

Heroes or Villains, the Dutch Farmers During the Protests

Polarization in news articles about the Dutch farmers' protests

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Student: Marike G. M. van Niersen

Student Number: 2299992

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Supervisor: Dr. H. A. van Vuuren

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Abstract

Objectives: These last years the farmers' protests have been very visible in the media. Media play an important role as they increase visibility, however, they can also influence people their opinions by focusing on different aspects of the protests and using frames such as spectacle and conflict. These frames have the risk of causing polarization. This study will focus on the extent to which printed media shows polarization regarding the Dutch farmers' protests. This is done by analysing sentiment towards farmers and the protests, issue or identity-based information, Us vs. Them thinking, interpreted beliefs from out-groups and comments about polarization over time.

Method: A qualitative content analysis was performed using 161 articles about the Dutch farmers' protests. Articles were collected from October 2019, the starting point of the protests, till March 2023 as the articles were gathered in April. Articles from the five biggest Dutch newspapers were used as they have the biggest impact on the public discourse. A combination of deductive and inductive coding was used.

Results: The analysed news articles predominantly have a neutral sentiment towards the farmers and the protests. There were, however, some peaks where there were negative and positive sentiments were visible as well. In addition, there was little identity-based information being shared about the two groups while nearly every article contained information about the issue. Although there were few negative statements about the farmers, negative statements about politicians were seen more often.

Conclusion: Based on the content analysis of the five biggest newspapers of the Netherlands it can be concluded that there are no clear signs of polarization from the start of the protests in October 2019 till March 2023 visible in the news articles. The only polarization can be seen in the negative talk about politicians done by farmers. However, these negative statements seem to be event-based and do not increase over time. While there is no visibility of the process of polarization in news articles over time, the articles do increasingly mention polarization, the gap between groups, and opinions and actions getting more extreme.

Keywords: printed news, farmers' protests, content analysis, polarization, media

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1. Introduction

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Protests in the Media

Framing of the media can largely influence public opinion and what topics get attention. Media publication helps the protest get more attention and can indirectly force the target of the protest to acknowledge the issues (King, 2011). According to Harlow and Brown (2022), journalists value objective, passive and neutral journalism. However, for stories to be published, they need to have news value. Some of the criteria for news value are drama, human interest, and size (Oliver & Maney, 2000). The decisions of reporting frequently on some topics and not report on others could be interpreted as support by the readers (Harlow & Brown, 2022; Wilson et al., 2020). For example, newspapers focusing on violent protest actions while not reporting about peaceful actions could be interpreted as anti-farmers.

There are several predictors of whether a protest will be in the media. According to Oliver & Maney (2000), the main predictors of the newsworthiness of a protest are “sheer size, the presence of counterdemonstrators, the number of police involved, being organized by local people, and the use of an amplifier” (p. 496). It is widely known that this selection of what to cover in the news has its risks, however, the amount of influence it has is unknown (Oliver & Maney, 2000).

Perceived support can not only be caused by the topics that are reported on but also by the frames that are used (Harlow & Brown, 2022; Lee 2014). Media frames suggest a certain way to interpret information. Through influencing the manner a text is interpreted, framing can also affect the opinions and behaviour of people (D’Angelo, 2017). Frames that are often used for protests are spectacle, riot, and confrontation (Harlow & Brown, 2022). Using these

frames that focus more on for example arrests and violence increases the news value though it also delegitimizes the protests (Harlow & Brown, 2022). Besides delegitimizing the protests, focusing on the conflicts can also contribute to polarization by concentrating on differences and disagreements over nuance and the complexity of an issue (Ratheiser-van der Velde, 2020).

2.2 Polarization

There are many ways to define polarization. According to Esteban & Ray (1994), polarization is visible when there is a clear division visible between groups, that are significant in size, where there are many internal similarities and few external similarities. These polarized groups also need to be consistent and not change per topic, which in this research would mean that the news agencies consistently write positively or negatively about the protests. However, within this explanation, a distinction can be made between polarization as a state and polarization as a process. Polarization as a state is described as the extent to which opinions are opposed in distinct groups while polarization as a process is the increase of the opposition over time and the movement towards polarization as a state (DiMaggio et al., 1996). With both types of polarization, the lack of a middle group is important. This research will focus on the process of polarization in printed media on the topic of the farmers' protests.

There are more dimensions of polarization that will be analysed such as asymmetry and false polarization. Asymmetry means that one group can feel more distant from the other group than the other does (Esteban & Ray, 1994). False polarization means that the out-group is judged based on what perceivers think that group believes instead of what they in reality believe causing animosity between groups to be based on fictional issues instead of actual differences (Wilson et al., 2020). However, as this research will focus on the polarization visible in media and not the polarization in society, how the groups experience the

polarization and the difference between perceived beliefs and actual beliefs will not be measured.

2.3 Polarization in Media

The media have gotten a lot of critique for their perceived opinions. Research from Dekker and Den Ridder (2019) found that Dutch society blamed the media for enlarging differences between groups and not mentioning the togetherness of the people causing polarization. Even king Willem Alexander mentioned polarization in his 2020 christmas speech: “We leven in een tijd waarin verwacht lijkt te worden dat je stelling neemt. Voor of tegen. Vriend of vijand. Wij of zij” [We live in a time where you seem to be expected to take a stand. Pro or con. Friend or enemy. Us or them] (2020). Many Dutch people feel like the society is polarizing, however, Dekker and Den Redder found that even though the discourse on a topic might be polarizing, there is no clear evidence that, on overage, polarization is taking place. With this, they already make a distinction between two types of polarization. Polarization in society and polarization on a topic (Dekker & Den Ridder, 2019; Hetherington, 2009).

Even though polarization in the media is a topic that is discussed often, there are relatively few definitions or proposed methods of measuring it (Serrano-Contreras et al., 2020). Balán (2013) proposed the following definition of media polarization: “The existence of two or more alternative and relatively coherent visions that contradict their most important elements. Polarized coverage tends to strongly criticize the opposing view, making the public more reluctant to consider the opposing position legitimate” (p. 477). This definition is also used by Serrano-Contreras et al. (2020) as well as a similar one in that of Muller & Camia (2023) stating that polarization in media is present when there is little neutral coverage and considerable positive and negative articles. A method that can therefore be used to measure polarization is a sentiment analysis as it measures how positive or negative an article is

(Chiru et al., 2017; Serrano-Contreras et al., 2020). The greater distance in sentiment between articles, the more polarization is taking place. If, over time, the amount of neutral news about the protests would decrease, and the amount of positive or negative news would increase over time, it would suggest there is more polarization visible in the media on this topic. Therefore, to answer the question whether there is polarization visible in the news articles, the following sub-question needs to be answered:

SQ1 What sentiments are displayed in the news articles about the farmers' protests and how did this develop over time?

According to Bart Brandsma in an interview with Vrij Nederland another sign a topic is polarizing is the movement from discourse about the issue to the identity of the opposing group (Juffermans, 2019). In this case, it would mean a shift from talking about the nitrogen emission crisis to a conversation about the farmers' or politicians' identities. By coding which topics the articles focus on we can see if this focus changes over time allowing the following sub-question to be answered:

SQ2 What parts of the issue do the media focus on over time? (Is the issue or the identity the main focus?)

When looking at the research done about political polarization, more measurement tools are given. For example, thinking in distinct "us" and "them" groups is given a sign of political polarization and the division into groups (McCoy et al., 2018; Roberts, 2021). Especially negative thinking about the political opposition can be a sign of severe polarization (Gidron, 2020, as cited in Roberts, 2021; McCoy, 2018). However, the "Us" vs. "Them" categorization does not only apply to politics but to many fields (McCoy et al., 2018). Ratheiser-van der Velde (2018) used the same construct for polarization in media, however calling it "we" and "they". An increasing number of farmers talking positively about

farmers, farmers talking negatively about politicians, politicians talking negatively about farmers and politicians talking positively about politicians would show an increasing distance between groups which would work adversely toward solving the original issue, the nitrogen crisis.

To explore the “Us” vs. “Them” thinking visible in the media to following sub-questions were created:

SQ3 In which ways is “Us” vs “Them” thinking visible in the media?

SQ 4 How does the amount of “Us” vs. “Them” thinking shared in the news articles change over time?

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

The aim of this research is to discover to what extent polarization is visible in the five biggest Dutch newspapers around the topic of the Dutch farmers' protests. To determine if there is any polarization visible in the traditional media discourse about the farmers' protests a qualitative content analysis will be done. This content analysis will focus on the sentiments displayed in the articles, us vs. them thinking, comments about polarization, and the amount of discourse about the actions discussed compared to the amount of discourse about identity. If these signs of polarization become more frequently visible over time, it can be concluded that the process of polarization is taking place.

3.2 Corpus

NexusUni was used to collect articles about the Dutch farmers' protests using the search terms "boeren" "protest" "nederland" and "stikstof" which gave 1995 results. The first criterion set was the date. As the farmers' protests started in October 2019, this was set as the starting point. As the data were collected in April, the end point was set at March 2023, which still includes the regional elections where the BoerBurgerBeweging (often seen as the farmer's party) won the election in every province. The five biggest newspapers in the Netherlands were chosen as they have the most readers and therefore also the biggest influence on the public discourse and opinion. The five biggest Dutch newspapers are 1) De Telegraaf, 2) Het Algemeen Dagblad, 3) De Volkskrant, 4) NRC, and 5) Trouw (based on numbers from 2022, excluding regional papers) (NOM media, 2022). Online articles were not included as there is often no significant difference in reporting between the physical and online news articles (Ghersetti, 2013). After applying these criteria 183 articles were left. 19 articles were manually removed as they were about different Dutch protests, were not

journalistic articles or did not include any information about the protests. This resulted in a corpus consisting of 155 different news articles. See Table 4 in Appendix A for an overview of the articles collected.

3.3 Coding Scheme and Analysis

The coding was done using a combination of deductive and inductive coding. The codes were found in previous research done about polarization, however, any codes emerging from the raw data were added. See Table 1 for the initial codebook with codes deducted from existing research. The first two codes are about the source of the article and the month it was published, these were coded on the article level. The following two codes consisting of the sentiment towards farmers and the sentiment towards the protests were coded on the paragraph level. The last four codes are issue, identity or action-based information, “Us” vs “Them”, interpreted beliefs from out-group and comments about polarization. These were coded on the sentence level. ATLAS.ti was used for the coding, to help structure the data and draw conclusions. See Table 5 in Appendix B for the final codebook that includes the inductive codes.

Table 1: Initial codebook (deductive codes)

| Code | Sub-code | Definition | Level | Examples |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|-----------------|
| 1. Source | De telegram, Algemeen Dagblad (AD), De volkskrant, NRC, Trouw | By which newspaper is the article published? | Article level (Select only the publisher's name at the top) | |
| 2. Time period | Oct 20, Nov 20, Dec 20, ... Jan 23, Feb 23, Mar 23 | Monthly code for when the article is published | Article level (Select the entire date from day number till day of the week) | |
| 3. Sentiment towards farmers | Positive | Positive sentiment towards farmers highlighted | Paragraph level | |
| | Neutral or mixed | No opinions shared about the farmers or both positive and negative sentiments mentioned | | |
| | Negative | Negative sentiments towards the farmers highlighted | | |
| 4. Sentiment towards protests | Positive | Positive sentiment towards the protests highlighted | Paragraph level | |
| | Neutral or mixed | No opinions shared about the protests or both positive and negative sentiments mentioned | | |
| | Negative | Negative sentiment towards the protests highlighted | | |

| | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|----------------|--|
| 5. Issue, identity, or action-based information | Issue-based information | The text is about the issue of nitrogen reduction or the disagreement around it. | Sentence level | |
| | Identity-based information | The text is about the identity of the farmers or politicians | | “ik ben boer in hart en nieren” |
| | Action-based information | Actions from the farmers that are discussed ranging from peaceful conversations to protests and violence. | | “ontbijt voor Haagse omwonenden of een brunch in Amsterdam”, “in ruim een week tijd met een tractor is ingereden op de marechaussee, tientallen boeren zijn gearresteerd wegens illegale acties en een werkbezoek van Landbouwminister Schouten werd afgebroken” |
| 6. Us vs. Them | Farmers perspective positive | Positive statements about the in-group from the perspective of the farmers | Sentence level | |
| | Farmers perspective negative | Negative statements about the out-group from the perspective of the farmers | | “dictaten van bovenaf”, “de grootste smeerlap van nederland” “vijanden” “ ‘burgers’ zals Brouwer niet- boeren noemt” |
| | Politicians perspective positive | Positive statements about the in-group from the perspective of the politicians | | |
| | Politicians perspective negative | Negative statements about the out-group from the perspective of the politicians | | “de beroepsdemonstranten die maar één ding willen: de overheid |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| | Other perspective positive | Positive statements about the farmers or politicians from people not belonging to either of these groups | | |
| | Other perspective negative | Negative statements about the farmers or politicians from people not belonging to either of these groups | | |
| 7. Interpreted beliefs from out-group | Farmers' perspective | Farmers mentioning what others think about them or the issue | Sentence level | “afrekening met de boeren en het plattelandsleven” “we worden weggezet als lompe boeren” |
| | Politicians' perspective | Politicians mentioning what others think about them or the issue | | |
| 8. Comments about polarization | | Comments mentioning polarization, the distance between groups or the lack of a middle group | Sentence level | “dat is de kloof tussen stad en platteland” “voor een deel zou die grimmig dreigende sfeer verklaard kunnen worden door toegenomen polarisatie.” “uiteindelijk blijven alleen de radicalen over” |

To check the codebook reliability, 10% of the articles were coded by a second coder. The second coder was given the codebook, the articles, and a verbal explanation of the theoretical framework. Krippendorff’s Cu-Alpha was calculated, and the limits used are the ones suggested by Krippendorff (2021): “Accept data whose agreement measures $\alpha \geq 0.800$ within confidence limits at p” and “Consider data measuring $0.800 > \alpha \geq 0.667$ only for drawing tentative conclusions” (p186). See Table 2 for Krippendorff’s Cu-Alpha the code groups. As Interpreted beliefs from out-group and comments about polarization were not or only once coded in the articles, Krippendorff’s Alpha for these could not reliably be calculated.

Table 2: *Krippendorff’s Alpha*

| Code | Krippendorff’s Cu-Alpha |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Source | 1.0 |
| 2. Time period | 1.0 |
| 3. Sentiment towards farmers | 0.953 |
| 4. Sentiment towards protests | 0.942 |
| 5. Issue, identity, or action-based information | 0.696 |
| 6. Us vs. Them | 0.768 |
| 7. Interpreted beliefs from out-group | N/A (Not coded) |
| 8. Comments about polarization | N/A (Only coded once, 1.0) |

4. Results

4.1 News Coverage over Time

The farmers' protests have been covered in news articles throughout the time frame from October 2019 to March 2023. Figure 1 shows the number of articles posted in the five biggest newspapers per month throughout the period of data collection. The amount of news published seems to be based on the events taking place with the main peaks being in October 2019 ($n = 19$) which is the start of the protests and June 2022 ($n = 37$) to July 2022 ($n = 20$) which is when the new nitrogen reduction plans were published. See Appendix B for the protest timeline. There is a clear difference in the number of articles published with Trouw publishing most about the protests ($n = 44$) and De Telegraaf publishing least ($n = 20$).

When comparing the number of articles different newspapers publish over time it can be seen that while De Telegraaf and AD often within one month, but relatively little over time, NRC, De Volkskrant and Trouw publish more consistently throughout the period of data collection. See Figure 2 for the amount of articles published per newspaper over time.

Figure 1: News articles published over time.

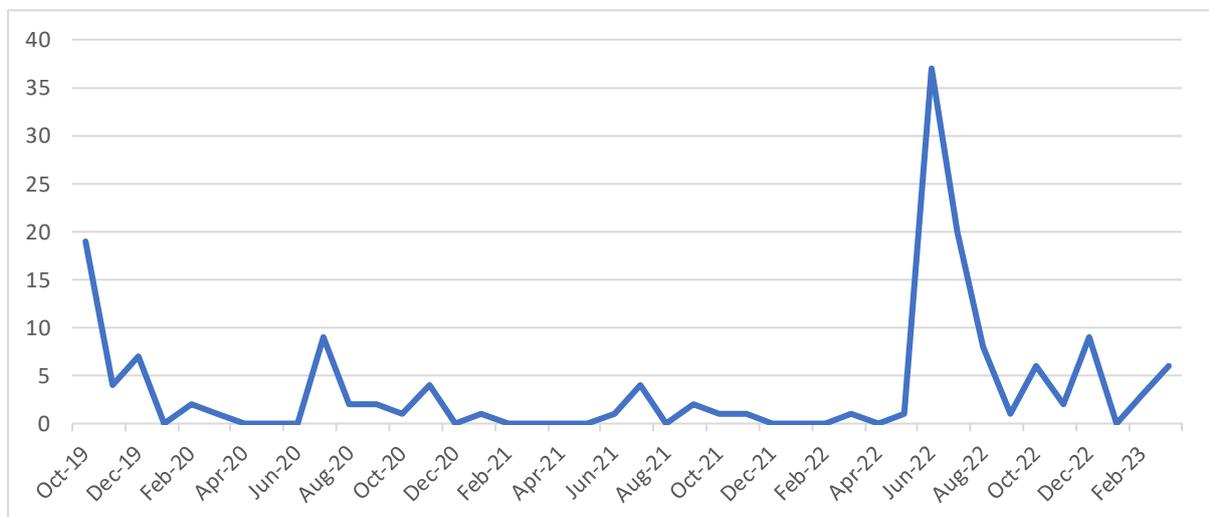
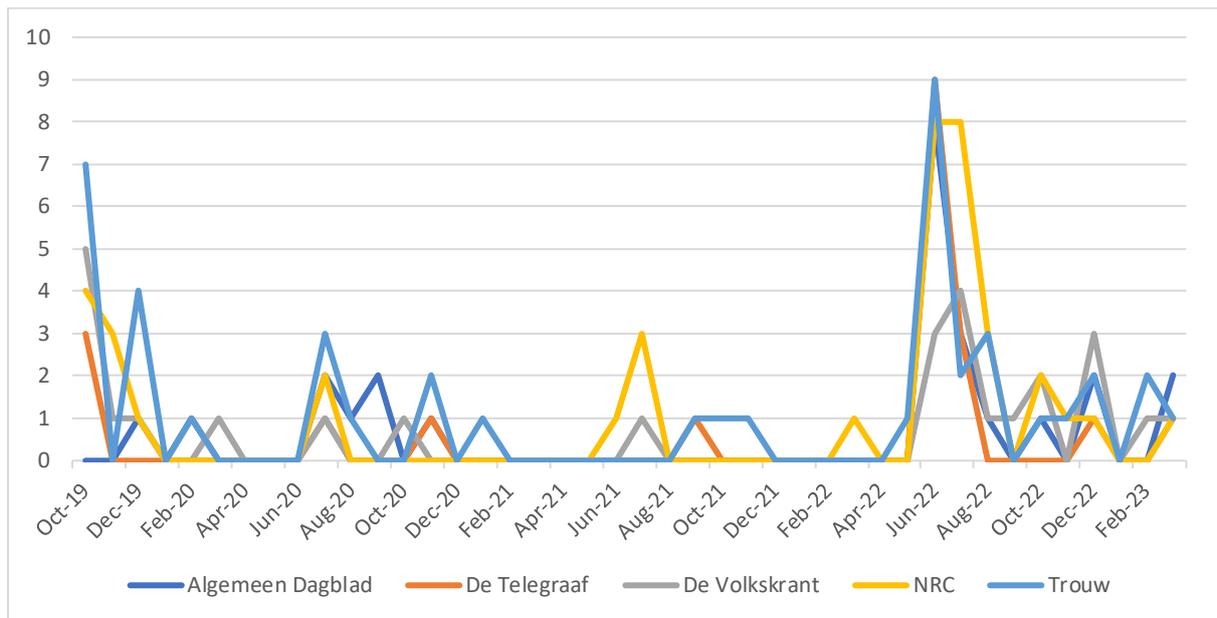


Figure 2: News articles published per newspaper.



4.2 Sentiment Towards Farmers and the Protests

Sentiments getting more extreme over time can be one of the signs of the process of polarization in media. Figure 3 shows the sentiment towards the protests over time and figure 4 shows the sentiment towards the protests over time. Most of the news articles were very objective and did not share any opinions or showed both positive and negative perspectives about the protests (74.8%) and the farmers (78.7%). However, some articles were talking more positively or negatively about the protests, the farmers or both.

Figure 3: Sentiment Towards Protests over Time

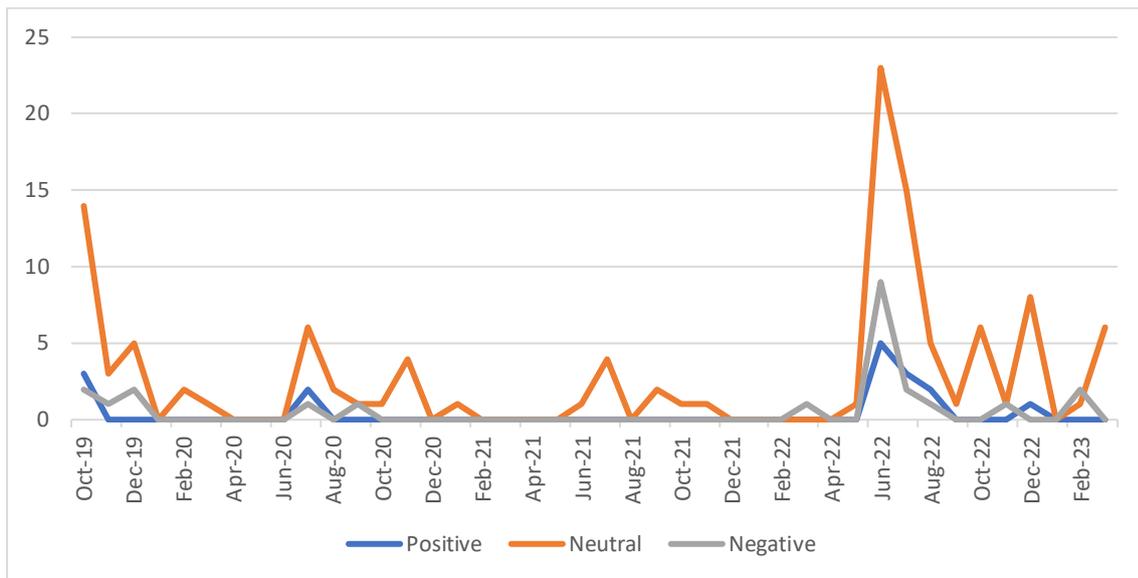
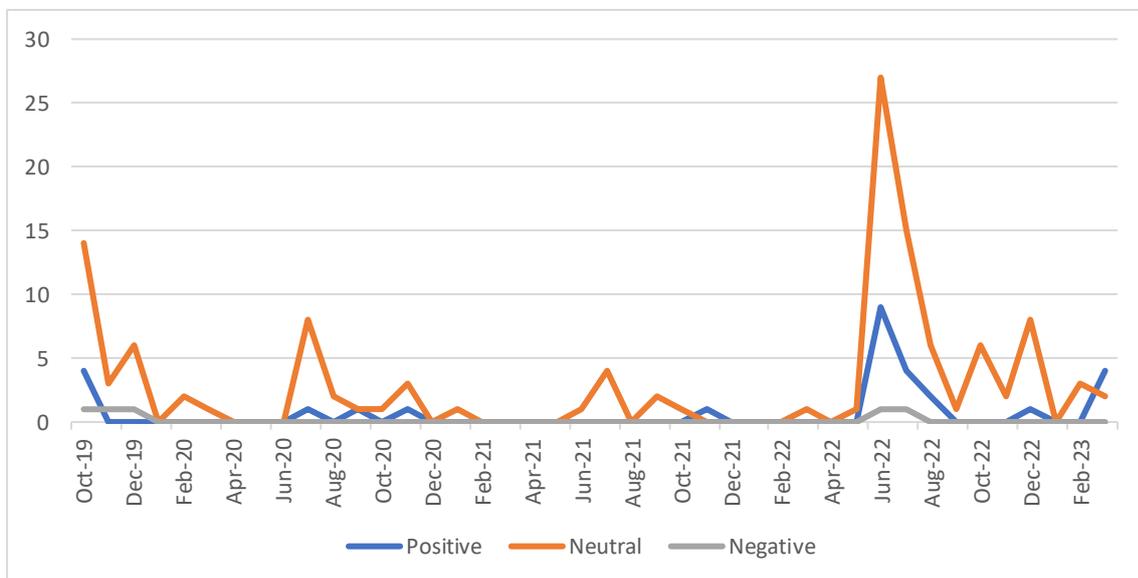


Figure 4: Sentiment Towards Farmers over Time



There were more articles with a positive sentiment towards farmers ($n = 28$) than articles with a negative sentiment ($n = 5$). The negative sentiments towards the protests were mainly found in June 2022 with protests actions such as visiting politicians' homes and blocking highways by dumping trash taking place.

When comparing the amount of positive and negative articles per newspaper both Algemeen Dagblad and Telegraaf have no articles with a negative sentiment towards farmers and relatively many articles with a positive sentiment towards farmers with 40 and 35% percent respectively. While the other three newspapers also had about double the number of articles with a positive sentiment compared to negative sentiment, the percentage of neutral news was higher. See Figure 5 for the distribution of positive, neutral, and negative sentiments towards the farmers per newspaper.

There were slightly more articles talking negatively about the protests ($n = 23$) than positively ($n = 16$). Again, Algemeen Dagblad and Telegraaf were the newspapers with the most articles with a positive sentiment. While Algemeen Dagblad had the same number of articles with a positive sentiment towards the protests as articles with a negative sentiment ($n = 4$), De Telegraaf had more with a positive sentiment ($n = 2$). De Volkskrant is the newspaper with the least articles with a positive sentiment ($n = 1$) and the most articles with a negative sentiment ($n = 7$). See Figure 6 for the distribution of positive, neutral, and negative sentiments towards the protests per newspaper.

Figure 5: *Sentiment towards farmers per newspaper*

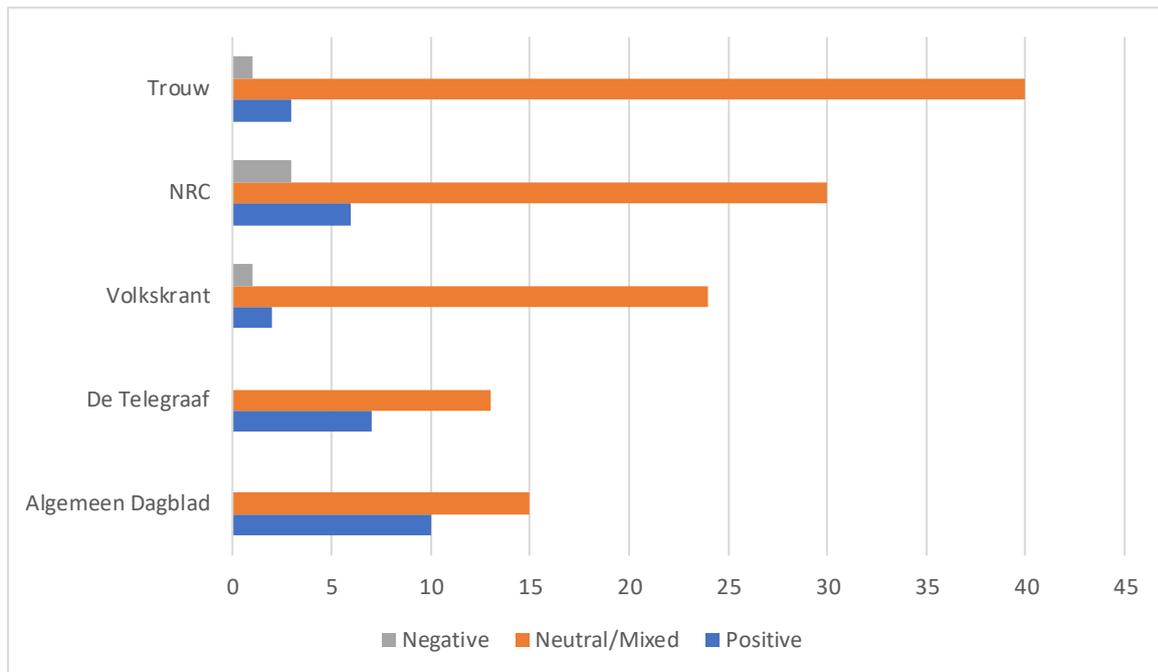
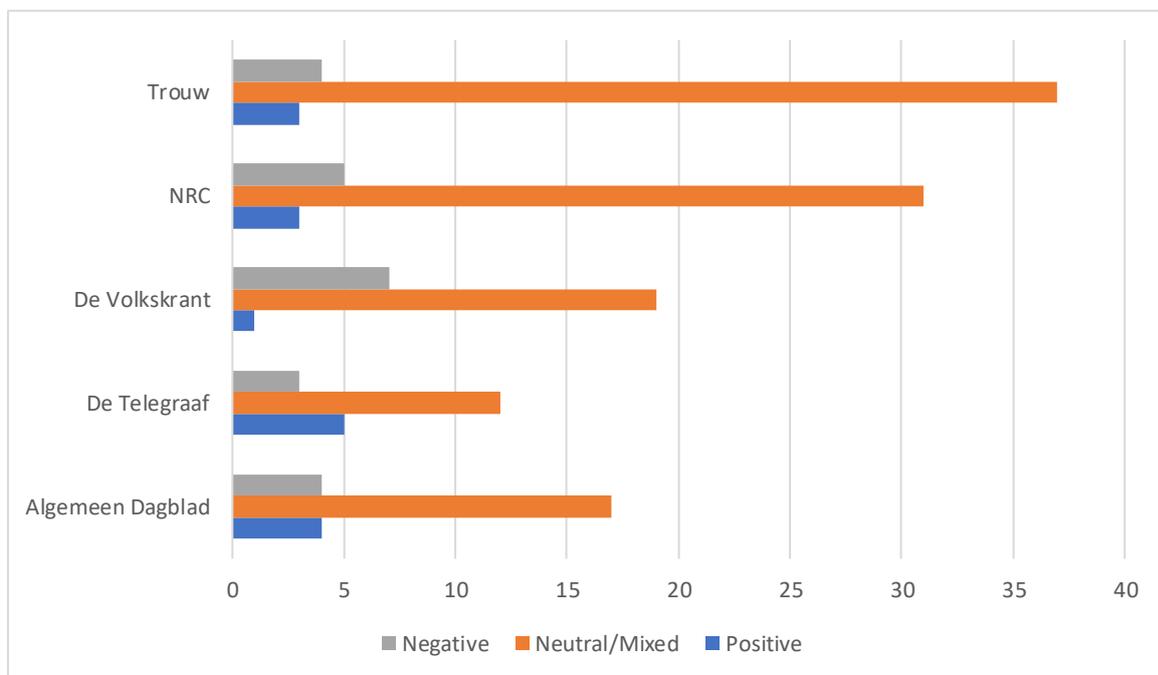


Figure 6: *Sentiment towards protests per newspaper*

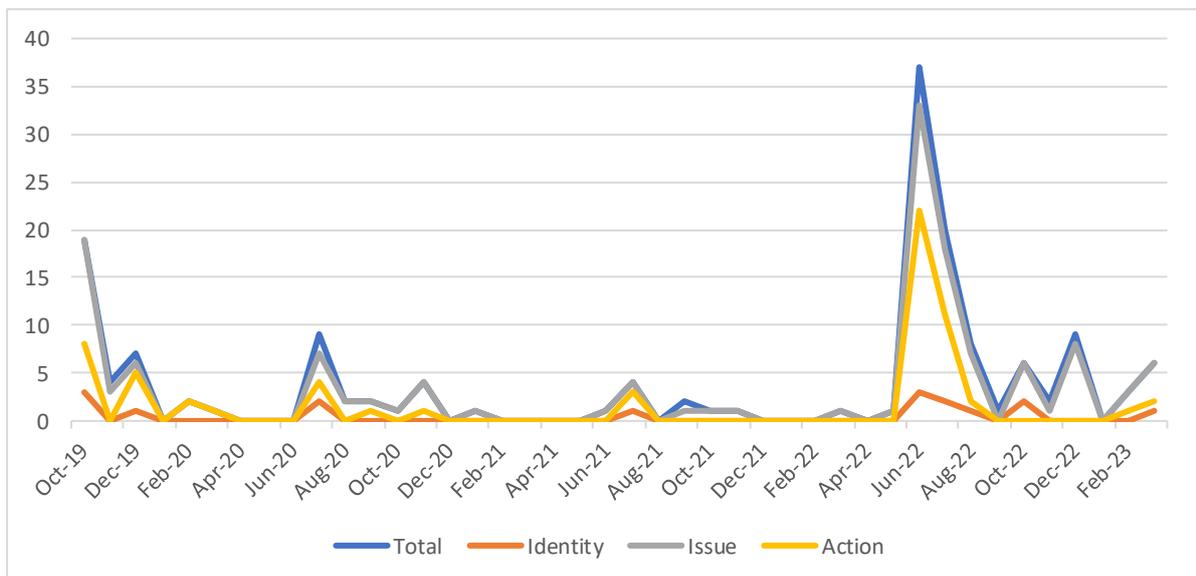


4.3 Issue, Identity, or Action-based Information

When comparing the number of articles that contain action, identity or issue-based information there is a big difference between categories. See Figure 7 for an overview of how often these topics were seen in the articles over time compared to the total number of articles over time. The issue is the topic that is discussed most ($n = 333$). Almost every article ($n = 141$) contains information about the issue, however, different issues can be distinguished. For example, the farmers often mention the issue of reducing the number of livestock and the issue of politicians not listening to them while the politicians mention the issue of restoring the environment. Only 14 articles did not share information about the issue. These were mostly short articles about the protest actions or articles with a different main topic that only had a small amount of text about the farmers' protests.

There is relatively little information about the identities of the politicians and farmers ($n = 27$). When comparing between newspapers, Trouw and De Volkskrant have no articles with identity-based information, Algemeen Dagblad and Telegraaf both have three, while NRC has most with nine.

Figure 7: Identity, Issue and Action-based information over time



From the farmers' perspective, it is often shared that the biggest issue is the lack of communication and the lack of future perspective. They want to discuss and find solutions together instead of the government just telling them what to do and, in their eyes, destroying everything they have worked for and have built up for generations. In addition, they feel like they are the only ones targeted while other big polluters such as industry and airlines are ignored.

4.4 Us vs. Them

One of the signs of polarization is negative talk about the out-group and positive talk about the in-group. See Figure 8 for the number of positive and negative in-group and out-group statements from the politicians and farmers. While there was a lot of negative talk found about the politicians from the farmers' perspective ($n = 48$), there was little positive talk about the in-group.

The politicians rarely talked negatively about the farmers ($n = 10$), and when they did it was mostly focused on the actions and not on the group or their identity, for example: *“Minister of Agriculture Henk Staghouwer thought that traffic disruption ‘crossed a clear border’. ‘Just like endangering others destroying nature or intimidating drivers.’”* When there were opinions shared by politicians towards the farmers themselves it was more positive. For example: *“From the bottom of my heart: I am your minister and I am proud of you.”* More politicians were talking negatively about the ingroup ($n = 18$) than about the outgroup. There was not only negativity about the mistakes that were made, but also about the unreliability, lack of decisions being made and lack of connection with society. Two of the critiques were also that their negative talk about other politicians for their own gain caused a lack of trust and threats: *“Now you see how the snake pit works: people will go far to destroy you, when it should be about how we as a country get out of the crisis of confidence.”* And *“statements by politicians from other political parties increase the number*

of threats”. See Figure 9 for the farmers out-group negative and politicians’ in-group negative plotted over time.

Figure 8: Number of positive and negative in-group and out-group statements

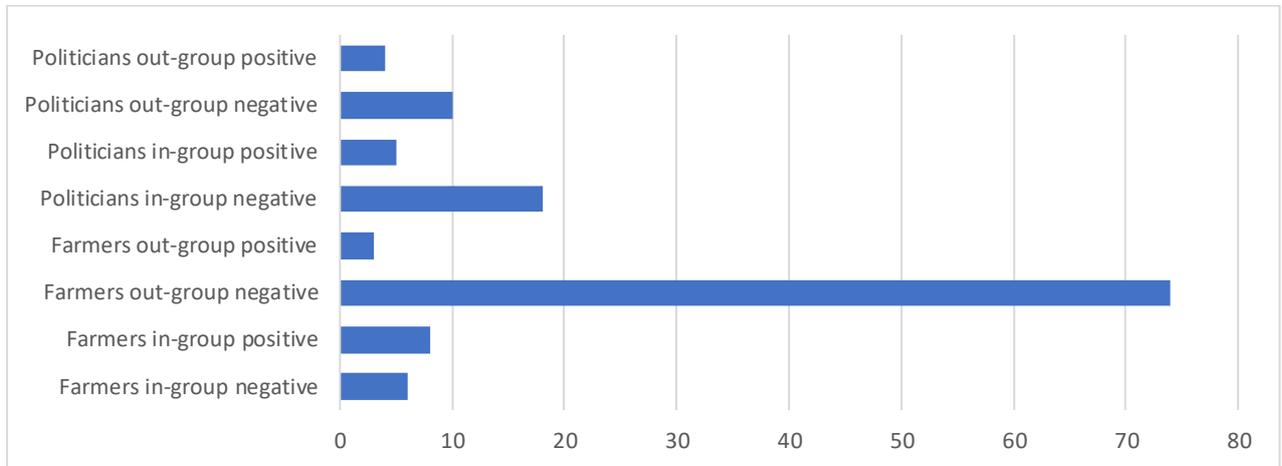
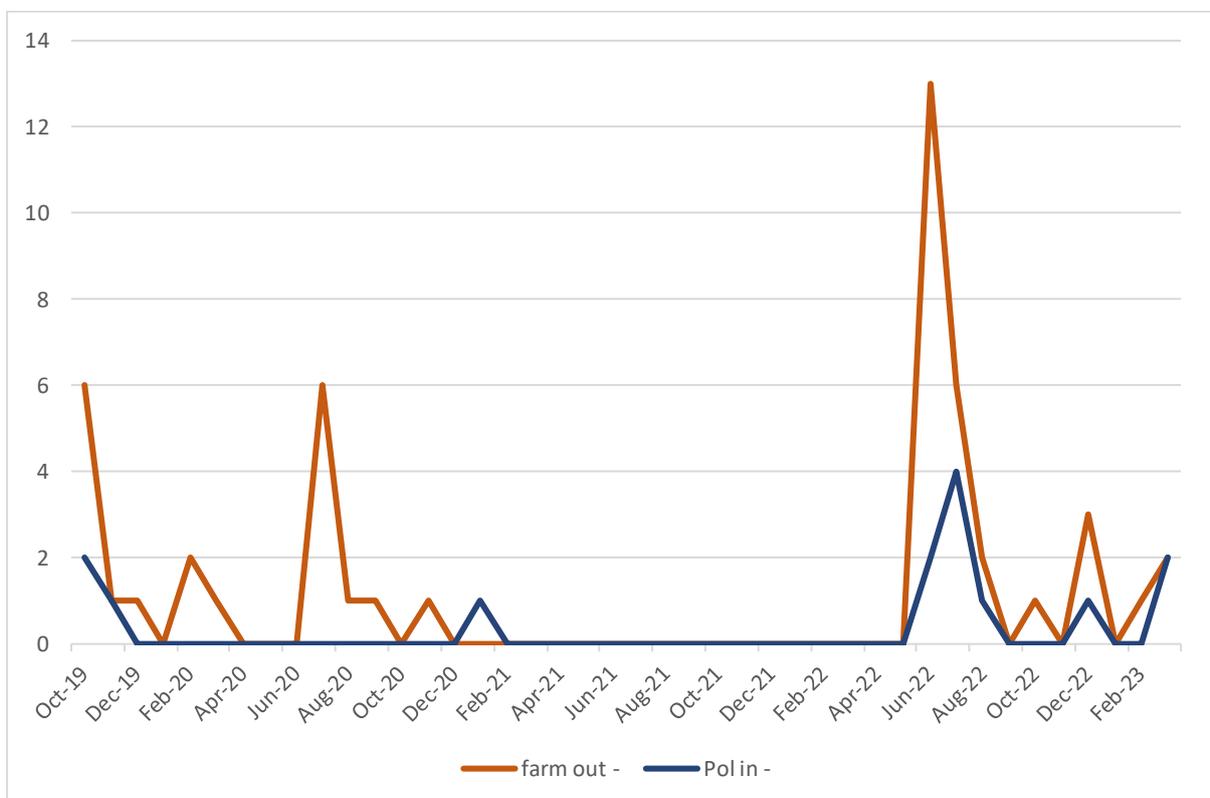


Figure 9: Number of negative statements about politicians from farmers and politicians



4.5 Interpreted Beliefs from Out-group

While no interpreted beliefs from the outgroup have been found from the politicians' perspective, there have been some from the farmers' perspective ($n = 9$). Some interpreted beliefs are: "*Rutte does not want us here*" and "*According to the farmers, it now appears that the government does not want to solve the problem together at all, but is only out to kill the agricultural sector*". The farmers shared they feel like the politicians or government thinks they are crazy, second-class citizens, or rude. And that the politicians blame the farmers for the nitrogen crisis and want to get rid of agriculture in the Netherlands.

4.6 Comments on Polarization

In the 155 news articles, polarization was only mentioned fourteen times. The first mention of polarization was already in July 2020 in De Volkskrant where a politician warned the aggressive protests would lead to polarization. However, not all mentions were about polarization around the farmers' protests and nitrogen. Some mentions were very general about polarization in the Netherlands or society around the topic of nitrogen emission while others were very specific for example about the absence of polarization between groups of farmers. From mid-2022 there has been an increase in mentions of polarization. See Table 3 for the mentions of polarization and the context.

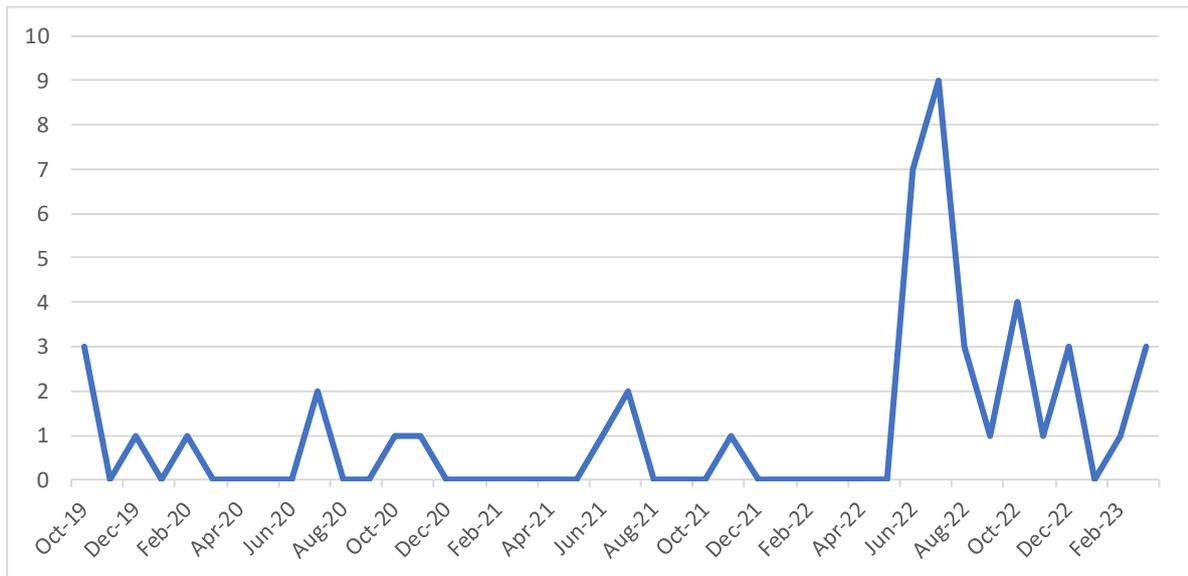
Table 3: mentions of polarization

| Nr. | When | Newspaper | Groups involved | Context |
|-----|--------|------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 59 | Jul 20 | De Volkskrant | Farmers and politics | Extremism adding to the polarization |
| 19 | Jul 20 | NRC | Society around the topic of climate | Extremism adding to the polarization |
| 42 | Jun 21 | NRC | Farmers, society and politics | The depth of polarization |
| 29 | Nov 21 | Trouw | The debate around agriculture | The depth of polarization |
| 5 | Jun 22 | NRC | Groups around the nitrogen issue | The depth of polarization |
| 21 | Jun 22 | Algemeen Dagblad | The Netherlands | Polarization by a lack of future perspective |
| 117 | Jul 22 | Algemeen Dagblad | Farmers and politics, politicians | Causes for polarization |
| 156 | Jul 22 | De Volkskrant | USA (warning against) | Warning to not polarize |

| | | | | |
|-----|--------|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 157 | Aug 22 | NRC | Farmers and politics | Bad communication of the government worsening polarization |
| 180 | Aug 22 | Algemeen Dagblad | Farmers and politics | Keep trying with polarization present |
| 123 | Oct 22 | NRC | Netherlands | The amount of discourse about polarization and its meaning |
| 135 | Oct 22 | Trouw | Farmer groups | The lack of polarization |
| 152 | Dec 22 | NRC | Netherlands and politics | Influence of online polarization on society and the effects |
| 132 | Mar 23 | De Telegraaf | City and countryside | The distance caused by polarization |

Another 29 times polarization was not explicitly mentioned, however, the distance between the groups, radicalization, the lack of communication or even war between groups was mentioned. See Figure 10 for the mentions of distance between groups over time. There were however also four mentions of improved communication between groups and the absence of radicalization.

Figure 10: Mentions of distance between groups over time



5. Discussion

This research was conducted to explore to what extent printed media regarding the Dutch farmers' protests show the process of polarization. First, the development of sentiments over time will be given, then the focus of the media on the issue or identity whereafter the visibility of Us vs. Them thinking will be described. Finally interpreted beliefs from out-group and comments on polarization will be discussed.

While an increase in extremer sentiments was expected, this was not found. Whereas there were articles that had a predominantly positive or negative sentiment towards farmers or protest, the amount was limited and not increasing. Throughout time the sentiments towards the farmers and protests were predominantly neutral. An unexpected find was that some of the articles that had a negative sentiment towards farmers focused on the farmers doing extreme protest actions and acknowledged that this was only a small group of farmers, and this did not represent all farmers. For example, one of the articles by NRC in June 2022 said: *“By no means do the farmers involved represent the entire farming community, but they do give it a bad name”* mentioning the negative effect the extreme actions had on the general opinion towards farmers.

Where a shift from issue-based information to identity-based information would show polarization is taking place, this was not found in the news articles. The articles consistently had information about the issue and only 27 articles shared some identity-based information about the farmers or politicians. These articles with identity-based information were shared at the times at which most articles were posted so it connected to the number of articles posted and does not increase over time. In addition, except for one, all articles that had identity-based information also had issue-based information.

Negative talk about the out-group and positive talk about the in-group is one of the signs of the distance between groups. This is however not what was visible in the news articles. Only the farmers showed signs of Us vs. Them thinking with many negative statements towards politicians. They however didn't share many positive statements about the in-group. What might be the most surprising result of this section was that the politicians unexpectedly shared many negative statements about the in-group. This could be the result of the politicians being seen as one group in this issue, however consisting of many political parties that consider each other the out-group. Some politicians shared critiques about this phenomenon in the articles saying it adds to the reduced trust in the government. The negative statements from politicians about politicians were found mostly at the same time periods as the negative statements from farmers about politicians. These are however also the time periods most news about the farmers' protests was posted. Therefore, these negative statements seem to be event-based.

Throughout the articles, very few interpreted beliefs from an out-group were found. Only from the farmers' perspective interpreted beliefs from the politicians' perspective were found. This might suggest asymmetrical polarization meaning that the farmers feel a bigger distance towards the politicians than vice versa. In addition, the interpreted beliefs are often statements that have not been shared by the politicians such as that they want all farmers gone and that they are dumb or rude. In the articles, none of these statements have been made by the politicians. This might suggest there could be false polarization.

While there were a few mentions of polarization taking place between farmers and politicians, the lack of conversation between groups was also given as one of the reasons the protests started. The politicians were not (sufficiently) talking with the farmers in their efforts to solve the nitrogen emission issue. As a result of the protests, more discussions between farmers and politicians were taking place. So, if solely looking at the conversation between

groups, the groups might be less polarized currently as there is an increase in conversation. However, the farmers were also blamed for causing polarization as their actions caused the distance between politicians and farmers to grow and make it more difficult to communicate. This is visible in the number of times the distance between groups is mentioned as there is an increase from June 2022 onwards, which is when some of the more extreme actions took place. This shows the difficult balance of protests between getting enough attention so that you are listened to and not overdoing it creating more distance and the difficulty of determining polarization as some aspects of polarization might increase while others decrease.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the existing literature about polarization in media. Whereas many studies about polarization in media focus on online media such as twitter, this research focuses on traditional media. The printed media are still widely used and play a difficult role in relation to the protests. While they help inform the general public and help protesters gain attention, they also use frames and choose certain types of information to attract readers (Harlow & Brown, 2022; King, 2011). These frames and choices of what to focus on in their articles could influence peoples' opinions and add to the process of polarization. As research on polarization in news articles is limited, this research could be used as a guide to how research about polarization in traditional media could be done. It shows that qualitative content analysis can be used to determine the visibility in newspapers. Most research on polarization in media is done using sentiment analysis on social media such as Twitter. This study shows that as Dutch news articles are generally neutral this might not be the most appropriate way to determine polarization in more traditional media and a content analysis covering more variables might be more appropriate. Furthermore, it suggests that a distinction should be made between the different types of media when determining the

visibility of polarization as not only the results but also the method of analysis can differ for each type of media.

5.2 Practical Implications

This study shows that there are no clear signs of the process of polarization in the media, polarization was however mentioned several times. Not only polarization between politicians and farmers but also between politics and society. The lack of trust in the government was a reappearing topic in the articles. While the sentiments towards farmers, sentiments towards the protests and the positive and negative statements about farmers were quite evenly balanced, there were many more negative than positive statements about the politicians. The number of negative comments towards politicians from both the farmers and politicians does not only represent the lack of trust but might also add to the problem. By reading these negative statements about politicians the reader might be influenced and adopt a more negative view of politicians or politics in general. Therefore, politicians should be careful with spreading negative news about other politicians and journalists should take into account the amount of positive or negative news that is shared about politicians and the influence it might have.

The farmers should make sure they keep their attention on the issue that needs to be solved and try to keep from thinking in two opposite groups as they appear to feel a bigger distance towards politicians than vice versa. As interpreted beliefs from the outgroup have been found that do not match the shared opinions of the politicians the farmers should be careful with assuming what the outgroup thinks and again, should keep the conversation going to make sure the actual beliefs are known instead of the interpreted beliefs. The politicians can make an effort in this as well by actively trying to show that these interpreted beliefs are not the reality.

5.3 Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has several limitations such as the sample and the focus on visibility of polarization in media. Due to the collection of articles that were posted in the timeframe, they are not posted consistently over time. As the articles are not spread evenly over time this has an influence on the results over time. Many of the variables such as positive and negative sentiments, identity, issue and action-based information and negative statements about politicians made by farmers had peaks in October 2019 and June/July 2022. These are also the peaks of amount of news articles published about the farmers' protests. In addition, with the nitrogen crisis still not being solved and the unrest between farmers and politicians still going on it would be interesting to see how this develops in the future, therefore this research could be extended over time.

Another limitation of this research is that it only focuses on the visibility of polarization in news articles and not the effect it has on society. News articles can be objective but still cause a positive or negative sentiment for the reader based on what type of information is being shared. As this research has shown that the news articles about the farmers' protests are quite neutral over this time frame, the topics focused on compared with the topics neglected and the interpretations by readers could therefore be explored further. This to explore why the media, such as newspapers, are blamed by society for causing polarization while being generally very neutral.

Another area of further exploration could be the differences between newspapers. While some newspapers posted predominantly neutral news, others were more opinionated. Eventhough, on average, the five newspapers did not show polarization, the results could differ when looking at the newspapers individually. As people often read only one newspaper, this difference between newspapers could and the influence it has on readers could be significant.

5.4 Conclusion

This study aims to answer the research question: *‘To what extent does the printed media regarding the Dutch farmers’ protests show the process of polarization?’* Based on the content analysis of the five biggest newspapers of the Netherlands it can be concluded that while the articles do mention the gap between groups, opinions and actions getting more extreme, there are no clear signs of polarization from the start of the protests in October 2019 till March 2023. The sentiments towards the farmers and the protests stays neutral over time, the articles stay focused on the issue and actions with little identity-based information and few interpreted beliefs from out-groups. The only polarization can be seen in the negative talk about politicians done by farmers. This might suggest unsymmetrical polarization. This increase in negative talk about the out-group however seems to be event-based and not increasing over time.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Article Overview

Table 4: *Article overview*

| Title | Source | Date published | Included? |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Een man voor álle boeren, boos of niet | Algemeen Dagblad | Jul-22 | |
| 2. We laten ons bedrijf niet zomaar afpakken' Boeren Gelderse Vallei in verzet tegen stikstofplanneegraaf; | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 3. 'Als we Den Haag slopen, verliezen we de burgers' | Algemeen Dagblad | Jul-22 | |
| 4. Boze boeren zijn echt wel welkom in Den Haag, maar laat de trekkers thuis Commentaar | NRC | Jun-22 | |
| 5. De ambtenaar die 40 jaar terug al de locaties met stikstofoverlast aanwees Haagse invloeden | NRC | Jun-22 | |
| 6. Averechts | De Volkskrant | Jun-22 | |
| 7. De oudejaarsconferenties komen er weer aan: V was aanwezig bij drie try-outs | De Volkskrant | Dec-22 | No, no information about the farmers' protests |
| 8. 2022 te snel voor politiek Den Haag Weinigen in kabinet-Rutte IV hadden ook maar vermoeden wat hun allemaal te wachten stond | De Telegraaf | Dec-22 | |
| 9. Oplossing Citatenprijsvraag 2022 | Trouw | Jan-23 | No, not an article |
| 10. Hoe het witteboordenactivisme Den Haag op nieuwe wijze onder druk zet Haagse invloeden | NRC | Nov-19 | |
| 11. Stikstofbom: CDA bloedt leeg De keuze van landelijke partijtop dreigt uit te draaien op harakiri bij de komende provinciale verkiezingen | De Telegraaf | Jul-22 | |
| 12. Buitenkans én risico voor LTO Stikstofoverleg Hoe eensgezind is het boerenverbond? | NRC | Aug-22 | |
| 13. Woold maakt zich klaar voor de vlinder | De Volkskrant | Oct-19 | |

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|---|------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| 14. Weer trekken de boeren vandaag naar het Malieveld Naar het Malieveld... of niet? Nieuwe rapporten over inkrimping van de veestapel zetten kwaad bloed bij boeren. Maar niet elke boer voert actie. Boerenprotesten | NRC | Jul-21 | |
| 15. De hitsige fantasieën over burgerverzet gaan aan de meeste mensen volledig voorbij | De Volkskrant | Jul-22 | |
| 16. Dagelijks protest boeren Den Bosch | Trouw | Oct-19 | |
| 17. De Grote NRC-Nieuwsquiz 52 vragen over 2022 Wat was #quietqitting? Wie had 4 miljoen in z'n bankstel verstopt? Wie voelde zich „Arabier, gay en arbeidsmigrant"? De grote NRC-nieuwsquiz van 2022. WekenNieuwsquiz Wie verstopte 4 miljoen in een bankstel? En waar stonden mensen 14 uur voor in de rij? 52 vragen over 2022 | NRC | Dec-22 | No, it's a quiz, not an article |
| 18. 'Dirty Harry' lost het boerenprotest niet op Politie? Liefst beste vriend Handhaving Hard optreden is geen oplossing De Nederlandse agent is geen 'Dirty Harry' - en dat is maar goed ook, schrijft Bob Hoogenboom . Harder optreden helpt niet. | NRC | Jul-22 | |
| 19. De boer is los Boerennijd Hoe het stikstofoverleg tussen kabinet en boeren keer op keer wordt ondermijnd door intimidatie en radicale acties. | NRC | Jul-20 | |
| 20. Beroep: probleemoplosser | De Volkskrant | Dec-22 | |
| 21. Hele land loopt vast, maar wie is bereid in te leveren? | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |
| 22. De gouden Grenstrekkingen | De Volkskrant | Dec-22 | |
| 23. Stop het blabla! Activisten Greenpeace voeren actie bij en óp Tweede Kamer | Trouw | Sep-21 | |
| 24. 'Rijksinstituut voor Volksverlakkerij en Manipulatie' is weer het doelwit | Trouw | Jul-20 | |

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|---|---------------------|--------|--|
| 25. Rond het échte hoofdpijndossier is het opvallend stil | Trouw | Oct-21 | |
| 26. 'We hebben ons ontzettend vergist' | De Telegraaf | Oct-19 | |
| 27. Zijn de boeren terecht boos? | Trouw | Jul-20 | |
| 28. Waarom de strijd tegen stikstof stilligt | De Volkskrant | Jul-21 | |
| 29. Ik wil dat de landbouw weer saai wordt | Trouw | Nov-21 | |
| 30. Boerenprotest kleinschaliger én grimmiger | Trouw | Jul-20 | |
| 31. 'De boer is niet plots geradicaliseerd' Landbouweconoom: 'Agrarische sector staat voor een omslag, maar welke?' | De Telegraaf | Sep-21 | |
| 32. Boerenprotest keert terug Stikstof Een nieuw advies om uitstoot van stikstof aan te pakken doet boerenprotest weer opblaaien | NRC | Jul-21 | |
| 33. 'Ik hou van kritiek, maar we moeten elkaar niet afmaken' | Algemeen Dagblad | Nov-20 | |
| 34. Boeren en bouwers dreigen met harde acties rond Kerst | NRC | Dec-19 | |
| 35. Protest zonder kranen | De Telegraaf | Oct-19 | No, not about the farmers protests |
| 36. Hebben de boeren een punt? | Algemeen Dagblad | Jul-20 | |
| 37. Waar komen al die bomen? | De Volkskrant | Jan-21 | No, about farmers protesting outside the timeframe (2017) |
| 38. Ook solidaire Duitse boeren willen inspraak en respect | De Volkskrant | Dec-19 | |
| 39. Bonte stoet partijen lonkt naar teleurgestelde boer | Trouw | Jan-21 | |
| 40. Aanhoudingen smet op rustige protestdag | Algemeen Dagblad | Jul-20 | |
| 41. Alleen maar verliezers | Algemeen Dagblad | Aug-20 | |
| 42. SER: landelijk landbouwakkoord nodig | NRC | Jun-21 | |
| 43. Stikstofcrisis is één groot déjà vu | De Volkskrant | Oct-19 | |
| 44. FDF weet de 'strijders' online te verbinden | Trouw | Feb-20 | |

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|--|------------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| 45. Boeren blijven boos Woede richt zich vooral op stikstofmaatregelen en 'beroepsverbod' | De Telegraaf | Nov-20 | |
| 46. Erft volgend kabinet de stikstofcrisis? | Algemeen Dagblad | Sep-20 | |
| 47. Boeren lappen regels aan laars, slechts 100 boetes | Algemeen Dagblad | Dec-19 | |
| 48. Blokkeren of praten, dat is de kwestie | NRC | Jul-20 | |
| 49. 'Ik word niet meer blij van een hele kip' Eten Kamerlid Laura Bromet wordt langzaam vegetariër | NRC | Jul-21 | |
| 50. CDA en de boeren | De Telegraaf | Jul-20 | |
| 51. Vervuilende agroindustrie isonhoudbaar Column | NRC | Oct-19 | |
| 52. Begrip voor acties begint op te raken | Algemeen Dagblad | Dec-19 | No, reader send-ins |
| 53. De boswachter ziet soorten wegwijnen | Trouw | Oct-19 | |
| 54. Transitie lukt alleen met betrouwbare overheid | De Telegraaf | Oct-19 | |
| 55. Nu komen de bouwers naar het Malieveld | Trouw | Oct-19 | No, not about the farmers protests |
| 56. Verdeelde boeren zijn wel eensgezind over onvrede | Algemeen Dagblad | Feb-20 | |
| 57. Verduurzamen, graag. Maar hoe? | Trouw | Oct-19 | |
| 58. 'Het is nog steeds leuk om boer te zijn' | Algemeen Dagblad | Sep-20 | |
| 59. Redt boerenprotest het zonder burgersympathie? | De Volkskrant | Jul-20 | |
| 60. Nu komt het aan op Schoutens stevigheid | De Volkskrant | Oct-20 | |
| 61. Boer van de maand | De Volkskrant | Oct-19 | |
| 62. Geachte redactie | De Volkskrant | Jun-22 | No, reader send-ins |
| 63. Wat boerenverstand, dat zou mooi zijn | Trouw | Oct-19 | |
| 64. 'Boeren komen veel te weinig voor zichzelf op' | Trouw | Oct-19 | |
| 65. 'We moeten Rutte nu echt gaan raken' | NRC | Nov-19 | No, not about the farmers protests |
| 66. 'Door de knieën? Slappe rug?' | De Volkskrant | Oct-19 | |

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| 67. Stikstofprotest? De regio's en het centrum drijven uiteen Stikstofprotest 'Verhouding regio en Randstad staat zwaar onder druk' | NRC | Oct-19 | |
| 68. CDA-spagaat doet ook provinciebestuur pijn | Trouw | Nov-19 | No, not about the farmers protests |
| 69. Lezersbrieven | Algemeen Dagblad | Jul-22 | No, readers send ins |
| 70. Hoog tijd voor een nieuwe Sicco Mansholt | Trouw | Dec-19 | |
| 71. Geen traktor de weg op zonder dat hij het wil | De Volkskrant | Mar-20 | |
| 72. Dat stond niet in de vacature | De Volkskrant | Oct-19 | |
| 73. Malieveld | NRC | Nov-19 | |
| 74. Als Den Haag last heeft van te hoge verwachtingen en trendy ideetjes Haagse invloeden | NRC | Nov-19 | |
| 75. Den Haag komt de bouwers tegemoet met handreiking Protest bouw- en grondsector | NRC | Oct-19 | |
| 76. Brieven | De Telegraaf | May-21 | No, readers end ins |
| 77. 'Laat anderen maar over mij oordelen' | Trouw | Dec-19 | |
| 78. Uit de mest herrezen Geplaagde uitvinder Willibrordus van der Weide ziet een toekomst in schone koeienstront | De Telegraaf | Dec-20 | No, not about the farmers protests |
| 79. De weg naar duurzaam is met een lantaarntje te zoeken | Trouw | Nov-20 | |
| 80. Burgers in verzet tegen Haags wensdenken | De Telegraaf | Feb-20 | No, not about the farmers protests |
| 81. Brieven | De Telegraaf | Nov-19 | No, readers send-ins |
| 82. Klets-kassa, verhuizen en afpakjesdag | NRC | Dec-19 | No, not about the farmers protests. |
| 83. Terug in Europa | De Volkskrant | Nov-19 | |
| 84. Klein Stroe klaar voor 'grootste boerenprotest ooit' | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 85. De vrouw met bruine hoed is bij elke 'demo' Boerenprotest Andere groepen sluiten zich aan bij protest-acties boeren | NRC | Jul-22 | |
| 86. Vergissing | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 87. 'Branden op snelweg?Goeie acties!' | Algemeen Dagblad | Dec-22 | |

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|---|------------------|--------|----------------------|
| 88. Stikstofcrisis leidt tot geharrewar over koe in de wei | Trouw | May-22 | |
| 89. Protest boeren gelijktijdig met actie Extinction Rebellion | Trouw | Feb-23 | |
| 90. Warrig beleid lokt boerenprotest uit | Trouw | Oct-19 | |
| 91. 'Den Haag zal woede voelen van deze nieuwe generatie' | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |
| 92. Provincies zijn nu aan de beurt: zonder kaartje, maar ook zonder stikstofvisie | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 93. Terwijl boer die afval stortte op de snelweg een werkstraf krijgt, bindt Farmers Defence Force wat in | De Volkskrant | Aug-22 | |
| 94. Geachte redactie | De Volkskrant | Oct-19 | No, reader send ins |
| 95. Vertrouwen in de overheid krijgt een nieuwe deuk Boerenprotest Ondermijnt de onvrede de democratie? | NRC | Jul-22 | |
| 96. Boeren verdeeld: actievoeren of diplomatie? Protest tegen politiek en RIVM | NRC | Oct-19 | |
| 97. Provincies: Boeren gaan niet weg voor woningbouw | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 98. Waar ligt de grens, vragen politici | NRC | Jun-22 | |
| 99. 'Perspectief is ons ontnomen' Boze boeren met trekkers bij woning minister | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 100. Het effect van rauwe boerenemotie Boerenprotesten | NRC | Jun-22 | |
| 101. De extremisten galmen over het Haagse Zuiderpark | Trouw | Mar-23 | |
| 102. Ook Vlaamse boer in stikstofverzet In Wallonië heerst een soepeler regime | De Telegraaf | Mar-23 | No, about Belgium |
| 103. [Uitslag verkiezingen Zijn er voldoende goede bestu...]* | Algemeen Dagblad | Mar-23 | No, readers send-ins |
| 104. Boze boeren dreigen de voedselvoorziening rond Kerst lam te leggen | Trouw | Dec-19 | |
| 105. Boze burgers voegen zich bij de boeren | Trouw | Jul-22 | |
| 106. Nieuwe stikstofcijfers leggen grote druk op provincies | Trouw | Jun-22 | |

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|------|---|------------------|--------|------------------------|
| 107. | Stikstof: wat Brussel precies wil | NRC | Apr-23 | No, outside time-frame |
| 108. | De grote landbouwbedrijven zetten alles op alles | NRC | Mar-22 | |
| 109. | 'Alles wat wielen heeft, gaat rollen' Rijkswaterstaat alert op boerenacties | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 110. | Voor mij zijn die boeren helden | De Volkskrant | Mar-23 | |
| 111. | Het rood-wit-blauw kan zo de vlag van de toekomst worden | De Volkskrant | Sep-22 | |
| 112. | 'Nederland moet weten hoe radeloos wij zijn' | Algemeen Dagblad | Mar-23 | |
| 113. | Geen protest, maar 'stukje nuchterheid' | NRC | Mar-23 | |
| 114. | Onveilige situaties door hevige acties van boeren | NRC | Jul-22 | |
| 115. | Koe mag toch in de weide lopen zonder vergunning | Trouw | Dec-19 | |
| 116. | Protesterende veehouders vrezen einde eigen bedrijf | De Volkskrant | Jun-22 | |
| 117. | Ludiek protest: Texel is nu republiek | Algemeen Dagblad | Jul-22 | |
| 118. | Met vijf trekkers staan de boze boeren op het erf van collega Datema Onderzoek Radicale boeren | NRC | Apr-23 | No, outside time-frame |
| 119. | 'Agrarisch Walhalla' aan de dijk Strikte naleving Brusselse regels zet volgens experts rol van ons land als voedselsupermacht op het spel | De Telegraaf | Jul-22 | |
| 120. | Boze boeren trekken er deze week opnieuw op uit | Trouw | Oct-19 | |
| 121. | Met 'nul vertrouwen' staan de boeren bij de Kamer op de stoep | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 122. | Spontane protesten 'enige manier plan van tafel te krijgen' | NRC | Jun-22 | |
| 123. | Gewoon doen bestaat niet 'Klootjesvolk' Zijn boeren 'gewoon'? De gewone man is opnieuw gepolitiseerd | NRC | Oct-22 | |

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| 124. Ook 25 jaar terug liepen emoties hoog op bij boerenprotesten | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |
| 125. In Tubbergen is de vlag weer rood-wit-blauw | Algemeen Dagblad | Mar-23 | |
| 126. Het stikt nog niet van de plannen in alle provincies | Trouw | Dec-22 | |
| 127. Stikstofregels temperen paasvuur | De Volkskrant | Apr-23 | No, outside time-frame |
| 128. Brandende fakkels voor de politicus | De Volkskrant | Feb-23 | |
| 129. 'Boeren uitkopen? Laat ze liever duurzaam bouw materiaal telen' | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 130. 'We verwachten dat we vandaag worden gehoord' | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |
| 131. Uitkoopregeling voor boeren loopt opnieuw uit op mislukking Stikstofcrisis | NRC | Jul-22 | |
| 132. 'Vertrouwen in overheid moet terug' BoerBurgerBeweging gaat als komeet in de peilingen | De Telegraaf | Mar-23 | |
| 133. Het kaartje was 'ruk' en dat is het ook gebeven | Algemeen Dagblad | Dec-22 | |
| 134. Veevoerbedrijf spekt protestkas | NRC | Jun-22 | |
| 135. Leden LTO geven rapport-Remkes een mager zesje | Trouw | Oct-22 | |
| 136. Brieven | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | No, reader send ins |
| 137. Remkes ziet vele genodigden schitteren door afwezigheid | Trouw | Aug-22 | |
| 138. Provincies eisen duidelijkheid Stikstofbeleid Provincies eisen duidelijkheid Onmogelijke opgave Toekomst landbouw | NRC | Jul-22 | |
| 139. Boeren tevreden, politici en truckers zijn verbolgen | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |
| 140. De wereld kijkt toe hoe Nederland zich uit de stikstofcrisis gaat redden | Trouw | Aug-22 | |
| 141. Remkes komt piekbelasters tegemoet | De Volkskrant | Oct-22 | |
| 142. Enquête: veel steun voor boerenacties | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |

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| 143. | 'Ik geef nooit garanties. Dat is valse hoop' | De Volkskrant | Oct-22 | |
| 144. | Ook voor Statenleden is intimidatie de nieuwe realiteit | Trouw | Feb-23 | |
| 145. | De boeren vechten tegen een veelkoppig monster | Trouw | Nov-20 | |
| 146. | 'Remkes' legt veel meer bloot dan stikstof alleen | Algemeen Dagblad | Oct-22 | |
| 147. | Niemand heeft zin in uitgestelde afspraken column | NRC | Nov-22 | |
| 148. | Boeren tevreden, politici en truckers zijn verbolgen | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | No, article was included twice |
| 149. | Woest aantrekkelijk stikstofbeleid, dat voor beleidsmakers in spe fantastische lesstof zal zijn | De Volkskrant | Dec-22 | |
| 150. | Protest boeren verhardt Na blokkades meer acties verwacht | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 151. | Klimaatdemonstranten in Rotterdam: Nederland staat stil | Trouw | Jun-22 | No, about other protests |
| 152. | Veel kiezers vinden politiek het probleem, niet de oplossing | NRC | Dec-22 | |
| 153. | Hoogleraar: We zien hier de grenzen van de handhaving | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 154. | Ja, er is een probleem, maar dit is niet de oplossing | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 155. | 'Stikstofbeleid gaat te ver' Respondenten snappen dat boeren boos zijn op overheid | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 156. | Het boerenprotest wordt door anti-democratische krachten ingekapseld | De Volkskrant | Jul-22 | |
| 157. | Wopke Hoekstra beschadigt het toch al lastige stikstofbeleid Commentaar | NRC | Aug-22 | |
| 158. | De vonk van verzet moet op de burger overspringen Boerenprotest Sympathie van de burger, dat willen de boeren Boerenprotesten | NRC | Jun-22 | |
| 159. | Bange koeien voor de Kamer, fikkende hooibalen op de weg Boerenacties | NRC | Jun-22 | |

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| 160. Droge zomer geeft omstreden veevoerplan het laatste zetje | Trouw | Aug-20 | |
| 161. Boerenactie bij minister was 'onaangenaam en bedreigend' | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |
| 162. 'Ze willen ons weg hebben' Protesterende boeren houden in het hele land wilde acties | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 163. Revanche van de 'plekken die er niet meer toe doen' Boeren Hoe verder van de Randstad, hoe groter de onvrede Brandende strobalen zijn de revanche van de 'plekken die er niet meer toe doen' | NRC | Jul-22 | |
| 164. Boeren des duivels over stikstofkrimp 'Cijfers komen neer op leegvegen van hele gebieden' | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 165. Worden klimaatactivisten harder aangepakt dan boeren? | Trouw | Nov-22 | |
| 166. De miljardairsfamilie die pal achter de boeren staat | De Volkskrant | Jul-22 | |
| 167. Lezersreacties | Trouw | Jun-22 | No, readers send ins |
| 168. Woede tegen de overheid is vaak terecht en geen extremisme | Trouw | Dec-22 | |
| 169. Is er nog een uitweg uit de stikstofcrisis? | Trouw | Aug-22 | |
| 170. Het boerendorp met nog maar twee boeren De laatste boeren Eerst moesten ze opschalen, nu inkrimpen. In boerendorp Hollandscheveld zijn bijna geen boeren meer over. | NRC | Aug-22 | |
| 171. Stikstofminister Van der Wal weet van geen wijken | Trouw | Jun-22 | |
| 172. 'Vechten voor platteland' Boeren zien de vertrouwde wereld waarin ze opgroeiden langzaam verdwijnen | De Telegraaf | Jul-22 | |
| 173. Weg met stikstof, maar koester het grasland | Trouw | Jul-22 | |
| 174. Remkes sust meerdere conflicten Stikstofrapport Remkes | NRC | Oct-22 | |
| 175. 'Ik kan in elk geval zeggen dat ik er alles aan heb gedaan' | NRC | Jul-22 | |

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| 176. | Vierkant achter de boeren | De Telegraaf | Oct-19 | |
| 177. | Antropomorfisme • den haag, nederland • 28 juni 2022 • foto Freek van den Bergh / de Volkskrant | De Volkskrant | Jul-22 | |
| 178. | Onvrede smeult, en niet alleen onder de boeren | Algemeen Dagblad | Jun-22 | |
| 179. | 'Zwarte Cross geen plek voor boerenprotest' | De Volkskrant | Jul-22 | No, not about the protests or issue |
| 180. | 'Minimaal 10 miljard nodig voor koopkracht' | Algemeen Dagblad | Aug-22 | |
| 181. | Lezersbrieven | Algemeen Dagblad | Oct-19 | No, readers send-ins |
| 182. | Woede in weiland Tienduizenden demonstranten bij boerenprotest tegen stikstofplannen verwacht | De Telegraaf | Jun-22 | |
| 183. | De betrouwbare mannetjes | De Volkskrant | Jun-22 | |

Appendix B – Final Codebook

Table 5: *Final codebok*

| Code | Sub-code | Definition | Level | Examples |
|---|---|--|--|-----------------|
| 1. Source | De telegram, Algemeen Dagblad (AD), De volkskrant, NRC, Trouw | By who is the article published? | Article level (Select only the publisher's name at the top) | |
| 2. Time period | Oct 20, Nov 20, Dec 20, ... Jan 23, Feb 23, Mar 23 | Monthly code for when the article is published | Article level (Select the entire date from day number till day of the week) | |
| 3. Sentiment towards farmers | Positive Neutral or mixed Negative | Positive sentiment towards farmers highlighted No opinions shared about the farmers or both positive and negative sentiments mentioned Negative sentiments towards the farmers highlighted | Paragraph level | |
| 4. Sentiment towards protests | Positive Neutral or mixed Negative | Positive sentiment towards the protests highlighted No opinions shared about the protests or both positive and negative sentiments mentioned Negative sentiment towards the protests highlighted | Paragraph level | |
| 5. Issue, identity, or action-based information | Issue based information | The text is about the issue of nitrogen reduction or the disagreement around it. | Sentence level | |

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|----------------|------------------------------|---|----------------|---|
| | Identity based information | The text is about the identity of the farmers or politicians | | “ik ben boer in hart en nieren” |
| | Action based information | Actions from the farmers that are discussed ranging from peaceful conversations to protests and violence. | | “ontbijt voor Haagse omwonenden of een brunch in Amsterdam”, “in ruim een week tijd met een tractor is ingereeden op de marechaussee, tientallen boeren zijn gearresteerd wegens illegale acties en een werkbezoek van Landbouwminister Schouten werd afgebroken” |
| 6. Us vs. Them | Farmers ingroup positive | Positive statements about the in-group from the perspective of the farmers | Sentence level | |
| | Farmers ingroup negative | Negative statements about the in-group from the perspective of the farmers | | |
| | Farmers outgroup positive | Positive statements about the out-group from the perspective of the farmers | | |
| | Farmers outgroup negative | Negative statements about the out-group from the perspective of the farmers | | “dictaten van bovenaf”, “de grootste smeerlap van nederland” “vijanden” “ ‘burgers’ zals Brouwer niet- boeren noemt” |
| | Politicians ingroup positive | Positive statements about the in-group from the perspective of the politicians | | |
| | Politicians ingroup negative | Negative statements about the in-group from the perspective of the politicians | | |

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|---|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------|--|
| | Politicians outgroup positive | Positive statements about the out-group from the perspective of the politicians | | |
| | Politicians outgroup negative | Negative statements about the out-group from the perspective of the politicians | | “de beroepsdemonstranten die maar één ding willen: de overheid aanvallen en ontregelen” |
| | Other perspective positive | Positive statements about the farmers or politicians from people not belonging to either of these groups | | |
| | Other perspective negative | Negative statements about the farmers or politicians from people not belonging to either of these groups | | |
| 7. Interpreted beliefs from out-group | Farmers perspective | Farmers mentioning what others think about them or the issue | Sentence level | “afrekening met de boeren en het plattelandsleven” “we worden weggezet als lompe boeren” |
| | Politicians perspective | Politicians mentioning what others think about them or the issue | | |