



THE COMPOSITION OF STATE COMMITTEES AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVENESS

A study of Dutch state committees between 1994 and 2019

Author: L.E. Benthin

Student number: 1875523

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Table of contents

Acknowledgement.....	2
1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Representation in Advisory Committees.....	3
1.2 Goal and Research Question.....	4
1.3 Relevance.....	5
1.4 What to expect?.....	7
2. State committees & Representativeness.....	8
2.1 State committees.....	8
2.2 Representation: active and passive.....	11
2.3 Representative bureaucracy.....	13
2.4 Passive representation in state committees.....	15
3. Research Design & Methods.....	16
3.1 Research Design.....	16
3.2 Research methods.....	17
3.3 Validity and reliability.....	20
4. Results.....	21
4.1 General Information.....	21
4.2 Passive characteristics.....	23
5. Analysis.....	28
5.1 Gender.....	28
5.2 Age.....	29
5.3 Political affiliation.....	30
5.4 Academic titles.....	31
6. Conclusion & Discussion.....	32
6.1 Conclusion.....	32
6.2 Discussion.....	33
6.3 Future research.....	34
7. Reference list.....	35

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1. Introduction

1.1 Representation in Advisory Committees

The representativeness of advisory committees has been a subject of many debates and studies throughout the years. For example, the *Algemene Rekenkamer*, an independent governmental organisation, concluded in a report from 2019 that the number of women in permanent advisory committees stagnated. Minister Ollongren (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations) responded to this research by stating that she wanted to stimulate the number of women in public administration. The end goal is reaching a percentage between 40 and 60 percent (Kammer, 2019). In the last two decades plenty of politicians have likewise criticised the composition of advisory committees and its implications for representation. Alexander Pechtold (Minister of Administrative Renewal in 2005-2006) uttered his critique and anger regarding the composition of advisory committees in an interview with *De Volkskrant* (2005). His critique focused on the political affiliation of the members of these committees. *“When I look closely, I see a creepy phenomenon. The composition represents exactly the four, or five big political parties.”* Pechtold’s critique was a response to the results of a study on ad hoc-advisory committees (hereafter called ad hoc-committees) from the political party GroenLinks. This study concluded that most of the presidents of these committees (88%) have a clear political affiliation (Duyvendak et al., 2005). This conclusion was based on the study of a selection of 90 ad hoc-committees, installed between 1994 and 2004. Wijnand Duyvendak, a GroenLinks politician and initiator of the study, criticised the homogenous composition of advisory committees. A small group of people populated the ad hoc-committees and were mostly men from the four biggest political parties (Duyvendak et al., 2005). Duyvendak explained that political accountability and legitimacy was affected by the use of ad hoc-committees. These committees could not be held accountable, but political parties had influence on their composition.

In 2006, Geveke et al. presented their study on ad hoc-committees. In this study they looked at the level of independence of the ad hoc-committees and researched the possibility of the existence of a shadow power. In their conclusions they noted that the committees were independent and that the level of political influence could not be determined. In their study they did not find a shadow power and most of the chairmen of the committees were no political heavy weights (2006). This conclusion was in contrast with the findings of Duyvendak et al., but still there is much uncertain

about the existence of an old boys' network. This is primarily a result of the lack of data (Schulz et al., 2006).

Because of these critiques and studies it is interesting to study the composition of ad hoc-committees in a longer period and the implications on their level of representation. In contrast to the research of Duyvendak et al. and Geveke et al., this research focused on a special kind of ad hoc-committee: state committees. More will be clarified about the different kinds of advisory committees somewhat further in this thesis. For now, however, it needs to be said that state committees are ad hoc-committees of a different kind. Like general ad hoc-committees, state committees focus on a specific subject, but the difference is the weight of the research subjects. Hoekstra (2005) wrote that state committees study fundamental issues where there isn't a consensus. In addition, the findings of state committees have often led to changes to the constitution in the past.

1.2 Goal and Research Question

The goal of this research is to find out what the composition of state committees was in the period between 1994 and 2019 and what the implications of this are for the level of representation in those committees.

The research question of this thesis is as follows:

What is the composition of state committees in the period between 1994 and 2019, and what implications do the results have for the level of representation of these committees?

To reach the goal and answer the research question, this study is a combination of a descriptive research design and explanatory research design. Through data-collection via archival research a description has been made of five state committees in the period between 1994 and 2019. The variables that were used for constructing the description are based on passive characteristics of the members of state committees and general information, like for instance the number of state committees or the number of members. More on the research design and the used method can be found in chapter 3. On the basis of the results the analysis will show what kind of implications these results have for the level of representation of the state committees.

1.3 Relevance

1.3.1 Societal relevance

What kind of relevance does a study to the composition of state committees have? First of all, it is interesting looking from an institutional point of view. Instructions regarding the composition of advisory committees are recorded in the law *Kaderwet Adviescolleges*. This law states that the government should strive for representative compositions of advisory committees and should reflect Dutch society. An example is the number of women (Wet BWBR0008159, 1996). It is therefore interesting to know, from an institutional perspective, if the government followed its own laws in the research period.

Second of all, it is interesting to get some insight into the level of representation of the composition of state committees. These committees research fundamental issues and the subjects supposedly have a bigger weight compared with general ad hoc-committees (Hoekstra, 2005). Kerkhoff & Martina (2015) agree with that view. Their research points out that state committees have played a role in every aspect of policy-making in the period between 1814 and 1970 (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015). If these state committees had so much influence and were so important for Dutch democracy, who were those members? This research strives to give more insight into the composition of these committees and the implications it has for the level of representation. If Dutch citizens cannot appoint the members of these committees, the level of representation becomes even more important. More diversity in these state committees could lead to a more balanced policy, because a wider spectrum of ideas, experience, interests and opinions are represented. Duyvendak (2005) emphasised the lack of accountability for these committees compared with the level of influence they had on the policy-making process. It is therefore interesting for society and politicians to know what the composition of these state committees were and form their own opinions. Kerkhoff & Martina (2015) state that a broader discussion about advisory committees looks hindered because of the lack of empirical data. The results of this thesis could be used to evaluate the role of state committees and their compositions, or advisory committees in general.

1.3.2 Scientific relevance

After their research, Kerkhoff and Martina gave a couple of suggestions about the composition of state committees, in light of their own study. “*Who were those members of these state committees? What was their political affiliation, level of education, socio-economic background, age or sex?*” (2015, p.97). As is stated earlier, there was much critique regarding the composition of advisory committees and their level of representation. Unfortunately, there were different visions on the composition of ad hoc-committees and various studies gave different conclusions, based on the difference between research populations and definitions. The research of Duyvendak et al. (2005) focused on the composition of ad hoc-committees from a selection of 90 committees. This number differed immensely from the study of Geveke et al. (2006), which had a research population of 364 committees. The research of the *Algemene Rekenkamer* (2019) focused on the composition of a whole other type of advisory committee: permanent advisory committees. Clearly, there is still no clear view on this topic and more research is needed on the composition of advisory committees and its implications. This is especially the case when it comes to research on state committees, which have not been studied much by researchers (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015). This thesis strives to give more empirical data regarding advisory committees in general and state committees in particular. In addition, this thesis gives more insight into the concepts of state committees, representation and the combination of those two in the theory of representative bureaucracy. Not much is known about the composition of state committees and their level of representation. Still it remains important to add knowledge and understanding about state committees and their representational character. Other studies, somewhat similar to this thesis, have proven to be an addition to the field of research regarding state committees. Like the historical study of Homminga of state committees between 1814 and 1880 and her research on the possible existence of an old boys’ network (2019). My results and analysis could give more motivation to study other advisory committees in general and state committees in particular and research their compositions and the possible implications for the level of representation. This could give more insight into these concepts and their theoretic relevance in (Dutch) democracy.

The studies of both Duyvendak et al. (2005) and Geveke et al. (2006), focused on the presidents of the advisory committees, not their general members. Even though the research population of Geveke et al. was larger compared with the research population of Duyvendak et al., you still cannot say much about the composition of advisory committees regarding political bias or political

influence using that method. The method used in this thesis focused on all the members and not only the presidents. Naturally, a chairman has much influence in the way a state committee functions, but he or she is surrounded by a number of members who also constitute the committee and influence its functioning. To be clear, this study focuses on composition and representation, not political bias or influence. This study could serve as an example for future research on how to study the composition of advisory committees and its implication for the level of representation.

1.4 What to expect?

This thesis starts with the theoretical exploration of the concepts *state committees* and *representation* (chapter 2). After the exploration of these individual concepts, the theory of *representative bureaucracy* will be introduced. This theory will be used in this thesis for interpreting the descriptive results of the study. It forms the basis of the analysis on the implications of the results for the level of representation of the state committees. This theory focuses on the representativeness of bureaucrats in government bureaucracy, not members of state committees, but its view on passive representation is the main reason for its selection for this study.

In the next chapter (chapter 3) a description will be given about the research design and the research method. After that the results of the research will be presented, laying out the overall findings and findings per state committee. These results will be analysed in the following chapter (chapter 4). What do these results implicate regarding the level of representation of the studied state committees? After the analysis, everything will be summarised into a conclusion in chapter 5. In the same chapter a reflection on research will be given, its development and limitations and suggestions for further research.

2. State committees & Representativeness

2.1 State committees

2.1.1 Advisory committees: what are the differences?

Van Poelje (1967) defined advisory committees as small groups of people with a specific task of an advisory or regulating nature. This broad definition has been made more concrete by Schulz et al. (2006, p. 21): “*a (more or less) extensive group of people which comes mostly from outside of the public bureaucracy and which is given the assignment to add knowledge and know-how on a specific field of policy, on how to tackle issues (in the broadest sense) in the public administration by doing research, give advice, or mediate between interest groups, or stimulate the implementation of specific policies.*”

Advisory committees exist on all levels of government (local, provincial, national), and in many forms (Schulz et al., 2006). The number of committees on the national level increased from 1945 till the 1970's (Hoekstra, 2005). In 1977 the *Wetenschappelijke Raad voor Regeringsbeleid* (itself an advisory committee) noted that there were 368 permanent advisory committees. Between 1995 and 2005, 365 temporary advisory committees were constructed (WRR, 1977). To limit the number of advisory committees, the law *Kaderwet Adviescolleges* was introduced in 1996. A law which regulated the process of constructing advisory committees (Duyvendak, 2005). The result was a decrease of permanent advisory committees to a number of 26 (Schulz et al., 2006).

The *Kaderwet Adviescolleges* classifies three kinds of advisory committees (Wet BWBR0008159, 1996):

1. Permanent advisory committees/organizations are constructed by law and have no time limit.
2. Temporary advisory committees are constructed for four years, which can be prolonged by another two years.
3. An one-off advisory committee (ad hoc-committee) about a specific issue is constructed by a royal decree or by a ministerial arrangement for as long as the advisory procedure takes place.

2.1.2 What is a state committee?

State committees were created by King Willem I to keep control over state affairs (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015). In that time, the power of the monarch became more restricted. Most of the installations of state committees between 1814 and 1850 came directly from the King (Kerkhoff, 2019). When the wish for a Dutch constitution grew, state committees were created to coordinate the creation of this constitution (Den Hoed, 1995; Schulz, 2010). A famous example is the constitutional committee of J.R. Thorbecke, who laid the foundation of the Dutch constitution in 1848 after political struggles with King Willem II (Leeuwen, 2008). Kerkhoff (2019) states that between 1890 and 1930 there is an interesting peak regarding the number of state committees. He suggests that it could be because of the growth of the Dutch state and the role of that state, which became more active because of the rise of the number of social issues (Kerkhoff, 2019). The number of state committees declined after 1930. There is no clear answer for this development, but Kerkhoff states that it is remarkable, because of the reconstructions after the Second World War and the development of the welfare state (2019).

The biggest difference between an ordinary ad hoc-committee and a state committees seems to be the way in which the latter one is constructed. Still there is much uncertainty. Ordinary ad hoc-committees are constructed by a ministerial arrangement. That means that one or a couple of ministers/state secretaries are able to construct an ad hoc-committee (Van der Burg, 1975). Hoekstra defined state committees as “*ad hoc-committees which are installed by royal decree*” (2005, p.38), not by one or a couple of ministers/state secretaries. Of course there are exceptions to the rule, like state committee-Delprat, which was constructed by law or state committee- De Roo (which was constructed by royal decree after parliamentary pressure (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015). Because of the exceptions, it is still pretty unclear when an ad hoc-committee is called a state committee. Kerkhoff (2019) states that state committees have no clear formal judicial definition. He believes that it may be the case that ad hoc-committees are called state committees when the government wants to research complex or important societal issues. In addition, he states, the adjective ‘*state*’ might give these committees extra weight and status.

2.1.3 Composition of state committees

Because the research of this thesis focuses on the composition of state committees, it is interesting to know what is already known about the composition of committees in general and state committees in particular. Most research is focused on general advisory committees. Duyvendak, for instance, presented many arguments against the representativeness and democratic legitimacy of ad hoc-committees (2005). The power of the biggest parties is solidified by the members in these committees (mostly men). They suggest it is an old boys' network. His study concluded that most of the presidents of these committees (88%) have a clear political affiliation (Duyvendak, 2005).

This vision of an old boys' network is strengthened by a recent study, done by the *Algemene Rekenkamer* on 17 permanent advisory committees. The number of women in these committees stagnated around the 38%, in the period between 2010 and 2019. The results showed something else about the composition of these committees. The percentage of members with the background of an ethnic or cultural minority decreased from 10% to 4% in the period between 2010 and 2016 (2019). According to the *Algemene Rekenkamer* (2019) the percentage should be 50% for the number of women and around the 10% for the number of people with the background of an ethnic or cultural minority. In 2006, Geveke et al. presented their study on ad hoc-committees. They noticed in an earlier study (Den Boer et al., 2002) that there was a pattern for dealing with complex issues in Dutch politics: creating a consensus with the use of ad hoc-committees. The composition of these committees would include (ex) politicians, (ex) administrators, scientists, businessmen, or high-ranking civil servants (Den Boer et al., 2002). Geveke et al., also noticed a consensus on the composition of these committees and that consensus was that they too often included the same people. Because of earlier findings, like the study of Duyvendak et al., they wanted to give some insight into the methods and compositions of ad hoc-committees. This study included 364 committees, installed between 1995 and 2005. Regarding to the composition of these committees, they did not find convincing evidence that political affiliation is more important than experience in the selection of presidents. The study also states that the studied group of people that populated the committees was vast and refreshed itself.

These studies give some insight into the composition and representativeness of several kinds of advisory committees, but does it also apply for state committees? The fact is that there is little research done on state committees in general. In their research into state committees, Kerkhoff and

Martina point out that the size of state committees could vary between 3 and 92 members. The average number was between 3 and 7 members. This information is in itself not noteworthy, but the follow-up question would be: who were those members? Kerkhoff and Martina state that these members originated most of the times from outside of the civil service, like (ex-) politicians, ex-administrators, or professors and they were from a wealthy lineage or background. This meant that those members had a big career in public administration or politics, and had high positions in these fields (2015). Kerkhoff and Martina state that a lot of members of state committees could be found in other (political or administrative) positions (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015). Kerkhoff and Martina explain, that it was, and still is, “*a men’s world*” (2015, p.86). They could not say something significant or definitive however about the existence of an old boys’ network or favouritism. In her research on state committees between 1814 and 1880, Homminga found some indicators of the existence of an old boys’ network, like age, gender and educational background. Still she could, like Kerkhoff & Martina, not say something definitive about the phenomenon (2019). In the same study she found that in the researched period, the state committees became more open, regarding the occupation of members or political conviction.

2.2 Representation: active and passive

One of the goals of this thesis is to analyse the descriptive results of the composition of the state committees, in order to form a vision on possible implications on the level of representation. To do this, there should be a clear view about what representation is.

A lot has been written about representation and to summarise it all would take a book in itself. Alba and Foner (2009) state about representation: “*[Finally the] legitimacy of a political system, especially a democratic one, ultimately depends on the ability to give representation to different groups in the population.*” Frissen and Schulz also focus on the connection between legitimacy and representation (2017). They embrace the idea of Boogers (2012) that a pluriform composition of elected bodies optimize the representation of citizens in society. They point out that legitimacy is linked with the level of representation of ideas. Do citizens feel like they are represented by the government or parliamentary representation (2017)?

One of the most influential thinkers on the concept of representation is Hannah Pitkin. Pitkin states that representation is “*acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them*” (1967, p.209). She discussed four analytical dimensions of representation. Peters et al. describe

these dimensions as follows (2015, p.4-5): “*Formalistically (pertaining to the formal status of representatives and the way how they are chosen, e.g. in elections), descriptively (with an eye to the extent to which representatives are like those represented), symbolically (asking about the degree of acceptance that representatives enjoy in their constituencies), and substantively (focusing on the activities of representatives and the extent to which they serve the interests of those represented).*” These dimensions of representation could be divided into two categories: *acting for* and *standing for* (1967). The first one is a theoretical and legal way of representing the ones you represent, like the choices you make or what you do as an official elected representative. It is focused on the institutional form of representation. The second one is a passive notion, a symbolic way of representing. Michael Saward called the second *aesthetic representation* (2010): “*the presentation of someone as symbolically representative of a valued (or demonized) trait of some group, or those who present themselves as symbolic representatives of some set of interests*” (2010, p.12). Saward acknowledges the value of Pitkin’s work, especially for what he calls the central aspect of political representation, “*the active making of symbols or images of what is to be represented*” (2010, p.15).

For Pitkin, representation is an active concept, an activity. This is something Saward agrees with, because it should not be about a static definition of representation, or a perfect way of representing. It is about the process, about how representation works as such (2010). Saward wants to take the concept of representation out of the legal, institutional and elective format and treat it as a process in itself. Representation can be constructed outside of the elective institutional framework and seen as a process between the representative and the represented (2010). For this choice, Saward references the ideas of Andrew Rehfeld (2006). Rehfeld wrote about political representation based on the notion of ‘audiences’ which look at representatives within a framework of ‘rules of recognition’: “*political representation arises simply by reference to a relevant audience accepting a person as such*” (2006, p.2). You are not only a representative in a formal way, but also in an informal way. If a group of people see you as a representative, you are one (2011). Saward builds up on this aesthetic way of looking at representation by referencing the idea of ‘surrogate representation’ of Mansbridge. Mansbridge came up with other forms of representation like ‘surrogate representation’: “*Surrogate representation is representation by a representative with whom one has no electoral relationship – that is, a representative in another district*” (2003, p.522). This idea of representation negates the limits of electoral districts and focuses on the passive

characteristics of representatives. These representatives could therefore represent other people in other districts based on notions like recognisability and passive representation. This opened the traditional views on representation up to non-electoral forms of representation, like representing ethnic minorities, or women (Sawer, 2010).

To sum it up: representation can be active, or it can be passive. The first category is about actions, accountability and choices in an elective and institutional framework. The second one is about aesthetics, symbols and images. Representation is a process, an activity. It is complex, and not a 'thing'. This process is based on what the representative does and symbolises and how the audience sees the representative and interprets his or her actions and aesthetic representation. Passive representation is therefore as important as active representation in the process of representing people.

2.3 Representative bureaucracy

For a long time, (political) representation was seen by most of the political science researchers as a legislative affair, based on elective processes and a principal-agent relationship (Peters et al, 2015). In time, researchers found problems with representations outside of the elective formal framework. The reasons for this development can be found in the increasing influence of international actors on the policy process, or the influence of powerful organised interests (Peters et al., 2015). Another reason is the growing importance and power of the executive branch of government and public institutions (Krislov, 1974). Especially the latter reason became a subject of increasing importance. For a long time the dominating vision of the bureaucracy was that of the Weberian legal-rational authority (Weber, 1922). A bureaucracy void of partiality, a neutral institution based on hierarchy and bound by rules. This vision came under pressure when researchers like J. Donald Kingsley (1944), Subramanian (1967) and Krislov (1974) noted that a democratic society can still be undemocratic when the executive branch, or the bureaucracy is filled with people who do not identify themselves with the people they make policies for. Kingsley gave the example of the British civil-servants who were from the upper-classes and had to make policies in the interest of the lower classes. This could counter their own interests, as members of the disadvantaged class (1944). Therefore, Kingsley's idea was that the public service should reflect the social class it serves and therefore should have recognisable characteristics. He measured these characteristics in terms of social class. Other researchers, like Subramanian (1967) added other

characteristics, like age, education, or income. Later adaptations of this theory also included for example ethnicity and gender. This theory was called *representative bureaucracy*. This theory is derived from other theories of representation, like the theory of Pitkin, or Mosher's *active representation* and *passive representation* (1968).

Sally Coleman Selden explains the theory of representative bureaucracy as follows (1997, p.5): *"The central tenet of the concept of representative democracy is that passive representation, or the extent to which a bureaucracy employs people of diverse demographic backgrounds, leads to active representation, or the pursuit of policies reflecting the interests and desires of those people."* Representative bureaucracy can be beneficial for a couple of reasons. A diverse bureaucracy symbolizes the commitment to equal access to power (Peters et al., 2015). It is also more likely that a wider range of experiences, perspectives and ideas will be presented in the policy-making process. Perspectives that may represent certain social groups, or interest groups. Representative bureaucracy may influence the agenda-setting. It is more likely that when a woman is present in the policy-making process, that female interests will become a priority. The responsiveness will also be positively affected with a more diverse group of people. Bureaucrats with different backgrounds result in active representation and higher responsiveness wherein ideas, views and goals of different interest groups in society are pursued (Kranz, 1976).

All these benefits affect the level of legitimacy of public policies. The assumption is that policies are perceived as more legitimate, because the actors within the process passively represent a more diverse and broader group of people. These actors are perceived as people with the same experiences and interests as the people that view them as their representatives (Guinier, 1994). As Saward noted, representation is a two-way street. Representation can be passive or active. You can be seen as a representative, if you are an official representative or not. Another assumption is that the process of policy-making is being perceived as more legitimate, because more people assume that their interests and views were presented and represented in the process (Kranz, 1976).

In summary, this theory aims to stimulate the level of active representation (ideas, choices, and policy) through a focus on passive representation (representativeness of characteristics). This could stimulate the representation in the policy-making process and increase the legitimacy of the policies.

2.4 Passive representation in state committees

In this thesis the theory of representative bureaucracy is used to analyse the results of my descriptive research of state committees. One may argue that the theory cannot be projected on state committees, because members of these committees are no bureaucrats. The difference between members of state committees and bureaucrats is clear and undeniable, but this theory was chosen because of the concept 'passive representation'. The theory of representative democracy focuses on passive representation regarding unelected bureaucrats. I am not saying that bureaucrats and members of state committees are the same, but they are both unelected groups of people which influence the policy-making process. That is the common characteristic I am focusing on regarding passive representation.

I will work with the same assumptions regarding representative bureaucracy. I will assume the following aspects:

1. A more diverse state committee will represent more social groups in Dutch society;
2. A more diverse state committee will priorities more and a broader range of issues;
3. A more diverse state committee is more responsive to changing politics;
4. A more diverse state committee will represent a broader political spectrum;
5. A more diverse state committee will actively represent more social groups and classes;
6. A more diverse state committee will be more legitimate.

State committees advise the government about fundamental societal issues. Following the theory of representative democracy, diversity in the composition of state committees stimulates passive representation which in turn affects the active representation of different ideas, views and goals of social groups in society. Therefore, the level of representation in state committees is stimulated when there is a more diverse composition of its members, because it is a better representation of Dutch society. Because of the supposed weight of the value of state committees, the level of representation is important. It can affect democratic legitimacy.

3. Research Design & Methods

3.1 Research Design

The goal of this research is to find out what the composition of state committees was in the period between 1994 and 2019 and what the implications of this are for the level of representation in those committees. To do this, I have used a combination of a descriptive research design and an exploratory research design. The reason that I chose for this structure, is that little is known about state committees in this time period. We, as an academic community, need more data on state committees before we are able to conduct more concrete research on this subject. The exploratory part of this research is useful for future research and research questions regarding state committees, because in my explorations I gave my own interpretation of the results of the data-collection. These interpretations are biased, because they are subjective, but may offer food for thought for other researchers and could be the cause for further research.

The descriptive part of the research design is based on data-collection of the composition of state committees through archival research. The exploratory part of the research design, is an analysis of the results of the data-collection and my conclusion. The analysis and conclusion are based on my theoretical analysis and literary research on the concepts *state committees* and *representation*.

In the end, this research has become a small-N case study, because in the time-period that was studied there weren't any more state committees that were installed. The choice for the beginning of the studied time-period fell on the year 1994. Why start from this year? The choice could have been 1996, because that was the year the law *Kaderwet Adviescolleges* was created. It could also have been the year 1998, because that is the year when the first state committee (after 1994) was installed. The reason for the year 1994 as the starting point for this study was based on the fact that the research period of the research of Duyvendak et al. on ad hoc-committees started in 1994 (2005). Their research caused, as was stated in the introduction of this thesis, a lot of public attention. It was one of the reasons that Geveke et al. formed their own research on ad hoc-committees (2006). It is a symbolic choice. The choice for the year 2019 as the ending of the studied time-period was based on the fact that it was the year this research was finished.

In the selection of state committees all the ad hoc-committees which are called state committees were chosen. In the theoretical exploration it has been explained that it is still unclear when an ad

hoc-committee is called a state committee or not. Generally, the difference is that a state committee is installed by royal decree. But as is stated earlier, some ad hoc-committees were called state committees, but were not installed by a royal decree. Two criteria were used in the selection of state committees:

1. The ad hoc-committee is officially called a *state committee*;
2. The ad hoc-committee is installed under the law *Kaderwet Adviescolleges*.

These two criteria gave the selection a concrete scope in the search for state committees. This meant that some advisory committees were not selected although they look like state committees, like the *Nationale conventie*, or *Staatscommissie voor het internationaal privaatrecht*.

3.2 Research methods

The method that was used for the data-collection is archival research. A clear scope was needed for the data-collection to answer the research question. This scope was created by narrowing down the search to a couple of variables and/or characteristics of state committees and their compositions.

The selection of variables is as follows:

1. Name of the state committee
2. Year of installation and year of termination
3. Number of members
4. Names of the members
5. Function of the members (president, praesidium, general member)
6. Gender of the members
7. Birthdate of the members
8. Political Affiliation of the members
9. Academic titles

These variables are classified into two categories. Variables 1 to 5 were chosen because of the general data that needed to be collected from the state committees. This way the research can be an addition to the knowledge and data on state committees that already exists. These characteristics also help to find and connect the data when other researchers look at the data-collection and want to search by name of the state committee, year, or name of a member. The secretaries of the state committees were not included in the data-collection, because they are not counted as members in

the official documents, but as support for the state committees. This does not mean that the secretaries were not important, but were not officially seen as members. This difference of officiality was the reason for the choices that were made regarding the selection of the studied people. The year of installation of the state committees and the year of termination are stated specifically in the decrees in the *Staatscourant* or *Staatsblad*.

Variable 6 to 9 were chosen because they are passive characteristics of the members of state committees. These characteristics were based on the suggestions of Kerkhoff and Martina, stated earlier in the relevancy of this study. The age of members was derived from their birthdate and their age on the date of installation of the state committee. Political affiliations were noted by using the abbreviations of the names of political parties. If a member had no (publicly known) affiliation, it is noted as NA (no affiliation). The academic titles are based on the official definitions which are explained on the website of the *Taalunie* (Taaladvies.net). These titles are also mentioned in the decrees. I have noted the titles that the members had in their period of membership in the state committees. Members with no titles are noted as NT (No Title). The results of the data-collection of the remaining variables are presented in an Excel-sheet. The results will show the composition of state committees between 1994 and 2019, but in the analysis of the results, a vision will be given on these results, based on the literary analysis on the concept of representation. In the analytical part the results of the data-collection are used and give a depiction of my views on the implications of the results for the level of representation of the studied state committees.

For this research official documents, biographies, websites of data-collection centres and of the government were analysed. Kerkhoff and Martina already explained the difficulty of getting the information needed on state committees (Schulz, 2010; Schulz et al., 2008). This research focuses on a period which is digitally accessible. The following sources were used in this study:

1. Officiële bekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad)
2. Parlement.com;
3. Montesquieu Instituut (Montesquieu-instituut.nl);
4. Websites of universities;
5. Online résumés;
6. Official websites of state committees;
7. Wikipedia.

To give some structure in the search for data the following table was constructed to determine where to find the data the fastest. In reality, some data could be found in multiple sources, or in other sources in the table than originally thought. The table was still useful in the research and could be used as an example in future research with similar subjects.

Variables	Sources
Name of the state committee	Officielebekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad)
Year of installation and year of termination	Officielebekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad)
Number of members	Officielebekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad)
Names of the members	Officielebekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad)
Gender of the members	Officielebekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad), Wikipedia,
Birthdate of the members	Online résumés, official websites of state committees, websites of universities
Function of the members (president, praesidium, general member)	Officielebekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad), official websites of state committees
Political Affiliation of the members	Parlement.com, Montesquieu Instituut
Academic titles	Officielebekendmakingen.nl (Staatscourant, Staatsblad), websites of universities

3.3 Validity and reliability

The reliability of this study is high, because every part of the research methods are explained and all the sources are stated in the list of references. Because it is archival research, the content of the data will not change. Therefore it is very reliable, because it is historic research of static data. The risk of getting other findings with the same method is low. Only more time and resources can give more specific information, or other findings.

The internal validity of this study is high. Internal validity was increased by defining more concretely in the research design what the framework was for the selection of state committees: the ad hoc-committees that are officially called state committees and are installed under the law *Kaderwet Adviescolleges*. In addition, the variables are defined more concretely. That way the room for interpretation was limited. For example, the age of members is derived from their birthdate and their age on the date of installation of the state committee. In addition, I created a table for structuring the search for data. This strategy led to finding most of the data in the suspected sources, with a small number of exceptions. For example, when this study did not find a political affiliation of a member, it does not necessarily mean that he or she had no political affiliation at all. It is possible that the person had a political affiliation, but it is not publicly known. It could also be that, despite the intensive search, that this information was not found. This also applies for the birthdates of some members that could not be found in this research.

The external validity of this research depends on the time scope you choose. If you pick the period 1994 to 2019 this research has a level of external validity, because the data of every state committee in this state period is used. The longer the period you take, the lower the external validity becomes, because this research covers only twenty-five years. The history of state committees goes back to 1814 (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2005). This study focuses on a small period compared with how long state committees exist. In addition, you cannot compare state committees with other kinds of advisory committees, because of the differences between the characteristics of these different types. Even compared with general ad hoc-committees, state committees are too different because of their supposed political weight.

4. Results

In this chapter the results will be presented. First, general information on the state committees will be given, based on the first four variables. There is an exception for the names of the members and their functions in the state committees. This information can be seen in the excel-sheets with the rest of the data. After that, the data regarding the different passive characteristics of the members of the state committees will be presented. The implications of these results for the level of representation in the state committees will be analysed in chapter 6.

4.1 General Information

In the data collection the following five state committees were found:

1. *Staatscommissie Dualisme en lokale democratie (Sc Dld)*

Date of installation: 14-10-1998

Date of termination: 01-01-2000

2. *Staatscommissie duurzame kustontwikkeling (Sc dk)*

Date of installation: 11-09-2007

Date of termination: 03-09-2008

3. *Staatscommissie Grondwet (Sc G)*

Year of installation: 09-07-2009

Year of termination: 01-12-2010

4. *Staatscommissie herijking ouderschap (Sc ho)*

Year of installation: 01-05-2014

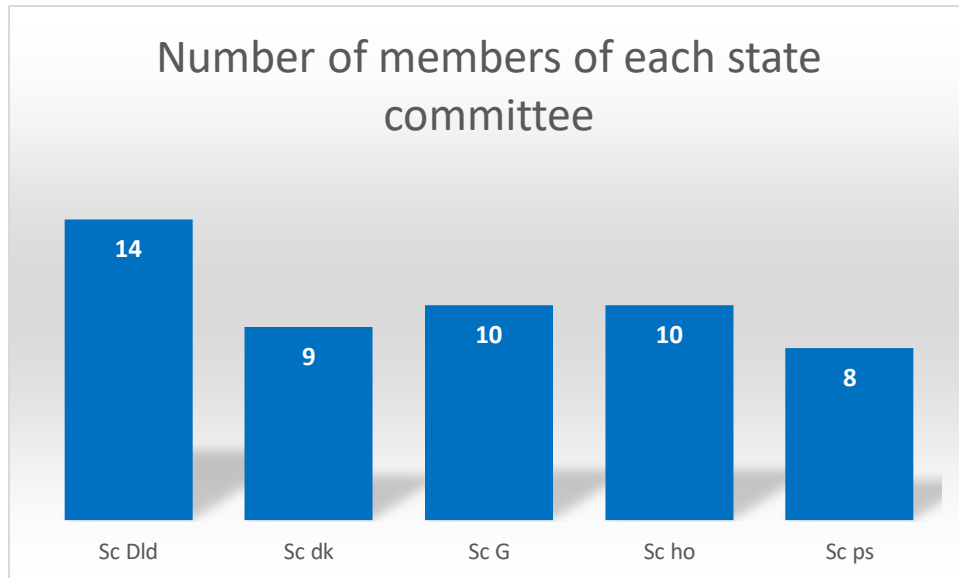
Year of termination: 31-12-2016

5. *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel (Sc ps)*

Year of installation: 07-02-2017

Year of termination: 31-03-2019

The number of members in these state committees are illustrated in the graph below. The names of the state committees are the same as the abbreviations that are presented behind the names of the state committees, shown before.



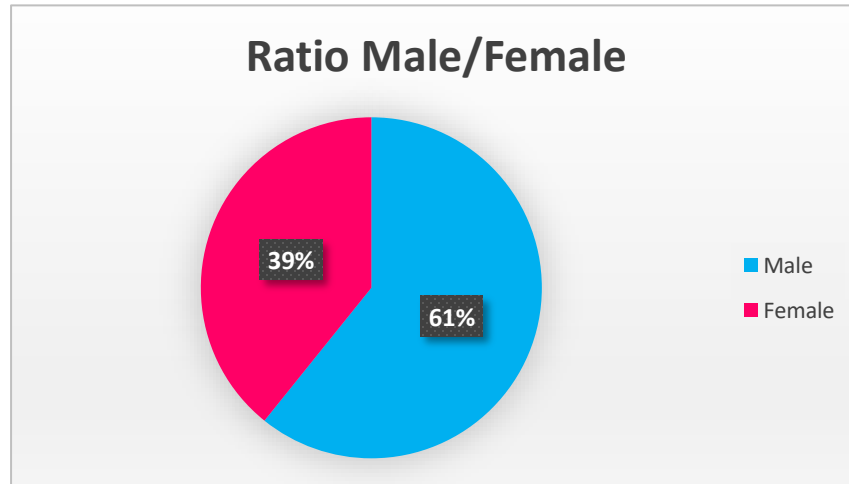
The number of members varies between 8 members in *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel* and 14 members in *Staatscommissie Dualisme en lokale democratie*. As you can see, *Staatscommissie Dualisme en lokale democratie* is an exception, because the other state committees had around 8 to 10 members. If you look at the data, the exception can be explained because of the fact that *Staatscommissie Dualisme en lokale democratie* had a praesidium, and the rest of the state committees did not.

4.2 Passive characteristics

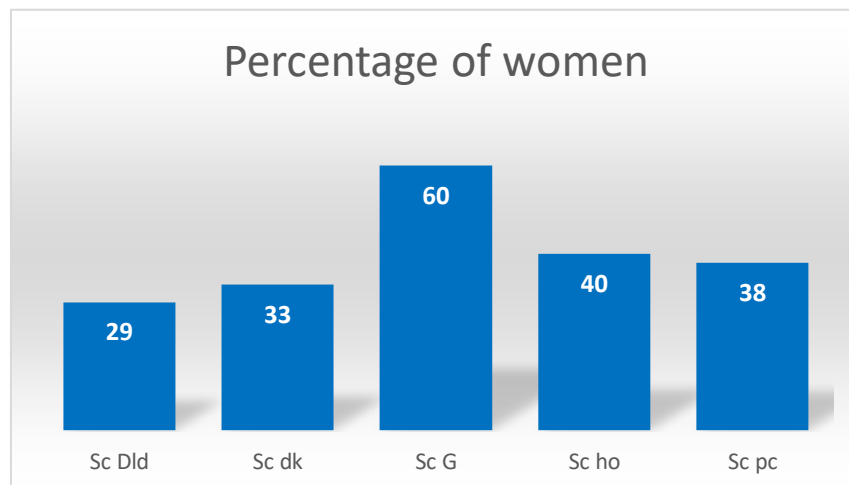
Now that the general information about the state committees has been presented, the passive characteristic of the members of these state committees will be laid out.

4.2.1 Gender

Of the total number of members, the ratio between male and female is as follows:



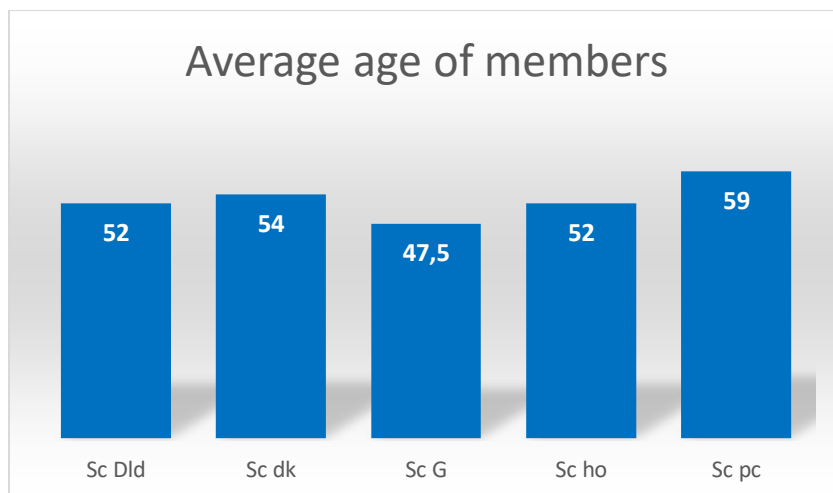
When you look at the data, there is a clear difference between the state committees:



The percentage of women in the state committees varies between the 29 percent in *Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie* and 60 percent in *Staatscommissie Grondwet*. The percentage of women in the state committee rises after the years, showing a clear peak in *Staatscommissie Grondwet* and a steady decline till around the 40 percent in *Staatscommissie herijking ouderschap* and 38% in *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel*.

4.2.2 Age

The average age of these men and women per state committee is as follows:

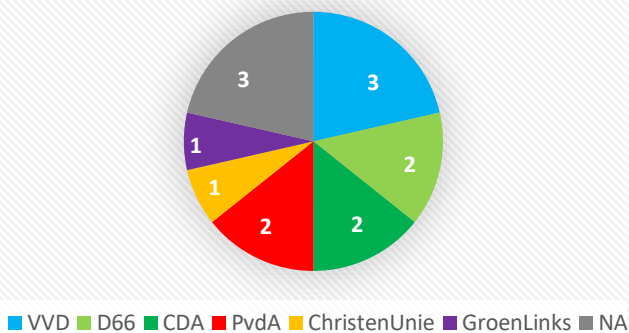


The average age of the members of the state committees varies between 47.5 years in *Staatscommissie Grondwet* and 59 years in *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel*. The *Staatscommissie Grondwet* had the youngest members on average and the *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel* had the oldest members on average. There is no visible trend from the beginning till the end, except for the last three state committees, where the average age of the members rose from 47.5 years to 59 years. It should be noted that in the research for this study, not all birthdates of members were found. This has an effect on the data, but not much. The more members there are in a state committee, the harder a single birthdate is able to influence the average age of the members of each committee. This does not apply for *Staatscommissie herijking ouderschap*, where 4 out of 10 birthdates were not found.

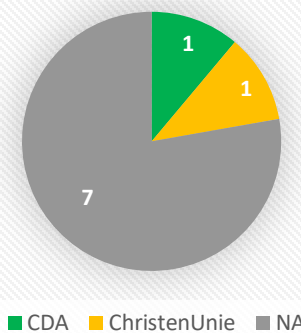
4.2.3 Political Affiliation

The number of members with a political affiliation in each state committee is presented below. After the presentation of each separate committee, all the members will be combined to give an overview of the distribution in its totality. It has to be clear that if a member is categorised as ‘not affiliated’, it does not necessarily mean that he or she had no political affiliation at all. It is possible that the person had a political affiliation, but it is not publicly known. It could also be that, despite the intensive search, that this information was not found.

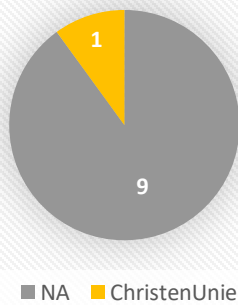
Members with a political affiliation in Sc Dld



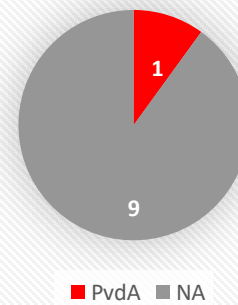
Members with a political affiliation in Sc dk

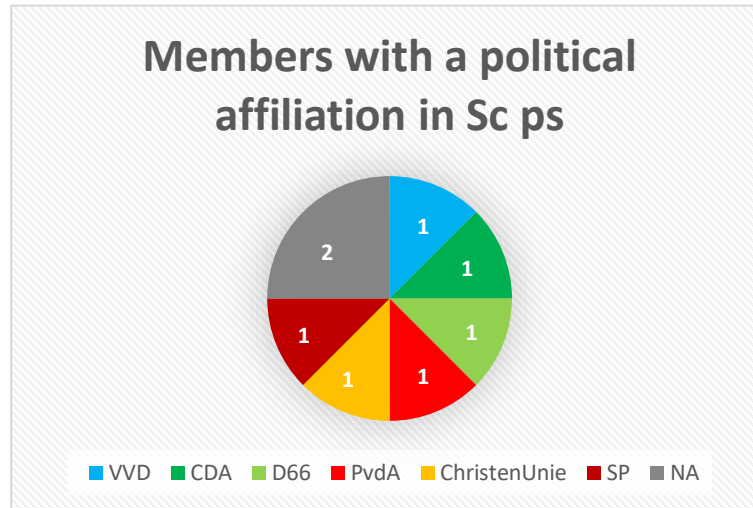


Members with a political affiliation in Sc G



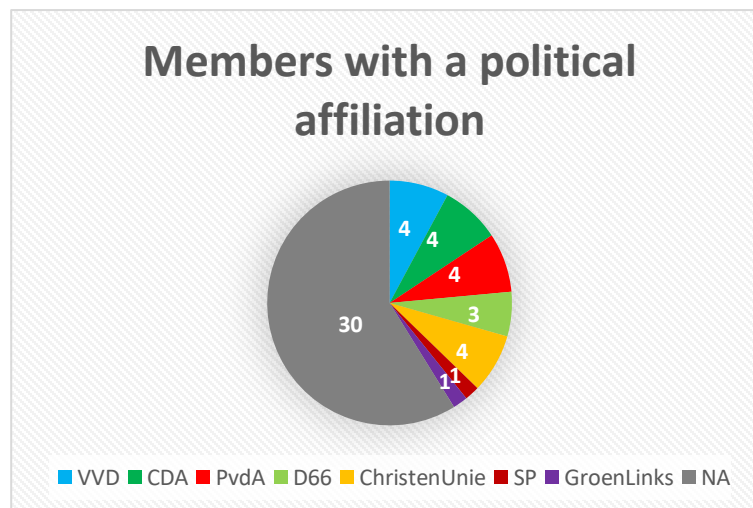
Members with a political affiliation in Sc ho





The state committees *Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie* and *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel* had the largest number of members with a political affiliation. The rest of the state committees were vastly composed of members with no political affiliation.

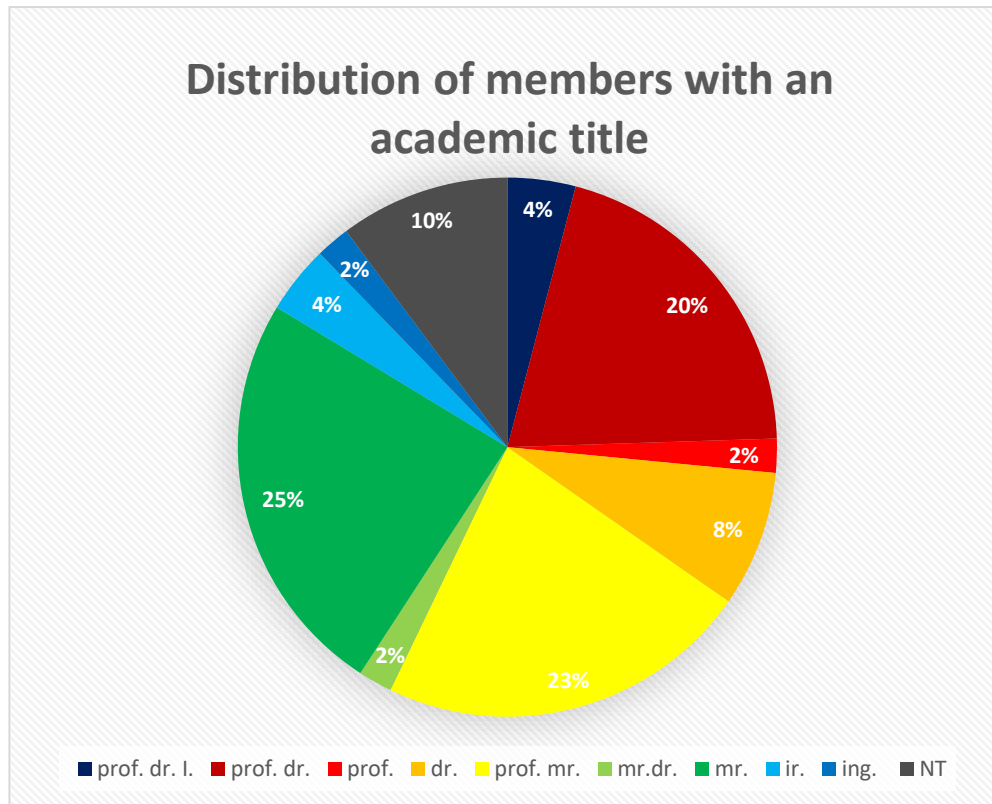
The overall number of members with a political affiliation in the state committees is as follows:



The top five categories with the largest number of members, are the non-affiliated, VVD, CDA, PvdA and ChristenUnie. The number of non-affiliated members far exceeds half of the total number of state committee members, with 30 out of 51 members. The ChristenUnie is the best represented political party, populating four of the five state committees. The least represented parties, are GroenLinks and SP. It should be noted that the total number of political parties, seated in parliament, is far greater compared with the seven political parties that are presented in this thesis.

4.2.4 Academic Titles

The distribution of the members with academic titles is as follows:



Looking at the distribution, there is a small percentage of members with no academic title at all. The distribution within each state committee shows a couple of notable results. *Staatscommissie Dualisme en lokale democratie* had 4 members (out of 14) without an academic title. *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel* had 2 members (out of 8) without an academic title. *Staatscommissie duurzame kustontwikkeling* had 1 member (out of 9) without an academic title. More than half of the members of the latter state committee had a technical background and academic title, like engineers. The other two state committees consisted only of members with academic titles.

5. Analysis

5.1 Gender

Looking at the gender balance, the results show a different view compared with the conclusions of the studies of Kerkhoff & Martina (2015) and Homminga (2019). These results seem to show a more positive portrait of the distribution of men and women in state committees than one would have expected. On the other hand, if, for example, the goal of minister Ollongren of a percentage between 40 and 60 percent is used as a criterion, these results fall short. Two of the five state committees would meet the criterion. In addition, after the peak of 60 percent in *Staatscommissie grondwet*, there is a steady decline to 38 percent in *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel*. It cannot be concluded that it is a trend, because we would need to look at future state committees, but it is a decline. Compared with the percentage of women in society (50%) there is also a significant difference regarding exact representation. In addition, it is roughly the same percentage as the distribution of men and women in permanent advisory committees, according to the report of the *Algemene Rekenkamer* (2019). Looking at the data, there is no telling why the percentages differ in such a significant way. The data disprove the assumption that state committees are committees dominated by men, because a percentage of women around the 40 or above is too high for that conclusion. But looking at the implications for the level of presentation in the state committees, the percentages are too low. There is no balance between the number of men and women in the state committees. While it is not necessary to have a perfect fifty-fifty balance, these results imply that the representation of women falls short. State committees study fundamental societal issues, but the passive representation of half of the population is not adequate. Following the theory of representative bureaucracy, inadequate passive representation could lead to inadequate active representation. With significant less women in state committees compared to the number of men, the risk is that women's problems, viewpoints and interests are not represented enough in the policy-making process. This affects the legitimacy of most of the studied state committees in a negative way.

5.2 Age

The average age of the members of the state committees varies between 47.5 years in *Staatscommissie grondwet* and 59 years in *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel*. There are no big differences between the state committees, with the exception of *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel*. The average age of Dutch society is 41.8 years in 2018 and 38.2 in 2000 (CBS, 2019). The average age of the members of four out of five state committees is 52 years or higher. This means that there is a significant discrepancy, by more than 10 years, between the average age of the members of the state committees and the average age of Dutch citizens.

This study did not focus on the motivations behind the choice for members, but looking at the data it looks like the choice for members is partly based on seniority and life experience. It can have a positive influence on the legitimacy of the studied state committees, but also a negative. It depends on the chosen perspective. It may affect the legitimacy of the state committees in a positive way. The state committees are composed of ‘old and wise men and women’. Looking from a Weberian perspective, this is positive. This perspective looks at the competence, seniority and experience of individuals. Passive characteristics of members are less important than competence and experience. From the perspective of the theory of representative bureaucracy, there is a great risk regarding representation. The lack of younger members may bear the risk of misrepresenting the views and interests of the younger generations of Dutch society. Because less passive representation of younger generations, may lead to less active representation of these generations. The legitimacy of state committees can be negatively affected when younger generations get the idea that they are not represented in the policy-making process in state committees. It gives fuel to the thought that these committees are filled with old people and that an old boys’ network exists.

5.3 Political affiliation

Looking at the data, you see a clear choice for political unaffiliated persons being chosen as members for the committee. The only two ‘political’ state committees are *Staatscommissie Dualisme en lokale democratie* and *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel*. These committees had clear political subjects, such as the state of Dutch democracy and local democracies, like municipalities. The large number of unaffiliated members strengthens the vision of state committees being used as impartial, independent and unbiased advisory committees. This vision is somewhat similar like Geveke et al. gave in their study on advisory committees (2006). The focus on these unaffiliated and academic persons shows, again, a Weberian view on the use of state committees. It is a focus on expertise, impartiality and neutrality. It can be argued that it is good that the government tries to look for impartial advice and neutral advisers. Especially when it comes to such complex societal problems. However, the ‘neutrality’ of these committees can turn into a disadvantage. From the perspective of the theory of representative bureaucracy, these state committees lose legitimacy, because they do not visually represent ideological visions, and cannot be held politically accountable, just as Duyvendak concluded (2005). The only (but big) difference between these results and the conclusion of Duyvendak et al. is that they feared too much political influence from big political parties (2005). These results suggest otherwise. There is no political accountability, because most of the members of the studied state committees have no political affiliation. At least, not that is publicly known.

The non-affiliated advisers in state committees have their own political views and ideas on society, if it is publicly known or not. This bias can be negated as much as possible with formalised procedures and ‘neutral research’, but it cannot be eradicated. The disadvantage is that the public and the democratic representatives do not know the political bias of these non-affiliated members. The passive representation of political viewpoints falls short. State committees have much influence on the policies that the government creates, when these committees are tasked with studying fundamental societal issues. Therefore it is much harder for citizens to feel represented by the content of the advice that state committees create, or to recognise their own political interests as a citizen in the research reports that state committees bring forth. This may affect the legitimacy of state committees in a serious way, because their advice bear political consequences, without a clear political accountability.

5.4 Academic titles

The vast majority of the committee members had an academic title. The committees with the ‘smallest’ percentage of members with an academic title are state committees with clear political subjects: *Staatscommissie Dualisme en lokale democratie* and *Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel*. As is stated earlier, this study did not focus on the motivations behind the selection of people for a membership, but for most of the state committees the choice for the selection of members looks like it was based on academic knowledge and expertise. An example for this assumption is the choice for engineers for the composition of *Staatscommissie duurzame kustontwikkeling*. This committee focused on the developments surrounding rising sea levels and water management, clear technical subjects. The two ‘political’ state committees mentioned earlier were likely more focused on members with different political backgrounds than an academic background. Still, the (vast) majority of the state committees consisted of members with an academic title.

The same risk applies to the educational level of the members of state committees as to the political affiliation of these members. Again, it looks like the Weberian approach of impartiality, expertise and neutrality was the main motivation behind the selection of committee members. It is perfectly reasonable that highly qualified and educated people are members of state committees, because of the complex issues that they study and the fundamental societal problems that they have to analyse. But when members of state committees form policies and try to reach a consensus, there is a great risk that the interests of uneducated people, or lower educated people are not represented in that fundamental discussion and consensus-seeking in the state committees. It does not mean that the members with academic titles cannot know what the interests of uneducated and lower educated people are, but it is less likely and more difficult. Looking at societal issues from an academic point of view is different from looking at a representative point of view. The theory of representative background suggests that views, interests and problems of uneducated and lower educated are less adequately represented in the policy-making process within state committees. This could negatively affect the legitimacy of state committees.

6. Conclusion & Discussion

6.1 Conclusion

There is no simple conclusion regarding the research question and the research goal of this study. It is safe to say that the distribution of men and women in the state committees is more balanced compared with other studies on state committees, like that of Homminga (2019) and Kerkhoff & Martina (2015). Still, the distribution of men and women in the studied state committees is out of balance, with 3 out of 5 state committees not even reaching the goal of 40% or higher of minister Ollongren. The same applies for the age of the committee members, with 4 out of 5 state committees with an average age of 52 years or higher. Compared with the average age of Dutch society of 41.6 years, it is legitimate to say that there is a significant discrepancy. Regarding political affiliation and academic titles, it is legitimate to conclude that

The same can be said about the claim of Duyvendak that there is a small group of people that populates the committees. In this study on state committees, I did not see one person multiple times. The members of the state committees were all different persons. So far, there are no negative implications on the level of representation in the state committees.

What are, in the end, the implications of the results for the level of representation of state committees? The overall conclusion would be that the compositions of the studied state committees have negative implications for the level of representation. The focus regarding the compositions of the state committees looks like it is based on experience, knowledge, expertise and impartiality. A Weberian way of looking at the suitability of the members and compositions of state committees. This has, obviously, certain advantages regarding the (academic) quality of the policy-making process within state committees. But looking from the perspective of representative democracy, this focus neglects the representative aspects of the composition of these influential committees. Risking in consequence the loss of legitimacy and missing representation of different ideas, views and interests. This conclusion has even more relevancy, because state committees cannot be held accountable by the public, while they have much influence on the policy-making process of the government. State committees are, supposedly, used to give more (legitimate) weight on the advice that they produce. These committees study fundamental societal issues that influence society as a whole, but the supposedly lack of focus on representation damages the legitimacy of their used methods and advice. This conclusion does not mean that the composition of state committees

should be a perfect representation of Dutch society, but it looks like the people who do the selection of committee members do not even regard the aspect of representation as a serious issue. An aspect and a goal, as is stated earlier in this thesis, that is recorded in the law *Kaderwet Adviescolleges*. There should be a balance in the selection of committee members regarding the competence and experience of individuals and their passive representation. This way, according to the theory of representative bureaucracy, it will affect the legitimacy of state committees in a positive way because the representation of ideas, views and interests of more social groups are more likely to be represented in these committees.

6.2 Discussion

In general, this study has constructed a good foundation for future research. It filled the gap of empirical data regarding state committees and it explored the characteristics of the members of those state committees. For most of the data, it was fairly easy to collect. Information regarding state committees is accessible, because of the digitalisation of most of the information. Compared with the research of Kerkhoff and Martina (2015), this study did not face many difficulties collecting the information. This does not mean that all information could be found. This was especially the case for the birthdates of some of the members, or political affiliation, even after a long and extensive search on the internet.

Another problem with the variables has to do with the political affiliation of the members. Most of the members in the study did not have a political affiliation, but that does not mean that they did not have sympathy for a specific political party at that time. It is the absence of public information about a political affiliation and it is an assumption that they are not affiliated. I have no knowledge about private political affairs or private political beliefs. That aspect could have influenced the results of this study, regarding political affiliations.

In earlier stages of the research another variable was added: cultural or/and ethnic background. This variable is important to study the cultural and/or ethnic diversity of the state committees. While collecting the data, the conclusion was that it was practically impossible to find out what the cultural or/and ethnic backgrounds was of the vast majority of the committee members. Therefore there was no other way than to delete this characteristic from the research. This has some serious effects on the research goal of this study. It is important, regarding representation of different social

groups, to research the cultural or ethnic background of the members of state committees. While the vast majority of the committee members had a ‘typical Dutch last name’ and were white,

6.3 Future research

It is difficult to generalise the findings of these thesis on advisory committees in general and state committees in particular. In the last twenty years, there were five state committees, but there is still no empirical data on state committees between 1970 and 1994. Further research can focus on this period, to bridge the gap of data between the researches of, for example, Kerkhoff and Martina and this research. It is also interesting to study the development of the number of men and women in state committees throughout the decades. Is there a trend? What about the political affiliation of the members, are there less members with a political affiliation in the last two decades, compared with the 1970’s and 80’s? It is interesting to research this question within the context of the depillarization of Dutch society. What about the number of state committees and the number of members in these state committees. Do you see differences between the period this thesis studied and the period between 1970 and 1994? It is also necessary that research regarding the representativeness of state committees would focus on cultural or ethnic backgrounds. It will fill the gap of data that has formed in this research. It is important to keep adding more data on state committees, so there is more insight in certain developments that has taken place in state committees. Maybe it is possible to prove the existence of an old boys’ network. There is much more to study about state committees and much more to know about advisory committees in general.

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