'Well I think, I think, if I look back on it. These are beautiful images, and, I mean, I have seen them. It was just the transition from one job to another and it is clearly different' (De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th: 00:19:14 ff.).¹⁰⁴ On NOVAPolitiek he utters a similar stance (June 7th 2010: 00:13:30 ff.). A final interesting finding on the element of logos in the performances of Cohen was that he hardly connected logos like arguments with pathos and/or ethos to put together a convincing line of reasoning. In other words: he used logos in isolation.

The third and final means of persuasion that is distinguished by Aristotle is ethos. Whereas logos dominated the talk shows and debates, and pathos dominated the speech, ethos can be found in all three types of performances. In his performances Cohen used ethos like arguments to convince his audience of his suitability as the leader of the Labour Party as well as the possible next prime minister of the Netherlands. Cohen used ethos like arguments in two ways: he used them to make statements about his own personality or traits that would implicitly or explicitly make him a suitable leader, and he referred to his previous experience. In his career, Cohen has had two major relevant positions: junior minister of Immigration and mayor of Amsterdam. Cohen drew upon both these experiences if he used ethos like arguments. Interestingly, when referring to his past achievements and experiences based on his position as junior minister and mayor, he mostly referred to his achievements on immigration and safety. He, for example, stated that he also felt that crime and nuisance should be tackled, and: 'In the time that I was the mayor of Amsterdam I have also done that. And I have ensured that there was more safety' (NOVA, April 26th 2010: 00:09:20 ff.).¹⁰⁵ Similar accounts could be found in his performances on 'Pauw & Witteman' (March 12th 2010) and the Prime Ministers debate (May 23rd 2010). When drawing on his experience as a junior minister he mostly referred to the Immigration Law for which he was responsible. The ethos like references to his traits and personality that made Cohen a suitable leader were mostly implicit, but there were also some examples in which Cohen deviated from this normal tendency. On 'Paul Rosenmöller en...' (May 27th 2010: 00:11:33 ff.) Cohen, for example, literally stated when asked whether the positions of party leader and prime minister could be combined: 'Yes, I feel that is possible and I feel that I can also do

¹⁰⁴ Original text: 'Nou ja, ik denk, ik denk als ik daar op terug kijk. Dit zijn mooie beelden en, ik bedoel, ik heb ze ook wel gezien. Het is gewoon de overgang geweest van de ene baan naar de andere en die is natuurlijk ook anders'.

¹⁰⁵ Original text: 'Ik heb in de tijd dat ik burgemeester van Amsterdam was dat ook gedaan. En ik heb er ook voor gezorgd dat er meer veiligheid kwam'.

that such a way that I am able to commit people from other parties to it as well'.¹⁰⁶ A more implicit example can be found in his performance on NOVA (April 26th 2010: 00:09:38 ff.) in which he stated that looking for a personal attack was not his way of campaigning. Implicitly he was saying that Cohen stood above such a 'childish' style of campaigning; he was more of a statesman who focused on content and on what really mattered.

Besides ethos in Cohen's own speech, as a means in which he could promote his own credibility as a leader, in his performances there were also attacks from others on his credibility as a leader. The uttered critique that he might not have enough economic knowledge and political skills could be considered some sort of 'counter ethos'. As already mentioned with the element of framing Cohen was for example asked whether he considered himself good at debating on the cutting edge. This was quite severe critique for an aspiring prime minister. Whether such 'counter ethos' arguments actually stuck depended on how Cohen dealt with them, but as already previously established he did not do very well in this respect.

Next to the type of arguments used to gain support for his frame, Cohen used several tropes to actually put these arguments into words. Some tropes were more appropriate than others for articulating pathos, logos and ethos. The tropes fitting with pathos were all forms of exaggeration and repetition, such as anaphora, antitheses and enumerations. Looking at Cohen's performances, he mostly used these in his candidacy speech. This was in line with the extensive use of pathos in this performance. A clear example of repetition and enumeration is the following:

'Because I have seen what it means to people if they do not have a job, or when they even need two jobs to make ends meet. What it means if children are insufficiently educated, if they do not speak the Dutch language well and never catch up again or if they cannot calculate well. What it means if you are afraid to go outside on the street or if illness is an obstacle in your daily life. And I have seen how people sometimes do not understand each other anymore. If there is no willingness to work together for a shared future. What it means if hatred emerges, for example in the period after the murder on Theo van Gogh' (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010: 00:05:50 ff.).¹⁰⁷

Another example from Cohen's candidacy speech is the following quote, in which anti theses are the main trope of use:

*'... Because we are constantly looking for balance. Balance between **individual** and **society**, between **old Dutch nationals** and **new Dutch nationals**, between an **international orientation** and **national interests**, between **elderly** and **youth**, between **believers** and **non-believers**' (Candidacy speech, March 12th 2010: 00:14:40 ff.).¹⁰⁸*

¹⁰⁶ Original text: 'Ja, dat denk ik wel en ik denk dat ik dat kan op een manier waarbij ik ook in staat ben om mensen van andere partijen daarbij te binden'.

¹⁰⁷ Original text: 'Want ik heb gezien wat het betekent voor mensen als zij geen werk hebben, of wanneer zij juist twee banen nodig hebben om rond te komen. Wat het betekent als kinderen onvoldoende scholing krijgen, als ze de Nederlandse taal niet goed spreken en dat nooit meer inhalen of als zij niet goed kunnen rekenen. Wat het betekent als je niet veilig over straat durft of als ziekte een obstakel in je dagelijkse leven is. (...) Wat het betekent als er haat ontstaat, bijvoorbeeld in de periode na de moord op Theo van Gogh'.

¹⁰⁸ Original text: 'Omdat wij voortdurend op zoek zijn naar balans. Balans tussen individu en samenleving, tussen oude Nederlanders en nieuwe Nederlanders, tussen internationale oriëntatie en nationaal belang, tussen ouderen en jongeren, tussen gelovigen en niet-gelovigen'.

Remarkably, besides in this candidacy speech, Cohen's performances can be characterized as rather businesslike and bare. He did not use many tropes and if he used them, he did so in a modest way. Exaggeration and other similar tropes hardly came to the fore. In other words: if tropes were used at all, they were mostly anti theses, enumeration and repetition, but no hyperboles and superlatives. An example of this businesslike and bare style and related to logos type arguments, is the example in which Cohen stated the following on the position he wished the European Commission to play in solving the economic crisis: 'I am happy with the results of the, of the summit of one and a half weeks ago, or of two weeks ago. With that enormous stack that is there and of which I sincerely hope that it functions. But it will only function if all countries can get their budgets further in check. And I feel that in this respect, uh, if it was up to me, uh, that the European Commission should play a role' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 29th 2010: 00:03:05 ff.).¹⁰⁹ Finally, looking specifically at the ethos like arguments, it has to be noted that although his use of language was also not sparkling in this respect, he did use examples to refer to his previous achievements and experience.

Besides the use of pathos, logos, and ethos, and the use of tropes, there were also some other characteristics that could be distinguished throughout Cohen's performances. A first characteristic related to the way in which Cohen answered questions. Cohen regularly seemed to just start talking. From the perspective of a viewer, it was difficult to understand what he meant and what he tried to say. Especially because he also took a lot of time to formulate his stance, which resulted in him being regularly interrupted before he had made his point. Another interesting aspect of the way in which Cohen answered questions were his responses to questions containing insinuations with which he did not agree. Here, Cohen tended to answer something like 'I don't know whether that is the case' (for example in Paul Rosenmöller en..., May 27th 2010: 00:10:37 ff.).¹¹⁰ Another type of example can be found in Cohen's performance on NOVA (April 26th 2010). Twan Huys, the host of this show, posed that opponents of Cohen felt that he did not have enough economic knowledge and that they would point to that over and over again. After a short silence, Cohen's only response was: 'we shall wait and see'. In other words: as already established in the element of framing, Cohen did not seize many opportunities to reframe such 'hostile' views. Consequently, it was not clear what Cohen actually thought and what he represented.

Secondly, and related to the previous point, the way in which Cohen spoke was regularly quite vague and abstract. He often uses words like that, those, this et cetera, without it being clear to what he was referring. Additionally, he used quite a lot of subordinate clauses that distracted from the main message. On May 5th 2010, when Cohen was present in the show 'Pauw & Witteman', he responded as follows on the question whether it was true that Cohen's 'binding leadership' only came into play after the elections of June 9th 2010:

'Well, I think that, uh, if, if it is about, about stances, about the kind of stances that you just mentioned. Yes, then it is now the case that the Labor Party tells what its views are, the ChristianUnion tells what its views are and in the meanwhile, and that is one of those things that we have also stated in our program, provides an opening to say, even though we have taken

¹⁰⁹ Original text: 'Ik ben blij met de resultaten van de, van de top van anderhalve week geleden, of twee weken geleden. Met dat enorme pakket dat er ligt en waarvan ik ook echt hoop dat het functioneert. Maar dat functioneert ook alleen maar als alle landen ook verder hun begroting op orde brengen. En ik vind dan ook dat we op dat punt ook uh, als het aan mij zou liggen, uh, dat de Europese Commissie wel een rol mag spelen.

¹¹⁰ Original text: 'Ik weet niet of dat noodzakelijk is...'

those stances, that it is well possible to discuss with us, dis, dis, disregarding ones own stances, to reach other solutions' (00:44:45 ff.).¹¹¹

In this example, it was not the case that shortly before a reference was made to certain exact policy stances. For viewers, it was thus quite unclear to what point Cohen was trying to make, especially because they were not in the position to read back what exactly had been said. Furthermore, related to the second part of the example, there were a number of distracting subordinate clauses. His message, that in order to reach solutions together with others, it was well possible that the Labor Party would make compromises from time to time, was partially lost because of additional information like 'we have also stated that in our program', 'even though we have taken those stances', and, 'disregarding ones own stances'. It is thus not a surprise, thirdly, that Cohen's speech was characterized by an indirect manner of speaking, instead of a more direct one.

A final point that needs attention is Cohen's attitude on speaking during his performances. Overall, Cohen's attitude can be characterized as relatively passive. He hardly took any initiative, but remained quiet until he was explicitly given the floor. When given the floor, he did not tend to let his own story prevail, and he did not try to influence the conversation in such a way that he could speak about the topics he would like to address. Contrary, he stuck relatively close to the questions asked and did add much of his story to it. Additionally, because it took him quite some time to formulate his stance, he was interrupted quite often. Even on such occasions, his attitude remained passive as he hardly tried to get the floor back. If he tried, his attempts regularly failed. In the Prime Ministers debate on the topic of mortgage interest relief, for example, Cohen only spoke 5 times. Admittedly, Wilders got fewer turns (three in total), but Cohen was completely outranked by Mark Rutte and Jan Peter Balkenende, who had respectively 13 and 12 turns. In all cases that he did speak, he did not 'win' the floor, but the host Frits Wester explicitly gave him permission to talk. Partially this attitude can be understood from the 'decent society' idea. Cohen liked to portray himself as a wise statesman who was above the others and who did not let himself in with childish games. From this perspective, interrupting others can be considered rude. However, Cohen might have taken this a bit too far, as being a decent leader is not necessarily the same as being walked over repeatedly. Especially when one was criticized it is only normal to seize the opportunity to counter that critique. If such an opportunity was not there, Cohen could (and should) have created it.

Getting in touch with the public

Another aspect of the element of scripting is the way in which Cohen related to his audience, both the audience present in person at the performances and the citizens at home. By involving the audience in a performance a leader can keep their attention, might give them the feeling that they actually matter to the leader and that he knows what he is talking about. Remarkable about Cohen's performances was that he – except for his candidacy speech – hardly involved the audience in his performances.

There are different ways in which a speaker can involve an audience in his performance. The first option is to directly address the people in the audience by making contact with them, for

¹¹¹ Original text: 'Nou, ik denk dat uh, als, als het gaat over, over stand, over het soort standpunten die u nou noemt. Ja dan is het nu zo dat de Partij van de Arbeid vertelt wat zijn standpunten zijn, de ChristenUnie vertelt wat die standpunten zijn en ondertussen, en dat is een van die dingen die wij ook in ons programma hebben gezegd, ook openingen bieden om te zeggen ook al hebben wij die standpunten ingenomen, er is met ons prima te praten om met het, het, het voorbij gaan van je eigen standpunten, om dan tot andere oplossingen te komen'.

example by asking them a question. A variant of this option entails explicitly turning to the people at home during a performance. This can be done for example by indicating that this is specifically meant for the voter. The second possibility entails speaking in terms of 'we' and 'us'. This can establish a relationship with the voter and some sort of feeling like 'we are in it together'. Naturally, leaders also have to make clear that with 'we' they mean him and the viewer at home, and not, for example, himself and his party. Thirdly, besides speaking in terms of we and us, there was also another way in which the audience can be included. Speaking inclusively can also be done by being clear about who is meant. An example can clarify this: a leader speaking about 'people like builders' is not as clear as merely saying 'builders'. By directly addressing the people you mean the distance between the audience and the speaker is reduced. If a leader wanted to address all citizens, he could use a 'totum pro parte' construction, in which he for example speaks about himself and the Netherlands. In this case the Netherlands means the Dutch citizens.

In the analyzed performances of Cohen, not many examples could be found in which Cohen used one of the above possibilities. The great exception was his candidacy speech. Here, all means to include the audience were used. Cohen directly spoke to his audience, for example when he semi-seriously told a journalist to sit down. In this respect he tried to show who was in control and he acknowledged that others were present. Secondly, he included the audience as he was speaking about 'us' and 'we'. He stated for example: 'But it is not only about the problems of today, we also have to look further into the future. Building something, building something of which we can be proud, getting our country ready for future generations'.¹¹² Thirdly, he spoke about children, teachers, victims and police officers, not of people like teachers, victims and police officers. In this respect he thus directly addressed his audience and he established a relatively direct relationship to reduce the distance. In the other performances these ways of inclusive speech were hardly found. Although he kept referring to us and we, he did so in a different way than in his candidacy speech. In these performances he referred either to the labor party or it was not clear whom he exactly meant. An example of this can be found in Cohen's performance on 'Miljarden Gezocht'. The host Peter Zadelhoff wondered why the Labor Party wanted to realize extra cutbacks all of the sudden while, for example, the problems in Greece had been known for over a year. Cohen responded: 'That is true. Yes, that is true, but we have, but we have also seen now what the effects of that were' (May 20th 2010: 00:02:48 ff.).¹¹³

Acting the job: Cohen's body language

The final element of scripting entails Cohen's body language. As described in the theoretical framework (chapter 2) this element included his posture, facial expressions, gestures and his use of voice. Looking at Cohen's performances, it was possible to distinguish between his basic body language - his body language at the beginning of each performance and the language he wished to communicate – and his body language when he had a difficult time.

Starting with Cohen's posture, Cohen tried to take the posture of a wise statesman. In the performances he had to stand up, he stood up straight with his shoulders down and his hands either at his side or loosely on his desk. In the performances in which he sat down at a table, like 'Pauw & Witteman' and 'De Wereld Draait Door', he leaned forward a bit, again with his shoulders down and

¹¹² Original text: 'Maar het gaat niet alleen om de problemen van nu, wij moeten ook verder kijken naar de toekomst. Iets opbouwen, iets bouwen waar we trots op kunnen zijn, ons land klaarmaken voor toekomstige generaties.

¹¹³ Original text: 'Dat klopt. Ja, dat is waar, maar we hebben, maar we hebben nu ook gezien in de afgelopen weken wat de effecten daarvan waren'.

he placed his hands and forearms in front of him on the table. This posture communicated calmness and a sense of being in control. As this was also the posture with which Cohen started all his performances, it can be expected that this was a posture he strived for. There is one exception to this basic starting posture, however, which was his posture during his performance on NOVA (April 26th 2010). Afterwards, Cohen was also severely criticized on this. During this show he sat down at a table, but he did not look as if he controlled the situation at all. He sat up straight with his arms on his legs, under the table, and hardly moved at all during this performance. The posture Cohen normally tried to retain did not always last that long. As soon as the host criticized him or if he was asked some tough questions, the viewer could see his posture change substantially. His posture cramped either because he leaned forward even more while clenching his shoulders together, or because he sat up completely straight while leaning all the way back in his chair. Whereas the first can be considered an 'aggressive' posture, as if preparing himself trying to deal with the difficulties by 'attacking' the source of tension, with the second type of reaction Cohen rather gave the impression that he was withdrawing himself from the conversation.

The same can be seen in his facial expression. His basic facial expression was calm, relaxed and relatively serious. This facial expression added to his basic posture as described above. Combined it strengthened the message that Cohen was a wise statesman who was in control and who knew what to do. Simultaneously, just as with his posture also his facial expression changed if he experienced difficulties. His facial expression tensed when he was no longer at ease with the situation (or at least because of his expression it looked that way). This tensed expression can be observed because he started to frown and he clenched his lips together. Just as the basic posture and facial expression complemented each other and strengthened the communication of the desired message, his posture and facial expression in times of supposedly experienced difficulties were also complementary to each other. Because both his posture and his facial expression were communicating a message of discomfort, this message was strengthened.

Focusing, thirdly, on the gestures that Cohen made in his performances, it was remarkable to note that it seemed that Cohen is slightly reluctant to use them. Mostly they could not be characterized as grand and compelling, rather, the gestures Cohen made fitted with the image he seemed to be wanting to convey: the image of a wise statesman, who acted restrained and controlled, and who did not like to exaggerate. In his basic posture, Cohen's hands were on the table, folded together. If Cohen used gestures, his forearm or elbow remained on the table and he moves his hands via his wrists. When doing so he for example pointed to something or he moved both his hands slightly from the left to the right to indicate a change. It should be noted in this respect that as in the television shows Cohen was usually filmed from slightly below the shoulder up, the gestures he made might not have always been visible to the viewer. Interestingly, when Cohen was experiencing difficulties and his posture and facial expression cramped, also his hands looked tensed. When visible, Cohen started to squeeze his hands together if he was not as ease. Another gesture that Cohen tended to use, was a gesture to put additional emphasis on certain words to indicate if he considered something to be important. If he, for example, stated on Paul Rosenmöller en...' (May 27th 2010) that he also considered it important that in the short term additional employment was created, he put emphasis on some of his words by moving his head up and down. The words 'also' and 'short term' were, for example, accompanied with a nod (00:16:11 ff.).

Finally, in his use of voice it was also possible to differentiate between his use of voice as a starting point and his use of voice when he had a difficult time. The major difference between these two 'uses of voice' is fluency. When he spoke fluently, he seemed to be at ease and in control. In

these cases his use of voice was also in line with his posture, facial expression and gestures. Unfortunately for Cohen, in the analyzed performances it more often seemed as if he was uncomfortable and not that into control. Next to his posture, facial expression and gestures, at such a point also his use of voice changed. Put bluntly: he started to stammer and stutter. Besides that this did not communicate a message of a leader ready for the difficult position of prime minister, it also made it much more difficult for the viewer to understand what Cohen was trying to say. Take, for example, a part of Cohen's performance on 'Pauw & Witteman' in which he tried to explain how he intended to finance Liberation Day as an annual public holiday:

'Yes, how, how we intend to pay for that. Yes, I also do not know exactly how, how we will pay for that. Uh, uh, I, I, it, for me it was mainly about saying I think it is important that we, that we this point, and that, that well also the entire Netherlands is actually saying about that, yes that is, it is one of the, one of those things, uh, that we also share with each other' (May 5th 2012: 00:07:35 ff.).¹¹⁴

What this examples shows is that when Cohen was asked an (perhaps) unexpected and difficult question, he had problems in formulating an answer. This resulted in an answer full of stammering and consequently it made Cohen seem like he did not know what he was talking about, not a very desirable trait for a leader. Even if Cohen was verbally stating that he did not worry, this might still have not been that credible in these cases, because his body language stated otherwise.

Overall, there is thus a major difference between Cohen's first speech and the other analyzed performances in the way in which he conducted the various elements. Only focusing on the talk shows and debates, Cohen was clear in who his friends and enemies were, which might have helped to clarify his story. However, for underpinning his statements Cohen mostly used logos-like arguments and used very little tropes. As a result he mostly only spoke to the mind of citizens. Additionally, they were hardly included in the performances, as if they did not have a role to play in reaching a decent society. More importantly, what hampered the clarity and coherence of his message was that Cohen hardly took any initiative. He only answered the questions in a narrow sense and only to a small extent connected it to the broader picture of his underlying ideas and values of the decent society. Consequently, a rather dispersed and haphazard image of what Cohen wanted to achieve emerged. Finally, in his body language he communicated a message of insecurity as soon as he got critique on his proposals or leadership qualities. Besides that this did not give the idea that Cohen was ready for the position of prime minister, the stammering in his language also hampered the clarity of what he was trying to say. At this point, after the analysis of the individual elements, the question remains what the findings mean for Cohen's credibility. In the next paragraph this is discussed.

¹¹⁴ Original text: 'Ja, waar, waar we dat van gaan betalen. Ja ik weet ook nog niet precies waar, waar we dat van gaan betalen. Uh, uh, i, I, het, het ging mij er vooral om om te zeggen van ik vind het belangrijk dat we, dat we dit punt, en dat, dat nou ook heel Nederland daar ook echt zegt van ja, dat is, het is een van de, een van de dingen, uh, die wij ook met elkaar delen'.

6.1.4 Combining staging, framing, and scripting: Consequences for credibility

What do these findings on staging, framing and scripting mean for Cohen's credibility? Starting with staging, in short the conclusion is that in this respect Cohen did not do anything wrong. Considering the props and the design of the stage, he took full advantage of the opportunities. For both he basically only had a chance to influence them for his candidacy speech. During this performance the design of the stage was fully in his hands, whereas he could not do this in his other performances. His clothing and personal appearance was the one aspect of staging that he could control at all times. In terms of credibility it was important that his appearance was consistent and fitting to the occasion. In all performances analyzed of Cohen, he met these requirements. Furthermore, if anything he was consistent in his choices: in all performances Cohen wore a dark suit, pale shirt and a red tie. This exact combination communicated a message of authority and trustworthiness, traits that are desirable for an aspiring prime minister. The drop in Cohen's credibility can thus not be understood by looking at staging.

Contrary, the element of framing pointed to interesting clues for understanding why Cohen witnessed a drop in credibility. There was one frame during his performances that underpinned Cohen's proposals and viewpoints: the decent society frame, in which the values solidarity and equality were central. However, even though this underlying 'decent society' frame could be retraced to most views and proposals, this did not mean that Cohen formulated a coherent vision. On the contrary, the values could indeed be found in the individual utterances, but Cohen hardly made any explicit connections between them. Additionally, he also only scarcely connected them explicitly to the underlying values, which would have helped the viewers to put individual themes into perspective. This gave the impression over time that Cohen was responding to issues in an 'ad hoc' manner. The grand and encompassing vision could have been there, but Cohen did not communicate this well. This lack of coherence did not help his credibility as a potential prime minister, as he did not make it seem as if he was working towards realizing a bigger plan.

If critique was uttered on Cohen's proposals, this critique often took an economic perspective. Besides critique on his viewpoints, Cohen was even more criticized for his suitability as a political leader. Hosts and other political leaders in the analyzed performances explicitly doubted his economic knowledge and political skills. During the campaigns this critique gained dominance, if only because Cohen turned out not to be capable of reframing it. Either he affirmed the hostile frames, or he did not even address it at all. This made that Cohen was no longer considered the most suitable person for the job of prime minister.

Next to framing, also the element of scripting was helpful for understanding why Cohen experienced a drop in credibility. For putting the frame into words, the exact use of language is important. Through language Cohen could establish whom his friends and enemies were, he could construct a dialogue, build a relationship with his audience and use his body language to strengthen his verbal message. Related to the first Cohen was quite clear: his enemies were those who were not willing to work towards a decent society in which everyone mattered. All those who would want to achieve this were his friends. This categorization helped Cohen to clarify his position. For the other three elements, this was not really the case. Cohen's language had a businesslike style and except for his candidacy speech he hardly used any pathos. Additionally, the different means of persuading an audience were not combined. Rather in most performances, he used either logos, or ethos. As these views were hardly connected with pathos, Cohen only spoke to the mind and not to the heart of

citizens as well. Next, Cohen's language did not really help to promote his message because he spoke in a relatively vague and abstract manner, without it really being clear what he was trying to say. Additionally, his attitude was relatively passive. He did not seize and create (many) opportunities to get his message out or to counter hostile frames. This made it seem as if Cohen was not in control of the situation. Looking at how Cohen established a relationship with his audience, it was clear that he hardly did so. He mostly talked about citizens, thus including those who were watching the performances, as if they did not have to play a part in it. This created some distance between Cohen and his citizens, which did not promote their commitment with his vision. Finally his body language did not communicate that Cohen was a strong, forceful and self-confident leader who had everything under control. When Cohen was criticized, his body language often tensed, indicating to the audience that he had difficulties. Even though he might verbally say that he was not worried, for viewers this might not have been that credible because his body language indicated otherwise.

A final point that requires attention is that there was a major difference between Cohen's candidacy speech and the other analyzed performances. After his speech, in which he announced his arrival in national politics, Cohen was considered to be extremely credible as the next possible prime minister. In this performance all elements came together: staging, framing and scripting all matched with each other. Cohen posed his 'decent society' frame and connected all individual points to create an overarching vision. This vision was also convincingly formulated: he called on pathos, logos, and ethos, and he used many suitable tropes such as repetition, metaphors and anti theses. The citizens at home were explicitly included and given a task to reach the ultimate goal of a decent society and his body language communicated a message of a confident leader who was ready to take the national stage and to perform the role of prime minister. Clearly, this was quite different from what is described above, which helps to understand why Cohen lost a considerable amount of his credibility over time.

6.2 Constructing credibility: Newspaper articles

Besides television performances, also newspaper articles were of importance considering the construction of Cohen's credibility, as they are the second most used source of information for citizens about politics (cf. SCP, 2010; see chapter 3). In these newspapers not only 'clear' news facts are presented, but they are interpreted in some way as well. Especially in back ground articles, journalists provide some sort of framework to help readers make up their minds about certain events. In this part of this chapter on Cohen several aspects of the newspaper articles in which Cohen was mentioned pass in review.

First attention is paid to the characteristics and background of the studied newspaper articles. Secondly, the way in which Cohen was described as a leader – as mayor, as party leader and as potential prime minister – is further discussed. In the period between February 18th and June 10th 2010 four distinct phases can be distinguished in the way in which newspapers wrote about Cohen. Next, besides newspaper articles discussing the performances of Cohen on television shows, newspapers also wrote about the broader context in which he performed and how that might relate to his suitability and credibility as a leader. Fourthly, the story of Cohen was one of a leader who did not made it happen what he had set out to do. However, this did not mean that the newspapers only wrote about Cohen in a negative way. What was mentioned in the articles that praised Cohen for his leadership therefore also requires attention. Finally, in the last part of this section is elaborated on

the differences between the three selected newspapers in how they wrote about Cohen. Is there any difference and if so to what extent and in what way?

6.2.1 Providing some background: Characteristics of newspaper articles on Cohen

For studying how Cohen’s credibility was constructed in newspaper articles, a total of three different newspapers were studied: a quality newspaper (‘de Volkskrant’), a tabloid newspaper (‘de Telegraaf’) and a free newspaper (‘de Metro’). Again, these three newspapers were selected because they covered the diversity in the types of newspapers available and in their category they had the largest amount of copies in circulation in the studied period (see chapter three).

In the period between February 18th and June 10th 2010 a total of 786 articles were published that contained either the word ‘Cohen’ or the words ‘Job Cohen’. After inspection, not all articles turned out to be about Job Cohen, leader of the Labor Party. These non-relevant articles were, for example, about Sacha Baron Cohen’s new film ‘Borat’, about musician Leonard Cohen, about one of the founders of the Ben & Jerry ice cream brand Ben Cohen, or about table tennis player Tali Cohen. After removing all non-relevant articles from the first selection, a total of 738 newspaper articles remained. The largest amount of articles was published by the quality newspaper ‘Volkskrant’ (363 articles). The other two newspapers, the tabloid ‘Telegraaf’ and the free newspaper ‘Metro’, published respectively 269 and 106 articles. Additionally, these articles were not spread out evenly over the studied 3.5 months, but three peak periods could be distinguished (see figure 6.1). The first peak is reached in week eleven, the week of March 15th to March 21st. The second peak can be seen in weeks sixteen and seventeen, thus between April 19th and May 2nd. The third and final peak is reached in week twenty-one to twenty-three, which ran from May 24th to June 10th 2010. Not all three peaks were of the same magnitude. The second one, for example, was not as strong as the first and the third. Additionally, the peaks were not necessarily equally strong in all three newspapers. Except for the first peak, the number of articles in the free newspaper ‘Metro’ did not vary that much over time.

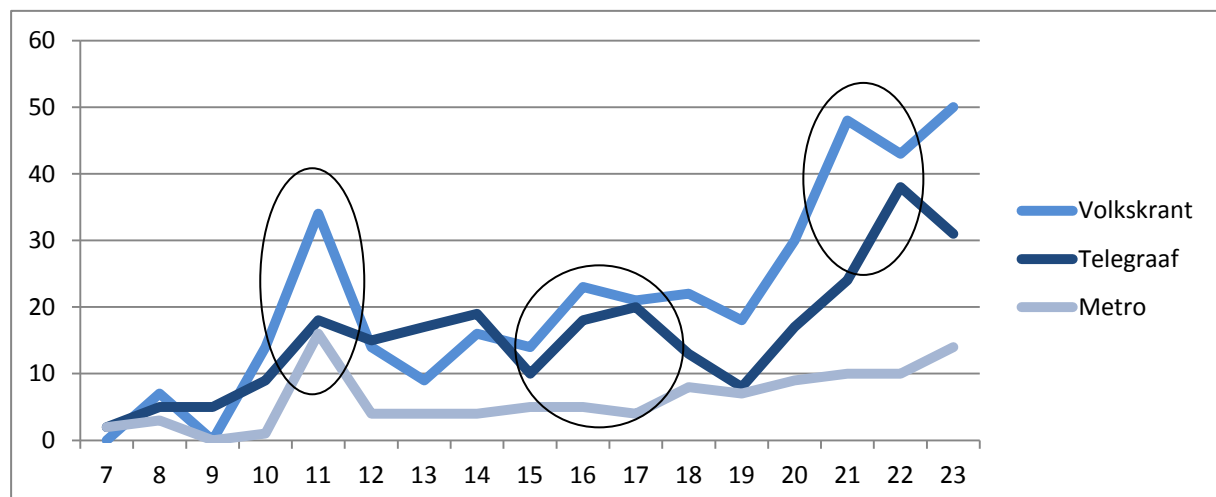


Figure 6.1: Number of newspaper articles on Cohen in the three newspapers. The circles in this graph represent the peaks in the number of newspaper articles on Cohen in each newspaper.

To a large extent the three selected newspapers discussed the same topics. In February and the beginning of March Cohen was still the mayor of Amsterdam. In this respect it was not a coincidence that the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV played no role at all: Cohen performed on a different level. What was written about Cohen was, for example, that he had interviewed crown prince Willem-Alexander and his wife Máxima for the women's magazine 'Margriet' (Metro, February 26th 2010; Volkskrant, February 26th 2010) and that 'Pizzeria Ristorante Ramses' has been closed by his order (Telegraaf, February 24th 2010). The number of articles published on Cohen steeply rose at the beginning of March, after Cohen had made himself available for the position of party leader of the Labor Party. This event also helps to understand the first peak in articles on Cohen. Besides merely bringing the fact that Cohen had stepped forward, 'de Volkskrant' for example reported that 'with Cohen, the Labor Party nevertheless has a trump card in their hands for the confrontation with both Balkenende as Geert Wilders' (March 13th 2010c). Besides the strategic opportunities that had arisen for the Labor party, also attention was paid to the process leading up to Cohen's candidacy. Apparently, Wouter Bos (former leader of the Labor Party) and Job Cohen had already been discussing this moment for over three years (Volkskrant, March 13th 2010a; March 13th 2010d). In the reported polls, the strategic move of the Labor Party was reflected as well. 'De Telegraaf' stated that 'with a plus of three seats, the Labor Party is, after the arrival of Cohen, for the first time in a long period the biggest party again' (March 15th 2010).¹¹⁵

Simultaneously, as Cohen left his position as mayor of Amsterdam, rumors started on who would be his successor. The two names mentioned most often were Guusje ter Horst (at the time the cabinet minister of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations) and Eberhard van der Laan (at the time cabinet minister of Integration and Housing). Before the final choice was made, first Lodewijk Asscher, Labor Party alderman in Amsterdam, temporarily took up the position. It is especially this replacement that stirred a lot of critique. The local Liberal Democratic Party spoke of nepotism and called it an unfair situation. Although Cohen was not directly involved in this, his name was mentioned to indicate the context. 'Metro' for example stated: 'The parties quarreled after Liberal Democratic party leader Ageeth Telleman uttered severe critique on the appointment of Labor party leader and alderman Lodewijk Asscher as acting mayor after Job Cohen had left' (April 22nd 2010).¹¹⁶ Other aspects that received attention were the refusal of redundancy pay by Cohen and the formal farewell of the municipality.

Most attention was paid, however, to Cohen's new role as party leader. Newspapers wrote about him, for example, when he received the first copy of the Labor Party election program, his proposal to make Liberation Day an annual public holiday, his position on immigration, his performances during debates and the changes he made to the election program during the campaign. This also explains the other two peaks in newspaper articles on Cohen. During the first, from April 19th to May 2nd, not only the election campaign 'officially' started, but Cohen had also experienced his first bad performance. After this performance on NOVA the critique on him strengthened. The third peak, from May 24th 2010 to the elections, included the discussion of the two biggest election debates (the Prime Ministers debate and the Carré debate), in which Cohen again failed to impress. Additionally, a point of attention in this period was also the preferred

¹¹⁵ Original text: 'Met drie zetels in de plus is de PvdA na de komst van Cohen voor het eerst sinds lange tijd weer de grootste partij'.

¹¹⁶ Original text: 'De partijen raakten gebrouilleerd nadat D66-fractievoorzitter Ageeth Telleman ernstige kritiek had geuit op de benoeming van PvdA-lijsttrekker en wethouder Lodewijk Asscher tot waarnemend burgemeester na het vertrek van Job Cohen'.

coalition of Cohen and how well Cohen was doing compared to Mark Rutte. Or more precise: that Mark Rutte was doing much better than Cohen was.

Not all articles in which Cohen's name was mentioned were the same. Differences can be noted on the basis of their contents, who had written them and their format. It is too strong to call them distinctive categories that were mutually exclusive. Rather they can be considered indicators that to a certain extent covered the diversity in articles. They helped to come to grips with their meaning as the articles provided additional backbone to the analysis. Starting with the contents of the articles, in the three newspapers was written about Cohen from at least five different angles. First of all, in some articles the contents of the viewpoints and the election program that were brought forward by Cohen were discussed. Attention as for example paid to Cohen's wish to hire additional street coaches and community police officers to tackle problems of nuisance, vandalism and fraud (Volkskrant, May 10th 2010a). Secondly, other articles (especially from the end of April) described and analyzed Cohen's performances on several television shows, like 'Pauw & Witteman' and 'NOVA'. Additionally, some articles also discussed Cohen's performances more broadly by referring to his previous achievements in his previous position mayor of Amsterdam. Fourthly, all three newspapers regularly published an update on how the Labor Party and Cohen were doing in the polls. Were they still the biggest party? How many virtual seats did they lose or win? Was Cohen still considered favorite to become the next prime minister? Finally, in the fifth set of articles Cohen was mentioned he did not play a leading role. In these articles the main topic of interest was for example who would be Cohen's successor or the plans of the Party for Freedom of which the journalists posed that constitute a frontal attack aimed at Job Cohen (Metro, May 10th 2010).

Moving to who had written the articles or 'who spoke', three different senders can be distinguished. The first is an obvious one and that is the journalist. They were responsible for voicing the majority of the articles, although regularly they also used some responses from others in the same article. The second group includes citizens. Via letters to the editor, they commented on the news and events around Cohen. These comments were usually not formulated in a neutral manner but either argued in favor of or against Cohen. Thirdly, also Cohen himself can be considered a sender. He was, for example, interviewed several times and also some letters to the editor were written in his name. In these cases, Cohen was provided with the best means to control his message and much of what he stated in these could also be retraced into his television performances. Finally, focusing on the format of the article, again three ways can be distinguished and they are closely related to who is 'speaking' in the article. If citizens were the main voice, the format normally used was that of a letter to the editor that were published in the 'opinion and debate' section of the newspapers. If the party leader, Cohen, himself as the main voice, this was either in the format of – again – a letter to the editor or in the format of an interview. The third format as most often used by journalists themselves and is what could be considered (by lack of a better name) a 'regular' newspaper article in which journalists write a story about a news fact. Contrary to the letters to the editor, these articles were formulated in a neutral manner. If a judgment was made, it was an expert who was quoted.

6.2.2 Four periods: From mayor to a man who could not live up to the expectations

Considering the development of Cohen's credibility as party leader of the Labor party and as the next prime minister of the Netherlands, four more or less distinctive phases can be derived from the way in which 'de Telegraaf', 'de Volkskrant' and 'de Metro' wrote about him.

Job Cohen: Mayor of Amsterdam

Shortly after the fall of cabinet Balkenende IV, Cohen was not at all in the picture as the next possible prime minister. His candidacy was hardly considered because at that time he was still the mayor of Amsterdam and thus not active on the stage of national politics. Interestingly enough, 'de Telegraaf' did consider him as a potential rival to Wouter Bos, who on February 20th officially still wanted to continue his party leadership. At this point however, it was more speculation than factual knowledge. The articles published on Cohen in this period did not address his leadership specifically, but they reported on certain events in which Cohen had a role to play. He, for example, interviewed the crown prince and his wife, he got critique of Balkenende and Rouvoet on his soft drugs policy and his reaction on the maiden speech of a new member of the Amsterdam council was cited (Telegraaf, February 25th 2010, 3; Metro, February 26th 2010; Volkskrant, March 12th 2010).

Cohenmania: 'Yes we Cohen'

After Cohen made himself available as party leader of the Labor Party, he was immediately the center point of attention. The newspapers did not only mention the fact that he had put himself forward, but also wrote about how well his candidacy had been received: the rise of the Labor Party in the polls is completely attributed to the arrival of Cohen in national politics (Metro, March 15th 2010; Volkskrant, March 13th 2010g). On instant, Cohen was also considered to be favorite for the position of prime minister in most polls: according to the polls of Maurice de Hond, 32% had faith in him as prime minister and in the polls of the television show 'ÉénVandaag' 52% thought he was the one. The day after his candidacy, March 13th, the newspapers started to evaluate his period as mayor of Amsterdam. What went well and what went – at least to a certain extent – wrong?

Cohen was praised mostly for his performance after the assassination of Theo van Gogh (2004) and how he succeeded in 'keeping things together'. Interestingly, shortly after the assassination this was not the general feeling about Cohen's performance. Critics considered him to be 'weak and only drinking tea with imams instead of tackling radicalized Muslims and criminal Moroccans' (Volkskrant, March 13th 2010e).¹¹⁷ Later, even one of his most severe critics, Gijs van de Westelaken (cineaste and friend of Theo van Gogh) acknowledged that Cohen was quite successful in his approach as he kept Populism outside of Amsterdam. Contrary to municipalities like The Hague and Rotterdam, the 'Livable movement' (*Leefbaarheidsbeweging*) hardly took ground. In his 'keeping things together' motto also Cohen's most defining characteristics can be found according to others: the chairman of the youth division of the Labor party described him as 'someone who pre-eminently succeeds in connecting generations' (Volkskrant, March 13th 2010f)¹¹⁸ and a journalist of 'de Volkskrant' stated that he has 'won a lot of authority as a mayor of Amsterdam by being a

¹¹⁷ Original text: 'een slappeling die thee dronk met imams in plaats radicale moslims en criminele Marokkanen aan te pakken'.

¹¹⁸ Original text: 'bij uitstek iemand die generaties weet te binden'.

consensus builder' (March 13th 2010c).¹¹⁹ Furthermore, a citizen hoped that Cohen got a fair chance and that he 'brings together and binds together' (Telegraaf, March 16th 2010a).¹²⁰

On the other hand, Cohen received criticism for his performance on the construction of the 'North/South' metro line in Amsterdam and his stance on immigration and the Islam. The 'North/South' metro line was a prestigious project in Amsterdam that planned to build an additional metro line from the north of Amsterdam to the south of Amsterdam straight through the city center. The construction of this line, however, did not go smoothly. Besides that the project was terribly delayed (the plan was to have it open in 2011 but estimates now think it will be 2017), the construction caused damage to monumental buildings and the budget was exceeded with 300 percent. Instead of 300 million euros, the project was now estimated at 900 million euros. In this sense it might not be that surprising that someone stated that 'he is leaving Amsterdam in a deplorable state, virtually bankrupt because of the North/South line, of which the costs above all were consciously estimated lower to circumvent the city council' (Telegraaf, March 17th 2010).¹²¹ His stance on immigration and integration was criticized because some felt that he was violating the separation between church and state. Cohen feels (or felt) that, for example, imams could play an important role in stimulating integration. He therefore did not turn his back on subsidizing special Muslim facilities, like the Wester Mosque (Volkskrant, March 19th 2010; Volkskrant, May 15th 2010a).

Despite these concerns that were uttered from the beginning, the general image that stuck was the idea that the Labor Party had made a genius strategic decision and that Cohen was the ideal candidate for whom all had been waiting (Telegraaf, March 16th 2010b). On the internet the movement 'Yes we Cohen' emerged, with a Facebook group, a twitter account, a website on which 'Yes we Cohen' merchandize could be bought and a song based on Barack Obama's 'Yes we can' (Volkskrant, March 16th 2010; Telegraaf, March 17th 2010). By some the attention for Cohen was even described as a Cohenmania that 'seems to get a hold on the Netherlands. It is a political fever that has spread mainly via the Internet, a state of mind of believers who feel that the candidate for the party leadership of the Labor Party, Job Cohen, is the savior who will tackle all polder problems' (Volkskrant, March 16th 2010).¹²² This idealized vision of Cohen lasted for about six weeks, until the end of April.

Job Cohen: The decent and controlled statesman with a stammer

The third phase in the perceived credibility of Cohen as potential prime minister and leader of the Labor Party started more or less after his performance on NOVA (April 26th 2010). On May 3rd 2010 'de Metro' reported on a poll conducted shortly after Cohen's performance on NOVA. In this poll of Maurice de Hond a majority of the respondents agreed that Cohen did not do a good job. According to this same article Cohen was criticized for looking 'uninspired and badly prepared' (Metro, May 3rd, 35).¹²³ In 'de Volkskrant' it was even stated that the man performing on NOVA was not Cohen at all: 'across Huys was sitting a politician who looked straight ahead, a black suit, tensed, afraid that he

¹¹⁹ Original text: 'aan het gezag dat de burgemeester van Amsterdam als consensusbouwer heeft verworven'.

¹²⁰ Original text: 'samenbrengt en samenbindt'.

¹²¹ Original text: 'Hij laat Amsterdam in een deplorabele toestand achter, vrijwel failliet dankzij de Noord/Zuid-lijn, waarvan de kosten nota bene bewust lager werden geschat om de gemeenteraad om de tuin te leiden.'

¹²² Original text: 'De Cohenmania lijkt Nederland in zijn greep te krijgen. Het is een politieke koorts die zich vooral op internet verspreidt, een geestesgesteldheid van gelovigen die denken dat de kandidaat voor het PvdA-lijsttrekkerschap Job Cohen als een verlosser alle polderproblemen zal aanpakken'.

¹²³ Original text: 'ongeïnspireerd en slecht voorbereid'.

would forget his rehearsed lines' (April 28th 2010, 3).¹²⁴ Special attention was also paid to his body language. David Pinto, full professor in intercultural communication, was even said to be shocked because a man who, among others, held his hands underneath the table the entire time, was not communicating self-confidence and was not dominantly present (Volkskrant, May 1st 2010a). Additionally, as was noted in 'de Telegraaf', Cohen was again and again unable to reply to the most basic questions about the economic situation in the Netherlands. In short: it was pure incompetence (Telegraaf, April 28th 2010).

Another interesting response was uttered after Cohen's second performance on Pauw & Witteman. During this performance he also failed to impress and his image as a desirable potential prime minister was put even more under pressure. In 'de Volkskrant' it was, for example, sarcastically noted that it would be very fun if Cohen were to become prime minister: 'On every issue he is not interested he says 'I do not feel like it'. Or on questions that do not suit him: 'I will not participate in this'. The weekly conversation with the prime minister could be struck out, after five seconds you are done' (May 8th 2010).¹²⁵ After these performances in which Cohen did not make a very strong impression, it was wondered how he would do in the first televised debates. Would he keep standing (Volkskrant, May 10th 2010b)? Unfortunately for Cohen, this did not happen according to the reporting in the newspapers. They considered it to be surprising that Cohen ended up second in the Prime Ministers debate because he was again stuttering and stammering (Metro, May 25th 2010). In the debate, Cohen was still too much a mayor, which made that he did not do well as a political leader of the Social Democrats (Telegraaf, May 25th 2010). After the second debate, the Carré debate, Cohen was said to have made a perhaps fatal slip because he again was not able to answer questions on his program. To make things worse, these were almost the same questions that were asked three days earlier on the first debate (Telegraaf, May 27th 2010).

Even though in the newspapers both friends and enemies acknowledged these 'bad' performances, Cohen did not lose his first place as favorite to become prime minister until the very end of May. In a poll conducted by the Bureau Consumer Research (Bureau Consumenten Onderzoek) commissioned by 'de Telegraaf', Cohen was still considered to be favorite for prime minister. He got 35,7 percent of the votes, whereas Rutte and Balkenende only got respectively 15.5 percent and 16.1 percent (May 22nd 2010a). Others, like the editor of Elsevier (as quoted in the Volkskrant) also started to defend him, pointing out that for being prime minister other qualities than debating skills mattered (Volkskrant, May 27th 2010b). Other party leaders seemed to assume as well – either strategically or not – that Cohen still had a good chance of becoming prime minister. Alexander Pechtold, leader of the Liberal Democrats, for example stated that 'voting for the Liberal Democrats ensures that Cohen does not turn to the conservative Socialist Party' (Volkskrant, May 27th 2010c).¹²⁶

Job Cohen: unable to live up to the expectations

Although in the polls on virtual allocation of seats the Labor Party and the Liberal Party were going head to head for a long time and in the end the Liberal Party only got one seat more, Mark Rutte overtook Job Cohen as most desirable prime minister from the end of May until the elections. With

¹²⁴ Original text: 'Tegenover Huys zat een strak voor zich uit kijkende politicus, zwart pak, gespannen, bang dat hij zijn gerepeteerde teksten zou vergeten'.

¹²⁵ Original text: 'Bij elk dossier waar hij geen zin in heeft zegt hij 'daar heb ik geen zin in'. Of bij vragen die hem niet komen: 'ik doe hier niet aan mee'. Het wekelijkse gesprek met de premier kunnen ze wel schrappen: na vijf seconden ben je klaar.

¹²⁶ Original text: 'Een stem op D66 zorgt ervoor dat Cohen niet de conservatieve SP erbij trekt'.

49 percent of the votes, Rutte left Cohen behind (Volkskrant, June 5th 2010). Cohen grew a bit in his role as party leader and supposedly started to perform better, but he never did live up to the others (Telegraaf, June 8th 2010; June 10th 2010a). As 'de Volkskrant' states: 'Whereas it is one election to many for Balkenende, it is one too little for Cohen. (...) It is only now that he is fully exposed to the heat of the debate. The elections increasingly are a test of character. (...) Cohen was unmasked, he does not have the leadership qualities that Left thought he had' (Volkskrant, June 7th 2010, 47).¹²⁷ After June 9th, it thus turned out that Cohen was not able to live up to the expectations people had of him when he started his career as a party leader. In the end, Mark Rutte was thought to be more credible for leading the country than he was.

6.2.3 Taking a newspaper perspective: understanding the decline of Job Cohen

Besides providing a description of events in society and politics, as said newspapers also have the function of reflecting on what happened as well as providing some sort of framework to help citizens understand what is going on. In this respect, some articles also reflected on the functioning of Cohen as party leader during the election campaigns, which to a certain extent was already described above. Next to the reflections on Cohen's actual performances on television shows, the newspaper articles also provide some clues on what other circumstances might have contributed to the substantial decline in Cohen's credibility.

Relatively quickly after Cohen entered the stage of national politics, the first critics already started to wonder whether Cohen was actually the good man for the good fight. 'De Telegraaf' referred to a statement of former Labor cabinet minister Frank de Grave who posed that 'Cohen is well-informed about societal issues, but he does not have much knowledge of finances and economy, while everything is now about the question how to get the economy back on track again' (March 13th 2010b).¹²⁸ Cohen profiled himself on immigration and integration, and was not that strong on economics (the strength of Rutte). In this sense the dominance of economics instead of integration during the election campaigns turned out to be a disadvantage for him. Secondly, in all three analyzed newspapers at one point was wondered whether Cohen was not more of an administrator than a politician. Even though both are positions within the public sector, they require different skills (Metro, March 22nd 2010). He had to account himself for his proposals, but 'he did not have the necessary figures at hand to support it, out of nerves he stammered and he was an easy prey for his enemies. The speed of the debate and the street fighter mentality of the other (experienced) party leaders, the unceasing interruptions – the Labor Party leader could not respond to that. He had campaigned never before, he was always an appointed administrator' (Volkskrant, June 10th 2010a).¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Original text: 'Is het voor Balkenende een verkiezing te veel, voor Cohen is het er een te weinig. (...) Pas nu wordt hij blootgesteld aan de hitte van het debat. De verkiezingen zijn steeds meer een karaktertest. (...) Cohen is door de mand gevallen, hij heeft niet de leiderschapskwaliteiten die links bij hem veronderstelde'.

¹²⁸ Original text: 'Cohen is goed thuis in maatschappelijke vraagstukken, maar hij heeft weinig verstand van financiën en economie en alles draait nu om de vraag hoe we de economie weer op het rechte spoor kunnen zetten'.

¹²⁹ Original text: 'hij had de cijfers om zijn verhaal te onderbouwen niet paraat, hakkelde van de zenuwen en was een makkelijke prooi voor zijn tegenstanders. Het debattempo en de straatvechtersmentaliteit van de andere (ervaren) lijsttrekkers, het onophoudelijke interrumpen – de PvdA leider had er geen antwoord op. Hij voerde nooit eerder champagne, was altijd benoemd bestuurder.'

A second element that was said not to contribute to Cohen's position was that he had made three changes to his election program, even after both the members of the Labor Party and the Central Planning Agency had already approved his program and budget. Halfway May he announced that the Labor Party planned to cut back an additional 10 billion euros. Thus instead of only cutting back 20 billion euros, the total amount now was put at 30 billion euros in reduced spending (Telegraaf, May 19th 2010). The other two changes entailed introducing the higher pension aid in 2020 instead of 2015, and they decided not to opt for making the excess in health care insurance income dependent (Telegraaf, May 22nd 2010b; Volkskrant, May 26th 2010). The changes were said to have contributed to the image of Cohen not having the necessary economic knowledge. As 'de Volkskrant' stated: 'Cohen's entourage made one mistake after another in the election program – to the extent that the Labor Party leader had to adjust the program up to three times. Even after the Central Planning Agency [Centraal Plan Bureau, SvZ] (CPB) had already given their seal of approval: a deadly sin at the 'Binnenhof'. In the eyes of the voter, this confirmed the image that Cohen is not knowledgeable about the economy' (June 10th 2010a).¹³⁰

A third point that was considered to be damaging to Cohen's suitability as a leader in the national domain was that he was accused of 'turning' in his position on the extension of the (police) mission to Afghanistan. The previous cabinet had fallen over extending the military mission to Afghanistan, and at that point the Labor Party also did not want to talk about turning it into a police-training mission. Later on, in April, the Labor Party also did not support a motion that requested the cabinet to investigate the option of training Afghan policemen by Dutch colleagues (Volkskrant, April 30th 2010). However, at the end of April Cohen stated on the television show 'Oog in Oog' that he was willing to talk about a police mission to Afghanistan. Other members of the Labor Party continued to emphasize with Cohen that this was not a change in position, but that the earlier motion, for example, still left too much room for a military mission. Contrary, parties like the Socialist Party rushed to state that they considered it to be 'bizarre and embarrassing that 'all of a sudden Cohen is saying yes' to such a mission after all (Volkskrant, May 1st 2010b).¹³¹ The Liberal Party, contrary, 'welcomed the new turn of the Labor Party' (Telegraaf, April 30th 2010).¹³²

6.2.4 'Volkskrant', 'Telegraaf' & 'Metro': All alike?

The three analyzed newspapers were all leading newspapers considering their number of copies in their category – quality newspaper, tabloid newspaper and free newspaper. The question is whether these three newspapers all reported in the same way about Cohen or whether there were substantial differences between them. To a large extent there were also similarities, as the basic analysis of Cohen's leadership, performances and all other relevant discussed aspects were the same or at least complementary to each other in the three newspapers. In other words: they had a common core. But what about the differences?

One of the first most obvious differences in the reporting on Job Cohen in the newspapers is the difference in the number of articles in which he was mentioned. As already noted in the introduction of this newspaper analysis on Cohen, 363 articles in 'de Volkskrant' contained a

¹³⁰ Original text: 'Cohens entourage stapelde fout op fout in het verkiezingsprogramma – zodanig dat de PvdA-leider tot drie keer toe door de knieën moest om het programma aan te passen. Zelfs nog na het goedkeuringsstempel van het Centraal Planbureau (CPB): een doodzonde op het Binnenhof. Het bevestigde in de ogen van de kiezer het beeld dat Cohen geen verstand heeft van economie'.

¹³¹ Original text: 'bizar en beschamend dat Cohen nu ja zegt'.

¹³² Original text: 'We juichen de nieuwe draai van de PvdA toe'.

reference to Job Cohen. In 'de Telegraaf' and 'de Metro' respectively only 269 and 106 articles related to Cohen. Secondly, when comparing the free newspaper 'Metro' to the other two, it can be noted that the articles in 'de Metro' were relatively short compared to the articles in 'de Volkskrant' and 'de Telegraaf'. On average, newspaper articles in 'de Metro' contained 284 words, articles in 'de Volkskrant' had an average length of 655 words, and 'de Telegraaf' published articles on Cohen of 474 words. Related, the articles in 'de Metro' were mainly on (short) news facts and contained relatively little reflection on the events, whereas this happened more often in the quality newspaper and the tabloid newspaper. At the end of the election campaigns both Rutte and Cohen stated that after the elections a cabinet should be formed as soon as possible (Metro, June 8th 2010). To what extent this was actually possible and under what circumstances this could be hampered or not was not paid any attention to. In this sense, these statements of Cohen and Rutte were not put into context. Additionally, instead of referring to experts on why things happen Metro often asked citizens to comment on the news in one or two sentences. These comments are used in sections like 'What do you think?'. The third difference between the three newspapers is that especially between 'de Telegraaf' and 'de Volkskrant' there was a major difference in tone. 'De Volkskrant' spoke of a Cohenmania and, for example, stated that with Cohen the Labor Party had a major advantage to counter both Balkenende and Geert Wilders (Volkskrant, March 13th 2010c). 'De Telegraaf', on the other hand, drew more attention to the downsides of Cohen's candidacy: 'From north to south, mayor Cohen makes a mess of Amsterdam. As a contemporary sheriff of Nottingham he lets his gang of parking robbers steal from the people... And he victimizes hard working merchants to the stab and trigger-happy hands of city scum. Therefore we need to see him as the ideal successor of Balkenende' (March 16th 2010c).¹³³ This difference in tone can be understood by looking at the profiles of the newspapers. The origins of 'de Volkskrant' lie with the catholic working-class, and the newspaper is politically positioned as left from the middle. Furthermore, the audience of readers was different for both newspapers. Data from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 2010 suggested that citizens who intended to vote for either the Liberal Party or the Party for Freedom mostly read 'De Telegraaf', while readers of 'De Volkskrant' were more inclined to vote for Left parties. This could be either the Labor Party or the GreenLeft and Liberal Democratic Party.

6.2.5 Cohen's credibility in newspaper articles

What do the above findings mean for Cohen's credibility and what can be learned from the way in which the newspapers have written about him considering the question of why Cohen lost a substantial amount of his credibility during the national election campaigns of 2010? As can be derived from the four phases that could be distinguished in the way in which the newspapers wrote about Cohen as a potential prime minister, they followed the steps of Cohen from up close. He was initially considered as the ideal candidate for being prime minister, a leader of whom everybody was waiting, but after his first major media performances this gradually but steadily started to change until at the beginning of July Rutte took over his position as most credible future leader.

Going back to the trait approach on credibility, the two basic characteristics of credible leaders are trustworthiness and competency. In this respect the newspapers highlight several interesting aspects that might help to understand the decrease in perceived credibility. Starting the

¹³³ Original text: 'Burgemeester Cohen maakt van noord tot zuid een puinhoop van Amsterdam. Als een eigentijdse sheriff van Nottingham laat hij zijn parkeeroversbende het volk bestelen... En gooit hij hardwerkende kooplui ten prooi aan de steek- en schietgrage handjes van stadstuig.

statements of Cohen quoted in the newspapers – either in the interviews, letter to the editors or derived from other performances – it can be stated that they were relatively consistent. The proposals he made could, just as in the television performances, be retraced to his main ‘decent society’ frame. Additionally, not only could they be retraced to the central frame, the uttered stances in the newspapers were also the same as on television. Therefore, citizens heard the same points over and over again which could help to gain support for them and which might have helped to build an image of being credible. On the other hand one could wonder whether Cohen was actually able to get these concrete proposals across, as due to the less successful television performances he did not tell a clear and coherent story. Consequently, the repetition might not have been recognized as such. On the other hand, the ideas that Cohen tried to convey were not only consistent in different media, but over time as well. Cohen’s story and ideals of binding people together and bridging differences, was a story that formed the basis of Cohen’s reputation. Especially after the assassination of Theo van Gogh he was given much credit for it, not only in the Netherlands but abroad as well. This consistency over time might actually have contributed to a credible image, as it showed that he was stable in his core values and that he indeed tried to realize them.

Another point that might have helped Cohen in building a credible image was his style of presentation. In the reports on the debates and in short subordinate clauses the newspapers again and again wrote that Cohen was trying to be a wise statesman who stood above the parties. In the debates he was said not to be shouting, but that he was polite and let others finish their sentences. Additionally he was focused on the contents and his principles, instead of only being interested in his own share of votes. Such an image made him credible as a potential prime minister because in such a position a leader is supposed to be needed who can bridge the (ideological) differences between parties and who puts the interests of the nation before party interests. Not power, but serving the nation should be the prime motivation.

The above points are all in favor of Cohen’s credibility. However, there are also points that might have damaged his credibility and one is his ‘turn’ in his position about extending a (police) mission to Afghanistan. Rival politicians accused Cohen and the Labor Party of altering their views because Cohen stated that he was willing to talk about it while the Labor Party had not supported a similar motion a week earlier. Such a turn damages the consistency of a leader’s views and thus his credibility. Nevertheless, it can be debated to what extent this critique actually stuck. In the campaigns of 2006 a similar accusation of Balkenende against Bos became a turning point in the elections (Volkskrant, May 15th 2010b), but in this case this did not happen. Looking more closely at the newspaper articles it became clear that mostly fellow politicians and not at all citizens uttered this critique. From this perspective, although this supposed ‘turn’ might have had major consequences for the perceived credibility of Cohen, it did not turned out to be the case.

For understanding why Cohen lost a substantial amount of his credibility, the key was thus not in the above points. Rather, his credibility seemed to be much more affected by the following. As previously stated, Cohen’s basic ideas did not change and his concrete policy proposals were also in the same line of reasoning. At the same time, Cohen did change his election program three times during the campaigns. Normally this would not count as a very consistent performance. In Cohen’s case, these sudden and late changes in the program were considered to be mistakes that showed how much knowledge Cohen lacked about the Dutch economy and about what needed to be done to get it back on track.

Moreover, besides his rattling knowledge on the economy, Cohen’s perceived credibility for the role of prime minister was also harmed by his bad television performances. The newspapers have

elaborately reported on the events of, for example, the televised debates. Repeatedly, Cohen was said to have performed badly, not only according to journalists, but according to citizens and experts as well. Thus, if a citizen was not convinced yet that the debates did not go very well for Cohen, the newspaper articles would get him doubting. Although it was also wondered explicitly a couple of times whether being a good debater is the skill that made someone a fit prime minister, it is on the other hand a basic skill that is required for the next leader of the Netherlands. A prime minister constantly has to defend his position, not only in the national arena, but abroad as well. A stumbling leader would not do much good in that respect. Related, when referred back to his time as the mayor of Amsterdam, Cohen was not praised for his decisiveness. This might have harmed his perceived credibility as a leader as, especially in times of an economic crisis, leaders are supposed to take action and to solve things. Combined, following the findings of the newspaper analysis Cohen's loss in credibility can mainly be understood as stemming from the doubts on his political skills and economic knowledge. It was doubted too much whether he had what it took to get the Netherlands through the tough times of the economic crisis.

A final possible disadvantage for Cohen that was mentioned was the dominance of the economy as an election theme. Cohen's profile was mainly based on the theme of immigration, which beforehand was thought to become very important. Thus, if immigration actually had become the dominant theme it might have given Cohen more opportunities to shine and he might not have been blamed as much for his lack of economic knowledge. Naturally, the dominance of the economy did not make Cohen defenseless and it was always up to him to also seize the opportunities that he was given, but it might have made the elections a bit easier for him.

6.3 Credible leadership: The verdict on Job Cohen

Why did Cohen lose a substantial amount of his credibility in the period between his candidacy as party leader of the Labor Party and the parliamentary elections of 2010? This was the central question to which this chapter sought an answer. In short the answer reads that Cohen became less credible because he lacked the needed knowledge and skills apparently required for the position of prime minister of the Netherlands in times of an economic crisis.

Starting with the match between Cohen's vision on the one hand and the broader context on the other hand, it can be derived from the findings that at least in theory a match was possible. The 'decent society' frame had the potential to also become a dominant vision on how to handle the cutbacks: not leaving anyone behind and letting everybody contribute their share based on what additional burden they can carry. All parties agreed that cutbacks were necessary, only the way in which these should be conducted differed. In this sense reasoning from the 'decent society' frame could have been a valuable alternative to the 'cold and harsh' cutbacks proposed by the Liberal Party. In practice it seemed that this match was not achieved, mainly because of the difficulties Cohen experienced regarding his knowledge and skills.

Although the different policy proposals made and views uttered by Cohen could all individually be retraced to the 'decent society' frame, he did not connect the various points explicitly together and he also did not clearly connect them to the underlying values of solidarity and equality. Over time this lack of coherence gave the impression that Cohen did not have a clear end goal in mind, but that he was only responding to issues in a more 'ad hoc' manner. As such it harmed the perceived competency of Cohen, as it did not give the impression that Cohen was very aware of what he was doing. It did not make him seem as if he was working towards realizing a bigger plan. It was

additionally thus also not the case that Cohen repeated the same things over and over again – necessary to make ideas stick (Lakoff, 2004; De Bruijn, 201). Rather he responded merely to the questions being asked to him, without taking much initiative.

Moreover, the television performances and the newspaper articles suggest several other reasons for why Cohen was considered to lack (to a large extent) the necessary skills. In the newspaper articles he was mostly criticized for having not enough economic knowledge and for being more an administrator than a politician. Taking into account on what aspects Cohen was criticized, other political skills besides these content related skills were needed as well. One of these skills were debating skills and standing one's ground on such occasions. Repeatedly, Cohen was declared the loser of the debates even though in the polls he ended as the runner up. Next to the debates, also the performances on other shows were explicitly criticized, especially his performance on NOVA which was said to have ended the 'Cohenmania'. Cohen was thought to have lost the debates because he repeatedly did not know the answers to essential questions, because he stammered and because he let his head down. The impression that Cohen was really having a difficult time could be derived from the newspapers' judgments that he was 'nervous and tensed'.

These findings of the newspaper analysis were in line with the dramaturgical analysis. Due to the earlier mentioned point of a lack of coherence in Cohen's message, it was not always that clear towards what Cohen was heading. In this respect the occasional stammer and the long time it took him to formulate an answer did not help either. Moreover, it seemed that Cohen was not very capable of reframing critique against him. If he came round to reframing at all, it again often took him so much time to formulate an answer that he was already interrupted again. Related, he did not get to the point straight away, but beat around the bush, and his manner of speech was relatively vague and abstract. In explaining his views Cohen also tended to refer back to previous things with words like 'these, those, that and this'. However, because Cohen did not simplify his language, hardly connected his views to day-to-day examples, and because he did not formulate a coherent story, it was quite difficult to reconstruct to what he was referring, even when having the exact transcript on paper. This did not enhance the comprehensibility of Cohen's stances at all and one could start to wonder if Cohen himself knew what he was talking about. Except for his candidacy speech, Cohen also hardly established a relationship with his audience. In the type of arguments he used to convince, he mostly drew upon 'logos' like arguments and occasionally some ethos. As pathos is relatively little used, Cohen did not speak to the heart of citizens. This might have damaged Cohen's perceived credibility as it created a distance between him and the citizens and therefore might have given the idea that Cohen did not know what 'normal' citizens were going through.

If he, additionally, referred back to his own experience he mostly refers to his time as the mayor of Amsterdam. In this respect he highlighted, for example, that when he was in office he reduced the crime rates, but what measures he took to achieve this was not clarified. This made it more difficult for citizens to understand what he had done. Moreover, what also might not have contributed to the image of Cohen's debating skills was that in the debates, but also in his other performances, he did not take any initiative. He refrained to a large extent from interrupting others but rather waited until the leader of the debate explicitly gave him the floor. Again, as it took him a long time to formulate his stance, he repeatedly was already interrupted before he had finished his story. Due to his passive attitude he also hardly got the floor back again. Related to the content, furthermore, it was often not Cohen who attacked others. Contrary, Cohen was usually in the defense mode and waited to see what the others came up with. He did try to attack the plans of the Liberal Party by labeling them cold and destructive to the economy, but as Cohen was unable to

answer basic questions about the Dutch economy and the exact contents of his proposed measures he did not get a long way with these attacks.

Contrary to the interesting indicators on why Cohen lost credibility, it is also possible to distinguish some elements that might have contributed to his credibility. Although there was a lack of coherence between the individual points and even though these individual views were not connected explicitly to the broader values, they were also not outright challenging each other. It is, in other words, not a coincidence that the individual points could be retraced to the 'decent society' frame. Cohen had already been conveying the values underlying the 'decent society' frame, solidarity and equality in involving all in society, before he had entered national politics. As early as 2004, after the assassination of Theo van Gogh, Cohen gained his reputation for aiming to bind people together and bridge the differences between them. As he continued this same vision also after his arrival in national politics, it gives a credible impression as apparently Cohen stayed true to himself and his convictions. A second element for why Cohen could be considered credible was his style of presentation. In his performances he always tried to perform as a controlled and calm statesman, who was considering the pros and cons of each position carefully and who stood above all parties. As such this made him trustworthy for always keeping the interest of the nation in mind.

A final point that requires attention is that there was a major difference between Cohen's candidacy speech and the other analyzed performances. After this speech it was not remarkable that Cohen was welcomed that enthusiastically on the national stage, because all elements came together. Cohen posed a coherent vision, accompanied with a few concrete ideas on what has to happen. This vision was also convincingly formulated: not only did he use a combination of pathos, logos and ethos. The vision was also formulated straightforwardly and in a direct way. By doing so he did not only call out to the mind of the voters, but also to their hearts. Furthermore, citizens were explicitly included and given a role to reach the 'decent society' and his body language communicated the image of a confident leader. Clearly, this was quite different from what as described above in the general findings about the performances. Thus to conclude, although Cohen got off at a very good start he was not able to continue it. Considering Cohen's credibility it seemed that the flaws in his performances considering framing and scripting (as staging did not go wrong at all) mostly affected his perceived credibility.

Chapter 7

Comparing Rutte and Cohen

In the previous two chapters the cases of Mark Rutte and Job Cohen are described and analyzed individually for how it can be understood that Rutte gained credibility while Cohen lost a substantial amount of it. To fully grasp why one leader was considered increasingly credible whereas the other was not, it is necessary to compare what they were doing on the various elements of their performance. This makes it possible to distill those elements that made a difference. To be able to pinpoint these distinctive elements, in this chapter the analyses of Rutte and Cohen are studied and compared up close, element per element. In this comparison the analyses of the television performances and the analyses of the newspaper articles are combined. First attention is paid to the contextual factors: what events, more or less independently from the performances of both leaders, can be considered of importance for the credibility of both Cohen and Rutte? Next, the elements of staging, framing and scripting are discussed one by one to see where the performances of Job Cohen and Mark Rutte differed. Finally, after the individual comparison elements, the findings are integrated to reach an overall picture on their credibility. Additionally, attention is paid to whether some elements of the dramaturgical analysis seemed to matter more than others and if so, why.

7.1 Contextual factors: The dominance of the economy over immigration

Two themes predominantly came back in the elections when taking into account the nineteen unique analyzed performances and the newspaper articles in which either Cohen or Rutte was mentioned: the first was immigration & integration, and the second was the economy & the necessary cutbacks. The two leaders are not involved in these two themes in the same way. Especially in his period as the mayor of Amsterdam, Cohen earned his reputation for trying to bind

and bridge within the multicultural society. In the period shortly after the assassination of Theo van Gogh, he succeeded in preventing the city from falling apart. The day after Cohen made himself available for the position of party leader 'de Volkskrant' argued that 'based on his experience in Amsterdam, Cohen would perhaps be better able than Bos to bridge the gap between various social and religious groups in society' and 'Wilders in his rants against the 'tea drinking multi-cultural hugger' Cohen will have difficulties to alter the authority the mayor of Amsterdam had gained as a consensus builder' (Volkskrant, March 13th 2010c).¹³⁴ Cohen's (successful) reputation is thus closely linked to the theme of immigration & integration. For Rutte, this is not the case. He positioned himself and the Liberal Party more as an expert on economics. To use the earlier example on the Liberal Party's ethos: 'If I look at our track record, in the early eighties during the economic crisis the Liberal party took responsibility. Early this century during the economic crisis we took our responsibility. Twice, in those difficult times, we have been able to almost fully execute our election program' (Miljarden Gezocht, May 13th 2010: 00:14:08 ff.).¹³⁵ The Liberal Party election program, additionally, put an important focus on the economy and his performances Rutte continuously emphasized the need to put the state finances back in check and to cure the economy.

When Cohen entered national politics, it was expected that the big battle would be between him and Wilders on immigration and integration. None of this came true. In the course of the election campaigns, the issue of immigration and integration moved to the back, while the theme of the economy and the necessary cutbacks became increasingly salient. As Rutte in a way 'owned' the latter issue, the increasing attention for the economy gave him the opportunity to elaborate broadly on his plans for tackling the budget cuts and for getting the economy back on track. In other words: he had an easy and willing stage to spread his ideas. Cohen, on the other hand, did not exactly benefit from this shift in focus. He was known for his desire and ability to keep divided groups in society together and for his commitment to let everybody participate in society as much as they can. A great economic knowledge, contrary, was not a characteristic that was often attributed to Cohen. Critics pointed, for example, at the prestigious North/ South metro line project in which Cohen was said to have let the budget run out of control (Telegraaf, March 16th 2010b). As such, the prominence of the economy as an election theme can be considered a disadvantage for Cohen. Particularly when compared to Rutte, the dominance of the economy did not provide Cohen with additional opportunities to shine. Or rather: it was far more difficult for Cohen to dominate this debate as compared to Rutte he was lagging behind from the start due to his perceived lack of economic knowledge.¹³⁶ In terms of credibility, Cohen had to work harder to make his vision plausible and to convince voters of his suitability to lead the country. Rutte, contrary, benefited from the idea that the Liberal Party was more obvious one to get the Netherlands out of the crisis. In this respect, it is thus not that surprising that political scientist André Krouwel noted in 'de Volkskrant' that the

¹³⁴ Original text: 'Cohen zal op grond van zijn ervaringen in Amsterdam wellicht beter dan Bos in staat zijn de kloof tussen de verschillende sociale en religieuze groepen in de samenleving te overbruggen' and 'Wilders in zijn tirades tegen de 'thee drinkende multiculti-kuffelaar' Cohen zal moeite hebben iets af te doen aan het gezag dat de burgemeester van Amsterdam als consensusbouwer heeft verworven'.

¹³⁵ Original text: 'Als ik kijk naar ons track record, begin jaren '80 in de economische crisis heeft de VVD verantwoordelijkheid genomen. Begin deze eeuw in de economische crisis hebben wij verantwoordelijkheid genomen. Tot twee keer toe hebben wij die moeilijke tijden ons verkiezingsprogramma bijna volledig kunnen uitvoeren.'

¹³⁶ In political science this idea relates to the 'issue ownership theory of voting' and the 'saliency theory of party competition'. The latter '*holds that, within a certain historical context, most political actors favor only one course of action on most issues (e.g., Budget, 1999:30). Each of the parties has a set of policy issues that they "own", i.e., policy areas where they have a relatively good reputation. So, parties can gain electoral support by increasing the saliency of each of their issues during a campaign, reason for them to consistently emphasize "their" topics*' (Van der Brug, 2004).

extensive attention for the economy helped Rutte to win the elections, while it is disadvantageous to the political parties on the Left, including the Labor Party of Cohen (May 19th 2010).

Interestingly enough, another course of events also would have been plausible. As Paul Rosenmöller put it bluntly in his talk show: the Liberals have caused the economic crisis (May 31st 2010: 00:00:55). The market capitalism had enabled the ‘perverse’ incentives to emerge at the top of the corporate sector and has therefore stimulated irresponsible behavior. The banking sector with their short-term bonus systems was, in this respect, generally considered to be the prime example of these excesses. The Liberal Party positioned itself as a protagonist of the free market and as such was closely associated with capitalism. The traditional followers of the Liberal Party were generally also considered to be the elite businessmen, including the bankers. Although Rutte himself naturally did not agree with the suggestion that his party or the underlying ideology had anything to do with the economic crisis, this idea is not that strange. As a citizen wrote in a letter to the editor: ‘neoliberalism has caused the problems, why do all those people [intend, SvZ] to vote for a neoliberal party’ (Volkskrant, June 1st 2010)?¹³⁷ If this line of reasoning had caught on, Cohen would have had an advantageous position to build a credible image as the best suitable prime minister to lead the country, whereas Rutte would have had more difficulties to stand his ground. The question is whether this was just something that happened to them or whether Cohen and Rutte could have done something about it as well. In this respect, it is interesting to take a closer look at the different performances of Mark Rutte and Job Cohen.

7.2 Staging: Comparing the design, the props and their wardrobe

The dramaturgical analysis conducted for both Rutte and Cohen consisted of the elements staging, framing and scripting. Starting with staging, the performances of the leaders can be compared on three aspects: the design of the stage, the available props and their use, and their personal appearance.

The analyzed performances of Cohen and Rutte could be categorized into the same three types: a speech, debates, and talk shows. In part the performances analyzed for both leaders overlapped. Considering the two major debates analyzed for this study, Rutte as well as Cohen were present at both of them. Occasionally they were thus directly opposing each other in their performance. Also in another way the performances of Cohen and Rutte overlapped as, although on different episodes, they both performed at the following five talk shows: ‘Miljarden Gezocht’, ‘Paul Rosenmöller en...’, ‘De Wereld Draait Door’, ‘Knevel en Van den Brink’, and ‘NOVAPolitiek’. Even though in this thesis only a selection of the television performances was analyzed, combined with the newspapers it does point to the notion that to a large extent Cohen and Rutte had to deal with the same circumstances and had more or less the same opportunities to take control. In other words: the circumstances in which they had to perform were comparable and these posed to a certain extent the same challenges and chances.

¹³⁷ Original text: ‘Het neoliberalisme heeft ons in de shit geholpen, waarom stemmen al die mensen dan op een neoliberale partij?’

7.2.1 Designing stages

The first aspect of the element staging is the design of the stage. Related to the different opportunities to take control on each stage, Cohen and Rutte were basically only able to take full control of the design of the stage during their speeches. During his candidacy speech, Cohen stood directly opposite of his audience, facing the camera. While giving his speech, he stood behind a wooden, relatively massive, lectern. At the background banners with the Labor Party symbol were strategically positioned. Rutte maintained the same position versus the audience and also in this case symbols of the Liberal Party were omnipresent. The main difference between this speech, and the speech of Cohen was that because he did not stand behind a lectern he had the opportunity to move around more. The absence of such a lectern decreased the distance between him and his audience as literally nothing was standing in between them. Considering credibility one can wonder whether it was actually an option for Cohen not to use a lectern of some sort at his candidacy speech. Whereas the analyzed speech of Rutte was given at a party conference, Cohen's speech was delivered in a press conference. The speech accompanied the official announcement that Cohen had made himself available for the position of party leader. As such it is thus not surprising that there was a lectern present as it gave Cohen the opportunity to discretely keep his notes with him. On the other hand, related to the distance build towards the audience and the ease to which they can be drawn into the performance, a less bulky lectern might have been more suitable. In the other performances analyzed of Cohen and Rutte, they did not have the opportunity to design the stages themselves, as they were guests at shows directed by others. At 'Pauw & Witteman', for example, it were the hosts Jeroen Pauw and Paul Witteman who were in charge during the show, and during the Prime Minister it was Frits Wester who controlled what happened, not Rutte or Cohen.

7.2.2 The use of props by Cohen and Rutte

Moving over to the props, during their speeches Rutte and Cohen both had the most opportunities to use props. As already mentioned with the design of the stage, props containing symbols of the Labor Party and the Liberal Party were omnipresent. On the stage where Cohen delivered his speech, there were more props present than the banners containing the Labor Party logo. Next to these banners, also the lectern contained the Labor Party logo. Additionally, while discussing the design of the stage, the presence and position of the lectern was already mentioned. Although it could be noted that a smaller lectern might have reduced the distance between Cohen and his audience, the lectern was convenient for hiding the notes Cohen needed. Even when filmed from the side, the notes could not be seen. Why did the audience know that he used notes? This was given away by his reading glasses and the clear turning of pages. In Rutte's case the logo of the Liberal Party was projected full size on three screens and the entire audience present at the Party Conference was dressed in clothing on which also the logo was depicted. They, for example, wore a white scarf or a white cardigan with the logo and party name on it. The prop of the lectern was thus not present at Rutte's speech, as he did not use one.

This also brings us to a very important difference between Rutte and Cohen. Rutte did not use any notes during any of the analyzed performances and as such also not during his speech. He walked around the stage with only a microphone in his hand and due to the filming it was clear that there were no notes present on other places of the stage. Additionally, although he might perhaps have worn an earpiece, this was not at all visible to the audience. Considering credibility, using notes might not harm it, but it is not unimaginable that delivering a speech by heart can contribute to the

perceived credibility as a political leader. Firstly because he did not need help in remembering the necessary figures and facts for what needed to be done. Secondly, credibility was enhanced because not needing notes gave the impression that what Rutte said came straight from the heart and that he really meant it.

In the other performances, Cohen and Rutte did not have the opportunity to use many props, but they could mostly only take a sip of water at a strategic moment. In the talk shows and in the Prime Ministers debate, it is not quite accepted to use notes, and this was also not possible without it attracting attention. As such Cohen had a disadvantage compared to Rutte as his performances showed that Cohen needed a bit of help in clearly formulating his message. Interesting in the Carré debate was that in this debate it was possible to hide a sheet of paper. Balkenende also showed this possibility, as at one point during the debate he showed a sheet of paper with some facts on it. This broke the illusion that everything had to be done by heart. However, there was no way to find out whether Rutte and Cohen had any notes with them or not as this was not explicitly addressed or depicted.

7.2.3 Personal appearance: conveying image via clothing and physical features

The last aspect of staging is the personal appearance of leaders. In terms of credibility it is important that the clothes worn are fitting to both the situation and to the impression that the leader wishes to convey. Cohen and Rutte met both these requirements in the analyzed performances. Overall, Cohen was dressed slightly more formal than Rutte. Both wore dark suits with pale colored shirts all the time, but due to the ties they wore the color contrasts were much stronger in Cohen's case. Whereas Cohen always wore a bright red or bronzed red tie, Rutte wore a lavender, a beige or a silver tie. All performances analyzed of Cohen required a formal attire of a suit and tie, for Rutte also one 'light entertainment' program (Carlo & Irene) was studied. For this performance Rutte dressed appropriately, while still doing justice to the serious image he wanted to convey: he wore a suit without a tie. The question is whether Cohen's more formal and authoritative appearance made any difference considering credibility compared to Rutte's appearance. First of all, the difference in color contrast is clear, but minor. Both dress authoritatively, only Cohen slightly more. Moreover, one could wonder whether a more formal attire of Rutte over Cohen would have been appropriate. Rutte is, for example, twenty years younger than Cohen. Therefore, this difference in formality might converge with the differences in seniority. Additionally, Cohen aimed for the wise statesman image, whereas Rutte in a way had to prove that he was an 'ordinary' citizen as well, instead of only representing the 'elite'. As such, the differences in clothing might have contributed to both their credibility.

Besides wardrobe, the physical features of leaders also matter for the impression they make. What the newspapers highlighted repeatedly, and what was also clearly visible in the performances, was that Cohen was much more senior than the more junior Mark Rutte. This seniority of Cohen would make him more suitable as a prime minister than the more junior Mark Rutte. Being considered too young for the job might give the impression that a leader does not have enough knowledge to tackle the complex problems government is facing, and the idea that he is not serious enough about the position and his responsibilities might sooner stick. Until quite far along the election campaigns there were others on the table as well as possibilities to become prime minister instead of Rutte if the Liberal Party won the elections. The alternative candidates were Neelie

Kroes, eurocommissioner, and Ivo Opstelten, at the time mayor of Tilburg. These two candidates were much older than Rutte and also had considerably more experience in administrative and political positions. However, considering credibility, the seniority of Cohen and Rutte eventually turned out not to matter that much, as the confidence in Rutte as the most suitable prime minister continued growing. At the beginning of June, Rutte even surpassed Cohen as the most favorable candidate, showing that the most senior leader is not necessarily considered to be the best prime minister.

7.3 Framing: Comparing the ‘decent society’ to the ‘responsible society’

Going back to the theoretical framework: frames are a quality of communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 40). In their performances, Cohen and Rutte each brought their vision forward considering what they wanted to achieve for the Netherlands and what actions were necessary to reach their goal. These two different visions originated in two different frames. The central frame of Rutte can be described as the ‘responsible society frame’ and was mostly based on the idea that all, citizens and leaders, should take responsibility for their own lives and for each other. As such not only social problems but also the economy should be put back on track. There were two main values underpinning this frame, the first was the already mentioned ‘responsibility’, the other was a classic Liberal value: freedom. Rutte was quite strongly in posing that citizens should be able to make their own choices and that they should be able to decide for themselves how they wished to live their life. From a governmental perspective, this required a modest role, as they should leave citizens alone as much as possible. Cohen’s central frame, on the other hand, can be described as the ‘decent society’ frame. In this frame it was posed that citizens should look out for each other. People were not isolated individuals, but were part of a society in which all should be involved. Therefore, it should be tried as much as possible to let people, in their way, participate in society. As such, the differences between rich and poor, highly-educated and lowly-educated et cetera should not grow too big, as this might prevent the full participation of people in society. Nobody should be left behind to ensure a decent existence for all. The underlying values of this ‘decent society’ frame were solidarity and equality. As Cohen put it on ‘Paul Rosenmöller en...’ (May 27th 2010: 00:05:15 ff.): ‘Everyone counts. And that means that you want to have a society in which you also have to do your very best and (...) that you try to do justice to citizen’s capabilities’.¹³⁸

Both these frames can be considered to be quite strong, and have a major potential to become dominant. A first reason for why these frames were strong is that they both entailed an all-encompassing view on the Netherlands. The ‘decent society’ and the ‘responsible society’ frames can be applied to all areas of social life. They can, for example, provide guidance to what should be done considering the economy. From a ‘responsible society’ perspective, the governmental spending should be reduced as much as necessary to prevent that additional taxes are needed that limit people in living their lives as they wish. From a ‘decent society’ approach, on the other hand, the

¹³⁸ Original text: ‘Iedereen telt mee. En dat betekent dat je een samenleving wilt hebben waar je ook echt je uiterste best moet doen en je best voor wil doen dat alle mensen, hoe verschillend ze ook zijn, waar ze ook vandaan komen en die, die, ook bij toeval, voor een deel ook maar bij toeval terecht zijn gekomen op ditzelfde stukje grond op hetzelfde moment, dat je al die mensen wil proberen tot hun recht te laten komen’.

economic crisis should indeed be tackled, but without cutting back so much that the economic growth is immediately stopped. Cutbacks are necessary to prevent that essential governmental services can no longer be provided, but these should not be done in such a way that, for example, the unemployment rate rises. Being unemployed limits the opportunities people have to fully participate in society and may lead to too large differences between groups. Besides on economics, the frames can similarly be applied to the field of society and the area of government. The second reason for why both frames can be considered quite strong is that they are rooted in values. Although one can disagree with the concretization of the vision into policy, this is much more difficult for the values underlying these frames. These are all worthy goals and are not that disputed in society, the only thing that might differ is their perceived priority. Additionally, underlying values are important because these are the elements citizens identify with (cf. Lakoff, 2004). Combined with the increasing uncertainty of future policy, as problems have become more difficult to predict (cf. Manin, 1997), the values might have gained importance as a basis for voting over only taking into account concrete measures. In short: thus both the 'decent society' and the 'responsible society' frame met the basic requirements for framing.

Interestingly, during the election campaigns Cohen and Rutte tried hard to make it look as if their vision were complete opposites. They made it seem as if their views were not compatible at all and that there was a sort of 'zero-sum' relation between them. There is indeed no mistake that these two frames differ substantially from each other. However, it is also not fair to state that they are directly opposing each other and that the frames are mutually exclusive. It is not unthinkable that common ground could be reached on certain issues. The frames are thus not positioned opposite each other, but they are located on a different level as they prioritize values differently.

7.3.1 Retracing views and leadership style to the 'responsible' and 'decent' society

The 'decent society' and the 'responsible society' frames can be retraced in the proposals and views that Rutte and Cohen uttered in their performances. Rutte was fiercely defending the mortgage interest relief, whereas many other parties wanted to limit this tax benefit for homeowners. These opposing parties considered the mortgage interest relief to be a subsidy that could be limited to achieve immediate saving. Rutte, contrary, reasoned that the interest relief was not a subsidy but a tax reduction that at least a little bit corrected for the high tax burden in the Netherlands. Such a tax reduction should be maintained as it gives people more income to spend on thus more opportunities to live their lives as they wish without government deciding it for them. Cohen's proposal to make Liberation Day an annual public holiday, furthermore, is an example of a proposal that can be retraced into the 'decent society' frame. Why would one want to make Liberation Day an annual public holiday? Cohen reasoned that was important to reflect explicitly on the value of both the freedom of speech and freedom of religion, two rights that are at the core of the Dutch society. An annual special day was necessary, because especially these values have been intensively discussed the last couple of years. Freedom in general, and freedom of speech and religion in particular, fitted with the wish of Cohen to ensure a decent existence for all citizens. Without such freedoms it would mean that there was oppression and that would hamper that all people living in the Netherlands could participate fully in the Dutch society.

Besides these similarities of retracing individual views and proposals into the frames, there are major differences between Cohen and Rutte in how they were doing this. Rutte build a coherent

framework in which all individual views and proposals were connected with each other into a bigger picture. He did so by connecting each to the underlying values. Rutte, for example, referred repeatedly to the idea of taking responsibility. Additionally, also in his way of speaking the connections between individual stances became clear (but that is further discussed with the element of scripting). Related to credibility, the coherence in Rutte's views gave the idea that he knew what he was talking about and that he had the necessary overview to accomplish the ultimate goal: reaching a responsible society in which people could live their lives as they wished and in which government merely facilitated. Cohen, contrary, did not succeed in posing such a vision. In part, this also had to do with his way of speaking (which was also addressed more elaborately for the element of scripting). Cohen did not very often connect the individual points to a bigger story, but only narrowly answered the questions asked to him. A clear example of this can be found in his performance on 'De Wereld Draait Door' (June 4th 2010). During this performance the host Mathijs van Nieuwkerk showed a clip of Cohen campaigning in Tilburg where someone asked him about the smoking prohibition in the hospitality sector. Cohen answered the question with how he felt about that. Mathijs van Nieuwkerk wondered why he would even do such a thing, as this issue had been off the agenda for quite some time and did not play a role at all during the campaigns. Spending time on this issue thus only distracted from the main message Cohen tried to communicate. In countering the critique of Van Nieuwkerk, why it for example was important to answer that question, Cohen did not connect it to the bigger picture at all. Similar examples can be found in other performances as well, which gave the viewer a relatively dispersed image of Cohen and it did not become very clear what bigger idea he wished to achieve. Thus, whereas Rutte's credibility was boosted, in Cohen's case this rather harmed it as Cohen succeeded less in convincing citizens of his plans for the future and that he knew what he was doing. As such, the perceived credibility of Cohen can be thought to have decreased.

Next to retracing the 'decent society' and the 'responsible society' frames into views and proposals on policy, Cohen and Rutte also applied their frames unto their own leadership style. A first difference was that Rutte did so more explicitly than Cohen, but for both clues on what they considered to be an ideal leader can be found. Rutte posed that as a leader he and his Liberal Party intended to take responsibility as well and that he did not only require citizens to do so. Rutte wanted to take responsibility for getting the country back on track and to put the state finances 'back in their cage'. Besides this type of responsibility, he also wanted to take it in another way: namely by honoring the earlier made agreements with the voter. Promises made before should be kept, even though this might be difficult to do. To regardless of anything still honor the agreement is, in his eyes, taking responsibility. To prove that he also did so, he regularly referred back to the past, for example to 2008 in which he said to have already warned the cabinet of the upcoming crisis. By also referring back to how the Liberal Party had taken responsibility in the past, Rutte was able to gain trust that he would also do this if he ended up in office.

As Cohen, on the other hand, campaigned for a decent society, he also had to perform 'decent' himself. It is thus not that surprising that he refused to attack the other leaders personally. He did not want to 'sling mud', as it would only lead to discord and dissensus instead of the necessary compromises. Not wanting to give an answer to the question whether Cohen considered Balkenende to be a bad prime minister was thus in accordance with the 'decent society' frame. Two months after Cohen arrived in national politics, he was asked on 'Pauw & Witteman' about his desired leadership style. The answer he gave to this question clearly fitted with his 'decent society'

frame in which he wanted to ensure that everybody could fully participate in society. Cohen called this style of leadership 'binding leadership'. He wanted to build bridges between different groups in society and to bring them together. How he exactly planned to do so, and thus what this binding leadership entailed remained a bit vague. Although it can be applied to all kinds of issues, Cohen was not able to clearly explain this. Paul Witteman, one of the hosts of 'Pauw & Witteman' wondered: 'You call that binding leadership right? The problem is that you can never apply that concretely to things. Because if you say well, there is a plan with the mortgage interest relief or with a higher tax for the high incomes. What does that have to do with that binding leadership of yours' (Pauw & Witteman, May 5th 2010: 00:42:16 ff.)? Cohen could have answered that, for example, limiting the interest mortgage relief could help to reduce the budget deficit and that only limiting the interest relief for houses over a certain value would ensure that the differences between different economic status groups in society would not become bigger. This would thus prevent a split in society. He, contrary, answered with a vague answer, stating that it was only logical that parties had taken position on issues, and based on these positions tried to gain as much support as possible. After voters had given their opinion on June 9th, it was up to politics to look for majorities on issues. Thus although clues could be found that Cohen wanted to apply the ideas of a decent society to his leadership as well, it often remained unclear what he meant and how he intends to do so.

Considering credibility, the position of both Cohen and Rutte on their leadership with regard to their central frame suggested that this might have increased their perceived credibility. Not only had Cohen and Rutte promised to act accordingly, they also provided proof of how they had done so in the past. It might be expected, however, that Rutte could benefit more from this convergence between leadership style and his central frame than Cohen could. Whereas Rutte clearly and explicitly explained why and how he took responsibility, Cohen had trouble in even describing what binding leadership entailed and how that could be applied to concrete policy proposals.

7.3.2 Reframing and countering critique

Over the course of the election campaigns, Rutte's frame came to dominate over Cohen's frame. Nevertheless, although at some point Cohen's frame might have been criticized more than Rutte's frame, both leaders had to deal with countering critique and reframing others. In a way, this might be even more important as not adequately reframing these 'hostile' frames give them more room and thus increases the chance that one's one frame becomes less credible. Rutte seemed to be quite able at reframing 'hostile' frames and countering critique. With his 'responsible society' frame he was not limited in attacking others. If, for example, one of the other party leaders posed a proposal that did not fit with his 'responsible society' frame, he attacked them by wondering why those other parties would not take responsibility. As they were not taking responsibility for what needed to be done, they cannot be considered as a serious option to vote for. Secondly, in countering hostile frames, Rutte stayed away from using their language. As already stated by Lakoff, using the language of the other makes it that what you say is judged from their perspective. Therefore, you will never win. Rutte understood this very well. Thirdly, another reason for why his reframing might be considered convincing was that he at least did not let a chance go by to counter critique. If the opportunity was not given to him directly, he created one. Consequently, he did not let any critique go unanswered and combined with not using the 'enemies' language this created the image that the others were not right.

In Cohen's case, it appeared that he was not that capable of dealing with hostile frames and in countering critique. In his attempts to do so, Cohen regularly ended up affirming the points on

which was attacked. When asked whether he considered himself capable of debating, as this did not really show in an earlier example, Cohen again and again almost furiously asked whether the hosts had any other examples (Pauw & Witteman, March 12th 2010). By doing so he basically communicated the message that the hosts were right. Another variant of this 'mistake' was using the language of his opponents. In countering critique, Cohen often started off with explaining why the other is wrong. However he did so by using the same language. When Wilders stated that street-terrorists should be expelled from the country, Cohen countered this with stating that there was a difference between street-terrorists and actual terrorists. Hereby he confirmed their existence. Finally, regularly Cohen even did not come round to refute critique. He did not get, take or create the opportunity to give a reply, and if he was given that opportunity, it took him too long to formulate an answer. Before he could finish he was already interrupted again.

Consequences for their perceived credibility were that Rutte's credibility was enhanced, but that Cohen's credibility was harmed. In Rutte's case he was capable of refuting most critique, thereby creating the image that he was very competent and that he had the right solutions at hand. Cohen on the other hand, did often not successfully reframe the uttered critique. During the course of the election campaigns, increasingly more people therefore started to wonder whether he was actually the right man with the right capabilities for the job.

7.3.3 Dealing with possibilities and limitations

Each frame had possibilities as well as limitations. The same applied to both Cohen's and Rutte's frame. Taking a closer look at the possibilities and limitations of the 'decent society' and the 'responsible society' frame it can be noted that a limitation of the first was actually a possibility for the second and vice versa. A limitation of Rutte's 'responsible society' frame was that it was vulnerable to the critique that it was cold, harsh and that it did not have an eye for the human dimension. There is more in society than money and people should be helped and not be left outside in the cold. Rutte knew to reframe this well as he considered that people did not only need to take responsibility for themselves, but also for their surroundings. However, in Cohen's 'decent society' there was a lot of attention for the human side. It projected a vision of solidarity and looking out for one another. On the other hand and on a different aspect, a limitation of the 'decent society' frame was that it posed quite high demands on Cohen himself and what he could and could not do in the political setting. If he wanted others to interact in a decent way, he also had to do that in, for example, debates. This not only meant that he could not attack others personally, but also that he had to be careful in interrupting others and in how he could counter critique. Rutte, contrary, did not have to worry about these things. His 'responsible society' frame rather gave Rutte many opportunities to put the other leaders and their plans up for discussion. If they proposed something, he only had to wonder whether they were actually being responsible or not. Did the proposal address the problem or did it deny the problem by just muffling it up a little bit? With the economic crisis, this proved to be a viable critique.

For credibility it depended to what extent Cohen and Rutte were able to make use of the possibilities and to what extent they could overcome the limitations. Starting with Cohen, he was not able to let his 'decent society' view dominate, mainly because as described before he was not very good at reframing hostile frames. Simultaneously, although he was limited in attacking others directly in, for example, the political arena of the debates, he took it perhaps a bit too far. If others are criticizing you, it is not indecent to take the floor to address that critique – even if it is necessary to interrupt others for that. Therefore, the limitation of his frame took the upper hand over the

possibilities Cohen's frame had and consequently, his credibility was put under pressure. For Rutte, the opposite applied. In his case the possibilities took the upper hand and he was able to overcome the limitations. By questioning whether the others took responsibility and action, and showing how he had taken responsibility in the past and how he intended to do so in the future, he was able to promote his competency and trustworthiness, while the credibility of others was doubted. Additionally, because of his careful reframing, the idea that Rutte's plans were cold and harsh never dominated. Thus, this limitation did not affect his credibility.

7.4 Scripting: Roles, dialogue, the audience and body language

The final element in studying the performances of Cohen and Rutte is scripting, which entails four aspects: the attribution of roles, the construction of the dialogue, the relationship with the audience (present in the studios and at home), and the displayed body language of both leaders. Starting with their own roles in the performances, both Cohen and Rutte took the role of a leader who fought for his beliefs. To be more exact in Cohen's case, he played two roles in the analyzed performances. In his candidacy speech he explicitly said goodbye to his former role of mayor of Amsterdam, and he welcomed his new role as leader of the Labor Party. Related to the latter, he fought against people turning their backs to each other. Rutte also fought, but he fought for the interests of the average, hard working citizens.

7.4.1 Friends versus enemies

In identifying their friends and enemies, Cohen and Rutte were both quite clear. For Cohen, his friends were all those people who were willing to cooperate and work towards a decent society. Translated to political parties, he considered the parties on the left side of the political spectrum to be protagonists. In particular he thought about the Liberal Democrats, the GreenLeft Party and the Socialist Party (NOVAPolitiek, June 7th 2010). Rutte considered his friends to be those people who with him wanted to take responsibility and who wanted to contribute to getting the country back on its feet. Contrary to Cohen, Rutte did not mention any specific political parties that he preferred to cooperate with. He did not want to exclude anyone beforehand, but he acknowledged that the distance to the various other parties differed (De Wereld Draait Door, June 2nd 2010). Especially the Labor Party would not be an obvious candidate to form a coalition with, according to him. Similarly, also Cohen stated that the Liberal Party was his main enemy (De Wereld Draait Door, June 4th 2010). In this respect, the Party for Freedom also played an interesting role, in terms of a possible cooperation with this party from either the side of the Labor Party or the side of the Liberal Party. This was a topic that regularly came up for discussion during the performances. Cohen explicitly excluded the Party for Freedom from all cooperation. Not only did Cohen feel that Wilders was rubbing against the boundaries of the Rule of Law, he also violated the core values of Cohen's 'decent society' frame: Cohen considered all to be equal and felt that all citizens should do their best to ensure that they enable others to fully participate in society. Wilders took a slightly different position as he, for example, wanted to expel 'street terrorists' from the country. Rutte repeatedly emphasized that he did not want to exclude any party up front, thus also not the Party for Freedom. Indeed, for this party he also considered the distance for cooperation to be great, but between the

lines it was clear that he less explicitly distanced himself from the Party for Freedom than from the Labor Party.

Considering credibility, both the position taken by Cohen, as the position taken by Rutte can be understood and considered appropriate. The choice of indicating those willing to work along with you to realize your vision as your friends is obvious. From Cohen's perspective, furthermore, it can be considered credible that he considered his friends to be on the left side of the political spectrum. The values and approaches to tackling problems are more similar between these parties on the left side. That he on the other hand distanced himself from the Liberal Party and the Party for Freedom was thus also understandable, as their prioritization of values and approach to tackling problems was quite different. When taking the perspective of Rutte, the same line of reasoning d All though he did not want to exclude anyone up front – as he wanted to judge people on their actions not on their beliefs – we can understand why he specifically mentioned the Labor Party. The Labor Party was not a likely candidate for cooperation due to their different value prioritization. With the Party for Freedom though, there seemed to be much more ground for cooperation, even though there were also major differences. As such it was understandable that besides the reason of arguing in line with the 'responsible society' frame, Rutte wanted to leave the option of cooperating with Wilders open. Or in credibility terms: it can be considered a credible choice of Rutte and Cohen to explicitly state that their friends were those who also wanted to realize their vision, and it was credible that they were considering each other as the main enemy as this choice is made on the basis of value convergence. The consequences of this credible choice for their credibility as a leader are not that clear. As this choice is relatively obvious, it can be expected that it did not harm their credibility but at the same time it is also doubtful whether it has enhanced their credibility directly. At least, as both them have made credible choices in this respect, it cannot account for the different credibility developments. Indirectly, this clear indication of friends and enemies could have helped Cohen and Rutte to demarcate their vision more clearly as especially their enemies also gave them someone to rebel against.

7.4.2 Constructing the dialogue

The construction of the dialogue itself can be divided into three different sub-aspects that need attention. The first is with what kind of arguments Rutte and Cohen try to support their claims and to convince voters of the suitability of their plans and themselves as future leaders. The second sub-aspect relates to actual choice of words of both leaders: with what kind of tropes do they try to increase the attractiveness of their message and as such the chance that their messages will take hold within the citizens' minds. The final sub-aspect entails some more general characteristics of how the two leaders speak. These include among others the way in which Rutte and Cohen answered the questions and whether they spoke in a direct or more indirect manner.

The way in which Rutte and Cohen used pathos, logos and ethos to support their claims differed substantially. Rutte used all three types of persuasion during the analyzed performances. Pathos, logos and ethos all came back at various moments during his performances. Especially interesting in Rutte's case is that he did not always use them in isolation, but that he also made innovative connections between pathos and logos in the same passage. This increased the persuasiveness ('compellingness') of his message: it not only spoke to the mind or the heart, but to both. A clear example of this was the example Rutte used of the welfare mom who lost income if she started to work four days a week after having lived on benefits. Although it is not entirely clear what kind of job Rutte was thinking about and why a former stay-at-home single mom would start to work

four days a week, the image painted by Rutte stuck. It involved pathos as it referred to a feeling of outrage: how could it be that if someone previously on benefits wanted to work again and to fully participate in society, got 'punished' in a way for doing this? Additionally, logos was included in this example because if we want to stimulate people to start working again, it also needs to be rewarding. Thus, changing the tax laws is a solution that follows logically on the problem that starting to work after being on benefits does not pay off at the moment. Moving over to Cohen, in his use of pathos, logos and ethos, he was less diverse than Rutte. Cohen mostly used logos and occasionally some ethos if he spoke about his own suitability. Consequently, his language was relatively monotonous and lacked the 'compellingness' of Rutte's speech. Calling out to the mind is only one part of it, especially as politics is not a pure rational activity but also has much to do with values and 'doing the right thing'. The big exception to Cohen's general pattern was his first analyzed performance, which can also be considered his first performance on the national stage. During his candidacy speech, all three elements of pathos, logos and ethos came together. It was not the case that logos dominated in this speech, but there was a balance between the three ways of persuasion. As this speech was also mainly meant to set out the first lines of his vision, pathos had an important role to gain initial support. Looking at the polls, this worked out quite well: after his announcement that he had made himself available for the leadership position of the Labor Party, he was almost instant the most desired candidate for becoming prime minister. This contrasts heavily with his later performances and his substantial loss in credibility. As such, it seemed that the use of pathos, logos and ethos helps to understand why Rutte gained credibility, whereas Cohen lost some of his: while Rutte's message became more compelling, Cohen's argumentation was less suited to convince people that his analysis of the problem and his approach to solve it was the best.

The use of pathos, logos and ethos is accompanied by the use of tropes. By using the appropriate kind of tropes, the persuasiveness of the argumentation can be enhanced. When comparing Cohen's use of tropes with how Rutte used them, in essence the same difference came to the fore as when comparing the kind of arguments used to support their claims. Rutte thus used a variety of tropes, ranging from anaphora and antitheses to enumerations of previous achievements, rhetorical questions and analogies. Some were more appropriate for communicating pathos, others for strengthening logos and ethos arguments. Cohen's use of mostly logos is also reflected in his speech: contrary to Rutte, Cohen did not use tropes to spice up his language very often. If he did use them, they mostly entailed enumeration and antitheses. All forms of exaggeration hardly came back in his performances. To illustrate, generally the greatest hyperbole that Cohen used was that he stated that he thought something was 'incredibly important'. Consequently, whereas Rutte's language use was relatively rich and attention grabbing, Cohen's language was more bare and businesslike. Related to credibility and convincing the voter of the appropriateness of their plans and their leadership, Rutte was better able than Cohen to keep the attention of citizens and thus had greater opportunity to build a more deep commitment. Keeping citizens' attention is not necessarily the same as also convincing them, but as Rutte offered the full package of calling out to the mind and the heart – a call that was strengthened by his language style – he build a message that was very hard to resist. Citizens with a very strong 'Left' political conviction will still not be convinced to change to the Liberal Party, but as increasingly more people move around freely on the political market (within a certain range of options) (McAllister, 2007; Schnabel, 2011), such differences in language style and argumentation can have great consequences. The findings thus suggest that Rutte was able to pose a more credible image of his ideas and leadership than Cohen could.

Concluding with some more general characteristics of the leaders' language style, it was remarkable to note that Rutte and Cohen took almost opposite positions. Rutte simplified his language to explain his views (this also relates to using logos lines of argumentation) and he connected it to very concrete, everyday examples and measures to solve the issue. Take the earlier used example of the welfare mom who wanted to start working again. By using this example, everyone knew what he meant and a complex issue like various tax laws became something to which people could relate. Cohen, on the other hand, did not simplify his language and hardly used any concrete examples that could help people to relate the topic to their own lives. In 'De Wereld Draait Door' he, for example, referred back to an episode of 'Netwerk' to show the main difference between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. In this episode the consequences of the election programs for three types of families were described. Although Cohen here tried to use an example, it was still relatively abstract. He spoke of 'someone with an income of 180.000 who benefited from the proposals of the Liberal Party' and mainly the 'welfare mom who had to cut back greatly if the proposals of the Liberal Party were to be implemented, whereas with the Labor Party she would gain a bit'. Next he continues, 'that is in a nutshell what it is about. It is the purchasing power of middle and lower incomes that is put together totally different with the Labor Party than with the Liberal Party'.¹³⁹ Although Cohen thus used an example, it was still unclear what exactly the problem was and how he intended to tackle it. It is clear that there apparently were differences in purchasing power for several income groups, but how the Labor Party actually differed from the Liberal Party is not addressed and by only referring to 'people with a middle income' instead of, for example, 'a nurse with an income of 20.000 Euros a year' he was not really clear about who he had in mind.¹⁴⁰

This points, secondly, to another difference between Rutte and Cohen. Whereas Rutte spoke in a direct manner, directly addressing the people he was thinking about. In the case of hardworking, average citizens he, for example, referred to nurses, teachers, builders et cetera. Cohen continuously only referred to the higher, middle and lower incomes, if he referred to those at all. He had, moreover, the tendency to refer back to previous statements by using demonstrative pronouns like 'those' and 'this'. This however, made it quite hard for viewers to keep up with what he was trying to say. It was relatively easy to lose track and if that happened it was difficult pick the story line up again. Rutte on the other hand, tended to use a lot of repetition that eased the burden on the viewers to keep track of his story.

A third difference between Cohen and Rutte relates to the structure of their sentences. Rutte, in line with his direct manner of speech and use of concrete examples, used relatively short sentences without many subordinate clauses. Cohen, contrary, had the tendency to hide his message behind many subordinate clauses. Most of the time the subordinate clauses provide nuance to the statements Cohen wished to make. Although this fitted with his decency ideal, it also distracted from what Cohen actually was trying to say. Consequently, the clarity of his message was compromised.

A fourth important difference between Cohen and Rutte is related to the way in which both answered questions. Rutte normally answered them first with a short clear answer, indicating

¹³⁹ Original text: 'Daar is in een nutshell precies waar het om gaat. Het is de koopkracht van middeninkomens en lagere inkomens die aan de kant van de Partij van de Arbeid totaal anders in mekaar zitten dan als het gaat over de VVD'.

¹⁴⁰ Indeed, in the example he also speaks about a welfare mom, which is a concretization of the lower incomes. When connecting this example to the point Cohen wishes to make, the concretization is lost. That he used the term 'welfare mom' to refer back to the 'Netwerk' episode in which they described the consequences of the election programs for her, is probably because in that episode they use this term as well.

whether he agreed or not. After that he continued with explaining why, connecting it to his views and underlying values of the 'responsible society' frame. Cohen, on the other hand, merely started with his story, without it sometimes being clear what he was trying to say. The latter related to the other mentioned differences of among others in his extensive use of subordinate clauses to nuance his statements. If he did not agree with a question, his answer was very remarkable. Almost every time he answered something like 'I do not know whether that is the case' instead of just saying 'I do not think that is the case because...'. These kinds of answers did not contribute to the clarity of Cohen's message and his perceived decisiveness, whereas Rutte made a very clear and competent impression.

A final difference in the language style of Cohen and Rutte that requires attention is their attitude during the performances. Whereas Rutte had a proactive attitude, Cohen was rather passive. This issue was already partially discussed for countering critique and hostile frames, and for the limitations and possibilities of their frames. Rutte took initiative in his performances. When answering questions he did not limit himself to a narrow answer on it, but he actively tried to connect it to his frame and his underlying values and tried to ensure that he created room to tell what he wanted to tell (instead of being at the mercy of the hosts). Additionally, if he was criticized, he was not afraid to take the floor to address that critique. In doing so, he regularly also interrupted others. Cohen performed completely different in this respect: he stayed very close to the questions that were asked to him and did not take the opportunity to place his answer in the bigger picture of his frame. Additionally his answers were relatively short and sometimes seem a bit curtly. When criticized, he regularly did not address it adequately. Especially in the debates a lot criticism remained hanging in the air without him taking the floor to counter it. Cohen mostly only spoke when the floor was explicitly given to him and he did not tend to interrupt others to bring his point forward. Consequently, in his performances Cohen did not do justice to himself and his vision.

Adding up these differences on the more general characteristics of their language style, the findings suggest that the image Cohen conveyed was one of a leader not completely in control of the situation. The lack of clarity in communicating his message might have resulted in giving citizens the idea that he was not fully sure of what he was talking about and that he also did not know what he exactly wanted to do. Additionally, because of his passive attitude it might have given the impression that Cohen lacked the necessary political skills and decisiveness. Rutte gave a completely different impression: he knew what he was talking about; he knew what the problem was and what needed to be done about it. Considering his attitude he was also not afraid to clearly bring this forward and he showed that he had the necessary political skills and decisiveness to govern a country in crisis. In terms of credibility, these aspects might have stimulated Rutte's perceived credibility whereas it harmed Cohen's credibility.

7.4.3 Addressing and including the audience

Perceived credibility of political leaders can be stimulated by including the audience in performances. It can make citizens feel involved, give them a feeling of that they matter to the leader and that he knows what he is talking about. Or in other words: it reduces the distance between the leaders and potential followers. Moreover, directly addressing citizens can be a means to keep the audience's attention. In the previous chapters, several ways were mentioned in which leaders can include their audience in their performances: a leader can ask them a direct question, he can speak in terms of we and us, and he can directly address certain groups of society or all citizens by using a concrete term, like builders, teachers, the Netherlands, or hardworking citizens. For this latter means it is thus

mainly important that a term is used to which citizens can relate and that not leaves them wonder whether they are included in it or not.

The way in which Rutte and Cohen approach their audience differed substantially, although there was again also a major difference between Cohen's candidacy speech and his other performances. Cohen hardly established a relationship with his audience and not many examples can be found in which he explicitly included citizens in his performances. He thus did not ask citizens a question directly and he did not use a concrete term to address all citizens or a specific group of them. He spoke of citizens with a high income or about people like welfare moms, instead of only referring to welfare moms and a range of concrete professions. At times he did speak in terms of 'us' and 'we', however in those cases it was not always clear whether he meant himself and citizens or himself and the Labor Party. In the latter case it was still Cohen and the Labor Party against the rest of the world, instead of together with the world. In Rutte's case, all three distinguished means by which the audience can be included in his performances were used. This does not mean that Rutte used them all in all performances, but during the course of the election campaign they can be observed at appropriate moments. In his conference speech, knowing that it was broadcasted, he explicitly turned his attention away from the people who already supported him and focused on the average citizen who watched television. What came back in all performances was that he regularly talked about 'us' and 'we'. As such it was not only the case that citizens were merely involved, but they also have a vital and important role to fulfill if the ultimate goal was ever going to be reached. Furthermore, he used 'totum pro parte' constructions to refer to all living in the Netherlands. He, for example, stated that 'Balkenende had promised to the Netherlands that there would be no general amnesty' for asylum seekers (Prime ministers debate, May 23rd 2010: 00:16:50 ff.).¹⁴¹

In terms of credibility, the differences in including the audience in their performances promoted Rutte's perceived credibility, while it did not help Cohen's credibility. Rutte involved citizens in his plan and gave the impression that he knew what was necessary because he knew what was going on in people's lives. Cohen did quite the opposite, as he was even hesitant to clearly mention about whom he was speaking.

7.4.4 Acting the job of future prime minister?

The final aspect of scripting entails the body language displayed by both leaders. Someone's body language is not a one-dimensional concept, but entails several sub-aspects: posture, facial expression, gestures and use of voice. For credibility this matters as, at least unconsciously, body language gives away whether a leader is actually really confident about his plans and whether he actually believes in it himself. Especially if they are criticized, it was interesting to see how their body language holds up.

In their basic, starting body language, there was not much difference between Cohen and Rutte. At the performances they had to stand up – their speeches and the debates – they stood up straight with their shoulders down and their hands loosely on the lectern in front of them. At Rutte's speech there was no lectern present. With one hand he held the microphone, his other arm was loosely at side if he did not use it to make gestures (which he did a lot). During performances at which they sat down at a table, normally they both slightly leaned forward a bit, with their forearms and hands leaning on the table and their shoulders down. Consequently, they both looked quite

¹⁴¹ 'Original text: ' u, meneer Balkenende, had beloofd aan Nederland dat er geen generaal pardon zou komen'.

relaxed and at ease, at least at the beginning of their performances. The main exception for Cohen to this basic 'sitting down posture' was during his performance on NOVA (April 28th 2010). During this performance he sat down at the table with a completely straight back and his hands and arms rested on his legs, underneath the table. This gave a very artificial and forced impression, as if Cohen did not know what to do.

Moving over to their facial expressions, Rutte's main expression was usually a relaxed and composed one. This was not that different from Cohen's basic expression, as he looked relatively calm, relaxed and serious. For both, their basic facial expression thus added to their posture. The same applied for the other two sub-aspects. The basic gestures and tone of voice with which Cohen and Rutte started their performances added as well to the impression that they were at ease, knew what they were doing, and that they wanted to fight for their beliefs. This latter point is mostly seen in their tone of voice and their gestures. Both use gestures to clarify their points and to add additional emphasis, although Rutte did so more often and more 'bold'. Whereas Cohen's gestures were relatively small and constrained, Rutte's gestures were bigger. Considering their tone of voice, to start with they both spoke calm and relatively fluent. This suggested at well that they felt they were in control of the situation.

Although their basic body language is thus relatively similar, this does not mean that there were no substantial differences. These differences mainly came to the fore when difficult questions were asked or when they were heavily criticized. Whether Cohen felt that he was put under pressure or not showed clearly in his body language. As soon as he got a difficult question his entire posture and facial expressions tensed: he pulled his shoulders up and he started to frown more. Additionally, he clenched his hands together and the fluency of his speech became disrupted. In other words: Cohen was clearly not at ease and was not in control of the situation. In Rutte's case these differences could not be noted. Even in his performance on 'Paul Rosenmöller en...', when he was asked some tough questions and he was not addressed in a very friendly manner, Rutte kept his appearance up. His posture and facial expressions did not tense, and as such did not give the impression that he was insecure about his answers and his views. Rather he became more fierce – but in a polite manner – in defending his position. This gave the idea that he really knew what he was talking about and that he really believed in it. In credibility terms, Rutte's body language affirmed his words that he was capable of being a leader, that he knew what he was talking about and that he would fight hard to make it happen. In Cohen's case, his credibility was not helped by his body language as it mainly expressed insecurity when things got tough during his performances. Combined with how he answered questions it might have raised doubts for the voter whether he was actually capable of leading in such a difficult time: did he have the necessary knowledge to adequately assess problems and tackle them, and did he have what it takes to lead in a political arena?

7.5 Understanding the increase and decrease in credibility

In the above, all elements of what Cohen and Rutte did during the performances, as well as some contextual factors were studied up close and compared between both leaders. The findings suggest that on some elements Cohen and Rutte did not do anything different, while on some other elements substantial variation could be observed.

Considering the contextual factor that the economy became a more dominant theme than immigration it is indeed true that Rutte can be considered to have an advantage at this point,

however, Cohen's central frame could also be applied to this theme as well. Additionally, the dominance of the economy could also have been a disadvantage for Rutte, as his party was generally associated with a rich elite. In part these were the same people who are considered to have caused the economic crisis. As such, the advantages and disadvantages for Rutte and Cohen level each other out and thus do not seem to contribute to understanding the credibility developments of both leaders.

Secondly, from the findings on the element of staging it can be derived that this element as well is not the main reason for why Rutte gained credibility whereas Cohen lost it. Considering the design of the stage and the props a leader can use, there is only so much that he can do. During the majority of the performances, it is not the leader himself who is in charge. Rather, Cohen and Rutte were mostly invited to other television performances. They simply had to deal with the already present stage and the limited opportunities to bring their own props. The only aspect of which they were always in control was their personal appearance. This sub-aspect only gave them a limited opportunity to distinguish themselves from other leaders in a positive way, if at least they were aiming for an authoritative image. As could also be seen in the analyzed performances of Cohen and Rutte, all party leaders tend to wear a suit and tie. A leader can differentiate with the colors a bit – creating greater color contrasts implies more communicated authority – but these are only minor changes. Even in performances that are more 'light entertainment' shows they wear a suit, only perhaps without the tie to blend in with the situation. Consequently, as leaders do not have many opportunities to distinguish themselves in a positive way, it also does not contribute much to gaining credibility. Rather, if not dressed appropriately they might lose some as an authoritative leader and thus this sub-aspect might rather be considered an essential prerequisite or basic requirement.

Framing, contrary, is an element that is helpful for understanding why Rutte gained credibility, whereas Cohen lost a substantial amount of his. On this element they were also actually doing something different. Both had a strong and thus potentially dominant frame at their disposal, although both were completely different. The main difference in why Rutte's frame came to dominate over Cohen's related to in the way in which both utilized their frames. Whereas Rutte connected his individual proposals and views to the bigger picture and underlying values of his frames, Cohen did not do so. Consequently Rutte communicated a coherent vision that showed that he had a plan for the future and concrete measures to reach it. Cohen, on the other hand, seemed a bit as if he did not have such a concrete, all encompassing vision to which he was working. Additionally, in dealing with critique the findings suggest that Rutte was much better able to do this than Cohen. Rutte did not let any critique go unanswered and also clearly indicated why he did not agree, whereas Cohen did much of the opposite. Especially in politics, reframing is often part of the framing activity because competitive frames will normally be present. To convince others of the appropriateness of your plans it thus also matters to show that the others are not right when attacking you. Furthermore, it seemed that Cohen was not able to utilize the possibilities of his frame, while at the same time he was not able to overcome the limitations. For Rutte, this worked exactly the other way around. These three points considering framing affected the credibility of both as it was either related to the feasibility of their plans or to the question whether Rutte and Cohen had the necessary skills and knowledge to lead the country. Thus because Rutte's plans were considered feasible and because he was expected to have the necessary knowledge whereas Cohen was thought to lack both, Rutte's credibility increased while Cohen's credibility went downhill.

Setting up a perceived coherent frame of views and proposals as well as utilizing the possibilities of a frame while avoiding its limitations cannot be done without language. In this sense

framing and scripting are inseparable. Casting roles for enemies and friends helped to position oneself in relation to others. It helps citizens to understand for what a leader stands and gives the leader the opportunity to rebel against an enemy to clarify his own views. Both Cohen and Rutte were very clear on this, which thus does not contribute to understand the different credibility developments. The other three elements – the construction of the dialogue, the established relationship with the audience and his body language – combined help to understand Cohen's decreasing and Rutte's increasing credibility. Cohen's language style was relatively 'bare and businesslike' and as such mostly only calling out to the mind. Rutte's language addressed both heart and mind, which made it much more difficult to disagree with. Moreover, Rutte directly addressed citizens, giving them the idea that he knew what they were going through and that they were in it together. Cohen, on the other hand, did not do so and combined with his more dispersed communication of his vision, it might have given the impression that he did not really know what he was doing. This was also confirmed by his body language as when Cohen was put under pressure his body language tensed in such a way that it might have given the idea that he was insecure about himself and his plans. Rutte did not give in on these occasions, which strengthened his image that he passionately believed in his vision and plan for the future.

To sum up, the main reasons for why Rutte gained credibility whereas Cohen lost a substantial amount of it can be found in the elements of framing and scripting. Only having a potentially strong frame is not enough: it should explicitly be used in all performances to build a coherent vision and critique on it should not go unanswered. Additionally, to convince citizens of its value the leader should call upon both the mind and the heart, include the audience and be supported by the leader's body language as to prove that he really believes in it and has the necessary skills to achieve it as well.

Why did the elements of framing and scripting make the most difference, more than the contextual factor and staging? The answer to this question relates to the possibilities to prepare and the accompanying uncertainty during the performances. The context factor is mostly a given and staging is a relatively stable factor as well. The design of the stage was fixed during most analyzed performances. The design of the studio of, for example, 'Pauw & Witteman' or the Prime Ministers Debate is not for the leaders to decide upon. Indeed, during the speeches they could design the stage themselves, but in doing so they had quite a lot of time to prepare for it while consulting as many experts as necessary (in principal at least). In most of the performances, the leaders were also quite limited in the props they could use and if they could decide completely themselves, the same line of reasoning as with the design of the stage applies. The final element of staging, their appearance, also needs to be decided upon up front and is not subject to change during the performances. In the case of framing and scripting this is totally different. The frame itself can be completely thought through beforehand, and even needs to be, but the degree to which it is convincing and whether it becomes dominant depends mostly on how it is communicated in the actual performances. Naturally one can prepare and practice for these, but they are not completely predictable and leaders constantly have to make decisions on the spot on how to react. Overall, there should be a match between the context and staging, framing and scripting, but it is on the latter two elements that leaders have the most opportunities to distinguish themselves from others and thus can make a major difference considering their credibility.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Requirements for credible political leadership

Why do some leaders become credible whereas others do not? With this question this study started out. Literature suggested that in order to be perceived as credible, leaders at least had to be considered trustworthy and competent. Research done since the sixties repeatedly has established that these two traits are the core characteristics of credible persons. Simultaneously it was acknowledged that credibility is a relational concept: it is not a 'thing' that leaders possess, but it is something that they need to actively earn again and again. At this point, the ideas of dramaturgy and impression management provide valuable insights. Each encounter with others can be considered a performance in which the leaders had to act in such a way that they give the desired impression. In the case of credible leadership they thus need to appear competent and trustworthy.

To achieve such an image, leaders can pay attention to several aspects of their performances: staging, framing and scripting. These three elements have to match with each other, but also with contextual factors like the main events happening at the moment, or in case of elections, the performances should provide an answer to the dominant themes that require attention. Individually, staging entails the actual design of the stage, the props present on the stage that a leader can use to emphasize his message, and his personal appearance. For framing it is about posing a strong frame that connects to values in society, and about reframing the critique of others and their 'hostile' frames. Scripting, thirdly, consists of paying attention to means of persuasion and the types of arguments that leaders can use, the tropes and language style, establishing a relationship with the audience, and the body language.

The literature thus provided an answer to the first question of this study: highly credible leaders are leaders who are considered highly competent and highly trustworthy. On the other end

of the spectrum, leaders who are considered to be not that credible are perceived to lack competency and/or trustworthiness. These perceptions come about on the basis of a leader's performances: being considered credible entails good staging, framing and scripting. Or in the case of elections, the staging, framing and scripting at least has to be better than of their opponents. What remained unclear in literature was what this good and convincing staging, framing and scripting actually entails. What it is that leaders *do* that they are considered credible or not, was thus the second part of the central question of this study.

The findings of the in-depth analyses of the cases Job Cohen and Mark Rutte during the election campaigns for the Dutch parliamentary elections of 2010 provide indications of what needs to be done to construct a performance that contributes to a leader's perceived trustworthiness and competency (and thus to their credibility). It should be noted that although the different elements of staging, framing and scripting can be separated analytically, they all blend in during the performance. Ideally, all elements of staging, framing and scripting match with each other and with the set requirements for the role during the performance to become as credible as possible. As the findings on the case studies show, it is not the case however that a low score on one sub-aspect of the performance means that a leader becomes completely incredible on instant. Rather it is a scale and the more the performance fits with the set requirements for the leadership role, the more credible a leader is considered to be. Additionally, as credibility is a relational concept that cannot be owned by the leader, it is also not a static concept. Credibility has to be earned on every occasion. To a certain extent one can draw on previous gained credibility, but this is not an endless source. As the development of Cohen and Rutte's credibility also showed, with a constantly strong performance a leader can add to his 'stock' of credibility, whereas repeated poor performances can result in running out of credit according to some citizens.

In the remaining part of this concluding chapter first is discussed what it is that credible leaders apparently do (following the findings of the case studies). Next, the findings of this study are extended to broader debates in the literature. Especially is focused on to what extent and how performances of leaders actually matter for the vote which citizens cast, as well as on what kind of leadership style is suggested that citizens appreciate most. Thirdly, after the broader debates attention shifts to nuances to the findings of this thesis. These relate to the possibility of intentionality in performances, and to the grounds on which citizens determine the credibility of a leader. Finally, this chapter concludes with some suggestions for future research.

8.1 Profiling credible leaders: performing credibility

Previously, it has been established repeatedly that the two traits at the core of credibility are competency and trustworthiness. In the analyzed performances clues can be found from which it can be argued to apply to either competency or trustworthiness, but it should be noted that this is mostly an analytical distinction. In the actual performances the two traits are to a large extent interrelated, which often makes it very difficult if not impossible to establish if only one or both traits are affected. As research of Wisse (2010) additionally shows: perceptions of trustworthiness and competency are correlated. Therefore, in the following the findings on what leaders *do* are not discussed for competency and trustworthiness separately, but attention is paid to the overall perceived credibility.

Besides that in the performances the competency and trustworthiness directly has to show, for example in their knowledge on contents and their political skills, also the expressed vision and its

persuasiveness matter for the perceived credibility of leaders. In this respect there is an interaction between the perceived credibility and the persuasiveness of the message. On the one hand a highly credible leader makes his message more convincing. On the other hand, a convincing message can also make a leader more credible. The vision and ideas they pose need to be considered a valid answer to the interests, values and expectations of citizens. If a leader can convince his audience of his plans for the future and the measures he wishes to take to reach them, this might thus make him more credible as, for example, a future prime minister. Next, for each element of staging, framing, and scripting is discussed, following the findings of the case studies, what would characterize the performances of a credible leader.

8.1.1 Performing staging

Starting with staging it very much depends on the occasion on whether leaders can influence the design of the stage and the props they can use. In the cases of Cohen and Rutte, television performances were analyzed in which they were invited to shows of others, they could hardly do anything about it. They were not in control of the design of the stage and the props they could use. Therefore, in these cases they had to adapt their performances to the stages on which they performed, instead that they could alter the stage itself. During the speeches, Cohen and Rutte could determine the design and props themselves. From these performances it can be derived that the design of the stage and the use of props can help in communicating the desired image. If a leader wants to mark a special occasion, an important transition that has major consequences, a more formal stage including a lectern and formal screens behind him while delivering the speech are fitting to underline the importance and formality of it. However, if the purpose is to, in a way, motivate ‘the troops’ at the start of the election campaigns and to get them enthusiastic about it, a more informal stage might be more suitable. As such, a match between stage and message can contribute to the perceived credibility of the leader.

The third and final element of staging entails the personal appearance of the leader. In this respect, it is mainly about his wardrobe and hairdo, or in other words: the elements the leader is able to change. Physical features also have an influence – as is also suggested in the literature – but the elements that are subject to change determine to a large extent the total picture of a leader’s personal appearance. For credibility, the results suggest that not much credibility can be won with this element, but that it is possible to lose some with it. The key is to dress for success, which in the case of potential prime ministers and in ‘serious’ contexts entails wearing a suit and tie. Although differences in color are possible and indeed some color combinations are more authoritative than others, leaders have limited opportunities to distinguish themselves positively from others. The differences between different suits and different colors of the ties are smaller than if one of the leaders all of the sudden would show up in jeans and t-shirt. Although in the latter case a leader distinguishes himself from others, it generally does not communicate the message that this leader is worthy of becoming prime minister because his appearance is not formal and serious enough. As such, his credibility is damaged instead of enhanced.

8.1.2 Performing framing

Moving over to framing, an essential element in communicating a convincing vision and plans for the future is having a strong frame. Such a strong frame has to have at least the potential to dominate the debate. In the theoretical framework a frame was among others described as ‘a quality of

communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another' (Gardner & Avolio, 1998: 40). Different frames entail different ways of seeing and interpreting the world. Thus if your frame is dominant, your interpretation of what needs to be done is considered most credible by the audience (that is the citizens). However, as much as one can develop one's own frame, for it to be strong it cannot exist in isolation of to whom and which it applies. It has to be rooted in values and these values also have to find resonance in society. Citizens have to feel that the specific values on which a frame is based are important. It is not the case that only politicians use frames: rather, as the theoretical framework pointed out, frames are the mental structures that shape the way in which each human being sees the world. In these terms credibility depends on the extent to which the frame uttered by the leader fits with the frames used by citizens in society. This is not a conscious process, but it is nevertheless present. In the cases of Rutte and Cohen, the European Value Studies suggest that at least a substantial group within Dutch Society supported their underlying values of responsibility, freedom, solidarity and equality (Halman, Sieben & van Zundert, 2012).

However, only having a strong frame that adheres very well to the values considered important in society is not enough. The underlying values and the individual views and proposals also need to be communicated in a coherent way. Connecting the individual views to each other and to the underlying values is building a coherent story that also shows citizens that a leader is working towards a clear goal and that he knows the bigger picture. It gives the impression that he knows what he is doing. Besides what a leader says about his plans for society, it is also necessary to be attention to his own suitability. In part this relates to the element of scripting that is further discussed later on, but showing you knowledge on the content of the topic at hand shows citizens that the leader in question indeed knows what he is talking about. In a really practical sense, this entails knowing the answer on what are considered key element of that topic. In Cohen's case, he did not know the answer to seemingly simple and essential questions on the economy, like how many extra people get unemployed a month. Naturally, one could wonder whether it is really necessary for a good leader to know these figures by heart, but it is the image that sticks that counts.

This brings in another element of framing: the issue of reframing. Indeed, knowing the answer to essential knowledge questions on an important topic can enhance the perceived credibility of a leader and his plans for the future. However, if a leader does not know what the answer to these kinds of questions is, it is not necessarily the case that his credibility is harmed. Much depends on how the leader responds on these occasions. The findings suggest that it is not wise to merely answer that you do not know. Taking the example of the rising unemployment, the question should be answered in such a way that the viewer gets the idea that it does not matter what the exact numbers are. It matters more how the problems are tackled in such a way that, for example, 'as many people as possible are enabled to fully participate in society'. Exact figures are only of relative importance in this way, as it is clear that they will increase if nothing is done. The same line of reasoning applies to other 'hostile' frames or critique.

In any case, it is not wise to let any critique go unanswered. If it is not addressed at all, or not adequately, the idea might take hold with citizens that the critique is actually true. This would make a leader less credible in most cases. During the Carré debate, it was for example suggested by Pechtold, one of the other party leaders, that Rutte was only there when things went well. If things got rough, Pechtold stated, someone would come to take over. Such an idea could have been harmful for Rutte's credibility as it can give the impression that he gives up easily and that he is not ready for such a big responsibility of governing the country. In Rutte's case such a critique might have done some additional damage as it comes close to his core value of taking responsibility. Letting

another person take over if it becomes difficult, can easily be seen as not taking responsibility. Even though at this occasion Rutte formally did not get the chance to address this critique, he still made it quite clear that he did not agree with it. As in such cases silence definitely is consent, Rutte used all the possibilities he had to show his disagreement.

A final aspect considering reframing is the warning of among others Lakoff (2004) that one should not use the language of the other. During the prime ministers debate Wilders dared Cohen to finally really take action: treat terrorists the same as street terrorists and evict them from the country instead of drinking tea with them. Such statement harmed Cohen's credibility as he apparently was reluctant to take action and that he was afraid to address the problem. Cohen responded that he wanted to explain once again what the difference between terrorists and street terrorists was. However, in this way he only confirmed the idea that they existed. To avoid this, Cohen might better have stayed close to the language of his frame. He might have responded that instead of treating the symptoms he rather addressed the real problem. After this he could have continued with his view that safety can only be improved by giving people opportunities and by including them in society. To achieve the best results repression is combined with prevention, as he posed in his candidacy speech. By making such a statement it is no longer that Cohen is reluctant to take action, but that he gets to the core of the problem and that he actually solves it instead of only shouting a lot without improving the situation.

8.1.3 Performing scripting

As is already clear in the above, framing cannot happen without language. Indeed, it is through language that the underlying ideas and values are shaped and put into words. Consequently, framing and scripting are inseparable. In dramaturgical terms, the script provides guidance to the performance. The enacted scripting during the performances of political leaders on stages of television thus determines how the performances proceed. The four elements distinguished in the literature point first of all to the casting of roles. The findings suggest that indicating who friends and enemies are helps leaders to make their position clear. It helps citizens to understand what a leader wants to do, how and why. It was interesting to note in the performances that it is not necessary to literally appoint persons as enemies and friends. Without eliminating anyone up front a leader can indicate that he, for example, welcomes everybody who wants to help him fight for the position of average, hardworking citizens who are being oppressed by an ever expanding and overspending state (as Rutte wanted to do). Not only is it difficult to disagree with this – who wants to oppress hard working citizens like yourself, your friends or your parents – it also communicates in a way the idea that citizens can do something about it themselves. Additionally, it gives them the opportunity to belong to the 'good guys' instead of to those jealous crooks on the left who take what average citizens (not rich citizens) have earned.

The second element consists of the construction of the actual dialogue. Building on Aristotle, leaders can use three types of arguments to support their claims: logos (based on facts and figures reaching a logical conclusion), pathos (affect the feelings of the audience) and ethos (refer to one's authority to convince an audience of their correctness). The findings of the case studies suggest that for enhancing and maintaining credibility there should be a balance between the three means of persuading. Only leaning on one means creates a weak foundation, whereas using all three of them creates a commitment to the message on different levels. Findings from Rutte's case also suggest that in using the means of persuasion, multiple means can be combined in one passage of the performance. It is thus not necessarily an and/or situation, but an and/and situation is possible as

well. Ethos seemed in the performances mostly suitable to support claims of the leader's own suitability for the job. Rutte implied that he as a fit leader among others for getting the countries finances back on track because he had implemented various reorganizations in a big multinational company before he entered national politics. Cohen drew on his experience of mayor of Amsterdam, where he bridged differences and bound people together. Pathos and logos, furthermore, seemed very fit for simultaneous use. Rutte regularly combined them in such a way that he did not only evoke a feeling of outrage in his audience, but also that from his problem analysis, based on facts and figures, only one solution was suitable (which is naturally his proposal). By doing so, his statement gained 'compellingness': it did not only apply to the mind, but to the heart as well. Additionally, by varying the means of persuasion and the accompanying tropes to spice up their language they are better able to keep the attention of the audience. Keeping their attention is not necessarily the same as also convincing them, but it is a start. In Rutte's case it also increased the convincingness of his idea because of among others the earlier mentioned innovative combinations of logos and pathos.

Besides this innovative use of pathos and logos, also other clues can be derived from the case studies that help to understand what political leaders do to be perceived credible. A first additional clue can be found in the way in which questions are answered. For the sake of clarity and decisiveness the findings of both case studies imply that it is best to start with a relatively short answer in which the leader takes position and summarizes his main point. After that, the leader can elaborate this answer, connect it to the underlying values of his frame to explain it and make additional necessary nuances. By following this structure the leader guides his audience through the point he wishes to make and he helps them to follow every step. Together this makes it clear for the audience what the leader wants to achieve and what he represents.

Related, the findings of the case studies suggest that to enhance and maintain credibility it is better to speak in a direct manner than in a more indirect way. This point entails for one calling things by their name. Whereas Cohen spoke of people like those with a middle income, Rutte referred to nurses, teachers et cetera who, according to him, all had a very normal income. A second and more fundamental way in which leaders can speak in a direct way is by keeping the number of subordinate clauses to a minimum. Subordinate clauses distract attention from the main message and, as the findings of the case studies suggest, are mainly used to nuance the statements. As a consequence, it is more difficult for citizens to keep up with what a leader is trying to say, as compared to a leader who uses a more direct way of speaking. Moreover, citizens might start to wonder whether the leader is really sure of himself and his plans. Many subordinate clauses might give the impression that a leader is sharing his hesitations instead of indicating a clear route for action. Speaking in a direct and clear manner might result in citizens attributing credibility to a leader, as the leader then is decisive, knows what he wants to achieve and confident that he can make it happen.

A final element considering scripting that contributed much to understanding why in the cases of Rutte and Cohen the first gained credibility while the latter lost a substantial amount of his credibility, were their attitudes during their performances. Derived from the comparison between these two leaders it can be stated that for being credible as a political leader, aspiring to be the next prime minister, a proactive attitude is more beneficial than a passive one. In Rutte's case the proactive attitude showed in several ways: in answering questions he did not do so in a narrow way. Meaning: he did not limit himself to only give answer to the question in a strict sense. Rather, he also took the opportunity to connect it to his bigger story. By taking initiative in answering questions he

created the room to ensure that the story he wanted to tell was actually told. This proactive attitude also influences the way in which 'hostile' frames are to be reframed and critique countered. As earlier mentioned under framing, critique should not be let go unanswered and a leader should thus always fight to counter it. With this it is not meant that a leader for example has to respond to every negative letter to the editor in a newspaper, but that if he is criticized in a performance he should not be afraid to fight back. This prevents the critique from hanging in the air and giving citizens the idea that the critique was justified.

Having a proactive attitude in the performances requires certain skills. In Cohen's case it was suggested that he lacked these skills and that he was run over by the others. Looking at the previous role Cohen performed, this was not that surprising. Whereas we expect from political leaders to really take a stance and to fight hard for it, a mayor in Dutch local government is expected to have a more modest role. In short, the council has the primacy and the mayor is supposed to stand above political differences and always represent the general interests of the municipality. Therefore, to determine the appropriate attitude for a leader, his role in the political and governmental system has to be taken into account.

A third element of scripting is the relationship with the audience. Establishing a relationship with citizens and involving them in the performances can contribute to the perceived credibility of political leaders. Involving the audience can give them the idea that the leader is really interested in them, that he knows what is necessary and that he is doing everything he can to realize it. Limiting the distance to the audience and involving them in the performances can be done in several ways. The first possibility is related to the design of the stage and entails literally limiting what stands in between the leader and his audience. This possibility, however, is not always possible. As said, most of the times when leaders perform on television, they do not have the opportunity to design the stage themselves. Additionally, in some occasions a bulky lectern can actually contribute to the formality of situation. It is not unlikely that this is sometimes in accordance with the message one tries to convey. As such, this means to include the audience in the performances should first be well considered before used. The other means to include the audience, contrary, are suitable in all types of performances. These means include first of all addressing the audience directly, for example by asking them to think about something. Secondly, a leader can talk in terms of 'we' and 'us', and thirdly by being clear about whom the leader is talking. Talking in terms of 'we' and 'us' gives the suggestion that the leader and his audience are in it together and that what the leader is talking about actually also applies to them. The latter means has already been discussed in a previous part of this section. It mainly entails addressing people in such a way that they can relate to it. Rutte, for example, often refers to hardworking citizens like 'entrepreneurs, nurses, teachers' et cetera. Being considered a hardworking citizen is something that is considered a virtue in Dutch society and is thus a group to which many people want to belong. Cohen on the other hand hardly did this, if he referred to citizens at all it were mostly 'people'. A final way in which leaders can include the audience in their performances is by using concrete, everyday examples. Not only is this helpful in clearly explaining complex issues and how a leader's view on it had come about, but it can also attract the attention of citizens as they can relate to it. Recognizable examples give the impression that apparently the leader knows what is happening in the lives of citizens and about what they worry.

The final element of scripting entails the body language. This element often does not have a clear effect on credibility in itself, but mainly has to be related to other aspects of the performances. Nevertheless, to be credible as a political leader during election campaigns it can be considered

important to keep a composed and relaxed body language at all times. When standing up during the performances, a composed and relaxed body posture entails standing up straight, with their shoulders down and their hands put loosely on the lectern before them. If there is no lectern present and they do not have to hold a microphone, they can fold their hands together lightly. When they are sitting down the findings of the case studies suggest that it is best to lean forward a bit, again with their shoulders down while resting their hands and forearms loosely on the table. Their facial expression needs to match this body posture and basically comes down to keeping an open and neutral expression. Leaders should not frown and clench their lips, but keep a small smile to prevent them from looking angry or insecure. To emphasize or clarify points in their speech, they can use gestures. They can, for example, be used to indicate that something is very important to them or that they are talking about a contrast. The gestures made in the case studies are relatively modest and controlled. Although Rutte used larger gestures than Cohen, for both they were limited to nodding or shaking their head, and to gesturing with their hands and forearms.

Finally, from the two case studies it can be derived that it is advisable to keep stammering and stuttering to a minimum. With this not the condition of a stutter is meant, with which people have problems for example to pronounce certain letters or words. Rather the stammering and stuttering is meant that occurs if someone is insecure or does not know what and how to say things. As such it is not necessarily the case that it is only the stammer that causes a loss in credibility. However, stammering can increase the difficulty people can have with understanding what someone is trying to tell. Additionally, it can convey the image that a leader is insecure about what he is saying. A citizen might think: he has difficulty in formulating his message so how well has he thought it through? Another example in which body language, and stammering in particular, might harm the perceived credibility is in the earlier used example of Cohen not knowing the answer to some question on essential elements of the Dutch economy. Not only did he not know the answer, but also the stuttering and stammering made it seem as if he thought himself that it was very bad that he did not know. Via his body language Cohen thus communicated that it apparently did matter to know these figures by heart.

8.1.4 Acting credible: Making the difference

When comparing the three elements that can be distinguished in the performances – staging, framing and scripting – it can be argued from the findings of the analyses that not all element are equally important. Or more precise: certain elements make more of a difference whereas on others leaders cannot gain that much. Staging and the first part of framing, constructing a vision on society, can be prepared thoroughly beforehand. In these leaders are also not on their own, but they can use the help of many others when needed. As such, it is not surprising that most leaders start off on different, but equal footing. Taking an example of the case studies, it was found that in the debates all leaders wore a dark suit and tie (except for Femke Halsema, the only female party leader at that moment). Moreover, on the stages on which they performed, all leaders had more or less equal opportunities to design it. Additionally, clothing and design of the stage cannot change during the performances (at least generally they do not) and therefore they are not a factor of uncertainty during the performances. For the other elements of framing and scripting their success depends on how it is actually performed. Beforehand it is possible to, for example, prepare for the critique one might possibly get, and to prepare for questions that are likely to be asked. However, how these performances proceed is not set in stone, especially not in the case of talk shows and debates. Consequently, the political leaders have to continuously make decisions on the spot on how to

respond and what to say. Even though preparation matters in this respect, it is in the heat of the moment that things can work out differently. For performing these elements of framing and scripting, they are on their own and they need to make it happen themselves. As such, it is thus in these elements of the performances, in which the uncertainty is highest, that political leaders can make a difference considering their credibility.

Stepping back from the analysis of the individual elements to the overall performances, the answer to the central research question can be summarized in three points. It can be argued that first of all leaders should have a proactive attitude. They should take initiative in two ways: in answering the questions to ensure that they build a coherent vision and that they take the opportunity to tell their story, and secondly also in refuting critique. In talk shows and debates in which, in his presence, an image is painted of the leader that is not favorable, the critique has to be addressed to prevent that it sticks. In this respect, the countering of the critique has to be done from the leader's own vision and by using his own language. This also brings us to the second point for what leaders can do in their performances that is suggested to contribute to their credibility: leaders have to communicate an all-encompassing vision on society, the economy and government. Grounding one's proposals in values and also explicitly communicating this connection can be a way to make this clear. Additionally, such an all-encompassing vision on society should not be separated from society. The values underlying the vision communicated need to have sufficient support in society to take root. Finally, it can be argued that the way in which the vision has to be communicated has to speak to both the mind and the heart of citizens. Thus not only rationally citizens have to be convinced, but an emotional commitment strengthens the persuasiveness and credibility of the vision advocated.

8.2 Extending the findings to broader debates

In the introduction of this thesis, three interrelated circumstances were introduced that get attention in literature and that highlight why the credibility of political leaders matters. In this concluding part of this thesis, it is interesting to reflect upon what the findings of this study means for political leadership in light of the developments of governance, individualization, and mediatization including personalization. Especially to what extent and how performances matter is discussed. Additionally, some reflections on what kind of leadership style Dutch citizens seem to reward are made. Before elaborating these, first some attention is paid to summarize what the circumstances entail.

Starting with governance, this development relates to the internal functioning of government. Shortly put, the underlying idea of it is that government cannot do it alone. To deal with the societal issues and problems facing a country, they need resources of others. As such, the top-down authority basis from government down to other organizations has been challenged. Consequently cooperation is needed and all should be convinced of what course of action to take. Enforcing things on others hardly works in these circumstances, as all are interdependent to some way (Rhodes, 1996; Kjaer, 2004). For political leaders this has two consequences: they have to be credible towards the other partners in the cooperation, as they need to be convinced of what needs to be done. On the other hand their credibility is also important related to citizens, as leaders cannot make detailed promises up front. They cannot fully dictate themselves that it will happen and thus they cannot guarantee that what they want will also actually take place. Moreover, related to the development of individualization and party dealignment, citizens move around more freely on the political market and do no longer vote the same way their entire life. As such, leaders do not have an

automatic support in society even though the party might support him. Rather, the support from citizens needs to be actively earned. They need to be convinced that the specific party indeed has the best vision for the future. The leader, as head of the party, plays an important role in this respect. It is even argued following the idea of personalization that the person of the leader increasingly matters. In part this is related to the decreasing importance of political parties as guiding organizations and in part it can be understood from the idea of mediatization. Due to the technological developments and the rise of television as the main medium for communication between leaders and citizens, leaders come to the fore (McAllister, 2007). Especially because television contains visuals and moving images, it is convenient to put the leader forward to tell the story. In this way, many more people can be reached than by only distributing a policy document or a party manifest.

8.2.1 The leader as the ground reason to vote?

Another part of the personalization and party dealignment thesis poses that leaders also increasingly matter as a basis for voting (Kriesi, 2011; Dassonville & Hooghe, 2011). It is argued that because party alignment has decreased and because issues are less predictable, leaders increasingly function as a ground for voting. Partially, this was also implicit in the previous, but it was not intended to give the idea that only the person of the leader matters as a reason for citizens' votes. Contrary, other elements do play a part in this decision, among others one can think about strategic voting, the position of parties on perceived key issues, the political preferences or voting mainly out of habit.

For parliamentary systems that are characterized by proportional representation it used to be supposed that strategic voting did not happen. As almost all votes were converted into seats, scholars assumed that there was no need to vote insincerely. Recent research on this topic however shows that strategic considerations do happen (Galen & Holsteyn, 2012). Strategic considerations in this respect entail citizens thinking about the possible outcomes of the elections with regard to the coalition that is to be formed. By voting strategically, citizens can hope to increase the chance that their preferred coalition will actually be formed.

Voting on the basis of perceived issue positions relates to the approach parties suggest to take on tackling certain issues. In this respect the exact, detailed plans may not be that important, but the general line in how to deal with problems is (Manin, 1997). Following this line of reasoning, citizens are expected to vote for those parties that are closest to their preferences on how to deal with certain problems. An important note at this point is that citizens need to have strong preferences on certain issues. If a citizen does not really care about health care, for example, the different positions of parties on this issue are not likely to be a deal breaker.

Finally, the last example given as a ground for voting, voting on the same party out of habit, relates to ideas of socialization. Even when the position of parties and citizens change and no longer align, the preference for a certain party may endure. This type of reason for voting a certain party is said to be declining because the connections with specific parties are assumed to have lessened due to among others individualization, but this does not mean that it has completely disappeared (Deegan-Krause & Enyedi, 2010). These three examples of reasons that might play a role for citizens to decide who to vote for, other than the reason of who is the leader, raises the question to what extent the performances of leaders and their credibility actually matter and in what way?

8.2.2 To what extent and how do performances matter?

Derived from the findings of the two researched case studies it can be argued that the performances of political leaders and their credibility matters in two ways. First, looking at the topics discussed during the performances and in the analyzed newspapers, it can be noted that in these mainly issues and the qualities of the leaders themselves were given attention. Whereas Rutte was praised for his performances, mostly for his debating skills and knowledge, Cohen was criticized on his economic knowledge and his political skills. Thus in line with the suggestion made in the personalization thesis, the focus was hardly on the parties Rutte and Cohen represented but more on themselves. Especially in the Netherlands this is interesting, as in this parliamentary system the prime minister is not directly chosen. Related to voting, the different polls show a development that is in line with the success both leaders had in their performances. After Cohen's successful speech the Labor Party gained substantially in the polls on virtual allocations of seats, but after successive less strong performances, the Labor Party continuously lost in these. For Rutte, an opposite development showed in the polls. He started out quite low but steadily gained seats during the election campaigns (De Hond, 2011; Synovate 2011; also see chapter 4). The question only is whether this is fully attributable to the personal qualities of Cohen and Rutte that showed in their performances and about which was also written afterwards in the newspapers.

As said, next to the personal qualities of political leaders, also issues were an important topic during the performances. In this respect, the performances of the leader also matter. Due to, among others, mediatization it is up to the leader to communicate the vision of himself and his party as clearly and convincingly as possible. In other words: besides giving credibility to their own qualities as possible future prime ministers, they also have to make their vision for the country credible. Thus although the decision on who to vote for might be based to a large extent on the issue positions as well, it is up to the political leader to make their plans and ideas as credible as possible. He is the main spokesperson and is the one on who is mainly focused in the media. In this respect the two ways in which the performances and the credibility of the political leaders matters can be argued to interact. To convincingly put their vision forward, leaders need to have at least a limited amount of credibility for their message to be accepted. On the other hand, putting forward an convincing message can also contribute to their credibility, as can be seen in the case studies, as this might convince people that the leaders know what has to be done and that they also know the means to achieve it. Either way, because the performances of political leaders matter for how their qualities as potential prime ministers are perceived and for how convincing their ideas for the future are, it can be argued that the performances are an important factor in the decision for who to vote for.

However, this point should also not be taken too far, as the actual results of the elections show that the Labor Party, for example, did lose as much seats as might be expected on the basis of Cohen's performances. Compared to the elections of 2006, the Labor Party only lost three seats (from 33 to 30 seats), which is quite limited. Rutte, on the other hand, gained 9 seats compared to 2006, which is more in line with what could be expected from his performances. For understanding why the Labor Party did not lose as much as might have been expected, it can be suggested that the idea of strategic voting plays a major role. As for example in polls taken shortly after the elections, some even indicated that 49% of the citizens who voted for the Labor Party did so out of strategic considerations, whereas for the Liberal Party this rate was below 20% (De Hond, June 9th 2010). As such, strategic considerations might take the upper hand as ground for deciding whom to eventually vote for. Additionally, the results of the Liberal Party and the Labor Party in terms of seats are not

compared on purpose. In the reason for not doing so lies a second nuance to the statement that the performances of political leaders and their credibility play an important role in the voting decision. Even though the partisan alignments might have decreased in most western democracies, including the Netherlands, this does not mean that citizens do not hold any political preferences anymore (as argued before). Contrary, true liberals are, for example, not likely to vote for a socialist party and vice versa. As such, the political market has become more free, but only to a certain extent: citizens choose among parties within a certain range. As such, the Liberal Party and the Labor Party are generally not direct competitors (Van der Meer, Lubbe, Van Elsas, Elff & Van der Brug, 2012). Consequently, the difference leaders can make is mostly in attracting votes from parties ideologically close to them. As such, regardless of how convincing one's performance might be, generally it will not convince all citizens, but mostly those who hold similar political preferences. Leaders might gain importance in this respect if the strength of these preferences lessens, but nevertheless it is a factor that limits the role of leader's performances in deciding who to vote for.

8.2.3 Rewarding leadership styles

Besides reflecting upon the extent to which the performances of leaders matter, also the kind of leadership that is considered credible requires some attention. In this study it is extensively discussed what it is that leaders do that contributed to citizens attributing credibility to them. From how a leader performs certain characteristics might be derived. In this sense it is not about competency and trustworthiness, but rather about what kind of leadership style is preferred. In the theoretical framework in chapter 2 it was stated that different kinds of leadership style are appropriate in different types of democracy. As in the case studies only the Dutch context was studied, the following mainly applies to the Dutch context of consensus democracy.

In such a consensus democracy usually a more modest style of leadership is preferred. In this respect Hendriks (2009) refers to a 'regency type' style, in which leadership with a capital L is frowned upon. Rather, a technocratic, pragmatic leader, who constantly plays down his contribution to ensure a focus on the issue at hand and to keep everybody on board, can be considered to be most credible style of leadership in a consensus democracy. However, only looking at the performances and how citizens have evaluated these, a different kind of leadership style can be thought to be most rewarding. The findings showed that the main differences between Rutte and Cohen were that Rutte had a proactive attitude, had an all-encompassing vision that was coherent and clearly connected to the underlying values in the performances, and that he spoke to both the mind and the heart of citizens. During these performances, Rutte was also not afraid to emphasize his role and the role the Liberal Party had played in the past. In this respect the style of leadership that was considered credible comes closer to a 'gladiator' type of style (Hendriks, 2009). This type usually can be found in majoritarian democracies in which leaders can make a lot of difference. In this leadership style, a leader does not downplay his contribution but clearly shows his successes and clearly indicates how he and his party differ from others. In this respect, especially the proactive attitude of Rutte and his emphasis on the qualities of himself and his party fit perfectly with this more 'gladiator' style.

How can this difference in formal democracy type and preferred style of leadership by citizens be understood? One way to understand this difference lies in the development of mediatization. Following the personalization that is also part of this development, increasingly more focus is on the person of the leader. He personifies the party and as such takes the limelight more as is common in consensual democracies to win votes. Additionally, another characteristic of

mediatization is that it favors drama and conflict (Hajer, 2009). Telling the story of few competing leaders who each fights for victory is much more interesting from this perspective, than the less spectacular story of harmony, compromises and pragmatic reasoning. In other words, the story of a proactive, confident and decisive leader lends itself better than the story of a regent. Thus taking this perspective, it might be not that surprising that Rutte's leadership style is valued more than Cohen's performed style. A next question might be in this respect how a more 'gladiator' style of leadership vis-à-vis citizens relates to the consensual reality of Dutch formal consensual democracy, but that is a question has to be taken up at a later time, as it refers to a totally different question than studied in this thesis. Rather, in the next paragraph some additional attention is paid to some nuances to the findings of this study on the credibility of political leaders.

8.3 Nuances to the findings on credible political leadership

In the above sections an answer is given to the question why some political leaders gain credibility whereas others do not. There are, however, also some limitations and some nuances to these findings that need to be made. These nuances relate to the leader's performances, and to elements outside leaders' control that matter for the credibility attributed to them. Below, further is elaborated on both.

8.3.1 Intentionality in performances: Are political leaders robots?

Reading what leaders do that contributed to citizens attributing credibility to them, one might wonder why not all our leaders are credible at the moment. It seems easy enough to, among others, connect individual views to a bigger picture, speak in a direct manner with many everyday examples to always dress appropriately for the occasion and the role they wish to credibly embody. Unfortunately for them, the everyday practice of political leadership is not that simple. Literature draws in this respect explicit attention to question of intentionality.

Arguing from a critical frame analysis perspective, Bacchi (2009: 19) states that it is necessary to reflect upon the limitations of understanding 'framing as an intentional process'. Understanding framing as an intentional process entails the idea that political actors can consciously and deliberately select a specific type of language to influence the political debate and the process of decision-making. The implicit assumption is that people can 'stand outside' of frames to manipulate them. It is exactly this assumption that can be questioned as Bacchi poses that actors cannot detach themselves from their cultural and institutional backgrounds. As such, the possible frames that actors can formulate are limited by their background conceptions. Bacchi then continues that the intentional shaping of frames should be accompanied by critical introspection because it helps to develop useful political strategies and while otherwise knowledge on the 'limitations imposed by our own subject positioning are lost' (2009:30). Although this latter statement opens up whole new spaces for discussion, it does highlight the point that in formulating frames, their cultural and institutional background influences what frames political leaders will actually formulate. Therefore, it is not the case that political leaders can just decide on the most strategically strong frame while choosing from a full range of possibilities.

While the above relates specifically to the formulation of a frame, as it can be prepared beforehand, also the way in which political leaders perform in action requires some consideration. In the comparison of the cases of Rutte and Cohen and above in paragraph 8.1.4 it was suggested that in understanding the differences in credibility the elements of framing and scripting mattered most.

This related to the extent to which the prepared execution of an element can change during the actual performance. Although the frame can be thought of beforehand (even needs to be) and the performances can be prepared into great detail, what image eventually will be communicated depends on how the leader really executes it. A speech at a party conference is relatively predictable, but in a debate or in a talk show there are many factors that leaders cannot control. In these, the leader has to decide on the spot how to respond to certain situations. These decisions are in practice not based on rational calculations, Hajer and Uitermark argue, but they act 'out of a 'feel for the game' that they have accumulated of time and in environments both inside and outside politics' (2008: 3).

Here it becomes clear that political leaders are not robots who can be programmed beforehand and will execute exactly what is asked of them. Rather, as research on emotions in political leadership suggests, a leader's general acts and responses are in part determined by his personality. In this case emotions are thus seen as personality or character. The characteristic way in which leaders respond to the contemporary political challenges they have to deal with, are considered to be grounded in their early, formative experiences (Marcus, 2000: 225). Following this line of reasoning, Cohen's passive attitude during the debate would stem from his personality and would thus be difficult to change. Consequently, although it might be better for his credibility as a political leader to take a more proactive stance, this is not likely to happen over night; it is not a switch that can be put on and off. Hajer and Uitermark's notion of the 'performative habitus' (2008; Hajer, 2009) is closely related to this idea. They define this 'performative habitus' as the 'embodied dispositions, developed over the course of many years that help or hinder actors to respond tactically when they need to act in contingent and stressful situations' (Hajer, 2009: 71). Translating this to the case of Cohen, the entire election campaign can be considered a stressful situation for him. He was new to the political arena and to leading a political party, while at the same time he saw himself facing other leaders who had much more experience in dealing with these kinds of situations. Rutte, on the other hand, had been in national politics for many years and had already learned a lot about playing the game. Due to this previous experience, Rutte was allowed a higher level of 'agency and tactical intelligence' (Hajer, 2009) in this particular setting than Cohen was.

To conclude, political leaders are not harmless in their performances. To a certain extent they can alter their performances in such a way that they can enhance their credibility as a political leader. Simultaneously, it should also be borne in mind that – contrary as sometimes might be expected of them – (political) leaders are not supernatural human beings or robots that can be molded in any way that is convenient. They are no different than the ordinary citizens they represent and merely try to do the best they can.

8.3.2 Limits to the possibilities to take control of credibility

Besides the limitations for leaders to 'step outside themselves' in terms of framing and the extent to which they can mold themselves and their ideas to what is most convenient for their credibility, there are also at least three other ways in which political leaders are limited in taking control of their won credibility perception. In the introduction of this thesis it was established that leaders' performances matter for their credibility as future leaders of their country, but this does not exclude that these limitations also matter. Whereas previously the focus was on the elements inside a leader's performances, the three limitations to take control of credibility discussed here relate to events happening more or less independent of their performances. Additionally, these three

limitations relate mostly to on what basis leaders gain credibility, not to the actual voting decision (which was the focus of attention in paragraph 8.2.1).

The first limitation that requires attention regarding on what basis leaders are attributed credibility, is the way in which the public debate evolves during the election campaigns. As already came to the fore in the analysis of the individual cases, the theme that becomes dominant influences the opportunities and limitations political leaders have for getting their story out. Rutte, for example, benefited from the dominance of the economy as a theme, whereas Cohen would have been better off with the theme of immigration (as was also suggested by political scientist André Krouwel in the *Volkscrant* on May 19th 2010). It might be argued that political leaders can enhance the salience of certain issues and they can try to put them on the agenda by indicating them as issues worthy of attention. Following the idea of issue ownership, political leaders are likely to focus upon those issues on which they have a strong reputation as they expect that citizens' judgment on these issues will be most favorable to them (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008). However, although political leaders might prime certain issues on which they have a strong reputation, this does not necessarily mean that these issues will become dominant in the public debate. Here I mainly want to pay attention to the role of events. Important events in the world or the country draw attention to public problems (Birkland, 1998). In regard to the example of the case studies, one might wonder whether the economy would also be such an important theme if no financial crisis had occurred and if the Dutch national government did not have to cut back this severely. Another example is whether immigration and integration would have had that much attention if 9/11 did not occur, or if – specifically in the Netherlands – the two political murders did not happen. Besides the effect of these events, agenda setting theory points to a whole range of other elements that matter for the agenda of the public debate (Deschouwer & Hooge, 2005), among others the role of mass media is considered important (Scheufele, 2000; Entman, 2007), but all these point in the direction that there is a dynamic in the public debate that political leaders do not control. As such they, to a large extent, merely have to ideal with the issues being dominant during election campaigns, even though these might not be the issues on which they wish to profile themselves.

A second limitation for what leaders can do to enhance their credibility relates to the reputation of the political party they represent. The established parties in advanced democracies have a history that precedes the period that the leader is in function. As such, the political party a leader represents matters for his credibility and for the extent to which they can mold their performances to what is most desirable. Just as leaders are limited in stepping outside of 'themselves' to change their performances in the most desirable way for gaining credibility, political leaders can also not simply set the history of the political party, the views for which the party stands, and the reputation the party has aside for what might be most convenient for their credibility as future leaders of the country. For one this relates to the idea that the political leader is not the only one in the organization of the political party. Although perhaps more for more activist-dominated parties than for more leadership-dominated parties, there are also other members of parliament, members and administrators who have an opinion that should be taken into account (Schumacher, Vis & De Vries, 2010). Consequently, the party's previous positions and values have to be kept in mind in preparing the performances of the leader, particularly if these views are supported by a many people within or related to the political party. Secondly, the reputation of the party a leader represents matters for his credibility. If the party as a negative image, overall or on one specific issue, the leader might have a harder time than others to gain credibility. Compared to these other leaders who represent a party with a more favorable image, the political leader is put at a distance. To gain

credibility for himself and for his views as the best way to go in the future, the political leader first has to turn the negative image around (Davies & Mian, 2010). The point here is not that this is not possible or that by good performing the leader can indeed change a reputation around, but the point is that it is possible that a new political leader 'inherits' such an image. It is a situational given with which a leader has to deal with and which he cannot (or only to a small extent) influence up front. In other words: he is not in control of the party's history.

Finally, a third element that political leaders cannot control for promoting their credibility is the political preference of citizens. Although processes of party dealignment and individualization have taken place in most advanced democracies (McAllister, 2007; Garzia, 2011), this does not mean that citizens have completely lost their preferences. Contrary: citizens still have their general preferences, but they feel less attached to specific party organizations (Mughan, 2009). These political preferences and their strength matter for the extent to which political leaders can convince them that they and their ideas are the best for leading the country (as was also argued before related to how citizens decide who to vote for). For citizens with a political orientation on the left side of the political spectrum all leaders on the left might in potential have a convincing story, as their prioritization of values is likely to correspond to the prioritization that these citizens make. Leaders on the right side of the political spectrum, on the other hand, are less likely to have a convincing story for these left citizens (Van der Meer, Lubbe, Elsas, Elff & Van der Brug, 2012). As the prioritization of values is likely to be different, the story of right can be as convincing as possible, it does not persuade citizens who consider other things to be important. To be more concrete: a convinced socialist is not that likely to consider a conservative politician as the best possible leader for governing the country. Therefore, although the performances of leaders are important for their perceived credibility as, for example, the future leader of their countries, it is not likely that it will convince all citizens.

To conclude, while the performances of political leaders to a great extent help to understand why some leaders are considered credible whereas others are not, there are also other elements that matter in this respect, such as the dominant theme in the public debate, the party a leader represents, and the political preferences of citizens. Although a leader might be able to influence these elements to a limited extent, they are mainly just happening without political leaders having control over it. Therefore, while analyzing the performances of political leaders can reveal a lot for understanding their credibility development, these kinds of elements have to be kept in mind.

8.4 Future research

The empirical findings of this study contribute to the literature on credibility by showing what it is that Dutch political leaders *do* during election campaigns, which made an audience attribute credibility to them. In this respect the findings thus provide a further concretization of how leaders can perform when they convey an image of being trustworthy and competent. There is, however, more to be learned on credibility. For one it is interesting to analyze additional (foreign) leadership cases during election campaigns to check whether and in what way these findings also apply to them. Especially if in these cases attention also could be paid to various contextual factors like the dominant theme in the public debate and the political party that a leader is representing. Moreover, additional research is necessary for understanding what competency and trustworthiness entail in different situations. Is trustworthiness, for example, never changing your mind – as sometimes is suggested in the accusations of leaders that the other is 'turning' – or is it always keeping the best

interests of their country in mind. Exact courses of actions might change over time as the situation also changes. The same question could be posed on the trait of competency. In other words, what is it that citizens expect of their leaders to attribute trustworthiness and competency to them?

A third and final suggestion for further research relates to the roles and settings in which leaders perform. In this study only one role and one setting is taken into account: the role of party leaders aiming to get as many votes in the general elections as possible to be able to take office as prime minister. The setting is primarily the stage of television. Although also the interpretation of the newspapers on their leadership are taken into account, the basis is still formed by their performances on television as this is the place on which citizens can actually see them perform. Besides this role and this setting there are more roles leaders can fulfill and more setting in which they perform. There is a major difference between the expectations and requirements set for a cabinet minister, and the expectations and requirements set for parliamentary leaders. Each has different responsibilities and a different function within democracy (although the difference might be bigger in consensus democracies than in majoritarian democracies). Additionally, besides on television leaders also perform in parliament – the center stage of formal democracy. These two different settings are characterized by different rules and traditions. It would be interesting to know whether for these different roles and performances in different settings, the demands for credible leadership are the same or not. As the role requirements and the construction of the settings differ, it can be expected that competency and trustworthiness do not always entail the same. But, what are these differences exactly and what is it that parliamentary leaders and cabinet ministers are doing on the stages of television and parliament that some are considered credible whereas others are not? Studying this question, for example, on the basis of survey research among citizens and an in-depth analysis of their performances might help to refine and deepen our understanding of credible leadership and what it takes to be considered as such.

The above three suggestions for further research are not meant as an all encompassing research agenda, but it was intended to indicate some starting points to show that there is much more to be learned about this topic. As credibility emerges in action, it promises to be a viable field for research in Public Administration.

Summary¹⁴²

1. Introducing credible political leadership

In recent years the credibility of political leaders has become increasingly important. Reasons for this heightened importance can be found in three distinct, but interrelated circumstances. The first relates to the emergence of governance. In dealing with the problems society and government are facing, government can often no longer decide completely on its own what needs to be done and cannot implement that straight away. To tackle the issues government needs the resources of others. Following from this interdependency between government and other actors, government can only to a limited extent force others to cooperate. Contrary, they need to be convinced that cooperation is necessary and that what government proposes is the way to go. From the perspective of political leaders vis-à-vis citizens, this means that they can no longer make hard promises and detailed plans on what will be done. Besides that they can no longer decide on this on their own, the nature of the problems also has become increasingly complex and unpredictable. The credibility of a leader might therefore have more value for citizens than his exact plans at this moment.

Whereas this first circumstance relates to the side of government and its leaders, with the second circumstance focus shifts to the side of citizens. Derived from the trend towards individualization and partisan dealignment, traditional institutions have to a large extent lost their dominant force over citizens' lives. Citizens' ties with political parties have weakened, resulting in higher voter volatility. Citizens are increasingly less faithful to a party their entire lives, but move around more freely on the political market where they – within a certain range of options – choose the candidate of whom they feel deserves their vote most. For political leaders this means that support cannot be automatically assumed, but has to be actively earned.

¹⁴² The paragraph numbers in this summary correspond to the chapter numbers in the actual thesis.

In actively earning the support of citizens, mediatization and personalization point to a third relevant circumstance for a leader's credibility. Due to that the media – and television in particular – have become the main means by which citizens learn about politics, and because the medium of television favors certain types of communication over others, the focus to tell the story of the party is mainly on the parties' leaders. As television is a medium of visuals, the leader can communicate the story and plans more efficient than a policy document or party manifest could do. Moreover, besides the convenience of the leader as a messenger, another part of the personalization thesis argues that leaders also increasingly matter as a basis for citizens to vote: who is likely to do the best job when elected? To evaluate the qualities of the political leader his performances in the media can serve as a starting point. Here the credibility of political leaders is important not only for how voters evaluate them, but also for the extent to which they can credibly communicate their vision and plans for the future.

Although it is thus clear that the credibility of political leaders matters, what remains largely unknown is what leaders actually do that contributes to convincing citizens (their main and ultimate audience) to attribute credibility to them or not. As such, the central research question reads: *'What is it that political leaders do that makes citizens attribute credibility to some, but not to others in the same period, taking into account their performances on television and related newspaper reporting?'*

To research in detail what leaders are doing that contributes to citizens' credibility evaluations, this study uses cases. Two interesting cases were found in the Dutch parliamentary election campaigns of 2010 (February 19th – June 9th). In this period Mark Rutte (leader of the Liberal Party) gained credibility and was increasingly seen as a potential candidate for being prime minister, while Job Cohen (leader of the Labor Party) lost a substantial amount of his credibility as a potential candidate for the same position. In various polls conducted during this period – not only on virtual allocations of seats but also on evaluations of their party leadership and their potential as future prime ministers – it showed that Cohen started out quite strong. After his arrival in national politics the Labor Party gained approximately 15 seats (depending on the poll), and on instant he was considered the most favorite candidate for becoming prime minister. However, during the election campaigns the Labor Party repeatedly lost virtual seats and Cohen's suitability as a political leader was increasingly doubted. Mark Rutte, on the other hand, was hardly considered a potential candidate for becoming prime minister in the beginning of March. In the first polls on who citizens preferred as prime minister, for example, Rutte was not even an option. This gradually started to change and slowly but steadily Rutte gained the trust of citizens. He was increasingly considered the most appropriate next prime minister, whereas Cohen lost this position. Therefore, it can be argued that Rutte is a case of a leader who gained credibility, while Cohen represents a case of a leader who lost a substantial amount of his credibility in the same period. As such, these two cases can be considered a concretization of the above described main research question. Adapting the main research question to this concretization it reads:

'What is it that Mark Rutte and Job Cohen did that contributed to citizens attributing credibility increasingly to Rutte, while Cohen's credibility decreased in the period between February 19th and June 9th 2010, taking into account their performances on television and related newspaper reporting?'

2. Theoretical framework

In the various disciplines attention is paid to the concept of credibility. In the field of communication studies in this respect mostly is referred to source credibility, which entails 'the judgments made by a perceiver (e.g. a message recipient) concerning the believability of a communicator' (O'Keefe, 2002: 181). Only this description does not say much yet about when credibility emerges. When is a communicator believable?

The answer to this question lies in the idea of correspondence. For one, correspondence between and within the performances of leaders is necessary. In the performances of leaders, there are three things that need to match with each other: their words, their actions and their achievements. This match is rooted in the assumption that leaders have to practice what they preach. Thus their words need to be subsequently confirmed by later words, how they act themselves and by what kind of policy products they achieve or support. The same applies to acts and achievements: these also have to be subsequently confirmed by words, acts and achievements. Next to this more internal kind of correspondence, to be credible as a political leader another type of correspondence is also necessary. In this respect an external dimension is added, which answers the question of as what a leader is credible. To be credible as a political leader – in contrast to, for example, an administrator – leaders have to provide a convincing answer to the interests, values and/or expectations of the public. In other words: leaders have to meet the requirements set for political leaders to be considered credible. In line with the first type of correspondence these demands have to be met over and over again, not only in words but in actions and achievements as well. An additional point that these two types of correspondence and the earlier description of source credibility highlight is that credibility is not a static concept. 'It' is not something a leader can possess, but it emerges in the interaction between citizens and leaders. The audience of citizens determines whether a leader adheres to their requirements to attribute credibility to them or not.

What are the expectations citizens have of a political leader? Since the sixties it has been established in research in various disciplines, among others in communication and management studies, that the two core traits of a credible communicator are trustworthiness and competency. Mind that it is thus mainly that citizens have to perceive them as such. As Kouzes and Posner (2003) refer to it: 'if traits alone were running for office, these are the ones that would achieve consensus and victory'. On both of these traits an audience can believe that the leader is biased. In other words: an audience can believe that either a leader is not telling the truth – for example not keeping his promises – or they can believe that he does not have the necessary knowledge and skills to convincingly make certain statements. Moreover, the two traits of competency and trustworthiness are related. The more competent someone is considered to be, the more trustworthy he is also considered. The same applies the other way around: less trustworthiness also seems to imply less perceived competency.

The impression that political leaders make on their audience, and thus the clues the audience derives from the performances on their competency and trustworthiness, is not set in stone. In this respect, literature speaks of Impression Management or self-presentation strategies. These strategies cover what is being said, how it is being said, with what physical appearance and on what kind of stage. Gardner and Avolio (1998) refer to three interesting elements that need to be executed well during performances to be considered convincing (as a credible leader): staging, framing and scripting. The first of the three performative elements in this dramaturgical approach, staging, deals with the settings in which leaders perform. Staging in this sense literally has the

meaning of stage construction. It is about the surroundings in which a leader performs, in the presence and in front of a certain audience. Besides the actual design of the stage, one can also pay attention to the props that are present on the stage and how the political leader makes use of them, as well as the wardrobe and personal appearance of the leader. Framing, secondly, relates to the idea that every person thinks in frames and that all hold certain basic ideas and values about reality, and about right and wrong. Given the idea that information is best accepted when it adheres to existing frames of citizens, it is necessary for politicians to concur with these to convince citizens of their ideas. In other words: the frames used by political leaders must resonate with the frames held in society. An important tool to activate the wanted frames is language. Using specific language gives leaders the opportunity to let their ideas correspond with the values present in society, and as such can convince an audience of their value. Scripting, finally, entails the way in which the employed frame of the leader is put into words. During the performances several elements require attention in this respect: who are friends and enemies, how the dialogue is constructed in terms of argumentation and tropes, the relationship established with the audience, and the body language of the leader. Based on how leaders actually perform on these elements, clues for understanding their credibility development can be derived.

3. Data and methods

As stated previously, in this thesis two cases of political leadership have been studied in depth. Of main focus in these cases are the performances of Rutte and Cohen in the media, especially on television and how is written about them in national newspapers.

The reason for focusing on the performances of Rutte and Cohen on television lies in the nature of the concept credibility. As previously established, credibility is considered a relational concept which emerges in the interaction between the political leader and his audience. Based on what leaders do during this interaction citizens can derive clues about their trustworthiness and competency as political leaders and potential future prime ministers. Looking at the interaction between leaders and audience, one can find that in the mediatized society of western democracies the interaction mainly takes place via the mass media. Although the Internet is on the rise, television still has a dominant position in this respect. Therefore, to study what it is that leaders do that contributes to citizens attributing credibility to them or not, the television performances of political leaders are an interesting place to start. Additionally, newspapers were studied because these also still are an important source of information about politics for citizens. In the newspapers articles that are written about the leaders, their acts and performances are not only described but they are interpreted as well. As such, without neglecting the fact that newspapers are a different type of medium than television is, the newspaper articles also contribute to the credibility construct of political leaders.

For studying the television performances of Cohen and Rutte, first eleven performances were selected for each leader. The selection of the performances was based on a number of criteria like the dispersion over the studied period between February 19th and June 9th 2010, and the type of television performance (debate, speech or talk show). Considering the newspaper articles analysis, first the national newspapers in the Netherlands were subdivided into three categories, quality newspapers, tabloid newspapers and free newspapers. Next, based on the highest number of copies in circulation one newspaper out of each category was selected: respectively 'de Volkskrant', 'de Telegraaf', and 'de Metro'.

The analysis of the 22 television performances was conducted along the lines of the dramaturgical framework formulated in chapter 2. For each performance, the elements of staging, framing and scripting were studied up close to find out how Rutte and Cohen conducted these. Next, the individual findings of the performances were integrated into an overall picture of how both leaders performed on the three elements. At this point the findings of the performances were related to their meaning for Rutte's and Cohen's credibility as well. In the newspaper articles again was sought for clues about how the two leaders performed on the elements of staging, framing and scripting. Next to the mere description of what happened during, for example, the debates, here also explicit attention was paid to how Rutte's and Cohen's acts were interpreted and who uttered that interpretation.

7. Findings

In chapter 4 the cases of Mark Rutte and Job Cohen were described, and chapters 5 and 6 reported on the findings of the dramaturgical analysis and the analysis of the newspaper articles related to their significance for Cohen's and Rutte's credibility. In chapter 7, the findings of the two individual case studies were compared to understand the differences in their credibility development.

Besides the differences between the actual television performances of Rutte and Cohen, especially the newspapers also pointed to another circumstance that might have contributed to Rutte's rise and Cohen's decline in credibility. Cohen earned his reputation as mayor of Amsterdam mainly because of his efforts to 'keep things together' and to bridge the differences between different groups in society. As such, Cohen's (successful) reputation was closely linked to the theme of integration and immigration. Rutte, on the other hand, positioned himself and the Liberal Party as experts on economics. In this sense it was not immigration and integration, but the economy to which his reputation was positively linked. When Cohen made himself available for the position of party leader of the Labor Party it was expected that immigration would become the dominant theme, but none of this came true. In the course of the election campaigns, the issue of immigration and integration moved to the back, while the theme of the economy and the necessary cutbacks became increasingly salient. Consequently, Rutte got more opportunities to shine and was in an easier position than Cohen to get his story out convincingly. Cohen, on the other hand, did thus hardly benefit from the shift in focus. A great economic knowledge was not a characteristic that was often used to describe Cohen. As such, compared to immigration and integration as a dominant theme, Cohen had to struggle more to persuade others of his credibility as a political leader and potential prime minister, and of the credibility of his plans for the future.

Moving over to the element of staging it was found in the comparison of the findings of the individual case studies that there were not that many differences in how both performed on this element. In terms of taking control of the design of the stage and the use of props they had roughly the same possibilities and limitations. Both participated in speeches, talk shows and debates. Whereas they could take (almost) full control of their performances during the speeches, they only had limited possibilities to do so during the talk shows. The debates, moreover, took a middle position for taking control: the design of the stage, the rhythm of the performance and the use of props was not in the hands of the leaders, but they were given the opportunity to speak freely at certain points. Regardless of the quality in possibilities, there still were some differences. The most striking one was that Rutte did not use any notes during his analyzed performances, not even during his speech at the party conference (at least not that could be noted by the audience). This is not to

say that using notes is wrong during a speech or that it harmed Cohen's credibility, but on the other hand not using them can be thought to have been beneficial to Rutte, as it could have given the audience the idea that Rutte really knew what he was talking about and that he really meant it.

Finally, another difference can be found in the appearance of Rutte and Cohen. For one, it is clearly visible in their looks that Cohen is older and more senior than Rutte. In terms of credibility this might have been an advantage for Cohen as generally can be assumed that age comes with wisdom, experience and knowledge. However, after this initial impression such an image also needs to be confirmed (as argued on framing and scripting) to maintain this advantage. Cohen was not able to do so, whereas Rutte 'proved' that he did have the necessary knowledge. Therefore, the initial advantage of Cohen for his credibility as future prime minister did not last, while Rutte was able to overcome the possible negative perception of his knowledge and experience. This difference in seniority also came to the fore in their wardrobe. Both wore a suit and tie, but in Cohen's case the color contrasts were starker. As such, Cohen dressed slightly more authoritatively than Rutte did. Besides in terms of seniority, this difference in expressed authority might also not have had much influence on their perceived credibility as they were both aiming for a slightly different image. Cohen was going for the wise and fatherly image, while Rutte also wanted to show that he was an 'ordinary, hardworking citizen' (or at least that he was not only there for the elite).

Looking at framing, in Rutte's and Cohen's performances for each a distinct underlying frame could be detected. Rutte's frame can be summarized as the 'responsible society' frame and was grounded in the liberal values of freedom and responsibility. Rutte was quite strong in posing that citizens should be able to make their own choices and that they should be able to decide for themselves how they wished to live their life. From a governmental perspective, this required a modest role, as they should leave citizens alone as much as possible. On the other hand, this freedom also required citizens (but government as well) to take responsibility: responsibility for themselves as well as for others. Cohen's frame, contrary, can be summarized as the 'decent society' frame. In this frame, values of solidarity and equality are central. People are not isolated individuals, but are part of a society in which all should be involved. The differences between rich and poor, highly-educated and lowly-educated et cetera should thus not grow too big, as this might prevent the full participation of people in society. Both these frames can be seen as potentially powerful as both frames resonate with values that are considered important by a substantial part of the Dutch citizenry, and both potentially entail an all-encompassing vision on society, government and economy.

That Rutte's frame came to dominate over Cohen's 'decent society' can be understood when focusing on the coherence in their story during the performances and the way in which each dealt with critique on their positions. Besides only answering questions in a narrow sense, Rutte also took the chance to connect them to his broader vision of the responsible society. In doing so he connected individual proposals and ideas to a broader picture and he constructed a coherent story about what needed to be done and why. In terms of credibility this made it seem as if Rutte knew exactly what the problem was and what measures were necessary to solve it. Additionally, it gave the idea that Rutte had the necessary knowledge and expertise to see the broader picture. Moreover, because Rutte was able to connect his leadership and the Liberal Party to the idea of responsibility and because he made it plausible that they took responsibility in the past, his credibility was also promoted. Cohen, contrary, hardly succeeded in connecting individual proposals and ideas to an overarching vision in the performances after his speech. Rather, because he narrowly answered the question, without taking the initiative to make clear how individual views related to

each other, the idea emerged that Cohen did not really know what he was doing and where he was heading. That he changed his election program three times during the campaigns also did not help in this respect. As a credible future prime minister, Rutte was thus in a more favorable position than Cohen on this point.

Next, considering dealing with critique and reframing hostile frames, it can be suggested from the findings of both case studies that Rutte did better a better job as well. Whereas Cohen used the language of his opponents in his attempts to counter critique (and as such only affirmed their points) if he even took the opportunity at all to address it, Rutte did not let any critique go by unanswered. Contrary to Cohen, Rutte did not use the language of his opponents but stayed close to the language that fitted with his responsible society idea. Consequently, while Cohen gave the idea that his opponents actually had a point when uttering critique on his views and leadership capabilities, Rutte more often was able to adequately set it aside. This promoted Rutte's credibility as it gave the impression that he was in charge and knew what he was doing, where Cohen let people wonder whether he had what it takes to lead.

The final element on which the television performances and newspaper articles on Cohen and Rutte were compared relates to how both leaders put their frames and visions into words. For understanding the differences in their credibility development it can be derived from the findings that what Cohen and Rutte did differed on almost all aspects of scripting. The only thing they both did was clearly describing who their friends and enemies were to clarify their positions and views. Moving to the construction of the dialogue it can be noticed that in all performances Rutte used logos, pathos and ethos individually, and that he also made innovative connections between them. By doing so, Rutte was capable of speaking both to the mind and the heart of citizens, which enhanced the 'compellingness' of his message. Additionally, because Rutte used a variety of tropes to support his argumentation he was able to increase the likeliness of persuading his audience. Cohen, on the other hand, mostly only used logos (except for in his candidacy speech) and only to a limited extent used tropes to strengthen his message. As such, Cohen style was more austere, which might have hampered citizens in keeping attention and persuading them of his qualities and vision.

Focusing on more general characteristics of Rutte's and Cohen's speech it can be noted that compared to Cohen, Rutte employed a more direct manner of speaking. Not only did he less often hide his message behind subordinate clauses, he also directly addressed the people he was talking about, which lowered the burden on the audience to keep track of his story. Secondly, contrary to Cohen Rutte simplified his language from time to time and he used concrete, everyday examples to explain his views. Again, this made it easier for citizens to relate to what Rutte was talking about and it made it clear that it is also affecting them. In Cohen's case, his explanations of his views were more abstract and thus did not connect to citizen's everyday life. Thirdly, in answering questions Rutte tended to first answer the question shortly, clearly indicating whether he agreed or not with the question. Next he elaborated on his initial answer, explaining his views and placing nuance where necessary. This differs from the way in which Cohen tended to answer his questions. It seemed that regularly Cohen merely started talking without him having a clear idea about towards what he was heading. Additionally, if Cohen did not agree with insinuations made in a question he tended to respond with statements like 'I don't know whether that is the case'. Finally, the last difference highlighted at this point is the difference between Rutte's and Cohen's attitudes during the performances. Whereas Rutte's attitude can be characterized as proactive, Cohen was rather passive during the analyzed television performances. When getting critique Rutte did not let any chance go

by to counter it, and if he was not given the opportunity to do so, he tried to create one. Cohen, contrary, did regularly not take or create the opportunity to counter critique, but he let it hang in mid air. Moreover, contrary to Cohen, Rutte did not only narrowly answered the questions asked to him, but in his answers he also took the initiative to connect his individual ideas to each other by relating them to the underlying values. Adding up these differences on the more general characteristics of their language style, the findings suggest that the image Cohen conveyed was one of a leader who lacked the necessary political skills and decisiveness. Rutte gave a completely different impression: he knew what he was talking about; he knew what the problem was and what needed to be done about it. In terms of credibility, these aspects might have stimulated Rutte's perceived credibility whereas Cohen's credibility more likely reduced.

In regard to the relationship Rutte and Cohen established with the audience, the leaders differed substantially. In the analyzed performances Rutte connected to his audience by addressing them directly. In this respect he did not only refer to specific groups in society to which citizens like to belong, but he also explicitly turned to them. Furthermore, Rutte also spoke in terms of 'us' and 'we', indicating that he, the Liberal Party, and citizens were in it together and that citizens also had a role to play. Cohen, on the other hand, mostly only occasionally spoke in terms of 'us' and 'we'. However, in these cases it was not always that clear whether he was referring to him and the Labor Party or to him and citizens. Related to credibility it can be argued that Cohen's credibility was not promoted whereas Rutte's credibility did benefit from performance on this aspect. Rutte involved citizens in his plan and gave the impression that he knew what was necessary because he knew what was going on in people's lives. Cohen did quite the opposite, as he was even hesitant to clearly mention about whom he was speaking.

Finally, focusing on the body language of both leaders it was found that Rutte's body language remained relatively stable during all analyzed performances, which indicated that Rutte was at ease and in control of the situation. As such, Rutte's body language strengthened his message that he was a suitable next prime minister and that his plans provided a viable course of action. In other words: it strengthened Rutte's credibility. Cohen's body language, contrary, varied considerably during the analyzed performances. At certain times his posture and facial expressions tensed and he started to stutter. This gave the impression that Cohen was not at ease at those points and that he had difficulties in getting his story out correctly. Besides that this raised doubts about Cohen's political skills and capabilities, one could wonder whether Cohen was fully convinced himself of his plans for the future and whether he had fully thought them through. As such, combined with his verbal message his body language did not promote Cohen's credibility.

8. Conclusion and discussion

Taking a closer look at the analysis of the television performances and the newspaper articles, it seems that not every element of staging, framing, and scripting contributes equally to understanding the credibility developments of Rutte and Cohen. It can be argued that Rutte made the most difference on those elements of the performances that entail the highest uncertainty. Staging and formulating a potentially strong frame are elements that can be well prepared beforehand, that when necessary can be constructed with the help of experts, and that remain relatively stable during the performances. The design of the stage and the clothes leaders wear do not normally change during the performances. For the other elements of framing and for scripting, this is a different story. Much of the persuasiveness for credibility depends on how it's actually performed. Although these

parts can also be prepared and rehearsed, there is still a high degree of uncertainty. How the performances proceed is not set in stone (especially not for the debates and talk shows) and much depends on the on the spot decisions of the leader: does he connect individual ideas to a broader picture to make the relationship clear? Does he take initiative? In what way does he reframe and counter critique? Therefore, it is on these elements that are the least predictable that leaders can make the most difference and where they can distinguish themselves from others.

Stepping back from the individual elements within the performances, and using the findings of the two case studies to answer the research question it can be argued overall that credible leaders in the Netherlands do three things in their performances: they take initiative and have a proactive attitude, they employ a strong frame that is grounded in values cherished by society and which helps the leader to construct an overarching vision on what needs to be done, and thirdly that in telling their story they speak to both the mind and the heart of citizens.

Besides that the findings give insight into what leaders do that contributes to citizens attributing credibility to them, the findings of this study also matter for the broader debates on preferred leadership style, and personalization. Based on what apparently is considered credible can be derived what kind of leadership seems to be preferred. Specifically for the Dutch context it seems that the leadership style that is considered credible for (potential) future prime ministers can be characterized as more of a 'gladiator type' instead of the traditionally preferred 'regency type' (typology derived from Hendriks, 2009). This means that a more decisive leader, who is not afraid to make differences clear and to highlight his personal contribution, is valued. Leaders who are more pragmatic and technocratic, and who downplay their contribution to bridge differences and keep everyone on board, seems to be appreciated less. In light of the Dutch history and formal democratic institutions, this is remarkable.

Another debate in literature is the debate on personalization in politics and media. This debate was already mentioned in the introduction. What I want to discuss here is the thesis that leaders have become increasingly important as a ground for citizens to decide on their vote. Although I do not mean to suggest that the performances of leaders are the only thing that matters – strategic voting, political preferences, and voting out of habit also play a role for example – I do want to argue that the performances of leaders matter in two ways. For one they can convince citizens of their qualities and capabilities for fulfilling a leadership position. Here, the personal credibility of the leader as a political leader and possibly as a future prime minister is thus mentioned. Besides this reason, in the mediatized society leaders also have the role in telling the story of the party, their plans and their vision for the future. Thus next to convincing citizens of their own qualities, leaders also have a task to convince them of their position on certain issues and that they have the most credible plans for the future. As such, the role of leaders might be more important than sometimes recognized.

Besides the possibilities to connect the findings of this study to broader debates in literature, it must be noted that also a few nuances are in place. The first relates to the degree to which political leaders are able to control and construct their performance as to be as credible as possible for the desired role. It might seem easy enough for a leader to just follow what apparently makes leaders credible, but in practice this is not the case. Due to among others their personal character and previous experiences, people have certain dispositions that they have developed over many years and which cannot change overnight. Someone who is shy, for example, cannot change immediately

to an extravert person who dominates an entire conversation. Following Hajer and Uitermark (2008), in the thesis this is referred to as the 'performative habitus' of a leader.

Next to this nuance that leaders cannot be molded in every way that is necessary to be as credible as possible as a future prime minister and political leader, also the basis on which citizens determine the credibility of a leader has to be nuanced. In this thesis it is argued that the performances of leaders play an important role in this respect. This important role is not something I want to challenge at this point, but I do want to draw attention to other elements that also have to be acknowledged. Specifically one can think of the political preferences of citizens, the dominant theme during the election campaigns (as was already mentioned), and the reputation of the political party they represent. These aspects are more or less a given which the leader simply has to deal with, but simultaneously this does not leave the leader defenseless. Thus while these should be kept in mind for understanding the credibility of political leaders, it is the way how they deal with them during their performances that has consequences for their credibility development.

Finally, at the end of the concluding part of the thesis some suggestions for further research were made. The first was, for example, to analyze additional (foreign) leadership cases to study to what extent and why the findings of this study can also be found there (or not). The last and most important suggestion for further research related to the different roles and settings in which political leaders perform. In this study only attention is paid to political leaders who aspired to become prime ministers during the parliamentary election campaigns. It can, however, be expected that for different leadership roles (for example parliamentary leaders and cabinet ministers) different requirements are set because they fulfill a different task within democracy. Additionally, what is considered credible might also differ per stage on which leaders perform (for example parliament and television) because of the different rules and traditions. But, what are these differences exactly and what is it that parliamentary leaders and cabinet ministers are doing on the stages of television and parliament that some are considered credible whereas others are not? This question cannot be answered yet with the current knowledge on credibility and (political) leadership and thus requires additional research.

Samenvatting¹⁴³

1. Introduceren van geloofwaardig politiek leiderschap

In de afgelopen jaren is de geloofwaardigheid van politiek leiders steeds belangrijker geworden. Drie verschillende, maar gerelateerde omstandigheden kunnen helpen om dit gestegen belang te begrijpen. De eerste heeft betrekking op het idee van *governance*. In het aanpakken van problemen in de samenleving kan de overheid vaak niet meer helemaal zelf beslissen wat er moet gebeuren en kan zij de door haar bedacht oplossingen ook niet zo maar implementeren. Voor het adequaat bestrijden van deze problemen heeft de overheid middelen van anderen nodig. Door deze wederzijdse afhankelijkheid kan de overheid andere betrokkenen maar in beperkt dwingen om mee te werken. Integendeel, ze moeten overtuigd worden van de noodzaak van samenwerking en van de waarde van de door de overheid voorgestelde plannen. Voor de relatie tussen politieke leiders en burgers betekent dit dat leiders minder goed harde beloften kunnen maken en gedetailleerde plannen voor de toekomst kunnen voorstellen. Naast dat ze er niet alleen over kunnen beslissen is de aard van de problemen dusdanig complex en onvoorspelbaar geworden dat de gewenste oplossingen kunnen veranderen. In dit opzicht is de geloofwaardigheid van een leider daarom misschien meer waard voor burgers dan zijn exacte plannen op dit moment.

Waar deze eerste omstandigheid betrekking heeft op de kant van de overheid en haar leiders, staat bij de tweede omstandigheid de burger centraal. Gezien de trends van individualisering en het loskomen van burgers van politieke partijen hebben traditionele instituties voor een groot deel hun dominantie in het leven van burgers verloren. De banden van burgers met politieke partijen zijn verzwakt, wat heeft geresulteerd in een grotere volatiliteit van het electoraat. Het is in mindere mate het geval dat burgers gedurende hun hele leven trouw blijven aan slechts een partij. Ze

¹⁴³ De nummering van de paragrafen in deze samenvatting komen overeen met de hoofdstuknummers in de daadwerkelijke scriptie.

bewegen zich vrijer op de politieke markt waar zij – binnen een bepaalde bandbreedte van opties – de partij kiezen die hun stem het meeste verdient. Voor politiek leiders betekent dit dat steun niet min of meer automatisch verondersteld kan worden, maar dat zij deze actief moeten verdienen.

Voor het actief verdienen van steun van burgers, wijzen mediatisering en personalisering op een derde relevante omstandigheid voor de geloofwaardigheid van leiders. Doordat de media – en voornamelijk televisie – het belangrijkste middel zijn voor burgers om informatie in te winnen over de politiek, en omdat televisie bepaalde vormen van communicatie bevoordeeld, ligt de focus van het vertellen van het partijverhaal voornamelijk bij partijleiders. Aangezien televisie een visueel medium is kan de partijleider effectiever de boodschap communiceren dan een beleidsdocument of een partijmanifest dat kan. Naast de geschiktheid van de leider als boodschapper, stelt daarbij een ander deel van de personaliseringsthese dat de leider aan belang heeft gewonnen voor het trekken van stemmen: want, wie zal het het beste doen? De optredens van leiders kunnen hierbij dienen als basis voor burgers om de kwaliteiten van politiek leiders te bepalen. In dit opzicht is hun geloofwaardigheid belangrijk, niet alleen voor hoe zij zelf beoordeeld worden door kiezers, maar ook voor de mate waarin zij hun visie en plannen voor de toekomst geloofwaardig kunnen maken.

Hoewel het dus duidelijk is dat de geloofwaardigheid van politiek leiders er toe doet, blijft het grotendeels onbekend wat het is dat leiders doen dat eraan bijdraagt dat burgers – hun belangrijkste en ultieme publiek – al dan niet geloofwaardigheid aan hen toe delen. Hieruit volgt de volgende onderzoeksvraag: *‘wat is het dat politiek leiders doen dat burgers geloofwaardigheid toebedelen aan de een maar niet aan de ander in dezelfde periode, rekening houdend met hun optredens op televisie en de gerelateerde verslaggeving in kranten?’*

Om tot in detail te onderzoeken wat het is dat leiders doen dat bijdraagt aan de beoordeling van geloofwaardigheid door burgers richt deze studie zich op cases. In de Nederlandse parlementaire verkiezingscampagnes van 2010 (19 februari – 9 juni) kunnen twee interessante cases gevonden worden. In deze periode won Mark Rutte (leider van de VVD) geloofwaardigheid en werd hij steeds meer gezien als een mogelijke kandidaat voor het premierschap, terwijl Job Cohen (leider van de PvdA) substantieel geloofwaardigheid verloor als potentiële kandidaat voor dezelfde functie. Uit de verschillende peilingen die gehouden zijn in deze periode – niet alleen over virtuele zetelverdelingen, maar ook over de beoordeling van leiders als partijleiders en als mogelijke toekomstige premiers – bleek dat Cohen vrij sterk startte. Na zijn komst in de nationale politiek won de PvdA ongeveer 15 zetels (afhankelijk van de peiling) en vrijwel meteen werd hij gezien als de meest favoriete kandidaat voor het premierschap. Met het vorderen van de verkiezingscampagnes verloor de PvdA echter herhaaldelijk virtuele zetels en ook aan de geschiktheid van Cohen als politiek leider werd steeds meer getwijfeld. Mark Rutte, daarentegen, werd nauwelijks gezien als mogelijke premierkandidaat. In de eerste peilingen over wie burgers graag als nieuwe premier zagen kwam zijn naam niet eens voor. Geleidelijk begon dit te veranderen en langzaam maar zeker won Rutte het vertrouwen van burgers. In toenemende mate werd hij daarbij gezien als de meest geschikte premierkandidaat. Daarom kan worden gesteld dat Rutte een case is van een leider die geloofwaardigheid won, waar Cohen een case representeert van een leider die een substantiële hoeveelheid van zijn geloofwaardigheid verloor in dezelfde periode. In dit opzicht kunnen de twee cases dus worden gezien als een concretisering van de hierboven beschreven onderzoeksvraag. Wanneer deze hoofdvraag wordt aangepast aan deze concretisering luidt hij dus als volgt: *‘wat is het dat Mark Rutte en Job Cohen deden dat eraan bijdroeg dat burgers steeds meer geloofwaardigheid toebedeelden aan Rutte, terwijl Cohens geloofwaardigheid verminderde in de periode tussen 19*

februari en 9 juni 2010, rekening houdend met hun optredens op televisie en de gerelateerde verslaggeving in kranten?’

2. Theoretisch raamwerk

Verskillende disciplines besteden aandacht aan het concept geloofwaardigheid. In de communicatiewetenschap wordt in dit opzicht vooral gesproken over de geloofwaardigheid van de bron, waarbij het gaat om: ‘de oordelen van de ontvanger (bijvoorbeeld de ontvanger van een bericht) betreffende de mate waarin de zender geloofd kan worden’ (O’Keefe, 2002: 181). Alleen deze beschrijving zegt echter nog weinig over wanneer iemand het geloven waard is.

Het antwoord op deze vraag kan gevonden worden in het idee van overeenstemming. Ten eerste, overeenstemming is nodig tussen en binnen de optredens van leiders. Kijkend naar hun optredens zijn er drie dingen die met elkaar overeen moeten stemmen: hun woorden, hun daden en hun prestaties. Deze overeenstemming volgt uit de assumptie dat leiders ook zelf moeten doen wat ze van anderen verlangen. Dus hun woorden moeten bevestigd worden door hun latere woorden, door wat ze doen en in het beleid dat ze bereiken of steunen. Naast deze meer interne vorm van overeenstemming is voor de geloofwaardigheid van een politiek leider ook nog een andere vorm van overeenstemming noodzakelijk, die als het ware een externe dimensie toevoegt. Deze externe dimensie geeft antwoord op de vraag in wat voor rol een leider geloofwaardig is (of niet). Om geloofwaardig te zijn als een politiek leider – in tegenstelling tot bijvoorbeeld een bestuurder – moet een leider een overtuigend antwoord geven op de belangen, waarden en/of verwachting die het publiek stelt. Met andere woorden: een leider moet tegemoetkomen aan de eisen die gesteld worden aan een politiek leider om als zodanig geloofwaardig te zijn. In lijn met het eerste type van overeenstemming moet herhaaldelijk aan deze eisen worden voldaan, niet alleen met woorden maar ook in daden en prestaties. Een bijkomend punt dat deze twee typen van overeenstemming en de eerdere omschrijving van geloofwaardigheid onderstrepen is dat geloofwaardigheid geen statisch concept is. ‘Het’ is niet iets dat een leider bezit, maar het ontstaat in de interactie tussen burgers en leiders. Burgers moeten bepalen of een leider voldoet aan hun eisen om geloofwaardigheid toe te delen of niet.

Wat zijn de verwachtingen die burgers hebben van een politiek leider? Sinds de jaren zestig is herhaaldelijk vastgesteld in onderzoek in verschillende disciplines – waaronder communicatie wetenschap en management studies – dat betrouwbaarheid en competentie de twee kerneigenschappen van een geloofwaardige spreker zijn. Hierbij moet opgemerkt worden dat het er dus vooral om gaat dat burgers hen als zodanig ervaren. Of zoals Kouzes en Posner (2003) stellen: ‘als alleen eigenschappen verkiesbaar zijn, dan zijn het deze die tot consensus leiden en de overwinning bereiken’. Voor beide eigenschappen geldt dat een publiek kan denken dat een leider er niet aan voldoet. Met andere woorden: een publiek kan het gevoel hebben dat een leider ofwel niet de waarheid vertelt – bijvoorbeeld omdat hij niet zijn beloften nakomt – of dat hij niet de benodigde kennis en vaardigheden bezit om overtuigend bepaalde uitspraken te doen. Daarbij hangen de twee eigenschappen van competentie en betrouwbaarheid met elkaar samen. Hoe competentier iemand wordt geacht, hoe betrouwbaarder hij ook wordt ervaren. Hetzelfde geldt in een omgekeerde situatie: minder betrouwbaarheid lijkt te impliceren dat iemand ook als minder competent wordt gezien.

De indruk die politiek leiders maken op hun publiek, en dus de aanwijzingen die een publiek kan vinden in de optredens over hun competentie en betrouwbaarheid, staat niet bij voorbaat vast.

In dit opzicht spreekt de literatuur van imago management of strategieën van zelf-presentatie. Deze strategieën relateren aan wat een leider zegt, hoe hij het gezegd, met welk uiterlijk en op welk podium. Gardner en Avolio (1998) verwijzen naar drie interessante elementen die goed uitgevoerd moeten worden tijdens de optredens om te overtuigen (als geloofwaardig leider): staging, framing en scripting. De eerste van deze drie elementen in deze dramaturgische benadering, staging, gaat over de settings waarin leiders optreden. In deze zin heeft staging letterlijk de betekenis van podiumbouw. Het gaat om de omgevingen waarin een leider optreedt, in de aanwezigheid van en voor een bepaald publiek. Naast het daadwerkelijke ontwerp van het podium, spelen ook rekvisieten en de kleding en het uiterlijk van de leider een rol.

Framing, ten tweede, relateert aan het idee dat elk persoon denkt in frames. Deze frames vormen een soort raamwerk met daarin bepaalde waarden en basisideeën over de werkelijkheid, over wat goed en slecht is, aan de hand waarvan nieuwe informatie wordt geïnterpreteerd. Gegeven de notie dat informatie het beste geaccepteerd wordt wanneer het tegemoet komt aan de bestaande frames van burgers, is het noodzakelijk voor politici om aan te sluiten bij deze frames om burgers te overtuigen van hun ideeën. In andere woorden: de frames die door politiek leiders worden gebruikt moeten resoneren met de frames die aanwezig zijn in de samenleving. Een belangrijk instrument voor het activeren van de gewenste frames is taal. Door specifieke woorden en formuleringen te gebruiken kunnen leiders hun ideeën laten aansluiten bij de waarden die leven in de samenleving, wat kan helpen om burgers te overtuigen van de waarde van hun visie.

Scripting, ten slotte, houdt de wijze in waarop het gehanteerde frame door burgers onder woorden wordt gebracht. Verschillende elementen in de optredens vragen aandacht in dit opzicht: wie vrienden en vijanden zijn, hoe de dialoog is geconstrueerd wat voor relatie ene leider opbouwt met zijn publiek en de lichaamstaal van de leider. Van hoe deze elementen ten uitvoer worden gebracht kunnen aanwijzingen voor het begrijpen van de ontwikkeling van geloofwaardigheid worden afgeleid.

3. Data en methoden

Zoals eerder gesteld zijn in deze scriptie twee cases van politiek leiderschap uitvoerig bestudeerd. Centraal in deze cases stonden de optredens van Rutte en Cohen op televisie en hoe over hen werd geschreven in nationale kranten.

De reden om te focussen op de optredens van Rutte en Cohen op televisie volgt uit de aard van het concept geloofwaardigheid. Zoals eerder vastgesteld wordt geloofwaardigheid gezien als een relationeel begrip dat voortkomt uit de interactie tussen de politiek leider en zijn publiek. Op basis van wat leiders doen tijdens deze interactie kunnen burgers aanwijzingen vinden over hun betrouwbaarheid en competentie als politiek leiders en als potentiële toekomstige premiers. Kijkend naar de interactie tussen leiders en burgers valt op dat in de gemediatiseerde Westerse democratieën deze interactie vooral plaats vindt via de massamedia. Hoewel internet terrein wint heeft televisie nog steeds een dominante rol in dit opzicht. Daarom, om te bestuderen wat leiders doen dat bijdraagt aan het aan hen toebedelen van geloofwaardigheid door burgers, vormen de televisieoptredens van politiek leiders een interessant startpunt. Daarbij zijn ook kranten geanalyseerd omdat deze voor burgers nog steeds een belangrijke bron van informatie over de politiek vormen. In deze krantenartikelen worden hun optredens niet alleen beschreven, maar ook geïnterpreteerd in een breder kader. Zonder te negeren dat kranten een ander type medium vormen

dan televisie, dragen krantenartikelen dus ook bij aan het geloofwaardigheidsconstruct van politiek leiders.

Voor het bestuderen van de televisieoptredens van Cohen en Rutte zijn voor beide leiders elf optredens geselecteerd. Deze selectie van optredens was gebaseerd op een aantal criteria zoals de spreiding van de optredens over de bestudeerde periode tussen 19 februari en 9 juni 2010 en het type optreden (debat, speech of talkshow). Voor het analyseren van de krantenartikelen zijn de nationale kranten eerst onderverdeeld in drie categorieën: kwaliteitskranten, populaire kranten en gratis kranten. Vervolgens is uit elke categorie de krant gekozen die in de bestudeerde periode de grootste oplage had. Dit waren de kranten de Volkskrant, de Telegraaf en de Metro.

De analyse van de 22 televisieoptredens is in principe uitgevoerd langs de lijnen van het dramaturgisch raamwerk zoals uiteengezet in hoofdstuk 2. Voor elk optreden zijn de elementen staging, framing en scripting uitgebreid bestudeerd om vast te stellen hoe Rutte en Cohen hier uitvoering aan gaven. Hierna zijn de individuele bevindingen van de optredens met elkaar geïntegreerd tot een geheel beeld van hoe de twee leiders de drie elementen uitvoerden, waarbij ook aandacht is besteed aan de betekenis daarvan voor hun geloofwaardigheid. In de krantenartikelen is eveneens gezocht naar aanwijzingen over hoe de twee leiders de elementen staging, framing en scripting uitvoerden. Naast alleen de pure beschrijving van wat er gebeurde tijdens, bijvoorbeeld, de debatten, is ook aandacht besteed aan hoe de uitvoering van Rutte en Cohen werd geïnterpreteerd en door wie deze interpretatie werd geuit.

7. Bevindingen

In hoofdstuk vier zijn de casussen van Mark Rutte en Job Cohen beschreven, en in hoofdstuk 5 en 6 zijn voor de individuele cases de dramaturgische analyse en de analyse van krantenartikelen beschreven, alsmede wat dat betekende voor hun geloofwaardigheid. In hoofdstuk 7 zijn de bevindingen van deze twee individuele cases met elkaar vergeleken om te begrijpen waarom hun geloofwaardigheid zich ontwikkelde zoals het deed.

Naast de verschillen tussen de televisieoptredens of Rutte en Cohen, wezen vooral de geanalyseerde kranten ook op een andere reden die bijgedragen zou hebben aan Ruttés gestegen en Cohens gedaalde ervaren geloofwaardigheid. Cohen verdiende zijn sporen als burgemeester van Amsterdam voornamelijk door zijn inspanningen om ‘de boel bij elkaar te houden’ en om de verschillen tussen verschillende groepen in de samenleving te overbruggen. In dit opzicht was Cohens (succesvolle) reputatie sterk verbonden met het thema immigratie en integratie. Rutte, aan de andere kant, positioneerde zichzelf en de VVD als experts op het gebied van de economie. Het was dus niet immigratie en integratie waaraan Ruttés reputatie positief verbonden was, maar aan het thema van de economie. Op het moment dat Cohen zichzelf beschikbaar stelde voor de positie van partijleider van de PvdA was de verwachting dat immigratie het dominante thema zou worden, maar dit gebeurde niet. Met het voortschrijden van de verkiezingscampagnes schoof het issue van immigratie en integratie steeds verder naar achteren terwijl het thema van de economie en de benodigde bezuinigingen steeds meer naar voren kwam. Als gevolg hiervan kreeg Rutte makkelijker de kans om te schitteren en was het eenvoudiger voor hem om zijn verhaal overtuigend voor het voetlicht te brengen dan dat het voor Cohen was. Cohen profiteerde dus nauwelijks van deze verschuiving van aandacht. Een grote economische kennis was niet een kenmerk waarmee Cohen vaak werd omschreven. Vergeleken met immigratie als dominant thema, moest Cohen nu harder vechten om

anderen te overtuigen van zijn geloofwaardigheid als politiek leider en potentieel premier, en van de geloofwaardigheid van zijn plannen voor de toekomst.

Wat betreft het element staging bleek bij het vergelijken van de bevindingen van de individuele case studies dat de uitvoering van dit element door beide leiders niet veel verschilde. In termen van het nemen van controle over het ontwerp van het podium en het gebruik van rekwisieten hadden beide min of meer dezelfde mogelijkheden en beperkingen. Voor beiden zijn toespraken, debatten en talkshows geanalyseerd. Waar ze hun optreden tijdens de toespraken zo goed als volledig zelf konden bepalen, hadden ze slechts beperkte mogelijkheden om dit te doen tijdens de talkshows. De debatten namen in dit opzicht een tussenpositie in: het ontwerp van het podium, het verloop van het optreden en het gebruik van rekwisieten was niet in handen van de leiders, maar van tijd tot tijd werd hen wel de mogelijkheid gegeven om vrij te spreken. Hoewel de mogelijkheden bijna gelijk waren, waren er nog steeds een aantal verschillen. De meest opvallende was dat Rutte tijdens geen enkele van de geanalyseerde optredens aantekeningen gebruikte, zelfs niet tijdens zijn toespraak op het partijcongres van de VVD (tenminste niet dat gezien kon worden door het publiek). Hiermee bedoel ik niet dat het gebruiken van aantekeningen tijdens een toespraak verkeerd is of dat het de geloofwaardigheid van Cohen schaadde, maar aan de andere kant kan wel gesteld worden dat het niet gebruiken ervan voordelig was voor Rutte, aangezien dit het publiek het idee kon geven dat Rutte echt wist waar hij het over had en dat hij het ook daadwerkelijk meende.

Ten slotte, een ander verschil kan gevonden worden in het uiterlijk van Rutte en Cohen. In de eerste plaats is het is duidelijk zichtbaar in hun uiterlijk dat Cohen ouder en meer senior is dan Rutte. In termen van geloofwaardigheid kan dit een voordeel zijn geweest voor Cohen omdat de neiging is te veronderstellen dat wijsheid, kennis en ervaring met de jaren komt. Na deze eerste indruk echter, moet dit imago ook bevestigd worden om deze voorsprong te behouden (zoals ook beargumenteerd bij framing en scripting). Cohen bleek hiertoe niet in staat, terwijl Rutte als het ware bewees dat hij de benodigde kennis had. Het voordeel dat Cohen had gezien zijn geloofwaardigheid als toekomst premier hield dus geen stand, waar Rutte wel in staat was om deze potentieel negatieve perceptie over zijn kennis en ervaring te overwinnen. Het verschil in senioriteit kwam ook naar voren in hun kleding. Beiden droegen een kostuum met das, maar in het geval van Cohen waren de kleurcontrasten sterker. Als gevolg hiervan was Cohen iets autoritairder gekleed dan Rutte. Voor hun ervaren geloofwaardigheid maakte het verschil in autoriteit wellicht niet veel uit. Behalve dan dat Cohen ook ouder was, streefden beiden ook een net iets ander imago na. Cohen ging voor het wijze en vaderlijke imago, terwijl Rutte naast autoriteit ook wilde laten zien dat hij een 'gewone, hardwerkende' burger was (of in ieder geval dat hij niet alleen maar bij de elite hoorde).

Gezien framing kon in de optredens van Rutte en Cohen voor ieder een verschillend onderliggend frame ontdekt worden. Ruttess frame kan samengevat worden als de 'verantwoordelijke samenleving' en was gebaseerd op de liberale waarden van vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid. Rutte was vrij stellig in dat burgers in staat zouden moeten zijn om hun eigen beslissingen te nemen en dat zij zelf moeten beslissen over hoe zij hun leven wensen te leiden. De overheid heeft hierin een relatief beperkte rol, aangezien burgers zo veel mogelijk met rust gelaten dienen te worden. Aan de andere kant vraagt deze vrijheid ook een zekere verantwoordelijkheid: burgers (en de overheid) moeten verantwoordelijkheid nemen voor zowel zichzelf, als anderen. Cohens frame, daarentegen, kan samengevat worden als de 'fatsoenlijke samenleving'. In dit frame staan de waarden van solidariteit en gelijkheid centraal. Mensen zijn geen geïsoleerde individuen, maar maken deel uit van een samenleving waarin allen betrokken zouden moeten zijn. De verschillen tussen rijk en arm, hoog-

en laagopgeleid enzovoort moeten daarom niet te groot worden, aangezien dit de participatie van bepaalde groepen in de samenleving kan belemmeren. Beide frames kunnen gezien worden als potentieel krachtig omdat beide frames resoneren met waarden die belangrijk geacht worden door een substantieel deel van de Nederlandse bevolking en omdat beiden in potentie een allesomvattende visie op de samenleving, de overheid en de economie inhouden.

Dat Ruttés frame ging domineren over Cohens fatsoenlijke samenleving kan begrepen worden wanneer gekeken wordt naar de coherentie in hun verhaal tijdens de optredens en de manier waarop beiden omgingen met kritiek op hun standpunten. Rutte beantwoorde vragen niet alleen in beperkte zin, maar hij nam ook de gelegenheid om deze individuele antwoorden te verbinden met zijn bredere visie van de verantwoordelijke samenleving. Door dit te doen verbond hij zijn individuele voorstellen en ideeën tot een overkoepelend perspectief en construeerde hij een coherent verhaal over wat er moest gebeuren en waarom. In termen van geloofwaardigheid maakte het dat het leek alsof Rutte precies wist wat het probleem was en welke maatregelen nodig waren om het op te lossen. Daarbij gaf dit het idee dat Rutte over de benodigde kennis en expertise beschikte om het grotere geheel te kunnen zien. Verder, omdat Rutte in staat was zijn leiderschap en de VVD te verbinden met het idee van verantwoordelijkheid nemen en omdat hij het plausibel maakte dat de VVD in het verleden verantwoordelijkheid had genomen, stimuleerde dit zijn geloofwaardigheid. Cohen, aan de andere kant, was nauwelijks succesvol in het verbinden van individuele voorstellen en ideeën aan zijn overkoepelende visie in de geanalyseerde optredens na zijn kandidaatstellingstoespraak. Hij gaf alleen in beperkte manier antwoord op de vragen, zonder dat hij het initiatief nam om duidelijk te maken hoe de individuele voorstellen met elkaar samenhangen. Hierdoor ontstond het idee dat Cohen niet precies wist wat hij aan het doen was en wat hij wilde bereiken. Dat hij drie keer het verkiezingsprogramma wijzigde tijdens de verkiezingscampagnes hielp ook niet in dit opzicht. Als een geloofwaardige toekomstige premier, had Rutte op dit punt dus een betere positie dan Cohen.

Daarbij kan ook worden gesteld op basis van de bevindingen van de individuele case studies dat gezien het omgaan met kritiek en het reframen van vijandige frames Rutte het eveneens beter deed dan Cohen. Waar Cohen gebruik maakte van de taal van zijn opponenten in zijn pogingen om de kritiek tegen te spreken (en op die manier de kritiek alleen maar bevestigde), als hij überhaupt de kans nam om de kritiek te weerleggen, liet Rutte geen kans voorbij gaan om kritiek te pareren. In tegenstelling tot Cohen gebruikte hij daarbij zijn eigen woorden, woorden die pasten bij zijn verantwoordelijke samenleving. Als gevolg daarvan was Rutte beter in staat om de kritiek adequaat tegen te gaan, terwijl Cohen in feite regelmatig bevestigde dat zijn tegenstanders een punt hadden met hun kritiek op zijn standpunten en leiderschapskwaliteiten. Dit bevorderde Ruttés geloofwaardigheid omdat dit het idee gaf dat hij de situatie onder controle had en dat hij wist waar hij mee bezig was, waar Cohen mensen liet afvragen of hij wel had wat nodig is om te leiden.

Het laatste element waarop de televisieoptredens en de krantenartikelen van Cohen en Rutte zijn vergeleken relateert aan hoe beide leiders hun frames en visies in woorden omzetten. Om de verschillen in de ontwikkeling van hun geloofwaardigheid te begrijpen, blijkt uit de bevindingen dat wat betreft scripting Ruttés en Cohens uitvoering op zo goed als elk aspect verschilde. Het enige wat ze beiden deden was duidelijk omschrijven wie hun vrienden en vijanden waren om hun positie te verduidelijken. Gezien de constructie van de dialoog kan worden opgemerkt dat Rutte in alle optredens pathos, logos and ethos los van elkaar gebruikte, maar dat hij daarnaast ook innovatieve verbindingen maakte tussen deze argumentatietypen. Door deze innovatieve verbindingen was Rutte

in staat om zowel het verstand als het hart van burgers aan te spreken, wat de meeslependheid van zijn boodschap vergrootte. Daarbij, omdat Rutte een verscheidenheid aan stijlfiguren gebruikte om zijn argumentatie te ondersteunen steeg de kans dat hij zijn publiek overtuigde. Cohen, daarentegen, gebruikte het grootste deel van de tijd alleen logos (de uitzondering hier is zijn kandidaatstellingsspeech) en hij maakte slechts in beperkte mate gebruik van stijlmiddelen om zijn boodschap te versterken. Als gevolg hiervan was Cohens taalgebruik kaler en soberder, wat het voor burgers lastiger maakte om hun aandacht erbij te houden en wat het overtuigen van burgers van zijn kwaliteiten en visie bemoeilijkt kan hebben.

Wat betreft de meer algemene kenmerken van het spreken van Rutte en Cohen valt het op dat in vergelijking met Cohen Rutte directer sprak. Hij verborg niet alleen minder zijn boodschap in bijzinnen, maar hij sprak ook direct de groep mensen aan die hij bedoelde. Dit verlaagde de inspanning die van het publiek geëist werd om zijn verhaal te kunnen blijven volgen. Ten tweede, in tegenstelling tot Cohen simplificeerde Rutte zijn taalgebruik op bepaalde momenten en gebruikte hij concrete, dagelijkse voorbeelden om zijn standpunten uit te leggen. Dit maakte het wederom makkelijker voor burgers om zich te relateren aan het onderwerp en het maakte duidelijk dat het wel degelijk van belang was voor hen. In Cohens geval was de uitleg van zijn standpunten abstracter en verbond hij ze nauwelijks met dagelijkse voorbeelden. Ten derde, in het beantwoorden van vragen had Rutte de neiging om eerst de vraag kort te beantwoorden, waarbij hij duidelijk aangaf of hij het wel of niet eens was met de gestelde vraag. Daarna werkte hij dit antwoord verder uit, waarbij hij zijn standpunten uitlegde en waar nodig elementen nuanceerde. Dit verschilde van de manier waarop Cohen vragen neigde te beantwoorden. Regelmatig leek het alsof hij simpelweg begon met praten zonder dat hij een idee had waar hij naar toe ging. Daarbij, als Cohen het niet eens was met de insinuaties die werden gemaakt in een vraag, beantwoordde hij die over het algemeen met uitspraken als 'ik weet niet of dat het geval is'. Ten slotte, het laatste verschil waaraan hier aandacht is besteed is het verschil in houding van Rutte en Cohen tijdens de geanalyseerde optredens. Waar Ruttés houding gekarakteriseerd kan worden als proactief, was Cohen redelijk passief tijdens zijn optredens. Als Rutte kritiek kreeg nam hij elke kans aan om deze te pareren, en als hij deze kans niet meteen kreeg dan probeerde hij er een te creëren. Cohen, daarentegen, liet mogelijkheden voorbij gaan om kritiek te reframen en nam ook nauwelijks het initiatief om kansen hiervoor zelf te creëren. Hierdoor bleef de kritiek als het ware in de lucht hangen. Ten slotte, waar Rutte niet alleen de vraag beantwoorden in smalle zin (zoals gesteld), maar ook het initiatief nam om het te verbinden met het bredere verhaal en de onderliggende waarden, bleef Cohen juist wel erg dicht bij de originele vraag. Deze verschillen in de meer algemene kenmerken van hun spreken bij elkaar optellend kan worden gesteld dat Cohen het beeld van zichzelf neerzette dat hij een leider was die niet de benodigde politieke vaardigheden en daadkracht had. Rutte gaf een totaal andere indruk: hij wist waar hij het over had, hij wist wat het probleem was en hoe het aangepakt moest worden. In termen van geloofwaardigheid kunnen deze elementen die van Rutte dus hebben bevorderd, waar het de geloofwaardigheid van Cohen verminderd kan hebben.

Gezien de relatie die Rutte en Cohen opbouwden met hun publiek, gaven beide leiders ook een geheel andere invulling. In de geanalyseerde optredens maakte Rutte contact met zijn publiek door ze direct aan te spreken. Hierbij gaat het er niet alleen om dat hij specifieke groepen in de samenleving, en waartoe burgers ook graag behoren, expliciet benoemde, maar ook dat hij soms rechtstreeks tot hen sprak. Verder sprak Rutte in termen van 'ons' en 'wij', waarmee hij aangaf dat hij, de VVD en de burgers er allen bij betrokken waren en dat burgers ook een rol hadden bij het oplossen van problemen. Cohen, aan de andere kant, betrok het publiek het meeste wanneer hij af

en toe in termen van 'ons' en 'wij' sprak. Hier was het alleen niet altijd duidelijk of hij het had over zichzelf en de PvdA of zichzelf en burgers. Voor geloofwaardigheid kan dus beargumenteerd worden dat Cohens geloofwaardigheid hier niet door gestimuleerd werd, terwijl dat wel het geval was bij Rutte. Rutte betrok burgers bij zijn plannen en gaf het idee dat hij wist wat nodig was omdat hij wist waar burgers tegenaan liepen. Cohen deed bijna het omgekeerde en was zelfs terughoudend in het verduidelijken van wie hij precies bedoelde.

Ten slotte kijkend naar de lichaamstaal van beide leiders kan gesteld worden op basis van de bevindingen dat Ruttés lichaamstaal relatief stabiel bleef gedurende de geanalyseerde optredens, waardoor het leek alsof Rutte zich op zijn gemak voelde en dat hij controle had over de situatie. In dit opzicht versterkte Ruttés lichaamstaal dus zijn boodschap dat hij een geschikte premier was en dat zijn plannen een haalbaar handelingsperspectief boden. Met andere woorden: het versterkte zijn geloofwaardigheid. Cohens lichaamstaal varieerde aanzienlijk tijdens de geanalyseerde optredens. Op zekere momenten verkrampte zijn houding en gezichtsuitdrukking en begon hij te stotteren. Dit gaf het idee dat Cohen zich niet op zijn gemak voelde tijdens deze momenten en dat hij het moeilijk had om zijn verhaal op de juiste manier de wereld in te krijgen. Naast dat dit vragen oproep over Cohens politieke vaardigheden en kwaliteiten, kan men zich ook afvragen of Cohen zelf wel volledig overtuigd was van zijn plannen voor de toekomst en of hij ze wel volledig had doordacht. Gecombineerd met zijn verbale boodschap bevorderde Cohens lichaamstaal dus niet zijn geloofwaardigheid.

8. Conclusie en discussie

Bij het nader bestuderen van de bevindingen van de dramaturgische analyse en de analyse van kranten artikelen, bleek dat niet elk element van staging, framing en scripting evenveel lijkt bij te dragen aan het begrijpen van verschillen in geloofwaardigheid. Het kan worden beargumenteerd dat Rutte het meeste verschil maakte op die elementen gedurende de optredens die meeste onzekerheid met zich meebrachten. Staging en het formuleren van een potentieel sterk frame zijn elementen die goed van te voren voorbereid kunnen worden, eventueel met hulp van experts, en die relatief stabiel zijn gedurende de optredens. Het ontwerp van het podium en de kleding van leiders, bijvoorbeeld, veranderen normaal gesproken niet gedurende een optreden. Voor de andere aspecten van framing en voor scripting is dit een heel ander verhaal. Veel van de overtuigingskracht voor geloofwaardigheid wordt bepaald door hoe er daadwerkelijk uitvoering aan wordt gegeven op het moment zelf. Hoewel deze onderdelen ook voorbereid en geoefend kunnen worden, is er nog steeds een grote mate van onzekerheid. Hoe de optredens verlopen ligt vooraf niet precies vast (zeker niet voor de debatten en talk shows) en veel hangt af van de beslissingen die de leider op dat moment neemt: lukt het hem bijvoorbeeld om de individuele ideeën te relateren aan een overkoepelende visie om de samenhang te verduidelijken? Neemt hij initiatief? Op welke manier reframed en pareert hij kritiek? Het is dus op deze elementen die het minst goed voorspeld kunnen worden dat leiders het meest verschil kunnen maken en waar zij zich kunnen onderscheiden van anderen.

Op basis van de bevindingen van de individuele case studies kan de centrale onderzoeksvraag worden beantwoord door een tree boven de individuele elementen binnen de geanalyseerde optredens te gaan staan. Over het geheel genomen lijkt het erop dat (Nederlandse) geloofwaardige leiders drie dingen doen in hun optredens dat het verschil maakt: ze nemen initiatief en hebben een proactieve houding, ze hebben een sterk frame dat gebaseerd is op waarden die ook

leven bij een substantieel deel van de bevolking en dat de leider helpt om een overkoepelende visie te construeren over wat er moet gebeuren, en in het vertellen van hun verhaal spreken ze zowel het verstand als het hart van kiezers aan.

De bevindingen geven inzicht in wat leiders doen dat eraan bijdraagt dat burgers geloofwaardigheid aan hen toebedelen, maar de bevindingen van deze studie zijn ook van belang voor de bredere debatten over de geprefereerde leiderschapsstijl en personalisering. Wanneer de geanalyseerde optredens van leiders verbonden worden met hun geloofwaardigheidsontwikkeling kunnen aanwijzingen gevonden worden voor wat blijkbaar een gewenst type leiderschap is. Specifiek voor de Nederlandse situatie lijkt het erop dat de leiderschapsstijl die als geloofwaardig wordt gezien voor politiek leiders en mogelijke premiers een gladiator-achtige stijl is in plaats van de meer traditioneel geprefereerde 'regentenstijl' (typologie ontleend aan Hendriks, 2009). Dit betekent dat een meer daadkrachtige leider die niet bang is om verschillen duidelijk te maken en die zijn eigen bijdrage ook onderstreept wordt gewaardeerd. Leiders die meer pragmatisch en technocratisch zijn, en die hun eigen bijdrage wat wegcijferen om de verschillen te overbruggen en om iedereen binnenboord te houden lijken minder op prijs te worden gesteld. In het licht van de Nederlandse geschiedenis en formele democratische instituties is dit op zijn minst opmerkelijk.

Een ander debat in de literatuur is het debat over personalisering in de politiek en de media. Dit debat is reeds in de introductie aan bod gekomen. Wat ik hier ter discussie wil stellen is de stelling dat leiders belangrijker zijn geworden als basis voor burgers om te bepalen op wie zij willen stemmen. Hoewel ik niet wil impliceren dat de optredens van leiders het enige is dat telt – strategisch stemmen, politieke voorkeuren, and stemmen uit gewoonte spelen bijvoorbeeld ook een rol – wil ik wel beargumenteren dat de optredens van leiders in twee opzichten belangrijk zijn. Ten eerste kunnen zij burgers overtuigen van hun kwaliteiten en vaardigheden voor het vervullen van een leiderschapspositie. Hier gaat het dus om de persoonlijke geloofwaardigheid van een leider als politiek leider en eventueel toekomstig premier. Daarnaast hebben leiders een rol in de gemediatiseerde samenleving om het verhaal van hun partij, hun plannen en hun visie op de toekomst te vertellen. Dus naast het overtuigen van burgers van hun eigen kwaliteiten, hebben leiders ook de taak burgers ervan te overtuigen dat zij de meest geloofwaardige plannen hebben voor de toekomst. De rol van de leider kan daarom dus belangrijker zijn dan nu soms wordt erkend.

Naast de mogelijkheden om de bevindingen van deze studie te relateren aan de bredere debatten in de literatuur moet ook opgemerkt worden dat een aantal nuanceringspunten op zijn plek zijn. De eerste heeft betrekking op de mate waarin politiek leiders in staat zijn om hun optredens te controleren en deze zo te construeren dat ze zo geloofwaardig mogelijk zijn in de gewenste rol. Het kan zo simpel lijken om als leider ten uitvoer te brengen wat blijkbaar geloofwaardig wordt geacht, maar in de praktijk is dit niet zo eenvoudig. Door onder meer hun persoonlijkheid en hun eerdere ervaringen hebben mensen gedurende vele jaren een bepaald automatisme ontwikkeld in hun reageren dat niet van de ene op de andere dag te veranderen is. Iemand die verlegen is bijvoorbeeld, kan niet onmiddellijk in een extravert persoon veranderen die gesprekken domineert, als dat beter uitkomt. In navolging van Hajer en Uitermark (2008) wordt in de scriptie zelf hier verwezen naar een '*performative habitus*' van een leider.

Naast deze nuancering dat leiders niet gemodelleerd kunnen worden in elke manier die wellicht voordelig is voor hun geloofwaardigheid, verdient ook de grond waarop burgers de geloofwaardigheid van leiders vaststellen nuancering. In de thesis is beargumenteerd dat de optredens van leiders een belangrijke rol spelen bij het toebedelen van geloofwaardigheid. Het

belang van deze optredens wil ik hier niet ter discussie stellen, maar ik wil wel aandacht besteden aan andere elementen die een rol spelen. Men kan hierbij denken aan de politieke voorkeuren van burgers, het dominante thema tijdens de verkiezingscampagnes (zoals al eerder naar voren kwam) en de reputatie van de partij die de leider vertegenwoordigt. Deze aspecten zijn min of meer een gegeven waarmee de leider om heeft te gaan, maar tegelijkertijd maken ze leiders niet weerloos. Dus hoewel deze aspecten in gedachten moeten worden gehouden voor het begrijpen van de geloofwaardigheid van politiek leiders, is het vooral de manier waarop ze met deze omstandigheden omgaan in hun optredens, dat bepalend is voor de ontwikkeling van hun geloofwaardigheid.

Ten slotte, aan het einde van het concluderende deel van deze thesis zijn een aantal suggesties gedaan voor toekomstig onderzoek. De eerste was, bijvoorbeeld, om aanvullende (buitenlandse) leiderschapscases te onderzoeken om erachter te komen in welke mate en waarom de bevindingen van deze studie ook daar gevonden kunnen worden (of juist niet). De laatste en meest belangrijke suggestie voor toekomstig onderzoek heeft betrekking op de verschillende rollen en omstandigheden waarin politiek leiders optreden. In deze studie is alleen aandacht besteed aan politiek leiders die aspiraties hadden om premier te worden tijdens de parlementaire verkiezingscampagnes. Het kan verwacht worden, echter, dat aan verschillende leiderschapsrollen (bijvoorbeeld parlementaire leiders en ministers) verschillende eisen worden gesteld omdat ze een verschillende rol in de democratie vervullen. Daarbij, wat geloofwaardig wordt geacht kan ook verschillend zijn per type podium waarop leiders optreden (bijvoorbeeld parlement en televisie) omdat de regels en tradities anders zijn. Maar, wat zijn deze verschillen precies en wat is het dat parlementaire leiders en ministers doen op de podia van televisie en parlement dat sommigen geloofwaardig worden geacht en anderen niet? Deze vraag kan op dit moment nog niet voldoende worden beantwoord met de huidige kennis over geloofwaardigheid en (politiek) leiderschap en daarom is extra onderzoek nodig.

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