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Animal Politics or Animal Police? Islamophobia and Animal Advocacy Politics

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Abstract

Although there is increasing academic attention for the rise of Animal Advocacy Parties (AAPs), existing accounts overlook their emergence in the context of the politicization of race and religion. This contribution deploys Rancière's political thought combined with a critical race theoretical lens to analyze the project of the leading AAP after which most international sister parties are modeled: the Dutch Party for the Animals. We find that the party on the one hand disrupts the anthropocentrism characteristic for the Dutch social and political order but on the other hand affirms and contributes to the policing and racialization of Muslims. This became most apparent in their proposal to ban unstunned religious slaughter. We demonstrate that this proposal was part of the party's general inability to recognize the contemporaneous logics of race and religion. This leads us to conceptualize the party's project as a colorblind, or in non-ableist terms, color-evasive animal politics.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory; Islamophobia; Animal Politics; Animal Advocacy Parties; Party for the Animals; Rancière

Introduction

The Dutch general election of 2006 marks an important moment for animal advocacy politics: for the first time worldwide, an Animal Advocacy Party (AAP), in this case the *Partij voor de Dieren* (Party for the Animals, PvdD), was elected to a national parliament. The party, founded in 2002, has since become the leading global AAP and is now represented at the local, national, and European level. Since the party's election, attention for animal welfare and agriculture has vastly increased, both in parliament and in other parties' platforms (Otjes 2014; 2016). Furthermore, the PvdD has set up several international organizations and alliances with AAPs outside the Netherlands. Most sister parties have taken the PvdD as an example, with some stating that "the Dutch model" of animal advocacy politics is a huge inspiration (Korteweg 2018).[1]

Along with the global rise of animal advocacy politics, academic attention for AAPs has also increased. Whereas initial studies focused primarily on the PvdD, later comparative studies were published. Importantly, all studies deploy conventional typologies in political science to understand AAPs. For example, the PvdD has been compared with other small or new parties (Beyens, Lucardie, and Deschouwer 2015; Krouwel and Lucardie 2008; Lucardie 2006) and is typified as a single-issue, testimonial, or niche party (Andeweg, Irwin, and Louwerse 2020; Green-Pedersen 2019; Morini 2018). Furthermore, political scientists have made comparisons between the PvdD and a range of other parties, including socialists, liberals, Christian Democrats, and environmentalists. The latter stands out for political scientists, as they were keen to analyze whether AAPs can be considered akin to the Greens (Otjes and Krouwel 2015). Whereas the (Dutch) Greens emphasize "ecological modernization," the PvdD mobilizes with "a more radical, *non-anthropocentric* programme" (Van Der Heijden 2010, 1005 italics in original). Consequently, the PvdD's rejection of anthropocentrism is identified as a key pillar of the party's ideology and of AAPs generally (Lucardie 2020). This leads Morini (2018) to conclude that AAPs constitute a new party family, distinguishable on the basis of their anti-speciesist ideology and rejection of anthropocentrism. As Lucardie (2020) finds, compassion for non-human animals as beings with intrinsic and individual moral worth is an internationally consistent ideological element across AAPs.

Such scholarly accounts of animal advocacy politics pay, however, limited attention to the rapidly changing sociopolitical context in which AAPs have emerged, because in 2006, the Netherlands not only witnessed the entrance of the PvdD in the Dutch Parliament but also of the far-right *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom, PVV). The Partij voor de Vrijheid (2021) openly strives to "de-Islamize the Netherlands" (8) which has resulted in stigmatizing and racializing proposals such as taxing headscarves or banning the construction of mosques and the Koran. The party is currently the largest and longest-serving far-right party in the country and has been an important driver of the Europe-wide emergence of the far-right, as well as of the concurrent restructuring of politics. Yet, academic studies have not explored whether there is a connection between the PvdD and the far-right ideologies of the PVV despite their simultaneous emergence.

This is likely the consequence of conventional ideological left-right typologies in political science that hardly suggest any ideological connection between the PVV and PvdD. Despite the PvdD's insistence that its political project transcends the political left-right distinction (Koffeman 2018), the party is both commonsensically as well as academically typified as "left-wing" (Andeweg, Irwin, and Louwerse 2020; Lucardie 2006; Meijer 2022; Morini 2018; Van Der Heijden 2010). One would, thus, assume the ideological distance between the PvdD and the far-right PVV to be quite insurmountable. However, there is a surprising confluence with regard to a number of animal-related political issues between the two parties. Like the PvdD, the PVV has paid significant attention to animal welfare and in 2010 even successfully negotiated the establishment of a specialized police division tasked with tackling animal abuse (aptly named "animal police") in exchange for government support. Two years earlier, the PvdD initiated a law proposal to ban slaughter without prior stunning which would, according to certain religious interpretations, make Islamic

and Jewish slaughter impossible. Although the initiative made the PvdD an "issue owner" of the topic religious slaughter, the momentum for this proposal was generated by numerous parliamentarian interventions of both the PvdD *and* PVV (Jung 2022). In the Lower House, this proposal found overwhelming support from both left-wing and right-wing parties but was ultimately rejected in the Upper House, because a majority found that a ban would disproportionately breach the fundamental right to religious freedom (Kurth and Glasbergen 2017).

Existing studies of the PvdD have mostly ignored the proposal to curtail unstunned religious slaughter. This is quite surprising given the fact that the party regards the proposed ban as one of their biggest successes, which has yielded the PvdD by far the most public attention to date (Thieme 2019). The Dutch debate on religious slaughter has been researched extensively (Janssen 2014; Jung 2022; Kurth and Glasbergen 2017; Lelieveldt 2017; Mansvelt Beck 2015; Valenta 2012; Van der Schyff 2014; Wallet 2013; Zoethout 2013). These studies analyze the content of that debate but do not connect the pursuance of this issue to the overall political project of the PvdD specifically, let alone AAPs more general. In addition, little scholarly effort has been made to bring the rise of the PvdD and other AAPs in conversation with literature on the changing political climate in the geopolitical West regarding issues pertaining to immigration, multiculturalism, and Islam since the dawn of the 21st century. This sociopolitical structure, through which anyone and anything related to Islam becomes an a priori object of problematization and suspicion, has been dubbed "the Muslim Question" (Bracke and Aguilar 2020; Farris 2014). The absence of any explorations into the possible relevance of this wider context for the development of AAPs implies a lacuna in the academic understanding of the distinguishable characteristics, ideology, and general complexity of animal advocacy politics.

This article seeks to address that lacuna by focusing on the case of the PvdD. We consider the Rancièrian concepts of "politics" and "police" indispensable tools to understand the political project of the PvdD. For Rancière, *politics* consists of the disruption and reconfiguration of political subjectivities within any existing social order. The *police*, by contrast, represents something of the "status quo," or the existing order, in which everyone and everything has its place in the normalized and depoliticized social hierarchy of subjects and objects. We apply a critical race theoretical lens to analyze the aspirations and political discourse of the PvdD, as expressed in books written by party leaders, statements of prominent party members in national newspapers and periodicals, contributions by MPs to parliamentary debates, and party platforms, since the party's establishment in 2002 until 2022.

We find that the party engages in a genuine form of Rancièrian politics by challenging the anthropocentric normalcy of the existing social order. Yet, by closely bringing these data in conversation with literature and insights generated by critical race theory, we argue that the party simultaneously contributes to the policing and racialization of Muslims. We show that over the course of its existence, the party has subscribed to a post-race sequential emancipation narrative and demonstrates a false understanding of anthropocentrism as devoid of racialism. The PvdD also manifests willful white ignorance (Mills 2007) when confronted with the

contribution of the party's political agenda to the ongoing racialization of Muslims. We, therefore, argue that the PvdD propagates a colorblind (Bonilla-Silva 2003) or in non-ableist terms color-evasive (Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison 2017) animal politics. Altogether, our analysis advances Rancièrian thought by considering simultaneous instances of politics and police. We also hope that our argument motivates future political science scholarship to be attentive to the political workings of both race *and* anthropocentrism.

Politics and Police: Rancière's Political Thought

We deem the concepts of "politics" and "police" as developed in the political theory of Jacques Rancière crucial instruments for understanding the project of the PvdD. Rancière attempts to go beyond the Aristotelian notion of politics. According to Aristotle, "human beings are political because they own the power of speech that puts into common the issues of justice and injustice whereas animals only have voice to express pleasure or pain" (Rancière 2006, online). The Aristotelian notion of politics refers to institutional practices in which various social subjects or "parts" discuss matters of justice and distribute power. Although this understanding of politics resonates well with what is commonly associated with the term, Rancière proposes to call these types of governance practices "the police."

In Rancière's account, *the police*, thus, represents the governance of the status quo or the seemingly natural order of things in which everything has its "proper" place (Dikeç 2005, 174). The "policed" social order does not necessarily refer to the state apparatus and certainly not (only) to the "petty police." It is rather the disciplining body of power mechanisms through which the "aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution" (Rancière 1999, 28). Police should, therefore, not only be understood pejoratively but also as a "regime" or mode of governance aimed at social control of subjects who are being recognized as part of the social order.

This policed social order, where every "part" of society has its proper place, is described by Rancière as the "partition of the sensible" (*la partage du sensible*) and plays a central role in his account (Lievens 2014). Any society is, or can be, partitioned into various parts representing different social subjects—for example, peasants, workers, women, bourgeoisie, etc. Yet, no order of governance can fully account for all parts in society, simply because political institutions, social instruments, and even our language are not capable of fully recognizing each "part" of society. Thus, there will always be "parts that have no part" as they fall outside of the social order or are not recognized as such.

In contrast to "police," Rancière redefines *politics* as a moment that is instantiated when those "parts that have no part" act under the assumption of being equal to the recognized parts and demand to be taken into account in the partitioning in which they previously had no part. Politics, then, is a rare moment that is regarded as an "extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing" because Rancière requires the subjects that engage in politics to act under the presumption of equality—that is as parts that *do* have a part. In later work, Rancière

has summarized his account as follows: "Politics consist in reconfiguring (sic.) the partition of the sensible, in bringing on the stage new objects and subjects, in making visible that which was not visible, audible as speaking beings they who were merely heard as noisy animals" (Rancière 2006, online). Thus, prior to the discussion of matters of justice or who should be in power lies the question of who gets to decide what justice is. Politics in a Rancièrian sense concerns exactly the (re) configuration of subjects and objects that get to decide on matters of justice.

A textbook example of such a political moment with regard to race according to Rancière (2005) was Rosa Parks' staged refusal to sit in the back of a bus. In this case, a Black woman negated the "police order" by resisting the "proper place" of Black subjects and demanded to be treated similar to other "parts" in society—that is, white subjects. Other examples of the emancipation of racialized (and gendered) subjects are rather limited in Rancière's work, but various scholars have used his theory to describe other "moments of politics." Examples include U.S. Civil Rights activists who acted as ordinary customers in lunch corners that did not serve to African Americans (May 2008) or Black mothers who refused to leave a meeting in Congress after they were denied speech (Sparks 2016).

In some instances, applying Rancière's thoughts requires one to stretch his concepts. Gündoğdu (2017), for instance, criticized Rancière for his misrecognition of the 2005 violent uprisings of the Paris *banlieues* as a moment of politics. For Rancière, the use of violence affirms the identities already ascribed to subjects, whereas Gündoğdu claims it is an important stage in the process of subjectivation. In that sense, she articulates a Rancièrian conception of politics that is less preoccupied with speech acts and focuses more on the *process* of subjectivation.

Because of Rancière's ambiguity regarding the temporal horizon of politics, some critics point out that Rancière does not specify "what comes before, after, and alongside 'politics'" (McDonnell 2022, 197). According to Clarke (2013), Rancière offers more "a politics of moments, rather than a politics of movements" (21). Resultingly, Rancière's theory has, as Uitermark and Nicholls (2013) put it, "more limited use when addressing empirical questions about actual political mobilizations" (972). Uitermark and Nicholls, therefore, favor an approach that leaves more space for incrementalism and creating the conditions for small steps of politicization. Regarding the aforementioned example of Rosa Parks which, following Rancière, "negate[d] the police order and dramatically evoked the political," Uitermark and Nichols (2013) remark that "she could only do so because she had cultivated her political dispositions through prolonged interactions in the budding civil rights movement" (973).

Our account links up with these adapted, incrementalist perspectives but focuses more on what happens alongside politics—that is, the development of "the Muslim Question" in relation to the rise of the PvdD. We thereby think of policing as a multidimensional disciplinary mode of governance or, borrowing from Laclau (1996), a "sedimented" practice that works through several axes of oppression and emancipation at once. As we will demonstrate in the next sections, a Rancièrian political moment may, thus, disrupt and reconfigure the policed order on one front but at the same time reproduce other aspects of the police order on another front. This results in simultaneous instances of politics and policing.

The Animal Politics of the Party for the Animals

The emergence of the animal party in the national political arena can be regarded as a Rancièrian "moment of politics" or a step toward politicization. The PvdD was founded by three animal advocacy activists in 2002 (Lucardie 2023). Two founders have become prominent representatives and are the main party ideologists: former party leader Marianne Thieme and senator Niko Koffeman. Esther Ouwehand joined the party in 2003 as the first party office coordinator, took seat in the Lower House in 2006 next to the party leader Marianne Thieme, and succeeded the latter as party leader in 2019.[2] By then, Thieme had been leading the party for 17 years. In the first elections in which they participated, the party just fell short of winning a seat in parliament (which requires about .67% of the vote), but, in 2006, they became the first AAP to be elected in a national parliament by winning two seats that were taken up by Thieme and Ouwehand. In 2007, the party also won a seat in the Senate that was taken up by Koffeman, who in 2023 entered his fifth term as senator.

The election of the PvdD in parliament immediately sparked controversy. Many commentators were keen to dismiss and ridicule the party for being a single-issue party that represents mere petty issues. In defense of the dominant anthropocentrism, conservative critics stirred up the debate by claiming that the party represents a form of decadence, because it prioritizes animal interests over human concerns (De Groot 2006). Yet, a few other commentators appreciated the PvdD's interventions in the Dutch political landscape. They signal that the PvdD is the first party since decades that has brought along a new political ideology and claim that the PvdD is the only party that challenged the status quo of that time (De Rek 2012).

Other parts of the controversy focused on the style and aims of the PvdD. Central to this discussion is the distinction between "expressive politics" aimed at moral expression and "instrumental politics" aimed at reaching compromise and implementing policy change (Parkin 1968, 34). One historian accused the PvdD in a national newspaper of engaging in "unnuanced and moralistic" expressive politics that would not amount to concrete change and, therefore, the PvdD should be dismissed as a serious political actor (Kluveld 2006). In response, historian Janse (2007a; 2007b) argued exactly the opposite: the PvdD's expressive politics encompasses the core of the political in the party's project—namely, as it disrupts the normalization of instrumental politics in the Netherlands.

Ever since this discussion between the two historians, the PvdD has proudly taken over the notion of "expressive politics" to describe its own political strategy—as seeking to influence political discourse rather than institutional power (Koffeman 2018; Thieme 2009a).[3] Thieme is explicit about using the parliament as a stage to politicize moral grievances and raise awareness about the plight of animals. She frequently uses the Dutch proverb "a pacer in the marathon" to describe how she views the party's role in the Dutch political landscape: as a pacemaker, ahead of other parties urging them to catch up. The PvdD aspires "to remind the incumbent parties of their promises in their election manifesto's so they put their money where their mouth is" (Thieme 2004, 83).[4] Almost a decade after the party's election in parliament, political scientist Otjes (2016) has indeed found that attention to animal welfare and agriculture has vastly increased across the Dutch political landscape.

Through the party's election in parliament, a new political subject (the animal) is manifested before the police order in which that subject had hitherto no part. In doing so, the PvdD even challenges the anthropocentric premises in Rancière's conceptualization of politics. For Rancière (2006), the animal is, following Aristotle, only capable of "producing noise and express pleasure or pain" and, therefore, incapable of becoming a political subject. The PvdD, by contrast, does introduce the animal as a political subject in taking the representation of animal interests as their main objective. Disrupting anthropocentrism, the party regards animals as beings with a rich lifeworld that have value in and for themselves, irrespective of their relationship with humans.

Concretely, the disruptive politics of the PvdD is expressed through several interventions both inside and outside parliament. For instance, Thieme has written six books in which she details the anti-anthropocentric ideological project and activist origins of the PvdD. Furthermore, the party has produced two award-winning documentaries questioning the normalization of industrial farming and the consumption of meat and fish. The party's activism also continues from within parliament: MPs regularly disrupt business as usual during official events. The PvdD has, for instance, played loud animal sounds from stereos positioned in the party office's window to disturb the annual meat-packed barbecue for MPs, organized and financed by the industrial agriculture lobby. Thieme and Ouwehand have, as party leaders, also donned extravagant and playful dresses at the otherwise rather stiff annual Budget Day, to draw attention to animal welfare and environmental causes.

The PvdD's disruptive politics is, thus, carried out through a strategy of mixed tactics or what has also been termed "parliamentary metapolitics" (Huijzer 2022). Meijer (2022) states that the PvdD "changes the story of politics, by taking seriously the interests of nonhuman animals and defending these interests" (158) but also lists a significant number of policy achievements. These include a ban on the live cooking of lobsters, expediting a ban on mink breeding, and an amendment to a law with far-reaching impact on industrial farming which states that "animals can no longer be changed physically or genetically to adjust to their housing conditions, but instead that the housing conditions should change to accommodate the farmed animals' species-specific needs and individual welfare" (Meijer 2022, 157). At the European level, they secured a ban on pesticides like thiacloprid (harmful for bees) and a ban on Mancozeb (as it might cause Parkinson). The PvdD, thus, disrupts the anthropocentric policing of animals with playful actions and at the same time strives to change policies. Together, these mixed tactics work toward reconfiguring the position of animals within the social order.

However, one important policy proposal that is not discussed in any of the above accounts, which Thieme (2019) sees as "one of the party's biggest successes" (93), is the proposed ban on religious slaughter without prior stunning. This oversight is remarkable because the proposal has drawn by far the most public attention since the PvdD's election to parliament. We contend that both the relative political success of this proposal and the overwhelming public attention can only be properly understood in context of the emergence of race and religion structuring political conflict. Before discussing the proposed ban on unstunned religious slaughter in more detail, we, therefore, first introduce the contours and impact of those sociopolitical changes in the following section.

The Policing of Islam and "the Muslim Question"

The establishment of the PvdD in 2002 and its election in parliament in 2006 coincided with two seismic shifts in Dutch politics. Those years mark the success of two far-right parties that moved the critique on multiculturalism, immigration, and religion (Islam particularly) from the political margins right into the center. In 2002, the far-right party *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (Pim Fortuyn List, LPF) was elected in parliament with a massive win—known as the Fortuyn Revolt—by obtaining 26 (out of 150) seats. However, its success was short lived due to the assassination of the party leader a couple of weeks before the election. The PVV led by Geert Wilders became the LPF's ideological heir, and its electoral success since 2006 has given the far right a permanent foothold in the Netherlands (Oudenampsen 2018).

The Fortuyn Revolt, thus, heralded a pivotal moment in the development of multiculturalism and Islam as issues saliently structuring political conflict. Yet, it should be acknowledged that this discourse was already in the making in liberal and social democratic circles (Oudenampsen 2018). In this sense, the LPF and PVV mobilized a stronger articulation of that discourse and propelled it into the heart of Dutch politics. Fortuyn popularized the Dutch variant of the Islamization thesis via his 1997 book "The Islamization of our culture," in which he argued that Dutch culture was at risk of being replaced by Muslims and Islamic norms. He also infamously claimed that Islam is "a backward culture." Ever since, critique on immigration and Islam has become part of the discourse of the political mainstream too, from left to right (Prins 2004). As one social-democratic senator sighed: "Sometimes it seems like the entire political discourse after the murder of Fortuyn has been picked up by an invisible hand, and brusquely put down again several meters to the right" (Witteveen quoted in Oudenampsen 2018, 4).

Under the influence of this political shift, Dutch citizenship became increasingly "culturalized," which is a process through which "more meaning is attached to cultural participation (in terms of norms, values, practices, and tradition), either as an alternative or addition to citizenship as rights and socioeconomic participation" (Duyvendak, Hurenkamp, and Tonkens 2010, 237). In accordance with the prominence of such culturalization discourse, a key societal and political debate in the Netherlands has centered on establishing the exact "norms and values" that characterize Dutch identity. Prominent in this debate was a "clash of civilizations" argument which held that "Islamic culture" was incompatible with supposedly quintessential Western and Dutch liberal values, such as women's rights, gay rights, and political secularism (Akkerman 2005; De Lange and Mügge 2015; Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010; Oudenampsen 2018).[5] A femonationalist and homonationalist narrative, thus, underpinned the culturalization of Dutch citizenship that instrumentalized liberal rights and social accomplishments to evidence the superiority of Dutch culture (Bracke 2012; Farris 2017; Wekker 2009).

Another noteworthy implication of the mainstreaming of far-right discourse is that issues of immigration, multiculturalism, and Islam have become "legitimate" topics of critique under the guise of "freedom of speech." Far-right politicians and their allies had presented themselves as truth tellers that proudly broke with "political correctness," a form of "political censorship" they perceived to be caused by the cultural relativism of the political left (Prins 2004). This led to the

normalization of "breaking the taboo" on publicly calling into question the desirability of Islam in the Netherlands. The articulation of Dutch identity in contradistinction with the supposed incommensurability of Islam became a dominant discourse in relation to which all political parties positioned themselves.

Consequently, a social group in the Netherlands commonsensically thought of as "just" religious is equally so a racialized group—its members are homogenized, essentialized, and inferiorized based on their supposed culture, whereby "culture" is imagined as static, all-encompassing, and determining an adherent's entire being (Garner and Selod 2015; Meer 2013; Selod and Embrick 2013). Such representation negates the many differences among Muslims in terms of degree of religiosity, Islamic denomination, class, age, education, gender, language, or geographic location, to name but a few. In this way, culture performs a similar function to what race once did, when race was thought to be a biological and, therefore, immutable fact that fundamentally determined peoples' being and social positioning (Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006; Meer and Modood 2012). Furthermore, under the influence of this discourse, Islamic characteristics (e.g., veils) have become enmeshed with phenotypical characteristics of North African and Middle Eastern people (of which the majority of Dutch Muslims are descendants). Together, they form a mixture of signifiers on the basis of which people are (correctly or not) "profiled," singled out, suspected, and policed in the eye of both the public and judicial institutions on the basis of their perceived Muslimness. In the process of their interpellation *as Muslim*, a racial formation of Islam, thus, occurs. Alternately called "cultural racism" (Al-Saji 2010; Modood 1997) or "neoracism" (Balibar 1991), this racialization of Muslims may too be captured with the term Islamophobia (Hafez 2018; Lauwers 2019; Rana 2007; Sunier 2016).[6] The production of the racialized Muslim through the policing of Islam illustrates how race and religion may form a constellation in Europe (Topolski 2018a).[7]

The sociopolitical context in which Muslims are problematized because they are Muslim on the basis of a homogenizing, essentializing, and inferiorizing representation of what Islamic culture supposedly entails has been dubbed "the Muslim Question" (Bracke and Aguilar 2020; Farris 2014). In this discursive context, a social hierarchy has been established that renders suspect and polices anyone and anything related to Islam (Sayyid 2014). Illustrative is the ever-growing list of policy interventions regarding Islamic practices—for example, veiling, the construction of mosques, halal slaughter, and (de)radicalization (Jung 2022; De Koning 2020; Fadil, Ragazzi, and De Koning 2019; Anna Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009; Lettinga and Saharso 2014; Maussen 2004). Instead, it produces an image of Muslims through which they are monolithically addressed and considered to be an alien and a threat to the nation (Bracke and Aguilar 2022).

Islamophobia is further normalized through the discursive distinction made by pundits and politicians across the political spectrum between what is often called "moderate" and "radical" Islam (Mondon and Winter 2017; Topolski 2018b). Both categories "are part of the same exclusionary paradigm" (Mondon and Winter 2017, 7) because each of the different imagined interpretations of "Islamic culture" is placed in a subordinate relation to the unquestioned superiority of an equally mythical representation of quintessential Dutch culture. Moderate Islam would be carried by assimilated, progressive, and, therefore, "redeemable" Muslims, whereas

radical Islam would consist of a group of undesirable, fundamentalist, or even extremist Muslims. This distinction between "good" and "bad" Muslims (Mamdani 2002) is constitutive of what Mondon and Winter (2017) call "liberal" and "illiberal Islamophobia." Whereas the latter excludes Muslims, regardless of how they behave or what they believe and is, therefore, more easily identified as racist, the former allows certain currents of Islam or groups of Muslims as long as they are consistent with a supposed "Western" cultural norms and values. Yet also in "liberal Islamophobia," Muslims are only accepted as they pass a "loyalty test" of sorts, by adhering to "acceptable" interpretations of Islam. Liberal Islamophobia still delineates what Islam can and cannot be and like illiberal Islamophobia is, thereby, used as a vector of exclusion.

In public discussions, however, liberal and even illiberal Islamophobic interventions are rarely identified as racist, which is by and large the consequence of the conception of race after World War II in Europe. The Netherlands had, similar to other leading organizations like UNESCO, in an antiracist effort replaced the term "race" with "ethnicity" in policies, politics, and public debate (Lentin 2004; 2008). It was generally considered that with the defeat of Nazi-Germany, racism was defeated too (Goldberg 2006). As culture and ethnicity became stand-ins for race to discuss and manage social difference, any racial implications, thereof, got masked (Weiner 2014). At the same time, what remained generally recognized as racist was reduced to a very narrow conception of "biological racism." Yet, as Lentin (2015, 1281) states, "culturalization is merely a continuation of racialization because [. . .] both are imbricated in the [. . .] disciplining of non-normative bodies." The consequence of the culturalization discourse is, therefore, the loss of a vocabulary to identify and address racism. Such a post-racial approach disables the recognition of racism that *continues* to structure the sociopolitical and enables its denial. This leads to a situation where there is "racism without racism" (Goldberg 2008). Hence, Muslims can be homogenized, essentialized, and inferiorized based on their supposed culture; all the while, any charges of racism are being denied.

The Party for the Animals' Troubled Relation with Race and Religion

Existing political science accounts of the PvdD and of AAPs, in general, have yet to explore the possible relevance of the context of "the Muslim Question" for the characteristics and development of animal advocacy politics. We seek to address this lacuna by analyzing the aspirations and political discourse of the PvdD since the party's establishment in 2002 until 2022. We apply a critical race theoretical lens to thematically analyze (Braun and Clarke 2006) books written by party leaders (Thieme 2004, 2009a; 2019; Siebelink and Thieme 2022), statements of prominent party members in national newspapers and periodicals, contributions by MPs to parliamentary debates, and party platforms. We identify four thematic instances through which the troubled relationship of the PvdD with race and religion becomes manifest, which we analytically distinguish but which occur simultaneously:

1. The party's sequential emancipation and post-race narrative
2. The party's proposal to ban religious slaughter without prior stunning

3. Party members' willful white ignorance when confronted with concerns of racism
4. The absence of a critical assessment of Islamophobia despite the party's recent public positions against the insidiousness of racism as a legacy of Dutch colonialism and slavery.

After discussing each of these themes in more detail, we argue that together they manifest a distinct pattern which expresses what we call a color-evasive animal politics.

Sequential Emancipation and Post-Race Narrative

Since its election in parliament, the PvdD has frequently made brief references to race or race-related emancipation struggles, although never very extensively. Most notable among these references is the party's conceptualization of the struggle for animal rights as the successor of earlier emancipation movements, such as the suffragettes and abolitionists (Partij voor de Dieren 2006; Siebelink and Thieme 2022; Thieme 2004; 2019). This sequential narrative, dubbed by Lucardie (2020) as "progressive egalitarianism," functions to suggest that the animal advocacy struggle is a rightful revolutionary companion to those movements. It is implied that the PvdD, like these other struggles, has the moral right on its side and that in the end history will prove them right.

Although there are undeniable similarities and overlap between animal advocacy movements, feminist, and abolitionist movements (e.g., in terms of public reception, political strategies, and people involved), what concerns us here is the suggested sequential nature of emancipation. This invokes a post-race imagery of the contemporary. Consider the following quote from the party's 2006 election manifesto:

> The destruction of the environment and the violation of rights of living beings must be stopped. To this end, we need a civilizing mission similar to the struggle *of yore* against the oppression of women, children and slaves. (4; emphasis added)

This sequential narrative implies that the emancipation of the concerned groups has been completed and belongs to the past. Such narrative implies that "the animal is the new black" (Gossett 2015)—that is, the next subject to be emancipated—and is frequently found in animal advocacy circles. However, this sequential emancipation narration has been subject to critique, as it presents questions of race as well as the antiracist struggle as out of date (Boisseron 2018).

In addition, the quote above illustrates how the PvdD adopts and thereby affirms the dominant narrative about emancipation that mostly ignores the Dutch antiracist struggle. Nimako (2018) describes the Dutch master narrative of emancipation as consisting of four struggles: the struggle for sovereignty (16th century), the emancipation of Catholics and workers (both 19th century), and emancipation of women (20th century). Black emancipation struggles occurring throughout these centuries are no part of this narrative and, thus, written out of collective memory.

Weiner (2014), therefore, charges the Dutch of exhibiting "racist denial" (731) through which the connections between contemporary and historical oppression are denied.

Another problem with the dominant narrative of emancipation is that racism is regarded as a problem of "elsewhere" (Hondius 2009, 57; Özdil 2014), which denies the relevance of race for the workings of the sociopolitical makeup of Dutch society (van Dijk 1992; Essed and Hoving 2014; Essed and Nimako 2006). This is congruent with the historical inspirations of the PvdD that Thieme refers to in her books. She only names British abolitionists, the civil rights movement in the USA, and the resistance led by Gandhi against the British emperor in whose footsteps the animal rights struggle follows (Siebelink and Thieme 2022; Thieme 2004; 2009a; 2019). No antiracist, anticolonial, or antislavery movement, moment, or leaders are mentioned that resisted the Dutch Empire. Nor does she consider any historical or contemporaneous example of the racialization of religious groups. Consequently, the impression is given that race is not, and never has been, of relevance to the Netherlands.

Constitutive of the party's sequential emancipation and post-race narrative is Peter Singer's (1975) seminal work on animal liberation, which has been of particular influence on animal advocacy movements in the West. Singer posits "the question of the animal" and "the question of race" to be comparable yet inherently distinct. He argues that racism and speciesism follow a similar logic: "Racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race (. . .) Similarly, speciesists allow the interests of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species" (Singer 1975/2002, 9).

However, a more thorough engagement with the question of race lays bare how the Eurocentric construction of the idea of "the human" at the dawn of modernity was molded after the norm of white, European, Christian, and affluent men. This particular conception of "the human" depended on the negative constitution of the colonized and the racialized (McKittrick 2015; Wynter 2003) as well as the animalized (Kim 2015; Jackson 2020) The construction of "the animal" as a lesser being compared to humans is foundational to anthropocentrism, which is a logic that the PvdD opposes in its political project. However, the party does not take into account that anthropocentrism and racialism are fundamentally related (Jackson 2020), because the distinction between "the human" and "the animal" has been developed in relation to the racial invention of whiteness and Blackness (Kim 2015). Consequently, the PvdD's aim to decenter anthropocentrism in Dutch politics and emancipate animals is, thus, based on the false premise that the Western ontological distinction between "the human" and "the animal" is devoid of race thinking. Such understanding precludes the party from thoroughly engaging with the issue of race, let alone the racialization and policing of Muslims that form an integral part of it in the Dutch context.

Policing Muslims: The Proposed Ban on Unstunned Religious Slaughter

The PvdD limited understanding of the relevance of race and racism for the Netherlands, especially with regard to Muslims, became particularly apparent when

the party introduced a bill to remove the exemption clause for religious groups from the general requirement to slaughter with prior anesthesia in 2008. The PvdD argued that the practice causes measurable and unnecessary suffering to animals. In 2011, an overwhelming majority of 7 out of 10 parties from the left and the right supported the bill in the Lower House which led to much societal unrest and debate (Havinga 2008). Representatives of both Jewish and Islamic communities publicly criticized the proposed bill for fostering anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and for curtailing their fundamental right to religious freedom. The proposal was ultimately rejected by the Senate in 2012, mainly on the grounds of religious freedom (Kurth and Glasbergen 2017).[8]

Whereas in the Dutch context religious slaughter is performed by both Jewish and Islamic communities, during the parliamentarian deliberations in the 2006–2012 period, halal slaughter is repeatedly and gratuitously mentioned. This emphasis on halal slaughter stands in stark contrast to kosher slaughter, which is rarely named explicitly (Jung 2022). This changed only marginally when Jewish representatives publicly criticized the proposal, and MPs of several parties rushed to confirm their rejection of anti-Semitism. In the Dutch political imagery, therefore, the question whether or not to curtail religious slaughter was strongly tied to Islamic slaughter (Jung 2022).

Such emphasis on Islamic slaughter does not emerge in a vacuum but is induced by the pre-existing and overarching political climate that polices anything and anyone related to Islam as an object of suspicion and deviation. When proposing and defending their bill, the PvdD taps into that racializing discourse on several occasions. For example, they connect their endeavor to the aforementioned dominant "norms and values" debate (Thieme 2004, 25):

> In the Netherlands, the norms and values debate is in full swing. Yet time and again it appears that animal suffering is not a priority. The norms and values debate should not only be about issues such as senseless violence, but also about certain customs of cultures or religions that do not fit within the current (ethical) frameworks of our legislation, manners that are at the expense of freedoms of certain groups in society. [. . .] Why is this discussion of norms and values limited to human interests? Why do we not include all the defenseless in society, and thus also the millions of animals who are victims of certain religious or cultural manners?

Elsewhere, the then-party leader Marianne Thieme (2007, 1191) suggests that her party "finds it incomprehensible that animals suffer because of a misplaced sense of political correctness." The party, thereby, willfully instrumentalizes the then-dominant discourse through which commentators critical of multiculturalism portray themselves as "taboo breakers." Through presenting their concerns about unstunned religious slaughter with this kind of speech, the issue of religious slaughter becomes entangled with a racializing dynamic through which notions of Dutch citizenship are increasingly defined on the basis of "cultural" markers. This becomes strikingly evident in the party's adoption of a civilizational discourse (Thieme 2009b, 7):

> According to many today does the treatment of animals reflect the level of civilization of a society and of a culture. Cruelty to animals is rightly regarded as barbaric, and not appropriate in a civilized society. [. . .] This justifies a ban on ritual slaughter without stunning.

The PvdD aspires to conduct a, as they call it, "civilizational mission" (2006, 4) with regard to the Netherlands. This consists of challenging the dominant anthropocentric perspective on animals that represents them as mere objects whose value is determined by their usefulness to humans. In this respect, the animal rights discourse is very much a marginalized discourse vis à vis the hegemonic normalcy of animal oppression (Kim 2007). However, when applied to address animal practices by minorities in a context of "the Muslim Question," the tables turn. Now the PvdD's "civilizational mission" becomes part and parcel of a racializing discourse. When the stunning requirement becomes a marker of civilization, Judaism and Islam are awarded a lower position in a classification scheme ranking cultures and civilizations.

Throughout the party's years-long mobilization of support for its proposal to ban unstunned religious slaughter, the PvdD acknowledges that within Islam (and Judaism), an ethical stance toward animals is a topic of importance. The party stresses that it does not deny that animal welfare is valued by Islamic communities. The PvdD refers to Islamic interpretations that allow reversible stunning of animals prior to slaughter. This enables the party to maintain that its proposal does not infringe on the right to religious freedom disproportionally, for stunning is not necessarily part of the religious prescriptions. Yet, at the same time, this differentiation between various interpretations of religious slaughter also echoes a discursive distinction between "good" and "bad" Muslims (Mamdani 2002; Topolski 2018b).

Such distinction between more desirable and undesirable versions of Islam becomes most apparent when Thieme (2011, 15) singles out Turkey as a country with a predominantly Muslim population that introduced a ban on unstunned slaughter in 2011:

> I would like to point out developments around a ban on unstunned slaughter in several countries where ritual slaughter is or was the norm, for example in Turkey, where unstunned slaughter is expected to stop by the end of the year. This progressive understanding in Turkey should also be allowed to develop in the Netherlands.

In this quote, Thieme creates a hierarchy in which certain Islamic interpretations are more preferable than others. By acknowledging the difference in perspectives, the PvdD is able to argue it does not reject Islamic slaughter per se—which aids to suggest that the PVV proposal to ban religious slaughter altogether (regardless of prior stunning) as the "real" discriminatory position. The PvdD makes every effort to distinguish itself from the "illiberal Islamophobia" of the PVV, but acknowledgment of different Islamic interpretations of slaughter also functions as a "loyalty test" to determine the access of Muslims to Dutch cultural citizenship (Mondon and Winter 2017). "Good Muslims" are those whose take on religious

slaughter is congruent with the "civilization level" and cultural norm in the Netherlands that, according to Thieme (2011, 12), results in a "socially urgent need" to fight violations of animal welfare. As such, the various interpretations of religious slaughter become an instrument by which Muslims are policed.

The figuration of PvdD's proposal in a racializing political discourse becomes even more apparent when we consider that the PvdD deliberately connected its bill to the Parliamentarian debate on the Islamic face veil that was unfolding during the same period. Since 2006, several MPs and governments have proposed to prohibit the donning of such veil for a variety of reasons (ranging from security concerns to women's emancipation) which has resulted in a partial ban since 2019. This partial ban—popularly called "burqa ban"—officially targets all face-covering clothing (e.g., ski masks), yet the Islamic face veil has remained a key topic of reference in proponents' argumentations. As only a couple of hundred women in the Netherlands wear such veil and often against their families' wishes (refuting the concern that women are forced), the ban has been critiqued of being mere political symbolism with nevertheless grave implications: contributing to the racialization of Muslims and discrimination of Muslim women in particular (Moors 2009a; 2009b).

Both the "burqa ban" and the PvdD's proposal to ban unstunned religious slaughter may constitute infringements on the constitutional right to religious freedom. In order to justify such infringement in the case of banning unstunned religious slaughter, PvdD senator Niko Koffeman invokes the "burqa ban" during a parliamentary debate. This triggers a prickly response by Labour Party senator Niko Schrijver, who intervenes (Schrijver and Koffeman 2011, 17):

> Mr. Koffeman does make great strides: from the Eel Riot[9] to the possible burqa ban. To the best of my knowledge, the latter is only a bill, unfortunately submitted by this cabinet [. . .] the Labor Party will be against it in every fiber. Where does Mr. Koffeman stand on this? Does that actually have anything to do with this [proposal to ban unstunned religious slaughter]? I would add: how often has Mr. Koffeman actually encountered a woman in burqa in the Netherlands?

Koffeman responds:

> I don't see a burqa as a big problem. [. . .] I was trying to point out that [. . .] things that I do not see as a big problem are sufficient reason for a restriction of religious freedom [for the cabinet]. That is my point.

On a follow-up question by Schrijver whether it is not "a little distasteful" to invoke the burqa ban in discussions about animal welfare, Koffeman reiterates:

> I don't think so. Again, I do not want to discuss the content of that issue [the burqa ban]. My concern is on what basis ministers think you can curtail religious freedom. If that is already the case on a relatively small point, I think it should certainly be possible on an important, larger point that causes serious suffering. That is the only point I want to make.

This exchange demonstrates that senator Koffeman is acutely aware that the "burqa ban" amounts to political symbolism. Nevertheless, he willfully instrumentalizes the politicization of an Islamic custom that entrenches the ongoing racialization and discrimination of Muslims in the Netherlands to promote his party's agenda—namely, their proposed ban of unstunned religious slaughter. Ultimately, the PvdD (and remarkably, also the Labour Party) voted in favor of the partial ban on face-covering clothing that came into effect in 2019.

Confrontations with Racism: the PvdD's Willful White Ignorance

To many Dutch people, awareness of the role that race plays in structuring societies has remained rather limited. Mills (2007) famously coined the term "white ignorance" to theorize how white domination is constructed and maintained under modern political liberalism. The concept has since been deployed and advanced by a wide range of critical race scholars and philosophers of social epistemology (e.g., Alcoff 2007; Bailey 2017). We argue that the behavior of the PvdD, when confronted with concerns about racism, manifests a form of white ignorance.

Over the course of its 20-year existence, the PvdD has been confronted with concerns that its political discourse reinforces existing inequalities and fuels racism. However, instead of triggering reflection on the role of race in the existing social order and the party's own contribution thereto, the PvdD leadership repeatedly disavows any serious engagement with those concerns. Consider Thieme's (2019, 93–94) reflection on disquiet caused by the PvdD's proposal to curtail unstunned religious slaughter:

> The letters of some rabbis referred to Nazi Germany, and Orthodox Jewish rabbi Lody van de Kamp predicted that in the future our party would stir up hatred, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. It is typical of the demonization that can befall you as a challenger to the status quo, and it resonates with the ways in which abolitionist in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were treated too.

The pride expressed in this quote on being a truthteller akin to earlier emancipation movements functions to quickly disregard the charges of racism. It inhibits, too, a critical self-reflection on the ways in which the party's political agenda might be fueled by, and adding to, the policing of Muslims.

Consider, too, Thieme's reply to a reporter when asked about the warnings expressed by leading animal political theorists Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) to not become entangled with "xenophobic politics" (Ten Hooven 2018). Thieme answers that she agrees with these theorists' rejection of xenophobia, but:

> As an activist party, we want to be "the canary in the coal mine," thus we put the evil on the political agenda that others have not yet realized exists. If you want to address the greater evil of the abuses in regular slaughter, it is best to start small, with unstunned slaughter.

Rather than seriously contemplating the possible risks of focusing on animal practices by racialized minorities, Thieme swiftly shoves those concerns aside and

admits to instrumentalizing a focus on small-scale animal practices to address "the greater evil" of large-scale animal practices. Thieme's argumentation exhibits a willful disavowal of responsibility for any racializing consequences of the PvdD's political agenda.

Such deliberate disavowal becomes even more explicit in the following comment by Koffeman to a journalist (Hofman and Luimes 2021):

> Racism is a relatively small human thing. (. . .) There are many little things like that. They are huge problems, but in the big picture still relatively small problems. Humans make up only 0.01 percent of all life on earth; our little problems obscure the view of the problems of the other 99.99 percent.

The PvdD's deliberate disavowal of the ways in which its political agenda may get caught up in racializing dynamics is, we argue, an expression of the party's "willful white ignorance" (Martín 2021). According to this account, "white ignorance is the result of moves that white individuals make to avoid inconvenient truths about race and racial inequality" (8–9), which function to protect the "benefits they receive as a result of white racial domination (e.g., income, wealth, access to resources, social power, credibility)."

In the case of the PvdD, there are clear benefits deriving from their willful white ignorance. It enables the party to present and further its political agenda without having to take notice of "the Muslim Question." Instead, it allows them to gather support for their proposal to ban unstunned religious slaughter. In a sociopolitical context in which the intricate relation between race and religion saliently structures sociopolitical conflict, it pays off to deliberately refuse any serious consideration of one's entanglement with "the Muslim Question" and instead tap into the discourse that polices Muslims.

Antiracist Renewal: What About "the Muslim Question"?

Since the 2010s, there is a growing awareness of the persistence of racism in the Netherlands (Essed 2014), which has forcefully influenced public and political debate (Essed and Hoving 2014; Weiner and Báez 2018). This so-called "second wave of Dutch antiracism" (Adam 2019; Adam, Beaman and Jung Forthcoming; Esajas 2018; Essed 2014) started with renewed protests against the black-faced figure "*Zwarte Piet*" (Black Pete), which is an annually celebrated racist depiction of (supposed) Black people acting as the servant of a white bishop and saint (Schor 2020). Underlining the racism in and expressed through this tradition, anti-Black Pete activists pointed to the widespread support for this figure as an illustration of the general ignorance about race and racism in the country. In so doing, they propelled example after example of institutional racism into the mainstream public sphere and connected the enduring insidiousness of racism to the barely acknowledged legacy of Dutch colonialism and trans-Atlantic slavery.

Invoking calls for "decolonization" and encouraged by highly (social) mediatized international events (e.g., Rhodes Must Fall protests in South Africa, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA), the Dutch antiracist movement has motivated numerous well-established institutions to critically look at their work

(such as museums, cultural centers, universities, municipalities, and broadcasting stations) and take action (developing new exhibitions, changing street names, and appointing diversity officers). This antiracist momentum has also transpired onto the political stage when, in 2015 and 2016, two parties were founded and (later on) elected in parliament with, respectively, 3 and 1 seat(s). These parties, *DENK* (THINK) and *BIJ1* (2GETHER), can be seen as the political representation of the renewed grassroots antiracist movement (Jung 2021). The latter party frequently references the PvdD as an example of how a small party can have significant influence, and its leaders have built since 2021 strong personal and political connections to the point that BIJ1 endorsed the PvdD in elections it was itself not participating.

The shift in public awareness in the 2010s about the persistence of racism in the Netherlands has influenced the political discourse of the PvdD too. The party exhibits an increasing awareness of connections between the legacy of Dutch slavery and colonialism and contemporary discrimination. For example, in 2014, the PvdD's political group in the European parliament organized a debate on the Black Pete tradition, and the party has also called to change this tradition at the local level. Furthermore, the 2021 national party platform (Partij voor de Dieren 2021, 88) states that "a growing movement has revealed that discrimination and racism are deeply rooted in our society. That is something we should acknowledge, and something we should resolve, starting with the government."

Although it showcases that the party is increasingly aware that certain emancipation struggles are all but completed, it should be noted that attention to racism remains a marginal component of the party's political project and continues to be conceptualized as unrelated to the logic of anthropocentrism. Furthermore, prominent MPs continue to discredit or dismiss concerns about the party's reproduction of a racializing discourse. The role race and religion play in the political project of the PvdD also remains a troubled one. In 2018, the party reinitiated its proposal to ban religious slaughter without prior stunning. Furthermore, the party rejects discrimination based on the grounds of race *or* religion but fails to connect the two and, in doing so, does not acknowledge the possible racialization of religious groups (Partij voor de Dieren 2023). This signals that despite the increasing awareness of colonial legacies of racism, the PvdD's unwillingness to recognize the racialization and policing of Muslims persists. The party sticks to the false dichotomy of race and religion, which places Muslims in the latter category following the dominant Dutch culturalization discourse. That dichotomy prevents a consideration of the racializing ramifications of the party's political agenda. The figure of the "moderate" Muslim supporting prior stunning also continues to be invoked which, because of its reliance on Dutch culture as the yardstick against which the acceptability and redeemability of Muslims are measured, normalizes Islamophobia and the policing of Muslims.

Conclusion: A Color-Evasive Animal Politics?

Despite its troubled relation with matters of race and religion, the star of the PvdD is ever rising, evidenced by the increasing electoral support from the local to the European level since its inception two decades ago. New sister parties continue to be

established and win seats in Europe and beyond. The PvdD did experience an electoral setback during the 2023 general election, for which the highly mediatized outburst of a long-lasting interpersonal conflict between the party leader and the party board is the most plausible explanation.[10] The bigger picture remains, however, that animal advocacy politics is far from having reached its peak. Moreover, the fact that the PVV won the 2023 election makes the study of animal advocacy politics in a sociopolitical context that polices Muslims all the more pressing.

To date, the PvdD has mostly been studied following conventional typologies in political science that do little justice to the disruptive aspirations of the party. The novelty of our approach resides in the fact that it is grounded in political theory, thus advancing beyond the established categories by which political parties are regularly studied. We apply an incrementalist understanding of Rancière's political thought, which enables us to demonstrate that the political project of the PvdD unfolds along multiple dimensions. The party enacts a Rancièrian form of "politics" by disrupting the existing anthropocentric order through which the PvdD gives voice to the animal as a political subject. To some degree, this even challenges the anthropocentrism in Rancière, which relies on a dichotomy between "loathing animals" and "speaking human beings." Moreover, our account advances Rancièrian approaches by evidencing that there can be simultaneous instances of "politics" and "policing" instantiated by the very same actor. Drawing from insights generated by critical race theory, we show that the PvdD introduces the animal as a political subject but, at the same time, joins in on dominant discourses that police Muslims, thereby contributing to the further racialization of this group.

The complex role race plays in the PvdD's politics, we find, is best captured by identifying the party's political project as a colorblind or, in non-ableist terms, color-evasive animal politics. We are inspired by Bonilla-Silva's (2003) notion of "colorblind racism," by which he analyzes the dominant racial ideology in the USA that has led to the denial of the importance of racism in the persistence of racial inequality. However, the term "color blindness" has been rightfully critiqued by Annamma et al. (2017) for being an ableist expression, confusing lack of vision with lack of knowledge and equating difference with deficit. In lieu of color blindness, these authors propose the term "color evasiveness."

We find the term color evasive helpful to spotlight the PvdD's ignorance about the historical and contemporaneous workings of race and its intersection with religion in a European context. As we hope to have shown, the PvdD has subscribed to a post-race sequential emancipation narrative and demonstrated a false understanding of anthropocentrism as devoid of racialism. The party has also manifested willful white ignorance about the racialization of Muslims, despite having become more aware of the racist legacies of Dutch colonialism in recent years. Together, these moments show a clear pattern in which the PvdD fails to recognize the ways in which its aspirations and political discourse are steeped in the logic of race–religion constellations.

We wish to stress that the PvdD is not alone in being implicated by "the Muslim Question" because the law proposals discussed in this article have been supported by virtually all left-wing and right-wing parties. While disrupting the anthropocentric

police order is quite unique to the PvdD, the policing of Muslims is quite common in the Netherlands. Therefore, we may conclude that the PvdD has arrived at a crossroads: as they will continue to challenge anthropocentrism, it remains to be seen whether they will do so in a disruptive way or repeat earlier strides and persist in contributing to the racialization and policing of Muslims.

In terms of scholarly approaches, we are aware that our Rancièrian account of the PvdD has mainly examined animal advocacy politics through a Critical Race Theory lens, whereas future research could turn this around and explore the extent to which anthropocentric assumptions are embroiled in (anti)racist politics (but see Kim 2015). We hope our account contributes to the development of a more comprehensive research agenda, one that addresses both race and anthropocentrism, to study political parties in general and AAPs in particular. Such agenda would align well with a wider project of reconnecting the conceptual forests of political theory with the plow fields of empirical political science.

Notes

1 In addition to the Netherlands, an AAP has been established in the following countries since the PvdD's inception: Australia, Cyprus, Canada, United Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Israel, Spain, Portugal, France, Brazil, Italy, Ireland, Moldova, USA, Switzerland, and Denmark. The German AAP had been founded already in 1994 and was elected in the European Parliament in 2014 but has never been elected into the German Federal Parliament. AAPs in the European Union are united in the group Animal Politics EU. In 2019, the Dutch, German, and Portuguese AAPs were elected in the European Parliament (MPs of the latter two have left their respective parties, leaving these AAPs without representation ever since).

2 Women are, and historically have been, at the forefront of animal advocacy movements (Deckha 2013; Gaarder 2011). The PvdD is an outspoken supporter of women's rights and stands out in the Lower House with its two women leaders among the predominantly men-led other parties (Jung 2021). The connection between women and animals runs deeper still, as argued by ecofeminist scholarship that theorizes patriarchy and human supremacy in relation to one another (e.g., Adams and Donovan 1995; Gaard 2019; Plumwood 1988).

3 We contend that the distinction between "expressive" and "instrumental" politics entails a false opposition. The distinction suggests that the notion of "expressive politics" does not yield concrete effects, whereas we would consider the PvdD's politics also impactful even if it only has discursive or ideological influence (Huijzer 2022). Elsewhere, Thieme (2019) differentiates between a "politics of the possible" versus a "politics of the attainable" (84) that strongly resonates with the respective Rancièrian concepts "politics" and "police." According to Thieme, politics of the attainable is aimed at "governing society from the center" which is a characteristic for other parties, whereas the PvdD's "politics of the possible is aimed at disrupting that center." Consequently, Thieme places the disruptive politics of the PvdD emphatically outside the police order aimed at governance and social control.

4 All originally Dutch quotes are translated by the authors.

5 The identification of Dutch culture as secularized also affects other religions such as Judaism, in particular the more orthodox expressions (Vellenga 2011; Schuh, Burchardt, and Wohlrab-Sahr 2012).

6 We acknowledge that what exactly constitutes racism against Muslims remains an open debate in academia. See Bracke and Aguilar (2022, 213) for a concise overview. We find Hall's (1997) argument that race and racism are floating signifiers contingent on the specific context in which they figure most convincing.

7 The term "race-religion constellation" is coined by Topolski (2018a, 59) to name the historical and continuing connection and co-constitution of the two categories in Europe, when humans were racially classified based on categories today understood as religious.

8 Instead, the Senate accepted the State Secretary's proposal (catching the PvdD by surprise at the 11th hour) to draw up a covenant together with representatives of animal protection organizations, Jewish and Islamic communities, and slaughterhouses to improve the welfare of animals during unstunned religious slaughter, much to the PvdD's dismay.

9 In 19th-century Amsterdam, "eel pulling" was a popular game. Live eels were fished out of the canals and hung on a rope that was spanned over the water. Players tried to pull on the slippery eels while sailing underneath the rope. In 1886, the police banned this game, leading to a bloody riot resulting in 26 deaths. Koffeman uses the Eel Riot to illustrate that longstanding Dutch cultural practices involving animals are not set in stone but can be outlawed.

10 In September 2023, a long-lasting conflict between the party leader and the party board came to the surface when the board, responding to accusations of undemocratic behavior by the leader, withdrew the leadership candidacy. Party members, however, rallied behind the leader which resulted in the leader's reinstatement and the board's resignation. Nevertheless, the party lost half of its seats in the November 2023 general election.

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