

A Perfect Democracy

How can we solve voters' dissatisfaction by changing the Dutch voting system?

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1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation

'Dit is het ergste jaar van de democratie sinds 1933' ("This is the worst year of democracy since 1933") is what David van Reybrouck wrote about the year 2016 in his book *Tegen Verkiezingen* ('Against elections'). Some might disagree with his statement, but not many will deny that the Dutch democracy has been increasingly criticized. There is also dissatisfaction in other European countries among voters about the way democracy is functioning. Dissatisfaction with democratic systems among voters is a central theme in our thesis.

We wrote this thesis as part of the Design Thinking Thesis Challenge organized by Talent Education, which is a part of SKOL. In this project we learned about and worked with the Design Thinking method and applied this method to the Dutch political system, we did this together with other students our age from two other European countries: Slovenia and Czech Republic (both from Pilsen and Brno). We first met for a week in November 2016 in Bodegraven, and for another week in March 2017 in Pilsen (Czech Republic).

We talked with our peers about the differences in political systems between our countries, and found out that although the dissatisfaction is universal among these countries, there is a crucial difference in the degree of dissatisfaction among the voters in different countries. While we might find the Dutch democracy lacking, our peers from Slovenia seemed to have totally lost faith in any kind of democracy in their country. The differences in system, politicians, voters, and the country's' history seemed possible causes for the larger degree of dissatisfaction.

During our first week with the foreign peers, Donald Trump won the election in the United States. This was a crucial moment in our research because the way he won made us question the voting method that was used. When Trump won, not because of a majority in votes, but because of a majority in states, the district system seemed unfair to us. The majority of Americans didn't want Trump as their president, but he still made office. After Trump's election the dissatisfaction with democracy seems to have increased all around the democratic world.

1.2 Purpose

In this thesis, we want to find a solution for the dissatisfaction among Dutch voters. In Dutch voting, there are three elements involved: the voters, the politicians and the voting system. In our research we will discuss all three elements but we will focus on the voting system.

1.3 Design Thinking methodology

We performed this research according to the Design Thinking methodology. Design Thinking is a solution-based process, in which you first find a large problem, after which you tackle a comprehensible part of this problem. Because it is a relatively new method we will briefly explain the way it works. It consists of six steps:

1. Empathize: after finding your large problem, you have to immerse yourself in the environment involved. In this step, you should gain a deeper understanding of the problem and everything around it. This should give you a better view on the causes

of the problem, and all the elements involved. It will give you some background knowledge that will make the problem comprehensible.

2. Define: after having this deeper understanding of the environment you are researching, and the problem you want to tackle, you have to write down the problem in a human-centred matter. This will be your research question and this will make finding solutions easier, since you'll have a very specific problem.
3. Ideate: the question defined can be solved in many ways. In this phase, you want to concisely write down all possible solutions to the question defined. In this stage, you should try to 'think outside the box'. This is the brainstorming phase, which is used to broaden the thinking space of the researcher.
4. Prototype: The researcher will now produce a few prototypes of the solutions found in the ideating phase. In this phase, the researcher should try to identify the best possible solution to the problem from the defining phase. While some solutions from the ideating phase might immediately seem unworthy of trying, others might seem worthy at first, but after looking into them not be suitable for the problem. This is what you are trying to find out during this phase.
5. Test: After finding these possible solutions, you can test these in many ways. This is the stage in which you will find out whether the prototypes work in order to solve your problem or not. It may give you a deeper understanding of the problem and therefore bring you back to the defining stage, or it might make you think of another possible solution and bring you back to the ideating space. This process can go on forever, until you find the perfect solution.

1.4 Research question

Since we used the design thinking methodology, we did not start with the research question but developed it along the way. After we got to know our audience better (the voters) by reading articles online and putting out a survey to our acquaintances (friends, family, teachers, etc.), we defined the following research question during the defining phase: **'How can we solve voters' dissatisfaction by changing the Dutch voting system?'**

1.5 Structure

In Chapter 2, empathize, we try to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the dissatisfaction among voters by looking at the three elements involved in our problem of dissatisfaction among voters in our democracy: the voters, the politicians and the voting system. After this, in Chapter 3, we decide about the party we want to focus our research on, the voting system, and we define our problem. In Chapter 4, we ideate all possible solutions to this problem and broaden our thinking space by creative thinking. This results in a list of all possible solutions. In Chapter 5, we prototype seven possible solutions: disapproval voting, approval voting, alternative voting, lottery, 'Het Nieuwe Kiezen' ('The New Voting'), constituency system, coalition voting. We test these prototypes in our final Chapter, Chapter 6, by identifying the degree in which the problems discovered in the empathizing phase are solved and by testing these solutions to reality. After this we single out the most suitable one and we conclude this chapter by giving a final answer to our research question.

Chapter 2. Empathize: The voters, politicians, and the voting system

In this Chapter, we want to find the nature of dissatisfaction among voters with the current democracy. Our goal is to immerse ourselves in the voters and gain a deeper understanding of all three elements involved in this system: the voters, the voting system and the politicians. By doing so, we want to find the problems voters have with the current democracy, and find out where the largest problem lies. Our goal is to finish this chapter with a frame of reference, a list of current problems, by which we can later on test our possible solutions. This frame of reference should include the most common problems that Dutch voters currently experience, and in particular the part of our system we want to improve.

2.1 Voters

In the most literal sense of getting to know our audience, we have to know who the voters in the Netherlands are. We will first discuss the restrictions when it comes to the people that are allowed to vote, and then we will talk about the problems resulting from these restrictions.

To vote, you have to meet several requirements. First of all, you have to be at least 18 years old. The minimum age to vote was 21 until 1972, but it was lowered to include adolescents in politics. There are some parties that want to lower the minimum age to 16, but this plan wasn't realized because sixteen-year-olds were considered too immature to cast a well-considered vote. There is no such thing as a maximum age.¹

The second requirement is that you must have the Dutch nationality to vote. The inhabitants of the islands Bonaire, Sint-Eustatius and Saba are also allowed to vote, since these are a part of the Netherlands. For the residents of the islands Aruba, Curaçao and Sint-Maarten the rules are slightly different. For them the rule applies that, to have voting rights, they have to have lived in the Netherlands for at least ten years or they have to be operating in a Dutch public service.²

Lastly, one can't vote if he or she is excluded from suffrage. People can be excluded from their right to vote by a criminal court ruling.

Problems³

Dutch voters are people of a very wide variety of origin, class and age, they all have different interests and concerns. All these people vote within the same system and for the same variety of parties and candidates. That such a wide variety of people vote, is a great asset to the diversity in the parliament, where there are a lot of politicians with discrepant views. That everyone can vote is the basis of our democracy, but also introduces the problem of uneducated votes. While you should read approximately 25 different election programs to bring out an educated vote, most voters don't do so. A vote is often not based on the actual

¹ De kieswet, artikel B1

² De kieswet, artikel B1

³ <http://politiek.tpo.nl/2016/12/25/de-stem-van-ouderen-weegt-te-zwaar-in-politieke-besluitvorming/>
<https://www.kiesraad.nl/verkiezingen/inhoud/tweede-kamer/stemmen/kiesgerechtigdheid>

plans of a party. Instead, the image of a party and the charismatic appearance and rhetoric abilities of a leader play a large role in voting decisions.

Some are of the opinion that there is an age problem, as there is a minimum age to vote, but not a maximum. That there is such a thing as a minimum age rule is quite logical, as young children are simply not that interested in politics and furthermore, often do not understand the importance and influence of a vote. Changing the minimum age to 16 instead of 18 may be an option, since 16 year olds are often capable and benefit from decisions made for a long time. Elderly are not restricted from voting. There has not been put a maximum to the age at which citizens may vote. This is quite odd, as elderly will not benefit from their vote for a long time.

2.2 Dutch voting system⁴

If you meet all the requirements to vote, you may cast your vote. To vote, one must go to a designated location and cast his or her vote by filling out a voting-ballot with a red pencil. Voters are only allowed to bring out one vote only. People can cast their vote during a given time period of one day. After the polling stations have closed the votes will be counted by hand and the results will be published.

Party list/open list system

The current Dutch voting system is a proportional representation system with an open party list. Proportional representation implies that the percentage of acquired seats in parliament is proportional with the percentage of acquired votes. Within this system there are several different possibilities, one of those is the Party list system. The Party list system is a system in which parties compose lists of candidates to be elected. This can be specified to the Open Party list which is used in the Netherlands. In an Open Party list system, voters can vote for the preferred candidate within the party. This is different from the Closed Party list system in which voters vote for a party as a whole rather than a single politician. This Closed Party list system leaves the parties with the responsibility to figure out which candidate will obtain which place on the list. In the Open Party list the voters do have influence on the placing of the elected politicians.

The Dutch electoral system seems simple but it is actually quite complex. After the votes have been counted, the electoral quota will be calculated. The electoral quota is equal to the number of votes that you need to obtain one seat. In the Netherlands there are 150 seats in the Second Chamber, which forms the Parliament together with the First Chamber. If, for example, 15 million people vote for the party of their preference, the electoral quota is 15 million divided by 150, so in that particular case the quota is 100.000. This number of votes can also be referred to as the election threshold. A party can only get a seat if they get this precise amount of votes or surpass this threshold. But, it almost never occurs that a party gets exactly 100.000 votes, so there will always be 'extra votes'. These votes are divided by

⁴ <https://www.prodemos.nl/leer/informatie-over-politiek/nederland/het-kiesstelsel/>
<https://11.nl/politicooloog-peter-bootsma-over-de-coalitievorming-in-nederland-127535/>
<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/parlement/inhoud/verhouding-kabinet-en-parlement>
<http://stukroodvlees.nl/meerderheidskabinetten-zijn-niet-meer-van-deze-tijd/>

the parties with a minimum of 100.000 votes through the method of the greatest average. To determine what parties get these 'extra' votes there is added one seat to the amount of seats every party got. The amount of votes a party got is then divided by this number of seats (including the extra seat) to determine the average of every party. The party with the greatest average will get the 'extra' seat.

After the seats have been distributed, the coalition forming process starts. An advisor will be appointed by the newly elected parliament⁵ to supervise the process. This advisor will meet with each party to discuss their plans and wishes. After these meetings, the advisor has a clear idea about the plans of every party and he or she will then start proposing possible coalitions. After this, parties that will possibly form a coalition will start talking about how they would combine and carry out their plans as previously made. If they cannot come to an agreement, the advisor will propose a new possible coalition or a new advisor will be appointed. This process will be repeated until the parties that may form the coalition agree on how they will govern the country.

Problems

This system does have its benefits. The main one being that it's easy for new parties to enter the Second Chamber because of the low threshold, which results in a big variety of different parties in the Second Chamber. This, however, is a disadvantage as well, because all these different parties have to work together in coalitions in the government. The problem with this is that voters don't have any influence on how these coalitions are constructed. That's why it is also in a politician's interest to be vague about his or her plans for the future, concerning coalitions in this case. They don't promise specific things, thus they cannot be held accountable for their actions and decisions. The forming of coalitions also results in strategic voting. Voting for a party that is more likely to be part of a coalition might be more beneficial than voting for a smaller party that most likely will not win enough seats to be part of the coalition.

Furthermore, the fact that you can't vote for multiple candidates or multiple parties can cause dissatisfaction, as voters often agree with different perspectives of different parties, depending on the topic: e.g., they may agree with the economic ideas of party A while agreeing with the environmental plans of party B.

2.3 Representatives⁶

The Dutch people's representatives ('volksvertegenwoordigers') are the ones that notice the consequences of the dissatisfaction most. Voting rates go down and criticism grows. But who are those politicians exactly?

⁵ Until 2012, the king or queen appointed the advisor, after consultation with all political leaders in parliament. Since 2012, this task is carried out by parliament itself.

⁶ <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/02/17/alleen-mannen-in-pak-6741427-a1546605>
https://www.parlement.com/id/vkbye7qlmczm/profiel_kandidaten_tweede
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportional_representation;
<https://www.prodemos.nl/leer/informatie-over-politiek/nederland/het-kiesstelsel/>

A number of things can be said about the politicians from the Dutch elections in 2017. First of all, women are underrepresented. 54 elected members of parliament are female, while 96 candidates are male. The average age of all candidates is 45. One third of the candidates live in large cities, and they were mostly raised in the west of the Netherlands. The level of education is way higher than average with a large majority having completed university education or higher professional education (WO or HBO).⁷

The Dutch politicians that are elected by Dutch citizens to govern, are called people's representatives ('volksvertegenwoordigers'). The word representative is misleading. 'Representative' indicates that they represent, and therefore are a part of, a certain wider group.

The representation of these representatives for a larger group used to be the case. During the compartmentalization, every compartment (often formed by religion, or a lack thereof) had their own representative. The Catholics, Protestants, Atheists all had their own political party and representative. The people belonging to this society group followed the leaders' views, and didn't really think about politics themselves. The largest group had most votes and therefore most say in political decisions.

When religion became less important during the sixties, the term 'representative' became misleading. People started making political decisions that weren't connected to their society group. They based their vote on personal views. Representatives no longer represented a society group. Instead, they represented certain personal views. This is where the dissatisfaction started.

Problems

Since everyone had a different personal view on every political topic, finding a large group of people with the same view on every single topic is very hard. One representative can never represent a large group, and therefore every voter has to make compromises when voting. The politicians on the other hand, want to hold up the illusion that they still represent the views of a large group. They do so by being vague about their plans, or having incoherent views on political topics in order to attract a larger group.

Another problem that emerged was the idea that all politicians are elitists. Since they are mostly highly educated, although this isn't a requirement, they don't form an accurate representation of the population. Voters feel that someone that is so different from themselves cannot serve their interests properly.

Another problem with the representation is the lack of women. This has always been the case, but since the idea of gender equality is generally accepted and as a result more and more women are highly educated, the lack of female representatives seems outdated and unfair. The reasons for the underrepresentation are of a large variety. One is the idea that still exists that men are better and more natural leaders, and that women don't dare to show leadership because they might be portrayed as arrogant or presumptuous. Also the nepotism among men is a cause that is often mentioned.

The last problem that comes up when looking at our representatives, is that ethnic minorities are underrepresented. More than 20% of the Dutch population has a migration background, but there are barely any in the Second Chamber. As a result, some minorities feel their voice

⁷ [cbs.nl/ewoud butter](https://www.cbs.nl/ewoud-butter)

is not being heard. This can cause polarisation in our society, and lead to dissatisfaction from both ethnic minorities and other citizens.

2.4 Conclusion: frame of reference

In this Chapter, we gained a deeper understanding of the Dutch voter. We tried to immerse ourselves in the Dutch voter by doing research online and setting up a survey online. The survey and its answers can be found in the attachment⁸ but we wanted to outline the most common causes of dissatisfaction among Dutch voters.

1. There are a lot of different parties voters agree on in different areas, but they don't agree on everything with one party.
2. The composition of the Second Chamber does not reflect the composition of groups in society.
3. The large number of parties leads to strategic voting.
4. Politicians are often not clear about what they will do after they are elected since they will always have to make compromises in forming a coalition. This makes it difficult to make a voting choice.
5. Politicians make promises they cannot sustain because of coalition negotiations.
6. Voting decisions are hard to make due to the large number of (small) parties and the lack of voting education.
7. The large number of (small) parties and consequently lengthy coalition forming processes make the country government less efficient.

This list of causes of voters' dissatisfaction will serve as our frame of reference by which we will in Chapter 6 test our possible solutions.

⁸ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n-5ROL7Cg9evNcfFP1pAE0u6LKiICWj1fGNLgyh7mE/edit#gid=1541246417>
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B4eaaZPm4FDdUURienMyaTdjalk>

Chapter 3 Define: The research question

Looking at the dissatisfaction in the Dutch democracy, we found that three parties are involved: the voters, the politicians and the system. All of these elements are involved in voters' dissatisfaction. However, voters and politicians are the starting point of the analysis. Their dissatisfaction should not be resolved through a forced change in their behavior. For this reason, we decided to do research on our political system, and more specifically: our voting system.

After deciding to do research on alternative voting methods, we came to the following research question:

How can we decrease voters' dissatisfaction by changing the Dutch voting system?

Chapter 4 Ideate: A range of possible solutions⁹

In this Chapter, in order to expand the thinking space, we want to list a range of possible solutions to our research question: *How can we decrease voters' dissatisfaction by changing the Dutch voting system?*. Not all of these solutions are completely problem-free or even possible to execute, some of them are not even solutions that require a change in the voting system, but they all solve at least one problem that Dutch voters have at this moment. This Chapter is exclusively intended to expand the thinking space, and doesn't serve any in-depth information on the voting systems. This will be done in Chapter 5: test.

1. Referenda (direct voting)
A referendum allows voters to vote in favour or against a particular proposal.
2. Disapproval and Approval voting
Disapproval and Approval voting implies that voters can cast two votes: one vote in favour of a party and one vote against (another) party.
3. Disapproval voting (only one against vote)
Voting against one party. Party with the least against votes wins.
4. Yes- and no- voting
Voters vote yes or no for every party.
5. No representatives
Instead of representatives, we will have experts who make our decisions
6. Every social class proportionally represented
Every level of education and every social background has to be proportionally represented
7. Alternative voting
Voters rank the candidates in order of preference.
8. Distributing points
Voters distribute 100 points among the parties.
9. A new parliament every year
10. Constituency voting system
Dividing the country in districts, which all get to elect representatives.
11. 'Het Nieuwe Kiezen'
Voting for ideas instead of for parties.
12. Abolish coalitions, one party can govern
13. Plurality-at-large voting
A voter gets to vote for as many people that will be elected. They can vote, in the Dutch case, for 150 candidates.
14. Coalition voting
Voters vote in two rounds. In the first round for the parties or representatives they approve of and in a second voting round for possible coalition agreements ('regeerakkoord').

⁹ http://www.dprvoting.org/System_Comparison.htm
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-plurality_voting
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRvTGas82yM>
<http://archive.fairvote.org/?page=766>

15. The numerous vote¹⁰

Voters can bring out numerous votes but the number of votes they can bring out is always less than the number of candidates.

16. Closed party list system

Voters can only vote for parties as a whole and do not have influence on the order in which the party members are elected.

17. Higher electoral threshold

¹⁰ Originally called the limited vote: <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esd/esd04/esd04b/default>

Chapter 5 Prototype: Several solutions designed

In Chapter 4 we produced a broad range of all possible solutions. In this Chapter we are going to prototype some of these solutions in order to figure out whether they are suitable to fix the problems we found in Chapter 2 and to see if these selected solutions are possible to execute. The selection of prototyped possible solutions is made to cover the entire spectrum of voting systems. All solutions prototyped in this Chapter seemed like a good solution to us at first, but are all very different from one another. We want to gain a deeper understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of all these very different solutions. In this Chapter, we incorporated information obtained from Edward Brühem¹¹, who is a senior legal counsel in 'de kiesraad' (the Dutch voting council).

5.1 Disapproval and Approval voting¹²

In the Disapproval and Approval voting system, voters can cast two votes: one vote in favour of a party and one vote against (another) party. The voting result is determined by distracting the number of votes against a party from the number of votes in favour of that party.

One of the problems with our current system is that people don't feel represented by any party. People vote for someone, to make sure another party does not make office and will not be able to be part of a coalition. A good example of this is the last Dutch election. People voted for Rutte because they wanted to make sure Wilders would not win the election. They might have preferred voting for another party, but since the VVD was a larger party, they voted for them strategically. An advantage of this system is that voters can bring out a negative vote, who would otherwise vote strategically.

Another advantage is a higher voter turnout. A lot of people don't vote during elections because they dislike all parties. Once they are able to vote against someone, they are more likely to vote.

A major disadvantage of this system is that the negative votes are often brought out on the extreme opinions. The moderate parties will not get a lot of negative votes and therefore have a substantial advantage over extremer parties. More extreme voters will be less likely to be represented in the Second Chamber.

In a two party system, like the United States, the Disapproval and Approval voting system would not work. In a multiple party system like the Netherlands, however, this system might solve a lot of dissatisfaction among voters who especially dislike one of the parties.

5.2 Alternative vote¹³

The Alternative Vote system is a system that works by ranking parties in order of preference. Voters put their first choice on top, their second choice in the second place, their third choice

¹¹https://docs.google.com/document/d/1somN9t406peSnOd8GsVH04JmOTqqDe_d6IWFQBL4B1c/edit

¹²https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disapproval_voting
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MYpE0lv4eo>

¹³<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/av/a-guide-to-the-pros-and-cons-of-av-2278570.html>

in the third place and so on. In the first round, only the first preferences are counted. If there is a party which is put in first place with more than 50% of the votes, this party will automatically win. If this is not the case, there will be a second round of counting. If there would be, for example, 3 parties and party A gets 25% of the first preferences, party B 35% and party C 40%, the following will happen. Firstly, the party with the lowest number of votes, party A in this case, will be eliminated. The remaining parties will get the second preference votes from the voters who put the eliminated party in the first place. This will eventually result in one party with more than 50% votes. This party will win the elections and becomes governing on its own.

The current system is not specifically designed to result in one party winning, but it is possible. In our current system, we will only have one party winning if this party gets over 50% of the votes. In the alternative vote system, there will always be one majority party, but this will sometimes be after more counting rounds.

There are a lot of advantages in this system. The first one being that it does not require tactical voting, as the voters bring out numerous votes instead of only one. With the current voting system, people who want to vote for smaller parties would vote for bigger parties instead, because they feel they will not have any influence when voting for a small party which has little to say or they do not want one of the bigger parties to win. Within the Alternative vote system, these voters will not have this problem anymore.

Secondly, voters who are doubting between numerous parties that are similar can bring out votes for all these parties, instead of just one. This will also force people to get to know all the parties, instead of just the one they are voting for.

This system also encourages efficient decision making, since the parties don't have to form coalitions. The winning party will be able to govern and make decisions on its own.

Lastly, it will even out the votes when there are, for example, three left wing parties and one right wing party. Normally, this would have advantages for the right wing parties, as the left wing votes will be divided by three parties and the right wing votes just by one. With this system the right wing voters can put the other right parties in the first, second and third place which equals the chances between all the parties.

But there are also some major disadvantages to this system. The outcome of this system will not be a coalition, instead it will result in just one winner. This winning party will have a lot of power and does not have to collaborate with other parties anymore.

Another disadvantage is that voters who really want one candidate or party to win cannot express how badly they want this candidate or party to win. It is also quite a complex system which makes it difficult for voters to understand, this makes counting the votes problematic as well.

5.3 Coalition Voting (CV) ¹⁴

In the Coalition Voting system voters vote in two rounds: first for the party of preference, and then for a coalition agreement ('regeerakkoord').

In the prototype we designed of the coalition voting system, a voter can vote for all the parties the voter approves of. This first vote is called a 'party vote'. The vote is divided evenly among all parties of which a voter approves. If a voter would only vote for one party, the party gets an entire vote. If a voter prefers two parties, both get half a vote. This vote determines the seats in parliament.

After the seat allocation is determined, the parties have time to form coalitions. One party can be part of multiple coalitions. Every coalition makes a coalition agreement. Once multiple coalition agreements are formed, voters can vote for their one coalition agreement of preference. The coalition agreement with most votes, becomes governing.

One of the causes of dissatisfaction among voters is the feeling that they don't have any say in the decisions the politicians make once they are elected. For the politicians on the other hand, it is unsatisfying that they can't make the changes they promised their voters during the election because they have to make compromises to form a coalition. This results in every coalition party having to adjust to other coalition parties to conclude a coalition agreement. In the end, no party can make real changes or stick completely to their own ideology because they will always need to compromise for a majority in the Chamber. Coalition Voting could solve this problem.

The coalition voting system forces parties to reconcile their differences before an election. As a result, voters will have more say in the subsequently government, and it will be in both the parties' and voters' interest to be clear about the compromises the parties are willing to make after an election. Voters will be better informed, and will not be dissatisfied by a sudden change of policy.

One of the disadvantages of this system is the complexity. Both the seat-determination, in the party vote, as the coalition-selection, in the coalition vote, are more complex than the current system. It is more complex to divide one vote among several parties, than to simply count single votes. In the Netherlands, votes are still counted by hand, which might cause a problem for the CV system.

5.4 Lottery

The Flemish publicist David van Reybrouck wrote a book called 'Tegen Verkiezingen' ('Against Elections') in which he suggests a system that works by lot. The government will exist of a group of experts and elected politicians and a group of randomly picked citizens.

Van Reybrouck claims¹⁵ that this system will result in a rebuild of the trust in the government. The input of 'normal' citizens in a secluded political environment will make the gap between the so-called 'elite' representatives and the normal citizens decrease and people will feel

¹⁴ Steven J. Brams, department of politics, New York University:
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S089571779290084X>

¹⁵ 'Tegen Verkiezingen', De Bezige Bij, 2016, <http://www.debezigebij.nl/boeken/tegen-verkiezingen-3/>

less dissatisfied as a result. Citizens will not see the politicians as highly educated know-it-alls anymore but just as normal people.

Another big advantage of this system that Van Reybrouck proposes is that people who are picked by lot will not feel the pressure of upcoming elections that current politicians feel. As a result, representatives will choose solutions that are best for the country instead of choosing the solutions that make them most popular. David van Reybrouck gives the example of a pronouncement of Bruno Tobback, chairman of the Flemish socialists: 'I perfectly know what I have to do about the climate matter, but if I do that, I'll never be elected again.' With this example van Reybrouck illustrates the problem perfectly: because Tobback is afraid he won't be elected, he doesn't execute a solution to a big problem. But, citizens who are picked by lot won't refrain from great solutions because of 'stupid' reasons like upcoming elections.

After van Reybrouck published his book, he received a lot of criticism. The biggest point of criticism being the danger of frauds and idiots getting power. Van Reybrouck argues that this already happens in normal politics, but having an actual mentally challenged person govern our country can be quite scary.

The engagement of 'normal' citizens brings another disadvantage, as these randomly chosen people often do not have a political background or intellect regarding politics. They might not be able to come up with the best solutions or to make weighed decisions.

Another problem is that those chosen individuals might put their own interests before the rest of the country. Being chosen randomly means you will have a life outside of politics. Making decisions that are best for you or your family will be really tempting, and since there is no pressure of getting elected afterwards this might cause a lot of problems.

Then there is the problem of corruption. Where the current politicians are set to ignore any offer of bribery, normal citizens will be more likely to accept these offers. This is due to the fact they don't have to get elected and therefore can afford to be part of a scandal. Corruption can cause even more dissatisfaction than we have in the Netherlands today.

Lastly, it is by all odds absurd to assume that every single citizen is willing to enter the world of politics. It's important to think about whether entering the political system should be mandatory or a choice. If it is mandatory and people enter the government reluctantly, it would affect the integrity of the government as a whole. These reluctant people wouldn't take their job seriously and would probably not make the right, measured choices.

If it would not be mandatory to respond to a solicitation to take part in the government, the whole idea behind this system wouldn't work. Instead of a dichotomy between the elite politicians and the normal system, a new dichotomy will develop, this time between the people who want to get into politics and the people who do not. This makes a real 'representation' of the population impossible.

5.5 Approval Voting¹⁶

Approval voting is a voting system that allows voters to vote for every candidate they approve of. They are allowed to vote for an unlimited number of candidates. A vote indicates the voter's approval, while not-voting means disapproval. Voters can bring out as many votes as they like. These votes will be added up per candidate and the candidate with most votes wins. In the context of the Dutch parliamentary elections: the 150 candidates with the most votes win.

This system has its advantages for both candidates and voters. Candidates or parties with similar views will not have to split votes anymore, as voters who agree with their perspectives can bring out a vote for all of them instead of just for one. It also gives an accurate reflection of support for every participating candidate, even for the ones that lost. Lastly, it ensures that the candidate with the most support wins.

There is, however, a major disadvantage to this system, as it is vulnerable to strategic voting. With some smart thinking, it is easy to find out that it is more convenient to just vote for the candidate you prefer most. If you approve of candidates other than the one of your preference, you increase their chances to win while reducing the chances of your favourite candidate.

5.6 'Het nieuwe kiezen'

'Het nieuwe kiezen' (*The new voting*) is a system that is invented by Rudy van Belkom, a Dutch lecturer and researcher at the creative academy of Fontys. He suggests¹⁷ a system that allows people to vote for plans instead of parties. Instead of voting for the VVD as a whole, one would be able only to vote for VVD's view and plans regarding the European Union and for another party on another theme.

He noted that many people agreed with different parties on different subjects. Somebody would, for example, completely agree with D66 in the field of education, but with the PvdA in a different area as elderly care and maybe even with yet another party in the area of refugee sheltering. Because all these different parties have varying views on these themes, it is nearly impossible for voters to find a party that completely represents their views. Eventually, most people vote for the party that meets their views the most. But after the elections are held, a coalition has to be formed and all plans and ideas of the parties in this coalition are polished and simplified. Because of these matters, a lot of people don't vote anymore, because they don't feel their vote has any influence.

The system that Van Belkom suggests has its advantages, it stimulates parties to focus on their strong points and prevents parties to simplify their views. It will provide voters with a better oversight and voting will be less complicated.

However, there is also a downside. The system may result in unrealizable plans. If there are different governing parties for every theme, collaboration will be complicated. Collaboration is necessary to carry out the plans that are made in the different groups, as they will have to divide the budget. It is not possible to increase funding on education as well as on defence

¹⁶ <http://www.fairvote.org/why-approval-voting-is-unworkable-in-contested-elections>
<http://lookingatdemocracy.org/submissions/14935-the-united-states-needs-approval-voting>

¹⁷ <https://hetnieuwekiezen.nl/#het-experiment>

as well as on refugee sheltering and so on, there simply is not enough budget for that. In order to find a balance and divide the budget equally, an exchange of plans and ideas is called for and this is not incorporated in this system.

5.7 Constituency voting system¹⁸

The district system is a system in which the country is divided in two or more districts. In every district there is at least one representative. There are two options to determine who the representatives will be. The first one is by using a plurality system, such as FPTP (first-past-the-post) voting, where the candidate with the majority vote wins. The second option is the proportional representation system, which is used if there are more than one representative per district. The district system has been used in the Netherlands around 1850.

This system has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of this system is that the connection between the voters and the representatives is very strong, as a representative has a direct connection to his or her district and is able to defend the interests of his or her district. Another advantage of this system is that every part of the country is represented.

The connection between a representative and his or her district can also be a disadvantage, as the representative might put the interests of the district before the interests of the rest of the country. Add to that, that dividing the districts evenly is really complicated and almost undoable. Even when there is a way to divide the country in equal districts, the number of inhabitants will be changing all the time due to new construction and mobility.

¹⁸ <https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp1x09/districtenstelsel>

Chapter 6 Testing: Which alternatives solve the problems

In Chapter 5 (prototyping phase) we have identified several suitable solutions for decreasing voters' dissatisfaction by changing the Dutch voting system. In the current Chapter, our goal is to test the solutions we identified in the prototyping phase. This test consists of two steps. First we will test the solutions to the list of causes of voters' dissatisfaction forming the frame of reference we developed in the empathizing phase (Chapter 1). In the second step we will perform a reality check: do the solutions have any major disadvantages that may cause new problems?

This Chapter is partially based on our own thinking, but also on an interview with Edward Brüheim who is a senior legal counsel in 'de Kiesraad' (the voting council).

6.1 Testing to our frame of reference

In Chapter 1, we developed our frame of reference. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this is based on both research online and the survey on dissatisfaction. The problems mentioned in our frame of reference are based on what makes voters dissatisfied in our current system. We identified the following causes of dissatisfaction:

1. There are a lot of different parties voters agree on in different areas, but they don't agree on everything with one party.
2. The composition of the Second Chamber does not reflect the composition of groups in society.
3. The large number of parties leads to strategic voting.
4. Politicians are often not clear about what they will do after they are elected since they will always have to make compromises in forming a coalition. This makes it difficult to make a voting choice.
5. Politicians make promises they cannot sustain because of coalition negotiations.
6. Voting decisions are hard to make due to the large number of (small) parties and the lack of voting education.
7. The large number of (small) parties and consequently lengthy coalition forming processes make the country government less efficient.

Now we want to test our solutions designed in chapter five on our frame of reference. This is done in the table and text below.

	Disapproval and Approval voting	Alternative voting	Coalition voting	Lottery	Approval voting	'Het nieuwe kiezen'	Constituency voting system
1		+/-	+		+	++	
2		-		++			+
3	++	+	++	++	-	++	
4			++	++		+	
5		++	++	++	++	++	
6			++	-			
7	-	++	+	++		+	++
___+	1	4	10	9	2	8	3

For the first problem - voters agree with a lot of different parties in different areas - the solution must involve voting for multiple parties in order to solve the problem. We found that the voting system that suits best to solve this problem is 'Het nieuwe kiezen', as this system allows voters to vote for different ideas from different parties. Then there are some systems that solve this problem partially. These are the systems that allow voters to vote for multiple parties but will not allow voters to combine the plans from different parties. Systems that let voters vote for multiple parties are Alternative voting, Coalition voting and approval voting. Alternative voting, however, also results in one winner. You can vote for different parties, but eventually those parties will never combine their ideas because only one party governs.

The solution to the second problem - not every group in society is represented proportionally - would require to stimulate every group in society to take part in politics and to contribute representatives. One of the solutions, lottery, fully solves this problem. In lottery, everyone has an equal chance to become a representative. The constituency voting system solves this problem to a certain extent. When representatives are geographically equally elected, this will most likely result in social diversity among representatives. The alternative vote makes this problem worse because there will only be one party governing, and therefore minorities will most likely not be represented.

The third problem - strategic voting - has two causes. The first one is the number of small parties that have a small chance of meeting the electoral quota. People might agree with these smaller parties but still don't vote for the party of preference because their vote will not make a difference in the final outcome. The other cause is a result of the wish voters have that a certain party does not win. People will vote for a large or opposite party in order to counterbalance the party they don't want to win. In order to solve this problem, a solution must be found that will prevent voters from strategic voting for both reasons. Disapproval and Approval voting might stop people from strategic voting because they won't feel the need to vote for a certain party to prevent another party from winning. This way, they can immediately vote against the party that they don't want to win. This solution does not, however, solve the other part of the problem, as voters still have to pick just one party to vote in favor of. Voters who would normally vote for a bigger party because they fear that a vote for a small party will not show results will keep doing this. Another system that solves this problem partially, is the Alternative Vote. In this system people's votes will never go to waste due to parties that don't meet the electoral quota. If you vote for a smaller party that does not meet this quota, your vote will go to the party you ranked second. It does not completely prevent voters from voting strategically, because there exists a chance that only their first ranked choices will be counted. Voters might vote for a larger party first because they want that party to meet the 50% first. Coalition voting also solves this problem. The 'yes' or 'no' votes already solves strategic voting, because you can both cast a disapproval vote as a vote for every party you agree on. With the lottery system this problem will completely disappear as people will not even have to vote. Another system that will solve this problem is 'Het nieuwe kiezen'. This system does not even require voters to vote for one or more parties, it just requires them to vote for ideas. Voters will never vote for an idea that they do not agree with and thus will not vote strategically. A system that should solve this problem in theory is Approval voting, as it allows people to vote for multiple parties. Approval voting, however, is extremely vulnerable to strategic voting in actual practice because voters will figure out that it is more effective to vote for one candidate instead of multiple candidates.

The solutions that solve the fourth problem - politicians are often not clear about what they will do after they are elected - should force politicians to be honest and realistic about their plans. Coalition voting fully solves this problem because it forces parties to reconcile before elections. Politicians will have to be honest and make compromises before elections. Lottery solves this problem as well, because there will not be elections. A solution that solves a part of this problem is 'Het nieuwe kiezen'. Parties have to make concrete plans on every topic in order to gain votes for their ideas. They will be, however, very likely to sugarcoat their plans to gain more votes.

Problem five - politicians make promises they cannot sustain because of coalition negotiations - should either be solved by a decrease in a number of parties, or by a possibility to vote for more than one party. In the Alternative voting you can, and must, vote for more than one party. This forces the voter to look into all parties in order to rank them. The same goes for Coalition voting, Approval voting and 'het Nieuwe Kiezen'. Within these systems, voters are also able to vote for multiple parties. Lottery also solves this problem because voting does not have to be done.

The sixth problem - voting decisions are hard to make - can only be solved by Coalition Voting. Voters have direct influence on how coalitions are formed by voting for all majority coalitions the voter approves on. Lottery makes this problem of not having influence on how coalitions are formed worse. With lottery, the voter does not only have no influence on how coalitions are formed, but does not even have any say in who will be part of the Second Chamber.

The last problem - the inefficiency of the country government - requires a solution that either decreases the number of parties, or does not require a coalition or makes the coalition forming process shorter. A system that will make this problem even worse is Disapproval and Approval voting as it will increase the number of small parties. This will happen because disapproval votes will mostly be brought out to larger parties since they are more 'dangerous' to the opposition. Smaller parties will get less disapproval votes and as a result they will get relatively large and therefore unavoidable to form coalitions with. There will have to be more (smaller) parties within one coalition, which will make the process even lengthier and more complicated. Alternative voting will solve this problem, as the counting process is repeated until there is a winner that has a majority of the votes. This means there will not be a coalition that has to be formed. This problem can be solved by introducing the lottery system as well. This system does not require coalition forming and thus will make the lengthy forming process disappear. The constituency voting system also solves this problem, because as soon as the representatives have been elected, no coalition will have to be formed anymore. Coalition voting only solves the problem partially. It does not decrease the number of parties that will be in the coalition forming process and the two voting rounds will take a long time. The coalition forming itself, on the other hand, will go faster as it will be based on what the voters want and will not be done completely by the politicians. 'Het nieuwe kiezen' also solves this problem partially. Within this system, there will not be formed a coalition, so you would say it will not take much time for the government to 'get started'. Nonetheless, there will have to be formed work groups, consisting of different parties, to carry out plans. The forming of these workgroups might take a while. This system will, instead of getting rid of the long coalition forming process, replace this with a workgroup forming process.

6.2 Reality check

Subchapter 6.1 showed us how different voting systems could solve the problems that we found in Chapter 1. Based on Subchapter 6.1 we can pinpoint a solution that will solve most of the problems of our current system. This frame of reference only takes problems of our current system into account, but does not portray the requirements for a perfect voting system. To include all possible problems we will be looking at if these systems would work when put into practice. We will sum up any disadvantages that may cause new problems that are not included in the frame of reference.

Disapproval and Approval voting

- Moderate parties have an advantage over extremer parties because the number of negative votes will be smaller.

Alternative vote

- The eventual winner may have been selected in multiple counting rounds which means he or she may not be every voter's first choice.
- People who want to express their support for one candidate or party in specific, can not do so with this system.
- The method is too complicated to understand for voters
- Counting the votes is very complex and difficult.

Coalition voting

- The complexity of the CV system

Lottery

- Randomly chosen citizens are not educated in politics
- Since there are no elections and representatives don't have the need to be liked, they are likely to put their own interests before the interests of the rest of the country
- Not every citizen will be willing to enter the world of politics
- The danger of frauds and idiots getting power
- Corruption

Approval voting

- It is vulnerable to strategic voting.

'Het nieuwe kiezen'

- It will result in unrealizable plans.
- There is no way to divide the budget over all plans.

Constituency voting system

- Representatives might put the interests of their district before the interests of the country
- Dividing the country in districts evenly is complicated.

6.3 Which alternatives are the best solutions?

In this paragraph we will take both the results we found in 6.1 and in 6.2 into account. We will discuss the most significant pros and cons of every system. Based on that, we will conclude whether these solution would work in the Dutch political system.

Some of the possible solutions prototyped in chapter 5 do not seem like a good idea when looking at paragraph 6.2.

Looking at our frame of reference, there are three major winners: Coalition Voting, Lottery and 'Het Nieuwe Kiezen'. When looking at the reality check, however, Lottery does not seem the best possible solution. This system bears too many risks. It is irresponsible to put uneducated, randomly chosen citizens in charge of a country, this could lead to corruption and self-centered leaders who put their own interests first.

Although Disapproval and Approval Voting will prevent voters from voting strategically, it does not give a good reflection of the voters' support. Additionally, it gives moderate parties an advantage over extreme parties because extreme parties are more likely to get a disapproval vote. This inaccurate reflection of the voters' support is an inevitable disadvantage that makes this system unsuitable. This inaccurate reflection of extreme voters will cause dissatisfaction among these voters.

The Alternative Vote system is a system that is well constructed but just not suitable for the Dutch political system as it only allows one party to win. The idea that one party would represent the entire Dutch population seems unlikely. For this reason, the Alternative Vote system is not our perfect solution.

'Het nieuwe kiezen' seems like a good solution, but the system that Rudy van Belkom suggests is incomplete. His proposal does not include a way to divide the budget between the different groups. To make this system work, we would have to think of a way to divide the budget equally between the different groups. After having been brainstorming about possible ways to do this, we could not think of any solution that would solve this and would not at the same time affect the fundamental philosophy behind this system. These solutions would just reintroduce the problems that this system would otherwise solve.

The constituency system is a system that has been used before in the Netherlands. It could work and does not show any major disadvantages. Looking at the frame of reference we don't find the constituency system solving most of the current problems. Besides, it will be very complicated to put into practice.

Approval voting does not score too high, but still positive on our frame of reference. This means it does solve some of our current problems. The problem with Approval voting is the way it works in practice. Once people find out that voting for one instead of for multiple

parties is more beneficial for the party of preference, the advantages mentioned in our frame of reference are cancelled.

The winner of our frame of reference and our check against reality is Coalition Voting. The largest problem with this system is the complexity. It does, however, solve a lot of problems like vagueness by politicians, strategic voting and hard voting choices. We think that this system could be a great solution to our problems.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In this thesis we did research within the broad and complicated world of politics. In Chapter two we started off by looking at the three major elements involved in our political system: the voters, the politicians and the voting system. After conducting a survey on dissatisfaction among voters and doing research online, we found that our political system is not flawless. The major problems we found in this chapter formed our frame of reference, which we could later on use to test our solutions on. We identified the following causes of dissatisfaction:

1. There are a lot of different parties voters agree on in different areas, but they don't agree on everything with one party.
2. The composition of the Second Chamber does not reflect the composition of groups in society.
3. The large number of parties leads to strategic voting.
4. Politicians are often not clear about what they will do after they are elected since they will always have to make compromises in forming a coalition. This makes it difficult to make a voting choice.
5. Politicians make promises they cannot sustain because of coalition negotiations.
6. Voting decisions are hard to make due to the large number of (small) parties and the lack of voting education.
7. The large number of (small) parties and consequently lengthy coalition forming processes make the country government less efficient.

After doing research on the three elements (the voters, the politicians and the voting system), we decided that we wanted to solve the dissatisfaction by changing the voting system because this seemed to be able to solve most of the problems found in Chapter two. Going into Chapter three, we developed our research question to:

How can we decrease voters' dissatisfaction by changing the Dutch voting system?

After testing seven possible solutions to our frame of reference, we found that we also had to test these solutions against reality. Some of the solutions solved a lot of our current problems, but caused even more or larger problems than our current voting system. These problems came to the surface in our test against reality.

The winner in the frame of reference was Coalition voting. Coalition voting solved every problem except for number two. The composition of society groups is not reflected better in the Second Chamber because of this change in the voting system. All the other causes of dissatisfaction, however, were at least partially solved by this solution.

Chapter 8 Reflection

8.1 Error analysis

In this chapter, we want to address the shortcomings and limitations of our research. While we found a good solution, we would not want to say that the method to come to this solution cannot be criticised.

First of all, we only prototyped seven possible voting systems in chapter four, while we found seventeen possible solutions in chapter three. If we would have prototyped all seventeen, another system might have turned out to be better than the coalition voting system. Although we did try the best solutions to be among the seven prototyped, we aren't sure whether there might be a better solution among the other ten.

Another problem with our research is that we can't know how these systems would work out in real life. The problems they solve (in the frame of reference) and the practical disadvantages they bring (in the check against reality) are based on logical thinking. There might be some disadvantages we overlooked or some problems they would solve in reality. A system's advantages and disadvantages can only fully be discovered, once put into practice.

In the second chapter, we created our frame of reference to test all our possible solutions. This frame consists of seven problems that Dutch voters have with our current voting system. These problems are all very different from each other and some of them are experienced as more disturbing than others. We did not, however, take the difference in significance into account. We considered all problems to be of equal importance while voters may find some problems more important than others.

Lastly, there are some things that we could have done differently regarding the survey we conducted. One thing we should have done, was clarifying the type of election that we were doing research on, namely the elections for the Second Chamber of parliament. The fact that we did not do this, may have caused deviant results. Additionally, this survey was taken by approximately 40 voters. Although the persons that took our survey are from different places and different layers of society, the number of persons that took our survey is not big enough to represent Dutch society.

8.2 General reflection

We started our research with the problem of dissatisfaction among voters. In chapter two, we pointed out the problems voters experience within the current voting system. The cause of their dissatisfaction might, however, be different from what they think themselves. If this would be the case, the solution to this dissatisfaction might lie elsewhere as well. This would mean that changing the voting system may not solve the problems that voters are experiencing. Next to this, there are some practical problems that occur when changing the voting system.

First of all, introducing a new voting system will cost a lot of money and create a lot of work for the government. The citizens will have to pay for this change through taxation. This might cause even more dissatisfaction. One may wonder whether all this money and work is worth it.

Secondly, if the government feels that changing the voting system is necessary and that it is worth the money and work it will cost, there is still a big obstacle in the way. To change the whole voting system, it is mandatory to change the electoral law. The current electoral law entered into force in 1989, and there have only been made two small amendments since. Changing the voting system completely, will require major adjustments. We cannot foresee the consequences this will have, as it has never been done before. Furthermore, introducing Coalition voting as the new voting system would even require a change in the constitution, because voters would be voting for parties instead of persons. Changing the constitution is a very lengthy and complicated process, with small chances of success, unless there is broad agreement concerning the need to do so.

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