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How politics becomes news and news becomes politics. A comparative experimental study of the politics-media relationship

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Acknowledgements

A PhD? Never! This is what I said in the summer of 2010 halfway through my Research Master in Amsterdam. Surely I enjoyed how we were pushing each other to achieve higher grades during the Research Master. But spending years working on *one* question all by myself sounded like my worst nightmare. Yet, here we are, with a book that contains years of working on the question of politics-media influence. What happened?

First and foremost, Rens Vliegthart happened: My professor in Fribourg Joachim Trebbe had put me up to the idea of going to Amsterdam for a Master's degree. But without you, Rens, I would not have done a PhD. You never pushed me but were always ready when I had finally come around: you gave me my first academic job and you suggested the project with Peter I ended up working at. You always believed in me and I often think back to your speech at my Master graduation ceremony... We have both come a long way since, thank you.

Peter Van Aelst and Rudy B. Andeweg, my supervisors, happened: We did not have an easy start but you were almost always on the same page during all these years. For you Peter, I was one of the first "own" PhD students and you introduced me to all (!) aspects of academic work. Thank you for giving me this opportunity on your project. For you Rudy, I was far from the first PhD student but that never kept you from being interested and personally invested. I sometimes have to think of you when I tell my students to put an idea in writing... Thank you for all the invaluable input on the project.

My research project happened: That I was able to divide the project into two parts, one study with journalists and one with politicians, was crucial to see the light at the end of what sometimes felt like a tunnel. Most importantly, however, Peter had put together a great crew on the VIDI project with Joeri, Rosa and Lotte. You and many many others provided input, helped me master the Dutch language and were always there for me. The project would not have been possible without your help and that of many others: thanks Pa for letting me use your name that still opens doors to politics and the media in Switzerland, thank all of those who have read, re-read and re-re-read my Dutch and German vignettes and most of all a big thank you to all the journalists and politicians in Switzerland and the Netherlands who participated in my studies and those who helped me stalk them.

M²P happened: The two worlds of Leiden and Antwerp University that the VIDI project combined was one of the aspects of the PhD I enjoyed most. The welcoming atmosphere in both places was exceptional and made all the trips from and to Belgium worthwhile and my half year in Antwerp pass very quickly. Who knew that academics can be as passionate about winning in sports as about discussing their research. . . And don't even get me started on what happens after dark. Thank all of you who are and were part of these special groups!

Ultimate Frisbee happened: Running around on a field, going to tournaments and also my tenure as vice-chair of the Dutch Association (2013-15) gave me the perfect distraction from my research during all those years. It cost me a lot of energy sometimes, but it was worth it: only doing one thing is just not my thing. Thank all of you for the experiences we shared on various (national) teams, boards and so forth!

Finally, many other people played a crucial part that I cannot all name but that I am exceptionally grateful to: the members of the commission, the fellow PhDs in Amsterdam next to Leiden and Antwerp, my parents who gave me the confidence to move abroad and take on such a big project, my dear brother, James who shared the first part of this journey, the many friends from Switzerland who came to visit and stayed in touch all these years and all the friends I won in the Netherlands. And thank you Lotte and Jannine for begin my paranimfen. . .

Now I am at the end, I am glad that I decided to do a PhD. My prejudices were dismantled one by one over the past years thanks to all the people that have been involved. The sometimes challenging moments on the way make the defense even more special: thank you to all those who share this final step and the celebrations with me, here Leiden during the defense or in thought. I am curious to see what comes next...

Curriculum Vitae

Luzia Helfer (1984, Biel/Switzerland) relocated to the Netherlands in 2009 to pursue a Research Master degree in Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam (2011, with honors). Working as a journalist in Switzerland during her Bachelor's degree at the University of Fribourg (2007), it was analyzing viewer data for the Swiss television network 3+ that sparked her passion for data and motivated her to move abroad. From 2009 to 2016 she pursued her PhD research at Leiden University and the University of Antwerp under the supervision of Prof. Rudy B. Andeweg and Prof. Peter Van Aelst. Her study was part of a larger project lead by Prof. Peter Van Aelst financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research NWO [grant 452-10-016]. Her research has been published in renown journals and she has presented her work at numerous academic conferences and workshops around the world. Luzia Helfer is currently a lecturer in Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam.

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