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1 INTRODUCTION

The resounding Dutch 'Nee' to the European Constitutional Treaty came with a singular paradox: the intense debate preceding the referendum vote has made all of us, sceptics and opponents included, a little more European. Since then, soul-searching with regard to the identity, culture, political mission and physical limits of Europe has developed into a permanent exercise. The referendum debate in this respect absorbed, focused and generalized earlier concerns about the Brussels technocracy, the introduction of the euro, suspected cases of fraud by europarlliamentarians, the views of candidate-commissioner Buttiglione on marriage and homosexuality, and the future admission of Turkey. It was recently renewed in the wake of the conflicting reactions by leading European politicians to the 'Danish cartoon crisis' and the Lebanon war, which the Finnish presidency characterized as an 'existential test' for Europe.

What exactly was the 'Nee' directed against? According to some, the referendum debate was not so much about Europe or its proposed Constitution, but about the legitimacy of domestic politics and the performance of the national political elite. The outcome was widely interpreted as a vote of 'no confidence' in the Balkenende government and politics more generally, confirming the existence of a deep rift (the infamous *kloof*) between political professionals and the Dutch people. In this respect, the referendum debate offered a series of proxy or 'placeholder' issues, in which the possible admission of Turkey channeled more general cultural fears about the rise of islam, and the anxiety about the loss of economic and social security was projected on to the controversial introduction of the euro.

The debate about the future of Europe is simultaneously a debate about the future of the Netherlands and Dutch national identity. In our mediatized democracy, existential debates such as these increasingly conform to the pattern of a new political culture, which tends to personalize political issues, to blend politics and entertainment, to emphasize the importance of political style, and to promote the emergence of a new species of political celebrity. Media democracy facilitates new, more direct forms of political communication, representation and identification which are not devoid of risk but which may also enliven the democratic process. It is clear that the strongly media-driven referendum debate has truly brought Europe 'home' in this sense.

This paper inquires whether the 'idea' of Europe can be reinvented and a new type of political leadership may emerge on the strength of this evolving media-political culture. On the one hand, there is a widespread uneasiness about the lack of political leadership in the EU and the need to rethink its basic architecture (Hix 2002, 2006; Lenaerts & Verhoeven 2002;

Coussens & Crum 2003; Bunse, Maignette and Nicolaidis 2003). On the other hand, the role of media-political communication is consistently undertheorized in our efforts to understand the political salience and 'presence' of the EU (De Vreese 2006). To what extent is a new structure and style of leadership capable of resolving the current stagnation of the European project and the insecurity of European and national political elites? In what sense does it alleviate the anxieties produced by cultural and economic globalization? What are the opportunities for reviving the European cultural and political imagination and for re-mobilizing European citizenship through novel channels of communication? To what extent do political parties, both on the national and European level, need to adapt to the personalization of electoral choice and political power? What are the prospects for the emergence of a supranational political elite which employs its media visibility and presence in order to 'impersonate' and broadcast a more attractive Europeanness?

The paper will begin by briefly analysing the Dutch referendum debate and the No vote in media-political terms. It continues with an inventory of political-sociological approaches to democratic leadership, primarily focusing on the tradition of the 'elite theory of democracy'. Then it will recapitulate the debate about populism, media charisma and the personalization of democracy as it has developed in the Netherlands after Fortuyn, in order to inquire to what extent it may be relevant to European institutions and the 'democratic deficit' of which these are routinely accused. My inquiry will be driven by the hypothesis that the addition of more direct, mediatized and personalized forms of representation to existing parliamentary and party-based institutions (including a further personalization of parliaments and parties themselves) may enhance the visibility and possible legitimacy of European politics. Europe needs faces in order to make its presence felt (De Vreese 2006: 16).

The democratization of national and European politics are inseparable issues. Europe is not a foreign country but is part of domestic politics. The revitalization of local, regional and national democracy will therefore also enhance the presence of Europe in Dutch political debate. But new leadership also requires new ideas. We therefore also need to invent a new idea of Europe which matches a new idea of the Netherlands. Outlining such an inspirational vision for the Netherlands-in-Europe and for a more European Netherlands is a task which lies beyond the confines and competences of the present paper (for a preliminary sketch, see Pels 2005: 157-63). However, political leadership and 'personal democracy' are big issues which stretch beyond the boundaries of the merely technical and procedural; they themselves provide part of the vision which makes the idea of Europe work.

1.1 Debating Europe

After the fact, the referendum initiative and the ensuing debate received almost unanimous praise from campaigners on both sides of the issue. Undeniably, the referendum raised the profile of Europe in the Netherlands and intensified political controversy, mobilizing an abnormally high voter turnout of 62,8% (cf. the 39,1% turnout at the 2004 European parliamentary elections and the 29,9% turnout in 1999; but note that the turnout at the Fortuyn-dominated national elections of 15 May 2002 reached 78,9%). For the first time in recent Dutch history, the lukewarm attitude of electorate and public towards important European matters was defeated (De Beus & Pennings 2005). Although the campaign started late, towards the end of April 2005, political agitation and polarization reached unprecedented levels – as was also the case in France, where the ‘non’ was preceded by an even more intense public controversy.

As in the Spring of 2002, politics came ‘out into the street’. Europe suddenly became a topic of discussion ‘in hair salons, canteens, during coffee breaks and family parties, similar to Pim Fortuyn a few years earlier’ (Aarts & Van der Kolk 2005: 158). Media attention for and involvement in the debate ran unusually high, including a series of television debates between the major political protagonists which were watched by millions of Dutch citizens. Apart from national party leaders and Dutch europarlamentarians, a large number of independent publicists and intellectuals came out to defend or criticize the proposed European Constitution in the opinion sections of newspapers and on radio and television chat shows. Van Gunsteren’s observation that we actually witnessed ‘the birth of the European citizen’ may be somewhat overblown; but he is right in concluding that the loud ‘no’ of both French and Dutch voters sounded in a European public space which had barely existed before that time (Van Gunsteren 2005).

A large part of this unprecedented polarization must therefore be accounted to the new political prominence of the media, especially television. The symbiotic mediapolitical culture which had enabled the unprecedented success of Fortuyn now also framed and staged the ‘yes-or-no’ to Europe. The ‘digital’ and direct-democratic format of the referendum, despite the complexity of the constitutional issue itself, eased its transformation into an entertaining mediapolitical circus. Celebrity journalists, supposedly acting as gatekeepers and floor managers of the debate between political and intellectual celebrities, foregrounded themselves to such an extent as to become prominent political players themselves. The results of the continuous polling by various agencies, which constituted daily news, fed back into the debate as self-fulfilling prophecies. Internet websites such as the IPP ‘referendumwijzer’ attracted thousands of visitors. The ballot night itself was a dramatically

staged media event, virtually a 'national programme', which once again assembled all the main political stars (and star journalists) in a Hilversum studio.

The campaign featured prominent roles for both familiar and new political personalities. The media focus on party leaders (the personalization of political parties) was intensified. Comparatively new 'stars' included Harry van Bommel of the SP, who took over from his indisposed party leader Jan Marijnissen; André Rouvoet of the Christian Union, who emerged as a versatile television debater; independent rightwing populist Geert Wilders, who embarked on a road campaign called *BustoerNEE*; Ronald Plasterk, bioscientist and columnist for *Buitenhof* and *de Volkskrant*; Ad Verbrugge, communitarian philosopher and pessimist cultural critic; Marianne Thieme, leader of the Party for Animal Welfare; and Willem Bos, former Trotskyite and spokesperson for the Comité Grondwet Nee. Not accidentally, all of them operated in the eurosceptic camp.

Apart from this generous media attention, Europe also turned into a popular concern because the debate quickly expanded beyond the actual content of the Constitutional Treaty into an existential debate about 'everything'. The incorporation of a whole range of social, political, cultural and economic issues dramatized it into an anxious quest for Dutch national identity, political sovereignty, social protection and economic survival in a globalizing world, touching a raw nerve which had been lying bare at least since the neonationalist and anti-islamic Fortuyn revolt of 2002. There is no denial that this dramatic inflation must be credited to the 'no' camp, which succeeded in hijacking the agenda of debate at an early stage and henceforth determined the direction and push of the campaign. The 'yes' camp, which was internally divided and itself remained rather lukewarm about the European project, largely left the initiative to its eurosceptic opponents, who expressed stronger convictions, produced more effective one-liners and, despite coming from opposite sides of the political spectrum, temporarily formed a united front. The condescending attitude adopted by government ministers such as Balkenende, Donner, Bot and Brinkhorst towards prospective 'no' voters was widely interpreted as a sign of weakness (Kleinnijenhuis a.o. 2005: 133, 144).

Evidently, what the supporters of the European Constitution lacked was an inspirational narrative about the European project which successfully matched the strength of conviction of the 'no' camp. The only spark of vision issued from a pro-European pep talk by Joschka Fischer, the (then) German Foreign Minister and leader of the German Greens, in an interview in *Buitenhof* on 22 May. The pro-European camp failed to focus the debate on significant features of the Constitution itself, such as the Preamble, the enhanced powers of the European Parliament, or the European Minister of Foreign Affairs. Instead, they were

drawn on to a broader battlefield and into a more popular (and populist) agenda. SP-leader Jan Marijnissen warned that the Constitution was 'authored by the same people who had devised the Stability Pact and had introduced the euro'. In his view, Europe constituted a neoliberal and etatist project which would degrade the Netherlands into an insignificant province within a coming European superstate (*NRC Handelsblad* 18.4.05). A map of Europe issued by the SP featured a hole where the Netherlands should have been. Geert Wilders likewise insisted that, instead of selling out its autonomy and national culture, 'the Netherlands must stay' (*Nederland moet blijven*); in his view, the intended incorporation of an 'Asian', populous and muslim-dominated country such as Turkey into the European Union was a bridge too far.

As in France, the campaign for the 'No' therefore featured a remarkable coalition of the populist left and the populist right. While the former primarily advocated the need for social protection against the threat of neoliberal marketization, and the latter was primarily concerned to defend Dutch cultural values and traditions against the threat of islamization, both nevertheless converged in the notion that a European culture, identity or people simply 'did not exist', and were therefore unable to provide a stable groundwork for a European democracy and a substantive form of European citizenship (cf. Fortuyn 1998; Verbrugge 2004). This conviction evidently challenged that of the more idealistic champions of the Constitutional Treaty (such as Convention president Giscard d'Estaing) that there indeed existed such a European identity, that it was grounded in liberal-democratic values and a rich cultural heritage, and that it could be strengthened precisely by codifying it in a European Constitution.

1.2 To be or not to be

It is illuminating to dwell a little longer on this populist simplification - according to which the Netherlands constitutes a unified people and culture, whereas Europe does not - which since Fortuyn is so widely echoed from left to right. Essentialist claims such as these generate quasi-political, performative effects which reach beyond the realm of the empirical in order to co-produce what they describe: they tend to operate as self-fulfilling or self-denying prophecies. Whether intended or not, judgments to the effect that 'there is no European people, no European language, no European public opinion' (Bolkestein, in *NRC Handelsblad* 7.2.05) or that 'cultures differ, and there is no demos, hence no basis for a true democracy' (Plasterk, in *de Volkskrant* 10.6.05) therefore precisely function to *minimize* the chances that such a people, language, or democratic public opinion may ever arise.

A similar 'politics of description' is evident in Verbruggé's view that the idea of European citizenship as laid down by the Constitutional Treaty was too thin to provide a true sense of community and solidarity. The majority of people did not see themselves as European citizens, but first and foremost as Dutchmen, Germans or Frenchmen. During the French Revolution, citizenship expressed sentiments of fraternity within the confines of the national state, and demanded responsibility for the common interest. This constituted the essence of democracy. A similar commitment was currently absent: little enthusiasm existed for Europe as a community, and the insufficiency of solidarity was primarily felt at the national level. The small elite of internationally oriented 'Davos-people' (Samuel Huntington's expression), which included academics and economic managers, dwelt in a separate milieu, pursuing their own leisure pursuits and preserving their own mores and way of speaking. Ordinary citizens, who usually lived in a much more homogeneous lifeworld, felt but little connection with this sphere (*NRC Handelsblad* 30.4.05).

In a typical liberal rejoinder to this communitarian view, Eijsbouts and Van Middelaar asserted that cultural unity did not constitute an essential prerequisite for political unity. In the Western tradition, the people and the nation were created by political processes and institutions, not by an antecedent cultural, linguistic or religious unity. Did the Swiss, with all their internal diversity, not constitute a people? A people was a territorially bounded human group with a distinct history and future. Of course a geographical frontier was useful for this purpose, and the European Union did not yet enjoy full stability in this regard; but neither had the USA with its receding frontier enjoyed such stability during a considerable period of its history. In this fashion, Eijsbouts and Van Middelaar self-consciously turned the performative logic around. Why should Europe be incapable of electing a president for lacking a demos? Precisely by electing a parliament or a president in Europe, we would become somewhat more of 'one people' (*NRC Handelsblad* 7.5.05).

This reversed view was shared by Van Gunsteren, who emphasized that citizenship should not be organized as 'friendship' after the communitarian ideal, but had better be conceived in more adversarial and agonistic terms. Attempts to create citizenship and a European demos by fostering a symbolic sentiment of community were bound to fail. Like Eijsbouts and Van Middelaar, Van Gunsteren advocated political means precisely in order to improve the chances that a European community would eventually come into being. In this regard, the Dutch referendum had been instrumental in drawing the first contours of European citizenship and a European political realm (Van Gunsteren 2005). Liberal views such as these hence concur in the notion that Europe cannot be shaped after the model of a primordial demos or a homogeneous community. Europe does indeed not exist in this sense: we rather

witness a process of Europeanization (Beck & Grande 2004: 16-19). As an institutionalized process of self-creation, Europe can only exist as a performative reality, as a social construct which at every juncture remains dependent on the political will to self-definition. In this constructivist perspective, Europe has no primordial 'grounds', deep 'soul' or essential 'identity', but can only exist in the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹

1.3 Vertical democracy

Another populist mantra which was repeated over and over again during election night and in subsequent comments was that the 'no' vote once more revealed the protracted existence of a 'gap' or 'rift' between an 'antipolitical' people and the political elite in The Hague. True enough, the referendum vote split virtually all parties from left to right, demonstrating that the views of parliamentary representatives differed significantly from those of their rank and file: while 85% voted in favour of the Constitutional Treaty, close to 62% of the electorate voted against. In pollster Maurice de Hond's expression, a 'peatbog fire' still raged among disillusioned and dissatisfied voters which was comparable to that which a few years earlier had fomented the success of Fortuyn and the LPF. Others however argued that the political enthusiasm generated by the debate and the vote had been instrumental in closing or at least diminishing the representative gap. Whichever view is more plausible, the initial reaction of the defeated pro-European elite was to bow deeply before the populist cry about a continued 'crisis of representation', and to declare the Constitutional Treaty 'dead'.

In the following, I will venture an alternative interpretation, which distances itself from the populist ideal of closure of the representative gap, and opposes the drift towards nationalism and provincialism which found such a vocal expression in the 'No' vote. The fact that more than 40% of Dutch voters currently think that Dutch identity and culture are threatened by European unification (Van der Kolk & Aarts 2005: 193) should be taken as a political challenge, not as a datum the political elite should simply accept ('the voters are always right'). The sentiment of anxiety was most typically expressed by a fishmonger's wife at Urk, the former island where 91,6% voted against the Constitutional Treaty: 'The world is coming at us. We are not going to cooperate in this, are we?' The novelty of the referendum was that such sentiments could for the first time be openly and clearly expressed, and that, after decades of 'permissive consensus', the political elite was forced to enter into critical dialogue with a largely eurosceptic electorate about the future of the European project.

This challenge implies a perspective on the role of elites and of democratic leadership which presumes that the divide between representers and represented is, in principle, a functional one which can and should never be fully closed. Democratic politics does not merely require a

horizontal division between institutional functions and domains (expressed in principles such as the *trias politica* or the separation between church and state), but also a vertical division of labour (which is similarly a division of interests and a balance of powers) between political professionals and citizens; it combines the relative autonomy of domains with the relative autonomy of levels (Pels 1993: 122). My sense is that, while European institutions seem to be rather well-served in terms of horizontal democracy, they suffer from a distinct lack of vertical democracy – indeed, this is the heart of what is usually deplored as Europe’s ‘democratic deficit’.

The ambition to forge a mirror-like political *identity* between representers and represented in order to fill the (vertical) representational gap is precisely what constitutes the acute danger of all populist interventions, irrespective of whether they issue from the left or the right. Indeed, insofar as they anticipate such an identity between rulers and ruled, the classical democratic ideals of popular self-government, popular unity and popular sovereignty may themselves drift into authoritarian populism and cultural nationalism, exposing an uncovered flank of liberal democracy vis-à-vis totalitarian politics (Talmon 1970). That is why a strategy which attempts to preserve or restore sovereignty and popular unity at the national level is equally risky in democratic terms as a strategy which would place the full weight of sovereignty exclusively in the European parliament. What we need is a deeper strategy of democratization, which distances itself more fully from ‘identitarian’ thinking and does justice to the principles of ‘multiple sovereignty’ and institutional balance both along the horizontal and the vertical axis of democratic difference.

In the following sections, I will therefore argue for an alternative conception of democracy as a continuous *interplay* or reciprocal *interaction* between political elite and mass or between leaders and led, which requires a functional separation of tasks and a mutual distancing of views and interests. Political power is not the exclusive property of the people (the populist view) or the exclusive property of politicians (the traditional elitist view) but precisely what emerges *in the gap*, in the peaceful competition between the two actors in the political process (Ankersmit 1997, 2002; Pels 1993; Elgie 1995). In accentuating both the functions of agenda-setting or political initiative and that of accountability or political control, this conception of democracy seeks not unity or homogeneity of representation, but a new dualism and a new balance of power. While incorporating some of the advantages of the new ‘directness’ offered by mediated politics, it does not give in to the populist pressures that simultaneously arise from it. If taken up in the right way, the referendum and its outcome could provide a perfect example of this productive give-and take of vertical ‘interactional’ democracy.

2 LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

Leadership and 'elitism' have for a long time enjoyed a rather bad press. In conventional terms, elite rule and democracy (literally: 'rule of and by the people') do not sit very well together (e.g. Bottomore 1964). The fascist adoption of 'Italian' elite theory and the Nazi deformation of the leadership idea (*Führerprinzip*) have effectively deterred extensive theorizing and research about this explosive subject. But there is no reason why leadership or elite formation and democracy must be divorced and opposed in a principled manner. Indeed, to deny the presence and impact of leadership and elites is to deny a vital element in democracy itself, and hence to render it vulnerable to the negative features of leadership practices which continue to exist in democracy as in any other political system. Elite formation should instead be recognized as an indispensable prerequisite for democratic representation (Etzioni-Halévy 1993).

Different from the classical pessimistic notion about an 'eternal circulation of elites' (which is consistently misinterpreted in this regard), this view does not imply that the gap between politicians and citizens cannot be diminished, or that it would not make sense to replace an old, dysfunctional elite by a new and more meritorious one. Founders of elite theory such as Pareto, Mosca and Michels precisely argued that the new social movements of their time such as socialism and fascism incubated new energetic elites of competence, merit and character, which would dethrone and replace the exhausted elites of the bourgeois-capitalist regime. In his criticisms of the Dutch *regenten* elite, Fortuyn echoed this view when arguing that, while of course new mandarins would take the place of the old ones, this fact of life should not keep us from ousting them while in the meantime 'subjecting the house (of democracy –DP) to a significant makeover' (cit. Pels 2003a: 188). In this perspective, democracy is precisely the system in which elites can emerge and flourish on the basis of true merit and with a maximum amount of freedom, rather than perpetuating themselves in exclusionary fashion through aristocratic or nepotistic inheritance.

Recent decades have witnessed a rediscovery of the salience of elites, political leadership and political charisma, triggered by a variety of developments such as the success of charismatic leaders in neopopulist movements (cf. the 'Fortuyn effect' in the Netherlands), the ongoing mediatization and personalization of politics, the impact of the neoliberal model of strong managerial leadership, and a new conservative emphasis on the reinstatement of authority and hierarchy. Neo-populism remains a highly complex and duplicitous phenomenon in this regard. On the one hand, it recovers and extends the authoritarian drift of classical democratic theory in advocating strong forms of plebiscitary leadership on the basis of an identitarian conception of the popular will. On the other hand, it channels more positive

aspects of direct democracy and political personalization, which are better adapted to the new individualism and the new media culture than more traditional political ideologies. Learning from populism would therefore imply that, while remaining wary of radical ambitions to close the representative gap and abolish the political division of labour, we should preserve those elements in the populist conception of democracy which enable us to reinvent the idea of democratic leadership for the new media age. In order to accomplish this, we need to enter upon a brief historical discussion of some relevant approaches to leadership and elite formation in modern mass democracies.

Max Weber's political sociology is an obvious starting-point for such an inquiry. The main problem of modern democracy, in Weber's view, was how to control the threat of despotism that issued from the inevitable rise of those great 'human machines' of administrative rationality and expert decision-making which were the modern bureaucracies. Strong parliaments were necessary in order to act as a counterweight against bureaucratic officialdom, and in order to provide a training ground for genuine political leaders. However, the many-headed parliamentary assembly itself was not capable of governing and making policy. The 'true will of the people' (and hence the political sovereignty of parliament) was a mere fiction; instead, the 'principle of the small number' always ruled political action. Parliamentary democracy was therefore inevitably (also) a leadership democracy (*Führerdemokratie*). The only choice, Weber argued, was between a leadership democracy with a 'machine' and a leaderless democracy – which meant the rule by professional politicians without a vocation, i.e. who lacked the inner charismatic qualities which made a true leader (Weber 1994: 351, 145ff.)

In Weber we therefore encounter a strong defence of professionalism as an inevitable product of rational political specialization. But bureaucratization of the state and political leadership should also mutually balance one another. Selection of political leaders, in contrast to that of bureaucratic officials, required a continuous struggle within parliament and between political parties, in the course of which would-be leaders used 'the means of mass demagogy to gain the confidence of the masses and their belief in his person'. A Caesarist element of plebiscitary leadership was therefore inseparable from even the most democratic form of state. The danger of mass democracy consisted principally in the possibility that emotional elements would become predominant, because the mass as such 'thinks only as far as the day after tomorrow', and 'the democracy of the street' was always swayed by momentary and irrational influences. As a counterbalance to this, parliamentary democracy should provide more room for natural leaders to emerge (Weber 1994: 220-31).

In this way, Weber pioneered the idea of a personal and plebiscitary 'leadership democracy' according to which political representation was no longer conceived as a pure reflection of the popular will but rather as an interplay or reciprocal interaction between leaders and masses. Weber envisaged a three-way institutional balance of power, in which strong parliaments, charismatic leaders and efficient bureaucracies held each other in mutual check. On Weber's advice, an opening for strong charismatic leadership was built into the Weimar Constitution; but in my view Weber cannot be held fully responsible for the abuse which the Nazis subsequently made of this presidential clause. The idea of 'leadership democracy' is not irreparably compromised by this unfortunate outcome; neither does it necessarily imply the outright pessimism concerning the political capacities of the mass which Weber himself entertained, and which may also be encountered in the tradition of early mass psychology (Le Bon, Tarde, Sighele) and in the first generation of 'Italian' elite theorists (Pareto, Mosca, Michels).

2.1 De Man and democratic reciprocity

This becomes clear if one inspects the political theory of the Belgian socialist theorist and politician Hendrik de Man (1888-1953). In his work, influences from crowd psychology, Weberian political sociology and elite theory converged to produce an 'elite theory of democracy' which centered around a more optimistic conception of the reciprocal interaction between rulers and ruled. Like Weber and Michels, De Man acknowledged an inevitable process of professionalization and bureaucratization which everywhere produced a new social stratification (a new 'gap', in current parlance) between leaders and led, even in those political parties (such as the socialist ones) which remained closest to the principles of democracy. Politics was a professional activity which required a distinct stratum of professionals. Even in modern democracy (nay, above all in modern democracy) it was only in an extremely indirect and theoretical sense that politics could be said to be the affair of the people; it was above all 'the affair of the politicians'. Hence it was illogical to behave as if the leaders did *not* lead. It was 'pure fiction' to regard them as nothing more than representatives of the will of the members of their party or that of their electors (De Man 1928: 200, 203).

Instead, masses and leaders reciprocally determined each other's actions. While the essential function of the leader was to take initiative, to animate, to organize and to command, 'in a word, to manifest intellectual volition and personal creative initiative', the mass defined the limits within which the leaders could operate. Normally, leaders took the view that it was their business to form the opinion of the masses, never the other way around. All relationships between leaders and masses were grounded in the fact that the masses had more confidence in the judgments of the leaders than the other way around. Their

relationship more nearly answered to a logic of attack-and-defence, according to which the leader tested the limits of his support in the mass, attempting to justify himself and maintain his position. True leaders were not elected by but imposed themselves upon the masses; and all leadership was based on the crucial psychological variable of trust (De Man 1928: 203-9).²

Already outlined in *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* of 1926, this 'interactional' or 'reciprocal' view was further elaborated in De Man's essay *Massen und Führer* of 1931.

Here he took care to demarcate his view from two opposite and rival approaches which dominated the field of debate at the time: the classical theory of popular sovereignty and the pessimistic elitism in the tradition initiated by Le Bon, Pareto and Michels. De Man repeated that the claims of 'naive democracy' that parliamentary government was the rule of the sovereign people, and that elected legislators were merely the executors of the popular will, should be considered fictional and false. Theorists such as Le Bon, Sorel and Michels had accordingly replaced this democratic monism by a 'sceptical dualism' in which the relationship between leaders and mass was conceived as a unidirectional link between an active, determining subject and a passive, determined object. De Man's own alternative was not 'dualistic' but 'dialectical', since it recognized a bipolar influence, where each pole represented autonomous interests and convictions, and the suggestion of power and prestige arose simultaneously from both sides (De Man 1932: 13, 21, 28).

The suggestion upon which all leadership prestige rested constituted a form of power; and even in the most perfect democracy the relationship between leader and mass never ceased to be a power relationship. What persisted in terms of subordination was caused by functional differences between leaders and led, and by the unevenness of psychological processes which occurred in the individual leader and the mass. The mass was bound to the leader in a relationship of trust, while the leader was bound by responsibility. The motivations of the mass originated to a larger extent in affective and subconscious dispositions, whereas those of the leaders were relatively more conscious and rational: 'With the mass interests or needs predominate, while the leaders are primarily moved by ideas or judgments' (De Man 1932: 29-30).³

In this way, De Man set a principled notion of democratic reciprocity or bipolarity against the monistic conception of democratic identity in the tradition of Hobbes and Rousseau. The classical doctrine of bourgeois democracy, he proclaimed in his *Pontigny Theses* of 1934, should be replaced by a new theory based upon a different conception of the separation of powers: 'the executive governs, the representative institutions supervise' (De Man 1975: 314). In this fashion, De Man anticipated the basic formula of what is currently known as 'political

dualism' and what, in recent Dutch political history, has been canvassed both by the liberal democrats of D66 and by a liberal conservative such as Fortuyn. But De Man also exemplified the risks involved in this version of leadership theory by gradually drifting into political authoritarianism during the second half of the 1930s, and finally opting for collaboration with the Nazis during 1940-42 (Pels 1987).

But rather than dismissing De Man's theory of democratic leadership on account of this evident degeneration, we should recognize that this drift towards the fascist *Führerprinzip* (which tends to abolish all forms of democratic reciprocity) was not an inevitable or logically necessary outcome. Moreover, as noted earlier, classical democratic monism itself remains prone to populist degeneration and fails to include intrinsic safeguards against totalitarian appropriations – as has for example become evident in the writings of Carl Schmitt. In the Netherlands before the war, Jacques de Kadt, Sal Tas, Willem Bongers and Menno ter Braak explicitly followed De Man in advocating an elitist or 'selectionist' conception of democracy (Pels 1993: 122ff.) During the war, Joseph Schumpeter's political theory preserved the fundamental notion that elite theory was not inherently elitist or undemocratic. The classical doctrine of popular sovereignty was, he repeated, 'patently contrary to fact'. Political professionals shaped the popular will and were even able within a broad margin to create it; rather than being the motor of the political process, it should be conceived as its product. Democracy effectively meant that the people had the opportunity to accept or reject aspiring leaders in a free competition for their vote. This 'vital fact' of leadership was however consistently ignored by classical democratic theory (Schumpeter 1974: 253-63).⁴

2.2 Postwar approaches

After the war, Raymond Aron and Seymour Martin Lipset continued in the frame of the elite theory of democracy, primarily emphasizing the importance of countervailing, mutually independent elites and multiple centres of power in democratic states. But the influential traditions of 'participatory' (Pateman, Barber, Gould) and 'pluralist' democracy (Dahl, Lindblom, Polsby, Sartori) once again did not clearly focus on (and in some cases, actively neglected) the issue of the vertical division of labour between leaders and led. According to Eva Etzioni-Halévy – whose work has been instrumental in recovering what she calls the 'demo-elite perspective' – both these traditions failed to emphasize the importance of the relative autonomy of elites for the democratic process. Her notion that relative elite autonomy and the democratic role of the public go hand in hand usefully wedges the Weberian-Schumpeterian conception of 'elite rivalry before the public' to De Man's argument about the reciprocal relationship of 'give-and-take' between leaders and mass (Etzioni-Halévy 1993: 91ff.)

In proposing an 'aesthetic' conception of democratic representation, Frank Ankersmit has recently restated the principle laid down half a century ago by De Man. In his view, the essence of political representation is not that voters' preferences or interests are pictured photographically, in a 'mimetic' rendering which expresses a relationship of identity; on the contrary, it presupposes a specific distance and functional difference between elector and elected, which enables them to engage in fruitful mutual interaction. As in artistic representation, the goal of political representation is not mirror-like portrayal or the creation of a perfect replica, but *autonomy* vis-a-vis that which is represented. Political reality and political power only emerge in the 'hollow' or 'gap' between representer and represented, state and citizen. Whereas the 'mimetic' theory tends to erase all differences of political will, the 'aesthetic' theory creates an opening which provides both representers and represented with a separate space for movement. Political power is not the property of either party to the exclusion of the other, but emerges in the force field between elector and elected. The representational gap is therefore not a *faute de mieux* for direct democracy, but the indispensable and only constitutional procedure for generating political power (Ankersmit 1997; 2002).

Following in Schumpeter's tracks, Bourdieu's 'field theory' of politics has given this dualistic conception a more distinct sociological profile. For Bourdieu, the political game is a struggle for symbolic and institutional power among interested professionals, which is simultaneously a competition for the vote of laypersons. The relationship that the 'owners of the means of political production' maintain with their clients (the voters) is always mediated by the relationship they maintain with their competitors. As a result of this inevitable 'double play', political representation always and intrinsically runs the risk of political alienation. The danger of usurpation lurks in all forms of political delegation, and speaking for or in the name of someone else always implies the propensity to speak in that person's *place*. More clearly than Ankersmit, Bourdieu therefore thematizes the intimate connection between the productive and the repressive dimensions of the political division of labour, and hence displays a greater sensitivity to the moral complexity of elite formation and political leadership (Bourdieu 1991).

While emphasizing that the political struggle is primarily a struggle for symbolic power, Bourdieu has also warned that the modern media, and especially television, pose a serious threat to political life and to democracy itself (Bourdieu 1998; cf. Elchardus 2002). A more nuanced view, which similarly ties the insights of elite theory to the novel conditions of media politics, can be encountered in the notion of 'audience democracy' as developed by Manin

(1997). In Manin's perspective, elections inevitably select a representative elite, but ordinary citizens legitimately determine who may belong to it. Politicians 'make a difference' by presenting themselves as trustworthy personalities and distinguishing themselves from other politicians in a stylized manner. Their initially vague political profiles acquire sharper contours in and through their mutual competition. By drawing symbolic lines of division and struggling over them, they categorize 'the people' into representable groups. Rather than expressing or reflecting the interests of particular sections of the people, politicians in this sense *create* their own rank and file.

In Manin's approach, similar to that of Ankersmit and Bourdieu, political representation does therefore not follow a 'reflective' but a performative logic in which politicians are the initiators or agenda-setters and citizens play a more reactive and monitoring role. The introduction of direct, media-driven forms of political communication, which tend to bypass the legislature and the party bureaucracies, induce a personalization of electoral choice and political power. There is a concomitant change in the type of political elite, as activists and party bureaucrats are increasingly replaced by media personalities and experts in political communication. Television, more especially, confers a particular salience and vividness upon the individuality of candidates, which enhances personal trust rather than ideological principle or programmatic detail as a platform for political selection. As a result, the electorate turns into something similar to a theatre audience, which reacts to the political performance by applauding, whistling, booing, or maintaining a deafening silence (Manin 1997).

It is interesting briefly to connect this media-sensitive interactional model with the fate of the Dutch 'polder model' and 'consociational democracy' since the Fortuyn revolt. The pillarized political landscape which acquired its mature shape during the 1950s facilitated a collectivist, corporatist and consensus-oriented leadership style in which political elites primarily functioned and saw themselves as representatives of relatively autonomous social and ideological groupings (*volksdelen*), which acted separately through their own political parties and channels of communication, meeting only at the top level of the national pyramid. The traditions of cartellized politics, negotiation behind the scenes (the infamous political 'backrooms') and 'collegial' governance fostered a quiet distrust of profiled individualistic leadership and dismissed all forms of charismatic mystique. The postwar leadership style from Drees to Lubbers and Kok can thus be characterized as primarily consensual, 'governmental', depoliticizing, and oriented to pragmatic problem-solving. However, the progressive decollectivization and mediatization of Dutch political culture has meanwhile facilitated the emergence of an alternative and competing leadership style, which asserted

itself most dramatically through the persona of Fortuyn: that of the problem-identifying, ideologically motivated, 'divisive' outsider, who is less a party-based manager than an image-conscious political communicator and media personality. As 't Hart and Van Hooven suggest, the accommodation between these conflicting managerial and plebiscitary styles of leadership may be the greatest challenge confronting Dutch political elites in the decennia ahead (2004: 252-53).

2.3 Media democracy and personalization

A new urgency has entered into the debate about leadership and the role of political elites in Western democracies. Much of this, we saw, has been triggered by the comparative success of the rightwing neopopulist movements which have emerged in various European countries since the 1980s. The populist claim to incarnate 'the voice of the people' poses a challenge to conventional (leftwing) democratic theory, which has long been quagmired in naive anti-authoritarian conceptions of 'basic' or 'bottom-up' democracy which minimized the relevance of authority and leadership. The presumed 'end of ideology' has plunged the established intellectual and political elites into insecurity, resulting in technocratic reflexes, absence of vision, and lack of political will. This insecurity has been considerably heightened following the attacks which brought islam-inspired political violence into the heartland of Europe and the capitals of the West.

But perhaps the most significant long-term factor which explains the current focus on political leadership has been the spread of 'television democracy', the emergence of a political celebrity culture, and the concomitant decline of more traditional party-based forms of political representation. The 'Fortuyn effect' has accelerated the trend towards the personalization of politics and has given an new intensity to the debate on democratic renewal. The stagnation of formal constitutional democratization (e.g. De Graaf's failure to carry through proposals for the direct election of mayors in March 2005) has not halted (and is in a sense compensated by) the ongoing process of political personalization through the media and the political parties themselves, as is evident in the novel practice of direct leadership elections, which increasingly turn traditional parties into 'plebiscitary' parties (Voerman 2005). From this perspective, the neopopulist focus on personality and charisma poses another challenge to democratic theory, since it appears more effective in exploiting the new logic of media-driven political communication than older political formations have been capable of doing.

There is wide agreement that the unprecedented rise of Pim Fortuyn marked a major threshold in the ongoing process of mediatization and personalization of Dutch political

culture. The remarkable year 2002 suddenly highlighted the features of what is often described as an 'Americanization' of politics: the blurring of traditional left/right political distinctions, the drift towards the political middle, the rise of the well-informed and experiment-prone political consumer (the 'floating voter'), the decline of traditional party bureaucracies and overarching ideological programmes, and especially, the mediatization and commercialization of political campaigning and the political enterprise more generally. In the age of television, a symbiotic partnership has emerged between the mass media and professional politics, which increasingly replaces 'partisan' forms of political representation with representation through political personalities and their distinct political style (Pels 2003b). This 'style revolution' in politics expresses a more general process of individualization of social life, which is also reflected in the ever-growing intensity of the cult of public individuality or celebrity (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Marshall 1997).

For some, such tendencies represent an acute danger, if they imply that political principles are sacrificed to spin, image building and personal charisma, and the political enterprise is increasingly dictated by camera-ready pseudo-events and ritual conflicts between political celebrities (Elchardus 2002; Lloyd 2004). Others are less disturbed by the rise of the soundbite and the personalization of political communication (Van Zoonen 2005; De Vreese 2006). Hix describes politics as 'ultimately a glorified "soap opera", with weekly installments of confrontations or intrigues between vibrant (or sometimes dull!) personalities'. But he prefers to see this in a positive light: 'clashes between political leaders attract media attention, which in turn attracts public attention'. In this way, political battles allow citizens to identify the protagonists and to understand the issues and consequences involved (Hix 2006: 10). My own perspective more closely approaches this latter view (Corner & Pels 2003, Pels 2003a). Though not devoid of risks, a personalized and style-conscious form of politics could indeed be seen as a promising medium of democratic representation, political communication and trust-building between electors and elected.

The intense media coverage of political performances has stripped politicians of their former aura and has 'informalized' their charisma. The classical aura of Great Men has dissipated and has been reduced to more ordinary proportions. Rather than supernatural qualities and characteristics, famous individuals in modern media culture enjoy a more ordinary status, resulting from the typical intimacy-at-a-distance which characterizes 'parasocial' or mediated interaction (Thompson 2000; 2005). Since electronic media re-stage the entire spectrum of information which once remained confined to private (face-to-face) encounters, they breed a typical 'one-directional' familiarity between strangers. The camera and the close-up technique minimize the distance between audience and performer, revealing so much

expressive and personal detail that the distant image of the politician is replaced by something resembling 'an encounter with an intimate acquaintance' (Meyrowitz 1985: 273).

On the one hand, such 'media friends' appear to come so close as to virtually become 'one of us'. On the other, they remain distant and aloof, if only for the fact that they dwell on the far side of the television screen. In this respect, politicians increasingly share in the 'extraordinary ordinariness' which characterizes the modern democratic celebrity. The daily TV news, current affairs programmes and chat shows turn them into media regulars whose persona is familiarized in a continuous soap-like narrative. Their new media visibility also enhances the fragility or vulnerability of their personal reputations. Questions of character are politicized, and scandals increasingly function as 'credibility tests' for this new politics of personal trust (Thompson 2000). In this way, media democracy and 'parasocial' interaction change the terms and conditions of political proximity and political distance (Corner 2003).

In a world of information overload, personalization and its mixture of political content, emotion and style may provide a welcome shortcut to political information. The new informality and publicness of political lives fit better into an individualized and mediatized society which is also an entertainment culture and a culture of celebrity. This culture facilitates new, more direct forms of political communication and identification, even though the gap between the new mediapolitical elite and ordinary citizens is never closed. This is not to dissimulate the dark sides of the relationship between political 'stars' and political 'fans', which were so clearly exemplified in the obsession and hysteria surrounding the Fortuyn phenomenon. Indeed, media populism may engender the same false identification and the same concealed authoritarianism as more traditional versions of 'naive' popular democracy. But such risks should be weighed against evident advantages. The power of political celebrities such as Fortuyn is to connect media spectacle with ideological content. They are 'idols with ideas'. As crystallization points for political emotions, such 'programmatic persons' may broaden the base of political commitment, while embodying a greater variation of ideological stances and political styles which are no longer dictated by party traditions.

2.4 Institutionalizing direct democracy

In Fortuyn's conception, traditional party democracy was in irreparable decline. Most parties were still rooted in the waning era of 'pillorization' (*verzuiling*), and were of diminishing relevance and representativeness in an age of individualization, mediatization and 'end of ideology'. They had turned into job-generating machines for a closed and arrogant *regenten* elite. This political cartel could only be broken by adding forms of direct plebiscitary democracy to the existing representative institutions. Not merely mayors and provincial

governors, but also the prime minister was to be elected through direct popular ballot. In this fashion, citizens not only voted for the controlling representative bodies, but also for the executive powers themselves. The latter would acquire a more independent position vis-à-vis the controlling organs, promising an intensification of political dualism, a greater transparency of issues, and hence a flowering of public political debate. Direct elections of political personalities was expected to enhance political interest and commitment. The media would quickly give new political faces a high degree of public visibility. The threshold for political newcomers would be lowered, and the variety and range of political standpoints would be enlarged.

Different from what his detractors suggested, Fortuyn did therefore not envisage the abolition of parliamentary democracy and its replacement by a plebiscitary leadership democracy, but argued for a deepening of the existing 'indirect' representative system with the help of direct-democratic procedures. Indeed, representative democracy is not identical with a system of representation through political parties; while, conversely, a system of personalized representation does not cease to be a representative system. It is therefore misguided to reject the populist personification of politics as an unmitigated danger, a virus which necessarily undermines the tried structures of representative democracy in favour of a 'presidential' system in which strong leaders set the tone and representative bodies are marginalized.

In contrast to what is for example argued by Tromp (2002; 2003), plebiscitary or presidential forms of democracy do not in themselves conflict with the basic premises of a parliamentary system which features proportionality of representation and a pluralist structure of interests. There is no necessary relationship between the direct popular election of political leaders and the populist notion that the leader is the sole and immediate incarnation of the sovereign popular will. This populist danger is only imminent if the pluralist structure of checks and balances, in which leadership prerogatives are weighed against prerogatives of control, are abolished in favour of a single pyramid of top-down command. Accordingly, while the democratic function of pluralist interest representation remains vitally tied to the existence of institutional political rivalries, it is not exclusively dependent upon the rivalry between traditional political *parties* or traditional political *programmes*. Indeed, the pluralist constitution may be deepened if party-based competition is intensified by a partly cross-cutting competition between 'programmatically persons'. Democracy ceases to be if One Leader incarnates the unity of The People; but it thrives if many individuals are allowed to compete for the top positions.

Critics of populism additionally fear that a more personalized democracy may intensify the 'monetization' of politics, since ambitious but 'partyless' individuals will increasingly seek private funds in order to finance their election campaigns. But there is no reason why campaign subsidies cannot be (re)allocated in such a manner as to give both established and outsiders a fair chance to compete in the political game. That personal democracy and the accentuation of leadership functions threaten to undercut the tried traditions of collegial governance, which are taken to be a defining characteristic of Dutch political culture, should not so much be deplored but rather be applauded. There is more substance to the allegation that media democracy tends to sacrifice rational content to form, imagery, spin and style; but, as we have already noted, this risk must be weighed against the potentially broader reach which is facilitated by new forms of 'emotional' political identification and awareness. Tromp objects that plebiscitary and presidential states do not demonstrate an improved relationship between electors and elected or a higher level of political participation by citizens (2003: 137-39). But in the context of Dutch political culture at least, both the rise of Fortuyn and the referendum debate appear to warrant a slightly more optimistic view.⁵

Critics of populism such as Tromp often presume that the 'horizontal' ideological left-right continuum represents the 'normal', 'essential' or 'ultimate' structuration of political views and interests, and that the 'vertical' populist opposition between people and elite or outsiders and established, which posits itself at right angles to the former, is an unfortunate corruption and degeneration of it. Populists, in their turn, tend to consider the traditional left-right polarization as obsolete, and endeavour to replace the horizontal polarity by the vertical one. Conflicts between (parties of the) left and right are then easily seen as internecine struggles within the *regenten* class ('old politics', 'The Hague squabbling') and hence as mock battles which merely deflect attention from the cartellized politics which unifies all parties under the The Hague 'cheese cover'. Anti-populists once again reverse this logic in wishing to reduce the vertical polarity to the horizontal one – which by definition allocates populist politics to the right of the political spectrum as they picture it.

Over against both forms of political reductionism, I think it is crucial to preserve a more complex picture of the political space, which gives equal weight to and activates both axes and dimensions. Of course, the traditional left-right polarity sheds its exclusive status and is 'softened' as soon as an alternative polarity is placed at right angles to it. But it is not completely erased. The opposition between people and political elite is equally divested of its alleged priority and one-dimensional simplicity as soon as one admits that there rages a permanent contest between its leftwing and rightwing variants (the two populisms which forged an unstable and short-lived coalition during the 'No' campaign).⁶ In my view,

democracy can precisely be revitalized by simultaneously 'opening up' both oppositions (or both political 'gaps'). A mature democracy must therefore not denounce and excommunicate populism in a single sweeping gesture, but must recognize its normative complexity and attempt to institutionalize its positive features. While elite theory may sensitize us to the productive side of the vertical political division of labour, populism continues to alert us to its repressive side. The true challenge of democratic theory is to 'hold out' this ambivalence and to acknowledge and valorize both aspects in their tensionful but intrinsic connection.

The activation of the populist opposition between 'established' and 'outsiders' (or the gap between professional politicians and laypersons) remains vitally important for democracy, because it serves as a permanent counterweight to the oligarchic (*regenteske*) tendencies which inhere in democracy as in any other political system, and secures a permanent opening for political innovation and political innovators. But populism, as we have seen, also cultivates the dangerous notion that the people constitute an indivisible, self-contained and sovereign unity which is able to speak for itself through a single spokesperson. By firmly rejecting this identitarian notion, we are able to extract the dangerous sting from populism in its traditional form, in order to insert its more positive features into the established structures of representative democracy. Direct elections and personalization may enliven political debate, foster the involvement of citizens, and in this sense diminish the gap between politics and people. Ultimately, however, this gap cannot and should not be filled, in order to preserve the interactional space in which both citizens and political elite are able to play their distinctive parts.

This separation of functions creates a new balance of power which breaks up the alleged 'sovereignty of the people' and intensifies the checks and balances which make pluralist democracy work. Such a fragmentation of sovereignty and duplication of electoral mandates is fully democratic, since institutional differences are multiplied, and democracy further distances itself from the postulate of identity which may divert it in a totalitarian direction. It is an ironic fact that the critics of direct democracy and presidentialism, in neglecting the very real 'leadership deficit' which threatens national democracy as it does its European counterpart, miss the importance of the interactional logic which is engendered by the vertical political division of labour, recouring to an idea of popular sovereignty which tends to privilege parliament as the ultimate repository of it, and rivalling political parties as the only channels through which the popular is able to express itself. In this manner, traditional parliamentarianism still residually submits to the Rousseauan 'identitarian' conception of democracy of which its populist adversary is routinely accused, neglecting the democratic

vitality which may issue from the vertical balancing of interests and the productive give-and-take between leaders and led.

3 A POST-PARLIAMENTARY STRATEGY

How can this view of 'interactional' and 'personal' representation inform a new and more attractive idea of national and European democracy? First of all, it is squarely opposed to those populist tendencies which seduce political elites to hide behind the broad back of the popular vote, to go into self-denial about their own functional role and responsibility, and to cultivate a general insecurity about what to do next. In terms of the vertical division of labour, national and European governing elites are currently obligated to reinvent their political agenda, in order to start a new round in the incessant conversation/negotiation with their electoral publics. Rather than giving in to democratic monism, the dualist signature of democracy currently demands creative and autonomous leadership, new intellectual visions, and a reinvigorated self-consciousness on the part of the elites. In other words, a new effort is needed to 'perform Europe', by entering into confrontational dialogue with a largely sceptical electorate and address its anxieties without genuflecting before the more provincial sentiments which have inspired last year's 'No'. The voters are not always right, but they must at all times be taken seriously.

Apart from advocating a new 'round of talks' between political professionals and citizens across the representational gap, dualist democracy also moves beyond an exclusive focus on the established structures of parliamentary representation, with the purpose of deepening it by introducing elements borrowed from populist direct democracy. In this context, we may envisage a double movement of 'upward' and 'downward' differentiation, which breaks up the unitary essence of parliamentary sovereignty in favour of a more complex separation, balance and rivalry of powers. The upward differentiation confirms and sharpens the vertical division of labour between the governmental executive and the parliamentary legislative (strictly speaking, the traditional functionalist terms of the *trias politica* do no longer apply – see also Lenaerts & Verhoeven 2002: 39-44), emphasizing the productivity of an institutional separation and interchange between the functions of agenda-setting and the functions of inquiry, evaluation and control. Within the dualist frame which is advocated here, such leadership functions could well acquire a more personal profile, especially if their autonomy and visibility would be enhanced by giving them a separate mandate through direct elections.

The 'downward' differentiation or pluralization of representative democracy would entail a further expansion of the control, assessment and discursive functions by introducing binding referenda and popular legislative initiatives. In this fashion, the risks of strengthening and concentrating the functions of agenda-setting and decisional leadership would be balanced against a further enlargement of grassroots control and a broadening of public political controversy. However important, the vertical separation of leadership functions and

functions of (parliamentary) control does not extend beyond the political class itself, and does not include external controls by 'the people' and the broader political interaction between representers and represented. Quadrannual or quintannual parliamentary elections are only a poor instrument to realize this interaction; direct elections to leadership positions and referenda increase the frequency of political 'moments of contact' and improve the continuity of political debate. Regularized national and European referenda would therefore strengthen political and cultural integration from below, introducing new forms of representation and intervention which would give citizens a voice, activating them in a manner which would go beyond the semi-passive watchfulness of 'audience democracy'. Some powers of initiative would thereby pass to the electorate itself, even though popular initiatives would primarily be aimed at starting a debate rather than seeing through legislative measures.

Instead of promoting further parliamentarization to the exclusion of other options (cf. PvdA 2005; Bos 2006), we had better follow the 'post-parliamentary' strategy which was already contemplated by De Man, and which has recently been advocated by Beck and Grande. For the latter theorists, a prospective postnational and cosmopolitan democracy such as the European Union should be prepared to experiment with truly Europe-wide referenda on every theme which is proposed by a qualified number of European citizens. In their view, Europe should not be bogged down in a series of uncoordinated national referenda, which are easily misused in the service of a renationalization of politics. In the spirit of dualist negotiation and political learning recommended above, the results of such international referenda should be binding for the supranational institutions, which should react to them and seek to integrate them into their own proposals (Beck & Grande 2004: 350-54).

Inevitably, this double extension of indirect parliamentary democracy with structures of direct representation is also a double boost for personal democracy and for the mediatization of politics. I therefore disagree with Elzinga's opinion that, unlike the referendum, the introduction of personal democracy would threaten the foundations of representative democracy in its present form (2005: 102-3). On the contrary, both the referendum and personalization may equally enrich the representative process, and post-parliamentary democratization should therefore follow both tracks. Recent developments on the national level indicate that both parliament and political parties are themselves caught up in a progressive process of personalization, which precisely appears to raise rather than dampen political interest. The European referendum debate, as we saw, was itself strongly media-driven and encouraged the personalization of political issues rather than working against it. Both referenda and direct leadership elections are media-friendly, and accordingly run the

already catalogued risks of dramatization, sensationalism, populist posturing and political celebrity; but they simultaneously carry the promise of a broader politicization of issues and a more profound commitment to democratic procedures (cf. Hix 2006: 10).

Clearly, in advocating a more direct and personal conception of democracy, it is hard to separate the levels of national and supranational politics. If Europe is indeed a domestic affair (*binnenland*), these levels need to be seen as continuous and convergent. It would be mistaken to presume that the rift between citizens and EU politics can only be mended by improving the Dutch representative and electoral system or the other way around; it would require similar structural changes to both. This means that a more democratic Europe is inconceivable if we would fail to introduce more personal and direct forms of representation at the local, regional and national levels. In this respect, direct elections of municipal mayors and other public functionaries (including the prime minister), as well as the regularization of local and national referenda, must be considered indispensable stepping-stones towards a more substantive democratization of European institutions.

3.1 The Constitutional Treaty

There are a few elements in the now defunct Constitutional Treaty which would have promoted a more focused and transparent leadership, and possibly have entailed an interesting personalization of European politics. The most conspicuous of these was of course the solidification of the presidency of the European Council, which currently rotates every six months among the member states, into a more permanent and politically more conspicuous post. The president was to be appointed by the Council for a period of 2,5 years, renewable for a second term and hence for a maximum of 5 years, to be chosen outside the circle of currently serving prime ministers and presidents. The president could however hold a mandate within another European institution, allowing for the future possibility of combining the prerogatives of the President of the European Council with those of the President of the European Commission in one person. The Constitution also opened up the possibility that, in the future, the [President of the Commission](#) would be elected by the European Parliament, acting on a proposal from the [European Council](#), and taking into account the results of the European parliamentary elections.

Another novel figure in the Constitution was the European Minister for Foreign Affairs who, by combining the present functions of the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations, would effectively have become the voice of the Union's [common foreign and security policy](#). The Minister would be appointed by the [European Council](#) acting by qualified majority, with the agreement of the [President of the Commission](#). The Foreign

Minister would also act as one of the Vice-Presidents of the [Commission](#), and would therefore have to be approved by the European Parliament. In addition, the chairmanship of various other Councils of Ministers was to be extended from six to eighteen months, to be held by rotating groups of ministers from three different member states. Other relevant proposals included a greater media openness of sessions by the Council of Ministers, a modest enlargement of the legislative powers of the European Parliament, and an equally modest option for a popular initiative, i.e. the right to petition the Commission to make legislative proposals on a particular issue by collecting at least a million signatures from a sufficient number of member states.

Even though the duties and powers of the envisaged European president and Foreign Minister were rather limited, the proposal may be considered a step in the direction of giving the EU a distinct 'face'. To some extent, the new functions would have worked against the bureaucratic intractability and aloofness of the EU, instituting a visibly acting and leading element that to some extent would have transformed the European government into a concretely embodied affair. The Constitutional Treaty thus featured a modest but unmistakable tendency to shift some of the powers from the European Council to the Commission and the European Parliament. If, in the future, the functions of Council and Commission President were to be combined, (s)he might indeed develop into a strong public figure. Even without this, as Eijsbouts expects, the European president would gather authority almost automatically, by speaking in the name of national leaders and the Union as a whole. The president's authority would of course be further enhanced if (s)he would be made fully accountable to Parliament. MEP's should likewise present themselves in a more personal and concretely visible way (Eijsbouts 2004).

In the current political constellation, it would perhaps be going too far field to contemplate the election of a European President through direct and Europe-wide popular ballot. One would be better advised first to experiment with direct forms of democracy on the local, regional and national levels before taking the experiment to Brussels. It is often argued that Europe should remain wary of adopting a presidential system and going down the American federalist road. Leonard (2005) is not unique in locating the strength of Europe precisely in its multiple centers of power; Europe is not a state but a network owned by its member-states, which is characterized by political flexibility and respect for national democracy and identity. In his view, there will never be a central figure or body such as a president, prime minister or parliament which will be solely responsible for setting the European agenda. Moreover, none of the policies in the five most important issue areas for voters (health care provision, education, law and order, pension and social security policy, taxation) are

currently determined by the European Union. A directly elected president lacking power over these issues would be a disaster; (s)he had therefore better be appointed by the Parliament and the European governments (Leonard 2005: 97-8).

Any proposal to strengthen the European presidency, and more specifically, to turn him or her into a directly elected officer, invites suspicions of federalism and European statism: ambitions which the French and Dutch referenda appear to have stopped in their tracks. But pleas for a more prominent and autonomous role for the European Commission and its President are not necessarily inspired by traditional federalist ambitions for a United States of Europe. It is an open question to what extent and under what conditions European citizens will accept a shift in the balance of power between their national governments and European institutions. The networked, pluralistic and decentralized character of Europe is not in itself incompatible with more focused and personal forms of leadership. Even if important policy areas such as social security, culture and education presently remain outside of the jurisdiction of Brussels, there is no guarantee that they will remain so in the future. And a European President who would have powers over such important areas as security, integration and asylum policy would still cut a formidable figure on the political scene.

For the nearer future, we may therefore contemplate a further 'dualization' of European political structures and, following the lead of Weber and De Man, balance a strengthened European Parliament against an equally strengthened leadership by the Commission and its President. The Commission will need to develop into a more autonomous political body and its President, instead of being nominated by the Council, can be provisionally elected by the European Parliament, and in the longer run by Europe-wide direct popular vote. Rather than enlarging the legislative powers of Parliament in order to confirm its sovereignty, dualization would break up this sovereignty in order to separate and balance the powers of political initiative and those of monitoring and control. The President could in turn select his or her own team of Commissioners and propose them for individual approval to the Parliament. Currently, the role of Parliament remains limited to the approval of the Chairman and the Commission as a whole by a two-third majority, while it is unable to reject the candidacy of individual Commissioners. A dualistic parliamentary-presidential system would also further the harmonization of pan-European structures of political leadership (though it would steer closer to the German than the French system) and in the long term could also absorb the ceremonial functions which are currently exercised by national presidents and hereditary monarchs.

3.2 Horizontal and vertical balances

Democracy, I have implied throughout, requires the separation of and competition between functions and powers in both the horizontal and the vertical dimensions. In this paper, I have emphasized that the vertical interaction between political elites and citizens, particularly in its current mediatized and personalized form, constitutes an undertheorized element of contemporary political thought, even though it is equally important for the functioning of a well-ordered democracy as its horizontal counterpart. While the horizontal balance of power between EU institutions and their incumbent elites (e.g. between the Council as representative of European governments vs. Parliament as representative of European citizens) and the practice of shared leadership (e.g. as formalized by the rotating Council chairmanship, which to some extent equalizes the weight of the big and small states) are often cited as unique features of European constitutional democracy (Lenaerts & Verhoeven 2002; Nicolaidis 2003; Bunse, Magnette & Nicolaidis 2005), this paper has effectively argued for a strengthening of the vertical dimension of democratic difference – both in terms of stronger leadership and in terms of stronger democratic accountability. In order to combat the over-concentration of power and resist grandiose superstatel ambitions for Europe, a calibration of checks and balances in both dimensions is required. For some, this double balance even suggests a welcome reconceptualization of the federal ideal (Lenaerts & Verhoeven 2002).⁷

From this perspective, strengthening the visibility, continuity and legitimacy of the European leadership, e.g. in terms of a single democratically elected EU President, does not undermine the mixed and balanced nature of EU government or feed centralist ambitions for a European superstate – even though a further accentuation of vertical democracy does imply a relative shift of the burden of representation from intergovernmental to supranational institutions. I therefore disagree with the view proposed by Nicolaidis and Magnette, who emphasize the horizontal rather than vertical sharing of sovereignty and favour the retention of a (revised) form of the rotating presidency, even describing the principle of rotation as a ‘key symbol’ of what European integration is about (Magnette & Nicolaidis 2003: 32-33; Nicolaidis 2003: 146). But there is wide agreement that the current horizontal structure not only fails to deliver stable and effective leadership, but also tends to privilege the intergovernmental logic, thus disturbing the equilibrium between horizontal and vertical principles of representation. Lenaerts and Verhoeven therefore favour a shift in authority from Council to Commission as well as the introduction of a unified presidential system in which the Commission President is granted a separate mandatory base through direct election by the European public. Indirect election of the President and Commission by Parliament would define them too much as emanations of parliamentary authority, compromising the necessary independence

of the executive and resulting in a loss of critical distance by the parliament itself. Europe-wide presidential elections would also stimulate the formation of genuine European political parties and a European public sphere, and hence promote the 'denationalization' of the current structure of democratic representation (Lenaerts & Verhoeven 2002: 56ff.)

Coussens and Crum similarly argue that the current system of power-sharing between Council and Commission results in an unfortunate scattering of executive powers and agenda-setting functions. Like Lenaerts and Verhoeven, they plead both a radical focussing and a radical democratization of the EU leadership, in which the Commission and the European Parliament emerge as the centre of gravity of the Union. While opting for a permanent EU president joining 'two hats', they likewise refuse to accord political primacy either to the Council or to the Parliament, in order not to undermine the horizontal institutional balance. A permanent president nominated by the European Council would turn Parliament into an institutional loser, while election by Parliament would tilt the balance too much towards the latter and run the risk of introducing a majoritarian system. The ideal option would be to introduce a carefully calibrated direct election, which would grant the president a distinct base of democratic legitimacy. If this is considered 'too big, too soon', a more prudent short-term option would be the election of the president by a Congress of national and European parliamentarians, which over time could develop into a direct election model. Like Lenaerts and Verhoeven (2002) and Hix (2002; 2003), they also expect that further politicization of and competition for the Union leadership would raise the salience of the EU in national political debates. The election of the Commission President would become a public process, engaging European public opinion around unequivocally European issues, thus helping to free the EU from the grip of nationalized politics in which European elections are merely a 'mid-term beauty contest' for the national governments (Coussens & Crum 2003: 11, 17).⁸

3.3 Faces of Europe

In general, what Europe needs is a new type of 'idols with ideas': high-profile and media-wise cultural and political spokespersons who are able to communicate the European idea and style in a novel, more personal and expressive way. These exemplary and charismatic Europeans would be perfectly bilingual (i.e. minimally fluent in Euro-English), rooted in their national heritage but simultaneously cosmopolitan and multicultural in orientation, and thus committed to a hybrid 'postnational' identity. Not merely Commissioners and MEPs would need to raise their profile in this sense; the Dutch political elite as a whole must further Europeanize itself, in the sense of cultivating a broader European consciousness which is able to resist the current wave of a defensive and inward-looking nationalism. One

precondition for the emergence of this new elite would be the establishment of truly European media (including highly visible postnational and multilingual media personalities) which would moderate a permanent Europe-wide cultural and political discourse. Another would be the normalization of elections and referenda which would bypass national party allegiances and possibly even national borders, permitting citizens to vote for Europe-wide parties and truly European political 'stars'.

As far as 'star quality' and its integrative functions are concerned, political Europe might find a suggestive model in modern mediasport and the role of sport celebrities, especially in football, which is strongly internationalized both at the club team level and the level of annual European competitions. After the Talpa 'coup', sports programmes on Dutch public television have easily switched from showing national games to reporting on the English Premier League, the Spanish Primera Division, the Italian Serie A, and the German competition, all of which employ a large number of Dutch star players. National sides competing for the World and European Championships have become carriers of new festive forms of community and light, non-exclusive expressions of patriotism, which form a template for a culturally more integrated Europe. Football stars are known across Europe as no politician can ever hope to be, and European football grounds attract more pilgrims than the houses of democracy. Indeed, who among current Dutch MEP's do we actually know? Who of the present European Commissioners can we name, apart from Neelie Kroes and perhaps Peter Mandelson?

There are a few suggestive instances illustrating how Europe can be made more tangible by putting a face to a particular controversial issue. The Buttiglione affair of October 2004, for example, interestingly concentrated the ongoing dispute about European values and European identity around the contested views of the proposed Italian Commissioner about homosexuality (which he called an 'objectively disturbed condition') and the role of women within the traditional family. Buttiglione had to withdraw his candidacy, but afterwards philosophically remarked that what for him came as an evil might also generate a more positive effect: 'Perhaps for the first time we shall speak about Europe, not in order to complain about bureaucratic problems, but in order to ask ourselves: what is the conscience, what are the values, what is the identity of Europe?' The issues of course remain acute, if only because conservative majorities in new member states such as Estonia and Poland continue to foster homophobia and embrace traditional family values which are less sanguinely upheld in other parts of Europe (especially in the liberal Netherlands). During the controversy, deputies from the ultra-catholic League for Polish Families for example demanded the dissolution of the European parliament, which they thought was too much swayed by a

homosexual lobby. Supported by the Vatican, Buttiglione himself criticized the 'new leftwing civil religion' of the 'Euro-secularists' as promoting a new inquisition and a cultural relativism which erased all distinctions between good and evil.

An earlier example of a strongly personified political scandal developed around Dutch whistleblower Van Buitenen during 1998-99. Featuring all the dramatic trappings of a struggle of David against Goliath, the Van Buitenen affair went to the heart of the functioning of the European Commission and Parliament, revealing widespread practices of fraud, patronage and mismanagement and bureaucratic prejudices which confirmed the worst suspicions of citizens about the Brussels 'beehive'. Initially, Van Buitenen was suspended from his assistant auditor's job, had his salary halved and was subjected to disciplinary action for violating formal secrecy regulations. But his perseverance resulted in fierce controversy within the parliament and ultimately caused the collapse of the Santer Commission in March 1999. Van Buitenen's revelations proved especially damaging for Commissioner for Education and former French prime minister Edith Cresson who, among other things, had commissioned expensive advisory reports by her own dentist. After being rehabilitated, Van Buitenen established his own party, Europa Transparant, and out of nowhere unexpectedly gained two parliamentary seats in the 2004 EP elections. Later in the same year, Van Buitenen was nominated 'European of the Year' by the weekly *European Voice*.⁹

3.4 A new campaign

Let us recall that the 'No' vote against the Constitutional Treaty was not a 'No' against Europe: 80% of the Dutch population, including nay-sayers, still favour the Dutch membership of the European Union. The majority of nay-sayers do not want to leave Europe, but want a *different* Europe, which for example is less dominated by neoliberal market ideals, or which takes the principles of 'constitutional tolerance' and democratic subsidiarity much more seriously. This situation calls for a concentrated revision of the European project on the part of the political elites, which should take their responsibility and demonstrate boldness, creativity and visionary leadership. Rather than attempting to 'bridge the gap' in populist fashion, 'listening' to what voters have to say, or organizing 'broad societal discussions', politicians should transcend their intellectual impotence and the insecurity about their own professional role. They should welcome the end of the 'permissive consensus' about Europe, and be prepared to enter into a more contestatory and intellectually more serious form of interaction with a largely (euro)sceptical electorate.

While public interest in Europe has been lifted to a higher level, there is a distinct lack of vision and initiative on the part of national and European leaders. In the run-up to the

referendum, the pro-European majority of the Dutch political elite demonstrated a reluctant complacency, which was partly rooted in aversion against the referendum instrument itself. During the campaign, it paired a distinct lack of enthusiasm to a dismissive and condescending attitude towards the eurosceptic camp. In its aftermath, both the Dutch government and Commission chairman Barroso swiftly declared the Constitution 'dead', without coming up with credible alternatives. German chancellor Merkel has meanwhile pleaded a 'second chance' for the Constitutional Treaty in order to 'restart' the European project, but so far has not produced a convincing story which is able to successfully combat eurosceptic views. How, then, can a further politicization of Europe be promoted, and how can Dutch politics be further Europeanized? Let me conclude this paper by offering a few recommendations which appear to follow from the preceding analysis.

1. Political elites and public intellectuals must take up the challenge of the French and Dutch 'No' in order to produce new long-term visions for European integration. Political parties should focus more intensely on Europe. Unfortunately, a provisional inspection of current election programmes hardly yields a wealth of new ideas; most programmes (except those of GroenLinks and D66) take a rather defensive 'sovereignist' line on Europe. The improved level of public national debate about Europe must be sustained, e.g. by subsidizing associations such as the Vereniging voor een Democratisch Europa and Ander Europa, and by developing further internet initiatives (cf. the relative success of the governmental inquiry about Europe and the *NRC Handelsblad* site *We The People*). The Netherlands unfortunately lacks European thinktanks which match the intellectual calibre of e.g. the Centre for European Reform, Policy Network or Notre Europe.
2. As a recent VVD paper recommends, the government, and more particularly the prime minister, must give a more powerful direction to European dossiers, to be supported by a fully mandated Minister for European Affairs. The recent alteration in cabinet meeting regulations already elevates the prime minister to a more initiatory role, especially with regard to his performance on the European stage. A directly elected MP would have an even stronger mandate to act on the international scene.
3. The Constitutional Treaty needs to be reformulated, adapted and simplified, in order to be tested in a new Europe-wide referendum. The referendum itself has proven its worth as a democratic debating ground, because the debate is conducted against a deadline and thereby intensified, and because it is naturally polarized in terms of a digital (yes or no) vote. The positive effect of '2005' might well have been that we have

simultaneously become more European and have gained a clearer sense of our 'Dutchness'. A new referendum on Europe would hence also be a good way to continue the debate about Dutch identity in a globalizing world. More generally, one could plead the regularization of popular referenda as a permanent feature of the Dutch representative system, adding a plebiscitary element which would raise political interest and commitment and institute a more permanent 'conversation/negotiation' between political elites and citizens.

4. While formulating clearer views about the demarcation between supranational and national or 'subsidiary' issues and powers, the revised Treaty also needs to retain, clarify and perhaps radicalize those elements which promote a more focused and personal European leadership, such as the offices of President and that of Foreign Minister (no current election programme mentions the former, while the PvdA, the VVD and the SP also explicitly reject the latter). On the future horizon would lie a possible merger of the presidency of the Commission with that of the European Council, and the democratic election of the president by the European Parliament (or, if one accepts the previous analysis, by direct Europe-wide ballot). These changes would not aim at the restoration of undivided parliamentary sovereignty, but at the institution of new vertical differentiations and power balances between leadership functions and functions of control. This vertical differentiation would also be extended 'downwards' by means of direct elections and national and Europe-wide popular referenda. Parliamentary democracy would thus be simultaneously extended in a 'presidential' and a 'plebiscitary' direction.
5. MEP's and other Europoliticians, both Dutch and non-Dutch, must acquire a greater personal and political visibility in the Netherlands. Parties such as the PvdA, the VVD, GroenLinks and D66 have recently established internal pre-elections for the leadership of ballot lists in the European parliamentary elections. Candidate MEP's should conduct more personal and media-oriented campaigns, and should circulate more regularly in national debating circuits. A double mandate combining the membership of the national parliament and the EP would perhaps not be advisable; but MP's and MEP's could assemble more frequently in combined meetings over important European issues. In general, we should lose our 'cold feet' over the personalization of both national and European politics, and view it as an opportunity to surmount the 'crisis of the parties' and provide new channels for political communication and the building of political trust.

6. On the European level, the harmonization of existing European parties and the formation of new ones should be further stimulated. These parties can be admitted to the national electoral arena and compete with Dutch parties in offering European rather than strictly national ballot lists. This would enable Dutch electors to vote for non-Dutch candidates (e.g. European political 'stars' such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit), who would need to campaign in different member states. Not surprisingly, this idea is strongly rejected by the nationalists of the LPF, who view it as 'a power grab by Brussels bureaucrats' and maintain that such a 'marginalization of national parties is a fatal stab to democracy'.
7. What would be required to promote a truly European public space and intellectual discourse, where common values and ideas could be elaborated and a European 'imaginary' could take shape? Most cultural media remain national, or at best reach only partial international audiences from a national base. Educational systems likewise remain predominantly national, even though universities are gradually becoming more 'Europe-conscious'. The Europeanization of the public sphere is beginning to take shape on internet fora, through international exchanges, conferences, meetings and festivals. To further it, we may think of the establishment of a European public broadcasting station and of Europe-wide newspapers and magazines. Examples of the latter are Bourdieu's short-lived review magazine *Liber*, which from 1989 regularly appeared as a section in various French, German and British newspapers, or the Vienna-based e-magazine *Eurozine*, which forms the hub of a network of European cultural journals.
8. One obvious strategy would be to combat linguistic particularism and vigorously promote (English) bilingualism, both within EU institutions and across the Union at large. The EP currently works with twenty official languages, which formally yields 380 translation combinations. There is a possibility that, in the future, more languages will be added (such as Irish, Croatian, or Macedonian) while the Spanish government has even proposed that regional languages such as Catalan, Galician and Basque should in the future be used in official meetings. But the principle that members must be able to follow and conduct debates in their mother tongues is no longer feasible, and testifies to an outmoded cultural nationalism (see also De Swaan 2000). Brussels should switch to 'Euro-English' as a matter of principle. The Netherlands, with its reasonable command of 'broken English' as second language, may offer a model for other European countries in this regard. Perfect bilingualism (which would require language classes and practice from early on in the educational

system) is the only way to promote direct communication across Europe. Europe will either speak English or remain a helpless Babel of voices – and never be able to invent the new community which makes its diversity work.

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NOTES

- ¹ Hancher & Van den Brink (2006: 16) similarly argue that a European *demos* is the result rather than the prerequisite of European constitutionalism, and as such less a codification of a pre-existing social reality than a legal or political construct. The Constitution hence 'would not just entail the construction of a political entity, but, indeed, also the "constitution" of the very *demos* as the constituency thereof'. A similar constructivist view is expressed by Nicolaidis: 'In political terms, a demoi-cracy is not predicated on a common identity, European public space or political life... This political community does not rest on a shared identity but on shared projects and objectives. What matters is not the proclamation of shared values but the *praxis* associated with common values. The sense of belonging to the EU ought to be based on the *doing* more than the *being*, on shared projects and ambitions. A community of projects is not necessarily less demanding than a community of identity. But it is voluntary and differentiated rather than essentialist and holistic' (2003: 145-56; cf. also Nicolaidis 2006).
- ² In my view, however, the principle of democratic election is not necessarily or incontrovertibly opposed to the psychosocial mechanism of self-assertion or 'self-imposition' by the leader. Like representation, election is not a one-way but a two-way process. De Man's distinction still echoes an element of the pessimistic version of elite theory.
- ³ In the spirit of De Man's argument, I interpret this to mean that his interactional model, rather than suppressing political emotions in favour of the supposed rationality of the political elite, is prepared to lend them a distinct 'voice'. While elite decisions are less rational, mass political feelings are less irrational than traditionally conceived (at least in pessimistic versions of elite theory). The mixture of articulated reason and unarticulated emotion may differ at both ends of the spectrum, but both components occur 'hand in hand', and require 'equal' representation.
- ⁴ Hix follows the Schumpeterian view in stating that 'competition between rival groups of elites is the central element of modern democratic government' (2006: 10).
- ⁵ A familiar anecdote has it that (as reported by the Youth News Channel in early 2002) a majority of Dutch children above the age of six not merely knew who Fortuyn was, but also knew something about his political programme, while some of them even knew why they were against it. No Dutch politician has ever enjoyed such a broad political 'reach'.
- ⁶ This approach to some extent converges with that of Pellikaan a.o. (2006), who develop a similar 'horseshoe configuration', but go on to develop it into a three-dimensional 'cubic' model. For earlier sketches of the horseshoe model, see also Pels (1993; 2000; 2003).
- ⁷ Federalism prescribes that power be dispersed both vertically, between the central authority and the component entities, as well as horizontally within the central authority, in order to ensure that that authority duly represents all different interests present in the federal whole' (Lenaerts & Verhoeven 2002: 43). This view effectively distinguishes between federalism and statism, a distinction which is also emphasized in Nicolaidis' observation that 'the history of federalism is that of its progressive subversion by the state paradigm of centralisation'. In her opinion, the Constitution should have been bold enough to present the EU as a federal union rather than a federal state, thus rescuing the federal baby from the statehood bathwater (Nicolaidis 2003: 147).
- ⁸ While similarly favouring a more open contest for the executive power and further politicization, Hix instead considers that election by *national* parliaments provides the best guarantee for political debate about EU candidates and their programmes. The EU, in his estimate, is presently not ready for direct elections. But he simultaneously allows for an evolutionary mechanism which would in the future replace the parliamentary vote with direct elections in the various member states. Coussens and Crum appear to worry less about the alleged immaturity of the European electorate and (in my view, rightly) advise not to underestimate it.
- ⁹ Other recent examples of more or less successful issue-personification (both including Dutch Europeans) are the way in which ECB President Duisenberg acted as 'Mr Euro', and Eurocommissioner Bolkestein impersonated the controversial Services Directive and was connected to the threatening invasion of the 'Polish plumber'.