



## NATIONAL IDENTITY AND COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNITY AMONG DUTCH GREEN PARTY MEMBERS



Written by Matthias Schmal and supervised by Luc Lauwers: A thesis part of the Master's program Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship at Utrecht University.

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# GREEN COMMUNITIES







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## INTRODUCTION

The mood in the bar is excited. The bar is probably having a good turnover this night, as many drinks are ordered. Most people order beers after examining the board where the craft beers are listed. I am standing in the middle of the walkway of the narrow establishment, but there is no way to move to the side as the small bar is packed. The age of the people filling the bar range from early twenties to pensioners, but all share excitement on their faces, as they came to the *Café de Zaak*, in the heart of Utrecht, for the same reason. The small café is based close to the Utrecht city council building and councilors often meet at *de Zaak* after council meetings, but this Wednesday night March 15 members and volunteers of *GroenLinks'* Utrecht department watch the election results.

The wait is first for the exit polls that would come directly after the closing of the voting bureaux. I talk to a young woman, Linda, a few nights before we campaigned for the party by going door to door at a large student housing complex, handing out flyers and talking about the party's plans. Linda expects *GroenLinks* to get twenty seats. An older woman, who had left the party five years ago and returned for this campaign, had smaller expectations, she expected thirteen, but would be very disappointed if it were less.

Just after 9pm the exit polls come in. First there is the shock of the decimation of the Labor Party, the crowded bar is quiet for a moment, but then there is jubilation. In the exit poll *GroenLinks* got 16 seats, quadrupling the result of the last elections and making it a historic result for the party. Senator Frits Lintmeijer was invited to analyze the exit poll, but he is struggling to get the attention from the crowd as everyone is still chatting excitedly. After a while he sees the opportunity to speak and he warns not to get too excited yet, as *GroenLinks* always scores higher in the exit polls than in actual results, which was proven right as the night showed that *GroenLinks* got 14 seats instead, which is still a historic result.

The speech of the political leader, Jesse Klaver, is broadcasted on a big screen. Klaver is on a stage in Amsterdam, together with the other people who were on the party list. His speech is often interrupted by cheering or laughter, which was also taken over by the people watching in Utrecht. Klaver tells that many international journalists that covered the Dutch elections ask the question: "Is populism breaking through in the Netherlands?" the crowd in Amsterdam and in Utrecht both loudly yells "No!" Klaver explains the success of *GroenLinks*: "Especially in a time where politicians try to instigate hatred and fear, we choose hope and change!"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Klaver's speech was published by GroenLink's YouTube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD3MIW4OqP8>

The politicians that Klaver means are Geert Wilders, Marine Le Pen and Donald Trump, among others. Much has been written about right-wing nationalist movements (cf. Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012; Betz 1994), but there is also growing left-wing cosmopolitan movement, that has had less attention in academic writing. Examples are the supporters of Bernie Sanders in the United States and Jeremy Corbyn in the United Kingdom. This research is about two explicitly cosmopolitan, environmental parties and their members in the Netherlands: *GroenLinks* and *De Partij voor de Dieren*. This research answers the questions: how do the members of these two parties experience national identity combined with cosmopolitan ideals and how do the parties, and their members, try to create a community alternative to the nation-state?

The period leading up to the parliamentary elections in the Netherlands on March 15, 2017 was tense. Would the Netherlands also follow the shift towards nationalism? In 2016 the United States elected Donald Trump and the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. With other elections following in Europe in 2017, the world looked at the Dutch elections to see if the right-wing nationalist Freedom Party (PVV) of Geert Wilders would win or if it could be 'stopped'. When the first results came in, some international press was quick to report that "Wilders' far right was beaten"<sup>2</sup>. The election results are more complex, though. They mostly show that the country is divided. The ruling coalition has gotten a historic beating, losing half of their seats. In general the country made a shift to the right, with other right parties also taking over some of Wilders' rhetoric<sup>3</sup>. On the other side of the political spectrum, there are parties that strongly oppose nationalist sentiment and also won seats. The Green Left party (*GroenLinks*) reached its highest seat count in the party's history, going from 4 to 14 seats. As did the Party for the Animals (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PvdD), going from 2 to 5 seats.

The Dutch political situation is not unique. Many European countries have influential right-wing nationalist parties. These movements can be seen as reactions to increased insecurities and the loss of a sense of community, which Bauman (2001a) describes in his work. These insecurities are a result of the processes of economic globalization, or neoliberalism, and increased migration (Bauman 2001a, 4). These processes have undermined the nation-state and one way of dealing with that is trying to 'take back control', which was the slogan for Brexit.

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<sup>2</sup> "Dutch elections: Wilders' far-right party beaten, early results show". *CNN*. Last accessed on July 30, 2017. <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/15/europe/netherlands-dutch-elections/>

<sup>3</sup> "The Guardian view on Geert Wilders' defeat: good news, to be treated with caution". *The Guardian*. Last accessed July 30, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/16/the-guardian-view-on-geert-wilders-defeat-good-news-to-be-treated-with-caution>

In my opinion, Both the PVV, *GroenLinks* and PvdD are the responses of the same globalization process and the associated insecurities (such as the loss of (the feeling of) community). However, the way of responding, is very different, whereas the PVV focusses at the national borders, both physically and socially, *GroenLinks* and the PvdD take a more transnational or even cosmopolitan approach.

*GroenLinks* and PvdD seek to oppose economic globalization, but also go against nationalist sentiment. Especially *GroenLinks* leader Jesse Klaver has declared his party as an alternative for right-wing populism. In a speech prepared for the *GroenLinks* congress on December 16, 2016 Klaver stated: “The insecurity and anger of people is a direct consequence of the continual increasing social-economic inequality.”<sup>4</sup> For Klaver this inequality is the result of thirty years of economic globalization and neoliberal policy. PvdD leader Marianne Thieme has recently published a book how the political focus on market liberalization and economic growth has led to the climate change problems of today.<sup>5</sup>

Although being a national party, active within the Dutch political system, *GroenLinks* is part of the European Green Party, supports European integration and is active in action against global climate change. Climate change is one of the most important issues for the PvdD as well. The party states that it does not just represent “Westerners and their money”, but that everything it does has a “planet-wide focus”.<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising that the members of these parties, the participants of this research, do not have a strong feeling of nationalist sentiment comparable to that of right-wing nationalists, most participants do not feel national identity to be of great importance and when they do, they define it in inclusive terms. More important are cosmopolitan ideals that are more about solidarity across national borders. This view is complementary to the work of political and social scientists such as Beck (2006) and Held (1995). They argue that today’s issues like economic globalization, but also climate change and migration, cannot be dealt with by nation-states. They call for a move towards a more cosmopolitan way to organize society. Can cosmopolitanism return a sense of community as nationalism does, though? For this I also draw on the work of Anderson (2006) and Gellner (1983).

The PvdD and *GroenLinks* both were rewarded for their explicit cosmopolitan manifestos as they both won seats in the elections. For my participants, the cosmopolitan ideals of the parties

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<sup>4</sup> “Laat radicaal links de boze burger bedienen”. NRC. Last accessed July 30, 2017.

<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/12/16/laat-radicaal-links-de-boze-burger-bedienen-5824575-a1537063>

<sup>5</sup> Thieme, Marianne and Ewald Engelen. 2016. *De Kanarie in de Kolenmijn*. Amsterdam: Prometheus.

<sup>6</sup> “Who We Are”. <https://www.partyfortheanimals.nl/> (last accessed June 26)



were important in the choice for the party. Some of them explicitly became involved with the party as a statement against rising nationalist sentiment. One of my participants, for example, 'confessed' to me that she was one of the many people that signed up to become a member of *GroenLinks* after Donald Trump was elected as President of the United States. This research gives an insight into a growing group of supporters of cosmopolitan politics opposed to growing nationalist sentiment.

Central to this group is the question of how to create or return a sense of community within the group and on a broader, societal level. The right-wing nationalists strive towards a strict national identity in exclusive, ethnic terms, but how does the other side of the political spectrum find a solution to the lost sense of community in society? *GroenLinks* executed an election campaign with the primary goal of creating a 'movement'. With the use of activist terms and methods the party managed to get many supporters out of their homes, away from their computers and into massive political gatherings and onto the streets. These methods were new in the Dutch political context and it was interesting to see how the campaign worked. *GroenLinks'* campaign was successful in that it managed to win the party's largest election result. In my opinion, looking at my participants, it was also successful in creating a sense of community among its supporters, although maybe not as much as the party would have liked.

The PvdD, as a smaller party, did not have such a campaign, but the members of the party still do have a strong sense of a community. This comes from a strong shared ideology of consumption behavior. Talking about being vegan, sharing recipes and sharing tips to reduce ones ecological footprint help in creating a community, because there is a shared sense of risk of climate change and a shared idea about the measures that need to be taken.

On a broader, societal, level especially *GroenLinks* sees the need to return a lost sense of community, although the party made this turn in policy recently. *GroenLinks* is struggling to lose a reputation of being a 'left-elitist' party of well-off highly educated people. This struggle is visible, for example, in the party's internal discussion on holding referendums: a recent vote of *GroenLinks* members against the use of referendums shows that there can be a distrust of the general public by members. Nonetheless, *GroenLinks* has experimented, and has vowed to experiment in the future, with a new form of democracy, deliberative democracy. The goal of such new ways of democracy is to strengthen citizenship and citizenship strengthens community, a community that is based on a common vision of governing together. In a community of citizens there is more place for cosmopolitanism, because nationality and ethnicity are of less importance. The discussion on deliberative democracy is mostly theoretical, because *GroenLinks* only recently has begun to experiment with it and only a few of my participants actually had heard of it.

The buildup of my thesis is as follows: first I explain the methods I used during my research period, the chapter after that gives more context on the political and societal situation in the West, but specifically the Netherlands, then I describe the history and ideology of the Dutch Green parties. After these first chapters my participants take on a more central role: first I will describe and explain the way my participants experience national identity and how they combine this with their cosmopolitan ideals. Part of that chapter is a more in-depth discussion of the future of the nation-state. The longest chapter, 'Green Communities', shows how the two parties and their members are creating a community among their own supporters. In my final chapter, I shortly summarize my findings and I discuss deliberative democracy.

## METHODS

To come to these in-depth observations I used the methods of ethnographic fieldwork. For about three months from the end of January until the end of April 2017 I have been working together with members of *GroenLinks* and PvdD. The fieldwork for this research was predominantly done in Utrecht, the fourth largest city of the Netherlands, with about 340,000 inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> Utrecht has a large university and various schools of applied sciences, resulting in the fact that 10% of the city's population is studying.<sup>8</sup> Politically, the city is quite progressive. *GroenLinks* has had a significant support in Utrecht since the party's founding, with between 8 and 10 seats out of 45 in the council. *GroenLinks* is almost always in the executive body of the city government. The PvdD has only participated in the last local elections in 2014, winning one seat. My activities in Utrecht can be divided in three categories: participant observation, interviewing, and online and media ethnography.

### Participant Observation

In my field research, it was my goal to see the perspective of my research participants, which is possible through the method of participant observation. DeWalt and DeWalt define participant observation as "a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture." (2011, 1). Here, the explicit aspects of culture are those that people can articulate with ease, contrasting the tacit aspects, those aspects of culture are outside our awareness or consciousness (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 2).

I applied participant observation mostly to members of *GroenLinks*. The week that I started my research I went to an event organized by the Utrecht department of *GroenLinks* on January 25. This event was the kick off for the election campaign. In the month and a half that followed the *GroenLinks* campaign grew massively. This gave me the perfect opportunity to participate in the campaign events of the party. The main campaign strategy of *GroenLinks* this campaign was canvassing. This means that *GroenLinks* volunteers would go door to door and talk to people about the upcoming election and political issues. I participated with canvassing twelve times in the period leading up to the March 15 elections. Participating in canvassing was a good way of doing research as I could observe other volunteers talk about their own political views with strangers and also with other party volunteers. This gave me an idea of what issues are most important for them and how

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<sup>7</sup> For data on population count see: <https://www.cbs.nl>

<sup>8</sup> "Tien procent Utrechtse bevolking is student". *DUB*. Last accessed July 26, 2017.

<https://www.dub.uu.nl/nl/plussen-en-minnen/2013/08/26/tien-procent-utrechtse-bevolking-student.html>

their stance is towards the official party views. The way people might joke about some issues or would talk in a different way about other issues shows underlying values. There were also limits to the canvassing activities as a research setting. Usually, before and after the actual canvassing there were opportunities where volunteers would talk with each other and would share experiences of the day, but sometimes that was not possible. During the canvassing itself I could not always observe the participants as much as I would have liked, because I was also participating in the campaign myself. The first few times, I went together with others, but later I was asked to do it alone to be more efficient, to get more doors done.

Other campaign activities I participated in with *GroenLinks* are: handing out campaign flyers and attending political ‘meetups’. These meetups were large gatherings of *GroenLinks* supporters in theaters or clubs that came to listen to a speech of party leader Jesse Klaver. I also joined a ‘werkgroep’, this is a small committee that discusses a specific political topic. I joined a committee that was involved with environmental policy, especially on the municipal level of Utrecht.

I did most of the participant observation with *GroenLinks* for several reasons. Utrecht is not a large city and the number of people involved with political parties in Utrecht is even smaller. At campaign events I often saw the saw people from other parties. This meant that people would notice if I would be involved in the campaign of two separate parties. When I participated in my first campaign events for *GroenLinks*, I realized that participants would probably not understand it if I would be involved with the campaign of PvdD as well. That would have a negative result on my relationship with participants, probably from both parties. I chose to work on the campaign of *GroenLinks* because it was a larger campaign with many more events, giving me more research opportunities. *GroenLinks*’ campaign also got some attention from the press, because the used strategy was different from traditional Dutch political campaigns and the party was supported by a company that also worked on the campaigns of Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton<sup>9</sup>. It was interesting to see how participants responded to this strategy.

Participant observation was a good way to learn the daily life and language of volunteers of *GroenLinks* in Utrecht. It gave me an idea on what political topics participants find important, but also what their preferences were in daily consumption. During canvassing events, for example, I could listen to participants discuss current affairs and see how they form their opinion and also see how all the food was organic or fair trade. These informal conversations often went in other

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<sup>9</sup> “Campagnebureau Obama helpt Jesse Klaver: we kunnen leren van Nederland”. *De Volkskrant*. Last accessed July 30, 2017. <http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/campagnebureau-obama-helpt-jesse-klaver-we-kunnen-leren-van-nederland~a4435841/>

directions than my research topic, or were cut short by circumstances, but another research method, interviewing, gave me the opportunity to go into topics more in depth.

## **Interviewing**

To crosscheck my data collected from participant observation and to go more in-depth with certain topics, I used several types of interviewing. After the elections there was significantly less activity in both parties and also less possibilities to do participant observation. After March 15 it was easy for me to ask many of my fellow campaigners to do an interview with me, because people had more free time. During interviews I could ask questions in a more personal and relaxed environment than during campaign activities. The ethnographic interviews I held usually had a collaborative style with open-ended questions (cf. O'Reilly 2012, 118). I use three types of interviewing: informal conversation, unstructured interviewing and semi-structured interviewing.

Informal conversations were the kind of interviews I used during participant observation, often during campaign activities, canvassing and informal meetings. O'Reilly explains this method as an exploratory approach rather than actually mining for data (2012, 117-118). The informal conversations that I had gave me ideas about the questions I would like to ask in more organized interviews. For example, to go deeper into the personal motivations of being vegan or buying fair trade.

I have done fifteen detailed and in-depth interviews with participants. Ten of the interviewees were members of *GroenLinks*, the others were of PvdD. All of them lived in Utrecht or close to the city. Two-thirds of the interviewees were volunteers for the parties, the others had some official function, for example chief editor for the scientific journal, campaign community manager, council member for the municipality or supporting staff. The ages of the interviewees vary from early twenties to retirement age, with more people on the younger side, resembling the age group in the campaign. For these interviews, I arranged a time and place beforehand, to make sure that my participants would have time to meet me. These interviews entailed me and the participant face to face in a relatively quiet place, which made it possible for me to record the interview. Most of the interviews were unstructured interviews. An unstructured interview is a free-flowing, more conversation like, type of interview. I did bring a topic list, but my participant was given the opportunity to answer freely, disagree with a question or even change the topic (O'Reilly 2012, 120). This type of interviewing was especially useful when talking about more abstract topics like national identity. Participants would not be as easily distracted as they might be during an informal

conversation in an informal meeting, but the participant still has the freedom to go in any direction with the topic, without me as an interviewer asking leading questions.

In a few interviews I built in more structure, what O'Reilly describes as a semi-structured interview: this is still an interview with open-ended questions, but also can contain some predetermined questions (O'Reilly 2012: 120). The reason I used this type of interview was when I knew my participant would not have much time. For example when I interviewed a council member for PvdD during her workday. This interview was less like a conversation and more structured with me asking the questions and the participant answering. Still, I asked open-ended questions where the participant had opportunity to answer as extended as he or she would like.

With these interviews I could go more in-depth on certain topics, going beyond the citing of the official party stance, which happened more during the canvassing activities. During interviews I was able to find out about the participants' own views on topics such as national identity, cosmopolitanism and community and what these topics meant for them in their daily lives.

### **Online and Media Ethnography**

Increasingly, social life takes place online. During the March 2017 elections, Dutch political parties used social media in their campaign on an unprecedented level, *GroenLinks* and PvdD included. The PvdD is actually the party with the most followers on Facebook, despite being one of the smallest parties in parliament. *GroenLinks* was active on social media with the use of 'memes', videos and live broadcasts. But social media were not just used as a way to spread their political message, but they were also used to create a community among the party's supporters and volunteers. The Utrecht department of *GroenLinks*, for example, extensively used WhatsApp in the organization of their campaign. There was a general WhatsApp group with around 200 members called 'Team for Change', and for every campaign activity, a separate WhatsApp group was created for the participants.

In my research I followed all the pages by the parties and their prominent members on Twitter and Facebook and followed their campaigns closely in the media. This was actually a necessity as participants often referred to the recent news articles or television shows, so it was important for me to keep up, to understand what they were talking about.

The responses of participants to writing in the media could give me insight in the views of participants. The call of Christian-Democrat leader Buma to have children sing the national anthem more often, for example, was talked about much by my participants, giving me the opportunity to ask questions about national identity. Another example is the way participants responded to a

certain message from the *GroenLinks* online campaign. In the last week before the elections *GroenLinks* uploaded graphs with a comparison between *GroenLinks* and other parties. Especially the comparison between *GroenLinks* and PvdD got strong responses. Participants from both parties thought this comparison was unfair. It gave me an insight in the relation between the two parties.

IK TWIJFEL TUSSEN	GROEN LINKS	 Partij voor de Dieren
Klimaatdoelstellingen Parijs halen	JA	?
Aanpakken van in Europa belastingontwijkende bedrijven	JA	NEE
Hogere belasting voor hogere inkomens	JA	NEE
Word je als zzp'er arbeidsongeschikt krijg je:	Een eerlijke uitkering	NIETS

Figure 1 Comparison between GroenLinks and PvdD published by GroenLinks.  
<https://groenlinks.nl/snelkieswijzer/groenlinks-pvdd>

## A LOST SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The political situation has changed drastically over the last few decades. In the period after the Second World War, countries were rebuilt and the welfare state was developed. Looking at the election results, the Cold War period was a relatively stable period. For decades, there was a kind of balance between two factions, the Christian-Democrats center-right and the Labor Party center-left. But in the last twenty years the traditional center parties have lost much support.<sup>10</sup> The last Dutch general elections have truly shown the end of the traditional parties, with the Labor Party winning less than six percent of the vote. The largest party, the VVD, is the second smallest largest party every in Dutch electoral history, only topped by the VVD's result in the 2010 election. To gain a majority, a coalition now needs to be formed containing at least four parties, also a rarity in recent Dutch politics.<sup>11</sup>

Underlying this change, are societal changes, often simplified by using the container concept 'globalization'. Much has been written on the process of globalization (for an overview see Inda and Rosaldo (2002)). Among the dimensions of globalization Eriksen (2010) mentions are disembedding and acceleration. With these he means that in a globalized world distance has become less important and the speed of transport and communication have increased (Eriksen 2010, 8). This is one of the reasons a number of transitions happened in the global political economy since the 1970s, in which capitalist organization became more transnational, flexible and irregular. National borders were decreasingly constraining for labor, finance and technology (Appadurai 1998, 907-908). I focus on the social and political consequences of globalization, like how it affects 'community'. Community is a word with a 'warm feel'. For Bauman (2001a) it refers to a place where people can feel safe and secure together with people they know and can count on. Yet community also stands for the world which is not available to us, but which we would like to inhabit (Bauman 2001a, 3). The harsh reality of globalization is community-hostile and differs from the community with the warm feel. The process of globalization, with its increased movement of capital, people and ideas has increased the feeling of insecurity. Bauman explains the reason for this increase as: "we are all in a fluid and unpredictable world of deregulation, flexibility, competitiveness and endemic uncertainty, but each one of us suffers anxiety on our own, as a private problem" (2001a, 144). Bauman refers to individualization, part of the process of globalization, it means that individuals cannot deal with the shared insecurities that have resulted from globalization, because dealing with

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<sup>10</sup> For historical Dutch election results see: <http://www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl>

<sup>11</sup> For the 2017 parliamentary elections result: <https://www.kiesraad.nl/actueel/nieuws/2017/03/20/officiële-uitslag-tweede-kamerverkiezing-15-maart-2017>



these problems as private problems, leaves the roots of the insecurities (i.e. globalization) intact (Bauman 2001a, 144).

In the Netherlands, these processes had a particular effect on the country's pillarization. "Pillarization implies the close ties between political elites and the masses through networks of ideological organizations – referred to as pillars or columns." (Lucardie 2008, 152). A religious denomination or social class had its own political party, but also its own media. Being part of a pillar means being in a community. Through secularization and individualization the process of depillarization started, for example by media associated with pillars gradually being replaced by 'politically objective' commercial media (Lucardie 2008, 154). Depillarization resulted in major losses in the traditional electoral bases for the established parties (Lucardie 2008, 153), an embodiment of the deterioration of the sense of community that the pillar provided.

Being unable to attain a sense of a secure community, however, makes the image of community even more alluring. We have to do with living in an illusion of community, the 'really existing community', which is the collectivity that we live in that pretends to be community (Bauman 2001a, 4). This really existing community, what I would call the contemporary nation-state, demands a price to be paid for being in a community. We pretend that we have to hand over our freedom in order to be in this safe community. According to Bauman, to attain safety or security, we perceive the need to choose between security and freedom, and community and individuality. This decision is perceived as follows: "Do you want safety? Do not let the strangers in and yourself abstain from acting strangely and thinking odd thoughts." (Bauman 2001a, 4). While Bauman wrote these words already fifteen years ago, the Dutch Prime-Minister, Mark Rutte, recently, before the March 2017 elections, presented exactly the same choice in an open letter to all Dutch people: "act normal or leave". In the same letter he called upon people to "fight to be able to still feel at home in our country"<sup>12</sup>. According to this view and in line with Bauman's writings of 2001, strangers or foreigners become the embodiment of insecurity and unpredictability. While the actual sources of insecurity (i.e. globalization) remain hidden from view, foreigners are visible and create a sense of unsafety, therefore they become the target (Bauman 2001a, 145). This was particularly visible in the period leading up to the March elections in the Netherlands. In television debates and in the media the relation between migration and national identity became a major topic instead of, for example, tax evasion by multinationals.

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<sup>12</sup> "Aan alle Nederlanders." January 22. <https://vvd.nl/nieuws/lees-hier-de-brief-van-mark/>  
Accessed May 22.

What both Prime-Minister Rutte and Bauman (2001a) describe here, becomes even clearer in the various radical right-wing populist movements across Europe. Whereas Rutte and his VVD recently took over a more populist rhetoric, there have already been populist parties in The Netherlands and Europe for decades. In France, the National Front has gained influence the last few decades with two candidates making it to the second round in the presidential elections of 2002 and 2017. In Scandinavian countries the right-wing populist Progress Parties increased in significance from the late 1980s onward (Betz 1993). In the Netherlands, right-wing parties led by Hans Janmaat were marginal in Dutch politics throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The beginning of the new millennium meant the rise of the right-wing populist movement in the Netherlands, first with Pim Fortuyn, followed by Geert Wilders' PVV and in 2017 by Thierry Baudet and his Forum for Democracy.

More than twenty years ago Betz (1993) already connected the older work of Bauman with the development of radical right wing populist parties. He argues that this development is “a consequence of the general individualization process of postindustrial society, which is gradually destroying the basis of the great all-encompassing projects of modern politics.” (Betz 1993, 424). An example of such a project is the welfare state. Individualization as part of a globalization process has had great effect on the political situation from the 1980s. Electoral alignment decreased, political fragmentation increased and there was a growing distrust in social and political institutions (Betz 1993, 413). For the Dutch case, this claim is supported by the fact that party membership between 1960 and 1985 almost halved.<sup>13</sup> Since then, party alignment has remained stable with the continued losses of traditional parties compensated by the growth of new parties such as *GroenLinks* and PvdD.

The radical right-wing populist parties use the sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment caused by the increased feeling of insecurity, and appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense, going against the established social and political system (Betz 1993, 413). The parties present themselves as the protectors of an exclusive national identity, from the prospects of a future multicultural and multiethnic society. Immigrants are targeted as the threat to the nation and its people (Betz 1993, 417). This can clearly be seen in the PVV's manifesto for the March elections, which had one major point: “Deislamizing the Netherlands” through, among other measures, putting migration to a stop.<sup>14</sup>

In recent years there have been examples of successful political campaigns that prioritize anti-immigration and nationalist policy. Donald Trump was elected as president with the slogan

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<sup>13</sup> “Gezamenlijk ledental van de partijen die in de Tweede Kamer zitting hebben, 1950-2017”. Last accessed July 13, 2017. <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/themas/lt/gezamenlijk>

<sup>14</sup> “Verkiezingsprogramma 2017-2021” Last accessed July 13, 2017. <https://www.pvv.nl/visie.html>

“Make America Great Again”. The British voted to leave the European Union to “Take Back Control” of their own borders and for the March Dutch elections Geert Wilder’s PVV used the slogan “Netherlands ours again”. These three slogans all have a nostalgic element in them, referring to an imagined time when the nation-state did give security, safety and community.

According to Bauman, the nation-state has been the only entity that came close to being a community in modern times (Bauman 2000, 173). The way right-wing populists promote national identity is similar to Gellner’s definition. According to him nationalism is “a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones” (Gellner 1983, 1). And when ethnic boundaries do cross political ones, nationalist sentiment comes up, which is a “feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle [of nationalism]” (Gellner 1983, 1). Gellner goes further to say that this ethnic boundary or shared culture that is the basis of nationalism is actually invented and not a natural law (Gellner 1983, 56). An argument that was often presented by supporters of *GroenLinks* and the PvdD during my research.

Benedict Anderson presents a similar view on the nation, but disagrees with the term ‘invention’. According to Anderson, Gellner is too focused on exposing nationalism as a falsity, with which he also implies that ‘true’ communities exist. Anderson argues that communities should not be measured on how false or genuine they are, but on how they are imagined. He defines the nation as “an imagined political community” (Anderson 2006, 6). It is imagined because the members of nations will never know their fellow-member, yet still all they share an imagined communion. The nation is a community, because it conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson 2006, 7). Anderson explains nationalism in more inclusive terms, based in a shared language.

Smith (1991) combines these two forms of nations, the civic model and the ethnic model. The civic model is based on a shared territorial conception, laws and institutions with a single political will, legal equalities among the members of the community, and common civic culture and ideology (created through mass media). With the civic model it is possible for a person to choose which nation he/she would want to be part of (Smith 1991: 10-11). In the ethnic model, a nation is a community of common descent, a fictive ‘super-family’. The nation can trace its roots to a common ancestry. The emphasis on presumed family ties make popular mobilization, seen in the ethnic model, possible. Popular mobilization plays an important role in the ethnic conception as it can unite different classes in an appeal to the ‘will of the people’. The idea of an ethnic nation is created by making its members aware of the myths, history and linguistic traditions of the community (Smith 1991: 12). All nations have some components of the civic model as well as the ethnic model. And so Smith defines the nation as: “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common

myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.” (Smith 1991: 14). Taking this dichotomy to the Netherlands in 2017, it seems easy to say that *GroenLinks* is on the civic side and the PVV on the ethnic side.

Yet, practice has shown that it is not always easy to distinguish what elements of the nation or nationalism are civic or ethnic. During the election campaign of 2017, parties on the right used a seemingly rhetoric. In the PVV’s campaign the threat of Islam to Western values was the central theme. In the already mentioned letter Prime-Minister Rutte refers to “people exploiting our freedom, while they came to this country because of that freedom [...] [people] that harass gay people and women in short skirts”<sup>15</sup>. In this letter the VVD is clearly making a connecting between immigration and its threat on Western liberal values. Halikiopoulou et al. (2013) analyzed European right-wing parties in terms of Smith’s ethnic-civic dichotomy. The studied right-wing nationalist parties hold very strong ethnic agendas where the state should be only inhabited by people from the same nation and non-natives are seen as a threat. The nationalist parties that have been successful have been framing those ethnic and exclusive values into civic terms (Halikiopoulou et al 2013: 112). The authors give the example of the Dutch LPF and PVV. These parties have reframed their anti-immigration agenda as a form of preserving Dutch identity and Western liberal values, such as gay rights, freedom of speech and women’s rights (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013: 119). One of my participants, a member of *GroenLinks* was skeptical: “I find it interesting that when they [right-wing politicians] talk about gay-emancipation that it is always aimed against Islam. And then I wonder if they really feel strong about gay-emancipation or if they are just against Islam.”<sup>16</sup>

The Green parties I studied and their members that participated in this research strongly believe in liberal values, but do not use these believes to legitimize an anti-immigration agenda. The Green parties define the nation more in civic and inclusive terms. My participant were very positive about a performance of *GroenLinks* leader Jesse Klaver during a television debate where he said that the Dutch identity had not been protected well enough, by which he meant a culture of tolerance and inclusivity, contrasting his opponents on the right who argued Dutch culture was under threat from the outside.<sup>17</sup> An important difference between the views on the nation of the Greens and the right-wing nationalists is that the Greens have a strong believe in transnational social equality and the right-wing nationalists do not believe in international solidarity, as people from outside their imagined nation are not equal to those inside. I explain this dichotomy of cosmopolitanism and nationalism more in detail later.

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<sup>15</sup> “Aan alle Nederlanders.” January 22. <https://vvd.nl/nieuws/lees-hier-de-brief-van-mark/> Accessed May 22.

<sup>16</sup> From an unstructured interview April 15.

<sup>17</sup> From the Carrédebat March 5

Green parties and right-wing nationalist obviously have many more differences, but they originate from the same process of globalization. Green political parties came from an environmental movement influenced by writings like *The Tragedy of the Commons* (Hardin 1968) and *Limits to Growth* (Meadows 1972). The environmental aspect is combined with leftist elements like being anti or critical of capitalism and also with a focus on the individual and social equality (Betz 1993, 413). In the late 1970s and 1980s national Green parties came up in many Western countries. In 2001 all Green parties came together as the Global Greens and signed the Global Green Charter. The charter entails six principles: ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, nonviolence, sustainability and respect for diversity (Global Greens 2017). These principles show the cosmopolitan approach of the Green movement. A cosmopolitan approach also means a different understanding of community than a national community. Later I go into detail how members of Dutch Green parties combine national community and cosmopolitan ideals, but first I give a short history of two Dutch political parties with Green ideals.

## DUTCH GREENS

In the Dutch parliament there are two parties that I consider Green parties. One is GreenLeft (*GroenLinks*) and the other the Party for the Animals (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PvdD). *GroenLinks* is usually referred to as the Dutch Green Party and the PvdD is often referred to as an animal welfare party, both in the parliamentary press and by participants. Yet, the two parties are quite similar in their goals of countering climate change, promote equality and support the weaker in society. I believe the reason that *GroenLinks* and PvdD are two different parties is related to what Richardson (1995) saw in the development of different Green parties in different countries. Because all countries have a distinct political context, parties could take a different shape. Yet, Richardson (1995, 5) recognizes two main philosophies within Green parties: ecologists and environmentalists. The ecologists care for the environment because of the intrinsic value of life and the Earth. The environmentalists care for the environment mainly for the improvement of human society. *GroenLinks* holds an environmentalist approach, more focused on human society, whereas PvdD has an ecologist worldview more focused on the intrinsic value of all life. Another reason the Netherlands can have two Green parties, where Green parties in other countries are struggling to get seats, is because it has a proportional representation voting system with an elections threshold of less than one percent of the vote.<sup>18</sup>

*GroenLinks* was the first party to be formed, due to a merger of smaller leftist parties in 1990 (Richardson 1995: 12-13). This merging process started after major electoral losses for all small left parties in 1977. This made the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN), the Pacifist-Socialist Party (PSP), and the Political Radical Party (PPR) decide to work together. In the 1984 European elections the parties first worked together as the Green Progressive Accord. This combination was reasonably successful, winning two seats. Therefore, the merging process continued. In 1989 the Evangelical People's Party (EVP) joined and the four parties took part in the Dutch national election under the banner of *GroenLinks* (Voerman 1995: 82-85). In the beginning, the party was more socialist, ideologically, than environmentalist, but *GroenLinks* shifted more to environmentalism in the years following its formations (Voerman 1995: 86). In the general elections of March 2017 *GroenLinks* went from its historic low of 4 seats to its historic high of 14 seats in the House of Representatives. The party also has representatives in most municipalities, with greater support in both bigger and smaller cities. Utrecht houses the largest *GroenLinks* department with local membership recently surpassing the 2000 mark<sup>19</sup>. In the last three municipal elections, *GroenLinks* was one time the

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<sup>18</sup> The Dutch voting system explained: <https://www.parlement.com/id/vhnmmt7ieeyb/kiesstelsel>

<sup>19</sup> From the *GroenLinks* Utrecht newsletter April 7

largest party and twice the second largest, always making it into the ruling coalition.<sup>20</sup> Contrasting the national party, that never made it into a coalition. Before a campaign event volunteers sometimes were briefed that, when a voter might be sympathetic towards *GroenLinks* but might feel the party is not ready to rule, to use the argument that *GroenLinks* has ruled in Utrecht for over a decade in Utrecht.

The PvdD was founded more recently, in 2002, by the current leader Marianne Thieme, among others. One of the party's main priorities is animal welfare and protection, but from a holistic ecology view. This worldview that the ecosystem is central instead of humankind. As this excerpt of the party's manifesto shows:

“Humans are part of the Earth's ecosystem, but – as a result of the species' mental development and the culture that derives from it – they are capable of looking after their own interests at the expense of other beings more intensively and at a grander scale than any other living creature. However, the very same mental development also gives Homo sapiens the freedom to not inflict unnecessary suffering and damage on other organisms as well as members of its own species both today and in the future. This respect for the physical and mental integrity of all life on Earth provides the basis for a more peaceful way for humans to interact with each other, animals and nature in general.” (Party for the Animals 2005).

The PvdD is not a Green party in the sense that is connected to the Global Greens. Also, in the European Parliament PvdD is connected with a left-wing party instead of the European Green Party. But the principles of the party, like this excerpt shows, is similar to ecologists Green parties, whereas *GroenLinks* is more human-centered with its pacifist socialist tradition. In 2006 PvdD was first elected to the Dutch House of Representatives. It held two seats for more than ten years, but in the March 2017 elections the party won three extra seats, for the total of five. The party is also represented in the senate and most provincial governments. On the municipal level the PvdD has a single representative in twelve municipalities, Utrecht among them. For the municipal elections in 2018 the party wants to expand to more municipalities.

Looking at the manifestos<sup>21</sup> both parties used in the March 2017 elections they clearly show cosmopolitan programs. Both parties have an ambitious environmental plan to reduce climate change and its effects. Both parties want to undo the austerity on international development and

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<sup>20</sup> For the election results see: <http://www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl>

<sup>21</sup> GroenLinks manifesto: <https://groenlinks.nl/programma#samenvatting> PvdD manifesto: <https://www.partijvoordedieren.nl/partijprogramma-s>

raise the budget to one percent of the GDP. Other cosmopolitan issues the parties share are the humane treatment of refugees and the protection of minorities. One of the main differences is the stance on the European Union. *GroenLinks* is much more positive about the EU than the PvdD. *GroenLinks* is for more European collaboration, although combined with a democratic reform of the EU. PvdD is much more skeptical about the EU, Thieme called it a “welfare state for multinationals”<sup>22</sup> and therefore would not like to transfer more power to Brussels.

Especially *GroenLinks* proposed policies that show how the party would like to present national identity. An example is through national holidays. *GroenLinks* would like to see Liberation Day as a more important national holiday. Liberation Day celebrates the liberation from Germany at the end of the Second World War, but has evolved in a celebration of freedom, peace and inclusivity. *GroenLinks* also would like to introduce *Keti Koti*, the commemoration and celebration of the abolishment of slavery, as a national holiday. Another example is that the party wants non-Dutch members of the European Union living in the Netherlands to be able to vote for Dutch parliamentary elections.

These kind of policies show that *GroenLinks* uses civic terms to define national identity (cf. Smith 1991). The proposed national holidays have an inclusive nature, as they celebrate the end of slavery and occupation, which are universally accepted as being unwanted, and are also not related to a certain religion. Such holidays make possible what Anderson (2006) means with a national imagining: people that have never and will never meet face to face to imagine themselves as a community. It is different from Gellner’s (1983) ethnic view on national identity. An example of this view related to national holidays would be the recent political discussions started by parties opposite to *GroenLinks* on keeping the Christian identity in Christmas and Eastern.<sup>23</sup>

In an interview with the chief editor of *GroenLinks’* scientific journal, she revealed to me that, on the long term, she would like to see the nation-state as a way of organizing society replaced by levels of administration that are more localized and internationalized.<sup>24</sup>

As these are the official views of the parties, in order to answer my research question it is more important to listen to members of these political parties and analyze how they view cosmopolitan ideals and national identity. In the next chapter I will therefore dive deeper into the ethnographic data of this research.

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<sup>22</sup> From the closing debate on March 14

<sup>23</sup> “Premier Rutte: ‘In Nederland vieren we Kerst’”. *De Volkskrant*. Last accessed July 15.  
<https://www.volkskrant.nl/politiek/premier-rutte-in-nederland-vieren-we-kerst~a4439310/>

<sup>24</sup> From a semi-structured interview February 21



## COSMOPOLITANISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Cosmopolitanism is a term that comes from ancient philosophy and therefore the idea is much older than the idea of the nation. The first known time that the term ‘cosmopolitan’ was used was in the fourth century BC (Appiah 2007, xii), the idea of the nation originated two thousand years later (Anderson 2006; Gellner 1983). Van Hooft defined cosmopolitanism as it is used in modern philosophy as “the view that the moral standing of all peoples and of each individual person around the globe is equal. Individuals should not give moral preference to their compatriots, their co-religionists or fellow members of their demographic identity groups.” (Van Hooft 2009, 4). The party programs of *GroenLinks* and PvdD have a cosmopolitan outlook that transcends national boundaries. In this chapter I go into how members of the parties respond to the discussion on national identity and cosmopolitan ideals.

During the election campaign, the issue of national identity was prominent. In all the television debates there were discussions about immigration, refugees and the effect these have on the national identity. National identity as one of the major topics of these elections made it easy for me to start a conversation about it with my participants, I could ask about what they thought of the last debate as a bridge to how they themselves feel about national identity.

A typical answer I got was: “I think it is a bit of a non-issue, Dutch identity. [...] The world doesn’t stop at the border, so I think it is a bit of an overrated thing. [...] I think it is a non-issue, but for many people it is important and you should show some understanding.”<sup>25</sup> This was said by my participant Maaïke<sup>26</sup>, referring to the prominence of national identity in the election campaign. She is a psychologist in her late twenties, Maaïke has been a member of *GroenLinks* for about eight years and has been active on and off in that period.

Other participants had similar comments on national identity. Linda said: “I think it is kind of disappointing when everyone talks about it. When someone [Christian-Democrat leader Buma] says that we have to sing the national anthem, standing up. Then I think ‘what are we doing?’ there are more important things we need to be concerned about.”<sup>27</sup> When asked about the role of national identity in the elections, Simone also referred to Buma’s call to sing the national anthem: “I think that it’s good that [national identity] is part of the discussion, but if you look, concretely, what it’s

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<sup>25</sup> From a semi-structured interview April 7

<sup>26</sup> I changed all my participants’ names

<sup>27</sup> From an unstructured interview March 20

about, it's about very small and insignificant things. From that perspective, I disapprove that it was such a huge issue [in the election period]."<sup>28</sup>

The mentioned quotes show that members of the Green parties do not have a strong connection with national identity. It is not surprising that members of a political party have similar views as their party, but it is interesting to hear their own reasoning and on the topic of national identity I did get many different answers.

I start with these quotes because they are quite telling of the views of most *GroenLinks* and some PvdD members about national identity. The widely supported and shared view is that it is not important for my research participants themselves, but that it might be for others. All my participants I asked about their background, were highly educated, often in social sciences or humanities. This influences the way participants think about national identity. In an interview with Marit, this became explicitly clear. Marit is in her late twenties, studied anthropology and is currently working for the PvdD on a provincial level. She said about national identity: "I don't think the discussion should be about it, well, national identity, I don't think that it is a real problem. You study anthropology, identity is fluid and dependent on outside influences."<sup>29</sup> According to this view, it does not make sense to try and protect 'Dutch culture' or identity, it is just something that evolves.

Other participants use less constructivist terms when they talk about national identity. For Anne, national identity does have some importance. She is a social worker and a mother in her mid-thirties. She said:

"I think we have to accept that we are a multicultural society and that Dutch nationality has increasingly become a mix between different cultures, but it is important to keep your roots as a country. Everybody likes to have control and security, and culture is important in that, there must be room for that. It's an indirect consequence of globalization, travelling has become easier. [...] Politics should anticipate to this. I think it is good to keep some traditions, which gives certainty, people like that. You shouldn't let everything go, but you should also acknowledge that there are also other cultures, that are also welcome, because everyone has their own identity and that is what makes the Netherlands, the Netherlands"<sup>30</sup>

The way Anne describes national identity is in a very inclusive way that is like how Smith defined the

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<sup>28</sup> From an unstructured interview April 4

<sup>29</sup> From an unstructured interview March 31

<sup>30</sup> From an unstructured interview March 29

civic model of a nation (Smith 1991, 10). Later in the interview she described what she meant with the roots of the country and traditions, for her these were things like national holidays. She gave the example of *Sinterklaas*. “People become angry or sad when there is being muddled with their traditions, which is actually their last feeling of control. [...] It is fine that it is subject to change, but we need things like *Sinterklaas* and the Dutch football team to make Dutch people feel connected. I think you should have that in society, or else it will be splintered and everyone will be doing things individually.”<sup>31</sup> So for Anne, national identity is of some importance, but in a different way as right-wing nationalists. Her emphasis on civic national traditions is similar to the way *GroenLinks* itself also tries to define national identity. In the party’s manifesto it argues to make Liberation Day and Keti Koti national holidays. To celebrate freedom together and commemorate slavery.<sup>32</sup> These are more civic traditions of national identity, because it is more inclusive towards people from different backgrounds to participate, instead of it being a national holiday that is about a specific ethnic or religious background.

Anne’s view is related to Bauman’s (2001a) theory of community, that people are losing their sense of control and security as a result of the processes of globalization. She would like national identity to give this sense of security and control, but in an inclusive way towards people with other cultural backgrounds. Anne shows that the loss of community is not only felt by the supporters of right-wing nationalist parties but also by *GroenLinks* members, although not many of my other participants expressed or admitted to feel this way.

According to many *GroenLinks* members that I have spoken with, Dutch inclusivity or tolerance is under threat. The opposite to the views of right-wing nationalist supporters. When I first became involved with the party I was surprised on the amount of new members joining the party, many of them students in their early twenties. The main reason for many of them to join the party at that moment was as a kind of statement against the rise of nationalism. After the election of Donald Trump in the United States, for example, many people joined *GroenLinks* to stop nationalists winning the Dutch elections. The reason for Linda to become a member is also related to nationalism. Linda is a history student at Utrecht University. At the start of 2016 there was much political debate about refugees coming to Europe and the Netherlands. She was shocked by the dehumanizing way there was spoken about refugees in the media and by politicians, so she wanted to become more politically involved and became a member of *GroenLinks*, the party that she believes to be the most

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<sup>31</sup> From an unstructured interview March 29

<sup>32</sup> From the 2017 manifesto: <https://groenlinks.nl/sites/groenlinks.nl/files/Verkiezingsprogramma-digitaal-2017-2021.pdf>

positive and cosmopolitan.<sup>33</sup>

All the participants I have spoken to have some cosmopolitan views, which also reflect in the daily practices of my participants. One way cosmopolitan ideals reflect in daily life is in consumption behavior. Buying products with the Fair Trade label can mean that the buyer feels a responsibility towards the producers of the product on the other end of the globe. Supporting fair trade was probably one of the most noticeable patterns in consumption. During the *GroenLinks* campaign I visited many residences of party members. The houses were the assembly points from where a campaign activity started and where there were closing drinks after. Almost always there would be a brand of fair trade chocolate on the side, together with fair trade tea and coffee. Perhaps people bought it especially because they knew *GroenLinks* members would visit, but still it shows the conscious consumption. The same goes for buying organic. In the *GroenLinks* Utrecht campaign headquarters people would joke about how the organizers managed to literally buy everything organic and fair trade, from wine to potato chips. Another example is the use of the FairPhone, some *GroenLinks* members use this brand of phone. I asked one participant about it and she likes the FairPhone because the company that makes it gives honest prices to workers and is transparent about the chain of production.

Among members of the PvdD the daily practices and consumer behavior seem even more important. All PvdD members I spoke with are either vegetarian, vegan or something in between, what a participant called being a 'flexinist'. One member described the concept of veganism as: "It is a complete concept. It all just fits. The CO2, the deforestation, the manure surplus, it is all related."<sup>34</sup> This explanation shows that being vegan is more than just about caring for animal welfare, but that it is also related with global climate and can be a cosmopolitan expression.

Also at the party's youth organization's (PINK!) congress veganism was promoted as something that is totally in line with the "holistic" worldview of the PvdD. At the congress all the food was vegan and there was a guest speaker that talked about a plant-based seaweed burger. This speaker had a talk about the benefits of a plant-based diet. An attendant of the congress asked him: "why do you keep talking about plant-based instead of vegan, what do you have against mushrooms?"<sup>35</sup> Following this comment everyone laughed. This small episode shows that through daily practice and a shared consumer behavior people can connect. At the congress event there were many conversations about vegan lifestyle and sharing tips and experiences.

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<sup>33</sup> From a semi-structured interview March 20

<sup>34</sup> From an unstructured interview April 4

<sup>35</sup> From the PINK! congress April 29

Cosmopolitan ideals also show in the reasons to become a member for one of the two parties. For the PvdD members I spoke with, the support of animal rights, the improvement of the environment and ecological justice were the most important party ideals that made them join the party. The party might be involved in very local initiatives, for example, one participant was active in getting leisure hunting banned, but the underlying ideals are cosmopolitan.

For some *GroenLinks* members, the reason to join the party was also mainly environmental, not surprisingly that was the case with members from the environmental committee. One member of the committee, Clothilde, is a young woman from France and a student in sustainable development. She became interested in environmentalism after watching Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, but she also has a broader view: "So we are moving towards an idea of [the UN's] sustainable development goals that should actually be about human well-being. It is not only about climate change, climate change is only the number 13."<sup>36</sup> She supports *GroenLinks* because she believes the party supports those goals.

Tessa was one of the main organizers of the *GroenLinks* campaign in Utrecht. She is around thirty years old, studied public administration and worked for a bank. She became a member of *GroenLinks* some years ago when she was studying in Argentina. This exchange program was the main reason to become involved with the party.

"In Argentina I saw a lot of inequality, which I had never seen in the Netherlands. On the one hand you had the most luxurious cars stopping in front clubs with people wearing fantastic clothes, very upper-class. Around the corner, at the back entrance of that club, you could see homeless children sleeping on the streets. Why do we live in a world where these people can exist side by side, but have nothing to do with each other? During that exchange I learned a lot about inequality in Latin America. Inequality is decreasing there, but in Europe it is increasing. It is essential that, in the Netherlands, we have a society where there is room for everyone and where we look out for each other."<sup>37</sup>

Tessa has more cosmopolitan leftist reasoning to become involved with *GroenLinks* that I also recognized with other members of the party. What is also relatable from Tessa's account with other members of *GroenLinks* is the experience of being abroad. Many other participants have studied abroad for some months or have travelled and lived outside of the Netherlands. Especially *GroenLinks* has internationally oriented supporters. My participant Clothilde from France was not

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<sup>36</sup> From a semi-structured interview March 10

<sup>37</sup> From an unstructured interview April 6

the only person active in the *GroenLinks* Utrecht department that was not raised in the Netherlands. This shows the cosmopolitan character of the party.

It is not surprising that two left-environmentalist parties have cosmopolitan supporters. Nora also believes in these cosmopolitan ideals, but is afraid her party, *GroenLinks*, is disengaged with the broader Dutch population. Nora is mid-twenties and a student in political sciences. She did an internship for members of parliament of *GroenLinks* and is currently active with the youth department of the party's scientific bureau. She supports *GroenLinks* because she likes the "classical left" turn the party has taken with the current leader, Jesse Klaver. "I think that *GroenLinks* has the best solutions for the big problems. I think that we have been doing more of the same for too long in the Netherlands. I think we may start by resembling the Scandinavian countries more, that everyone can really be part of it."<sup>38</sup>

Personally, Nora also does not have strong feelings with a national identity. She believes that national identity politics is a strategy of the right political parties to distract people from socioeconomic issues, but she does think that *GroenLinks* has not been doing well in the debate about national identity, especially when the issue of the European Union was involved:

"I think that [...] the *GroenLinks* electorate is more mobile in a globalized world and is less afraid of more open borders and more European integration. I think that is because they don't really need to be afraid of, for example, guest workers from Eastern Europe. You see that with the SP [Socialist Party], I wouldn't call them nationalist, but they are much more fearful of things coming from outside and I think it is dangerous that we do not appeal to that group of people. The cosmopolitan and pro-European stance works well with people that are already doing well in a globalized world. [...] I don't think [the European Union] currently works well in solving problems and is now making people in the Netherlands more fearful and insecure. I think we can at least be critical on the European Union."<sup>39</sup>

In this statement Nora explains what she sees as the main problem of *GroenLinks*, and what might be the main criticism from outside, that it is disengaged with a wider public, because the party's members are mostly people that are well off, whereas the process of more globalization and, specifically, more European integration might have a negative effect on a significant portion of the population.

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<sup>38</sup> From an unstructured interview April 15

<sup>39</sup> From an unstructured interview April 15

I already mentioned that my participants were mostly highly educated, many of them have studied abroad, like Tessa, or have travelled to far places where they have met people and now have an international network of friends. What Nora is saying, is that when you have these possibilities to travel and meet people from other countries, it is easy to have cosmopolitan ideals, whereas people that do not have the opportunities to do these things might be more fearful of what comes from abroad. For example, low-skilled workers that are being replaced by Eastern-Europeans that work for a lower salary. Nora and some other participants feel that *GroenLinks* for too long has ignored the negative side effects of the European Union. *GroenLinks* failed to provide an alternative sense of community to the nationalist agenda of right-wing parties.

The PvdD members that I have spoken with have a similar view on the European Union as the *GroenLinks* members that are more critical on the EU. Marit stated explicitly that she and her party are not against international cooperation, but are against the European Union in its current form: “We understand that [...], for example climate change, that you cannot fix that alone, you need Europe and the rest of the world. It is just that we are very critical of the EU, because we think it currently is too bureaucratic and undemocratic.”<sup>40</sup> This statement is similar to the view of the party’s political leader Marianne Thieme. She calls the EU a welfare state for multinationals and states: “those who are for Europe, are against this European Union”<sup>41</sup>. By this, she means that the EU is more beneficial to large corporations and not citizens and that the EU is not democratic enough. Her criticism does not come from a nationalist sentiment.

A *GroenLinks* member, Jos, had similar criticism on the European Union. First he complained about the bureaucratic rules and how they often are not beneficial for people, but he was pro-European because:

“In the end I am for one world. I think it is very strange that there are differences between people, that there are places where there is famine and places with plenty. That there are trees cut down at the other side of the world that are also in our interest. So, in the end, from social and sustainability considerations, I am for one world, where everyone takes each other into account, everybody pays for each other when there is a need. If I say that there has to be one world, then I, at least, have to be for Europe, it is the first step that we can take, to work together with some

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<sup>40</sup> From an unstructured interview March 31

<sup>41</sup> From an interview of Tubentia: <http://www.tubantia.nl/enschede/in-debat-met-marianne-thieme-partij-voor-de-dieren-in-enschede~a2dfc4b2/>

countries.”<sup>42</sup>

It is Jos’ cosmopolitan view that we, eventually, should move beyond the nation-state and into more transnational ways of organizing society, but not in the same way as the European Union currently works.

### **The Future of the Nation-State and Cosmopolitan Community**

Jos has been a volunteer in many elections for *GroenLinks*. He told me that the local support, in terms of voters and volunteers, for *GroenLinks* in Utrecht is usually stronger during municipal elections than during national elections, in terms of the number of volunteers joining the campaign. This is interesting, because for society as a whole, the turnout for national elections is much higher than for municipal elections.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that for *GroenLinks* members, in Utrecht at least, the national government is not the most important level of government. This section shows that the drift from national politics towards both local and international politics is part of cosmopolitanism.

One of the leading authors on cosmopolitanism in social sciences is Ulrich Beck. He argues that because of globalization politics, economy, law, culture, and communication has given rise to the era of reflective modernity, “in which national borders and differences are dissolving and must be renegotiated.” (Beck 2006: 2). In recent years we have seen the nation-state having trouble with dealing with different processes, for example, climate change, refugees and global financial markets. Beck suggests that a globally intertwined world requires a cosmopolitan outlook. Cosmopolitanism does not replace local, national or ethnic cultures. Instead, local, national, ethnic and cosmopolitan cultures interconnect and intermingle. It is because of this that Beck claims: “cosmopolitanism without provincialism is empty, provincialism without cosmopolitanism is blind.” (Beck 2006: 7). This idea is reflected in the way the Dutch Green parties are represented in local politics.

The cosmopolitan outlook furthermore questions the claim of the national outlook that ‘modern society’ and ‘modern politics’ can only be organized in nation-states. In social sciences this view is reproduced in what Beck calls ‘methodological nationalism’ (Beck: 2006: 24). Methodological nationalism is taking the nation-state for granted and creates an essentialist and false sense of the nation. The cosmopolitan outlook on the other hand does analyze the nation-state and questions its premises (Beck 2006: 33).

The editor of *GroenLinks’* scientific journal, Erica Meijers, continues on Beck’s argument:

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<sup>42</sup> From an unstructured interview April 21

<sup>43</sup> The turnout for the 2014 municipal elections was 54% and the turnout for the 2017 parliamentary elections was almost 82% Source: <http://www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl/>



“Our analysis is that we are not rid of the nation-state in the short term, but that it is a perspective on the long term, if we had the say, to make that administration level less relevant. On the one hand you’ll have more internationalization and Europeanization, and on the other hand you move administration more to the local and urban level. That would make the nation-state obsolete on the long term. That is really a long term perspective, unfortunately. It doesn’t show that this will happen in the near future, on the contrary, you see more a return to nationalism.”<sup>44</sup>

Later in the interview Erica Meijers explains why she would like to see the nation-state become obsolete. She believes the nation-state is a constructed institution that is not actually a cultural unity at all and the problem with that is: “because there is a certain group in the nation-state that has the power to define what the [national] identity is, all other people that also live in that nation-state and that do not have that identity are pushed into a periphery.”<sup>45</sup> Earlier in this chapter I showed how participants felt about national identity and they showed the same problem, they felt that national identity is currently not inclusive enough.

Benjamin Barber provides an answer on how the world can be governed without nation-states and more in line with Beck’s cosmopolitan outlook. For Barber cosmopolitanism imagines citizens as “rooted in urban neighborhoods where participation and community is still possible, reaching across frontiers to confront and contain central power.” (Barber 2013: 5). In his book *If Mayors Ruled the World* Barber explains that the city can rescue “democracy from sovereignty and find ways to help us govern our world democratically and bottom- up, ... [and] to help us solve problems pragmatically rather than ideologically.” (Barber 2013: 23). The pragmatism Barber proposes is similar to Erica Meijers’ argument in that it might also mean that community would be less about identity in the sense of nationality or ethnicity and more about solving concrete problems together. This process is about decentralizing and moving towards a stronger local government.

On the other hand, Erica Meijers also mentioned going towards more internationalization. On an international level, according to Held (1995), the influence of the nation-state is also fading. Organizations like the EU, NATO and the IMF limit the decisions that nation-states can make. And so the “idea of a [national] community which rightly governs itself and determines its own future [...] is today deeply problematic.” (Held 1995: 17). Held’s solution to sustain democracy is to create a cosmopolitan democracy. This entails reforming the United Nations and creating international parliaments (Held 1995: 279).

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<sup>44</sup> From a semi-structured interview February 21

<sup>45</sup> From a semi-structured interview February 21

The European Union already has a continental parliament, but it is currently not working in a way that it could make a national parliament obsolete. The gap between Dutch citizens and the European parliament is broad, as shown in the 2014 European elections: only 37% of citizens went to vote in the Netherlands<sup>46</sup>, and in 2005 the Netherlands voted against a European constitution in a referendum. If one would like to create more European and international democracy, there is still work to be done. Erica Meijers sees a beginning for that in more European integration in the political sphere and also be active in constructing a kind of European cultural identity through shared history and more attention for European languages in education. That can lead to greater sense of community between European citizens. And like Jos, Meijers also sees a unified Europe as a first step towards more global international solidarity. Nora is skeptical of the idea that Europe might have a stronger community sense if there would be a stronger focus on a shared cultural identity. She believes that the way of creating more European community sense is through making policy that actually works for people, like eradicating poverty, only then a cultural identity is possible.

Beck et al. (2013) also see that the future of transnational community is not so much about a shared cultural identity, but more in line with Barber's pragmatism. They propose a research agenda for social sciences around the question: "how and where are new cosmopolitan communities of climate risk being imagined and realized?" (Beck et al. 2013: 1). The theoretical perspective Beck et al. offer relies on Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities'. This type of community is not based in direct contact between members, but on an image of communion. (Anderson 2006: 6). Whereas Anderson uses this term to describe the nation, Beck et al. suggest that it can also be applied on 'cosmopolitan risk communities', this community is based on the "conscious awareness that one is living through and affected by similar experiences..." (Beck et al. 2013: 2). Through climate change such a community might be imagined because it involves everyone and everyone is somehow responsible for climate change.

*GroenLinks* and *PvdD* are the two parties in the Netherlands most involved with climate change. Both parties are also still national parties that mostly address potential voters. It is interesting to see if and how these parties are active in creating cosmopolitan communities. The next chapter goes into this.

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<sup>46</sup>Turnout numbers per country: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html>

## GREEN COMMUNITIES

Both *GroenLinks* and PvdD are a kind of community to some of its members. This chapter analyzes the way both parties are communities. For *GroenLinks* their campaign strategy was an important way of creating a 'movement', the party tried this through political meetups, extensive canvassing and the social media campaign. As a significantly smaller party, the PvdD did not have a large campaign, but their community comes from consumption behavior, mainly veganism.

### Meetups

The next section describes the largest meetup of *GroenLinks* that was held in one of the largest concert halls in Amsterdam March 9.

Earlier that day I read that the concert hall was 'sold out'. The tickets were free, but it was mandatory to sign in and already more people had sign in than there is capacity in the AFAS Live concert hall. I got a message from Tessa, asking me if I also wanted to join her and a group of volunteers from Utrecht to take the train together to Amsterdam. I declined because I was already going together with the members of my committee. During the train trip we were excited about the event. We mostly talked about the different environmental policies of different parties. Tim, the workgroup's chairperson, brought a friend that was not sure if she would vote for *GroenLinks* or Party for the Animals. Tim tried hard to convince her to go for *GroenLinks*.

At the venue we had to show the confirmation email, which I never had to do at other 'sold out' meetups. Perhaps the organizers, this time, were afraid that the people coming would exceed the venue's capacity of 5500. I looked around at the other people standing in line for the check in and I saw that many other groups of people resembled the group I went with: students in their twenties. Entering the main concert hall, I saw many groups of people standing around, waiting for the show to begin. On the balcony there was a large group that had hung a banner with the name of their municipality in the north of the country, it probably took them hours by train to come to Amsterdam. Other groups were probably also volunteers from the same *GroenLinks* department. Some were even wearing the green jackets used during campaign events. I looked around to see if I could find the other group that came from Utrecht, but it was too crowded.

The show started with Eric Corton, a well-known presenter and radio DJ, as the host of the night. First, he presented hip-hop artists Jiggy Dje and Winne, who

played two songs. After that there was performance by a poet and a speech by a feminist journalist. These performances were a warm up for the highlight of the show, the speech of leader Jesse Klaver. The warm up had worked, because the mood in the hall was excited. People joined in the singing of the rappers, participated in the breathing exercises of the poet. When Jesse Klaver came on the crowd cheered him on for a while, before he could start his speech. During his speech Klaver talked about refugees, education, empathy, sustainability. In his speech he took pauses where people would clap and cheer, but the crowd would often interrupt Klaver during his speech with their cheering.

In his speech, Klaver told also about volunteers in the campaign and how they were the center of the party and the campaign. He thanked them and the crowd for being involved in the campaign. Different than other meetups, the questions after the speech were already selected beforehand, and Klaver had no trouble to make his reply be answered by loud cheering.

After the night had ended Tim reflected: "That was so amazing! This gives me so much energy." Tim's friend that came along was no longer in doubt what she was going to vote: she would go for *GroenLinks*. After this meetup I myself also thought that *GroenLinks* would have a good chance of becoming the largest party in the elections.



Figure 2 "You are the movement that our country needs" Posted on the GroenLinks Twitter page March 9. Picture was taken during the AFAS Live meetup.

This vignette gives a small insight in the spectacular campaign meetups that *GroenLinks* organized in the campaign period. Before the described meetup in Amsterdam, *GroenLinks* had meetups in a large concert hall in Utrecht, with 2000 people attending in January, and also some other meetups around the country with more than 1000 people attending.

One of my participants, Bart, was one of the organizers of the campaign at the party's central bureau. He described his job to me: "In one sentence you could say it is about: how do you get someone from a like on a Facebook page onto the street, and all the steps that are in between that."<sup>47</sup> The campaign of *GroenLinks* is in some ways very similar to what Gerbaudo (2012) experienced in his research of the use of social media in the social movements of the Arab Spring and the Spanish 15 May movement. Like with these movements, the connection between online social media and coming together in physical space was of great importance in the *GroenLinks* campaign.

*GroenLinks'* meetups were quite a new phenomenon in Dutch political campaigning. As my vignette shows, my participant Tim was very enthusiastic about the meetup, but the same will probably go for the many people cheering during the speech of Jesse Klaver. Other participants from Utrecht also liked the meetups as many of them that went to one in Utrecht also went to the one in Amsterdam a few weeks later. I do not believe that people like to go to meetups just because of the content of Klaver's speech, then one could watch it live at home. Going to a meetup is also about being together with other supporters of the party. One reason to organize the meetups was to find new voters, but it was not just about that, seeing as the party also organized a meetup after the elections, when the coalition negotiations the party was involved in failed. The meetups were part of the campaign to create a 'movement', a community. Like Bart said: about getting people from social media together into a physical space.

Gerbaudo (2012, 12) continues on Bauman's (2001b) analysis of an individualized society and argues that social media is perfect reflection of it. Social media allows people to deal with others from a distance, without actually having to fully engage with them (Gerbaudo 2012, 12). Massive political meetups are quite the opposite of that, as it involves a large number of people in close proximity to each other. Gerbaudo describes such events, protests in his cases, as 'rituals of popular reunion' in which individuals are being fused into a collective (2012, 11). *GroenLinks* is trying the same with the meetups.

However, not all participants were excited about the meetups, some would say it was too

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<sup>47</sup> From a semi-structured interview April 14

'American', too 'popular' or that it was too much copied from Barack Obama and Justin Trudeau. Still, looking at the high numbers of people attending the meetups and the responses from the crowd during the meetups I attended, the party was successful in mobilizing supporters into a 'popular reunion'. Which is one step in making the supporters of the party into a community.

### **Canvassing**

The most used campaign strategy for *GroenLinks*, besides the political meetups, was canvassing. The strategy is also used by some other parties, but not so extensive as *GroenLinks* did this campaign. I joined canvassing for twelve times in Utrecht in the two months leading up to the elections. The local department in Utrecht had already done some canvassing events from November onwards, but in the last two months the activity intensified.

To reach many people, canvassing requires a large number of volunteers. The party had a system in place to attract as many people as possible to volunteer. Through the central social media campaign people can sign up as a volunteer, to sign up as a volunteer it was not required to be a member of *GroenLinks* and many were not. Once sign up, a person would get an email from the local department with a link to a document where a person can fill in which of the planned canvassing activities they could volunteer for. Besides this email, Utrecht had a team of people that come together every Thursday and would call local members and people that signed up through the central campaign and would ask people when they were available to help. Telephone requests would probably have a higher response rate than email requests.

When a person was planned into a canvassing event, he/she would get an email with the specific place and time, and some details about the neighborhood where the canvassing would take place. There would also be a WhatsApp group for every canvassing moment. If it was ones first time to join the canvassing, he or she would get a briefing often by Jos, a campaign veteran.

There was a standard questionnaire for the canvassing, that Jos liked to deviate from. With an online smart phone application campaigner could fill in questionnaires for a specific address. The order of the questions on the app were: 1. Are you planning to vote March 15?, 2. Are you planning to vote *GroenLinks* March 15? 3. What is the most important political issue for you this election? After that a campaigner might ask for an email address if the person would like to ask a question or if the person would also like to sign up for volunteering with *GroenLinks*. It was important to save the questionnaire, because this was data that could be used for next elections.

Jos liked to do it a little different. He would start a conversation with "Good evening, as you can see I'm from *GroenLinks* [because of the Green jacket]. There are elections on March 15, and we

are going door to door to ask people what are important themes for them.”. After the conversation he handed the person a flyer in a certain way: holding the flyer high to force eye contact and to hold the flyer for a few seconds so that the other person does not just take the flyer, but actually has to pull it out of the campaigner’s hand. Other campaigners would joke that these flyer handing tactics was the true secret to the *GroenLinks* campaign.

During the canvassing itself I did not speak with other volunteers much, because the organizers tried to be as efficient as possible to get as many doors done in the period of time. Before and after the campaign the volunteers would meet, often at a member’s home, and here there was more opportunity to get to know each other. After the campaigning volunteers would reflect on the things that happened that day or night, the kind of conversations they had and what answers would have been good. People also spoke about the campaign in general and the things that had recently been reported in the media about the election.

The goal of this campaign, besides trying to gain voters, was also to bring *GroenLinks* supporters together. In the canvassing activities there were not only the usual volunteers, but almost every time there were new people joining for their first time. Often they would only come once or twice. Although, there was a broader audience of volunteers, it also made it harder to connect with each other. The organizers often could not remember all the names of people joining, because there were simply too many, which makes it hard to create a sense of togetherness.

On social media it was easier to create this sense of togetherness. At the start of the canvassing the organizers would always make a picture of the group of volunteers. These group pictures are staged with everyone wearing a green *GroenLinks* jacket and ‘doing something spontaneous’. The picture is then uploaded to the *GroenLinks* Utrecht Twitter account, saying in which neighborhood *GroenLinks* members are campaigning that day. From the national campaigning team there are some volunteers that moderate a Twitter account called ‘*GroenLinkers*’. The volunteers go to different campaigning local branches and then post memorable quotes and pictures about their experience with this group. On the page one can see cozy pictures of campaigners warming up with a cup of soup, or *GroenLinks* members playing in the snow during a door-to-door campaign activity. These posts sometimes also involve people on the candidate list for the elections that are asked to take part in local campaigning events.

Such pictures and stories have the goal of representing *GroenLinks* campaigners as a happy group of people and to convince people to also become part of one of these groups, such a group is much like the warm feel of community that Bauman (2001a, 1) describes. However, it is not an entirely

truthful representation of such activities. My own experience was that I had a good time, most of the times, and had friendly conversations with other volunteers, but canvassing was also about efficiency, to ring as many door bells as possible. I mentioned that the volunteers would meet at someone's home before and after the canvassing, and here we would talk, but most people would leave within half an hour. I would sometimes stand next to other volunteers on the pictures, looking like a group of friends, but not having shared more than five words with some of them.

Still, working together in the campaign, wearing the same jackets and sharing campaign experiences is in some ways a bonding activity, just somewhat less than the social media representation suggests. The participants that joined with canvassing were usually positive at the end of an event, though. Jos' daughter, who often participated, always talked very enthusiastically when she had a conversation with a voter that she felt like having persuaded voting for *GroenLinks*. Other participants were positive about Jos' favorite tactic of going through a street all together, on both sides, so that there would be a 'green wave' going through the street. This suggests that members feel a sense of togetherness during canvassing events.

### **A Grassroots Movement**

At the *GroenLinks* conference in December 2016, all attendants were asked to send a WhatsApp message to a certain number, then you would be an 'apptivist'. As an apptivist, one would receive messages from the party through WhatsApp, these messages were often short videos or announcements about coming up events and sometimes the apptivists were asked to share a message in their own network. The term 'apptivist' suggests that a person is involved in a kind of social movement as an activist, whereas I might describe it as a platform for the party to send mass text messages. However, these kind of terms do fit in the goal of the party to make what they call a 'grassroots movement', but what might also seem to be quite centrally organized.

Amongst my research participants there was Bart, who worked for the campaign on the party's central bureau as a community manager. It was his task to connect the online campaign with offline action. He explained the campaign as:

"The definition [of grassroots] we used is about giving the people at the bottom the feeling they can contribute to the campaign and that they are feeling heard and involved in the 'why' of the campaign and that they know why they do it. Not that they would get an assignment from the top that they would then have to complete, that is outdated, especially with today's communication methods, you can directly



target people that want to do something.”<sup>48</sup>

Although most participants were positive about the campaign, especially the ease of signing up, not everyone was impressed. Jos, an older participant that has volunteered in many other campaigns questioned if *GroenLinks* would actually have another election results if there had been no campaign at all. He experienced quite the opposite of what the previous quote said. He asked me:

“Did you get the feeling that you were too little or enough involved in choices that were made somewhere else in the organization? You were, with an ugly word, an errand boy. You were not involved with why we campaigned some streets or why we used certain methods. Wouldn't you have liked to be more involved in these choices?”<sup>49</sup>

It is interesting criticism of Jos. He is actually active in *GroenLinks* Utrecht's committee that is involved with a permanent campaign. In other, earlier campaigns he experienced much more freedom to come up with unique campaign methods together with the other members of the local campaign group. In the 1970s and 1980s Jos was involved with social movements that were more grassroots than this *GroenLinks* campaign.

Other participants that were less experienced campaigners were positive about this campaign. The campaign was about creating a 'movement'. A progressive movement that should be about more than just voting once every four years. Bart said: “the key to a movement is that they have actions and events.”<sup>50</sup>. With this he meant for the movement to join with protest rallies, for example *GroenLinks* organized for their members to join in the Climate March April 29. The actions that were organized from the Utrecht department were, for example, having a stand on the Liberation Day festival and participation in the 'Night of the Refugee' an event raising funds for emergency aid for refugees.

Another way that *GroenLinks'* movement seems grassroots is how the organization's hierarchy is presented. Bart saw himself more as a facilitator for the grassroots campaign than as a leader of it. The campaign for *GroenLinks* was quite clearly a campaign for a political party that has leaders, but still those leaders were addressed informally, as if they were just members like any other. Members of *GroenLinks* get regular emails from Marjolein (chairperson), Jesse (parliamentary leader), Wynand (campaign leader), Truuske (organizer of the meetups), with the receiver's first name in the salutation, as if it were personal emails. In a way this also worked, my participants also

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<sup>48</sup> From semi-structured interview April 14

<sup>49</sup> From unstructured interview April 21

<sup>50</sup> From semi-structured interview April 14

just used first names when they spoke about the party leaders. Most of my participants did not actually vote for Jesse Klaver, but for someone else on the list. When they spoke about whom they would for, they might say something like: “I will vote for Nevin”, who was number 12 on the list. What might have helped this informality is that everyone who was on the party list was expected to help local party branches in canvassing. Pictures of this would be posted on social media with the electable representatives wearing the green jackets like the other campaigners, This is another similarity to the work of Gerbaudo. In the social movements he studied he found that there is a kind of denial that there are leaders (Gerbaudo 2012, 165). In the campaign *GroenLinks* tried to make their leaders seemingly on the same level as other members.

Besides Jos, none of my participants were very critical or negative about this campaign. However, the participants I asked about if they felt part of the movement were reluctant to admit it. Some thought that the movement was more for other people, who were maybe younger than themselves. Other participants gave the example of the meetups, that they did not enjoy being in a crowd and cheering together in a crowd. Looking at the numbers, the campaign was successful to create a movement: sold out meetups with thousands of attendants, a high amount of volunteers going on the street to canvas, and a rise in membership. However, I have doubts about people really feeling connected with the movement, looking at my own participants. At the time of this writing, it does not seem likely that *GroenLinks* will participate in the government coalition, something that many of my participants had wished for. It is uncertain on how the movement will continue to exist as part of an opposition party.

### **The Party for the Animals and Community**

The PvdD did not have such a campaign as *GroenLinks*. I did not participate in the campaign for the PvdD, one of the reasons for that is that it felt not fair to my participants to work on the campaigns of two political parties at the same time. Another reason was that the PvdD campaigning was much smaller with far less activities. I did follow the campaign in the media and social media, I went to some debate nights and I talked about the campaign with participants. The campaign for the PvdD was much smaller than *GroenLinks'* campaign, which is not surprising as it has about half the number of members.<sup>51</sup> The campaign activities were mostly centralized events with the two sitting members of parliament giving lectures all around the country together with people who were also on the party list. Locally, the party mainly distributed flyers during the last weeks before the election. A feeling of community does not come from the campaign of PvdD, like it does for *GroenLinks*.

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<sup>51</sup> PvdD had around 13.000 members the start of 2017: <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/content/partij-voor-de-dieren-pvdd>

There are other ways how the party can function as a kind of community. I already mentioned that daily practices of consumption are important for members of both *GroenLinks* and PvdD, but especially so for PvdD. I visited the congress of the youth organization of PvdD, PINK!. Among the members of this group veganism was an important life style. It might be a logical choice to become vegan if one looks at the ecological program of PvdD and PINK!, but having a shared life style can be part of forming a community. I saw this in practice in the sharing of advice about a vegan diet between members and in the jokes about veganism. Cherry (2006) came to a similar conclusion about her study on veganism. She found that “a vegan lifestyle is not dependent on individual willpower [...], it is more dependent on having social networks that are supportive of veganism.” (Cherry 2006, 157). She sees vegan lifestyle not just as an individual identity, but as a cultural movement (Cherry 2006).

The PvdD is a much smaller party than *GroenLinks* and therefore also had a much smaller campaign, that was less about making a movement. In the party’s communication, especially of the youth organization, life style changes are supported. For example, at a campaign meeting<sup>52</sup> member of parliament Esther Ouwehand told about how the party brought about that the cafeteria in the parliament building would no longer serve an endangered species of fish. Ouwehand presented this as the style of politics of the PvdD: always staying true to your ideals even in the seemingly insignificance. Parliamentary leader Marianne Thieme<sup>53</sup> made similar argument by making a distinction between politics with a capital ‘P’ and a lowercase ‘p’. ‘Politics’ with a capital letter is the politics that happens in the traditional political sphere of government, parliament and so on. ‘politics’ with a lower case are the choices individuals can make every day, with this Thieme means consumption behavior. She promotes consumption behavior that not only improves the lives of animals but also the global climate.

PvdD has a focus on life style change and consumer behavior and less on a cultural identity. What was quite telling for this, was a moment in a television debate.<sup>54</sup> The statement Thieme was supposed to respond to a statement related to national identity, she did not go into that instead she said that the reason we are discussing national identity is because of climate refugees and climate change. The kind of community that the PvdD would like to achieve is similar to the mentioned idea of Beck et al (2013): ‘cosmopolitan risk community’. According to this idea, the risk of climate change is something that can bring people together and that makes national borders and identity

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<sup>52</sup> A lecture by Esther Ouwehand and Lammert van Raan in Leiden. February 25

<sup>53</sup> A book presentation by Marianne Thieme and Ewald Engelen in Utrecht. February 13

<sup>54</sup> The Carrédebat March 5

insignificant. The commonalities between members of such a community can be, for example, having a vegan lifestyle, instead of ethnicity or language.

Cosmopolitan risk community is less applicable to the members of *GroenLinks*. One thing is that members of *GroenLinks* are less strict with their daily practices, none of my *GroenLinks* participants were vegan, for example. The reasons to join *GroenLinks* for participants were also more diverse than for participants for PvdD. Whereas PvdD members got involved mainly because of climate change, *GroenLinks* members also had other reasons, making it less of a community that is solely about climate risk. Motivations for *GroenLinks* participants to become involved with the party often were related to the rise of right-wing nationalist parties, for example, after the election of Donald Trump many people signed up to become a volunteer for *GroenLinks* to avoid such an election result in the Netherlands. The way *GroenLinks* would like to establish community on a broader scale than just their own movement is also a way to take away the support of right-wing nationalists.

## DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

This thesis set out to understand the way members of the two Green parties in the Netherlands experience national identity. Part of that consideration are the cosmopolitan ideals that members of these parties have. Besides this question, my research went deeper into the question of what could be an alternative to the nation-state in creating a sense of community.

It is not a surprising conclusion that the members of *GroenLinks* and PvdD do not feel a strong connection with national identity, looking at the parties' manifestos. It was interesting to see how that stance was challenged in an election period where national identity was one of the most prominent topics. For some participants the reason to join the party was actually to make a stance against nationalism, to not let Donald Trump or Brexit happen in the Netherlands. Other participants, like Anne, saw the necessity in national identity to give a sense of community to people, but she would like to see national identity to become more inclusive. This relates to the civic notion of nationalism that I came across with most participants. Civic nationalism (Smith 1991) refers to an imagined community that is more based in shared political and economic institutions within a territory, instead of ethnicity. This stance is shown, for example, in *GroenLinks*' plans with national holidays that are more about celebrating a shared freedom, instead of holidays that are related to a Christian identity.

Shaping this inclusive view on national identity has much to do with the cosmopolitan ideals of the members of the parties. With cosmopolitan ideals I meant the show of solidarity with all humans across the national borders. These ideals show, for example, in Linda's reason to join *GroenLinks* because the party propagates the humane treatment of refugees. Cosmopolitan ideals were most noticeable in consumption behavior, all of my participants were in some way conscious about the products they bought. Some for bought fair trade for humanitarian reasons, others were vegan because of environmental reasons. Many of my participants have travelled to faraway places, that also gave them a broader view of the world.

This last point strongly relates to the main criticism that members of Green parties might get: that it is easy to be cosmopolitan if you are well-off. All of my participants were highly educated, not extremely rich, but quite certain of their future. In their case it is easier to have a pro-European stance, for example, if you do not have to worry about Eastern European laborers to take your job. Especially *GroenLinks* always held a pro-European stance in the past, becoming slightly more critical in the last elections, but this does give members a reputation of being disengaged with broader society. If the party would like to achieve its goal of making the nation-state irrelevant and move

towards more cosmopolitan ways of organizing society there should, therefore, be more attention for the maintenance of a sense of community on the whole scale of society.

In different ways, the campaign period leading up to the March elections was about community. National identity was a major topic in all of the televised debates as well as in other press. For the parties on the right, Dutch identity should be protected from foreign threats. This is reflected in their proposed policies of limiting immigration, as well as protecting Dutch traditions. The view of my participants was the opposite, however, the idea of creating a community was important for the studied parties, especially *GroenLinks*. *GroenLinks'* whole campaign set out to create a 'movement', a kind of activist community, from its supporters. The party's campaigning methods had the goal of finding new voters, but also of connecting volunteers and supporters and this was, in some ways, successful. These ways were that the campaign had great turnouts at the political meetups, as well as during canvassing. Looking at my participants, however, I have doubts about them feeling as connected to the movement outside of the election campaign period.

For the members of the PvdD, the sense of community does not come from a large campaign, as their party is much smaller with a small campaign. Still, the party's members do have strong sense of community among themselves. This comes from a shared holistic view that connects animal welfare and the risks of climate change. Community then comes from the sharing of personal contribution towards averting that risk, for example through having a vegan diet.

The PvdD's risk community is strong, but it is also only a tiny part of society. *GroenLinks'* movement is larger, but still is a small part of society. Especially *GroenLinks* is involved in experimenting with ways to shape society in a way that is not based on nation-states. Instead, *GroenLinks'* goal is to shape a society that is based on shared citizenship. This shift is intended to create a community that can be more cosmopolitan and inclusive than a national community. One way the party tries to achieve this is through the implementation of democratic reform. The idea of democratic reform as a solution of the lost sense of community came late in my research and deserves a whole research on its own, however, I would like to discuss this shortly as a suggestion for future research.

### **Deliberative Democracy and Citizenship**

In December 2016 *GroenLinks* had its congress that determined the party's manifesto for the 2017 March elections. It was the best attended *GroenLinks* congress ever with around 3000 members attending. The most controversial issue during this congress was related to referendums. In April 2016, the Netherlands held a referendum about the association agreement between the Ukraine

and the European Union. *GroenLinks* was for this agreement, but 61% of the Dutch voters voted against the agreement, although with a low voter turnout of 32%.<sup>55</sup> During the December congress, members of *GroenLinks* filed a motion to ratify the agreement anyway, going against the party leadership, which wanted to respect the result of the referendum. The motion was passed with 58%.<sup>56</sup> During the voting on amendments, the members of *GroenLinks* also changed the party's stance towards referendums in general. An amendment of Utrecht alderperson Lot van Hooijdonk was passed that replaced the use of referendums with the use of deliberative democracy.<sup>57</sup>

Van Hooijdonk had already experimented with use of deliberative democracy on the municipal scale in Utrecht. In 2015 she organized three sessions with a random selection of Utrecht citizens to come up with a plan about sustainable energy. During these sessions the citizens would be informed about the issue from different stakeholders and would then talk in smaller groups to discuss plans and come up with a plan together. The result was an ambitious and quite radical plan for the transition towards sustainable energy.<sup>58</sup>

The Global Greens took on participatory democracy as one of their six main principles in 2001, indicating that democratization is one of the most important issues for the Green political movement. It might seem strange that *GroenLinks*, member of the Global Greens, scraps referendums from its manifesto. I asked my participants about referendums and the reactions were mixed. Some were sceptic of referendums, because they do not quite trust the opinion of the people. Maaïke said it like this: "I am not for referendums, because I think we have representatives and those people studied for it, they have the possibility to research [issues]. [...] The chance that the people are sufficiently informed, and not one-sidedly informed, is just very small."<sup>59</sup> This doubt if people could be able to inform themselves well enough on political issues was something that I came across with other participants as well. Participants would often name the recent referendums about the Ukraine in the Netherlands and Brexit in the UK.

Nora did not like it that the referendum was scrapped from the manifesto. She felt that the use of referendums can still be a safety brake, especially now that parliament went more to right of the political spectrum. However, she is also for deliberative democracy. She said: "I am huge

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<sup>55</sup> The results of the referendum: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/04/12/official-uitslag-referendum-61-tegen-opkomst-32-a1407970> (last accessed June 24, 2017)

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/12/17/congres-groenlinks-geeft-rutte-steun-in-de-rug-voor-oukrajne-verdrag-a1537205> (last accessed June 24, 2017)

<sup>57</sup> Amendment 296 in the 36th 'congreskrant': <https://groenlinks.nl/congres> (last accessed June 24, 2017)

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Lot van Hooijdonk with *GroenLinks'* scientific journal <https://bureaudehelling.nl/artikel-tijdschrift/het-referendum-is-fastfood-deliberatie-is-slow-politics> (last accessed June 24, 2017)

<sup>59</sup> From a semi-structured interview April 7.

supporter of more democracy and trying out new forms of democracy, [...] because I have the idea that people have a feeling that they have no control on governing. In Europe, as well as on the national and local level.”<sup>60</sup>

This loss of control of government made James Fishkin (2009) develop his concept of deliberative democracy. He took an idea of Ancient Athens, where a random selection of citizens would come together and decide on important issues, based in deliberation (Fishkin 2009, 43). Deliberative democracy has the main goal to include people and to motivate people to really think about issues. Fishkin has done experiments with deliberative polling around the world. What is interesting to see is that, like the Utrecht deliberation on energy, many deliberative polls show a higher support for environmental and Green stances, than conventional polls (Fishkin 2009, xiv; Center for Deliberative Democracy 2017). From this point of view, there is much to gain for Green parties to support deliberative initiatives, besides the goal of democratization.

The idea of deliberative democracy is strongly influence by the work of Benjamin Barber (1984). In his book *Strong Democracy*, Barber (1984) makes an argument against liberal democracy and for participatory democracy enacted by citizens. Barber argues that liberal democracy is in crisis because of the increased complexity of modern society (Barber 1984, xxi). This argument resonates the assertions of Held (1995) and Beck (2006) I discussed earlier, that the nation-state is no longer capable of dealing with the consequences of globalization. Barber describes the consequences of ungovernability as: “If the leaders cannot govern, the people increasingly refuse to be governed. Alienation has become a central indicator of modern political crisis, whether it is measured by plummeting electoral participation figures, widespread distrust of politicians, or pervasive apathy about things public and political.” (Barber 1984: xxi). What Barber call alienation relates to what Bauman (2001a) describes as the lost sense of community, which has let, as I have described, to the rise of right-wing nationalist parties throughout Europe.

The solution to the crisis of liberal democracy is, according to Barber, ‘Strong Democracy’, which “rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogeneous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or their good nature.” (Barber 1984, 117). One of the problems that Barber has with liberal democracy is that it sees human nature as individual, whereas strong democratic theory supposes the social nature of human beings. In strong democracy, citizenship and community are “two aspects of a single political reality” (Barber 1984, 216). What Barber means by that is that one cannot

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<sup>60</sup> From an unstructured interview April 15.



become a citizen without community. “In a strong democratic community, [...], the individual members are transformed, through their participation in common seeing and common work, into citizens. Citizens are autonomous persons whom participation endows with a capacity for common vision.” (Barber 1984, 232). What Barber sees as a community here is a group of people that are able to govern themselves, together. Deliberative democracy is the method to achieve this goal.

Barber’s argument against individualism is interesting in the case of *GroenLinks*. The party used to be a strong supporter of individual rights and autonomy. In 1994 the party’s manifesto for the parliamentary elections had a paragraph named ‘Individualization and solidarity’, this paragraph called for more individual autonomy. Former leader Femke Halsema described herself as ‘left-liberal’, even winning the ‘liberal of the year’ award from the neoliberal, right wing political party VVD’s youth organization in 2006 for the manifesto of that year.<sup>61</sup> In the foreword of that manifesto Halsema writes: “*GroenLinks* want more chances for work and an autonomous existence for everyone.”<sup>62</sup> It therefor seems surprising that a ‘left-liberal’ party would want to implement reforms that go against individualism.

In the 2017 manifesto, however, *GroenLinks* made a turn on its stance on the individual. In chapter 4 the rhetoric question is asked: “Do we continue with on the road of individualization that carried on too far, or do we change course?” Chapter 5 is called ‘One Society’ and in its introduction the party states: “For fifteen years, differences have increased in society. [...] We have forgotten that we share a society.”<sup>63</sup> This quote and the plan to develop deliberative democracy both show that *GroenLinks* wants to create a stronger sense of citizenship, in line with the idea of both Barber (1984, 216) and Bauman (2001b, 49) that it is impossible to be a citizen individually.

Strengthening citizenship is a way to counter the insecurities that people have because of economic globalization and to restore a sense of community. A problem to achieve that is what I quoted of Nora in the third chapter, that economic globalization has not hit all people in the same way, there are some that are more affected by the insecurities of globalization than others. The so called winners and losers of globalization. It is a challenge to bring both of these groups together. Deliberative democracy might be a useful tool that could help to achieve this, because participants are selected randomly from a pool of people that are affected by the topic. This is one of the advantages Fishkin (2009, 3) names himself, the random nature of the selection makes participants discuss politics with people they would never speak with otherwise. This conversation is essential

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<sup>61</sup> <https://www.trouw.nl/home/femke-halsema-liberaal-van-het-jaar~af8878b8/>

<sup>62</sup> For the collection of all the *GroenLinks* manifestos see: <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/content/groenlinks-gl>

<sup>63</sup> From the 2017 manifesto: <https://groenlinks.nl/sites/groenlinks.nl/files/Verkiezingsprogramma-digitaal-2017-2021.pdf>

for, what Barber (1984, 232) calls, the transformation of individuals into citizens, as it makes a common vision possible between participants.

In my view and what this thesis has shown, is that the solution of bridging the gap that lies between far-right nationalist and cosmopolitan leftists lies in the strengthening of citizenship. As I have shown that the idea of nation-states governing themselves becomes increasingly problematic, democratic reform that seeks to strengthen citizenship can decrease the influence of nationalist populists, because there is more space for the concerns of all citizens and less reason to feel neglected by the political system.

At the time of this writing it does not seem likely that *GroenLinks* will become part of the next Dutch government, but it is my hope that party will succeed in experimenting more with the concept of deliberative democracy, even if it is just on the Utrecht level again, because it is a reform worth trying in a time of a widening gap between political parties and citizens.

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