

THE REFERENDUM: IDEAS AND EXPERIENCE IN THE NETHERLANDS

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1. Referenda

In recent years, the idea of introducing the referendum in the Dutch political system has attracted more and more attention. The growing frustration among "action groups" in the field of e.g. nuclear energy, their use of civil disobedience as a last resort, and the government's need for voluntary compliance with its policies has given new weight to the desire for a new input channel into the political system, i.e. the referendum. Political parties like D'66 as well as journalists and scholars started a discussion about the relative merits of the referendum in the Netherlands¹. The referendum is to be distinguished from another input mechanism which has been introduced in the Netherlands recently, i.e. the inspraak, organized meetings where the authorities inform the citizens about their plans in a specific field (e.g. housing, education) and where everyone present can have a "say" by stating his opinions and/or objections. Whereas inspraak implies an exchange of information and opinions prior to decision-making, a referendum requires a specific policy question which is put before the electorate - the electorate decides which alternative will become official policy.

The discussion about introducing referenda in the Netherlands, will have to deal with the variety of alternatives presenting themselves on the basis of experience abroad e.g. the distinction between referenda from above and referenda from below (people's initiatives), referenda on global system characteristics (constitution, leadership) and referenda on specific matters of policy (cf. Norway's E.E.C. referendum, Sweden's nuclear energy referendum).² Also, one will have to consider the specific (dis)advantages of referenda, like the supposedly businesslike (*zakelijk*) character of referenda (which is probably a myth), the supposed absence of party politics in referenda, or the highly democratic nature of the referendum.

As for this last quality, the democratic nature of a referendum will depend on the extent to which it creates additional possibilities for participation as well as opposition.³ On the one hand, a referendum will provide an additional opportunity for citizens to express their views on a matter, but on the other hand the exact content of the question(s) put before the people will be decided upon by a small elite group, either in the government or among the initiators. The substance of the referendum remains out of reach for the common citizen. Truman⁴, dealing with referenda within organisations (e.g. trade unions), considers the referendum as an effective way for an active minority to exercise central control over decision-making, using democratic legitimacy to its own advantage.

Also, referenda cannot be said to favour either leftist or rightist policies.⁵ They reflect prevailing public opinion at a certain moment, and this is rarely a consistently rightist or leftist opinion. Referenda do

seem to be a disturbance for politicians, however. Governments will resort to referenda only after other channels have failed to bring a workable solution and when it expects a favourable result from the referendum, in terms of substantial policy views or in terms of responsibilities and legitimacy. Referenda require the citizen to choose between extremes and they tend to divide the community into "yes" and "no", into winners and losers. This divisive effect is considered to be a disadvantage. On the other hand, in some cases (e.g. questions of national self-determination, the drawing of boundaries), it is better to have some decision, supported by most citizens, than no decision at all. Frequent referenda about "regular" policy issues, as the Swiss case suggests, do not have a strong mobilizing effect on voters (cf. the low turnout) and do not coexist with a strong party system based on ideologies. In the case of occasional referenda about "special" dramatic issues the referendum may serve as an instrument 1) to bring in protest groups and protest voters 2) to draw attention to certain neglected issues and 3) to remove an issue from the political agenda after other solutions have proved unworkable.

It will be clear that the form, the operation and the consequences of a referendum will be affected by several factors, such as the nature of the issues and the interests involved, the legal status of the referendum (consultative or decisive, exceptional or "routine"), the level of education, regional or ethnic disparities etc. However, referenda as such, are not restricted to certain types of society. Ancient Rome, Swiss local communities, the French Fifth Republic, the Iranian Islamic Republic, Sweden and Canada have all known their referenda. Before introducing referenda in the Netherlands, therefore, one will have to look for experiences with referenda in circumstances similar to Dutch society. Of course, the Dutch will look for comparable experiences abroad, but they will also have to look at home, i.e. to the referendum in the Dutch countryside, as it has been operating since the beginning of this century.

2. Dutch referenda in the reallocation of land: "schappen en kavels".

Even in a small country like the Netherlands there seems to be a gap of mutual ignorance between urban and rural politics. Urban-based "action groups" are thinking of referenda as a new way to solve their problems, but they seem to overlook the experience with referenda which has accumulated in rural politics, where the reallocation of land has been a major issue during the 20th century. In order to deal with the fragmentation of holdings and in order to improve the economic viability of the farms, reallocation schemes were designed, which were presented to the landowners for approval by referendum.

Of course, this referendum is to be seen in a quite specific context and, after going into its actual operation, one will have to consider if conclusions can be drawn for other situations as well. For Dutch rural politics two elements seem to be of specific importance, i.e. the traditional "polder democracy" (waterschap) and, secondly, government policy in the field of agriculture.

2.1. Dutch farmers' democracy.

Local politics in the pre-19th century Low Countries show a wide variety of governmental forms and even in post-Napoleonic days, when legislation had been modeled on French lines, the Dutch constitution respected the autonomy of provinces and municipalities, so that local differences could persist.

Still, some clear lines can be drawn in the development of rural political institutions from the Middle Ages until the present. In those parts of the Low Countries where feudalism could not establish strong roots, e.g. because of recurring internal conflicts or because of geographical obstacles to permanent dominance, rural society was characterized by "farmers' freedom" and private property.⁶ This was the case especially in Holland and the western part of Utrecht, from the beginning of the 13th century on. The "seignorial prerogatives" were weak, the united free farmers were strong and their corporations, the polders and (hoog-)heemraadschappen possessed wide and autonomous powers. There were few really large aristocratic landowners - unlike elsewhere in the Low Countries - even though the distribution of land was far from equal: the best, most fertile, land was owned by church and nobility, and hardly more than 50% of the land was owned by those living and working on it. The decisive factor from a political viewpoint, however, was the inability of the privileged classes to subject the peasantry. Thus, there was no coherent peasantry, confronted by powerful ruling groups, but a more open, individualistic community. Rich farmers owned land and farmed parts of it out to others and poor peasants were landless, but for their existence they depended upon their fellow-peasants rather than upon church or nobility. The spirit of independence⁷ was also reflected in the rural corporations (waterschappen), founded in order to deal with the water dikes, roads, bridges, pumping mills, etc.)

In the villages, being the centres of rural society, conditions were different: there the influence of regional nobility or the urban elite was felt more clearly. The autonomy of the farmers/peasants was limited by their dependence on the villages for certain needs;⁸ the village chief (schout), who possessed both judicial and executive powers for the village and the surrounding rural area, held the key position in this tug-of-war between regional elites and autonomous farmers.

The farmers had one obvious interest in common, i.e. controlling the water; from the 13th century on, they founded corporations (waterschappen) to take care of this interest.

This private interest served as the starting-point and the extent of governmental activity varied greatly. In some cases, mills were operated on a purely private basis (private associations); in most cases a common authority was established which would make and enforce its own decisions. Waterschappen were large in number (Friesland alone had more than 300 of them in the 19th century, Noord-Brabant 500, Zuid-Holland and North-Holland

more than 200 each), but small in scale, at least until this century. They were free to make their own internal regulations; even today they are subject only to provincial supervision and there is no national law dealing with their internal structure.⁹ Therefore, names and formal design of waterschappen vary considerably, but several structural patterns can still be found.

One common characteristic in waterschappen is the landowners' franchise. Every landowner in a certain area (e.g. polder) is entitled to vote on the basis of his material interest, i.e. corresponding to the size of his holdings. No interest other than "landed interest" makes a person (man or woman) fit for full membership of this rural corporation. Everyday management of the waterschap's business lies in the hands of a small governing board. This board (sometimes called the dijkstoel) is presided by the schout (also called watergraaf or dijkgraaf, i.e. the man acting on behalf of the count (graaf) in matters of water & dikes); the other members of the board, numbering about five, are called (hoog-)heemraden or dijksgedeputeerden (dike-deputies).

This governing board needs the approval of the general meeting for its budget, the appointment of officers etc.; the general meeting consists of all the landowners (called ingelanden) in the area. In the larger waterschap areas, intermediate bodies were created (hoofd-ingelanden) supervising the governing board on behalf of the general meeting.

The members of the governing board are nominated or recommended by or on behalf of the general meeting. In some cases the general meeting appoints the governors by itself, but in those waterschappen bordering on the sea or the main rivers, the Dutch national government appoints them: in those cases, a national interest is involved, justifying national interference with the local affairs of the waterschap.

Most landowners in the larger waterschap areas (e.g. the ones including Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leiden, The Hague and Delft) are hardly involved in waterschap matters except by paying taxes to the waterschap and by voting in the election for hoofdingelanden every four years. The farmer-landowners have a direct franchise, the non-farmer landowners (e.g. urban house-owners, industrial landowners) often elect their representative in an indirect way, i.e. the municipal administration (mayor and aldermen) select the non-agrarian representatives. Only recently, the direct franchise for non-agrarian owners has been introduced on an optional basis. Electoral competition is further restricted because a vote from the landowners is taken only if the nomination by the governing board is opposed by a second (or third etc.) nominee. In most cases no vote is taken at all and all the ingelanden have to do is pay their taxes.

In those cases when elections are actually held, electoral turnout is rather low, especially among the non-agrarian landowners.

Membership and franchise in the waterschappen are based upon material interest, i.e. the possession of land. It can, of course, be argued that non-landowners, or indeed all the inhabitants of the area, also have a vital interest in the waterschap activities e.g. the prevention of floods.

However, the corporation's task is defined as "taking care of the interests of the land" (the soil), and therefore only those people entitled to the land qualify as members, regardless of sex or nationality. Also, the more land one owns, the more votes one has. In order to have 1 vote, a certain minimum is required: sometimes 1/4 ha., in most cases 1 ha. - for non-agrarian owners a minimum amount of annual taxation. Large landowners, however, can never obtain more than 10 votes - this rule prevents a few large landowners from dominating the waterschap.

The traditional waterschap corporations provide very interesting material for political research. They are an example of traditional rural democracy (contrary to the idea that "city air makes free"), where the principles of "no taxation without representation", of "private interest qualifies a man for public participation", and "party-less democracy" were carried out in practice.

One may wonder, however, if these corporations can be more than a relic of the past as they are confronted with 20th century developments. First, there is a strong tendency toward unification and merger of waterschappen. The size of the waterschappen still varies greatly (the largest, Noordhollands Noorderkwartier, comprises an area of 142,000 ha., the smallest only a few ha.), but in the 20th century many small waterschappen have merged, especially after major floods (e.g. 1916, 1953). In the 19th century there were more than 1500 waterschappen, in 1977 there were less than 700 left. Major disasters and the pursestrings of the central government (the Ministry of Transport and Waterworks, which subsidizes the construction of dikes, bridges etc.) have stimulated this process. Central government considers¹⁰ the waterschappen as strictly technical (functional) bodies where specific business interests (owners and users of land) are to be represented and whose internal regulations should be standardized by national legislation. Still, the rising tide of "democratization" did not leave the quiet world of the waterschappen undisturbed. From the 1930's on, there has been controversy about the franchise for tenant-farmers, who have a strong business interest in waterschap matters. Although legislation on this point has not yet been passed, there is a consensus now on the right to waterschap membership for the tenants; however, their franchise also will make them liable for taxation - "no representation without taxation." Secondly, there is a desire for participation by the non-agrarian owners in waterschap elections. The option of direct voting by non-agrarian owners was introduced recently, and the results are rather ambiguous. On the one hand, the electoral turnout among the farmers is much higher than among the non-agrarians, but when official candidates are opposed by a second nominee, this nominee very often belongs to the non-agrarian group ("import" groups living in newly-built parts of villages or small towns).

Finally, the purely technical, functional character of the waterschap is seriously questioned. As more and more people feel that the condition of land and water (=environment) is a vital public interest for everyone in society, the waterschap is considered not only from an agrarian business

interest, but also from a wider view of the public interest. In parliament, the leftist-democratic parties (Partij van de Arbeid, Democraten' 66) have asked for a representation of "general interests" (e.g. political parties) in the governing boards of the waterschappen, aside from the agrarian business interest -- both types of interests should have the same number of seats.

The Minister of Transport and Waterworks has not consented to this idea; however, he has proposed direct elections with an open nomination system for the waterschappen, to be combined with the periodical elections for municipal boards or the provincial assemblies.

2.2. Land reform by referendum: the reallocation.

Whereas the waterschap corporations demonstrate how traditional small-scale democracy is submerged in a process of administrative rationalization and large-scale democratization, the agricultural policy of the Dutch government shows a different picture, i.e. centralist policymaking from the outset, using a traditional democratic device (the referendum) in its implementation. Dutch agricultural policy, as it developed since the end of the 19th century, has been characterized by centralist control. A central ministry, with its branches in every corner of the countryside, well-informed about local conditions, implements government policy by means of persuasion, education, agricultural extension and scientific research. Decisions are made in the Hague (especially since the establishment of the E.E.C.), but the ministry is closely acquainted with specific and varying conditions in the countryside. Agrarian interest groups have adapted themselves to this situation: they operate at the central level and they give priority to information, consultation and compromise rather than to controversy and opposition. These groups, representing the agrarian professions (divided along religious lines), have been recognized by the government and they cooperate officially with the ministry through a corporatist institution, the Landbouwschap, where all matters of agricultural policy are discussed. The agricultural unions have thus obtained a considerable influence upon government policy, but they have also become co-responsible for these policies in the eyes of the farmers. A major issue of agricultural policy is the need for restructuring, in order to make farms more competitive in the international agricultural economy. Farms are "restructured" either by closing down unprofitable farms or by reallocating landholdings, so that fragmentation is undone, land holdings are located next to a road, well-drained etc. Reallocation is achieved on a trading basis: every landowner will get out as much land as he has put in, and for the construction of new roads, waterways etc. a proportional levy is taken from all.

Theoretically, land reallocation can be achieved on a voluntary basis, i.e. when every farmer expects a future benefit from the operation; in practice, however, one "staunch farmer" can frustrate such a voluntary reallocation. Most if not all reallocations therefore take place on a legal basis. According to the law on reallocation the Ministry of Agriculture can (and does) take the initiative, designs the reallocation scheme. the

provincial administration gives it approval, and the landowners consent by referendum before the scheme is put into operation.

Land reallocation in the Netherlands started around 1910. A private agrarian association (Koninklijk Nederlands Landbouw Comité) propagated the idea on scientific grounds, and the first reallocations were achieved on a completely voluntary basis (private agreements among landowners). Since a legal basis proved to be indispensable, however, a Reallocation Act was passed in 1924. The reallocation scheme, after being approved by the provincial administration, needed the approval of a so-called double majority by referendum, i.e. a majority of the votes cast and a majority of land (ha. represented) in the area. The policy was widely propagated through agricultural extension services as well as private organizations; two private companies (Heidemaatschappij and Grontmij), took up the actual implementation of the schemes. In order to facilitate reallocations, the law was changed in 1938: the double majority was no longer required, and a single majority of consent by referendum (either a majority of the votes or a majority of land area). The administrative expenses and the costs of implementation were all heavily subsidized by the government.

was sufficient

After World War II (food scarcity and famine 1944-45) the interest of increasing agrarian production was given almost absolute priority; land reallocation had to proceed more quickly and the Reallocation Act was changed once more. Single majority approval by referendum was maintained, but those landowners who did not cast their vote were supposed to have agreed with the reallocation scheme. New lands were opened up, farms were rebuilt, farm holdings were expanded, new roads and waterways were constructed -- the countryside was thoroughly transformed by "restructuring" and "reallocation".

This policy, however, ran into difficulties. People in the countryside, whose interests were deeply affected, felt themselves unable to do anything about their problems. The agrarian interest groups, narrowly involved and cooperating with government policy, increasingly lost touch with their constituents. The referendum on the reallocation schemes did not offer an effective channel of influence for the landowners, now that the chances of disapproval were almost nil because of the "no vote = yes" rule.

Sometimes these feelings of impotence and indifference turned into protest,¹¹ especially among those who feared they would be "restructured away". In 1946 an association was formed to promote "Farmers' Freedom", resisting all governmental interference in agriculture. It found many followers among the small farmers in the eastern and central parts of the Netherlands, and its leader, Hendrik Koekoek, became a symbol of agrarian protest. Koekoek founded a political party, the Boerenpartij, in 1958, and in 1963 he was elected to the Dutch parliament. In 1967 the Boerenpartij obtained seven seats in the Tweede Kamer, which it has kept till this day; in 1981 it changed its name into Rechtse Volkspartij (Rightist People's Party). At the provincial level, its strength lies in the provincial assemblies of Gelderland (Center) and Noord-Brabant (South).

The Boerenpartij ("anti-dirigist", "poujadist") presented itself as an anti-system party. It mobilized its followers for "direct action", blocking

roads, sabotaging the sale of farms under execution for tax debts, etc. and directed itself against the corporatist landbouwschap. Sometimes it also worked against reallotment schemes by mobilizing people to vote against them, by disturbing the general meetings (the referendum on re-allotment was held in a physical meeting of all landowners) or by instigating riots. As a result, some rather large schemes (Tubbergen, Overijssel and Rijsbergen, Noord-Brabant) were frustrated.

Against this background of growing dissatisfaction, academic and political discussion about legislative change began. Four academic associations, including the Association for Agrarian Law, established a "Working Group on the Reallotment Act" in 1964, which reported in 1968 on the pro's and con's of this piece of legislation. In the ensuing academic discussion about the Working Group's Report the criticism à la Boerenpartij did not find much sympathy. Some lawyers wanted to abolish the referendum completely, arguing that the voters let private interests or sympathies prevail over the public interest of the scheme or voted on the basis of complete ignorance, ergo the referendum is disqualified.

Others, however, were strongly in favour of the referendum: the landowners' interests are strongly affected, they bear considerable expenses for the reallotment operation, and in order to implement the scheme effectively, one needs an insight into the ~~the~~ feelings of the landowners. Psychological arguments in favour of the referendum prevailed: there is "democratization" in many parts of society (schools, factories, churches) so agriculture cannot isolate itself, and above all the referendum gives people the impression that they are performing the reallotment themselves. This impression, this feeling is indispensable for the effective implementation of the scheme.¹² Aside from that, the authorities need more detailed information about the specific objections against a scheme.

Several legislative improvements were suggested on the basis of the Werkgroep discussion. A minimum land-holding should be introduced as a title to vote (cf. the waterschappen) to prevent very small landowners, who don't have much real interest in the scheme, from voting down the proposal for "fickle" reasons. Also the tenant farmers should have the right to vote, since they are deeply interested and because they have to pay for the reallotment operation. The experts could not agree on the "no vote = yes" rule, however. It was argued that people agreeing with the scheme feel much less compelled to express their feelings publicly than those opposed to the scheme; in any case a secret vote (e.g. in writing) was preferred to a general meeting where all those present show their views in public. Also, the need for a more intensive contact and an expression of specific objections and arguments by the landowners was widely felt.¹³

The Werkgroep's report and the expert discussion carried considerable weight with the Ministry, and in 1972 new legislation was put before Parliament. In 1974 both Chambers approved a revision of the Reallotment Act without a vote being taken - only the Boerenpartij declared itself against the new Act. The present Act has been changed in several respects:¹⁴ a) the "no vote = yes" rule has been abolished: only the votes

actually cast can carry weight; b) the referendum takes place by written ballot, voting booth etc. and the public, physical general meeting has been abolished; c) the tenant farmers have the right to vote both in their capacity as individuals and in their capacity of representing a certain amount of land (hectares); d) numerous meetings are organized by the authorities, where views from the public can be expressed; these meetings take place in the initial (planning) stage, as well as in the referendum stage (shortly before the referendum), and also in the implementation stage (concerning technical details, roads, bridges, etc.).

The procedure for re-allotment has become more time-consuming, more democratic (in terms of participation and opposition), and as a result the pace of reallocation has slowed down considerably and the number of rejected schemes has increased. Whereas the average reallocated area amounted to 10,000 ha. during the fifties, increasing to an annual average of 55,000 ha. during the sixties, the seventies show a decline to 38,000 ha. (1973), 49,000 ha. (1974), reaching an absolute low in 1975: 22,000 ha. and 1976: 12,000 ha. Afterwards, re-allotment gradually regained the level of the sixties (1979: 53,000 ha.).

However, reallocation increasingly takes place on a small scale in the form of voluntary agreement among landowners, subsidized by the government.

2.3. Recent developments.

In the field of Dutch rural administration, waterschap corporations and agricultural policy are undergoing parallel experiences today and the institutions, it seems, are converging rather than growing apart.

First, there is the increasing role of non-agrarian interest in the countryside. The number of farms and farm workers is decreasing, the villages and small towns are increasingly "suburbanized", and the strong feelings of non-agrarian groups about matters of "ecology" make themselves felt (and heard) in the rural policy-making process. Rural administration becomes increasingly complicated, at the local as well as the provincial and national level.

At the national level the need to coordinate the various institutions dealing with rural matters has been realized for a long time. The Central Commission for Reallocations (Centrale Cultuurtechnische Commissie), which is in charge of planning and designing land allotment schemes, provides the official channel for several ministries and private organisations to have their say in reallocation policy.

The C.C. is presided over by a top official from the Ministry of Agriculture (directeur-general landinrichting). Its members represent other ministries (Interior, Culture and Recreation, Finance, Transport and Waterworks, Housing and Physical Planning, and sometimes Economic Affairs for non-agrarian business interests and Defense for military needs), as well as private interest groups (the so-called "officially recognized associations representing the agrarian profession") as well as conservationist groups.

The C.C. is thus a "mixed" body representing both official and

non-official interests. Recently it has been proposed to include representatives of municipal administration (the Association of Dutch Municipalities) and the waterschappen (the Union of Waterschappen) in the C.C. so that the complete network of institutions and groups interested in reallocation policy will be present in this major decision-making body.

In the legislative field, the interrelatedness of all aspects of rural life, agrarian as well as non-agrarian, has become obvious, and it is felt that the current network of laws and regulations has become a cobweb and a hindrance more than a help. Therefore, a drastic overhauling of land legislation is in the offing. An official paper has been published ("Relatienota"), which spells out the relationship among the different aspects of rural legislation, as they are now scattered out in various of regulations, acts etc. 33

The Reallocation Act is doomed to disappear: a new Landinrichtingswet (Land Planning Act) will take its place, integrating land reallocation procedures with procedures of physical planning, housing, industry, infrastructure etc. As far as the waterschappen are concerned, the ministry of Transport and Waterworks will probably remain as the chief supervisor, and its need to coordinate with other ministries in waterschap affairs has always been weaker than in the case of the Ministry of Agriculture in reallocation matters. However, it will become necessary to integrate waterschap matters with the policy for the Environment, for which the Ministry of Health & Environment is responsible.

3. Some concluding remarks.

We have not been able to present more, in this paper, than a brief survey of Dutch rural politics and administration. It should be clear, however, that this field offers several interesting starting-points for the study of democracy, participation and referendum.

As an example of "primary democracy", the traditional waterschap shows some characteristics similar to other examples like the Swiss or American village democracy. The absence of political parties, the use of a general meeting for decision-making, referendum as a frequently used technique inherited from the past, private ownership/interest as a basis for public participation (membership, franchise) -- these traits all offer highly relevant material for further research. 6r

The reallocation referenda have never been highly estimated by any participant in this field of policy-making, and this makes it all the more surprising that, recently, other people in the Netherlands have advocated and highly praised the referendum as an instrument of democracy.

In the present legal procedure for land reallocation, a landowner has three ways of participation at his disposal and the referendum-vote is probably the least effective. First, he is represented by his union or professional organisation in the C.C., where reallocation schemes are prepared and policy decisions are made. This channel offers him an opportunity for influencing decisions at a very early stage, provided he can get in touch with his representative in the C.C. Second, he can attend inspraak meetings, organized by the Preparatory Commission (i.e. a local

committee, set up by the C.C. and the provincial administration, with a "mixed" composition similar to the C.C.) in the preparatory and the immediate pre-referendum stage, or the wensvergadering meeting organized after the referendum, in the implementing stage. Third, he can vote at the referendum on the reallocation scheme.

In terms of "all-or-nothing", the referendum is of course the most effective way to reject or accept the scheme as a whole, but for specific desires and interests it has very little to offer; the voter has no say in the content of the "yes-no" question put before him. For the ~~the~~ C.C.'s decision-makers the inspraak meetings are highly useful, because they give them a detailed insight into the views of those directly involved in the policy implementation. For the farmer, these meetings may have the result he desires (detailed changes in his favour), but he cannot be sure; the wens meeting at the post-referendum stage may help him out.

The first channel could be highly effective, since the average farmer has very little time to ⁶ ~~sapre~~ and because an expert, full-time representative can effectively work for the farmer's interests on his behalf. The representative can do this all the better since he is very close to the ministry and is frequently consulted and well-informed about matters of policy.

However, this brings us back to the dilemma of agricultural interest representation in the Netherlands. Because of their close cooperation with government, the interest groups have obtained a maximum of influence on policy-making, but they also run a high risk of alienating their constituents. This risk might be reduced by the interest groups themselves, but, as things stand now, the additional channels of inspraak meetings and referenda have proved necessary.

Notes

1. Cf. Couwenberg, 1980; the weekly *Intermediair*, which devoted several articles to this topic during 1981; for a more general, scholarly discussion of the referendum see Butler and Ranney, 1978.
2. Cf. Butler and Ranney, 1978.
3. Cf. Dahl's concept of "polyarchy".
4. Truman, 1964, p.136-137, 197-199.
5. Butler and Ranney, 1978, p.224-226.
6. These "modern" traits went hand in hand with a low level of economic and technological development, contrary to the thesis that social/political modernity (democracy) requires a high economic and technological level.

7. Individualism also shows in the commercial activities undertaken by the farmers (selling their products or buying raw material, fodder, fertilizer, etc. on a small scale); even today, the milkman in Holland is called melk-boer and similarly schillenboer (waste food collector), vodden-boer (rag-and-bone man).
8. A.G.N. vol. 7, p.17-18, vol. 5, p.380-382.
9. Schilthuis, 1960, p.5-6, 99-117.
10. Nota-1977 "Naar een nieuw waterschapsbestel".
11. Cf. Dolle, 1979.
12. This view was already expressed by the Minister of Agriculture in 1924, when he presented the Reallotment Act in Parliament.
13. Freseman Gratama, 1963; Wintermans, 1968; Rodrigues Lopes 1969; Dam, 1970; de Visser, 1970.
14. Rodrigues Lopes, 1976; Ruilverkavelingswet-1954 (1978).

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TABLE I

Number of waterschappen in the Netherlands in 1977

Province	<u>Waterschappen</u>
Groningen	112
Friesland	95
Drente	15
Overijssel	9
Gelderland	23
Utrecht	37
Noord-Holland	99
Zuid-Holland	161
Zeeland	29
Noord-Brabant	53
Limburg	7
bi-provincial	<u>38</u>
total number	678