



# Miscasting Politicians in the Netherlands

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***TITLE OF THE WORKING PAPER:***

**“Miscasting Politicians in the Netherlands.  
What remains of the fellowship of Pim Fortuyn after a brief ruling time?”**

***OBJECT OF THE WORKING PAPER:***

The Lijst Pim Fortuyn was created in February 2002 by a populist newcomer of Dutch politics Pim Fortuyn, who was shot to death on May 6<sup>th</sup>. His party became the second party in the Netherlands after the legislative elections of May 15<sup>th</sup> (17%) and gained 26 MP seats. As a result of such a landslide election, the government to be appointed could not avoid any LPF members so that four of those became ministers (among which one was to be appointed as vice-prime minister) and five more became state secretaries. Because of the many conflicts between the LPF members inside the government, Premier Balkenende asked the Queen for resignation on October 16<sup>th</sup>. New legislative elections were called for and, after the polls of January 22<sup>nd</sup> and the loss of 18 seats by the LPF, a new government was appointed on May 27<sup>th</sup> without the LPF. The present paper deals with the constructing of the LPF as a party almost regardless or in spite of the presence of some LPF members in the government.

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## **Miscasting politician in the Netherlands:**

### **What remains of the fellowship of Pim Fortuyn after a brief ruling time?**

Over the last decades most European democracies have witnessed the emergence of new political parties in accordance with the rising of such issues as ecology, the revival of traditional claims for more power to peripheral regions or the growing influence of populist figures. Whatsoever the circumstances of their creation have been, however relevant the issues they raise have been, no matter whether their members have honestly believed in their own mottoes, those new parties have always officially aimed at having some actual bearing on the policies to be conducted by the political personnel. Few though they may be, some new parties have even taken part in government, be it local or national, and have thus experienced slight or major changing in their organisation, political strategy, goal orientation and ideological affiliation. Having members of a political party in a government is indeed nowhere near as effectless on the party itself as it could seem at the outset, for such members never make up a specialised section continuing the party or a simple offspring thereafter apart from the party. The newer the party, the likelier it could be to undergo a first ruling experience as an initial traumatism, a sort of constructive and/or damaging episode of its development very frequently referred to in any decisions engaging the party.

There is still little point in trying to decipher facts and to determine their potential significance in a new party's history as long as a preliminary question remains unanswered: what is a "new party"? How long does the newness of a political party last? It would be pleasantly easy to state that a political party remains a new party until it is no longer regarded as such. Some would argue about the lifetime of the party. A threshold between new and traditional parties could thus be found according to the political system of the country. Others would focus on the issues, ideology and style of the political party and would label the party new as long as those are labelled new. Yet one should more successfully take notice of its level of (self-) achievement as a political formation (organisation, public acquaintance with the party, sustainability, and so forth). In all respects the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in the Netherlands may be regarded as a new party, if any, and this inchoate party gives an accurate example of those new parties of which some members have been lately – and often for a short term – charged with governing and have thereby contributed to the evolution of their political formation.

The LPF was indeed founded in February 2002 by the former scholar and sarcastic essayist Pim Fortuyn in response to the so-called offhandedness of the political elites allegedly responsible for a collapsing Dutch society. Mainly stemming from another party (Leefbaar Nederland), when not from pure political nothingness, the LPF was meant to legally prop up Pim Fortuyn in his personal quest for premiership and, to a large extent, it was not exactly created for any long-planned collegial political action, hence its name. From its very start, the LPF lacked in cohesion since everything relied upon its leader who was the sole voice to be heard and the only face to be seen. As a result of the landslide election that occurred shortly after Pim Fortuyn's assassination in May 2002 (26 MP seats gained), the LPF was to participate in the new government, however without its own head and without any clear project but that fairly sketchy of Fortuyn.

This paper will therefore aim at analysing how a still hardly stable and ill-based new party has had to cope with both the loss of its mischievous, charismatic leader and the repeated political failures of its members of parliament (MPs) and members of government (MGs). I will attempt to answer the question as to whether governing can help a brand new party such as the LPF find an inner cohesion, a sustainable ideology and structure, a successful canvass, an ever offensive political and electoral strategy, all of which it did not really prove to possess in its beginnings, whilst it obviously misses its *lijsttrekker*. I will thus have to take into account the very exceptional context of the appointment of LPF members to government offices so little time after the impulsive creation of the party and an extraordinary, unconventional campaign led by Fortuyn. I will also pay attention to what caused the government to quickly turn out to be unsustainable after less than 4 months and to eventually be resigned until new legislative elections and the new government of May 2003. In other words, I shall not overlook the affairs with which some LPF members were faced, nor shall I neglect to comment upon the ensuing crucial crisis in Dutch politics.

### ***Dutch politics in the dark, Pim Fortuyn out of the blue.***

As a first step to determine the incidence of the participation in government on the LPF, I suggest that everyone should bear in mind the critical context of Dutch politics in the turning year 2002 and be au fait with Pim Fortuyn's debuts as a candidate.

*Political context of the Netherlands : Poldermodel in crisis.*

Far from being a homogenous society, the Netherlands has almost hitherto consisted of a few groups (*zuilen*, i.e. pillars) determined by two main cleavages (religion and social class) and providing their members with specific services. On the grounds of such pluralism, the Dutch had to invent a form of consociational democracy that would allow them to live on together in a common country despite their acute differences (Lijphart, 1968 & 1977). That means of accommodation in all political, social and economic fields caused the Dutch political system to be famously known as the “Poldermodel”. The Poldermodel actually stems from the consultative economy (*overlegeconomie*), which originally designates the system based upon the cooperation between organisations of employers and those of employees beside any intervention of the authorities. Not only did the *overlegeconomie* concern workers and bosses, it also became the general system of handling any social relations between the civil society and the authorities. The *overlegeconomie* can thus be regarded as the constant striving for the consensus on which social and political actors eventually agree after mutual consultation, regardless of – or beyond – the divergence or opposition in their interests and goals. The Poldermodel may prove to offer a satisfactory solution to chaotic pluralism and its resulting political and social instability as long as the pillarisation of the Dutch society (*verzuiling*) is meaningful. Indeed, one’s likelihood of benefiting at all from the system mostly depends on whether they belong to a pillar and on how much they can identify themselves with it. What is more, there is enough evidence of an ongoing process of depillarisation of the Dutch society (*ontzuiling*). This *ontzuiling* can be accounted for by two major phenomena. On the one hand, as a result of the secularisation, people are more and more reluctant to be part of any religious *zuiling* (the three traditional religious pillars correspond with the three Christian confessions in the Netherlands, namely Roman Catholic, Calvinist, Dutch Reformed). On the other hand, bounds of solidarity and involvement are loosening because of the still growing individualism. Nowadays, many think they should always be able to question and put an end to their belonging to any “community”, be it national or social, as soon as the effects thereof and, in particular, the duties linked therewith are considered too restricting. The lingering pillarisation of the elites and the progressing depillarisation of the society make it easier for some politicians like P. Fortuyn to assess the quality of a supposedly confiscated democracy: the pillarised elites are thought to be estranged from the depillarised society and to take decisions in its stead without regard for its real needs and with too much eagerness for their own advantages. Moreover, the Dutch

culture of consensus tends to virtually fence out any agitators as well as to doom political debates to conventional talks, political positions to expected phrases and political life to a dull, predictable play. Pim Fortuyn posed as the exact opposite of what he named the Dutch archetypical, traditional politician, that is: a “*clean, white, heterosexual man, endowed with patriarchal authority, who was legitimated by his religious conviction as well as by his vision of life*” (Fortuyn, 2002 : p. 237).

*Electoral context of the Netherlands: the unheard-of in a tediously calm country.*

Beside the long-standing crisis of the Poldermodel, the Netherlands was to live through a climate of crisis before the end of 2002. Apart from the “case Pim Fortuyn”, the legislative elections of May 2002 were to take place in a critical political context because of the Srebrenica crisis. On April 16, Premier Kok was asked for the resignation of his government as consequence of the publication of an overwhelming report on the appallingly grievous uselessness of the Dutch army in ex-Yugoslavia. The Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (Dutch Institute for War Documentation) had just published a report on the events of July 1995 in Srebrenica: 7,000 Bosnian men had been slaughtered by the Serbian whereas the Dutch VN-battalion was supposed to protect the population. The Dutch prime minister accepted the responsibility of his government for such awful fault and asked the Queen for resignation, which finally happened in a conventional way. The matter-of-factness of the handling of that issue helped Pim Fortuyn denounce the feebleness, the inefficiency and the irresponsibility of the traditional political elites and, of all people in public offices, Wim Kok. Before and during the campaign Pim Fortuyn did his best to assure people that the whole system was in crisis and that the Dutch society was on the brink of collapse. For instance, the aftermaths of September 2001 and the mass immigration of people from Muslim countries were actually part of a growing concern about multiculturalism and social cohesion, although they were not officially labelled main political issues. The waiting lists (*wachlijsten*) for health care also contributed to a general discontent with the political system and the current policies but, once again, they did not appear as a sign of serious crisis. To those two some other questions can be added: what of the efficiency of premier Kok and his government staff? Why did criminality seem to be so little contained? How would a society sustain itself if no solidarity bounds were ascertained any longer because of individualism? Using a populist style and disdaining political correctness, Pim Fortuyn put all

those questions in such a way that they gave the impression of being the symptoms of a true crisis of the Dutch society. He used to tackle his public over issues that could be calmly discussed but that he presented as the visible part of a major problem, which no one else but he did and maybe could afford to do by that time. As he had before in many columns, he would always find new scandals and reasons for lambasting politicians. Whilst some would keep right or left, Pim Fortuyn wanted to keep out of the system. Somehow even his campaign climaxed the impression of an ongoing crisis. He played an original character, unseen and unheard of on the political stage, to the utmost delight of the medias, the public and of himself, he challenged the established parties as never before and, doing so, shook the Dutch political system. Thanks to Pim Fortuyn, there was “never a dull moment” (Van Holsteyn & Irwin, 2003) during the campaign. His outrageous statements about Muslims or politicians and his extravagant behaviour made him quite distinct from the other candidates and, accordingly, made his party quite distinct from the traditional ones. His presence was a fuss, his assassination was a bigger fuss still. Nine days before the election day, Pim Fortuyn was shot to death by a radical animal-friendly militant: that was the first political assassination in centuries in the Netherlands. The party he had previously created was to run for the election without him and eventually won 26 MP seats (17 %) on May 15<sup>th</sup>: the party of the queer Pim Fortuyn got more seats than any new party had ever achieved and became the Dutch second party only a few months after its foundation. Because of that landslide election his new party was to be represented in the government. Yet this offered no solution to the “crisis”, for other crises occurred as a result of the presence of the LPF in the government and in the parliament. On October 16<sup>th</sup> premier Balkenende had to ask for resignation, new legislative elections had to take place on January 22<sup>nd</sup> (2003), a new government could be appointed on May 27<sup>th</sup>. The reasons for that instability will be discussed below.

### ***LPF, standing for Loyalty to the Populism of Fortuyn.***

When he decided to enter the world of elections, Pim Fortuyn was required to be a member of a party or to have a party of his own. This strategic requirement and his firmly hostile stance on traditional politics seemed invincibly contradictory. He did not wish to stay in a party that would be too conventional and purposefully made up his own that would reflect his new conception of politics.

*Pim Fortuyn's political movement as an ad hoc bottom-up party.*

Pim Fortuyn's interest in politics was older than his will to electoral competition. P. Fortuyn was made worldly famous with his party in the beginning of 2002. However he conceived his party firstly as the institutional, mandatory form of something socially more important and politically worthier. He saw his formation (that is: his way of speaking and making politics, his friends and list fellows supporting his views, and so on) as a general movement of new / modern politics in the Netherlands: the LPF was not supposed to be an *"anti-movement, but a movement that wants to change things and that also points to the way how this changing must be considered and how it can be achieved"* (Fortuyn, 2002: p. 185). Such a movement was explicitly opposed to all traditional parties as it rejected the consensual handling of any public affairs and issues. It therefore fought political correctness, which Fortuyn defined as: *"what is based on the assumption of some political and cultural elites in European countries that only they have the right to set up the political agenda, that is to tell sensitive issues of the cultural and political debate, and that they are capable of determining which facts can or cannot play a role in the debate about issues on the political agenda. In other words political correctness is a form of mental dictatorship that pretends to be enlightenment"* (Fortuyn, 1999: p. 161). His vision of what politics should be was pregnantly developed in the many books he had written in the 1990s. His goal as a politician was double: he asserted that he would change politics and that he could do so from the Torentje (i.e. the place where the Prime Minister of the Netherlands stays). He avowed many times that he dearly wished to become prime minister, that he would achieve it cost what may: *"Whether I want to become prime minister, this is not a gentle joke. I have never joked about it. It is no construction in my mind. A man has also a destiny. And that of ruling the country, I have had it since I was young. I feel it will happen, but don't ask me how. I am launching out for the first price. I will sit alone in a Cabinet when I have become prime minister. I will refuse any portfolio"*<sup>1</sup>.

Pim Fortuyn aimed at premiership above all, his personal aim was to be his party's aim. To that purpose he became a member of the Leefbaar Nederland (Liveable Netherlands). Leefbaar Nederland (LN) was founded on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1999 as the national continuation of two local parties (Leefbaar Hilversum and Leefbaar Utrecht). The LN can indeed be regarded as the national form or federation of local parties that agreed on a certain range of

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from *Elsevier*, 31/08/2001.



issues. They all wanted to strengthen Dutch democratic values and merits, to make citizens have their say in all cases, to make people feel responsible for their acts and take their responsibilities. The official programme for the legislative elections of 2002 consisted of proposals for a real opposition to old parties, for more influence for the voter in the decision process, for more responsibilities, against bureaucracy, for “fair” asylum policies, so that the people has actually his word in the conducting of policies (more *zeggenschap*). The party referred to French and American revolutions (especially to the fundamental rights with which they provided the people) and justifies its philosophy as follows: “*In England and America one speaks even literally of the right to ‘happiness’. We prefer calling it liveability (leefbaarheid)*”

The LN had some local success but something or someone was missing for any chance of success beyond a few towns. Pim Fortuyn was believed to be the man of the national challenge of 2002 and to be able to successfully pass from a local to a national level thanks to his style, which is why he was relied upon sufficiently by the party and elected as its leader in November 2001. Yet Pim Fortuyn could not be under control and he had to resign in February 2002 after he had caused a inner crisis of the LPF (national executive committee): on the 9<sup>th</sup> he had made very offensive remarks about Muslims during his interview in *De Volkskrant*. He was nevertheless the leader of Leefbaar Rotterdam, the local party he had founded just before the election for municipal councils according to the spirit of Leefbaar parties, and won 17 out of the 45 the seats (35%): his local party became the largest one in the second largest town of the Netherlands. He then decided to go his own way and to run for national elections with a party made up to that sole purpose. The LPF was created with the help of some political friends and of people convinced either of Fortuyn’s way of making politics or of the benefits expected from his possible victory (see below). Pim Fortuyn was obviously the *lijsttrekker* (chief candidate) of the LPF, while the Lijst Pim Fortuyn was mainly identified with Pim Fortuyn: his list fellows were foils and made up a supportive fellowship of Pim Fortuyn rather than a real political team.

### *Pim Fortuyn’s political movement as a fellowship.*

The LPF was an ad hoc bottom-up party insofar as it only aimed at helping Pim Fortuyn achieve his quest for premiership and it managed to turn common concerns and politics of local parties linked to one another into a general pattern of issues of a party with an

unmistakeable label (that of Pim Fortuyn). It *was* and *is* a political party because there has been an identification with a label, an organisation, candidates for public offices, some public support (Sartori, 1976), but it was an inchoate party before the participation in the government and still remains so to some extent after that participation (some would say with irony that the inchoate party has become a chaotic party since the failure of the government). However the Lijst Pim Fortuyn minus Pim Fortuyn is closer to a (political) fellowship than to a political party. As was shown before, the LPF was the institutional pretext for Pim Fortuyn and had no real consistence *in se*. Being members of the LPF, friends, fans and opportunists formed the fellowship of Pim Fortuyn whose shared interest and aim officially originate in those of Pim Fortuyn. Little attention was paid to Pim Fortuyn's list fellows, maybe even less to the LPF members, during the campaign. The list was an anecdote and so was the party as long as Pim Fortuyn was on stage. Pim Fortuyn used all medias with astuteness in order to make his (somewhat simple) message clear, to make himself quite different from other candidates, to label himself and his party so that people would at once recognize him for his views over criminality, asylum seekers, integration of minority. Whatever was not eccentric or outrageously dealt with by Fortuyn seemed to estrange the party. For instance, the LPF official position on more traditional issues (reducing income differences, euthanasia, nuclear energy, etc.) was less known to the voters (Van Holsteyn *et al.*, 2003: pp. 76-81). The political party hardly existed without Pim Fortuyn and Pim Fortuyn hardly existed without his performances in the medias. *He* very often broadcast on television or on the radio (Nicolasen, 2002), not his list or party fellows. The LPF is reported to have been at the third place (18%) after the PvdA (28.5%) and the VVD (23.5%) in the medias (Kleinijenhuis *et al.*, 2003), although it was a political newcomer. But very little time was granted to LPF members, for the public was too eager to discover some new odious statement or extravagance of Pim Fortuyn.

Somehow Pim Fortuyn was not the leader of his party but his party itself. Political leaders are useful in a political party, but the party must be able to "miss" its leaders. If not, the party members are nothing more than the stubborn followers of their leaders instead of being trustworthy (or even failing) partners. Despite this strong personalisation of the party, the LPF collapsed neither after Pim Fortuyn's assassination, nor after the elections of May 2002, nor after the appointment of the government in July, nor after the many quarrels inside the party, nor after the resignation of the government: the still active party is even preparing the European elections of June. Bréchon (1999, pp. 17-18) stated 4 criteria for political

parties. According to the first one (“sustainable organisation”), a political party can be regarded as such providing that it can outlive its founder thanks to its internal rules that must be a routine. In that respect the LPF seems to be more than an ad hoc bottom-up party. As for another criterion (“quest for power”), after the resignation of the government in which some LPF members had taken part, it is obvious that many LPF members have craved for MP seats and ministries: their craving has always been a such source of tension and conflict that the survival of the party has often been at stake. Each time a new inner crisis has occurred in the party, Pim Fortuyn has been used as the reference because every LPF member has implicitly pledged loyalty to Pim Fortuyn (what he was, what they think he was) when entering the party.

### ***When the heirs err.***

Because of his character and charisma Pim Fortuyn could afford some conspicuousness, which is the not case of other LPF members. The former academic and social scientist was very cultured even though he was a genuine populist. He openly acknowledged his homosexuality, no one could shame him into giving up his many narcissistic habits. He was a figure, a personage. His party fellows could not resemble him or be as colourful as their late leader. However they were and are not the peaceful ciphers one could imagine. I have not been able to carry out a sociological study on LPF members for want of available data, but I have found enough information on the key members for a few remarks about the difficult sustainability of a very heterogeneous party.

### ***It takes all sorts to make a party.***

Political parties are seldom homogenous as regards their members. The LPF was a very mixed group inasmuch as their members were professionally and politically very much dissimilar. Among the LPF MGs, two were academics, six were businessmen or professionals and two were Public servants. Among the LPF MPs elected in May 2002, four were civil servants or worked for civil servants and representatives, two worked as consultants or advisers, one taught, two came from the world of Law and one from that of finance, nine were business men or worked for business men, three were medical specialists, two earned their lives with medias, two had a special job (Eberhard owned several erotic websites and sex

chatlines, Wiersma played draughts for a living)<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore there seemed to be a contradiction between the desiderata of the party and its actualities. Pim Fortuyn had coined such phrases as “borders closed” (*grenzen dicht*, in Fortuyn, 1997: p. 90) and “The Netherlands is full” (*Nederland is vol*, in Fortuyn, 1995: 2003). Yet there were several quasi-foreigners among the LPF MPs: Jansen van Raaij had returned from his birth place (Dutch Indies) to the Netherlands at the age of 14, Palm was born in Singapore, Varela stems from the Cape Verde Islands, Ms De Jong grew up in Germany and came back to the Netherlands in 1989 with a strong German accent, Zvonar was born in Czechoslovakia and started living in the Netherlands when he was 31 (he used to travel abroad so often and so long that he missed 22 out of 47 sittings). Pim Fortuyn was admittedly no primary xenophobia and championed instead of ethnic nationalism a sort of civic nationalism based upon a civic contract (P. Pennings & H. Keman, 2003: p. 62; Lucardie & Voerman, 2002), but he was a hopeless islamophobe<sup>3</sup>. A Muslim, namely Ms Zeroual, was notwithstanding elected on his list in May 2002 and kept herself busy with integration policies and emancipation in the Parliament.

*Would-be and half-accomplished politicians cast in a rightist mould.*

Unknown though they may have been to most Dutch voters, all LPF members were by no means political ignoramuses. A newly founded party can indeed be entered by defectors from other parties as well as by party-free, political novices. Such was the case of the LPF whose very leader proves to have been politically very active before 2002. Pim Fortuyn had been no stranger to politics, for his first political commitments dated back to the early 1970s. Still imbued with the Marxism of his student years, he did not leave the PvdA he had entered then until the late 1980s. He even took part in renewing the party programme by collaborating on what was to be known as the *schuivende panelen* report (1987). Only after a serious argument with the party’s leader W. Kok in 1989 did he sever his connections with his friends of old and criticise a party he found too conservative and too reluctant to reforms. As he eventually favoured liberalism, he was made many an offer by the CDA and the VVD, which he indifferently turned down, before he decided on taking his chance with the LN (2001). Another argument with his party’s head resulting from his interview in the *Volkscrant*

<sup>2</sup> In January 2003 they were one consultant, two businessmen, one civil servant, one lawyer and two journalists.

<sup>3</sup> In almost all his books Pim Fortuyn denounced the dangers of Islam. One of them is even entitled *Against the islamisation of our culture* (1997).

(February 2002) caused him to make up his own list / party. When he started his (short-lived) electoral career, Pim Fortuyn was admittedly a sort of outsider (Katz & Mair, 1995) since he had no political experience in parliament, let alone in local or national government, yet nevertheless he knew a good deal of politics through his own personal commitment.

Should one take a closer look at the LPF Members of Government (MGs) and Members of Parliament (MPs), one would at once notice that political inexperience was not the most striking feature of the active members of that new party. As for political activity or affiliation prior to membership of the LPF, 4 out of the 9/10 LPF MGs left a previous political formation for that of Pim Fortuyn. Two were members of the CDA (Hessing, Nawijn<sup>4</sup>), one of the VVD (De Boer), one of the PvdA (Bomhoff). Two even had political responsibilities: Nawijn had local responsibilities and Hessing served as police adviser for the CDA parliamentary group. Those were also the only LPF MGs to have a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards their party. Two entered the LPF long after the elections of May 2002: Hessings was a CDA member until June 2002 and Nawijn officially became a LPF member on July 16. One even remained in another party until September 2002 whilst he was already a LPF member (De Boer). One left the LPF in august 2002 and still remained in the government (Bomhoff).

What is more, political novices formed the minority of LPF newcomers in parliament. Out of the 26 LPF MPs elected in May 2002, only 11 were reportedly party-free before they had entered the LPF. Three had previously been members of the CDA (Albas, Eerdmans, Jansen van Raaij), four of the VVD (van As, De Graaf, Hoogendijk, Wijnschenk), five of the LN (Van den Brink, Eberhard, Herben<sup>5</sup>, Smolders, Wiersma). Two came to the LPF after a first period in the VVD and a second one in the LN (Bonke, van Ruiten). Another one had been a militant in D66 from 1966 to 1970, in the VVD from 1970 to 2000) in Nederland Mobiel in 2001 before he supported Pim Fortuyn (van der Velden). Out of those 15 MPs with a first political experience before their LPF membership, five were re-elected in January 2003 and thus outnumbered the other three LPF MPs without prior political experience (Varela and the two newcomers Hermans, Kraneveldt). Regarding political responsibilities in a party, at least 4 LPF MPs had been more than simple militants in their previous parties (Eerdmans, Hoogendijk, Jansen van Raaij, van der Velden). One could add to those four Ms. De Jong,

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<sup>4</sup> Nawijn was a member of the ARP (Anti-Revolutionary Party) until 1980 then a member of the CDA from october 1998 to june 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Herben was a member of Leefbaar Linschoten in january 2002. Leefbaar Linschoten was a local section of Leefbaar Nederland.

who had been very active in the CDU youth movement in Germany. Furthermore, a LPF MP, namely Jansen van Raaij, had an 18-year-long experience of politics as a former Member of the European Parliament (political parties: Unie voor Europa and Europees Verkiezers Platform Nederland).

*Wrangles within the party.*

However different their first political commitments may have been, all those LPF members but Bomhoff shared a common general position on the left-right scale: they were undoubtedly rightists. Yet that common rightist position was not sufficient to prevent them from quarrelling and eventually splitting up. Concerning the handling of personal conflicts inside the party, the efforts to make were all the more strenuous since the party had no real traditions to refer to, no mediation process to resort to, no legitimate referees to call upon, but only the minimal implicit pledge to honour Pim Fortuyn's memory. One of the main challenges of the members of the fellowship of Pim Fortuyn was the maintenance of a cohesion *within* the party (as an organisation) and *before* the electorate (as a competitive political formation); they failed to a large extent.

Putting forward Pim Fortuyn's attachment to freedom of speech (*"I say what I think and I do what I say"*), some LPF members jeopardised the still good image of the party as they behaved or spoke regardless of the consent of the party, that is without consulting the executive committee and other organs of the party. They actually acted as though there was no party at all, according to their own understanding of Fortuyn's political and intellectual heirloom. Some would turn their noses up at special events so as to show their dissatisfaction with the recommendations of the party executive committee about "silence". That was the case of new LPF MP Jansen van Raaij who missed the press conference after the victory of 2002 (*"I didn't feel like going to a press conference where I was to shut up, that's why I went back home"*). In May 2002 and every now and then, "silence" was indeed recommended or imposed by that committee for some reasons. In December 2002, the LPF leader Herben was compelled to justify such authoritarian measures: *"That's why I say the fanatic basis of the party who says: 'I won't let them gag me' and 'I say what I think': 'Well, you're not Pim'"*. But many problems of that sort persisted and, for instance, the committee was to deplore the statements of a few LPF members and LPF members of provincial parliaments on a TV programme (10<sup>th</sup> of October 2003) as those freely expressed statements were alleged to

do harm to the public image of the party. Some sentences of LPF members and LPF representatives could certainly do a disservice to the other members and bring the party into disrepute. Commenting on Pim Fortuyn's assassination, Jansen Van Raaij expounded his theory of a conspiracy implying Bin Ladin and Al Qaeda whereas Langendam (president of the committee) meant that "*the bullet came from the left*"<sup>6</sup>. This last sentence caused a major political crisis in the Netherlands: Langendam had to be dismissed and the party had to face a general opposition. For his part, the LPF MP Wijnschenk, who had rather that the LPF MG Heinsbroek had become Vice-Prime Minister instead of the LPF MG Bomhoff, branded Bomhoff as an "*autistic idiot*" in an improvised meeting on the occasion of Prince Claus's decease. The LPF MP Stuger is reported to have said of Wijnschenk that he "*is the only man I know whose age (38) accords with his IQ*".

Inside the party there have been several crises of importance until now. In June and July 2002, there were two serious conflicts in the executive committee (*bestuur*): a personal one between Dost and Langendam and a more general one amongst the committee members (MP Van As had to be the mediator to solve the problems). The LPF MGs took part in the many inner conflicts of the party, which was one of the reasons for the fall of the government. MG Heinsbroek tried to intervene alone and, in the meantime, MG Bomhoff along with the provisional executive committee of the party intervened on their side. There were two logics (one personal and another one a bit less personal or more collegial) that showed the lack of experience of the functioning of a political party and the lack of any real *primus inter pares* endowed with an undisputable legitimacy. Between the calculating academic Bomhoff and the flamboyant businessman Heinsbroek tensions grew in intensity. Their mutual detestation even became a hindrance to the government work. Several MGs (included a few LPF MGs) asked for their dismissal and, since VVD leader Zalm refused to trust the Cabinet any longer, the leader of the VVD parliamentary group Verhagen and the minister-president Balkenende asked the Queen to accept their resignation. The Cabinet was therefore demissionary from October 16<sup>th</sup> (2002) to May 27<sup>th</sup> (2003), which means that it could only deal with current cases (the handling of any controversial issues is delayed). Be it before or after the resignation, the 4 LPF ministers and 5 LPF state secretaries did not really rule in that 223-day long demissionary Cabinet<sup>7</sup>. State Secretary Bijlhout even stayed for a few hours before

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<sup>6</sup> *Het Parool*, 13/05/2002.

<sup>7</sup> Only the Den Uyl Cabinet was demissionary for a longer time (271 days) in 1977.

resigning: RTL Nieuws produced pictures of her in military clothing after December murders 1982 whereas she had assured that she had left Bouterse burgermilities in Surinam in 1981.

The LPF MGs could be no model for the LPF party members or the LPF MPs. It is still uneasy to determine any effect of the LPF presence in government on the party, for the quarrels between the LPF MGs had little influence on the LPF MPs who carried on fighting against one another. From May 2002 to January 2003 26 LPF members sat in the Parliament and made up a parliamentary group or, at least, attempted to do so. In August 2002 a first major crisis occurred. Herben, who was president of the parliamentary group from May 28<sup>th</sup>, was somehow forced to resign after being harshly criticised and was succeeded by Wijnschenk<sup>8</sup>. The turnover was not limited to the presidency but all other important positions were at stake. Then, in October, another major crisis is worth mentioning. Wijnschenk threatened to make up his own parliamentary group unless De Jong and Eberhard were excluded from the LPF parliamentary group. Those two had previously criticised his leadership and Hoogendijk's role inside the group. As a consequence, De Jong started her own group (groep-De Jong). She left the parliamentary group on October 1<sup>st</sup> after 19 members thereof had decided her departure. Such a decision was thus made as a sort of sanction for her criticisms: she had indeed said that the executive committee of the parliamentary group was undemocratic and that Hoogendijk's position was desperately unassailable. As for Eberhard, he also left the LPF parliamentary group after 13 members thereof had asked for his departure (October 1<sup>st</sup>). Besides, on August 26<sup>th</sup>, the parliamentary group had already asked him to be inactive for a couple of weeks: two days before, the newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* had claimed that he was tried for stealing address data from the Leefbaar Nederland (i.e. his former party).

### ***In the shadow of a ghost.***

Because of the many disputes inside the party, the parliament and the government, the very existence and survival of the party is at stake. One can doubt if the LPF is a genuine political party, for there seems to be two barely coincident realities: on the one hand, the party as a structure, albeit inchoate, is making progress and, on the other hand, its members still fail to consider the LPF as a political party and to act correspondingly.

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<sup>8</sup> There was no real consensus on this matter, since Van As bid for the same position (16 votes Wijnschenk and 5 for Van As)



*From nothingness to smallness.*

The LPF was created from political nothingness and everything relied on Pim Fortuyn. The party provided him with an institutional pretext. Little attention was paid by Fortuyn and his staff to the traditional questions about the organisation and sustainability of the electoral alibi. Pim Fortuyn's successors have toiled to give the party an actual existence so that its organisation is fully achieved on both national and local levels. There is a general organisation with an executive committee, an administration, an information office, a section "media and information", a youth organisation ("de Jonge Fortuynisten", i.e. "the young Fortuynists"), at least four inner commissions ("treasure and cash", "suspension and exclusion", "home rule", "selection and candidature", those three being officially acknowledged in October 2003), a general annual meeting. The next general meeting (*Algemene Ledenvergadering*, ALV for short) is due on May 8<sup>th</sup> this year in Rotterdam. This ALV is noticeable and instructive as regards party processes and organisation. It will indeed deal with the selection of committee candidates, the writing of new statutes and the selection process for the European elections. Candidates for the European elections are to be interviewed by the commission of selection and recruitment and, after the ALV, the LPF members who will have attended the ALV will vote for the chief candidate (*lijsttrekker*) by means of a ticket they will be given at some moment of the ALV.

Beside the general organisation of the LPF, local sections must be mentioned, be they provincial or town sections. There are as many provincial sections as there are provinces. As the Netherlands consists of 12 provinces (Zealand, Northern Brabant, Limburg, Southern Holland, Northern Holland, Utrecht, Gelderland, Flevoland, Overijssel, Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen), 12 provincial sections have been made up. However they are not all very active and often miss militants. To those provincial sections, there may be added some 22 town sections (Southern Holland: 11; Northern Brabant: 3; Zealand: 2; Gelderland: 3; Groningen: 1; Limburg: 1; Overijssel:1). Incidentally, the LPF sits in the Town Council of three significant towns (2 in Southern Holland and 1 in Zealand) and has its own provincial parliamentary group in 7 provinces (Gelderland, Utrecht, Southern Holland, Northern Holland, Overijssel, Flevoland, Drenthe). One should nevertheless note that such groups often consist of a single representative and that in Drenthe the former LPF representative now runs for himself. As for the score or number of representatives or the structure, the LPF must be

considered as a small party (Laurent & Villalba, 1997; Müller-Rommel & Pridham, 1991) but not as a short-lived party (Rose & Mackie, 1988; Mair, 1991) or as a “flash party” (Lawson & Merkl, 1988), for its electoral power has drastically decreased and its failing participation to a government has weakened its attractiveness for any coalition or alliance.

*From fellowship to party fellows.*

One of the most important challenges for the LPF as a party is to change the relationship inside the party rather than to focus on organisation and structure. I have described the membership of the LPF as a fellowship and asserted that the LPF members were not always aware of the necessary solidarity for the party’s good. I have some more examples that show the lack of experience of party discipline: although most of them remained loyal to their idea of who and what Pim Fortuyn was, the LPF members miss the point of what self discipline and inner cohesion meant for a party in which they had hardly been socialised. One could even question the first LPF members’s solidarity with Pim Fortuyn’s ideas. The LPF MP Van den Brink openly declared that it was too controversial to keep porno webmaster Eberhard on the list (incidentally, one should know that Eberhard was placed before Van den Brink on the list), whereas the “pink populist” Pim Fortuyn (Mudde, 2002; see also Lunsing, 2003) never favoured any moral order. When filmed by *Netwerk*, the new LPF MP Hoogendijk tried to stroke any blond woman he met and promised them some public offices (state secretaries). The LPF MP De Graaf is rumoured to have paid 25,000 € to be on the list of the LPF for the legislative elections. The LPF MP Varela left a meeting of the parliamentary group (October 1<sup>st</sup>) for a competition for the best clothed man in which he meant to take part. De Boer, who remained a member of the VVD until September 2002, is alleged to have become a member of the LPF in order to be appointed as a minister. As a columnist, Bomhoff criticised the LPF views on social system and, as the director of the Nijenrode Forum for Economic Research (Nyfer), he did not endorse the LPF electoral programme so that the credibility of Nyfer was not involved. When *De Volksrant* accused the LPF leader Herben of blackmail because of the allusions of that newspaper to Pim Fortuyn’s alleged use of drugs, the provincial section of the LPF in Zeeland blamed Herben for spoiling and betraying fortuynism (*Fortuyniaans gedachtegoed*). What is more a few LPF members had also some interest in other political parties, like the LPF MP Van der Velden who happened to be the interim president of another political formation, namely Nederland Mobiel. This double membership, as well as that of other members (cf. supra), means either

that some conceive the LPF as a movement rather than as real political party (no interference), or that the LPF was not thought to be serious enough as a party (hence the need for the membership of another “real” party). Unless the attitude of the members to their party changes, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn is highly likely to remain the fellowship of Pim Fortuyn awkwardly fitting in an institutional apparatus.

*Living with a ghost: from mentor to memory.*

The cement of the fellowship has been so far the loyalty to and the admiration for Pim Fortuyn. As stated before, Pim Fortuyn was a personage with whom no other politician can bear comparison and had his own way of making politics regardless of political correctness or social conventions. Memories of the politician Pim Fortuyn are still vivid because of his original style or approach to politics rather than because of his few political propositions (out of the fields of immigration or “debureaucratisation”). What actually maintains the LPF as a party and ensures it a minimal cohesion is the conformity of any action to the *geest van Pim*, that is the spirit of Pim Fortuyn (Pels, 2003). As Fortuyn managed to bring citizens back to politics thanks to his unconventional, shocking sentences and his radical stances, his heirs tried to continue his excessiveness. For instance, Langendam still publicly agreed with Fortuyn’s opinion on the former minister for Public Health Borst who had been considered more dangerous than Bin Ladin: “*Less people died from the attacks of Bin Ladin than from the waiting lists (wachlijsten)*”. Furthermore, the war some LPF members declared to medias after Fortuyn’s assassination was severely disapproved of by a large basis of the party: Pim Fortuyn gained success through medias and always performed because of his acute sense of extravaganza. The outliving of *geest van Pim* is surely the only goal on which all LPF members agree without bargaining. The party leader Herben sees it as both a common and a personal duty: “*The only thing I can do is to pass on Pim’s ideas as well as possible*”<sup>9</sup>.

However the heirs of the *geest van Pim* outnumber the LPF members. The whole political system has undergone the influence exerted by Pim Fortuyn more than that of his heirs in the government. It is questionable whether the LPF did actually rule during the brief time of the first Balkenende Cabinet. The LPF MGs did not seem to succeed in enforcing new laws that would have been inspired of the *geest van Pim*. The other traditional parties have nevertheless adopted a range of policies Fortuyn had championed, especially in matter of immigration. In February 2004, there were many demonstrations against the proposition of

the minister for Immigration Verdonck that 26,000 asylum seekers be sent back to their countries before 2006. This anecdote can serve as another example of the “fortuynisation” of Dutch politics (or at least of the policies on immigration): many religious members of the Society of the Divine Word might not be allowed to come to the country where their congregation was found in 1875 because of the new law forbidding entry of foreigners to the Netherlands<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, the familiar expression of the former social scientist Pim Fortuyn “norms and values” has become a catchphrase in the Netherlands, no matter the political affiliation. Tribute to Pim Fortuyn is sometimes paid by political opponents: although the CDA and the VVD was against the project, the PvdA MPs eventually changed their minds so that a room of the parliament the LPF MPs usually use to meet in was named after Pim Fortuyn.

What is more, a few other (small) political parties are now claiming Pim Fortuyn as their spiritual leader. “De conservatieven.nl” run for the legislative elections of January 2003 with the former LPF MP De Jong as leader. The members of that party want to pass on Fortuyn’s ideas (*gedachtegoed*) according to the *geest van Pim*: they have made up an unconventional party with no executive committee, no members (any voter is considered as a *de facto* member), no local sections, no traditional programme (“members” of the party are asked to keep in touch with one another via Internet and to help candidates write the party programme by emails), and clear references to Pim Fortuyn’s ideas about immigration, security, health care, attitude towards the Third World and Europe. They got some 2,500 votes, which is twice as many as what the Alliantie Vernieuwing en Democratie (AVD, Alliance Renewal and Democracy) got despite its presence in nearly every constituency. The chief candidate of that party (Van der Krieke) is a former LPF member and also claims to pass on Fortuyn’s *gedachtegoed*. Moreover, the former LPF MG Heinsbroek and the former LPF MP Wijnschenk created the Lijst Nieuw Politik (List New Politics), which was registered on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2002 at the *Kiesraad* (National Council for Elections), so as to run for the elections of January 2003. They announced on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2002 that they would not enter the electoral competition for lack of people on their list. The party has not been disbanded yet.

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<sup>9</sup> He made this statement in December 2002.

<sup>10</sup> *La Croix*, 15/01/2004.

*Cobbling an ideology and/or a political programme together from a few ideas.*

The *geest van Pim* is to be found in Fortuyn's books, interviews and speeches rather than by a political programme that never was but that could be inferrable from his words. His many books and chronicles served as a programme. His last work, *The ruins of eight years of Violet Coalition (De puinhopen van acht jaar Paars)*, was taken for the official party manifesto and presented his main ideas and propositions. His imperfectly achieved ideology (Lucardie & Voerman, 2002; Ghillebaert, 2004) was that a rightist and not that of a right radical (Keman & Pennings, 2002; Pennings and Keman, 2002; Pennings & Keman, 2003; Van Donselaar & Rodrigues, 2002) and was seen as such by the people (Van Holsteyn, Irwin, Den Ridder, 2003). Pim Fortuyn was not an ethnic nationalist: races were of no importance, what counted is one's will to live peacefully in society of which they respect the norms and values (especially the so-called nine bases of modern society: separation of the Church and of the State, freedom of speech, market economy, parliamentary democracy, separation of powers, equality of sexes, individual responsibility, common agreement on a system of norms and values, respect of human rights and of international conventions). He gave no hint of anti-materialism or of anti-Semitism and he even supported Israel in one of his books (Fortuyn, 1998a). To some extent his ideology proceeds from postmaterialism (Inglehart, 1977 & 1989) as he admitted to having been born in a country that had never known war and food shortages and that, her first needs met, had claims for better life (Fortuyn, 1998b). His islamophobia was unlimited: he wrote that "*since the collapse of German nazism, the world has not known any ideology as cruel and imperialistic as that of Islam*" (Fortuyn, 2002: p. 149) and that "*the undeclared programme is the domination of Islam over at least whole Europe*" and "*Islam is from many views an agricultural backward ideology*" (Fortuyn, 1999: p. 131). Moreover Pim Fortuyn used to scapegoat the traditional elites who were allegedly responsible for the supposed chaotic Dutch society and he would also often mock the members of the royal family in a very scornful way. He favoured contract society in which everything is negotiable (even the system of norms and values) and for the sustainability of which everyone is responsible by their sharing of a common set of references (norms and values as well as acquaintance with the history of the country).

In order to sustain itself as a party, the LPF must make itself distinct from the other parties and from opinion movements. Its members must cope with Pim Fortuyn's words as a heritage unless they risk losing their credibility and the *raison d'être* of the LPF as a party.

They have three main options: either they consider Fortuyn's *gedachtegoed* as a heritage not to be wasted (legitimacy for action), or they use it as a safe basis for any new political supply (legitimacy for proposal), or they regard it as an original impulse for something new (legitimacy for simply being). At any rate, they must succeed in the task of exegesis of Fortuyn's words since Pim Fortuyn had no political programme. They have so far made use of Fortuyn's catchphrases and pictures to legitimate their programme.

In Groningen, the programme of the LPF local section states that *"The LPF does not favour the development of windmill parks, nor the building of new windmills on behalf of private individuals or of the Province Groningen. Windmills are not profitable and can only be run with the help of grants"*. It is in the spirit of Fortuyn who first thought of economic efficiency and who did not promote any cliché Dutch identity items (some would add that Fortuyn did not care for environment, which had caused him to be considered a enemy by the Dutch ecologists). The seven points of the programme of the LPF of Northern Brabant is also consistent with Fortuyn's ideas: less regulation, more executive power to the people, less notes, more social and physical security, more collaboration between social partners, more local activities, less meetings. In Gelderland the LPF section criticises activities on a large scale (*grootschaligheid*) and justifies any point of the programme with quotations from Fortuyn's books (especially from that of 2002). The slogans of the LPF of Limburg are very close to those of Fortuyn: *"norms are values are being lost"*, *"citizen first again"*, *"Give Limburg back to (Limb)burgers"*, *"safe schools"*, *"at your service"*. The provincial section of Utrecht puts forward Fortuyn's idea of an ever negotiable contract society as it announced : *"The electoral programme of the LPF Utrecht is a "living document". This means that it will be constantly adapted to the situation and the needs of the society"*. Only the provincial section of Friesland gets a bit off the point when making known that *"The LPF-Friesland foremost prioritises the keeping of Frisian cultural good"* (Friesland regionalism must account for this interest in cultural good whereas Fortuyn disdained local identities and folklore as unworthy, old-fashioned issues).

As a conclusion, it is impossible to determine whether and how much the participation in a government has had any effects on the LPF as a party. No sooner had the LPF been created that some of its members were appointed as ministers. The Lijst Pim Fortuyn had

firstly hoped for Pim Fortuyn's appointment as Prime Minister and had only focused on that goal. After the assassination of its leader, mentor and even *raison d'être*, the LPF had to cope with many problems at the same time: quarrels inside the government because of two members who could not bear each other, quarrels in the parliament about the roles and acts of one another, quarrels within the party itself through the lack of cohesion and the question of legitimacy. Whereas taking part in a government should be a goal and an opportunity, it actually was a troublesome concern for the LPF: that experience did not count as a genuine experience of government. The LPF was too inchoate and chaotic as a party, it was still a movement. With Fortuyn gone, the campaign agenda has come back since 2003 to more social and economic issues, on which the LPF position is not perfectly clear yet and might still be set (Pennings & Keman, 2003). While the LPF leadership have become more moderate since 2003 (slight shift to the left), other parties have slightly shifted to the right so that the need for voting for the LPF has weakened. The future, that is the survival, of the LPF as party is still at stake.

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