The Material Culture of Parliament. A case study of the Dutch Second Chamber, 1945–2000

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Abstract

If parliament is anything, it is an institution where speech acts define politics. It should therefore come as no surprise that political historians have devoted most of their attention to parliamentary debate and decision-making, whereas the materiality of parliamentary debate has only recently entered their purview. Building on these recent approaches, this article offers an analysis of the material culture of the Dutch parliament in the post-war years. Three angles of materiality are explored: the building in which the Second Chamber houses; the objects present in plenary hall; and finally, the objects used as ‘props’ in parliamentary performances. Through the use of the notion of ‘performances’ or ‘practices’ of speaking, debating and acting in parliament, the aim is to acquire a better grasp of how these ‘things’ have impinged on political communication.

Keywords: material culture, parliament, political performance, representation

Introduction¹

The term parliament – so we are often reminded – derives from the French verb ‘parler’, which means ‘to speak’: ‘If parliament is anything, it is a parliament: an institution that makes politics through speaking’.² Used since medieval Anglo-Norman times to define discussion meetings, with

the rise of modern democracies in the nineteenth and twentieth century parliament has become associated with the place where democracy is served and acted out through a rational and civilised debate among its members.³ As Patrick Joyce has shown, it was nineteenth century liberalism that introduced an understanding of the political in opposition to a non-political space that was framed as material and technological.⁴ Against this background parliament, the foremost arena of democratic politics, emerged as the domain of deliberation and debate centring on an exchange of words and arguments. It should therefore come as no surprise that political historians have devoted most of their attention to parliamentary debate and decision-making, whereas the materiality of parliamentary debate has only recently entered their purview. Building on these recent approaches, this article offers an analysis of the material culture of the Dutch parliament in the post-war years.

Current approaches to modern parliamentary history still first and foremost focus on the history of legislation and the balance of power between parliament, government and other political institutions. Quite a few countries in Europe have research groups and institutes that devote themselves to the history of political parties, parliament and government, some of which are also trying to move beyond the framework of the nation state.⁵ Moreover, the linguistic turn of the 1980s has resulted in research on historical parliamentary discourse as a distinct language of politics like Thomas Mergel's study on the culture and political languages in the Weimar parliament, Henk te Velde's work on the art of parliamentary speech in nineteenth century Britain and France, and Te Velde and Marnix Beyen's research on parliamentary discourse in the Low Countries.⁶ In addition, historians – often together with political linguists – have studied parliamentary insults, violations and disruptions to establish the limits or boundaries of parliamentary discourse and to reveal institutional principles of conduct and normative forms of politeness.⁷ Recently, scholars interested in such topics have profited from the availability of digitized parliamentary proceedings in public databases.⁸ Yet another body of scholarship not so much focuses on parliamentary history as on the history of parliament as an institution. Inspired by the cultural turn and fed by anthropological approaches, scholars have delved into the 'corporate identity' of parliament, among others by analysing parliamentary performative culture: the traditions, rites, rituals and ceremonies of parliament, as well as its architecture.⁹

Common ground in this growing body of literature on the language and culture of parliament is the perception of politics as a communicative practice, structured around discursive and performative activities realized in a particular context. Historians of the Bielefeld School have been opening up important new perspectives in this respect by interpreting politics as a meaningful exchange of messages between competing parties on the one hand and with the public on the other hand.¹⁰ As such, parliament has increasingly been compared with a theatre where more or less skilled human performances are staged.

Where and when, then, does the ‘materiality’ of modern parliaments come in the play? The focus on materiality has first emerged among experts of early modern parliaments. In *Theater of State*, an inspiring study on the history of parliament in seventeenth century England, Chris Kyle discusses practices of note-taking during parliamentary sessions, the use of ink and pencils, the distribution of notes and how this contributed to constituting a public sphere.¹¹ Moreover, since the late 1990s Barbara Stollberg-Rillinger has published several influential studies on pre-modern political and parliamentary culture, incorporating the material and built environment in her analysis.¹² Both Stollberg-Rillinger and political scientist Philip Manow have also tackled the exclusive association of symbolic communication with pre-modern forms of rule.¹³ Manow has argued that modern democracies too have an ‘imagery’ of their own, a distinct symbolism that expresses itself in its rituals as well as in its buildings, notably in the seating arrangement of the plenary.¹⁴ According to Stefan Paulus, parliamentary architecture ‘is part of a complex process of communication between governors and governed’.¹⁵ Over the last decade, scholars have been gradually taking up the challenge laid down in the 1980s by the American political scientist Charles Goodsell, who was one of the first to argue that the architecture of parliament, its interior, surface and objects have political and symbolic meaning. Through their architectural style and program of decorations parliaments represent political norms and national values. Through their location on sites of special historical or symbolic significance they suggest continuity and order. Their location and the design and use of the assembly hall reflect aspects of the national political culture. Referring to Churchill’s famous quote – ‘we shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us’ – Goodsell also points to the psychological and mental influence exerted by the shape,

the size, the design and other spatial qualities of assembly halls and the buildings in which they are located.¹⁶

Symbolic communication, however, not only takes place through parliamentary architecture, but also through parliamentary practice. One of the few studies that has discussed the use and meaning of objects in modern parliamentary discourse is Rebekka Habermas' article on the whip August Bebel brought along to the German Reichstag in 1894, an object that triggered a debate about German colonial rule. Habermas shows that the whip could be read in various ways, including as a *structural* element of colonial rule. When the whip entered the plenary, however, debate did not centre on colonial rule as such, but was narrowed down to reading the whip as a symbol of single, isolated cases of maltreatment.¹⁷

Other good examples of studies on modern political and parliamentary history that deal with materiality as a category of analysis are, however, still hard to find. In his response to the Bielefeld research project, Frank Trentmann has warned that in the wake of the linguistic turn 'things' are often 'drowned out by words' and has urged political historians to pay more attention to the things and technologies used in political communication.¹⁸ One way to do so is by studying the material culture of parliament. Based on a case study of the Dutch parliament in the post-war years, we explore the material culture of parliament from three angles, moving from the macro to the micro level. The first angle involves an analysis of Dutch parliamentary architecture with the emphasis on the move to a new parliament building in the 1990s. We will analyse the norms, values and conceptions of democracy and political representation that have been inscribed into this built environment. Second, we discuss the objects present in plenary hall. Here we will distinguish three categories of things that 'set the stage', in other words, which have a visible and noticeable impact on parliamentary communication: the furniture and decoration, including the clock and the calendar; the omnipresent paperwork; and last but not least microphones, TV cameras and other newly introduced means of communication. Third, we explore how objects have been used as 'props' in parliamentary performances: we discuss if and how objects have been instrumentalized as rhetorical tools by MPs.

Historians of material culture have introduced several ways of analysing objects and architecture. First of all, reading it as 'text', as part

of the range of signs, symbols and gestures that are used in communication.¹⁹ Seen from this perspective, things are given meaning by its users and are read and decoded by observers and by us as researchers. Others have stressed the need to explore the ‘interplay of things and words’ or have forwarded a ‘new materialism’ which stresses the agency of objects.²⁰ The notion of practices or performances of speaking, debating and acting in parliament allows us to have an eye for both perspectives. It enables us to analyse how things have impinged on political communication in the Dutch parliament in the post-war years, that is, how things have structured and circumscribed speech acts, and how things have been appropriated and instrumentalized by Dutch MPs.²¹ A performance requires an audience, which MPs find on the public gallery and, indirectly, at home through media coverage of parliamentary debates. Performances are scripted and reproducible, which goes for parliamentary debates as well. Because of the recognizable, iterative and standardized steps taken in legislative processes as well as in debates, meetings of parliament are often said to be highly ritualized. Marion Müller even speaks of a ‘parliamentary liturgy’, both with an internal and an external purpose.²² Each meeting follows specific prescriptions: the order of speakers, speaking time, where to sit, stand and speak, how to deal with interruptions and so on. Performances carry symbolic value: it is up to the audience to decode their meaning.²³ Applied to parliament the notion of performance and performativity indicates that parliamentary culture, the identity of parliament and its members, is not stable or independent of the people in parliament but is continuously performed.

To close our introduction, let us briefly amplify on our empirical basis. To state the obvious: research into the role of objects in such a ‘verbatim theatre’ as parliament is a complicated endeavour.²⁴ The key sources of parliamentary history are the written records of parliamentary debate, records that are meant to give a detailed account of oral communication, not the physical or material context in which this takes place. To excavate the objects that have been brought into action during post-war parliamentary debates, and which are buried deep into the pages of Dutch parliamentary history, we have employed a combination of methods. At first, we asked experts of parliamentary history for a list of examples.²⁵ Second, we searched through news media archives looking for references to materiality. Third, we carried out a search in the digitized parliamentary records. We used the search engine

politicalmashup.nl, which allows for a keyword-in-context search of Dutch parliamentary proceedings. We used variations of ‘*meegebracht*’ (brought along/with) as keyword, since pilot research showed that many MPs announce an object by stating that they have ‘brought with me to Parliament a ...’.²⁶ Although we still needed to filter out many results that had nothing to do with objects in parliament, this strategy did also provide us with some new cases to explore further. Before we dive into these, the next section offers a discussion of the significant meaning inscribed into the built environment of the Dutch parliament.

Parliamentary Architecture

Parliamentary architecture has played a key role in the attempt by parliaments across Europe to express their self-understanding as the institute that constitutes the nation as a political community.²⁷ With the notable exception of the British parliament, most national parliaments date from the nineteenth century. Emerging as the new core political institution between 1814 and 1848, parliaments had to compete with the established power elites of monarchy and court for recognition, respect and authority. National parliaments rose to power as a result of electoral and constitutional reforms that secured parliament a position of preponderance over the king and his government. But to visualize this ascendancy to power and to gain authority as the prime political and representative body, parliaments also had to display the traditional features of status, power, authority and nationhood, much like the early modern architecture of palaces, squares, parks, triumphal arches and grand avenues had done. In this sense parliamentary architecture was meant to arouse feelings of awe, national pride and enthusiasm. To put it differently: modern representative bodies developed a cultural, visual programme of their own, full of spectacular, ceremonial and architectural aspects harking back to monarchic and more ancient forms of legitimatization and expression.²⁸

This brings into focus the actual buildings that were appropriated or erected to house parliament. As Ita Heinze-Greenberg has stated, the history of parliamentary buildings did not begin with newly built houses.²⁹ Parliaments in the early decades of the nineteenth century usually were seated in the former quarters of their precursors, the Estates

or Estates-General, or they moved into former royal palaces or some other representative public building. The French national assembly has been seated in the Palais Bourbon since the early nineteenth century, in 1831 the Belgian national assembly took its seat in a palace that had previously lodged the Estates and Estates-General and the Portuguese parliament was allocated a former Benedictine monastery. The first Dutch post-revolutionary parliament of 1796 occupied the ballroom of the expelled Stadtholder, not to leave this seat until 1992, when a new assembly hall was created within the same medieval complex of buildings in The Hague. The British parliament was the first to build a completely new house, in the 1830s and 1840s, soon to be followed by the Spanish *Cortes*. Elsewhere in Europe, notably in Germany and the nations of the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire, parliaments had new palaces built in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most European houses of parliament date from the period 1840 to 1914. In the twentieth century a series of new national and democratic states joined the tradition, with buildings that were either inspired by the style and features of nineteenth-century parliaments or were modernist adaptations of that tradition. Only after 1945 – and again after 1989 – a new style of democratic parliaments was introduced, expressing new democratic values of transparency and accessibility. Apart from the design of the assembly halls, for which the French National Assembly and British Parliament appears to have provided the model, there are a number of other similarities between the national houses of parliament all over Europe. To underline their status as the true representation of the nation, most parliamentary buildings have been lavishly decorated with symbols, sculpture and paintings depicting civic and national values and the highlights of national history.³⁰

Although the Dutch parliament also has much in common with parliaments elsewhere in Europe, it does stand out in a number of aspects. The Dutch parliament is housed in a hotchpotch of buildings in the centre of The Hague that together encompass eight centuries of architectural history. The complex is known as the *Binnenhof* (Inner Court) (Figure 1). Since 1446, the Inner Court has been the location of meetings of the Dutch parliament: the States-General (*Staten-Generaal*). Count Floris IV of Holland purchased the grounds on which the Inner Court now stands in 1229. Gradually, more buildings were constructed around the court of the Count of Holland, several of which are still in

Figure 1: The Inner Court from a birds-eye perspective (2015). The Knight's Hall (*Ridderzaal*) is located in the centre of the court. The Second Chamber was housed in the far-left corner of the court from 1814 until 1992. The new building has been integrated in the west wing of the old complex, including the distinct hemisphere of the new plenary hall. (Source: Wikimedia CC0/ Rijksvastgoedbedrijf).

use today, like the *Ridderzaal* (Great hall; literally Knight's Hall), and the part of the complex that currently houses the offices of the Prime Minister and the assembly hall of the Dutch Senate. The Inner Court is one of the few political centres in the world that is not located in the state capital. Equally exceptional is the fact that it brings together all powers in one location: the executive, the legislative branch, the executive branch and (a part of the) judiciary branch have all been housed in a complex that covers approximately 300 square meters.³¹ Those who manage to get hold of the right set of keys can easily reach all corridors of power without having to step outside once.³²

The modern States-General, established in 1814 as the newly elected representative body of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, settled themselves in a small former palace located in a corner of the Inner Court. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century several adaptations and extensions were made to this part of the building to make it more suitable for parliamentary debate and corresponding work. All these adaptations, no matter how small they may have appeared at first sight,

reflected changes in political culture. In 1904, for instance, the decision was made to discard the throne from the plenary hall. In the 1950s the chamber had to be redecorated in order to accommodate 150 instead of 100 MPs (Figure 2).³³ The main transition, however, came in 1992, when the Dutch parliament – after twenty years of complaining about lack of space and bad facilities – moved to a new part of the Inner Court complex. The prospect of and experiences with a new building provoked continuous discussion among MPs, as well as in the press; discussions that provide us with insights into the connections politicians and journalists made between design, architecture and political values.

In the 1970s, when Parliament started to discuss plans for a renovation of the complex of buildings surrounding the Inner Court, MPs soon agreed that the renovation plans first and foremost should be ‘functional’ and that they should turn parliament into a true ‘house of the people’ where representatives and the people they represented could mingle. The new built space should be accessible rather than ‘spectacular’.³⁴ This focus on accessibility and transparency was new – it had not been

Figure 2: Refurbishment of the plenary hall (1951) (Source: National Archives CCo / Anefo).

present in the old building – and of course reflected the political culture of the 1960s and 1970s, which was characterized by attempts to bridge the ‘gap’ between the political elite and the people. It had also been a motif for the reconstruction of post-war parliaments elsewhere, like the West-German Bundestag in Bonn.³⁵

Pi de Bruijn, the Dutch architect who in 1980 won the competition to build the new accommodation of parliament, indeed put transparency and openness at the heart of his design. His plans amounted to the construction of a large hall or passage, which linked two squares in the centre of the Hague and was supposed to serve as a meeting point where all – visitors and politicians – would feel at home. All separate offices and meeting rooms of parliament opened out into this light and airy passage, bringing together MPs, officials, journalists and visitors. De Bruijn envisioned this corridor to be open to the general public at all times, in his attempt to construct a new, vibrant urban space in the heart of parliamentary democracy.³⁶ For safety reasons, however, accessibility was soon curtailed.³⁷ Nevertheless, the passage remained the most striking feature of the new complex.

De Bruijn’s design triggered a debate among MPs about parliamentary culture, particularly about the perpetual tension in modern democracies between a public demand for openness and a political need for secrecy. The old parliamentary building had offered lots of opportunities for backroom politics, for sneaky get-togethers of politicians and the press in one of its many alcoves and small corridors. In the new building with its spacious hall and walls of glass this would all belong to the past. With its many windows parliament opened up to the outside world; passers-by, so it was argued, could take a look inside and keep an eye on the corridors of power.³⁸ When the plans for the renovation were presented, the presiding Speaker of parliament Wim Deetman hailed the new building’s transparency, which according to him reflected the attempt of parliament to create an ‘environment in which people can keep a close eye’ on us.³⁹ Others, however, stressed that in the end parliamentary politics could not do without backroom politics. A couple of critical journalists wondered if the current generation of MPs would be able to cope with the openness of the new building. If parliament became more transparent, would the general public be pleased with what they could now see with their own eyes? For one seasoned parliamentary journalist the new building in this respect aroused a feeling

Figure 3: 'Full House' in the old plenary hall (July 1980) (Source: National Archives CCo/Anefo).

of nostalgia for the era of great orators when politics had been full of tension and emotions.⁴⁰

Another discussion regarded the radically changed seating plan of the new plenary hall and the impact it would have on the debating culture in the Dutch parliament. It had been up to the MPs themselves to decide whether they would stick to the Westminster model, which implied a rectangular form and government and opposition benches facing each other, or switch to the French model using a hemicycle with government benches facing parliament (Figure 3). Although some MPs had a clear preference for one or the other, a majority refrained from making the new seating plan a matter of principle. The spokesperson of the social-democratic *Partij van de Arbeid* even argued that 'the architect has to figure that out for himself'.⁴¹ MPs merely made functional demands: more space and more and better, up-to-date facilities. Which values needed to be inscribed into the new building and the new plenary hall, was a question that was hardly asked – let alone answered. In the end, De Bruijn opted for a hemicycle, arguing that this fitted better with the Dutch polity and its tradition of coalition governments (Figure 4).⁴² Parliament subsequently embraced this argumentation. According to Speaker Deetman, the new seating arrangement reflected and articulated

Figure 4: The new plenary hall (2000) (Source: Wikimedia CC0).

the ‘culture of deliberation’ (*cultuur van gesprek*) that had always characterized the Dutch parliament.⁴³ Government facing parliament, rather than MPs of opposing parties facing each other, was said to represent the moderate dualistic nature of the Dutch political system. In his opening speech in the new plenary hall, Deetman even suggested that the new semi-circular seating arrangement was true to tradition and tied in with the character of Dutch parliamentary debate. The Second Chamber, he argued, was all about deliberation and compromise: ‘In the Netherlands, we in Parliament aim at consensus, sometimes more than we are aware of’.⁴⁴ Moreover, Deetman believed that the new seating plan could have a stimulating effect on discussions in parliament: standing behind the rostrum one could look everybody in the eye, which would make it easier for eloquent speakers to play to the audience.⁴⁵

However, the new setting did cause some controversy among MPs with a less consensual orientation towards their job. For them, the layout of the old plenary hall, with its opposite blocks, had played into an idealized vision of parliament as a countervailing power: it symbolized political dualism and the primacy of parliament. Their sentiment of loss tied in with more general criticism on Dutch political culture: with its focus on harmony and compromise, parliament supposedly had lost touch with the issues on the minds of the electorate.⁴⁶ Others were

critical of the spacious layout of the new plenary hall. Several MPs quoted Winston Churchill when they made their case for a more intimate setting: Churchill had once argued that he preferred a crowded house because it produced a sense of intimacy and urgency when many or all members were present.⁴⁷ The old plenary hall had been a crowded house for sure: when in 1956 the number of MPs was raised from 100 to 150, no extra seats were added. MPs were crammed on benches which hardly left any room for manoeuvre. When emotions were running high, one MP nostalgically reminisced, the old meeting room had smelled of 'wild beasts' and another argued that 'for a fierce debate one needs to see the fear in each other's eyes, the sweat on each other's forehead'.⁴⁸ Architect De Bruijn was not impressed: 'Putting MPs on hard benches does not make politics more exciting'.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the reactions of the MPs reveal how they attached value to the place where they carried out their job. Behind their – sometimes rather nostalgic – argument that the physical environment played a part in their performance, stood particular assumptions about parliamentary politics. The seating arrangement in the old Chamber was valued as a reflection of the different and, to a certain extent, opposing responsibilities of the executive and the representative, as well as of the parties in government and in opposition. More externally motivated was the argumentation that a small and crowded plenary hall visually supported the view that what happened in the Chamber was of high importance, both in a political and in a social way. It also underlined the idea that interpersonal dynamics were the essence of parliamentary debates, involving emotions, noise and (when things got really heated) raised temperature and the smell of sweat.

Objects that Set the Parliamentary Stage

As mentioned above, parliaments have often been labelled as theatres, literally and figuratively. If the Dutch parliament had in fact been operating as a theatre one might wonder if it had been able to fill its auditorium. As the discussion about the renovation of the Inner Court complex has shown, functionalism and frugality have characterized the culture, lay-out and set-up of the Dutch parliament.⁵⁰ Rituals, playing into emotions, or the display of rhetorical skills have not been part of Dutch parliamentary culture.⁵¹ Remieg Aerts has even compared the

Dutch parliament to an office.⁵² The self-understanding of parliament has centred on reaching agreements and getting things done.

For this, current historiography presents us with three lines of explanation. Most famously Dutch sobriety has been narrated as part of a long tradition, dating back to the Middle Ages: the Dutch ‘poldermodel’.⁵³ In a country several feet below sea level, rhetoric was not going to keep your feet dry. More recent comparative research has emphasised the relevance of the fact that the Netherlands, in contrast to France and Belgium, has no tradition of popular sovereignty. There was a notion of popular sovereignty in the short-lived revolutionary Batavian parliament of 1796–1798, but it disappeared and has not been included in the Dutch constitution since 1814. The States-General thought themselves to be the collective representation of the nation and all of its inhabitants with MPs that acted and decided independently instead of being directly accountable to ‘the people’.⁵⁴

According to Beyen and Te Velde this has had significant effects on Dutch debating culture. Compared to the Netherlands, parliamentary debates in France and Belgium have always been much livelier. This difference was not only a question of reputation or self-labelling; it was reflected in differing ideas about the essence of political representation as well as in the way MPs actually performed. In comparison, for the whole of the nineteenth and twentieth century the art of persuading an audience has been less developed in the Dutch parliament than in its southern counterparts: Dutch MPs spoke calmer, with more emphasis on rational and functional arguments, did not often attract popular attention, and were primarily aimed at finding common ground with their adversaries. Even the Dutch conception of the parliamentary proceedings reflected this attitude. Until well into the 1980s stenographers were instructed to only record the spoken word and ignore any accompanying performances like gesturing, banging with fists, laughing or applauding. Utterances of emotions or hilarity, if any, were not placed on record.⁵⁵

World War II and the Cold War then played their part in reinvigorating this debating culture, making post-war Dutch politicians highly suspicious for too much eloquence and rhetoric. The mass meeting rather than parliament was the preferred arena for the display of oratorical skills. Often quoted in this respect is former prime minister Willem Drees, writing on the Dutch parliament in 1975: ‘[c]ompared to several

other parliaments ... the situation in ours is quite simply peaceful. Even in the House of Commons, often regarded as an example of democratic performance, eruptions occur in a way we are not familiar with any-more'.⁵⁶ As a result, Dutch MPs have been notably sceptic towards the theatrical aspects of parliamentary politics. This helps to explain why Dutch politicians struggled to deal with the extravagancy of populist politicians like Geert Wilders.⁵⁷

All things considered, the Dutch parliament presents itself to us as a classic example of symbolic anti-symbolism. Surely, preferring rational debate, upholding an attitude of sobriety and refraining from overt 'theatre' has a communicative meaning too. The notion of performance therefore retains its relevance for an analysis of Dutch parliamentary culture: how did MPs perform or act out this 'tradition' of sobriety as well as other aspects of parliamentary culture? Remieg Aerts has approached the performance of MPs from the perspective of representation: adequate representation requires some measure of distance between representatives and the people they represent. A focus on distance sets the spotlight on how parliament and MPs have navigated the borders between the public nature of modern, parliamentary politics and the need to maintain dignity, authority and some form of autonomy as the elected body of the people.⁵⁸ Here the theatrical, performative aspects of politics come into play. These aspects – Aerts refers to it as 'functional theatre' – enable politicians to perform distance between themselves and the people, who much like the audience in a theatre accept that the stage belongs to the actors. Moreover, they give MPs an aura of authority, help them to command respect and achieve legitimacy. Common denominators in all these performances are restraint, austerity, and sobriety.

Anyone visiting the public gallery of the Dutch parliament sees this parliamentary culture is not only communicated through language and debating style, but also through the sober material surroundings. Objects that one might expect to find, like portraits of the sovereign or art that represents national history are nowhere to be found. Symbolism remains very implicit: the green tapestry of the new plenary refers to the Dutch polder landscape and the blue ceiling to the Dutch blue skies, the seats of MPs are shaped as tulips and decorated with a very rare example of explicit symbolism: the Dutch coat of arms.⁵⁹ Walls have been decorated with art, but to avoid controversy, the painter responsible for the artwork

refused to say what his abstract painting represents.⁶⁰ On the occasion of the opening of the new plenary hall, the Speaker expressed his approval of the absence of any frills and the emphasis on professionalism. This did not just reflect the cultural history of the Dutch parliament: it represented the Dutch national character, so he claimed.⁶¹ The Speaker made sure that MPs did not turn plenary hall into a canteen: drinks and foodstuffs, were – and still are – barred from plenary hall as part of the parliamentary conventions and customs. Only members of government, who are treated as guests of parliament, and the Speaker are allowed to drink a cup of coffee or a glass of water.⁶² The old plenary hall had been no different. Only rarely were new items introduced in parliament. One notable example was the introduction of a rostrum in 1906. Before that, MPs had merely risen from their seat to address parliament, with other MPs gathering around the speaker to catch a glimpse of his speech. In the first post-war decades, parliament also hardly invested in any new equipment or furniture, apart from refurbishing upholstery.⁶³

Interestingly, in Dutch parliament functional objects possess the strongest symbolic value. Apart from the rostrum two other objects stand out: the clock and the calendar that marks the day of the year. Both objects express that time is one of parliament's most precious resources. Illustrations suggest that the revolutionary National Assembly of 1796–1798, a predecessor of the Second Chamber, was equipped with a clock. When the public galleries of parliament were extended in the middle of the nineteenth century two clocks were placed just at the front of the galleries. The calendar in parliament at least dates back to 1951, when, to celebrate a recent renovation, the Dutch Senate presented its counterpart with two calendar shields, sending out the message that the Second Chamber had the obligation to timely process legislation and budget proposals. For Speaker L.G. Kortenhorst this meaningful present symbolized three essential parliamentary values: patience, perseverance and the realization that '*tempus ruit*' – time forges ahead.⁶⁴ To add to the symbolism, every day at midnight sharp a parliamentary officer tore off a page of the block calendar. Clock and calendar highlighted the growing time-oriented consciousness of modern parliament.⁶⁵

The presence of time increased in the 1970s when the desk reserved for members of government as well as the rostrum were equipped with digital displays counting down the set speaking time limit.⁶⁶ When parliament entered its new plenary hall in the 1990s, MPs could check

the time on two clocks at either side of the hemicycle. The constant pressure of these omnipresent clocks is reflected by repeated references in the parliamentary proceedings. Post-war parliament structurally ran out of time. According to the Speaker of the 1960s, Frans-Joseph van Thiel, the calendar and the clock, together with the gavel, were his 'unrelenting and indispensable' attributes for presiding parliamentary debates.⁶⁷ Accordingly, MPs frequently mentioned the clock to mark the conclusion of their speech. Moreover, members of government have repeatedly referred to the clock to justify that they were not answering all the questions raised by parliament during a debate. Prime minister Ruud Lubbers (1982–1994) in particular had an undisputed reputation of skipping questions 'with an eye on the clock'.⁶⁸

Another functional object that is often neglected in reflections on parliamentary culture, although it stands at the heart of parliamentary practices, is paper. Although parliament revolves around oral discourse, in the end it produces paperwork and is dependent on paperwork for its flow of communication. In the Dutch parliament the spoken words end up in the so-called *Handelingen*, which literally translates as the deeds or doings of parliament. The objects cherished most by the Dutch parliament are the volumes in which its proceedings have been recorded. They are kept in the old library of the former Ministry of Justice, which is part of the Inner Court complex. With its stained glass windows and a spiral staircase decorated with Chinese ornaments it is one of the most lavishly decorated rooms of the complex and therefore part of every guided tour around the parliamentary buildings – somewhat comparable in status with the room in Victoria Tower in Westminster where British parliament stores all the adopted legislation on parchment rolls.⁶⁹ The library hardly has any practical use anymore, since all proceedings have been made digitally available, but still bears testimony to the high value parliament attaches to its proceedings (Figure 5).

The vast amount of parliamentary paperwork, as well as the elaborate official and technical channels through which this paperwork flows, does not only facilitate but also structure and even dictate parliamentary practices. To adapt a famous saying: whoever controls the information, controls the world of parliament. MPs and members of government try to influence the flow of information by keeping documents behind or by slowing down the flow of documents through the prescribed channels. Another frequently and successfully used tactic, often overlooked

Figure 5: The old library where copies of the parliamentary records (*Handelingen*) are kept. (Source: Wikimedia CCo / Rijksoverheid).

by observers, is to produce an overload of data. Because of its political importance, the production and flow of documents is repeatedly subject to (parliamentary) debate. Moreover, the availability of documents is intrinsically linked to the right to be informed: the degree to which MPs are ‘in the know’ with regard to the issues at hand.⁷⁰

A major innovation that would in time outshine paper as the main communicative object in and for parliament has been the admission of microphones and TV cameras. In 1929, the plenary hall – famous for its poor acoustics – had first been equipped with amplification, also making it easier for emerging radio stations to air debates.⁷¹ Both literally and figuratively microphones strengthened the voice of parliament: not only were MPs better able to make themselves heard in the plenary hall, thanks to the radio they could also reach out to a wider audience.

The introduction of TV cameras undeniably had the biggest impact (Figure 6). In 1955, the Dutch national broadcast cooperation NTS (*Nederlandse Televisie Stichting*) was granted permission to broadcast a session of parliament live on Dutch television. Compared to their colleagues in other European countries, Dutch MPs were quite optimistic about the opportunities offered by TV broadcasts to strengthen

Figure 6: TV-crew recording a parliamentary debate (1961) (Source: National Archives CCo/Anefo).

the position of parliament as the centre of public debate. In practice, however, also Dutch MPs struggled with this new situation. The heat produced by camera lights, the presence of cameramen, and simply the presence of a large object in an already crowded room caused controversy.⁷²

In the long run, the introduction of cameras and microphones also influenced the behaviour of MPs, conditioning and structuring their speech acts.⁷³ In 1965, interruption microphones were introduced, again at the request of a broadcasting cooperation. The introduction of microphones thus structured parliamentary debate: regulations only allowed

MPs to give a speech or ask questions if they were standing in front of a microphone. To a certain extent it made debates livelier: MPs now had to leave their benches to make an interruption.⁷⁴ ‘Walking towards the microphone’ turned into a synonym for making an interruption. A proposal to make debates more dynamic by introducing a rostrum on wheels was turned down because it would interfere with the unmanned TV cameras that registered parliamentary debates.⁷⁵ In the 1960s, MPs also became more aware of the opportunities offered by the presence of running TV cameras and adapted their behaviour to it, making interruptions and key statements when the cameras were rolling. To some extent MPs aiming to shine in front of the cameras became an accepted part of parliamentary culture. Yet, MPs were walking a tightrope since the dominant view on parliamentary politics still assumed rational, functional and non-emotional debates.⁷⁶ The Speaker did not hesitate to reprimand MPs in case he or she perceived them to be blatantly putting on a show aimed at an audience beyond parliament.⁷⁷

The integration of TV cameras in Dutch parliamentary culture shows how parliament as an institution – and MPs as bearers of its culture – tried to carefully negotiate innovations in the field of communication without vitiating its culture and self-understanding. One could also argue that as a result of this careful negotiation and as technological innovation advanced, parliamentary culture has progressively diverged from the world outside parliament. When in the 1980s the Dutch parliament started to discuss plans for a new complex, MPs decided to make their new building, plenary hall included, ready for the use of upcoming technological devices such as an electronic voting system and projection screens. Much of this new communication infrastructure, however, still lies idle. In fact, what has set the history of parliamentary communication apart from other professional forms of communication is the absence of the use of things like audio-visual aids. In 1992, the Speaker made it clear that plenary hall was no place for ‘showing slides’.⁷⁸ Although the installation of a projector seems to have been taken into consideration during discussions about the renovation of the parliamentary complex in 2001, this eventually did not materialize.⁷⁹

The Dutch parliament cherished its traditional communicative practices. Where the development of new communication technologies accelerated the flow of information, on the floor of the House most MPs preferred to stick with old-fashioned means of communication,

scribbling memos on pieces of cardboard that were distributed across the hall by parliamentary officers. The old plenary even had a pulley system that was used to distribute memos to the boxes of government servants and special guests of parliament located at the gallery. Only after text messaging and email became available the use of these so-called courier memos (*bode briefjes*) decreased. There were (and are), however, still MPs who took pleasure in sending round memos from time to time: it had turned into a ritualized form of political communication. MPs who made use of it, were well aware of the attention they would or could attract.

Objects that had once been merely functional, like dipping pens, inkpots and a hand bell, gradually became ritualized parliamentary objects. Judging from photographs the distinctive tin inkpot holder disappeared from the MPs desks after the renovation of 1956. It remained present on the government's desk as an ornamental object at least through the 1970s (Figure 7). The copper hand bell stayed within reach of the

Figure 7: The inkpot as an ornamental object on the government's desk (1958) (Source: National Archives CCo/Anefo).

Speaker until the move to a new building in 1992. To this day the procedure for the election of parliamentary officers prescribes the use of ballot papers, to be put in a nineteenth century ballot tin one by one. This time-consuming procedure – a recent election of a new Speaker took over four hours – is a tradition parliament is not ready to abolish. In addition, it demonstrates how things have turned from commodity into symbol, carrying particular associations and values that have shaped parliamentary culture.⁸⁰ In general, the Dutch parliament's hesitancy when it comes to introducing new objects shows that it still projects an image of itself as an austere and sober place for debate: a parliament of words, not of things.

'Props' in Parliamentary Performances

One of the other ways in which objects have emerged in parliamentary communication is as what Jaap de Jong, a professor of journalism and new media, has labelled 'theatre props'.⁸¹ In these cases, objects were used as rhetorical devices, as tools used to visualize and underline statements and to keep the audience spellbound, like the bottle of polluted water MP Lamberts brought with him in a debate with the secretary of Health to illustrate his call for an active approach to environmental issues.⁸² Effectiveness depends on the degree to which message and object are in sync. De Jong uses the example of the socio-liberal MP Alexander Pechtold. In 2009, Pechtold responded to a fellow MPs call for the establishment of a committee that was supposed to investigate possible spending cuts by bringing along a large pile of reports to show that it was now time to take action instead of having another committee writing yet another report.⁸³

Documents have obviously been the things MPs most frequently brought with them to parliamentary sessions, like books, proceedings of past parliamentary meetings and newspaper clippings. They used these documents, quoted from them, in parliamentary performances in which they confronted their political opponents with inconsistencies or flaws in their statements or tried to substantiate the claims they were making in parliament. MPs could ask the Speaker to distribute these documents or to include them in the parliamentary proceedings.⁸⁴ This was an accepted form of parliamentary communication – as long as the

sources remained limited to some kind of paperwork: in 1970, MP Hans van den Doel was not allowed to confront the members of government with a tape recording of a speech by the Prime Minister.⁸⁵ Not that this was explicitly against the rules; the standing orders did not (and still do not) mention anything about bringing along objects. On the basis of his general authority to maintain order during debates Speaker Van Thiel simply deemed the action unnecessary. To appease Van den Doel he instead proposed to let the stenographic services transcribe the tape. 'You or your secretary can then send it as a letter or memo to all the 150 members of parliament. There is no objection to that whatsoever.'⁸⁶ Again, paperwork was all that mattered.

On a few occasions, MPs and members of government also brought maps into parliament: in 1953, Prime Minister Willem Drees used one to show the impact of the North Sea Flood of February that year and Minister for Agriculture Victor Marijnen took one with him when he discussed the drought that had plagued Dutch farmers in 1959.⁸⁷ On other occasions MPs had to be creative, like Wijnand Duyvendak, who in a debate about environmental policy showed parliament an enlarged picture of a graph depicting fluctuations in the emission of carbon-dioxide.⁸⁸ In general, however, politicians relied on their rhetorical skills to win over their fellow MPs.

In most cases, however, rhetorical considerations played second fiddle to the more banal intention to generate media attention by bringing along a particular artefact. Strikingly, almost all of the known cases date from after the start of televised sessions of parliament. If objects were valued as rhetorical devices in parliamentary debate, one would after all have expected to find examples of their use in the era predating the introduction of TV cameras. Moreover, most of the MPs who brought along objects operated in the margins of parliament and were known for their tendency to explore the limits of prescribed parliamentary behaviour. One example is MP Nico Verlaan. Verlaan stood out with his unparliamentary language: on four occasions during Verlaan's four years as MP the Speaker decided to delete parts of his contribution to parliamentary discussions.⁸⁹ Verlaan was a member of a right-wing populist party led by 'Farmer Koekoek' (*Boer Koekoek*), who was known for his anti-elitism and anti-intellectualism and his ability to generate media attention with his rather odd behaviour.⁹⁰ The *Boerenpartij* had won seven of the 150 seats in the 1967 general elections. In May

Figure 8: Jacques de Jong using a small black board (Source: National Archives CCo/ Anefo).

1969, Verlaan introduced a record player in parliament during a debate about the taxation of petrol, beer and liquor. Verlaan wanted to play an LP record that had also been used in demonstrations against higher taxes. Speaker Van Thiel warned Verlaan that parliament was ‘neither a nursery nor a madhouse’.⁹¹ Unlike Koekoek, Verlaan failed to make an impact: newspapers did not report on his LP stunt.

Three years later another backbencher was more successful. Jacques de Jong, an independent MP, had asked and been given permission by Speaker Van Thiel to use a portable blackboard in a debate about the budget, ‘because I assume that without the blackboard you will not be able to substantiate your point of view’(Figure 8).⁹² This was another way of saying that De Jong lacked the rhetorical skills to make his case without the use of props. For De Jong, asking permission and thus more or less announcing his performance, something which Verlaan had failed to do, was part of his attempt to generate media coverage. He desperately needed it with elections due in one and a half months. Indeed, quite a lot of photographers had gathered both near and in plenary hall to watch De Jong’s lecture. The Speaker, clearly not too happy with the way in which De Jong had staged the event, reminded the MP of the need to maintain a serious discussion of the issue at hand: ‘Do

keep that in mind'.⁹³ When it turned out that De Jong had another trick up his sleeve, a briefcase filled with abaci which he wanted to hand out to the members of government present, the Speaker again intervened and warned him that 'this should remain a normal discussion ... We are not here to make jokes, but to discuss the budget in rather serious circumstances'.⁹⁴ De Jong for his part had gotten what he wished for: the next morning pictures of him carrying a blackboard appeared in a range of newspapers.⁹⁵ A fellow MP criticized his 'improper behaviour' (*ordinair gedoe*) and derided the fact that every newspaper had published pictures of it, but De Jong made sure to capitalize on the attention he had generated and cleverly used the blackboard incident in his campaign adverts.⁹⁶

In the following decades, a range of objects entered parliament in similar circumstances, like the stuffed muskrat brought along by MP Huib Eversdijk in a debate about rat control.⁹⁷ Also more recent examples confirm that objects are most often used by MPs as props in counter-performances aimed at challenging the boundaries of accepted parliamentary behaviour.⁹⁸ Objects are part of the repertoire with which they fashion themselves as outsiders in parliament and attack the established parties and political culture. During a session of parliament in November 2016 MPs of the populist Freedom Party (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*), who are normally prone to verbal provocations, rolled out a banner picturing party leader Geert Wilders with a red cross over his mouth. It was a reference to an on-going trial against Wilders for incitement to hatred and discrimination. 'This does not belong here', Speaker Khadija Arib responded and the MPs, and their banner, were quickly escorted to the door.⁹⁹

Whereas, throughout the years, the Speaker has become more tolerant with regard to verbal provocations, objects are still treated with suspicion.¹⁰⁰ Objects therefore still act as a powerful instrument in the hands of MPs who aim to challenge the status quo, particularly because the use of props fits very well into the visually oriented culture of today. Illustrative of this are the actions of Thierry Baudet, an MP who entered parliament after the general elections of March 2017. Baudet is the leader of *Forum voor Democratie* (Forum for Democracy), a new political party that takes on the existing 'party cartels' and strives for direct democracy. Baudet caused controversy in October 2017 when he mounted the rostrum wearing an army vest and carrying a pair of

army boots in a debate about the quality of Dutch army equipment that was triggered by an accident that killed two Dutch soldiers on a mission in Mali. Baudet used these objects to literally ‘show’ that soldiers were forced to work with low quality equipment: ‘This is what [the Ministry of] Defence supplies to our Marines’. Although Chair Khadija Arib deemed this inappropriate, she did not intervene.¹⁰¹ Two weeks earlier, Baudet had brought along empty coffee cups to illustrate that the Minister of Health was ‘playing a shell game’, fooling voters about the costs of health care insurance.¹⁰² In both cases Baudet received applause from the public gallery prompting an intervention by the Chair. Journalists derided Baudet for his attempt to use the death of two soldiers to reach headlines and referred to him as a ‘political dandy’, who had conducted a ‘disgraceful piece of theatre’.¹⁰³ Baudet with his coffee cups and army vest, however, made good copy: pictures were printed in newspapers and spread all across the Internet, including, of course, Baudet’s own Instagram account.

Conclusion

Very cautiously, over the past decade Dutch MPs as well as the Speakers of parliament seem to have become more open to new verbal and non-verbal performances. The display of oratory and the use of props nonetheless still cause controversy. A focus on the material culture of the Dutch parliament has enabled us to show that despite significant developments in the built, physical or material environment in which parliamentary politics is staged, being an MP in essence keeps revolving around the question how to do things with words. Since the nineteenth century an important element in the self-understanding of Dutch parliamentarians has been that they are experts in convincing others of their viewpoints verbally, through an exchange of rational arguments. Further, comparative research is needed to support our assumption that this complex negotiation of objects is prompted by the absence of a tradition of popular sovereignty in the Netherlands: the Dutch parliament has been primarily oriented to good governance and not so much to popular representation. We presuppose this can be best understood as part of an effort by MPs to maintain the legitimacy of parliament as a deliberative institution cantered around rational debate: a verbal contest, a battle of words rather than swordplay. Moreover, parliamentary

legitimacy is derived from and intimately linked with continuity. This brings with it a certain resistance against the introduction of new, modern practices of political communication. In this sense, parliamentary culture differs from the extra-parliamentary political sphere. One could criticize this and claim that parliament has become old-fashioned and out-dated set against the material and technological developments in political communication. Or, instead, one could cherish this history as a sign of the ability of parliament to maintain a great amount of institutional stability, from which it derives legitimacy, without being completely ignorant and non-receptive to changes in the outside world.

This is not to say that the Dutch parliament lacks a meaningful material culture. First, our analysis has shown that the political establishment used architecture to fashion a representation of parliament as the pounding heart of democracy: an open and transparent arena aimed at both stimulating discussion and generating consensus. The discussions about the move to a new complex revealed how MPs connected architecture to their perceptions of parliamentary culture. This further adds to the perception of the Dutch parliament as a sober institution. Only very recently, in November 2017, parliament decided to display the national flag in plenary hall. Again, further international comparative research is needed to better understand how architecture and visual symbols have contributed to constructing and legitimizing parliament as the core institution of modern European states.

Second, the introduction of new objects in parliament, such as microphones and TV cameras clearly had an impact on the behaviour of MPs and structured parliamentary debate in new ways. Although Speakers of Parliament have reprimanded MPs who used parliament as a stage to reach out to an audience beyond parliament, the presence of TV cameras has triggered MPs to perform in such a way that they could make headlines and get into the eight o'clock news. One way to do so, has been through the use of props. Only over the past couple of years, however, their use in parliamentary performances has become more prominent. Populist politicians have shown themselves to be particularly skilful in this field. Social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram offer them the opportunity to 'go viral' with their striking performances in parliament. Although these performances may challenge the tradition of parliament as the arena for rational debate, they too confirm its position as the key stage for political communication.

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Notes

- 1 We thank Anne Bos (Radboud University, Centre for Parliamentary History) as well as the anonymous reviewers selected by this journal for their valuable comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this article. Our thanks also go to Paul Reef for assistance with the footnotes.
- 2 Thomas Mergel, 'Funktionen und Modi des Sprechens in modernen Parlamenten. Historische und systematische Überlegungen', in Andreas Schulz and Andreas Wirsching (eds), *Parlamentarische Kulturen in Europa. Das Parlament als Kommunikationsraum* (Düsseldorf, 2012) 229.
*Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this article are the authors'.
- 3 Estevão Chaves de Rezende Martins, 'Parliaments: History of', *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)* (2015) 515–519.

- 4 Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom. Liberalism and the Modern City* (London and New York, 2003) 70.
- 5 See The European Information and Research Network on Parliamentary History, <http://Euparl.net>, accessed 23 April 2017.
- 6 Thomas Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Kommunikation, symbolische Politik und Öffentlichkeit im Reichstag* (Düsseldorf, 2002); Mergel, 'Funktionen und Modi des Sprechens'; Henk te Velde, *Sprekende politiek. Redenaars en hun publiek in de parlementaire gouden eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2015); Marnix Beyen and Henk te Velde, 'Passion and Reason. Modern Parliaments in the Low Countries', in Pasi Ihalainen et al (eds), *Parliament and Parliamentarism. A Comparative History of a European Concept* (New York and Oxford, 2016).
- 7 Cornelia Ilie, 'Insulting as (un)Parliamentary Practice in the British and Swedish Parliaments: A Rhetorical Approach', in Paul Bayley (ed.), *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse* (Amsterdam, 2004); Peter Bootsma and Carla Hoetink, *Over lijken. Ontoelaatbaar taalgebruik in de Tweede Kamer* (Amsterdam, 2006); Ruth Graham, *Withdraw and Apologise: A Diachronic Study of Unparliamentary Language in the New Zealand Parliament, 1890–1950* (Wellington, 2016).
- 8 Marnix Beyen, 'A Higher Form of Hermeneutics?: The Digital Humanities in Political Historiography', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 128:4 (2013); Kaspar Beelen, 'Tussen 'ik' en 'wij'. Zelfrepresentatie in parlementaire vertogen (1840–1940)', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Antwerp, 2014; Hinke Piersma et al, 'War in Parliament: What a Digital Approach Can Add to the Study of Parliamentary History', *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 8:1 (2014); Beyen and te Velde, 'Passion and reason'.
- 9 Emma Crewe and Marion Müller, *Rituals in Parliaments: Political, Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on Europe and the United States* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006); Henk te Velde, 'Parliamentary Obstruction and the "Crisis" of Parliamentary Politics around 1900', *Redescriptions. Yearbook of Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory* 16 (2013); Remieg Aerts et al (eds), *In dit Huis. Twee eeuwen Tweede Kamer* (Amsterdam, 2015); Schulz and Wirsching (eds), *Parlamentarische Kulturen in Europa*; David Cannadine et al, *The Houses of Parliament. History, art, architecture* (London, 2000).
- 10 For an account of the research project 'Das Politische als Kommunikationsraum in der Geschichte' (SFB 584; 2001–2012) developed in Bielefeld see

- Willibald Steinmetz et al (eds), *Writing Political History Today* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2013).
- 11 Chris Kyle, *Theater of State: Parliament and Political Culture in Early Stuart England* (Stanford, 2012).
 - 12 Barbara Stollberg-Rillinger, 'Zeremoniell als politisches Verfahren. Rangordnung und Rangstreit als Strukturmerkmale des frühneuzeitlichen Reichstags', in Johannes Kunisch (eds), *Neue Studien zur frühneuzeitlichen Reichsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1997); Stollberg-Rillinger (eds), *Vormoderne politische Verfahren* (Berlin, 2001).
 - 13 Stollberg-Rillinger, "'Parlamentarische Kultur" und "Symbolische Kommunikation"'. Grundsätzliche kommentierende Überlegungen', in Schulz and Wirsching (eds), *Parlamentarische Kulturen in Europa*.
 - 14 Philip Manow, *In the King's Shadow. The Political Anatomy of Democratic Representation* (Cambridge, 2010) 9–10.
 - 15 Original in German: 'politische Architektur [ist] Bestandteil eines komplexen Kommunikationsprozesses zwischen Regierenden und Regierten'. Stefan Paulus, "'Das bauliche Herz der Demokratie". Parlamentsarchitektur im öffentlichen Raum', in Schulz and Wirsching (eds), *Parlamentarische Kulturen in Europa*, 389.
 - 16 Charles Goodsell, 'The Architecture of Parliaments: Legislative Houses and Political Culture', *British Journal of Political Science* 18:3 (1988).
 - 17 Rebekka Habermas, 'Peitschen im Reichstag oder über den Zusammenhang von materieller und politischer Kultur. Koloniale Debatten um 1900', *Historische Anthropologie* 23:3 (2015).
 - 18 Frank Trentmann, 'Political History Matters: Everyday Life, Things, and Practices', in Willibald Steinmetz et al (eds), *Writing Political History Today* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2013) 401, 406–7.
 - 19 Karen Harvey, 'Introduction. Practical Matters', in Karen Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture. A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London and New York, 2009), 4.
 - 20 Ibid., 3; Alan Mayne, 'Material culture', in Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (eds), *Research Methods for History* (Edinburgh, 2012) 51; Hans Schouwenburg, 'Back to the Future? History, Material Culture and New Materialism', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 3:1 (2015) 63.
 - 21 Although Parliament in the Dutch case officially encompasses both Houses of Parliament, the First and Second Chamber, in this article for the sake of readability we use it to refer to the Second Chamber only.

- 22 Marion G. Müller, 'Parliaments and their Liturgies', in Emma Crewe and Marion G. Müller (eds), *Rituals in Parliaments. Political, Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on Europe and the United States* (Frankfurt am Main et al, 2006).
- 23 Simon Gunn, 'Analysing behaviour as performance', in Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (eds), *Research methods for history* (Edinburgh, 2012) 192.
- 24 The Dutch parliament, for its part, has not done much to preserve its material heritage. Parliament does have its own Central Archive (CA) that collects and preserves official documents that have been generated as part of the parliamentary process and is closed to the general public. There is no parliamentary museum or permanent exhibition (yet) dedicated to parliament's past. During the forthcoming renovation of parliament (2020–2025), however, an exhibition will be held dedicated to the history of Parliament.
- 25 Our thanks go out to Anne Bos and her colleagues at the Centre for Parliamentary History.
- 26 Recent digitizing projects have made the complete collection of parliamentary records available and searchable. The Dutch Royal Library provides for the historical records (1814–1995) via <http://www.statengeneraaldigitaal.nl>. The Dutch government keeps the collection up to date from 1995 onwards via https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/zoeken/parlementaire_documenten. IT-specialists from the University of Amsterdam have incorporated these two datasets in a new search engine for the parliamentary proceedings: <http://wip.politicalmashup.nl>. In some respects this bèta search engine is more user friendly, offering e.g. keyword-in-context searches. The same specialists have been working on a new project, 'Digging into Linked Parliamentary Data', which will bring together in a single database the parliamentary proceedings of the Netherlands, the UK and Canada.
- 27 Remieg Aerts, *Het aanzien van de politiek. Geschiedenis van een functionele fictie* (Amsterdam, 2007) 107.
- 28 Manow, *In the King's Shadow*, 1–84.
- 29 Original in German: 'Die Geschichte der Parlamentsbauten beginnt nicht mit Neubauten, sondern mit der Nutzung bestehender historischer Gebäude. Ita Heinze-Greenberg, 'Nation und Stil. Zur Formfindung parlamentarischer Repräsentation im 19. Jahrhundert', in *Plenum. Orte der Macht. Sonderausgabe Biennale Venedig 2014* (2014) 135.
- 30 Inventory by courtesy of Remieg Aerts, 'The architecture of Political Representation', paper presented at the International Euparl.net Conference

- 'The Europe of Parliaments. Current Research in the Field of Parliamentary History' (Paris, 8–9 November 2012). See also Heinze-Greenberg, 'Nation und Stil', 131–141 and Goodsell, 'The Architecture of Parliaments'. Although there are several studies available on national representative buildings, studies offering a cross-national perspective are rare.
- 31 Diederik Smit, *Het belang van het Binnenhof. Twee eeuwen Haagse politiek, huisvesting en herinnering* (Amsterdam, 2015); Jaco Alberts et al (eds), *Het Haagse Binnenhof. Acht eeuwen centrum van de macht* (Den Haag, 2013).
 - 32 Smit, *ibid.*, 9–10; Henk te Velde and Diederik Smit (eds), *Van Torentje tot Trêveszaal. De geschiedenis van de noordzijde van het Binnenhof* (Den Haag, 2011) voorwoord.
 - 33 Carla Hoetink and Erie Tanja, "Een moeizaam te analyseren, onvervangbare sfeer." Debatcultuur in de Tweede Kamer', in Carla van Baalen et al (eds), *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis 2008. Het feest van de democratie. Rituelen, symbolen en tradities* (Amsterdam, 2008) 81.
 - 34 Smit, *Het belang van het Binnenhof*, 273.
 - 35 Paulus, "Das bauliche Herz der Demokratie", 396–399.
 - 36 Smit, *Het belang van het Binnenhof*, 252–253.
 - 37 Marcel ten Hooven, 'In de hal ruist de zee, de arena wacht op het drama', *Trouw*, 25 April 1992.
 - 38 'Open huis in Tweede Kamer', *De Telegraaf*, 25 April 1992; Teun Lagas, 'De architect kan de Kamerleden ook niet verder helpen', in Van Baalen et al (eds), *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis 2008*, 94.
 - 39 National Archives (NA), Archief Dolman, inv.no. 15, Toespraak op een bijeenkomst in de Ridderzaal over de (ver)nieuwbouw Tweede Kamer, 28 April 1982.
 - 40 Willem Breedveld, 'Staat die nieuwe jas dat klagend volkje wel?', *Trouw*, 25 April 1992.
 - 41 *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (HTK)* 1980–1981, 10 September 1980, 6201.
 - 42 Rutten, *Nieuwbouw Tweede Kamer*, 20.
 - 43 *HTK* 1991–1992, 9 April 1992, 4631.
 - 44 *HTK* 1991–1992, 9 April 1992, 4631; cf. Manow, *In the King's Shadow*, 24–25.
 - 45 *Haagsche Courant*, 25 April 1992.
 - 46 Carla Hoetink, 'Tussen traditie en modernisering. De Tweede Kamer op het breukvlak van de eenentwintigste eeuw', in: Aerts et al (eds), *In dit Huis*, 422–424.

- 47 Goodsell, 'The Architecture of Parliaments', 298.
- 48 Tom Leijte, 'Parlement moet naar wilde beesten ruiken', *de Volkskrant*, 14 July 2015; 'Vergaderzaal Tweede Kamer op de schop', *De Telegraaf*, 27 November 2015.
- 49 'Een doorzichtig Kamergebouw met optimaal comfort', *NRC Handelsblad*, 12 January 1990.
- 50 Cf. Henk te Velde, 'Staten-Generaal en parlement. De welsprekendheid van de Tweede Kamer', in Aerts et al (eds), *In dit Huis* and Rudy Andeweg, 'Normalisering van de Tweede Kamer? Een internationale vergelijking', in *ibid.*, 139.
- 51 Te Velde, *Van regentenmentaliteit tot populisme*, 115.
- 52 Remieg Aerts, *Het aanzien van de politiek*, 106.
- 53 Dennis Bos, Maurits Alexander Ebben and Henk te Velde (eds), *Harmonie in Holland. Het poldermodel van 1500 tot nu* (Amsterdam, 2007).
- 54 Beyen and Te Velde, 'Passion and reason', 96; Andeweg, 'Normalisering', 139–140; Remieg Aerts, 'Op gepaste afstand. De plaats van het parlement in de natievorming van de negentiende eeuw', in Carla van Baalen et al (eds), *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis 2007. De moeizame worsteling met de nationale identiteit* (Amsterdam, 2007), 26–31.
- 55 Beyen and Te Velde, 'Passion and reason', 96–97.
- 56 Original in Dutch: 'Vergeleken bij verschillende andere parlementen is [...] de situatie in de volksvertegenwoordiging bij ons bepaald rustig te noemen. Zelfs het Engelse parlement, vaak als voorbeeld geldend voor democratisch optreden, geeft soms uitbarstingen te zien zoals we die niet meer kennen.' Willem Drees, *Het Nederlandse parlement vroeger en nu* (Naarden, 1975) 46, cited in Te Velde, *Van Regentenmentaliteit tot populisme*, 108–109. Cf. Piersma et al, 'War in Parliament'.
- 57 Te Velde, *Van regentenmentaliteit tot populisme*, 119.
- 58 Remieg Aerts, *Het aanzien van de politiek*, 91–92.
- 59 Diederik Smit, 'Een oud toneel, een nieuw decor', in Aerts et al (eds), *In dit Huis*, 37–63; Carla van Baalen and Anne Bos, 'Gemeinsam in der Sitzung. Parlamentarische Rituale und symbolische Kommunikation in der Tweede Kamer', in Schulz and Wirsching (eds), *Parlamentarische Kulturen in Europa*, 107–108.
- 60 'Over kunstwerk Tweede Kamer kan niet meer gestemd', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 28 April 1992.
- 61 *HTK* 1991–1992, 9 april 1992, 4631.
- 62 Van Baalen and Bos, 'Gemeinsam in der Sitzung', 109–110.

- 63 Hoetink en Tanja, “‘Een moeizaam te analyseren, onvervangbare sfeer’”, 82–83.
- 64 Original in Dutch: “‘Beid Uw tijd en duur Uw uur’; geduld en volharding zijn in deze schilden gesymboliseerd. *Tempus ruit – de tijd snelt voort!*’ *HTK* 1951–1952, 8 nov. 1951, 287.
- 65 Cf. Ryan A. Vieira, *Time and politics. Parliament and the culture of modernity in Britain and the British world* (Oxford 2015) 33–35.
- 66 Cf. *Het Vaderland*, 6 November 1975; *Nederlands Dagblad*, 16 November 1978.
- 67 *HTK* 1970–1971, 16 September 1970, 7.
- 68 *HTK* 1986–1987, 23 October 1986, 804.
- 69 Diederik Smit, ‘De Handelingenkamer’, in: Aerts et al (eds), *In dit Huis*, 60.
- 70 Guido Enthoven, *Hoe vertellen we het de Kamer? Een empirisch onderzoek naar de informatierelatie tussen regering en parlement* (Delft, 2011) 93; Chris Lorenz, ‘Het “Academisch Poldermodel” en de Westforschung in Nederland’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 118: 2 (2005) 268.
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- 72 *Ibid.*, 238.
- 73 Harm Kaal, ‘De cultuur van het televisiedebat. Veranderende percepties van de relatie tussen media en politiek, 1960 – heden’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 127 (2014) 299–300; Carla Hoetink, *Macht der gewoonte. Regels en rituelen in de Tweede Kamer sinds 1945* (Nijmegen, 2017).
- 74 Anne Bos and Johan van Merriënboer, ‘Van het dorp van Romme naar het grote bedrijf van Vondeling. Professionalisering van het democratisch proces’, in Aerts et al (eds), *In dit huis*, 391.
- 75 Hoetink, ‘Tussen traditie en modernisering’, 411.
- 76 Te Velde, ‘Staten-Generaal en parlement’, 184–189.
- 77 *HTK* 1970–1971, 15 October 1970, 393.
- 78 Chairman Deetman in reaction to an MP who had asked one of the members of government to inform parliament about a speech he had given someplace else, and for which he had used ‘beautiful slides’. *HTK* 1991–1992, 10 March 1992, 3737.
- 79 *HTK* 2000–2001, 27 June 2001, 5774 and 5779.
- 80 Cf. Trentmann, ‘Political History Matters’, 403.
- 81 Jaap de Jong, ‘Stekkers, geweren en stropdassen. Theatrale effecten in toespraken’, *Onze Taal* 9 (2014).

- 82 *HTK* 1963–1964, 12 November 1963, 331.
- 83 Footage ‘Alexander Pechtold vs. Pieter van Geel’, <https://youtu.be/Y8GVbHqWroM>, accessed 23 April 2017.
- 84 Examples are numerous, see for instance: *HTK* 1979–1980, 20 May 1980, 4783, speech by H.J.G. Waltmans (PPR); *HTK* 1958–1959, 6 November 1958, 2131, speech by W.K.N. Schmelzer (member of government); *HTK* 1966–1967, 21 September 1966, 37, J.J.Th. ten Broecke Hoekstra (VVD).
- 85 *HTK* 1969–1970, 26 February 1970, 2539.
- 86 *Reglement van Orde van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, art. 58–59. Explicit grounds for intervention are speaking off-topic, insulting, disturbing the order, encouraging wrongful acts and violating rules of confidence.
- 87 *HTK* 1952–1953, 3 February 1953; *HTK* 1959–1960, 29 October 1959; maps were also used in debates about planning policy, see for instance M. Schakel (ARP): *HTK*, 10 December 1969, 1506.
- 88 *HTK* 2006–2007, 6 November 2007, 1338–1339.
- 89 Bootsma and Hoetink, *Over lijken*, 147–151.
- 90 Koen Vossen, ‘De andere jaren zestig. De opkomst van de Boerenpartij (1963–1967)’, in Gerrit Voerman (ed.), *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen 2004* (Groningen, 2005).
- 91 *HTK* 1968–1969, 21 May 1969, 2927, debate about the taxation of petrol, beer and liquor.
- 92 *HTK* 1972, 10 October 1972, 207, Algemene Politieke en Financiële Beschouwingen over de Rijksbegroting voor het Dienstjaar 1973.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 ‘Jac. de Jong met telraam in de Tweede Kamer’, *Leeuwarder Courant*, 11 October 1972. Pictures also appeared in *Limburgs Dagblad*, *Het Vrije Volk*, and *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*.
- 96 *De Telegraaf*, 31 October 1972, 18.
- 97 *HTK* 1985–1986, 3 October 1985, 374; Eversdijk and his pet were pictured in *De Telegraaf*, 4 October 1985.
- 98 Grunwald uses the concept of counter-performance in: Henning Grunwald, *Courtroom to Revolutionary Stage: Performance and Ideology in Weimar Political Trials* (Oxford, 2012), 179.
- 99 Sacha Kester, ‘De plenaire zaal als protestpodium, mag dat eigenlijk wel?’, *de Volkskrant*, 17 November 2016.
- 100 Hoetink, ‘Tussen traditie en modernisering’, 432.

- 101 HTK 2017–2018, 3 October 2017.
- 102 HTK 2017–2018, 20 September 2017.
- 103 Sheila Sitalsing, ‘Woordenpap’, *de Volkskrant*, 4 October 2017; Sjirk Kuijper, ‘Geloofwaardig’, *Nederlands Dagblad*, 4 October 2017; Lex Oomkes, ‘Nieuw leven voor beter referendum’, *Trouw*, 4 October 2017.