

Counteracting polarization

in Dutch society

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Abstract

Polarization is one of the prominent issues of current western societies. This project takes on the challenge to design an intervention that deals with polarization in Dutch society, based on an extensive analysis of the context of the phenomenon, in order to achieve positive impact for society. It was found that even though the Netherlands is not as divided as it seems when for instance watching the news, the emphasis on extremes in the public debate is a problem. People want to belong to a group, which results into a pressure to choose for one of the extreme opinions on an issue. People with a moderate opinion either tend to go along with the extremes, or to turn their back on the public debate because they feel unrepresented. This in turn creates polarization. In order to relieve the pressure to go along with the extremes, the desired implication of the to-be-intervention is defined as to augment the presence of moderate opinions in the public debate, by making people with a moderate opinion express themselves in the public debate. The created intervention is the Pine Grenade, an emblem symbolizing outspoken reasonableness and thereby a counterpart to the 'like' known from social media. It is meant to serve as an appealing and recognizable representation of reasonableness in the public debate, inspiring people to express themselves in a reasonable way and relieving the pressure to choose for one of the extremes. In order to make the symbol publicly known, public figures representative to the message are approached to become ambassadors of the Pine Grenade.

Preface

Polarization is one of the prominent issues of current western societies. Discussions about topics as migration, climate measures and vaccination seem to be extremely divided and the tone is rather rough. A completely divided debate as for instance the Brexit-dispute in the United Kingdom shows how escalation of public conflicts can disrupt a country.

Polarization is also a phenomenon that touches me personally. I believe the world is a better place when people understand each other. Mutual understanding serves as a basis for empathy, which in turn drives people to be there for others. And this mutual understanding is exactly what is at stake in polarized discussions, where people do not seem to feel any empathy for the other side.

I'm excited to show what design can do in dealing with such a complex societal issue. Enjoy reading!

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Part 1. **Introduction**

This part discusses the challenge this project takes on and the process that is pursued to tackle it. What exactly is polarization? What can the role of design be in such complex issues? What kind of process is used to get to an intervention that helps in dealing with polarization?

1.1. The challenge

This chapter discusses what polarization is, what kind of societal consequences it has and what the role of design can be in dealing with such a complex societal issue.

Polarization?

The political crises in the United States and the United Kingdom show a fierce division of opinions among the population: people either seem to strongly support or strongly oppose President Trump or the Brexit. There is little space for a middle ground. Such a trend also seems visible in the Netherlands, where debates about issues as Black Pete, measures to counteract climate change and vaccination are characterized by strongly opposing opinions.

What is polarization?

Polarization in society can be defined as “division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs” (Lexico, n.d.). Thereby, polarization relates to people’s opinions about an issue drifting apart towards the extremes. On those extremes, the poles, groups arise that completely disagree with each other.

Perception of polarization

Polarization is a vivid topic in the Netherlands. While many newspapers write about it, a recent study by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) showed that 75% of the Dutch population feels that divisions over opinions on

societal issues are increasing (Dekker & Den Ridder, 2019). The respondents mostly blame social media. Another study by the SCP shows that polarization is one of the major worries of the Dutch population (Beugelsdijk et al., 2019).

However, whether the Dutch society is actually more divided than before is hard to say. Everyone is influenced by what they see in the public debate, and what is seen in the public debate is not necessarily an accurate representation of society (see chapter 2.4). The previously mentioned study by Dekker & Den Ridder (2019) measured how many Dutch people say to have negative feelings towards others because of differences of opinion, the so-called affective polarization. It showed a slight increase compared to earlier measurements (16% of respondents in 2019 compared to 13% in respectively 2012, 1980 and 1975), however, in 1970 the affective polarization scored higher (19%). As a conclusion, Dekker & Den Ridder pose that even though people feel as though differences of opinion are increasing, there is little factual indication for an increasing polarization.

Consequences of polarization

On behalf of the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), Tiemeijer wrote a publication about the consequences of social divisions (2017). He at first argues that social divisions have their benefits. Belonging to a group provides for psychological comfort, as it gives people support and a feeling of identity and connectedness. Additionally, Tiemeijer poses that differences can trigger social creativity and innovation because conflict challenges the status quo - which is necessary in a constantly changing world.

The notion that conflict triggers innovation might however not apply for polarized discussions. In a literature review concerning conflict at the workplace, De Dreu (2008) poses that conflict only triggers creativity and innovativeness under specific conditions. Among others, the conflict should be strictly task-related and not involve personal concerns, for instance about ideology or personality. Additionally, the team members should trust and feel comfortable with each other (De Dreu, 2008). One can question whether these conditions are met in the current polarized public debate.

There is, however, an important side note to the theory that conflict triggers innovation. In a literature review concerning conflict at the workplace, De Dreu (2008) poses that conflict only triggers creativity and innovativeness under specific conditions. Among others, conflicts should be task-related and “not (also) involve issues related to personality, identity, religious values, humor, or political ideologies”. Additionally, “team climate should be high on psychological safety and within-group trust”. One can question whether these conditions are met in the current polarized public debate.

In his publication about the consequences of social divisions, Tiemeijer (2017) distinguishes two main risks. At first, polarization threatens the social cohesion: a society is built on a community of people that work together to keep it functioning, which is only possible when there is a certain amount of connectedness, solidarity and trust. Tiemeijer poses that an increasing identification with contrasting groups can lead to distrust and conflicts that threaten this social cohesion.

Secondly, Tiemeijer puts forward that polarization can lead to so-called ‘insolvable disputes’. Because people tend to interpret information according to their own beliefs (also see chapter 6) and within groups people generally have a shared frame through which they perceive the world, different groups can have completely different perceptions of a similar thing. The situation becomes worse when media and politics are involved in these different frames, because information by such sources is then no longer considered as neutral to both groups. This can lead to conflicts that are barely bridgeable. Examples of such a situation are the conflict between Israel and Palestine, a violent dispute that seems nowhere close to a solution, as well as the increasing gap between US republicans and democrats.

In short, although social divisions give people the comfort of belonging to a group, the biggest risks of a fierce polarization are (1) distrust and conflicts that threaten social cohesion, and (2) groups perceiving the world in an unbridgeable different way, which can result in insolvable disputes.

“Division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs”

Definition of polarization, by Lexico (n.d.)

Conclusion

Polarization is about the division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs. Even though there is little factual indication for an increasing polarization, people do feel as though

differences of opinion are increasing. Polarization is a threat to social cohesion and can cause societal conflicts that are barely bridgeable. It is important to prevent such consequences and therefore counteract possible polarization.

Role for design

How can design help with a complex social phenomenon as polarization?

Making up for it

The cause of increasing divisions of opinion on societal issues are often said to be social media (Dekker & Den Ridder, 2019). Social media, as well as related inventions as smartphones and algorithms, are all designed. As a result, if these are indeed a cause of polarization, designers are partly responsible for it. This leaves space for design to 'make up for it': if designed things can drive groups apart, things can also be designed that bring groups together.

Value of design

Additionally, designers typically have the ability to reframe complex problems in a way that creates perspective to deal with them (Tromp & Hekkert, 2018). Even though designers do not have the specific

knowledge sociologists, psychologists or politicians have, they can add value by combining insights from these domains and interpreting them in a way that creates solution opportunities. Subsequently, designers can typically create concepts that tap into these opportunities and help resolve complex problems.

This being said, complex societal challenges are a relatively new domain for designers to partake in. One essential difference with for instance user-centered design is that the goal is common good rather than individual good. The client - the one to answer to - is not a company, but society as a whole. This brings different challenges to a design project. For me, this project is a way of exploring as well as showing the value design can have in complex societal problems.

powerfully achieves a defined desired implication for society.

The departing assignment of this project is thereby phrased as underneath. The full project brief can be found in appendix H.

The challenge

This project takes the challenge of designing something to deal with polarization in the Netherlands. As such, it explores how the system behind polarization works and what kind of mechanism could turn this system around. The goal is to design a simple but smart intervention which

Design an intervention that achieves positive impact for society by dealing with polarization in Dutch society, based on an extensive analysis of the context of polarization.

1.2 Approach

This chapter shows the approach that is taken to deal with the challenge as discussed in the previous chapter.

Social Implication Design

The process is inspired by the method 'Social Implication Design' (SID), as proposed by Tromp and Hekkert (2018). SID is specifically developed to design for social impact by taking the desired social implication as the reference point to design from.

In a typical SID-process (Tromp & Hekkert, 2018) the context is thoroughly explored, translated into context factors and clustered together into a context structure. This context structure gives an encompassing perspective on the domain, exposing underlying mechanisms and providing opportunities to make

a change. Based on that, the designer defines the desired social implication within this context and a mechanism to accomplish this in a design statement.

Based on the context and the design statement it is decided which interaction would be the best to create this effect. Following, ideas of interventions to create this interaction are explored and developed into a concept. The last step of SID is validating whether this concept would in fact lead to reaching the desired social implication.

Process overview

An impression of the process of this project is shown in figure 1 on the next page. Design processes are typically displayed in diamond shapes, because they often involve a repetitive sequence of exploring information or possibilities - divergence - and concluding or choosing a direction - convergence. In reality such processes are typically iterative: newly gained insights are used to improve or change direction, constantly jumping back and forth through the process.

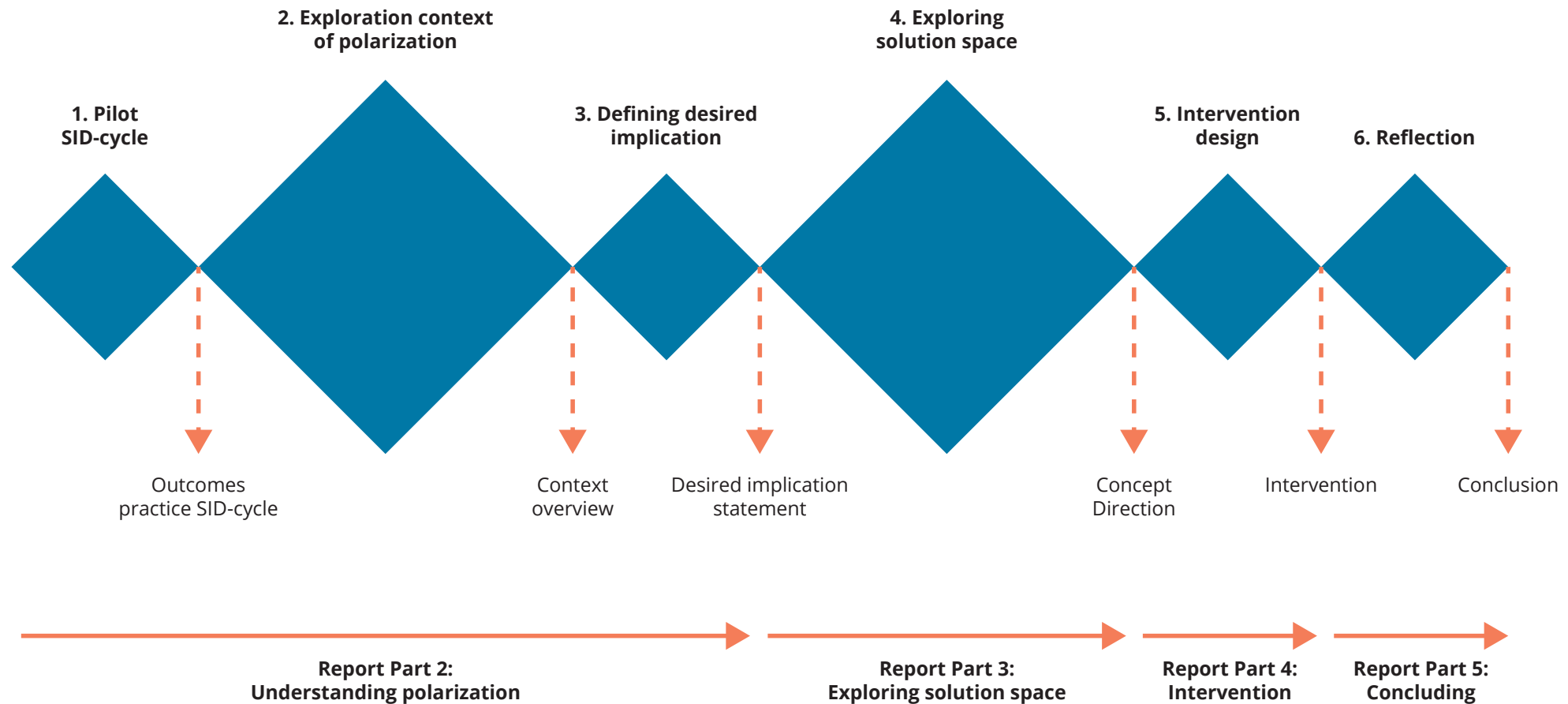


Figure 1 - Impression of the process of this project

1. Pilot SID-cycle

Getting acquainted with the SID-method in a two-week sprint through all its steps. The results – a provisional overview of the context of polarization and a provisional concept to counteract it – can be found in appendix A.

2. Exploration context of polarization

Exploring what polarization is about through literature, discussions, newspapers and interviews with experts, and

iteratively looking for an interpretation that strikingly encompasses and conveys the context of polarization.

3. Defining desired implication

Taking a position in this context: how should it change in order to reach a positive impact for society? This defines the desired implication of the to-be-designed intervention for society.

4. Exploring solution space

Exploring how this desired implication can be achieved through an iterative process of exploration, probing and reflection, which comes together in a concept direction.

5. Intervention design

Designing the intervention to reach the desired implication.

6. Reflection

Reflecting on the expected impact of the intervention in the perspective of dealing with polarization.

The background of the slide features a large, abstract geometric design. It consists of several overlapping shapes in a vibrant blue color against a white background. These shapes include a large triangle on the left, a curved band that sweeps across the middle, and various other angular and curved forms that create a dynamic, modern aesthetic. The blue shapes are solid and have sharp edges, while the white spaces between them are also geometric, forming a complex pattern.

Part 2.

Understanding polarization

This part dives into the context of polarization. How did we get into this situation? Which factors play a role? Through reviewing literature and newspapers, having discussions and conducting interviews with experts, the context of polarization is explored. This part discusses the most important insights and concludes with an encompassing but concrete overview of the context of polarization, which is used as a basis to define the desired implication of the to-be-designed intervention.

2.1 Process

Through literature research, topics as psychological biases and the influence of technology are studied. In order to get a view on what is going on in Dutch society, besides staying updated on the news, several publications by the SCP and the WRR are studied. Interviews with PhD candidate Kemmers, a sociologist researching discontent in society, and dr. Rijshouwer, sociologist and designer, gave more context to the findings. The view of the municipality, who could possibly be an important stakeholder in dealing with polarization, is studied through an interview with Brouwer, manager of the civil society policy department at the Municipality of Utrecht. Notes of the interviews can be found in appendix B. Additionally, discussing findings with my supervisors, teachers, fellow students and friends are an important source of insight, as in such conversations insights tend to fall into place.

This resulted into a wide array of insights relating to polarization, which were to be condensed in a comprehensive but insightful overview. Such a process requires a lot of discussion and trial and error. The result is a perspective on polarization that reveals directions to improve the situation. The following chapters discuss the most important factors playing a role in polarization, which together build up to the overview of polarization (chapter 2.7) and the chosen direction to deal with polarization (chapter 2.8).

2.2 Belonging to a group

At the basis of polarization seems to lie a typical human trait: the desire to belong to a group. This subject is discussed in this chapter.

Group perception

Social identity

There are certain needs that any human being seems to strive for. One of these is the need for belonging: the need to be “part of and accepted by a social group or entity that is important to you” (Desmet and Fokkinga, 2018). Additionally, the social identity theory by Tajfel et al. (1979) poses that people derive a significant part of their self-image from the group they perceive to belong to. Therefore, people do not only desire to be part of a group, but also strive to positively distinct this group from other groups. An example of such behavior is the in-group bias: the tendency to show favorable behavior towards people who are considered to be of your group.

Arbitrary group perception

Even though people form part of multiple social categories at the same time - a person can be a mother, a cycling fan, a cat-owner, etcetera - their behavior is determined by the group characteristics that are salient at that time (Tajfel et al., 1979). People can sympathize with fellow

cat-owners when there is a discussion about cats versus dogs, while sympathizing with fellow cyclist fans when watching the Tour de France.

In other words, the social category a person identifies with at a certain moment depends on which group categorization is emphasized at that time. As a result, the group people perceive to belong to (and consequently people’s behavior, think of the in-group bias) can be manipulated by stressing a certain shared characteristic, which is for instance exploited by politicians (see chapter 2.5). Experiments showed that even categorizing people in random groups, a group A and a group B, makes people favor their own group above the other group (Tajfel et al., 1979).

In short, people strive to feel part of a group and positively distinct this group, as this defines one’s identity. The group people perceive to belong to at a certain moment depends on context factors and can therefore be manipulated.

Belonging in the 21st century

The age of freedom

One place to find belonging is by being part of an association or community. In the Netherlands, up to the sixties most people automatically formed part of a community, in one of the so-called pillars. Society was organized to foster the existence of a catholic, a reformed, a social democratic and a liberal pillar,

where every pillar had its own educational institutions, media channels, etcetera. In other words, people were born in an explicit community that granted people with a certain identity.

However, from the sixties on a time of ‘depillarization’ (Dutch: ontzuiling) started: the connection with the pillars became

looser and groups started to mix. Since, the trend of not committing oneself seems to have carried on. Churches are less and less visited (CBS, 2018), people marry less often (CBS, 2019) and even sports associations have a reducing number of members (CBS, 2019). Committing oneself seems to be rather unfashionable nowadays. This desire for freedom might satisfy people's need for autonomy, also one of the universal needs distinguished by Desmet & Fokkinga (2018), but conflicts with people's need for belonging.

Social media

When not found in the shape of associations, people are likely to find this sense of belonging in other places. A likely new source for belonging is people's new domain of communication: social media.

Concluding

In short, people strive to feel part of a group and positively distinct this group, as this defines one's identity. The group people perceive to belong to at a certain moment depends on context factors and can therefore be manipulated. Social media are likely to play a role in shaping where people perceive to belong to.

Social media have a lot to do with identity construction and expression. Firstly, social media are a place of self-expression. On platforms as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, people typically share who they are and what they like and what they think. Secondly, social media are a platform of affiliation. By exploring social platforms people see what others think or do and can typically show what they approve, through likes, follows, shares, etcetera. Such affiliations in turn showcase themselves and what they like. As self-expression and affiliation are very linked to identity, social media are likely to play an important role in determining where people perceive to belong to.

2.3 The public debate

The public debate is where polarization comes to the surface. This chapter gives a short impression of the public debate in the Netherlands.

Traditional and social media

The public debate can be defined as the public conversation about the way we live (Roovers, 2019). Next to traditional media as newspapers, news - and talk shows and informal chats, the public debate is recently more and more held on the domain of social media. This brought a

significant change: whereas traditional media mediate what happens in the world, through social media people have the opportunity to directly contribute to the public debate; opinions are no longer filtered.

A divided society

Moralization of the public debate

A rough tone seems to be characteristic of the current public debate: topics as migration, vaccination, European Union, Black Pete and climate measurements are recently causing a lot of friction. Especially on social media, the tone can be quite offensive (see figure 2). Kemmers, a sociologist researching discontent in

society, spots a 'moralization' of the Dutch public debate: he sees more than ever the involvement of value judgements ('he is a bad person') concerning differences of opinion in the public debate (Kemmers, see appendix B). Such roughness gives the impression of a fiercely divided society.



Figure 2 - Broadcaster RTV Noord collected offensive posts that were placed on their Facebook page to make a statement against online hatred (RTV Noord, 2020)

Interestingly, politicians and their parties – representatives of the people – now and then set this rough tone. For example, political party SP recently publicly mocked the European party leader of PvdA by means of a provocative video in light of the European elections of 2019 (figure 3), which provoked a lot of commotion (NOS, 2019).

Protests

Additionally, recently there have been many public protests. Newspaper Het Parool even states: “Never before has there been more demonstration in the Netherlands than last year.” (Khaddari & Wiegman, 2019). And in 2017, the yearly Black Pete discussion came to a climax with an illegal occupation of the highway to block protesters from disturbing the Sinterklaas celebration. This shows the tension that lives between groups.

Concluding

With value judgements on social media, public protests on a regular basis and media showing a divided image on topics, the current public debate can be

‘Bridgebuilders’

Also in newspapers and talk shows, extreme opinions tend to get much attention. Philosopher Brandsma, specialized in the phenomenon of polarization, calls these platforms ‘bridgebuilders’: they tend to connect extremes from both sides and make them discuss. Instead of fostering understanding between the two sides, however, such discussions rather tend to fuel a division (Brandsma, 2019). The platforms tend to go along in framing the conversation as two opposite sides because that delivers spectacle. Meanwhile, the extremes are generally happy to be able to share their story and are not interested in finding common ground. Therefore, such items tend to result in sensational shows or interviews that actually emphasize dividedness rather than building a bridge.

characterized by fierce differences of opinion and a rough tone, thereby giving an impression of a divided country.

2.4 The Dutch society

Do Dutch opinions and worldviews actually stand as far apart as the public debate makes it seem? This chapter sheds a light on the differences and similarities in the Dutch society by discussing three relevant studies.

Differences in Dutch society

Close or far away, change or conservation

Firstly, I&O Research studied different value orientations among the Dutch population (Titre & Kanne, 2018). They summarized the differences they found over two axes: (1) a focus on people closer by (standing up for oneself and loved ones) versus a focus on people further away (standing up for ‘the other’), and (2) a focus on change versus a focus on conservation.

Each of these extreme positions is recognizable from the public debate: people standing up for a fair treatment of migrants (‘the other’) versus people standing up for better care for themselves, and people calling for change versus people calling for protection of what is there (conservation). Also, the Dutch political parties could be loosely and arguably plotted on these axes, with for instance Groen Links focusing on further away and change, CDA focusing on further away and conservation and PVV focusing on closer by and conservation.

Universalistic, particularistic or in between

In a research conducted by the SCP and the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), Bovens et al. (2014) see an emerging social-cultural division in the Netherlands, spurred by globalization. On the one hand they see people, mostly higher educated, with a positive attitude towards the EU and immigration. On the other hand they see people, mostly low

educated, who have less trust in politics and emphasize the negative sides of immigration and the EU. Director of the SCP Kim Putters sees a similar division, which he calls the *cans* and *cannots*: the division between people that can get along with the changing, globalizing society and people that have trouble to do so (Vissers, 2019).

Bovens et al. call these groups respectively ‘universalists’ and ‘particularists’. Universalism and particularism are different philosophical concepts. Universalism assumes there is a universal moral of what is right, and that this rational morality precedes social bonds. Particularism, however, assumes that morality is closely related with social bonds. In practice, universalistically justice might refer to equal treatment for everyone, while particularistically justice might refer to being there for the people close to you.

The universalistic and particularistic characterizations show several similarities when comparing it to the study by I&O Research. The universalistic family mostly coincides with the top left on the two axes (a focus on people further away and change), and the particularistic family mostly coincides with the bottom right (with a focus on people closer by and conservation).

Although Bovens et al. link the emerging social-cultural division in the Netherlands to people thinking in a more universalistic way opposed to people thinking in a



Figure 3 - Still from the movie ‘Hans Brusselmans’ (Socialistische Partij, 2019). Translation: “He wants more. More! Because Hans doesn’t do it for the crumbs.”

more particularistic way, they emphasize that the population is not strictly divided and that most people take a stance in between.

Symbols & traditions, civic liberties or in between

Thirdly, the SCP recently studied what Dutch people consider to be typically Dutch and what they feel connected to concerning the Dutch identity (Beugelsdijk et al., 2019). The study found three distinctive positions concerning thoughts about the Dutch identity: a position feeling mostly connected to typical Dutch symbols and traditions, a positioning feeling mostly connected to civil liberties and a position that is rather indifferent to Dutch identity. The first two positions seem to align with the earlier mentioned research by Bovens et al. (2014), where the ‘symbols and traditions’-group would coincide with the ‘particularistic’ family and the ‘civil-liberties’-group with the ‘universalistic’ family.

Above all, the results of this study especially emphasize another point, also

mentioned by the research by Bovens et al.: the presence of a large ‘grey’ middle. The three mentioned distinctive positions together only constitute 17,4% of the people, while no less than 82,6% identifies to a greater or lesser extent with all three of the positions. The three distinct positions can therefore be labelled as extremes, while a large majority takes a moderate position. As conclusion of their research, hence, Beugelsdijk et al. pose that there are major similarities in what Dutch inhabitants see as typically Dutch and what they feel connected to concerning the Dutch identity.

Concluding

Combining these studies, they show a coherent image of value orientations in the Netherlands (see figure 4). There are mainly two extremes: a ‘universalistic’ position focusing on ‘the other’ and change, and a ‘particularistic’ position focusing on oneself and loved ones and on conservation. A large majority is positioned somewhere in between.

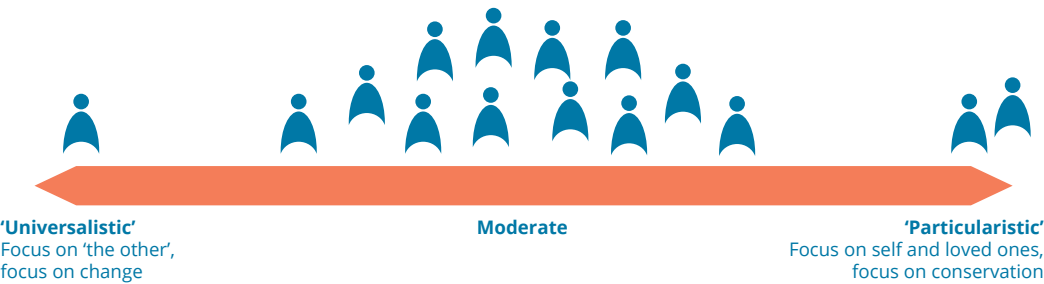


Figure 4 - Summarized representation of value orientations in the Netherlands

The Dutch society and public debate

When comparing the conclusion of the previous sub chapter with the impression of the public debate, two things stand out.

Recognizable extremes

At first, the two identified extremes can be very much related with what is seen in public debate. For example, on the issue of migration there is the rather universalistic position stressing the importance of a humane treatment for migrants versus the rather particularistic position of protecting what is Dutch. On the issue of climate change, there is the rather change-focused position to become more sustainable as fast as possible versus the rather conservation-focused position to hold back and only change carefully. On Black Pete, there is the position to adapt the tradition versus the position to keep the tradition the same. However, this

does not work for every escalating issue: the discussion concerning vaccination is not easy to link to these extremes. In short, the extremes identified in the studies are recognizable in the public debate, however not all divided discussions can be related to them.

An invisible moderate majority

Secondly, it is striking to see that the large majority that takes a moderate position is barely represented in the public debate. The voice advocating an understanding of multiple perspectives can barely be found. Therefore, the public debate gives a skewed representation of what the Dutch people think: the extremes are overrepresented while the people with moderate positions are barely seen.

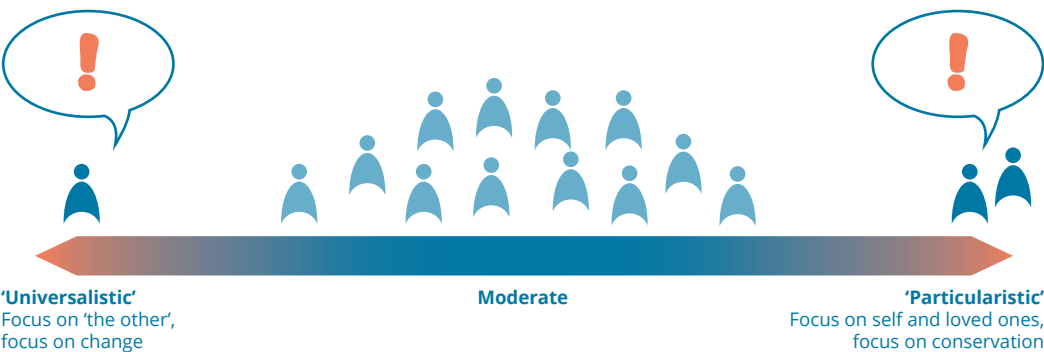


Figure 5 - Representation of the Dutch society and public debate

Sketching the Dutch society and public debate

To create overview, these findings are visually represented in figure 5. In visualizing differences, one must be careful with putting labels to them. As discussed in chapter 2.2, the social category a person identifies with at a certain moment depends on which group categorization is emphasized at that time. Consequently, sketching a difference between people fosters the existence and importance of this difference.

Therefore, a characterization of extremes is chosen with care. They are labelled as 'universalistic' and 'particularistic', adopted from the research by the SCP and WRR (Bovens et al., 2014), for three reasons:

1. Firstly, because it represents the extreme positions well.
2. Secondly, because universalism and particularism are arbitrary ways of thinking rather than a fixed division. Unlike for instance education level (a person can be lower- or higher educated, not somewhere in between), universalism and particularism is no absolute and unbridgeable difference. In fact, knowing the reasoning behind the other way of thinking might foster for understanding.
3. Lastly, because the labels of universalism and particularism are, according to my experiences when discussing with people, not perceived with a value judgement: I did not perceive instant (dis)respect towards one of these labels, both are seen as recognizable.

2.5 Sensation as a business model

Why are the extremes overrepresented in the public debate? And why now? This chapter discusses the system behind the overrepresentation of the extremes in the public debate. An exploration of factors relating to technological developments and human behavior lead to a striking conclusion: for multiple stakeholders in the field of public debate, division and sensation are rather beneficial.

Media: economical profit

Depending on attention

At first, showcasing extremes brings economical profit for media. Extreme opinions obviously catch more attention as these are more sensational, and as a result media are read, watched or sold more. Even though this has always been the case, the digitalization seems to have increased this pressure for attention. The digitalization drastically lowered the threshold to become a media platform, and therefore enabled many new media platforms to arise. The result is fierce competition. Additionally, many of these new media platforms center their business model around advertisements, and thereby directly rely on how many people spend time on their platform. As a result, there is a huge pressure on media to gain and keep people's attention.

Quest for attention

This quest for people's attention has several consequences. Firstly, tricks are explored to keep people's attention for a longer time. For example, mobile apps build in functions based on the delivery of dopamine boosts, as for instance unlimited scrolling and social appreciation, to get users 'addicted' to them (Leslie, 2016).

Secondly, sensation prevails over depth or truth. News platforms bombard us with catchy headlines while talk shows

invite guests they know will provide for a tense discussion, as this is what people will be tending to read or watch. A research by De Correspondent and De Volkskrant even showed how YouTube's algorithm facilitates right-wing radicalization, through recommending videos with increasingly extreme content in order to keep people watching (Bahara et al., 2019).

Concluding

In short, extreme opinions and conflict are sensational and sensation brings attention. Media depend on attention for their revenue, especially as many of their business models are centered around advertisements. With the digitalization, competition for media has become fiercer and dependence on attention has only increased. Hence, for media it economically pays off to show extreme and provocative content.

Personal profit

Impressing others

Additional to economic benefit for media, spreading sensation and division can also be psychologically attractive for people. At first, because people like to impress others. People are generally inclined to share the most extreme version of a story, also called the extremity bias (Mims, 2018). In social media, where the amount of interest for your contribution is quantified through likes or retweets, it might be especially tempting to bend to the extreme.

Moral outrage

Furthermore, it can feel rather good to distance yourself from others. Speaking up to someone who violates supposed norms positively distincts yourself, a

phenomenon called moral outrage (Yudkin, 2018). Even though such behavior is usually beneficial in group collaboration, in the age of social media, where behavior that goes against your norms can easily be encountered, this easily gets out of hand. As Yudkin describes it, “in an effort to demonstrate their reputation, people practically fall over themselves calling out cases of moral infractions” (Yudkin, 2018).

Concluding

Concluding, it is psychologically pleasing both to share extreme versions of something as to publicly distance yourself from others, and social media give plenty of opportunity to do so.

Political profit

Spotlight

The incentives discussed in the previous sub chapters also apply politically. At first, politicians and their parties need support from the electorate to be re-elected. In order to get support, it helps to be in the spotlight. Just like media, politicians also partly rely on attention. Extreme and provocative statements can provide for this, as such statements provide for most interactions on social media and are eagerly picked up by traditional media. And now that people can constantly be reached through social media, any moment is an opportunity to gain attention. As a result, political parties constantly profile themselves on social media to stay relevant. In short, it can pay off for politicians to publicly and often express themselves in a sensational way.

Us versus them frames

One type of expression can especially pay off: frames of us versus them. At first because an us versus them-frame provides for attention as it implies an opponent (‘them’), which will therefore be inclined to respond. People on both sides are put up against each other, creating attention for both.

Additionally, us versus them-frames clarify what a politician (or any person) stands for. In a complex political field such a frame presents people with a comfortably simple choice: you are either one of us or one of them. Politicians can frame the contrast exactly as suits them, which clearly and positively positions themselves for the electorate.

Obviously, us versus them-frames foster divisions. As discussed in chapter 2.2,

an emphasis on certain characteristics makes people categorize themselves over them, which is exactly what is utilized in us versus them-frames.

Concluding

Politicians rely on attention to be re-elected. Us versus them-frames as well as provocative and extreme statements

help to clearly position oneself for the electorate and to be in the spotlight. Therefore, spreading sensational and division-spurring statements can be of political profit.

Concluding

Concluding, for multiple stakeholders in the field of public debate, division and sensation are rather beneficial. Both media and politicians, more than before, rely on attention to be successful. Extreme and provocative statements provide for this attention. Additionally, it is personally pleasing to share extreme versions of something and to publicly distance yourself from others.

Then why is it exactly now, that this overrepresentation of extremes in the public debate and the polarized view it gives on society, are so apparent? My estimate would be that the digitalization plays an important role. After the rise of digital media, the pressure to gain people’s attention has increased drastically. At the same time the digitalization allowed people to constantly send and receive information, which made any moment a potential moment to gain attention. In this constant quest for attention, sensation has become necessary and extreme opinions thrive.

2.6 Increasing division

This chapter describes the consequences of an overrepresentation of extreme standpoints on Dutch society.

Where do you belong?

Pressure to choose sides

An overrepresentation of the extremes in the public debate has several consequences. At first, it creates a pressure to choose for one of these extreme sides. As chapter 2.2 discusses, people strive to feel part of a group and the group people perceive to belong to at a certain moment depends on what is salient at that time. When especially two extremes on an issue are salient, people plausibly tend to categorize themselves over these two groups. This pressure to choose sides is confirmed by a recent study by the SCP, where almost half of the respondents states to experience a strong pressure to choose sides in the public debate about immigration in the Netherlands (Dekker & Den Ridder, 2019).

Decline of the moderate

Through this pressure to choose sides, people with an initial moderate view can slowly slide towards the extreme position they have more sympathy with. As a result, the moderate majority is likely to shrink. This effect can for instance be seen in the recent 2019 Dutch provincial elections, where parties on the extremes of the political spectrum, Forum voor Democratie and Groen Links, were the big risers, while traditional centrist parties CDA and PvdA had disappointing results (Kiesraad, 2019).

Turning away from the public debate

A second consequence of the overpresence of extremes is that, because they do not recognize themselves, people with a moderate view tend to turn away from

the public debate. This insight especially came forward through discussions with fellow industrial design students. The result is that these people are easily overlooked: politicians and media are likely to address topics and be influenced in their decisions based on what they see in the public debate. And, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, people's opinions are also influenced by what they see in the public debate. In these cases, the opinion of people that turn away from the public debate are not considered; they are unrepresented.

Normalization of extreme opinions

Another effect of this overrepresentation of the extremes is the normalization of extreme opinions. Frequent exposure to something is known to create a more positive attitude towards it because it feels more familiar, also known as the mere exposure effect (Kahneman, 2011). When being often exposed to extreme opinions, these will become more familiar and therefore possibly more attractive or more normal.

Concluding: a self-fulfilling prophecy?

In short, because people from the moderate majority are not well represented, they are likely to either slide towards one of the extreme opinions or to turn away from the public debate. As a result, the moderate majority shrinks and becomes even more invisible. Additionally, extreme opinions are normalized.

As such, polarization might be a self-fulfilling prophecy. As chapter 2.4 concludes,

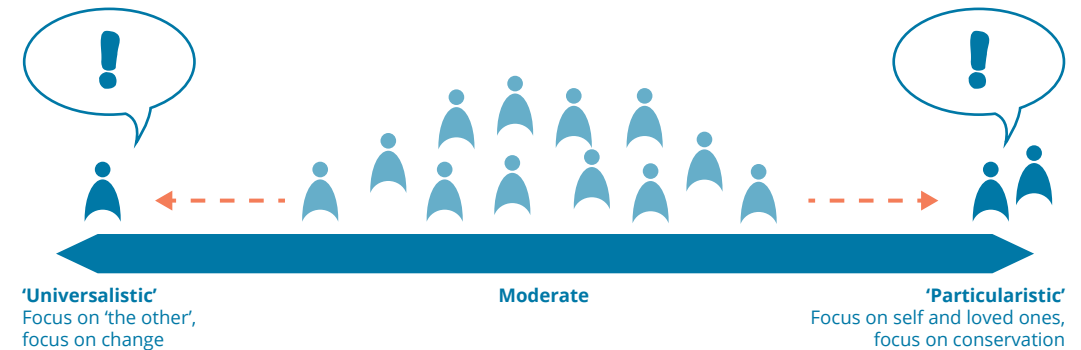


Figure 6 - A shrinking moderate majority

the Netherlands is not as divided as it seems in the public debate. However, a moderate majority that is likely to shrink due to the current overrepresentation of extreme opinions in the public debate

results into a stronger division than there was before (see figure 6). A polarized image of the public debate might very well lead to polarization itself.

Risk of division

The risk of a declining moderate majority is that, when a division into two clearly distinctive disagreeing groups has emerged, there are various processes that can intensify such a division.

Ingroup bias

At first, when identification with a group is stronger the ingroup bias is stronger. In other words: people are more prone to favor their group compared to others when they identify with their group in a stronger way.

Group polarization

Secondly, there is the effect of group polarization. Recent technology is often said to make it harder to get in contact with conflicting opinions. Because social media use algorithms to decide what people get to see, people see the world through a filter that might especially

show what they are already interested in, often referred to as a filter bubble-effect. Additionally, because users of social media can generally choose themselves who to follow, the platform can soon become an interchange of likeminded ideas, often referred to as an echo chamber. Once people especially interact with likeminded people, the effect of group polarization comes into play: when likeminded people interchange arguments, they are likely to become more extreme of opinion than they initially were (De Ridder, 2018).

Confirmation bias

But even when getting into contact conflicting opinions, people seem biased to not be persuaded, no matter how much these conflicting opinions make sense. In his book *Thinking fast and slow*, Kahneman discusses how people tend to stick to their opinion (Kahneman, 2011).

He poses that, as consistency provides people with cognitive ease, people tend to “search and interpret information in a way that confirms what a person initially believed” (Kahneman, 2011), also known as the confirmation bias.

Downgrading the other group

Additionally, even though people on social media seem to mostly interact with likeminded people, these social media also make it rather easy to come across extreme and sensational statements by persons with contrasting views. Stereotyping makes it easy to project such extreme views over the whole opposite group, giving rise to a hate towards the other group based on a statement by one rather extreme person. For example, one can think of the US: a convinced Democrat might be disgusted by Trump’s most extreme quotes and might project this negative attitude over Republicans in general.

Concluding

While the confirmation bias makes people generally averse to changing their opinion, in current times of social media, effects as group polarization and stereotyping easily further drive groups apart (see figure 7). This is when the risks as sketched in the introduction, chapter 1.1, come into play: distrust and conflicts that threaten social cohesion, and barely solvable disputes because groups perceive the world in an unbridgeable different way. Hence, in preventing such escalation it is essential to keep the emergence of divisions, and subsequent processes as group polarization and stereotyping, under control.

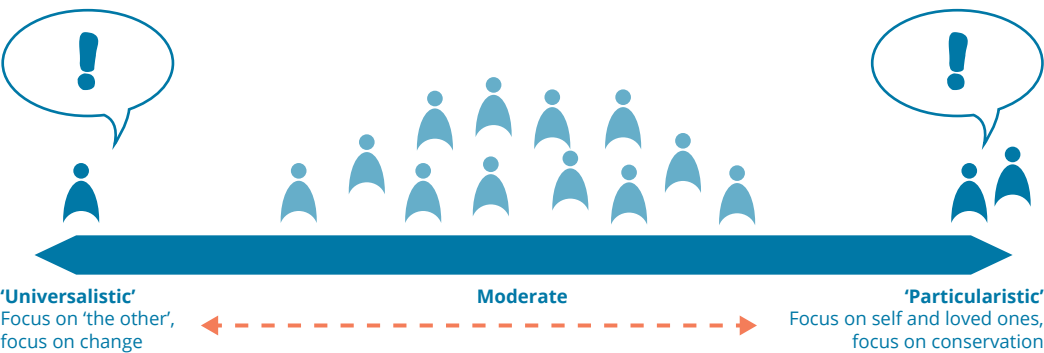


Figure 7 - Distinctive conflicting groups are likely to drive further apart

2.7 Context of polarization

This chapter concludes the analysis and summarizes the insights into one figure: the context of polarization (see figure 8). This figure gives an encompassing yet concise overview of the system that drives polarization.

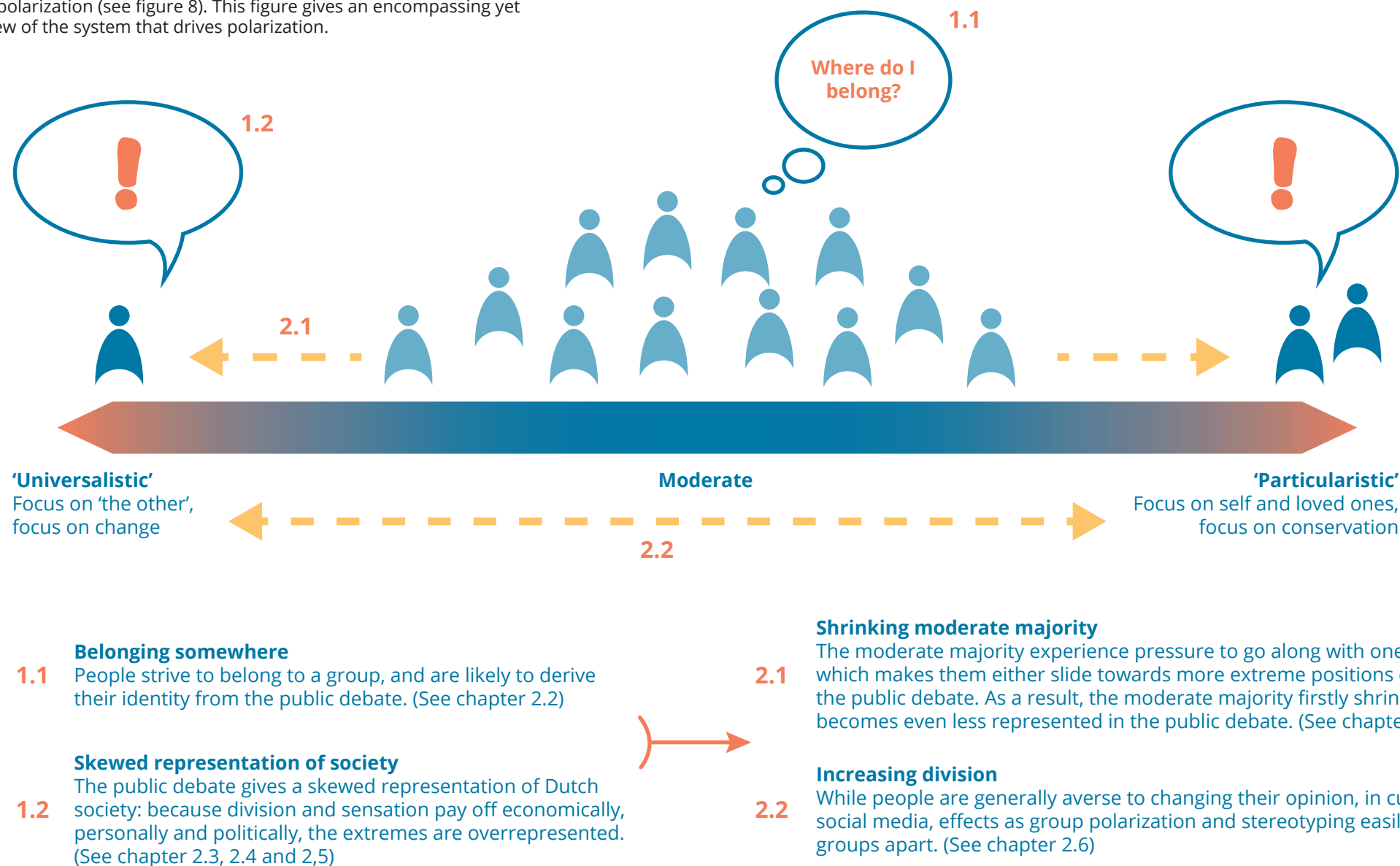


Figure 8 - Context of polarization

2.8 Desired implication of intervention

Now that an encompassing overview of the system that drives polarization is created, the question is how this system can be turned around. This chapter discusses several directions on how polarization can be counteracted, concluded by a statement that defines the desired implication of the to-be-designed intervention.

Potential directions to intervene

Reflecting on the context of polarization as sketched in figure 8, there are several ways to intervene. The directions that seem most promising to me are the following three:

1. Visible representation of the moderate

Concerning the lack of representation of the moderate majority in the public debate, which causes a pressure to go along in extreme opinions: would it be possible to encourage people with a moderate opinion to express themselves in a recognizable way, resulting in a visible representation of the moderate majority?

2. Reduce dependence on attention

Concerning the system behind the overrepresentation of extremes in the public debate - the profitability of sensation: could media, politicians or media users be made less dependent on attention, for instance through new business models, which would take away the pressure to spread sensational content?

3. Meaningful interactions across groups

Concerning the effects as group polarization and stereotyping which currently easily further drive groups apart: in the current individualized society, can people be sparked to meaningfully interact with people from different social categories, reducing the effects of group polarization and stereotyping?

Choosing a direction

Through consideration and conversations with others, the potential of the directions is compared and one of the directions is chosen.

Whereas the third direction battles the consequences of polarization, reconnecting people, the second direction directly deals with the system behind polarization. Therefore, in order to reach structural change, I think it is

essential to innovate in this direction. The first direction, however, is especially interesting because, as there is a large group of people that does not recognize themselves in the extreme positions (see chapter 2.4), there is a large potential group to address. Additionally, I see qualities in taking a moderate position; addressing those could make people confident to express themselves.

Because my interest and skills are more directed towards creating behavior change than towards exploring business models, I choose to focus on the first direction - encouraging people with a moderate opinion to express themselves.

Even so, in order to counteract polarization on a longer term, I think solutions in the second direction are also essential to be looked into. This however falls out of the scope of this project.

Desired implication

Based on this direction a statement is formulated, describing the desired implication of the to-be-designed intervention. This statement will be the

basis to evaluate the to-be-designed intervention.

It is defined as follows:

I want to augment the presence of moderate opinions in the public debate, by making people with a moderate opinion express themselves in the public debate.

The desired implication is visualized in figure 9. The consequences this desired implication would have in a bigger

perspective are shown by means of an abstraction hierarchy in figure 10 on the next page.

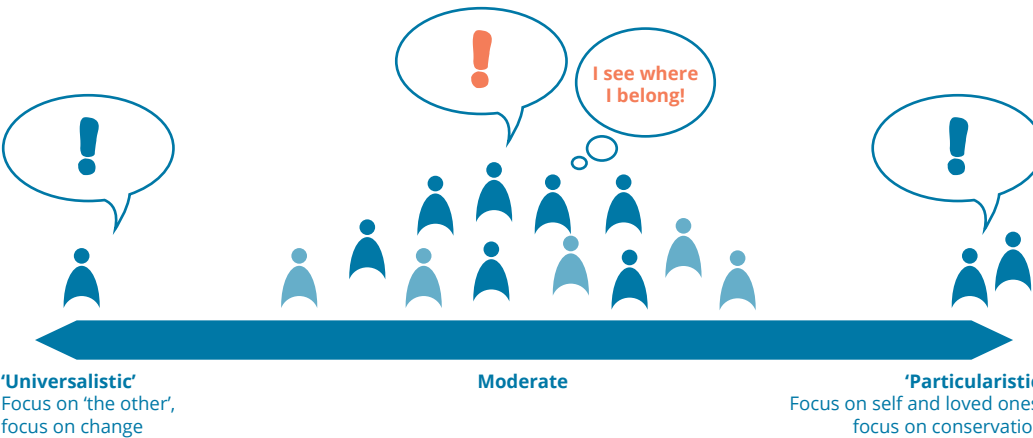


Figure 9 - Desired implication: a presence for the moderate in the public debate



Figure 10 - Abstraction hierarchy of the desired effect



Part 3.

Exploring solution space

Based on the context of polarization, as sketched in chapter 2.7, and the desired implication as defined in the previous chapter, in this part directions are explored to make people with a moderate opinion express themselves in the public debate. It starts with an analysis of what 'moderate' entails and why moderate opinions are currently barely present in the public debate. This is followed by an iterative journey towards finding the right intervention, in which two solution directions are explored, each ending with a reflection. Analogies are used as sources of inspiration, the desired destination is, as mentioned in chapter 1.1, a simple but smart intervention which powerfully achieves the desired implication.

3.1 The moderate

What does moderate entail? And if the desired implication is to make people with a moderate opinion express themselves in the public debate, why don't they do so now? Along the analysis of polarization several reasons have been identified, which are discussed in this chapter.

Moderate opinions

What exactly entails a moderate opinion? As far as in the desired implication statement, it refers to 'not taking an extreme position in a debate'. However, that does not yet say much about the content of this opinion. In order to gain more of an idea of what a moderate opinion can be, several related terms are discussed.

Nuanced and well-considered

Typically, a non-extreme position involves considering multiple aspects to an issue. A moderate position is therefore often nuanced: "having subtle and often appealingly complex qualities, aspects, or distinctions" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The Dutch word 'genuanceerd' means "taking many aspects of something into account" (Woorden.org, n.d.). Another characteristic that refers to considering multiple aspects to something is to be 'well-considered'. However, technically one could also bring very extreme standpoints in a nuanced or well-considered way. Nuanced and well-considered opinions are therefore often, but not necessarily, moderate.

Reasonable

Reasonableness is about "having sound judgement" and being "fair and sensible" (Lexico, n.d.). Just like nuanced and well-considered, reasonableness typically involves a balance of multiple interests. Reasonableness additionally also involves taking a stance based on this consideration: a sound, fair or sensible judgement. What is reasonable therefore depends on one's values. Just like the previous terms, reasonable statements are often moderate, but can also be rather extreme when a person's value priorities are extreme.

Taking multiple aspects into account

Even though well-considered, nuanced and reasonable opinions are not essentially moderate, I do think a rise of such opinions would result in more moderate opinions. The basis that I take from these terms, is that a moderate opinion entails taking multiple aspects into account.

Problems of moderate opinions

Why are such opinions barely visible in the public debate? Along the analysis of polarization several reasons have been identified, which are discussed below.

1. Not sensational

Firstly and most obviously, moderate opinions do not tend to be sensational. They are typically nuanced rather than provocative, open to doubt rather than determined and well-considered rather than emotional. As chapter 2.5 describes, sensation pays off in the public debate. As a consequence, moderate opinions have a tough time becoming visible in the public debate.

2. Negative image

Secondly, the word moderate comes with negative connotations. Through conversations with others, it became clear that moderate is seen as not daring to take a stance and 'neither fish nor fowl': boring and cowardish. Moderation suffers from a negative image, or as Roovers, the current Dutch 'Thinker Laureate', says: "nuance is not sexy" (NOS, 2019). Additionally, moderation seems to go hand in hand with being quiet and/or humble, which does not correspond with confidently expressing one's opinion. In short, moderation has a negative image that does not encourage expression.

3. No group to belong to

Thirdly, as the context of polarization (chapter 2.7) shows, people with moderate opinions have no clear group to belong to in the public debate. Whereas especially on social media the extremes are widely represented, moderate opinions are harder to come across (see chapter 2.3). As a result, which again especially became clear through discussions with others, people with a moderate opinion do not feel comfortable in the public debate.

These reasons would have to be addressed by the to-be-designed intervention in order for moderate opinions to be expressed and visible in the public debate.

3.2 Reframing moderation

The first solution direction that is explored especially focuses on the second problem as sketched in the previous chapter: that moderation has a negative image. Because people are not likely to share their opinion if they feel like it is not appreciated, this chapter explores how moderation can be reframed in an appealing way and how such a frame can be conveyed.

Direction

Moderate opinions possess plenty of qualities: as discussed in chapter 3.1, they are for instance typically well-considered and reasonable. If people would start seeing moderation as something admirable, people would likely be more confident to express themselves in a moderate way. Therefore, it is looked into how moderation can be framed in a more appealing way.

However, a new frame for moderation would not only have to be appealing. As the previous chapter describes, moderation often seems to go hand in hand with

being quiet and/or humble, while the goal is to make people express themselves. Therefore, additional attention is put into how moderation can be framed in a way that would encourage expression.

Design statement

In order to give direction to the design process, a preliminary design statement is phrased. The design statement specifies through which mechanism the desired implication is aimed to be reached. The preliminary design statement is phrased as follows:

I want to make people confident to share their moderate opinion in the public debate, by providing them with an appealing frame for moderation.

Creating an appealing frame

Associations with moderate and extreme opinions

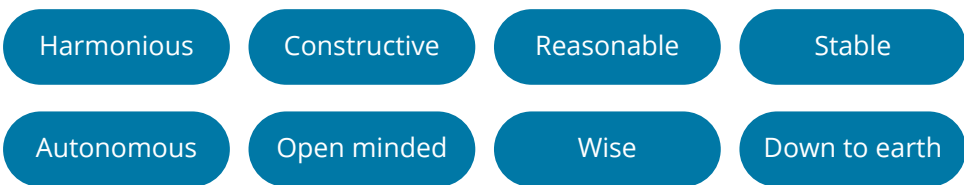
In order to get to an appealing frame, positive associations people have with moderate opinions and extreme opinions are explored. Additionally, negative associations with extreme opinions are also explored. This is done through a brainstorm session together with three industrial design students. Figure 11 shows the results, summarized into clusters of associations, each describing an

overarching quality or pitfall of moderate or extreme opinions. The full results can be found in appendix C.

Contrarian branding

In order to create an appealing frame from these associations, the theory of contrarian branding by Van Der Vorst (2017) is used. This theory, generally used to position brands, aims to simplify the perceived field of competition for people by creating an absolute contrast - a

Qualities of moderate



Qualities of extreme



Pitfalls of extreme

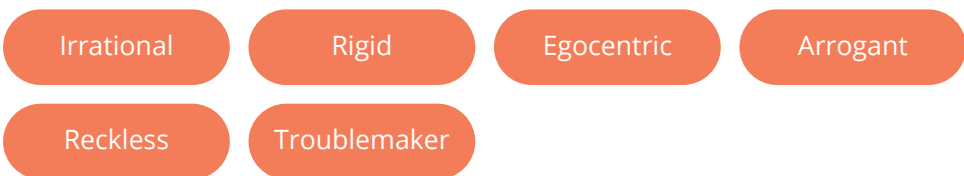


Figure 11 - Clusters of qualities and pitfalls of moderate and extreme opinions

contrast that does not allow for a middle ground. As such, your brand clearly distincts from the competition which is camouflaged into the background: people can either choose 'your' brand or 'one of the others'. Considering moderation, this would mean creating a frame that clearly and positively distincts moderation from extreme statements.

Creating such an absolute contrast can, according to Van der Vorst (2018), be done in different ways. The most obvious way is creating 'polarity': reframing a distinctive feature into an absolute and oppose it to another absolute. Another way is creating 'bipolarity': uniting supposedly contradicting characteristics in a meaningful way as a brand, which makes the competition always miss a part of it.

Frames for moderation

With the associations from figure 11 as ingredients, the theory of contrarian branding is used to create a distinctive positioning for the moderate. As one of the criteria for the frame is that it should encourage expression, I especially looked into how positive associations of moderation can be united with what is attractive about extreme opinions, which tend to more eagerly expressed.

This resulted into a selection of three frames for moderation. These frames are described on the next page, through their unique feature(s), the pole they distinct themselves from and the rationale behind it.

1. As a person with a moderate opinion, I am: **Independent**

Contrast strategy: polarity

Contrasting pole: people with extreme opinions get carried away by what others think or want to hear.

Rationale: By making my own consideration, personally weighing the different aspects to an issue, I am independent.

2. As a person with a moderate opinion, I am: **Boldly honest**

Contrast strategy: bipolarity

Contrasting poles: honest people are usually cautious, bold people are usually ignorant.

Rationale: While others blindly ignore other people's interests and express the extreme viewpoints that will bring them attention, I dare to admit that things are not that simple.

A new division

Paradoxically, through reframing moderate opinions opposed to extreme opinions, the mechanism of polarization is used in order to counteract itself. Moderation is made to stand out appealingly against extremity, thereby deliberately making this salient as a new division (see figure 12). This new division is expected to be more fruitful than the division between opposing extremes that currently characterizes the public debate (see chapter 2.4), because it would encourage the moderate majority to represent themselves, which is likely to prevent the increase of divisions as described in chapter 2.6.

3. As a person with a moderate opinion, I am: **Outspokenly reasonable**

Contrast strategy: bipolarity

Contrasting poles: people with outspoken opinions are usually unreasonable because they ignore other interests, reasonable people are usually humble and quiet.

Rationale: I dare to see things in perspective and share a reasonable vision in a public debate that lacks reasonableness.

These frames include generally admired characteristics as independence, honesty and reasonableness, which makes them appealing. At the same time, they are likely to encourage expression because they are confident, bold or outspoken.

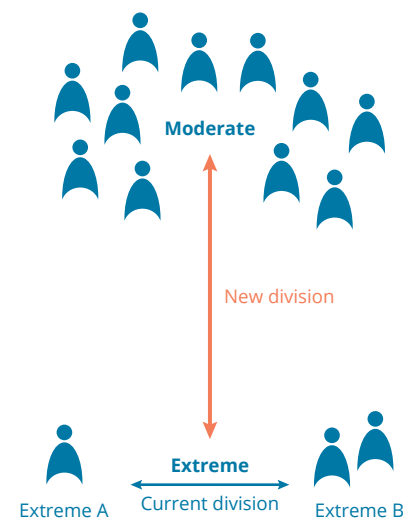


Figure 12 - A new division that is made salient

Conveying a frame

A new frame can only influence people when they know about it. Therefore, now that there is a selection of appealing frames for moderation, the question is: how can such a frame be conveyed to people, thereby making them confident to express their moderate opinion?

Creative sessions

In order to explore this question, two creative sessions are conducted, each with five industrial design students. In these sessions the frame of 'independence' is used because it seemed most promising to me at that time. An impression of the results and a short reflection can be found in appendix D.

The results of the creative session were not as promising as hoped, as it proved hard to get to in depth solutions when having only short time to get people

familiar with the challenge. Even so, two important insights were gained. Firstly, 'being independent' did not work well as an appealing frame for a moderate opinion. The link of being independent by making one's own consideration appeared not comprehensive enough. Additionally, being independent is too closely related to how people with rather extreme opinions feel: independent because they dare to go against the established order. Secondly, a promising idea is to create a movement based on the attractive frame of moderation. As such, people themselves further spread the attractive frame.

Based on these insights, I decided to further dive into the creation of a movement. As the frame of independence did not work well, the frame of 'outspokenly reasonable' is further developed.

Movement for reasonableness

Based on the insights from the creative sessions, a concept direction around a movement for reasonableness is developed. A movement for reasonableness would not only provide for a positive

perspective on moderation, but also provide for a clear group in the public debate that people with a moderate opinion can belong to.



Figure 13 - Affiliation to Katniss, the symbol of rebellion (Movieclips, 2014)

Affiliation to the 'Mocking Jay'

Inspiration is derived from a clip in the movie 'The Hunger Games: Catching Fire'. As can be seen in figure 13, people show their support to main character Katniss (vague silhouette on the left), who as 'Mocking Jay' stands symbol for the rebellion to the oppressive government. This analogy shows how a movement can be sparked by having a clear purpose (in this case rebellion to the government), having an inspiring role model (Katniss) and by having a recognizable symbol to show affiliation with (the arm gesture, not to be confused with another arm gesture that looks alike).

Manifest

In order to provide for a clear purpose for the movement of reasonableness, the frame of 'outspokenly reasonable' is further developed into a manifest of 'Radical Reasonableness' (see appendix E for the full manifest).

In short, it poses that reasonableness does not have to be moderate as in cowardish and unoutspoken. In fact, reasonableness stands for principles and as

these principles are now under pressure, it is time to convincingly stand for them. Radical Reasonableness resists against the unreasonableness in the current public debate: activism, manipulative frames by politicians and accusations going back and forth on social media. The principles of reasonableness are (1) considering different interests, (2) striving for an optimal solution and (3) being open to valid new insights. Radical Reasonableness is about standing up for these principles and daring to confidently share one's reasonable viewpoint.

Manifestation

Through several ideation sessions, ways are explored in order to launch the movement of radical reasonableness. Figure 14 shows a collection of the most promising ideas. These ideas could together form a campaign to create a movement of radical reasonableness.



Figure 14 - Ideas to boost a movement of radical reasonableness

From top to bottom and left to right:

'Or something reasonable'

A campaign to make people aware of the unreasonableness in the current public debate and encourage them to become radically reasonable.

The peace sign

As a symbol for reasonableness, which can be used both on- and offline to affiliate oneself to radical reasonableness.

'RR'

A provisional logo and presence on social media, which can be used to respond to recent events and discussions.

'The microphone for'

A way for people to involve each other in the movement, inspired by the #MeToo movement. People can send a 'microphone' either digitally (WhatsApp) or physically (on a postcard) to people of whom they think have a solid reasonable vision. As such it is a motivator to express oneself in the public debate.

Reflection

Before further development of these ideas, a step back is taken. Is this the right direction to go?

Strong points

This direction shows that moderation can be appealingly framed as outspoken- or radical reasonableness, which does not only present moderate in an admirable way, but also inspires to express one's reasonable opinion. Secondly, aspects as a logo, a symbol and a purpose can connect people and spark a visible representation of a group.

Doubts

However, there are two doubts to this direction. At first, the solution that is strived for in this process is, as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, a simple but smart intervention that powerfully achieves the desired implication. Such beauty in the way it fulfills its purpose can be achieved through meeting the principle of maximum effect for minimum means (MEMM) (Da Silva, Crilly & Hekkert,

2016). Creating a campaign following the ideas as presented in figure 14 makes up for quite an operation and it would likely not be self-sustaining: it would need constant effort or funding to thrive. This direction of a campaign therefore does not yet match the MEMM principle.

Additionally, along the process it became more and more clear that especially the third problem of moderation as posed in chapter 3.1 is essential: people with a moderate opinion often do not feel comfortable in the public debate, let alone feel the urge to express themselves there. As long as the context in which the public debate is held does not change, there might not be much effect. These ideas do not properly answer to this problem.

Therefore, bringing along the insights and strong points of this direction, a step back is taken and a new direction is explored.

3.3 Appropriate in the public debate

Starting again from the desired implication - augmenting the presence of moderate opinions in the public debate by making people with a moderate opinion express themselves in the public debate - a new direction is explored. This chapter delves into how it can be made appropriate to share a moderate opinion in the public debate.

Direction

Along the process, it became clear that just being proud of one's moderate opinion is not enough for people to express themselves in the public debate. People feel as though a moderate or reasonable opinion is not appropriate to be shared in the public debate. Therefore, it is looked

into how the context of the public debate can be changed in a way that people with a moderate opinion feel more comfortable to express themselves.

Design statement

A design statement is phrased as follows:

I want to empower people with a moderate opinion to express themselves in the public debate, by making it feel appropriate to do so.

Appropriateness to express oneself

An introvert at a loud party

In order to get inspiration, an analogy is used for the situation of a person with a moderate opinion in the public debate: he might feel like an introvert at a loud party (see figure 15).

Suppose the introvert feels comfortable with deeper conversations, however all he sees around is people having loud and shallow talk. He experiences the same dilemma as people with a moderate opinion in the public debate: shall I join in the shallow and loud way the others talk, although I am not comfortable with it? Or shall I bail out and leave the party? My challenge would be to make it feel appropriate to express himself in the way that suits him.

Ways to make one feel comfortable

In this analogy, several ways pop up that would make it more appropriate for the introvert to start a deeper conversation:

1. Create more suitable circumstances for deep conversations at the party: what if the music volume would be turned down, so people more easily hear each other? What if there would be a chill zone where people can sit comfortably?
2. Show he is not alone: although the people that are loudly chatting are most visible, there might be many others that are into deeper conversations. What if it would be somehow visible that others are into deeper conversations as well?



Figure 15 - An introvert at a loud party

Transferring this to the people with a moderate opinion in the public debate, this would mean:

1. Create more suitable circumstances for moderate opinions in the public debate.
2. Show that there are plenty of other persons in the public debate that have a moderate opinion.

Design of social media

Delving into the circumstances of social media, where an important part of the public debate is held, leads to a realization: social media are designed in a way that fits sensational statements much better than reasonable statements.

Quantity defines quality

Firstly, in social media quantity is generally taken as quality: the visibility of contributions depends on the amount of interactions with the contribution – likes, shares, comments (Barnhart, 2019). Similarly, the amount of interactions is clearly visible for users, resulting in a striving for more. As a result, it pays off to share controversial and provocative rather than reasonable content, as these deliver interactions, may they be positive or negative, which in turn yields more attention.

One-dimensional appreciation

Secondly, a 'like', typically the most accessible way to show appreciation on social platforms, only selectively represents appreciation. There are different types of approval: one might for instance appreci-

The second option corresponds with the direction explored in the previous chapter: creating a recognizable and attractive representation of people with a reasonable opinion. The first direction, however, encourages to look into the circumstances of where the public debate is held.

ate something for its amusement, insight or agreement. In real conversations there are many ways to show these types of approval, from explicit laughter up to a subtle nod of understanding. However, in social media appreciation is typically condensed into one accessible type: the 'like' button.

Giving a 'like', however, does not feel as appropriate to every kind of approval. It mostly feels at its place for contributions that amuse people or that people deeply support: those are things people literally tend to like (Dutch: leuk vinden). Reasonable and balanced contributions however, which might provide a viewer with new insights or better overview over an issue, would rather be found 'interesting' or 'insightful' than 'liked' (or in Dutch, 'leuk').

Facebook did recently launch multiple types of likes (see figure 16). However, these types of likes (see figure 16: like, love, haha, wow, sad and angry) are still all most appropriate to sensational contributions. As a result, it is still likely that especially appreciation of amusement

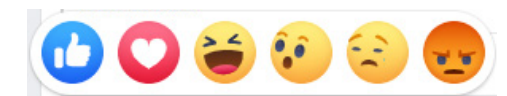


Figure 16 - Different types of likes on Facebook: like, love, haha, wow, sad and angry

is conveyed through one of the types of likes, while appreciation for a reasonable contribution might pass by unnoticed by the sender as the available symbols seem less appropriate.

As a result, sensational statements receive more appreciation on social

A counterpart to the like

Based on these insights, the idea originated to create a counterpart to the like – a second symbol which would typically be offered on social media. This way, people would be able to show appreciation to both sensational contributions (like) and reasonable contributions (new option) in an appropriate way.

Selection of symbols

Deducted from chapter 3,1, the insight and overview reasonable statements can typically offer is seen as the most valuable quality of reasonable statements. From an exploration of possibly suitable symbols and names to appreciate insight and overview, five symbols and four words are selected (see figure 17).

User test

In order to find the most suitable symbol and name, a user test is conducted. Four participants are shown a news article and

media than moderate statements, independently of whether people appreciate them more. Likes are simply more appropriate to give to amusing or powerful statements than to reasonable statements, for which social media generally do not offer an accessible way of showing appreciation.

three fictive Facebook-responses: two concise one-sided statements and one more balanced and in-depth statement (see figure 18). The participant is first asked which of the symbols he would find most fitting to react to the balanced statement, then asked which word would be most fitting to this symbol.

The results showed a clear preference of the light bulb as a symbol. The light bulb is said to stand for “intelligence” and “a well-founded opinion” (P2), “inspiring” (P3) and “bringing new insights” (P4) (see appendix F for the full user test plan, results and interesting quotes in Dutch). As corresponding word, enlightening (P1 and P2) and Insightful (P3 and P4) were seen as most appropriate, both translatable as ‘verhelderend’ in Dutch.

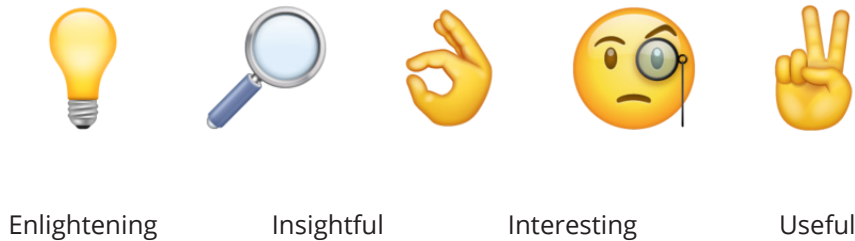


Figure 17 - Selection of symbols and words to appreciate insight and overview



Figure 18 - User test to find the right symbol and name

The Bulb

Based on the insights of the user test, the ‘Bulb’, is presented as counterpart to the like symbol (see figure 19).



Enlightening

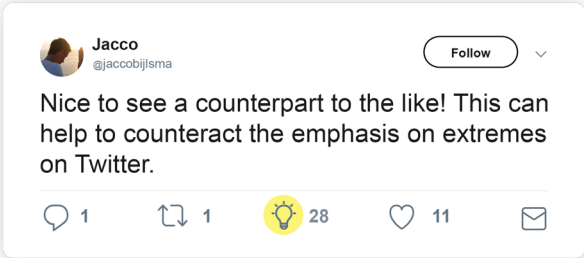


Figure 19 - The Bulb, counterpart to the like symbol

The Bulb is an intervention aimed at social media as Twitter and Facebook, but is also meant as an inspiration for news websites that work with likes as for instance the Dutch Nu.nl. It exposes how the design of their platforms, in particular one-dimensional appreciation through the like, emphasizes sensational rather than reasonable content, and shows them how it can be done in a more responsible way.

Implementation of the Bulb as counterpart to the like could be attractive for social media, because by making their platforms suitable for people with moderate opinions they could address a broader target group. Additionally, adjusting their design to counteract

Reflection

Strong points

It is an interesting insight that the design of social media, in particular one-dimensional appreciation through the like, emphasizes sensational rather than reasonable content and thereby encourages polarization. A counterpart to the like would make it more appropriate for people to express themselves in a reasonable way, which is likely to result in a larger presence of moderate opinions in the public debate. As such, in contrary to the campaign of the previous chapter, the Bulb does comply to the principle of maximum effect, minimum means: it is a rather simple intervention that could make a big difference if implemented.

Doubts

However, implementation is a problem. Huge organizations as Twitter and Facebook are not likely to take the advice of a graduate student just like that. A change would require a long process of getting in contact with such organizations,

polarization could provide them with positive publicity.

Impact

The impact of implementation would be that, as people would be able to show appreciation to insightful contributions in a suitable way, reasonable contributions would receive more appreciation and consequently more attention in the public debate. This would make it more appropriate for people to express themselves in a reasonable way, likely to result in a larger presence of moderate opinions in the public debate. This in turn would relieve the pressure for the moderate majority to go along with extreme opinions, or to turn one's back on the public debate, thereby resulting into less polarization.

convincing them, testing and, only then, possibly implementation.

A more realistic option is to present this project as a statement to social media, calling for a more responsible design that does not encourage polarization. As such it can inspire smaller social media platforms, and put pressure on larger ones, to incorporate a counterpart to the like or adjust their design in another responsible way. However, a statement needs attention and show conviction in order to be successful. In order to act as a statement, the concept should be more provocative.

Therefore, bringing along the insights and strong points of this direction, again a step back is taken and insights from the past two directions are combined.

3.4 Symbol for outspoken reasonableness

Building further on the previous explorations, this chapter combines the strong points of both directions into a concept.

Take aways

The previous two explorations especially gave the following insights:

Reframing the moderate

Moderation can be appealingly framed as outspoken reasonableness, which does not only present moderate in an admirable way, but also inspires to express one's reasonable opinion. Aspects as a logo, a symbol and a purpose can connect people and spark a visible representation of a group.

Appropriate in the public debate

The design of social media, in particular one-dimensional appreciation through the like, emphasizes sensational rather than reasonable content and thereby encourages polarization. A counterpart to the like would make it more appropriate for people to express themselves in a reasonable way, which is likely to result in a larger presence of moderate opinions in the public debate. Impact can especially be made by making a statement to social media for a more responsible design. In order to do so, the concept should be provocative.

An inspiring symbol

Combining these insights, a new idea is created: what if the counterpart to the like, especially suitable to appreciate reasonable contributions, would be a newly designed, inspiring emblem for outspoken reasonableness?

Visible representation

This symbol could be launched in order to become a publicly known symbol for outspoken reasonableness. As such, it would serve as a recognizable and appealing representation of reasonableness in the public debate, giving people

from the moderate majority a group they can belong to.

Inspiration to express oneself

Additionally, a symbol that represents outspoken reasonableness can, both through its presence as through its message, inspire people to express themselves in a reasonable way.

Statement to social media

When turned into a popular public symbol, the concept could make for a strong statement to social media because it is widely known.

Concept

Therefore, as an intervention, a symbol is designed to attractively and recognizably stand for outspoken reasonableness.

Additionally, a strategy is created to make the symbol publicly known. These are presented discussed in the next part.



Part 4.

Intervention

This part presents the intervention that is designed to counteract polarization in Dutch society. Firstly the concept is presented, secondly the launch strategy of the concept is discussed and lastly the impact of the intervention is evaluated.

4.1 The Pine Grenade

Symbol for outspoken reasonableness, counterpart to the 'like'.



Figure 20 - The Pine Grenade

Symbol for outspoken reasonableness

"Let's make the public debate make sense. Dare to stand for reasonableness."

The Pine Grenade – 'Granaatappel' in Dutch – is an emblem symbolizing outspoken reasonableness (see figure 20). It is a counterpart to the famous 'like', launched to become a publicly known symbol. As such, it would serve as a recognizable representation of reasonableness in the public debate and inspire people to express themselves in a reasonable way.

A recognizable representation

As discussed in chapter 2.6, the absence of a clear representation of moderate opinions in the public debate results into a pressure to go along with extreme ones.

The Pine Grenade creates an attractive and visibly recognizable representation of the moderate majority. It reframes moderation as something appealing, daring to be reasonable, and visually represents it in an emblem. Launched in order to become a publicly known symbol, it is aimed to become a recognizable

element that people with a moderate opinion identify with, affiliate themselves with and that inspires them to express themselves.

As symbol for outspoken reasonableness, the Pine Grenade is presented as a counterpart to the famous 'like' symbol. While the like promotes sensation and amusement in the public debate, the Pine Grenade advocates balanced and reasonable contributions that help discussions further.

Core message

A symbol achieves its value through the message it conveys. The Pine Grenade carries two messages.

Outspoken reasonableness

The core message of the Pine Grenade is that it is time to publicly stand for reasonableness. A public debate dominated by the unreasonableness of a small group of extremes does not make sense, because the majority is not heard, mutual understanding is hard to find and solutions are out of sight. In order to make the public debate make sense, it is time to publicly stand for reasonableness.

As such, the Pine Grenade does not only visibly represent reasonableness in the public debate, its message also directly encourages the moderate majority to take part in the public debate and express themselves in a reasonable way.

Counterpart to the 'like'

Through this message, the Pine Grenade makes for a statement to social media platforms. As a counterpart to the 'like', it stresses how the design of social platforms as Twitter and Facebook encourages polarization: whereas the like is particularly appropriate to powerful statements or sensational contributions, the Pine Grenade would be a suitable approving response to reasonable and balanced contributions, contributions that help discussions further.

This message, however, will only be emphasized after the symbol has become publicly known, because one message is more convincing to convey than two messages at a time. Additionally, a statement to social media might especially be impactful when already having a wide reach of people.

The design

The emblem is carefully designed to attractively represent outspoken reasonableness by means of a metaphor: a grenade projected onto a pinecone. The pinecone relates to taking multiple aspects into consideration in order to get to a reasonable opinion, balancing them as in a pinecone. The grenade stands for the courage and determination that is needed to stand for one's reasonable opinion in a debate dominated by unreasonableness. As such, the symbol aims to unite rationality and feeling: the consideration of a pinecone flows into the power of a grenade.

The graphical design process has been a quest to find the optimum between recognizability and subtlety, which are found to be crucial factors in designing an aesthetically pleasing metaphor (Cila, 2013). The visual style is chosen to be courageous, distinguished and modern, in order to appeal to, just as the symbol's meaning, both the mind and the heart. The graphical journey towards the final design of the Pine Grenade can be found in appendix G.

4.2 Launch strategy

The Pine Grenade only gains its meaning, serving as a visible representation of and inspiration for the reasonable majority in the public debate, when it is publicly known. The launch strategy is therefore an important part of this concept, which is described in this chapter.

The message

As said in the previous chapter, a symbol achieves its value through the message it conveys. In order to successfully get the message across to a wide range of people, it is essential that it is expressed in a consistent and recognizable way.

Manifest

In order to facilitate consistent expression of the message, the essence is captured in a manifest. This manifest focuses on the Pine Grenade as a plea to publicly stand for reasonableness. In order to keep the message straightforward, as described in the previous chapter, making an explicit statement to social media platforms is saved for the moment the Pine Grenade is publicly known and is therefore not included in the manifest. The manifest is defined as follows:

"Accusations going back and forth in talk shows, one-sided statements by politicians on Twitter... The public debate is dominated by unreasonableness. Especially the extremes are visible, the reasonable majority is silent. The result: a public debate that makes little sense, in which the majority is not heard, mutual understanding is hard to find, and solutions are out of sight.

That's why it's time to publicly stand for reasonableness.

The Pine Grenade, counterpart to the famous 'like' symbol, symbolizes daring to stand for reasonableness. Wanting to consider different aspects and standing for

the outcome, in an open and passionate way. Because, in order to make the public debate make sense, the reasonable majority must be represented. This way we bring mutual understanding to the public debate and solutions become within reach again."

Visual style

In order to make people instantly recognize expressions related to the Pine Grenade, a distinctive visual style is created. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the visual style is chosen to be courageous, distinguished and modern, reflecting daring to be reasonable. The chosen color scheme is shown in figure 21.



Figure 21 - Color scheme

Launch plan

Now that the message is captured and a visual style is determined, the challenge is: how can this message become widely known? In order to reach the mass, two strategies are used.

Ambassadors

Firstly, publicly known figures are approached to become ambassador of the Pine Grenade. Public figures have a wide reach, for instance through talk shows or through social media, and can therefore be the entrance to the public debate. A first selection is made of publicly known figures that are representative to the message of daring to stand for reasonableness, and they are asked to help spread the message.

The first selected potential ambassadors are:

Tim Hofman

Tim Hofman typically stands up for justice in a bold but sincere way. He is publicly known for his public plea and petition to prevent deportation of migrant children raised in the Netherlands (NOS, 2018).

Rutger Bregman

Rutger Bregman conveys well founded but groundbreaking views in a balanced way. He is among other things known for publicly confronting the financial elite with tax evasion at the World Economic Forum 2019 in Davos (NOS, 2019).

Rob Wijnberg

Rob Wijnberg is founder and chief editor of news platform De Correspondent, for which he also writes articles about how media influence people's worldview. De Correspondent aims to be a "medicine to the issues of today" by focusing their articles on the fundamental rather than the exceptional (De Correspondent, n.d.). As such, not only Rob Wijnberg but also De Correspondent would be a suitable entity to promote the message of the Pine Grenade.

This selection is approached by sending them a Pine Grenade t-shirt with a letter (see figure 22), explaining the meaning of the symbol and making them enthusiastic to become involved.

Affiliation

Another potentially powerful source to spread the message is people themselves. When people deeply identify with a message, they are likely willing to show that. Therefore, people are given the

opportunity to affiliate themselves with the Pine Grenade through merchandise. This creates visibility of the message and facilitates mouth to mouth propagation. Additionally, it creates engagement: deciding to acquire a Pine Grenade object creates a certain commitment to live up to it.

As types of merchandise, a t-shirt and keychain are chosen. A t-shirt is a highly visible way to affiliate oneself with something. A keychain is a more accessible option, cheaper and less prominently visible, and is something people typically bring with them all day, frequently reminding them of the message.

The t-shirt (see figure 23) is responsibly produced, of good quality and stylishly designed, to make people proud to wear it. The first version of the keychain is made from wood, resulting in a distinctive and stylish appeal (see figure 24). Later versions must be made in a different way, suitable for mass production.



Figure 22 - Approach of ambassadors through a t-shirt and letter



Figure 23 - The Pine Grenade T-shirt



Figure 24 - The Pine Grenade keychain

Touch points

Using the strategies mentioned above, where are people supposed to come across the message of the Pine Grenade?

Public events

Through the ambassadors, the message is aimed to be spread in public events. It would for instance be ideal if one of the ambassadors would show up in a talk show as *De Wereld Draait Door*, pitching the Pine Grenade while wearing a Pine Grenade t-shirt. Such possibilities must be discussed with the ambassadors.

The first launch is provided by Prof. dr. Hekkert, chair of the supervisory team of this project, presenting the Pine Grenade in his keynote speech in honor of the TU Delft's 178th dies natalis (see figure 25). Here, a crowd of approximately 500 people is reached consisting of TU Delft staff, alumni and students and invited guests as the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science.



Figure 25 - The Pine Grenade presented by Prof. dr. Hekkert in a speech for in honor of the TU Delft's 178th birthday

Social media

Another important channel for the spread of the Pine Grenade message are social media. Ambassadors are asked to express themselves mentioning or showing the Pine Grenade. A '#' dedicated to the Pine Grenade is created: #granaatappel (the Dutch version of 'pine grenade').

Ideally the Pine Grenade also has its own accounts on for instance Twitter, regularly reacting to current issues, addressing unreasonableness in the public debate and standing for reasonableness. In order to do so, first a moderator would have to be found.

Website

In order to create a base where people can get to know more about the Pine Grenade, a website is created:

www.granaatappel.nu. On this website people can find the manifest, buy the t-shirt and keychain and become inspired to express themselves in a reasonable way. An impression of the website is shown in figure 26, the QR-code can be scanned to visit the website.

Daily life

Lastly, the Pine Grenade is supposed to become visible in daily life, through people talking about the Pine Grenade or wearing the Pine Grenade merchandise.

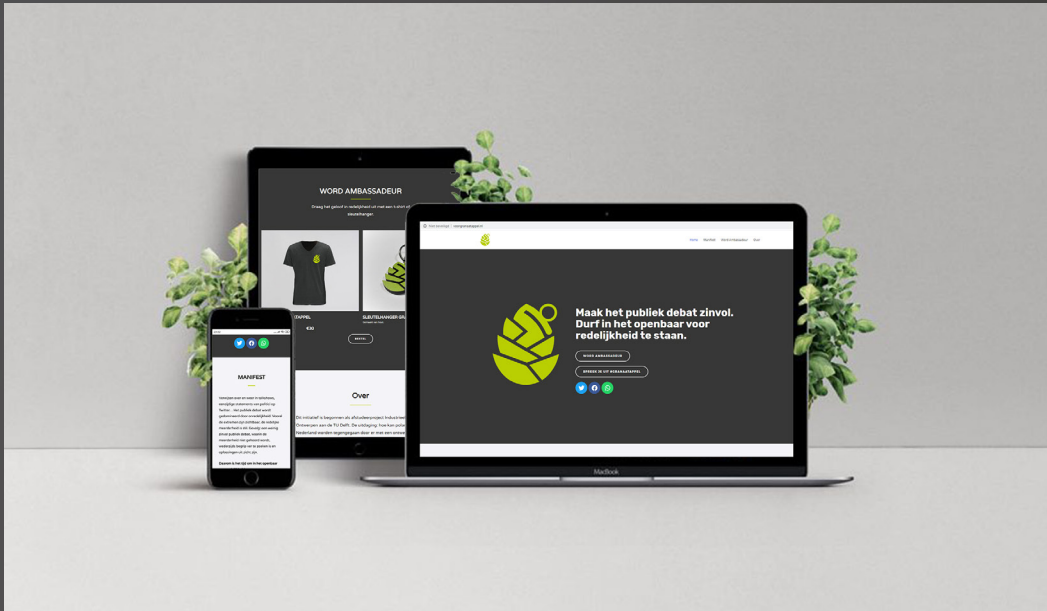


Figure 26 - Impression of the website www.granaatappel.nu

4.3 Evaluation

To what extent is this intervention expected to fulfill the desired implication as defined in chapter 2.8? This chapter evaluates the impact of the launch of the Pine Grenade as symbol for outspoken reasonableness.

Desired implication

In chapter 2.8, the desired implication of the to-be-designed intervention was defined as:

I want to augment the presence of moderate opinions in the public debate, by making people with a moderate opinion express themselves in the public debate.

This desired implication was part of a hierarchy of more abstract goals, shown in figure 27.



Figure 27 - Abstraction hierarchy of the desired effect

Intended impact

The launch of the Pine Grenade symbol aims to fulfill the desired implication in three ways.

1. Visible presence of the moderate majority

Firstly, the Pine Grenade serves as visibly recognizable representation of the moderate majority. As such, it not so much augments the presence of moderate opinions in the public debate, but rather augments the visibility of the moderate opinions. Thereby it provides for a group people with a moderate opinion can belong to, taking away the pressure to choose for an extreme position.

2. An appealing perspective on moderation

Secondly, the Pine Grenade provides people with an appealing perspective on having a moderate opinion, as daring to be reasonable. This can give people with a moderate opinion the confidence to express themselves.

3. Encouragement to express oneself in a reasonable way

Thirdly, the message of the Pine Grenade directly encourages people to express their moderate opinions in the public debate, by making the plea to “dare to stand for reasonableness”. Even though standing for reasonability is not the same as expressing a moderate opinion, reasonable opinions are likely to be moderate as they typically consider multiple sides to an issue (see chapter 3.1).

Validation

These effects heavily rely on two conditions: (1) that people with a moderate opinion are indeed attracted to the Pine Grenade and its message, and (2) that the Pine Grenade is successfully launched. These conditions are related: the launch strategy highly depends on the willingness of people to commit to the message.

Informal conversations about the Pine Grenade have indicated that the message appeals to people with a moderate opinion. As decent quantitative research costs serious resources, it is chosen to validate this assumption in practice, by launching the symbol as described in the previous chapter. The launch will only succeed if the message appeals to people.

Conclusion

The launch of the Pine Grenade aims to make people with a moderate opinion express themselves in the public debate by creating a visibly recognizable representation of the moderate majority. This representation provides for an appealing perspective on moderation, giving people the confidence to express oneself in a moderate way. Additionally, it spreads a message that directly encourages people to express themselves for reasonableness.

As such, the Pine Grenade can fulfill the desired implication as defined in chapter 2.8, creating an augmentation of the presence of moderate opinions in the public debate and thereby relieving the pressure to choose for an extreme opinion. This however depends on whether the message of the Pine Grenade indeed appeals to people with a moderate opinion, which will be proven through the launch.

The background of the slide features a large, abstract geometric design. It consists of several overlapping shapes in a vibrant blue color against a white background. These shapes include a large triangle on the left, a curved band that sweeps across the middle, and a smaller, more complex shape in the lower-left quadrant. The overall effect is modern and dynamic.

Part 5. **Concluding**

This part finalizes the report through a conclusion, discussing the continuation of the intervention, a personal reflection, acknowledgements and a list of references.

5.1 Conclusion

Polarization

This project takes the challenge to design an intervention that deals with polarization in Dutch society, based on an extensive analysis of the context of the phenomenon, in order to achieve positive impact for society.

Analyzing the context of polarization, it was found that even though the Netherlands is not as divided as it seems,

the emphasis on extremes in the public debate is a problem. People want to belong to a group, which results into a pressure to choose for one of the extreme opinions on an issue. People with a moderate opinion either tend to go along with the extremes, or to turn their back on the public debate because they feel unrepresented. This in turn creates polarization.

Desired implication

Therefore, the desired implication of the to-be-intervention is defined as to augment the presence of moderate opinions in the public debate, by making people with a moderate opinion express

themselves in the public debate. This implication would relieve the pressure to choose for one of the extremes on public issues.

Intervention

As an intervention, the Pine Grenade is created. The Pine Grenade is an emblem, symbol for outspoken reasonableness and counterpart to the famous 'like', which is meant to serve as an appealing and recognizable representation of reasonableness in the public debate and inspire people to express themselves in a reasonable way.

As a consequence, people with a moderate opinion would see a representation in the public debate they can identify with, making them more confident and inspired to express themselves and relieving the pressure to choose for one of the extremes.

In order to make it a publicly known symbol, public figures representative to the message are approached to become ambassadors of the Pine Grenade. Additionally, a website is created where people can affiliate themselves to the Pine Grenade by buying a t-shirt or keychain. The main assumption of the project is whether people with a moderate opinion are indeed attracted to the Pine Grenade and its message, which will be proved right if the launch becomes a success.

5.2 Continuation

As the launch of the Pine Grenade is ongoing and therefore overstretches the time scope of this graduation project, this chapter discusses how the intervention is planned to be continued.

Ambassadors

The involvement of publicly known ambassadors is essential in becoming a publicly known symbol. As such, much depends on whether these persons are interested to become ambassadors. At this moment, shortly after approaching

the first selection of potential ambassadors, there is no response yet. In case they answer negatively, a new selection of potential ambassadors has to be made and approached.

What if the launch takes off?

The moment ambassadors agree to become involved and the launch takes off, there are several things that need to be done. At first, a strategy must be discussed with the ambassador(s) on how they can help to get publicity. Secondly, the website has to be professionalized, for instance by creating a safe web shop where people can order the Pine Grenade merchandise. Thirdly, a person has to

be involved to manage social media channels on behalf of the Pine Grenade, providing for further visibility.

Depending on the effort needed to launch the Pine Grenade, I strive to stay involved with this project, in order to make the Pine Grenade a publicly known symbol that counteracts polarization.

What about across the border?

The systems the Pine Grenade touches upon are the same across borders: polarization, social media and the pressure for attention are worldwide phenomena. The Pine Grenade might therefore just as well work internationally. As countries as the United States and the United Kingdom show fiercer signs of polarization than the Netherlands, the message of the Pine Grenade might even be more urgent over there.

For the scope of this graduation project it is decided to limit the launch of the Pine Grenade to the Netherlands, mostly for a practical reason: within the Netherlands I have a much better feeling for which people and which platforms to involve in order to launch the Pine Grenade. However, depending on possible success in the Netherlands and finding the right contacts, a launch across borders is a possibility!

5.3 Personal reflection

Coherence in complexity

The most challenging part of this project was finding coherence in the complexity of polarization. Turning a broad collection of insights into a coherent, encompassing and comprehensive view, a view that

touches upon the core and provides perspective to intervene, proved to be a tough challenge, but at the same time the most rewarding challenge to conquer.

Making impact

One of my biggest insights is about making impact. Even though an analysis must make sense in order for solutions to be meaningful, I found out impact can especially be created when the resulting

stance is firm and able to inspire people. My supervisors taught me a pinecone sometimes needs to act as a grenade in order to leave a footprint.

Inspiring conversations

The most entertaining of this project has been all the conversations that it sparked. Polarization proves to be a topic that loosens a lot of tongues, taking

a stance on how to counteract it even more, resulting into many inspiring and insightful discussions.

Value of design

One of my goals in this project was to explore and show the value design can have for complex societal problems. This project definitely taught me a lot about this. As I see it, designers can typically uncover a perspective on societal issues that enables to act upon them with a clear vision. Based on such a vision they can create unexpected solutions that

are simple yet impactful. And they can communicate their findings and solutions in a way that engages people. Altogether, I believe designers can and should play a significant role in dealing with the complex issues our time faces, and I hope this project convinced you as a reader too!

5.4 Thank you

Thank you for reading this report, I hope you enjoyed it and take the Pine Grenade's advice to your heart: it is time to stand for reasonableness!

I want to explicitly thank:

My supervisors Paul and Roland,

For the entertaining discussions full of energy and insight. Your passion with the topic inspired me, your spot-on feedback often made me rethink and explore further until finding something that coheres.

Thomas, Ward, Annette, Jan, Ernest and Maaïke,

For your help in finding coherence in the complexity of polarization, managing the project and writing this report.

And everyone else that contributed to the project, among others:

Fellow (ex-)students Thom, Daniel, Elise, Alex, Yasmin, Karin, Tjapko, Emiel, Pleun, Nard, Wietse, Thomas, Matthijs, Emma, Alberto, Rens, Adam, Laura and Geert, and professionals Joke, Roy, Mieke, Nynke, Daan and Emiel.

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Part 6.

Appendices

This part shows all the appendices that are referred to throughout the report.

Appendix A - Results pilot SID-cycle

The context of polarization

Society is changing

- Globalization leads to immigration into the Netherlands (development)
- After the 'ontzuiling' (division of society in religious piles) there is an increased alienation between 'the people' and 'the elite' (trend)
- People more often live in homogeneous neighborhoods (trend)
- Big data are used to make decisions and steer behaviour (development)
- Individualization: people value authenticity more and more (trend)
- People are afraid of change (principle)
- People have a need for clarity (principle)
- Competence, relatedness and autonomy are key psychological needs of people (principle)

An increasing division in society

- Different groups are less likely to meet each other (development)
- Lower educated Dutch people way less often trust other people than highly educated Dutch people (trend)
- Inequality: 29% of Dutch population stays behind on all aspects, from economical to social (development)
- The self-called 'bottom layer' population sees 'a lot of' friction between 'the elite' and 'the people' (trend)
- A 'new' inequality: the people who can deal with the changing society and the people who have trouble to do so (development)
- A society needs cohesion to function well (principle)

'What's nice sells best' is ruling media and politics

Media

- Information and news have become a product, media and journalists need attention for their business to survive (development)
- Journalism is by definition filtered, manipulated, biased and simplified (principle)
- Extreme opinions generate more attention than nuanced opinions (principle)
- Opinion websites get more and more visitors (trend)
- Everyone can share information without much effort due to social media (development)
- Fake information is deliberately generated to influence opinions (trend)
- Entertainment is viewed more often than programs that focus on background knowledge (trend)

Politics

- Dutch politics is no longer about in depth discussion but rather about scoring for the supporters. Quick and tough statements seem essential to survive (trend)
- The 'poldermodel' of Dutch politics is based on compromises (state)
- Pragmatism doesn't convince people looking for an inspiring story or vision (principle)
- People are encouraged to create their own truth (trend)

Ideas easily radicalize

Technological influence

- Social media allow people to communicate with like-minded people (development)
- Algorithms of social platforms, aiming to keep people there, direct watchers/readers into a loop of similar and/or more extreme content (trend)

Irrationality of people

- People systematically overestimate what they know and understand (principle)
- Information that matches our worldview is easily accepted, while information that doesn't is easily rejected (principle)
- Information is better absorbed when it is brought in a way fitting to one's social cultural identity (principle)
- Rational ignorance: sometimes the effort to get to the bottom of something does not match the benefits (principle)
- Letting people explain and back up ideas in a quiet way makes them realize possible self-overestimation and creates space for an open attitude (principle)

Enforcing group dynamics

- Groups of people with similar opinions that exchange arguments are likely to move to an extremem version of their initial opinions (principle)
- People judge their group as better than other groups, simply because it's their group (principle)
- The more someone identifies with a party, the higher the tendency to act for the party and the stronger the emotional reaction to a possible threat (principle)
- Groups whose members' identities are coherent, are more biased, less tolerant and less positive towards other groups (principle)

Design goal

- Desired implication *In order to create empathy between different groups and encourage well-considered opinions,*
- Design goal *I want to encourage people to explore different world views,*
- Mechanism *by appealing to their desire for autonomy and authenticity.*

Intervention

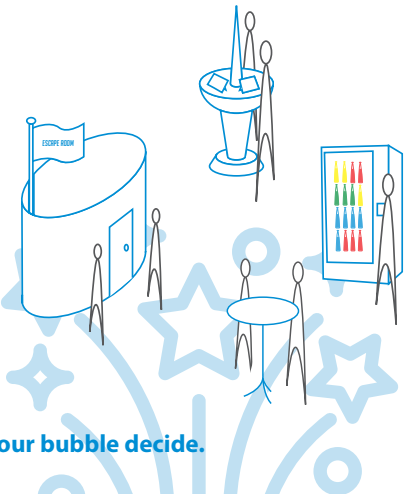
POP your Bubble movement

POP your Bubble movement

Consisting of:

- 1 POP-platform**
Make people explore new perspectives

- 2 POP-up events**
Make people experience new perspectives



Find your vision - don't let your bubble decide.

Appendix B - Interviews with experts

This appendix shows the conclusions of interviews with experts on different domains.

Interview Roy Kemmers

Roy Kemmers is a sociologist and PhD candidate studying discontent in the Dutch society. This is a rough report of the conclusions of the interview.

Divisions

Roy mostly sees a division between higher and lower educated. In general, a difference can be found in how they look at culture: culture is relative and constantly develops (higher educated) vs. culture is rigid, one culture is better than the other and cultures can worsen (lower educated). This has to do with high cultural capital vs. low cultural capital. One of the causes and risks of this division is: higher educated create a societal system that suits themselves.

Moralization of the public debate

Additionally Roy sees a difference in what people seek in politics: reverence versus practicalities. Protest parties typically offer reference, a vision to cling on to. Protest parties can have a positive impact on a country: they question things that are taken for granted by others.

However, it becomes a problem when the tone becomes rough and it becomes about making others look bad. This is currently visible in the public debate. The difference with earlier polarization in the sixties/seventies is: the public debate now includes value judgements ('he is a bad person') more than before. Other groups are being made to look bad based on their ideas and personality.

Counteracting this might be by focussing on similarities and creating dialogue.

Interviews dr. Emiel Rijshouwer

Dr. Emiel Rijshouwer is a designer and sociologist. These are the notes of the interview.

Difference sociology and design

Sociology: things become complex and political. Sociology: mainly observe and describe. Sociological initiatives are, for example, things that are set up at community centers. Watch out as a designer: creating an opportunity is not enough. It sometimes ignores basal sociological or psychological principles. Tip as a designer: be vulnerable: "I came up with something, does it work?" If not, it may not help the problem, but it will help the field.

Insights

- Neo-liberalization: lower class loses

- Social rental homes: massive and available to everyone in the 1970s. Now not à exclusion, gentrification.
 - Distrust (lower educated) & hautain behavior (higher educated): polarization
 - Protest votes: people do not agree with everything, but especially want to be heard. See work Roy Kemmers.
- Mixing neighborhoods: Groups meet each other more often, but in practice it does not mix, little effect measured. There is a risk of gentrification or decay anyway.
- Literature Dick Houtman: left vs. the right is no longer. Now for or against globalization. Against: fear of change, or missing the benefits.
- Uitermarkt, John Booi: Instagram is a romantic idea that anyone can join, but not in practice: select individuals are dominant, there is a colored image and thus promotes gentrification.
- Elenor Ostrem (economist): communities do best when they are homogeneous and with clearly defined boundaries. So external strength should be needed to break that. Or you can use it.
- Educational sociology: in "black" schools little success is not necessarily related to cleverness of pupils or teachers, but to the fact that pupils are less used to school culture, which is something complicated to tackle.
- With polarization I can also focus on the positive effects.
 - Distrust also has positive sides (no naivety)
- Verzuiling: separation used to be built into society, society "tolerant" for separation
- Fear (for common enemy) is much stronger than the ideal of an inclusive society. A larger / stronger ideal is needed.
- Facts are multi interpretable. Solution is not about informing.

Interview Joke Brouwer

Joke Brouwer is manager of the civil society policy department of the Municipality of Utrecht. As such, she is involved in the current policy of depolarization of the municipality of Utrecht. The conclusions of the interview are summarized underneath.

How does the municipality view polarization?

Polarization is seen as the start of radicalization, violence in society. Money comes from NCTV (Dutch counterterrorism unit) and a large program (Utrecht zijn we samen) was started after the attack on Charlie Hebdo.

Joke thinks it should not be exaggerated (we are the fourth most happy country in the world with a relatively high level of confidence in the institutions), but she does see that people speak more directly and louder, both online and on the street, which means immigrants for example do not feel appreciated. In addition, she sees a skewed growth in society between highly educated and low educated people, high education is valued too high and the low educated too low. Thanks to digitization and automation, there are additional concerns for the low-skilled: what kind of work will there be later? The polarization should not be exaggerated, but it must be worked on.

What kind of policy is being developed related to polarization?

- Stimulating citizens' initiatives through social brokerage, placed under Stichting Dok. With a focus on inclusiveness ("everyone can participate") and social cohesion (the "light connections" between groups).

- Anti-polarization- and radicalization program: Utrecht zijn we samen. Preventive (anti-polarization) and signaling (radicalization). Programs related to integration and acceptance, education, upbringing, work, communication. Started after Charlie Hebdo.
- Supporting initiatives such as
 - Stichting Vreedzaam
 - People learn at school how to deal with different opinions in a peaceful way
 - Stadsschool: bringing children from 2 different schools together
 - Ter info - app
 - Dare to be gray
- Supporting sports and cooperation among neighborhood teams
- Neighborhood design and composition: consider what a neighborhood should look like for social cohesion, both in spatial design and composition of houses (social rent, free sector)

Also interesting

- Budget is politically charged; for example, the municipality receives a budget to combat radicalization after an attack like Charlie Hebdo.
- In the case of austerity, policy for promoting social cohesion, for example through social brokerage and for initiatives that create "light connections" between different groups, is the first to be cut because the consequences are difficult to measure or demonstrable.

Interview Mieke van der Bijl

Dr. Ir. Mieke van der Bijl is an Associate Professor in Design for Social Innovation for the TU Delft. She is specialized in systemic design. The notes of the interview are shown underneath.

Designer skills

What can you add as a designer that others cannot do? According to Mieke especially: designing and framing experiences. For example, in qualitative research designers are not the best, but in research in combination with framing the results they are typically good.

Systemic design

Systemic design: system theory + design. Recommendations:

- Upholstery of Design 4.0, 4th generation design, design X: involving design in complex issues with system thinking.
- Cultivating system change, Anna Birney (simple and practical explanation of system theories).
- System change, a leverage point, by Donella Meadows

Polarization

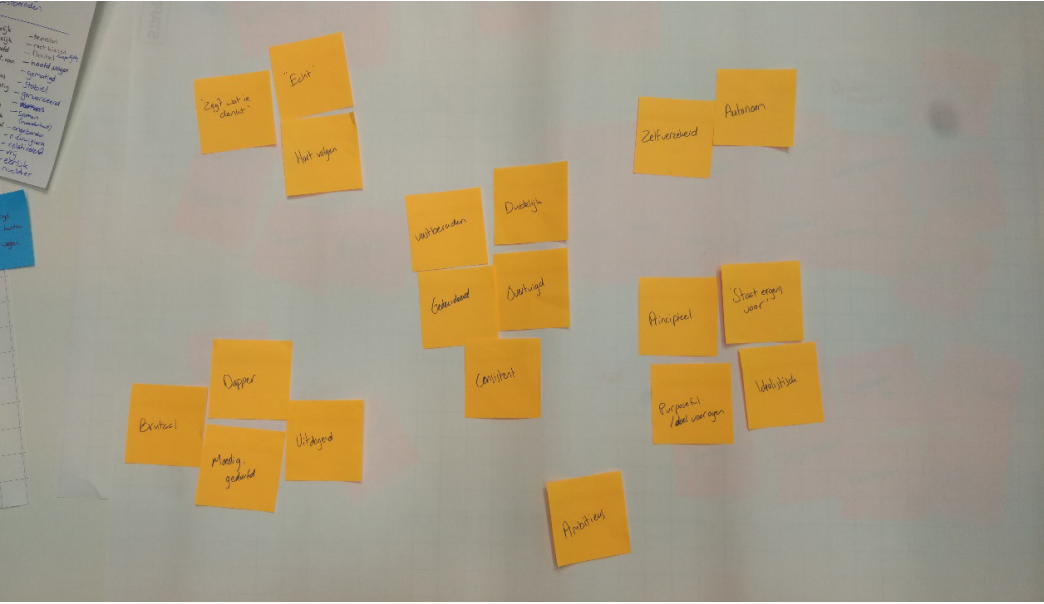
- Tip: "Throwing rocks at the Google bus" - digitization, system thinking, polarization
- Polarity thinking: assumption in system theory: everything goes up and down.
- See also Sapiens, how all kinds of parts of society are intertwined.
- Polarization is about framing (high / low educated is also polarizing). That is why media and politics also play a major role.
- Changing mindset is the most difficult, but has the most influence (culture change).
- Changing frame way: disorienting experience. Design game or experience?
- Other direction: create dialogue instead of debate

Appendix C - Associations with moderate & extreme

Positive associations with moderate opinions



Positive associations with extreme opinions



Negative associations with extreme opinions



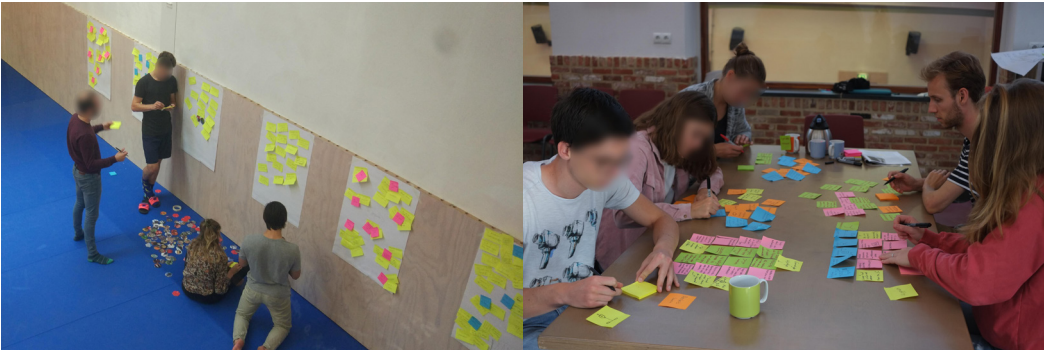
Appendix D - Creative sessions

In order to explore how a frame of 'being independent by having a moderate opinion' can be conveyed, two creative sessions are held, each with five industrial design students. The sessions are facilitated by students that are participating in the course 'Creative Facilitation' of the TU Delft. An impression of the session and the results (in Dutch) and a short evaluation are shown in this appendix.

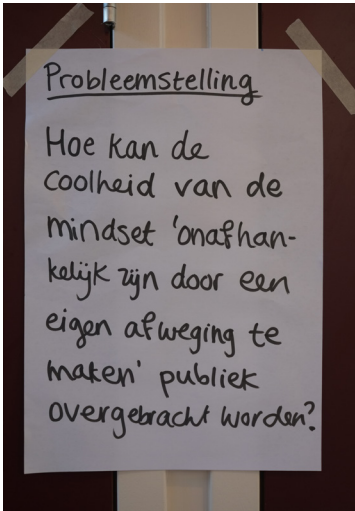
Impression

Impression of session 1 (left) and session 2 (right)

Results session 1



On the right the problem statement, starting point of the session. On the next page, the above two pictures show clusters of identified solutions. The picture left below shows associations with independence, the picture right below shows the two concepts that came out from the session.



Appendix E - Manifest 'Radical Reasonability'

Rationale

It is time for radical reasonability.

The public debate is currently dominated by unreasonability. On the one hand, look at current protests - activism, but also on the other hand at politicians who use manipulative frames and set people against each other, and also at social media, where reproaches go back and forth. They are examples of ignoring other people's interests. The result is less mutual respect in society and solutions for important issues get out of sight.

There are plenty of people among us who are reasonable. The problem is: you don't hear that. Because reasonability is seen as moderate: cowardly, unspoken, does not dare to stand for anything. But reasonability does not have to be moderate. Reasonability stands for principles - considering different interests, looking for an optimal solution and being open to new insights - and those principles are now under pressure more than ever. That is why it is time to stand up for the reasonable principles. It is time for radical reasonability.

Radical reasonability

Radical reasonability is about being convinced to dare to take your reasonable position and to stand up for the standards of reasonability. This is possible, for example, by sharing a point of view based on a consideration of interests, which you are willing to substantiate, while being open to valid new insights.

Reasonability

Reasonability is:

- Consider different interests
- Search for the optimum solution
- Being open to valid new insights

Reasonability is therefore:

- Well considered, because it considers multiple interests
- Respectful, because you take others into account and honor their interests and insights (by taking them into consideration).
- Fair, because you are looking for the best solution based on the interests at stake.
- Constructive, because a good solution can only be found based on understanding one another and the interests at stake.

Examples are:

- Share an opinion or solution based on a well-founded assessment (where you are open to criticism or new insights).
- Dare to change your mind. After all, a reasonable opinion is a consideration; if there are valid new insights, the balance may turn out differently.
- In the event of a disagreement, state the underlying values that conflict ("everyone wants ..., and everyone wants ..., it is about the balance between the two")

Unreasonability

Unreasonability is:

- Not being open to other people's interests and insights
- Ignoring from other people's interests and insights

Examples are:

- Allow yourself to be guided by emotion, for example, to find something much more important than anything else because it is close to you
- Putting self-interest at the center, such as winning more important than finding a good solution and basing choices on possible re-election
- Manipulation: playing others for their own interest. Such as one-sided frames, which consciously ignore certain aspects.
- Us vs. them thinking: ignoring other people's interests

Unreasonability is therefore:

- Stiff and short-sighted, because you are not open to other people's interests or insights.
- Selfish and indifferent, because you ignore other people's interests or insights.
- Unthinking and emotional, because you are guided by emotion.

This means radical reasonability stands up for

- People who feel forced to take an extreme position on an issue when they disagree with both poles.

- The people who act reasonably and do not recognize themselves in the public debate.
- The people who are being manipulated en masse against their interests.

Radical reason is opposed to

- Manipulating and inciting others for own gain, such as inciting politicians
- Not being open to someone else's point, for example the reproaches back and forth on social media
- Ignoring other people's interests, for example activists

Appendix F - User test plan: Counterpart to the Like

Research questions

1. Which word is the most appropriate to appreciate a social media post that considers multiple aspects to an issue?
2. Which symbol is most appropriate to accompany this word as appreciation to a post that considers multiple aspects to an issue?

Process

A news article title and three fictive social media posts about a currently controversial topic in the Netherlands (the political measure to lower the maximum speed on highways) are shown as a paper prototype. Two posts show a rather one-sided view on the issue while the third post considers multiple aspects of the issue. The participant is asked which symbol he would find most fitting to react to the moderate post, why and what he associates the symbol with.

Secondly, the participant is presented with a pair of the word 'like' and its corresponding symbol ('thumbs up'), and the word 'insightful' with a missing corresponding symbol. The participant is asked which symbol would be most suitable for the 'insightful' option as alternative to 'like'. He can choose out of four printed options. The participant is asked why and what he associates the symbol with.

Participants are asked to think aloud during the test.

Protocol

1. Introduction, toestemming foto's en opnamen, participants are asked to think aloud, you probably have heard about the 100km/u measure, ...
 - a. Participant is presented with ...
 - b. Question: "What do you think of the reactions?" ("You can think aloud.")
2. Question: "If you would react to the third post with one smiley or symbol, which symbol would you feel is most suitable? You can choose one of these, or if you know another that fits better..." Presenting the participant with the 6 symbols and the X. "Why did you choose that one? What does this symbol mean to you in this situation?"
3. Question: "Currently there is the Like to show appreciation. If there would be an alternative with [chosen symbol], which word would best fit with it?"

Presenting participant with like & thumbs-up symbol and the chosen symbol.
After some time present participant with the 5 words. "Why do you choose this word?"

1. Introduction

- Introduction to the participant
- Asking permission to take photos and record sound
- Participant is asked to think aloud during the test
- Participant is presented with the news headline and the three posts.
- Question: "What do you think of the reactions?" ("Don't forget you can think aloud.")

2. Task 1

- Presenting the participant with the five words and one blank fiche.
- Question: "If you could react to the third post with one word, which word would you feel is most suitable to the post? You can choose one of these, or if you know another word that fits better, you can also write that one down." "Why did you choose that one? What does this word mean to you in this situation?"

3. Task 2

- Presenting the participant with like & thumbs-up symbol and the chosen word with a blank fiche instead of a symbol, and the six symbols plus a blank fiche.
- Question: "Currently there is the Like to show appreciation. If there would be an alternative to the like, with [word chosen in task 1], which symbol would you think is most suitable to accompany it? You can look at these as inspiration, or come up with another symbol." "Why do you choose this symbol? What does it mean to you in this situation?"

- If the participant chose another word than enlightening in task 2, repeat task 3 with the word 'enlightening' instead of the word chosen by the participant.

Material

Options words:

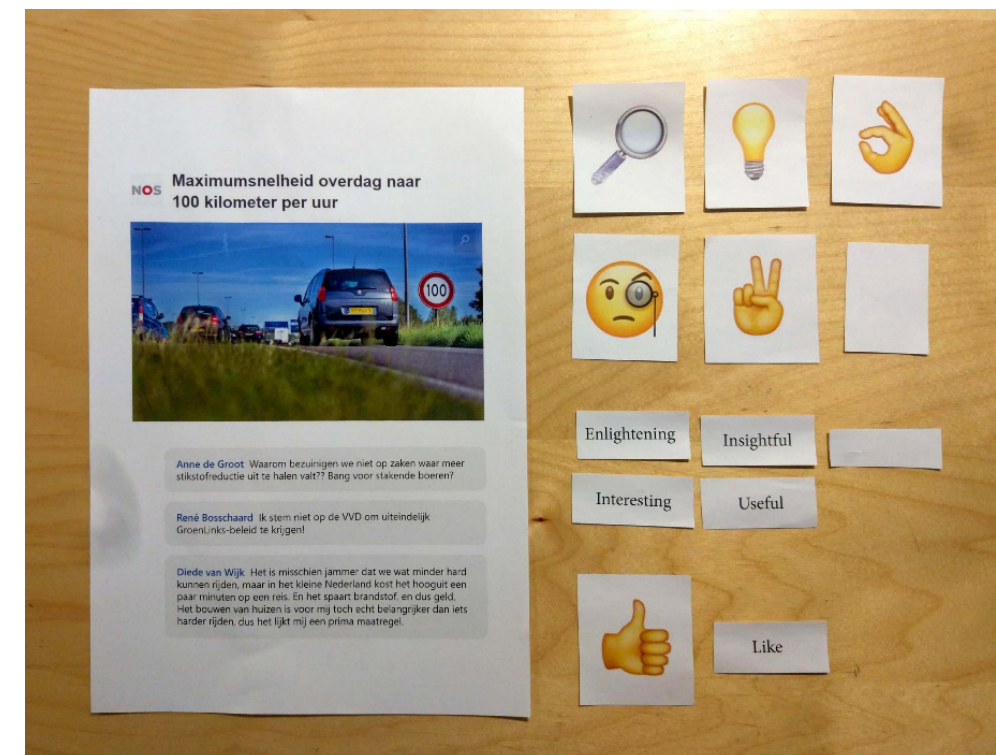
Like (control)	(vind ik leuk)
Insightful	(vind ik verhelderend)
Enlightening	(vind ik verhelderend)
Useful	(vind ik nuttig)
Interesting	(vind ik interessant)
Blank	

Options symbols:

👍 (control)

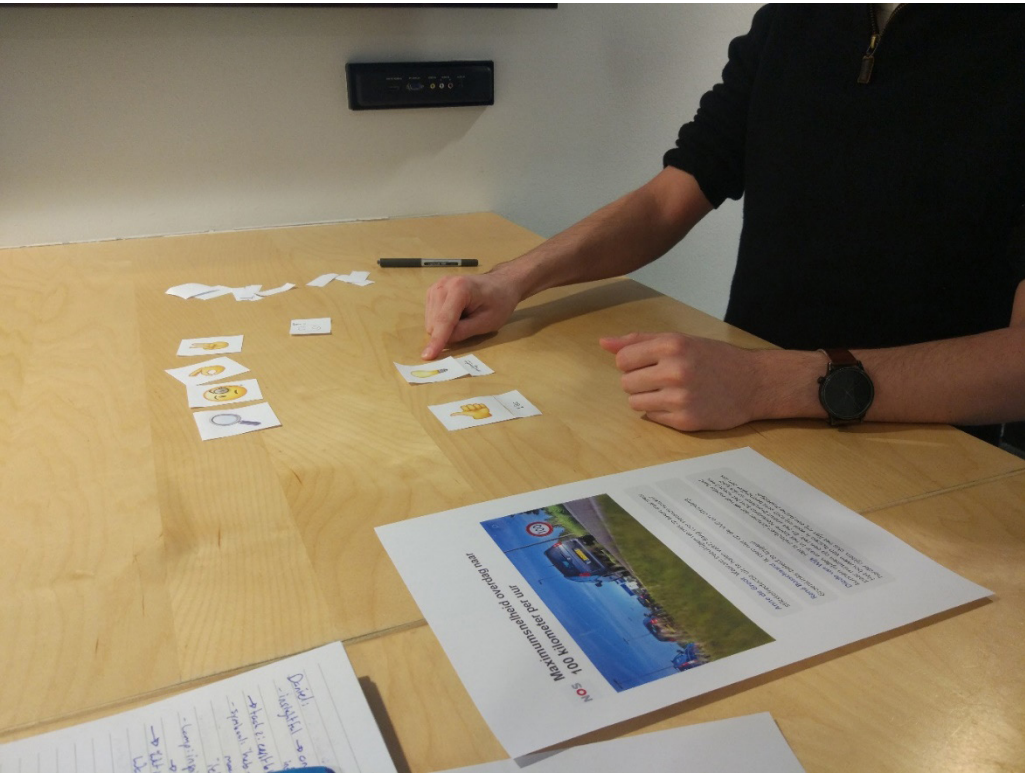


Blank



Material: news article, 5 symbols, 4 words and the like

Answers



During the user test

	P1	P2	P3	P4
Preferred symbol	Light bulb	Light bulb	Light bulb	Light bulb
Preferred word	Enlightening	Enlightening	Insightful	Insightful

Quotes
P1 was not recorded.

P2:
Symbol:
"Intelligentie, het lampje" "[Het lampje staat voor] een idee" "Het is weer een ander gezichtspunt" "Het is een iets onderbouwde mening, dus wat dat betreft zou ik die [het lampje] erbij vinden passen."
"[Oke-sign] zou een teken van waardering geven, dus dat zou ook kunnen [bij insightful]"
"Verhelderend zou ik naar een lampje gaan"

Woord:
"Insightful zou er iets meer kennis vanaf mogen stralen."
"Wordt verlicht [over enlightenment]" "Niet zomaar een kreet eruitslaan, maar ook daadwerkelijk wat iemand vindt die er een beetje over nagedacht heeft."

P3:
Woord:
"Insightful" "Onderbouwing op een stelling" "Daar heb ik niet aan gedacht, en het is onderbouwd, dus het is insightful"
"Enlightening is als het echt een geweldig stuk zou zijn wat ze zou hebben geschreven, iets waarbij je opeens compleet enthousiast en overtuigd van zou worden."
"Een like is een beetje terughoudend, een like. Je laat niet echt weten wat je denkt met een like."

Symbool:
"Een symbool wat laat zien: daar heb ik niet eerder aan gedacht, maar ik ben het er mee eens. Zoiets. Of Eh, ik heb er niet eerder aan gedacht, maar ik kan er wel in mee. Zoiets. Of: Ja inderdaad. Interessant."
"Het idee [lampje], want ik vind het wel inspirerend, onderbouwd, en ehm, ja, daarom vind ik het wel passen bij insightful." "Ik vind eh het lichtboltje wel nice, want het laat zien dat de reactie, eh, nuttig is, in plaats van niet nuttige reacties. Dan zou ik, dat betekent dat, dat je ook iets hebt aan die reactie, dat die interessant is. En dan zou ik eerder kijken naar die reacties, dat vind ik wel tof."
"Een ideetje, inspiratie of iets nieuws. [over de gloeilamp]" "Ik vind de like veel nietszeggender en minder genuanceerd dan ehh deze emoticon, de gloeilamp. Want bij een gloeilamp heb je dan meer het idee wat dat zou kunnen betekenen, je hebt altijd in tekenfilms van, een ideetje, inspiratie of iets nieuws. En de like is gewoon, 'hé, goed gedaan' of 'gaat wel goed zo', of 'dank je wel voor je reactie, ben ik blij mee', maar waar je dan precies blij mee bent is dan niet duidelijk. En bij die gloeilamp heb je meer van, ik ben blij omdat het een goed idee is, of inspirerend of mij op ideeën brengt."
"Als je echt in een discussie terecht wil komen, en echt bezig bent met het analyseren van het commentaar op die discussie, dan zou de gloeilamp wat meer geschikt zijn omdat je dan wat meer kan zien wat er echt toe dat."
"De gloeilamp zou ik dan zetten bij een inspirerende, interessante, niet eerder bedachte redenatie."

P4:
Symbool:
"Ik zou misschien iets zoals een lamje doen ofozo, van, als het insightvol is, dat betekent dus dat het op andere ideeën brengt, vanuit andere richtingen kijkt"
"Misschien zou het lampje iets meer van dat het vanuit een interessante nieuwe richting wordt benaderd. (...). En dit zou meer iets diepgaander kunnen zijn [vergrootglas].
"Like zou ik dus meer doen als ik het ermee eens ben. En insightvol meer als iemand zegt van 'oh ja, dat klopt ook wel'. Weet je wel van als iemand iets uit een andere hoek helemaal bekijkt, wat soms ook best interessant is, waar je dan denkt van ah, eh, hier had ik helemaal niet, niet echt over nagedacht nog. Dan zou ik die doen, de insight."

Appendix G - Graphical design of the Pine Grenade

This appendix shows the graphical journey towards the design of the Pine Grenade.



Appendix H - Project Brief

This appendix, see following pages, shows the original project brief that was approved by the Industrial Design Engineering Board of Examiners.

Counteracting polarization in society

project title

Please state the title of your graduation project (above) and the start date and end date (below). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

start date 08 - 03 - 2019

29 - 11 - 2019 end date

INTRODUCTION **

Please describe, the context of your project, and address the main stakeholders (interests) within this context in a concise yet complete manner. Who are involved, what do they value and how do they currently operate within the given context? What are the main opportunities and limitations you are currently aware of (cultural- and social norms, resources (time, money,...), technology, ...).

The political crises in the USA and the UK show a fierce division of opinions among the population: people either seem to strongly support or strongly oppose Trump or the Brexit, there is little space for a middle ground. Recently this polarization also showed in the Dutch provincial elections, where political opposites Forum voor Democratie and GroenLinks were the big risers.

Polarization can be defined as “the division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs” (Polarization, n.d.). Although some polarization is a normal aspect of a democratic society, a fierce polarization can create tension in society, uproars and radicalization (Wienke & Ramadan, 2011). This tension recently became visible in protests around the Dutch Sinterklaas celebration, whose traditions some people call racist (see figure 1).

One of the roots of the current polarization can be an increased social division in society, where some groups seem to have more trouble dealing with the changing society due to globalization than others. Another roots could be technological developments. Social media offer people the opportunity to connect with like-minded people, which makes it easy for ideas to become more extreme. Secondly, due to the huge flow of information that digital and social media caused (think of Facebook, regular papers, opinion platforms, etc.), people can choose themselves which information to take in. Lastly, social platforms can loop people into more extreme content in order to keep them on the platform.

These technological developments – smartphones, social platforms, algorithms - are all designed. As a result, one could say that designers are partly responsible for the creation of the current situation. This leaves space for design to ‘make up for it’; if designed things can drive groups apart, things can also be designed that bring groups together. Additionally, challenges our society currently faces (from polarization to global warming) will probably require a mass change of behavior. As Tromp and Hekkert (2018) argue, politicians have limited power to steer this change of behavior. At Design for Interaction, students are specifically taught to create interactions, i.e. create certain behavior. Designers also typically have the ability to reframe complex problems and create meaningful products or services (Tromp & Hekkert, 2018). With these skills, I think designers can add value in dealing with complex societal issues.

In this graduation project (Dfl and SPD combined) I want to design an intervention to counteract polarization in Dutch society. I will do so following the method of Social Implication Design (SID) as proposed by Tromp and Hekkert (2018), which is specifically developed to design for social or societal impact (see image 2 for an overview). Both SPD- and Dfl-specific skills play their part: typical SPD-related skills are to map out a complex phenomenon including political, technological, societal and psychological aspects, develop a vision and strategically define where to intervene. Typical Dfl-related skills are to include knowledge from the social sciences and to iteratively design an intervention that stimulates certain behavior.

1. Polarization. (n.d.). In en.oxforddictionaries.com. Retrieved March 25, 2019, from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/polarization>
2. Tromp, N., Hekkert, P. (2018). Designing for Society; Products and Services for a Better World. London: Bloomsbury.
3. Wienke, D. en Ramadan, O. (2011). ‘Polarisatie en radicalisering’. Geraadpleegd van https://www.nji.nl/nl/Download-NJI/Publicatie-NJI/Polarisatie_Radicalisering.pdf

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introduction (continued): space for images



image / figure 1: Protests around the celebration of Sinterklaas (© ANP)

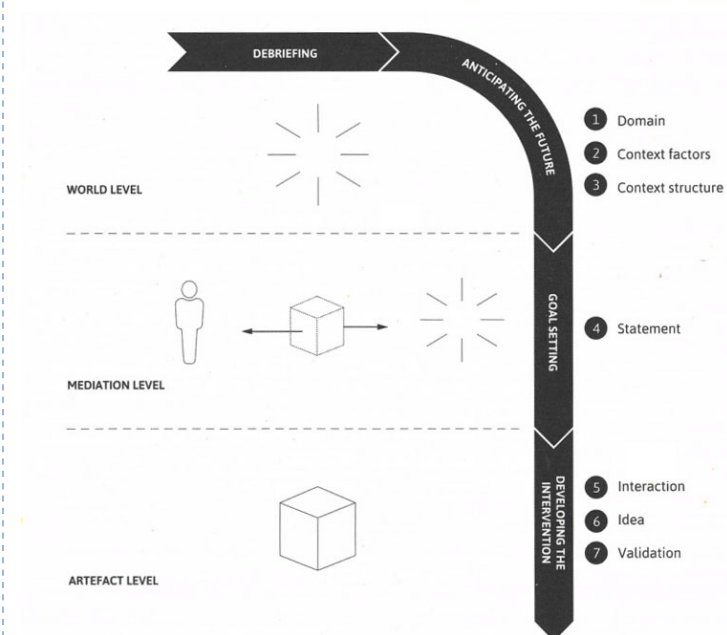


image / figure 2: The steps of the Social Implication Design-method as by Tromp and Hekkert (2018)

PROBLEM DEFINITION **

Western societies currently show a fierce polarization among the population. Triggered by globalization there seems to be an increased division in society, which is reinforced by technological developments as social media. How can design counteract this polarization in the Netherlands? Or does this polarization even need to be counteracted? Where in this phenomenon can a designed intervention have most positive impact for society, and what would this intervention look like?

To find out, I will further explore the context of polarization, reframe the problem, decide where an intervention would have most positive impact for society and design an intervention.

ASSIGNMENT **

Design an intervention that achieves positive impact for society by dealing with polarization in Dutch society, based on an extensive analysis of the context of polarization.

The intervention could be a product, a service, a combination of both or a strategy illustrated with product/service ideas. The expected result of the intervention is not solving the problem but rather improving the situation in a specific context. Apart from the intervention, deliverables will be a vision on the context of polarization and a corresponding design statement, which will be the basis for designing the intervention. The target group could be any actor involved in the phenomenon.

The project is to graduate for both Strategic Product Design and Design for Interaction.

PLANNING AND APPROACH **

start date 8 - 3 - 2019 29 - 11 - 2019 end date

Graduation planning

Official start: 08-03-2019

Project span: 32 weeks (160 work days) + 6 weeks of holiday

[illegible]

I want to follow the Social Implication Design method (SID), which is a variant of the VIP-approach (see image 2 earlier for an overview of the steps of the method). To gain experience with this method I will start off by going through the full SID process in two weeks. This also provides me with material to show to organizations or experts that I might want to involve. The third week will be used to revisit the assignment based on insights from the first two weeks ('debriefing' in image 2). Next, I will spend 10-12 weeks to explore polarization from multiple angles and define a context structure ('anticipating the future') and come up with a statement that describes the desired effect ('goal setting'). Based on the formed statement I will start designing the intervention in an iterative way (16 weeks). Especially the last weeks of 'Setting the context' and the first weeks of 'Designing the intervention' will be an iterative process of exploring idea directions and redefining the context, which I called 'Exploring solution space' (4 weeks). 'Designing the intervention' ends with the Green light meeting, which leaves 4 weeks to finish the report and prepare the final presentation.

MOTIVATION AND PERSONAL AMBITIONS

Explain why you set up this project, what competences you want to prove and learn. For example: acquired competences from your MSc programme, the elective semester, extra-curricular activities (etc.) and point out the competences you have yet developed. Optionally, describe which personal learning ambitions you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project, such as: in depth knowledge a on specific subject, broadening your competences or experimenting with a specific tool and/or methodology, Stick to no more than five ambitions.

Firstly, it is my goal to create real value for people through design. In my opinion real value is not about satisfying short term human needs, but about helping people forward on a longer term. I think this subject provides me the opportunity to do so.

Secondly, I want to demonstrate and experience the value the design way of working can have in dealing with complex societal issues. I think designers could play a role in social transitions and I might want to focus my future career around this topic.

Thirdly, I want to gain experience in effect driven design methods, Social Implication Design in particular. I feel this kind of method fits me well, and to be able to use it later in my career I like to gain more experience in it.

FINAL COMMENTS

In case your project brief needs final comments, please add any information you think is relevant.

This double degree is special case. I started SPD in the 'old' program and Dfl in the 'new' program. Therefore the graduation assignment consists of 48 ECTS (160 days of work), as discussed with Jana Stantcheva of education regulations IDE.

