

# **The people's platform? The voice of the people and its debut on Dutch television, 1960s-1970s**

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Author: Solange Ploeg  
Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

## Abstract

The American political scientist Pendleton Herring made it clear: the essence of democracy is argument and debate, “talk talk talk” (1965, p. xxv-xxvi). Also in the Netherlands, the communication between citizens and politicians changed and increased in the post-war period. As the ‘floating voter’ was born, deference declined and individualism soared, the want for popular participation in politics rose. Journalists took up the task of being critical of traditional authority and informing their public on political matters – ‘the people’ had to make its own decisions, regardless of social or religious background. The Dutch media, television in particular, created more content aimed at ‘the people’ and gave a stage to ordinary citizens and public opinion. The public’s perception of politics (and vice versa) became increasingly dependent on its presentation in the media, which acted as both the interpreter and designer of their communication. This paper focuses on how the media prepared its audience in the months prior to the Dutch national elections in the 1960s. Next to the televised debates, various informative shows such as NIPO-these and Televizier were broadcasted. These programmes featured not only politicians, but also claimed to represent popular opinion via opinion polls or audience participation. This paper explores the construction of ‘the voice of the people’ through these television shows. It will show how this changed the culture of political communication in the Netherlands, and on its way altered dominant understandings of democracy and the role of both citizens and politicians in it.

## Author information

**Solange Ploeg** is a PhD candidate at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. She currently investigates the role of the media and social science in constructing Dutch public opinion and perceptions of 'the people' in the post-war period. She is part of the research project 'The Voice of the People. Popular Expectations of Democracy in Postwar Europe'. Solange's research interests are Dutch post-war political culture, political rhetoric and communication, and the relationship between science and politics. She was trained at Leiden University and the University of St. Andrews.

### Contact Information

[solange.ploeg@let.ru.nl](mailto:solange.ploeg@let.ru.nl)

**Wednesday, 16 June** - Session 4 - **9,00-10,30 CET (Webex)** - Panel – *The culture of debate in and beyond parliament: a comparison of Britain, Germany and The Netherlands, c. 1870-1990*

**Luiss**  
School of Government

Via di Villa Emiliani, 14  
00197 Roma  
T +39 06 85225052  
[sog@luiss.it](mailto:sog@luiss.it)