

## **The Promise of Organization. Political Associations, 1820-1890 Debate and Practice**

Political parties have often been seen as obstacles on the road to true democracy, and as instruments of over-ambitious career politicians. And before modern parties even existed, political associations were seen as dangerous ‘machines’, producing ‘oligarchies’. Still, the modern voluntary association was ‘democratic’ because it integrated ordinary men and women into the political process in a disciplined, civilized manner. Without it, many people would never have been able to use the political system. Voluntary organizations could fit into the system of representative government which rejected unrestrained popular passions, but also be an instrument of mobilizing the common people. The contested machine-like appearance of voluntary organizations and political parties was the nearest one could get to the ideal of respectable democratization. This program will focus on the enthusiasm, arguments and concrete activities of the organizers as well as the criticism offered by opponents of modern political organization. The three projects focus on three waves of associational mania and debate: modern antislavery organizations and other early pressure groups; organizing during the revolutions of 1848; mass political parties during the 1870s and 1880s. Together they give an overview of the introduction of organizations into politics. We will study the separate discussions about the merits and dangers of voluntary associations and political parties as parts of a general debate during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and assume that the intensity of the debate was caused by the controversial issue of democratization and the related issue of inclusion and exclusion. By studying the contested nature of modern organizations, and in particular by thick description of the perception and introduction of new forms of organization, by biographical research, and by studying the debate on organizing in particular in (recently digitized) newspapers, the program will throw new light on one of the most hotly debated issues of modern politics.

### **Description of the Proposed Research**

Political parties are unpopular. Many people see them as obstacles on the road to true democracy, and as instruments of over-ambitious career politicians. This criticism is old - ever since modern political parties emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they have been criticized in this vein. And before modern parties even existed, political associations were seen as dangerous ‘machines’, producing ‘oligarchies’. As many organizations aimed at broadening democracy, they were vulnerable to such attacks. Their leaders and participants often even shared these critical views. Yet they continued to organize. This was because associations offered career opportunities, but also because they believed in the merits of this new instrument. Modern voluntary associations were ‘democratic’ because they integrated ordinary men and women into the political process in a disciplined, civilized manner. Without the intermediary form of the association, many people would never have been able to use the political system to voice their opinions. Voluntary organizations could fit into the system of representative government which rejected direct democracy, let alone unrestrained popular passions; yet at the same time be an instrument of democratization and of mobilizing the common people. The often criticized machine-like appearance of

voluntary organizations and political parties was the nearest one could get to the ideal of respectable democratization.

The central theme of this program is the contested nature of modern political organizations – more specifically, of the employment of modern organizing techniques in politics. We will focus on the enthusiasm, arguments and concrete activities of the organizers as well as the criticism offered by opponents of modern political organization.

***Topic, aims, theory and historiographical background***

In the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the idea took root that the ‘machine’ of organization was powerful enough to battle vices, redistribute power and re-organize society (Project 1). From the perspective of the founders, a new organization provided an opportunity to generate recognition (Honneth 2003) through individual leader- or membership, but more importantly through participating in public debate and political life. The mere existence of modern organizations empowered ‘new’ (formerly excluded) participants in public life. In this respect, democracy can be regarded as the (by-) product of their inclusion into the political system: when ‘new’ organized groups were recognized by the state, a stable democracy could develop (Young 2000; Bermeo 2000).

The craze for organizing rolled over Europe and North-America in consecutive waves from the Revolutionary years of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until the period around 1900 (Nord 2000; Hoffmann 2006). Because this project is concerned with the development of the respectable voluntary association in connection with the expansion of democracy (in the sense of suffrage), the three waves of the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - in between the revolutionary period of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the democratic age of the 20<sup>th</sup> - have been selected as most relevant for our purposes.

One of the most important innovations in mass organizing was the ‘subscriber democracy’ (Morris 1990, 2000). Many members of the new, democratic, organizations only paid their subscription and never attended meetings. By making unprecedented use of the modern press voluntary associations nevertheless produced imagined communities. If nations were imagined communities created by newspapers (Anderson 1983), these subscriber democracies have played an equally important and even more active role in the process of re-imagining the world, realigning loyalties and redefining politics – more than newspapers, political organizations mobilized people and prepared for action.

While organizing in a political context was by no means new in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, innovations in organizing as well as changes in the context in which the organizations operated, changed the older tool of organization into the power tool that was instrumental in building democracy. The new organizations distinguished themselves by operating in the **public sphere** and by their **transparent nature** (published proceedings, financial reports, and lists of [board]members); their **democratic management** (members, usually represented by local delegates, elected board members and had a decisive vote); their **national orientation** (not the local community, but the national arena was their natural playing field); their **accessibility** (low annual subscriptions and no secret ballots to decide membership) and the fact that the social diversity was compensated for by **ideological homogeneity** (instead of ‘general’ associations, denominational ones developed).

Researchers studying the phenomenon of (political) voluntary associations have established its importance for the development of class consciousness, for working as

well as middle classes (Thompson 1963; Morris 1990), of ethnic, religious and gendered identities (e.g. Janse 2007, Tilly 2002) or of the emancipation of workers and women (e.g. Zollinger Giele 1995); for structuring and representing local (mainly urban) society (Ryan 1989, Morris 1990); as a crucial part of the modern repertoire of political action (Tilly 1995, 2004a, b; cf. Houkes & Janse 2005); as constituting civil society and as crucial for a stable democracy (Putnam 1992; Young 2000; Morton 2006; Bermeo & Nord 2000); as vehicles for careers of ambitious ‘newcomers’ (Gusfield 1963; Harrison 1971; cf. Janse 2005).

*The Promise of Organization* aims at bridging the gap between the different approaches to organizational history, by studying the modern organizations and their contested nature as a phenomenon in its own right. The project aims at answering basic, but still unanswered questions: Why did certain people choose ‘founding an organization’ from the broad repertoire of action available to them (such as meetings or protest marches, petitions, pamphlets, or newspapers)? What did they expect from the new organization? Who opposed modern organizing, and why? How was the phenomenon of political organizing discussed during this time?

### ***Hypotheses***

Establishing an organization can be regarded as a way of institutionalizing ad hoc statements like a petition or a protest march. This ability to preserve momentary support or dissent made organizations capable of restructuring social and political life: they paired mobilization to an institution. Through its institutionalized and hierarchical nature (with a president, board, honorary members, and the strict regulation of meetings and proceedings), the new type of organization was part of the modern repertoire of political action.

On the basis of previous research we assume that (1) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was an ongoing, lively, though intermittent debate about the merits and dangers of voluntary associations and political parties, and that it is necessary to study the separate discussion as parts of a general debate in order to really see the importance of organizing, that (2) the intensity and urgency of the debate was mainly caused by the controversial issue of democratization (was democracy desirable, and if so, under what conditions could organizations play a role in it?), that (3) the issue of inclusion and integration (of new men and women into the associations and the political system) versus exclusion (active attempts to prevent the aspiring new members from participating, later the rise of a new oligarchy) made this debate emotional and personal for contemporaries.

### ***Background***

Historians no longer assume that politics is only about material interests and rational choice, or that political organizations are self-evident, and that pre-existing groups such as ‘the working classes’ or ‘the Calvinists’ were simply waiting to be organized. These ideas have found expression in the NWO-programs ‘The Nation State. Politics in the Netherlands since 1815’ and ‘Parliamentary and Partisan Culture. Political Culture and View of Politics’, to which the applicants have made important contributions. In her recent project ‘Associational Mania: The Struggle for Recognition and the Transformation of Politics, ca. 1820-1890’ (funded by Leiden University and Harvard University) Maartje Janse has researched early 19<sup>th</sup> century pressure groups in the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands. The American case study serves as a pilot project to *The Promise of Organization*: many

texts that discussed the new ‘instrument’ of organization could be unearthed relatively easily (results will be published soon). Similar sources are available for Europe, too.

### ***Method, Approach and Sources***

We use Charles Tilly’s notion of organization as an important element in the repertoire of modern politics (see for example Tilly 1995), but do not focus on the end result of the well-disciplined mass organization (with unintentional teleological effects). Neither the organization itself, nor the cause it advocated are of central interest here, but its uneasy starting moments. We focus on (A) the extraordinary people who brokered these innovations. We will not follow the organizations through the years (as associational history usually does) but study the short period before and after the moment the association was established and when the new phenomenon was debated in the press. Also, this project systematically analyzes (B) the way modern political associations were perceived, experimented with and debated in Europe and the United States. Its aim is not a comparison between countries as such, but an entangled history of the transfer of ideas and practices of organizing. In countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and even the United States the French Revolution of 1789 had severely tarnished the reputation of organizing (both guilds and Jacobin Clubs were mostly regarded negatively). Most forms of organization were suspicious, even in the United States and the United Kingdom where voluntary associations enjoyed a better reputation. Only in the late 1820s and 1830s did a new, positive concept of organizing develop in Europe and North-America, when reformers, women, and early socialists grasped the power of organization.

The three projects focus on three waves of associational mania and debate: the introduction of modern antislavery organizations and other early pressure groups; the craze for organizing during the revolutions of 1848; and the introduction of mass political parties during the 1870s and 1880s. The three cases are interconnected: there is a clear line running from the associational mania of the 1820s and 1830s to the craze for organizations of 1848-51, which were, in turn, precursors of political parties. Together the projects give an overview of the introduction of organizations into politics, and the people involved in it: from the bourgeois men and women putting pressure on the political system, to the socialists experimenting with modern organizations as an alternative to revolutionary violence, to the new generation of leaders of modern political parties.

The synthesis will use the results of the projects to reconstruct and analyze the broad debate on the merits and perils of organizing. Its aim is to present both historians and political scientists with a new perspective on the modern organization as perhaps the single most important tool of democracy.

Each of the projects will study (1) the early organizers, (2) their aims, ambitions, expectations, (3) their (foreign) examples and inspiration, (4) the language (metaphors) they used, (5) what they (personally, too) hoped to gain from organizing, (6) the critics and opponents of modern organizing, (7) the dangers they saw in this new method, and (8) what they had to lose or had lost.

The research methods and approaches are:

- Thick description of the perception and introduction of new forms of organization. Attention will be paid to the metaphors and comparisons used by advocates as well as adversaries, and the way they presented themselves.
- Biographical research into the background of founders, first members, adversaries and critics, and the way organizational activity changed their lives.
- Analysis of the arguments used in the more general debate on the merits and perils of organizing, in particular in newspapers.

Sources include **letters** among founders, the first **publications** of associations, and publications pro and contra specific organizations. Inspired by the promising results of the American case study, extensive use will be made of recently **digitized historical newspapers** (see appendix). The establishment of new organizations, convocations and meeting reports were published in newspapers, as well as editorials and letters debating the new types of organizations.

### **Importance/innovation**

Both in political science and in history the revolutionary effects of modern voluntary organizing have been underestimated. By studying the perspective and debates of contemporaries, the projects will demonstrate the radical innovation and impact of organizing. By taking the enthusiasm about political organizing and the criticism of its effects seriously, the program will throw new light on one of the most hotly debated issues of modern politics.

### **Project 1: Pressure groups**

This PostDoc project investigates the realization in the United States and Great Britain in the 1820s and 1830s that mass organizations could challenge political power; the first British and American experiments with pressure groups; and the impact their example had in continental Europe. As such, its topic is the rediscovery in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century of organization as a political tool, amidst a strong post-revolutionary fear of political organizing.

Antislavery is the foremost case in point. Even though the British and American antislavery movements had origins in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, from the late 1820s these movements radically transformed into modern pressure groups (Newman 2002; Temperley 1974). The older groups, such as the Philadelphia Abolition Society, were usually local, small, and elitist and aimed at a quiet and harmonious resolution of the issue, while the new national or statewide groups took a radical stance, widely publicized their protests, and gained a mass membership within a few years, most notably consisting of middle-class men and women. Within a short time large parts of the United States and the United Kingdom were covered in a network of local branches of national or state organizations (Young 2006; Midgley 1992). Even though historians have noticed this transformation, the new conception and practice of organizing have not been studied as such, but rather been viewed as the natural effect of the intensified antislavery sentiments produced by this period's surging Protestant Evangelicalism (Young 2006). While Evangelicalism and the craze for organizing undeniably reinforced each other, this project will argue that the popularity of organizing is a phenomenon in its own right, which can be found outside evangelical circles as well.

Where did the new generation of antislavery activists get their inspiration to organize in large-scale pressure groups? The hypothesis (which has been tested and confirmed for the American case) is that the efficiency and success in the 1810s and

1820s of apolitical organizations such as Bible, Tract and Missionary Societies was so striking that contemporaries started contemplating other causes in which this ‘powerful machine’ of organization could be employed. The consequent success of the British antislavery movement – many credited the 1833 law abolishing slavery to their pressure – internationally established the pressure group as a promising new tool in battling social and political vices. The 1830s and 1840s saw temperance movements applying the techniques of mass organization which in many countries led to the introduction of prohibition legislation around mid-century; and in 1838 the British Anti-Corn Law League had far reaching implications not just for the issue at hand, but for ways in which people in different parts of the world regarded pressure groups (Houkes and Janse 2005). These organizations and their founders pioneered a new type of politics, which would lead to mass politics. The argument of quantity (of members, of signatures, of publications sold) grew stronger, but an organization’s respectability was still its most cherished asset. It was a balancing act between mass politics and respectability.

### **Case studies and sources**

The main case studies are the first British and American pressure groups. However, due attention will be paid to the influence their example exercised in other countries, such as the Netherlands, France and Germany. In most of these countries, the fear of organization was much stronger than in the Anglo-American world, and for a long time pressure groups were either thought too radical to be established, or operated extremely carefully (Janse 2007; Roberts 1984; Jennings 1988; 2000).

In the case of antislavery and temperance, the single-issue pressure groups under investigation are part of a transnational movement. In other cases, they are specific to their national political context. In the period ranging from 1820 to 1840 the story of the invention and experimenting with the pressure group as a political tool will be told through the case studies of **Anti-Masonry** (US), **Anti-Catholicism** (UK), both being forerunners to the **modern Antislavery and Temperance movements** (US, UK and other countries) and the **Anti-Corn Law League** (UK).

This project will use primary sources and publications by and about pressure groups as indicated in the general project description. It will result in a series of three articles, to be published in leading historical journals:

1. European Antislavery movements and their problematic relationship to British Antislavery
2. The ‘invention’ of the pressure group as a political institution and the appreciation of public opinion in Europe and the United States, 1820-1840
3. A biographical analysis of members of early European and American pressure groups

It will also provide material for the synthesis, which the intended PostDoc will co-author with the main applicant. The intended PostDoc has already executed a large part of the research for the American case study, and she will be able to build on the results of her previous project ‘Associational Mania’.

## **Project 2: Associations in the European Revolutions of 1848**

### **Organizing as a revolutionary tool**

The image of organizing as a revolutionary activity challenges our understanding of revolutionary conduct, which tends to focus on barricades, street fighting, and red banners. However, the concept and practice of organization figured prominently in the European Revolutions of 1848 (Sperber 1994). Typical of the revolutionary moment is the sense that anything is possible, that the future is wide open and the world is malleable (Zollberg 1972). During revolutions, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century sensibility for change, possibilities and ambitions was heightened and condensed, which makes it an important case study within this larger project. Even more than during other periods of associational mania, in the 1848 revolutionary context many considered organization an effective tool to shape future events, and preferred it over violent action (Agulhon 1983).

The idea that associations were tools to build a better world originated in the 1830s, was widely popularized in 1848, and remained the fundamental principle on which workers built their revolutionary actions (Sewell 1980). Also, during 1848 the concept of organizing received a more radical connotation: some no longer used it in the sense of a private association, but in the sense of the public (re-)organization of work. This latter meaning was borrowed from early socialist concepts of organizing (Stewart-McDougall 1984). With the exception of revolutionary years, however, all associations were hounded by the authorities on the grounds that they were intrinsically perverse and opposed to individual enterprise and hence to liberty itself. There was no right to political association in France until 1901 – based on the conservative horror of mass organization and a phobia for associations (Sewell 1980; Agulhon 1983).

### **Old and new forms of revolutionary associations**

An important phenomenon that can be studied within the short time span of the 1848-49 revolutions is the transformation from older forms of organizing to modern ones. In the first months of the revolutions, the older forms were prominent: the unruly meetings in which political information was exchanged and debated, as well as political action such as petitions and strikes proposed, resembled those of 1789 revolutionary clubs. As these were general meetings, in which very different opinions were voiced, they proved relatively powerless as a political instrument.

This is why a new type of association, and a new type of meeting was developed: consisting of like-minded citizens, heavily regulated, and therefore (its advocates sometimes fruitless hoped) much more efficient in deciding a course of action. Socialist associations, in particular, developed speedily and successfully. From the moment the local associations started to reach out to likeminded organizations in other cities to form a national network of associations, they can be regarded as precursors to political parties.

Women's organizations similarly blossomed overnight when revolution broke out. Generally speaking, the organized women chose a supporting role in the project of the revolution. Nevertheless, the organizations were a courageous step into public political life. The women experimented with civilized ways to engage in revolutionary activity.

### **Case studies and sources**

Based on the availability of sources and literature, the research will focus on new organizations founded in 1848-1849, by two groups in two revolutionary cities: the socialists and women of Frankfurt and Paris. The critics of their associations include both those who believed in an armed revolution and thought voluntary associations to be weak tools, and the representatives of the post-revolutionary political order, who persecuted leaders of non-violent revolutionary organizations as well as their violent comrades. Their trials will be studied to better understand the fear of organization in Germany and France around mid-century. The PhD student will be able to draw from a rich literature on revolutionary life in both cities, in which organizations figure prominently – this time, however, he or she will use them for a different purpose: not to better understand the revolution, but to analyze the role and development organizing played during the revolutionary months. Additional archival research will be conducted in Frankfurt (the seat of the Frankfurt Parliament and a hotbed of associational culture in 1848) and Paris to further investigate relevant trials, debates, individuals and organizations.

This project has four aims:

1. analyze the importance and meaning socialists and women, as well as their critics, attached to ‘organizing’ and ‘association’ as concepts and as a practice
2. chart the transition from older, heterogeneous revolutionary political associations and clubs to the more modern, homogeneous type
3. analyze the biographies of the ‘modern’ revolutionary organizers, in contrast to ‘old-fashioned’ ones and to those who rejected and later prosecuted the organizers
4. reconstruct the way the legacy of the associational mania of the decades leading up to 1848 was employed during the revolutionary years and how it was challenged again by the post-revolutionary order.

### **Project 3: The birth of mass political parties**

The meaning of the words ‘political party’ changed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Until then they had referred to an ideology, a political ‘current’ or an at best loosely connected parliamentary group. Now the words meant a well-organized political group based on an ideology, putting up candidates at elections, and with a mass following outside of parliament. It could be argued that ‘political party’ now referred to a party in the old sense *in combination with* a modern voluntary association (public, transparent, democratically managed, national instead of local, accessible and ideologically homogeneous). This new combination changed politics for good and the new parties were accordingly dubbed ‘machines’, ‘caucuses’ (referring to the alleged American origin of the new phenomenon), and ‘oligarchies’. Much has been written about the emergence of political parties, but more often than not only in a single national context (Pombeni 1992 is one of few exceptions). Moreover, their history has mostly been written teleologically, with an eye to their 20<sup>th</sup>-century role, not with reference to 19<sup>th</sup>-century voluntary associations (whose history for that matter has often been written as the history of ‘proto-parties’; cf. Te Velde 2004 and 2006).

This project will study the modern political party as a new phenomenon, but also as a subdivision of the species voluntary association. Much of the criticism that famous commentators such as Mosei Ostrogorski or Robert Michels directed at political parties could have been (and had been) addressed to earlier forms of voluntary organizations (cf. Scarrow ed. 2002). Perhaps the initiators of political

parties did not differ that much from the initiators of older voluntary organizations. In this project the same questions will be asked as in the other projects in order to determine to what extent the new political party fitted in with the category of the voluntary organization. What differences did exist between the older single-issue movements, and the new party based on an ideology that pretended to have something to say about all important societal issues? Three cases have been selected:

- the National Liberal Federation or Birmingham Caucus of Joseph Chamberlain and Francis Schnadhorst (1877; the main object of Ostrogorski's criticism) in Britain
- the orthodox Protestant Antirevolutionaire Partij of Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands (1879)
- the socialist party of August Bebel and Friedrich Liebknecht and its direct forerunners in Germany: Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (1869), Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (1875), and the ensuing SPD (1890). This was the epitome of the modern mass party, the main object of Michels' criticism, and for our purposes more important than the more loosely organized forerunner party of Ferdinand Lassalle Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein (1863) – see for early socialism Welskopp 2000.

By studying the first modern parties of three different political currents in three different countries the effects of the emergence of the modern political party for the development of politics and the development of the modern voluntary organization will become clear.

The object is not to study ideology or political manoeuvring, but the process of creating modern organizations and the debates about their advantages and in particular their disadvantages. Much has been written about these three cases, and the purpose of this project will be:

1. to study the ambitions and organizational purposes of the leaders, with a focus on their management skills, ideas about organization, quest for recognition and pride; on the basis of secondary literature the first steps in the process of organization will be mapped out.
2. to study the aversion and criticism their projects aroused.

The research will start in familiar territory. Scholarly biographies are available about the most important leaders of these parties and the emergence of the new organizations has also been studied repeatedly (though from other angles).

Ostrogorski and Michels belong to the classics of political science and will be the point of departure for the study of the criticism of the new organizations. To a large extent Ostrogorski's work, in particular, can be regarded as a summary of the criticism of the late 1870s and in the 1880s on the caucus (cf. Pombeni 1994). Both built also on older literature concerning the 'americanization' and excessive 'professionalization' of political parties (cf. Mergel 1999). Research will then focus on the practical and theoretical importance the leaders attached to modern organizational structures (which they often described in terms of 'armies' who were waging 'battles' etc.) and to the debates about the new phenomenon of national political organizations on the occasion of their foundation, important meetings and conferences, and apparent successes in the first years of their existence. The study will be based on the existing literature, the sources concerning the organizations that already have been excavated and correspondence and systematic newspaper research from the initial period of the parties.

## **Project 4: Synthesis: The Promise of Organization**

The synthesis will argue that both the enthusiasm and the criticism that the modern political organizations evoked deserve attention as symptoms of the highly contested nature of political organization, and ultimately, of democracy. The ambition is not to write an exhaustive overview but a succinct analysis. It will give

1. a brief historical overview of the (re-)invention of modern organizing techniques in a political context
2. a summary and analysis of the debate pro and contra modern organizing
3. where needed, paint the historical and biographical background to this debate
4. finally, connect both historical development and debate to the larger narrative of democratization in the Western world.

The synthesis of the results of the three projects will illuminate the relationship between the introduction of modern organizing and the rise of democracy and the prominence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century of identity politics and the struggle for recognition by the state of religious and ethnic identities (Taylor 1994). The accessibility of the political tool of organizing and its effectiveness in mobilizing likeminded people facilitated a restructuring of the political landscape. The elitist politics of the notables were replaced by a type of politics in which professionally and permanently mobilizing large numbers of people became a winning strategy.

The synthesis will challenge the self-evident and a-historical ways the 19<sup>th</sup>-century democratization process has often been presented, and instead present an alternative history of civil society and democracy, in which (political) voluntary associations play a central role. In this sense, it answers the call of scholars such as Robert Morris for a more general overview of associational activity as comprising the history of civil society. In recent surveys such as Hoffmann's otherwise useful *Civil Society* (2006), political organizations are often left out.

Our synthesis will fill in this lacuna, while at the same time presenting a new perspective on the impact modern voluntary organization had on politics in general and more specifically on the process of democratization. We are not focusing on the modernization of the repertoire of political action as such, nor are we determining the 'contribution' to the process of democratization made by the new associations. Instead, we will concentrate on the tension inherent in the new democratic instrument of organizing. Organizing seemed the way to a perfect democracy. However, by channeling popular aspirations into fixed institutions, organizing also instantly limited direct popular participation. In the nineteenth century political organizations seemed to be able to connect the 'two faces of democracy' (Canovan 1999): the practical, institutional side, and the popular or populist dream of rule by the people. However, political organizations were not able to fulfill the promise of reconciling the two sides of democracy. It became apparent that democracy could not do without organizing, but we have to learn to live with the tensions that accompany it.

### **Summary for non-specialists in Dutch**

Politieke partijen zijn niet erg populair. Ze worden vaak gezien als lastige hindernissen op weg naar een echte democratie en als niet meer dan instrumenten voor al te ambitieuze politici. Deze kritiek klinkt al sinds het ontstaan van moderne politieke partijen aan het eind van de 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw en zelfs al voor die tijd werden politieke verenigingen beschreven als gevaarlijke 'machines' die nieuwe oligarchieën

produceerden. De nieuwe organisaties zelf hadden vaak juist als doel om de democratie in de zin van het kiesrecht en de publieke participatie in het algemeen uit te breiden. Ze wilden dat doen door op een fatsoenlijke en geregelde manier de massa te organiseren. Maar daarvoor hadden ze de 'machine' nodig. Zo belandden ze in een paradox: de partijen en verenigingen moesten de massa mobiliseren, maar hadden een afschuw van werkelijke directe democratie en de 'onbeteugelde driften' van het volk. Zo is goed te begrijpen dat de nieuwe uitvinding van de politieke vereniging en politieke partij het middelpunt werd van heftige debatten. Die debatten zijn op zich niet geheel onbekend, maar dit onderzoeksproject beschouwt ze voor het eerst als delen van één geheel, van een groot debat over politieke organisatievormen dat vrijwel de gehele 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw omspande.

In drie deelprojecten rond de introductie van de moderne politieke vereniging vanaf de jaren 1820, de discussie rond politieke organisatievormen in de revoluties van 1848 en de omstrengheid van de vroege moderne politieke partijen in het laatste deel van de 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw wordt de discussie gevolgd. Daarbij is er ook veel aandacht voor de motieven, ambities en dromen van de betrokken leiders en activisten. De combinatie van onderzoek in dagbladen (die nu grotendeels digitaal doorzoekbaar zijn) en biografisch onderzoek naar betrokkenen zal een reconstructie van de wereld van politieke verenigingen en politieke partijen opleveren vanuit het perspectief van de tijdgenoot die nieuwe 'machines' zag opduiken met, afhankelijk van wie aan het woord was, het wenkende perspectief van democratisering dan wel de misleiding en manipulatie van de massa. In dit onderzoek wordt de nieuwe organisatievorm van vereniging en partij in al zijn toenmalige onzelfsprekendheid gepresenteerd. Daarvoor kan een beroep worden gedaan op een uitvoerige literatuur over verenigingen, politieke partijen en hoofdrolspelers die nog zelden op deze manier is gebruikt. Zelfs over 'de' politieke partij of over 'de' vereniging (anders dan individuele politieke partijen of verenigingen) is maar weinig historische literatuur voorhanden, laat staan dat er literatuur is die beide ook nog eens met elkaar verbindt. Dit zal gebeuren in een internationaal kader. Verenigingen en pressiegroepen werden vaak opgericht in de Verenigde Staten en Groot-Brittannië en vandaaruit geëxporteerd naar het Europese vasteland. In dit onderzoek gaat het niet om vergelijking tussen de landen, maar om de voorbeeldwerking van enkele landen en de doorwerking in andere. Ook het debat over de voors- en tegens van de verenigingsvorm had een internationaal karakter en beperkte zich niet tot een land. In het geval van de politieke partijen is daarom gekozen voor de bekende en veel bediscussieerde voorlopers: de Britse liberale partij en de Duitse sociaal-democratie, waar de bekende politicologen Ostrogorski en Michels al rond 1900 beroemde boeken over schreven, die als uitgangspunt voor een preciezere analyse van de ontwikkeling en receptie van het idee van partij kunnen dienen.

Dit onderzoek bouwt voort op de recente traditie van aandacht voor vormen in de politiek: vormen in de zin van zowel de cultuur waarbinnen politiek vorm krijgt en de cultuur van de politiek zelf, als de instituties die haar vormgeven. Terwijl traditioneel voor parlement en kabinet veel aandacht is, is de literatuur over partijen als verschijnsel daarbij altijd achtergebleven. Toch zijn de partijen en de verenigingen die daarvoor al bestonden de belangrijkste effectieve manieren geweest waarop in de loop van de jaren de democratie gestalte heeft gekregen. Bij alle kritiek die er mogelijk is, is er nog geen duidelijk alternatief gevonden. Het is tijd om het succes van deze politieke organisatievorm opnieuw te bestuderen.

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- **British Newspapers:** British Newspapers 1800-1900  
(<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/news/newspdigproj/ndproject/index.html>); (only available on UK soil);
- **Dutch Newspapers:** Databank of Digital Daily newspapers (19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers will be available from 2009) (<http://www.kb.nl/hrd/digi/ddd/index-en.html>);
- **French Newspapers** through Gallica ([www.gallica.bnf.fr](http://www.gallica.bnf.fr));
- **Irish Newspapers:** Irish Newspaper Archives, (<http://www.irishnewsarchive.com>) (only available from subscribing institutions).