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The functioning of Dutch party youth wings: a comparison of the 1980s and 2010s

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4. Party Youth Wings in the Netherlands

Ever since political parties were first founded in the Netherlands, youth wings have developed alongside them. They have gradually become a self-evident part of the Dutch political system. Figure 4.1 presents the historical development of youth wings affiliated with political parties that have parliamentary representation. Overall, it shows that the landscape of party youth wings is constantly changing, although many of the party youth wings that exist today have their roots in the 1970s and 1980s or even in the period around the war. Although the figure includes the vast majority of party youth wings in the Netherlands, this overview is not complete. Other party youth wings seem to have existed for very short periods but were less documented or institutionalized. Often, the mother parties of these youth wings also existed for a short time or were only represented in parliament for a few years.⁴⁵ Based on Figure 4.1, this chapter will present a concise history of party youth wings in the Netherlands.⁴⁶

4.1 The first wave of national party youth wings

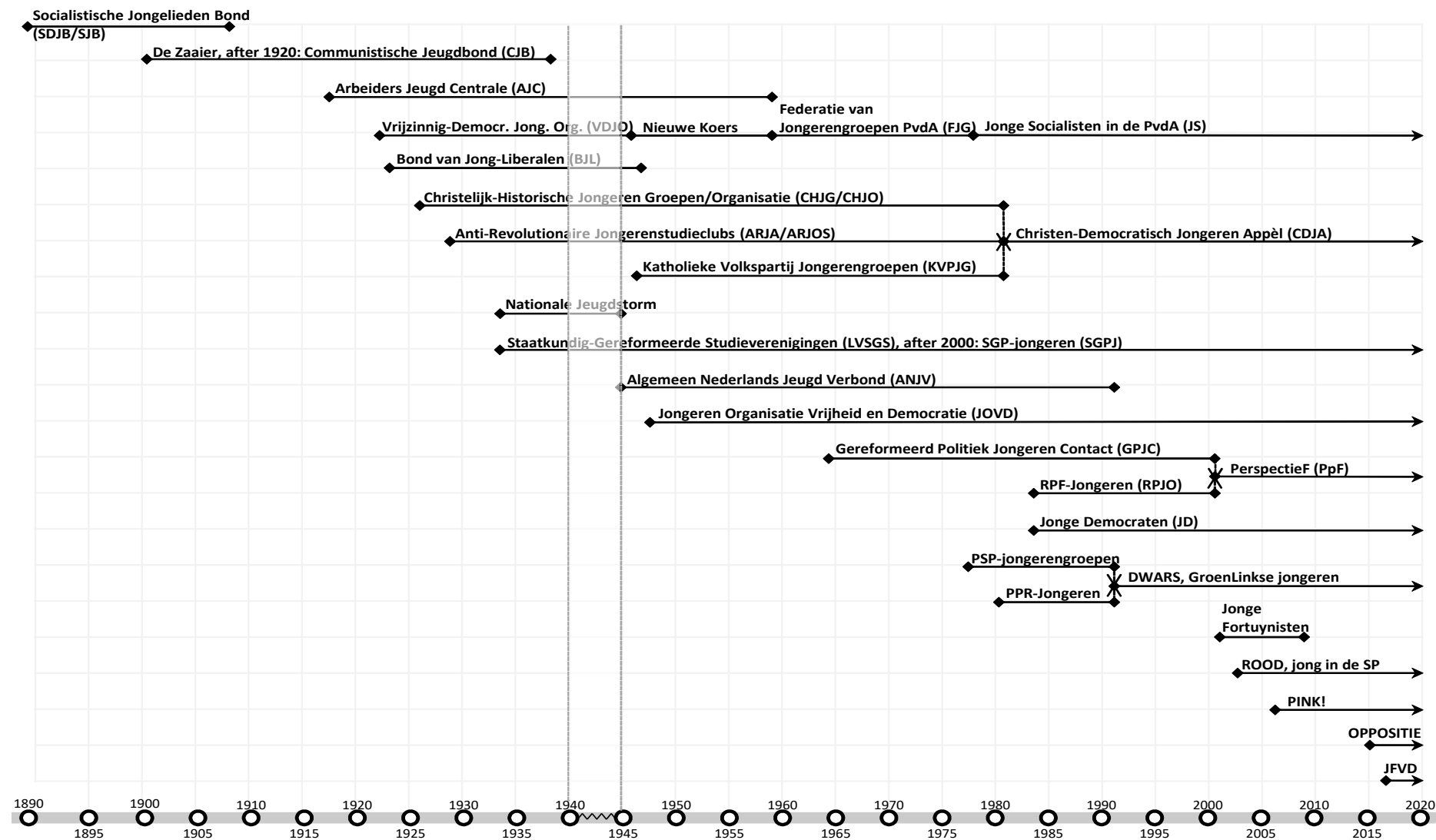
At the end of the 19th century, youth movements arose within and alongside various political parties.⁴⁷ Starting point of Figure 4.1 is the establishment of the first national and organizationally independent party youth wing on August 12 in 1888: the *Sociaal Democratische Jongeliedenbond* (SDJB, in English: the Social Democratic Youth League). It was closely affiliated to the *Sociaal-Democratische Bond* (SDB, in English: Social Democratic League), the first socialist party in the Netherlands (Harmsen, 1971). The SDJB formed an association of several local socialist youth leagues that originated a few years earlier as a result of efforts undertaken by local party members and young people. As Harmsen (1971) describes, the youth organization can best be characterized by its socialist study activities for members, total abstinence from alcohol, the fight against child labour, antimilitarist points of view and social activities such as singing, acting and excursions. The youth organization perceived the party leader of the SDB, Domela Nieuwenhuis, as its great role model. In turn, he was supportive of the SDJB. After 1893, the SDJB weakened due to turmoil in the socialist movement and the mother party. The SDB split into two political parties: the *Socialistenbond* (SB, in English: Socialist League) and the *Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij* (SDAP, in English: Social Democratic Workers' Party). The SDJB reorganized and adopted a different name in 1896, the *Socialistische Jongelieden Bond* (SJB, in English: Socialist Youth League). The

⁴⁵ This applies, for example, to the youth branches of the *Boerenpartij* (in English: The Farmers' Party) in the 1960s and 1970s, the *Democratisch-Socialisten 1970* (in English: Democratic Socialists 1970) in the 1970s and the *Centrum Democraten* (in English: Centre Democrats) in the 1980s and 1990s.

⁴⁶ The information is primarily based on secondary sources, although in some (more recent) cases I used primary sources from youth wing archives to supplement the historical overview.

⁴⁷ Harmsen (1971) explains the emergence of these youth movements as a concrete manifestation of a generation conflict, which existed because of the industrialization and the speed with which social changes took place. He defines youth movements as associations that lack adult leaders, that are organizationally independent, and that adhere to a certain youth idealism.

Figure 4.1 Global historical overview of the youth wings of political parties in the Dutch House of Representatives



Note. This is not a complete overview as party youth wings are not always well documented or institutionalized, or existed very shortly and were extremely small. Primary sources are Harmsen (1971), Klijnsma (2007), Welp (1999), Van der Hulst (2012), party youth wing websites and Parlement.com, but also see other references in text.

increasingly radical and anarchist character of the SJB repelled the more moderate SDAP, which led to sympathy among the youth wing members for the SB (Harmsen, 1971). When the SB merged into the SDAP in 1900, the SJB decided to continue independently. The youth organization dissolved in 1908.

Another try: De Zaaier

The negative experience of the SDAP with the SJB made the party doubtful about the benefits of party-related youth movements. However, after the International Socialist Congress adopted a resolution to encourage the education and organization of the young as a means to fight militarism, the SDAP started a new youth wing, *De Zaaier* (in English: the Sower), in 1901 (Harmsen, 1971). In contrast with the SDJB, which was characterized by bottom-up efforts of young people, the *Zaaier* was a typical party-initiated youth organization. Van Veldhuizen (2015) describes that the *Zaaier* made sure adolescents got a place in the mother party, as only people aged 18 and above could become a member of the main party. It first consisted of local branches only, but the youth wing started to organize national conventions and to issue member magazines from 1906 onwards. The relationship with the mother party was far from perfect. Although the official aim of the youth wing was to educate the young workers on the principles of socialism, to the dismay of the mother party, the *Zaaier* increasingly strived for political action (Harmsen, 1971).⁴⁸ The political and organizational independence of the *Zaaier* remained a point of discussion: is supervision by older party members necessary in the political education of young people or can – and will – they develop socialist views on their own (Harmsen, 2001)? Another conflict with the mother party arose when the *Zaaier* refused to adopt an age limit of twenty for its membership. The relationship between the two organizations became even more complex when the SDAP removed a group of dissatisfied party members in 1909. This group founded a new party, the orthodox Marxist Social-Democratic Party SDP (which later became the Communist Party). The *Zaaier* followed an increasingly independent and radical course, leading to the decision of the SDAP to cut its ties with the youth wing. As a result, the *Zaaier* lost a large part of its membership base. It was not until 1914 that the youth organization officially turned to the SDP, although the *Zaaier* remained a small and even sectarian organization (Harmsen, 1971). The *Zaaier* changed its name to *Communistische Jeugdbond* (CJB, in English: Communist Youth League) in 1920.

SDAP's subsequent attempts

The SDAP again tried to establish a youth wing in 1911,⁴⁹ although this time it had to be led exclusively by adults and could not be organizationally independent. This type of party youth wing soon proved unsuccessful and ceased to exist (Harmsen, 1971). A few years later, despite profound concerns on the possible radicalizing character of a youth wing, the SDAP and the

⁴⁸ The mother party was divided on the alleged functions of a party youth movement. Some wanted to connect the youth movement mainly to anti-militarist actions, while others were convinced that the youth movement should only focus on the socialist development of young people (Harmsen, 1971).

⁴⁹ *Jongeren Organisatie der SDAP* (JO der SDAP, in English: the Youth Organization of the SDAP).

affiliated socialist trade union NVV together founded another youth wing: the *Arbeiders Jeugdcentrale* (AJC, in English: Workers' Youth Centre). Harmsen (1971) emphasizes that the SDAP and NVV were cautious. They made sure that 1) adults were involved in the governance of the AJC and 2) the AJC was carefully kept out of any political issues and discussions. With the aim to nurture and educate the young on a socialist lifestyle, the AJC grew into an “island of socialist youth community” (Harmsen, 1971, p. 190). The AJC is well known for its youth camps and other social and cultural gatherings. In its heydays, the organization had around 10,000 members (Harmsen, 1971, p. 197). This third attempt of the SDAP thus became a success. The efforts of the SDAP to create its own youth organization points to the importance that was attributed to a strong network of affiliated organizations, what was later seen as the socialist pillar (Koole, 1992).

Other parties follow suit

Other parties did not follow the example of the socialist SDAP until the 1920s and 1930s. From then on, Dutch political parties increasingly started to pay attention to the integration of young people in their organizations. As Figure 4.1 shows, no less than six national youth wings of political parties were created during these two decades. The *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Jongerenorganisatie* (VDJO, in English: Freethinking Democratic Youth Organization) was established in 1923 as the youth wing of the progressive liberal political party *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* (VDB, in English: Free-thinking Democratic League). The mother party had by then already existed for about 20 years. The VDJO wanted to be a free youth movement, without a formal connection to the mother party, although they received some material support and shared the same ideological basis (Klijnsma, 2007). The youth wing operated somewhat similarly to the AJC. It promoted itself as a political study club and deliberately kept itself out of daily politics, although it was not averse to making political statements. After ten years with a limited number of members, the VDJO started to flourish in the 1930s. It had 3,200 members and 72 local units in its heydays in 1940 (Klijnsma, 2007, p. 531).

A year after the foundation of the VDJO, the *Bond van Jonge Liberalen* (BJL, English: League of Young Liberals) arose as a result of the collaboration of local youth branches. This youth wing was affiliated with the conservative liberal party *Liberale Staatspartij* (LSP, in English: Liberal States Party).⁵⁰ Like the VDJO, the BJL considered it important to be able to operate independently of the mother party. This was apparent, for example, from the ambitions of the BJL to merge with the VDJO. The youth wing had similar plans for its mother party and later even propagated an entirely new political party. These actions put such pressure on the relationship with the mother party that the LSP wanted to cut ties with the youth wing, but the issue resolved with a new party youth wing chair (Klei, 2015). Its membership base increased in the first decade to 3,400 in 1932 (Klijnsma, 2007, p. 530).

⁵⁰ The LSP was named *De Vrijheidsbond* (in English: the Freedom League) until 1937. There are indications that the youth wing was named *Centrale van Jongeren in de Vrijheidsbond* (in English: Centre of Youth within the Freedom League) until then.

The youth wings of the confessional parties also emerged during these years when local youth groups started to unite at the national level. In 1927, ten local youth groups of the Protestant *Christelijk Historische Unie* (CHU, in English: Christian Historical Union) founded a national party youth wing: the *Christelijk Historische Jongerengroepen* (CHJG, in English: Christian Historical Youth Groups). In the ten years that followed, the youth organization grew in both the number of local youth groups and members. In 1939, this youth wing had 3,361 members and 128 local youth groups (Ten Hooven & De Jong, 2008, p. 193). The CHJG was closely connected to the mother party and had the character of a study association. Education was its primary goal, although there was also room for entertainment – more so than in other party sections. The party board did closely monitor whether entertainment would not gain the upper hand at the expense of political education (Ten Hooven & De Jong, 2008).

The youth study clubs that were affiliated to the Protestant *Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* (ARP, in English: Anti-Revolutionary Party), which was founded in 1879 as the first political party in the Netherlands, also merged into one federation in 1929: the alliance of the Protestant *Anti-Revolutionaire Jongeren Actie* (ARJA, in English: Anti-Revolutionary Youth Action). The aim of the ARJA was to engage young people in the regular study of political and societal issues from an anti-revolutionary perspective (Welp, 1999). In doing so, it propagated the views and ideology of the mother party. The latter kept its grip on the youth wing by appointing two members of the ARJA's national board. The ARJA had around 3,000 members in 1939 (Welp, 1999, p. 207).

In a similar way, the *Landelijk Verband van Staatkundig Gereformeerde Studieverenigingen* (LVSGS, in English: National Union of Reformed Study Associations) of the orthodox Protestant *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (SGP, in English: Reformed Political Party) came into being in 1934 when various local study associations started collaborating on the national level. The LVSGS is the predecessor of the still existing youth wing *SGP-jongeren* (SGPJ, English: SGP-youth). Its main aim was to study the party principles. Young and old could join study activities and debates about the ideology of the SGP. However, in the first decades the LVSGS was not very active. Study activities took place in the local study associations, which were supervised by local party units and had no maximum age for membership (De Groot & Kok, 2009). The local study associations were only moderately interested in the LVSGS and some even refused to join the national association.

During the Second World War

The Dutch party youth wings dissolved during the Second World War due to the ban on democratic political parties. The *Nationale Jeugdstorm* forms an exception (NJS, in English: National Youth Storm). This youth wing was a Dutch equivalent of the German *Hitlerjugend* and existed from 1934 to 1945. The NJS was strongly affiliated to the *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (NSB, National Socialist Movement). It included the largest fascist youth movement in the Netherlands during WWII. While the organization went through turbulent times before 1940, the number of members increased to 12,000 during the German occupation (Oomen, 2016). Some other party youth wings, such as the liberal ones, remained active underground.

The VDJO, for instance, was remarkably more active than the mother party during the war (Klijnsma, 2007). It kept on organizing illegal study groups and member conventions, and issued a magazine. Many of its members helped in hiding Jewish friends. Such activities made it easier to re-establish the organization after the war.

So far, this historical sketch shows that more and more national youth wings of political parties arose in the Netherlands in the period between 1888 and 1945. The first socialist and social democratic parties experimented with different forms and types of youth organizations. Ultimately, a youth organization aimed at political socialization proved to be the most successful. Most of the other youth wings that emerged during this period also seemed little concerned with day-to-day politics. The majority arose as a national association of local branches and promoted itself as a study club. In this early period, party youth wings were thus predominantly focused on political education in the broadest sense of the word. In Dutch, this is traditionally called *politieke vorming* (literally translates into 'political formation' or 'political shaping'). This concept has a high overlap with the German *politische Bildung* and concerns the education of citizens in such a way that they are able to participate in the political system.

4.2 Continuity and change after WWII

Many party youth wings arose again after the war according to the pre-war configurations, but the years that followed can be characterized by change. New party youth wings came onto the scene and established youth wings transformed. Overall, the 50s and 60s can be characterized by an increase in party youth wings' political engagement and the first explicitly activist youth wings.

Changes within established party youth wings

The aforementioned BJL, LSP's youth wing, was particularly reform-minded after the war. It believed that the mother party was not modernizing fast enough. To the disappointment of its mother party, the BJL was one of the driving forces behind the establishment of a new liberal party, the *Partij van de Vrijheid* (PvdV, in English: Freedom Party) (Koole, 1995). In 1948, the BJL dissolved and the PvdV merged into the VVD.

In 1946, the *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA, in English: Labour Party) was founded as a merger of the SDAP, VDB and a small Christian Democratic party. The political youth work continued in the affiliated youth organization *Nieuwe Koers* (in English: New Course), which included the VDJO (Olthof, 1998; Welp, 1999). The AJC, the youth wing of the former SDAP, continued independently and dissolved in 1959 after a rapid decline in membership. As Welp (1999) describes, *Nieuwe Koers* started as an independently organized youth association, but soon became encapsulated by the PvdA. The membership base had risen rapidly to over 3,000 in the first few years but declined thereafter. Due to the continuing loss of members, but also because of objections of the mother party against the increasingly politically independent course of the youth wing (Olthof, 1998), it was decided to undertake a major reform in 1959. The closed and centrally managed *Nieuwe Koers* made way for the open and decentralized *Federatie van Jongerengroepen van de PvdA* (FJG, in English: Federation of Youth Groups of

the Labour Party). The FJG united the local youth centres (in Dutch: *jongerenkernen*) with the aim to give young people their own free place in the party (Koole, 1992). PvdA members younger than 30 years old automatically became members of such youth centres. The youth wing went through difficult times for quite a while, especially because the working method and close connection with the PvdA did not match the extra-parliamentary, activist spirit that existed among young people at that time (Olthof, 1998). The situation improved in the 1970s.

The ARJA was re-established as the *Anti-Revolutionaire Jongerenstudieclubs* (ARJOS, in English: Anti-Revolutionary Youth Study Clubs) after the war (Welp, 1999). The ARP officially adopted the youth wing in the party statutes in 1946. The executive board of the mother party appointed two delegates in the national board of the youth wing, the board of the ARJOS was part of the party congress, and the annual report of the youth wing had to be discussed at the party congress (Koole, 1992). The formal connection between the ARJOS and the ARP further strengthened during the 1950s and 1960s when the representation rights of the youth wing in the ARP increased as well (Welp, 1999). During these years, the ARJOS became more occupied with political activities and less with study activities. It had nearly 5,000 members in the 1950s.

While the relationship of the ARJOS with the corresponding mother party became closer, the CHJG started moving away from the mother party in the 1960s. The youth wing changed its name to *Christelijk-Historische Jongeren Organisatie* (CHJO, in English: Christian Historical Youth Organization) in 1965, started following the mother party more critically, removed the mother party from its organizational regulations and opened up the membership for young people of other political parties (Welp, 1999). From then onwards, the membership base of the CHJO decreased significantly (see Appendix 5.1a).

New party youth wings

In these post-war years, several new party youth wings came into existence. One was the communist youth wing *Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond* (ANJV, in English: General Dutch Youth League) in 1945, which was affiliated with the *Communistische Partij van Nederland* (CPN, in English: Communist Party). Not much has been written about this youth wing. From the website parlement.com, it can be derived that the foundations for the youth wing were laid in the communist resistance during the war.⁵¹ The ANJV was action-minded and aimed at spreading the ideas of communism and socializing young people. It had approximately 3,000 members in the second half of the 1940s. It is unclear how the youth organization fared, but after the refusal to merge with other small left youth wings in the early 1990s, it seems to have vanished at the end of the 20th century.⁵²

In 1947, the first catholic party youth wing was founded. The *Katholieke Volkspartij* (KVP, in English: Catholic People's Party) founded the *Katholieke Volkspartij Jongerengroepen*

⁵¹ Parliamentary Documentation Centre. (n.d.). *Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond (ANJV)*. Via https://www.parlement.com/id/vjcmdpx4gulq/algemeen_nederlands_jeugd_verbond_anjv.

⁵² See, for instance: Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (2021). Archief ANJV 1944-1998, p. 3, via <https://search.iisg.amsterdam/Record/ARCH00214/Export?style=PDF>.

(KVPJG, in English: Catholic People's Party Youth Groups). The emergence of the youth wing was not self-evident; the KVP feared that it would endanger party unity. But the desire for the political education of the youth and the concern for losing young people made sure the party overcame that fear (Haans, 1999). This all led to a close link between the mother party and youth wing. The party youth wing was kept under strict supervision, was financially dependent on the party and was represented in the highest decision-making bodies of the KVP (Welp, 1999). The youth wing focused on both political education and the representation of Catholic youth, although the latter became increasingly important. From the 1960s onwards, the youth organization began to adopt an increasingly independent stance. It abolished the indirect and automatically conferred youth wing membership of KVP members below 30 years old, indicating a weakening relationship with the mother party. The number of youth wing members halved; only approximately 2,500 of the 45,000 KVP members under thirty years old became a member of the KVPJG (Haans, 1999; Welp, 1999).

In 1948, two years after its founding, the aforementioned PvdV merged into the liberal *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD, in English: Liberal Party). The establishment of the still-existing youth wing *Jongeren Organisatie Vrijheid en Democratie* (JOVD, in English: Youth Organization Freedom and Democracy) was initiated by the party's executive board in 1949 (Koole, 1992). Originally, the youth organization was meant to be a politically independent training institute for liberal youth (Welp, 1999). However, the youth wing focused increasingly on the political arena. The relationship with the mother party can largely be characterized by tensions. Already at the first assembly of the JOVD it was concluded that "the JOVD should not become the trailer of the VVD; but we do want to maintain contact with the VVD (...)" (Habben Jansen, 1994, p. 15).⁵³ The JOVD became an independent organization that can best be described as a necessary irritant of the mother party. It had around 2,000 members in the first decades of its existence (Welp, 1999, p. 212).

Up to this point, we can see a trend break with the period before the war. While most youth wings at the time were mainly concerned with study activities, the new youth wings after the war explicitly manifested themselves as political actors. An exception is the *Landelijk Verband van Gereformeerde Politieke Jeugdstudieclubs* (GPJC, in English: National Association of Reformed Political Youth Study Clubs). The orthodox Protestant *Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond* (GPV, in English: Reformed Political League), founded in 1948, had several local youth study groups between 1955 and 1964. It was not until the party ended up in the House of Representatives that a national association of these groups arose in 1964: the GPJC. Not much has been written about this youth wing either. From one of the archival documents,⁵⁴ it can be derived that the GPJC took the Christian political education as the basis for all its activities. The local associations operated relatively independently. Young members of the reformed church (liberated) were allowed to join such a local youth club. The GPJC had roughly 1,500

⁵³ Original statement in Dutch: "De J.O.V.D. moet niet de bijwagen van de V.V.D. worden; maar wij willen graag contact houden met de V.V.D. (mentor)".

⁵⁴ Landelijk Verband van GPJC's (1980). *De GPJC-organisatie. Handleiding voor het GPJC werk (5^e druk)*. Groningen.

members in 1975 and grew to more than 2,000 members in the 1980s (see Appendix 5.1a). The GPJC would eventually merge with RPJO into *PerspectieF, ChristenUnie-jongeren* (PpF, in English: Perspective, Christian Union-youth) in 2000.

4.3 Dutch party youth wings since 1975

Figure 4.1 shows that, after a period of relative stability, major changes again occurred in the landscape of Dutch party youth wings after 1975. Two developments seem to underlie these changes. Firstly, state subsidies for party youth wings were introduced in 1976. Secondly, as described in Chapter 3, the 60s and 70s were characterized by an increasing secularization, depillarization and individualization of society. These trends have continued since then. The new zeitgeist resulted in the establishment and parliamentary representation of new parties, which in turn contributed to the emergence of new Dutch party youth wings.

The introduction of state subsidies for party youth wings in 1976

State subsidies for party youth wings were introduced in the Netherlands in the late 1970s. After that, party youth wings became increasingly financially independent of their mother party. In his thesis on party finance regulations in the Netherlands and Germany, Dragstra (2008) describes how discussions on the public funding of political parties started in the sixties, when most parties suffered from declining membership figures and a serious drop in incomes. Direct subsidies were highly contested at that time. As Dragstra (2008) describes, a proposal for the public funding of youth wings, drafted by the national association for party youth wings NPJCR,⁵⁵ was first rejected in 1971 out of fear of setting a precedent for directly subsidizing parties. However, after the introduction of state subsidies for independent scientific bureaus in 1972 and party institutes for education in 1975, the political support for youth wing funding increased. In 1976, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (in Dutch: *Ministerie van Cultuur, Recreatie en Maatschappelijk Werk*) introduced a temporary subsidy scheme for party youth wings by way of an experiment.⁵⁶ The number of seats of the mother party in the House of Representatives determined the level of the subsidy. It ensured that the financial strength and related independence of youth wings increased significantly. This might partly explain the finding of Welp (1999) that the relationship between Dutch party youth wings and their mother parties has become looser in nature between 1945 and 1995.⁵⁷

The subsidy was introduced at a time when the idea prevailed that the gap between

⁵⁵ The association *Nederlandse Politieke Jongeren Contact Raad* (NPJCR, in English: Dutch Political Youth Contact Council) argued that public funding was justified because party youth wings contribute to the political education and possibilities for actual political participation of young people. The NPJCR also emphasized that, given that their young members had not many resources to their disposal, it was not possible to increase membership fees (Dragstra, 2008).

⁵⁶ Kamerstukken II 1975/76, 13 600 XVI, nr. 2, p. 26. Via:

https://repository.overheid.nl/frbr/sgd/19751976/0000196213/1/pdf/SGD_19751976_0003525.pdf.

⁵⁷ Welp's explanation for this finding is that the parties have lost their mass character and therefore do not perform the typical mass-party functions as well as they used to. The few parties that never really had formal ties with a youth wing can be characterized either as semi-mass parties or as liberal parties, with the latter implying that the party youth wing had to be able to function freely as an independent youth organization.

citizens and politics should be closed by, among other things, a firm commitment to political and citizenship education (in Dutch: *politieke vorming*). The aim was to fight ignorance and apathy and to create active democratic citizens (De Jong, 2014). This idea was reflected in the public funding of party-bound youth organizations, as is evident from the commentary of the Ministry on the temporary subsidy scheme that took effect in 1981 as the successor of the experimental subsidy scheme (Ministerie van CRM, 1981, p. 12):

The experimental subsidies for political youth organizations, which started in that year [1976], aimed to offer these organizations more opportunities to realize the political education of young people for a number of years. This policy was based on the idea that becoming involved in and gaining insight into politics in a broad sense through political training activities is not only desirable from our parliamentary democracy, but also from the fact that young people are offered the opportunity to form themselves into citizens who are able and willing to help shape society.⁵⁸

The temporary subsidy scheme, which would eventually apply from 1982 to 1990, aimed at the continuation of this policy by subsidizing activities related to the political education of young people. It is clear that the Ministry assumed that party youth wings contribute to the political education of young people and that they therefore need public funding. Not everyone endorsed this assumption. Dragstra (2008, pp. 86-87) describes that the *Raad voor de Jeugdvorming* (in English: Youth Education Council) concluded in 1979 in its evaluation of the first three years of subsidy that 1) the youth wings had failed to make a substantial contribution to the political education of young people within and outside of the political parties and 2) their activities were not fundamentally different from the educational activities of the political parties themselves, so that a separate subsidy scheme for youth wings would not be justified. This evaluation was apparently set aside at the time.

From 1982 onwards, party youth wings were eligible for the grant if they 1) had at least 1,000 members across at least five provinces, and 2) were acknowledged by a political group represented in the House of Representatives. Both the number of youth wing members and the number of seats of the mother party were included in the calculation of the subsidy amount. Moreover, archival records of the CDJA show that members over 25 years old were not included in the calculation of the amount of the subsidy, and that the amount of subsidy increased with every thousand extra members.⁵⁹ Party youth wings were obliged to formally register their members and had to have their programme of activities approved by the Minister on a yearly basis (Dragstra, 2008, pp. 87-88). The latter is somewhat remarkable, because substantive control of the government on education and training was generally out of the question at that time (De Jong, 2014). In addition to the standard grant, party youth

⁵⁸ In Dutch: “De in dat jaar [1976] aangevangen experimentele subsidiëring van politieke jongerenorganisaties beoogde gedurende een aantal jaren deze organisaties meer mogelijkheden te bieden politieke vorming van jongeren te realiseren. Aan dit beleid lag de gedachte ten grondslag dat het door middel van politieke vormingsactiviteiten betrokken raken bij en inzicht krijgen in de politiek in brede zin niet alleen gewenst is vanuit onze parlementaire democratie, maar ook vanuit het gegeven dat jongeren gelegenheid wordt geboden zich te vormen tot burgers die in staat en bereid zijn mede vorm te geven aan de samenleving”.

⁵⁹ CDJA, *Bijdrage politieke jongerenorganisaties t.b.v. evaluatie tijdelijke subsidieregeling, 1985*, n.p.

wings could submit applications for project grants, such as international exchanges.⁶⁰

As the funding of Dutch party youth wings was emphatically dependent on the development of training and education activities, it is very likely that the attention of the then existing youth wings for this task increased. After all, their budget largely depended on it. Habben Jansen (1994, p. 77) describes in the JOVD's anniversary book that the attention of the JOVD for political education indeed increased after the introduction of the subsidy in 1976, leading to the development of "course material (...) on, for example, liberalism, political movements, meeting techniques and public speaking" and to an increasing emphasis in the information and propaganda material on "that the JOVD is an organization where you can learn something".⁶¹ However, as the remainder of this chapter will show, the subsidy will in most cases not lead to the same level of occupation with political study activities as before the war.

In the two decades that followed, the subsidy scheme for party youth wings was adjusted several times (Dragstra, 2008). It got a permanent character in 1990, when the number of required members was scaled back to 750 and the grant was distributed by a neutral partnership of political youth organizations. The responsibility for the scheme moved from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport to the Ministry of the Interior in the second half of the 1990s. Shortly thereafter the objective of the subsidy changed from the funding of activities that promote the political education to the funding of activities that promote the political participation of young people (Dragstra, 2008, p. 92). In 1999, the first law on the public funding of parties came into effect.⁶² As of then, the indirect subsidies for formal independent and affiliated institutes of political parties, such as scientific institutes and party youth wings, were included as earmarked amounts and supplemented with a subsidy granted directly to parties represented in the Dutch Lower and Upper House.

A changing party youth wing landscape

From 1975 to the turn of the century, new party youth wings were born as a result of merging or newly established political parties. On the centre-right of the political spectrum, a decrease in support for confessional parties forced the KVP, CHU and ARP to merge into the *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (CDA, in English: Christian Democratic Appeal) in 1980. Following the example of their mother parties, the three affiliated Christian democratic youth wings, KVPJG, CHJO and ARJOS, started exploring a merger in 1977. They initially founded a federation but could not agree on the basic principles and political programme (Koole, 1992). While the KVPJG was willing to loosen the Christian principles, the ARJOS wanted to retain the evangelical foundation (Welp, 1999). It was not until four years later that the party youth wings dissolved themselves and officially merged into the *Christen-Democratisch Jongeren*

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ In Dutch: "Met name sinds in 1976 subsidie verleend werd, nam de aandacht voor vormingsactiviteiten toe. Cursusmateriaal werd ontwikkeld over bijvoorbeeld liberalisme, politieke stromingen, vergadertechniek en spreken in het openbaar. In het voorlichtings- en propagandamateriaal is steeds vaker te lezen dat de JOVD een organisatie is waar je iets kunt leren".

⁶² *Wet subsidiëring politieke partijen* (Wspp, in English: Law on State Subsidy to Political Parties).

Appèl (CDJA, in English: Christian Democratic Youth Appeal). From 1983 onwards, local units started developing. In contrast to the ARJOS, the CDJA became less focused on study activities and more active on a political level (Sap et al., 1991). The CDJA still exists today. The current aim of the CDJA is to provide political training and to critically think along with the Christian democracy in general and with the mother party specifically.⁶³

A new party that benefited from the social changes was *Democraten 66* (D66, in English: Democrats 66). In its early years, D66 did not have any affiliated organizations. As Koole (1992) describes, D66 was convinced that separate organizations would prevent the integration of young people and women into the main party, and its rule that all members are equal and have the same rights opposed the idea of categorical groups. Two other reasons for the delay in the appointment of a youth wing were 1) the open sympathy of the JOVD for D66 and 2) the young character of the party itself.⁶⁴ After much deliberation, D66 founded the *Jongeren Aktiverings Centrum* (JoAc, in English: Youth Activation Centre) in 1980, mostly driven by the introduction of the government subsidy for party youth wings (Welp, 1999). The JoAc fell directly under the supervision of the party's executive board. A group of young members kept on fighting for the establishment of an independent youth wing that would still be affiliated with D66 but would also have more room for manoeuvre than the JoAc. This would also make the youth initiative eligible for the government subsidy for party youth wings. Their efforts resulted in the establishment of the *Jonge Democraten* (JD, in English: Young Democrats) as a "freethinking-democratic youth organization" in 1984 (Lozar et al., 2004, p. 13). Like the JOVD, the JD strives to be an independent organization that acts as thorn in the side of the mother party. However, it does emphasize its affiliation with D66. It is exemplary that the current formal aim of the youth wing is to set up political education activities that are in line with the aims of D66.⁶⁵

Another party youth wing that was founded in the year 1984 is the *Reformatorische Politieke Jongeren Organisatie* (RPJO, in English: Reformatory Political Youth Organization) of the minor Protestant *Reformatorische Politieke Federatie* (RPF, in English: Reformatory Political Federation). The mother party kept a grip on the preparations in the years preceding the foundation, as it wanted to prevent the founding of an uncontrollable youth wing (Van Baardewijk, 1994). Unlike the other newly established party youth wings, the primary goal of the RPJO was the (Reformatory) political education of young people. In order to achieve that goal, it laid great emphasis on the work of the local branches. The first few years were difficult, as evidenced by a relatively small membership base and a high turnover of members.⁶⁶ At the end of the 1980s, the organization was further expanded and the automatic link between membership of the RPF and the youth wing was released. In its heydays in 1994, the RPJO had over 1,500 members (Van Baardewijk, 1994). It eventually merged with the GPJC in PpF.

Party youth wings also emerged on the left side of the political spectrum. The *PSP*-

⁶³ CDJA, *Statuten Christen-Democratisch Jongeren Appèl (onofficiële versie)*, 2019, p. 3 (art. 1.1.3).

⁶⁴ JD, *DEMO*, 2017, 34(1), 'Interview met oprichter Erwin Nypels', p. 20.

⁶⁵ JD, *Statuten & Huishoudelijk Reglement Jonge Democraten*, 2016, p. 4 (art. 2.1).

⁶⁶ RPJO, *Jaarverslag Vereniging RPJO over Anno Domini 1989*, p. 2.

Jongerengroepen (PSP-jg, in English: PSP-Youth Groups) came into existence in 1976. As the party had already existed for several decades, the foundation of the PSP-jg seems to be the direct result of the introduction of the state subsidy for youth wings. Initially, the PSP-jg was the youth wing of the *Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij* (PSP, in English: Pacifist Socialist Party). After a group of unsatisfied party members split off and formed a new party,⁶⁷ the youth wing started to relate to both parties.⁶⁸ It therefore changed its name to *Pacifistisch Socialistische Jongerengroepen* (PSJG, in English: Pacifist Socialist Youth Groups) in 1986.⁶⁹ The PSJG focused on radical extra-parliamentary action. It was closely connected to social movements, such as those of the squatters, emancipation and anti-militarism. The youth wing characterized its own organization as discontinuous, loosely structured and informal.⁷⁰ Membership figures are largely unknown, but the received subsidy indicates that the number of members must have been over 1,000. The size of the membership base was 1,150 in 1987 (see Appendix 5.1a).

In 1980, the *PPR-Jongeren* (PPRjo, in English: PPR-Youth) was founded as the youth wing of the small left-wing *Politieke Partij Radikalen* (PPR, in English: Political Party of Radicals). This progressive Christian party had been around since 1968. Again, the introduction of the youth wing thus seems to have been the result of the introduction of the state subsidy for youth wings in 1976, although the bottom-up attempt by a number of young party members probably also played a role.⁷¹ The foundation of the PPRjo was preceded by heated discussions. Some members of the mother party were of the opinion that the PPR itself should remain a young party, so that a separate youth wing was unnecessary. The youth wing aimed at politically educating young people and encouraging them to think about societal and political issues and take action. Another central aim was to represent youth interests within the PPR.⁷² The PPRjo had on average 800 members in the 1980s (see Appendix 5.1a).

Together with two other small left parties, the PSP and PPR eventually merged into political party *GroenLinks* (GL, in English: GreenLeft) in 1990, after which it was a given that the two youth wings would develop in the same direction. The PSJG and PPRjo did so by founding *DWARS* (in English: Contrary) in 1991. Major differences existed between these two youth wings.⁷³ The PSJG, youth wing of the PSP, functioned independently, had an anarchist character and was engaged in political action and demonstrations. The youth wing of the PPR on the other hand focused more on the mother party and on parliamentary politics. This contradiction has dominated the youth wing for a long time. In its first decade, when the PSJG dominated the membership base, the youth wing had an activist character and the relationship with GL started to disintegrate. The relationship was restored in the beginning of the 21st century when DWARS started to become more organized. DWARS increasingly started to concern itself with the mother party and became more like the original PPRjo. DWARS still

⁶⁷ *Partij voor Socialisme en Ontwapening* (PSO, in English: Party for Socialism and Disarmament).

⁶⁸ PSJG, *Extra editie Rampspoed*, 'Nieuwsbrief PSJG', 12 mei 1986.

⁶⁹ Throughout this thesis, I will use the abbreviation PSJG for this party youth wing.

⁷⁰ PSJG, *Jaarprogramma PSP-Jongeren*, 1984, p. 2.

⁷¹ PPRjo, *Jonge Radikalenkrant*, 1988, no. 3, p. 7.

⁷² PPRjo, *PPR Jongeren Statuut*, 1982 (art. 5), n.p.

⁷³ DWARS. (n.d.). *Geschiedenis*. <https://dwars.org/geschiedenis/>.

exists today. Its current statutory objective is to engage in green and left-wing politics for and by young people.⁷⁴

Other noteworthy changes in this period were the name change of the FJG into *Jonge Socialisten* (JS, in English: Young Socialists) in 1977 and the organizational changes of the LVSGS. It was not until the second half of the 1980s that the LVSGS really started flourishing as an assertive youth organization. The youth wing started receiving state subsidy, female membership got accepted and the first 'SGP Youth Day' was organized, which led to an enormous growth in the popularity of the youth organization (De Groot & Kok, 2009). In 1999, the LVSGS presented its first political programme. As the name did not suit the organizations' activities anymore, it was changed to *SGP-jongeren* (SPGJ, in English: SGP-youth) in 2000.⁷⁵

A new century: the results of increasing fragmentation

In the decades that followed, new party youth wings continued to emerge in the Netherlands. The aforementioned social and political developments kept on contributing to a changing party landscape. An example is the emergence of the *ChristenUnie* (CU, in English: Christian Union) in 2000 because of the merger of the GPV and the RPF. The two corresponding youth wings went on together as PpF. While the GPV and the RPF at first decided to become a union with two separate organizations, the two party youth wings wanted to set an example for their mother parties and merged into one organization.⁷⁶ The aim of PpF encompasses several aspects, such as convincing young people of the value of the Christian political alternative, adopting a critical stance towards actual social issues and the mother party, and the political engagement, education and socialization of the members.⁷⁷

Another party youth wing that emerged at the start of the new century is *ROOD, Jong in de SP* (ROOD, in English: Red, Young in the SP). Although its mother party, the *Socialistische Partij* (SP, in English: Socialist Party), had known some action groups for young people, it was not until 1999 that the party congress decided upon the establishment of a youth wing.⁷⁸ From 1999 to 2003, a working group for young people existed, called *ROOD, Jongereninitiatief in de SP* (in English: Red, Youth initiative in the SP). A group of young SP members took action to set up a real political youth organization within the party organization. ROOD was eventually founded in 2003 as an inherent part of the mother party, although it is formally organized independently like the other youth wings. Young SP members are automatically a member of ROOD. ROOD has the intention to involve young people in the realization of a socialist society in the Netherlands, in which human dignity, equality for all people and solidarity between people actually take shape. It also aims to promote the mother party among young people and to create a place for young people who feel attracted to the principles of the SP and want

⁷⁴ DWARS, *Akte van statutenwijziging DWARS*, 2016, p. 3 (art. 3.1).

⁷⁵ Already in the mid-late 1980s, the youth wing used the name 'SGP youth organization' as subtitle or second name. In the remainder of this thesis, the abbreviation LVSGS/SGPJ is therefore used for the 1980s.

⁷⁶ ChristenUnie. (n.d.). *De geschiedenis van een beginselpartij*. <https://www.christenunie.nl/page/85>.

⁷⁷ PpF, *Statuten Perspectief, ChristenUnie-jongeren*, 2016, n.p. (art. 5).

⁷⁸ Parliamentary Documentation Centre. (n.d.). *Rood, Jong in de SP (ROOD)*. Via https://www.parlement.com/id/vi6pizsw8qyt/rood_jong_in_de_sp_rood.

to act accordingly.⁷⁹ Although the events fall outside the study period, it is worth noting that a conflict between the youth wing and the mother party resulted in the decision of the party to officially sever ties with ROOD as its youth wing in the summer of 2021 (Korteweg, 2021). The party suspected the youth wing of misgovernment, radicalization and of being a breeding ground for Communist ideas and reforms. The direct reason for the break was the occurrence of double memberships within the youth wing, which were prohibited by the mother party. The committee that investigated the matter concluded that the two organizations grew apart and advised the party to set up a youth wing as a separate entity *within* the SP instead of as an external association.⁸⁰

The five other new party youth wings that appeared in the period of 2000 to 2020 are the result of new political parties that predominantly represent partial interests. One is the *Jonge Fortuynisten* (JF, in English: Young Fortuynisten), a relatively unknown and small party youth wing that existed for a short period as the youth wing of the right-wing populist *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF, in English: List Pim Fortuyn). The other party youth wings founded during this period still exist today. *PINK!* (in English: Heifer!), for instance, was founded in 2006 as the youth wing of the radical green *Partij voor de Dieren* (PvdD, in English: Party for the Animals). This happened right after the mother party won two seats in the House of Representatives. *PINK!* has set the objective of getting young people involved in the realization of the goals of the mother party.⁸¹

The youth movement *OPPOSITIE* (OPP, in English: Opposition) was founded in October 2015 by the party of immigrants *DENK* (in English: Think). As described on the youth wing's website, *OPPOSITIE* aims to bridge the gap between young people and politics and to critically follow politicians.⁸² They describe their target group as Dutch young people between 15 and 31 years old who want to commit themselves to fight against the shift to right-wing politics and against the hardening and brutalization of society. The political ideals are unclear as these are not described on the youth wing's website and *OPPOSITIE* refused to cooperate in this research.

Another relatively new party youth wing is the youth wing of the new radical right-wing populist party *Forum Voor Democratie* (FVD, in English: Forum for Democracy). After an election results of two seats in 2017, the party founded the *Jongerenorganisatie Forum Voor Democratie* (JFVD, in English: Youth Organization Forum for Democracy). The youth wing was immediately successful. The party claims that the JFVD amassed 1,000 members within the first six hours of their existence.⁸³ The stated aim of the JFVD is to educate young people on the pursuit of a more democratic country and the attempt to break up the so-called party cartel. It also wants to increase the political participation of young people and organize

⁷⁹ ROOD, *Statuten ROOD*, 2003, p. 2 (art. 2.1).

⁸⁰ SP, Onderzoekscommissie ROOD / commissie "van goede diensten" (2021). Onderzoeksverslag commissie ROOD, p. 18-19.

⁸¹ *PINK!*, *Statuten PINK!*, 2016, p. 1-2 (art. 2.1).

⁸² *OPPOSITIE*. (n.d.). *Welkom bij OPPOSITIE!* <http://jboppositie.nl/>.

⁸³ FVD. (2017, March 30). *Jongerenorganisatie FVD (JFVD) heeft binnen zes uur na oprichting al ruim 1.000 leden*. <https://forumvoordemocratie.nl/actueel/jfvd-binnen-6-uur-1000-leden>.

educational activities in accordance with the views of the mother party.⁸⁴

The youngest party youth wing in the Netherlands is the youth wing of the new anti-racist political party *Bij1* (in English: Together). The party won a seat in the House of Representatives in the elections of 2021. Its party youth wing, *RADICAAL* (in English: Radical), was founded in the beginning of 2018, but is still in its infancy in terms of organizational development. The aim of the youth wing is to fight for radical equality, decolonization and economic justice.⁸⁵ The number of members is unknown.

Party youth wing funding regulation today

The legal framework of party youth wings also underwent small changes in the last two decades. Since 2013, the Dutch Political parties funding Act (Wfpp) has prescribed that each political party that is represented in the Dutch parliament can assign one party youth wing as its affiliated organization for which it can receive funding. In order to do so, the law explicitly requires that the political youth organization 1) is an association that exclusively or mainly performs activities to promote the political participation of young people; 2) has at least one hundred members, who are not younger than 14 and not older than 27 years old, and who pay a membership fee of at least five euros per year; 3) has a membership base that consists of at least two-thirds of members with these characteristics; and 4) officially agrees with the formal affiliation to the mother party in writing (Wfpp, art. 3.2).

The allocation of youth wing funding nowadays still depends on 1) the number of seats of the mother party in parliament and 2) the number of members of the youth wing (Wfpp, art.8.c). The Act prescribes that the youth wing directly receives the subsidy (Wfpp, art. 8.a). In other words, this subsidy cannot be transferred to the party itself or to other institutions affiliated with the party. The law does not make mention of dual memberships, i.e. people that are a member of both the political party and the party youth wing. This implies that in case of dual membership, the party receives a subsidy for both the party member and the youth wing member, even though this concerns the same person. It is thus a profitable type of membership for political parties.

We can conclude that memberships are still crucial for the financing of Dutch political parties and their youth wings, which has a motivating effect on the mobilization function of these organizations but also leads to a dependency on the formal membership model, as becomes clear from the interview with the CDJA's chair:

Becoming a member somewhere, that is out of date. (...) Party youth wings still have that structure. I would much rather work with sympathizers or something, people who say 'look, you know, we find it challenging, the Christian Democracy, but we also recognize beautiful aspects of liberalism'. (...) [but] I cannot work with sympathizers because then I will no longer receive a

⁸⁴ JFVD, *Statuten Jongeren Form Voor Democratie*, 2017, n.p. (art. 2).

⁸⁵ RADICAAL. (n.d.). *Welkom bij de meest radicale politieke jongerenorganisatie!* <https://www.radicaal.bij1.org/>.

subsidy. If you are going to promote or invoke that or offer that possibility, you will kill yourself because then you will not get any money.⁸⁶

This excerpt also demonstrates the importance of this subsidy for the financial health of the party youth wings. Indeed, state subsidies by far exceed other sources of income of youth wings.⁸⁷

The public funding of party youth wings in the Netherlands is not likely to disappear in the near future. Recently, the final report of the Evaluation and Advisory Committee on the Political parties funding Act was published (Commissie Veling, 2018). Some of its recommendations focus on the financing of party youth wings. The committee recognizes the importance of the tasks of these organizations and states that these are in line with the tasks of political parties. It emphasizes the broad support of political parties for the current funding of party youth wings and recommends maintaining the current system of earmarking part of the party subsidy for youth wings. The committee also recommends that the allocation criteria of the party youth wing subsidy are adjusted to those for the party subsidy, i.e. with a basic amount, an amount per parliamentary seat and a fixed amount per member. Moreover, the committee suggests removing the requirement that a party youth wing needs to have at least one hundred members in order to be eligible for subsidy. At the time of writing, it is not yet clear in what way these recommendations will be incorporated in a legislative change.

4.4 Concluding notes

This is the first time that a brief history of party youth wings in the Netherlands is presented. Over the last 130 years, the Dutch party youth wing landscape has constantly changed. Youth wings emerged, merged, reorganized, disappeared or simply kept on existing. While the first party youth wing was already established in 1888, youth wings mostly emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. Other 'waves' of new party youth wings occurred right after the war, around the 1980s and in the new century. The Dutch party system is known for its openness and inclusiveness; it allows for the relatively easy entry of new political parties (Krouwel & Lucardie, 2008). This might explain the continuous rise of party youth wings since 1888. In case of mergers between political parties, the affiliated youth wings usually follow the example. In rare cases, it is the other way around: the youth wing is the driving force behind party change, such as in the case of the BJL. Very occasionally, a party youth wing decides to continue as an independent youth organization after the mother party merges with another party, although history shows that this is often unsuccessful.

This chapter has shown that creating and upholding an organizational tie with a party

⁸⁶ In Dutch: "Lid worden ergens, dat is niet echt meer van deze tijd. (...) PJO's hebben die structuur nog wel. Ik zou veel liever willen werken met sympathisanten ofzo, mensen die zeggen: kijk weetje, we vinden het uitdagend, de Christendemocratie, maar we zien ook mooie aspecten uit het liberalisme. (...) Ik kan niet met sympathisanten gaan werken want dan krijg ik geen subsidie meer. Als je dat gaat bevorderen, oproepen of die mogelijkheid biedt, dan geef je jezelf de doodsteek want dan krijg je geen geld".

⁸⁷ An analysis of the financial accounts of party youth wings in the years 2012-2017 shows that the average share of membership dues was around 16% and that of state subsidies was around 60% of the total incomes of party youth wings. The remaining part often consisted of a subsidy from the party or income from other sources.

youth wing is a popular and traditional strategy of Dutch parties for connecting with young people. The majority of the parliamentary parties – both old and new – has been in the possession of a youth wing. They arise either through top-down efforts from the party leadership or through bottom-up efforts from party members. This confirms the theoretical distinction made in section 2.1 between the perspective of intra-party politics, which emphasizes party sub-organizations as bottom-up initiatives of like-minded party members, and the perspective of party linkage, which emphasizes party sub-organizations as a deliberate strategy of political party elites. Whenever parties do not have a youth wing, this often logically results from their party organizations. For instance, the radical right-wing populist *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV, in English: The Freedom Party) has no members, and *50PLUS* (in English: the Party for the Elderly) has no interest in a young constituency. Although youth wings are often seen as a typical exponent of the pillarized mass party (Welp, 1999), their appearance thus goes beyond this particular period and party type. Habben Jansen (1994, p. 14) stresses aptly in his historical overview of the JOVD: “Every self-respecting party had a youth organization and that is actually true up until today”.⁸⁸ The public subsidy has probably been an important driver of this since its introduction in 1976. As described, the emergence of various youth wings can be linked to this subsidy and the subsidy criteria and conditions led to the promotion of certain functions of party youth wings. When studying the functioning of party youth wings over time, it is thus important to keep this context of public funding in mind.

It can also be concluded from the historical overview that roughly three different types of Dutch party youth wings seem to have existed over time: education-oriented, activist-oriented and parliamentary-oriented youth wings. Before WWII, the first type seemed to dominate. Party youth wings such as the VDJO, CHJG, ARJA and LVSGS/SGPJ explicitly presented themselves as study associations. After the war, party youth wings developed more and more as political actors. Youth wings like the ANJV, PSJG, ROOD, and to a lesser extent the PPRjo and JS, manifested an activist character and displayed a preference for extra-parliamentary action. Other youth wings focused on the parliamentary arena and promoted themselves as critics of their mother party, such as the CDJA, JD, JOVD and JS. Only the religious youth wings, like the GPJC, RPJO and SGPJ, seem to have kept themselves out of the political arena and remained almost exclusively education-oriented until the end of the 20th century. Surely, this typification is not black and white; most party youth wings demonstrated different aspects of all three types. The question is to what extent we see this reflected in an empirical assessment of the functional performance of party youth wings in both the mid-late 1980s and 2010s.

⁸⁸ In Dutch: “Iedere zichzelf respecterende partij had een jongerenorganisatie en dat geldt eigenlijk tot op de dag van vandaag”.