



The Change We Need?

An Inquiry Into The Americanization Of PvdA Campaigns Of 1963 And 2006

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Introduction

The Dutch national Labour party, the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA), made a clear statement about a change in political campaigning during the 2012 national elections for the House of Representatives. The party leader, Diederik Samsom, featured in a TV ad with his family to promote his party. The clip showed images of him at home, with his wife and children, riding a bike to bring his children to school, and discussing his handicapped daughter. This “family man” image was a new phenomenon in the Netherlands, but already widely used in political campaigns in the United States. Samsom ended with a direct appeal into the camera, stating: “my name is Diederik Samsom”. This is another similarity to the typical American campaign TV ads.¹

Suddenly, the presence of American influence in political campaigns became evident and sparked a fascinating debate.² Tom-Jan Meeus, former NRC correspondent in the United States, was shocked when he returned to the Netherlands in 2012 and saw that the political culture was rapidly ‘Americanising’, just when the U.S. was attempting to contain its populism.³ Philip van Praag noticed this even earlier, in 1995.⁴ However, according to him, Dutch campaigns were only partially Americanising. Van Praag believed at the time that although the American influence was undeniable, campaigns in the Netherlands were still able to maintain their typical Dutch character.

This thesis will further investigate the statement: to what extent are the Dutch political campaigns ‘Americanising’? It will attempt to provide an answer to two sub-questions. Seeing how van Praag and Meeus both noticed Americanisation in different decades, the first one is whether or not there is a trend of increasing Americanisation of Dutch political campaigns. The second sub-question is whether these Dutch campaigns are in fact only Americanising partially as van Praag claims, and, more specifically, which aspects of American campaigns the Dutch are ‘copying’.

¹ PvdA, “Televiespot PvdA: Nederland Sterker en Socialer, YouTube, 28 June 2012.

² Joost de Vries. “Campagnespotjes: Samsom introduceert de Amerikaanse ‘family man’”, *De Volkskrant*, 2 July 2012.

³ Tom-Jan Meeus (2012), *De Grote Amerika-show: Populisme en Wantrouwen in een Gespleten Land*. (Amsterdam, Nieuw Amsterdam, 2012)

⁴ van Praag, P. “Hoe “Amerikaans” is de Nederlandse verkiezingscampagne?” In Kees Brandts and Philip van Praag (eds) *Verkoop van de Politiek. De verkiezingscampagne van 1994*. (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1995): 228-245.

The first chapter provides a definition of Americanisation. Additionally, it establishes five aspects of Americanisation that Dutch political campaign ads will be examined for. These five aspects include certain manners to reach the electorate and increasing personalization, professionalization, campaign expenses and negative campaigning.

In order to demarcate this research more clearly, a choice was made to focus on the evolution of Americanisation of one political party: the PvdA. The PvdA was chosen because it is one of the largest and oldest political parties of the Netherlands. Most scholarly research about development of political campaigns limits itself to one person or aspect of campaigning. This thesis explores instead the developments within one political party. Consequently, the PvdA will be the constant factor.

Furthermore, in order to answer the question to what extent Dutch political campaigns have Americanised and whether or not this phenomenon is taking place recently and/or partially, this thesis pinpoints two periods in Dutch political history. In the second chapter it will study two national campaigns during the 1960s. The third chapter will take a closer look at the national campaign of 2006. These two periods were selected because they both witnessed a technological revolution that had a considerable impact on political campaigning. During the sixties this was the introduction of the television, which enabled parties to reach a great number of voters with a single performance. The 2000s witnessed this as well, with political parties making use of the Internet and social media for the first time.

Methodologically, the research is based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are obtained from the PvdA archive based in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. Other primary research includes interviews, newspaper articles, Internet websites and public campaign material.

Historiography

The phenomenon of Americanization is understood as the influence of the United States on the culture of other countries, such as their cuisine, value-system, popular culture or political techniques. This thesis will focus on the Americanization of election campaign communication, which means the adaptation of certain successful election campaign strategies and features that were first developed in the U.S.

In his work, Berghahn analyzes the debate on the concept and development of Americanization. Furthermore, Berghahn also discusses the amount of research on the European-American relationship during the Cold War that dealt with the cultural impact the United States had on Europe. These works are focused on different topics, for instance on business, economy, popular culture, and military influence.⁵ A relatively small body of academic literature has studied the influence of American campaigns in other countries. Israel is a pivotal example: both Myron Aronoff and Dan Caspi have written articles about American style electioneering in Israel. James Hughes has written about the Americanization of Russian politics in the 1990s. Strikingly enough, these are both examples of Americanization of politics of non-European countries. Addressing the case of European countries, an article by Klaus Schönbach examines the Americanization of German election campaigns in 1996. Overall, however, there is a limited amount of academic literature that focuses on the Americanization of politics in European countries.

Very little research has been done on the topic of Americanization in the Netherlands in particular. Even though the Dutch scholar Mel van Elteren has written much on Americanization, he did not investigate Americanization in the Netherlands.⁶ When solely focusing on the Americanization of Dutch politics, only the earlier mentioned work of van Praag in 1995 examined this.⁷ Because this work is now two decades old, it is crucial to reconsider the question of whether or not Dutch political campaigns are Americanising.

The topic of Americanization of Dutch politics may have already been relevant before the 1990s. As Berghahn claims, the third wave of Americanization took place after the war and continued all the way through and after the Cold War. Therefore, this thesis will explore whether or not Americanization was already occurring in Dutch political campaigns during the 1960s.

Academic research have explored the effects of Americanization in Dutch political campaigns starting in the early 2000s. However, these occurrences were not specifically named as elements of Americanization even though they fall into the category described as

5 Volker R. Berghahn. "The debate on 'Americanization' among economic and cultural historians." *Cold War History* 10/1 (2010): 107-130.

6 Mel van Elteren. *Americanism and Americanization: A critical history of domestic and global influence.* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2006). Mel van Elteren. "Imperial gestures in portrayals of U.S. culture as a universal culture." *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 51/2 (2006), 207-238. Mel van Elteren. "Rethinking Americanization Abroad: Toward a Critical Alternative to Prevailing Paradigms," *Journal of American Culture*, 29/3 (2006): 345-367.

7 Van Praag, 1995.

such in this thesis. Henk te Velde for instance wrote on the emergence of populism in Dutch politics in 2010. Additionally, scholars also began to recognize the large role that the (social) media plays in politics. For instance, in 2010 Annemarie Walter and Philip van Praag examined the parties' use of YouTube in Dutch election campaigns and considered its effects. Another example of Americanization named in this thesis is personalization, researched extensively by Henk te Velde in 2000 and 2002 and by Kwakkenbos in 2014. Both of these authors studied the increasingly personal campaigns in the Netherlands. Furthermore, Annemarie Walter performed extensive research in 2008 on the development of negative campaigning during the Dutch elections of 2002, 2003 and 2006.

Therefore, scholarly research has recognized the elements of Americanization since the 2000s, but does not necessarily link them to a process of Americanization. This thesis will try to uncover whether there is in fact such a process, whether it started earlier than scholars have assumed, and which specific aspects of Americanization the Dutch have assimilated into their political campaigns.

The Americanization of electoral politics

The spread of Americanization: becoming standardization?

It is almost universally acknowledged that the U.S. is a leader in campaign innovation, and the first to embrace the concept of political marketing.⁸ Additionally, there is an enormous global interest in the U.S. presidential campaigns. Other countries often report on the U.S. presidential campaigns as extensively as they do on domestic items.⁹ Therefore, one can speak of an alluring “mythology of the great power of U.S. election campaign practices”, as Mancini and Swanson put it.¹⁰ Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that other parts of the world introduce similar practices into their political campaign strategies, thus establishing the U.S as a ‘role model’. This process is described as ‘Americanization’, a term increasingly used in media commentary as well as academic discussions on modern campaigning. Despite the criticism one might have concerning this term, there is a strong and commonly held belief that similar political communication techniques have been adopted in Latin America, Europe, and, of particular interest for this thesis, in the Netherlands.¹¹ Americanization of political campaign strategies is a process that occurs regardless of proudly held traditions and cultural characteristics of political systems in other countries.

What is so special about American electoral communication? What characterises a typical American campaign? After establishing these characteristics, we can determine whether or not these features occur in the two Dutch case studies to see if there is in fact a process of Americanization taking place.

After consulting the existing literature, two main sources were used to compile the following list of characteristics of an American campaign: *The wisdom of the war room: US*

⁸ Jay Blumler, Dennis Kavanagh and T. Nossiter. ‘Modern Communications versus Traditional Politics in Britain: Unstable Marriage of Convenience’ in D. Swanson and P. Mancini (eds) *Politics, Media and Modern Democracy*. (New York: Praeger, 1996)

⁹ Blumler, Jay, Jack McLeod and Karl E. Rosengren (eds) *Comparatively Speaking: Communication and Culture Across Space and Time*. (London: Sage, 1992).

¹⁰ David Swanson and Paolo Mancini. ‘Patterns of Electoral Campaigning and their Consequences’ in Idem (eds), *Politics, Media and Democracy*. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996).

¹¹ Margaret Scammell. “The wisdom of the war room: US campaigning and Americanization.” *Media, Culture & Society* 20/2 (1998): 251-275.

campaigning and Americanization by Margaret Scammell and various works by Paolo Mancini.

1. Reaching the voters

Campaign advertising includes several different mediums, such as newspapers, radio commercials, television commercials, etcetera, to reach and influence voters. There are very few regulations that govern this process. Technological advances in the media have made it possible for candidates to reach larger groups of constituents in less time and with less physical effort.

The speed with which this increases is best shown with an example. In 2004, Democratic nominee John Kerry spent around 146 million dollars on general television ads, while Obama spent 250 million dollars in 2008. President Eisenhower was the first “television candidate” in 1956. In fact, he made sure his entire campaign was oriented around television. The Republicans decided to limit his real life appearances and made sure that every time he did make one it would be a grand affair. In the meantime, Eisenhower would constantly be visible to the public on television. He would be in direct contact with them by addressing their major concerns on television. In fact, these were pre-recorded and the people asking the questions were pulled off the street in front of the studio and asked to read out a question, which was later edited in the final ad.¹²

Apart from television, campaigns work with display graphics, such as bumper stickers, pins, posters etc, covered in the party logo or with a picture of the nominee. This has three functions. First, it enhances name recognition. Secondly, they are useful in reinforcing voters already committed to the candidate. When they are given display graphics at rallies or meetings they enhance the spirit of the staff and volunteers. It is a visible link between the worker and the candidate, used to keep up the morale. Thirdly, display graphics are a show of the candidate’s strengths, and create a bandwagon effect. The trick is not to give out a few every day, but rather distribute a massive number on one day: the startlingly

¹² Craig Allen, “Our First “Television” Candidate: Eisenhower over Stevenson in 1956.” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 65/2 (1988): 352-359.

unexpected appearance of all these signs multiplies the effectiveness.¹³ These are well known tactics, often recommended by campaign consultants.¹⁴

During the entire campaign the politicians are on the campaign trail. An essential part of this is called ‘stumping’, which means that they cross the country to deliver speeches and attend rallies, with the intention to persuade audiences to support them through voting or donating. It is important, because it shows that politicians understand the value of a personal visit. In this manner they build a connection with the voting base. Stumping often coincides with a tour around the country, with a speech at each stop. These tours are called ‘whistle-stop tours’.¹⁵

During the 2012 Obama campaign the campaign organisation was not necessarily trying to reach voters but to target voters by canvassing. At the Obama campaign headquarters a room was nicknamed “the Cave” where a team of data analytics developed the most technologically advanced campaign in American history. This format, called Big Data, is reshaping American elections. By collecting information on voters they have developed a new way of electioneering. Campaigns are able to “analyse data like voter files and buying habits to pinpoint potential supporters, donors and volunteers and, crucially, to “marshal votes” the New York Times wrote. “Political advertising, like all advertising, is increasingly tailored to a particular person’s interests through the use of digital information and computer algorithms”.¹⁶ Chief scientist of this data analytics team, Rayid Ghani says: “We can pretty accurately predict who is going to vote based on what they’ve done before”.¹⁷

The roots of the system were already established during the 2008 campaign, when an unprecedented amount of survey work took place. For each battleground state, call centers from the campaign conducted 5,000 to 10,000 short form interviews and 1,000 longer interviews every week that quickly assessed the voter’s preferences. In addition, information came from consumer data warehouses, registration records, and campaign contacts. They produced massive files that covered almost every voter and said whether or not they would

¹³ Judith Trent and Robert Friedenbergh. *Political campaign communication: Principles and practices*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 358-59.

¹⁴ Trent & Friedenbergh, 2008, 358.

¹⁵ Gil Troy. *See how they ran*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 70-74.

¹⁶ Mica Cohen. “From Campaign War Room to Big-Data Broom”, *The New York Times*, June 2013.

¹⁷ Cohen, 2013.

vote and whether or not they would support Obama.¹⁸ Campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt said: "They are our nuclear codes".¹⁹

2. Excessive personalization

Scammell writes that personalization is one of the most prominent American style campaigning trademarks.²⁰ Mancini and Swanson explain the term as the "packaging of persons". The news media concentrates on the individual candidate and his or her presentation.²¹ This attention on the personalities of the candidates by the media results in a personalization of the party's message and places this one candidate front and center instead of the party that was traditionally the centrality.²² Therefore, the selection of candidates is made based on their appealing image on television. Negrine states that American presidential candidates are able to appear out of nowhere and prove themselves viable contenders by making excellent use of the mass media.²³

It is now often the case that governments are named after their leader, rather than after the party that holds the office, especially if they have won multiple elections in a row. This phenomenon can be traced to the election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain in 1979 and also to Ronald Reagan in the U.S. in 1980. Both of them were strong, charismatic leaders, whose personality eclipsed that of their parties.²⁴ The visible consequences of this emphasis on personalization is that campaigns will become more important in shaping outcomes, and they will feature personal images more than or as much as parties and policies.²⁵ Another consequence lies in the future of democratic governance. Leaders will benefit from much greater autonomy when governing, because of their personal popularity with the people. An example of the use of this personalized mandate was the decision to send troops to Iraq by

¹⁸ Michael Scherer. "Inside the secret world of the data crunchers who helped Obama win." *Time Magazine*, 2012. Digitally available on swampland.time.com/2012/11/07/inside-these-secret-world-of-quants-and-data-crunchers-who-helped-obama-win. Last visited on 30 June 2014.

¹⁹ Scherer, 2012.

²⁰ Scammell, 1998, 264.

²¹ David Swanson and Paolo Mancini (eds). *Politics, media, and modern democracy: An international study of innovations in electoral campaigning and their consequences*. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996): 272

²² Mancini and Swanson, 1996, 196.

²³ Ralph Negrine and Stylianos Papathanassopoulos. "The "Americanization" of Political Communication A Critique." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 1/2 (1996): 45-62.

²⁴ Ian McAllister. "The personalization of politics." *The Oxford handbook of political behavior*, 2007: 571-588.

²⁵ McAllister, 2007, 582.

Australia and Britain because their prime ministers had made personal commitments to George Bush. Of course this is dangerous because the parliamentary system can be undermined by one person's personal preferences and weaken the underlying rules of the (democratic?) system.

3. Increasing professionalization

At first sight the idea of an increasing professionalization of campaigning can be criticized on historical grounds. It is logical that there is a form of professionalization compared to earlier campaigns, as politicians have to adapt to the changing media and electoral environment. Yet there are currently concerns about the impact of advertising and public relations on political campaigning. Scammell argues that this continuous growing of professionalization can be measured by the emergence of a political consulting industry since the 1960s: "it is now a full-time occupation in the U.S. and there are signs of an emerging common identity of political consulting with its special sets of skills as distinct from other trades and crafts".²⁶

Scammell names two other indicators of more professionalism in the campaign industry. First, it has expanded from almost only technical advice, for instance polling advice or advertisements, to a wider range of campaign activities, such as direct mail fundraising, media buying, conferences, event planning, political research, and so on. American society has embraced this, resulting in a growing number of consultants that provide services to candidates on a contractual basis. A second sign is the attempt to professionalize this business of campaigning by providing training and education. In the U.S. parties offer extensive programs, but it is also becoming more and more privatized.²⁷

The already discussed changing media environment is also the cause of other changes. The media is now seen as opposition to candidates and parties, because they are interested in gaining a bigger audience for their news coverage, while politicians are interested in conveying messages most useful to convince voters. This leads to an 'agenda-setting-game', as Paolo Mancini calls it, which emphasizes the problem of time. Today the party and candidate that respond at the greatest speed to current events, themes chosen by

²⁶ Scammell, 1998, 256.

²⁷ Scammell, 1998, 256-57.

the media, and claims made by their opponents, are those who win elections.²⁸ This forces candidates to concern themselves with 'news management'. Therefore they make more use of media experts and spindoctors, they are hired to control the media, produce compelling campaign material, and improve the image of the candidate.²⁹

4. Mounting campaign expenses

There is no denying that this increase in professionalization of campaigns, and the continuing expansion has led to mounting campaign expenses, which Scammell dubs 'commercialisation'. Since the 1970s money has flooded into campaigning, not just in expensive presidential campaigns, which have been brought under some control by federal spending limits, but mainly by the unregulated lower contests. Scammell writes that the total campaigning costs, which includes all candidates at all levels, have increased from approximately 425 million dollars in 1972 to 3.2 billion in 1992.³⁰ In 2012 the total costs were around a shocking 6 billion, of which the candidates Obama and Romney raised more than 2 billion themselves. The other 4 billion were spent outside the official campaigns by Super PAC's, which each had its own interest in the victory of a certain candidate.³¹

One of the consequences of the more expensive campaigns is that candidates have to start raising funds a full year before they announce their candidacy. The campaign thus lasts longer than before. John F. Kennedy would probably never have won an election today. He only announced his candidacy ten months before Election Day. In comparison, the candidates for the 2008 election started announcing in 2006.³²

²⁸ Paolo Mancini. "New frontiers in political professionalism." *Political Communication* 16/3 (1999): 231-245, 239.

²⁹ Mancini, 1999, 240.

³⁰ Scammell, 1998, 258.

³¹ Fredreka Schouten & Christopher Schaars, "Records: Presidential race history's most expensive", *USA Today*, December 7 2012. Digitally available on <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/12/07/presidential-campaign-spending/1753971/>. Last visited 30 June 2014.

³² Adam Nagourney, "Strategy, Not Drama, I Intend to Run in '08'", *The New York Times*, 27 December 2006. Digitally available on <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/27/us/politics/27edwards.html>. Last visited on 30 June 2014.

5. Negative campaigning

The term 'negative campaigning' originates in the U.S. and is used more and more in the Netherlands by journalists and scientists who wish to analyse election campaigns. In general, negative campaigning has a negative connotation. It is associated with the election campaigns in the U.S. and especially with targeted personal attacks. Negative campaigning is an often-used method to gain votes, and is also employed in the Netherlands. The aim is to alter the image voters have of a politician or political party in a negative way. This can be about content or personality, and aimed at the party as a whole, as well as at specific people within the party.³³

According to David Mark, there is almost no getting around going negative during a campaign. The politician must be able to demonstrate the flaws of its opponent and express how they would do things differently. "Going negative on the opponent is the best way to draw clear differences and run on the issues the politician favours", writes Mark.³⁴

There are many ways to go about it. The most familiar one is television ads. But to build a successful strategy the unlikeable portrait of the opponent has to be painted through different mediums. This includes speeches, debates, press statements and talk show appearances. Lately, direct emails, blogs and social media have also become important tools to criticize opponents.³⁵

³³ John Geer. *In Defense of Negativity, Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006) and Richard Lau & Gerald Pomper, *Negative Campaigning: An Analysis of U.S. Senate Elections* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004)

³⁴ David Mark. *Going dirty: The art of negative campaigning*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009): 4.

³⁵ Mark, 2009, 5.

Case Study 1: 1963 Campaign

After the Second World War the political campaigns began to modernise. Depillarisation of the Dutch society resulted in a more flexible electorate, because people did not feel obligated anymore to vote for a specific party. The result was more competition between political parties and more leeway to attack each other in the media. Following in the wake of the English and American liberators, the Anglo-Saxon methods were imported. With the example of Gallup, the Dutch Institute for Public Opinion was established, which polled the voters' opinions during elections. Other elements, more specific to the campaign, will be discussed throughout this chapter.

This chapter will examine the American influences, which were explained in chapter one, on the PvdA campaign during the 1963 parliamentary elections, held on May 15. In addition, it will take a broader look at the 1960s overall and in addition focus on the rise of party leader Den Uyl in 1967. It was an exciting time for the PvdA, because the race to become the biggest party and deliver a prime minister was between them and the KVP (Catholic People's Party). In the 1959 elections the PvdA lost with 30,3% to the KVP's 31,5%.³⁶ With such a small difference, the 1963 elections would be the perfect opportunity for the PvdA to overtake it and have the left in power again.

Yet in the end, the PvdA suffered the greatest loss. Consistently being in the opposition yielded little support with the electorate. The social democrats lost five of their 48 seats. The KVP even gained one seat.³⁷ With the PvdA, Anne Vondeling was the party leader, and together with Suurhoff and Willems they became the voice of the PvdA during the campaign.

1. Reaching the voters

One of the most important developments in 1963 with regards to campaign advertising was the introduction of the televised debate. The first political debates on Dutch television were held. The election of 1963 was the first time the Dutch politicians entered a televised

³⁶ Jan Douwe Elzinga and Gerrit Voerman. *Om de stembus. Verkiezingsaffiches 1918-1998* (Amsterdam, 2002), 126-133.

³⁷ Elzinga and Voerman, 2002, 126-133.

debate.³⁸ The great example was considered to be America, where the four debates between the American presidential candidates Kennedy and Nixon 1960 served as an example for the Dutch debate.³⁹ Kennedy, hitherto relatively unknown to the general public, won the election by a very small majority. It sparked a discussion concerning the impact of the televised debate on the eventual election results.

The Dutch debate of 1963 consisted of four TV broadcasts, spread out over two weeks and three broadcasters. The first two in debate were Anne Vondeling (PvdA) and Toxopeus (VVD).⁴⁰ All the debates revolved around current government policy and whether or not the ruling parties had fulfilled their promises.⁴¹ It is remarkable that there were always two political leaders in debate, no more. Perhaps this demonstrates that the Dutch tried to copy the debate style of the Americans. Additionally, it was always the ruling party who debated the opposition, another aspect of a U.S. presidential debate, which would spark similar discussions.

But the debate was not the only way to sway voters. The Dutch political parties had long discovered other manners of campaign advertising. The social democrats used their role and viewpoints in the opposition to indirectly slander the existing right-winged cabinet. Their views were significantly advertised in national and regional newspapers. The PvdA decided to focus on its own election manifesto and not on the fight against the political opponents.⁴²

After WWII the PvdA developed a new campaign strategy. They wanted to reach as many individual voters as possible and have real in-depth conversations with them. Their slogan was: "The beginning and start of every campaign action is a home visit", as it was stated in a PvdA action leaflet before the elections of 1956. Additionally, the party newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* (The Free People) had a circulation of 300,000, which made it the biggest paper in the Netherlands. This paper played a very important role during the campaigns, and the entire content of the paper was under direct party control.⁴³

³⁸ C. Berkhouwer. *In de zendtijd voor politieke partijen: politieke propaganda op de Nederlandse televisie.* (Utrecht: Stichting Film en Wetenschap, 1993)

³⁹ Elzinga and Voerman, 2002, 126-133.

⁴⁰ Berkhouwer, 1993.

⁴¹ Elzinga and Voerman, 2002, 126-133.

⁴² Elzinga and Voerman, 2002, 126-133.

⁴³ Van Praag & Walter, 2013, 65.

From their financial and inventory documents it can be established that the PvdA had done research into what items would be most effective as campaign material. They decided on posters, matches (146,900), sugar bags (299,100) and ballpoint pens (12,450).⁴⁴ In addition, they ordered different folders, small spoons and ashtrays as gifts, all of which featured the party logo. Finally, the PvdA had around 62,000 New Years postcards printed, in addition to a manifest about the party congress, a canvassing newspaper, a canvassing newspaper made especially for women, and flyers.⁴⁵ This form of display graphic advertising was already widely used in the United States, on a scale larger than anywhere else.⁴⁶

Reflecting on the campaign, many voters felt that the message from the party had not come across well enough. They criticised the ‘propaganda’, as they called display graphics and reading material at the time. Even though in Utrecht alone 173,945 canvassing newspapers had been sent to people, many cities kept asking for more: “moreover, we could use a few hundred more copies of “broken borders” for targeted propaganda amongst our Protestant-Christian townspeople”.⁴⁷ Many wrote letters to PvdA complaining about this failed effort of propaganda. “Almost all the correspondence we have received after the electoral defeat has indicated that the main cause of the major loss was that the information department has somehow failed”, writes the general secretary treasurer E. Meester.⁴⁸ He also writes: “in general, we can establish that the party had been unsuccessful in delivering her program clearly to every voter”.⁴⁹

Overall, the labour party already used quite extensive methods to reach the voters. It tried to win over the electorate with candy, gifts and flyers. Additionally, the PvdA tried to talk to as many voters as possible individually, as well as use the televised debates to

⁴⁴ *Ordering list*, Archive PvdA, inventory number 1685, International Institute of Social History (IISG), Amsterdam.

⁴⁵ *Financial statements and campaign expenses*, Archive PvdA, inventory number 1902-1903, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁴⁵ Trent & Friedenberg, 2008, 359.

⁴⁶ Trent & Friedenberg, 2008: 359.

⁴⁷ PvdA Gorinchem, May 1963. Original text: overigens zouden wij voor gerichte propoganda onder onze prot.-chr. Stadgenoten nog wel een paar honderd exemplaren kunnen gebruiken van “ doorbroken grenzen”. Archive PvdA, inventory number 1792, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁴⁸ E. Meester, PvdA, Juni 1963. Original text: “vrijwel alle correspondentie die wij na de verkiezingsnederlaag hebben ontvangen als een van de hoofdoorzaken van de nederlaag aangeven, dat de voorlichting op de een of andere wijze heeft gefaald”. Archive PvdA, inventory number 1792, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁴⁹ Original text: “in zijn algemeenheid kunnen wij wellicht stellen dat de partij er onvoldoende in is geslaagd haar program op een voor ieder duidelijke wijze aan de man te brengen.” Archive PvdA, inventory number 1792, IISG, Amsterdam.

promote their causes. The similarities to the American campaigns are striking, because most of these tactics had already been used in American campaigns.

2. Excessive personalization

Before 1963 the PvdA party leader was Willem Drees. He enjoyed a political popularity that crossed political party boundaries and was even nicknamed ‘*Vadertje Drees*’ (Father Drees). He was prime minister of four cabinets from 1948-1958. His greatest achievement is that he was responsible for building the welfare state. He stood at the base of a lot of social legislation and in particular undertook action to help the unemployed, elderly and low paid.⁵⁰ His popularity with the people resulted in his prominent appearance during the campaign. The PvdA was the party of Willem Drees and he became a symbol.

When looking at the election poster, you can barely read the name of his party.⁵¹ It was not so much a PvdA poster as it was a Drees-poster. Was the election campaign of 1956 perhaps more between Drees and Romme (KVP), and less between the PvdA and KVP?

Yet in the 1963 campaign, Drees had just retired. His leaving was a major loss for the party’s popularity. In polls after the provincial elections of 1962 people indicated that the loss of seats of the PvdA was due to the retirement of Willem Drees.⁵² Anne Vondeling, not as well known as Drees, replaced him. Striking is the immediate difference in the election poster, with Vondeling not on it, thus demonstrating his unpopularity compared to Drees.⁵³

The excessive focus on the party leaders and candidates was already present in the Netherlands. This caused the PvdA to suffer because they put up a candidate that was not popular and was unable to achieve that popularity. Even having constant visible support from two other candidates, Suurhoff and Willems, did not have much effect. Vondeling himself was blamed for the bad election results. He could not portray himself as the face of the party in the way that Drees could. In a cartoon he is pictured as an orphan (a pun on his name), left behind by a beaten PvdA, at the steps of the Fryske Akademie, an institute that

⁵⁰ Bert van Nieuwenhuizen. *Willem Drees. Vernieuwer, voor, in en na de oorlog* (Soesterberg, 2010).

⁵¹ See Appendix A.

⁵² *Nederlands Instituut voor de Publieke Opinie*, Research amongst voters in 1962 by Nederlands Instituut voor de Publieke Opinie, Amsterdam: “Dat de PvdA is teruggelopen, komt dat doordat Dr. Drees weg is?” Archive PvdA , inventory number 2045, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁵³ See Appendix B.

Vondeling was connected to in many ways. Perhaps the artist tried to make clear that Vondeling would be better off in an Academy than in politics.⁵⁴

The increasing emphasis on the face of the party, and not the party itself becomes evident when one looks at these differences. Vondeling was a disappointing leader and was not heavily portrayed, while on the contrary his successor, Joop den Uyl, was very popular and featured prominently throughout his campaigns. He was the leader of the party from 1967-1986, and during his time the PvdA was as left as it would ever be. He profiled himself as the saviour of 'the little man'. Again, with him the election was not between the PvdA and CDA but between Den Uyl and Van Agt.⁵⁵ Here, the posters clearly use his profile and name recognition as a selling point for the PvdA.⁵⁶

Additionally, the introduction of the television, as previously discussed, raised the expectations the electorate had of the political candidates. As the campaign battle was fought on the television screen, the face of the party leaders more and more became the face of the party. This led to higher 'telegenic' demands.⁵⁷

There is certainly already personalization present in Dutch campaigns before 1963. Drees' popularity with the people combined with the success of the PvdA clearly demonstrates this. Vondeling was truly the exception. The public took little interest in him and consequently neither in the PvdA. After him, the charismatic Den Uyl brought the PvdA back to its previous status. This is the most striking example of personalization. Henk te Velde writes that Den Uyl and Vondeling were very much alike in their behaviour as party leader. Both men took a profound interest in electoral research. For them, this provided the means to determine how to approach the voter who was not part of the PvdA family yet. They were both nicknamed 'schoolmasters' and had an almost scientific and businesslike view of politics.⁵⁸

PvdA prominent van Thijn called Vondeling the first television personality of the PvdA. According to him, Vondeling appealed to a modern audience and enjoyed appearing on television. He fitted perfectly in a party which directed itself to the undecided voters. But

⁵⁴ See Appendix C.

⁵⁵ Joop Van Holsteyn. "Nederland is geen personendemocratie." *Socialisme & Democratie* 61/7-8 (2004): 79-83.

⁵⁶ See Appendix D.

⁵⁷ Gerrit Voerman (ed), *Politiek zonder partijen? Over de horizon van de partijpolitiek* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994)

⁵⁸ Te Velde Henk. *Stijlen van Leiderschap: Persoon en politiek van Thorbecke tot Den Uyl*, (Amsterdam: 2002).

within this, according to Te Velde, the image of the party leader mattered just as much as the party's viewpoints and the image of Vondeling left much to be desired.⁵⁹

Thus, in the end Den Uyl became more successful and well known due to his more charismatic appearance. He came across as an ordinary citizen who would never claim to be superior to his fellow countrymen. In the manner of appearance he was therefore similar to Willem Drees. During Den Uyl's time as party leader the PvdA became more powerful again.⁶⁰ This clearly shows that even in the 1960s the appearance of a leader mattered more than what he offered substantively.

3. Increasing professionalization

The sixties witnessed the start of an increased professionalization of campaigns. This was mostly caused by the introduction of the television. With only one performance on television you could reach millions of voters, something which before would have been impossible to achieve. The campaigns were more and directed at television, and politicians contracted external help of professionals.⁶¹ Another reason for turning to professionals was the increasing amount of swing voters. The sixties saw a growing depillarization, as a consequence of increasing wealth, mobility and secularization. Voters chose their party of preference based less on religion or class en started to 'float'. The established parties could not hold on to their voters and therefore could not count on a certain amount of votes.⁶²

During the 1963 campaign PvdA strategist Van Thijn advocates the use of U.S. marketing and advertising techniques, with which campaign strategists could market the carefully selected, polarising viewpoints of the PvdA with the voters.⁶³ As seen, this was used to some extent.

Though the increase in the level of media experts hired for a campaign in the 1963 was not nearly as high as in the U.S, some expansion was visible. Technological advances offered opportunities that political parties wanted to exploit. The PvdA ordered three short films in 1963, each of ten minutes. There were three airing dates for these films, each one

59 Te Velde, 2002, 201.

60 Te Velde, 2002, 239.

61 Johannes Bank, 'Televisie in de politieke cultuur van de jaren '60', in: Nico Cramer (ed), *Tussen Nieuwspoor en Binnenhof. De jaren '60 als breuklijn in de naoorlogse ontwikkelingen in politiek en journalistiek*. (Den Haag: SDU, 1989): 46.

62 Ed van Thijn, 'Een moderne verkiezingscampagne', in: *Socialisme en Democratie*, October 1966, 707.

63 Philip van Praag. *Strategie en illusie: elf jaar intern debat in de PvdA, 1966-1977*. (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1990), 360.

closer to the election day: January 21, March 11, and April 15.⁶⁴ In order to make these advertisements, an external advertising agency would need to be hired. The use of these advertising agencies expanded over the years, and in 1970 these agencies already contributed largely in developing the campaign strategies.⁶⁵

Overall, the campaign of 1963 saw very little professionalization compared to U.S. campaigns in the same time period. However, there were already calls within the party to become more professional by hiring experts.

4. Mounting campaign expenses

Material obtained in the PvdA archive provides insight in the financial situation of the PvdA in 1963 and show the purchase of a variety of campaign material, ranging from flyers to radio time.⁶⁶ Additionally, the local campaign quarters had to provide their own funds to buy books, postcards, and other election material. Therefore, these were not included in the costs of the national campaign. A lot of this money came from the Willem Drees fund.⁶⁷ Where this money originated from is not entirely clear from the documents. Most likely, it existed of member contributions and gifts.

Van Praag writes that, the costs of the PvdA campaigns around 1956 were approximately seven hundred thousand, which are not less than the costs of a campaign in 1977, namely 1,5 million, when you count in inflation. This amount was fairly normal. The Dutch campaign costs were, converted per voter, the lowest in the world.⁶⁸

5. Negative campaigning

Philip van Praag researched the historical development of negative campaigning within the PvdA. According to him, during the 1948 and 1952 elections the relationship between the KVP and PvdA is still good. Yet when the PvdA becomes the biggest party in 1952, and again in the more local elections in '53 and '54, the KVP is shocked and changes her electoral strategy. More and more the party seeks a confrontation with the PvdA.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ *Campaign material document*, 1963. Archive PvdA, inventory number 2022, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁶⁵ Van Praag, 1990, 91.

⁶⁶ See Appendix E.

⁶⁷ E. Meester, June 1963, *Election costs*. Archive PvdA, inventory number 1902-1903, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁶⁷ Van Praag, 1990, 91.

⁶⁸ van Praag, 1990, 389-90.

⁶⁹ Philip van Praag & Annemarie Walter. "Negatieve campagnevoering: iedereen deed het, iedereen doet het." *Socialisme en Democratie* 70/5 (2013): 64-69.

First, the PvdA is reluctant to enter this battle, but then the KVP publishes a pamphlet in 1955 called "Victory '56". This portrays catholic institutions, such as schools, hospitals and the television broadcasting KRO as being on fire with the text "when the red rooster crows victory". The PvdA is furious and calls it a criminal insinuation. The two parties start to clash more and more. The PvdA calls the KVP a fascist party and member of parliament Suurhoff (PvdA) writes a large article in a newspaper about the awful manner in which the KVP is conducting its campaign under the headline: "Simply LYING, that's what the KVP is doing". 1956 was the first year that the PvdA expressed its feelings about the KVP in such a harsh manner, which can be seen as a clear form of negative campaigning.⁷⁰

Primary sources of 1963 also tell us that the PvdA was more aggressive in its attacks on the more right-winged parties. For instance, a pamphlet carries the phrase: "should after the upcoming parliamentary elections a government without socialists rule for the second time? We do not believe that, because in everywhere the disagreement about this cabinet is plainly obvious"⁷¹ At this point, the competition was more obvious to recognize, despite the multiple-party system, because the PvdA was in the opposition and could attack the ruling government. With the battle being just between the PvdA and KVP to become the biggest party, this factor made negative campaigning easier.

Another document showing this is a flyer published by the PvdA, listing everything the cabinet has not done (right): "There is no free wage policy", "The taxes were not reduced", "The state expenditures have not decreased", "The private builders have not been used to relieve the housing shortage", and finally "Would you like a different, more just government, vote PvdA list 2".⁷²

An internal PvdA memo tells us that the party executives decided on a more positive campaign. This meant that the PvdA should be portrayed as a peaceful, dependable party wishing to make the country a better place. On the other hand they portrayed the right-winged ruling parties as the opposite of the PvdA, attacking them on their policies, or lack of

⁷⁰ Van Praag & Walter, 2013, 67.

⁷¹ *Pamphlet*, 1963, PvdA Campaign. Original tekst: "moet er na de a.s. Tweede Kamer verkiezing voor de tweede keer een regering zonder socialisten komen? Dat geloven wij niet, omdat allerwegen de ontevredenheid over dit kabinet wel heel duidelijk naar voren komt." Archive PvdA, inventory number 2091, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁷² *Flyer*, PvdA, April 1963. Original text: "Er is geen vrijere loonpolitiek, De belastingen zijn niet verlaagd, De staatsuitgaven zijn niet verminderd, De particuliere bouwers zijn niet ingeschakeld om de woningnood op te heffen. Wilt u een ander, rechtvaardiger beleid, stem dan op PvdA lijst 2" Archive PvdA, inventory number 2091, IISG, Amsterdam.

action on certain issues.⁷³ By portraying it in a negative sense, the PvdA would look more appealing, especially if they spread out propaganda showing this explicitly to people. For instance, the PvdA published and spread a picture of children running happily on the schoolyard. On the side was the text, “what is peace, that is peace and that is what the PvdA will bring”.⁷⁴

Overall, the degree of negative campaigning in 1963 is higher than one might have expected. The PvdA was already negative in its election material, but after being provoked, the PvdA is dragged into a downwards spiral of negativity. Americanization already seems to be present in the 1963 election as regards to their outreach to the electorate, the personalization and negative campaigning. Less American is the lack of professionalization and the low campaign costs. In the next chapter we will see how this has developed further and what the situation in 2006 is.

⁷³ E. Meester, *Strategic Campaign Document*, 23 February 1963. Archive PvdA, inventory number 1453, IISG, Amsterdam.

⁷⁴ 1963, no title, no author, original text: “Wat is vrede, dat is vrede en daar gaat de PvdA voor zorgen.” Archive PvdA, inventory number 2091, IISG, Amsterdam.

Case Study 2: 2006 Campaign

The national 2006 election was held earlier than originally planned, because the Second Balkenende cabinet fell in June 2006. Prime minister Balkenende's right wing party the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), who came into being after the KVP merged with two other parties, kept power in the 2006 parliamentary elections. They lost three seats in total and ended with 41. The biggest winner was the Socialist Party (SP) whose leader, Jan Marijnissen, won it 16 seats to a total of 25. A new extreme right party, the Party of the Freedom (PVV) from Geert Wilders, also established itself well with nine seats. The PvdA and the right winged VVD both suffered defeat. The PvdA lost nine seats and the VVD six.⁷⁵

In March 2006 the PvdA was still one of the larger parties. Its leader, Wouter Bos, booked a major victory during the municipal elections. It went from 1317 municipal council seats to 1988. Other parties, such as the VVD, D66, and CDA lost seats. However, in the months after the municipal elections the PvdA faced a difficult period. The SP gained popularity and became a dangerous competitor in the left wing. The race to become the largest party was still between the two main parties, CDA and PvdA, but the PvdA lost too many voters to the SP. Therefore CDA won the parliamentary election on November 22 and the PvdA became the second largest party with 33 seats.⁷⁶

This chapter will analyze the national election in 2006 more carefully. It will research how the five recognized elements of Americanization have developed since the 1963 election.

1. Reaching the voters

In 2008 for Obama, eight million people took to the road. In comparison, Obama had sixty volunteers for every one volunteer who flyers for the PvdA. Surely, the PvdA is adapting tactics, strategies and political tricks from the American campaigns. For example, the above-mentioned program VoteBuilder that was invented and used by the American Democrats was also sold to the PvdA.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Paul Lucardie, Martine Bredewold, Gerrit Voerman and Nelleke van de Walle, 'Kroniek 2006. Overzicht van de partijpolitieke gebeurtenissen van het jaar 2006' in: Gerrit Voerman (ed.), *Jaarboek 2006 Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen* (Groningen 2008), 15-104, 69-78.

⁷⁶ Lucardie, Bredewold, Voerman & van de Walle, 2008, 70-2.

⁷⁷ Joris Belgers and Nico De Fijter, "Nederlandse politici kopiëren van alles uit de VS", *Trouw*, 6 november 2012.

Kirsten Verdell, who was the only foreigner working on the Obama 2008 campaign, states that the Netherlands copies everything from the U.S. per definition, just with a few years delay. She says the greatest problem in the Netherlands is that politicians have less funds, means, people and knowledge. "During the latest [2012] parliamentary elections 'canvassing' became a trend in the Netherlands, which means going door to door to inform people about your candidate. This is indeed a very lucrative way to sway extra votes, but only if done in a professional manner. In America a main office keeps careful track which streets have been canvassed and which families took an interest. If someone is enthusiastic, party volunteers should visit him or her again about a week later. This approach can deliver up to 12% more votes if the same person is visited three times."⁷⁸

Campaign manager Pieter Paul Slikker (2007-now) still emphasizes the importance of permanently involving volunteers in the campaign. By canvassing the PvdA is constantly present, is updated on current happenings in different neighbourhoods and can model the campaign accordingly. Slicker claims it is never a question of canvassing or digital campaigning, but that they focus on both. Communication director Rik Winsemius is more critical and indicates that much is still possible in the field of digital campaigning. Especially, he says, when their campaign is compared to the latest presidential elections in the U.S.⁷⁹

Overall there are still elements from the 1960s recognizable, such as the notion to reach out to individual voters by means of pamphlets, flyers and canvassing. Especially canvassing is what the PvdA became known for; therefore this strategy has expanded over the years. The PvdA also keeps up to date with new technology that can reach millions of people at once. The use of television has expanded since 1963 and with it came the introduction of the Internet, which will be discussed further on.

2. Excessive personalization

Much has been written about the emphasis on the looks and personality of the party leader, and its importance during elections. This attention arose in particular after the year 2002. Pim Fortuyn, Dutch leader of the right-wing party LPF, is often recognized for delivering an important contribution to the sudden interest in personalization because he was better

⁷⁸ Kirsten Verdell. "Obama campagne: een militaire operatie", *De Volksvertegenwoordiger*, January 2013, 6-8.

⁷⁹ Yvonne Hertroys, "Politiek Café Schaefer over de campagne voor 2014", 27 February 2013. Digitally available on <http://www.pvdaamsterdam.nl/algemeen/2013/02/politiek-cafe-schaefer-over-de-campagne-voor-2014-2/>. Last visited: 30 June 2014.

known than his party. It became more clear that party structures were not necessary to gain political popularity, as shown by Ross Perot in the U.S. and Silvio Berlusconi in Italy. This personalization is first of all seen as a consequence of the declining (ideological) bond between voter and party.⁸⁰ Or as Mazzoleni expresses it: “voters have orphaned and look for new political parents”. Therefore strong personalities, charismatic leaders, people of flesh and blood try to rebuild a relationship of trust with the electorate.⁸¹ Henk te Velde agrees that the consequence of Americanization is an increasing personalization in Dutch campaigns. This causes a more intense political communication in the so-called television-democracy which actually brings politics closer to the people. In this line of reasoning, the chance of identifying with a person increases.⁸²

What has become very popular with the Dutch parties is organising a primary, following the American example. The VVD was the first party to hold one in 2006 after which the PvdA, CDA and GroenLinks followed. These “primaries” allow members of a party to vote for their party leader by means of a leadership election.⁸³

During the general election of 2003 Wouter Bos was appointed as the top candidate on the party list and leader of the PvdA. The PvdA won by a landslide, gaining 19 seats, while the ruling parties only won 1-4 seats each.⁸⁴ Especially with the municipal elections victory, it seemed Wouter Bos presented as a strong leader. Therefore it came as no surprise when he became the face of the party in 2006.

The people seemed to love Bos. To quote some citizens, he had a fresh face, charisma, a nice butt and always gave a straight answer.⁸⁵ Bos became a symbol of a new and honest politician. The PvdA’s intention was to profile Wouter Bos as the next prime minister even during the early stages of the campaign. During the entire campaign Bos occupied himself with the question: how will I become prime minister?⁸⁶

After his victory in 2003 the photogenic Bos was informally proclaimed the left successor of Fortuyn. Even supporters of Pim Fortuyn admitted that Bos was the politician

⁸⁰ Swanson and Mancini, 1996.

⁸¹ Gianpietro Mazzoleni. "A return to civic and political engagement prompted by personalized political leadership?" *Political Communication* 17.4 (2000): 325-328.

⁸² Henk te Velde. *Politieke stijl: over presentatie en optreden in de politiek*. (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2000), 2.

⁸³ “Mark Rutte nieuwe lijsttrekker VVD”, *NRC*, 31 May 2006.

⁸⁴ Joop Van Holsteyn and Irwin Galen. "The Dutch parliamentary elections of 2003". *West European Politics* 27/1 (2004) : 157–164.

⁸⁵ Kasper van Noppen, PvdA Amsterdam, 29 maart 2005.

⁸⁶ Joop Van Holsteyn. Hoe intens was de rode stem? *Socialisme en Democratie* 12 (2006) 14-19, 14. and De Wouter Tapes, *Tegenlicht*, VPRO, 19 March 2007.

who had learned most of the lessons taught by Fortuyn the best. The PvdA was called the “Bos party”.⁸⁷ And indeed, when examining the artwork of the PvdA (flyers, posters) we see Wouter Bos prominently appearing on every one of them.⁸⁸

The final weeks of the campaign were framed by the media as a “battle between titans” between Balkenende and Bos and, consequently, as a so-called prime minister election. The commentary during the debates made it seem as if they were Idols-elections. The commentator for the RTL4 debate stated that the content of the debate mattered 7% for the message, the rest was intonation (38%) and posture (55%). The day after the debate a comment by the magazine Elsevier made it clear that Bos did not have the authoritative appearance necessary for a prime minister because he was not wearing a tie.⁸⁹ These aspects all evoke the impression that the party elections are becoming prime-minister elections that focus on appearance and not on content. This shows a considerable expansion of the focus on the personality of the candidate since the 1960s. During the sixties the personalization revolved mostly around the attitude of a candidate and not about appearance, e.g. what he or she wears.

Technological improvements have made it easier for a campaign to revolve around a candidate. They are able to profile themselves better. As seen, during the sixties television had an enormous influence on this, but also often seeing a candidate’s photo on flyers and posters causes this effect. In 2006, the spread of the Internet allowed the candidate to campaign in an even more personal manner, because he or she could be even more visible to the voter. More than the ‘old’ channels, social media provides a simple way to do this and to increase his or her publicity. Individual politicians now have their own Facebook profile and Twitter account, which are often more prominent than those of their parties. The online politician is therefore not only campaigning through a party, but also through and for himself. This campaign strategy is not only visible in the amount of personal online profiles, but also in their communication. Politicians offer an opinion in their tweets, talk about their daily and political activities.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Dick Pels, “Het glazen huis van de democratie. Politiek sterrendom na Fortuyn”, *Justitiële Verkenningen* 33/2 2007: 9-20.

⁸⁸ See Appendix F

⁸⁹ Dick Pels. *Het volk bestaat niet*. (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2011).

⁹⁰ Sanne Kruikemeijer. “Waarom een interactieve en persoonlijke online campagne werkt”. *Campagne, Communicatie, Media en Persoonlijkheid*. 23 March 2014.

This tactic is used because it works. The increasing wealth, mobility and secularization which have broken the traditional bond between party and voter, as discussed earlier, strengthens the need for a strong, charismatic leader to attract voters. It is easier for citizens to feel connected to a politician than to a party.⁹¹ Online campaigning can even lead to more votes.⁹²

In 2006 the Dutch politicians did everything they could to reach the voters through a personal online campaign. Wouter Bos tried to profile himself as a modern man who tries to keep in touch with 'society'. He had a webportal, a digital newsletter ('Bosbode') and a podcast ('Boscast FM'), which were all regularly updated. To reach out to the Dutch youth Bos became a member of the, then very popular, social medium called Hyves. His reaching out to the Internet generation worked, because he soon had thousands of young followers. They massively react (positively) to his posts, make jokes, call him Wouter and refer to him in an informal manner.⁹³ This is a phenomenon of which the roots lay in the sixties and which has expanded during the following decades. In the sixties Vondeling and Den Uyl each represented the party personally and made appearances on the radio and television in their capacity as party leader. However, in the 2000s the focus on the person has increased so much that the importance of their relation to a party seems to decrease. There is starting to be a need for leaders to establish themselves as capable and famous and consequently their party will be too.

It is therefore understandable that the PvdA focuses its campaign on the personality and appearance of its leader. The newspaper *Volkscrant* wrote an article about the campaign spot featuring Diederik Samsom in 2012 and called it the introduction of the American 'family man', a concept the American citizens admire during elections.⁹⁴

3. Increasing professionalization

As opposed to the 1960s when there was hardly any professionalization of political campaigns, during the nineties this becomes more evident. The bigger parties organized

⁹¹ Kruikemeijer, 2014.

⁹² Eun-Ju Lee and Soo Youn Oh. "To Personalize or Depersonalize? When and How Politicians' Personalized Tweets Affect the Public's Reactions." *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012): 932–949.

⁹³ David Nieborg, . "Politici ontdekken Hyves – Over Wouter Bos en zijn nieuwe mediagebruik", *De Nieuwe Reporter*, 6 April 2006.

⁹⁴ De Vries, 2 July 2012.

itself in a more systematic and professional way to a certain segment of the electoral market. This was done by increasing the use of voter research (through opinion polling and focus groups), new information and communication technology and hiring external and professional advisors, spin doctors, pollsters, market researchers and fund raisers.⁹⁵

In 1993 the PvdA, under the direction of party leader Felix Rottenberg, introduced some major reforms. Within the campaign team the externally hired communication professionals became a prominent voice. Additionally, the PvdA hired an electoral investigator who had a 400,000-euro budget.⁹⁶ In 2006, Wouter Bos surrounded himself with many of these professionals, the best within the party or hired externally. Examples include current head of communication at the ministry of finance Remco Dolstra and head of campaign agency BKB Erik van Bruggen.⁹⁷ Bos wanted to listen to all of them. Jeroen Sprenger, who was also in the advice committee, states that even though Bos was given great advice by the best in the business, he had a difficult time making decisions.⁹⁸

Kay van de Linde points out some important differences between American and Dutch campaign professionalization. Van de Linde has worked on American campaigns for eighteen years before he returned to work in the Netherlands as a 'spindoctor'. According to van de Linde, the Dutch are about ten years behind on American tricks of professionalization. He states the campaigns attempt to implement American tactics but fail because they do not commit itself. The Dutch parties often do not have spindoctors and media advisors as the American parties have, whose only job it is to control the news cycle. Van de Linde states the same as Kirsten Verdell, namely that the PvdA has always been proud of their campaign tactic of canvassing. Yet this only works if you document every visit, and visit each house multiple times, as they do in the U.S.⁹⁹

4. Mounting campaign expenses

In 1996 the political scientist Koole already stated the dilemma for the modern political party. Parties stand in between the state and the electorate and should not become

⁹⁵ C.P.M. Hagemann, Os, R.G. van, Jankowski, N.W. & Voerman, G. (2006). *Professionalisering en personalisering? De sites van Nederlandse partijen en hun kandidaten bij de campagne voor de Europese verkiezingen van 2004*. (Groningen: Universiteitsdrukkerij Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2004).

⁹⁶ Philip van Praag and Kees Brants. "Professioneler, harder en populistischer, veranderingen in de campagnecultuur na 2002." *Bestuurskunde* 17.3 (2008): 22-29.

⁹⁷ De Wouter Tapes, *Tegenlicht*, 2007.

⁹⁸ Jeroen Sprenger, Interview, 2 May 2014.

⁹⁹ Kay van de Linde, Interview, 13 May 2014.

dependent. But if it wants to win over voters it has to spend more money. A party can nowadays hardly beg for more money from their members, so it turns to the state for extra subsidies. If this continues, the amount of subsidy it receives will be larger than the income from members contribution and the parties will financially speaking become state parties.¹⁰⁰

However, parties such as LPF and SP have shown that new parties can have a generous amount of seats in the House of Representatives without support from the government. These parties obtain its funding from anonymous sources or from industrial sponsors who have a particular interest in a victory of that party. This causes a lot of unrest among the other political parties. Therefore the pressure on political parties to raise its campaign budget has increased much since 2002.¹⁰¹

Parties needed more money and therefore campaign expenses increased. Even though the campaign expenses of all political parties in the 1960s were not yet exceedingly high, the graph shows that the expenses in 1989 were around 2 million; while in 2006 it was already over 8 million.¹⁰² The revenues from contributions were not sufficient due to the ever-decreasing amount of members. This unbalance led to a greater need for government funding, as stated before. From the seventies onwards parties received subsidies, first indirectly and later on directly. A graph illustrates the increasing amount of subsidies received by political parties.¹⁰³ The amount increased from 180,000 euros in 1972 to almost 5 million euros in 1999; six years later the amount was 15 million. Parties kept becoming more dependent on subsidies. For most parties this dependence has doubled in 2008 compared to 1989.¹⁰⁴

During the 2010 elections, a total of 9,5 million was spent by the parties on their campaigns. This amount grew in 2012 to 10,7 million. With this, the upward trend of campaign expenses continues.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Ruud Koole. *Ledenpartijen of staatspartijen? Financiën van Nederlandse politieke partijen in vergelijkend en historisch perspectief* (Groningen: Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen, 1997): 156-182.

¹⁰¹ van Praag, and Brants, 2008.

¹⁰² See Appendix G Graph 1.

¹⁰³ See Appendix G Graph 2.

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix G Graph 3.

¹⁰⁵ Kees Versteegh. "Politieke partijen krap bij kas door campagne", *NRC*, 7 October 2013. Available on <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2013/07/10/politieke-partijen-krap-bij-kas-door-campagne/> Last visited on 30 June, 2014.

5. Negative campaigning

When looking back on the 2006 campaign, many voters and politicians will remember an excessive amount of negative campaigning. The CDA attacked Wouter Bos continuously. In May 2006, after Bos' daring proposal to have the elderly pay into the state pension law as well, a prominent within the CDA, Maxime Verhagen, launched the one-liner "Met Bos bent u de klos". A literal translation of this rhyme is "with Bos you are done for". The attacks on Bos reached its highest point during a radio debate where Balkenende claimed: "You twist around and you are not being honest".¹⁰⁶

As negative campaigning during the sixties was still mostly done on posters and flyers, a stimulant for negative campaigning in the 2000s was the introduction of the Internet. While during the 2006 campaign in the media of print, radio and TV the negative part of the campaign still had to start, on the Internet it was already bursting. Not only because it is cheaper, but it is also easier to go negative online. Everything that cannot be said in person in a room can however be said on the Internet. Especially the two major parties, PvdA and CDA were busy posting campaign clips and texts on the Internet.¹⁰⁷ As in 1963, this election became a battle between two parties fighting to deliver a prime minister. Having one clear enemy makes it easier for a party to go negative.

Jacques Monasch, old campaign strategist of the PvdA stated at the time: "It is as if the Internet knows no norms and values. If all the accusations I saw on television were spoken out loud, we would have had an American situation: it would be Bush versus Kerry."¹⁰⁸

And many accusations there were. Most striking is a video made by the PvdA published on the internet. It is a parody on Charlie's Angels, called Wouter's Angels. In the cartoon party leader Bos tells three female PvdA members of parliament to get back the 'stolen' money for the Joint Strike Fighter from Balkenende and Rutte (VVD) and give it back to the care home.¹⁰⁹ It may seem innocent at first glance, but Balkenende is portrayed as someone who hired a gang to rob a nursing home.

¹⁰⁶ van Praag & Walter, 2013, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Misérus. "Negatieve campagne vindt plaats op internet". *De Volkskrant*, 24 October 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Misérus, 2006.

¹⁰⁹ "Wouter's Angels", *YouTube*, 21 October 2006. Available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wX-nyOACTA>. Last visited on 30 June 2014.

Negative campaign expert Annemarie Walters establishes that at least since the start of the 21st century the parliamentary elections have seen an increase in negative campaigning. Attacking the opposite party has become a crucial part of the campaign. All parties use this tactic to distinguish itself, the opposition parties and political outsiders maybe a little more than others. Walters states that the Dutch campaign culture seems to harden.¹¹⁰ Since the 1960s with every campaign the amount of negativity seems to grow, stimulated by increasing means to do so.

¹¹⁰ Annemarie Walter. "Met Bos bent u de klos: Negatieve campagnevoering tijdens de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen van 2002, 2003 en 2006". In G. Voerman (ed), *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen 2007*. (Groningen: DNPP/Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2007).

Conclusion

This thesis begun with the question whether or not Dutch political campaigns are Americanising. The existing Dutch literature claims that this Americanization process started during the 1990s. However, this thesis contests this claim based on extensive research of primary and secondary sources. It traces the historical development of the Americanization of Dutch political campaigns and shows that it started post-war with the introduction of the television.

The case study of the PvdA campaign of 1963 illustrates multiple elements of Americanization that were already taking place. One such aspect was the use of the television, which allowed political candidates to reach a much larger audience with just one performance. The Dutch parties observed as the American campaigns immediately made use of television broadcasting time. After having seen the Kennedy-Nixon debates as they aired on television in the United States, the Dutch too set up a national televised debate in 1963. Records also show that the PvdA specifically made much use of television broadcasting time by developing three television advertisements. Additionally, the Dutch PvdA followed in American footsteps by creating a diverse assortment of commercial collectible objects varying from spoons to matchboxes.

One of the most striking examples of this early Americanization is the surprising amount of personalization that already existed in 1963. The PvdA relied heavily on a strong, personable party leader. Through the use of the party leader's picture by the media, his name and face became strongly connected to the image of the party. This is distinctly clear when looking at Willem Drees and Joop den Uyl, who both represented the party at different times. Polling shows the public responded incredibly well to them and this is most likely directly connected to the success of the PvdA during their times. Both of these two party leaders prominently appeared and/or spoke on posters, television and the radio. Anne Vondeling however was the exception. He represented the party in 1963 but was not by far as popular as Drees or den Uyl. Therefore, they did not use his name or picture much during the campaign. This fact proves that personalization was already such an important part of the campaign culture in the 1960s that strategies were based on it.

It is more difficult however to trace the professionalization in 1963. This research shows that professionalization hardly existed during the 1960s and probably only slowly

expanded. This is surprising because the United States campaigns during the sixties were already very professional and involved spindoctors, media advisors, strategists and extensive campaign headquarters. Of course, this meant that the U.S. campaigns were much more expensive than the Dutch. Therefore this element of Americanization was not (yet) recognizable in the 60s

Scholarly research has told us that negative campaigning is uncommon in the Netherlands because the Dutch have a multi-party system. Because they all compete with each other, there is no clear enemy. This is opposite to the United States, where the winner-takes-all election rules encourage a two-party system. However, in many Dutch campaigns a party recognizes one or two other parties that they perceive as a threat. The negative campaign may therefore increase.

The 1963 campaign case study shows that negative campaigning certainly existed in material that was distributed. In a subtle but clear way pamphlets and flyers criticized the coalition and other parties. This was not necessarily limited to content but also indicated that their politicians could not function well enough. They even stated that the opposition was cold-heartedly lying to the people of the Netherlands.

We see a lot of changes and development between the case studies of 1963 and 2006. All elements of Americanization increased between these years. Even the almost non-existent professionalization and low campaign costs have expanded extensively by 2006.

Dutch campaign television ads model itself after American ads. The PvdA uses the image of the family man, which has proven to be popular in the United States. Television appearances have become indispensable in campaigns in the 2000s. Every party needs to create as much positive media coverage as possible. Another pivotal change in 2006 is the introduction of the Internet. When the Internet is used right, specific audiences can be targeted. One example is the youth vote. Wouter Bos was very active on social media during his 2006 campaign and he received a lot of positive feedback. The Internet has become another way to reach a massive audience with, for example, only a small post on twitter. The added bonus is that the message can be coordinated and candidates are not put on the spot.

This also demonstrates the reliance on the party leader's appearance, which has continually increased with the rise of television and internet. Representing a party means being something more than just a 'spokesperson'. The way the representative dresses, talks, acts and looks all add to the image the voter has of the party. If the popularity of the leader

is high, the PvdA makes sure the leader gets a lot of media coverage. If it is lower, they take the leader out and let the media focus on other prominent party members for a while. Wouter Bos' popularity was extremely high during the early months of 2006 when the municipality elections were held. With this in mind, the national campaign wanted to make Bos a prominent figure again. However, he lost a lot of sympathy from the voters and the opposition gained support. Suddenly, the entire campaign was in danger, because Bos' popularity decreased while his picture was on every poster and flyer.

This increasing personalization has most likely led to an increase in negative campaigning. In 2006 negative campaigning was a standard part of a campaign and in many ways just as heated as it was in 1963. However, personalization has shifted it to a more personally directed negative campaign. The CDA's attacks on the PvdA were on Wouter Bos personally. Here we see a major shift that was already noticeable in American campaigns. In the United States, negative campaigning often focuses entirely on the candidate. As seen, everything about the candidate reflects the party. Following this train of thought, if you disgrace a candidate, you disgrace a party.

When it comes to reaching the electorate, the PvdA is proud of its canvassing tactic and almost constantly has volunteers on the streets. In addition, it organizes a campaigning road trip around the country, modelled after American examples. Even though the organisation is not yet as professional as it could be, over the last decades you can see that the PvdA has caught up. This is most likely the case because (media) circumstances forced it to do so. Wouter Bos already surrounded himself with media advisors, and even though he did not listen to them all that well, bringing outside experts in was a big step in professionalization. Overall, we can conclude that in this regard, the PvdA is still behind on the streamlined, professionally organised American campaigns that this thesis compares it to. Perhaps this is because the Dutch got a late start and will quickly evolve in the following years.

In line with this assumption is the increasing amount of campaign costs. Campaigns are becoming more expensive, and therefore most likely more professional. This increase in campaign spending has put pressure on the parties, because they have to find funding. In the U.S. this led to political action committees and donor systems that got so out of hand that they required legal intervention. In the Netherlands there has been talk of legislation to regulate campaign financing, but so far this has not been implemented. However, what is

known for sure is that the parties are relying more on government contributions than before and are desperately looking for other ways to finance their campaigns.

In conclusion, this thesis found that Americanization is taking place when it comes to the Dutch PvdA campaigns. Much of this started as early as 1963. The two elements that were not yet taking place in the 60s, namely professionalization and high campaign costs, developed more slowly and less up to American standards than the other elements. Yet all of the elements are connected. For instance, a growing personalization of campaigns will inevitably lead to more negative campaigning. It will therefore be fascinating to see how this trend of Americanization will continue over the next few years. Will there be a continuity or discontinuity of this development?

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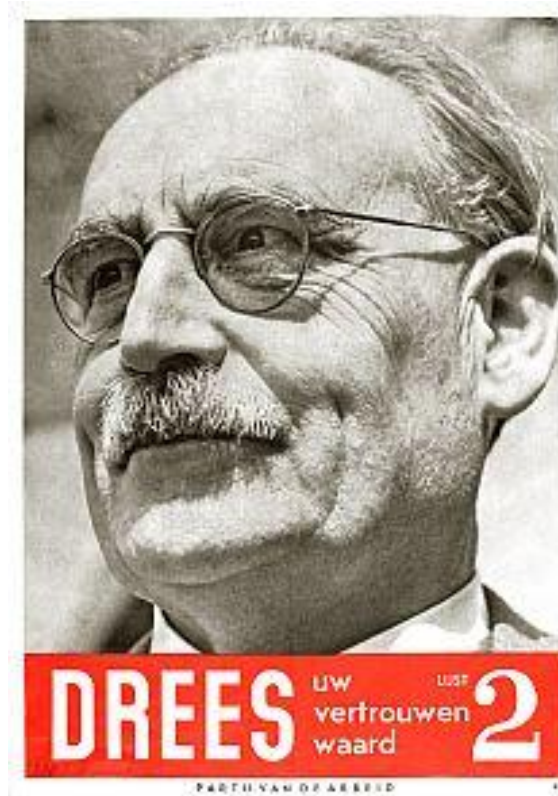
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Word count: 10,379

Appendices

Appendix A

Figure 1: Willem Drees Election poster, 1956.



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Appendix B

Figure 2: Vondeling PvdA Election Poster, 1963.



Nicovs,, and PvdA. *Kiest Partij: Vondeling*, Anne. 1963

Appendix C

Figure 3: Vondeling, 1965



Doeve, Eppo. 1965, 1 mei, Amsterdam: Elseviers Weekblad.

Appendix D

Figures 4, 5 and 6: Election posters featuring Den Uyl



Left to right: 1967, 1972, 1981.

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Appendix E

Table 1: Campaign Expenses 1963

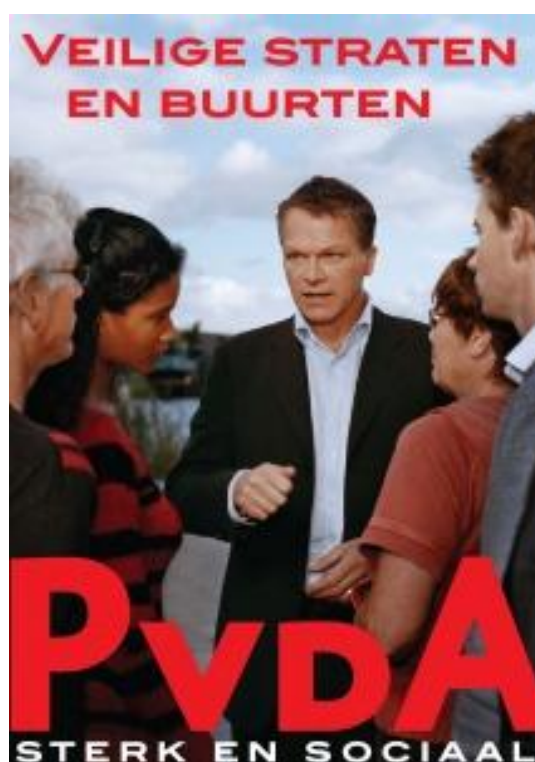
Item	Total cost in guildens
Flyers	200,000
Door to door leaflets	74,824
Costs of television	66,815
Costs of radio	2,813
Advertisements	2,9445
General costs	15,000
Total	± 653,468

These prices are obtained from a public record, written down by the secretary treasurer E.

Meester. I cannot be fully certain that these are all the numbers, but this was most conclusive financial document I could find. At least they provide an indication of the amount spent on campaigns and should not be far off. All the money is in guildens. Obtained from the archives of the Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

Appendix F

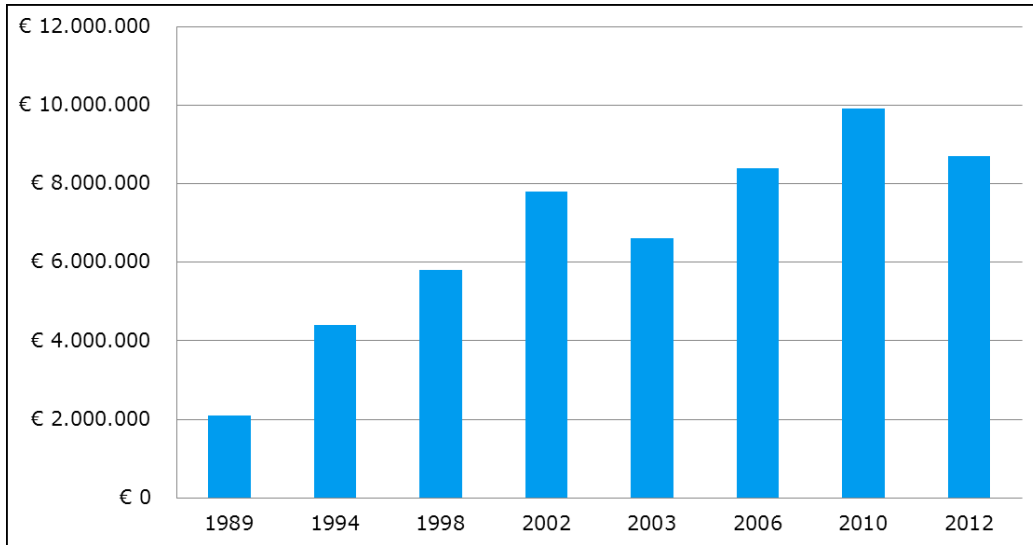
Figure 7 and 8: PvdA 2006 Election Posters featuring Wouter Bos



Rijksuniversiteit Groningen: documentatiecentrum Nederlandse politieke partijen.

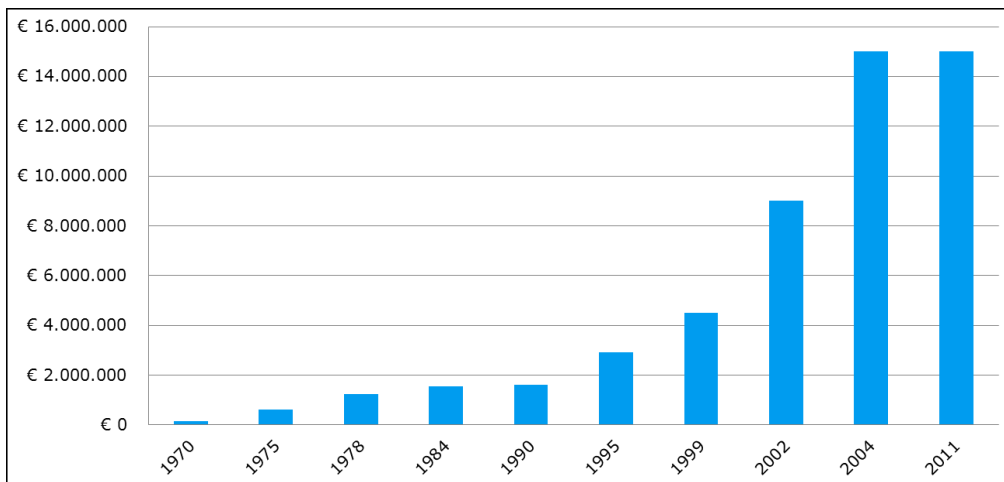
Appendix G

Figure 1: Campaign expenses of the Dutch political parties, 1989-2012



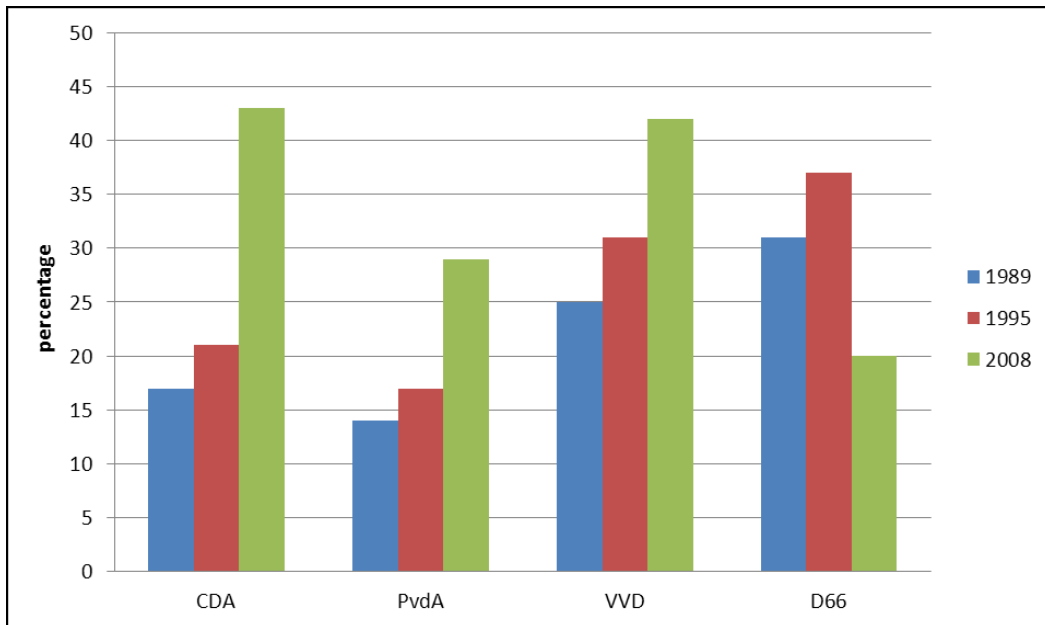
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Figure 2: Government funding for parties, 1970-2011



L. Dragstra, 2008.

Figure 3: Dependence on government funding, 1989, 1995 and 2005



L. Dragstra, 2008.