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**Scientization of Dutch policy advice: A study on the reliance on academic expertise in Dutch state committees between 1970-2017 and its relation to different understandings of democracy**

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# Scientization of Dutch policy advice

A study on the reliance on academic expertise in Dutch state committees between 1970-2017 and its relation to different understandings of democracy



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## **Preface**

Before you lies the thesis titled: “*Scientization in Dutch policy advice: A study on the reliance on academic expertise in Dutch state committees between 1970-2017 and its relation to different understandings of democracy*” I have written this thesis as a final part of completing the Master’s program Management of the Public Sector at Leiden University. This also marks the end of my academic career, for which I am very grateful.

I would especially like to thank Dr. A.D.N. Kerkhoff for the frequent meetings we had at the end of the process and above all for his constructive feedback which proved to be invaluable throughout the writing process.

I hope you enjoy reading this thesis.

Niels van der Velden

Den Haag, 7 June 2021

## Abstract

A state committee is a Dutch *ad hoc* political advisory instrument that is issued by Royal Decree and usually installed to provide the government with advice on complex, multi-faceted issues. This thesis explores the reliance on academic knowledge (*scientization*) within these state committees in the period 1970-2017 as a result of contemporary literature that argues how science and politics have become more and more intertwined over the last decades. An empirical analysis is executed in which the share of academics in state committees and the use of (academic) citations in committee reports function as indicators to measure the degree of scientization. Besides aiming to generate empirical data on longitudinal changes in the usage of academic knowledge in this type of committees, this thesis also evaluates the democratic effects of the outcomes. It does so by analyzing the quantitative data through different reasonable outlooks on democracy to see which conceptions of democracy show similarities with the outcomes.

The quantitative outcomes unequivocally show how an amplified dependence on academic expertise in Dutch state committees can be detected throughout the mentioned period. While both indicators demonstrate an increased degree of scientization in these advisory bodies, the growing presence of academia is the most indubitable one as the share of this profession group has doubled between 1970-2017 and little over 50% of all state committee members after 2000 were academics. The evaluative part of this thesis argues how the increased reliance on academic expertise indicates a shift towards a democracy with more deliberative and epistemic features. At the same time, the developments show less characteristics that are compatible with an aggregative, pluralist or intrinsically justified democracy.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Advisory committees in the Netherlands

Historically, the need for achieving consensus has characterized Dutch politics (Daalder 1996; Hendriks & Toonen, 2002). Throughout Dutch history, societal and political dynamics have maintained the urge for a system based on reaching agreements (Bovens et al., 2012). For instance, Dutch society was pillarized (consociational) until the 1970's: the Netherlands was composed of various separated religious and socio-economic subcultures.

The widely used Dutch term for this consensus politics is the *poldermodel*, and Andeweg (2000) states that this political system has “broadened the involvement in decision-making as widely as possible” (Andeweg, 2000, p. 511). The ample use of external ad hoc advice committees reflects this broad involvement. The usage of this political instrument is common for the Dutch government when facing difficulties in policymaking (Bovens et al., 2012).

These ad hoc committees, called *state committees*<sup>1</sup>, have been present in the Dutch advisory system since 1814. While there is no legal definition for this type of committee, certain characteristics distinguish state committees from other ad hoc committees. Firstly, a Royal Decree (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015) are installing them, which differs from ‘regular’ ad hoc committees, which are usually installed through a ministerial decree and thus, by one particular ministry (Schulz et al., 2007). A ministerial decree installs regular ad hoc committees as the assigned topic of the committee is often limited to one policy field. State committees are usually different as the subject-matters are complex, multi-faceted, and departmental transcendent (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015).n excellent example of this transcendence is the topic of the last appointed state committee, which was entrusted with a review of the entire Dutch parliamentary system<sup>2</sup>. The above-described features and their rich history dates to 1814, making state committees a fascinating and well-scoped research subject.

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<sup>1</sup> In Dutch spelling, an uppercase letter is used when referring to this term (*Staatscommissie*). This thesis will refer to the term using lowercase letters as there is no common translation in English.

<sup>2</sup> *Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel* is the official Dutch name of the state committee. The official name will be used in this thesis in the footnotes when explicitly referring to a particular state committee. An overview of all state committees with additional information can be found in appendix 1.

## 1.2 Externalization and scientization

Kerkhoff & Martina (2015), Kerkhoff (2019) and Homminga (2019) have thoroughly researched the composition and topics of Dutch state committees, from 1814 to 1970. After this period, research about state committees is sparse as only Van Leeuwen (2013) and Van Veluw (2018) have touched upon state committees. Although both researchers limited their studies to state committees that focused on specific themes (constitutional reforms and public order and safety), its periodization continued till 1983.

Nevertheless, the period after 1970 is fascinating as this demarcates the start of a general externalization shift of policy advice in the Netherlands (Oldersma et al., 1999). Ad hoc committees with a principal external character (composed of members outside the innermost public circle) became a more prevalent instrument in Dutch politics. The composition of state committees also reflected this; the share of active politicians gradually decreased (at the beginning of the 1990s) to where they no longer participate in these committees. Van den Berg (2017) adduces several factors that have triggered this externalization process. The fiscal crisis that started in the late 1970s initiated political efforts to reduce the size of the overloaded and expensive government apparatus. For example, by replacing the costly proliferation<sup>3</sup> of permanent advisory bodies by ad hoc committees with its corresponding, lower cost, short-term contracts. Simultaneously, depolarization and the rise of New Public Management fostered the need for a more independent type of policy advice in which “the dominant function of the advisory system soon became the provision of expertise, rather than the channelling and voicing of pillarized societal interests” (Van den Berg, 2017, p.72).

The external advisors of these ad hoc committees, state committees included, are attracted from different corners outside the innermost circle of politicians and civil servants. For example, ex-politicians or representatives of private companies frequently have a seat in these committees (Van den Berg et al., 2015). Another popular group of people in this category are staff contracted by universities (Van den Berg et al., 2015). The influence of these groups in policy advice and institutions with an academic purpose will be central in this thesis. According to many scholars, the influence of academic expertise or *scientization* in politics is becoming increasingly more present and is far more entrenched in politics than the traditional view on this relationship that suggests that policymakers are strictly separated from science (Turner, 2003; Hoppe & Halfman, 2004; Kitcher, 2011). The desirability of an increasing

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<sup>3</sup> In 1976, there were 402 permanent advisory bodies in The Netherlands (WRR, 1977).



scientization in politics is disputed and a popular topic of discussion. For some scholars, an increasing reliance on academic expertise means more social distribution of knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994). Others view it as an undemocratic allocation of power to an elite group of knowledgeable people (i.e., a *façade democracy* or a *disfigured democracy*) (Streeck, 2014; Urbinati, 2014).

### **1.3 Research question and research approach**

Considering the above, the democratic implications of scientization in policy advice are particularly captivating for Dutch state committees as they tend to touch upon quite extensive and fundamental issues. With this in mind, this thesis aims to answer the following research question:

*To what extent has there been an increasing reliance on academic expertise in Dutch state committees in the period 1970-2017 and how does this fit with different understandings of democracy?*

This study uses two different approaches to answer this research question. Firstly, it examines whether an increasing dependence on academic competence in the Dutch state committees from 1970 until 2017 can be detected through quantitative analysis based on a recent study by Christensen and Holst (2017), who conducted similar research on Norwegian ad hoc committees. Following their approach, the influence of academic expertise in state committees is operationalized through the following two indicators:

1. The share of academics (people professionally affiliated to a university) in state committees.
2. The number of citations to distinct types of academic literature in the committee reports.

With the outcomes of the quantitative analysis, this thesis aims to notice discussions about the democratic implications of scientization in politics. As the views on the desirability of an increasing reliance on academic ability are dispersed, the empirical outcomes are discussed alongside a variety of reasonable, normative ‘conceptual distinctions’ of democracy to see which concepts show congruency with the quantitative findings. Comparable to

Christensen and Holst (2017), three different conceptual distinctions of democracy will be addressed, emphasizing a separate dimension of democracy. The conceptual distinctions that will be addressed are elite versus pluralist democracy, intrinsically versus epistemically justified democracy and aggregative versus deliberative democracy.

#### **1.4 Scientific relevance**

As mentioned, there is a dearth of studies on state committees and empirical data on this type of ad hoc committees, which is limited to the period of 1814-1970 (Kerkhoff & Martina, 2015; Kerkhoff, 2019; Homminga, 2019). However, the existing data set for this period is extensive as, among other things, age, gender, education, and occupation of the committee members have been researched. This thesis can contribute to this data set by providing insight into state committee members' professional affiliation in the period after 1970. These empirical results could be used in future research on the composition – with occupation being one of many indicators – of state committees after 1970.

Moreover, aiming to empirically contribute to earlier executed research on state committees' composition, this thesis also intends on shedding light on the influence of science in Dutch external advisory bodies. Christensen and Holst (2017) have investigated this matter in Norwegian ad hoc committees, but Dutch research on this topic is still missing. Halfman and Hoppe (2004) did write an article about the developments and trends in scientific policy advice in the Netherlands from the late 1970s. However, despite depicting a beneficial overview of the changing position of science in Dutch policy advice, it does not include any quantitative data, nor does it say much about state committees. This thesis aims to bridge this gap.

Lastly, this thesis wants to contribute to discussions about scientization and its implications on democracy as done by Haas (1992), Loya & Boli (1999), Gibbons et al. (1994), Vibert (2007), Streeck (2014), Urbinati (2014), Habermas (2015), and Brennan (2016). It will not do so by taking a normative stance as these scholars did, as the limited scope of this research does not allow for an extensive evaluation of different outlooks on democracy and form a well-underpinned opinion on what can be viewed as an ideal form of democracy. Instead, it evaluates the empirical outcomes alongside different, pre-established concepts of democracy and displays to what degree the findings are compatible with these types of democracy.

## **1.5 Societal relevance**

Quantifying the reliance on academic expertise in state committees is societally relevant as it can explore what power the government gives a specific group of people through policy advice, which, in turn, is likely to be translated into actual policymaking (an essential objective for installing advisory committees). This objective is especially relevant for state committees because these committees are often concerned with fundamental and societal-wide topics, such as the protection of personal data<sup>4</sup>, the revision of the judicial system<sup>5</sup>, or the use of euthanasia<sup>6</sup>. By empirically and evaluatively shedding a light on a possible increased scientization in policy advice, this thesis can function as a starting point for political and societal discussions on interpreting or acting on the displayed developments.

## **1.6 Reading guide**

This thesis structure is as follows. Chapter 2 consists of a theoretical framework discussing the existing literature on the relevant concepts of externalization, scientization, and the different conceptual distinctions of democracy. Chapter 3 offers a research methodology operationalizing the two indicators related to scientization and justifying the empirical analysis. Chapter 4 consists of an empirical analysis in which the outcomes form the base of an evaluative analysis that relies on the conceptual distinctions of democracy as displayed in the theoretical framework. Chapter 5 contains the conclusion, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

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<sup>4</sup> Staatscommissie Bescherming Persoonsgegevens.

<sup>5</sup> Staatscommissie Herziening Rechterlijke Organisatie.

<sup>6</sup> Staatscommissie Euthanasie.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses and explores the existing literature around the different concepts and theories that need to be addressed to answer the research question. The author will discuss the concepts and thoughts around the policy advice system possibly linked to an increased influence of science in state committees. These are externalization of policy advice and science in politics. After this, the chapter will explore different dimensions and views on democracy.

### 2.1 Externalization of policy advice

It is vital first to zoom out and examine what externalization of policy advice exactly entails, to comprehend the possible implications of a growing reliance on academic expertise in policy advice, Scientization in politics can be viewed as one particular area within the concept of externalization (alongside, for example, the involvement of business interest groups in policy advice).

Halligan (1995, p.140) views externalization as a changing dynamic, and introduces the idea of a *policy advisory system*. He used this term to operationalize the role of different actors in the policy-making process by determining their proximity to the core public service and the degree of autonomy from the government (Craft & Howlett, 2013). Halligan (1995) distinguishes three different actors – the public service, internal, and actors external to the government - in the policy advisory systems; each has its place in that system. This locational model supposes that only organizations close to the government with a high degree of state control can influence the decision-making process (1995). Craft and Howlett (2013) have criticized this model and defined it as a traditional *insider-outsider logic* representation. This notion has resulted in Halligan's model being challenged after its publication, especially in the contemporary zeitgeist (Craft & Howlett, 2013, p.189).

A wide variety of scholars have produced more contemporary notions on policy advisory systems, in which the internal-external dichotomy of Halligan becomes more fluid and diluted (Bevir & Rhodes, 2001; Howlett & Lindquist, 2004; Mayer et al., 2004). According to these scholars, the influence of non-traditional advice suppliers in the public debate, such as think tanks and NGO's is substantial and cannot be underestimated. It is because of this influence that internal government policy and external sources of advice are also sought and utilized (Bertelli & Wenger, 2009; McGann & Sabatini, 2011).

The following statement emphasizes that these external actors can easily adapt and perform well in the public sphere:

“For example, private sector consultants perform such tasks as do experts in think tanks, universities, and political parties. All of these may, to varying degrees, be quite capable of providing specific suggestions about factors such as the costs and administrative modalities of specific policy alternatives.” (Craft & Howlett, 2013, p. 189)

In international academic literature, there are several possible reasons why governments over the last decades have chosen to increasingly externalize their sources of information instead of keeping it internal and thereby (seemingly) keeping more control. Ostensibly paradoxical, Dahlström et al. (2011) argue that this externalization trend can be viewed as a government’s instrument to acquire more political control as it can be used to overcome prevailing public opinions of a public service that holds a policy advisory monopoly. Another argument is that globalization and the rise of interconnected *wicked* policy problems has raised a notion that sources of information should be sought outside the sphere of where these problems allegedly have been able to grow, namely the public sector (Peters and Savoie, 2000).

## **2.2 Scientization in politics**

This section will zoom in and explore existing literature on science’s position in politics and policy advice. It will focus on traditional differences between both fields and analyse different motives on ‘scientization’ in political decision-making.

### **2.2.1 Scientists vs. politicians**

Before delving into the possible meddling of science in politics and policy advice, it is vital to examine how scientists and politicians differ, based on their core profession, not yet considering how its new activities may overlap. These differences can be adduced when discussing the implications of increased reliance on academic expertise in politics.

First, there is a difference in the way each group handles uncertainty (Terlouw, 2009). Scientists thrive on doubt as fallibilism is one of the core values of science. Scientific findings are only valid for a limited time until new research refutes the current theory. For politicians, doubt must be avoided as the public can perceive this as weak or indecisive, which is not conducive to one’s position in a political debate (Terlouw, 2009).

A second distinction between scientists and politicians is the importance of time and selectiveness are (Pels, 2001). Politicians must often react to recent occurrences and often do not have the time to execute a scientific study before drawing conclusions and making decisions. In addition, politicians make decisions on a wide array of issues. Conversely, scientists do not have to deal with similar time pressure and can often do years of research on a demarcated subject, making it easier for scientists to follow politicians than vice versa (Terlouw, 2009). Politicians are actively trying to be understood by the public.

Another difference between scientists and politicians, based on their profession, is the degree of rationality in their work. Science is rational and should not be influenced by emotions (unless researching emotions). Politicians often make decisions based on emotions and public opinion to appease or inspire people (Terlouw, 2009).

According to Pels (2001), these differences suggest a gap between science and politics, while this is not true in most cases. He states that the typical self-interested scientist and the professional-elected politician can be on a *positional continuum*; these actors and their affiliated institutions can be placed at each extreme. Between these two extremes lies a complex series of mixed institutions and overlapping areas that scientists can enter to either temporary or permanently change their position on the continuum (Pels, 2001, p.29). Some examples on this continuum are scientific departments of political parties, think tanks or permanent advisory bodies. When a scientist sits in on a state or ad hoc committee, there is a temporary change on the positional continuum where the traditional differences between the scientists and politicians also change. By setting up an ad hoc committee, politicians can give themselves (e.g., through committee members) more time to thoroughly analyse a public issue and change their limited timeframe to make decisions.

### **2.2.2 Possible motives for incorporating science in politics**

The traditional view on the relationship between science and politics is as follows: politicians try to make normative decisions based on scientific facts and cause-effect events (Habermas, 1976; Weingart, 1999; Hoppe and Halfman, 2004). In this *decisionist model*, values are separated from objective, neutral knowledge. According to most scholars, this view is inaccurate as the role of scientists in politics is no longer constrained to mere knowledge delivery (Pels, 2001; Hoppe and Halfman, 2004; Turner, 2003; Vibert, 2007; Douglas, 2009; Kitcher, 2011). Hoppe and Halfman (2004) argue that the interference of scientists in politics

is extensive: criticizing policymakers in the way they define problems, placing problems in other frameworks, pointing out unforeseen policy consequences, proposing alternative policy strategies, and even counseling policymakers during conflict.

There are many claims in the existing literature on why political decision-making increasingly rely on science. According to Kitcher (2011), the increasing complexity of modern society concerning technology and regulatory developments can explain this change. This view states that politicians across the political landscape require specialized expertise to make informed decisions. Consistent with this explanation is the belief that science has a substantial problem-solving capacity beneficial for social progress (Weiss, 1986).

Haas (1992) and Loya and Boli (1999) also stress that science can provide politics with a rationalized understanding of the world and inform governmental decisions. Quark (2012) adduces Loya and Boli (1999) with the following statement:

“Scientific expertise can provide what Boli calls rational voluntaristic authority, which is authority not of domination but of freely exercised reason, in which fundamentally equal individuals reach collective decisions through rational deliberations that are open to all.” (Quark, 2012, p. 900)

This idealized view argues that if science’s rationale would always be considered in political decision-making, these decisions would be just and efficient (Boli & Thomas, 1999). This view agrees with the *technocratic model* on science and politics: politicians become wholly dependent on experts replacing politics with a scientifically rationalized administration instead of the decisionist model. Vibert (2007) argues that politics has already become increasingly technocratic through the rising power of bodies, such as monetary regulators and central banks. He questions the democratic legitimacy of these institutions as their members are not elected.

Boswell and Hunter (2015, p.12) offer another explanation for the increasing use of academic consultation in politics. They state that the use of selectively chosen scientific knowledge is a well-known political trick to strengthen political preferences and push predetermined decisions through by an ostensible epistemic base. This argument emphasizes a legitimate goal to incorporate science in politics, while Kitcher (2011) focuses primarily on an instrumental aspect of the relationship. Weingart (1999) and Pinto (2017) endorse Boswell and Hunter’s view and further argue that this intertwinement of science and politics has severe effects damaging the authority of both.

Pinto (2017) argues that an ever-increasing pressure exists in politics to produce swift and scientifically grounded decisions, which results in data cherry-picking by politicians, subsequently leading to a *politicization of science* obscuring the neutrality and objectivity of science. Concurrently, an inverse dynamic has risen (Pinto, 2017), called the *scientization of politics*:

“If scientific expertise holds a privileged position in solving policy controversies, scientific values would likely undermine other cultural, religious, political, and ethical values relevant for the decision-making process in liberal democracy. The conception of science as the only source of legitimate knowledge for policymaking has led in turn to the current scientization of politics.” (Pinto, 2017, p. 341)

In Pinto’s work, the “scientization of politics” has a negative connotation and highlights the over-rationalization trend in political decision-making. In contrast, Christensen and Holst (2017) use scientization in politics more neutral to describe an increasing involvement of scientists in the political landscape.

## **2.3 Democracy**

This section offers definitions on democracy that functions as a conceptual basis. This basis will be utilized to interpret the quantitative analysis outcomes and allow a multi-angled discussion on which types of democracy are compatible with a possible scientization in state committees.

### **2.3.1 Reasonable disagreement**

Notions on the democratic effects of a prominent position of science in politics are fragmented with no overarching consensus. There is the critical side that regards the increasing influence of scientists in politics as damaging for democracy. Some call it a façade democracy, post-democracy, or a disfigured democracy (Streeck, 2014; Urbinati, 2014; Habermas, 2015). Gibbons et al. (1994) disagree and argue that the involvement of more scientists in the policy process is beneficial for the social distribution of politics. For advocates of rational political decision-making in general, an increasing influence of science in politics is also a positive development (Haas, 1992; Loya & Boli, 1999). Some scholars such as Brennan (2016) hold even more extreme views on the desirability of an epistocracy, regarding it as a solution to overcome “the ignorance of citizenry” (p. 23). All these different views show that one’s



perception of what is a 'good' democracy determines conclusions on whether increasing reliance on academia in politics can be regarded as desirable or not.

Christensen and Holst (2017) also notice these dispersed ideas and point out that scholars such as Urbinati, Streeck, and Brennan use these terms without a solid empirical or normative base. According to Christensen and Holst (2017, p. 13), the most problematic shortcoming of these 'grand diagnoses' is its lack of *reasonable disagreement*. These authors are consciously trying to portray their view indisputable, allowing no room for further discussion. Reasonable disagreement as part of public discourse is a well-known concept coined in Rawls' *Political Liberalism* (1993). Reasonable disagreement proposes that it is possible that people holding opposite, disagreeing standpoints are both adequately informed and motivated by the right reasons (Vallier, 2017). However, Rawls (1993) also argues that an 'overlapping consensus' can be reached for certain principles of justice and human rights. This statement means that people will endorse laws and regulations based on their perceptions and for their agenda.

As the views on scientization in politics are so diffuse, Christensen and Holst (2017) argue that it is not feasible to define democracy with an overlapping consensus (i.e., a definition that could generally be agreed upon despite opposing views, perceptions, and reasons). Instead, they suggest evaluating the quantitative analysis outcomes through different reasonable conceptual distinctions of democracy, each highlighting a certain dimension of democracy (Christensen & Holst, 2017). This thesis also underscores the fragmentation in views on incorporating science in politics, and will follow Christensen and Holst's (2017) approach and evaluate the possible implications on democracy of the findings through these different, well-established outlooks on democracy. It will rely on the following three (normative political theory) conceptual distinctions of democracy: The 'aggregative versus deliberative democracy,' the 'intrinsically versus epistemically justified democracy' and the 'elite versus pluralist democracy.'

### **2.3.2 Aggregative versus deliberative democracy**

Both these concepts are built around the dimension of decision-making. Advocates of aggregative democracies state that the democratic process goal ensures that its citizens' preferences translate into policy implementation and stress the importance of electoral voting. Here, the majority rule counts after everyone's vote has been giving equal consideration (Knight

& Johnson, 1994). Heath (2016) states that in an ideally executed aggregative democracy, politicians as citizens' representatives are obsolete, and policies are executed after public referenda are being held about a subject. Therefore, aggregative democrats argue that popular votes should be the building blocks of democracy.

Deliberate democrats state that in an ideal democracy, arguments should be the leading principle in decision-making instead of an individual's vote, often fueled by self-interest, according to Egan (2007). This school of thought argues that political decision-making should be based on a consensus reached through public reason after open, political discussions that considered all opposing, varying arguments (Habermas, 1996; Elster, 1998).

### **2.3.3 Intrinsically justified versus epistemic democracy**

This distinction focuses primarily on the justification dimension of democracy. Epistemic democrats hold the view that democracy can be justified because of its knowledge-producing qualities and its truth-tracking ability (i.e., meeting "a procedure-independent standard of correctness") (Knight et al., 2016, p. 141). The wisdom of the many stands central in this view. It argues that democracy enables good or correct decision-making as it can benefit from the many critical arguments and assessments offered by citizens, in contrast with less democratic systems that lack this collective deliberation of ideas (Christiano, 2018).

Intrinsic democrats argue that democratic processes are intrinsically valuable when they follow political equality (Ziliotti, 2019). This view concentrates on democracy as an end. It is justifiable regardless of its outcomes, if "equal distribution of political power among the members of society at the primary stage of the collective decision-making process" is guaranteed (Ziliotti, 2019, p. 413). This view suggests that democratic participation is good and needs to be pursued. Democratic systems are intrinsically more valuable than other, non-, or less democratic systems (Ziliotti, 2019).

Rostbøll (2015) supplies an accurate explanation on why, according to proponents of the intrinsic value of democracy, it is essential to not only analyze the instrumental, epistemic outcomes of democracy:

“If we can give only instrumental and epistemic arguments in favor of democratic participation, we lack reasons in favor of democratic participation in the case that non-democratic forms of decision-making turn out to have better results.” (Rostbøll, 2015, p. 267)

#### **2.3.4 Elite democracy versus pluralist democracy**

In this distinction, the main question is which groups of people should be included in governance and political decision-making. Supporters of an elite democracy find that only a small group of well-informed people (i.e., experts) should be involved in political decision-making (Schumpeter, 1942). They argue that this group is best suited and can make the right decisions. A misinformed, apathetic public must not influence policy decisions (Steelman, 2001).

Conversely, in a pluralist democracy, the power is dispersed amongst different interest groups (based on, for example, socio-economic status, religion, culture, or ethnicity). There is no clear group that dominates political decision-making in a pluralist democracy. Instead, every interest group “has some voice in shaping socially-binding decisions” (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p.15).

#### **2.3.5 The use of the conceptual distinctions**

This thesis will analyze the outcomes through these three conceptual distinctions to establish which types of democracy the quantitative findings support. The study will refer to the dimensions emphasizing each conceptual distinction as the *decision-making dimension* (aggregative versus deliberative), *the justification dimension* (intrinsic versus epistemic) and *the inclusion dimension* (elite versus pluralist).

Although one can combine or overlap these conceptual distinctions, each adds its own unique, normative concerns, guaranteeing specific conceptual independence. This thesis will follow the approach of Christensen and Holst, who focus “on the relatively pure versions of the opposing democracy conceptions that define our three selected dimensions, to get a broader picture of what our findings imply” (2017, p. 15). This research will focus primarily on the distinctive features of each dimension and its implications on democracy, rather than concentrating on commonalities between the dimensions.

### **3. Research Design**

This chapter discusses the research design of this thesis. It will start with an operationalization and justify the chosen quantitative indicators to measure scientization in Dutch state committees. After that, an elaboration on the data collection will be presented, the chosen research method will be explained. It concludes with a discussion on the validity and reliability of the empirical analysis.

#### **3.1 Operationalization and justification of indicators**

To be able to answer the research question, it is vital to determine viable indicators that are able to measure a possible increased reliance on academic expertise in Dutch state committees between 1970-2017. As already mentioned in the introduction, two indicators will be utilized in order to detect a possible scientization and these indicators are fairly similar to those used by Christensen and Holst (2017).

The share of members professionally linked to a university<sup>7</sup> is the first indicator. This indicator can clarify to what extent people with extensive academic knowledge are included in state committees and subsequently see how this relates to the inclusion of people with other types of knowledge or interests, such as ex-politicians or civil servants. It is possible that these groups also possess substantial academic knowledge, but it is fair to assume that academics have more profound, exhaustive, and current knowledge. Although this thesis cannot draw definite conclusions on the rationale behind appointing academics to these committees, it is reasonable to believe that “the involvement of academics in commission deliberations is conducive to a greater emphasis on academic knowledge in defining policy problems and solutions” (Christensen & Holst, 2017, p.17).

The use of citations to academic literature in the committee’s advice reports will be the second indicator in this thesis. The development of the use of academic citations from 1970-2017 will be measured by the total number of citations per 100 pages, the number of academic references per 100 pages, and the ratio of using (inter)national academic research in comparison to other types of documents, such as (inter)national policy documents or consultancy reports. It is reasonable to assume that a considerable increase in the overall use of citations over time means that citing sources explicitly is institutionalized more and this in itself can be regarded as an academic practice. An increase in the absolute references to (inter)national academic

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<sup>7</sup> During the period they took part in the state committee.

literatures would emphasize this even more. The ratio of the type of citations used is also a very useful sub-indicator, notably as it can still provide valuable information about scientization in state committees when there is no clear trend to be detected in the absolute number of academic citations per 100 pages.

### **3.2 Data collection**

During the data collection for this thesis, the first step was listing all the state committees set up between 1970-2017. A total of 13 committees was set up in this specific period, based on a pre-existing, complete overview that Kerkhoff had kindly provided. An overview of the 13 committees and their topics can be found in Appendix 1.

After creating an overview of the committees during the chosen period, information was needed to extract data for the ascribed scientization indicators. One of the most valuable sources for this were the advice reports published by the state committees. These documents were of paramount importance, particularly for the citations' indicator, as these were the only source. The reports were retrieved from various locations and forms. The most recent ones, after 2000, were online versions easily found by simple web search queries on the names of the state committees (one of them even had a website<sup>8</sup>). The reports of the committees before 2000 were all hard-copy versions located in the collections of Leiden University. One committee, disbanded prematurely, did not publish a report.<sup>9</sup>

The final step in the data collection process was acquiring personal information about the members of the state committees. This was needed to determine their profession outside the committee, which provided information about the share of academics in state committees compared to other occupations. The overview from Mr. Kerkhoff listed members in the concerned state committees, which the author fact-checked by scanning the list of names at the beginning of each report. This list detailed the profession of each member at the time of their appointment. Thus, data for both indicators were present in the committee reports. Additional personal information about the members – aiming to contribute to the existing dataset of Kerkhoff & Martina (n.d.) - was retrieved from a variety of websites; [www.parlement.com](http://www.parlement.com), [www.biografischportaal.nl](http://www.biografischportaal.nl), and Dutch university websites (for biographic information about professors).

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<sup>8</sup> Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel.

<sup>9</sup> Staatscommissie Herziening Rechterlijke Organisatie.

### **3.3 Time period**

The chosen time period for this research is 1970-2017. As already justified in the introduction, the rationale for choosing this specific time period is the lack of data on state committees after 1970 and the fact that this year represents the start of an externalization trend of policy advice in the Netherlands (Van den Berg, 2017). The period between 1970-2017 is divided into three subperiods to create legible charts; 1970-1980, 1981-2000 and 2001-2017. The demarcation and length of the different subperiods are selected to create a fairly equal distribution in terms of installed state committees within the three time periods (see table 1 at the results section for the descriptive statistics). The categorization of the data in the different time periods is based on state committee's year of installment. State committees who were installed before 1970 but published their report after 1970, were not included in the analysis. This choice was made consciously as the alleged externalization shift and its underlying causes did not start, or at least not with the same intensity, before this period.

### **3.4 Research method**

The research method consists of a descriptive, quantitative analysis of numerical data from primary sources (committee reports). Mertler describes this non-experimental research method as, "the researcher is simply studying the phenomenon of interest as it exists naturally; no attempt is made to manipulate the individual conditions or events" (2018, p. 111).

In this case, the share of academics in state committees and the number of citations are important. This descriptive, quantitative analysis consists of a longitudinal trend survey, meaning it measures the identified indicators over time for a defined population or unit (i.e., members of the state committees or the citations in the state committee reports) (Mertler, 2018).

The author used Microsoft Excel to convert the committee reports into organized spreadsheets, one per state committee, with categorized rows and columns. The most relevant categories for the profession indicator were the index number, name, profession group, and period. The source type was an important category for the citation analysis, using two separate documents, one for each indicator. After the separate tab sheets were filled in with the right information, the data of these individual report sheets was merged into one spreadsheet. The researcher created pivot tables with this overview spreadsheet, which served as the primary tool for producing several relevant charts and tables shown in the results section.

### 3.5 Reliability

Van Thiel (2015) states that the reliability in research is depending on the degree of preciseness and consistency. The nonexperimental character of the empirical analysis is already beneficial for the reliability as no manipulation of variables has been executed. For the occupation analysis, the individuals are categorized into six distinct groups to avoid ambiguity. These six groups are academia, politicians, civil servants, interest group representatives, external professional experts, and ‘other.’ The researcher categorized these profession groups based on the profession description at the beginning of each committee report. Ancillary activities of committee members are ignored. The labeling of politicians, civil servants, academia, and ‘other’ was straightforward as their professions have little room for more than one interpretation regarding professional affiliation. The divide between interest groups and external professional experts can be ambiguous. However, the following definition shows how the collective element is vital in defining interest groups:

“Interest group, also called special interest group, advocacy group, or pressure group, is any association of individuals or organizations, usually formally organized, that, on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempts to influence public policy in its favor.”  
(Clive, n.d.)

Using the ascribed definition, the profession description in the reports had to explicitly mention that a committee member represented an association of people or organizations to be categorized as an interest group representative. A business representative, in this case, would not be labelled as being part of an interest group (but as an external professional expert) while classifying a trade union representative as such.

The author used a coding scheme to secure consistency in the categorization process for the citation analysis of the committee reports. This coding scheme is composed of eight different source type: (inter)national policy documents, (inter)national policy research, (inter)national academic research, consultancy report, trade publications, interest groups documents, and other. The coding scheme can be found in appendix 2 and gives an extensive overview of what type of documents belong to the different source types. As academic sources are a sub-indicator in this thesis, it was also vital to distinguish between academic (e.g., publications in academic and scholarly journals) and non-academic (e.g., trade journals) references. The rationale behind this is two-fold. First, trade publications are not entirely viewed as academic sources lacking complete citations of sources, are not always peer-reviewed, and

often share general news and trends in a specific field of expertise instead of in-depth research. Second, classifying trade journals as a different source type can provide insight into the use of references to a particular professional group, viz. external professional experts.

### **3.6 Validity**

When assessing the validity of a study, one must analyze both its internal and external validity. The internal validity of a research concerns primarily whether the study's design accurately measures the effect it aims to measure (Van Thiel, 2015). The internal validity of this thesis is high as it is reasonable to assume that a (possible) rise in the share of academics and citations suggests an overall increased reliance on academic expertise in state committees. Moreover, as this research collects observable information about uncontrolled variables, there is no risk of possible confounding variables. Nonetheless, looking at the chosen indicators, this research cannot provide insight into possible 'contribution imbalances' of committee members. Extensive qualitative research – with its own feasibility concerns – would be needed to rule this out completely and secure absolute internal validity.

The degree of a study's external validity depends on whether the results “apply to a broader population or other target populations.” (Findley et al., 2021, p. 365). Therefore, the external validity of this study is built on whether the outcomes of the empirical analysis on state committees can also speak to the reliance on academics in all ad hoc committees. The differences between 'regular' ad hoc committees and state committees, as described by Kerkhoff and Martina (2015), make it challenging to generalize the outcomes. The profession indicator especially hinders the possibility to generalize the outcomes of this thesis as the complexity and departmental transcendence of state committee's topics could influence the selection of members. Although this study does thus not possess full external validity, the fundamental topics that state committees advice upon still make it a relevant and justifiable research subject.



## 4. Results and Analysis

This chapter is divided into two, the empirical results and the analysis. First, it presents general information about the analyzed state committees before illustrating the detailed outcomes of the research results on the two indicators. The professional affiliation of the members is discussed, followed by empirical evidence on the use of (academic) citations in the reports. The second part is the evaluative analysis. In this analysis, the empirical results are compared to the different normative views on democracy to find which aligns with the findings.

### 4.1 Empirical results

This section discusses the outcomes of the empirical analysis based on the extracted information out of the committee reports.

#### 4.1.1 General information

In the period between 1970 and 2017, 13 state committees were set up. One hundred fifty-nine members<sup>10</sup> had a seat on these committees, and every committee, but one published a report. Table 1 shows a numerical overview of the total number of installed committees in the designated periods, the number of committee members, the absolute number of citations in the committee reports, and the total number of report pages. The numbers show a substantial decline in the absolute number of committee members after 2000, and an exponential increase can be detected between 1970 and 2017 in the total number of citations. The latter can be explained by the total volume of report pages, which also doubled in this period. The upcoming sections in this chapter will display a detailed examination of these numbers.

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics state committees 1970-2017*

Time period	1970-1980	1981-2000	2001-2017
Number of committees	5	4	4
Number of committee members	64	58	37
Number of citations	172	345	902
Number of report pages <sup>11</sup>	487	721	1001

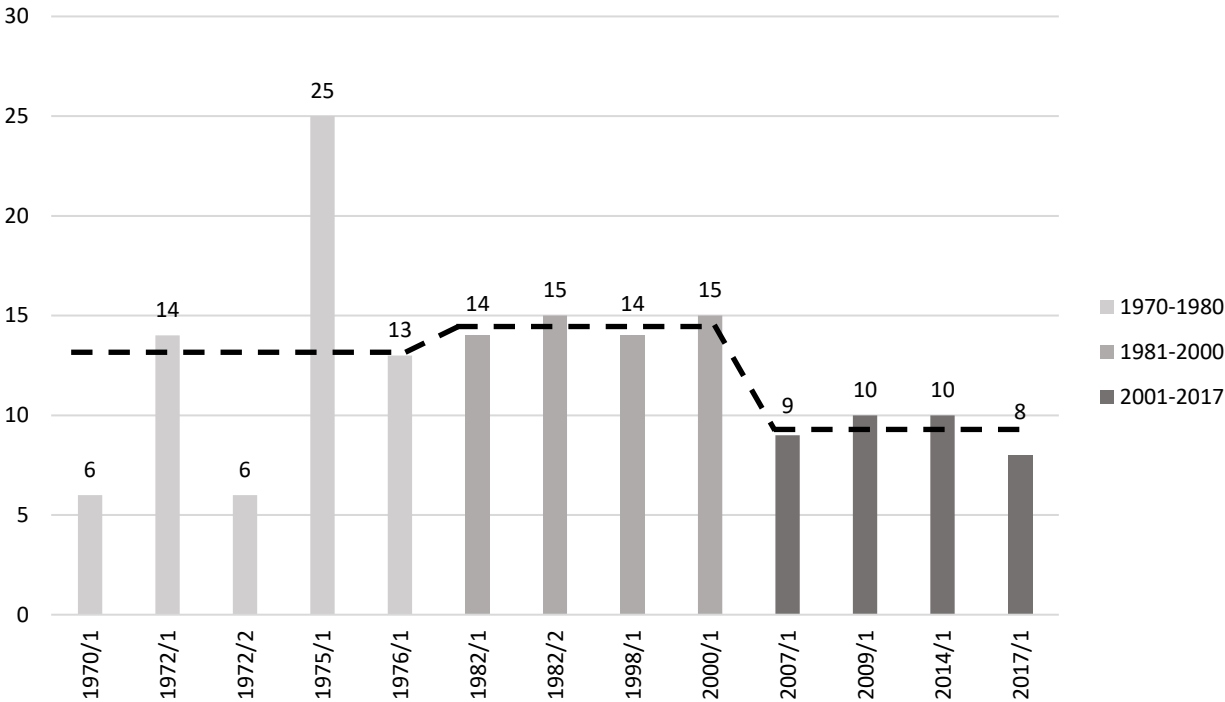
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<sup>10</sup> Of these 159, there were 156 unique individuals

<sup>11</sup> This includes the list of references

Figure 1 shows an overview of the volume of committee members: the volume of committee members varies per committee, from six members on two different occasions in 1970 and 1972 to a high outlier of 25 members in 1975. The black-dashed line represents the average number of committee members in the different periods. Although the values from 1970-1980 are erratic, there seems to be a declining trend in committee members after 2000 compared to 1981-2000, from 14 members in 1981-2000 to nine members after 2000.

*Figure 1. Number of committee members per state committee 1970-2017*



**4.1.2 Profession of committee members**

The professional affiliation of the committee members is one of the two indicators to measure a possible increased reliance on academic knowledge in state committees. This section analyses the state committees’ composition of each period before merging those outcomes to see whether there is a trend. The committee members are categorized into six different professional groups (politicians, academia, civil service, interest groups, external professional experts, and ‘other’). The professional labeling of the members is based on the job title mentioned in the committee reports. Of all members, 14% did not actively practice a profession (they were retired) during their time in the committee. As it is plausible that their offered expertise is derived from the profession they have practised during their career, this group is categorized in the same way as working members.

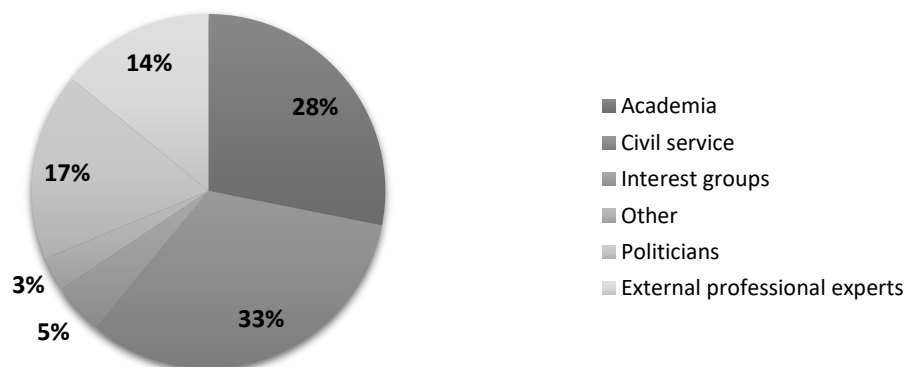
#### 4.1.2.1 Professional affiliation per time period

Table 1 shows how the five state committees set up between 1970-1980 contained 64 members. The assigned topics of these committees were divergent, from advising upon the desirability of a voluntary army instead of conscription to recommendations for revising the judicial system. A complete overview of the topics of the state committees can be found in appendix 1.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of different professional groups at this particular time. Both academia (28%) and civil servants (33%) were well-represented in the state committees. The data shows how at least one individual of both these professionals groups was present in all five committees. The ubiquitous presence of these two groups is unparalleled by any other professional group. In this period, politicians accounted for 17% of all the members in state committees and were the third biggest group. Another substantial group (14%) were the external professional experts. This group contains individuals appointed for their predominantly practical expertise (instead of the more theoretical knowledge of academia). The fields of expertise are as diverse as the committee topics, making for a heterogeneous group of people. For example, both the (ex-)lieutenants on the state committee for the desirability of a voluntary army<sup>12</sup>, and the lawyers on the state committee on the judicial system are considered external professional experts. Both interest groups (e.g., trade union representatives) and ‘other’ had a minimal share in the committee, respectively 5% and 3%.

Thus, civil servants and academia held the most prominent positions in state committees from 1970-1980, concerning percentages of the total as shown in figure 2 and they had a seat on each of the five committees

*Figure 2. Distribution of profession groups 1970-1980 (N=64)*

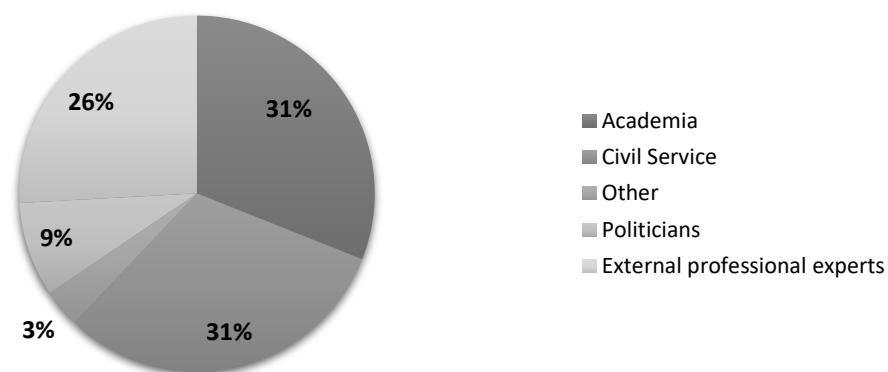


<sup>12</sup> Staatscommissie Personeelsvoorziening van de Krijgsmacht.

During the period 1981-2000, four state committees were set up. Figure 3 shows the percentual professional distribution of the 58 members. Similar to the previous period, academia and civil servants are the largest groups as they account for over 60%. These groups had a presence on every committee again.

A significant difference compared to 1970-1980 is the steep increase of the external professional experts (from 11% to 26%). This considerable rise was caused by a high number of business representatives on one state committee<sup>13</sup> to advise on the future of government communication. For instance, a newspaper editor-in-chief, a partner of an advertising company, and a managing director of a technology company participated in this committee. Moreover, the share of politicians in this period almost halved from 17% in 1970 to 1980 to 9% from 1981 to 2000. These committees did not appoint interest group representatives, and the minor share of 'other' remained in place in the period 1980-2000, with a total share of 3%.

*Figure 3. Distribution of profession groups 1981-2000 (N=58)*



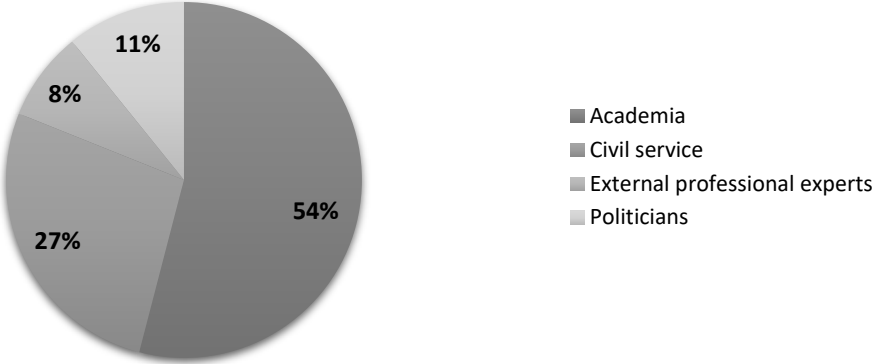
In the most recent period, four committees with 37 members were appointed, which is lower compared to the other two periods (figure 1). Figure 4 shows the distribution of professional groups and academics now account for more than half of all committee members.

The rise of academia seems to be at the expense of the share of external professional experts, whose percentual representation during this time plunges from 26% to 8%. Another interesting finding is the further homogenization of the committee's composition concerning professional groups. In the earliest period, six different professional groups were represented in

<sup>13</sup> Staatscommissie Toekomst Overheidscommunicatie. 9 of the 15 members in this committee were external professional experts.

the state committees, which dropped to five in the subsequent period. There are only four different professional groups identified between 2001 and 2017.

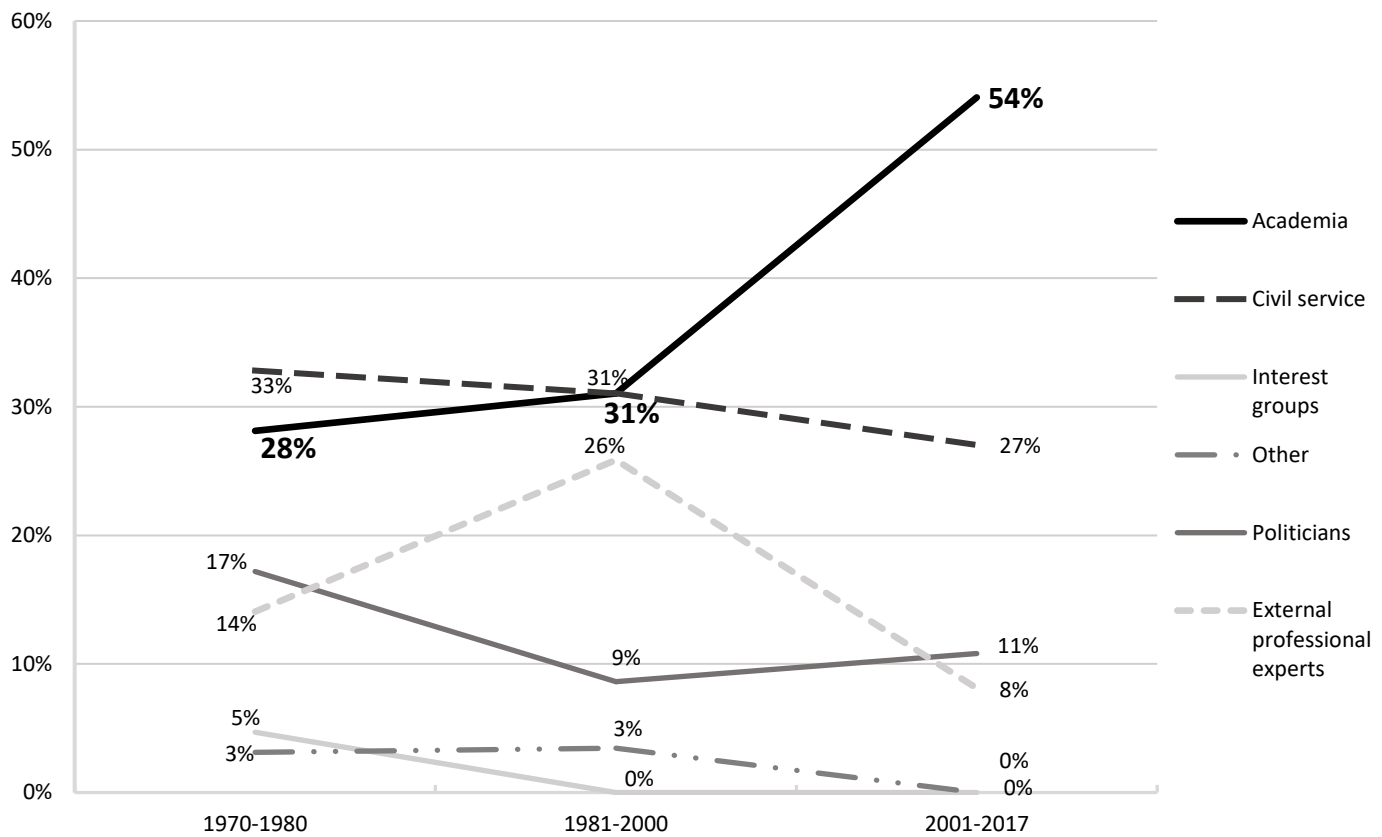
*Figure 4. Distribution of profession groups 1981-2000 (N=37)*



**4.1.2.2 Overall trend of profession indicator**

As this thesis wants to gain insight into whether increased reliance on academic knowledge between 1970 and 2017 can be detected in state committees, the researcher created a longitudinal trend to detect changes over time. The graph in figure 5 is an integration of the three pie charts from the earlier section.

Figure 5. Distributive trend of profession groups 1970-2017



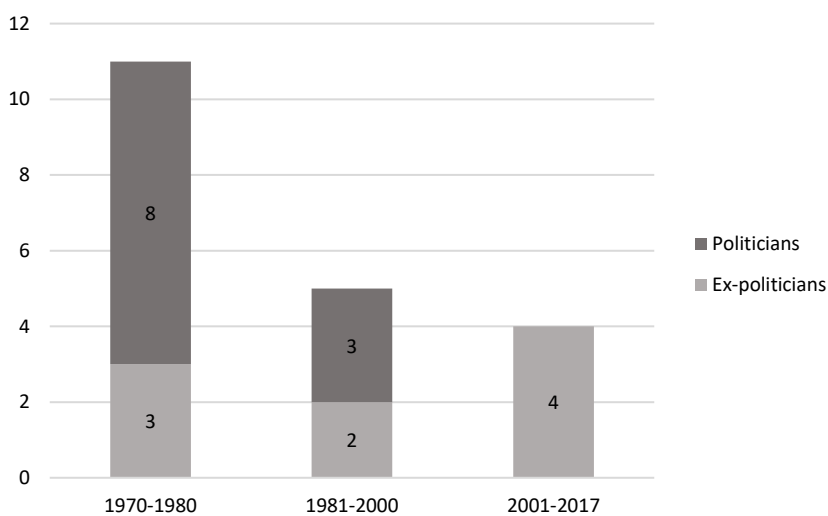
When analyzing figure 5, the most relevant development for this thesis is the substantial increase in the share of academics in state committees. From around a quarter in 1970-80 to more than half in the period after 2000. Based on this indicator, the view of Turner (2003), Hoppe & Halfmann (2004), and Kitcher (2011) – who argue that science is becoming more entrenched in policy-making – seems to be confirmed. A legitimate counterargument, in this case, is that a state committee stays an *advice* instrument without any executive powers.

However, the general objective of appointing a committee is to seriously consider its advice about complex matters when decisions or policy is made. This is particularly so for state committees as another reason to label them as such during their appointment (next to the contextual distinctions) is to give these committees more ‘cachet’ (i.e., more prestige) (Kerkhoff, 2019, p. 21). This title gives a state committee more importance, making it more probable that policymakers will take their advice seriously.

Apart from the increased numbers of academics on state committees, the development of the share of politicians and civil servants is noteworthy. Van den Berg (2017) argues that the 1970s demarcate the start of an externalization shift in the Dutch policy advisory landscape.

The outcomes of this analysis, as shown in figure 4 confirm this crowding out of policy advice. While between 1970-1980, half of the committee members<sup>14</sup> had a governmental affiliation, this dropped to little over a third (38%) from 2001-2017. This would be less (27%) if one considers ex-politicians not having a direct governmental affiliation as the total share of politicians from 2001-2017 were made up of retired politicians. Figure 6 illustrates the proportion of ex-politicians compared to active politicians over the three designated periods, expressed in absolute numbers. The balance shifted from a prevalence of active politicians to only ex-politicians present.

*Figure 6. Distribution of active politicians vs. ex-politicians*



According to an online statement from a state committee<sup>15</sup>, the presence of (active) politicians was harmful to its legitimacy as the assigned topics were often related to the political system. Their presence could lead to situations where politicians advised themselves (“Wat is een Staatscommissie?”, n.d.). Although active politicians no longer take place in state committees, figure 5 shows how civil servants still represent the political-administrative interests; their presence remains substantial and stable over time as civil servants held a seat in all 13 committees.

A few remaining conclusions can be drawn from figure 5. The share of external professional experts is whimsical and seems to depend on the subject matter entrusted to the committee. Moreover, interest groups representatives were rarely appointed implying that academic and political interests are given priority. Furthermore, the composition of the

<sup>14</sup> Politicians and civil service combined.

<sup>15</sup> Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel.

committees has become increasingly homogenized. In the earliest period, 39% of the total members were made up of interest group representatives, politicians, ‘other’, and external professional experts. Between 2001-2017, this has dropped to only 19% where at the same time the share of civil servants and academia combined went from 61% in 1970-1980 to 81% in 2001-2017.

### **4.1.3 Use of citations**

The use of citations in committee reports is the second indicator in this thesis to measure scientization in Dutch state committees. The author only analyzed 12 committee reports as one committee disbanded prematurely. Therefore, the number of reports per period is equally distributed with, each period containing four reports. The source types were identified during the analysis, and the coding scheme in Appendix 2 is helpful to give a complete overview of the type of documents that each source represents. For this analysis, explicit references in footnotes and the list of references are looked at. Duplicates are not counted as unique values.

The report’s introduction functioned as the starting point of the analyzed range, and the conclusion or advice marked the end of this range (appendices were thus not analyzed). The list of references is outside this range but included in the analysis. As this indicator also aims to shed a light on the number of citations per 100 pages, any blank pages within the ascribed range are excluded.

#### **4.1.3.1 Citations per 100 pages**

Figure 7 shows the longitudinal trend of the number of citations to academic literature per 100 pages. The explosive rise of the volume of citations stands out when looking at this figure. It increased from 35 citations on average per 100 pages in the period 1970-80 to 90 citations per 100 report pages between 2001-2017. As shown in table 1, the absolute number of citations also reaffirm the significant increase in the total use of citations over time. Christensen and Holst (2017) detected a similar trend in Norwegian ad hoc committees and argued how this implies that “commissions increasingly embraced the explicit citing of sources, which can be identified as an academic practice” (p.23).



Figure 7. Number of citations per 100 pages

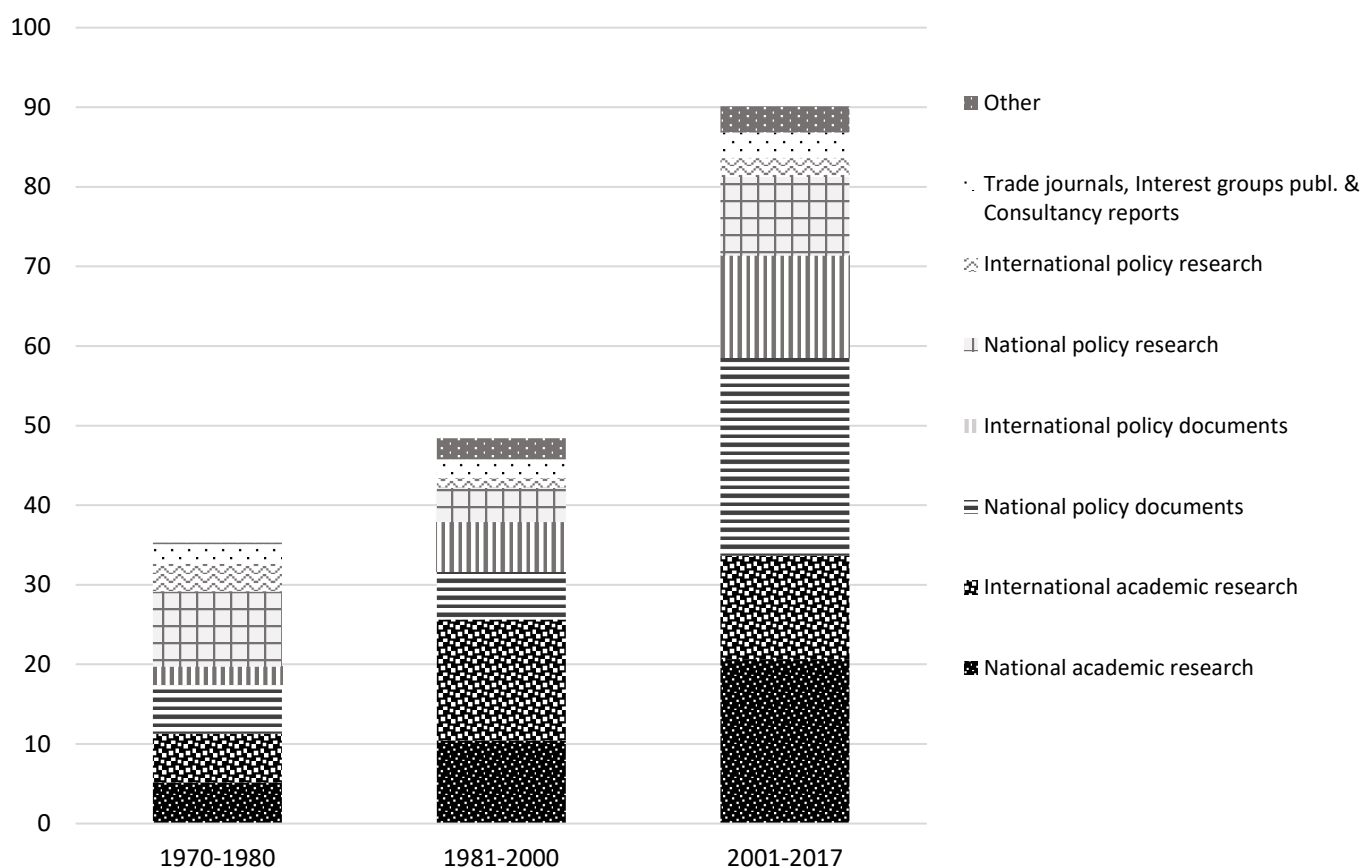
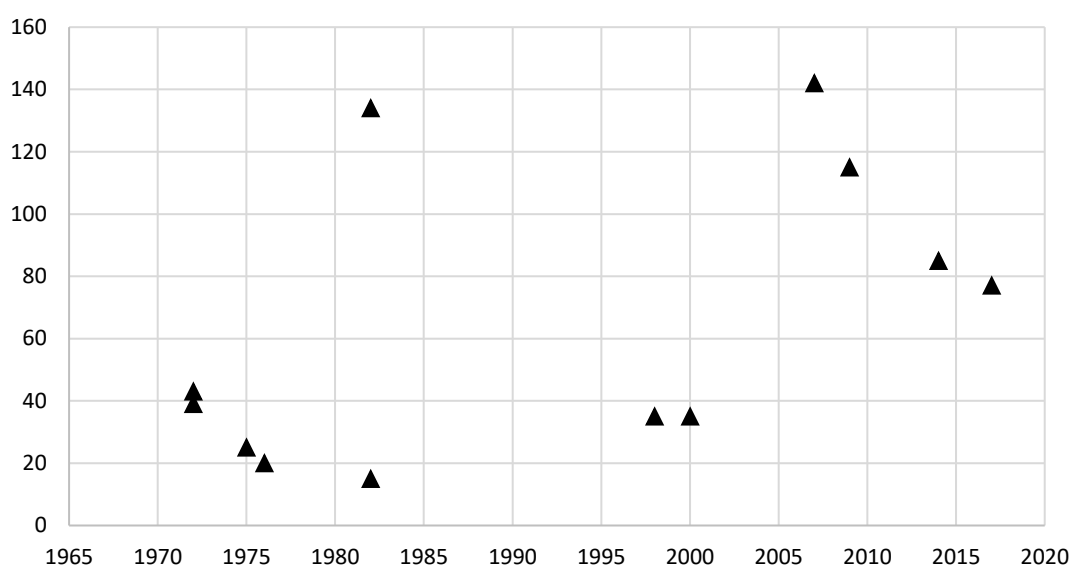


Figure 8 shows a scatter plot of the distribution of the citations per single report to check figure 7 and see whether outliers may have had a severe effect on the outcomes as the  $N$  (12 reports) is relatively low. The scatter plot confirms the validity of figure 7 but shows a slightly different picture showing the increase between 1970-80 and 1981-2000. Figure 7 is created by the aberration of one value<sup>16</sup>; there is a clear variance in the number of citations before and after 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Staatscommissie Relatie Kiezer-Beleidsvorming.

**Figure 8. Number of citations per 100 pages, by single report**



#### 4.1.3.2 The distribution of source types

Although general citing can be regarded as an academic practice, the use of actual academic sources is a more evident indicator for increasing dependence on academic knowledge in committee reports. The (inter)national academic research panels in figure 7 already illustrate how the use of national and international academic literature increased from 11 citations per 100 pages in 1970-80 to 34 citations per 100 pages in the period 2001-2017. This increase indicates how academic literature is increasingly relied upon during report writing.

However, both figures 7 and 8 have shown how the total citations per 100 pages also rose during the same period. Therefore, it is meaningful to see how the share of academic literature has grown compared to the other source types. Table 2 displays a percentual overview of the used source types per period and an aggregated overview per source type.

**Table 2. Distribution of source types**

Period	National academic research	International academic research	National policy documents	International policy documents	National policy documents	International policy research	Trade publ./Interest group doc.	Other	<i>N</i>
1970-1980	15%	17%	17%	6%	27%	10%	7%	1%	172
1981-2000	21%	32%	12%	13%	9%	3%	5%	6%	345
2001-2017	23%	14%	28%	14%	11%	3%	4%	4%	902
<i>Total</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>1419</i>

If one looks at table 2, clear longitudinal trends are difficult to detect because of the variety of topics of the state committees across the different periods. For example, the steep increase in the use of national policy documents (e.g., laws, acts, treaties) in the period 2001-2017 is due to one specific committee<sup>17</sup> entrusted with a revision of the constitution, which resulted in an ample use of national law-related documents. Table 2 clearly indicates the overall predominant position held by (inter)national academic sources (40%) and (inter)national governmental documents and studies (52%). Moreover, the underrepresentation or complete lack of interest groups in the composition is also reflected in citations, where only 4% of all the sources were derived from consultancy reports or interest groups related documents or research.

Looking at the outcomes of both indicators, it is evident that the reliance on academic expertise and knowledge has grown considerably. Although all indicators show signs of a scientization trend, some indicators and figures are more convincing. The sharp increase in the share of academics in state committees is unequivocal and strongly suggests that the possessed knowledge of academics is regarded as quintessential when appointing committee members. It also implies that academia is growingly involved in the definition of policy advice within these committees. Simultaneously, the continuous presence of civil servants does show how the political-administrative interests are consistently represented, be it less clear in the recent decades than when active politicians often took a seat on state committees. Interest groups and external professional experts play a minor role in the occupational figures of state committees and the externalization shift between 1970-2017.

The citations indicator, specifically the total number of citations and the absolute rise of academic literature, also points towards increasing academic knowledge. However, this increase is accompanied by an overall rise in the use of national policy documents and research, which shows that these public documents are equally considered, maintaining significant importance in the argumentation process of state committees.

#### **4.2 Democratic positioning of the outcomes**

The second part of the results section analyzes the quantitative findings through the different reasonable conceptual outlooks on democracy. Each conceptual distinction, and the corresponding dimension of democracy that it emphasizes, will be addressed separately.

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<sup>17</sup> Staatscommissie Grondwet.

#### **4.2.1 Justification dimension of democracy**

The quantitative outcomes show a divergent degree of congruency (the theories are conceptually distinct) with the two normative concepts of democracy prioritizing justificatory issues, viz. intrinsically justified democracy and epistemic democracy.

The increasing homogenization of the composition and the subsequent preponderance of two specific groups of people, academia and civil servants, is not following the principles of an intrinsically justified democracy. This theory regards the equal distribution of political power as an indispensable feature that intrinsically justifies using a democratic system over other forms of government. Although acknowledging this point from an intrinsically democratic perspective, it does raise the question of whether it is conceivable that a state committee – with its limited number of members and need for specific expertise on assigned topics – is a political instrument in which the endeavored political equality can be achieved.

In contrast, the increasing reliance on academic knowledge indicates a shift towards a more epistemic democracy. Supporters of this type of democracy argue that democracy should not be valued on its procedural fairness only, but primarily on its ability to facilitate a “procedure-independent standard of correctness” (Knight et al., 2016, p. 141). The rise in academia and the amplified use of academic references is not a development that is likely to result in advice and reports that are less ‘truthful.’ The increasing use of citations over time improves fact-checking, which is a critical element of epistemic democracy. The following contemplation by Holst and Molander (2019) accurately shows how, in an ideal epistemic democracy, having expert bodies is viewed as beneficial for policy-making while democratically justifiable when meeting basic procedural requirements:

“If we take it to be a minimal condition for expert arrangements to have normative legitimacy that their powers have been democratically delegated ... What then would be wrong really with delegating policy-making to experts without further inclusion of citizens and civil society, as long as doing so is licensed by elected parliaments, and as long as one could reasonably expect this to result in better, more efficient and even more equitable decisions, than decisions made by a democratic assembly or directly by the plebiscite?” (Holst & Molander, 2019, p. 7)

### **4.2.2 Inclusion dimension of democracy**

Pluralist and elite democracy are the two political theories highlighting political inclusion. Typically, increased reliance on academics as a select group of people is a development that would unquestionably show a shift towards an elite democracy, interpreted by elite democrats “as a precondition for better – more stable, more effective, more rational – democratic governance” (Christensen & Holst, 2017, p.26). However, setting up a state committee as a means to retrieve information on a topic from people with an alleged extensive knowledge on the subject matter, is an instrument that perfectly fits the elite democratic stance that only a small, well-informed group of people, (i.e. experts), should be involved in political decision-making or advising (Schumpeter, 1942). It can be argued that a rise in the number of academics does not necessarily increase the degree of ‘elitism.’ Instead, the empirical findings indicate how a shift towards one specific type of elites can be detected within this ‘elitist’ instrument.

The empirical findings do not show signs that are compatible with the ideas of a pluralist democracy. In a pluralist democracy, a society is composed of diverse groups seeking various political interests. These groups may form political parties who pursue actual electoral power or unite into an interest or pressure groups who aim to influence those in power. As one analyzes the quantitative outcomes, the only professional group that holds an unmistakable corporatist character, interest group representatives, has not been given a single seat on the committee over the last forty years, interest-group related documents continuously play a minor role in the advisory reports. In addition, the overall compositional homogenization of the state committees is a development that goes against the pluralist belief that diverse groups are competing against each other to exert influence. From a critical standpoint, one can question whether a state committee is an advisory instrument that can endorse a pluralist character when representing various interest groups may not be as relevant for the topic the state committee addresses.

### **4.2.3 Decision-making dimension of democracy**

As explained in the theoretical framework, the normative political theories of aggregative and deliberative democracy are built around the process of decision-making (Knight & Johnson, 1994; Habermas, 1996; Elster, 1998).

The empirical outcomes show that a growing number of academics in state committees points towards a more deliberative type of democracy as constructing well-founded arguments, that after considering competing views, is inherent to science and academia. The rise in total

citations underscores this and is undoubtedly beneficial for the transparency of the recommendations as it supplies an increased insight into the argumentation process. Furthermore, Eagan (2007) states that in a perfect deliberative democracy, “preferences should be shaped by deliberation in advance of decision making, rather than by self-interest” (p. 205). In this case, acting by ‘self-interest’ need a broader interpretation. It refers to any situation where individuals or groups persistently hold on to a predetermined set of ideas, including collective or group interest. From the six categories of professional groups, active politicians and interest group representatives are the most likely to act out of collective interest as they both represent a particular constituency or specific group of people. Therefore, the complete disappearance of interest groups representatives and active politicians in state committees also shows a shift towards democracy that holds more deliberative characteristics.

Concurrently, the rise of academics and the overall homogenization of the state committee’s composition are incongruous with an aggregative democracy. This type of democracy advocates “ways of aggregating individual interests or preferences” (Knight and Johnson, 1994, p. 277). As shown in the empirical analysis, the share of members representing a clear group of individuals has diminished, and a channeling of the population’s preferences in the state committees cannot be guaranteed. Moreover, the theoretical framework has highlighted how public referenda are the purest form of democracy according to aggregative democrats and how this decision-making instrument is preferred over the current system having politicians function as citizen representatives who decide on the electorate’s behalf (Heath, 2016). Therefore, setting up any advisory committee composed of unelected members would be a problematic practice.

## 5. Conclusion

This concluding chapter answers the research question. It also reverts to the underpinning theory before concluding with a reflection on the limitations and recommendations for future research.

### 5.1 Answering the research question

This thesis explored the role of academics and academic knowledge in Dutch state committees between 1970 and 2017 and its effects on democracy. This chapter answers the earlier presented research question:

*“To what extent has there been an increasing reliance on academic expertise in Dutch state committees in the period 1970-2017 and how does this fit with different understandings of democracy?”*

This thesis contributed empirically to innumerable (inter)national literature about politics and science becoming increasingly intertwined. This thesis also reflected on the democratic character these quantitative outcomes have by analyzing it from differing angles on democracy.

The analysis of this thesis confirms existing accounts underscoring the interwovenness of science and politics. It has provided evidence that illustrates a strongly growing scientization in state committees over the last five decades, which indicates an augmented influence of academics in defining policy problems and solutions on the fundamental issues entrusted to these committees. This is reflected in the distribution of professional groups, doubling the share of academics between 1970-2017. The composition analysis also displayed how, after 2000, more than half of all appointed members have been professionally affiliated to universities. Where the ascendancy of this group has crowded out several other professional groups, such as interest group representatives and external professional experts, the civil service remains to have a substantial share in the state committee’s composition. Next to the composition of the committees, the use of citations in committee reports has also supplied valuable insights pointing towards an increased scientization in state committees. However, nuance is needed here as the results primarily show how the academic practice of source referencing is used more extensively now than before.

The disparate views on the democratic effects of scientization have been the principal objective for this thesis to reflect on the empirical outcomes through different, reasonable conceptions of democracy. The variety of dimensions emphasized by the conceptual distinctions has benefited this research as it allowed it to analyze the outcomes from various perspectives, which helped to create a ‘democratic profile’ of the empirical findings.

The evaluative analysis has shown how the usage of state committees as a means to retrieve advice can be regarded as an elite democratic practice. Within this elite democratic instrument, the increasing dependence on academic expertise aligns with the core ideas of epistemic and deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, this development results in a democracy that holds fewer characteristics congruent with the ideas of an aggregative, pluralist, and intrinsically justified democracy.

## **5.2 Theoretical reflection**

The theoretical framework of this thesis commenced with an overview of the existing literature around the concept of externalization. First, when looking at the empirical outcomes, one sees an increasing degree of externalization (committee members that work outside the innermost public circle) within this specific policy advisory instrument. Furthermore, the locational model of Halligan (1995), suggesting that only groups in the policy advisory system with a high degree of government control (i.e., civil servants or politicians) can influence policy-making is disputed with the empirical findings of this thesis. Although this research has not examined whether committee reports have been translated into actual policies, one can assume that the substantial rise in external actors in state committees has not resulted in a simultaneous decline in the importance of the government recommendations because of the societal-wide topics they address and the prestige when named a ‘state committee.’ Additional longitudinal research on changes on the conversion of policy advice to policy-making would be needed to strengthen this argument.

The theoretical section has also displayed some of the core differences between scientists and politicians and how these differences may subside in certain situations, depending on their place on the positional continuum (Pels, 2001). The quantitative character of this thesis has not allowed diving into the social dynamics within the state committees. However, extensive qualitative research on this topic would be captivating as it could supply more



information on the effects that changes on the positional continuum cause and see whether academics adopt roles that are not inherent to their core profession.

Lastly, this thesis has emphasized and underscored the addressed literature, which argues that science is not a mere knowledge messenger for politics (e.g., Pels, 2001; Hoppe and Halfman, 2004; Kitcher, 2011). The dominant position of academics in state committees shows how this group has extensively been involved in providing policy advice and solutions on complex, societal subject matters, extending beyond presenting mere rational research outcomes.

### **5.3 Limitations and recommendations for further research**

Scientific research has limitations; this thesis is no exception. A researcher has to design a study within time, financial, and (human) resources limitations, leaving scope for future research. This section discusses the limitations and gaps of this thesis and suggests how follow-up studies may fill these gaps.

First, the quantitative data on the professional groups of members could be more refined than the primary profession, the occupation mentioned in the committee reports. For example, it is possible that academics are politically active and have a teaching position or politicians and civil servants may lecture at a university. While this limitation must be acknowledged, it will be challenging to consider all professional activities of a committee member as it would impede the categorization process.

A second limitation of this thesis pertains to the measurement of scientization. While the empirical analysis provides a firm quantitative base for the reached conclusion, it does not explain the rationale behind academia's appointment nor describes the internal committee deliberations and possible contribution imbalances. Extensive qualitative research among (ex-)politicians could be helpful to examine the reasons behind the members' appointments and whether symbolic or instrumental objectives are predominant in the selection process. This study would complement the earlier adduced work by Boswell and Hunter (2015).

A third and last limitation is built around the external validity of this thesis. The distinctive features of state committees (primarily the complexity and departmental transcendences of the topics) make it difficult to generalize the findings to other Dutch policy

advisory system sectors as the election of committee members may depend on the complexity of the subject matter.

Consequently, additional quantitative research on ‘regular’ Dutch ad-hoc advisory committees would be valuable as this could increase the validity of this thesis and create a complete quantitative overview of the changed position of academia on Dutch policy-making. The work of Christensen and Holst (2017) and this study have underscored the feasibility of executing a quantitative study on scientization in policy advice. Therefore, the author concludes this thesis with the expectation that these compelling findings would encourage another study to explore academics’s influence on Dutch policy-making further.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1. Chronological overview of state committees 1970-2017 and their topics*

Name (Dutch)	Date of installment	Year of disbandment	Chairman	Topic
Staatscommissie Rechtskarakter van de Ambtenaarsverhouding	24/03/1970	1973*	E.H. Toxopeus	Legal position of civil servants
Staatscommissie bescherming persoonlijke levenssfeer i.v.m. persoonsregistraties	21/02/1972	1976	T. Koopmans	Protection of personal data
Staatscommissie Bevolkingsvraagstuk	03/03/1972	1977	P. Muntendam	Population growth
Staatscommissie Personeelsvoorziening van de Krijgsmacht	22/03/1975	1978	J.A. Mommersteeg	Voluntary army / abolishment of conscription
Staatscommissie Herziening Rechterlijke organisatie	01/04/1976	1985	C.J. van Zeben	Revision of the judicial system
Staatscommissie Relatie Kiezers-Beleidsvorming	17/05/1982	1985	B.W. Biesheuvel	Relationship electorate-policy making
Staatscommissie Euthanasie	18/10/1982	1986	H.J.M. Jeukens	Euthanasia
Staatscommissie Dualisme en Lokale Democratie	30/09/1998	1999	D.J. Elzinga	Dualism and local democracy
Staatscommissie Toekomst Overheidscommunicatie	26/04/2000	2001	J. Wallage	Government communication
Staatscommissie Duurzame Kustontwikkeling	07/09/2007	2008	C.P. Veerman	Sustainable coastal development
Staatscommissie Grondwet	08/07/2009	2010	W.M.E. Thomassen	Revision of the constitution
Staatscommissie Herijking Ouderschap	28/04/2014	2016	A. Wolfsen	Recalibration of parenthood
Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel	01/02/2017	2018	J.W. Remkes	Revision of the parliamentary system

\* This was a premature disbandment. The ‘Staatcommissie Rechtskarakter van de Ambtenaarsverhouding’ did therefore not publish a report.

*Appendix 2. Coding scheme source categorization.*

	Academic research	Policy documents	Policy research	Consultancy reports / Interest group documents / Trade Journals	Other
<i>National</i>	- Dutch research papers	- National laws - Transcripts of parliamentary debates - Annual reports - Verdicts (e.g. from the Council of State)	- Reports from public research institutions (e.g. CBS, CBP, WRR, <i>de Rekenkamer</i> )	- Trade journals - Reports from consultancy firms* - Union magazines	- Novels - Biographies - Speeches - Film references
<i>International</i>	- International research papers (published in int. academic journals)	- Int. laws - Treaties (e.g. in the EU) - Int. verdicts (ICC)	- Reports from int. public institutions (e.g. UN, OECD, Worldbank, UNESCO)		

\* This includes reports that were commissioned by the governments