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For a long period of time, the Netherlands made headlines only because of its royal family, its dikes or its talented soccer-players. Within Europe the small, densely populated and affluent nation seemed to be a haven of stability and tranquillity. However, since the turn of the century things seem to have changed. The Netherlands witnessed two political killings (in 2002 political maverick Pim Fortuyn and in 2004 filmmaker Theo van Gogh), the unforeseen rejection of the European treaty in a referendum in 2005, and the spectacular rise of various new parties. The most important of these are: the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF), the Party for Freedom (PVV) led by Geert Wilders and the Socialistische Partij (SP), which was originally founded in 1972, but which made a rapid progress after 2000, growing from 1.4% in 1994 to 16.6% in 2006. Below is a table with their results in the national elections.

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Both the LPF and the PVV managed to have a direct influence on government policies. In 2002 the LPF was a partner in a short-lived coalition, while the PVV supported a minority government in exchange for a say on government policy. One of the main outcomes of this arrangement was the implementation of more restrictive immigration and asylum policies. This minority government stayed in power for 18 months, after which Wilders decided to withdraw his support in protest at the austerity measures being imposed on the Netherlands by the European Union. Up to the present the SP has always been an opposition party at the national level. However, at the local and provincial levels the party is sometimes part of governing alliances. In this chapter, I will portray and analyse these three parties from the theoretical perspective of populism. To begin with, the concept of populism will be discussed.

**Populism: basic ingredients and “flavour” enhancers**

Most scholars agree that populism arises from the perception of current politics as an irreducible conflict between two homogenous and antagonistic groups – a virtuous people vs. a malicious elite – and on the aspiration to build a polity in which the will of the virtuous people prevails. The denunciation of the elite as the incarnation of evil or at least as the embodiment of corruption and incompetence, on the one hand, and the glorification of the people as the embodiment of all good virtues, true wisdom and authenticity, on the other, may therefore be considered the basic hallmarks of populism. This core feature of populism entails some other

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closely connected features which reinforce and highlight the core concept, or, to use a culinary metaphor, these other features are the “flavour enhancers” that enhance the taste of the basic ingredient. In populism these flavour enhancers are: an inclination towards conspiracy theories, a popular and folksy style, a strong voluntarism and a preference for both plebiscite-based democracy and charismatic leadership\(^2\).

The inclination to utilise conspiracy theories might be regarded as a logical consequence of the aforementioned perception of the elite as both a homogeneous and corrupt group. Indeed, the populist concept of elites is open and vague enough to include all kinds of different elites – political, cultural, media, academic and economic – thus giving the impression that they are all in cahoots with one other. Moreover, this supposed coalition of elites is often accused of knowingly favouring a clearly identified minority group that is not part of the “real” nation. Whereas conspiracy theories like this emphasise the anti-elitism of populists, the use of a folksy popular style serves the purpose of underscoring the populist glorification of the people. By adopting simple and direct language, filled with anecdotes from every-day life, straightforward undecorated emotions and references to common wisdom and popular culture, populists not only mark their distance from the murky world of politics, they also express their closeness to the common people.

Another feature used to highlight the anti-elitist and, even more so, the pro-people element of populism is a strong voluntaristic approach to politics. Populists have high expectations of the power of politics based on the will and wisdom of the people. To them the complexities and the compromises of modern politics are not the logical consequence of the many

interests involved in the decision-making process, and of constitutional and economic restraints. Rather, they are the result of the incompetence and fecklessness of the elite, whose only ambition is to maintain the status quo. Since populism aspires to redesign democracy in order to let the people express and impose their will without any limitations or impediments, the introduction of various methods of direct democracy is also a recurrent theme of its political approach. Not only do many populists advocate the introduction of referenda, forms of recall and direct elections for political office at the national level, they also often attempt to present their own movements as the platform and mouthpiece of the “common people” by stressing their efforts to listen to their concerns. Another recurrent theme is strong confidence in a charismatic leader as the embodiment of the will of the people. The populist confidence in charismatic leadership is paradoxical since it is grounded in the belief in a leader who is expected both to lead and to embody the people, who in turn are portrayed as being fed up with existing leaders. Populist leaders solve this paradox by presenting the image of reluctant politicians, blameless outsiders without any deeply-felt need or aspiration to get involved in politics.

Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF)

The List Pim Fortuyn was founded by and named after Pim Fortuyn, a sociologist who until 2001 was a relatively well-known columnist for a conservative magazine and the weekly commentator in a television show. In November 2001 For-

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3 Taggart, cit..

tuyn became the leading candidate for Liveable Netherlands, a newly formed collection of local parties. However, already in February 2002 he left the party as a result of an interview in which he called Islam a “backward culture” and in which he proposed to put an end to all Muslim immigration. With his own hastily assembled party Fortuyn continued his – by Dutch standards – startling campaign. Opinion polls showed his growing popularity, which was based on a combination of anti-establishment sentiment and discontent with immigration and multicultural society. As a result, some of his political opponents placed Fortuyn in the same category as Jörg Haider of Austria and Jean-Marie Le Pen of France. However, it is difficult to recognise genuine far-right themes in the party platform or in Fortuyn’s books. Moreover, LPF included various candidates of non-Dutch origin in its lists (among others, a Muslim woman and a black CapeVerdian businessman); it even nominated a junior minister of Surinamese origin, who was the first black junior minister in Dutch history. Also, two days before his death, Fortuyn advocated a general pardon for a large group of former asylum seekers in the Netherlands.

On the 6th of May 2002 – nine days before the election – Fortuyn was assassinated by an animal-rights activist. His assassination notwithstanding, the elections went ahead as scheduled and even without its leader LPF became the second party with 17% of the votes: by far the best electoral debut ever in the Netherlands. LPF was then invited to join a centre-right coalition with the Christian Democrats and the Liberals. Without its leader, without a solid organisation and with a group of members of parliament hastily lumped together, LPF was destined to fail. After 87 days the coalition fell and in January 2003 new elections were held, in which LPF lost most of its votes (dropping from 17 to 5.7%). In the following years

LPF’s small parliamentary group was repeatedly plagued by conflicts and the party organisation collapsed rapidly. In 2006, various political heirs of Fortuyn participated in the national elections, but none succeeded in winning a seat in parliament.

Because he was the first to break the electoral monopoly of the established parties, Fortuyn is often considered as the godfather of Dutch populism. Some of the main features of populism, as discussed above, are indeed easily recognisable in his pronouncements and political activity. To begin with, since his days as a newspaper commentator in the 1990s, Fortuyn was already a fierce critic of the Dutch political elite. In his opinion the Dutch elite had become an almost inaccessible caste of professional politicians and apparatsjiks without any real vision or aspiration, besides that of clinging to power. He even introduced two nicknames to indicate the Dutch elite, which both proved to be highly influential: “Our Kind of People” (Ons Soort Mensen) and the “Church of the Left-Wing” (Linkse Kerk). Whereas the first nickname hinted at an alleged tendency by the Dutch political and administrative elite to share the spoils among “our kind of people” (e.g. by appointing only members of the “right” parties to important offices), the term “Church of the Left Wing” was meant to describe the alleged monopoly on Dutch public opinion of the intelligentsia of the left, who did not tolerate any criticism of their “sacred cows”, such as the welfare state, multiculturalism, development aid and a progressive education.

Obviously, this analysis of the behaviour of the elite comes close to a conspiracy theory according to which the various elites conspire among themselves to their own advantage. Certainly many of Fortuyn’s followers have interpreted it in this way, even attributing his assassination to deliberate bashing of his figure by the Church of the Left-Wing (“the bullet came from the left”, as one of Fortuyn’s close friends stated). However, to put his conspiracist anti-elitism in some perspective, Fortuyn himself had at the same time secretly
concluded a strategic non-aggression pact with the Christian-Democratic Party, the main party of the opposition and until 1994 the incarnation of Dutch political elites.

Still, we can affirm that anti-elitism, enhanced by conspiracy metaphors, is a clear feature in Fortuyn’s political outlook. However, it is more difficult to find in his pronouncements the other main ingredient of populism, i.e., a certain degree of glorification of the people as the embodiment of all good virtues. More in accordance with a liberal view, he preferred to speak of free, emancipated citizens pursuing their own interests. At most one could argue that Fortuyn had a tendency to perceive Dutch culture – or more broadly Western culture – as a homogeneous entity, which must to be considered superior to all others. Though perhaps, at the same time, we should admit that the glorification of a homogeneous culture is hardly the same thing as the glorification of a homogeneous people.

More importantly, Fortuyn’s opposition to existing elites was not based so much on the conviction that the elite should listen to and follow the will of a superior people, or even reflect the will of the people; rather on his idea that elites are supposed to lead and educate the people. As he elaborately discussed in his most ambitious work, bombastically entitled *The Orphaned Society: a Religious-Sociological Treatise* (1995), since the 1980s Dutch elites had failed to fulfil their role as leaders and teachers, and as a result Dutch society had become “orphaned”. This problem of a lack of leadership became more pressing as Fortuyn, inspired by Samuel Huntington’s conception of the clash of civilizations, began to fear the advance of Islamic culture within the weak “orphaned” Dutch society. To overcome this threat the country was in need of a new inspiring and caring elite: leaders who would serve as role-models guiding the nation with their vision, ambition and pedagogical skills. Consequently, Fortuyn never advocated the introduction of forms of plebiscitarian democracy, though he asked for the direct election of some official positions to break
the monopoly of the old elites. At the same time he did not believe in democratically organised responsive political parties as a means to satisfy the concerns of the people. In his view parties were at most the instrument of the political leader, a position he reinforced by creating his own electoral list named after him and devoid of any organisational structure. Ultimately, in Fortuyn’s opinion, democratic politics should be a struggle among unbounded, outspoken and daring political leaders with the people as enthusiastic spectators. He repeatedly expressed his contempt for “lack of class” of the Dutch political elite, ridiculing for example the parliamentary speaker because of her “vulgar” accent and the prime-minister because of his ordinary suits and his use of soccer-metaphors. Living in his Palazzo di Pietro with a butler and two lap-dogs (cocker-spaniels), wearing highly expensive, dandy-like outfits, talking openly about his nightly adventures in gay-bars and publishing several rather pretentious books filled with sociological jargon, Fortuyn could hardly be described as a politician who tried to imitate the common Dutch citizen. He viewed charismatic leadership as a political necessity: “A competent leader is father and mother at the same time. He is the law-maker and protector of the cohesion of the herd. The competent leader is the biblical Good Shepherd. He defines values and builds bridges. He is strict and merciful. He is inaccessible and understanding. […] Let us prepare ourselves for his arrival, so we can give him a warm welcome”5.

It is fairly safe to assume that Fortuyn perceived himself as the embodiment of this new charismatic leader, making him, in the opinion of many commentators, the prototype of the narcissistic personality on the political stage.

The murder of Fortuyn – the first political assassination in the Netherlands in 350 years – led to an unprecedented out-

pouring of public emotion, with “seas of flowers” and spontaneous shrines where thousands left messages, in which many expressed a sense of personal affinity with the deceased⁶. In the media many people stated, using almost the same words, that “Fortuyn dared to say what I myself think”, with reference mostly to Fortuyn’s criticism of multiculturalism and immigration policies. For this reason Fortuyn became for many a “people’s politician”, and consequently for others he was the populist politician par excellence who exploited primitive popular feelings (in the Netherlands distinctively called “underbelly sentiments”). Nonetheless, both qualifications are puzzling, since one can hardly find in Fortuyn a discernible concern for the opinions of the common people, let alone an urge to represent their will. Rather, he may better be viewed as the advocate of a more elitist democracy: most of his thoughts seem to be focused on how the elite should behave and act in order to lead and guide the people. At the same time one cannot entirely ignore the fact that both his followers and many (if not most) of his opponents perceived Fortuyn as a leader who had the ability to express popular feelings, or at least to convince “the people” that he dared to speak aloud what so many of them thought. Therefore, understanding Fortuyn’s populist dimension means, above all, focusing on the charismatic component of his outlook; that is, on the specific bond between followers and followed.

The Party for Freedom (PVV)

Since Fortuyn’s death and the disintegration of his party in the following months, various new parties have attempted to step

into what was at the time perceived as a political vacuum, using the same kind of language on Islam and its alleged threat to Dutch liberties. By 2006 Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom (PVV) proved the most promising candidate for filling that vacuum. After the PVV had made a modest electoral debut in the 2006 national elections (5.9%), Wilders succeeded in attracting an enormous amount of national, as well as international, media attention by offering a whole range of spectacular storylines and performances, such as the release of his anti-Muslim movie, *Fitna* (March 2008), and his detention at Heathrow Airport, a consequence of the British Home Secretary’s ban on him entering the country (February 2009). In the 2010 national elections the PVV more than doubled its support (15.5% of the votes) and the party became a serious player in coalition formation.

The attempt to classify the PVV in ideological terms has puzzled many observers both in the Netherlands and abroad. Whereas before 2002 most commentators were often inclined to classify a new party appearing on the political scene as belonging to extreme right, there is now a remarkable reluctance to use such a label for the PVV. Undoubtedly this reluctance is a result of Pim Fortuyn’s assassination by a political activist, which some considered a direct consequence of the campaign of “Fortuyn bashing” conducted by left-wing parties and the press. Since the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a radical Islamist in November 2004 Geert Wilders is living under permanent police protection. Looking at the party platform and language, however, it is not difficult to discern various characteristic features of populism. To begin with, we see – as in the case of Fortuyn – much evidence of strong anti-elitism, mingled – in the case of Wilders – with an apocalyptic.

conspiracy theory in which his two main enemies go hand in hand: Islam and left-wing politics. For Wilders, Islam is not a religion but a totalitarian ideology, which after the demise of communism and fascism poses the third great threat to Western modernity. Following Bat Ye’or’s infamous Eurabia theory and Solomon and Al Mahdiqi’s Al Hijra-theory, more than once Wilders has denounced Muslim immigration as the integral part of a deliberate strategy to Islamise Europe. This, it is argued, was allowed by left-wing political parties who hoped to gain a new loyal constituency after the loss of their old one.\textsuperscript{8} Referring to the Islamic precept of taqqia, which allows Muslims living in non-Muslim countries to hide their true beliefs, Wilders repeatedly doubted the sincerity of Muslims apparently willing to assimilate in their host countries. To him the only right approach is the complete marginalisation of Muslims who, because of their reliance on taqqia, are by definition untrustworthy. Examples of this “rejectionism” are his request that the Koran be banned, his proposal for a “head rag-tax”, but also his infamous remark that millions of European Muslims who do not adhere to Western values should be expelled from Europe.

At the same time Wilders has identified “the elite” more and more as a broad leftist coalition, in which almost all Dutch parties and politicians, but also of large parts of the media, the courts, the universities and the bureaucracy are involved. In his view, leftist politics represent above all a mentality, a post-material, progressive and permissive attitude that has spread out like an inkblot through Dutch elites since the 1960s to become solidly rooted in all vested Dutch political parties. Following a strategy of depoliticising political issues, subsidising instruments that spread progressive opinions (such as the

\textsuperscript{8} B. Ye’or, Eurabia. The Euro-Arab Axis, New York, 2005; S. Solomon and E. Al Maqdisi, Modern day Trojan Horse: Al Hijra, the Islamic doctrine of migration, Accepting Freedom or Imposing Islam, 2009; G. Wilders, Marked for Death: Islam’s War against the West and Me, 2012.
often criticised public broadcasting service) and tabooing and demonising contrasting opinions, this progressive, politically correct class managed to “hijack” Dutch democracy and governance. Though Wilders might also have been inspired by American neo-conservative theories (such as Irving Kristol’s new class theory), the main inspiration for his elite-criticism seems to be Pim Fortuyn’s Church of the Left-Wing metaphor, which he elaborated and enhanced together with the Eurabia Theory. As a result, Wilders has moved a few steps further than Fortuyn with regard to Islam, as demonstrated by his proposals to ban the Koran, to introduce a “head-rag” tax and to expel non-integrated Muslims. One could argue that Wilders considers Islam more dangerous to Western civilization than Fortuyn did and that therefore he advocates more radical measures to protect democracy. Whereas his battle against Islam initially seemed to be a personal crusade, Wilders more and more began to refer to the common people as his allies. “Henk and Ingrid”, as he has named them, are fed up with Moroccan street gangs, headscarves and Islamisation and ask for immediate action. To this end Wilders demands more direct forms of democracy such as referenda and directly elected mayors, police commissioner and even judges. “Not the political elite, but the people should have the opportunity to express more often their will, because together the people know better than the left-wing clique”.

From the perspective of populism, however, it is more difficult to perceive Wilders as the archetypical populist politician, rather than as the reluctant outsider. Operating in the House of Parliament since the 1990s, Wilders might better be characterised as a passionate professional politician who (as he himself has often stated) “enjoys parliamentary politics” and who knows all the ins and outs of parliamentary procedure, conventions and informal networks. Indeed he acted quite effectively as a substitute for the parliamentary speaker. The PVV parliamentary group, specially selected and thor-
though coached by Wilders, thus far gives the impression of competence and professionalism, especially when compared to the chaotic performance of most of the other new parties in parliament. Because of this non-populist feature, Wilders managed to escape one of the pitfalls of populist parties: rapid disintegration as the result of political amateurism.

**Socialistische Partij (SP)**

Whereas Fortuyn and Wilders are usually positioned (and position themselves) on the right of the political spectrum, the Socialistische Partij (SP) is usually positioned on the (far) left. Nonetheless, in the Netherlands the SP could also be considered a populist party, although of a left-wing populist strand. Formed in 1972 by a group of Maoist dissidents who had broken away from the Communist Party, the SP was for a long time a small, tightly organised, energetic group of extremely devoted members who, because of their door-to-door campaigning, were nicknamed the “Red Jehovah’s Witnesses”. Most of the early SP activists were middle-class students who had dropped out of their universities to work in factories and who identified strongly with working-class interests, tastes and life styles. Their campaigning in working-class districts and on factory floors and their attempts to imitate working-class culture were a result of their Maoist ideology and, more specifically, of Mao’s so-called mass-line which stated: “Go to the masses and learn from them, synthesise their experience into better-articulated principles and methods, then do propaganda work among the masses and call upon them to put

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these principles and methods into practice so as to solve their problems and help them achieve liberation and happiness”.

The “masses” however initially gave the SP a cold shoulder. Despite all its efforts to reach and behave like the masses, the party was probably still too much associated with spiritless leftist theoretical disputes and 1970s student radicalism. In the early 1990s, after five unsuccessful attempts to be elected in the national parliament, the SP changed its course under the leadership of Jan Marijnissen, who in his hometown Oss (a small factory town in the south-east of the country) had established a relatively popular and active branch. With the help of a few congenial journalists and public relations managers, Marijnissen attempted to establish an image of the SP as “a party of doers” with a strong contempt for intellectual waffling and a penchant for direct action. At the same time the SP positioned itself as the party of general protest against a political system in which all other parties (including the Labour Party and even the Green Party) had to some extent embraced the anti-state, neo-liberal agenda. For this purpose the SP adopted a new catchy slogan: “Vote Against: Vote SP” and a splattered tomato as symbol. The new course paid off and for the first time in 1994 the SP entered Parliament.

In the 1990s Marijnissen, as the party’s figurehead, successfully established himself as the only real outsider in a political culture characterised by strong consensus, technocratic belief in smart governance and decreasing political participation. In a number of interviews, in parliamentary speeches and in two books he published in the 1990s, Marijnissen painted a picture of a rather homogeneous neo-liberal money-obsessed political elite, made up of almost identical parties and politicians who had lost any connections with the concerns and tastes of “the ordinary people”. Working in the House of Parliament meant for Marijnissen (and for his only other parliamentary group member) a daily struggle against arrogant and selfish people, who – in his opinion – spoke an incomprehen-
sible jargon and had devised all kinds of procedures and gim-micks to shut out outsiders. Besides these more general accusations of deliberate exclusion and discrimination, from time to time Marijnissen imbued his anti-elitism with some elements of the old left-wing conspiracy theory (hidden dominance of multinationals corporations, international bankers and American military interests), but he also criticised professional welfare workers and elitist left-wing intellectuals who attempted to impose their multicultural, cosmopolitan and libertarian worldviews on the working-class.\(^\text{10}\)

In contrast with this “phoney left” who kept aloof from ordinary people, Marijnissen still adhered to the old Maoist mass-line: it was the elite who had to listen and learn from the people, not the other way around. In most of his public statements of the 1990s Marijnissen referred in some way or other to the ordinary people as the *raison d’être* of the SP. In nearly all his interviews he stressed his background as a welder in a metal factory and expressed his preference for the honest, altruistic, sometimes raw company of his old working-class mates in his Brabant hometown. “By simple intuition” many of these uneducated and despised people “knew right from wrong and a wise from a false decision”. On the one hand the party’s commitment to the cause of ordinary people was stressed by the altruist and energetic mind-set of SP members, symbolised by the much-publicised renunciation of all political earnings in exchange for a working-class salary. On the other hand the SP stressed its direct communication with ordinary people by establishing an emergency telephone number and consulting hours, through which anyone could ask for assistance or submit a complaint (often resulting in parliamentary questions), and of course by the presence of the party in all kinds of protest demonstrations.

Besides these efforts to present itself as the collector of grievances and as the mouthpiece for the common people, the SP also advocated the introduction of elements of direct democracy within the political system as a whole, such as referenda, forms of recall and direct election to political office at the national level. However, these initiatives of institutional reform have been eclipsed by the party’s emphasis on its role as a channel of communication with the ordinary people. From an organisational point of view the SP was a tightly organised, almost old-fashioned mass-party with over 50,000 members – in sharp contrast with the loosely organised movement of Fortuyn, not to mention the one-member party of Wilders.

In 1999, after five years of successful opposition, the SP changed again its strategy and course, adopting a new program and a new campaign strategy. To symbolise the change of course and strategy, the SP chose a new more proactive slogan: “Vote for, vote SP”, instead of the previous “Vote against, vote SP”. Of course, by emphasising its eagerness to “really change things”, the party implied that it intended to pay more attention to the framing and elaboration of a solid and detailed platform, while at the same time dropping old dogmas which stood in the way of cooperation with other parties, such as opposition to the monarchy and to NATO and its advocacy of nationalisations. At the local level the SP had already taken up governing responsibility, showing its ability and willingness to compromise whenever necessary. Its paradigmatic model has now become the old and still respected Dutch Labour Party and its march to power in the 1920s and 1930s. Behind its new proactive slogans the SP had now converted to a more incremental approach to politics.11

Of course, its emphasis on regierungsfähigkeit and its new attitude as a party of government implied for the SP partially shedding its image as the party of protest and the direct

mouthpiece of the “ordinary people”. Though we can still find some expressions of anti-elitism and glorification of the people, it is not difficult to discern a marked change in tone and style in Marijnissen’s speeches. Instead of criticising “the whole lot” with the usual blunt words, he now clearly finds a difference between “the good, the bad and the ugly”, disapproving at the same time of Wilders’ totally negative attitude. Politics is above all getting things done for the people, even when it means making compromises and cooperating with former enemies. One can also discern a less folksy and more thoughtful intellectual tone in Marijnissen’s repeated appeals for a cultural and moral regeneration which in his view is necessary to counter the shallow hedonism and dulling of the population. In terms of electoral growth, the change of strategy and course proved highly successful: within twelve years the SP grew from 1.32% to 16.6% of the popular vote. However, shortly after the victory of 2006, the limits of this new course also became clear: despite its emphasis on a positive governing attitude, the SP was not prepared to make the compromises necessary to participate in a new government. Having also lost its role as the most vocal anti-system party to Wilders and his PVV, the SP found itself struggling to find a new role as a government opposition party. Tensions within the party increased as a result of Marijnissen’s resignation from the leadership in 2009. His successor, Agnes Kant, proved a failure and after only a year was succeeded by Emil Roemer. This primary-school teacher was able to strike the same chords as Marijnissen, although Roemer apparently was more eager to enter government. During 2011 and in the early months of 2012 the SP was very successful in opinion polls and seemed to be heading for a place in the government coalition. However, in the ensuing electoral campaign the Labour Party, lead by Diederik Samsom, made an unexpected come-back at the expense of the SP, which again was excluded from government formation.
Different flavours of populism

Because of the disappointing results of both SP and PVV, the 2012 national elections have been interpreted by some commentators as the demise of Dutch populism. There are indeed enough good reasons to use the populist label for both the PVV and the SP, as well as for the LPF. At the same time, the label does not fully cover the different ideologies and styles of these parties. Since populism is a “thin” ideology, it is generally found in combination with another ideology\(^\text{12}\). Within the SP the ideological partner is a specific version of socialism; in the PVV it’s a mixture of nationalism and strong Islamophobia; in Pim Fortuyn’s list it’s a cocktail of populist, liberal and elitist ingredients. As a common denominator, populism may therefore be misleading. Whether Dutch populism has actually begun to decline is far from certain. At the beginning of 2013, both PVV and SP were again on the rise in the surveys. Though it is unlikely that in the near future either party will become the most powerful political party of the Netherlands, their game is certainly not over.