

# Abstracts

**Paul Dekker**

## **Stronger democrats, weaker democracy?**

Changes in political involvement in the Netherlands 1970-2000. The article focuses on developments in political involvement of the Dutch population. Findings include a rather stable level of political interest, a strongly increased approval of protest and increased willingness to protest and shifts from more electoral to more activist, informal and probably more fleeting forms of individual democratic citizenship with a weakening of democratic institutions.

**Joop van Holsteyn, Ruud Koole and Jos Elkink**

## **Marginal or in the middle of society? Members of Dutch political parties and their activities in society**

The decreasing number of members of political parties is sometimes seen as an indication of the societal isolation of political parties. It is alleged that parties have lost their roots in the society around them and that citizens have found other means of participation than via parties. However, research among party members does not support this allegation. A large portion of party members are by no means locked inside their party, but are also active in a variety of other societal organizations. There is no evidence that parties have been uprooted from their societal base.

**Philip Van Praag**

## **Give me some room: Participation in a major national policy proposal**

In the preparatory phase of large infrastructural projects, local and national authorities have attempted to provide new ways to involve citizens in policy formation. In the national project 'Give me some room' this was done by inviting people to fill in a questionnaire in the newspaper or via internet. The receipt of than 17.000 completed questionnaires attests to the success of this new form of conventional participation. The participation of older individuals occurred primarily via national and regional newspapers. Younger citizens, under age 30, were reached more often via internet or the free morning newspaper *Metro*. Despite the low threshold involved, however, this form of participation was no more able to attract the participation of citizens with little education than other forms participation are able to do.

**Hetty van Kempen en Kees Brants**

## **A digital informal party: Electronic democracy and political participation**

ICT, and digital discussions in particular, are often considered a medicine for democracy in crisis: it lowers thresholds, it enlarges participation, it broadens dialogue and it strengthens the quality of interactions between citizens and politics. Based on an analysis of three on line discussions and chats sites, the article brings the dreams back to its reality: the elite public participating in these discussions already knows its way around on the off line political platform.