

The Netherlands is among the most prosperous countries in the world. Over the last decades phenomena such as individual freedom, complex technology and merit-based selection have contributed to this. However, the rapid changes in society have put embedding in the community and grip on the environment under pressure. The key to maintain stability in the prosperous market-oriented democracy in the Netherlands is to ensure embedding and a sense of control throughout society.

The 21st century will be characterized by new societal trends. Technology is increasingly interacting with our daily lives, globalization is connecting the world and the characteristic pillarization of Dutch society in the 20th century has been replaced by a more individualistic sentiment. These developments have brought the Netherlands much prosperity. The economy is bigger than ever, unemployment is low and the Dutch are among the happiest people in the world. At the same time recent developments are also leading to new challenges. A widespread feeling of discomfort with the direction society is heading, has been present in the Netherlands for over a decade. The perception of uncontrollability of globalization, technology, migration and climate issues contribute to this feeling. Widespread dissatisfaction among citizens is problematic. It can lead to populism, radicalism or extremism, which threatens the stability of society. Therefore, action is needed to ensure that the market-oriented democracy retains its strengths.

EMBEDDING

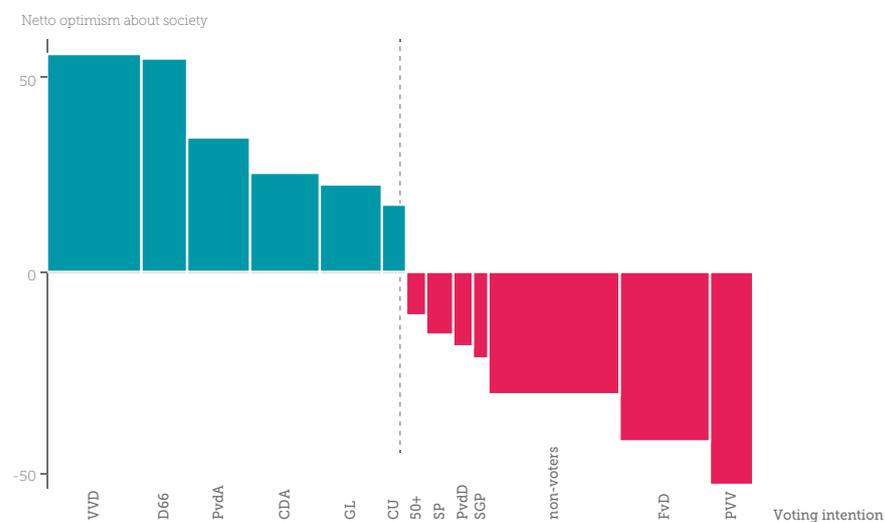
We define embedding as the network and the safety net that surrounds someone. Network is the group of people that gives access to opportunities and helps to take advantage of them. Someone's safety net is the group of people that actively supports someone in the event of a setback.

GRIP

We define grip as the control people have to shape their life and living environment to their own satisfaction.

The paper shows that the pessimistic view of the future that is prevailing in Dutch society may be explained by both the loss of embedding in the community and the loss of grip on the environment. First, the emphasis on individual

Optimistic and pessimistic feelings about society segmented by voting behavior



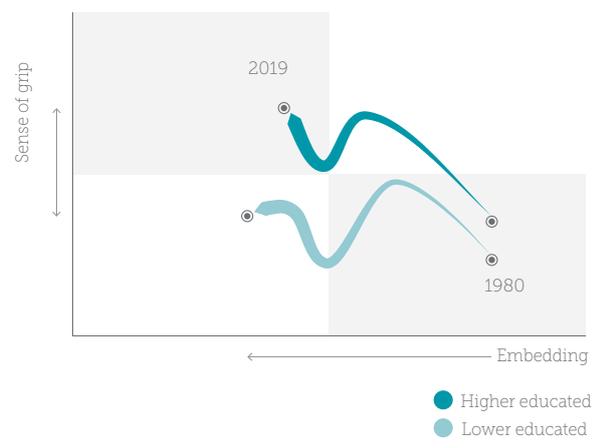
Netto-optimism is the percentage of people that believe society is moving in the right direction minus the percentage of people that believe society is moving the wrong direction (-100 to 100 in percentage points)



freedom, increasing diversity and merit-based selection makes connections in society weaker. This leads to more individual responsibility, less homogeneity and a societal division based on social class. The consequence is that the embedding of Dutch people in society is structurally declining; the social safety net is decreasing and the quality of social networks among groups diverges. Second, the increased complexity of society, a growing distance to policymaking and rising fixed monthly charges lead to less perceived control over one's living environment. The result is that the sense of grip that people have on their surroundings is declining. This effect is stronger in the groups that can be characterized by a lower educational level, who often live outside the big cities. Our conclusion is that in particular the combination of little embedding in the community and little perceived control on the environment leads to discomfort. Less grip gives the sensation that anything can go wrong at any moment while little embedding makes the personal safety net insecure.

For a future-proof society, DenkWerk pleads for targeted administrative and personal actions to improve the embedding and sense of control throughout society. Government, businesses and individuals can all play a role. The government can contribute by equipping people with the means to form a strong inclusive community. Actions may include the localization of significant parts of decision making to community level, further promoting political participation, adapting education to 21st century skills and needs, reducing government complexity and promoting the construction of new homes to stabilize rents and decrease monthly bills. Companies can contribute by strengthening the business community, for instance by actively involving workers on flex-contracts in the company culture, supporting the surrounding community and

The combination of little embedding and less sense of grip leads to uncertainty



preparing employees for the future changes in the labor market. And above all, individuals can do something themselves by stepping out of the bubble of like-minded people and spent time in the local community. This can open up otherwise closed networks and provide opportunities to all.

There is no other political and economic system that has led to more prosperity and equality than the market-oriented democracy in Western Europe. Welfare in the Netherlands was never greater than it is now. But the current system also brings new challenges. These need to be resolved to make society work for the majority in the long term. As such, we must provide a sense of grip and embedding throughout society to protect a stable and prosperous Dutch society.