



## The Search for an Extinct Volcano in the Dutch Polder

### Pilgrimage to Memorial Sites of Pim Fortuyn

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**Abstract.** – Every year followers of the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn commemorate him on the day he was shot dead. They make a pilgrimage to sites associated with his life and death. Reasons why they make this pilgrimage are: xenophobic nationalism, an imagined personal relationship with Fortuyn, the rise of a new religiosity, the role of the mass media, and a conflict in the group of organisers. The phenomenon is interpreted against a background of globalisation and the search for a feeling of human security. [*Europe, pilgrimage, identity, nationalism, mass media, human security*]

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### Introduction

On 6 May 2002 Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn was shot dead. The murder formed the shocking climax to the most eventful election campaign in the Netherlands for decades. Pim Fortuyn was poised to win a landslide victory, which would upset the Dutch political landscape. His political heirs did go on to take a resounding electoral victory, but did not know how to cash in on their good fortune. Pim Fortuyn’s party is no longer a force to be reckoned with, but several of his ideas have become common property in the Dutch political domain. His style of pursuing politics has

become a model, which might be considered abject or one which one would wish to copy, but it cannot be ignored. In 2004 Fortuyn was elected the “greatest Dutchman” ever in a television contest, which lasted for weeks and attracted plenty of attention.

In the shadow of these big events, a number of ordinary Pim Fortuyn followers regularly make a tour to places associated with him. Although the number of participants is declining (from perhaps 300 people in 2003 to about 200 in 2006), the phenomenon is not likely to fade away in the near future, as new participants joined the group in 2005 and 2006. I first became aware of their tour on the occasion of the second anniversary of his death. My curiosity about this “pilgrimage,” as I call this tour, was aroused.

The conspicuous mass show of grief immediately after Fortuyn’s assassination was understandable. He had emerged on the Dutch political scene resembling a new but very active volcano, growing quickly while spewing out lava. He was shot at a moment he towered head and shoulders above all the other politicians. The breaking news of his assassination glued the public to the television for the whole evening, in a way that is comparable only to the intense interest on 11 September 2001, when the World Trade Center in New York was destroyed. But why would people go on a pilgrimage years after Pim Fortuyn’s death? Obviously, he can no longer do anything for the people and his political party, which bears his name, has almost become a travesty. What are die-hard followers

searching for on their annual tour to Pim Fortuyn memorial sites? The research question in this article is: Why do some people continue to commemorate Pim Fortuyn in an annual pilgrimage?

The pilgrimage does not call for an explanation only because of what it is, a commemoration. The behaviour of the participants in the tour also sheds light on the changed form of politics in the Netherlands, and perhaps in other Western democracies as well. This change is the “personalisation and heightened emotionalism” of the democracy (Pels 2003: 268, 277–292). By playing the personal, emotional, and charismatic card, Fortuyn introduced politics into the domain of religion.<sup>1</sup> Looking at Fortuyn’s followers as pilgrims helps to understand the religious aspect of his political success and the reason why he attracted so many followers. Peter Jan Margry (2003) has already admirably analysed the hype of sorrow immediately after Fortuyn’s death, when 150,000 people visited his grave during the first ten weeks after he was shot (de Hart 2005: 21; Pels 2003: 262 f.). The pilgrimage analysed in this article, in contrast, took place long after the hype had died away.

Many data for this article were collected on the third anniversary of Fortuyn’s death, 6 May 2005, when I joined the tour. The data obtained by observation were expanded by interviews with several participants, analysis of material gifts at the memorial sites, and a discourse analysis of both letters addressed to Fortuyn and mass media reports. I started my one-day participant observation with almost no foreknowledge about what would happen. With “blank expectations” would not be the correct term here, because I dislike the views of Pim Fortuyn and find it ludicrous to consider him the greatest Dutchman ever. I do not think, however, that my dislike made a large impact on the fieldwork situation, because the Pim Fortuyn followers immediately recognised me as not one of them, assumed my aversion, but did not – for reasons to be made clear later – seem to be bothered.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, my anthropological relativism hopefully helped to set aside my own bias while interacting with the pilgrims. On 6 May 2006, I again observed the commemoration in order to add diachronic depth to the analysis.

1 At a programmatic level, Fortuyn also reintroduced religion into politics by – as we shall see – making Islam a political issue.

2 Some followers did not hide their disapproval of my background: “Are you from the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam? Leftist city! A university is left-wing nonsense subsidised by the state.”

The analysis is based on the 2005 material and I refer to the 2006 commemoration for significant variations only.

The research started with empirical curiosity about what actually happened during the commemoration and what it meant to the participants. By induction, I have distilled five explanations from my field notes to reveal why people take part in this annual pilgrimage: nationalism; the feeling of a close, personal relationship between the pilgrim and Fortuyn; the rise of new religiosity in Western Europe; the role of the mass media; and an internal conflict in the group of organisers. The article is structured around these five explanations. Most, if not all, of these explanations can be connected to the ubiquitous process of globalisation resulting in feelings of insecurity. Pilgrimage studies provide another theoretical backdrop to the analysis; for insight into the phenomenon of pilgrimage, I lean heavily on the work by John Eade and Michael Sallnow. The connections to globalisation, human security, and pilgrimage will be elaborated in the course of this article.

### **Pim Fortuyn and the “Polder Model” of Dutch Politics**

The Netherlands is a parliamentary democracy with a hereditary, ceremonial head of state (currently Queen Beatrix of the House of Orange).<sup>3</sup> The Dutch parliament consists of 150 seats, which are contested every four years, unless a political deadlock makes an early election necessary. There is no electoral threshold and there are no electoral districts; any party that obtains one one-hundred-fiftieth of all votes enters parliament with a seat.<sup>4</sup> The electoral system permits the existence of a considerable number of parties in parliament, none of which has ever gained an absolute majority since World War I at least. All Dutch governments since 1918 have, therefore, been based on a coalition of parties (Aerts et al. 2001: 376–379). Making political deals is an

3 This section is based mostly on my experience as a Dutch citizen; I have consulted political science literature to check a few facts. Not hampered by expert knowledge, the style is more certain than if a political scientist had written the section.

4 A corollary of the electoral system is that new parties find it relatively easy to enter parliament. The Dutch electorate is apparently willing to try its luck with a new party, a new political programme, or a new charismatic figure. Most of these endeavours have, however, been short-lived and the parties collapsed after one or a few terms in parliament.

essential part of Dutch democracy. The upshot of the need to build a coalition government is that the major political parties, even at opposite ends of the political spectrum, have been careful not to confront each other too strenuously. An adversary during the elections can be a coalition partner in the next cabinet. Even if politicians overemphasise differences in order to position themselves at election time, most parties agree on fundamental issues. Usually, party leaders have conversed about policy differences in balanced terms to the point at which most voters have found it difficult to tell the difference between one major party and the other. In short, for decades Dutch election campaigns used to be dull.

The political culture of striking a deal and avoiding overt conflict has been reinforced by three other features of Dutch society. First, debate between parliament and government has lessened over the years. One tacit rule is that members of parliament from the coalition parties do not oppose the government on issues prearranged in the written pact (the so-called *regeerakkoord*), drawn up between coalition parties before they start to govern jointly. These written pacts have grown longer and more detailed, with the result that the room for discord between government on the one hand and coalition parties in parliament on the other has shrunk. Second, reaching consensus has permeated Dutch society at large. Employers and trade union organisations have a long tradition of cooperation. This cooperation has characterised the Netherlands since the joint effort to rebuild society after the damage of World War II. This corporative method was dubbed the polder model in the 1990s and the term has been extended to all forms of consensus making in Dutch society. The word polder in the compound stressed that it is unique to the Netherlands. The polder model has become part of Dutch identity. Although this corporative model is less unique in Europe than Dutchmen like to think, an authoritative, comparative report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development also noted that the level of deliberation in the Netherlands is exceptional (de Liagre Böhl 2001: 341). Third, politicians had agreed that a number of sensitive topics were taboo. One important tabooed issue is the immigration of so-called visible minorities, people who have a different physical appearance to the tall, blond, and rosy Dutch stereotype. The Netherlands has played host to an important immigration for centuries and the country has basically been a multicultural society for a long time. Converting churches to mosques and building new mosques was part of this multi-

cultural society. Some concomitant problems, such as disproportionately high criminal and unemployment rates, were likewise tabooed. It was into this flat, consensus-based political culture that Fortuyn made his triumphal entry.

W. S. P. (Pim) Fortuyn was born on 19 February 1948. He first made a career at the universities of Groningen and Rotterdam in sociology and economics. In the 1990s he acquired a reputation for his talent to present his case in a provocative style. He became a welcome guest in talk shows on TV, wrote columns in the conservative, prestigious weekly *Elsevier*, and wrote books such as “Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur” (Against the Islamisation of Our Culture. 1997) and “De puinhopen van acht jaar paars” (The Messes of Eight Years of the [Socialist-Liberal] Coalition Government. 2002).

Core themes in his ideas were: a poorly functioning, overstuffed bureaucracy (what are all these civil servants doing the whole day?); the existence of politicians who only talked among themselves and had lost contact with the electorate with the upshot that they did not have a clue of what was going on in society; the European Union with far too many competences; long waiting lists for medical treatment; crime; asylum seekers; and the threat of Islam (Pels 2003: 182–213).<sup>5</sup> The anti-Islamism was probably the theme he kept hammering on most. The Netherlands has, in Fortuyn’s view, a Christian culture, although most people no longer go to church regularly (or do not even call themselves Christian). In contrast to Dutch culture, he labelled Islam a “backward culture” (Margry 2003: 108; Pels 2003: 1). The construction of mosques with minarets, wearing the veil, and the call to Friday prayer were all elements that did not fit in with Dutch culture and should be forbidden.

The Netherlands has had a number of extreme right-wing politicians, but they have never drawn a large crowd. These politicians were not eloquent orators at all, trespassed on the legal prohibition on racial and discriminatory statements and were prosecuted, or simply made fools of themselves. Fortuyn, by contrast, had a golden tongue, looked (and indeed was) smart, knew where to stop before making himself liable to prosecution and avoided carefully being placed anywhere on the left-right continuum (Pels 2003: 25–35, 236–246). Pertinently, the public debate took a different turn after

<sup>5</sup> In many ways the best analysis of Fortuyn’s ideas, style, and success is from Dick Pels (2003).

the attack on the World Trade Center. An outspoken, anti-Islamic opinion suddenly became politically acceptable (but not dominant). His one-liners were easy to understand, for example, when he spoke about the need to stop immigration as a measure to end crime committed by migrants: “‘When you need to mop up the spilt water, you have to turn off the tap first’, every respectable housewife can tell you this” (van den Brink 2005: 273).<sup>6</sup> He struck a chord in the hearts of many Dutchmen who had a latent fear of migrants, and one of his other pet peeves – the politicians who make deals in their ivory towers without listening to the ordinary people – was widely believed as well. As research would show later, the main motives prompting people to vote for Fortuyn were xenophobia and the desire to set the established politicians back a rung or two.<sup>7</sup>

Fortuyn’s rise to prominence was also helped by another social change, totally disconnected from the new anti-Islamic turn. Local politics had long been a mirror of national politics, with local branches of national parties taking part in municipal elections. However, national policies do not provide answers to local issues. In response to the irrelevance of national parties to municipal administration, new local parties were founded in many places in the late 1990s. They made a point of highlighting local nuisances which had never been solved by the established (local branches of national) parties, such as: streetwalking, waste on the street, eternally dug up streets, physical deterioration of neighbourhoods, long delays at the service desk of the town hall, lack of parking lots, etcetera. In short, the approach taken by Fortuyn to national politics was similar to the approach of these local parties. The local parties formed a very loose alliance, which consisted of no more than a similar name: *Leefbaar* and then the place name (*Leefbaar Utrecht*, *Leefbaar Hilversum*, *Leefbaar Rotterdam*). *Leefbaar* means “liveable,” “in good order,” or “pleasant.” Stimulated by their local success, critique voiced by the local *Leefbaar* parties entered the national political agenda.

Fortuyn placed himself at the head of *Leefbaar Rotterdam*, which gained a resounding victory at the municipal elections of 6 March 2002; subsequently three party members became alder-

men.<sup>8</sup> As expected, Fortuyn left local politics shortly after the municipal election day and concentrated on his career as a national politician. Three weeks before the municipal elections, and only three months before the national elections of May 2002, Fortuyn established the LPF (Lijst Pim Fortuyn [Election List Pim Fortuyn]) to contest in the parliamentary election. His campaign was a stunning success, outdistancing all previous newcomers in parliament. He dominated the public debate from the beginning.

Fortuyn’s style and charisma were very much part of his success. Dutch mainstream culture is a burgher (bourgeois) culture. An extravagant show of wealth, pride, or ambition is frowned upon. A popular saying is that one should behave ordinarily, which is already more than enough of behaving exceptionally (*doe maar gewoon, dan doe je gek genoeg*). Another telling saying is that one must not stick one’s head above the ground level (*je moet niet met je hoofd boven het maaiveld uitsteken*), or – the unspoken consequence is – the head will be cut by the scythe. Other Dutch politicians had schooled themselves to behave according to these norms. Fortuyn was different.

The tall, slender man was well-dressed, never without an eye-catching tie boasting broad, colourful diagonal stripes, which became his trademark. He visibly enjoyed cigars (a conspicuous sign of wealth, which defied the new norm of not smoking in public places) and was served by a butler. His bald head, protruding ears, and raised eyebrows made his face instantly recognisable; even his silhouette could not easily be forgotten. He made no secret of his homosexuality and visits to dark rooms (where one has sex with anonymous persons), but it was not a big deal either.<sup>9</sup> From the start, when the idea was still preposterous, he proclaimed his ambition of becoming Prime Minister (Pels 2003: 37–68, 299). Most of all, and contrary to the custom of sparing one’s opponents, he attacked the leaders of other political parties head on. Above all, neither the gentle, goody-goody leader of the liberal party, VVD, nor the intellectual, seemingly ice-cold leader of the social-democratic party, PvdA, was a match for Fortuyn. Fortuyn’s rhetorical questions and bitter

<sup>6</sup> Actually, this is not something “every respectable housewife can tell you,” but a standard Dutch proverb, used in many different situations.

<sup>7</sup> Van den Brink 2005: 285; Eckardt 2003: 13; Pels 2003.

<sup>8</sup> The executive power in a Dutch municipality consists of an appointed mayor and a board of aldermen. The board of aldermen is a coalition, reflecting the largest parties in the municipal council, very much like the coalition cabinet reflecting the balance of power in parliament at the national level.

<sup>9</sup> See, however, arguments that he did use his homosexual image to his political advantage (Pels 2003: 40, 51).

sarcasm were unusual but very effective weapons in public debates. He ignored taboos, especially the taboo on social problems besetting the multi-cultural society. His star was rising very quickly in the polls.

A few days before election day, when he left the Dutch TV studios in the town of Hilversum after an interview, Fortuyn was shot by an environmental activist, Volkert van der Graaf (a white, native Dutchman). Fortuyn died within hours. It was the first political murder in the Netherlands since time immemorial and the shock and dismay, also among his opponents, was enormous. Fortuyn was remembered in epitaphs as the champion of free speech. The remainder of the election campaign was cancelled, but the election took place as scheduled (15 May 2002). On a wave of sentiment, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn gained 26 of the 150 seats. Meanwhile the body of Fortuyn was temporarily interred in a cemetery in Driehuis. On 20 July 2002, Fortuyn was buried in his last resting-place in Provesano (Italy), near his holiday home, Roca Jacoba.

The political aftermath of the story is swiftly told. The LPF joined the cabinet, which was further composed of the liberal VVD and the central Christian-Democratic party, CDA. The LPF floundered without an accepted leader, and without experienced politicians. The prominent party members were often at a loss what to do, bickered one with the other, and to start the ball rolling, were forced to do exactly what Fortuyn had fulminated against: strike a political deal. The cabinet of CDA, VVD, and LPF was the most disorganised of its sort for a very long time and fell after three months. By then, several LPF delegates in parliament had already left the party and had become independent members of parliament. At the extra election of January 2003, its number of seats fell from twenty-six to eight and the LPF was forced to join the ranks of the opposition; subsequently its support has shrunk to one or two seats in the polls. One can speculate whether the LPF would have fared much better if Fortuyn had lived, but as it was, the party collapsed. Leefbaar Rotterdam, in contrast, has continued to play a major role in urban politics.

On 2 November 2004, another Dutch champion of free speech was murdered. Filmmaker Theo Van Gogh – who shared a disrespect of fundamental Islam (and all other fundamental religious beliefs), a fondness for breaking taboos, and an outspoken opinion on many affairs with Fortuyn – was shot and stabbed. This time the killer was a radical Muslim.

## The Pilgrimage Step by Step

In this article the term “pilgrimage” is an etic concept. The initial (and not altogether clear) response to my first e-mail to the Leefbaar Rotterdam secretariat, explaining my intentions and asking consent, was that if I wanted to study pilgrimage, I should go to Mecca “. . . for we in Rotterdam detest people who see a mass hysteria in everything.” The participants themselves do not call their tour a pilgrimage either. However, I do not think it is far-fetched to analyse the tour as a pilgrimage. Pilgrimage has been defined as “travel to a sacred spot for an act of religious devotion” and this spot or “place is meaningful” (Bowen 1998: 195). The purpose of the pilgrimage can be a general obligation or an individual need. John Bowen argues that, depending on the intentions of the individual, a wide range of actions might be called pilgrimages, including a visit to the grave of one’s grandparents or a trip to see the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. These examples, I think, already stretch Bowen’s own definition to include travels to meaningful, secular places, where curiosity is as much a driving force as religious devotion. The book “Pilgrimage in Popular Culture,” edited by Ian Reader and Tony Walter (1993) gives other examples of a secular pilgrimage – Elvis Presley’s estate Graceland and the Liverpool football stadium at Anfield Road – and underscores that the boundary between a tour for pilgrimage and tourism is thin. The tour to Fortuyn memorial sites can then certainly be called a pilgrimage too, the more so because some people attribute spiritual qualities to him.

In a seminal work on the anthropology of pilgrimage, John Eade and Michael Sallnow (1991: 2) argue that the new agenda in pilgrimage studies should recognise that pilgrimage is “. . . above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both the official co-optation and the non-official recovery of religious [and secular] meanings.”<sup>10</sup> In this study of competing discourses, not only the views of the pilgrims but also those of others involved should be taken into account.

10 The “old agenda” consisted of studies following Durkheim or Victor Turner. From a Durkheimian perspective, the function of pilgrimages was to integrate “diverse local communities and social strata into more extensive collectivities.” Turner, in contrast, believes that pilgrimage is a liminal act, during which social structure and hierarchy are temporarily abrogated to make room for an egalitarian view of all pilgrims. Both approaches focus on social structure – and Turner on a temporarily accepted anti-structure – and not on contest (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 3–5).

Such people include the guardians of the shrine or sellers of shrine souvenirs (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 5). Although others and one editor himself have later pointed out that this new agenda was perhaps not as revolutionary as proclaimed (Eade 2000: xiv; Margry and Post 1994: 23), the focus on pilgrimage as contest and competing discourses is still enlightening. In the case of Fortuyn, not only the participants in the tour – to whom I also refer as pilgrims or followers – are important but also the organisers, the political parties LPF and Leefbaar Rotterdam, and the journalists. By the way, if there is no single meaning of the pilgrimage for its participants, no uniform definition of “pilgrimage” can be taken for granted (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 3), and again we do not have to be overly bothered by the definitional question whether the Fortuyn tour is a pilgrimage or not.



**Map:** Fortuyn memorial sites in the Netherlands (Amsterdam and The Hague have been added as points of orientation).

The following outline of the Fortuyn tour is based on observations made on 6 May 2005, when I participated in the pilgrimage. There are also tours on 19 February (Fortuyn’s birthday), and 20 July (to commemorate the reburial in Provesano), but these attract fewer followers. As I understand from the regular participants, there are variations and the pilgrimage I joined had the most extensive itinerary. There have been organised pilgrimages

to Provesano too, but they do not form part of the analysis here.<sup>11</sup>

Actually, the pilgrimage consists of three parts. The first part is a bus trip from Rotterdam (where Fortuyn lived) to the Dutch TV studios at the so-called Media Park in Hilversum, then on to his temporary burial site in Driehuis, and back to Rotterdam (Map). The roundtrip is about 210 km. The second part consists of a march through Rotterdam on foot. The march starts at the zoo, which was also the main collector point for the bus trip, and goes via Fortuyn’s house to a statue in the centre of Rotterdam. The third part is a meeting at a large cafe during the evening. The programme was almost the same in 2006, except the second part, as will be explained in the last section of this article.

The bus tour started in Rotterdam at 8:45 a.m. There were thirty passengers, not counting a few journalists. Remarkable was the presence of a couple with two young children and two women of over seventy-five years (Table 1). With self-mockery, a person remarked: “Fortunately, the bus has tinted windows, so people won’t notice how empty it is.” Most people were middle-aged. Three men wore a typical Pim Fortuyn necktie (broad, diagonal stripes). One of them was a Pim Fortuyn look-alike with his bald head and idiosyncratic tie. At least two women wore a T-shirt bearing Fortuyn’s image.

**Table 1:** Estimated Age and Sex Composition on the Bus (Rotterdam–Hilversum).

| Age     | men | women |
|---------|-----|-------|
| < 10    | 1   | 1     |
| 20 ≤ 30 | 3   | 2     |
| 30 ≤ 45 | 5   | 5     |
| 45 ≤ 65 | 4   | 7     |
| 75 ≤    | 0   | 2     |
| Total   | 13  | 17    |

At the Media Park, the group got off the bus and walked to a copper plaque on the ground that marked the place where Fortuyn was shot.

<sup>11</sup> One follower had spent four days at Provesano and observed that Dutch visitors arrived “regularly” to place flowers on his grave. All LPF candidates in the parliamentary election of January 2003 went jointly to Provesano for team building and inspiration. A large commemoration in Provesano is envisaged for 2007, the fifth anniversary of Fortuyn’s death.



Fig. 1: Fortuyn followers descending the bus in Hilversum.

The text on the plaque is “Pim Fortuyn † 6 mei 2002.” A flag in the colours of the Dutch national flag, red-white-and-blue, with Fortuyn’s image was unfolded. It bore the text: “Let us watch over the freedom of speech. 6 May against violence”<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 1). A few persons laid flowers on the plaque. A garland was decorated with a ribbon with the English words “At your service,” the closing phrase of the speech in which Fortuyn, while making a salute (see also Fig. 2), had announced his entry in national politics in spring of 2002. The audience had swelled to about fifty-five persons, because more pilgrims had come directly from home to Hilversum with their own transport. There were also more journalists. One politician was present, namely Hilbert Nawijn, LPF member-of-parliament and former minister during the short-lived cabinet of which the LPF formed part.<sup>13</sup>

12 Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, all quotes were originally in Dutch.

13 Shortly thereafter he would abandon the LPF ranks and start his own political undertaking, so that I suspect he could use every opportunity for extra exposure in the media.

The ritual at the plaque was largely improvised, depending on who was present and who wanted to say something. The leader of the bus, a middle-aged woman called Margaret,<sup>14</sup> gave the floor to whoever wanted to say a few words. First, a woman read out a long letter addressed to Pim Fortuyn, ending with “I’ll never forget you.” Then, another pilgrim played a Bach sonata on his violin. Thereafter, Nawijn addressed the small audience with a brief political speech. This was followed by a one-minute silence to remember Fortuyn. Subsequently, a young woman, who had not been on the bus, recited a four-line poem by heart: “It takes a minute to fall in love with somebody, it takes an hour to like somebody, it takes a day to love somebody, but it takes a lifetime to forget somebody.” She added: “Thank you, Pim.” The session ended with people taking photographs of Nawijn together with whoever wanted to be photographed with him. The whole scene at the Media Park took about forty-five minutes.

14 Names of participants other than politicians are pseudonyms.



**Fig. 2:** Gifts in front of Fortuyn's former house. The text on the flag-pole is: "Pim, you were right!!"

Then there was another ride to the cemetery Westerveld in the village Driehuis, where the bus arrived around noon. There was a short procession from the parking lot to the site where Fortuyn had temporarily been buried. A tombstone was in place, as if the grave was still in use. About thirty bunches of flowers, three texts, two photographs, and one plush bear were left behind on the tombstone; by the look of them several gifts had been there longer than that day.

The same long letter, which had been read in Hilversum, was read again. Four people saluted and called out in English: "At your service!" Nawijn said a few words as well. The politician referred to Fortuyn's attempt to "give the Netherlands back to the citizens." Nawijn also recalled that he him-

self had been to Provesano. Next a lower-ranking LPF member held a politically motivated speech. He complained about the "Red Fascists" who were pursuing car owners with the road tax; the current Prime Minister who could not unravel the conspiracy that killed Fortuyn;<sup>15</sup> and the Netherlands

<sup>15</sup> Several of Fortuyn's adherents believe he was killed in a conspiracy. The alleged evidence consists of the supposedly missing videotapes of the shooting, and the Hilversum policeman who killed his own family and shot himself in the month before the pilgrimage (April 2005); the policeman had – in their view – done so because he had surely felt guilty that three years earlier he had escorted the CIA agents who had shot Fortuyn (because the Americans did not want a homosexual Prime Minister standing next to their President Bush, did they?).

that had degenerated into a Banana Republic. Then there was time for the press to talk to the pilgrims. The visit lasted about forty-five minutes and the bus was back in Rotterdam at about 15:00.

At 16:00 the march on foot started at the zoo. Half an hour later, the procession of one hundred persons reached Fortuyn's former house at 11, G. W. Burgerplein, called Palazzo di Pietro. A small crowd of fifty persons was already waiting in front of the house. Prominent members of LPF and Leefbaar Rotterdam were also assembled at this place (they use Fortuyn's former house as an office), among them were Nawijn, LPF members of parliament João Varela and Gerard van As, and leader of Leefbaar Rotterdam, Rolf Sörensen. A statue of Fortuyn stands in the front garden of the house. The statue is meant to be a true-to-life rendering of Fortuyn. Just as the plaque at the cemetery, the foot of the statue was covered with flowers (Fig. 2). While the crowd was waiting outside the gate of the house, people were allowed to enter one by one to lay more flowers.

When people had finished laying flowers, the march to Fortuyn's other statue in Rotterdam commenced. The march took the procession past the main streets Weena (a thoroughfare) and Coolsingel, where the town hall, stock exchange, and the largest department store are located. The city banner on the town hall was flying at half-mast. A few vocal men yelled: "Pim Fortuyn: killed for free speech!" and "We'll go on!" The march was firmly led by Kelly, a woman clad in a long, black leather coat. A few Lonsdale jackets and red-white-and-blue banners were signs of extreme right-wing political opinions. The march happened to take place towards the end of the Friday afternoon, a busy shopping hour, so that many people were in the street. Spectators looked curiously at the procession, but did not interact with the marchers. Four policemen on bikes and one police car accompanied the march.

The procession arrived at the statue shortly before 18.00. This statue is a bust on a pedestal, together about 4 m high. The text on the pedestal is in Latin and Dutch: "Let us watch over the freedom of speech."<sup>16</sup> It is placed in a small square at the Korte Hoogstraat. Although the statue is placed in a back street, it is very close to Coolsingel, the main street of Rotterdam. The square is a veritable wind trap, so that it is not a very pleasant spot. About another fifty persons

were waiting here, which meant that all in all two hundred people were present (I observed almost the same attendance in 2006). Seventy bunches of flowers and cards with texts were placed at the pedestal of the bust.

The master of ceremonies, Johnny, climbed on to a small rostrum and welcomed the crowd. Subsequently a middle-aged lady in woman's suit declaimed a poem, but because of the noise of the wind and the generator (powering the microphone), her voice was distorted. Thereafter, a man with a shaven head, black T-shirt, and beer belly sang a song from a Russian opera. After the singer had finished, the man who had already played the violin in Hilversum, played the same tune. At 18:06, the hour of Fortuyn's death, the crowd was silent for one minute. Nobody announced the end of the minute of silence, but when the time was more or less over, another speaker, unplanned, climbed on to the rostrum to say a few more words. Not using the microphone, his voice was completely lost, but as Johnny failed to pull him off the rostrum, the anonymous speaker was still somehow part of the ceremony. After the ceremony was over, the crowd slowly dispersed.

The day concluded with a meeting at Restaurant Engels, in front of Rotterdam central railway station. People sat around tables and enjoyed drinks and snacks. A continuous slide show projected pictures of Fortuyn on the wall. A few musicians tried to warm up the audience. Politicians from Leefbaar Rotterdam and LPF addressed the audience, who by this time was no longer really interested in what was said. After this description of the day, I will move on to addressing the research question and analyse five possible explanations of why people took part in the pilgrimage.

### Xenophobic Nationalism

On the bus, I had ample time to talk to a few followers and ask about their background and political opinions. As already said, they were of various ages (Table 1). Homosexuality did not seem to be a relevant social characteristic. Nobody on the bus self-reported being homosexual, and as far as I gathered during the day, people appeared to have heterosexual relationships. Most people had middle-income white-collar jobs: at a transport concern; in nursing; as a stewardess (and formerly at an animal-ambulance); as a housewife. One follower (with lower secondary education) was unemployed and called himself full-time activist. The pilgrims reflect the profile

16 *Loquendi libertatem custodiamus; Laten we waken over de vrijheid van het spreken.* The sculptor is Corry Ammerlaan-Van Niekerk.

of Fortuyn's electorate in 2002 (van den Brink 2005: 289; Margry 2003: 106, 109). One photo-journalist, when questioned by me, recognised several followers from other events with a semipolitical character, including the trials against the murderer of Fortuyn, the murderer of filmmaker Van Gogh, and the Hofstadgroep (an Islamist group tried for planning terrorist attacks). The full-time activist explained he had had a front-row seat during these trials, so that he could intimidate the suspects.

Without using the term themselves, Dutch nationalism was very important to the pilgrims. The flag with Fortuyn's image against a background of the colours of the Dutch flag was a material symbol of this nationalism. The pilgrims also stressed the importance of the Dutch identity in words.<sup>17</sup> One person explained his participation by referring to a line in the Dutch national anthem: "I am loyal (to my fatherland) into death (*tot in den dood*), not until death." The sentiment expressed was that staying loyal to Fortuyn until after his death is a patriotic obligation. When urged to explain what characterised Dutch identity, the informants stressed two elements: Christian (as opposed to Islam) and nonimmigrant.<sup>18</sup>

With regard to the Christian element of Dutch identity, the couple with children, for example, make a detour to Fortuyn's statue on their way to church on Christmas Eve. They do so to counterbalance Islam, which – in their view – is being thrust upon them by the Dutch State, for example, when children are given a day off at school on Id al-Fitr (the end of the Muslim fasting month). When I inquired whether a man encountered problems when he wore his Fortuyn badge at his work, he replied: "Am I not allowed to wear this small badge? How many metres of cloth go into a veil?" People also recalled that Muslim suspects in the Hofstadgroep were allowed to pray during the court case. The most radical participant stated that the Netherlands are being brainwashed from the mosques.

The professed nonimmigrant element of Dutch identity translated itself in opposition to non-Europeans: Antilleans walk on the street in "spread-out" fashion; they have an urban dance culture; rhythm-and-blues: that is "un-Dutch." Moroccans do not have a specific way of walking, but differ "in other respects": they are strangers to emotions; lack stamina; and cannot accept criticism. Turks are easily offended and quickly resort to taking revenge (especially in matters of women). Another thorn in the flesh to one of them was the fact that a popular Dutch-Moroccan rapper, Ali B, had been transported in a helicopter back-and-forth to perform in many different towns on Dutch Liberation Day (incidentally, 5 May, the day before). The dislike of immigrants was also expressed in racist jokes: one could not have put Fortuyn's statue in the Afrikaner Square (Afrikaanderplein) in Rotterdam.<sup>19</sup> Or: no nonwhite Dutchmen go to Provesano; there are only some blacks there to sweep the streets.

Considering the xenophobic – albeit more specifically anti-Muslim – attitude of many Fortuyn supporters, it is worth noting that five pilgrims on the trip were nonwhites. The bus included an Asian-looking couple, a pair of women of half-Indonesian background, and a dark young woman (who may have had her roots in the Caribbean or Africa). They were probably not Muslims. Apparently the opposition between Dutchmen and nonwhite immigrants, as perceived by the pilgrims, is really a matter of Dutchmen versus *Muslim* immigrants.

Taking a theoretical turn, the radical and xenophobic nationalism of the pilgrims seems to be a response to the globalisation process. Nationalist sentiments are a reaction to the erosion of the autonomy of states and the feeling that one has lost one's grip on the societal changes. Familiar ways of doing things are disappearing and people have to face more uncertainty than they have been used to. In the postmodern world, old orders seem to have been destroyed, without anything put in place as substitute. The weakening of old routines has created insecurity and fear in the hearts of many people. To cope with these fears, individuals seek to align themselves with new authorities and try to find again a clear place in the world.<sup>20</sup> Therefore

17 In the following, I do not always state explicitly that a certain view is that of the pilgrims. I trust the reader will tacitly understand that the xenophobic views expressed in this paper are theirs and not mine.

18 The mechanism through which people formulate an identity in opposition to outsiders is well-known and does not need to be elaborated on here (Barth 1969; Eriksen 1993; Jenkins 1996). Insofar the pilgrims did not oppose Dutch identity with outsiders, the answer to the question what constituted the alleged Dutch identity was hollow: Dutch norms; values; feelings; tradition (all begging the question what these values and feelings are); and the "deepest singularity of the people."

19 Actually this joke is based on the mistake that Afrikaners are black people; if the joker had realised that Afrikaners are white descendants of Dutchmen, he would have deemed the Afrikaner Square very appropriate.

20 Bauman 1992: ix, xvii; Castells 2004: 5–70; Eriksen 2005; Giddens 2000: 24–53; Smith 1990: 180–188.

– according to Zygmunt Bauman (1992: xviii), borrowing a term from Benedict Anderson – this era is an age of imagined communities.

The enhanced Dutch nationalism gave the pilgrims a new place and a sense of belonging to an “imagined community.” It is very important in this respect that, according to the pilgrims I spoke to, Fortuyn was considered to be from the people and for the people, and made time available for ordinary people. In other words, he stood in the midst and not above this imagined community of a white Netherlands.

The pilgrims’ form of Dutch nationalism was also expressed in an anti-leftist (rather than positively conservative) political view. In their opinion, leftist policy implies decades of naive immigration policy, and the erroneous constitutional ban on discrimination, which prevents people from speaking out on immigrants. Lefties hold hegemonic power over Dutch television: talk programmes have debates only between left-wing people and extreme-left-wing people – some considered a left-wing view extreme by definition – or between modest and extreme Muslims. When Fortuyn was fondly remembered as champion of free speech, what matters was that he opposed “left-wing attempts to muzzle voices critical of immigrants.” A mental connection was made with filmmaker Van Gogh, as another champion of free speech. One follower, for example, wore a T-shirt with images of Fortuyn and Van Gogh and the text: “Knight of free speech.”

To sum up this section, several political issues raised by Fortuyn (an oversized bureaucracy, anti-Europeanism, delays in medical treatment) and personal characteristics (middle-aged male, homosexual) were not the reason the pilgrims felt affinity with Pim Fortuyn (as it had not been a reason to vote for the LPF in 2002). The pilgrims rallied around Fortuyn because of his candid anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim opinions. This element appeals to their feeling of insecurity and the sense of belonging to a white-Dutch imagined community (in the way the pilgrims see it). The fear and the hopes they set on Fortuyn explain why he was more than an ordinary politician to them when he was still alive (Eckardt 2003: 13 f.). But how can this hope be linked to making a pilgrimage after his death?

First, a pilgrimage creates a temporary community<sup>21</sup> and this one-day community feeling helps to clarify the boundary between Us pilgrims

and Them non-pilgrims consisting of immigrants, Muslims, and lefties. The pilgrimage, thus, reinforces the idea that they are fulfilling the ideal of a “real Dutchman,” as imagined by the pilgrims.

Second, pilgrimage in societies with Christian roots is seen as a penance. Self-inflicted suffering is an inherent part of it and a modern pilgrimage is a journey of a soul in agony (Eade 2000: xvii; Eade and Sallnow 1991: 21). In this context, it is very important that the participants (including persons who joined the event only during the afternoon march) repeatedly stated that it is not always easy to be an adherent of Fortuyn. In their view, society at large demonises them. By experiencing the pilgrimage as a form of self-sacrifice, perhaps by being the object of scorn, the participants can share the sacrifice Fortuyn made (paying with his life) and identify with their hero. The pathetic words “loyal into death,” quoted from the national anthem, fit this pattern.

### Personal Relationship with Fortuyn

Several followers admitted to having experienced strong emotions during the trip, especially at the Media Park. Although most pilgrims looked relaxed and at ease, a few people were visibly moved: two women held each others’ shoulders in search of emotional support; a man pressed his fingertips against the copper plate with tears in the eyes. As somebody said: I feel shivers going down my spine. Another person said that this was the first year she had joined the pilgrimage; before she had felt too emotional. Several persons expressed grief.

Given these emotions, it is remarkable that only a few pilgrims had known him personally. Margaret, the organiser of the bus tour, was to have made acquaintance with him the week after he was assassinated (for her work, not as political follower). Another woman had once shaken hands after a lecture by Fortuyn. Thereafter she had written “many times” to him, and once he had answered with a card: “Do you want to pray for me?” She had also sent him a card shortly before his death: “Be careful with food offered to you,” because she feared he would be poisoned.

Yet, most participants spoke about Fortuyn as if he had been an intimate friend or close relative. Without exception, all pilgrims referred to him by his first name, Pim, or pet name, Pimmetje. Some mentioned his warmth, care, and charm without having experienced this quality personally, and this attribute might be purely imagined. The

21 De Hart (2005: 70–72) speaks of a “stand-by solidarity” in this respect.

pilgrimage was sometimes considered something they owed him, as expressed by the violinist. On the way back from Driehuis to Rotterdam, the violinist was urged to play again in Rotterdam, but he ruminated: “If I play again in Rotterdam, it looks as if I did not do it for Pim in Hilversum.” The singer of the fragment from a Russian opera explained that it was about a count who declared that he would always be devoted to his lover, and that applied to his own relationship to Fortuyn as well. Some women went further and spoke about him as if they had fallen in love. The imaginary personal relationship with Pimmetje is a strong motive to participate in the pilgrimage. The followers feel it as a moral obligation. People on the bus disapproved of persons who should have joined them, they felt, but were not there: his driver who stood next to Fortuyn when he was shot, his lover, and some political friends.

Feelings of affection were also apparent from the notes left at the statues and cemetery. Samples of texts are: “Bye, sweet, sincere, intelligent, faithful, roguish Pim. You gave life a special colour . . . How much we love you,” and “It is now 3 years ago that you were murdered. But the pain and sorrow have only grown. I still miss you.” A Flemish follower left the following poem behind at his temporary grave: “A voice and a face; By these a human is recognised; For these a man is caressed; For these we loved Pim; His voice, his face; His hands and his heart.” Not only many notes were left behind, there were also flowers and plush animals among the tributes. In 2006, a number of supporters told to a newspaper about the relics they cherish: a towel or shirt used by Fortuyn; his slippers; and the collars of his pet dogs. One woman wore his tattoo on her left breast, “close to my heart” (*AD/Rotterdams Dagblad*, 6 May 2006). Peter Jan Margry (2003: 117) analysed the notes and presents left behind at makeshift shrines<sup>22</sup> and also noted the affection and love

expressed in many gifts. These tokens of affection usually came from women and not, as might have been expected, from homosexual men.

The paradox of love, sexually toned or not, for a man never met personally is solved, I believe, by his death. Precisely the fact that Fortuyn is no longer among the living enables people to appropriate him for their own dreams. This “privatisation” of the pilgrims imagined relationship with Fortuyn can be connected to two more general phenomena. First, as already noted, among other responses globalisation has cleared a path for the emergence of multiple imagined communities. It is up to individuals to align themselves with one or more of these communities. Taking this point one step further, Zygmunt Bauman argues that in the postmodern condition, there are so many moral voices that none is dominant. As a result, the individual has to rely on his or her own morality: “Morality has been *privatized*” (Bauman 1990: xxiii; his italics) and so is a relationship to a charismatic person.

Second, and more relevantly, pilgrimage is a personal experience too. Contrary to the common belief, sites of pilgrimage do not have an intrinsic, accepted meaning, which attracts pilgrims like a magnet. A site forms a ritual space to which participants can ascribe their own meanings. As inevitably these individual meanings differ, the site itself expresses a plurality of voices. Participants can, to a certain extent, even perform rituals that defy the ideas of the officials who control a shrine. A powerful pilgrimage site is then one that offers many pilgrims what they are looking for (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 10–15). Nevertheless, it remains important that the pilgrimage is a shared event. Whatever meaning the pilgrims ascribe to the memorial sites, the intensity of the experience is enhanced by being together. Emotions are contagious.

The point that everybody can invent his own ritual was made clear at the memorial sites visited on the bus tour. People read out a letter, recited a poem, laid flowers, played the violin, or merely stood by, doing whatever they deemed appropriate. There was less room for private rituals in the afternoon, during the ceremony at the bust in Rotterdam. Johnny kept much firmer control (as Kelly had led the march through the city) than had been exercised on the bus tour. For example, Johnny had invited one speaker and others asked him permission. The Russian opera singer had called him and had to sing a fragment on the phone to demonstrate the quality of his voice. But even here, one person challenged the authority of

<sup>22</sup> The Meertens Institute in Amsterdam has an archive of 20 m of this material. A selection of it has been put on the internet (<<http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/meertensnet/wdb.php?sel=138759>> [28 June 2005]). Margry (2003: 115) divided the texts of 2002 into four categories: expressions of sorrow, expressions of affection and love, attributions of holiness and messianic leadership, and expressions of protest and anger directed against opponents of Fortuyn. In 2005, there were few angry protests (not discussed in this article), and expressions of sorrow were only encountered in combination with statements of love or the spiritual quality of Fortuyn. I consider the sorrow to be merely a reinforcement of the message and not a category of its own.

Johnny: the uninvited speaker who occupied the rostrum after the minute of silence.

A last point to be made in this section is that our focus on social and cultural explanations, should not blind us for another reason, emanating from the perceived personal relationship with Fortuyn. One powerful reason why the pilgrims commemorated Fortuyn is their sincere, deeply felt grief. The pilgrimage is a way to mourn.

### New Religiosity in the Netherlands

As has been said, the participants did not consider themselves pilgrims. Nor did they – with one exception – consider the day a religious affair, when I asked them about this. The definition of religion is highly problematic (Bowie 2000: 22–25), but what is meant in this section is that Pim Fortuyn is either more than an ordinary human being (has spiritual characteristics) or is now in heaven, close to God. The alleged supernatural quality attributed to Fortuyn is not very odd, because the connection between a populist agenda, charismatic leadership, divine protection, and saintliness has been observed in other places too (Allahar 2001: 9, 16–19).

When he was still alive, it was first and foremost Fortuyn himself who claimed to be an instrument in God's hand, leading the Dutch people to the Promised Land, like a shepherd guiding the sheep. He even referred to himself as a martyr. In the weeks after his death, far more people ascribed qualities of a prophet, messiah, or saint to him. And, whereas these terms were at best used in a metaphoric sense before he was shot, not a few persons took them seriously after the event (de Hart 2005: 24; Margry 2003: 118–122). Evidence of these spiritual ideas in 2002 are a note "Another Jesus has been crucified," another note "Dear Pim, now I know that GOD exists, because you are him!!" and a homo-erotic picture of Saint Sebastian, shot through by arrows.<sup>23</sup>

I encountered a similar discourse in the texts left at Fortuyn's temporary grave in Driehuis and at the foot of the bust in Rotterdam: "God preserve him in our memory; And Thou, who art even greater love than we; Preserve his name too; As is written; In the palm of Your hand; For this time and eternity." "From heaven . . . I miss you, dear Pim," "And yet, you ANGEL who was sent to us, remain connected to us by an invisible cord." "Still

keeping faith, in the Creator above, where a seat was ready, I would like to believe." A plush bear bore a T-shirt with a printed text "My guardian angel" (in German). A few participants believed in divine intervention in the commemoration and remarked that it is always nice weather, which cannot be coincidence. One woman, who had personally published a book with poems about Fortuyn, told that she had initially planned a blank page between the preface and the poems, but then decided not to do so. And what happened? For unknown reason, the page was blank after all. "Page 6 precisely! (the date of his death) I think it had to be so."<sup>24</sup>

In the previous section we have already seen that the pilgrims can invent their own ritual. The possibility to perform one's own ritual in public space was elaborated in the Netherlands in the 1990s, when the public display of emotions became common. This public show of emotions emerged partly as result of reality TV, international influence, and the emancipation of hitherto suppressed feelings. One manifestation of this "culture of emotions" is formed by personal, expressive, and newly invented ways of mourning. Examples are fancy funerals and little homemade shrines at the roadside, where somebody was killed in an accident (Beunders 2002: 10–22, 127 f.; de Hart 2005: 75, 85–87). The innovative texts and rituals to commemorate Fortuyn and to underscore his assumed supernatural qualities are another form of this new religiosity. A note of caution, the rise of a new religiosity has blurred the conventional understanding of the word "religious." In retrospect it is, therefore, not surprising that the pilgrims did not know what to think of my question of whether the tour was a religious affair.

Independent of the trend of new religiosity, the messianic quality of Fortuyn might also be understood from the perspective of existential psychology. According to psychotherapist Irvin Yalom, human lives are structured by the contradictory craving for autonomy and the need of being nurtured. Following a strong politician as an "ultimate rescuer" (Yalom 1980: 129–141) fulfils both needs at one stroke: one can identify with his strength and feel protected by him. Dead ultimate rescuers might be more useful than living ones, because they are invulnerable and will not let you down.

The last point to be made in this section on new religiosity is, again, the impact of globalisation.

23 <[http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/meertensnet/file/fortuyn\\_slides/fortuyn\\_slides.html](http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/meertensnet/file/fortuyn_slides/fortuyn_slides.html)> [11 December 2005].

24 In 2006, the number of messages with a religious tone had lessened somewhat, but one follower confessed to having made a home altar (*AD/Rotterdams Dagblad*, 6 May 2006).

Globalisation has played a role by providing examples of how to act when popular figures die unexpectedly, for instance: Olof Palme (1986), Melina Mercouri (1994), Yitzhak Rabin (1995), and most of all Lady Diana (1997). What these deceased persons had in common with each other – and also with Fortuyn – was their charisma, and the public recognition of the private suffering during their life (Beunders 2002: 107–138).<sup>25</sup> There is also a national tradition of mass sorrow, going back at least to 1919 when the Dutch socialist leader Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis was cremated (incidentally also at the Westerveld cemetery in Driehuis). Then, tens of thousands of people watched the funeral procession and there was a sea of flowers. In 2002, few Dutchmen knew about Domela Nieuwenhuis's cremation, but there was a fresh memory of regular silent processions, first held in 1997, when ordinary citizens had been killed by instances of so-called “meaningless violence”<sup>26</sup> (Beunders 2002: 104, 169–182; de Hart 2005: 15–19).

### Role of the Media

Journalists displayed such a conspicuous presence that they cannot be deemed merely spectators, but formed part and parcel of the event. Early in the morning, at least three journalists got on the bus in Rotterdam. In Hilversum, more reporters came on board (and also a second anthropologist). At a practical level, the bus trip would not have been financially possible without the contribution of these reporters, who paid the standard fee of 12 Euro. In the second part of the pilgrimage, the march in Rotterdam, more writing journalists but fewer cameras were present. In the third part, during the meeting in the cafe, I did not spot any journalists, probably because of the deadlines set by the television news and printed media.

Most noticeable for the pilgrims were the television cameras in the morning. At the gate of the Media Park in Hilversum, three film crews entered the bus. Whereas a few followers felt somewhat intimidated by the cameras (one young woman hid behind the back of the seat in front of her), the majority did not seem to be bothered. On seeing the cameras, a radical follower, the one who had

described himself as full-time activist, yelled: “We are now entering the bulwark of red fascism [of the public media in the Netherlands].” Where the bus halted, five photographers were standing waiting, so that in total eight film- and photo-cameras were recording the ceremony in Hilversum.<sup>27</sup> The married couple with children posed with their children in front of the coach, and then everybody walked to the plaque and found him- or herself a suitable place.

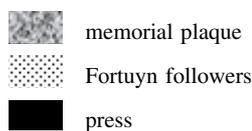
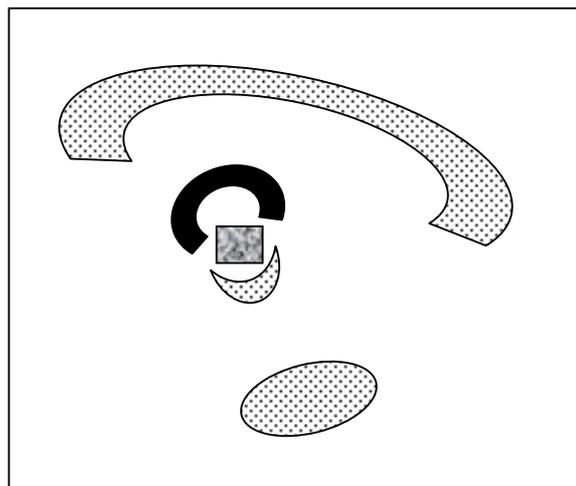


Fig. 3: Position of participants at the Media Park, Hilversum.

The cameras were so dominant in Hilversum (not surprisingly since this was literally on the doorstep of Dutch television) that they almost took precedence over the ceremony itself. Looking at the spatial position of the various participants (Fig. 3), one wonders who was observing whom: did the cameras record the Fortuyn supporters, or did the supporters watch the cameras (some even taking photographs of the pressmen)? In numbers, at least one out of four persons present around the plaque was a journalist or an anthropologist. The press made a slightly less dominant presence at the cemetery in Driehuis, but was still substantial (Fig. 4).

25 A saint cult also developed for Olof Palme (Scharfe 1989: 149); this is interesting because his political orientation was far removed from Fortuyn's.

26 The term refers to lethal violence against victims unknown to the perpetrators.

27 The number of cameras was less in 2006, but images of the event were shown on Dutch television (the 8:00 p.m. News) and reported in newspapers (*De Volkskrant*, *NRC Handelsblad*, and *AD*, 8 May 2006).



Fig. 4: Press photographers at Fortuyn's temporary grave in Driehuis.

I asked several reporters what they thought of their own role. To my surprise, the thought that they may have made an impact was a novelty for them. For example, one cameraman did not consider himself intimidating. As he told me, he just recorded an event which the viewers at home wanted to see, but to which they could not go themselves, like a football match. The journalists' position is, I believe, naive, for at least two reasons.

First, the scrutiny of the cameras is an intrusion into the privacy of the pilgrims. About half of the pilgrims whom I asked about this responded affirmatively. A woman answered that the pressmen prevented her from feeling close to Pim Fortuyn. A man said that the mass media infringed on his sorrow. One interlocutor, who had been at the Media Park before the bus arrived, observed that before the group arrived, the journalists made jokes and had not been respectful towards the deceased. She added: "They never interview me, because I look normal; they always pick out the weird-looking persons." Two women did not mind. The media

did not disturb them. On the contrary, if the media were not there, Fortuyn would be ignored and maybe Fortuyn will notice the attention in Heaven. Two LPF members of parliament, Gerard van As and João Varela, whom I asked about the pressmen later, were also enthusiastic about the press coverage.

Second, despite complaints that the media blocked the flow of emotions, the pilgrims ran at the media too and were very conscious of their own media-genic quality. For example, the prominent members of the group took all the time they needed to answer questions of journalists and made uninvited provocative statements. The man who yelled "Bulwark of red fascism," had sat calmly beside me all the way from Rotterdam to Hilversum and was spurred into action by the entry in the bus of television cameras. The couple with young children remarked that the pressmen would trespass the line of decency were they to interview the underaged, but posed willingly with the children and a banner in front of the coach when they arrived at the Media Park. They were

perfectly well aware that the press hounds love to shoot that sort of picture. Two persons carried a folder with the newspaper clippings – and there were many – in which they were quoted or had been photographed in a recognisable way. On the return trip to Rotterdam, Margaret was called by a journalist who wanted to interview her; apparently the editorial offices knew her mobile phone number. Most followers were excited about the media attention and spotted different reporters and camera crews: Look! so-and-so is also present!<sup>28</sup>

The media attention, then, to some extent forms the reward of the pilgrimage. No “conventional” rewards can be expected from the Fortuyn memorial sites, such as cures from a disease or pregnancies sought at Lourdes and Santiago de Compostela. Despite the spiritual quality of Fortuyn, no supernatural blessing is expected from the visit to the memorial sites. As far as can be judged, the participants come from a social class that cannot expect to climb the social ladder, but for one day they do rise in importance in the media.

The impact of my own presence must have been similar to that of the press. Early in the morning, when I walked towards the people waiting to get on the bus in Rotterdam, the pilgrims immediately recognised me as not one of them. They welcomed me with the question: “From which newspaper do you come?” and were slightly disappointed when I only came from a university. They were used to the mass media, which sometimes wrote about the participants in a disparaging tone. As a result, the political and cultural distance they sensed between them and me did not change their behaviour.

How, then, did the national media report about the event?<sup>29</sup> The *Algemeen Dagblad* (or *AD*) published a five-column-wide article about the whole day up to the ceremony at Fortuyn’s bust in Rotterdam. The headlines and text refer to the personal, emotional element and the disappointingly small audience. By his wording, the journalist subtly gives the impression that the followers are a little weird. For example, the journalist mentions the age of the two women over seventy; this way it looks as if the group consisted predominantly of grannies. The Pim Fortuyn look-a-like is described as “[name] in full Fortuyn-dress”; the Dutch word *uitdossing* (dress) in this phrase has a connotation of being dressed in a laughable way, such as at carnival. The ludicrous cry “Bulwark of red fascism”

is not left out, but for the sake of convenience placed during the ceremony at the memorial plaque (actually it was shouted earlier). Two photographs depict people with flowers in front of the bust in Rotterdam and the Fortuyn-look-alike at the Media Park.

The national daily *De Volkskrant* published a very brief fifty-seven-word article, copied from the Dutch Press Agency (ANP). It dryly remarks that 250 people commemorated Fortuyn’s death with a one-minute’s silence at his bust in Rotterdam. Another commemoration took place at the Media Park. The article leaves out much of the action and does not comment, either explicitly or by suggestive wording or photographs.

*De Telegraaf* showed a large photograph of the annual Cavalier dogs event with several masters airing eleven dogs. Fortuyn owned a pair of this breed of dog, which became popular because of him. The headline is: Fortuyn-doggies taken out. The news that on the same day 150 people commemorated him in Rotterdam was mentioned just at the bottom of the caption.

*Trouw* published a three-column article about the march in Rotterdam, without a photograph. The reporter underscores the declining number of participants, 450 last year, 150 this year. The main recurrent theme, however, is the potential for disorder.<sup>30</sup> The activities of the stewards of LPF and Leefbaar Rotterdam and the mass presence of the police are remarked upon. People queued patiently to lay down flowers at the foot of the statue near his house. “Just one idiot can spoil the atmosphere,” a policeman is quoted. Most of the event proceeded in an orderly manner, according to *Trouw*, but a few minor disturbances are reported: the adherents of an extreme right-wing politician handed out his flyers and yelled, despite the politician’s own statement that party politics should not play a role today. The closing sentence is devoted to the man, who unannounced, declared a poem after the minute of silence.

How did Dutch television, the more influential mass medium, report the event? The state broadcasting company, NOS, had a fifty-three-second item about the commemoration at the Media Park on the midday news. What was shown were: a middle-aged woman with the verse “I’ll never forget you,” the Fortuyn look-a-like kissing the plaque, the violinist, and one of the coloured par-

28 Margaret could recognise *De Gooische*, *Metro*, *Algemeen Dagblad*, Dutch radio, TV Noord Holland, SBS6, and *Man bijt hond*.

29 All dailies are from 7 May 2005, TV is from 6 May.

30 The journalist had specifically been looking for disorders, as she told me; in 2006, a radio reporter and another journalist were also waiting to be in place in case disorders were to break out.

participants. In other words, the out-of-the-ordinary participants received most coverage. The member of Parliament Nawijn was quoted saying that Fortuyn had done nothing wrong, but had listened to the people. The item was repeated at 13:00 and 16:00, but not in the popular 8:00 p.m. News. On the late news, at 22:00 hours thirty seconds were broadcast about both statues in Rotterdam and briefly about the Media Park again. The member of Parliament João Varela said on camera that Fortuyn was the greatest Dutchman ever, and “We in Rotterdam will never forget him.”

To recapitulate, the attention of the mass media is a powerful stimulus to the organisers to continue the pilgrimage. The point that the media make fun of the Fortuyn followers does not matter, because it fits the notion of pilgrimage as a sacrifice or penance. In their turn, the Fortuyn followers give the media something to record. Media and pilgrims preserve each other. A similar conclusion was reached by Margry (2003: 112) and de Hart (2005: 62, 91) in their studies of the public grief immediately following Fortuyn’s death; the media attention mobilised people to go to the sites of commemoration and created a self-fulfilling hype.

The mutual reinforcement of media attention and attracting pilgrims is probably not a closed system, which will last forever, because despite the media attention, more former pilgrims stay away and are only partially replaced by novices. Nevertheless, in 2006 the media coverage was still unabated. The quality newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, which had not reported about the pilgrimage in 2005, published an article and a five-column-wide photograph on page 3. *De Volkskrant*, which had barely paid attention in 2005, and *AD* published large photographs too. The prestigious 8.00 p.m. News on TV paid ample attention as well. In 2006, the news reports had, however, shifted the focus from the ritual to a point that had been simmering unnoticed in 2005: a schism in the group of organisers.

### Conflict in the Group of Organisers

In 2005, the pilgrimage formed one programme only in name. Actually the bus tour and the programme in Rotterdam were in the hands of two different foundations, which are at loggerheads with each other. The previous year, 2004, there had even been three parallel commemorations, because then the LPF also organised its own commemoration; it laid flowers at the Pim Fortuyn

statue a quarter of an hour after the others. The rift is ironical, because also the LPF has been haunted by a series of fissions.

The Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation (Stichting Vrienden van Pim Fortuyn) organised the bus tour. There is no formal board, but Margaret has become the driving force behind the foundation. The foundation earns some money with the publication of Fortuyn’s writings and receives substantial financial support from a private entrepreneur who had previously also cofinanced the LPF. A group of about fifteen volunteers meet every Sunday at the Spanish Cube, the office in Rotterdam that Fortuyn used as political headquarters. They also jointly and ostentatiously attend trials of Muslim suspects of terrorism and presented murderer Volkert van der Graaf with a photograph of Pim Fortuyn lest he forget. Not all people on the bus were members of the Pim Fortuyn Foundation, but they did form a loosely-knit group. Most persons recognised each other’s face and many knew each other by name from previous occasions. The atmosphere on the bus was like a school outing. Somebody offered a pack of cookies and another passed around sweets; acquaintances were happy to see each other again.

Johnny and Kelly organised the march in Rotterdam, followed by the evening at Restaurant Engels. They belong to the Foundation A Statue for Pim (Stichting Beeld van Pim), which successfully collected money for the bust in Rotterdam. Johnny and Kelly clearly had the better relationship with the political parties. Several key figures of *Leefbaar Rotterdam* and LPF were present in Rotterdam, whereas only one LPF member of Parliament joined a part of the bus tour. It is worth noting that the websites of the Foundation A Statue for Pim and LPF announced only the activities in Rotterdam but not the bus tour.<sup>31</sup> Conversely, a flier of the rival Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation did give the full programme and mentioned its own name “and others” as organisers of the whole day.

Confusion about the organisation on the part of outsiders was inevitable. The Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation invited the Grand Old Man of right-wing politics, Hans Wiegel, and well-known spirit medium Jomanda, to speak at the bust in Rotterdam, without discussing this with the real organiser, Johnny. Johnny found out when Wiegel and Jomanda called him to refuse their partic-

31 <<http://www.beeldvanpim.nl>> and <<http://www.vereniginglijstpimfortuyn.nl/agendapunt.php?id=22>> [28 April 2005].

ipation. To give another example of confusion, the camera crews in Hilversum had incidentally asked permission from the “wrong” foundation, and had to ask for permission again to shoot on the spot.

The rupture between the two groups of organisers had occurred when the organisation of the commemoration in 2004 ended in conflict. Margaret gave the following account.<sup>32</sup> She had organised the day and reserved 300 evening meals at Restaurant Las Palmas. While she was away on holiday, Johnny and Kelly organised a rival meeting at Restaurant Engels. Johnny had obtained a municipal permit for that meeting on behalf of the Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation (of which he was not a key member). Of the 300 meals ordered at Restaurant Las Palmas, only sixty were actually consumed (and paid by pilgrims), because other Fortuyn followers had gone to Restaurant Engels. This left Margaret’s foundation with a substantial debt, aggravated because one sponsor of the evening shifted his allegiance from Margaret’s group to Johnny’s.

The conflict of 2004 carried over into the organisation of 2005 and the cracks were barely hidden to the outsider. Several LPF and Leefbaar Rotterdam politicians who addressed the audience in Restaurant Engels referred briefly to the problems of 2004. “Fortunately,” they said, “this year we have a united commemoration.” Whether the party bigwigs were tactful or ignorant in this respect, I do not know, but they were certainly not correct. While the party leaders put on a show of amiability inside, Margaret was denied entry at the front door. A few loyalists stayed with her. Incidentally I observed how Joost Eerdmans, LPF member of Parliament, passed by the scene when he left the meeting. He could have mediated, but chose to go his own way so that Margaret was left stamping her feet with rage outside. However, the denial of access must not have come as a big surprise to her, because she had told me before that Johnny had threatened her physically not to come off the bus.

Quarrels and fissions have haunted all right-wing organisations in the Netherlands and as such this conflict fits a pattern. It also corresponds

very well with the idea of Eade and Sallnow that pilgrimage forms an arena for competing discourses, and a conflict, which involves the officials at the memorial sites. The point of this article is whether the conflict has had an impact on the motives of the participants. Two contradictory effects are feasible. On the one hand, the conflict may ruin the organisation of the commemoration in the future. On the other hand, it is possible that the small groups of die-hards will continue to organise two halves of the pilgrimage in order not to bow down in the face of the rival.

It appeared in 2006 that the latter effect was most powerful. A prior notice of the 2006 commemoration presented bus tour and march through Rotterdam as a whole. On 2 May 2006, however, *AD* published an article about the rift between the Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation and the Foundation A Statue for Pim. Other newspapers followed later (*Telegraaf*, 5 May 2006; *Het Parool*, 6 May 2006; *NRC Handelsblad*, 6 May 2006). According to Monica Beek, the *AD* journalist who scooped the others with the news about the quarrel, the media attention fuelled the conflict, with the result that the Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation decided not to join the march through Rotterdam. Instead, they observed one-minute silence in front of Fortuyn’s former house, Palazzo di Pietro, at 18:06 (the hour of Fortuyn’s death).<sup>33</sup> The Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation released a press report that the march to Fortuyn’s bust had been cancelled (which it was not). The upshot of the quarrel was that the followers split in two groups in 2006. Most Fortuyn supporters and all politicians from LPF and Leefbaar Rotterdam were at the bust, attending a ceremony organised by the Foundation A Statue for Pim (led by Johnny). Pilgrims of the bus tour and most media, however, stayed with the Friends of Pim Fortuyn Foundation (led by Margaret) at the Palazzo di Pietro. Stories, such as the rumour that the bus was delayed by a traffic jam and that people were too tired to walk from Fortuyn’s house to the bust, masked the real issue.

## Conclusion

In this article I have given five explanations for the question of why Pim Fortuyn followers go on pilgrimage every year to commemorate the anniversary of his death. The five explanations

<sup>32</sup> This is what I could make of a rather confusing story. Johnny evaded my questions on the matter or passed it off with laughs and deriding comments about Margaret. The contradictory evidence also suggests that the conflict perhaps did not take place on 6 May 2004, but on 19 February 2005. An additional accusation made by Margaret is that Johnny took away a beamer and other things from the Spanish Cube.

<sup>33</sup> M. Beek, personal communication; apparently she was less naive about the impact a journalist can have on events than the journalists interviewed in 2005.

can be regrouped into two broad causes: first, the search for security in a globalising world; and, second, social interaction with other pilgrims and the media, which causes its own dynamics.

The first broad cause is the process of globalisation, resulting in feelings of existential insecurity. In this instance, the pilgrimage is an attempt to overcome the uncertainty. Xenophobic nationalism is one answer to the lost sense of place, engendered by globalisation. Fortuyn was seen as a protector of the imagined white-Dutch national community. Joining the pilgrimage helped to draw the boundary between Us (members of this imagined community) and Them (immigrants, Muslims, lefties). The self-sacrifice of the pilgrimage – making the effort in the first place and, moreover, being scorned in the media – helps pilgrims to identify with the martyr Fortuyn. The pilgrims considered Fortuyn an “ultimate rescuer” and ascribed spiritual qualities to him; he helps to overcome the pilgrims’ existential anxieties. Quite apart from this, participants in the commemoration felt a strong personal relationship with Fortuyn, which partly explains the continued mourning over his death and the obligation felt to do something for him. A pilgrimage is an ideal way to express grief while simultaneously searching for security, because it allows every participant to perform her or his own, private ritual in a public space shared with like-minded people. Pilgrimage, therefore, fights individual fears and at the same time gives a safe sense of belonging to a larger group. New forms of religiosity in the Netherlands and global examples of how to react to the death of a popular person provide a template of what kind of rituals might be performed during the pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage is not only a spiritual journey but also – and this is the second broad cause – social behaviour that creates its own problems with other actors. The pilgrims have a love-hate relationship with the mass media. Although the media intrude on the feelings of the mourners, they also provide the ultimate reward – one minute of fame – to a class of people who have few other chances of social mobility. Of course, the Fortuyn adherents also give the journalists something in return, namely a media-genic event. In short, the media and the pilgrims constitute each other. The same can be said of two rivalling organisations which each takes care of half of the pilgrimage and do not want to be outshone by the other. A mental search for security and group dynamics are the two broad causes why people go on pilgrimage to Fortuyn memorial sites.

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