

THE CENTRE VERSUS PERIPHERY CLEAVAGE IN THE NETHERLANDS

HOW IS THE CENTRE VERSUS PERIPHERY CLEAVAGE IN THE
NETHERLANDS INFLUENCING THE SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENT
LOCAL POLITICAL PARTIES AND WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF
MUNICIPAL CHARACTERISTICS ON LOCAL VOTING BEHAVIOUR

by

Thijs Elderink

S2308649

t.elderink@student.utwente.nl

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science, program Public Administration, University of Twente

2020

Supervisors:

1st: Giedo Jansen, Public Administration

2nd: Marcel Boogers, Innovation and Regional Governance

Preface

Before you lies the study: ‘The centre versus periphery cleavage in the Netherlands; How is the centre versus periphery cleavage in the Netherlands influencing the support for independent local political parties and what is the impact of municipal characteristics on local voting behaviour?’. I have conducted this study to fulfil the requirements of the master Public Administration at the University of Twente.

With this study, I have turned my personal interests, voting behaviour and the phenomenon ‘peripheral regions’ in the Netherlands, into a research topic. While finishing this study, I hope that this study, as well as many others, again challenges the political debate and the debate between policy makers in the Netherlands about the centre versus periphery cleavage. It is acknowledgeable that certain (recent) issues have increased the dominance of this cleavage, in which identities are an important factor as well.

Before continuing with this article, I would like to thank several people. Firstly, I would like to thank Giedo Jansen, my first supervisor at the University of Twente. His guidance helped me with the structure of my research, as well as, to successfully conduct the analyses. Secondly, I would like to thank Marcel Boogers for his support as second supervisor and his suggestions regarding adequate studies as references. Finally, I really want to thank my family and partner for their unconditional support during my research. The circumstances due to the corona crisis, where sometimes challenging but they kept supporting me in finishing my thesis.

While finishing this preface, I notice that my student life has come to an end as well. I have enjoyed the years as a student, but I am very glad and enthusiastic to start my career.

Enjoy reading my research!

Sincerely,

Thijs Elderink

Diepenheim, July 2020

Abstract

Throughout the time the support for independent local political parties in the Netherlands has grown enormously. Scholars have argued that the strong rootedness, the political program of local parties, a missing representation of populist parties and the focus on solving practical issues on a local level instead of tending to positioning themselves as a leftish or rightist party are important factors of this growing support. Parallel to the growing support of the independent local political parties, the discussion between the centre and periphery in the Netherlands has increased. Eventually leading to feelings of subordination of the periphery among citizens living in the periphery. Knowingly, the centre versus periphery cleavage has a more dominant role in the voting behaviour of citizens nowadays. However, the influence of this cleavage on citizens' voting behaviour has not been studied so far. Therefore, this paper researched the impact of feelings of subordination of the periphery on the voting behaviour of Dutch citizens. As well as, the impact of municipal characteristics on the feelings of subordination of the periphery and the voting behaviour. Consequently, this paper argues that citizens with a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery are more likely to support independent local political parties. Additionally, municipal characteristics, such as a lower degree of urbanisation, a longer distance to The Hague and a strong negative demographic change are strengthening the feelings of subordination of the periphery. As a final point, this paper argues that the debate about the centre versus periphery cleavage in the Netherlands is far from finished. In fact, this paper recommends that future research could focus on the correlation between the centre versus periphery cleavage and an expected identity cleavage. Possibly leading to more polarisation in Dutch society which could lead to different voting behaviour as well.

Keywords: (local) voting behaviour – centre versus periphery cleavage – independent local political parties – peripheral regions – Netherlands

Table of contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Abstract | 2 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Social cleavages as a basis to voting behaviour | 6 |
| Social and political cleavages in the Netherlands | 9 |
| The centre versus periphery cleavage and voting behaviour in the Netherlands | 10 |
| Local voting behaviour..... | 12 |
| Data & variable construction..... | 16 |
| Analysis & results | 20 |
| Conclusion..... | 26 |
| References | 30 |

Introduction

The voting behaviour of Dutch citizens have altered enormously throughout the last couple of decades. Especially, the last couple of years, the local voting behaviour of Dutch citizens has changed significantly (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Otjes, 2018, 2019). Recent research explains that the support for independent local political parties has increased across the Netherlands. This support has been high in peripheral areas for decades already (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Otjes, 2019). Nevertheless, quite recently, this support has increased in urban areas as well (Otjes, 2019). An explanation for the increase of support is the missing representation of national populist political parties at local elections (Otjes, 2019). Subsequently, if the party of preference does not run for the local office, it is more likely that citizens will vote for an independent local political party. Another explanation is the active membership of citizens across independent local political parties. Boogers and Voerman (2010) explain that independent local political parties are more able and stable in maintaining rootedness across the local society in comparison to the local departments of national parties such as the VVD and CDA.

Even though the support for independent local political parties has increased in urban areas, there is an ongoing discussion in the Netherlands about the centre versus periphery cleavage. The core regions of the Netherlands have developed themselves strongly, while the development of peripheral regions has stagnated or, even, decreased (Butkus, Cibulskiene, Maciulyte-Sniukiene, & Matuzeviciute, 2018). Obviously, the challenges across the regions in the Netherlands are different, varying from geographical to economic challenges (Niemantsverdriet & Smouter, 2019). Specifically, the Randstad has a challenge regarding the integration of new citizens, while the peripheral areas have a challenges regarding negative demographic changes (van den Berg & van Vulpen, 2019). Consequently, a strong feeling of difference between the centre and the periphery has been established. This phenomenon could be explained as a dynamic development of interregional differences in which the regions with a stagnated or decreased development, the peripheral regions, are marked as “the places that do not matter anymore” (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Eventually leading to a situation in which inhabitants of the peripheral areas in the Netherlands believe that national policies are not focused on the challenges of their region(s) and, therefore, citizens could have a feeling of subordination of the periphery (van den Berg & van Vulpen, 2019). The question if the feeling of subordination of the periphery correlates with support for independent local political parties, however, remains.

As mentioned before, some explanations for the increase of support for independent local political parties have been studied in earlier research. The correlation between the feeling of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties, however, has not been studied so far. Therefore, this study examines the following research question: *‘How is the support of Dutch citizens for independent local political parties influenced by the feeling of subordination of the periphery during the local elections of 2018?’*. To add an extra dimension to this

study, we will examine whether municipal characteristics; degree of urbanisation, the distance of a municipality to The Hague (the governmental capital of the Netherlands), the socioeconomic status of a municipality and the demographic changes of a municipality, correlate with the feeling of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties as well. This dimension is added to the research because it has not been part of any research studying the phenomenon of support for independent local political parties so far. Moreover, other scholars studying this phenomenon have recommended to examine the impact of municipal characteristics as well.

The article starts with a general elaboration on social cleavages, consequently, the cleavage model of Lipset and Rokkan will be used. This elaboration will be provided to fully understand the existence and development of social cleavages, which functioned as a basis to the voting behaviour of citizens. Furthermore, the centre versus periphery cleavage will be specifically explained, also in relation to voting behaviour. Then, we will discuss the Dutch case of voting behaviour in a historical perspective. Moreover, the local voting behaviour of Dutch citizens will be explained in which we reflect on the correlation with the feeling of subordination of the periphery as well. Finally, we will discuss our expectation regarding the impact of municipal characteristics on local voting behaviour.

Social cleavages as a basis to voting behaviour

In 1967 Lipset and Rokkan developed the cleavage model in which they explained several social cleavages among Western democracies. The cleavages can be outlined into two main cleavages; territorial and functional or, in other words, national revolutions and industrial revolutions (Hoggart, Johnston, Shelley, & Taylor, 2014, p. 122-123; Sitter, 2002). The territorial cleavages or cleavages emerged from national revolutions can be explained as, respectively, the centre versus periphery cleavage and the church versus the state cleavage. The functional cleavages or the cleavages emerged from industrial revolutions can be explained as, respectively, the primary and secondary economy cleavage, in other words rural versus urban economy, and the employers versus employees cleavage.

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) believe that all social cleavages were part of a protest movement. These protest movements were often a new protest movement against, especially, an elite. There are three important phenomena which resulted in protest movements. Firstly, the Reformation, secondly the democratic revolution and, thirdly, the industrial revolution (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967, p. 34-38). Nevertheless, the cleavages varied quite substantially from country to country (Hoggart et al., 2014; Sitter, 2002). With these revolutions as a starting point, citizens tended to vote more often for parties representing their interests, such as an agrarian party for farmers, and resembles. It is important to acknowledge that the degrees of strengths across the cleavages varied. The employer versus employee, church versus state and rural versus urban economy were the first social cleavages that were present (Hoggart et al., 2014; Sitter, 2002). Subsequently, the geographical cleavage (centre versus periphery) was produced, which, over time, produced much more differences across a society than any of the

other cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967, p. 44-46). Since there is commitment to locality and its dominant culture, a citizen votes for the representative of its region irrespective to their economic position (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967, p. 46). Although, when someone's social class is politically dominant it is more likely that citizens will vote with their class (Hoggart et al., 2014). Consequently, all cleavages have their influence on someone's voting behaviour, but in today's society the two most dominant and studied cleavages (social class and religion) are less dominant politically seen (Jansen, 2011; van der Brug, van Praag, & van der Eijk, 2017). Eventually in the Netherlands, other cleavages regarding, for example, education, ethnic and cultural and economic values or ideologies became more important (van der Brug et al., 2017). However, this could be different between regions, since cleavages vary quite substantially across countries and across regions within countries as well (Alonso, Gómez, & Cabeza, 2013; Jansen, 2011; Jansen, De Graaf, & Need, 2011; Lijphart, 1988; Sitter, 2002).

Centre versus periphery cleavage

The centre versus periphery cleavage emerges when particular groups within society were or are against the national state building process and national policies which were initiated by central elites without any interest in peripheral region(s) (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Moreover, the centre versus periphery cleavages reflects on a conflict between the national culture and subordinate cultures or religious groups, often located in peripheral areas (Ford & Jennings, 2020). Scholars believed that this phenomenon occurred especially during the time that nation states were build. Although, nowadays there is still a centre versus periphery cleavage, with obviously a difference in strength among countries (Alonso et al., 2013). Even though this cleavage occurred quite recently across several countries, such as Belgium, Spain and the United Kingdom, and despite its centrality in fundamental theories regarding political science, scholars have not studied the centre versus periphery cleavage and its impact extensively (Alonso et al., 2013; Marks & Wilson, 2000).

The centre versus periphery cleavage has developed itself throughout time, but the context remained a cleavage between the centre of the state, and territories within the state who believe that they are less important (Alonso et al., 2013). As the cleavage may seem quite obvious, the centre versus periphery cleavage contains many complex issues such as economic, political and sociocultural issues (Alonso et al., 2013). Whereas economic development, specifically, has become an even more important issue within this cleavage, in which the centre of a state develops itself very strong while the development of peripheral and rural areas stagnated or even decreased over time (Ford & Jennings, 2020). Resulting in a brain drain in peripheral areas, meaning that younger and higher educated people are more likely to move to urban areas (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). This economic agglomeration shapes the centre versus periphery cleavage, resulting in polarization between subgroups in society living in different areas across the nation (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018); the young and higher educated people with progressive and liberal believes in

urban areas, whereas older and less educated people with more populist and conservative beliefs live in peripheral areas (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Jennings & Stoker, 2016, 2019).

The impact of the centre versus periphery cleavage is visible in the political atmosphere, in which most of the scholars argue that citizens in peripheral areas are voting for parties with a more local or anti-establishment focus since those citizens believe that the nation has no interest in their region (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Jansen & Boogers, 2018; Jennings & Stoker, 2016, 2019). Some global examples are the citizens of peripheral areas in Wisconsin who believe that the decline of their economy appeared due to the liberal beliefs and the political favouritism towards metropolitan areas of politicians holding office, a strong increase in votes in peripheral areas for the Front National in France which entails an anti-establishment vote, an increase of extreme right votes in peripheral areas during the Australian presidential elections while the urban areas voted for the Green Academic and, finally, the strong support for Brexit among citizens of peripheral areas due to a decreasing economy in their areas (Carreras, Irepoglu Carreras, & Bowler, 2019; Cramer, 2016; Ford & Jennings, 2020; Patana, 2018). This phenomenon is also visible in the Netherlands, where citizens with a feeling of subordination of their region are more likely to vote for populist parties and anti-establishment parties on a national level (van Kessel, 2011) and to vote for independent local political parties during municipal elections (Jansen & Boogers, 2018). Next to a national context, the centre versus periphery cleavage is also visible in the European integration process (Marks & Wilson, 2000), since European integration leads to, even more than a nation building process, less influence for peripheral areas and the citizens living there (Marks & Wilson, 2000).

Sociocultural issues mainly refers to the level of identification of citizens with their region and nation (van der Brug et al., 2017). If there is a strong centre versus periphery cleavage, there is a huge possibility that citizens in peripheral and rural areas identify themselves with characteristics and challenges of their own region and not with national characteristics and challenges since they have the feeling that their region is less important (Otjes, Stroebe, & Postmes, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; van der Brug et al., 2017). Subsequently, when citizens have a feeling that the nation is not focussing on challenges of their region, there is a huge probability that they will vote for an anti-establishment party (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Otjes et al., 2020), which eventually could lead to a vote for an independent local political party.

Putting everything in perspective, we believe that feelings of subordination of the periphery contain three main dimensions based on deprivation. The three dimensions are economic deprivation, political deprivation and sociocultural deprivation, as explained above and argued by many scholars under which Staniland (1970) who discussed it quite specifically. Consequently, we expect that a citizen with a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery is more likely to vote anti-establishment on a local level as well, meaning that those citizens are more likely to vote for an independent local political party.

Social and political cleavages in the Netherlands

The political atmosphere in the Netherlands has developed a lot. Many of these developments are the effects of several phenomena throughout the years. A historical year is 1917, the year of the Pacification (Lijphart, 1988, p. 11), in which voting rights for all men from 25 years and older and equal financial support for all primary schools were established (Lijphart, 1988, p. 105).

Another main characteristic of the Dutch politics are the politics of accommodations. The electorate of the Netherlands was strongly divided in three main accommodations; the Roman-Catholics, the Protestant-Christians and the General, of which the latter one could be divided in the Socialists and the Liberals (Lijphart, 1988, p. 28). Subsequently, every citizen voted for the party who represented their accommodation. The pacification-politics in the Netherlands focused on reducing the problems between the different ideologies from the several accommodations in a peaceful manner, focused on deliberation and consensus (Lijphart, 1988, p. 99).

Since 1967 the political atmosphere in the Netherlands changed again. The structure of the accommodations faded and political parties across the accommodations started to cooperate (Lijphart, 1988, p. 12). An example is the establishment of the Christian Democratic Appel (CDA). Another example of the alteration of the political atmosphere is the establishment of small political parties, such as D66 and the PPR, the precursor of the Green Left (Groenlinks) (Lijphart, 1988, p. 22; Lucardie & Voerman, 2010). The alteration in the political atmosphere is strongly visible in the period from 1975 till 1997, in which, on the one hand, the support for the rightist liberals and the left socialist forces grouped under the name Green Left has increased. While, on the other hand, the support for the Christian Democrats and the Socialists has declined (Knutsen, 2006, p. 44). A main cause for this alteration are the rising incomes among citizens, the improved standards of living, under which improved consumption, and a greater level of leisure. These developments led to a situation in which citizens, among which a high percentage of working-class citizens, identified themselves with the middle class (Knutsen, 2006, p. 4). The industrial revolution has played an important role in the decrease of the social class cleavage (Dalton, Beck, & Flanagan, 1984).

More recently, the importance of cultural aspects in the political debate increased enormously. Aspects such as ethics and culture, among others immigration, euthanasia and marriage between homosexuals, play a more determining role in the political debate (Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Jansen et al., 2011). Furthermore, topics such as unemployment, environmental problems and religion conflicts occurred on the political agenda (Aarts & Thomassen, 2008).

Compared with the historical context, voters nowadays are more influenced by ideologies about, among other things, culture and immigration and they are less loyal to the party representing their social class (Jansen, 2011, p. 154), while back in the days citizens voted for the party representing their accommodation or social class (Jansen et al., 2011).

The centre versus periphery cleavage and voting behaviour in the Netherlands

Before elaborating about the centre versus periphery cleavage in the Netherlands, it is important to outline the geographical distinction between the historical accommodations in Dutch politics. As explained before, there were three main accommodations; Catholic, Protestant and General, in which the latter one could be divided in Social and Liberal. Consequently, the Catholics were dominant in the southern part of the Netherlands, the Protestant were dominant in the northern part of the Netherlands, whereas the centre of the Netherlands was quite mixed between all pillars as shown in figure 1 (Lijphart, 1988, p. 11-15; van Kersbergen, 2009, p. 122; de Voogd, 2013).

Putting this in perspective of the centre versus periphery cleavage, being part of the theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), we could conclude that the centre versus periphery cleavage in the Netherlands in a historical context contained a cleavage between the several accommodations; state (Protestant) versus church (Catholics) and employers (Liberals) versus employees (Socialists) as well (Lijphart, 1988; van Kersbergen, 2009). Throughout time, as the system of accommodations has been destabilised, other social cleavages got more visible by, for example, the establishment of an agrarian party (Lijphart, 1988, p. 21). Even more recently, as explained before, other factors such as cultural beliefs and immigration became more determining in voting behaviour (Jansen et al., 2011). These developments are visualised in figure 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows an electorate in which the two dominant cleavages in the Netherlands are strongly represented, whereas figure 2 shows an electorate in which cleavages are less important and the importance of nowadays issues, such as migration and equality rights have increased (de Voogd, 2013, 2017; Jansen, 2011).

Figure 1

Dutch electorate over time 1918 - 1972

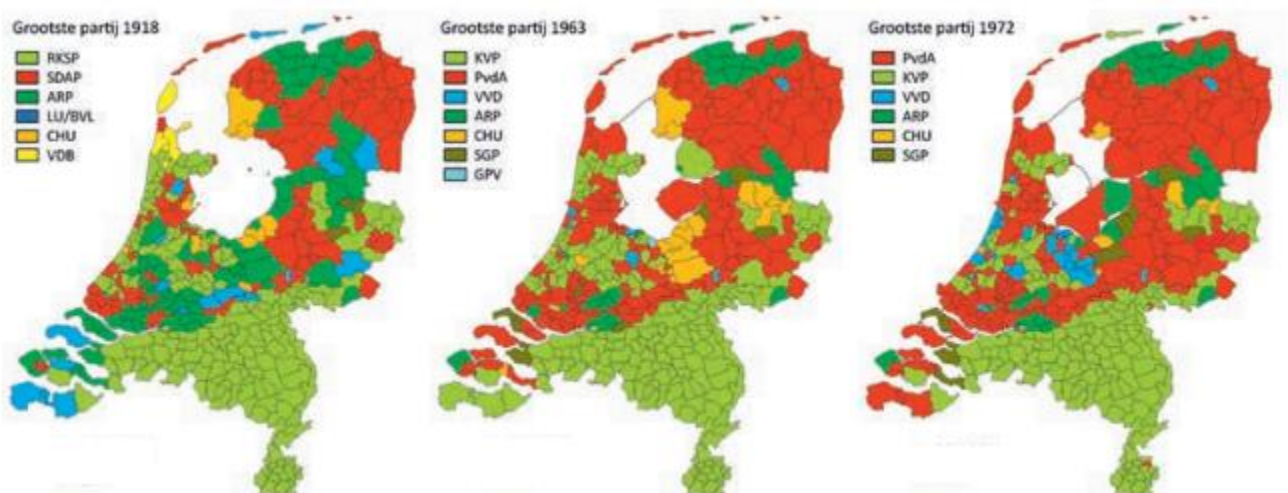


Figure 1 Dutch electorate over time in a geographical context 1918 - 1972 (de Voogd, 2017)

Figure 2

Dutch electorate over time 2006 – 2012

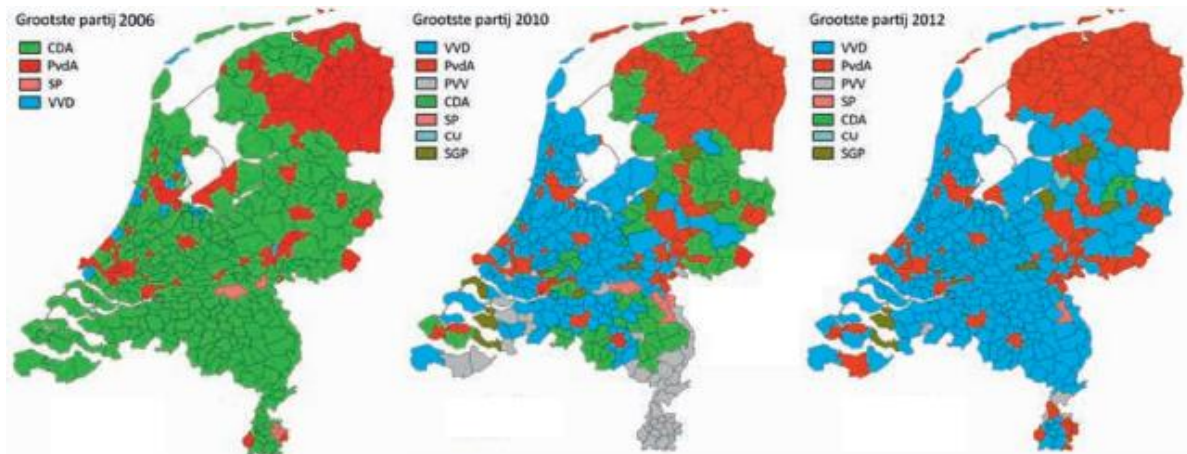


Figure 2 Dutch electorate over time in a geographical context 2006 – 2012 (de Voogd, 2017)

The question, however, if there still are any peripheral regions in a Western democracy as the Netherlands nowadays, remains. Therefore, the phenomenon of peripheral regions in the Netherlands will be discussed. Dühr (2009) explains that there are peripheral regions in the Netherlands, however, the context of scale in this discussion matters. The level of peripherality is measured along the standards of the country it concerns (Dühr, 2009). Accessibility and economic and social performance of a region are important indicators for measuring the level of peripherality (Dühr, 2009). Putting this in context of the Netherlands, Dühr (2009) concludes that the northern part of the Netherlands is peripheral. However, as Dühr (2009) only describes the northern part of the Netherlands as peripheral, Venhorst, Van Dijk and van Wissen (2010) emphasize that, next to the northern part, the eastern and southern part of the Netherlands are part of the Dutch periphery as well. They explain that younger and higher educated people, who grew up in peripheral areas, tend to move to more urban areas at a certain age (Venhorst et al., 2010), as explained by Ford and Jennings (2019) and Rodríguez-Pose (2018). Resulting, as explained before, in a situation in which the more progressive voters are living in urban areas, while the more conservative and anti-establishment voters live in peripheral areas.

Putting this in perspective of the three dimensions of the feelings of subordination of the periphery, starting with economic deprivation, there is a strong economic difference between regions (CBS, 2017). The overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Netherlands has increased (CBS, 2017). Although, if these figures are specified, a huge difference among the centre of the Netherlands and other regions occurs. For example, the GDP of the Randstad, a region in the western part of the Netherlands, has increased over more than four times than the GDP of regions like Oost-Groningen, a region in the northern part of the Netherlands (CBS, 2017). Another example is the inequality coefficient (Gini-coefficient) between provinces and COROP-regions in the Netherlands, which has almost doubled in the years from 1995 till 2014 (Butkus et al., 2018). Consequently, we believe that citizens who live in regions with a stagnated or decreased economic development have feelings of

economic deprivation. Subsequently, the decrease in economic development leads to an increase in support for anti-establishment parties (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). An specific example in the context of political deprivation is the gas extraction in northern parts of the Netherlands, which has increased the distrust in national politics by the citizens living in those regions (Otjes et al., 2020). Such issues strengthens the feeling of political deprivation, meaning that citizens in those regions are increasingly distrusting (national) politics which could eventually lead to an increasing amount of anti-establishment votes, subsequently voting for independent local political parties at municipal elections (Jansen & Boogers, 2018; Otjes, 2018, 2019; Otjes et al., 2020). Furthermore, independent local political parties are, due to their independence, more able to represent the interests of citizens of a specific municipality (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Eventually, inhabitants of regions with a lower or no economic development and less interests in national politics due to a difference in challenges will have a stronger feeling of sociocultural deprivation, since they will be seen as the regions who do not matter (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). From this point of view, people are more likely to vote anti-establishment (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Otjes, 2018; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Putting this all in perspective, we believe that people who have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery are more likely to vote for independent local political parties.

Local voting behaviour

The last couple of decades independent local political parties in the Netherlands have increased their support enormously. Subsequently, the results of the local elections of 2018 show a result of 29% of the votes won by independent local political parties (Otjes, 2019). With this result, the independent local political parties are the largest bloc after the municipal elections in 2018, while in 1986 these parties won 12% of the total votes (Otjes, 2019). Thus, the support for independent local political parties has almost doubled in the last, more or less, 30 years (Otjes, 2019). Striking with the fact that, the increase of independent local political parties was considered as a temporary phenomenon by scholars and others in the 90s (Boogers & Weterings, 2002).

An independent local political party has no ties with national political parties (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). These parties are more focused on local affairs and issues and, therefore, have an ideology about the local community, without any influence from national politics (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Otjes, 2018). Concluding, that independent local political parties are merely locally organised and competing in only one local political jurisdiction (Boogers, 2008; Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Marion Reiser & Holtmann, 2008). An important strength of independent local political parties is the willingness to cooperate and solve local practical issues, which is in the eyes of the local politicians more important than positioning themselves as a left or right wing party compared to local departments of national parties (Åberg & Ahlberger, 2015).

While explaining the increasing support for independent local political parties we will use the three dimensions economic deprivation, political deprivation and sociocultural deprivation. Before

elaborating about these three dimensions, it is important to acknowledge that earlier research has explained that citizens who are older, with lower education and a lower income are more likely to support independent local political parties (Jansen & Boogers, 2018; Jansen & Denters, 2018).

Economic deprivation is mainly focused on voting anti-establishment, due to differences in, among other things, economic development. Citizens who live in regions with a stagnated or even decreased economic development, while other regions have an increasing economic development, are more likely to vote anti-establishment and thus for an independent local political party (Carreras et al., 2019; Cramer, 2016; Ford & Jennings, 2020). A strength of independent local political parties in economic issues is their possibility to focus on local interests without any interference of a national department (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Subsequently, independent local political parties are functioning on an ad hoc basis in which local interests and expertise's have a prominent role (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Dekker, de Hart, & van den Berg, 2004).

An explanation of the increase of support for independent local political parties from a political deprivation point of view is the distrust and less interest in national politics (Jansen & Boogers, 2018). Subsequently, the support for populist parties on a national level, such as the Freedom Party and the Socialists Party, has increased (Otjes, 2019; van Kessel, 2011). However, these parties are missing representation on a local level. Since there is little representation of populist parties on a local level, these voters become 'homeless voters' during local elections. Therefore, these voters are more likely to vote for independent local political parties as a local anti-establishment alternative (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Otjes, 2018, 2019; van Kessel, 2011). Another explanation for the increase of support for independent local political parties, is the enrichment of independent local political parties via, among other things, new political dividing lines between local and supra-national interests and the local geographic and demographic interests (Boogers & Voerman, 2010).

The increase of support for independent local political parties from a sociocultural point of view is mainly focused on regional identification (Otjes et al., 2020). A specific example are the earthquakes due to gas extraction in the northern part of the Netherlands, leading to more votes for anti-establishment parties, under which independent local political parties (Otjes et al., 2020). Furthermore, citizens who have a stronger feeling of regional subordination are more likely to vote for an independent local political party (Jansen & Boogers, 2018). Especially due to the fact that independent local political parties only focus on local issues and, therefore, maintain or even strengthen their rootedness in local communities (Boogers & Voerman, 2010).

Another important aspect is the active membership of citizens across local political parties, in which independent local political parties are more able to successfully recruit new candidates for coming elections (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Moreover, citizens who do not align with the ideology of national parties turn to independent local political parties, since these parties share ideologies varying from left-wing to right-wing and from progressive to conservative (Boogers, Lucardie, & Voerman, 2007; Otjes, 2018). Another strength of independent local political parties is the regular

contact of these parties with citizens and the community, therefore these parties maintain strong ties with the local community (Boogers, Lucardie, & Voerman, 2007; Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Consequently, the first hypothesis of our research is as follows: *people with a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery support independent local political parties (H1)*.

Municipal characteristics

Despite all these insights in local voting behaviour of Dutch citizens, the impact of municipal characteristics has not been studied so far. Otjes (2019) motivates that including municipal characteristics in research allows us to trace the effect of the supply-side of local politics. In other words, this gives the possibility to study an individual's voting behaviour in a situation when someone's preferred party is not running for office during local elections (Otjes, 2019). A comparative study about Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom already explained the plausibility of a negative effect between the size of a municipality on citizen satisfaction with local governments and the elected politicians (Denters, 2002). Consequently, inhabitants of small municipalities are more satisfied with their local government, furthermore, these inhabitants trusted their locally elected politicians more than inhabitants of bigger municipalities (Denters, 2002). Putting this in perspective with the theory of Boogers and Voerman (2010) and Otjes (2018; 2019) in which they explain that independent local political parties are more dominant in smaller municipalities, it is plausible that, for example, due to the higher density of personal contact and stronger rootedness of independent political parties, the trust in the politicians of these parties is higher. Especially, since the trust in local politicians in smaller municipalities is significantly higher than in national politicians (Denters, 2002).

The question if municipal characteristics have an impact on the local voting behaviour of Dutch citizens and, specifically, voting on independent local political parties, remains. Above all, as explained before, people who live in peripheral areas are more likely to vote more conservative or anti-establishment (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Jennings & Stoker, 2016, 2019). Subsequently, we believe that the more progressive voters in the Netherlands live in urban areas. Whereas, we expect that people living in peripheral areas, with a feeling of subordination of the periphery, are more likely to vote conservative and, therefore, vote for independent local political parties. This is in line with the theory of Dühr (2009), who explains that regions outside the Randstad (the core region of the Netherlands) are less accessible and, therefore, citizens living in those regions will have a stronger feeling of subordination. Specifically peripheral regions are less accessible, especially when citizens use public transport. However, peripheral regions are also less accessible when citizens use their own transport possibilities, such as their own car, since there is less infrastructure compared to the core region of the Netherlands (Dühr, 2009).

While comparing the economic development of peripheral regions with core regions, in the Netherlands, we see an increasing difference between those two types of regions (CBS, 2017). As

explained before, there is a difference in the GINI-coefficient as well as the GDP of a region. Over the period from 1995 till 2014 the GINI-coefficient of the Netherlands has almost doubled (Butkus et al., 2018). Subsequently, the difference between GDP's of regions has increased as well. For instance, the GDP of the Randstad has increased for over more than four times compared to the GDP of Oost-Groningen (CBS, 2017). These differences in economic development could lead to different voting behaviour. Consequently, scholars argue that people living in peripheral regions, with a lower, stagnated or even negative economic development are more likely to vote anti-establishment (Carreras et al., 2019; Cramer, 2016; Ford & Jennings, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).

Additionally, the Netherlands has a special government programme for peripheral regions with strong negative demographic changes, especially a decline in young and potential inhabitants (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken & Koninkrijksrelaties, 2018). This results in very complex challenges regarding the housing market, elderly care, the economy and the accessibility of those regions (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken & Koninkrijksrelaties, 2018). These regions are typed as 'krimpregio's' and 'anticipeerregio's'. Subsequently krimpregio's have a 12.5% (or more) decrease of inhabitants in the period 2014 till 2040, whereas anticipeerregio's have a slightly less decrease of inhabitants, but the decrease in those regions will potentially grow (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken & Koninkrijksrelaties, 2018). Since these regions have not been part of any study regarding this subject so far, we will implement them as variables to our study and, therefore, tend to determine whether living in such a region has a correlation with the support for independent local political parties.

Therefore, the following three hypotheses of our research are as follows; *people living in municipalities with a lower degree of urbanisation, a larger distance to The Hague, a lower socioeconomic status and with population decline have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery (H2); people living in municipalities with a lower degree of urbanisation, a larger distance to The Hague, a lower socioeconomic status and with population decline support independent local political parties (H3); people living in municipalities with a lower degree of urbanisation, a larger distance to The Hague, a lower socioeconomic status and with population decline have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery and, therefore, support independent local political parties (H4).*

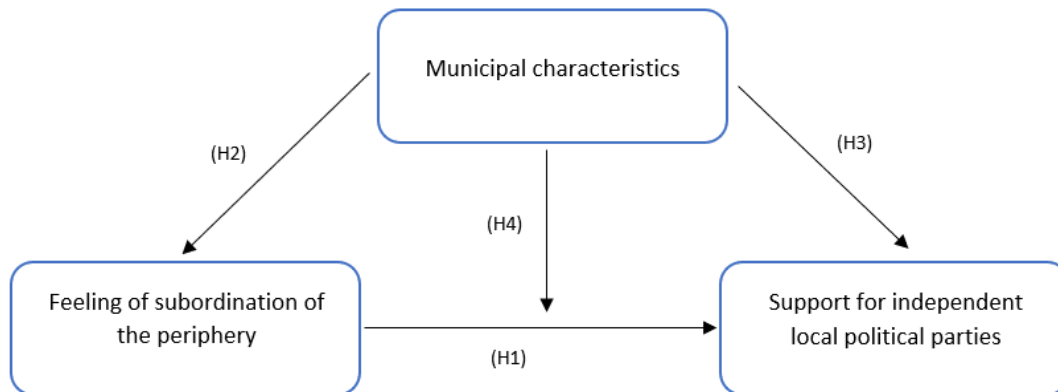
The study

As explained before, this study examines the correlation between the feeling of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties by Dutch citizens and to what extent municipal characteristics are influencing this correlation. Since the variables have a bi-variate character a bi-variate explanatory cross-level research design will be used.

The two independent variables (feeling of subordination of the periphery and the municipal characteristics) and the correlation with the dependent variable (voting for independent local political parties) explains the cross-level character of this research, as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3

The conceptual model



Data & variable construction

This study uses three datasets to test the hypotheses. The survey data of the Dutch Local Election Study 2018 (DLES) (Jansen & Denters, 2018), data from the database of the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS, 2018) and MapitoutiAmsterdam (MapItOut, 2020).

The DLES will be used to measure the three dimensions of the feelings of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties among Dutch citizens, based on a survey held during the Dutch municipal (local) elections in 2018 among 2652 households (N=2652) (Jansen & Denters, 2018). The response rate of the DLES is 78.5%. The dataset of the DLES has been manually enriched with data about municipal characteristics from other datasets such as the data about the degree of urbanisation from CBS and the distance to The Hague from MiA. The operationalisation of the variables is discussed below.

The *support for independent local political parties* will be measured by using the dataset of the DLES, in which the respondents are asked to indicate on which party they have voted. This question has been formulated as a categorical question with municipal specific answers. For the purpose of privacy regulations these answers have been transformed into broader categories, on the one hand differentiating between all major Dutch parties which are also active at the national level, on the other hand grouping the different local parties together. The possible answers are; 1) I do not want to say, 2) I do not know, 3) VVD, 4) PVV, 5) CDA, 6) D66, 7) GroenLinks, 8) SP, 9) PvdA, 10) ChristenUnie, 11) PvdD, 12) 50Plus, 13) SGP, 14) DENK, 15) FvD, 16) Local (or other) party, 17)

Progressive combination (PvdA, GL, D66), 18) Christian combination (CU, SGP), 19) Other national party, 20) Blanco. This data will be transformed into two categories; 1) voted for an independent local political party, 0) all other options, including not voted for an independent local political party and abstention.

The concept *feeling of subordination of the periphery* is an individual feeling containing three dimensions, namely economic deprivation, political deprivation and sociocultural deprivation. The variable feeling of subordination of the periphery has been measured via statements about these three dimensions. Respondents were asked, based on a 7-points scale, to answer if they fully disagree (1 point) or fully agree (7 points) with a particular statement. Economic deprivation has been measured via the statement: “the national government has not done enough to ensure or improve the vitality of my region”. Political deprivation has been measured via the statement; “national politicians are not interested in my part of the country”. Sociocultural deprivation has been measured via the statement: “people in our country look down on people coming from my region”. The average score of these dimensions together determines whether an individual has a feeling of subordination of the periphery, therefore the dimensions will be computed into a new variable representing the average score on the three dimensions explaining the feelings of subordination of the periphery. To test the reliability of these dimensions as measurement of feelings of subordination of the periphery, a Cronbach’s Alpha test has been conducted. The test resulted in a score of .794 which is an acceptable, almost good, score on the Cronbach’s Alpha test.

The *degree of urbanisation*, a municipal characteristic, will be examined via a scale with five categories. These categories vary from 1) rural; less than 500 addresses a km², 2) non-urban; 500 to 1000 addresses a km², 3) urban; 1000 to 1500 addresses a km², 4) strongly urban; 1500 to 2500 addresses a km², 5) very strongly urban; 2500 or more addresses a km².

The *distance to The Hague from municipalities*, a municipal characteristic, has been measured manually by using the MiA database. This dataset provided us the possibility to determine the distance in travelling time by car from municipalities to The Hague (MapItOut, 2020). The distance from the municipalities to The Hague has been measured from the city hall of a municipality to the city hall of The Hague. For the purpose of this study we have manually categorized the data into the following five categories; 1) very small distance to The Hague; <16 minutes, 2) small distance to The Hague; from 16 till 20 minutes, 3) moderate distance to The Hague; from 31 till 45 minutes, 4) long distance to The Hague; from 46 till 60 minutes, 5) very long distance to The Hague; > 60 minutes.

The *socioeconomic status of a municipality*, a municipal characteristic, will be measured via the research of DLES, which already included municipal data of CBS. The socioeconomic status of a municipality will be determined based on the average house price per municipality as an indicator. The municipalities are categorized in three categories; 1) less than 200k, 2) from 200k till 300k, 3) more than 300k. This is, however, not the most reliable measure to determine the socioeconomic status of a

municipality. Nevertheless, since the data has been gathered according the directives of, among others, the GDPR, it is impossible to use a more precise measurement for the socioeconomic status.

The variable *demographic changes*, a municipal characteristic, has been manually added to the dataset, based on geographical information of the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (Rijksoverheid, 2015). The data has been categorized as follows; 0) no population decline, 1) population decline.

Since earlier research has explained several other causes for the support of independent local political parties, we have introduced three control variables which correlate with the support for independent local political parties to test the validity of this research. These control variables are *age*, *education* and *income*. Subsequently, elderly and lower educated people, with an expected lower income, are more likely to vote for independent local political parties (Jansen & Boogers, 2018; Jansen & Denters, 2018).

The *age* of the respondents has been measured via the following categories; 1) 18 till 24 years, 3) 25 till 34 years, 4) 35 till 44 years, 5) 45 till 54 years, 6) 55 till 64 years, 7) 65 years or older. These categories will be computed into three new categories; 1) young adults; 18 years till 34 years, 2) adults; 35 years till 64 years, 3) elderly; 64 years and older.

The *level of education* has been measured in categories based on the Dutch school system. The respondents have been asked to fill in their highest finished degree. The categories are as follows: 1) primary school, 2) VMBO, 3) HAVO/VWO, 4) MBO, 5) HBO, 6) WO, 7) different, 8) not finished any degree, 9) not started a programme at any education level (yet). These categories will be transformed into three new categories; 1) low education; primary school, VMBO, not finished any degree and not started a programme yet, 2) middle education; HAVO/VWO and MBO, 3) higher education; HBO and WO. Different will be marked as missing.

Moreover, we are interested whether someone's individual socioeconomic status influences the feeling of subordination and the support for independent local political parties. Therefore, we will add *income* as a control variable as well. The levels of net income of an individual are based on the categories used in the DLES; 0) no income, 1) 500EUR or less, 2) 501EUR till 1000EUR, 3) 1001EUR till 1500EUR, 4) 1501EUR till 2000EUR, 5) 2001EUR till 2500EUR, 6) 2501EUR till 3000EUR, 7) 3001EUR till 3500EUR, 8) 3501EUR till 4000EUR, 9) 4001EUR till 4500EUR, 10) 4501EUR till 5000EUR, 11) 5001EUR till 7500EUR, 12) more than 7500EUR, 13) I do not know, 14) I do not answer. These categories will be transformed into three new categories, low-middle-high, based on a report of the NIBUD (Madern & Burg, 2012, p. 4); 1) low income; categories 0 till 3, 2) middle income; categories 4 till 6, 3) high income; categories 7 till 12. The categories 13 and 14 are marked as missing.

Finally, we will examine whether the sex of a respondent is a determining variable as well. Therefore, the variable sex will be used as a control variable as well; 1) male, 0) female.

Table 1

| <i>Descriptive statistics</i> | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| Variable | Frequencies | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
| Support for independent local political parties | | | | | |
| Yes | 538 (80,1%) | | | | |
| No | 2166 (19,9%) | | | | |
| Feelings of subordination of the periphery | | | | | |
| Feelings of subordination of the periphery | 2698 (100%) | 3,47 | 1,40 | 1,00 | 7,00 |
| Degree of urbanisation | | | | | |
| Rural | 415 (15,5%) | | | | |
| Non-urban | 529 (19,7%) | | | | |
| Urban | 583 (21,7%) | | | | |
| Strong urban | 730 (27,2%) | | | | |
| Very strongly urban | 428 (15,9%) | | | | |
| Distance to The Hague | | | | | |
| Very small | 103 (3,8%) | | | | |
| Small | 263 (9,7%) | | | | |
| Moderate | 275 (10,2%) | | | | |
| Long | 598 (22,1%) | | | | |
| Very long | 1465 (54,2%) | | | | |
| Socioeconomic status | | | | | |
| <200k | 1184 (45,1%) | | | | |
| 200-300k | 1375 (52,3%) | | | | |
| >300k | 68 (2,6%) | | | | |
| Demographic changes | | | | | |
| Population decline | 475 (17,6%) | | | | |
| No population decline | 2229 (82,4%) | | | | |
| Age | | | | | |
| Young adults | 179 (6,6%) | | | | |
| Adults | 1699 (62,8%) | | | | |
| Elderly | 826 (30,5%) | | | | |
| Education | | | | | |
| Low | 661 (25%) | | | | |
| Middle | 918 (34,7%) | | | | |
| High | 1068 (40,3%) | | | | |
| Income | | | | | |
| Low | 1170 (46%) | | | | |
| Middle | 1167 (45,8%) | | | | |
| High | 209 (8,2%) | | | | |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Male | 1263 (46,7%) | | | | |
| Female | 1441 (53,3%) | | | | |

Note; some variables have missing data, these are not included in this table. Therefore, the total response number varies between variables.

Analysis & results

To test our hypotheses we will, firstly, conduct some bi-variate analyses. A Pearson's R Test provides us results of the correlation between the variables and therefore the possibility to tentatively look to some first results regarding H1, H2 and H3. Moreover, given the binary nature of the dependent variable, several logistic regression analyses will be applied. Since its bivariate character, hypothesis 2 will be explained by conducting ANOVA tests for comparing the average feeling of subordination across different types of municipalities.

Bi-variate analyses

This paragraph will explain the results of the bi-variate analysis, explaining the correlation between the variables and testing hypothesis 2. Table 2 shows the results of the Pearson's R test for the correlation between the variables. Table 3 shows the results of the several ANOVA tests.

Table 2

| <i>Pearson's R Test for correlation between variables</i> | | |
|---|--|--|
| Variable | Feeling of subordination of the periphery | Support for independent local political parties |
| Feeling of subordination of the periphery | - | 0,13** |
| Degree of urbanisation | - 0,17** | - 0,10** |
| Distance to The Hague | 0,28** | 0,06** |
| Socioeconomic status | - 0,20** | - 0,01 |
| Demographic changes | 0,25** | 0,05* |
| Support for independent local political parties | 0,13** | - |

* p; <0,01 ** p; <0,05

Table 2 shows the correlations between the several variables based on a Pearson's R Test. As table 2 illustrates, the feelings of subordination of the periphery are stronger in municipalities with a low level of urbanisation, a longer distance to The Hague, a lower socioeconomic status and those municipalities who have population decline. The support for independent local political parties is stronger among citizens who have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery and those living in more rural municipalities. Furthermore, the support for independent local political parties is marginally stronger in municipalities with a longer distance to The Hague and municipalities who have population decline. The socioeconomic status of a municipality has no significant correlation with the support for independent local political parties. Table 3 shows the results of several ANOVA tests, which we have used to test hypothesis 2.

Table 3

| <i>ANOVA test for feelings of subordination of the periphery * municipal characteristics</i> | | |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Variable | Mean | Std. deviation |
| Degree of urbanisation | | |
| Rural | 3,94* | 1,42 |
| Non-urban | 3,50* | 1,45 |
| Urban | 3,49* | 1,35 |
| Strongly Urban | 3,40* | 1,32 |
| Very strongly urban | 3,04 | 1,41 |
| Distance to The Hague | | |
| Very small distance | 2,93** | 1,17 |
| Small distance | 2,91** | 1,26 |
| Moderate distance | 2,97** | 1,30 |
| Long distance | 2,98** | 1,27 |
| Very long distance | 3,89** | 1,37 |
| Socioeconomic status | | |
| <200k | 3,76* | 1,43 |
| 200k – 300k | 3,24* | 1,33 |
| >300k | 2,73* | 0,97 |
| Demographic changes | | |
| No population decline | 3,31** | 1,35 |
| Population decline | 4,23* | 1,42 |

* p; <0,05 ** p; <0,001

As table 3 shows, there is an increase of feelings of subordination of the periphery when the degree of urbanisation is stronger. As the table shows, there is a difference of almost 1 point between strongly urban municipalities and non-urban municipalities. There is a statistically significant difference between the categories ($F(4,2674)=22.697$, $p = <.001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the feelings of subordination of the periphery were significant statistically lower for ‘very strongly urban’ ($p=<.05$) compared to ‘strongly urban’ ($p=<.05$), ‘urban’ ($p=<.05$), ‘non-urban’ ($p=<.05$) and ‘rural’ ($p=<.05$). There is a significant statistically difference between ‘strongly urban’, ‘urban’, ‘non-urban’ and ‘rural’.

Furthermore, the table shows a small difference between the categories very small distance to The Hague, small distance to The Hague, moderate distance to The Hague and long distance to The Hague. Consequently, there is little difference between the average feeling of the subordination of the periphery between citizens with a distance to The Hague varying from less than 15 minutes till 60 minutes. Whereas, citizens with a very long distance to The Hague, from 61 minutes traveling time, have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery compared to citizens living in municipalities with a very small distance to The Hague. There is a statistically significant difference between the

categories of distance to The Hague in table 5 ($F(4,2693) = 83.247, p = <.001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the feelings of subordination of the periphery were statistically significant higher for the very long distance to The Hague category ($p <.001$). There are significant differences between all categories if they are compared to the category very long distance to The Hague. The other categories do not differ significantly.

As table 3 shows, there is a difference of just more than 1 point in the feeling of subordination of the periphery if we compare the highest category with the lowest category, in which citizens living in municipalities with the lowest socioeconomic status have the highest feeling of subordination of the periphery. Nevertheless, the score of 3,67 in municipalities with the lowest socioeconomic status is only 0,17 points higher than the average score on the 7-points scale referring to feelings of subordination of the periphery. There is a statistically significant difference between the categories ($F(2,2618) = 56.128, p = <.001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the feelings of subordination of the periphery were statistically significant lower for the category '>300k' ($p = <.05$) and '200-300k' ($p = .05$) compared to '<200k' ($p = <.05$).

The table shows that citizens living in regions other than regions with population decline, have an average score of 3,31 regarding the feelings of subordination. Whereas citizens living in a municipality with population decline have an average score of 4,23 regarding the feelings of subordination of the periphery. There is a statistically significant difference between the categories ($F(2,2695) = 95.632, p = <.001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the feelings of subordination of the periphery were statistically significant lower for regions with 'no population decline' ($p = <.001$) compared to regions with 'population decline' ($p = <.05$).

The municipal characteristic demographic changes has the strongest impact on the feelings of subordination of the periphery. Subsequently, citizens living in a region with population decline have the highest average score regarding to the feelings of subordination of the periphery, with a difference of more than 0,25 points which is distinctive to the other average scores of municipal characteristics. Moreover, the table shows that citizens living in a rural area, with a longer distance to The Hague and a higher population decline have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery. As the table shows, the municipal variable socioeconomic status does not have an impact on the feelings of subordination of the periphery. Even though, based on the results of the ANOVA tests and the Pearson's R Test we confirm hypothesis 2.

Logistic regression analyses

To test hypotheses 1 and 3 we will conduct two logistic regression analyses. The first model will measure the correlation between the feelings of subordination and the support for independent local political parties (H1). The second model will measure the correlation between the municipal characteristics and the support for independent local political parties (H3). Age, education and income will be used as control variables, as explained in the data & variable construction paragraph.

Table 4

| <i>Binary logistic regression analysis for feelings of subordination of the periphery and municipal characteristics with support for independent local political parties as a reference</i> | | | | |
|---|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
| Variable | B | S.E. | B | S.E. |
| Constant | - 2,70 | 0,30 | - 2,10 | 0,44 |
| Feelings of subordination of the periphery | 0,19** | 0,04 | 0,20** | 0,04 |
| Education (low = ref.) | | | | |
| Middle education | 0,02 | 0,13 | 0,02 | 0,13 |
| High education | - 0,30* | 0,14 | - 0,37* | 0,15 |
| Income (low = ref.) | | | | |
| Middle income | 0,05 | 0,12 | 0,01 | 0,13 |
| High income | - 0,18 | 0,23 | - 0,17 | 0,24 |
| Age (young adults = ref.) | | | | |
| Adults | 0,59* | 0,27 | 0,67* | 0,28 |
| Elderly | 0,83** | 0,27 | 0,90** | 0,29 |
| Sex (male=1) | 0,22 | 0,11 | 0,27* | 0,11 |
| Degree of urbanisation | | | - 0,17** | 0,05 |
| Distance to The Hague | | | - 0,06 | 0,05 |
| Socioeconomic status (low = ref.) | | | | |
| Middle socioeconomic status | | | - 0,01 | 0,12 |
| High socioeconomic status | | | 0,72* | 0,30 |
| Demographic changes (population decl. = 1) | | | 0,01 | 0,15 |
| Nagelkerke pseudo R ² | | 0,04 | | 0,05 |

* p; < 0.02 ** p; < 0,005

Model 1 in table 4 shows the regression between the feeling of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties (H1). As the model indicates, there is a positive significant correlation between the feelings of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties. In other words, people with a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery are more likely to vote for independent local political parties. Moreover, negative significant correlation between high education and the support for independent local political parties, whereas, there is a positive significant correlation between age and the support for independent local political parties. Accordingly, older citizens with a lower education are more likely to support independent local political parties. Therefore, based on this model, we conclude that older people with a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery and a lower education are more likely to support independent local political parties. Consequently, based on model 1 and the results explained in table 2 we confirm hypothesis 1.

Model 2¹ in table 4 shows the results of a binary logistic regression analysis testing hypothesis 3. As model 2 shows, the degree of urbanisation has a negative significant correlation with the support for independent local political parties. Additionally, a high economic status has a positive significant correlation with the support for independent local political parties. Thus, people living in a municipality with a lower degree of urbanisation and a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to support independent local political parties. The other municipal characteristics, distance to The Hague and population decline, have no significant correlation with the support for independent local political parties. Subsequently, based on this model we conclude that older people living in municipalities with a lower degree of urbanisation, a higher socioeconomic status and lower education are more likely to support independent local political parties. Nevertheless, we only found a significant correlation between two municipal variables and the support for independent local political parties. Consequently, based on model 2 and the results shown in table 2 we do not confirm hypothesis 3.

Interaction analysis

To test hypothesis 4, a binary logistic regression analysis including interaction variables between the feelings of subordination of the periphery and the municipal characteristic variables will be conducted. Eventually, we expect that municipal characteristics moderate the individual level correlation between the feelings of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties, therefore, interaction effects will be included. Firstly, we will compute the interaction between each municipal variable and the feeling of subordination of the periphery separately. Subsequently, we will conduct four binary logistic regression analyses, an analysis for each municipal variable, including interaction variables to test hypothesis 4. The results of this test are presented in table 5.

Table 5

| <i>Binary logistic regression analysis for municipal characteristics and the feelings of subordination of the periphery with support for independent local political parties as a reference</i> | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Variable | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
| | B | S.E. | B | S.E. | B | S.E. | B | S.E. |
| Constant | - 1,83 | 0,45 | - 2,12 | 0,58 | - 2,83 | 0,36 | - 2,73 | 0,31 |
| Feelings of subordination of the periphery | 0,08 | 0,08 | - 0,03 | 0,15 | 0,15 | 0,11 | 0,19** | 0,04 |
| Education (low = ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| Middle education | 0,03 | 0,13 | 0,01 | 0,13 | - 0,01 | 0,13 | 0,02 | 0,13 |
| High education | - 0,30 | 0,14 | - 0,32* | 0,14 | - 0,37* | 0,15 | - 0,30 | 0,14 |
| Income (low = ref.) | | | | | | | | |

¹ There are no differences between the results if the municipal variables are added at the same time or added separately and tested one by one.

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| Middle income | 0,04 | 0,12 | 0,05 | 0,12 | 0,03 | 0,12 | 0,05 | 0,12 |
| High income | - 0,14 | 0,23 | - 0,17 | 0,23 | - 0,20 | 0,23 | - 0,17 | 0,23 |
| Age (young adults = ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| Adults | 0,56 | 0,27 | 0,60* | 0,27 | 0,70* | 0,28 | 0,59 | 0,27 |
| Elderly | 0,77** | 0,27 | 0,83** | 0,27 | 0,94** | 0,29 | 0,82** | 0,27 |
| Sex (male=1) | 0,24 | 0,11 | 0,22 | 0,11 | 0,24 | 0,11 | 0,22 | 0,11 |
| Degree of urbanisation | - 0,26* | 0,11 | | | | | | |
| Degree of urbanisation by feelings of subordination of the periphery | 0,03 | 0,03 | | | | | | |
| Distance to The Hague | | | - 0,13 | 0,12 | | | | |
| Distance to The Hague by feelings of subordination of the periphery | | | 0,05 | 0,03 | | | | |
| Socioeconomic status (low = ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| Middle socio-economic status | | | | | - 0,07 | 0,29 | | |
| High socio-economic status | | | | | 0,65 | 0,53 | | |
| Socioeconomic status by feelings of subordination of the periphery | | | | | 0,04 | 0,07 | | |
| Demographic changes (population decline = 1) | | | | | | | 0,30 | 0,40 |
| Demographic changes by feelings of subordination of the periphery | | | | | | | - 0,05 | 0,09 |
| Nagelkerke pseudo R ² | 0,05 | | 0,04 | | 0,05 | | 0,04 | |

* p;<0,025 ** p;< 0,005

Table 5 shows the results of the binary logistic regression analysis testing hypothesis 4; people living in municipalities with a lower degree of urbanisation, a longer distance to The Hague, a lower socioeconomic status and with population decline have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery and, therefore, support independent local political parties. As the table shows, there is a negative significant correlation between the degree of urbanisation and the support for independent local political parties. There is no other significant correlation between the other variables of our study, based on this test. Moreover, the interaction variables do not have a significant correlation in any kind with the support for independent local political parties. In other words, based on this model there is no interaction effect of the municipal characteristic variables on the relation between the

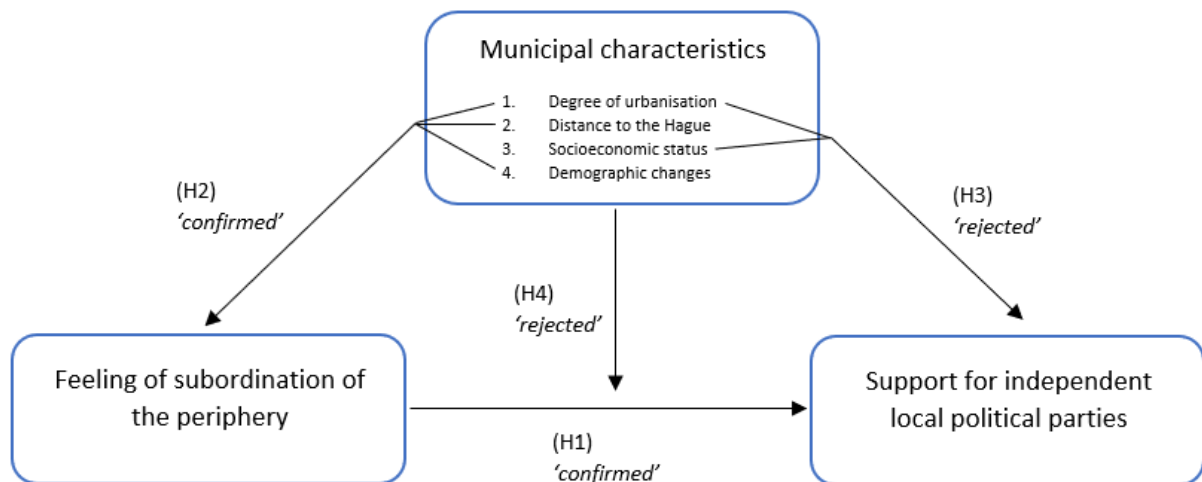
feelings of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties. Therefore, based on the results of this test, we do not confirm hypothesis 4.

Results of the study visualised in the conceptual model

Based on the results of the study we confirm hypotheses 1 and 2, whereas we reject hypotheses 3 and 4. The results of the study are visualised in the conceptual model, which is visualised in figure 4.

Figure 4

The conceptual model based on the results of the study



Note; the municipal variables who have a significant correlation with other variables are connected to the arrows explaining the hypotheses.

Conclusion

This research examined the voting behaviour of Dutch citizens on a local level during the municipal (local) elections in 2018 to determine whether feelings of subordination of the periphery are influencing the support for independent local political parties. Consequently, the main research question is as follows; ‘How is the support for independent local political parties influenced by the feeling of subordination of the periphery?’.

We conclude that citizens living in peripheral areas have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery in comparison to citizens living in more urban areas. These feelings are stronger in the periphery, since citizens have the feeling that their region is less important compared to, for example, core regions of a country (Jansen & Boogers, 2018; Jennings & Stoker, 2019; Otjes et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). We believe that the feelings of subordination of the periphery are based on three dimensions of deprivation, namely, economic, political and sociocultural deprivation as confirmed by Otjes et al. (2020) and Staniland (1970). Next to individual feelings, we state that a

lower degree of urbanisation, a longer distance to The Hague and stronger negative demographic changes have a strengthening influence on the feelings of subordination of the periphery as well. Eventually, we conclude that people with a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery are more likely to support independent local political parties. Additionally, we see that older people with a lower education are more likely to have a stronger feeling of subordination of the periphery and, therefore, support independent local political parties.

On the one hand we see an influence of municipal characteristics on the feelings of subordination of the periphery. On the other hand, however, we tried to examine the correlation between the municipal characteristics and the support for independent local political parties. Based on our research we conclude that some municipal characteristics, the degree of urbanisation and the socioeconomic status, have a marginally influence on the support of independent local political parties. Whereas, the other municipal characteristics do not have any influence on the support for independent local political parties. Given these results we conclude that municipal characteristics do not have a significant influence on the support of independent local political parties.

Furthermore, we tried to examine the interaction of the municipal characteristics on the relation between the feelings of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties. Whatever the case, we conclude that municipal characteristics are not influencing the relation between the feelings of subordination of the periphery and the support for independent local political parties.

Putting this all in perspective of this study, we see that citizens in peripheral areas are more likely to support anti-establishment parties (Jansen & Boogers, 2018; Jennings & Stoker, 2019; Otjes et al., 2020; van Kessel, 2011). Subsequently, the support for independent local political parties has increased enormously throughout the last couple of decades (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Otjes, 2019). Therefore, we conclude that feelings of subordination of the periphery strengthens the support for independent local political parties.

Recommendations for further research and limitations of this study

This study has some interesting outcomes, especially because feelings of subordination of the periphery and municipal characteristics were not examined as they are in this study in any earlier research. Despite the interesting outcomes of this study, it is important to take notice of the limitations of this study while interpreting the results. A very important note is the fact that this study focuses on a certain moment in time, whereas the political atmosphere and, therefore, the voting behaviour of the electorate can alter very quickly. As it has done enormously the last couple of decades. In other words, this topic as a research topic requires a continuous recalibration of the results to ensure reliability of the results. An excellent example is the region Groningen, this region has encountered many political challenges lately because of the negative effects of the gas extraction. Situations like these could strengthen the feeling of subordination of the periphery and, therefore, alter citizens' voting behaviour.

Because of issues like the gas extraction in Groningen and the ongoing discussion about the centre versus periphery in the Netherlands we expect that the debate about the centre versus cleavage in the Netherlands is far from finished. In fact, we expect the centre versus periphery cleavage to strengthen. Therefore, we recommend scholars to further research the existence of this cleavage in the Netherlands. Since the difference between regions might seem small, it is certainly there. Furthermore, we believe, as other scholars have outlined as well, that the feelings of subordination of the periphery of citizens in the Netherlands are, next to the centre versus periphery cleavage, part of the discussion regarding an identity cleavage. Future studies should focus on the causes of the feelings of subordination and this identity cleavage. Additionally, we believe that the centre versus periphery cleavage and this expected identity cleavage strengthens polarisation within the Dutch society. Our expectation is that, due to different identities across the society and an increasing difference between those identities, people create stronger feelings of deprivation and subordination and, therefore, strengthen polarisation. Consequently, we recommend scholars to study whether the centre versus periphery cleavage and the identity cleavage strengthen polarisation across the society and, eventually, the voting behaviour of citizens.

Looking at our research, at first, we see that there are some limitations regarding the data construction. Firstly, we have categorised the municipalities in categories of the degree of urbanisation. However, we should acknowledge that there are municipalities with a small amount of addresses a km², while these municipalities are not typically seen as rural or peripheral. Especially due to the fact that scholars have different opinions regarding the phenomenon peripheral regions in the Netherlands. Mainly because of the geographical location of regions and proximity to cities or larger municipalities.

Another limitation is the use of the average house price as data for the socioeconomic status of a municipality. Although the average house price might be low, this does not necessary mean that the socioeconomic status of that particular municipality is low as well. Future research should examine the, for example, working opportunities and possibilities to study in a particular municipality or in the surroundings of that municipality. Moreover, the average house price as an indicator is quite diffuse since outliers, both higher and lower, are not excluded. Which could lead to, eventually, a misinterpretation of the socioeconomic status of a municipality. As well as the fact that houses in urban regions only have a higher average house price. There are rural municipalities, with a small distance to bigger cities, where the average house price is extraordinarily high, for instance due to the fact that prosperous citizens decide to purchase a house in these ‘greener’ and ‘child-friendlier’ municipalities.

Thirdly, we have measured the distance to The Hague and then categorised this data. However, while categorising this data we have focused on the smaller distances such as till 15 minutes. Whereas, the focus should be on the longer distances such as from 2 hours and longer. Despite these categories, we conclude that the distance to The Hague has a significant correlation with

the feeling of subordination of the periphery. We believe that that if this data was categorised based on longer distances, the influence of this variable should be stronger. Therefore, future research should use categories with a focus on longer distances.

Finally, we have researched the feelings of subordination of the periphery on a national level. This provides us to determine whether people experience the focus of the national government different. On the other hand, we believe that there are feelings of subordination within a municipality as well. We believe that there are several causes for these feelings within a municipality, such as the reclassification of the municipalities. Subsequently, we believe that reclassification of municipalities leads to an increase of geographical segregation due to differences in identities between villages in one particular municipality. Therefore, we recommended other scholars to study the differences regarding these feelings within municipalities.

References

- Aarts, K., & Thomassen, J. (2008). Dutch voters and the changing party space 1989-2006. *Acta Politica*, 43(2–3), 203–234. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2008.6>
- Åberg, M., & Ahlberger, C. (2015). Local candidate lists: Historical artefacts or a novel phenomenon? A research note. *Party Politics*, 21(5), 813–820. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068813499870>
- Alonso, S., Gómez, B., & Cabeza, L. (2013). Measuring Centre-Periphery Preferences: The Regional Manifestos Project. *Regional and Federal Studies*, 23(2), 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2012.754351>
- Boogers, M. (2008). Local Political Parties in the Netherlands: Anomaly or Prototype? In M. Reiser & E. Holtmann (Eds.), *Farewell to the Party Model?* (pp. 149–167). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-90923-3_9
- Boogers, M., Lucardie, P., & Voerman, G. (2007). *Lokale politieke groeperingen: belangenbehartiging, protest en lokalisme*. Retrieved from TSPB/DNPP website: <http://dnpp.eldoc.ub.rug.nl/FILES/root/pubs/lokalisme/lokalisme.pdf>
- Boogers, M., & Voerman, G. (2010). Independent local political parties in the Netherlands. *Local Government Studies*, 36(1), 75–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930903435807>
- Boogers, M., & Weterings, R. (2002). Het gebeurde in Rotterdam, Hilversum en Drimmelen. *Beleid En Maatschappij*, 3, 169–171.
- Butkus, M., Cibulskiene, D., Maciulyte-Sniukiene, A., & Matuzeviciute, K. (2018). What is the evolution of convergence in the EU? Decomposing EU disparities up to NUTS 3 level. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 10(5), 1552. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10051552>
- Carreras, M., Irepoglu Carreras, Y., & Bowler, S. (2019). Long-Term Economic Distress, Cultural Backlash, and Support for Brexit. *Comparative Political Studies*, 52(9), 1396–1424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019830714>
- CBS. (2017). BBP, werkloosheid, opleiding en werkzaamheid 1997-2016. Retrieved November 20, 2019, from <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/maatwerk/2017/17/bbp-werkloosheid-opleiding-en-werkzaamheid-1997-2016>
- CBS. (2018). Gemeentegrootte en stedelijkheid. Retrieved January 20, 2020, from CBS.nl website: <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/onze-diensten/methoden/classificaties/overig/gemeentegrootte-en-stedelijkheid>
- Cramer, K. J. (Katherine J. (2016). *The politics of resentment : rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker* (1st ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dalton, R. J., Beck, P. A., & Flanagan, S. C. (1984). Electoral change in advanced industrial democracies. In R. J. Dalton, S. C. Flanagan, & P. A. Beck (Eds.), *Electoral change in advanced industrial democracies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- de Voogd, J. (2013). *Nieuwe scheidslijnen op de kaart*. The Hague.
- de Voogd, J. (2017). *Zicht op verschil*. The Hague.

- Dekker, P., de Hart, J., & van den Berg, E. (2004). Democratie en civil society. In P. Schnabel, P. Dekker, J. de Hart, & E. van den Berg (Eds.), *In het zicht van de toekomst: Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport 2004* (pp. 181–220). Den Haag: Staatsdrukkerij en Uitgever (SDU).
- Denters, D. (2002). Size and political trust: Evidence from Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 20(6), 793–810. <https://doi.org/10.1068/c0225>
- Dühr, S. (2009). Regional development and regional policy in the Netherlands : are there peripheral regions ? Die Stellung peripherer Regionen in der Regionalentwicklung und Regionalpolitik in den Niederlanden. *Raumforschung Und Raumordnung*, 67(4), 300–307.
- Ford, R., & Jennings, W. (2020). The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052217-104957>
- Hoggart, K., Johnston, R. J., Shelley, F. M., & Taylor, P. J. (2014). Developments in Electoral Geography. In *Political Geography*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/622958>
- Jansen, G. (2011). Social Cleavages and Political Choices: Large-scale Comparisons of Social Class, Religion and Voting Behavior in Western Democracies. In *Radboud Repository*. <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.3033202>
- Jansen, G., & Boogers, M. (2018). Opkomst en stemgedrag. In G. Jansen & B. Denters (Eds.), *Democratie dichterbij lokaal kiezersonderzoek 2018* (pp. 7–17). Enschede: Universiteit Twente.
- Jansen, G., De Graaf, N. D., & Need, A. (2011). Class voting, social changes and political changes in the Netherlands 1971–2006. *Electoral Studies*, 30(3), 510–524. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2011.02.005>
- Jansen, G., & Denters, B. (2018). *Democratie dichterbij: Lokaal Kiezersonderzoek 2018 Redactie namens de Stichting KiezersOnderzoek Nederland (SKON)*.
- Jennings, W., & Stoker, G. (2016). The Bifurcation of Politics: Two Englands. *Political Quarterly*, 87(3), 372–382. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12228>
- Jennings, W., & Stoker, G. (2019). The divergent dynamics of cities and towns: Geographical polarisation and brexit. *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 90, pp. 155–166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12612>
- Knutsen, O. (2006). *Class Voting in Western Europe*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Lijphart, A. (1988). *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek* (7th ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. New York: Free Press.
- Lucardie, P., & Voerman, G. (2010). *Van de straat naar de staat? GroenLinks 1990-2010*. Boom.
- Madern, T., & van der Burg, D. (2012). *Geldzaken in de praktijk*.
- MapItOut. (2020). MapItOut. Retrieved January 28, 2020, from IAMsterdam website: <https://mapitout.iamsterdam.com/Den Haag, Nederland::Den Haag>,

Nederland::52.0704978::4.3006999::60::driving

- Marks, G., & Wilson, C. J. (2000). The past in the present: A cleavage theory of party response to European integration. *British Journal of Political Science*, 30(3), 433–459.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000181>
- Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken & Koninkrijksrelaties. (2018). *Tweede Voortgangsrapportage Actieplan Bevolkingsdaling*. The Hague.
- Niemantsverdriet, T., & Smouter, K. (2019). En nu de experts: kloof tussen stad en land is veel complexer. Retrieved January 16, 2020, from NRC website:
<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2019/12/11/en-nu-de-experts-kloof-tussen-stad-en-land-is-veel-complexer-a3983552>
- Otjes, S. (2018). Pushed by national politics or pulled by localism? Voting for independent local parties in the Netherlands. *Local Government Studies*, 44(3), 305–328.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2018.1427072>
- Otjes, S. (2019). Going Local. Voting for independent local Parties in the Netherlands 1986-2010. *Local Government Studies*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2019.1619555>
- Otjes, S., Stroebe, K., & Postmes, T. (2020). When Voting Becomes Protest: Mapping Determinants of Collective Action Onto Voting Behavior. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 11(4), 513–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550619872482>
- Patana, P. (2018). Changes in local context and electoral support for the populist radical right: Evidence from Finland. *Party Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818810283>
- Reiser, M., & Holtmann, E. (2008). Farewell to the Party Model? In *Farewell to the Party Model?* (Vol. 11). <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-90923-3>
- Rijksoverheid. (2015). Krimpgebieden en anticipeergebieden. Retrieved June 13, 2020, from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/bevolkingsdaling/krimpgebieden-en-anticipeergebieden>
- Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2018). Commentary The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 11(1), 189–209.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsx024>
- Sitter, N. (2002). Nick Sitter Cleavages , Party Strategy and Party System Change in Europe , East and West. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 3(3), 425–451.
- Staniland, M. (1970). The Rhetoric of Centre-Periphery Relations. In *Source: The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Vol. 8).
- van den Berg, C., & van Vulpen, B. (2019). De kloof tussen bruisgebieden en krimpregio's blijft groeien. *Trouw*. Retrieved from <https://www.trouw.nl/opinie/de-kloof-tussen-bruisgebieden-en-krimpregio-s-blijft-groeien~b2b4b8b2/>
- van der Brug, W., van Praag, P., & van der Eijk, C. (2017). Elections, Cleavages and Voting Behaviour. In P. van Praag (Ed.), *Political Science and Changing Politics* (pp. 137–162).

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048539208>

van Kersbergen, K. (2009). Religion and the welfare state in the Netherlands. In K. van Kersbergen & P. Manow (Eds.), *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States* (1st ed., pp. 119–145).

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511626784.006>

van Kessel, S. (2011). Explaining the electoral performance of populist parties: The Netherlands as a case study. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 12(1), 68–88.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15705854.2011.546148>

Venhorst, V., Van Dijk, J., & Van Wissen, L. (2010). Do the best graduates leave the peripheral areas of the Netherlands? *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 101(5), 521–537.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2010.00629.x>