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Boekbespreking van: Voting behaviour in Europe: a comparative analysis of electoral participation and party choice

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digde, ontwikkelde en transformeerde zo de democratietheorie op het moment dat in continentaal Europa de anti-democratische reactie hoogtij vierde.

Het verband tussen revolutie (in het bijzonder de industriële revolutie en de revolutie van 1848) en de politieke theorie van Marx en Engels staat centraal in het vijfde hoofdstuk. Fennema legt hier op heldere wijze uit hoe het idee van economische gelijkheid als voorwaarde voor politieke democratie toegevoegd werd aan de democratietheorie. Tegelijkertijd laat hij zien dat Marx niet in staat was een zelfstandige en eenduidige democratietheorie te ontwikkelen, omdat enerzijds de politieke democratie begrepen werd als stap in de richting van de sociale democratie, maar anderzijds de politieke democratie gezien werd als bedrieglijk masker voor economische ongelijkheid.

In hoofdstuk 6 bestrijkt Fennema het terrein van de partijendemocratie. Dit hoofdstuk heeft een zekere actualiteitswaarde vanwege het huidige debat over de veranderende rol en betekenis van politieke partijen in de huidige democratie. Waar de teloorgang van de partij nu gezien wordt als een mogelijk gevaar voor de democratie, was het oorspronkelijk de opkomst van politieke partijen die als democratisch risico werd beschouwd. Achtereenvolgens komen in dit hoofdstuk de Engelse en de Amerikaanse traditie aan de orde en wordt er een helder overzicht gepresenteerd van het debat tussen de Federalisten en de democratisch-republikeinen, de Amerikaanse 'political machine' en het 'spoils system', de opkomst van de sociaal-democratische partijen en zelfs het politieke denken van Abraham Kuyper. Fennema laat zien welke bezwaren er bestonden tegen politieke partijen, dat de acceptatie van politieke partijen in de democratische praktijk is ontstaan en niet in de theorie en dat de politieke waardering van partijen direct samenhangt met de beoordeling van welke soort belang een partij verdedigt: het deelbelang, een specifieke versie van het algemeen belang of een verondersteld toekomstig algemeen belang. Het achtste hoofdstuk pikt deze draad weer op en is geheel gewijd aan de kritiek op de massapartij, waarbij systematisch het werk van Michels, Spengler en Schumpeter behandeld wordt. Het verbindende element in de kritiek van deze auteurs is hun cultuurpessimisme en het idee dat hoogdravende democratische ideeën in de praktijk niet werken. Volgens Fennema bleef alleen Schumpeter vasthouden aan de democratie, niet als ideaal, maar louter als de minst slechte regeringsvorm.

De Russische revolutie is de context voor het zevende hoofdstuk over de democratietheorie van het communisme. Het is voor een groot deel een verhandeling over de partijopvatting van Lenin. Middels een wetenswaardige vergelijking met Max Webers opvatting over de staatsbureaucratie en het gedachtengoed van de Nederlandse anarchist Anton Constandse, verdedigt Fennema de stelling dat Lenins naïef te noemen opvatting van democratie (dat wil zeggen de regeringsvorm die na de revolutie vorm zou moeten krijgen) feitelijk nauw verwant was aan het anarchisme. De opmerkelijke conclusie luidt: 'Een van de oorzaken van het ontstaan van het communistische politieke systeem was de combinatie van deze "naïeve", bijna anarchistische democratietheorie en het voortbestaan van de communistische partij gebaseerd op een ijzeren discipline en een centralistische organisatie. De arbeiders- en boerenafgevaardigden in de sovjets hadden tegen de beroepspolitici geen verweer.

Het monopolie van de CPSU maakte het radenstelsel, dat formeel een zeer democratische structuur had, tot een farce' (p. 230).

Het negende hoofdstuk bevat een thematisch geordende samenvatting. Opvallend is dat hier de Haïtiaanse revolutie nog wel een keer genoemd wordt, maar verder nauwelijks een rol blijkt te hebben gespeeld in Fennema's uiteenzetting over de ontwikkeling van de democratietheorie. Het is jammer dat Fennema zijn op zich prikkelende stelling over de onderschatting van het effect van deze revolutie niet overtuigender heeft weten in te bedden in zijn overzicht. Het is beslist niet uitgesloten dat Fennema een belangrijke omissie in de bestaande literatuur op het spoor was, maar het overzicht maakt niet voldoende aannemelijk waar, hoe en in hoeverre de Haïtiaanse revolutie nu precies gevolgen heeft gehad voor de democratietheorie. Overigens lijkt deze kwestie hem wel sensibel te hebben gemaakt voor de vraag in hoeverre de democratietheorie bij de oplossing van het probleem 'wie maken deel uit van het volk?' aandacht heeft besteed aan het probleem van raciale ongelijkheid. Dat is een verdienste van dit boek.

De epiloog is een korte schets van de Amsterdamse discussie tussen 'neo-anarchisten' in de persoon van Provo Roel van Duyn en de 'neo-Schumpeterianen', belichaamd door Ed van Thijn. Beide 'theoretici' deelden de kritiek op de pacificatiedemocratie en de confrontatie tussen het anarchistische wijkradenmodel van Van Duyn en het Schumpeteriaanse marktmodel van de democratie van Van Thijn bracht volgens Fennema een variant voort van de participatiedemocratie. Van Thijn filosofeerde over een kwestie die door Provo was gepolitiseerd en waarover de klassieke denkers niets of niet veel te melden hadden: het probleem dat burgers zich verzetten tegen de besluiten van een democratisch gekozen regering. Daarmee sluit dit boek af met een actueel thema en doet Fennema recht aan de in de inleiding geponeerde stelling dat de kennis van de geschiedenis van de moderne democratietheorie van belang is voor het begrijpen van actuele vraagstukken.

Tot slot: de vormgeving van dit studieboek, in het bijzonder de ruime marges die het studenten mogelijk maakt naar hartelust aantekeningen te maken, het trefwoordenregister en het namenregister zijn praktisch. Bovendien treft men na elk hoofdstuk suggesties aan om verder te lezen, alsmede gerichte vragen die de student helpen de stof kritisch te verwerken. Kortom, *De moderne democratie* is een leesbaar boek dat zeer geschikt is voor het onderwijs.

Kees van Kersbergen

E. Oppenhuis, **Voting behaviour in Europe: a comparative analysis of electoral participation and party choice**. Het Spinhuis, Amsterdam 1995.

Why do people vote and why do they vote for a specific party? These questions are among the most frequently studied topics in political science. Oppenhuis attempts to answer them for the European elections of 1989. By studying voting behaviour in

different countries at the same time, he is able to compare voting behaviour in different contexts. 'In cross-national research it does not suffice (...) to note merely that countries differ from each other, unless this difference can be linked to theoretically interesting concepts (...)' (p.4). Therefore, Oppenhuis poses the question whether country characteristics like the possibility to vote on Sunday and compulsory voting have an effect on the propensity to vote and whether characteristics of parties and party systems influence the attractiveness of political parties.

The thesis contains two studies: part one (chapters 2, 3 and 4) is about electoral participation and part two (chapters 5, 6 and 7) is about party choice. Each part starts with a theoretical outline, which is followed by a country specific analysis and a Europe-wide analysis. In the Europe-wide analysis the effect of contextual characteristics is studied.

In *chapter two*, Oppenhuis presents a theoretical framework for explaining individual electoral participation. Oppenhuis distinguishes between socio-demographic variables like 'social class' and 'education', and psychological variables like 'political interest'. The effect of socio-demographic variables on the propensity to vote is hypothesised to be both direct and mediated via psychological characteristics (p. 54). In *chapter three*, this model is estimated for each country separately. The models are fitted by including some extra causal links and by excluding non-significant effects (p.45-46). Oppenhuis does not exactly indicate for each country which relationships are added and which relationships are removed.

Oppenhuis is especially interested in the effects of the context. Therefore, in *chapter four* he estimates a 'Europe-wide model' including both individual and country characteristics. The selection of country specific variables is inductive (p. 72): compulsory voting, Sunday voting, the concurrence of national elections and the proportionality between votes and seats, appear to be related to turnout rates and are therefore included in the Europe-wide model. The resulting Europe-wide model is quite complex. It contains 28 variables (seventeen individual variables, four country variables, six interactions between individual and country variables and one interaction between two country variables) connected by about two hundred causal links.

After estimating this model, Oppenhuis concludes that some of the variables have indeed the predicted effect on electoral participation. There appears to be a strong direct effect of socio-demographic variables like social class and age. This confirms the expectation that these variables not only have an indirect effect via psychological variables on turnout, but also have a direct effect on the decision to vote. Of the country characteristics, compulsory voting, Sunday voting and proportionality have a positive effect on turnout and contribute 'to some extent to the explanation of individual variance' (p. 85), although the independent effect of Sunday voting is not significant (p. 80).

Oppenhuis starts his analysis of party choice in *chapter five*. The theoretical framework used to explain party choice in each country separately, contains individual characteristics like social class, religion, post-materialism and left-right ideology and the party characteristic 'party size'.

The nominal variable 'party choice' hardly permits cross-national comparisons. It

requires separate analyses for each country, and in that case the inclusion of country characteristics is impossible. Another difficulty is the impossibility to study voters of smaller parties because of the small number of respondents voting for these parties. Oppenhuis, therefore, uses a question about the attractiveness of each party participating in the European elections and transforms the original data matrix into a 'stacked' data matrix. In this stacked data matrix, 'a respondent and the VVD' and 'a respondent and the CDA' are two different cases. These two cases have two different scores on the dependent variable (attractiveness of the VVD and the CDA respectively). The independent variables are transformed by connecting characteristics of the respondent and party characteristics. For example, the independent variable 'left-right ideology' is transformed into the ideological distance between a respondent and the party. The stacked matrix, can be used to test the hypothesis that 'the shorter this distance between a respondent and a party, the higher his sympathy for that party'. The transformation of other independent variables is less easy. The independent variable 'social class', for example, is transformed into the 'predicted attractiveness of a party' by social class. In order to construct these new variables, Oppenhuis has performed many simple regressions between all theoretically interesting variables and party attractiveness for each party in the original data matrix. The attractiveness as predicted by each independent variable is included in the stacked data matrix. Due to the special operationalization of the independent variables, the causal model estimated by Oppenhuis cannot be interpreted as an ordinary causal model: 'the procedure has major consequences for the interpretation of the effects of the model' (p. 135).

In *chapter six* the variables of this model are studied in a bivariate analysis and in a multivariate model for each country. In *chapter seven*, the same model predicting party choice is used on the complete (stacked) data set. Some interaction variables between characteristics of parties and characteristics of individuals are added, but they do not contribute much to the explained variance found in just employing the 'simple' model presented in chapter six. Oppenhuis concludes that the 'political system characteristics hardly matter' in explaining the attractiveness of political parties. Moreover, the analysis indicates that 'the determinants of party preference are very similar across Europe' (p. 167). Implying that the same variables explain the attractiveness of parties all over Europe to more or less the same extent.

I concentrate my evaluation on two topics: the theoretical framework and the relationship between theory and data.

If Oppenhuis wants to test some hypotheses, as he suggests by starting each part with a theoretical outline, he should start with a theory. The selection of variables, however, is explicitly guided by two a-theoretical considerations: the availability of data and the question whether or not the variable is used in 'different types of research' (p. 20). Although Oppenhuis states that the selected variables are not theoretically 'incompatible with one another' (p. 96), he never discusses this rather bold statement. He simply assumes that a theory is a set of variables put together by some thinkable relationship. If Oppenhuis follows an inductive strategy, he should present his findings as theoretically understandable relationships. Oppenhuis, however, does

not interpret the relationships he establishes empirically.

A first example of this a-theoretical reasoning can be found in the way Oppenhuis selects independent variables from rational choice theory. In his summary, Oppenhuis reduces rational choice theory to the effect of left-right selfplacement, issue voting and (dis)approval of the existing national government. Issues, according to Oppenhuis, are the same as ideologies, 'only failing to take the step from many positions on different issues to one or few positions on ideological dimensions' (p. 101). If this is true, one cannot use both left-right selfplacement (assuming citizens reduce the uncertainties by using one ideological dimension) and the position of voters on different issues (assuming citizens do *not* reduce uncertainties using one ideological dimension) in the same model. By doing this, Oppenhuis hypothesises both the existence and the non-existence of a causal relationship between left-right self placement and the evaluation of parties. In a model explaining *individual* voting behaviour one cannot use two mutually exclusive assumptions.

A second example is his defence of the predicted relationship between political interest and having an opinion about the European Community (p.42). Oppenhuis states that some interest is a necessary condition for knowledge about the EC and that understanding is a prerequisite for any orientation towards the European Community. Then, Oppenhuis hypothesises a linear relationship between interest and EC approval. This implies that the more interested one is in the EC, the more positive one evaluates the EC. Doing this, Oppenhuis changes the variable 'having an orientation' into 'having a positive orientation'.

A third example is the way Oppenhuis uses 'interaction variables'. Interaction variables are multiplications of two other variables. These interaction variables, together with their constituent variables, can be interpreted as the effect of a variable on a relationship between two other variables. It is difficult to be convinced about the way Oppenhuis constructs, uses and interprets interaction variables in his model. Oppenhuis, for instance, hypothesises an interaction between compulsory voting and concurrent national elections (p. 73) and defends (interprets?) this interaction by simply describing its consequences in terms of its statistical effect, not by its possible (theoretical) meaning. The interaction might mean something like 'the effect of compulsory voting on turnout is reduced (strengthened) by the existence of concurrent elections', and/or 'the effect of concurrent national elections is reduced (strengthened) by compulsory voting', but a clear interpretation is not offered. Moreover, the way Oppenhuis uses his interaction variables in his Europe-wide model explaining turnout does not make a clear interpretation of the findings possible. Interaction variables are related to their constituent parts, to other interaction variables, which are again related to their constituent parts and other variables (p. 77). Although everything can be hypothesised to be connected to every relationship, this operation does not yield any insight in the not so simple act of voting.

The second topic I want to address is the relationship between theory and data. This relationship often becomes blurred: Oppenhuis measures other things than he discusses in his theory and interprets his findings without reflecting on the way he has measured the relevant variables.

A first example is Oppenhuis' discussion of the relationship between issue voting and the preferences for parties. In the theoretical discussion it is assumed that the opinions of citizens on certain issues are related to their evaluation of parties (p. 101). Oppenhuis explicitly relates this to his discussion of ideology. But then, the theoretical variable 'issue voting' is operationalized with a question measuring the *saliency* of an issue (p. 102), which is the extent to which an issue is important. One's opinion (positive or negative) and the saliency of the issue in question are two separate things.

A second example of the sometimes obscure relationship between theory and data is the interpretation of results from the stacked data matrix. As Oppenhuis states correctly, the relationships in the Europe-wide model predicting party sympathy cannot be interpreted as simple causal effects. The interpretation Oppenhuis offers, however, is completely in terms of a simple causal model (p. 159). Consider, for instance, the causal relationship between two variables in the model based on or tested with the stacked data matrix: 'the predicted party attractiveness by religion' and the 'ideological distance between the respondent and the party'. Does a positive relationship between these two variables mean that the higher the party attractiveness as predicted by religion, the bigger the ideological difference between the respondent and his party? If this is the right interpretation, why should that be the case? And if it is not the right interpretation, what is?

A third example is the observed relationship between country specific variables on the decision to vote. Oppenhuis includes five variables (four dichotomous variables and one continuous) in his Europe-wide model. Just the four dichotomous variables produce 16 cells. Oppenhuis has only 14 cases. Since five countries (Denmark, The Netherlands, Spain, Great Britain and Northern Ireland) fall into the same cell, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from the analysis. One can say almost nothing about the five independent country variables in this case.

I conclude that the theoretical framework, either as a starting point or as a result of the study, is not very well developed. The reasons to include some variables and to exclude others are a-theoretical and many predicted or found relationships are inadequately defended. Positive aspects of this study are the attempt to stress the importance of theory in comparative politics and the attempt to overcome difficulties in doing cross-national voting studies by using a stacked data matrix. The work of Oppenhuis could have contributed more to our understanding of electoral participation and party choice than it actually does.

Henk van der Kolk

J. Tillie, **Party Utility and Voting Behavior**. Het Spinhuis, Amsterdam 1995.

In recent research on electoral behaviour, attention has shifted from the choice of a single party at the ballot box to the range of preferences of the voter for all parties engaged in electoral competition. This can be regarded as a valuable development since